

Equal Opportunities Report 2021-22

This report summarises some of the work that has been done on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) at UCB over 2021-22, and plans for 2022-23. It also provides an update on EDI data, and on our progress against our Access and Participation Plan targets.

There have been a series of EDI-related issues that have dominated over recent years, not just at UCB, but more broadly. Below is a summary of the specific impacts at UCB, and our response.

a. Long term impact of the pandemic

Throughout 2021-22 we have seen ongoing impacts of the pandemic. In particular, we have seen significant challenges with student behaviour, and substantial gaps in learning, particularly in FE, where some students entered with Centre Assessed Grades which seemed very ambitious for their initial performance levels. Adapting to these challenges, which have not been felt evenly across our student population, has required extensive staff time and effort. As the year has progressed we have seen significant improvements, and expect that this will continue into the new academic year. Attendance has not quite recovered to pre-pandemic levels, but anecdotally, we are performing well compared with the typical attendance seen in other FE and HE institutions.

Feedback from students on the return to predominantly campus-based learning has been largely positive, and we have not seen any significant evidence of satisfaction levels being differentiated by protected characteristics. We will continue to monitor this through informal conversations with students and the Guild, and through more formal mechanisms such as the NSS.

As the employment market has improved we have seen fewer students in significant need of hardship funding, but we have instead seen students who are struggling to prioritise their studies over paid employment. We are just beginning to see an impact of inflation and the increased cost of living on students' circumstances, particularly for mature students with children. Students on the access to HE courses are likely to be the most significantly impacted, as their courses don't provide much (if any) maintenance funding. We are therefore looking at ways to help those students to commit to their courses, particularly through more careful planning of timetables to enable childcare and transport arrangements to be made efficiently. We anticipate more challenges arising from the increased cost of living over the next 12 months, and will closely monitor the take-up of hardship funding as a consequence. We are already seeing increasing numbers of students eligible for Free School Meals, and for the WP element of the Kick Start scheme.

b. Awarding gap

We have made substantial progress in closing the gap in 'good' degree outcomes between Asian and white students, and some progress in closing the gap between Black and white students. However, there is still substantial progress to be made, on these, and on other gaps. Full data for 2022 will be available in late September, with early indications available from late July.

We have made progress on all of the actions contained in the plan that we submitted to the OfS, including delivering race equity training to the majority of UCB staff, holding our first ever inclusivity conference for staff, and running joint inclusivity projects with Warwick and

our students. We are starting to get real engagement on these topics from students, who are developing a sophisticated understanding of the issues. In the new academic year we will be developing an inclusivity framework to embed inclusive practice in the curriculum.

c. Mental health

We have seen further increased demand for mental health and counselling support this year. Whilst the most common reasons for referrals remain anxiety, depression and stress, we are seeing increasing referrals for self-harm and suicidal intent, and for eating disorders. There have been more severe cases requiring immediate attention than we see in a typical year.

Despite this pressure on the service, we have managed to keep waiting lists to a reasonable level, in part because of our mental health and counselling advice line and app for HE students and staff, run by Endsleigh and Health Assured. This provides a 24-7 service, and has helped to provide students with an alternative to waiting for a UCB appointment. We haven't seen any specific patterns of service take-up amongst different groups, except that (as before) demand for counselling is dominated by female students.

2. EDI priorities for 2022-23

a. Student Success Strategy

The main priority relating to EDI in 2022-23 will be implementing the new Student Success Strategy, which aims to ensure that all of our students, whatever their starting point or programme of study, thrive at UCB, succeed on their chosen courses, and progress to positive and fulfilling futures. This will be monitored closely, in tandem with monitoring of our compliance with the OfS' B conditions of registration, ensuring that our work to close gaps is fully integrated with our work to improve outcomes, particularly related to employability. Plans in this area will be regularly reported to EMT and the corporation.

b. Staff training

We will continue to roll out our Race Equity training to any new staff. In addition, we intend to implement broader EDI training, probably also supported by AdvanceHE. We have also developed training for a number of members of staff who have become Harassment and Sexual Misconduct advisors. As part of the HR strategy we will also consider the training we provide during induction, and for key processes such as staff recruitment. Other actions are likely to include consideration of positive action around some underrepresented groups, supporting staff to undertake specific development activities (e.g. Aurora for female staff), and ensuring Corporation also reflects the wider staff and student body (where significant progress has been made recently).

c. Mental Health and Wellbeing

Over 2022-23 we will be implementing the recommendations in the Student Minds Charter, and formally signing up to the scheme. This will require a University-wide approach to positive mental health, embedded into the curriculum and all of our support services, offering a proactive, rather than reactive, service.

d. HR strategy

Building on the EDI review conducted by AdvanceHE in 2021, the new HR strategy will have staff diversity as a key strand. This will include consideration of both the recruitment of new staff to UCB, and policies to support and retain existing staff. Any policy changes as a consequence will be reported through relevant committees.

e. Pandemic recovery, and cost of living

Ensuring that all of our students achieve their potential next academic year will require us to recognise students' different starting points as a consequence of the disruption to education through the pandemic. We are committed to ensuring that educational gaps don't broaden, and academic teams are now experienced at providing summer bridging activities for new and continuing students.

We have revised our welcome week and induction plans to contain three strands within the week (academic, support and social), and to focusing on helping students to feel comfortable at UCB, and know where to go for help. Our communication plans for welcome week, and semester 1 focus on getting the right information to students at the right time, and avoiding bombarding them with information in the first few days. We will offer 're-induction' and catch up activities in the welcome period for returning students as well as new students, and again in the semester break, making use of learner analytics to target students who particularly need support. Our approach to learner analytics is particularly crucial to our ability to support HE students, and we are exploring whether a similar approach may also be practical in FE.

We are revising the Graduate Advantage scheme to increase its focus on wellbeing and belonging before moving on to academic and employment skills development, with a more consistent and scaffolded approach. This will include Graduate Advantage becoming an extended induction for the first four weeks of the semester.

Appendix: FE and HE 'gaps' data

Gaps are expressed as male – female, young – mature, not disabled – disabled etc.). So a positive score indicates higher performance for men, young students, non-disabled students etc. A negative score indicates higher performance for women, mature students, disabled students etc.

FE Retention Gaps

Retention was higher for female students, Polar Q5 students (the least deprived), IMD Q5 students, Black students and Asian students.

Gap	19/20	20/21	21/22
Gender	0.5	-0.6	-4.6
POLAR4 Q5 and Q1 (Young students)	1.4	-1.9	5.0
IMD Q5 and Q1	2.8	1.1	4.5
Age Group	-0.9	8.0	1.6
Disability	-4.5	-4.5	-3.0
White Black	1.4	2.6	-3.6
White Asian	-4.9	-0.8	-5.9

FE QAR Gaps (rules applied)

This shows the rate at which FE students achieve their planned qualification. We can see that male students, students with an Education, Care and Health Plan, and white students, were all more likely to achieve their qualifications.

Gap	18/19	19/20	20/21
Gender	-2.8	2.0	4.0
LLDD	-2.0	-4.3	0.7
ECHP	6.5	-1.7	-7.1
White BME	-0.7	-0.4	8.4

HE OFS Gaps (APP population only)

This data looks at gaps in performance for the student population reported on in our Access and Participation Plan (undergraduate, home, first degree).

Access

Access gaps look at UCB performance compared with the general population, and only look at our 18-year-old intake (with the exception of the IMD measure, which looks at our whole intake). This is how the OfS reports our data. Our intake is more likely to be female, from IMD q1 (most deprived), Black or Asian, than the general population of the UK.

Gap	18/19	19/20	20/21
Females compared with general population (Age 18)	-24.0	-23.0	-23.0
Males compared with general population (Age 18)	24.0	23.0	23.0
POLAR4 Q5 and Q1 (Young students)	0.0	-1.0	-1.0
IMD Q5 and Q1	-35.2	-39.9	-40.0
Black compared with general population (Age 18)	-7.0	-8.0	-9.0
Asian compared with general population (Age 18)	-14.0	-9.0	-12.0

Continuation

Gap	17/18	18/19	19/20
Gender	-2.0	-7.0	-10.0
POLAR4 Q5 and Q1 (Young students)	-3.0	8.0	-9.0
IMD Q5 and Q1	7.0	4.0	8.0
Age Group	3.0	1.0	8.0
Disability	2.0	-4.0	-6.0
White Black	9.0	-5.0	6.0
White Asian	9.0	-4.0	2.0

Attainment

Gap	18/19	19/20	20/21
Gender	-19.0	-23.0	-18.0
POLAR4 Q5 and Q1 (Young students)	6.0	15.0	-20.0
IMD Q5 and Q1	18.0	29.0	20.0
Age Group	2.0	3.0	11.0
Disability	8.0	-4.0	-8.0
White Black	16.0	38.0	31.0
White Asian	17.0	25.0	13.0

HE Retention Gaps (All students)

This looks at the full undergraduate population, including international students.

Gap	19/20	20/21	21/22
Gender	-1.3	-1.2	0.3
POLAR4 Q5 and Q1 (Young students)	-5.7	-0.1	1.9
IMD Q5 and Q1	-0.5	-0.1	-1.7
Age Group	0.0	-0.7	-1.0
Disability	-0.7	0.9	1.3
White Black	2.7	0.7	0.2
White Asian	0.1	-0.3	-1.4