Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Action Plan 2024/25

LEAD RESPONSIBILITY:
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Updated: January 2025

EDI Strategic Action Plan

Contents

Introduction

This Action Plan offers an overview of United College Group's (UCG) key achievements in respect of the Strategic EDI Action Plan 2023-24 and an insight of the EDI Strategic objectives (the EDI Action Plan) for the academic year, 2024-25.

As a reminder, UCG introduced the first set of Strategic EDI objectives in September 2021. These were designed to support the stated aim expressed in the 2020-24 Strategic Plan of "Embracing Diversity & Inclusion".

The Strategic EDI Action Plan for 2024-25 retains the same format of the Action Plans from the previous academic years and continues the ambition to help UCG work towards being an exemplar organisation in the approach to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion for students and staff.

The introduction of an initial Strategic EDI Action Plan and the annual revisions to support the continued commitment to develop a fully inclusive environment that enhances the experience of all students and staff, as well as to encourage through our practices, systems and culture our stakeholders to improve their support and approach to EDI.

Our EDI Achievements 2023-24

The achievements for 2023-24 were compiled and updated from prior versions of the EDI Action Plan, staff and student feedback, and the inputs from the various Leads.

Using UCG's 8 strategic themes, a sample of key EDI achievements during the previous academic year is available. **(Appendix 1).**

EDI Strategic Action Plan 2024-25

The Strategic Action Plan **(Appendix 2)**, for the current year is informed by the following sources:

- The remaining 8 objectives (out of 13) from the previous academic year
- Feedback from the new Strategic Lead for EDI and the appointed Leads for each objective.
- Feedback from the National Centre for Diversity (NCD)
- Actions agreed with the Black Leadership Group
- In year feedback from the EDI Staff Forum, staff and students.

The format of the plan is designed against UCG's Strategic themes paired with one or more "destinations" **(Appendix 3)** that underpin the respected and highly valued.

Investors in Diversity charter mark which UCG successfully achieved in May 2022 and were reaccredited with in June 2023.

The established monitoring schedule **(Appendix 4)** continues to provide quality assurance for the Strategic Action Plan and other key elements of UCG's work devoted to advancing EDI.

Within the EDI Structure, **(Appendix 5)** the Strategic Action Plan remains subject to the continuous review and scrutiny of the Strategic EDI Group, and the Staff EDI Forum on which sits the important role of EDI Champions.

Strategic Theme 1: Leadership & Management

Take steps to advance EDI as a core element of the culture of UCG and create a working environment where staff and students feel valued, safe, supported, and can be their authentic selves. (NCD Investors in Diversity Destinations 1 & 3).

Key Achievements (Examples):

- Review of the SAR Academic template completed for 2022-23, the new template included an EDI section which has been made a requirement of the SAR for Support Services. This development is supported by a structured monitoring process where EDI actions are fed into QIPs and reviewed twice in a year at KPI Reviews (January and May) and then again in next year's SAR.

- In areas where there are clear indicators of achievement gaps between different groups of students, Career Clusters have individual action plans to address these, which include reviewing classroom materials.

- Improved Quality Assurance systems/processes are in place at an organisational level to assess how well EDI is supported and improved within the curriculum and support service areas.

- A report was presented to the Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee of the Governors on 24/1/24 providing a breakdown and analysis of 22/23 Achievement data by equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) groupings at headline level, split by age group.

Strategic Theme 2: Students

Embed EDI into the student experience and use information systems to monitor, analyse, and raise the participation, progress, and achievement rates for student groups. (NCD Investors in Diversity Destinations 1 & 2).

Key Achievements (Examples):

- The College worked with Local Village Network, who run a programme called Amplify Me that works on increasing employer engagement to students that would not ordinarily have access to employer networks. UCG Students have had the opportunity to work in construction, IT, accounting, media and health, social and childcare.

- A plan to address the revision of the curricula/qualifications systematically across all career clusters was agreed in principle. A cascaded training model followed with the Assistant Principles that provided a tangible plan to create training resource and a framework for all career clusters. Individual plans for career clusters were ready to share with teaching teams to inform their planning for 2024-2025.

- National Rates have informed the SAR analysis and EDI Achievement analysis for December 2023 and is a standard feature of future SAR Reporting.

- Group wide reports with identified EDI information e.g. socioeconomic factors, in an appropriate format are now available at the Curriculum, Cluster and Group level.

- As part of the SAR Report (and the Annual EDI Report) student performance, data by ethnicity (and other characteristics), including actions to address any identified gaps is made available.

- A wide range of data is available through the MIS Portal, with Power BI Dashboard being available on the intranet. The EDI focused data has been further developed as evidenced by the 2022/23 SAR Data More EDI information has been identified to support the process for 2023-24.

Strategic Theme 3: Staff, including Governors

Improve the employee life cycle with reference to the recruitment and promotional opportunities for those groups who are underrepresented. Improve staff confidence to disclose their protected characteristics. (NCD Investors in Diversity Destinations 2, 6, 7 & 8).

Key Achievements (Examples):

- UCG remains proud of its diverse workforce. In terms of gender the figure is 58% in favour of females, disability at 5% while the total number of staff from an Ethnically Diverse (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) background remains at 55%- higher than the London ethnically diverse population of 41%.

- The level of representation of staff from an Ethnically Diverse background at the academic level is 54% and for support roles 57%. Both levels of representation are in line with the overall Ethnically Diverse figures for the Group, which is extremely positive.

- The picture at the Extended Management Team (EMT) level remains the same as last year, with the level of representation of staff from an Ethnically Diverse background at 48%. This figure exceeds the Key Performance Indicator set for 2024 of 40%. The achievement is evidence of how the long-term commitment to an integrated strategic and operational approach to improve the recruitment levels and promotional opportunities for Ethnically Diverse background staff to be represented at the highest managerial levels within the Group.

- Due to some changes on the Governing Board during 2023/24 the percentage of women on the board decreased to 34% from 50%. Similarly, for those from an ethnic minority the figure is also 34%. The Corporation discussed the diversity of its membership at its March and agreed changes to the Governor Recruitment and Succession Planning policy which would strengthen approaches to appoint women & those from an ethnically diverse background.

- The Staff & Governor Diversity profile is shared via the Annual EDI Report and has been added separately to the HR platform on the Staff Intranet.

Strategic Theme 4: External Partnerships

Ensure that external opportunities promote EDI and that activities delivered by UCG incorporate EDI best practice. (NCD Investors in Diversity Destination 9).

Key Achievements (Examples):

- Educate and Celebrate (E&C) Action Plan approved by the Strategic EDI Group and actions implemented. UCG awarded Educate and Celebrate Bronze Award in Jan 2023.

- During the year, pro-active steps were taken to achieve the Silver Award from Educate and Celebrate (now known as PRIDE in EDI). The external accreditation recognised the continued work undertaken at UCG to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ staff, students, staff and visitors.

- Building upon the Level 1 achievement, UCG obtained The Disability Confident Employer Award Level 2 in recognition the continued work and commitment to support those with a disability, seeking or employed in the organisation.

- UCG were nominated and shortlisted for the UnderOne Diversity & Inclusion award, in the category of 'Diverse & Inclusive Company Culture. 'This prestigious award exists to showcase and celebrate champions of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), who integrate these values into the fabric of their organisation's DNA. Fellow organisations nominated in this category were HSBC, University of Law, Citi Bank, and Pan McMillan.

- Achievement of the prestigious Investors in People (IiP) award which had a series of dedicated EDI related actions. UCG have now created an action plan to continue the journey to IiP Gold by 2027 which embeds a range of EDI initiatives.

- With the commitment to the NCD Action Plan, UCG continues to make improvements through a range of focused and specific actions. The impact can be gauged by 86% of staff agreeing that the College values ED and 92% stating they are familiar with the Colleges approach to EDI (Staff Survey July 23).

- April 2024 saw members of UCG's EDI team attend 'Just One More Thing' conference, sponsored by the Department for Education. The conference allowed colleagues from the Further Education sector and outside of the sector to consider and reflect on race inequality, exploring good practice and innovative approaches.

Strategic Theme 5: Training/CPD

Develop further opportunities to increase the understanding and the celebration of equality, diversity, and inclusion. (NCD Investors in Diversity Destinations 4 & 5).

Key Achievements (Examples):

- Mandatory CPD ensures all staff are trained on EDI

- The ALS team provided training to all Career Clusters in response to the barriers faced by deaf learners. A deaf learner from the Level 5 Diploma for Education led deaf awareness sessions for English department teachers, which proved effective. As a result, a workshop has been created for deaf learners to improve their English reading and writing skills, run by both the English department and the ALS team.

- LSAs from the SPL and ALS teams completed ELSA training to better support learners with SEMH, complementing UCG's trauma-informed approach to meet the needs of the learning community.

- A plan to address the Decolonising of the Curriculum systematically across all career clusters was agreed in principle. The initial activity commenced with training for the Assistant Principles who committed to develop a plan for their own career clusters using the same model across the board to ensure consistency.

- For teaching staff, the "The Common Agenda" was introduced i.e. an agenda for team meetings that includes two focused and open questions on EDI.

- A new central budget created for L&D activities. This will provide a range of CPD opportunities for all support staff. The planning of L&D activities will be done in collaboration/partnership with the curriculum.

- Staff continue to access to the suite of AOC course such as the Diversity in Leadership Programme and the Black Leadership Group Mentor Programme and the Department for Education (DFE) Leadership Mentoring Programme, which uses positive action to encourage applications from those from an Ethnically Diverse background and Women.

- Unconscious bias Training piloted with HR and selected nominees from support services. More training to be rolled out to hiring managers focusing on recruitment and selection.

- CPD in December 23 combined EDI & Well Being workshops. The former building upon the feedback from the Summer CPD with a deeper look at Gender, Intersectionality and Neurodiversity.

Strategic Theme 6: Accessibility & Support

Ensure buildings and services are accessible to and support the health and wellbeing of learners and staff. (NCD Investors in Diversity Destinations 1 & 4).

Key Achievements (Examples):

- Excellent links with external agencies such as Local Authorities *'Teachers of the Deaf'* who in conjunction with UCG have a well-established specialist hub for students with hearing impairments which focuses on socialisation, along with academic support. This is supported by the Local Authorities of Brent and Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

- ALS provided deaf awareness training for identified teaching staff to improve the inclusion of deaf learners. During the year, the Additional Learning Support (ALS) team offered training regarding supporting deaf learners to all Career Clusters. The English team worked with ALS to make the curriculum accessible for deaf learners and all lecturers adjusted their practices.

- Strong partnerships with external organizations have enriched the curriculum with diverse, inclusive activities addressing social, emotional, and physical learning. These include dance lessons, SEN Marathon, Dance Westminster Competition, Sports for Confidence, sensory stories, cycling, swimming, community outings, and DofE Bronze and Silver awards.

- A new changing place room was installed at the Paddington Campus to provide a modern and comfortable space to meet the personal care of learners with complex needs.

- ALS have rolled out across the group a social skills club for learners with additional needs and SEMH difficulties. The purpose of the club will be to support learners to improve their social communication skills and increase self-confidence.

- Some Deaf Learners have undertaken a monthly volunteering programme in partnership with Spitafields farm. This has supported them with improving their mental health and wellbeing as well as provided them with an excellent personal development and employability opportunity. One learner was taken on as volunteer at the weekends.

- A new initiative, in partnership with the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, will train Learning Support Assistants with the RBKC Psychology Service to become Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs). The program aims to help learners build emotional resilience and address issues before they escalate.

Strategic Theme 7: Supply Chain/Procurement

Ensure activities delivered on behalf of UCG are fair and inclusive. (NCD Investors in Diversity Destination 9).

Key Achievements (Examples):

- EDI added as a standing agenda item to all partner reviews for the academic year.

- Review Of Due Diligences Process, SLA, and EDI policies annually for existing partners has been completed.

- Progress reviews with partners are currently being undertaken, with UCG gathering feedback on whether partners feel ready to reintroduce Annual Staff and Curriculum Development Day.

- Review of the student journey and outcomes and the development of an Action Plan is ongoing with the introduction of Power BI and a dashboard specifically for apprenticeships.

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is effectively embedded in all aspects of employer-led training within UCG.

- Apprenticeship enrolment process was fully updated for 2022-23, with all training agreements and reviews include references to EDI.

- To address Ofsted's concerns, additional collaboration focused on embedding Prevent and British Values in Apprenticeships. The Brent Prevent Team facilitated online training on Safeguarding and Prevent, allowing apprentices and employers to participate, regardless of location.

- Bitesize CPD sessions, have been introduced including training on implementing developmental lesson observations.

- All apprentices have received a full induction programme conducted by internal staff and external agencies, ensuring apprentices have appropriate support. We have also recently introduced a revised electronic review form which includes questions relating to EDI for the apprentice and employer to complete.

1. Leadership & Management (NCD Investors in Diversity Destinations 1 & 3)

	Objectives	Key Actions	Measurements	Lead(s)/Team	Target Date
1	Review Quality Assurance systems/ processes to assess how well this support and improve EDI within the curriculum and service areas	• Support developed to help staff better understand how to interpret data sources that focus on EDI and to improve the EDI actions at the curriculum and service level to further narrow achievement gaps.	• Improved identification and implementation of EDI Actions at the curriculum and service level, monitored via the SAR/Process.	**Director of Innovation Enterprise & Quality Assurance** SLT EDI Team	July 2025
2	Support the advancement of equality and the reduction of discrimination using Equality Impact Assessments	• Agree the Strategic Lead for the Cross College, implementation and monitoring of the EIA process.	• SMT Lead agreed	**Principal** Director of Governance Director of Business Intelligence, MIS & People EDI Team	July 2025
		• Review the current policies and procedures, which should be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and create a plan to ensure EIAs are undertaken.	• Develop a clear process for the use of EIAs covering policies, procedures, and Management reports.		
		• Provide appropriate forms of support for staff on how to complete EIAs.	• A range of support mechanism in place to help staff understand and carry out EIAs.		

2. Students - (NCD Investors in Diversity Destinations 1 & 2)

	Objectives	Key Actions	Measurements	Lead(s)/Team	Target Date
1	To embed support networks for students with protected characteristics.	• Identify teachers or staff who can convene student groups.	• Introduce student support group based on protected characteristics	**Interim Assistant Principal (Student Experience)** Enrichment Team Head of Student Support Services	July 2025
2	To prepare students with protected characteristics for career pathways.	• Implement mentoring within existing work placement and apprenticeship networks. • Engage students with external employability programmes (i.e. Moving on Up, Making the Leap).	• Develop continuously updated calendar of programmes, workshops • Other development opportunities for students with protected characteristics. • Monitor the level of take-up of initiatives based on protected characteristics.	**Head of Student** Support Services	July 2025
3	To integrate EDI into learning and teaching experience.	• Evaluate curriculum for integration of EDI principles. • Evaluate current understanding of EDI policies, objectives, and principles among students to develop targeted initiatives that raise understanding. • A radical revision of FE curricula and qualifications to reflect contemporary values, incorporating the importance of colonial history and its influence on society, historically and now; the impact of racism on black and white communities; the contributions made by black people to society.	• Maintain a regular programme of EDI CPD with increased attendance. • Positive feedback on the quality of EDI CPD programming. • Develop KPIs on inclusive curriculum. • Perform annual portfolio review with EDI focus.	**SLT EDI Lead** Interim Asst Principal (Student Experience) Interim Director of - Teaching Learning & Assessment EDI Team	July 2025

3. Training/CPD - (NCD Investors in Diversity Destinations 4 &

	Objectives	Key Actions	Measurements	Lead(s)/ Team	Target Date
1	For all staff to feel comfortable using internal systems and software.	• Implement an annual self-assessment of IT skills	• Training matrix drawn up that considers the roles & digital skills requirement	**Director of Business Intelligence, MIS & People** HR Operations Manager IT Strategy Group	July 2025
2	To provide staff with a range of EDI training options that support their role and understanding of both other staff and students.	• Identify and develop specific activities using a variety of sources such as SARS, feedback from staff EDI focus groups and best practice to create a programme of EDI learning and supporting material which meet both general and specific service needs and includes, as a central component, forms of antiracism and the inclusion of anti-racist pedagogy.	• Development of an Induction & CPD programme	**SLT EDI Lead** HR Operations Manager Interim Director – Teaching Learning & Assessment. VP Students	July 2025

4. Accessibility & Support - (NCD Investors in Diversity Destinations 1 & 4)

	Objectives	Key Actions	Measurements	Lead(s)/Team	Target Date
1	To ensure that students and staff with dyslexia are supported.	• Raise awareness of dyslexia through workshops and posters, including training for teaching staff on dyslexia-inclusive teaching strategies. • Coordinate with Marketing to clearly communicate to students where to seek help with dyslexia	• Quality attendance and positive feedback at workshops. • Positive feedback in student focus groups regarding teaching strategies.	Head of ALS Marketing	July 2025
2	For students with a range of academic abilities to have the time, tools, and equipment they need to succeed.	• Ensure students have the appropriate equipment to work on and off-site. • ALS to provide deaf awareness training for identified teaching staff to improve inclusion of deaf learners in response to feedback from teaching staff and students.	• Audit student equipment needs and identify a plan to resource. • Identify staff who attend deaf awareness training to measure the effectiveness from the feedback from CSW's and improved • Achievement of deaf learners.	Head of ALS Assistant Principals Marketing Curriculum Teams	July 2025

5. Supply Chain/Procurement - (NCD Investors in Diversity Destination 9)

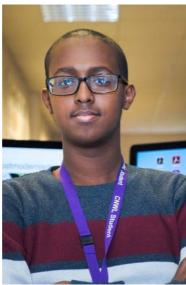|	Objectives	Key Actions	Measurements	Lead(s)/Team	Target Date
1	Ensure supply chain and key contractors (subject to financial threshold) are continuously improving their EDI policies and processes.	• Reintroduce Annual Staff and Curriculum Development Day with partners.	• Positive feedback from users.	**Director of Business Development & Apprenticeships**	July 2025

Destination
1) Your organisation is effective in advancing FREDIE: • Fairness • Respect • Equality • Diversity • Inclusion • Engagement
2) Your culture makes people of any background feel safe, valued, and included
3) FREDIE is core to your organisation's strategy or business plan.
4) Good mental health and wellbeing are regarded as important in your organisation.
5) Effective operational and line management of FREDIE.
6) You can demonstrate that your selection and recruitment practices are fair and seek to address underrepresentation of people with different protected characteristics in your workforce at all levels.
7) Retention, reward, and progression processes are fair and where appropriate, you are working towards eliminating any unfair pay gaps.
8) You are using your performance management systems to improve inclusion, engagement, and productivity.
9) Your organization has fair and inclusive procurement practices.
10) Effective FREDIE communications.

Activity	Date	Frequency	Lead (s)	Reported To
Strategic Objectives & Action Plan	Prior to EDI Strategic Group meetings	Termly	EDI Team	EDI Strategic Group Governors SLT
EDI Updates to the Finance & Resources (Governors) Committee	Prior to Committee Meeting	Termly	SLT EDI Lead Director of Governance	EDI Strategic Group Governors SLT
EDI Policy Review	End of Summer term	Bi-Annual	EDI Team	EDI Strategic Group SLT
Annual EDI Report	31st January	Annually	EDI Team	EDI Strategic Group Governors SLT
Student Feedback (survey/ focus groups)		Termly (Focus Groups) Bi-Annual (Surveys such as QPD)	Assistant Principal Performance, Quality & Innovation.	EDI Strategic Group Governors SLT
Staff Feedback (survey/ focus groups)		Bi -annual (Focus Groups) Staff Surveys	HR Operations Manager	EDI Strategic Group Governors SLT
Analysis of EDI Achievement data	Autumn and Summer	Annually	Assistant Principal Performance, Quality & Innovation.	EDI Strategic Group Governors SLT

The EDI Team is led by Nadia El Atrash, HR Operations Manager, supported by the newly appointed SLT EDI lead Bilal Bobat, an EDI Administrator and an EDI Consultant, Dennis Francis.

The EDI Team works with the EDI Strategic Group, whose purpose is to ensure Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is a strategic priority for UCG in line with the principle of Inclusion and Belonging agreed by the Corporation (June 2024). The focus is to ensure that across UCG, diversity is embraced, and pro-active steps are taken to improve the outcomes and impact of EDI actions.

The EDI Strategic Group meets two times per term, and the current "Core" membership is as follows:

- Bilal Bobat, Vice Principal & SLT EDI lead
- Stephen Davis, Chief Executive Officer
- James Wilson, Principal
- Amanda Thorneycroft, Chief Financial Officer
- Nicola McLean, Vice Principal (Students)
- Paul Bradley, Director of Business Intelligence, MIS & People
- Joanne Smith, Interim Assistant Principal (Student Experience)
- Tanya Rose, EDI Link Governor
- Nadia El Atrash, HR Operations Manager.
- Elsie Osuz, EDI Co-ordinator

EDI Staff Forum

In 2023-24, the EDI Staff Forum - which comprises of staff representatives from areas across UCG - met twice a term, two weeks before the meeting of the EDI Strategic Group. Their remit is to discuss collective staff EDI concerns, bring forward ideas/initiatives and to provide constructive feedback on EDI progress against the Strategic Action Plan. On rotation, members were invited to feedback to the EDI Strategic Group.

The Forum exists to provide a platform for staff to engage and support the work of the Strategic Group, and to ensure all protected characteristics are considered and reflected in UCG's EDI practices and initiatives. The forum provides a great opportunity for the direction and intention of EDI to be shaped through the staff "voice."

A key feature of the Forums is the role of EDI Champions - members of staff who are enthusiastic "advocates," of equality, diversity, and inclusion and who are willing to share their expertise and passion to collaborate with a community of like-minded individuals to support the responsibilities of the Strategic EDI Group.

If you are interested in joining this important platform, to be an agent of change who helps shape and drive the EDI agenda, please click here for further details.

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