

Executive Summary – 2024/25

This report presents staff equality monitoring data for the University as at **31 July 2025**, in line with the University's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75).

Workforce profile and age

- The University continues to have an **older workforce profile** compared to the HESA sector average, especially within **academic** roles.
- More than **three-quarters of Academic Staff are aged over 45**, and nearly **half are over 55**. This contrasts with a younger and more evenly distributed age profile for Professional and Support Staff.
- **Associate Lecturers are the largest and oldest staff group**, (average age 55.9), while Support Staff and Research Staff are the youngest groups (average ages 43.4 and 43.5 respectively).
- Candidates aged 35 to 64 make up a higher proportion of appointments relative to their share of applications, while **younger candidates** (especially 25 and under) **are less represented at appointment stage**.
- Lower representation of younger age groups, which have the greatest diversity in 2022/23 HESA benchmark data for disability, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, may impact overall workforce diversity.

Ethnicity

- Representation of racially minoritised staff has **increased for a fifth consecutive year** (to 12.6%). However, this remains significantly below the HESA benchmark (20.2%).
- **Representation varies significantly**, with the higher representation among the younger employee groups and lower representation among the older groups. Nearly 1 in 5 Research Staff and Support Staff (19–20%) are racially minoritised, compared to 7.8% of Associate Lecturers, the University's largest employee group.
- **Senior racially minoritised representation has seen a large increase** (up 0.9 to 13.1%). This has been driven by an increase in representation within Professor grades (16.8%), while representation in senior professional services staff roles reduced slightly (8.6%).

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Ethnicity (continued)

- **Black colleagues remain the least represented group at senior level**, and despite an increase (from 1.0% to 1.3%), there remains a significant gap against the Equality Scheme 2026 target (2.7%).
- Recruitment data shows **over 40% of applications are from racially minoritised candidates**, but this reduces to around 20% of appointments, with an increased success rate through the recruitment pipeline for white candidates.
- **All of the Equality scheme 2026 targets related to racially minoritised recruitment have been met** or exceeded.

Disability(ies)

- The proportion of staff declaring they have disability(ies) has risen to its **highest level in five years (9.5%)**, above the HESA sector total of 8.5%.
- Representation is highest within **Regional Academic, Support Staff, and Associate Lecturer roles** (all above 10%). The lowest representation is among Academic Related Staff (7.0%).
- Representation of staff with Disability(ies) at **senior level has increased (4.6%)**, driven by increased representation within Professor grades (4.8%), though numbers remain small and below the Equality Scheme target (7.2%).
- Recruitment outcomes have improved significantly. **12.7% of shortlisted candidates declared Disability(ies)**, exceeding the Equality Scheme target. 11.9% of appointed candidates declared Disability(ies).

Sex

- The majority of the University's workforce is female (63.1%) with the **highest representation in Professional and Support roles** (67.4%), compared to Academic roles (59.7%).
- **Senior female representation continues to grow**, increasing to 53.9%, the highest in five years. This is driven by increases in senior academic female representation, and continues to exceed the Equality Scheme target of 45%.
- In recruitment, female representation grows from **around 6 in 10 applications, to 7 in 10 appointments**.

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Sexual Orientation

- Among staff who have disclosed, **LGBQA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Asexual) representation varies by age group and employee group**. Representation is **highest among younger staff**. In 2024/25, 15.7% of academic staff aged 30 and under identified as LGBQA. Representation decreases with increasing age, falling to 2.2% among those aged 61 and over.
- Our data for **Academic staff** includes a **76.2% disclosure rate** for sexual orientation, compared to the 2022/23 HESA benchmark of 64.5%. LGBTQA representation of Academic staff is. **5.5%, slightly higher than the HESA benchmark of 5.2%** (for all staff).
- Despite continued progress in disclosure rates, **we do not have sexual orientation data for around half of the workforce**, partly because of legacy data migration issues affecting Professional and Support Staff. This limits the extent to which conclusions can be drawn about the overall population. Steps are being taken to collect this data from Professional Services and Support staff.

Religion or Belief

- Around **two-fifths of staff identify as having a religion or belief**, while just under half report having no religion or belief.
- **Christianity remains the most common religion**, followed by smaller proportions identifying as Muslim (2.3%), Hindu (1.7%), Jewish (0.5%), Buddhist (0.7%), Sikh (0.4%) or other beliefs (1.6%).
- Differences between academic and Professional and Support Staff are modest.

Gender

- The proportion of staff who have provided gender data remains too low to be able to draw meaningful insights. The Open University is committed to being an inclusive employer and we are working to improve disclosure rates.
- The Open University recognises that not all colleagues feel included with certain definitions of sex and gender. We provide staff with the option to share gender as well as sex. Staff can record information confidentially as part of their personal information form on the HR system, including the option to self-describe in their own words.