

UCB Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report 2024/2025

1) Introduction and overview

At University College Birmingham (UCB), our mission is to provide an inclusive, equitable, and respectful environment for all staff, students, and stakeholders. We are committed to creating a campus culture that celebrates diversity and ensures every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

This report outlines our efforts, progress, and strategic objectives in advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout the 2024/2025 academic year.

University College Birmingham is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment where all students and staff feel valued, respected, and empowered to achieve their full potential. The work in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is underpinned by the belief that inclusivity drives innovation, enhances well-being, and enriches both the student and staff experience.

This report provides a summary of the University's progress against its six equality objectives for 2024–2026, alongside staff and student data insights, key initiatives, and future plans.

2) The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society. It outlines nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), introduced under the Act, requires public bodies such as UCB to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people from different backgrounds.

3) Equality Objectives (2024–2026)

This year, the EDI Policy was updated, a transgender policy was created, and six equality objectives were established to support long-term institutional change at UCB:

1. Establish EDI Champions and staff networks
2. Embed inclusive practices
3. Increase representation of underrepresented groups
4. Develop an inclusive curriculum and reduce awarding gaps
5. Celebrate the diverse backgrounds of learners and staff
6. Achieve external recognition for inclusivity

Equality Objective 1: Establish EDI Champions and Staff Networks

By 2026, UCB will have a well-established network of EDI Champions and staff networks, ensuring all staff feel heard, valued, and included. These networks provide safe spaces for discussion, support, and collaboration on EDI initiatives, contributing to greater staff engagement and a stronger sense of belonging.

Leadership actively engages with these groups, using their insights to shape policies and reinforce UCB's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Progress update

EDI Champions and Networks

UCB now proudly supports eight staff networks:

1. Global Majority Network
2. Women's Staff Network
3. Disability and Wellbeing Network
4. Neurodiversity Network
5. Religion, Spirituality and Belief Network
6. Parents and Carers Network
7. LGBTQ+ Network
8. Men's Health Network

Each network is chaired by one of our 11 dedicated EDI Champions, who not only facilitate safe and open discussions within their groups but also sit on the EDI Forum. This ensures that insights from across the University reach senior leadership and inform institutional decision-making.

Future plans include EDI Champions collaborating with their networks to write articles, host podcasts and webinars, and organise exhibitions and events that celebrate the richness of our diverse community.

Equality Objective 2: Embed Inclusive Practices

By 2026, UCB will have successfully implemented comprehensive training programmes that empower staff to integrate inclusive approaches into their everyday responsibilities.

These initiatives will enhance confidence and awareness, ensuring that inclusivity becomes a core element of UCB's culture.

Staff will actively apply their learning to foster a more welcoming and equitable environment, while leadership will continue to support and reinforce inclusive behaviours at all levels of the institution.

Progress update

Over 673 staff members participated in EDI training during Semester 1, where they were introduced to the Equality Act and Unconscious Bias. Staff reported that their understanding of EDI-related issues improved from 63% to 97% by the end of the session.

In Semester 2, 630 staff members attended a second round of EDI training, which focused on scenario-based discussions around cultural awareness, inclusive leadership, and real-life case studies. These sessions have helped deepen understanding of how everyday practices can be more inclusive and accessible. Staff reported an increase in understanding from 71% to 94% by the end of the training.

In addition to core EDI training, all new staff induction sessions now include a dedicated EDI segment, ensuring that inclusivity is emphasised from day one.

Specialist Gender Identity training has also been delivered to ensure staff can appropriately support learners from all backgrounds. Senior leaders have further demonstrated their commitment by attending and completing external inclusive leadership training.

The results of the second staff inclusion survey demonstrate significant progress towards embedding EDI across the University, as shown in the table below.

Question	2024	2025	Change
UCB has a clear plan to improve EDI	40.9%	67.8%	26.9%
UCB has done a good job in providing EDI Training	62.5%	84.6%	22.1%
UCB is doing the right things to improve EDI	57.2%	78.3%	21.1%
Leaders are committed to EDI	53.8%	66.9%	13.1%
UCB has an environment for open expression	52.3%	63.1%	10.8%

The Office for Students (OfS) introduced a new condition of registration for Higher Education providers aimed at protecting students from harassment and sexual misconduct. This requirement will come into effect from 1 August 2025.

In preparation, UCB has strengthened its support systems and processes to ensure they are clear, accessible, and responsive. Information is available through the *Speak Out and Support* webpages, where students and staff can access free, confidential, and non-judgemental guidance.

In line with the new OfS condition of registration, all staff and students are required to undertake mandatory training on the handling of harassment and sexual misconduct. The completion of this training will be formally documented to evidence institutional compliance with the regulatory requirement.

Future plans include staff training on Cultural Intelligence, as well as working with the Student Guild to establish a Student EDI Board across HE, FE, and Sixth Form. The board will provide a platform to discuss current issues, policies, and projects. In addition, Equality Impact Assessment practices will be embedded into new initiatives and applied to changes in existing policies to ensure inclusivity and fairness.

Equality Objective 3: Increase Representation of Underrepresented Groups

By 2026, UCB will have made significant progress in achieving this goal through targeted recruitment, development, and retention initiatives. These efforts have contributed to a more diverse workforce and a more inclusive, representative institutional culture.

Leadership remains committed to sustaining this progress by ensuring equal opportunities for career advancement and embedding diversity as a core value within UCB's culture.

Progress update

As part of efforts to increase representation and support career progression, three new questions were introduced into the annual Staff Performance Reviews. These questions explore staff members' sense of belonging, their need for reasonable adjustments, and their aspirations for progression within the University.

UCB also launched the Inclusion Passport, a tool designed to support staff with long-term health conditions or disabilities by making workplace adjustments more consistent, transparent, and person-centred.

Future plans include the development of an Inclusive Allyship (The BRIDGE) Programme, through which staff will be allocated a mentor, participate in interview panels, and shadow a manager, enhancing both confidence and visibility across the organisation.

A dedicated Aspiring Managers Programme has also been introduced for staff who wish to progress into leadership roles. Participants attend an annual programme consisting of masterclasses on key themes such as finance, quality, and data, culminating in a project, presentation, or interview to demonstrate their learning and readiness for advancement.

In addition to the regular Gender Pay Gap Report, UCB will also prepare and analyse Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap Reports to provide a more comprehensive understanding of pay disparities and to inform ongoing equity initiatives.

Equality Objective 4: Develop an Inclusive Curriculum and Reduce any Awarding Gaps

UCB is committed to narrowing and ultimately eliminating any awarding gaps between different groups of learners by 2026.

By this time, UCB will have developed an inclusive curriculum that reflects diverse perspectives and responds to a wide range of learning needs. This inclusive approach will contribute to a significant reduction, if not the complete elimination, of awarding gaps across student groups.

Targeted academic support, inclusive teaching strategies, and continuous data monitoring have ensured that all students, regardless of background, have equal opportunities to succeed. UCB remains dedicated to sustaining this progress and fostering a fair, equitable, and empowering learning environment for all.

Progress update

Improvements to the Graduate Advantage programme this year included the introduction of an 'at risk' report, identifying students who may not pass. This process has been revamped to make it more meaningful and impactful. Students identified as at risk through the APP were contacted directly and invited to attend an additional session, Academic Excellence. This targeted approach was designed to provide tailored support and ensure that these students are better equipped to succeed on their programme.

An internal retention audit was conducted which produced an overall positive outcome. As a result, new reporting mechanisms and processes are being implemented to ensure that students identified as being at risk of withdrawal or low engagement are proactively contacted and supported.

To improve retention, recruitment and strengthen students' sense of belonging at UCB, both FE and HE students with a disability were invited to attend a SEND Transition Day. During the day, they were able to meet with supportive Student Services teams in a quieter, more controlled environment. The initiative provided a genuine impression of university life in a psychologically safe way, while also giving students the opportunity to speak with current UCB students about their experiences of settling in and the support available. The day also included the option to visit accommodation at The Maltings.

In addition, an online SEND Information Evening was held in April for HE students via Zoom. This session highlighted the support available at UCB and gave students the chance to ask questions in breakout rooms. Both initiatives were designed to increase retention, foster a stronger sense of belonging, and promote psychological safety, while also encouraging disability disclosures.

Different funding streams, such as the Kick-Start Fund, Hardship Fund, and the new COLA (Cost of Living Allowance) have helped to encourage student participation. Previous analysis has shown a positive link between financial support and improved academic outcomes, with students receiving such support being more likely to

achieve a good degree. This demonstrates the strong connection between financial assistance and student attainment.

A dedicated working group has been established to lead the development of an Inclusive Curriculum. The group is structured around four strands: Inclusive Planning, Inclusive Delivery, Inclusive Assessment, and Inclusive Progression. Each strand will produce a toolkit to guide staff through every stage of the teaching journey from curriculum planning and delivery to assessment and progression, ensuring that every student benefits from a fair, inclusive, and high-quality academic experience.

The annual Teaching and Learning Conference has been rebranded as the Teaching, Learning and Inclusivity Conference to reinforce UCB's commitment to embedding inclusivity at the heart of all educational practice. This event now includes participation from both Academic and Professional Services staff, recognising the vital role all colleagues play in shaping an inclusive student experience.

Awarding gap

The awarding gap figures below compare the percentage of good degrees (First and 2:1) awarded by gender and ethnicity.

For gender, the figures indicate that female students are more likely than male students to achieve a good degree. For ethnicity, the data shows that White students are awarded a higher proportion of good degrees compared to Asian and Black students.

Both gender and ethnicity awarding gaps widened during the COVID-19 period, which also coincided with changes to classification methodology. Since then, the gaps have reduced significantly. However, it is important to note that the reduction in the ethnicity awarding gap is primarily due to a decrease in the proportion of good degrees awarded to White students, rather than an increase in outcomes for Asian or Black students.

Gender gap

Gap	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24*
Male vs Female	-4.5	-18.9	-21.5	-17.7	-19.9	-13.2	-10.5

*Internal Metric (OFS figures due to be published on 24/09/25)

The gender awarding gap is in favour of female students, with negative figures indicating that male students are less likely to achieve a good degree.

Ethnicity gaps

Gap	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24*
White vs Asian	18.8	17.1	24.7	14.5	11.4	8.7	9.4
White vs Black	24.9	15.5	39.8	31.7	16.4	12.0	22.0
White vs BAME	19.6	16.7	29.1	19.0	13.2	8.4	13.0

*Internal Metric (OFS figures due to be published on 24/09/25)

Future plans include departmental reviews, led by Heads of Department, to identify programmes where significant disparities exist in student achievement and retention across different demographic groups.

Targeted staff training on inclusive curriculum design will be delivered within each department, equipping colleagues with the knowledge and tools to develop and implement inclusive curricula that support the success of all students at University College Birmingham.

Equality Objective 5: Celebrate the Diverse Backgrounds of Learners and Staff

UCB is committed to implementing initiatives by 2026 that ensure the diverse backgrounds of learners and staff are valued, recognised, and celebrated.

By 2026, UCB will have successfully delivered a range of initiatives that highlight and embrace the richness of its community, fostering a culture of inclusion, respect, and recognition.

Regular events, awareness campaigns, and storytelling initiatives will showcase the lived experiences of staff and students, ensuring that all individuals feel seen, heard, and appreciated.

This commitment has strengthened the sense of belonging across the University, making UCB a more inclusive, welcoming, and vibrant community for everyone.

Progress update

UCB has brought the community together through a series of cultural events and celebrations. These have included the Christmas Community Event, Community Iftar, and One World Day—occasions where staff and students can express their authentic selves as part of the UCB community. Additionally, UCB students and staff participated in PRIDE alongside other local universities, demonstrating solidarity and support.

Regular feedback is sought from students via Boards of Study for both Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE), as well as through the Guild Pulse Survey, which measures student satisfaction and sense of belonging at UCB.

This year's National Student Survey (NSS) results were generally very positive. Notably, the score for the question on students feeling able to express their opinions and beliefs increased from 87.5% last year to 89.2% this year, which is 0.9 percentage points above the sector average.

Future plans include vibrant events celebrating Pride, Black History Month, and Women's History Month. UCB will also develop a 'Human Library' featuring staff profiles that share diverse personal stories across protected characteristics and university roles. These narratives aim to break down stereotypes and humanise diversity within the workplace.

Equality Objective 6: Achieve External Recognition for Inclusivity

UCB aims to obtain at least two relevant kitemarks or charters by 2026 to demonstrate its external commitment to inclusivity.

By 2026, UCB will have successfully secured at least two prestigious accreditations that recognise its dedication to fostering an equitable environment for both staff and students.

These external validations serve to confirm the university's ongoing efforts and provide a strong foundation for further progress in embedding inclusivity across all aspects of the institution.

Progress update

UCB has achieved the Bronze Award in Investors in Diversity in June 2025, which involves a comprehensive review of our practices, leadership training, and staff feedback.

We have also partnered with The Proud Trust to work towards the Rainbow Flag Award, embedding LGBTQ+ inclusion into all aspects of student and staff experiences. This process is underway and expected to take one year to complete.

Additionally, preparations are in progress to align our practices with the University Mental Health Charter and the Disabled Student Commitment. These efforts demonstrate our intention not only to achieve formal recognition but also to use these benchmarks as catalysts for continuous improvement.

Future plans include becoming a Disability Confident Employer and pursuing other kitemarks such as the Care Leavers Covenant and the AoC EDI Charter.

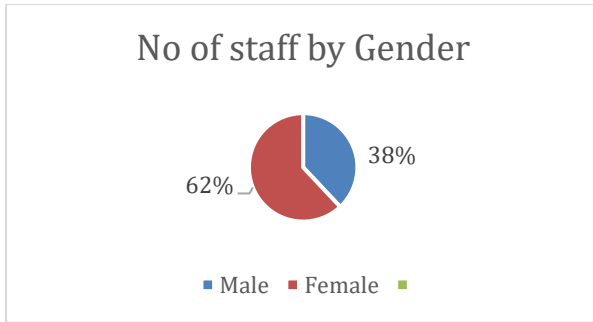
4) Staff Data

Analysis of staff data across Further Education (FE), Higher Education (HE), Sixth Form, and Apprenticeships as of September 2024 shows:

Gender: Women constitute approximately 62% of the overall workforce, with stronger representation in support and academic roles. Senior leadership positions show a more balanced gender distribution.

Gender	No's	%	West Midlands*
Male	290	38%	45%
Female	481	62%	54%
Other	-	-	2%
Total	771	100%	100%

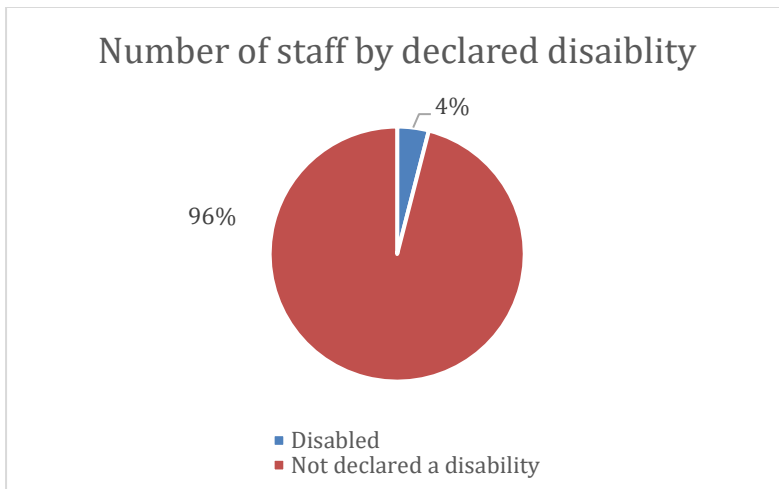
*HESA data 2023/24 – this will be Higher Education staff only (rounded to nearest %)



Disability: Approximately 4% of the overall workforce declared a disability, with representation evenly split between Academic and Professional Services staff.

Disability	No's	%	West Midlands*
Disabled	27	4%	7%
Not declared a disability	744	96%	93%
Total	771	100%	100%

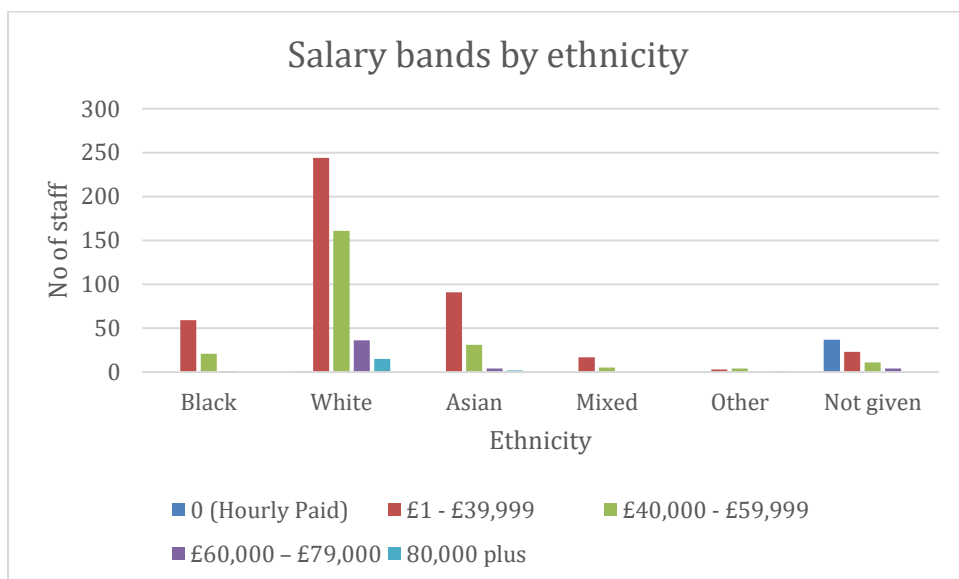
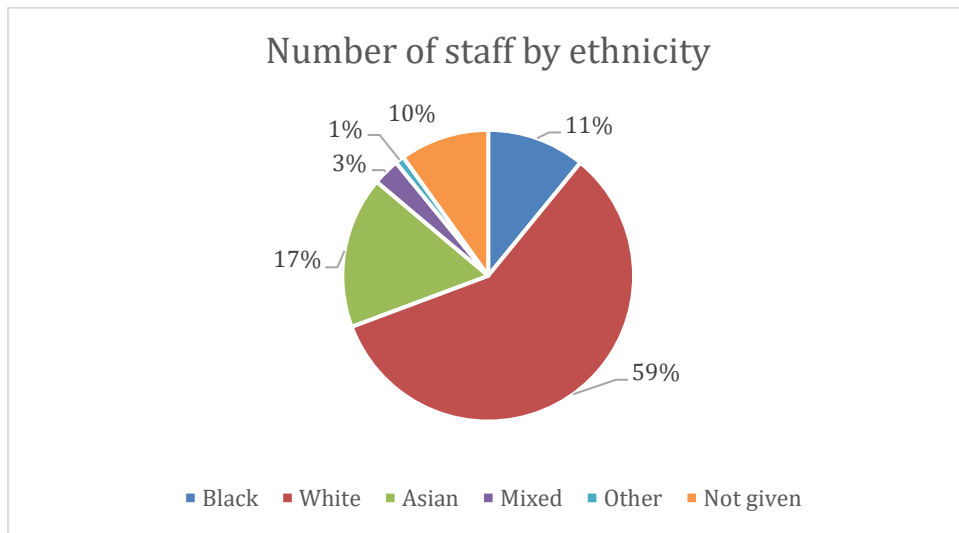
*HESA data 2023/24 – this will be Higher Education staff only (rounded to nearest %)



Ethnicity: Approximately 31% of staff identify as being from Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. Representation is similar between males and females, though it is stronger in junior roles.

Ethnicity	No's	%	West Midlands*
Black	81	11%	5%
White	457	59%	71%
Asian	128	17%	15%
Mixed	22	3%	3%
Other	8	1%	2%
Not given	75	10%	4%
Total	771	100%	100%

*HESA data 2023/24 – this will be Higher Education staff only (rounded to nearest %)



5) Student Data

Analysis of student data across Further Education (FE), Higher Education (HE), Sixth Form, and Apprenticeships (APP) as of September 2024 shows some interesting trends.

Gender: In Further Education, the gender split is nearly equal, with 51% of students identifying as male and 49% as female. In Higher Education, there is a slight female majority, with 52% female and 48% male. Among Apprentices at Levels 2 and 3, the gender gap is more pronounced, with 61% female and 39% male.

Ethnicity: In FE, Asian students make up the largest ethnic group at 38%, followed by Black students at 25% and White students at 24%. In HE, Asian students are even more prominent, representing 47% of the cohort, while White students make up 22% and Black students 13%. Among Apprentices at Level 2 and 3, 63% of students are White, with 37% identifying as BAME based on application data.

Disability: In FE, 10% of students have disclosed a disability, which is the highest among the cohorts. In HE, 7% of students have a disability. Among Apprentices at Level 2 and 3, the proportion is lowest, with only 4% of students disclosing a disability.

	FE	%		HE	%		APP (L2&L3)	%		Total	%
GENDER											
Male	1361	51%		3,531	48%		72	39%		4,964	49%
Female	1,307	49%		3,794	52%		113	61%		5,214	51%
Other				3	0%					3	0%
Total	2,668	100%		7,328	100%		185	100%		10,181	100%
ETHNICITY											
Asian	1,011	38%		3,426	47%					4,437	44%
Black	661	25%		948	13%					1,609	16%
White	645	24%		1,606	22%		117	63%		2,368	23%
Mixed	234	9%		331	5%					565	6%
Other	58	2%		233	3%					291	3%
Not given	59	2%		784	11%					843	8%
BAME (App only)							68	37%		68	1%
Total	2,668	100%		7,328	100%		185	100%		10,181	100%
DISABILITY											
Has Disability	262	10%		488	7%		7	4%		757	7%
No Disability	2,387	89%		6,836	93%		178	96%		9,401	92%
Unknown	19	1%		4	0%					23	0%
Total	2,668	100%		7,328	100%		185	100%		10,181	100%

6) Staff vs Student Data

It is important that staff and student data at UCB are broadly aligned, as this helps ensure that students see themselves represented within the institution, fostering inclusion, belonging, and fairness. A diverse staff body that reflects the student community is better equipped to understand and respond to different needs and perspectives, creating a more supportive learning environment.

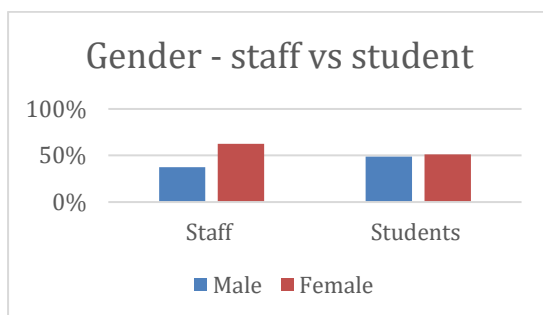
Monitoring these similarities also enables UCB to identify gaps, address underrepresentation, and take evidence-based action to strengthen equity, improve experiences, and uphold its commitment to being an inclusive institution.

UCB seeks to achieve close alignment between staff and student demographic profiles. However, recognising the dynamic nature of both the student and staff populations, a tolerance threshold of up to 10% has been adopted as an acceptable variance for monitoring and benchmarking purposes.

Gender: The staff population is predominantly female, with 62% identifying as women compared to 38% identifying as men. Among students, the gender distribution is much more balanced, with 51% female and 49% male. This indicates that males are underrepresented in the staff population by 11 percentage points relative to their proportion among students, while females are correspondingly overrepresented.

We are reviewing staff in student-facing roles to identify potential barriers that may discourage male applicants. This analysis will support incremental changes aimed at improving the representation of male staff within these roles.

Gender	Staff	Students
Male	38%	49%
Female	62%	51%
Total	771	10,181

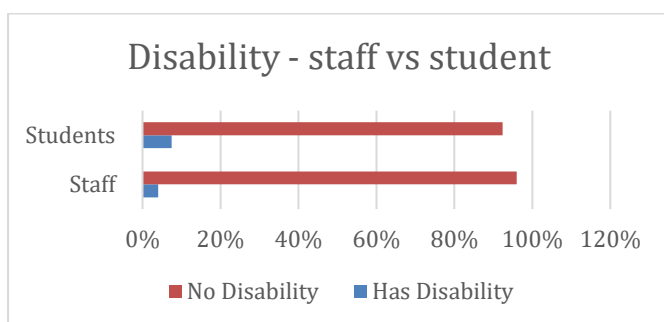


Disability: 4% of staff members have disclosed a disability, compared to 7% of students. This suggests that students are more likely to report having a disability than staff. The difference may be influenced by factors such as generational awareness, differing support systems, or variations in willingness to disclose.

We have established staff networks focused on disability and neurodiversity and encouraged colleagues to declare any disabilities. We have also introduced Inclusion Passports to help provide psychological safety and better support individual needs.

Future plans include working towards becoming a Disability Confident employer and reclarifying the definition of disability to include those who manage long term health conditions, so they understand that they fall within the legal definition.

Disability	Staff	Students
Has Disability	4%	7%
No Disability	96%	92%
Total	771	10,181



Ethnicity: The ethnic diversity among students is notably greater than that of staff. Only 23% of students identify as White, compared to 59% of staff. Conversely, 44% of students identify as Asian, while just 17% of staff do. Black individuals comprise 16% of the student body but only 11% of the staff.

Those identifying as Mixed ethnicity represent 6% of students and 3% of staff. Other ethnic backgrounds are also more common among students (3%) than staff (1%). This disparity highlights a significant underrepresentation of ethnically diverse groups within the staff population compared to the student body.

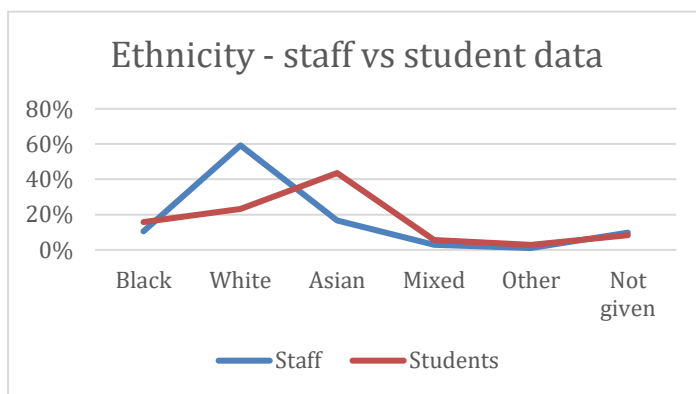
UCB has established staff networks for colleagues from the Global Majority to promote psychological safety, strengthen representation, and enhance a sense of belonging. These networks form part of our broader commitment to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion across the institution.

Future plans include working with staff who have not provided their ethnicity data (currently 10%) to encourage disclosure, thereby strengthening the accuracy of our reporting and monitoring. We also intend to carry out a recruitment audit to identify the stages at which barriers may arise and to inform more targeted interventions.

In addition, a series of masterclasses on career progression have been planned to support staff professional development. These will be complemented by the implementation of an Inclusive Allyship (The BRIDGE) Programme, through which staff will receive coaching, mentoring, and the opportunity to lead projects focused on improving recruitment practices at UCB. Alongside this, an Inclusive Leadership

Programme will be introduced to equip leaders with the skills needed to foster equity and inclusion.

Ethnicity	Staff	Students
Black	11%	16%
White	59%	23%
Asian	17%	44%
Mixed	3%	6%
Other	1%	3%
Not given	10%	8%
BAME (App only)		1%
Total	771	10,181



7) Conclusion

The 2024/2025 academic year has seen meaningful progress toward building a more inclusive UCB. By aligning our strategy with the Equality Act, actively engaging our community, and focusing on measurable outcomes, we are shaping a university environment where everyone truly belongs.

Looking ahead to the next academic year, our priorities include expanding the EDI Champions programme, deepening student engagement in inclusivity efforts, and hosting UCB’s first annual Inclusivity Conference in September 2025. The future of EDI at UCB is bright, bold, and firmly rooted in our shared commitment to fostering a community where everyone feels respected, represented, and empowered.

Together, we are shaping a more inclusive university—one initiative, one conversation, and one action at a time.