

Gender Equality Plan

At the University of Central Lancashire, we are committed to creating a fair, diverse and inclusive environment to work, learn and research. Our vision is for everyone to belong at the University. By levelling the playing field, eliminating discrimination, recognising, and valuing difference, and welcoming, celebrating, and connecting everyone, we can transform lives so everyone can thrive. Our Belonging Strategy 2024-28 sets out our whole university approach to belonging, which we deliver through university-level strategic alignment, a Belonging Network of key stakeholders and chartermarks and diversity specific activity, e.g. Athena Swan.

The University recognises the organisational benefits of a gender-balanced workforce, a commitment reflected at the highest level of governance. Since 2015, the Board of Governors has consistently had a majority of female members (10/18), and the last two Chairs of the Board have also been women, demonstrating strong leadership in gender equality. Our values reflect who we are and what we stand for and are defined as follows: Achieving Together, Being Proud, Creating Opportunity and Supporting All. The final value is particularly pertinent in this context demonstrating the value placed upon showing support, respect and compassion for everyone in our institution and community.

Our Gender Equality Plan (GEP) comprises a set of comprehensive institutional actions, and initiatives designed to champion and advance gender equality. Collectively these priorities both align with and meet the Horizon Europe GEP requirements as follows:

Mandatory requirements:

Be a public document

The GEP must be a formal document published on the institution's website, signed by the top management and actively communicated within the institution. It should demonstrate a commitment to gender equality, set clear goals and detailed actions and measures to achieve them.

This GEP is published on our University website and has been both signed and endorsed by our Vice-Chancellor Professor Graham Baldwin.

The University has been a member of Advance HE's Athena Swan Charter since 2005 and currently holds an institutional Athena Swan Bronze award to recognize our commitment to gender equality. Our most recent [Bronze institutional Athena Swan submission and associated action plan](#) is publicly available online and has been signed and fully endorsed by senior leaders in the University. The detailed action plan sets out the specific goals and measures of success that we aim to achieve with respect to advancing gender equality within the institution from 2019-2026. The University is currently undertaking a new Athena Swan Self-Assessment in preparation for our next submission, ensuring continued progress in advancing gender equality. Our Athena Swan submission and accompanying action plan sets out our key institutional gender equality priorities:

Priority 1: Enhance sense of belonging for all genders by fostering a supportive, diverse culture with visible improvements across gender identities.

Priority 2: Improve support for colleagues who are parents and carers by strengthening policies, raising awareness, and enhancing access to flexible working, leave entitlements, and return-to-work support.

Priority 3: Enhance the recruitment and retention of women in Academia

Priority 4: Advance the career progression and leadership development of women in academia

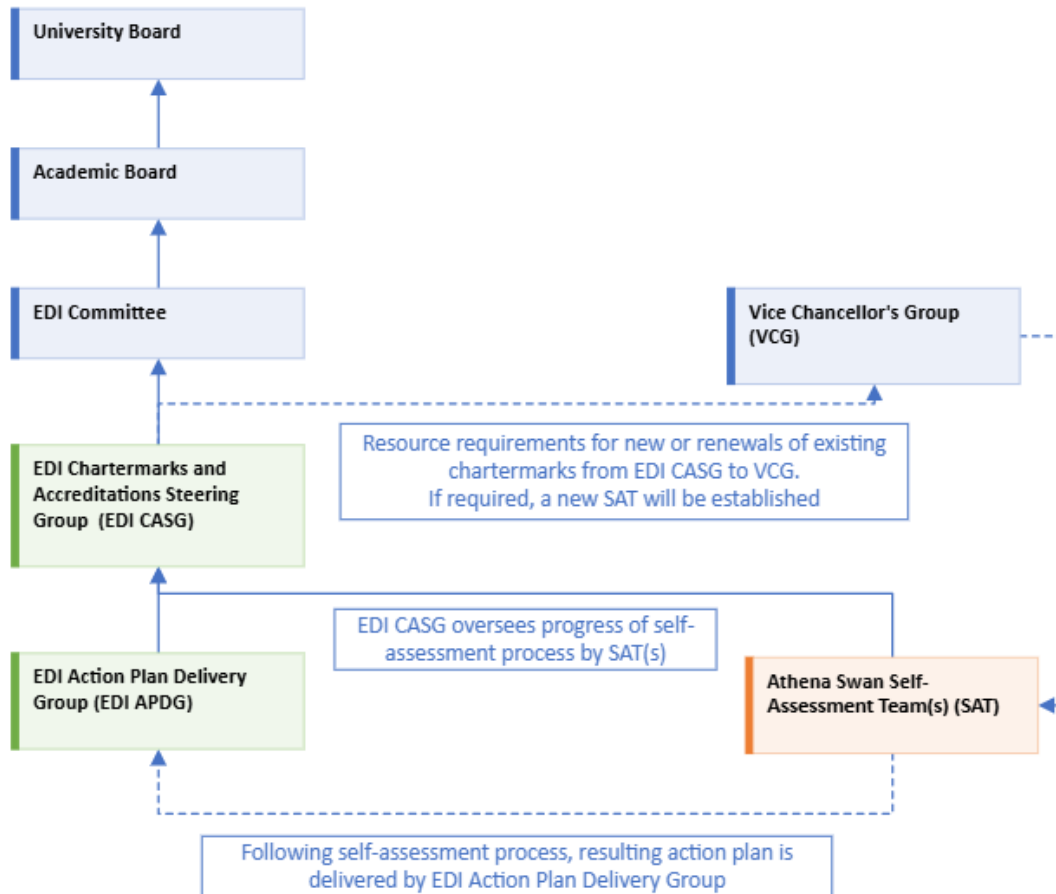
Priority 5: Develop the infrastructure to progress and embed gender equality.

Dedicated Resources

A GEP must have dedicated resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan. Organisations should consider what type and volume of resources are required to support an ongoing process of sustainable organisational change.

At the University, we have introduced an EDI governance and operating structure to ensure that our EDI ambitions are delivered and that we take a whole-institution approach to embedding EDI and driving organisational change. As part of this approach, we develop diversity-specific action plans, such as Athena Swan, using the framework established through our Race Equality Charter (REC) model. This includes the allocation of resources through the Vice-Chancellor's Group (VCG) to support implementation and delivery. Progress is systematically monitored through our governance structures, including the EDI Action Plan Delivery Group (EDI APDG), the EDI Chartermarks and Accreditations Steering Group (EDI CASG), and the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC), ensuring accountability and continuous improvement. The image below shows how our gender equality work feeds through this structure.

Image 1 – Gender Equality operating framework 2025-2026



Our gender equality work is championed by members of the Vice-Chancellor's Group (VCG), in particular Cathy Jackson, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Health and Campus Development), as chair of the Athena Swan SAT, George Charles, Chief Finance Officer, as VCG Ally for Women and StJohn Crean, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise), as VCG Ally for LGBT+.

The University's Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team (AS SAT) plays a central role in driving our gender equality work, bringing together dedicated resources and expertise to implement our action plan effectively. The AS SAT includes representatives from across the institution, including staff, students, senior leaders, and key stakeholder groups such as the Women's Network, the LGBT+ Network, and key colleagues from schools who lead on gender equality work. Their collective expertise in gender equality, along with insights from those with lived experience, ensures that our approach is informed, evidence-based, and impactful.

At University level, the University also has an experienced EDI Team to oversee and implement our Gender Equality Plan, actions, projects, and priorities. This Team is led by the

Director of EDI, and comprises of an EDI Project Manager, two EDI Officers, a Project Support Officer, a Faith and Spirituality Coordinator and a Chaplaincy Team.

The University has also established an effective network of EDI Leads across academic schools and services, who play a fundamental role in driving and implementing gender equality and broader EDI work. These EDI Leads work closely with their respective areas to ensure alignment with our Athena Swan (gender equality) action plan and Belonging Strategy. They also engage in ongoing consultation with schools and services to develop, refine, and embed gender equality plans, ensuring that institutional objectives are tailored to the specific needs and challenges of each area.

Each EDI Lead is allocated 100 workload hours per academic year to prioritise EDI work within their school or service, allowing them to contribute to both institutional EDI initiatives and school/service-specific priorities. In collaboration with their Dean or Director, EDI Leads facilitate the development and delivery of key priorities (institutional and school/service level), ensuring that gender equality goals and actions are integrated within the broader EDI strategy at every level.

As part of our commitment to evolving our approach to school-level gender equality work, we continue to address local challenges while embedding best practice. This ensures that good practices from across the institution are shared and integrated, contributing to the University's broader goal of improving sustainable organisational change and gender equality outcomes.

To further strengthen our work, we are actively improving how we recognise and reward contributions to equality, diversity and inclusion work, prompted by our Race Equality Charter action planning and wider commitment to EDI. This includes exploring and enhancing formal mechanisms such as workload allocation, promotions criteria, and institutional recognition schemes. By doing so, we aim to ensure that those with expertise and lived experience can contribute meaningfully without disadvantage, reinforcing gender equality as a core value within our institutional culture.

Data collection and monitoring

Organisations must collect sex/ gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students, for the establishments concerned) with annual reporting based on indicators. Organisations should consider how to select the most relevant indicators, how to collect and analyse the data, including resources to do so, and should ensure that data is published and monitored on an annual basis. This data should inform the GEP's objectives and targets, indicators, and ongoing evaluation of progress.

In 2021 the University developed a comprehensive EDI dashboard housing staff and student EDI data which can be accessed by staff, to identify and ensure a data-informed approach to all EDI work. The dashboard includes data on gender in relation to both the staff and student profile, recruitment, and progression.

The University monitors and publishes equality and diversity data (including sex and gender) for both staff and students, via our [EDI annual reports](#), to assess, report on and evaluate the progress we have made, in relation to our EDI objectives. Each year, the

University also conducts and publishes a Gender Pay Gap report with relevant gender pay data analysis and key work priorities to close the gap. The University's Gender Pay Gap Reports can be accessed here: [Gender Pay Gap Reports](#).

Through our Athena Swan action plans, applications, and renewals, we undertake a structured self-assessment process to identify gender inequalities, establish our key gender equality priorities, and set ambitious but achievable goals. This process underpins our action plans and enables us to track progress effectively. We conduct detailed analysis of sex/gender data across key areas such as recruitment, promotion, leadership representation, and student outcomes, benchmarking our findings against sector trends and national frameworks. In addition to quantitative analysis, we gather qualitative insights through surveys, focus groups, and consultation with key stakeholder groups to ensure our priorities reflect both data-driven evidence and lived experiences. This rigorous approach allows us to develop targeted, impactful actions with clear performance indicators, accountability, and success measures. Regular monitoring and evaluation ensure that we assess impact, refine actions as needed, and drive continuous progress towards gender equality.

Training

The GEP must also include awareness-raising and training actions on gender equality. These activities should engage the whole organisation and be an evidence-based, ongoing and long-term process. Activities should cover unconscious gender biases training aimed at staff and decision-makers and can also include communication activities and gender equality training that focuses on specific topics or addresses specific groups.

All University staff are required to undertake mandatory EDI Training, (Diversity in the Workplace) when they join the University and colleagues renew the training every two years. Unconscious bias, including gender biases, are embedded into the Recruitment and Selection Training for recruiting managers and those involved in recruitment and selection. EDI is also embedded within Induction for new staff and the Leadership Development Programmes.

Our EDI staff learning and development plan aims to embed belonging-related learning to ensure that gender equality is not only understood but actively lived across the institution. The University will focus on developing the skills, knowledge, and behaviours essential to fostering a culture of belonging, supporting the implementation of the Belonging Strategy through targeted learning and development initiatives.

By integrating belonging principles into gender equality training, we aim to create a university environment where all staff feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute

This plan will be underpinned by the training needs identified by schools and services and based on the four pillars of the EDI strategy.

The Key principles for EDI staff learning and development and fostering Belonging:

- **Support Institutional EDI Goals:** Training should align with and drive progress toward gender equality and EDI objectives.
- **Foster Positive Culture Change:** Learning and development initiatives should promote a sense of belonging and inclusion.
- **Enhance Accessibility:** Training should be available in various formats and times to ensure inclusivity.
- **Encourage Personal Action:** Every staff member should have opportunities to engage with EDI and reflect on their role in fostering an inclusive culture.
- **Tailored Training:** Gender-related training should be customised where possible to address the experiences and needs of different staff gender groups.

The University of Central Lancashire will ensure that staff are aware of and appropriately informed about the core principles of EDI. However, knowledge and awareness are not enough in and of themselves, if the principles of EDI are to become embedded in the ethos and activities of the University. The principles must be integrated into daily practice to foster an inclusive environment, with all development initiatives designed and delivered to enable this to happen.

All colleagues also have access to online [LinkedIn Learning](#) provision, with specific modules on gender including Perception Bias/Unconscious Bias, Fighting Gender Bias at Work, Using Gender Inclusive Language, Talking About Gender and Leadership Strategies for women.

As part of our recent Race Equality Charter Bronze award submission, we identified training and development actions which are due to happen between 2024 and 2027. While these initiatives are focused on race equality, they will also have a positive impact across all diversity characteristics due to their intersectional approach:

- Develop a plan to promote existing training available on LearnUpon to colleagues, including Building Blocks for a Speak Up Culture, Being an Active Bystander, and Let's Talk About Race in the Workplace.
- Develop and introduce Inclusive Language Guidance to provide guidance on terminology and how to talk about race and wider EDI issues.
- Review and develop mandatory Diversity in the Workplace training to include microaggressions, calling in/calling out, and signposting to additional resources/training for further information, including the new Dignity and Respect framework and building on the working group on microaggressions.
- Review existing senior leadership programme and general leadership masterclass sessions to include a session on allyship and being a bystander, run by an external facilitator.
- Develop a Leadership and People Management category on LearnUpon and include information on skills and confidence in calling out racist behaviours and examples relating to race and racist behaviours, as appropriate.

- Review existing training and guidance related to EDI taking place in Schools and Services to identify good practice and determine existing training or guidance that should incorporate skills relating to race.
- Monitor and evaluate the content and uptake of existing training, including Building Blocks for a Speak Up Culture, Being an Active Bystander, and Let's Talk About Race in the Workplace.
- Develop additional learning pathways or a suite of bitesize learning to increase understanding of race issues, following evaluation of existing training.
- Include content on barriers to progression and decision-making about career-enhancing opportunities that lead to promotions as part of the review of mandatory Diversity in the Workplace online module.
- Strengthen appraisal training, guidance, and forms to include reference to role-specific mandatory training, such as recruitment and selection training, for managers to encourage more colleagues to complete training.
- Incorporate cultural awareness and capabilities to lead an anti-racist university in the review of the existing senior leadership programme and general leadership masterclass sessions.
- Incorporate cultural awareness and capabilities to lead an anti-racist university in the development of training for the Leadership and People Management category.
- Review our Brand Guidelines and mandatory training on Diversity in the Workplace to ensure consistency with Inclusive Language Guidance and the Business Glossary.

Recruitment and Selection (R&S) Training:

- Mandatory for all panel chairs and interview panel members, to be completed every two years.
- Unconscious bias training is available alongside this as well as being embedded within the mandatory training.
- Best practices are also outlined in the R&S guide.

Other relevant topics (as requested by individuals and groups):

- LGBT+ Awareness – including Trans; non-binary; bisexual; gender neutral language
- Understanding People Policies and procedures e.g. Dignity at work; Menopause Guidance, Sexual Harassment, Report and Support (reporting incidents)
- Menopause Awareness training for managers/ Menopause Public Lecture series
- Gender related training to support key dates e.g., International Women's Day

Optional programmes/sessions

- Dedicated university Women's Programme (previously Springboard – new Programme in development)
- Aims to provide professional and personal development for women at the University incorporating belonging elements

Additionally, the University communicates and raises awareness of key gender equality awareness days (e.g., International Women's Day) as opportunities to share guidance on actions colleagues and students can take to promote gender equality. These events are used to reinforce our ongoing commitment to gender equality, offering a platform for discussion and reflection on individual roles in fostering an inclusive environment.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Graham Baldwin'.

Professor Graham Baldwin
Vice-Chancellor