

The University of Chester



Equality Report 2024 – Part A

April 2024

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Foreword



At the University of Chester, we are fully committed to ensuring we create an inclusive culture where we promote equity and celebrate diversity. I am pleased with the way our equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) provision across our community has continued to flourish in 2023.

Our successful Diversity Festival and the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences representatives in Warrington have hosted a variety of thought-provoking events throughout the year, invigorating the sense of community and belonging amongst our diverse staff and student body.

I myself had the great pleasure of hosting a conversation with Helen Tomlinson, the UK Government's first-ever Menopause Champion, at the Diversity Festival's International Women's Day 2024 event.

Community continues to be an important theme in our EDI work and we are proud that our staff and students have access to a variety of engaged and caring networks which help find peer support, offer advice and provide a genuine sense of belonging; the networks have continued to thrive this year, with increased membership.

In October 2023, we were re-awarded the Navajo LGBTQIA+ Chartermark, for which assessors praised the University for 'the extensive engagement activity that has taken place in relation to LGBT+ inclusion across our staff and student communities.'

We also released the 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Staff Survey', an opportunity to gain greater understanding of where we are succeeding as an institution, as well as where we can improve. The findings from this survey form part of our Athena Swan (gender charter) renewal, also a key piece of work this year.

This Report provides an overview of our EDI activities and successes during the past 12 months, we are making good progress, but recognise there is still more work to do. The information contained in this Report will help inform our priorities and plans for the future and focus on the delivery of our equality commitments for 2024, as outlined in this Report.



Introduction

This Equality Report is divided into two parts.

[Part A](#) – Achievements and Embedded Good Practice

[Part B](#) – Data Report

The University of Chester is an intellectual community and culture in which respect, equity, diversity and inclusion are core to our values. The work goes beyond compliance with equality legislation, to continually improve our policies and culture so that staff and students experience a supportive, welcoming and inclusive environment.

We strive to embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in all that we do, throughout our learning and teaching, research and scholarship, outreach, and leadership. We enhance participation of staff and students in equality events, programmes and initiatives through:

- increasing knowledge and understanding of EDI issues;
- fostering an intellectual environment where people are able to bring their authentic selves to work and study;
- providing a communication framework that invites feedback, diverse thought and generates innovative ideas;
- promoting an organisational ethos of continuous improvement.

Our Vision

We aim to stand out through our authentic culture and measurable initiatives, embedding 'The Citizen Student' in all aspects of University life.

Students are supported to access a breadth of opportunities – before arrival (to help their transition to University), on their course and beyond graduation.

They will develop flexibility in their career path by experiencing work-based placements and inter-disciplinary research. The curriculum enables the development of subject expertise, digital skills, data competencies and the application of these in the wider world. Sustainability, resilience and personal development are integral to the Chester experience.

The University creates a strong sense of belonging through the tradition of volunteering and citizenship. Both students and staff develop their potential to influence and lead in their subject areas and wider society, and our comprehensive alumni offer is an opportunity for lifelong learning and engagement.

Our Equality Commitments 2024

- To successfully renew the University's Institutional Bronze Athena Swan award and to begin work to commence actions within the 2024 Athena Swan action plan.
- To ensure 100% of staff on permanent and fixed term contracts have completed the mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan.
- To reduce the University's gender pay gap from 10.3% (mean) to 9% (mean) and 13.3% (median) to 12% (median).
- To use equality data more effectively with a view to
 - (i) measuring equality successes across the University and
 - (ii) identifying and addressing areas of underrepresentation through positive action.
- To deliver and evaluate an impactful Diversity Festival 2024.
- To continue to identify ways to effectively manage unacceptable behaviours at the University.
- To develop effective mechanisms to assess and monitor the impact of our diversity and inclusion initiatives and interventions on workplace practice, behaviour and outcomes across the University.
- To review and update the University's equality policies and initiatives to better support both staff and students and capture changing needs.
- To review the academic promotions process and identify barriers to staff diversity at all levels across the University.
- To continually enhance the leadership and governance of EDI across the University through strong partnership working with our students union, staff networks, academic and [professional services teams and our key stakeholders.

Governance

The Vice-Chancellor is the University's senior officer responsible for Equality. The Director of HR (a member of the Executive Team) leads the day-to-day senior management team responsibility for Equality work. The University's approach is characterised by operational responsibility for Equality being shared by all staff throughout the University, including through senior Equality leads in academic and support departments, and the Equality Forum which disseminates information, assists promotion and generates innovation throughout the University.

The University's Equality Forum is open to all staff and students. The Forum is integral to the University's EDI provision for the following reasons:

- a space for staff and students to raise equality concerns from all areas and levels of the University;
- forum to present and workshop current and upcoming initiatives;
- forum to share best practice;
- allows staff and students to feed into University strategy and goals;
- provides University with opportunity to obtain multi-lens feedback.

The forum is active throughout the academic year, meeting on a quarterly basis and it is led by the Director of HR and supported by the HR Manager for Organisational Development &

Equality. Staff Networks report to the Equality Forum, creating a clear line of communication between the networks and SET.

The Planning and Resources Committee (PRC) is also a key part in the University's Equality and Diversity governance and holds responsibility for reviewing the implementation of University policies and guidance relating to equality and diversity for staff and students.

The University has a small but proactive Equality and Diversity team, whose main purpose is to engage with staff and students in taking individual responsibility and interest in equalities matters across the University. We do this by raising awareness, providing extensive training, leading the Equality Forum, supporting diversity events, developing community links, and facilitating support networks.

The Equality and Diversity team maintain up to date knowledge to inform effective policy and good practice, and regularly consult with networks and knowledge-sharing groups to ensure all staff and students needs are being met.

The key Equality and Diversity members of staff are:

- Strategic Director of HR, (Rashmi Patel)
- HR Manager for Diversity, and Development (Kathryn Leighton)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer (Jules Crane).

For queries contact: equality@chester.ac.uk

Key Achievements

- **Successful conclusion of Diversity Festival 2023 & the beginning of Diversity Festival 2024**

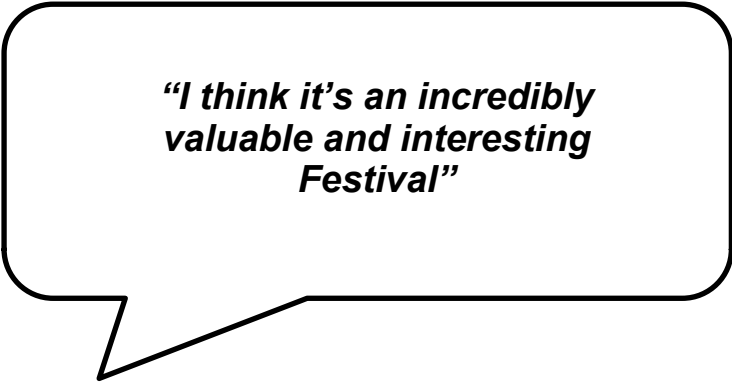
The Diversity Festival has inspired and informed students, staff and the public every year since its inception in 2006.

The Diversity Festival 2023 took place 27th February – 10th March 2023 and saw a vast array of thought-provoking events across University of Chester campuses. The theme was ‘Action for Change’ and focussed on the actions we can take to make meaningful changes to inclusion and belonging. Participants were inspired by diverse range of speakers and the ways in which changes, both big and small, can make a real impact.


The festival was launched on 27th February by Alex Staniforth, a record-breaking adventurer. Alex survived two of the biggest disasters in Mount Everest’s history as a teenager, and yet some of his biggest challenges were much closer to home. Having suffered with epilepsy, stammering, bullying and mental ill health since childhood, Alex shared his story as a motivational speaker and author who’s committed to helping others overcome their own challenges.

The festival also saw events featuring talks from Cerrie Burnelli (author, actor and activist); Imarn Ayton (BLM protest organiser and activist); and Dr Helen Pankhurst (Women’s rights activity and scholar).

Quotes from the Diversity Festival 2023 feedback survey:



“I think it’s an incredibly valuable and interesting Festival”



“Really good topics and well organised, thank you!”

In Autumn 2023, the Diversity Festival transformed from a condensed festival of events across a 2-week period to a celebration of diversity and inclusion events across the year. The transformation happened with a view to reaching a greater audience and more meaningfully celebrating significant diversity and inclusion dates.

Fittingly, the theme of Diversity Festival 2024 is a ‘New Approach’.

The Diversity Festival 2024 kicked off with “Black History Month: Race, Equality and Gender” on Monday 16th October; followed by a celebration of World Menopause

Day, “A Peri Supportive Workplace?” on Wednesday 18th October.

Following the highly successful International Men's Day celebration in November 2022 and an exploration of men's issues during the "Equality for Men Too" event during Diversity Festival 2022, the University held a second International Men's Day event in Wheeler Building on Friday 17th November 2023, focussing on mental health, mental health of global aid workers and childlessness.

On 6th December 2023, the Race Equality and Cultural Heritage (REACH) Network hosted 'Authentic Leadership' at Queens Park, in which staff who had undertaken Advance HE's Diversifying Leadership programme shared some of the key learning and benefits of the programme with others.

On Friday 8th March, the Diversity Festival hosted a celebration of International Women's Day 2024 at the Riverside Innovation Centre. Discussions included women's experiences of ageism, neurodiversity and recruitment, featuring a talk from the government's first Menopause Employment Champion, Helen Tomlinson in conversation with the Vice Chancellor.

To find out more about upcoming Diversity Festival events or to submit ideas for future events, please visit the webpage or email equality@chester.ac.uk.

The Diversity Festival are also supporting a series of Diversity and Inclusion events in Warrington.

• **Warrington Diversity and Inclusion Events**

Professor Hannah Bacon continues to direct a number of events and activities related to staff and student research and wider work in EDI for the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. This project has been focused on using the research power of the Faculty to help establish the new University Centre in Time Square in Warrington town centre. Some events are delivered in-person from this location at the same time as being streamed live.

Events to date have provided opportunities for knowledge exchange between different partners, including members of the University and external organisations, and between the University and general public/local community. These events are designed to benefit professionals outside of the University in enhancing their EDI literacy and assisting with their professional development and training. They are also intended to contribute to the University's Social Capital and Citizen Student agenda by building EDI literacy, by providing opportunities for networking within and beyond the University, by helping students grow in confidence, and by engaging students

with important questions around diversity and inclusion. Activities to date have facilitated the building of new relationships with external partners and have led to a University contribution to key cultural events in the town including Warrington LitFest and Warrington Pride.

If you would like to participate in the planning or delivery of these events, please contact Hannah (h.bacon@chester.ac.uk). Events in 2023 included:

June 2023 – **Warrington Pride** – this event included:

- Art social (organised and facilitated by UoC LGBTQ+ Society)
- Art exhibition (Infographic posters by University of Chester Art and Design students on LGBT+ history and rights)
- Talk: Why do we still need Pride? (Richard Euston, Director of Charity, Chester Pride)
- Film streaming: Aerial Roots (A short film by Adam Bennett Lea (as part of 'Local Legends' by Warrington-based theatre company, Not Too Tame)
- Film streaming: Who am I? (A short film by Lucas Rodrigues (first year drama student at the University of Chester)
- Talk: Rainbow parenting – how to support LGBTQ+ kids (Richard Euston, Director of Charity, Chester Pride)



16th October 2023 – **Black History Month** - 'Race, Equality and Gender':

This event included talks by staff and students from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and other staff and students from the UoC:

- 'The Disconnect: Black Britons and the LGBTQ+ community' – Tamirah Bass-Grant (BSc Sociology with Psychology student and Student Race Advocate, University of Chester)
- 'Can Discrimination Ever Be Justified? Affirmative Action and the Struggle for Racial Equality in the United States' - Donna Jackson (Senior Lecturer in History, University of Chester)
- 'Personal Reflections on Race and Gender Equality: Removing the 'Rose Tinted Glasses' – Arfana Ali (MSc Management student and former Race Advocate for the University of Chester)

13th December 2023 – **Disability History Month** – 'Disability, Children and Youth'

This event included talks by external speakers and staff from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and other staff from the UoC:

- 'Growing up with Disabilities: Personal and Professional Reflections' - Dawn Atherton (Disability Information Officer, Corporate Support, Warrington Disability Partnership, UK)
- 'Christianity, sign languages, and Deaf education: a brief history' - Professor Wayne Morris (Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research, University of Chester)
- 'Disabled Children and Victorian Literature' – Dr Alex Tankard (Senior Lecturer in Communication, Screen and Performance)
- 'Growing up Disabled: Stereotypes, Barriers and Overcoming Them' - Dan Cole

- **Armed Forces Day**

On 20th June 2023, the Armed Forces Network led a flag-raising ceremony in commemoration of Armed Forces Day. The Armed Forces Network was created to give members of the Armed Forces community space to network, seek peer support and to find links to external support if required. Network members are also invited to attend virtual webinars as part of the International Armed Forces, Veterans and their Families Research webinar series, the link to access tickets is emailed directly to members.

- **University School of Law**

The University's School of Law and Social Justice continues to ensure significant focus on EDI in relation to research and knowledge exchange activities. Professor Chantal Davies (Professor of Law, Equality and Diversity) and Professor Hannah Bacon (Professor of Feminist Theology) aim to launch a new institution wide Centre for EDI during 2024 to showcase research and knowledge exchange activity across the institution in this area and build upon the work of the Forum for Research into Equality and Diversity. Professor Davies has now been elected co-vice chair of the Law Society's Women Solicitors Network and in this role has been leading on rolling out the [Law Society's Women in Law Pledge](#). In December, the School of Law and Social Justice hosted the annual [Law Society Carrie Morrison Lecture](#) focusing on the next 100 years of women in the law and building upon an event organised by the School of Law in November focusing on the previous 100 years of female participation in the legal sector.

Professor Davies also continues to sit on the AdvanceHE EDI Committee and advise on higher education sector EDI policy and development. She has advised several large high-profile organisations on complex EDI issues. Prof Davies continues to sit on the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission and has also just completed a

12-month long research project focusing on developing inclusive approaches towards environmental sustainability and environmental justice and which implements the recommendations from the SIGC report from 2022 (Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission - Cheshire and Warrington). This report will be published in 2024 alongside a toolkit/framework for environmental justice based on the findings of this research.

Megan Cowan and Associate Prof Andrea Todd continue their work on the [Chester Community Law Project](#) (in which scores of students offer their knowledge for free and outside of their studies helping group of people that could benefit from a little guidance on legal issues. In particular they have been supporting schools, charities, and families in need, and inspiring legal minds of the future with Law students from the University of Chester are using their expertise for the good of society. Professor Todd has also seen her research and focus on student parents been utilised at a [national level](#) to enhance consideration and protection for this often-marginalised group.

- **Learning and Development**

The Equality Team offer a full suite of EDI training and development to members of staff across the institution.

All staff are required to complete an online Equality and Diversity training module, the content of which has been developed by the University, enabling us to update in line with legislation and business priorities instantly and at no extra cost. All staff are also required to complete mandatory online Safeguarding and Prevent training.

Mandatory training is closely monitored and, in 2023, a more targeted approach to reminding staff of the need to complete was undertaken, with compliance rates being reported to SET regularly. In April 2024, 97.1% of staff had completed Safeguarding (Prevent) training and 92.8% had completed Equality and Diversity training. Forecasts (figures 2 and 3) suggest that training completion rates will reach target levels of 98% for Equality and Diversity and Safeguarding by July 2024.

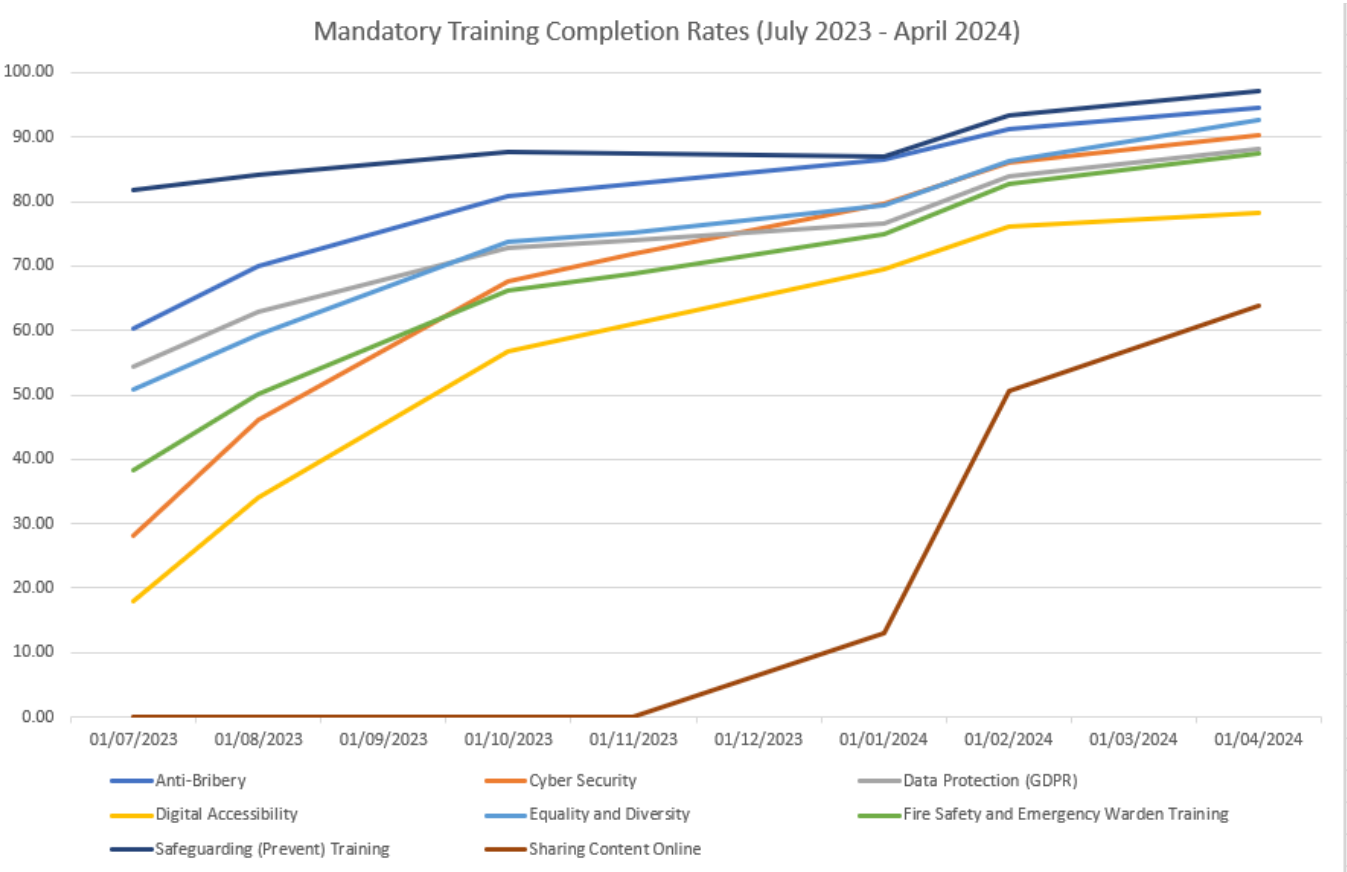


Figure 1: University of Chester mandatory training completion rates (all mandatory courses) between July 2023 - April 2024

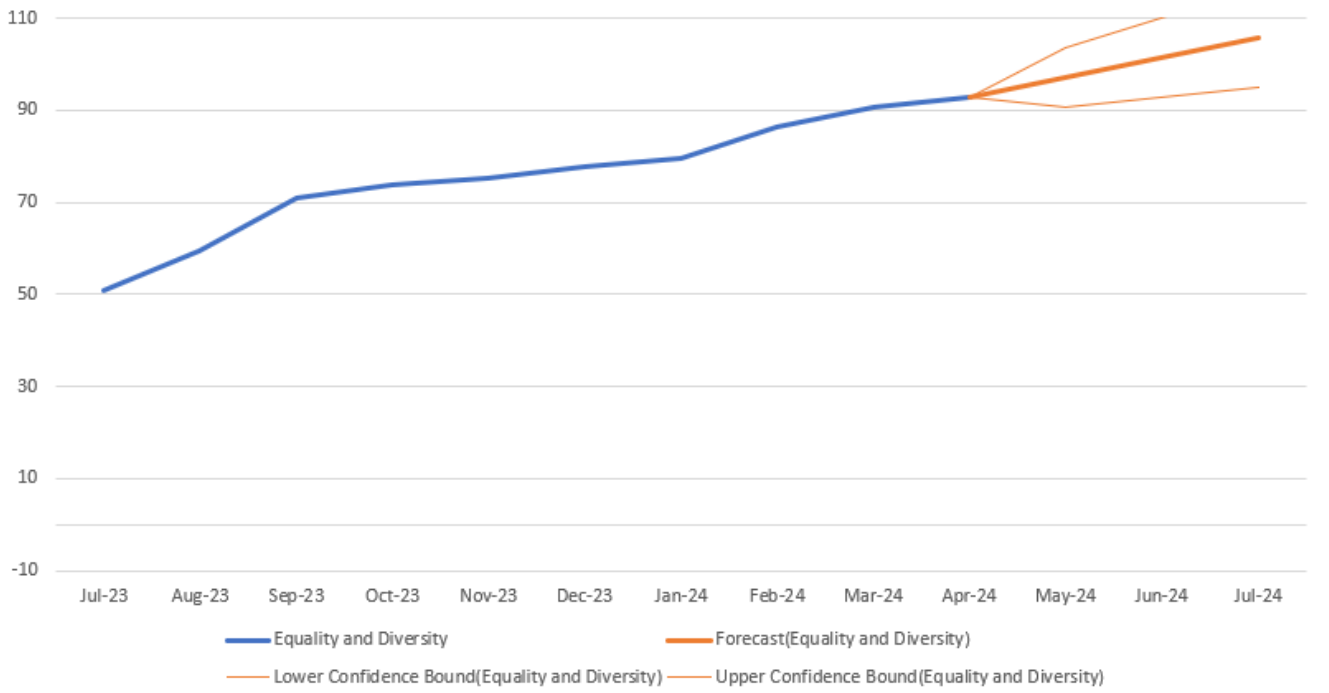


Figure 2: Forecast for Equality and Diversity mandatory training completion rates at the University of Chester.

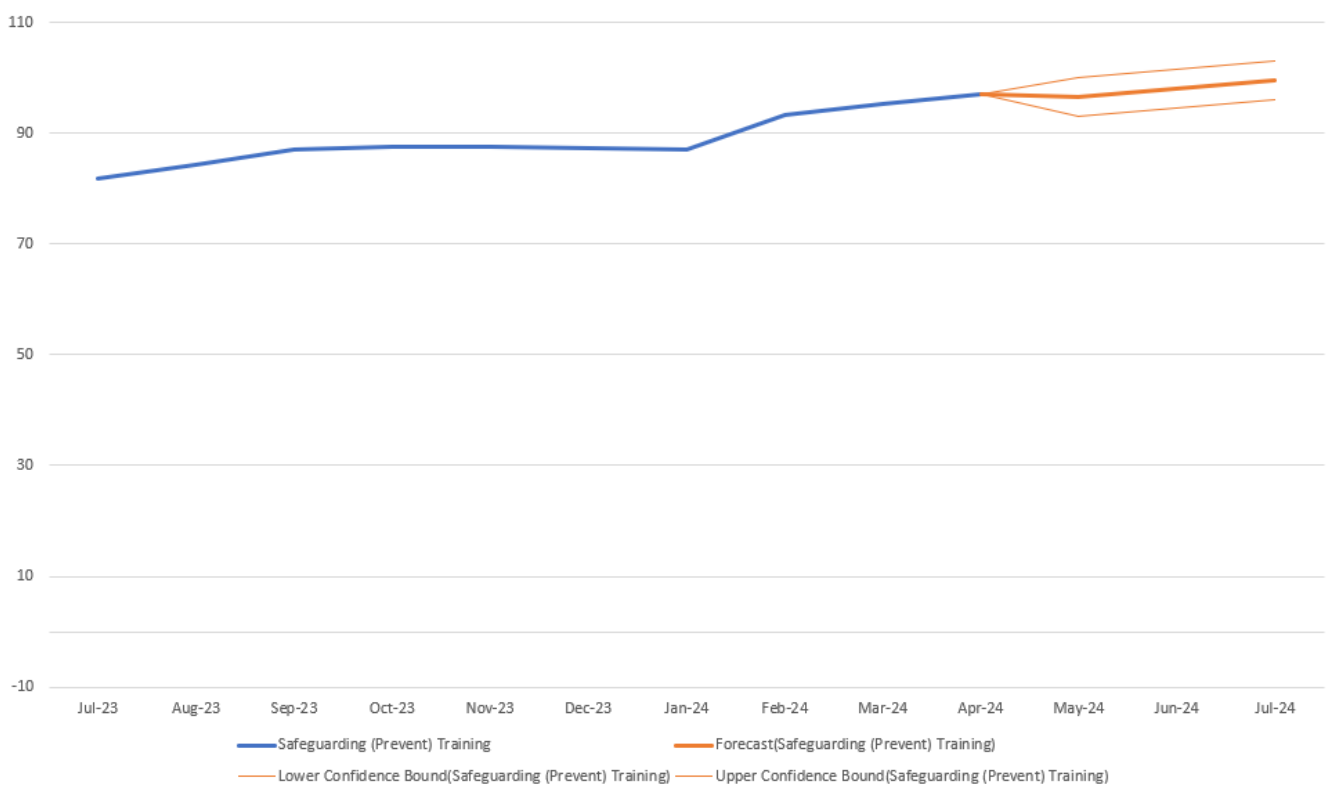


Figure 3: Forecast for Safeguarding (Prevent) mandatory training completion rates at the University of Chester.

In April 2023, the University introduced a digital platform (Moodle Workplace) to enable a more comprehensive approach to monitoring mandatory training completion rates. An automatic reminder function with more effective reporting was activated for the purposes of ensuring all staff maintain a good working knowledge of all mandatory topics, including EDI,

Prevent and Safeguarding issues.

A proactive approach to tracking completions and alerts has significantly increased percentage completion rates. A set of dashboards are now also made available to all Line Managers showing the latest compliance status of individuals in their department, together with an overall compliance rate for their staff.

A shorter version of all mandatory training is currently being development by the Learning and Organisational Development team for Visiting Lecturers and staff on limited hour contracts.

A new iteration of Unconscious Bias training was developed by one of the 2022/23 Student Race Advocates and delivered to a range of academic and professional services staff on 30th June 2023.

• **Equality Diversity and Inclusion Survey (2023)**

The Equality Team launched an institutional 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Staff Survey' in 2023, with a view to capturing cultural attitudes to EDI and profile areas of satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

Positives:

- A majority agree that they feel they belong at the University.
- A majority agree that people care about them in their department.
- A majority agree that their contributions and ideas as valued in their department.
- A majority agree that there is a high level of trust between people in their teams.
- A majority feel comfortable speaking up and expressing their opinions in their department.

Areas for improvement, particularly those relating to gender, have been incorporated into the Athena Swan Action Plan 2024-2029.

Embedded Good Practice

Disability, Neurodiversity and Mental Health

- **The Disabled Staff Group**

The Disabled Staff group is one of our oldest groups and it is a valuable forum for all. Members come to the group with questions about their disability, tips for navigating administrative processes (e.g. applying for blue badge), and advice on where they can get support. It is a vital forum for members to air frustrations and feedback ways in which the University should change to be more inclusive to disabled staff.

The network also acts as a consultative group and provide valuable advice on University practice, provision and policy relating to disability and the Equality Analysis process.

In 2023, two members of the Disabled Staff Network became official members of University Operations Groups, enabling members of the network to more consistently feed into Estate and Facilities planning.

- **Sport and Active Lifestyle**

In September 2023, as part of 'National Inclusion Week', Sport and Active Lifestyle celebrated with cultural and inclusion activity day, working in collaboration with student's union and international societies providing opportunities to explore traditions such as the beauty of Indian dance, wheelchair basketball, indoor cricket, badminton and table tennis.

The 'Sensory Quiet hour' was also introduced to the gym in 2023. Sensory Quiet Hour is Tuesday 14:00-15:00, for anyone who prefers to work out in a quieter environment.

The Sport and Active Lifestyle department trained 54 students this year in [Student Minds: Mental Health in Sport training](#). Membership forms were also updated to be more inclusive of individuals that have a disability or long-term health condition, offering the option to discuss any specific needs of support. This will help us gain insight into our student needs.

Students and staff can take advantage of the free activities on campus every week with our [Active Campus Timetable](#). There is no fee or commitment and everybody is welcome.

The Chester Student Union (CSU) held regular meetings with Student Council representatives and the Sport and Active Lifestyle department about finding ways to promote inclusive sports and ease barriers to participation.

- **Recovery Friendly University Charter**

On Monday 6th March 2023, at the Diversity Festival 2023 event "Celebrating Chester as a

Recovery Friendly University”, the University became signatories to the **Recovery Friendly University Pledge**. This pledge is a signal of the University’s commitment to challenging stigma and working to make the University inclusive and welcoming of students and staff with addiction histories. The University of Chester are the second University in the UK to sign the Recovery Friendly Pledge.

- **Neurodiversity Staff and Student Support Group**

In Spring 2023, Valerie Ebrahimi (Senior Lecturer for Nursing and Healthcare Education) re-launched the Neurodiverse Student and Staff Support Group, supported by Jules Crane (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer). The group is open to Neurodiverse Students and Staff, as well as staff and students who are eager to develop their understanding of how to best support neurodiverse people. Meetings are well-attended and engaging, providing neurodiverse people with a safe space to seek practical advice and learn more about the benefits of neurodiversity, as well as the obstacles which Neurodiverse people experience.

- **University Mental Health Charter**

Wellbeing is a key aspect of the University’s overall strategy. As such, one of the central focuses of 2023 was the University Mental Health Charter; a framework which provides a set of evidence-informed principles to support Chester’s adoption of a whole-university approach to mental health and wellbeing for staff and students. The Wellbeing Steering Group oversee the University’s work on the University Mental Health Charter, which we aim to submit for within the next three years.

Gender

- **Women’s Networking Forum**

The Women’s Network is extremely active and they have hosted a number of guest speakers and activities over this year; including but not limited to, networking sessions, strengths-awareness and overcoming self-limiting beliefs.

The network hosted a celebration of International Women’s Day again this year with a number of passionate speakers (see Diversity Festival for more details).

- **Menopause Networks**

The network continues to be an invaluable resource to anybody going through the menopause. The group collect and share tips and resources, helping each other navigate the menopause and providing the University with invaluable advice as to how best support menopausal people.

The Wellbeing and Mental Health team also run a [‘Student Menopause Support Network’](#), in which students similarly share tips and resources as well as peer support.

• Men's Networks

The Men's Network is a vital peer-support group and over the last year they continued their hard work raising awareness about men's health issues across the University.

A celebration of International Men's Day was held again this year as part of the Diversity Festival and saw numerous powerful speakers, including a talk from Martin Evans about the mental health of global aid workers, a speaker from the Men's Mental Health charity Mentell and the author Robert Nurden, who came to speak about his experiences of childlessness and the impact on men.

Feedback from attendees was that this event was emotional and impactful.

The Wellbeing and Mental Health team also support 'Men's Space – A Male Student Support Network'. This is facilitated by a male member of staff from the counselling team and

provides students with a friendly and supportive space where they can discuss men's issues.

• Parents' Network

The Parents' Network meets quarterly and meetings are informal, giving attendees the opportunity to raise parenting concerns and for peers to provide invaluable support, as well as feedback to the university with regards to how we can best support parents and guardians.

The Wellbeing and Mental Health team also run a ['Student Parent Support Network'](#). This is in its second year and continues to provide student parents with a friendly a supportive space to support them on their parenting journey, alongside education.

• Carers Network

The Carers Network is open to any member of staff or any student who undertake a caring role. It operates via MS Teams and the network meet quarterly. The Network have maintained a close relationship with the Cheshire and Warrington Carers Trust this year and representatives from the trust attended a number of meetings, providing invaluable advice on how to find appropriate support with caring.

The Equality Team attended a 'Carers in Employment' lunchtime workshop with the Carers Trust in June 2023 to further their understanding of how the University can better support carers.

Student Services also support the following student groups:

- Care Experienced Student Peer Group
- Estranged Student Peer Group

- Student Carers Peer Group
- Refugee Peer Support Group

- **Chester Student Union (CSU) Student Clubs and Societies**

The CSU launched a new committee hub which aims to have accessible and informative information and guidance made available through the CSU website, social media, fairs, and pop ups. A new society handbook was also launched as well as simplified bylaws for CSU centrally.

- **Gender Pay**

The University of Chester is fully committed to reducing the gender pay gap by recruiting, developing, promoting, and rewarding staff fairly, regardless of gender. The University works hard to support initiatives that mitigate the underlying causes of the gender pay gap and gender inequality, including Aurora and Athena Swan.

With a view to taking a more intersectional approach to pay gap monitoring, the University published its first Gender, Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap report in 2024. This report, and all previous reports, can be viewed [here](#).

To join the mailing list of any of the staff groups or for more information, email: equality@chester.ac.uk

- **Aurora**

In 2022/23, thirteen women from the University undertook Aurora, Advance HE's leadership development initiative for women. The programme exists to take positive action to address the under-representation of women in leadership positions in the sector.

Below are some experiences of our Aurora participants this year:

Aurora – Lisa Owen, Grounds and Gardens Coordinator, Estates and Facilities

“The opportunity to apply for the Aurora Programme came just at the right time in my career journey at the University. I had just taken up the role of Grounds and Gardens Coordinator, so the guidance and advice that I gained from undertaking Aurora was invaluable to me, especially as a woman in the horticulture industry.

I particularly enjoyed listening to all the guest speakers, and their different career paths and life experiences. I started using the tips I learnt from them in my role straight away, especially the skills needed to effectively prioritise in a very busy department! Thanks to Aurora my confidence, organisational skills and belief in myself has developed greatly.



Having a mentor was also a great added benefit and allowed me to discuss the programme in more depth and ask advice relevant to my role. After the programme came to an end, I have continued my journey and am now having regular coaching sessions for as long as I need them.”

Aurora - Jessica Vaughan-Foulkes, Clinical Skills Technician, Faculty of Health, Medicine and Society

“The Aurora programme equipped me with leadership skills which have already benefitted me in my current role and I know will continue to benefit me in my career. There are several tips and tricks that I learned from both the facilitators as well as through networking with women in HE institutions across the UK which I remember regularly when navigating through my day-to-day life. I had a brilliant mentor whom I had interesting discussions with throughout the process and a lovely Action Learning Set group who were incredibly supportive. We are still in touch now and hope to continue the journey together moving forward. I was able to learn so much from having open conversations – Identity, Impact and Voice being one of my favourite sessions – and found myself growing in confidence in not only my role but with who I am as a leader in whatever context that may be. I have been grateful for the opportunity because I know that having been a delegate on Aurora will have a great impact on my future.”



If you would like to find out more about the leadership development opportunities available to you, please contact Leadership and Organisational Development trainingenquiries@chester.ac.uk

• **Athena Swan**

Advance HE's Athena Swan Charter is a framework which is used across the globe to support and transform gender equality within higher education (HE) and research. It was established in 2005 with a view to encouraging and recognising commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment. The Charter is now used to address and reflect on gender equality more broadly, focusing on barriers which disproportionately affect women, men and non-binary people (staff and students included).

The University of Chester currently holds a Bronze institutional Athena Swan award and a bronze departmental award for The Department of Psychology.

The University remain staunchly committed to gender equality and are currently working towards a renewal of our Institutional Bronze award (due July 2024).

More information about Athena Swan and our charter principles can be found [here](#).

• **Institute of Gender Studies**

The core tenets of the University of Chester's [Institute of Gender Studies](#) – founded in 2016 – are inclusivity, intersectionality, and interdisciplinarity. The team are committed to providing not only a platform for established researchers and practitioners working in the field, but also for undergraduate and postgraduate students from a range of disciplines.

In 2023 the IGS hosted its tenth anniversary [Talking Bodies conference](#) in Chester. Around 150 academics, artists, activists and practitioners from around the world converged on

campus for a week in June.

There have been three Talking Bodies publications to date and, in addition, the Institute is home to the [Palgrave Studies in \(Re\)presenting Gender](#) and [The Routledge Companion to Gender, Sexuality, and Culture](#).

For further information on any aspect of the Institute's work, please contact its Director, Professor Emma Rees: e.rees@chester.ac.uk.

LGBTQ+

- **The LGBTQ+ Network**

The LGBTQ+ Staff Network has continued to grow in membership and engagement.

Between January-April 2024, 61% of LGBTQ+ Staff Network channel members actively engaged with the channel (according to Microsoft Teams analytics). Since December 2022, the network has grown by 21.8%.

To learn more about the network or to organise an informal, confidential chat contact the network chair Jules Crane (they/them) - j.crane@chester.ac.uk or email lgbt@chester.ac.uk.

Student Services also established an [LGBTQ+ Student Support Network](#). This continued to be very well attended in 2023 and provides students with a vital space for support and community.

- **Chester Pride**

The University is an enthusiastic supporter and sponsor of Chester Pride and a group of staff and students have marched in the parade every year. This is a valuable opportunity to stand by the LGBTQ+ community as an educator and employer, whilst also supporting an important local charity.

In 2023, we returned to Chester Pride as one of their main sponsors with 30 volunteers from the staff and student body joining us for the parade and volunteering on the stall. The University have once again confirmed sponsorship for Chester Pride in 2024.



In August 2023, the University also helped organise Warrington Pride and supported New Brighton's second annual Pride event and funded a stall which was run by volunteers from the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Society.

- **Navajo Charter Mark**

The Navajo Merseyside and Cheshire LGBTIQIA Charter Mark is an equality mark supported by LGBTIQIA community groups across Merseyside and Cheshire.

The University has held a Navajo Chartermark Award since 2019. In August 2023, we renewed our commitment to LGBTQ+ equality and inclusivity at the University by re-assessing for the Chartermark. We were awarded the Navajo Chartermark once again in October 2023.

- **Transgender Support Guidance**

The University published our Transgender Support Guidance in 2024, in close collaboration with Sport and Active Lifestyle. These guidelines are intended to provide staff and students

with clear, practical and easily accessible advice on how to best support transgender and gender diverse staff and students. These guidelines can be accessed via the University intranet ([Portal](#)).

- **LGBTQ+ Commitment**

In 2024, the University's SET approved an LGBTQ+ Commitment, which was brought to them by the University's LGBTQ+ Staff Network. This document reaffirms the University's commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusivity and aims to contribute to maintaining a welcoming and supportive environment for the LGBTQ+ community. The University of Chester LGBTQ+ Commitment can be read [here](#).

Ethnicity

- **Race, Equality and Cultural Heritage (REACH) Network**

The REACH staff group, established in 2021, is an inclusive group of University of Chester professional services and academic colleagues. REACH members are passionate about raising the profile of race issues and cultural heritage at the University of Chester. The group welcomes and celebrates the cultural diversity of their membership and is proud of the histories and cultures reflected. They also provide invaluable feedback on ways in which the University can improve positive representation, informed engagement and the treatment of all individuals and groups with dignity and respect. In December 2023, as part of the Diversity Festival, the REACH network hosted 'Authentic Leadership', a celebration of REACH staff at the University of Chester who have undertaken Advance HE's Diversifying Leadership programme, who shared some of the key learning and benefits of the programme with others.

- **Diversifying Leadership**

Diversifying Leadership (DL) is a programme designed to support early career academics, professional services staff, Lecturers and Senior Lecturers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds who are about to take their first steps into a leadership role. It exists to enable participants to enhance their visibility and authentic leadership within Higher

Education and to address the under-representation of leaders from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds in HEIs in the UK at all levels but particularly at senior levels. The University fully funded and sponsored two members of staff through the programme in 2023.

- **Student Race Advocates (SRAs)**

The Race Equality Challenge Group developed the role of Student Race Advocate (SRA). This is a paid role which aims to actively support and promote the needs of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic students.

Our 2023/24 cohort of Student Race Advocates have been assigned specific projects that will provide them with experience that fits their personal development goals, whilst also providing them with the opportunity to meaningfully advance the University's race equality

provision. The role will give the students the opportunity to promote race equality across the University and suggest creative ways to improve inclusivity and the availability of student opportunities.

Religion and Belief

- **Chaplaincy**

The Chaplaincy team at the University support both students and staff, and is focussed on care and belonging for people of all faiths and none. The multi-faith Chaplaincy team includes staff Chaplains and volunteer Associates Chaplains from a range of religions and beliefs. Our Chaplains offer important advice and guidance on issues related to religion and beliefs, supporting religion and belief literacy and fostering positive relationships and discussions between people of all faiths and none.



The University now has excellent Muslim prayer rooms across sites, overseen by our Muslim Chaplain. Chaplaincy also leads a Community Hub on the University's Exton Park site, as a safe and welcoming drop-in place where students and staff are offered pastoral care and a listening space that can be either in-person or online.

In 2023, the Chaplaincy team worked closely with volunteers to create a welcoming green space behind the chaplaincy building.

Our Responsibilities

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 prescribes a duty, to which all public authorities are subject, to have due regard to advancing equality in the exercise of all their functions. The duty requires public authorities to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Section 149 goes on to explain that having due regard for advancing equality involves: removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics; taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

These goals are reflected in the design of policies, delivery of services and engagement strategies employed by the University to ensure an inclusive environment for all staff and students. These are kept under review through audit, review and equality impact assessments.

The Act states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups and states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

The duty covers the following eight protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Public authorities also need to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination against someone because of their marriage or civil partnership status. This means that paragraph (a) of the duty applies to this characteristic, but that paragraphs (b) and (c) (advancing equality and fostering good relations) do not apply.

The University of Chester

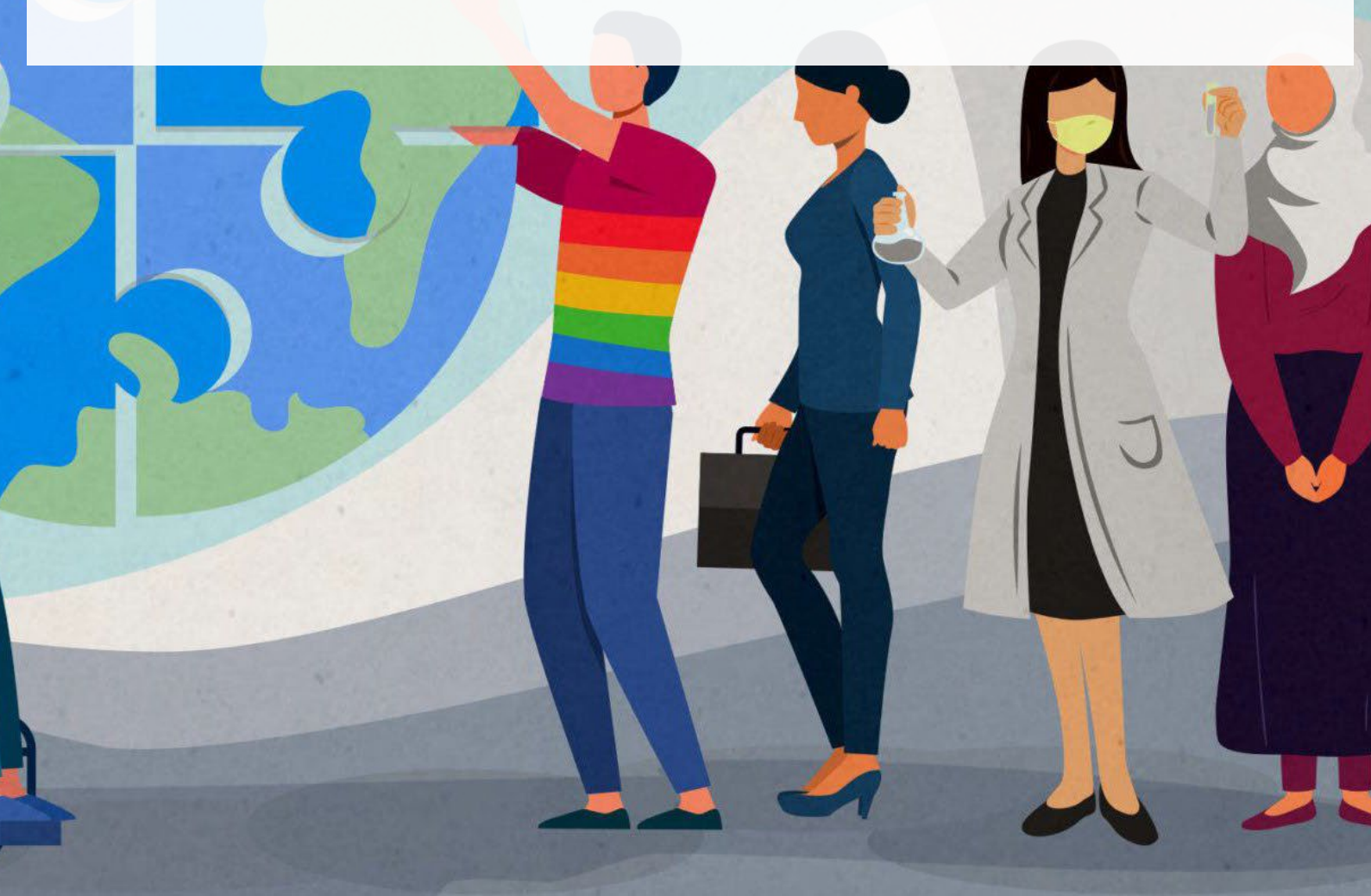


Equality Report 2024 – Part B

April 2024

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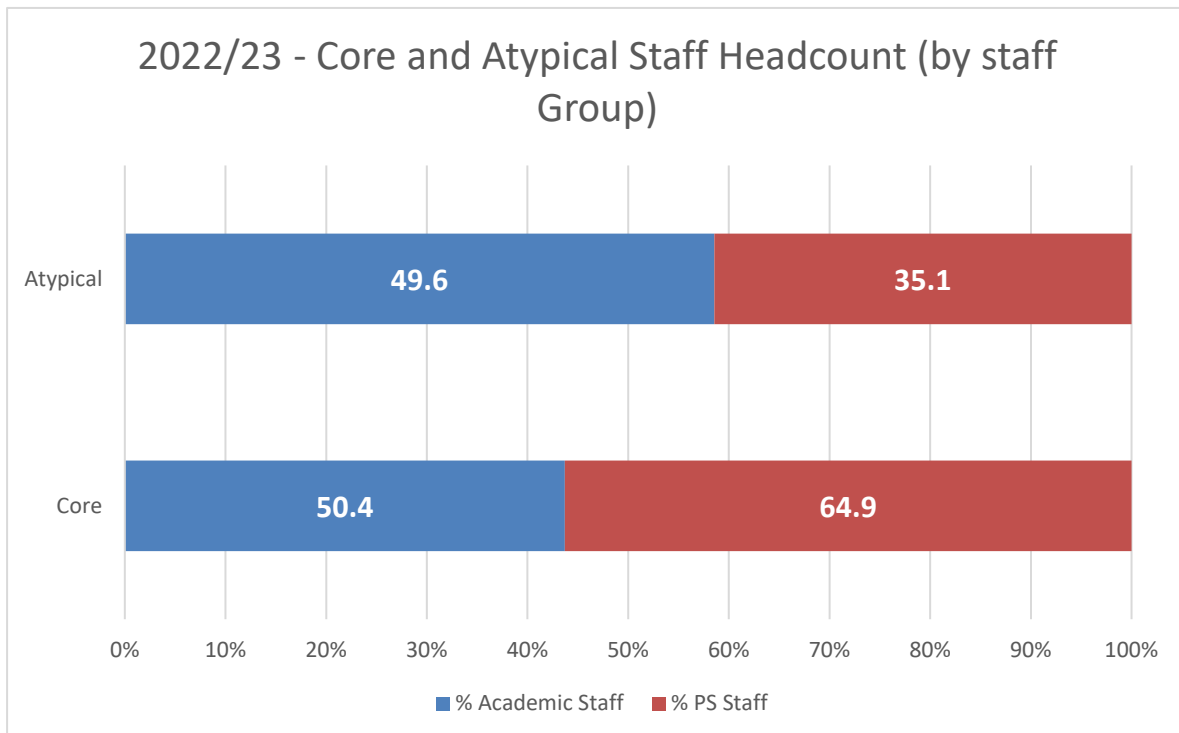
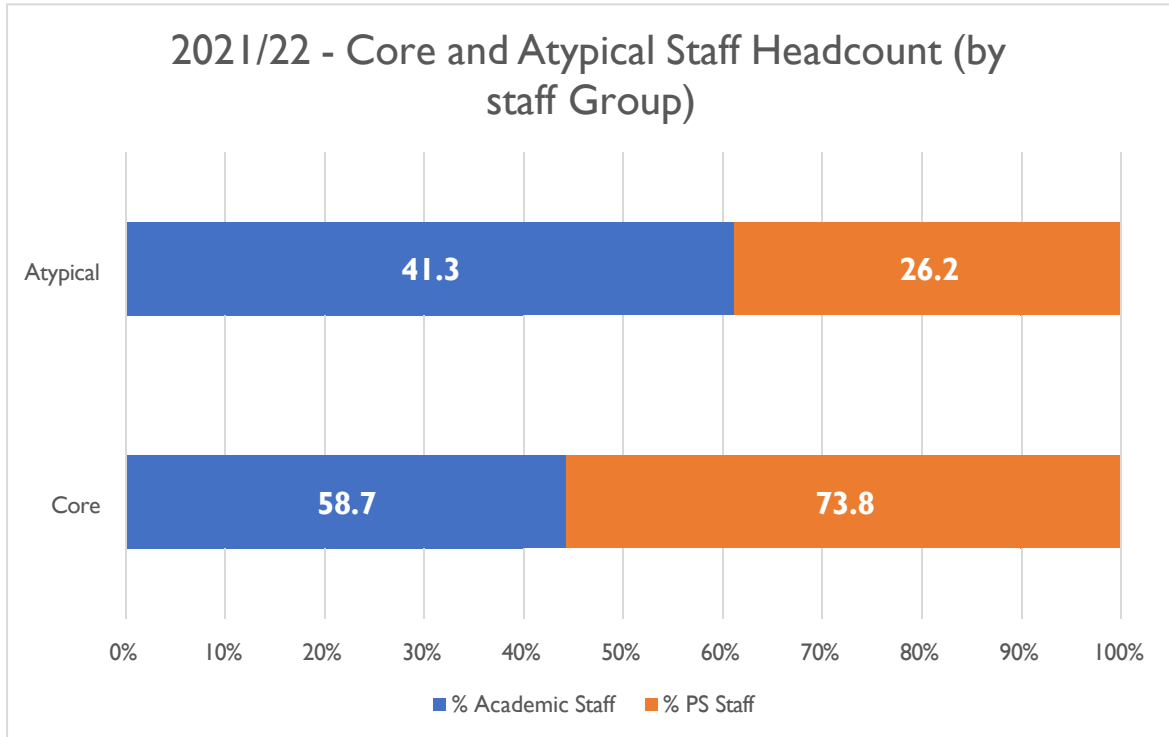
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Our People

The following section is a data overview of our University demographics in 2023. All data is taken from HESA reporting – snapshot 1st January 2023 – 1st January 2024.

Infographic 1 Total Core and Atypical Staff Headcount by staff group



Figures 1 and 2: Above is a comparison of atypical and core contracts by staff group (2021/22 vs 2022/23). Atypical contracts are casual or temporary whereas core contracts include standard fixed term and permanent contracts. There has been an increase in atypical professional services and academic contracts. The increase in atypical professional services contracts is largely due to an increase in student roles (for example Student Ambassadors and Student Race Advocates).

Infographic 2 Total Core Staff (Headcount and FTE) by staff group

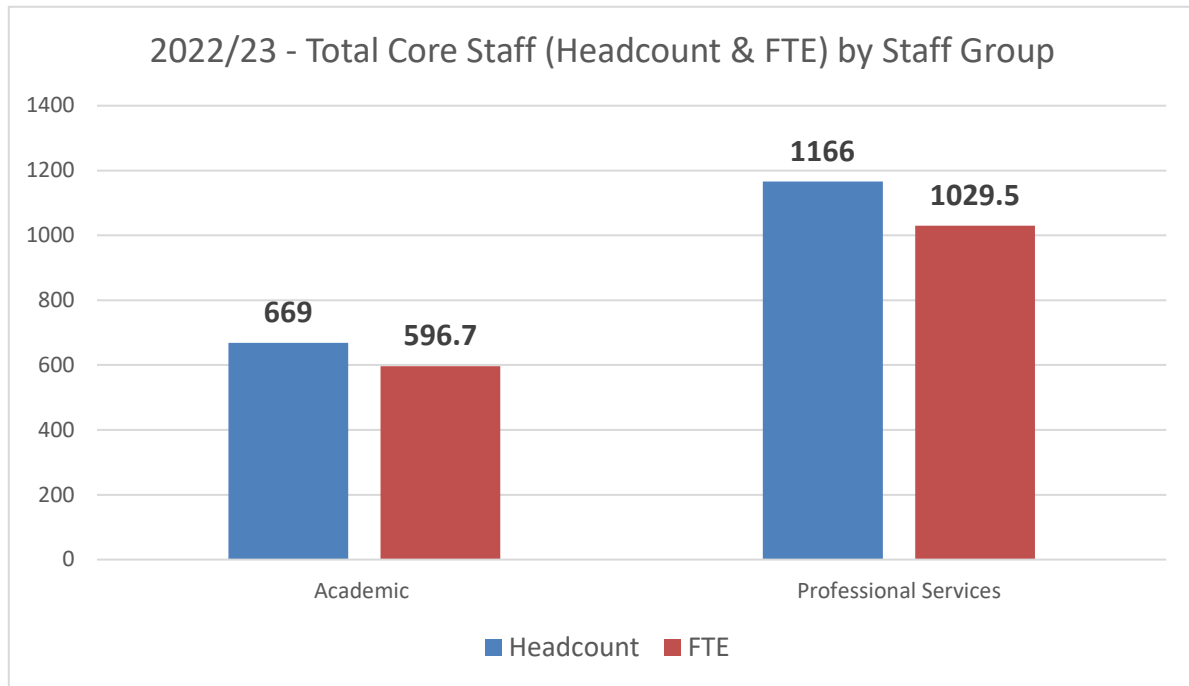
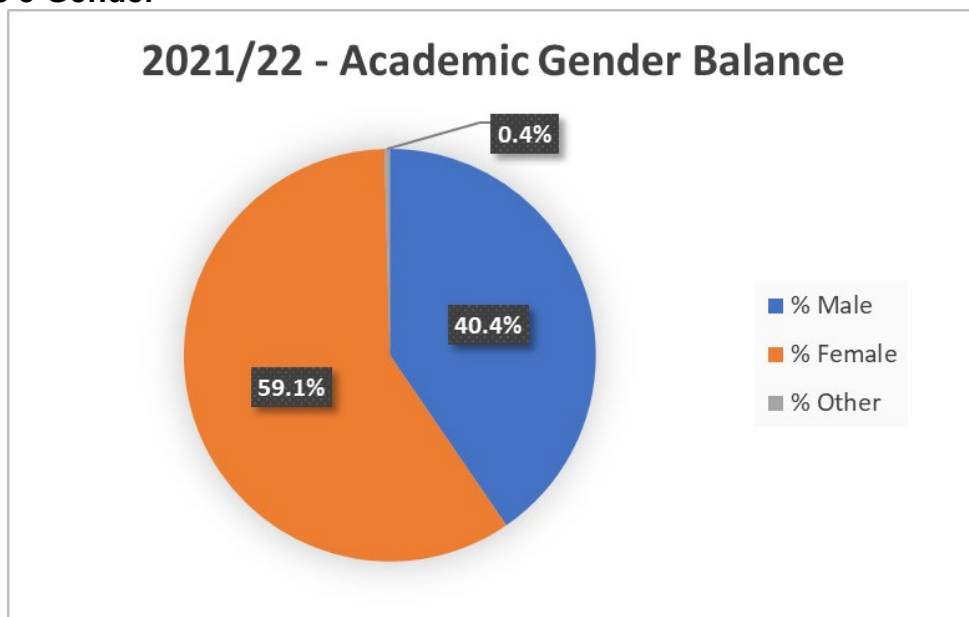


Figure 3: Demonstrates the distribution of core staff in 2022/23 (both headcount and Full-Time Equivalent). There are a greater number of professional services staff than academics.

Infographic 3 Gender



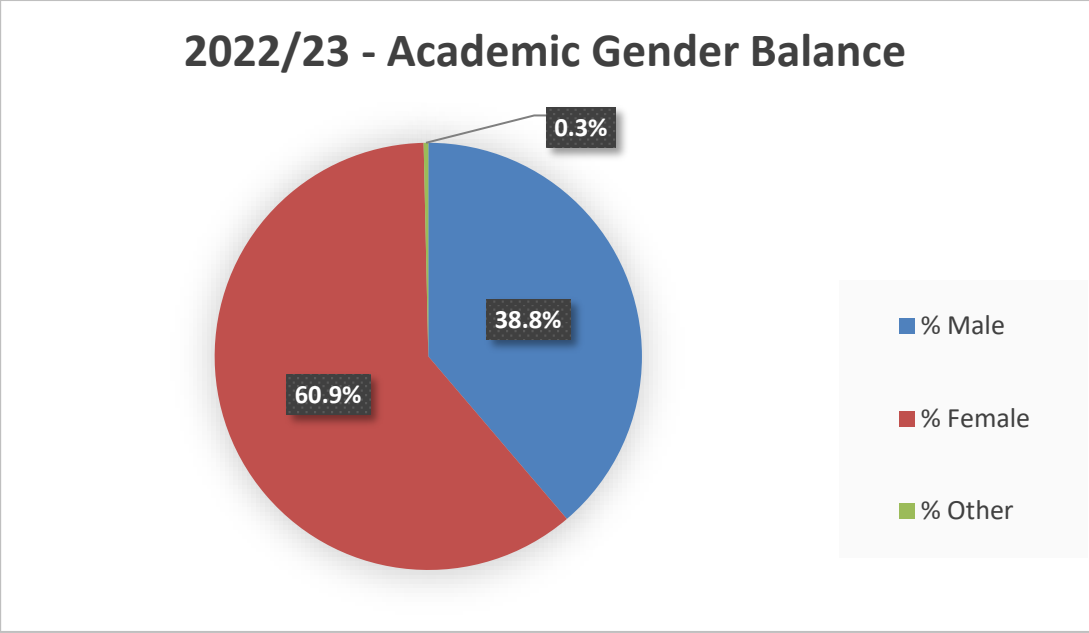
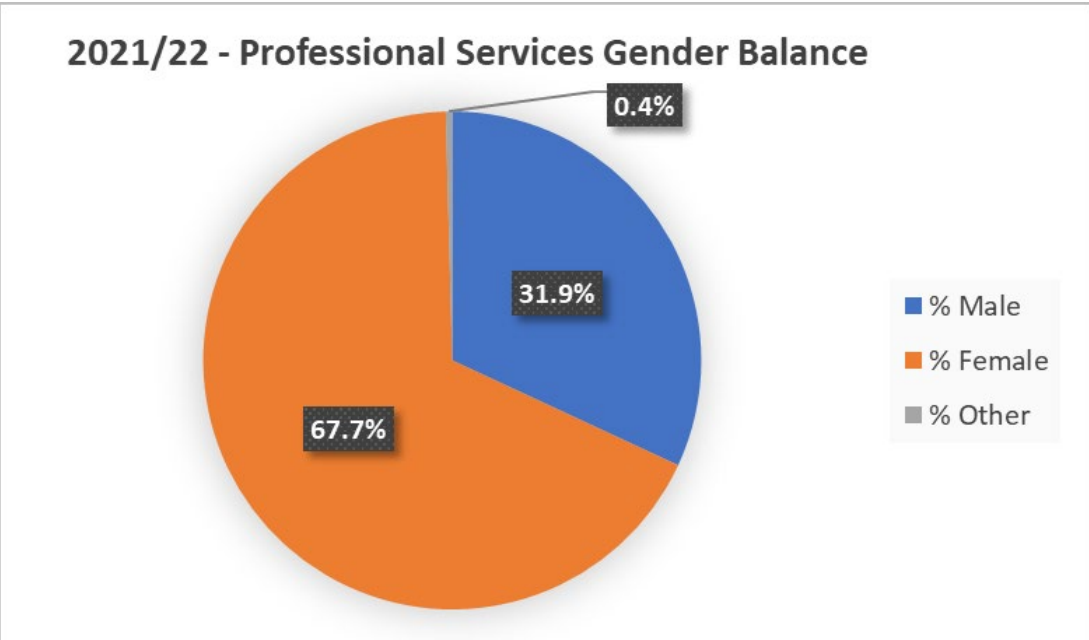


Figure 4: Is a comparison between the gender balance of Academic staff at the University in 2021/22 and 2022/23. The University's academic staff are predominantly female (60.9%). 0.3% of academic staff are gender diverse. There has been a slight increase in female academic staff, though not significant.



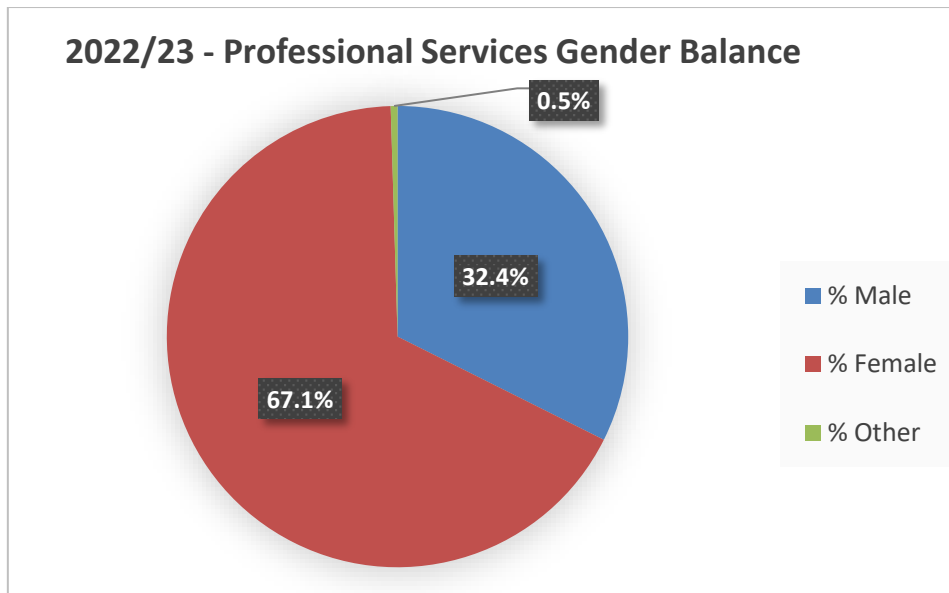
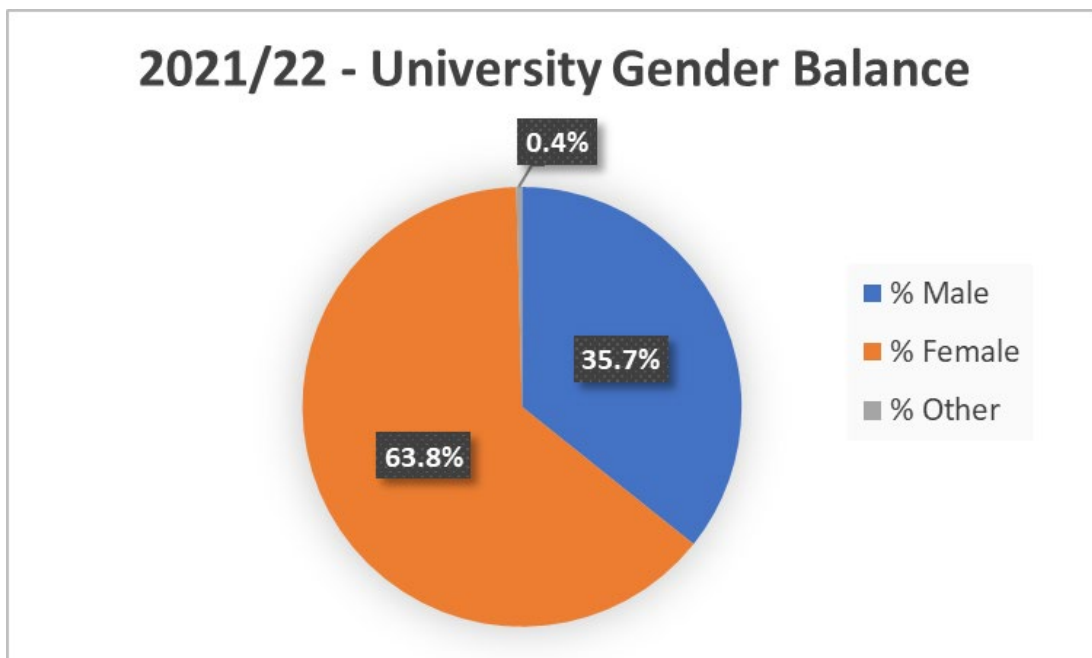


Figure 5: Demonstrates difference between the gender balance of Professional Services staff at the University (2021/22 and 2022/23). The University's Professional Services workforce is significantly female dominated. 0.5% of professional services staff are gender diverse. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of gender diverse people and men, though insignificant.



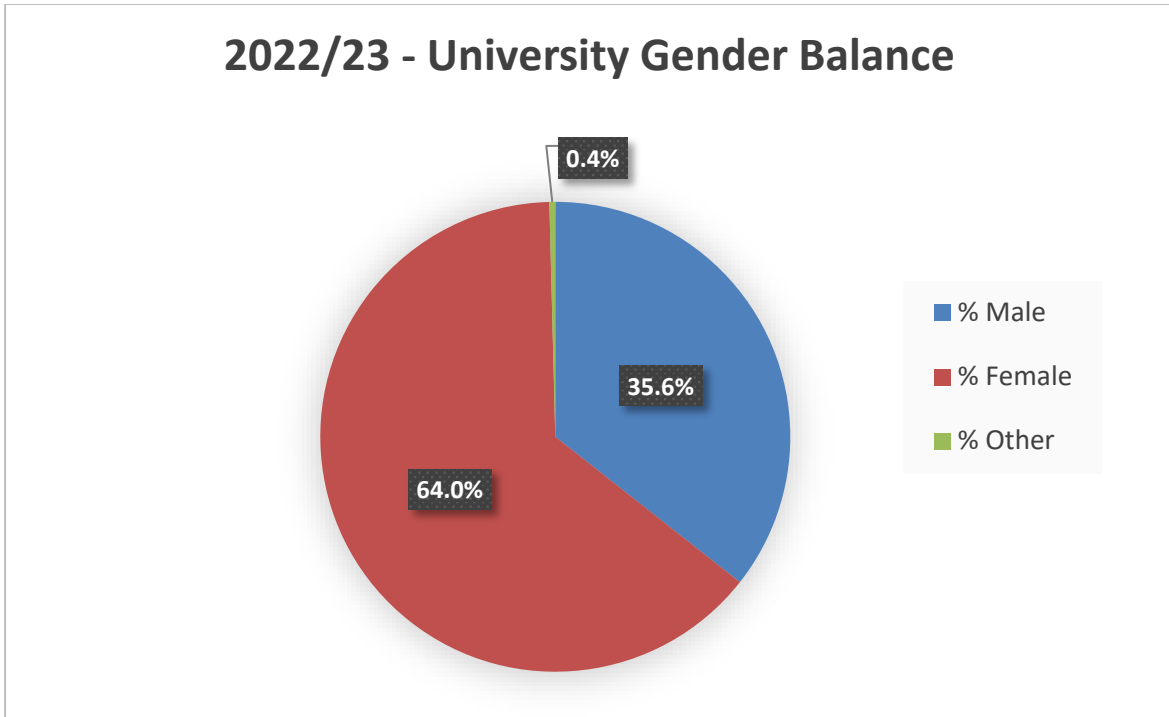


Figure 6: Demonstrates the gender balance of all staff at the University (2021/22 versus 2022/23). The proportion of women has increased, though insignificantly.

Infographic 4 Gender and Full-time/Part-time by staff group

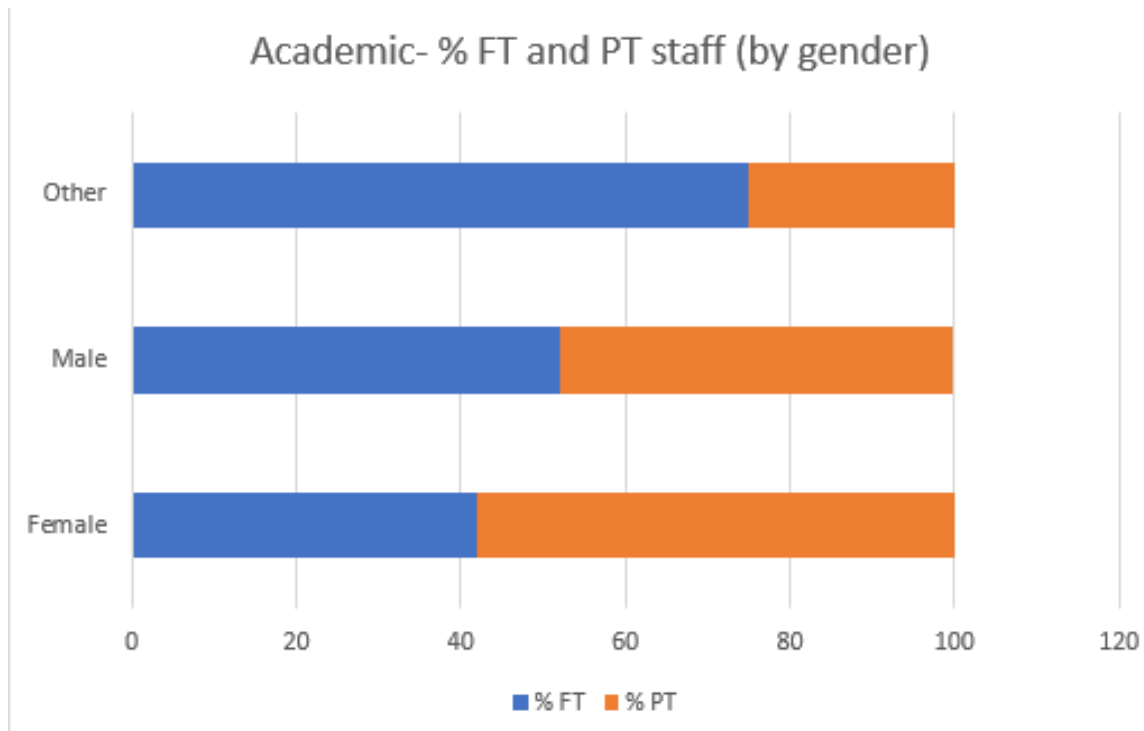


Figure 7: % of staff working full time vs part time contract (by gender and academic only) in 2022/23. This demonstrates that a greater percentage of academic staff (58% of female workforce) work part-time contracts than male staff (49%.)

Professional Services - % FT and PT staff (by gender)

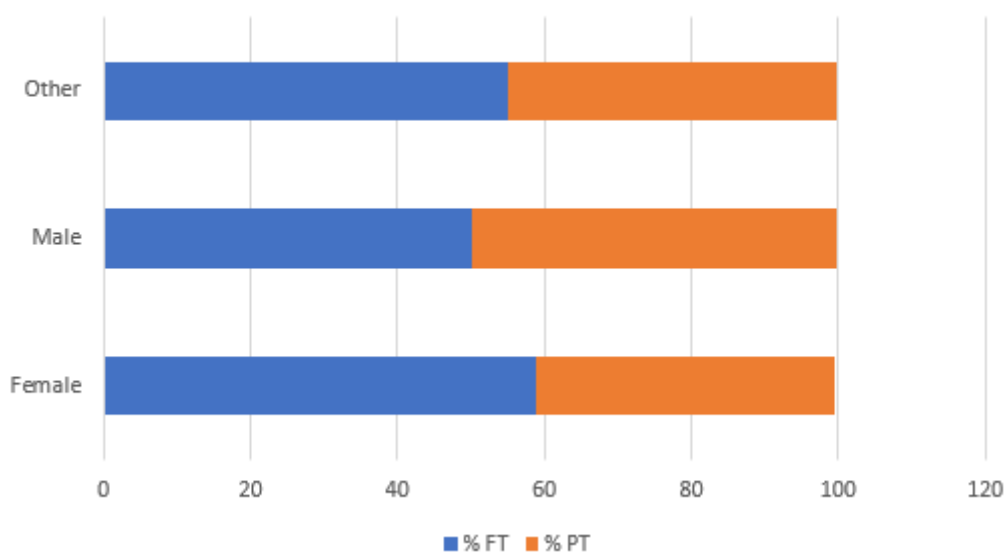


Figure 8: % of staff working full time vs part time contract (by gender and professional services only) in 2022/23. This demonstrates that a greater percentage of professional female staff (59% of female workforce) work part-time contracts than male staff (50%.)

There is no significant proportional difference in women working part time between the academic and professional services groups.

Infographic 5 Disability

% Disabled Staff at University of Chester

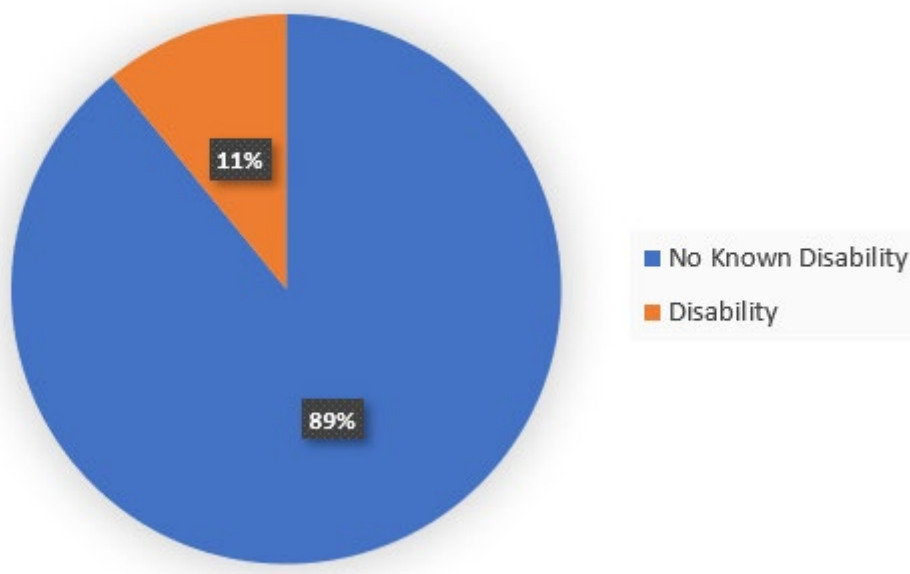


Figure 9: Demonstrates the percentage of all UoC staff who identify as disabled. The number of disabled staff has increased slightly when compared since last year.

% Disabled Academic Staff

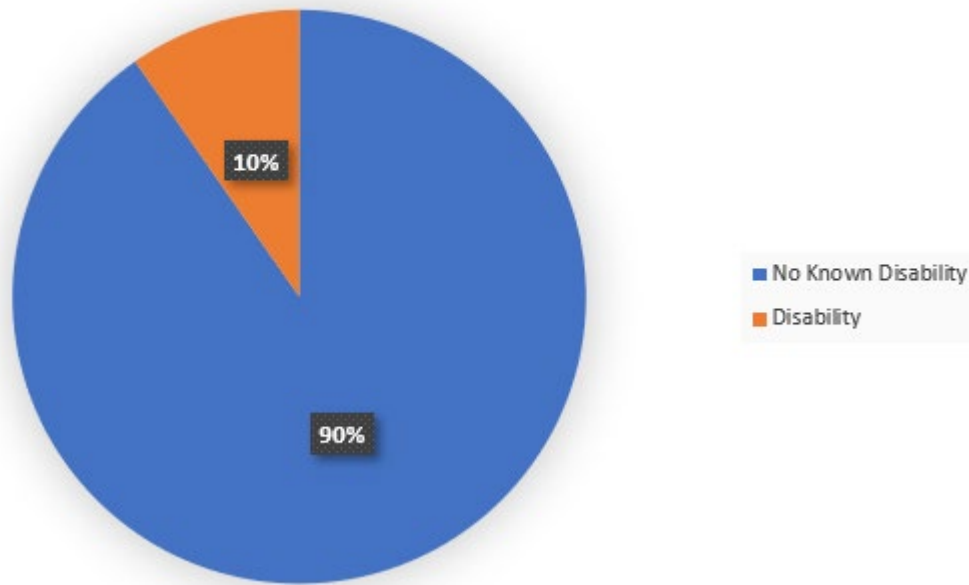


Figure 10: Demonstrates the percentage of all Academic staff who identify as disabled. The number of academic disabled staff has increased by 2% since last academic year.

% Disabled Professional Services Staff

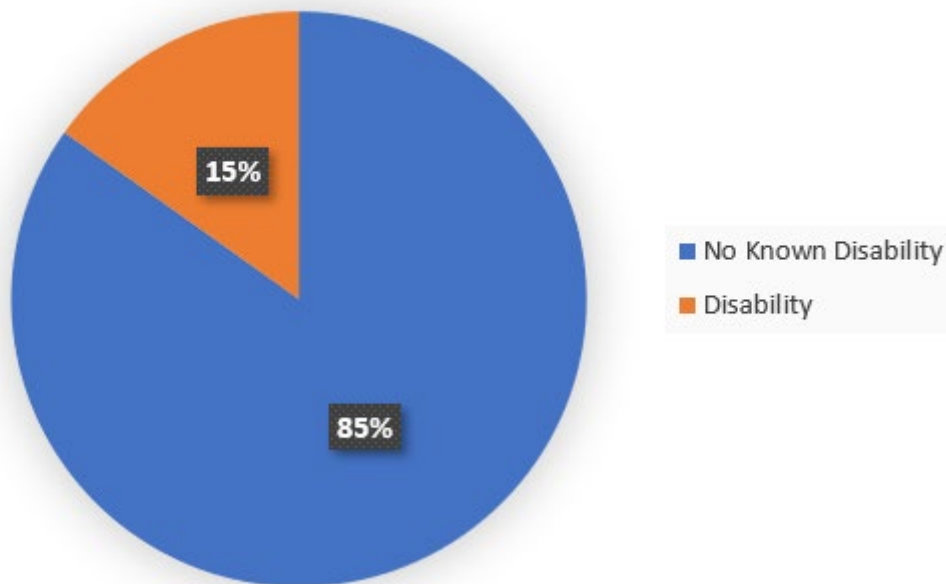


Figure 11: Demonstrates the percentage of all professional staff who identify as disabled. The number of disabled staff has increased by 4% since last academic year.

Infographic 7 Ethnicity

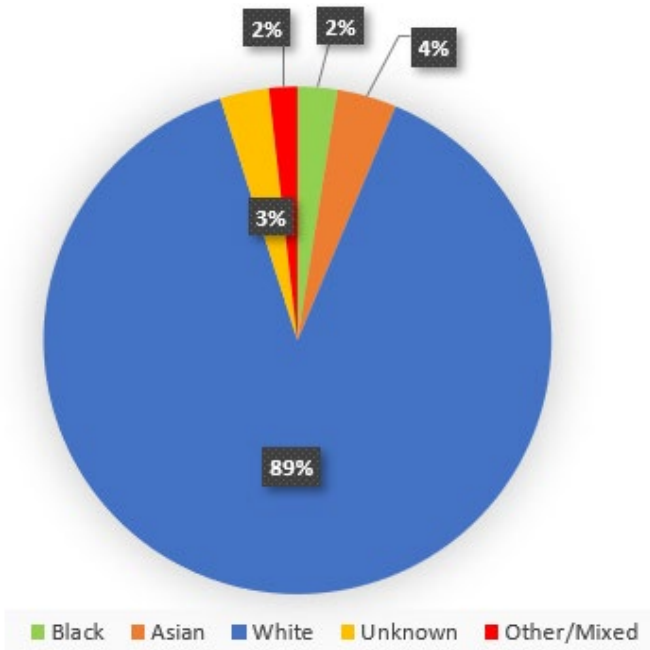


Figure 12: Percentage ethnicity of all University staff (2022/23). Overall, the ethnicity balance at the University of Chester remains the same as last year.

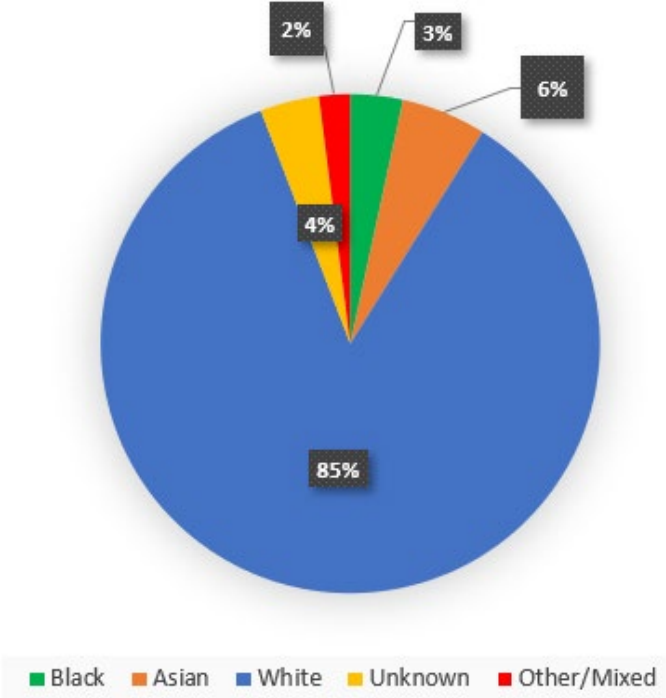


Figure 13: Percentage ethnicity of all University staff (2022/23). The ethnicity profile remains approximately the same as last academic year. However there has been a 1% increase in Asian academic staff.

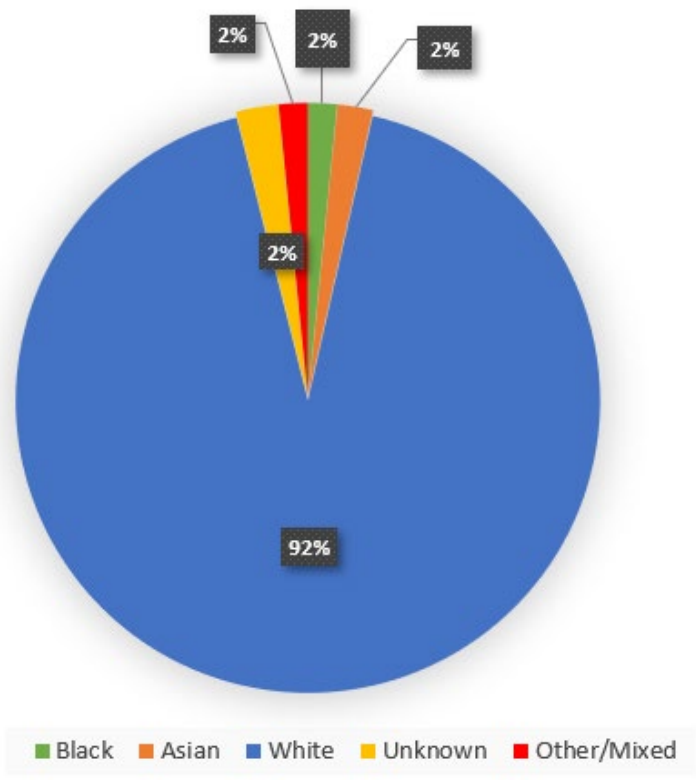


Figure 14: Percentage ethnicity of professional services staff (2021/22). The ethnicity balance for professional services remains broadly the same as last year.

Infographic 8 Religion and Belief

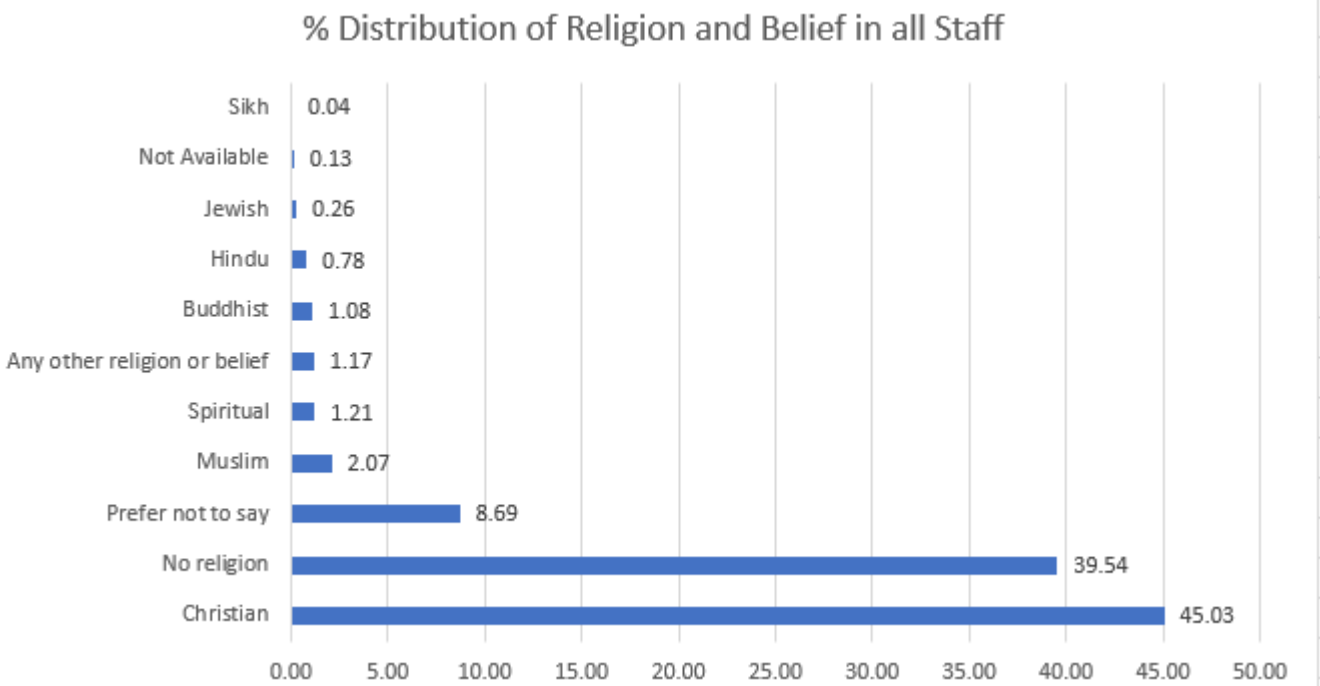


Figure 15: Percentage religion and belief of all staff. The University balance of religion and belief remains the same as last academic year with no significant changes.

% Distribution of Religion and Belief in Academic Staff

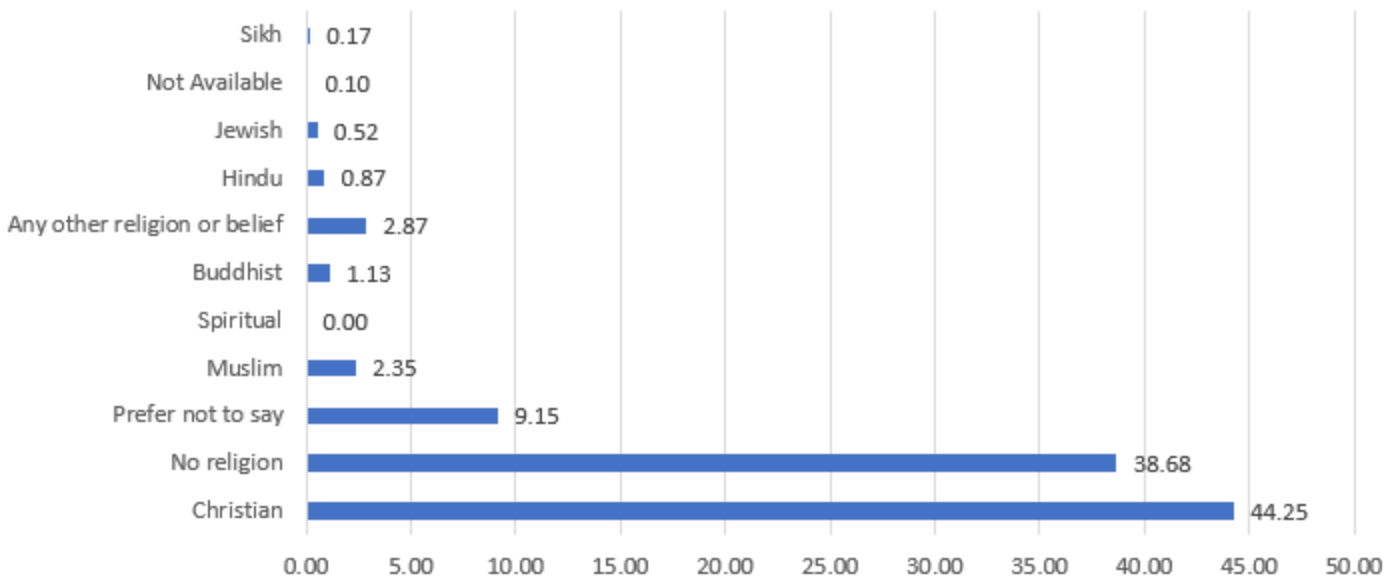


Figure 16: Percentage religion and belief of academic staff. There has been a slight increase in Sikh staff since last academic year. There has also been an increase in staff identifying with “Any other religion or belief” and a decrease in staff identifying as Spiritual.

% Distribution of Religion and Belief in Professional Services Staff

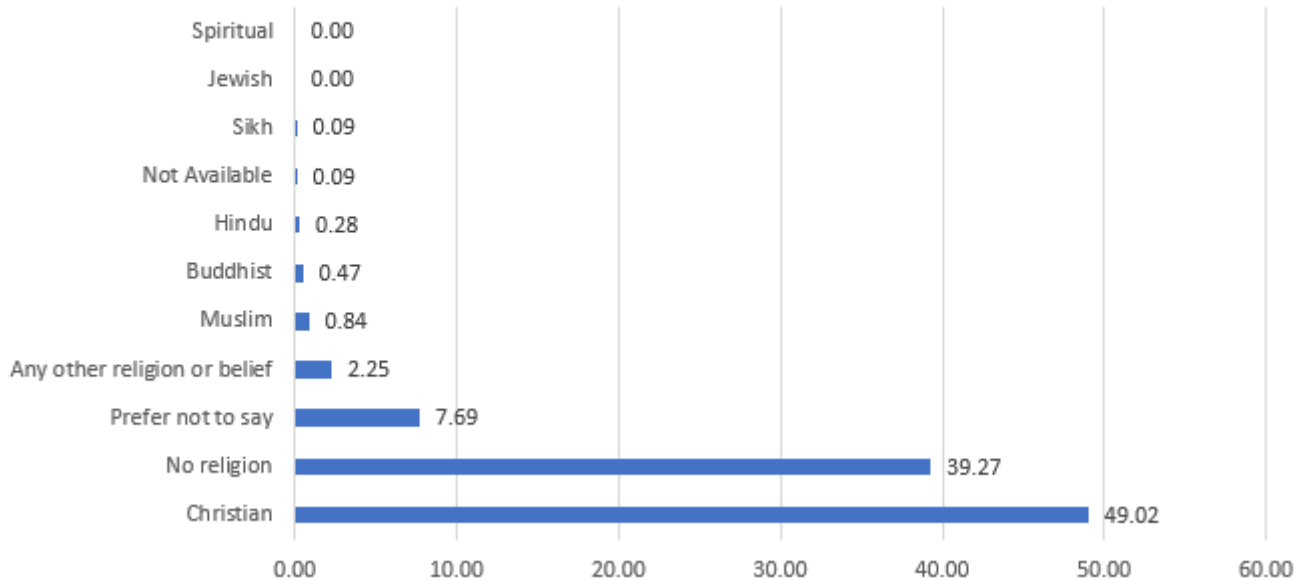


Figure 17: Percentage religion and belief of professional services staff. Proportions remain relatively consistent when compared with last academic year apart from an increase in staff identifying with ‘Any other religion or belief’ and identifying as Christian.

Infographic 9 Sexual Orientation

% Sexual Orientation at University of Chester

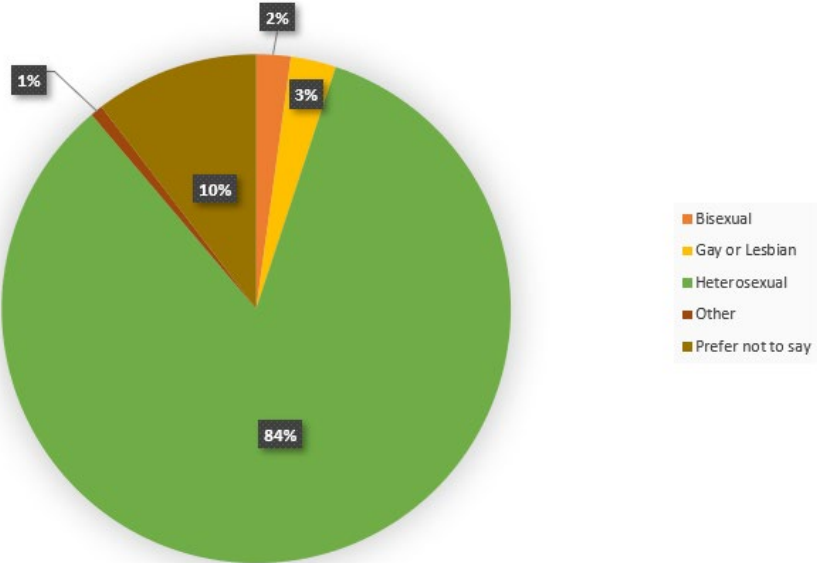


Figure 18: The above figure demonstrates the breakdown of sexual orientation at the University of Chester. This is the first year we have reported this breakdown as an institution in our Equality Report.

% Sexual Orientation (Academic Staff)

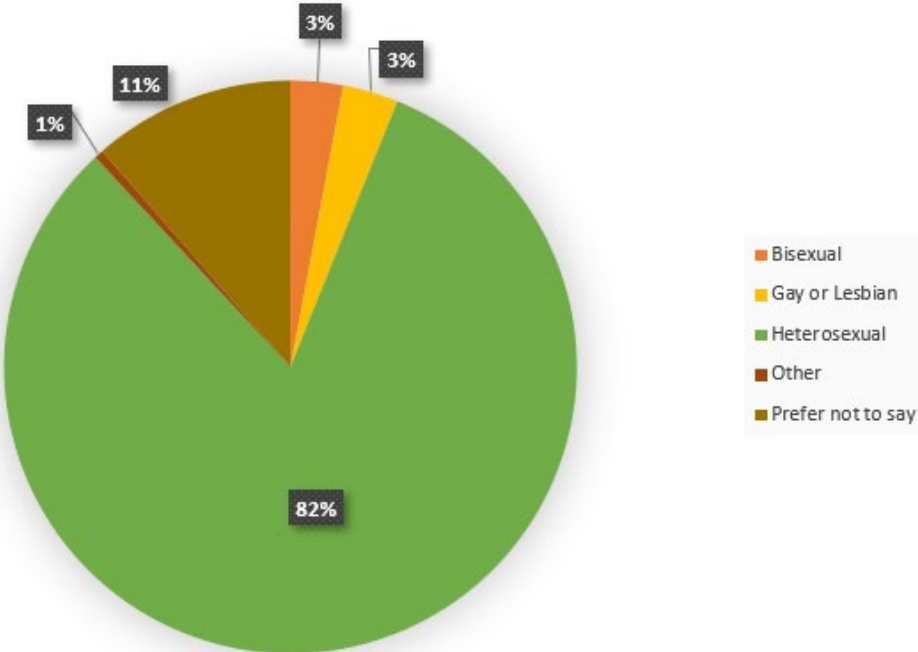


Figure 19: The above figure demonstrates the breakdown of sexual orientation among academic staff.

% Sexual Orientation (Professional Services)

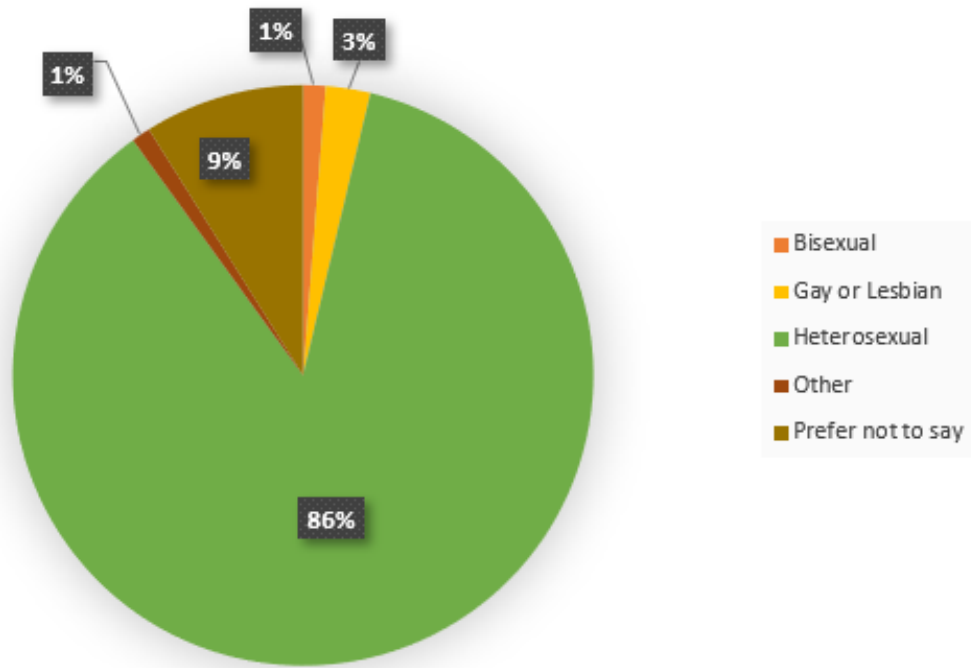


Figure 20: The above figure demonstrates the breakdown of sexual orientation among professional services staff. There are a lower proportion of bisexual staff among professional services staff.

Infographic 10 Age

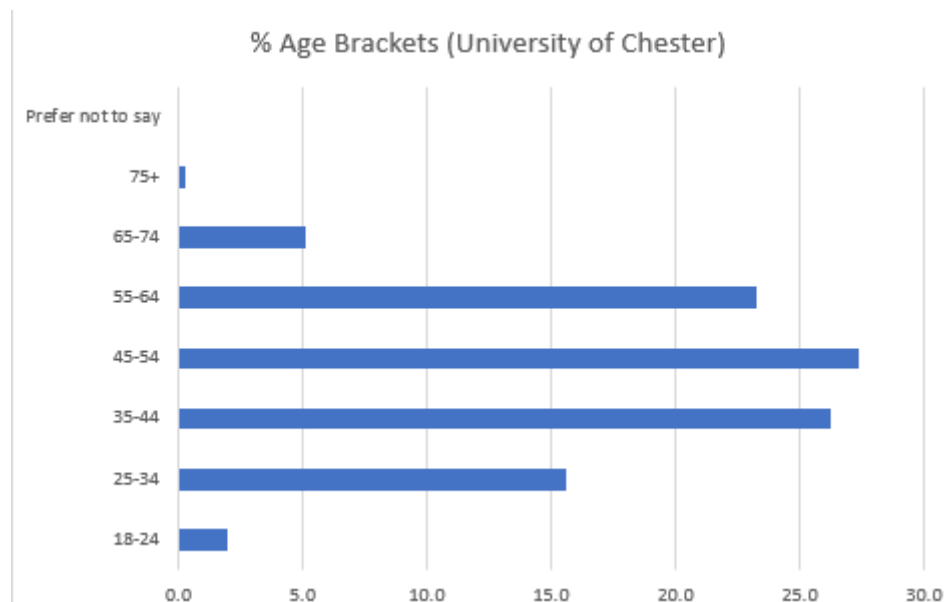


Figure 21: The above figure demonstrates the breakdown of age across the University. Over 50% of staff are 35-54 years old.

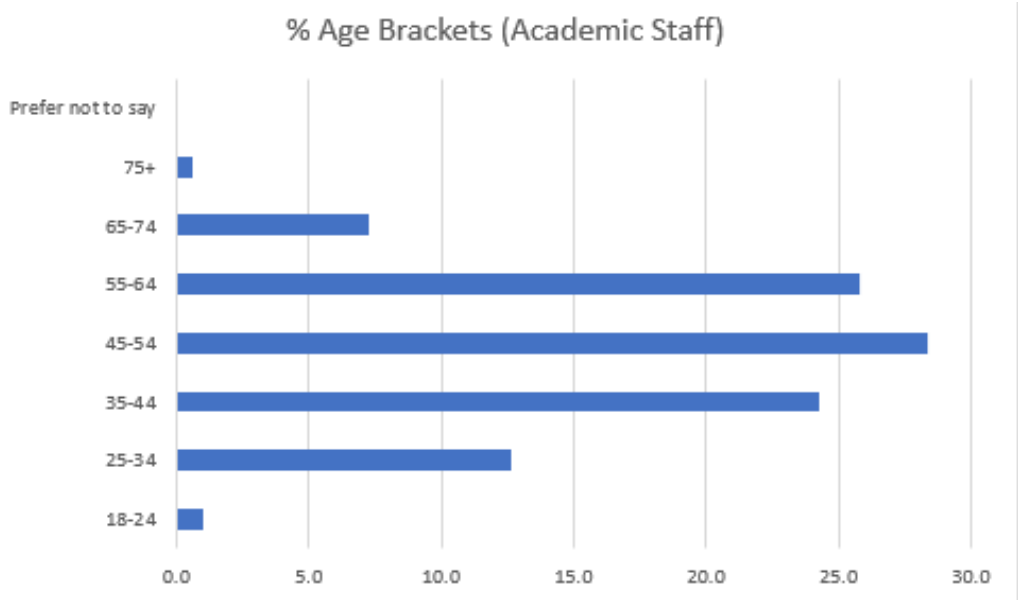


Figure 22: The above figure demonstrates the breakdown of age across academic staff.

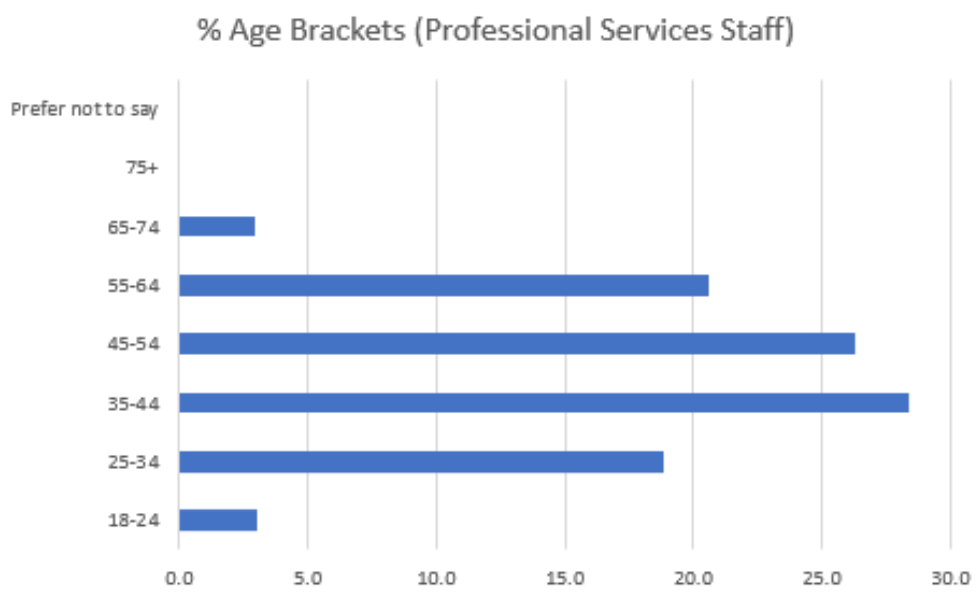


Figure 23: The above figure demonstrates the breakdown of age across professional services staff. The professional services demographic is younger than that of academic staff (50% of professional services staff are 18-44 as opposed to 37.9% of academic staff).

% of Women in Menopausal Age Brackets

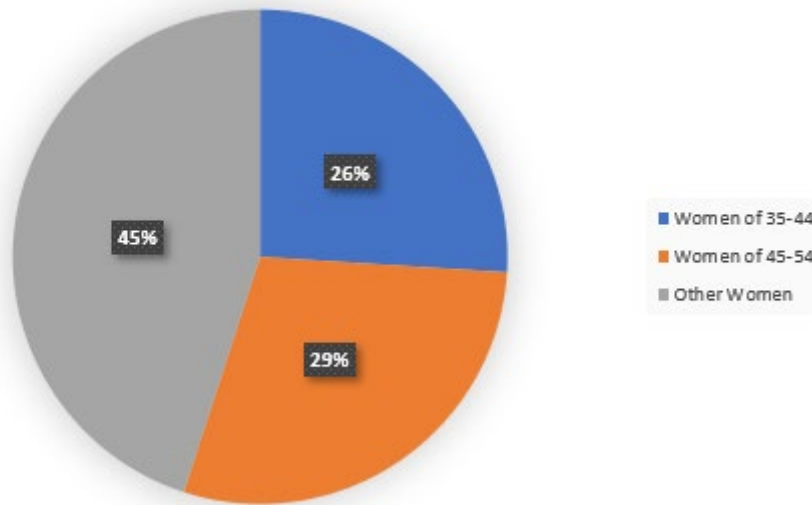


Figure 24: % of women in menopausal age brackets.

26% of staff who identify as women are in the age bracket 35-44 (the age bracket in which people may start to experience perimenopausal symptoms). 50% of these women are professional services and 50% are academic staff.

29% of staff who identify as women are 45-54 (the age bracket in which people with ovaries typically start to experience menopausal symptoms). 52% of these women are academic staff and 48% are professional services staff.

Note: Not all of these women will be experience perimenopausal or menopausal symptoms. Furthermore, transgender men and non-binary people who were registered female as birth are not captured within this data, but may still experience the menopause. Similarly, transgender women and intersex people may be captured in this data but are unlikely to experience the menopause.

Disciplinary Action, Harassment and Grievances (2023)

There were 49 employee relations cases between 1st September 2022 and 31st August 2023 (39 in 2021/22). The following are the significant Equality characteristics of the cases (2021/22 data in parentheses, where appropriate):

1. 63% (60%) of cases involved white staff, 6% (14%) of cases involved staff of black or other ethnic minority background, and 31% (26%) of cases involved individuals for whom ethnicity was not known or refused.
2. 49% (51%) of staff involved were female, 37% (40%) were male and the remainder were cases involving several staff.
3. 69% (60%) of cases involved professional services staff and 31% (40%) involved academic staff.
4. There were 5 (3) formal capability cases, 3 (1) of which involved disabled staff.
5. 2 (2) staff were issued with a formal sanction (warning or dismissal) as a result of disciplinary procedures, both of whom were female professional services staff.

6. No (2) staff were dismissed as a result of unsuccessful completion of their probationary period. HR provided support in respect of 5 members of staff with whom there were performance difficulties during their probationary period, but these staff either improved or left the University of their own accord. 2 of these staff were of black or other minority ethnic origin, 1 had a disability and all were female.
7. 8 (2) grievances were submitted, 7 (2) of which were submitted by white staff, and 3 (2) of which were submitted by female staff. 2 of these grievances were resolved informally.
8. There were 8 (7) formal dignity and respect cases. 4 (4) of these were student complaints against members of staff. 2 case involved both female complainants and respondents, 3 involved male complainants and respondents, 1 involved a male complainant and female respondent and 2 involved multiple complainants against a female respondent.

Our Students

Student Numbers, Mode and Gender

The most complete institutional student data is from the 2022/23 academic year. UK HE sector data provided by way of comparison are drawn from HESA data and AdvanceHE, for which the most recent complete reporting year is 2021/22.

The student numbers during this academic year were 13,940 of whom 10,870 were full-time and 3,070 were part-time:

| MODE | TOTAL | | Female | | Male | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| FT | 10,870 | 78% | 7,205 | 66% | 3,665 | 34% |
| PT | 3,070 | 22% | 2,165 | 70% | 905 | 30% |
| Total | 13,940 | 100.0% | 9,370 | 67% | 4,570 | 33% |

All Students – Gender

| | Male | Female |
|---------------------------------|------|--------|
| University of Chester | 33% | 67% |
| HE Sector (2021/2) ¹ | 43% | 57% |

First-year Full-time Undergraduate Students – Gender

| | Male | Female |
|---|------|--------|
| University of Chester | 34% | 66% |
| HE Sector (England, 2021/22) ¹ | 44% | 56% |

The University's Faculty of Health, Medicine and Society account for most of the gender imbalance (82% female), with the remainder of the undergraduate student body being 69% female.

Proportion of male undergraduate students:

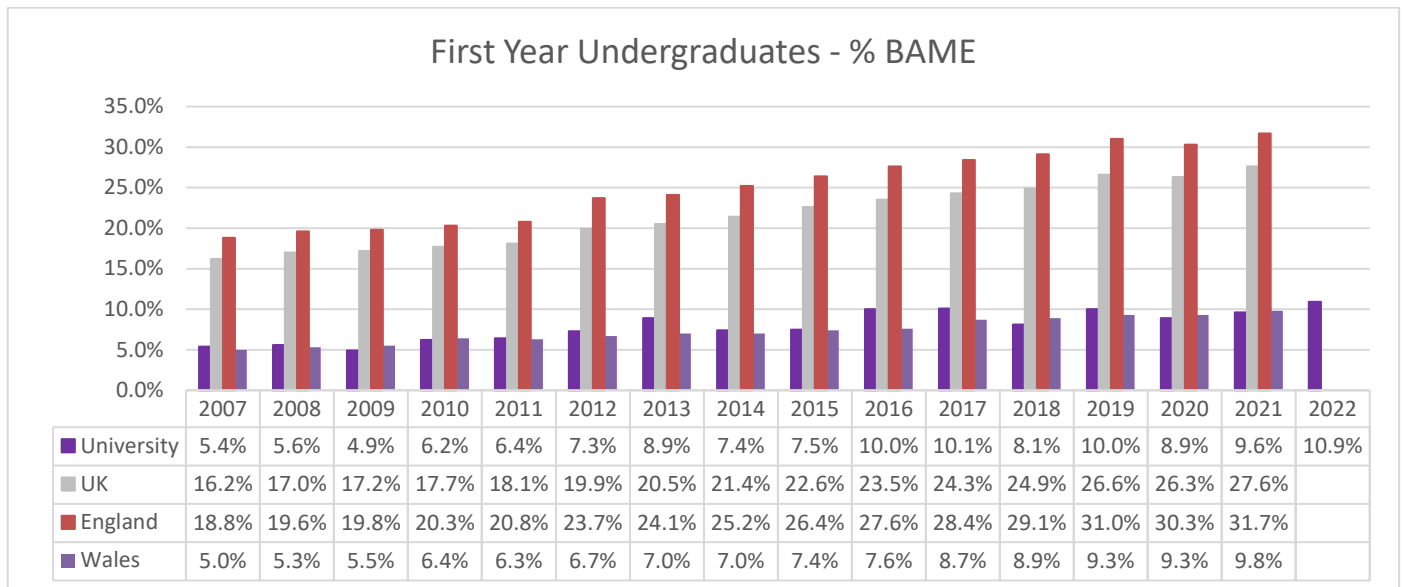
| 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 37% | 36% | 33% | 33% | 33% | 33% | 34% | 30% | 31% | 31% |

¹ HESA Student Record 2021/2, copyright Jisc 01/05/2024. Caveat: Neither the Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited nor HESA Services Limited can accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived by third parties from data or other information obtained from Heidi Plus.

Students – Race and Ethnicity

| | White | Black | Asian/ Chinese | Other | Mixed | Not known |
|--|-------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------|--------------|
| University of Chester (UK domicile only) | 86.5% | 3.1% | 3.8% | 0.7% | 2.8% | 3.1% |
| University of Chester (all domicile) | 70.7% | 8.3% | 14.7% | 1.0% | 2.6% | 2.7% |
| HE Sector (England, 2021/22) ¹ (UK domicile) | 68.2% | 9.0% | 13.9% | 2.3% | 4.9% | 1.7% |
| HE Sector (England without London, 2021/22) ¹ | 75.6% | 5.5% | 11.7% | 1.5% | 4.2% | 1.5% |

First-year BAME undergraduate intake (UK domicile only) (HE Sector 2021/22¹ benchmark also provided for UK, England and Wales)



Students – Disability

| | Declared disability | No known disability |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| University | 13.2% | 86.8% |
| HE Sector (England, 2021/22) ¹ | 15.9% | 84.1% |

Students – Age

| | 21 and under | 22-25 | 26+ |
|--|--------------|-------|-------|
| University of Chester (all) | 68.4% | 9.8% | 21.8% |
| HE Sector – UK from Advance HE (2023) ² | 65.2% | 13.4% | 21.4% |

² Advance HE. (2023). Equality+ higher education: Students statistical report 2023. **Member access only.**

Note: Data excludes postgraduate students and those studying at partner colleges.

Students - Religion and Belief, Sexual Orientation and Transgender

The University commenced collection of data on students' religious and other belief in 2017/18 and on sexual orientation in 2019/20. Collection of data regarding sexual orientation and trans began in 2020/21.

Students' responses to questions on their religious belief indicate the following:

| Description | University | HE Sector – England from Advance HE (2023)² |
|---|-------------------|---|
| No Religion | 45.4% | 42.1% |
| Prefer not to say/ information refused/ blank | 5.5% | 7.0% |
| Any other religion or belief | 2.9% | 1.6% |
| Spiritual | - | 1.5% |
| Buddhist | 0.7% | 1.1% |
| Jewish | 0.1% | 0.5% |
| Christian | 33.6% | 28.7% |
| Muslim | 7.9% | 11.7% |
| Not known | 0.1% | 3.5% |
| Hindu | 3.5% | 4.5% |
| Sikh | 0.3% | 1.2% |

Students' responses to questions on their sexual orientation indicate the following:

| Description | University | HE Sector – students in institutions returning data, Advance HE (2023)² |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Bisexual | 7.2% | 5.4% |
| Gay or Lesbian | 3.0% | 2.4% |
| Heterosexual | 80.3% | 74.3% |
| Other | 4.2% | 2.3% |
| Information refused/ unknown/ blank | 5.3% | 15.5% |

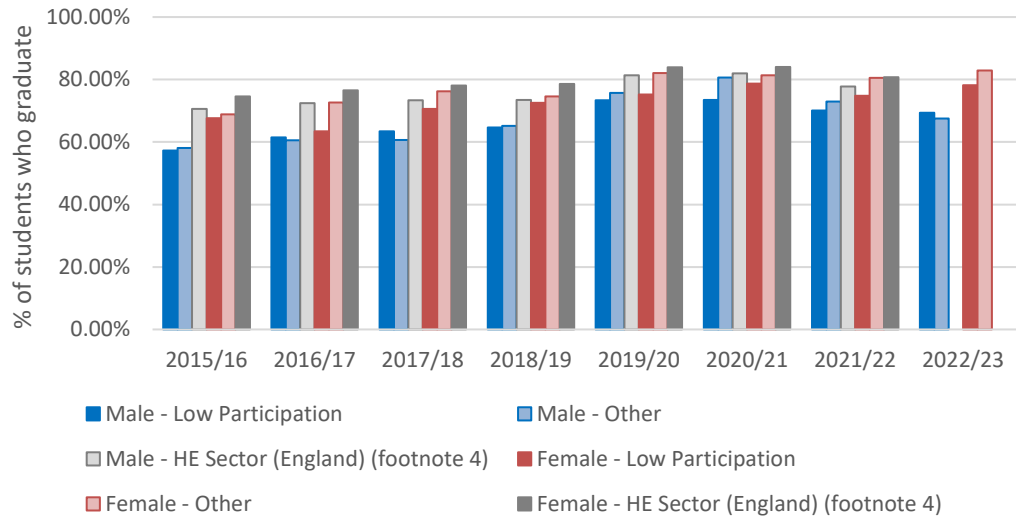
Students' responses to question on whether their gender identity is the same as was originally assigned at birth:

| Description | University | HE Sector – students in institutions returning data, Advance HE (2023) ² |
|---------------------------|------------|---|
| Yes | 97.9% | 89.0% |
| No | 1.0% | 1.1% |
| Information refused/blank | 1.1% | 9.9% |

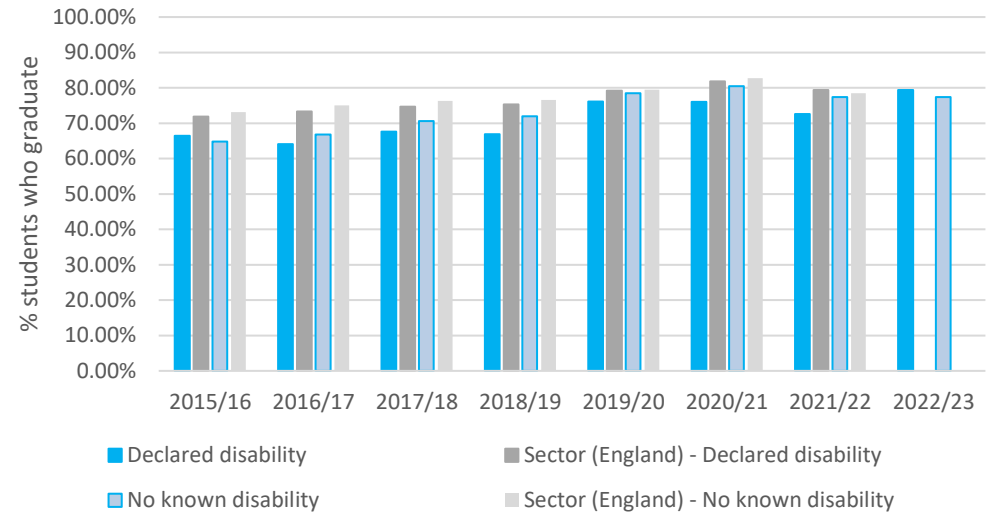
Student Attainment

The graphs overleaf show Class I and 2i Honours degree undergraduate classifications for the academic years 2015/16 to 2022/23 inclusive by gender, disability and ethnicity. Sector research has indicated that this is a complex area with many interrelated factors and the information from the attached should be interpreted with care.

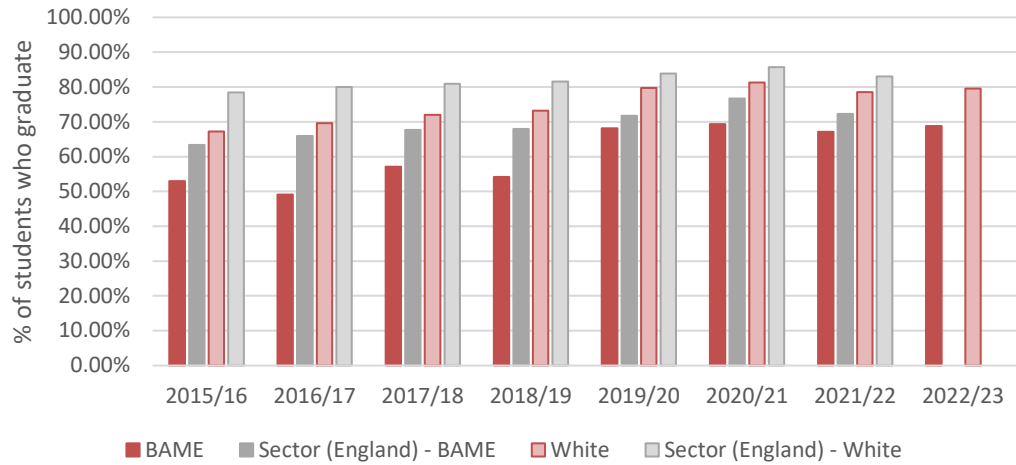
Good Honours: Gender and Polar Group



Good honours: Disability status



Good honours: BAME Group



Gender (and POLAR Group)

| Degree class | Gender | Polar Group | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | | 2018/19 | | 2019/20 | | 2020/21 | | 2021/22 | | 2022/23 | |
|-----------------------|--------|-------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|----------------------------------|---------|------------------|
| | | | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | HE Sector (England) | Chester | HE Sector (England) | Chester | HE Sector (England) ¹ | Chester | Sector (England) |
| 1 st or 2i | Male | Low participation | 57.3% | 70.6% | 61.5% | 72.4% | 63.4% | 73.4% | 64.6% | 73.5% | 73.4% | 81.4% | 73.5% | 82.0% | 70.1% | 77.8% | 69.4% | Unavailable |
| | | Other | 58.1% | | 60.5% | | 60.7% | | 65.2% | | 75.7% | | 80.6% | | 73.0% | | 67.5% | |
| | Female | Low participation | 67.6% | 74.6% | 63.4% | 76.5% | 70.6% | 78.1% | 72.5% | 78.6% | 75.2% | 83.9% | 78.7% | 84.0% | 74.8% | 80.7% | 78.2% | Unavailable |
| | | Other | 68.89% | | 72.6% | | 76.2% | | 74.6% | | 82.1% | | 81.4% | | 80.5% | | 82.9% | |

Disability

| Degree class | Declared Disability | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | | 2018/19 | | 2019/20 | | 2020/21 | | 2021/22 | | 2022/23 | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|-------------------------------|---------|--|---------|------------------|
| | | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | HE Sector - Advance HE (2022) | Chester | HE Sector - Advance HE (2023) ² | Chester | Sector (England) |
| 1 st or 2i | No | 64.8% | 73.1% | 66.8% | 75% | 70.6% | 76.3% | 72% | 76.6% | 78.5% | 79.5% | 80.5% | 82.7% | 77.4% | 78.5% | 77.4% | Unavailable |
| | Yes | 66.4% | 71.9% | 64.1% | 73.3% | 67.6% | 74.7% | 66.9% | 75.3% | 76.1% | 79.2% | 76.0% | 81.8% | 72.6% | 79.4% | 79.4% | Unavailable |

Ethnicity (UK domiciled only)

| Degree classes | Ethnicity | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | | 2018/19 | | 2019/20 | | 2020/21 | | 2021/22 | | 2022/23 | |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|-------------|
| | | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | Sector (England) | Chester | HE Sector Advance HE | Chester | HE Sector Advance HE | Chester | Sector |
| 1 st or 2i | White | 67.2% | 78.4% | 69.6% | 80% | 72% | 80.9% | 73.2% | 81.6% | 79.7% | 83.9% | 81.3% | 85.7% | 78.5% | 83.0% | 79.5% | Unavailable |
| | BAME | 53% | 63.4% | 49.1% | 65.9% | 57.1% | 67.7% | 54.2% | 68% | 68.1% | 71.7% | 69.3% | 76.7% | 67.1% | 72.3% | 68.8% | Unavailable |