



University
of Suffolk

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Annual Report 2023-2024

OUR VALUES

TRANSFORMATIVE COLLABORATIVE EMPOWERING

PROFESSIONAL CREATIVE INCLUSIVE



Introduction

At the University of Suffolk, we are committed to fostering a community that embraces Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) as fundamental values underpinning our mission and vision. Our annual report serves as a comprehensive overview of our progress, challenges, and future initiatives in creating an inclusive environment for all students, staff, and stakeholders.

Over the past year, we have made progress in cultivating a culture of respect and belonging. This report highlights our key initiatives and projects (and our progress against these) that reflect our dedication to EDI and to improving EDI outcomes for both staff and students. It also emphasises the voices and experiences of our staff and students, as we believe that inclusivity is not just a goal but a collective journey.

As we look ahead, our commitment to continuous improvement remains steadfast. We aim to further embed EDI principles into every aspect of university life, ensuring that all individuals feel valued and empowered to thrive.

We invite you to explore this report and join us in our ongoing efforts to make the University of Suffolk a truly inclusive institution.

The context of Suffolk

Suffolk, located in the East of England, is characterised by diversity that reflects both its historical heritage and contemporary demographic shifts. The county boasts a mix of urban and rural communities, with significant populations in towns such as Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, and Lowestoft.

Suffolk's ethnic diversity is characterised by a growing mix of communities, with significant populations of White British alongside small but increasing representations of other ethnicities, contributing to the county's cultural fabric.

The area also embraces a range of socio-economic backgrounds, age groups, and abilities. This multifaceted demographic landscape offers both opportunities and challenges, emphasising the importance of ongoing efforts in promoting equity and inclusion across all sectors of life in Suffolk.

As a university, most of our support roles are recruited from the local region; however we are seeing an increase in recruitment (particularly to academic and academic supporting roles) from outside of Suffolk and the UK – all of which adds to the richness of our staffing population.

We are proud to serve a diverse student population; both at home and overseas. As a small-to-medium-sized HE provider, we have over 16,000 undergraduate students across our Ipswich campus and our partner organisations, and a growing postgraduate community. The vast majority of our undergraduates are enrolled on full-time programmes. For instance, in 2023, our population of entrants consisted of 95% full-time, 5% part-time and 3% of all entrants were apprentices. Unique to the sector, 90% of our new students are classified as mature and 68% come from areas of socioeconomic deprivation; both of which are identified as student groups

at risk of experiencing systemic barriers to equality of opportunity in accessing and succeeding in higher education.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC)

The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) meets three times a year to:

- Monitor the key areas of priority for the institution as agreed for the year in relation to EDI (currently: Belonging, Athena Swan and People).
- Keep relevant policies and procedures (which influence or are influenced by EDI matters) and their Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) under review.
- Set, monitor and report progress against equality objectives.

The committee has membership from across the institution's community including academic representatives, professional service managers, Trades Unions and Staff Networks.

Members of the Senior Leadership Team are responsible for leading the implementation of the Equality and Diversity approach and action planning in relation to employee and student matters within their own Schools and Directorates/departments; ensuring that all staff understand their responsibilities and receive support to carrying these out.

All members of the institution's community have a responsibility to ensure that their behaviour towards each other and to the wider external community is respectful, encouraging a positive and inclusive environment.

EDI Governance structure

Board

- Overall responsibility for ensuring adherence to the duties set out within the relevant legislation and in the University's Equality and Diversity policy.

Executive

- Ensures that the Equality and Diversity policy and associated action plans are implemented effectively (including resourcing).
- Leading the implementation of the Equality and Diversity approach and action planning in relation to employee and student matters within their own Schools and Directorates.
- Ensuring that all staff understand their responsibilities and receive support to carry these out.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor

- Executive responsibility for Equality and Diversity (all – students and staff) (reporting to the Vice-Chancellor and the Board).
- Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Director of People and Organisational Development

- Senior management responsibility for Equality and Diversity (staff).
- Vice Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee.

Senate

- Ensures academic policies and procedures avoid discrimination, in terms of student recruitment, progression and attainment.

EDI Committee

- Lead responsibility for assuring the institution's equality obligations and commitments.
- Reports to the Executive.

EDI Embedded

EDI runs through the heart of the University of Suffolk. Inclusivity is embedded as a core value and our staff tell us that the thing we do best is “treating everyone with dignity and respect, regardless of gender, race and ethnicity, sexuality, age, religion and other protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010”. With a staff rating of 8.5/10 in our 2024 engagement survey, we are very proud of this outcome.

Our Values and Behaviours

VALUES



Transformative

We believe in the power of education to deliver positive change for the individuals and communities with whom we work.



Collaborative

We thrive through inclusive, trusting and supporting relationships which build a sense of community and mutual responsibility and help achieve our mutual goals.



Empowering

We inspire all members of the University to be the best they can be and support them to realise their potential.



Professional

We strive to deliver the highest standards of service and scholarship.



Creative

We dare to challenge established beliefs, generate new ideas and strive to change the communities we serve. We are innovative in finding new ways and solutions to advance the boundaries of knowledge and address real life issues.



Inclusive

We are community built on respect, fairness and compassion. We debate our differences sensitively and celebrate the strength and creativity that a diverse community gives us.

BEHAVIOURS



Managing self and others

Awareness of own behaviour and how this impacts others; and encouraging positive behaviours from those that you manage.



Embracing of change

Adjusting to unfamiliar situations and demands, seeing change as an opportunity and embracing (not resisting) this. Delivering positive change for the students and communities we work with.



Achievement, solution and service focussed

Consistently meeting agreed objectives and delivering excellent service, through robust planning and organising, adapting as required. Taking a holistic view and working enthusiastically and with creativity to analyse problems and develop workable solutions – identifying opportunities for innovation.



Clear communication

Actively listening and communicating in an open, clear way – to eliminate jargon and confusion, and prevent barriers to understanding.



Accountability

Taking responsibility for your own work and actions (and demanding the same of others). Being honest if things do not go to plan or require improvement.



Honesty and integrity

Displaying honesty and trustworthiness in all that you do – and demanding this of others (and challenging where this is not seen).



Respect

Respecting and recognising difference and diversity as being essential to the achievement of a well-rounded working and studying environment. Showing tolerance, fairness, friendliness and compassion.



Working together

Working collaboratively to achieve objectives, with bigger picture in mind.



Developing of self and others

Commitment to own and others personal and professional development – in terms of skills, knowledge and behaviours – to reach full potential (for wider benefit of self and university).

Our values and professional behaviours are embedded in our culture and in the employee lifecycle – starting with values-based recruitment, through to behavioural objectives at probation and appraisal. We support staff to live the values and challenge when negative

indicators are seen. Our values work has received significant praise from staff via free text survey comments in 2023 and 2024, and our values have become our common language.

INCLUSIVE



Inclusivity is one of our six core values, and this is underpinned by the behaviour of respect, which we expect to see demonstrated by our staff and student population.

We are a community built on respect, fairness and compassion. We debate our differences sensitively and celebrate the strength and creativity that a diverse community gives us.

Positive indicators

- Open-minded and embracing a diverse range of opinions, approaches and ideas.
- Creating an environment in which everyone feels they belong and will be valued.

Negative indicators

- Unable or unwilling to recognise the value that diversity offers; having a narrow perspective.
- Having a 'one size fits all approach' which potentially excludes or marginalises colleagues, students and members of our communities



EDI Highlights 2023–2024

We are particularly proud of our 2023–2024 ‘People’ EDI highlights, which are already adding impact and ensuring good outcomes for our staff:

Carers Policy

A new Supporting Carers policy was launched to demonstrate our support for colleagues who are carers and to set out what support is available which includes:

- 5 days’ paid carers leave per year (an enhancement from the statutory provision of 5 days unpaid).
- Carers passport.
- Information on linked supporting policies and procedures.

Adjustments at Work

We have implemented a new Adjustments at Work procedure which has been designed to empower conversations around reasonable adjustments. Consulted on by the Disability Network, the procedure provides guidance around what a reasonable adjustment is and to advise line managers and employees on how to conduct a discussion around adjustments alongside how to implement them.



Membership of Race Equality Matters (REM)

Following recommendation from the Anti-Racism Collective, the University became a part of Race Equality Matters (REM) which is an organisation whose fundamental ambition is to achieve Race Equality in workplaces, through the engagement, empowerment and education of organisations and their workforces.



Mindful Employer

As part of our commitment to our people’s wellbeing, the University continues to operate under the Mindful Employer Charter. The charter provides a number of commitments that the University has pledged to maintain to support employee mental health and wellbeing and creating an open and supportive culture where people can talk about their mental health confidently.



Disability Confident

We are a Disability Confident Employer which means we are committed to providing a fair chance for people with disabilities in our workplace; from their application to work for us through to their employee journey with us. Alongside this accreditation is a plan where actions have been identified to continually improve experiences for our employees and applicants with disabilities.



Athena Swan Bronze

University of Suffolk was proud to achieve Athena Swan Bronze in 2023. The University Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team (SAT) plays a pivotal role in monitoring and guiding the implementation of the Athena Swan action plan, ensuring progress at an institutional level. The SAT team actively reviews the delivery and impact of actions, using both quantitative and qualitative data to identify challenges and opportunities related to gender equality. This involves evaluating relevant policies, practices, and activities, and responding by establishing gender equality priorities, aspirations, and targets. The SAT continuously reviews and refines the evidence-based action plan to ensure advancement toward these priorities throughout the award period. Additionally, the effectiveness of actions is regularly assessed to ensure they are meeting objectives, with the action plan evolving based on these evaluations. The SAT reports progress, resourcing needs, and recommendations to the University's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee, ensuring alignment with institutional goals.

SAT team members attended the following external events in 2023-2024:

- Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion Equality Charters Enhancing Practice Event and the Enhancing Practice Event.
- Caring Responsibilities and Gender Equality in Higher Education run by Advance HE.
- Equality Charters Networking Event: Explore Developing Your Action Plan.

These external training events provided an opportunity for participants to share questions, challenges, experiences, and learning on action planning within the Athena Swan Charter self-assessment with the broader Charters community.

Impactful EDI training

In 2023–2024 we commissioned bespoke training 'Supporting EDI Principles' and 'Promoting EDI Principles' from Birketts Solicitors. These sessions covered introducing EDI, recognising negative behaviours and microaggression, and challenging internal biases and supporting those in minority groups. The manager sessions also focussed on key employee lifecycle touchpoints, such as recruitment.

Suffolk Family Carers also delivered sessions for line managers around how to support members of their team who have caring responsibilities.

Successful EDI outcomes in Academic Progression

During 2022–2023 improvements were made to the academic progression routes to align more closely with the appraisal process, and importantly for the process to expressly consider the effects resulting from specific individual circumstances such as absence due to maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave, caring commitments, part-time or other flexible working arrangements. Whilst no dilution of the required quality would be expected, the quantity of the contribution would be considered.

As a result of this we have seen improved outcomes, and in 2023–2024 we were proud that 68% of all academic promotion applications were successful, 71% of which were women. There were also good success rates from underrepresented groups (50% of those from Global Majority background and 86% of those who were part time). This change reflects the effectiveness of our efforts to address gender equity and diversity, providing tangible evidence that our initiatives to support female and underrepresented groups career progression are yielding positive results.



Equal pay audit

During 2023–2024 we undertook a gender equal pay audit to assure ourselves of our current position about the application of equal pay across all of our pay bands.

Apart from a small number of our senior members of staff, all posts are evaluated using the Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA) scheme. This system uses a fair, systematic and consistent approach to objectively measure 14 elements of jobs within the University, allowing them to be objectively compared and ranked against each other, thereby providing the basis for a fair pay and grading structure. The exceptions are Executive posts, whose salaries are individually determined by Remuneration Committee by reference to sector and other appropriate benchmark data; and some of our Senior Leadership team and non-Executive Professors, whose salaries are checked against sector and specialism benchmarks.

As set out in the New Joint National Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES) Equal Pay Reviews and Gender Pay Gap reporting guidance for higher education institutions (revised edition, January 2018), a significant pay gap is generally a difference of 5% or more or any recurring differences of 3% or more.

Equal Pay Audit – Gender

Band	Total Head count	Total FTE	Men head count	Men FTE	Women head count	Women FTE	Diff no. of women staff compared to men	Women FTE salary as % of men
1	27	19.74	8	7.3	19	12.44	11	2.66%
2	42	32.62	14	11.67	28	20.95	14	0.86%
3	72	58.08	14	13.2	58	44.88	44	-0.17%
4	88	77.68	22	20.9	66	56.78	44	-0.38%
5	84	75.56	19	18.2	65	57.36	46	-2.10%
6	156	129.67	60	50.9	96	78.77	36	-0.78%
7	116	106.7	44	39.4	72	67.3	28	-2.81%
8/9	25	24.05	9	9	16	15.05	7	0.73%
Professoriate (Associate Professor, Professor Band A, B, and C)	35	29.4	21	19.4	14	10	-7	2.02%
SPOT	22	21	11	10.2	11	10.8	0	-5.93%

NB — where the number of staff in the dataset is less than six, the bands have been combined as shown above.

From the equal pay audit undertaken there was one area marginally exceeding the 5% differential, which is attributable to gender composition/seniority in the Executive during 2023–24, which influenced the data (it should be noted that we expect this differential to reduce under 5% in 2024–25 due to staffing changes). Where the datasets were less than six, the bands have been combined to ensure no individual may be identifiable. Based on these findings, we do not consider there to be any areas of concern that need a specific intervention, or approaches to the setting of pay across the institution which need to be undertaken in a different way. We are confident therefore that our staff are paid fairly.

We will repeat this equal pay audit process in three years' time to remain assured of our position. As can be seen further down in this report, our Gender Pay Gap has reduced this year and is now at its lowest since reporting commenced.



Staff Networks

Our staff networks have continued to meet to discuss matters important to them, and any issues pertinent to the wider university have been raised within our EDI committee.

Our networks are proud to highlight the following work that they have been involved in this year:

LGBTQ+ Staff Network: successful launch of pronoun badges which have proven very popular with staff and students; the design of a pronoun guide which can be found on Hub (our staff intranet) and a film night where staff and students got together to watch 'Priscilla – Queen of the Desert' and discuss the themes behind it.

Disability Network: collaboration with People and Organisational Development (POD) department in providing valuable feedback on the new 'Adjustments at Work' procedure.

Anti-Racism Collective: successful 'Anti-Racism in Education' symposium hosted on campus; and an increase in membership from staff and students.

Menopause Network: continued running of menopause cafes and continued active support in the network Teams channel.



Our Staff EDI data

We are pleased to present our 'People profile'– showing differences from the previous year via +/- to illustrate areas of change.

Staffing data is taken from our HR Information System: Resourcelink (Zellis). University of Suffolk does not hold any responsibility (and therefore data) in relation to the staff of our partner organisations, and these individuals do not form part of this report.

Our staffing profile remains broadly static and there have been minimal changes in the 'make-up' of our staff profile in the last 12 months.

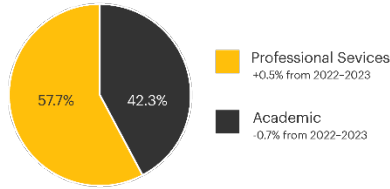


University of Suffolk Staff 'Snapshot' 2023–2024

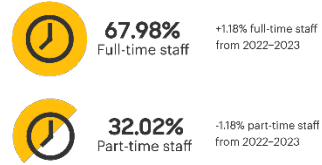
2023–2024

Staff Snapshot 2024

Staff by area



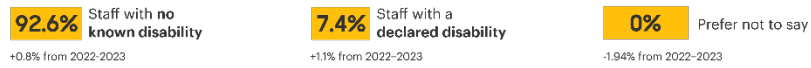
Full/Part-time



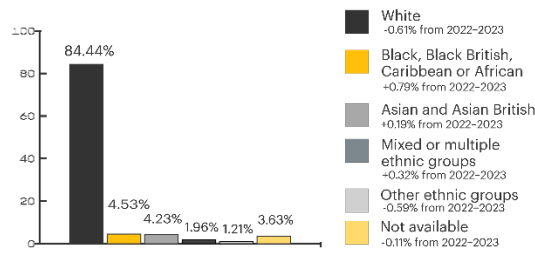
Gender



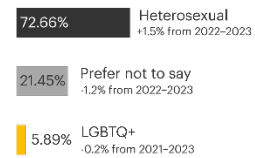
Disability



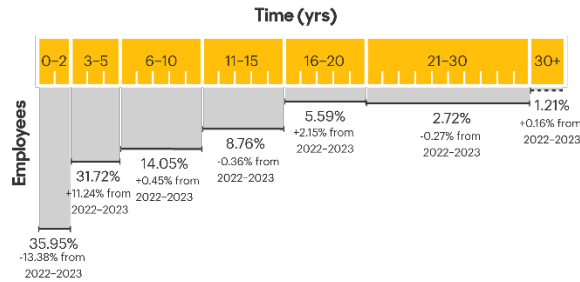
Ethnic group



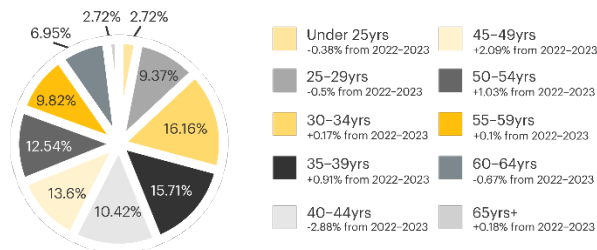
Sexual orientation



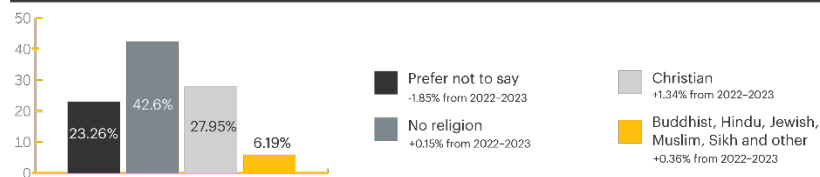
Length of service



Age group



Religion



Gender, Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gaps

Gender Pay Gap (GPG)

The Gender Pay Gap refers to the percentage by which the average pay for female members of staff is lower than the average pay for male members of staff. The University's Gender Pay Gap is shown below.

Gender Pay Gap	Hourly rate of pay (£) 2024		Gender Pay Gap (%)			
	Female	Male	GPG 2024	GPG 2023	GPG 2022	GPG 2021
Mean	£20.48	£23.25	11.9%	14.20%	13.23%	15.89%
Median	£19.14	£22.17	13.68%	15.19%	16.18%	17.72%

Compared to men, the average pay of women is less, however the gap has reduced in both the mean and median since 2022–2023. Both mean and median pay gaps are now at their lowest since reporting started in 2017.

Ethnicity Pay Gap (EPG)

Global Majority (including casuals worked in March)	Global Majority £ph.	White (including white other) £ph.	EPG 2024	EPG 2023	EPG 2022	EPG 2021
Mean	£21.32	£21.34	0.09%	1.44%	-2.40%	-2.51%
Median	£20.30	£20.30	0.00%	-0.44%	-2.98%	2.90%

Compared to white staff, the average pay of Global Majority staff is marginally less. The median pay of both groups is the same. This reflects a slight decrease in the Global Majority pay from 2022–2023 when Global Majority staff were paid slightly more. We are very pleased that this essentially shows no pay gap or differential because of or relating to ethnicity.

Disability Pay Gap (DPG)

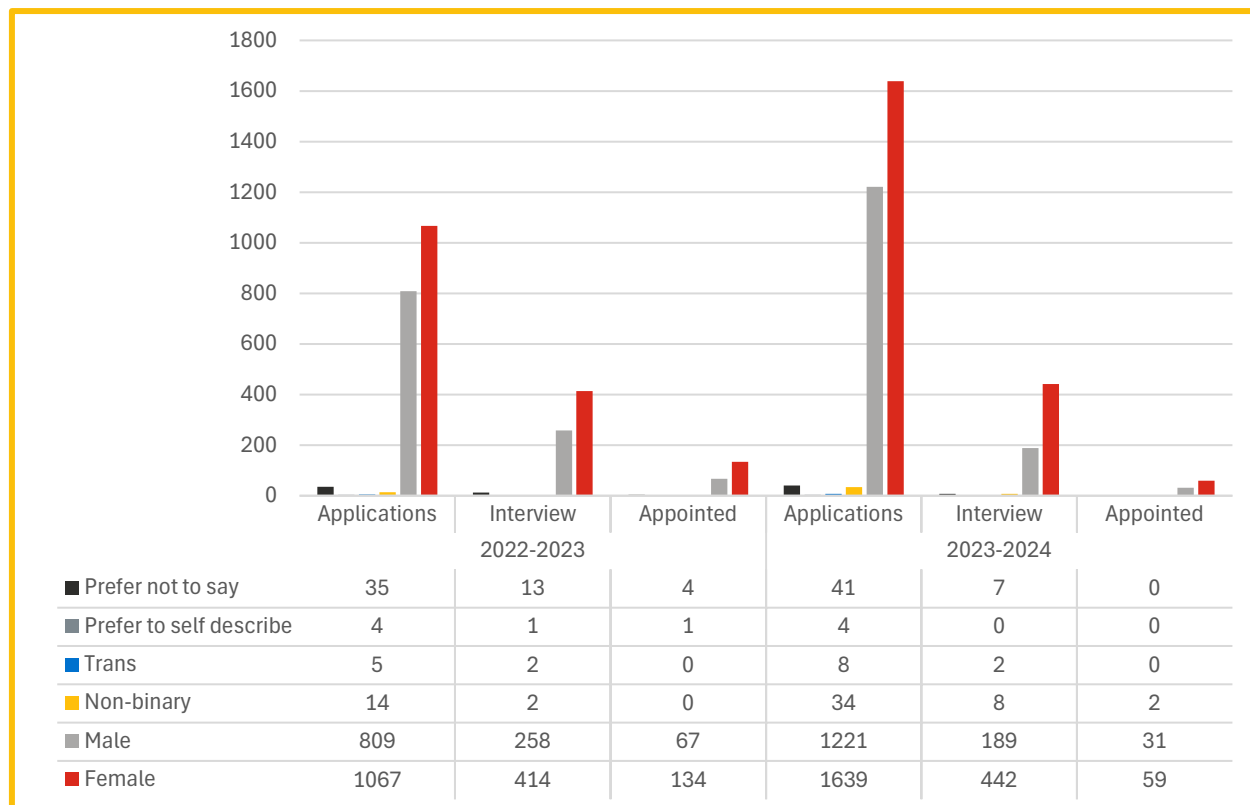
Disabled workers	Disabled £ph.	Non- disabled £ph.	DPG 2024	DPG 2023	DPG 2022	DPG 2021
Mean	£18.56	£21.62	14.13%	14.97%	14.50%	12.63%
Median	£17.52	£20.30	13.68%	19.59%	16.18%	19.94%

Compared to non-disabled staff, the average pay of disabled staff is less in both mean and median however, the median gap has decreased by 5.91%. Work is needed to better understand what is impacting this pay gap and what actions may reduce this.



Staff Recruitment – Gender identity, Ethnicity and Disability

Progression through Recruitment Stages by Gender identity 2023–2024

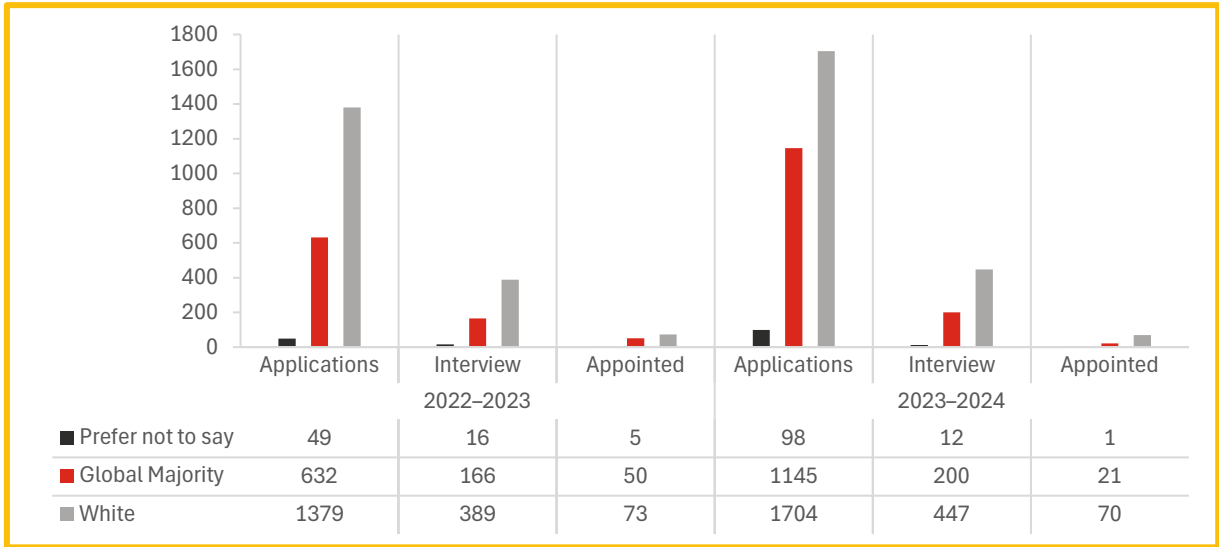


In terms of success of different gender identities through the recruitment process, in a year when 92 appointments were made:

Gender identity	Male	Female	Non-Binary	Trans	Prefer not to say	Prefer to self-describe
% success rate of all appointees	34%	64%	2%	0%	0%	0%
% success rate of each gender identity (i.e. % of appointments from applications of each gender identity)	2.5%	3.6%	5.88%	0%	0%	0%

Our recruitment data shows that the success rates at recruitment by gender (male and female) is very close to our staff profile gender split.

Progression through Recruitment Stages by Ethnicity 2023–2024



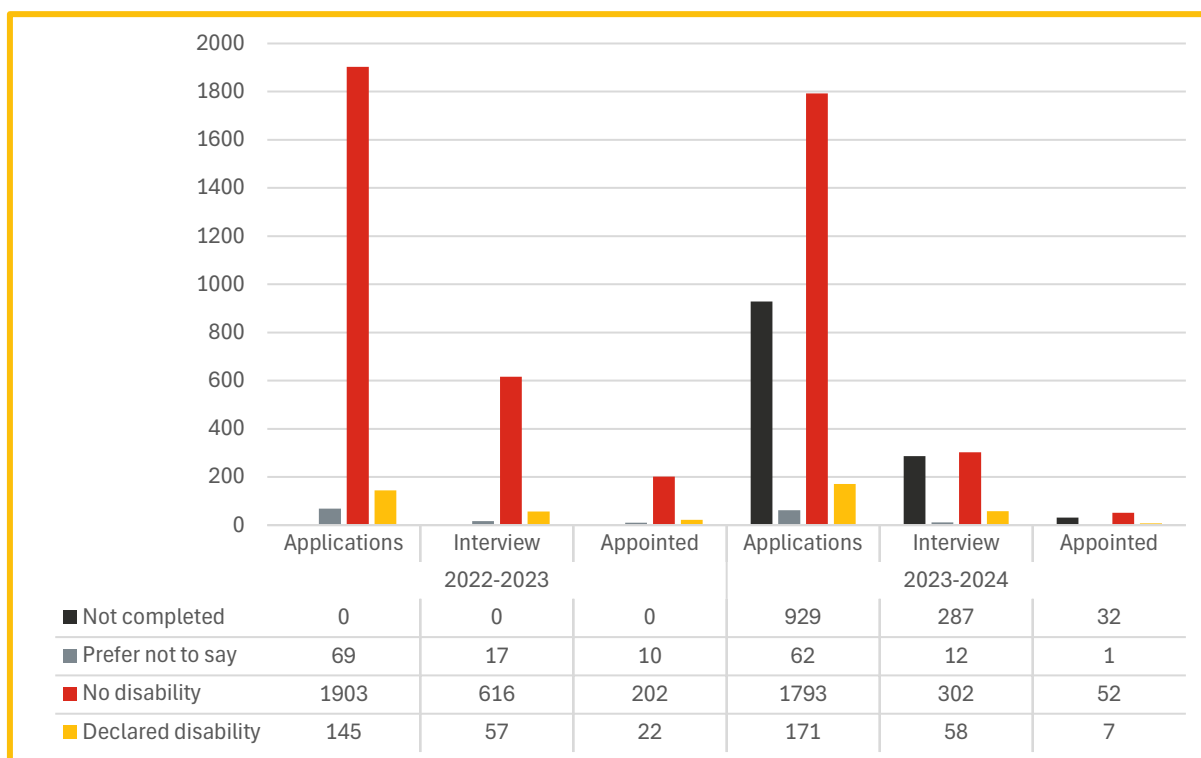
NB — the difference in the total applications relate to eight roles which were appointed through recruitment agencies, and we therefore do not have this information on applicants/appointees as these did not go through our Applicant Tracking System.

In terms of success of Global Majority and white applicants through the recruitment process, appointments made in 2023–2024 were:

Ethnicity	Global Majority	White	Prefer not to say
% success rate of all appointees	23%	76%	1%
% success rate by ethnicity (i.e. % of appointments from applications of each ethnicity)	1.83%	4.10%	1%

Success rates for white applicants are still higher proportionally than for those from a Global Majority background; however, they are lower than the broader ethnicity makeup of our staff base, which is positive, and which indicates that this should be making a positive change to increase our diversity across the institution.

Progression through Recruitment Stages by Disability 2023–2024



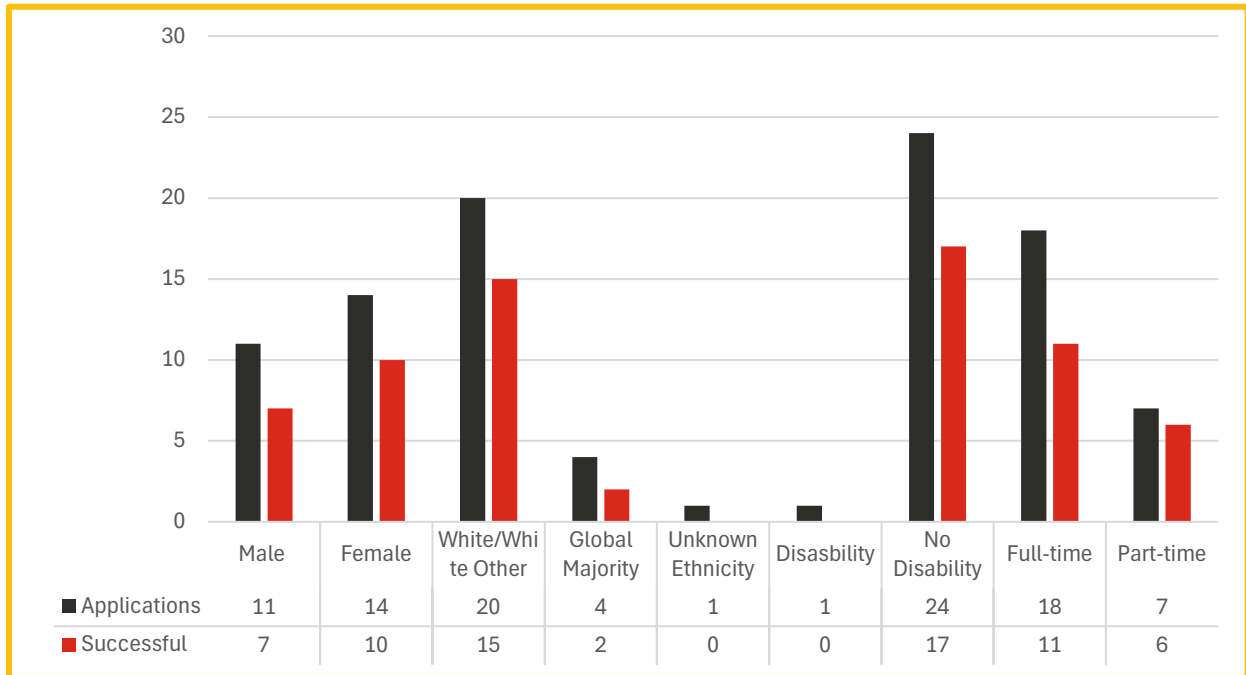
In terms of success of disabled and non-disabled applicants through the recruitment process, appointments made in 2023–2024 were:

Disability	Declared Disability	No Disability	Prefer not to say	Not completed
% success rate of all appointees	7%	57%	1%	35%
% success rate by disability (i.e. % of appointments from applications by disability)	4.09%	2.9%	1.61%	3.44%

Whilst proportionally more disabled (as a percentage of disabled applicants) than non-disabled (as a percentage of non-disabled applicants) saw recruitment success, it remains important that those with disabilities apply to work at the university and that there are no barriers to applying. Overall, those without disabilities saw most recruitment successes. With increased applications overall from those with disabilities we would hope to see higher levels of appointments from those with this protected characteristic.

Progression

Academic Progression by Characteristic

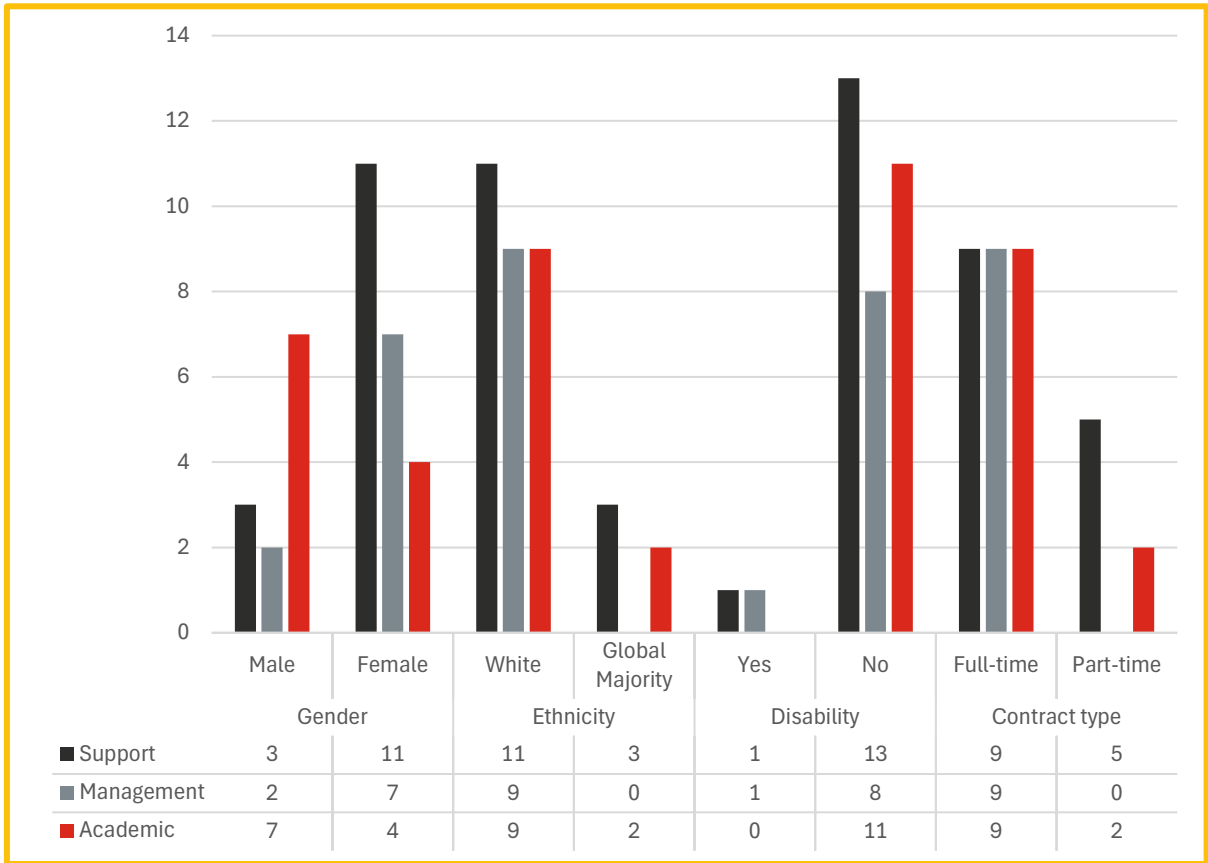


In terms of success through the academic progression processes (Lecturer to Senior Lecturer; Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor and Professor), from 25 applications made in 2023–2024:

- 44% of applications were from men and 29% were successful
- 56% of applications were from women and 40% were successful
- 16% of applications were from a Global Majority background and 50% were successful
- 80% of applications were from white staff and 60% were successful
- 28% of applications were from part-time staff and 86% were successful
- 4% of applications were from disabled staff and 0% were successful.

It should be noted that 'readiness' for progression is determined through annual appraisal processes, and in terms of Lecturer to Senior Lecturer on further analysis of the academic workforce, the majority of the academic staff members at Lecturer/Senior Lecturer level who are part-time, disabled or from a global majority background have five years or less service and are therefore unlikely to have been ready for promotion within that timeframe.

Internal Progression by Characteristic



Internal progression measures the internal movement (excluding academic promotions which are detailed separately above) resulting from successful applications for different or higher banded roles, re-banding of roles, and temporary enhanced roles (i.e. acting up).

From 34 internal promotions in 2023–2024:

- 65% were women and 35% were men.
- 85% were white staff and 15% were Global Majority staff.
- 94% were non-disabled staff and 6% were disabled staff.
- 79% were full-time staff and 21% were part-time staff.

Staff Engagement

The third and final staff engagement survey using the 'HIVE' platform was undertaken in March 2024. Further improvements to our overall scores were seen and we were encouraged that EDI remains an area that our staff feel has good outcomes. The questions relating to EDI have been selected and included below. Most responses fell within the 'high' scoring area (10 to 7) with other responses marginally below at the higher end of 'moderate' (which spanned 6.9 to 5).

Question	2024 score	2023 score	2022 score
Everyone in my School/Directorate treats each other with dignity and respect, regardless of gender, race and ethnicity, sexuality, age, religion and other protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010)	8.5	8.4	8.3
People of all cultures and backgrounds are respected and valued here	8.3	8.3	8.3
My School/Directorate leadership actively supports gender equality (Athena Swan)	8.1	8.1	7.9
I feel comfortable being myself when I am at work	7.7	7.6	7.6
I have conversations with my line manager regarding my performance and development	7.7	7.8	7.5
My line manager supports my career development (Athena Swan)	7.6	7.6	7.5
Positive professional behaviours are displayed by employees in the organisation	7.6	7.7	7.5
Agile working is truly embraced in my School/Directorate (Athena Swan).	7.4	7.5	7.3
I feel confident that incidents of harassment and bullying would be addressed appropriately within my School/Directorate (Athena Swan)	7.5	7.6	7.3
I feel like I belong at the University of Suffolk	7.1	7.2	6.9
My contributions are valued in my School/Directorate (Athena Swan)	7.0	7	6.7
This organisation demonstrates a commitment to meeting the needs of employees with caring responsibilities (Athena Swan)	6.7	6.8	6.7
I am comfortable voicing my opinions, even if they are different from others in my School/Directorate	6.8	7	6.6
This organisation demonstrates a commitment to meeting the needs of employees with disabilities (Athena Swan)	6.8	6.9	6.6
I believe that my wellbeing is supported in my School/Directorate (Athena Swan)	6.9	6.8	6.5
I would feel comfortable in talking openly about my mental health with my line manager (Athena Swan)	7	6.9	6.5

Our Student EDI data

We are pleased to present our 'Student profile' — showing differences from the previous year via +/- to illustrate areas of change.

All data relating to students includes both Ipswich campus students and those who are enrolled with our partner organisations (excluding Unicaf), and for whom University of Suffolk is their course awarding institution. Student data is taken from the internal Student Record System.

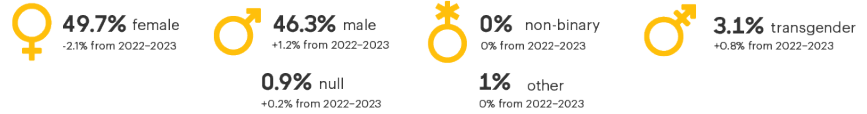


University of Suffolk Undergraduate Student 'Snapshot' 2023–2024

Undergraduate 2023–2024

Student Snapshot 2024

Gender



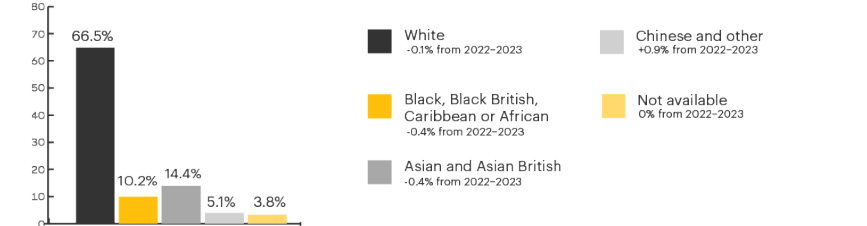
Disability



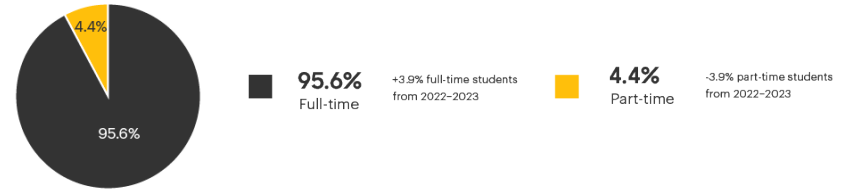
Sexual orientation



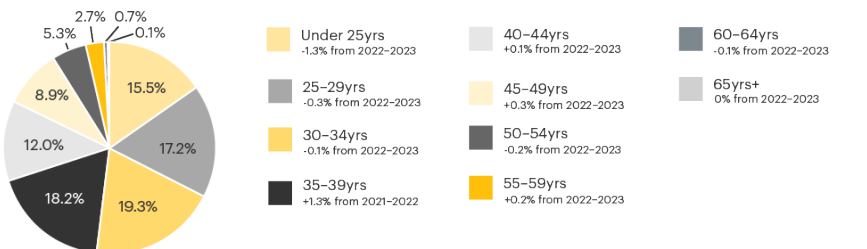
Ethnic group



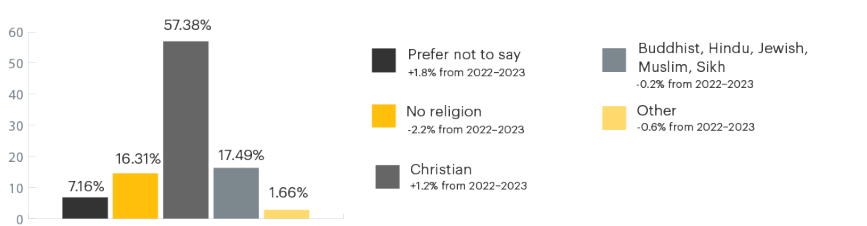
Mode of Attendance



Age group



Religion

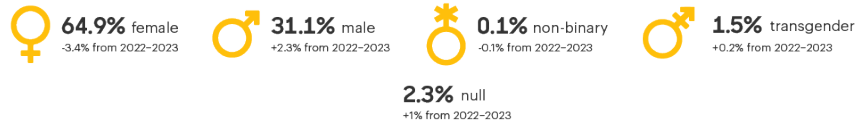


University of Suffolk Postgraduate Taught Student 'Snapshot' 2023–2024

Postgraduate 2023–2024

Student Snapshot 2024

Gender



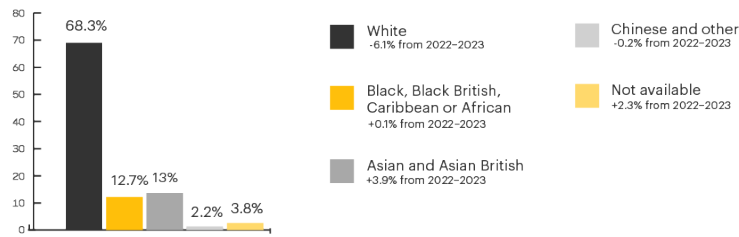
Disability



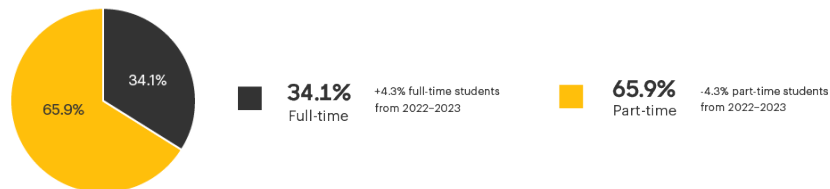
Sexual orientation



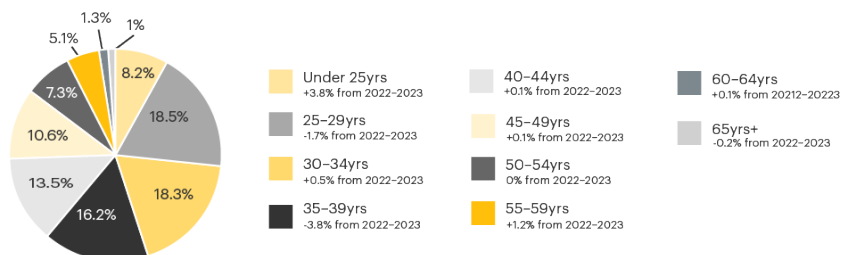
Ethnic group



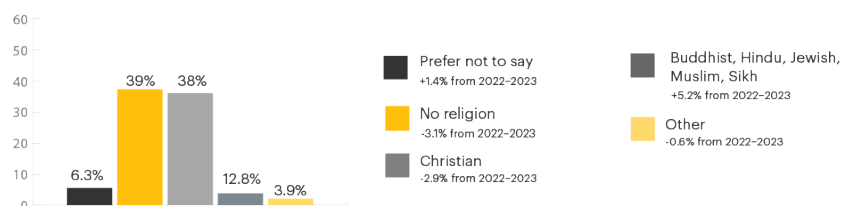
Mode of Attendance



Age group



Religion



University of Suffolk Postgraduate Research Student 'Snapshot' 2023–2024

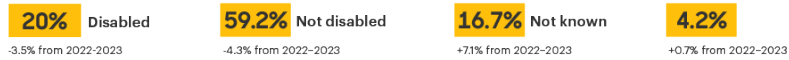
Research 2023–2024

Student Snapshot 2024

Gender



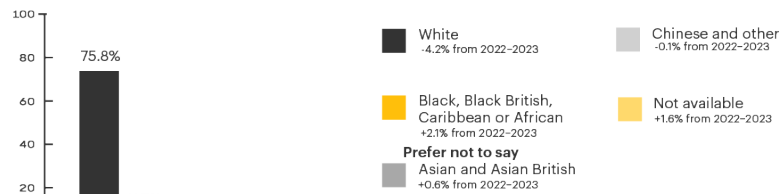
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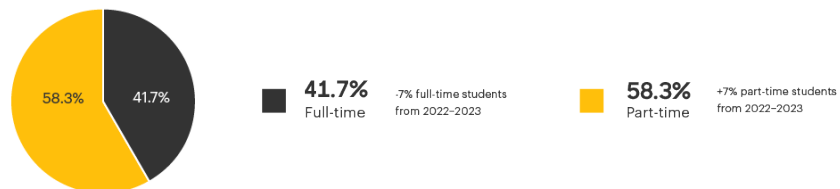
Sexual orientation



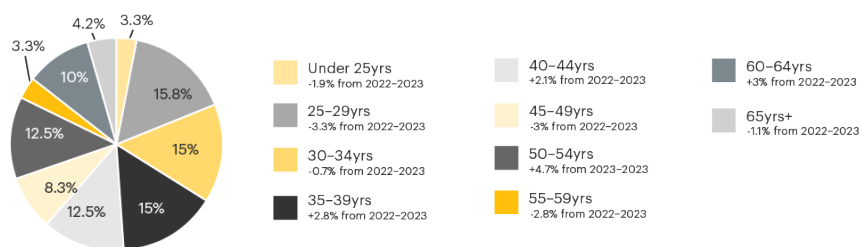
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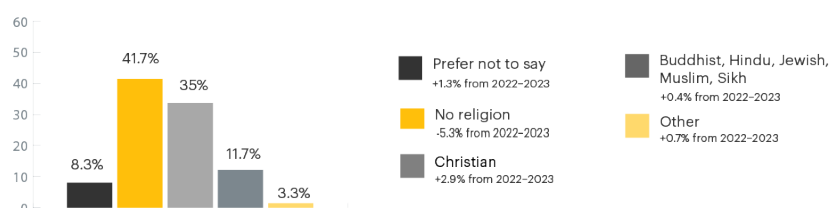
Mode of Attendance



Age group



Religion

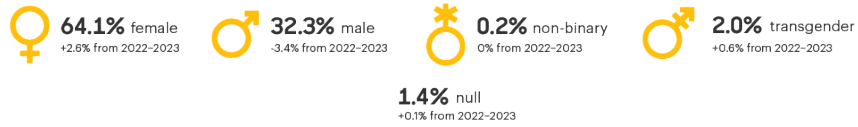


University of Suffolk Apprentices 'Snapshot' 2023–2024

Apprentices 2023–2024

Student Snapshot 2024

Gender



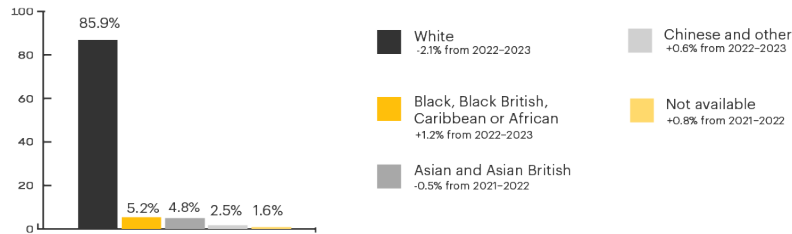
Disability



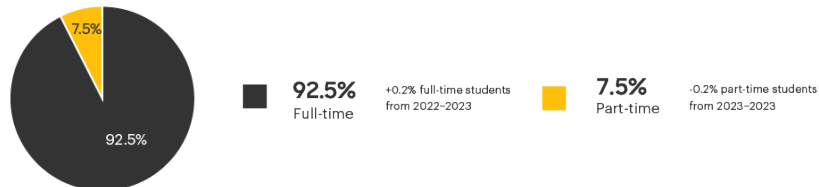
Sexual orientation



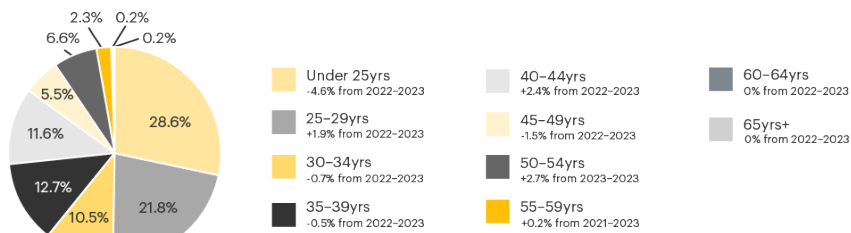
Ethnic group



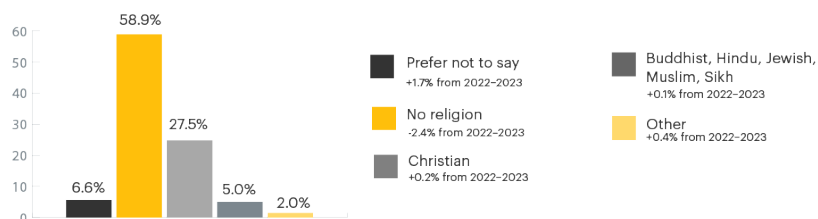
Mode of Attendance



Age group



Religion



Building belonging and an inclusive learning experience

Our compassionate pedagogy, Block and Blend, has had significant positive impact on the academic experience of our staff and students, and on students' ability to stay in study. Previous reports have noted increases in continuation for those students from under-represented groups, and particularly students of the Global Majority and those with a declared mental health condition. We are building ongoing learning into our curriculum design process, both in relation to assessment in block (Buck et al., 2023, Vieira Braga et al., 2024) and drawing on the QAA Inclusive Higher Education Framework (Quality Assurance Agency, 2023).

'Belonging' has been established as a sector-wide area of focus and is a component of the QAA Inclusive Higher Education Framework. Increasing student belonging may contribute to restoring connections between students and learning communities fractured during the Covid pandemic and has been seen to impact on academic confidence, friendships and wellbeing (WonkHE, 2022). In student surveys conducted early 2024, students were asked to rate their sense of belonging to a learning community. The results provided insight into the perception of students graduating post undergraduate degree and in study on postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes at the University. In the National Student Survey, the overall positivity score (including all partner institutions) was 83, however this fell to 75 when excluding partners with School scores ranging from 69-80¹. Data for the postgraduate taught students indicates similar experiences and levels of belonging, with a benchmark score of 70 for the sector, and 64 at Ipswich. Postgraduate Research students indicating a positivity score of 51 against the sector benchmark of 58.

In this context, exploration and understanding of what belonging is as a lived experience for staff and students becomes critical, and has been undertaken during this academic year, with a focus on themes of 'knowing our community' and 'understanding the impact of block on belonging'. This work has been completed as part of an AdvanceHE-led project on belonging and in parallel with curriculum-facing work to implement an inclusive education framework at the University of Suffolk as presented below.

A survey of undergraduate students with a respondent demographic closely reflecting the broader student population. Findings of statistical significance were that:

- Students who reported struggling to find a quiet space for their coursework were significantly more likely to report a lower sense of belonging, with their odds being approximately five times greater.
- Students in their first year of study appeared to be significantly more likely to report a higher sense of belonging compared to those in later years, with their odds being about two times higher.
- First-generation students exhibited a 1.8-fold higher likelihood of experiencing a *stronger* sense of belonging.

¹ There is no sector benchmark for this measure in the National Student Survey.

Listening rooms, a method of data collection first developed at Sheffield Hallam University and used in HE for data collection since 2017 (Parkin and Heron, 2022) were also conducted with 10 pairs of students exploring the impact of block on a sense of belonging.

Three themes were elicited from iterative facilitated discussion as part of round table analyses of student listening room data: valuing and respecting students, inclusive space and place and the 'whole world' course. Each theme contained two sub-themes within it that are outlined below:

Valuing and respecting students

- Welcome and transition
- Communications with staff

Inclusive space and place

- Physical environment
- Different student groups

The 'whole-world' course

- Block structure
- Socialisation within course

With students telling us:

"I like block and blend a lot because it spreads things out, it's less stress and you get to know your teachers and class better. I much prefer blocks compared to a regular structure."

"... it improves relationships with peers because this provides the opportunity for dialogue. We're at the same place at the same time . It also helps in terms of bonding, I suppose to some extent because it gives us opportunities for conversation."

"I feel like the University doesn't have a heart. I think that's one of my biggest gripes..."

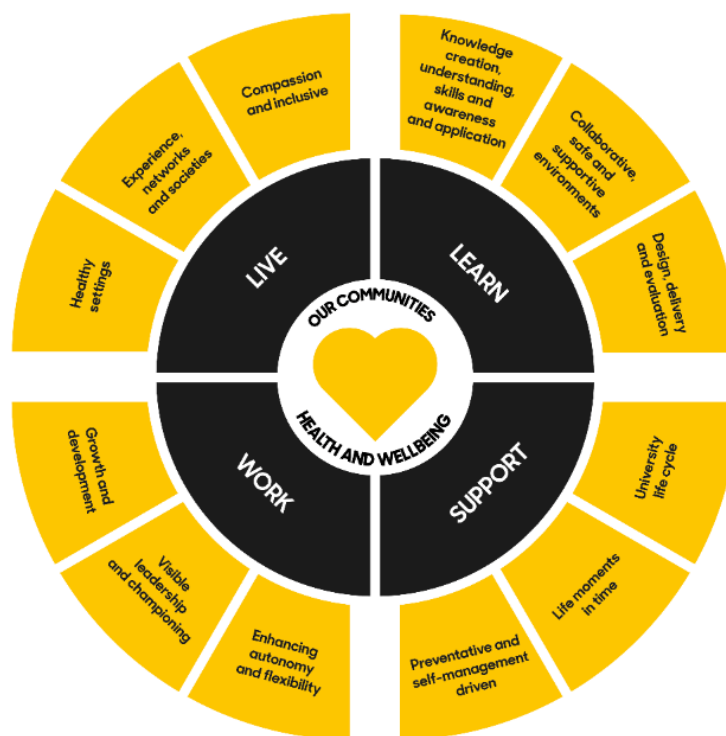
These insights give us perceptions and measures which can be revisited to consider the lived student experience and barriers to accessing, succeeding and progressing through higher education into graduate employment. They provide us with opportunities to consider the experience in the round, using systems thinking to reflect on estate, communications, learning design, assessment practices and how we build the concept of the 'whole world course' for those in our community.

This will shape our work in the next academic year, with our focus shifting to initial experiences and impressions, arrival and induction, and the ongoing enhancement of our physical and digital estate creating villages, communities and the Suffolk experience.

Embedding a whole-university approach to mental health and wellbeing

Wellbeing is front and centre of our People Strategy and our everyday approach. We have worked hard over recent years to re-set our People Culture to one which is inclusive, pro-active and engaged. Our annual staff surveys have put the voice of 'our People' at the heart of changes we are making, and we have made great strides forward in establishing the University as an Employer of Choice.

Our whole-university approach to wellbeing spans both our staff and students and ensures we have a golden thread of wellbeing in all that we do. Our Wellbeing Model (based on the Theory of Change approach) supports the embedding of wellbeing throughout the organisation. When assessing new policies/approaches/ideas from an equality perspective, we also assess from a wellbeing perspective. Our model can be seen below:



To enhance our a whole-university approach and mission to become a place that promotes the mental health and wellbeing of all members of the University community, a University Mental Health Charter Project Group embarked upon Student Minds, 2023–2024 University Mental Health Charter (UMHC) Development Programme.

Originally published by Universities UK (UUK), the University of Suffolk already utilises the charter framework as our institutional Wellbeing Framework. Engagement with the UMHG development programmes places the University on a pathway toward assessment for charter status through the alignment and enhancement of our policies, processes and practice.

In 2023–2024, the project group:

- Deepened understanding of the UMHC Charter framework and its one hundred+ principles of good practice across eighteen themes and domains (Learn, Support, Work, Live).
- Identified existing good practice and areas for enhancement.
- Disseminated learning and practice for adoption; sharing practice on developing emotional resilience particularly when teaching (or studying) emotionally challenging content and use of trigger warnings in curriculum content with a staff guide due to be published in the Autumn term.

Our commitment towards the UMHC charter has been confirmed for a further year and the Project Group will continue forward in 2024–2025. In addition it is planned to expand the project group to strengthen partnership, student and academic representation and to draft domain responses and complete a gap analysis.

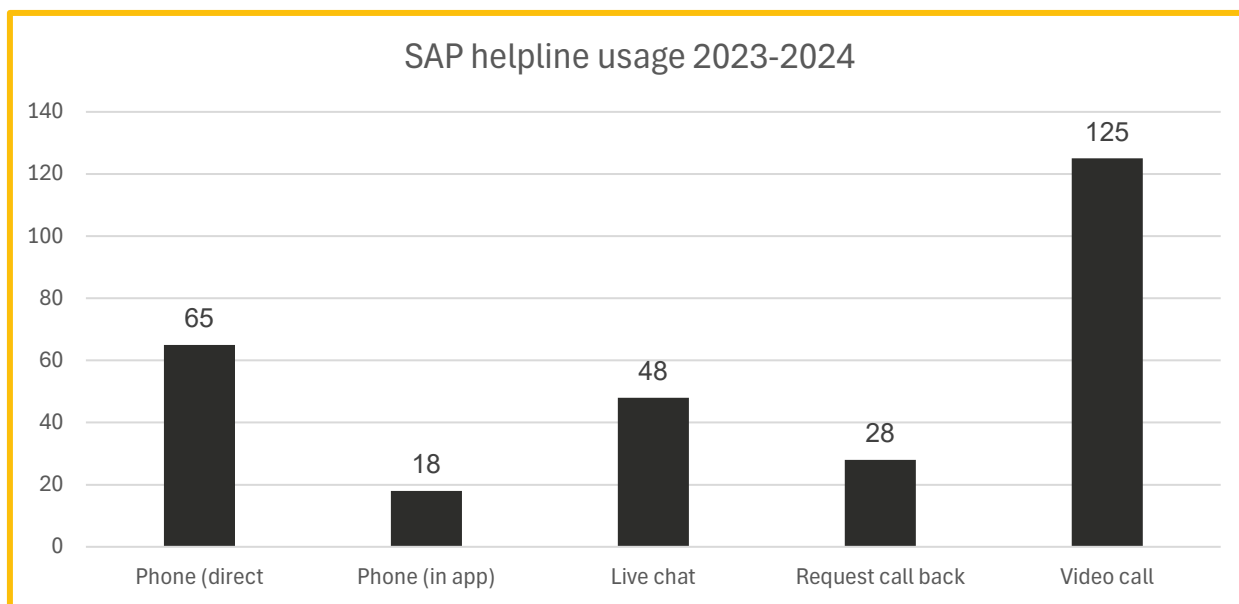
Finally, a self-help exercise focused on a 'hierarchy of wellbeing' has been successfully developed to assess staff perceptions of their wellbeing. This exercise is now embedded into team discussions and provides a structured approach to discussing and supporting staff wellbeing at a team or individual level. This initiative marks significant progress in addressing staff concerns and fostering a supportive work environment.

Student access to mental health and wellbeing support

To accompany in-house disability, mental health and counselling support services, this year saw the launch of a partnership to bring a Student Assistance Programme (SAP) with support for student wellbeing and mental health through a 24/7 counselling helpline and online app (Wisdom app).

Recognising the diversity in our student population, key features of this support programme is the capability to offer, for the first time, an out-of-hours wellbeing and counselling service. Counselling support can also be provided in different languages should a student prefer support delivered in their first, or preferred, spoken language, and support and advice which resonates with different characteristics and intersectionality.

There were 144 registrations to the Wisdom app and 648 active interactions in our first academic year (2023–2024) and as the table below illustrates, there were 283 engagements with counsellors.



Student communication and compassionate communication

A project began in February 2024 and will continue through 2024–2025 academic year where workstreams have been identified to explore communication and students’ experience through difference lenses. The workstreams identified include:

- Map student communication / information touchpoints across the university lifecycle.
- Understanding student experiences of communication and information touchpoints throughout the university lifecycle.
- Review of communication associated with transition, induction, and welcome activities.

At year end, the project group have undertaken the following:

- A review of communication and the channels used in the transition and induction period.
- Design and implementation of a tailored communication plan designed to connect with and orientate new students to key information, easing their transition and arrival to the University.
- An evaluation plan has been designed and this will commence in October 2024.
- Mapping of student communication ‘as-is’ across the academic lifecycle.

The project group remain cognisant of intersecting sector developments which relate to this project, such as the [Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce](#) (HEMHIT) workstream related to [‘Student Commitment’](#) which aims to address concerns about content and tone of communication through the adoption of compassionate communication principles. Staff training delivered in 2023–2024 has aimed to refresh understanding of and a commitment to compassionate communication.

In 2024–2025, there are plans to disseminate the transition and induction communication evaluation findings, review the transition and induction practise and draft a student communication framework for consultation.

EDI in Research at University of Suffolk

It is important to note in relation to research, that some national funders reference EDI considerations for research grant applications to their schemes. For example when applying for UKRI funding the applicant does not specifically need to include a section on EDI considerations, however in submitting an application the applicant needs consider EDI principles as detailed in UKRI policies and T&Cs: [UKRI-020424-FECGrantTermsConditionsApril2024.pdf](#) (section 3.4) and Guidance for equality, diversity and inclusion – UKRI.

National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) have their own policies on research inclusion and applicants are asked to consider this in terms of research teams and participants: [Research inclusion | NIHR British Council have specific questions on EDI.](#)

An example of EDI embedded in research practice is the current University of Suffolk Project 'Empowering Vulnerable Communities on Smart Home Ecosystem: Building Security and Privacy Awareness' led by Felix Ngobigha.

This project ensures equal and meaningful opportunities for people of different genders to be involved throughout the project as a priority. In terms of research and innovation, inclusive practices are being promoted to foster diverse perspectives and contributions. Collaborative decision-making processes are encouraged to ensure that diverse voices are heard and valued throughout the project's lifecycle. The project anticipates significant positive impacts on individuals of different genders, emphasising equitable opportunities and benefits throughout its implementation and beyond. By promoting inclusivity in project teams and leadership roles, it aims to enhance career advancement and participation in research and innovation activities.



EDI and our estate

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) are not just guiding principles but core drivers in the strategic development of our University estate. By leveraging insights from a recent AccessAble report, we are taking an evidence-based approach to shaping spaces that respond to the nuanced needs of our diverse population. This involves not only improving physical access, such as through better pathways, ramps, and signage, but also addressing less visible barriers. For instance, we are incorporating design elements that cater to neurodiverse individuals, ensuring environments that reduce sensory overload and provide quiet, calming areas for those who require them. These considerations go beyond compliance; they actively shape spaces where everyone, regardless of their individual needs, can fully participate in the University's academic, social, and professional life. Additionally, initiatives such as the wellbeing allotment and green spaces are central to our holistic approach to inclusion. These areas serve multiple purposes, supporting mental health, providing informal learning opportunities, and encouraging community interaction. By ensuring these spaces are accessible to all, including individuals with mobility challenges or sensory sensitivities, we enhance the overall experience of the estate.

Our commitment to EDI extends to our service partners as well, including NG Bailey and Churchills, where over 98% of the staff working with us are employed from Ipswich. We prioritise projects that favour local employment, ensuring that opportunities are accessible to our surrounding community and contributing to the social and economic wellbeing of the region. This partnership not only strengthens the local workforce but also aligns with our values of inclusion and community engagement.

This commitment to inclusive design and functionality, along with our focus on local employment, strengthens the University as a place where students, staff, and external partners feel valued and included. The impact of these ongoing efforts is clear; greater inclusivity leads to a more cohesive community, improved wellbeing, and ultimately enhances the satisfaction and engagement of all who interact with our estate.



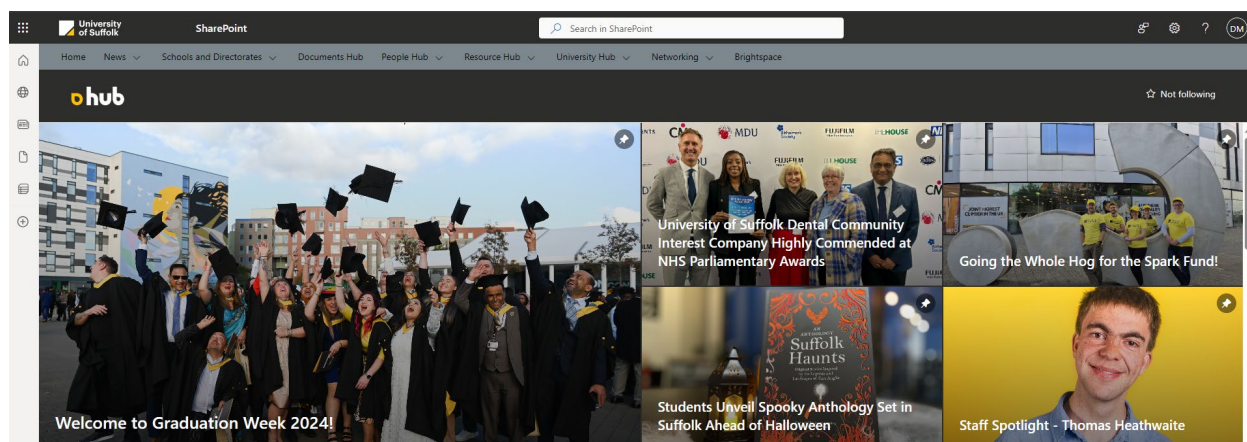
EDI and our communications

Website and 'Hub'

In 2023 after a review of the University's digital platforms, a new external website and staff intranet were launched. The purpose of the website is to provide information for potential and existing students, stakeholders, staff as well as for recruitment. The website has been designed to be used by as many people as possible, it is responsive on mobile devices, making it easy to access on all platforms. The structure of the site is easy to navigate, improving the user experience. Imagery and photography of the University campus and surrounding area presents an authentic view of the University.

The website includes a range of accessibility features including a zoom function up to 300% (without text spilling off the screen), appropriate colour contrast for improved readability and alternative text on images where appropriate. Heading levels on the site pages support assertive technologies including screen readers and browser plugins and the site can be navigated with only a keyboard if necessary.

The staff intranet, known as 'Hub' was launched with the aim of creating a central place for all information; a space to share news and to keep connected with colleagues across the organisation. In addition, the intranet aimed to reduce the amount of email traffic being sent to all staff. Every member of staff has access to the intranet and the homepage provides easy access to online systems such as for IT queries, booking leave, finance systems are more. News and noticeboard messages keep staff up to date with important information. Since its launch, the intranet has succeeded in connecting colleagues across the organisation, supporting new staff with easily accessible information and helping schools and directorates showcase their work. The staff intranet also has a dedicated place for networks which are run for and by staff including the Anti-Racism Collective, LGBTQ+ Staff Network, Menopause Network, Unions, and many others.



Summary action plan

Our strategic action areas (2023–2025) are documented in detail in our [action plan](#). This plan spans a number of areas of focus in respect of staff, students, and the overall institution.

To summarise our main areas of focus we aim to:

- Seek a better gender balance in our workforce, in terms of male to female ratio and also in terms of more balance in our gender spread across the pay quartiles.
- Improve recruitment outcomes for those from under-represented groups.
- Apply an EDI lens to our People outcomes across a range of activities (employee relations, objective achievement, personal development, progression etc) to understand (and address) where there may be any areas of concern or challenge.
- Better understand the support needed for under-represented groups in our workforce (carers, diverse gender identities etc), utilising lived experience and support through our staff networks.
- Continue to implement and monitor plans in respect of harassment and sexual misconduct.
- Undertake an efficacy review of our student reasonable adjustment processes.
- Continue our planned work around Access and Participation, Liberating the Curriculum and 'Belonging.'

Find out more

For more information about EDI at University of Suffolk please visit our website:

[Equality and Diversity | University of Suffolk \(uos.ac.uk\)](https://www.uos.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity)

Acknowledgements

The following staff are thanked for their input in the creation of the 2023-2024 University of Suffolk Annual EDI Report:

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Ellen Buck	Director of Learning & Teaching
Jo Divers	Associate Director - Learning, Teaching and Knowledge Exchange (Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health)
Andreea Tocca	Head of Research
James Nial	Head of Planning
Justine Oakes	Head of Strategic Estates Management
Kesha Allen	Marketing Business Partner
Jacqueline French	Communications Manager
Design and Content team	

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WonkHE. (2022) Students' perceptions of belonging and inclusion at university [Online]. Available: Available at: <https://wonkhe.com/wp-content/wonkhe-uploads/2022/02/Belonging-and-inclusion-survey-Wonkhe-Pearson-Feb-22.pdf> [Accessed 1 October 2024].



