

# **Mainstreaming the Equality Duty Report**

**April 2023**



**55%**  
of our Executive Team  
are women



**40%**  
of non-executive members  
of University Court, our  
governing body are women

**93%**  
of women in  
senior roles  
who responded to a recent  
survey have improved work/life  
balance since the Agile Working  
Framework was introduced.



Narrowed our mean  
gender pay gap  
by 4.6% as of 1 August 2022



**Increased  
the number  
of female  
applicants**

for academic promotion  
by 12% since 2020  
through targeted support



**84% of staff**  
agreed that agile working  
enhances their ability to  
deliver priorities successfully



**Student  
Carers Policy**

published to outline  
our commitment to  
providing support

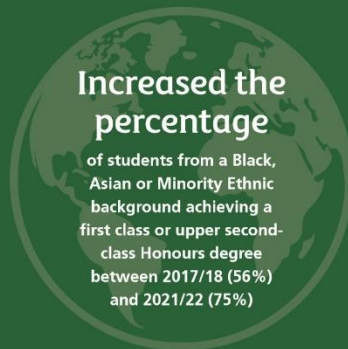


Launched an  
Anti-Racism and  
Race Equality  
Strategy 2022-25



**Improved  
University  
experience**

for 85% of students  
attending counselling



**Increased the  
percentage**

of students from a Black,  
Asian or Minority Ethnic  
background achieving a  
first class or upper second-  
class Honours degree  
between 2017/18 (56%)  
and 2021/22 (75%)



**Students with a disability  
or from a Black, Asian or  
Minority Ethnic background**

are more likely to continue past their  
first year of study, in comparison  
with the overall non-continuation  
rate, since academic year 2017-18.



**Increased the  
continuation rate**

of full-time undergraduate  
students under the age  
of 21 between 2017-18  
and 2020-21



**Established an  
Inclusive Curriculum  
working group**

to share best practice  
and support collective  
enhancement to the curriculum  
and learning environment



**Approved**

our revised Gender  
Based Violence  
Strategy (2021-24)

## **Executive Summary**

The University of Stirling is committed to creating and sustaining a positive, stimulating and supportive working environment for our staff, and an excellent teaching, learning and research experience which encourages our students to thrive academically and personally. We recognise that equality, diversity and inclusion is fundamental to good governance and management practices, and that these principles will support the University to achieve its strategic priorities and outcomes.

The Mainstreaming the Equality Duty report provides us with an opportunity to showcase our approach towards mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion, provide examples of good practice and reflect on the progress made since April 2021 to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into our functions and to demonstrate progress made to achieve our five equality outcomes for 2021-25.

### **Improving representation of women**

The University employs more than 1700 members of staff and there is good representation of female leaders. This reassures us that our culture is one in which women are encouraged, supported and empowered to progress into senior positions. The proportion of women in the role of Institutional Dean and Dean of Faculty is 56%, and 55% of our Executive Team are women. The introduction of more inclusive and progressive working practices via the University's Agile Working Framework has widened opportunities for women in senior roles. Qualitative feedback from female respondents of a recent pulse survey indicated that the Agile Working Framework played a key role in:

- Attracting women to work in senior roles at the University of Stirling
- Supporting the retention of female staff in senior roles at the University
- Contributing to the development of an inclusive and progressive culture at the University.

Our mean gender pay gap narrowed to 14.12% as at 1 August 2022. This can be attributed to an overall increase in the average pay of women since 2020. In addition, the proportion of women at the highest rates of hourly pay increased since 2020, accounting for almost 50% (from 48% in 2020). The work undertaken around supporting and empowering women towards promotion has resulted in an improved gender balance at senior level, with women accounting for 47% of all grade 10 staff. In 2021/22, 63% of successful applicants for academic promotion in 2021/22 were women.

### **Learning, Teaching and Student Experience**

Providing high quality learning, teaching and support to enable an outstanding student experience has remained a core principle of the University. The University maintained a UK-top 30 position for overall student satisfaction<sup>1</sup> in the NSS, with a score in 2022 of 80%, above both the Scottish sector average (79%) and the UK sector average (76%). Building on the successes of online learning, the University will implement a learning community approach focussing on connected face-to-face teaching on campus and inclusive hybrid learning to maintain an excellent teaching and learning experience.

A new Inclusive Curriculum Working Group was established, bringing together academic experts in equality, inclusive curriculum development and pedagogy, along with student representation to stimulate discussion, reflection and action whilst developing a cross-institutional network of colleagues who can share best practice and support collective enhancement to the curriculum and learning environment. Additionally, the University established a race equality and anti-racism group

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<sup>1</sup> Based on institutions included within the Guardian University Guide 2022

which oversees implementation of the Race Equality Strategy to ensure the University is an inclusive, welcoming and safe place.

In the 2021-22 academic year, 73% of undergraduate students were awarded first class or upper second-class Honours degrees. This level of attainment was consistent across individuals who identified with a specific protected characteristic including a Black, Asian or other minority ethnic background or a disability. There was an increase in the percentage of students from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background achieving a first class or upper second-class Honours degree between 2017/18 (56%) and 2021/22 (75%).

The overall non-continuation rate of full-time undergraduate students under the age of 21 declined from 12.1% in the 2017-18 academic year to 6.78% in the academic year 2020-21. Students with a disability or from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background have been consistently more likely to continue past their first year of study, in comparison with the overall non-continuation rate, since academic year 2017-18.

### **Inclusion**

The University recognises the unique set of circumstances faced by estranged students, care experienced students, and those with caring responsibilities, and is committed to supporting these students throughout their student journey. The University published a [Student Carers Policy](#), which addresses the challenges that Student Carers may face and it outlines the University's commitment to providing support to this group of students.

The University continues to work closely in partnership with Stirling Council's programme of support for refugee and asylum seekers – offering information, advice and guidance sessions on accessing higher education as well as providing pathways to higher education support. Sanctuary Scholarships have been introduced in 2022/23 for undergraduate and postgraduate students in the UK who have applied for asylum or are staying in the UK as refugees or on humanitarian grounds.

We are committed to ensuring that our LGBTQ+ students and staff feel safe, respected and free to be themselves in their place of study and work. Students can access the LGBTQ+ Student Support Network which was created to provide tailored support for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, and can also become a member of the student LGBTQ+ society. In 2022, the University's Careers and Employability Service received a prestigious award from LGBT Youth Scotland – achieving the LGBT Charter at Silver level recognised the work and dedication of staff to ensure the Service is inclusive.

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

In delivering the joint University of Stirling and Stirling Students' Union Mental Health Strategy 2021-24 we continue to foster and nurture a culture and environment which recognises the link between mental health, wellbeing, performance and impact, and which enables our community to talk openly about mental health without stigma or fear. The University regularly introduced themed campaigns around health and wellbeing matters and continues to make significant progress in its approaches to mental health and wellbeing support. This included increased investment in the Mental Health, Wellbeing and Counselling Service and evaluation has found that satisfaction with the University counselling service remained high.

Recognising the clear links between financial insecurity and stress and mental ill health, the University has proactively developed a range of support mechanisms to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis and will remain agile to the needs of our community in response to this developing issue.

### **Tackling Gender Based Violence**

The University revised its Gender Based Violence Strategy in line with the aims and definitions of the Scottish Government's Equally Safe Strategy, broadening the scope to explicitly cover all forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as well as sexual violence. A comprehensive GBV communications plan was developed during the 2021/22 Academic Year to present a consistent, confident, joined up narrative that tackles myths about GBV, support options available and prevention steps.

## 1. Introduction

The University of Stirling is an outward-looking international university, with a global reputation for providing high-quality education with a purpose and carrying out research that helps to shape society. Our aim is to unlock the full potential of the 17,000 students that study across a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes each year, and to equip them with the skills to thrive as global citizens in our fast-moving world.

The University employs more than 1700 members of staff and the majority of operations are carried out at the University's main Stirling campus, which is renowned for its naturally beautiful setting. To support effective delivery of learning, teaching and research activities, the academic structure is organised into five faculties; Arts & Humanities; Health Sciences & Sport; Natural Sciences; Social Sciences and the Stirling Management School. In addition, the Institute for Advanced Studies provides a focus for Stirling's thriving research community, promoting interdisciplinary research across the University, from postgraduate research students, post-doctoral and early career researchers, to senior researcher cohorts.

Academic activities are supported by integrated professional services. The University's Professional Services comprise ten directorates: Commercial Services; Communications, Marketing and Recruitment; Estates and Campus Services; Finance; Human Resources and Organisation Development; Information Services; Internationalisation and Partnerships; Research and Innovation Services; Sport and Student, Academic and Corporate Services.

The promotion of equality of opportunity has been a fundamental value of the University of Stirling since its establishment in 1967. Our charter states that "the University shall be committed to the fair and equal treatment of every person and shall not discriminate on unjustified, irrelevant or unlawful grounds."

The University of Stirling is committed to creating and sustaining a positive, stimulating and supportive working environment for our staff, and an excellent teaching, learning and research experience which encourages our students to thrive academically and personally.

We recognise that equality, diversity and inclusion is fundamental to good governance and management practices, and that these principles will support the University to achieve its strategic priorities and outcomes.

## 2. Institutional Vision Statement for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The University has a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and seeks to make continued progress in ensuring everyone in the University community is treated fairly, promoting and encouraging diversity, adopting a range of practices that support inclusion, and eradicating discrimination, structural bias and inequalities.

The University's approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is set out in our institutional vision statement that seeks to develop, champion and nurture a welcoming and inclusive culture and environment that:

- Actively prevents and tackles discrimination, harassment and abuse;
- Respects and celebrates diversity and inter-culturalism;

- Enables staff and students to thrive and achieve their potential, regardless of their background or identification with a protected characteristic(s); and
- Identifies and eradicates systemic barriers to equality.

Activity to achieve this vision statement is reflected within the [Equality Outcomes 2021-2025](#), published in April 2021 following a programme of consultation with student representatives, academic and professional services staff and members of our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) community of practice.

### **3. Governance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Work**

The authority and accountability for setting and maintaining commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is vested in University Court. To create a culture where EDI is intrinsic to all that we do and make continued progress, the Principal and Vice-Chancellor is supported in his academic and strategic leadership of the University by the Senior Management Team comprising the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary, Deputy Principals, Executive Directors, Faculty Deans and Institutional Deans.

Each of the University's ten professional services directorates is led by an Executive Director. The role of Institutional Dean operates to provide focussed academic and/or institution-wide leadership of areas of strategic priority, in complement to the leadership contributed by Faculty Deans and Executive Directors. The University currently has four [Institutional Deans](#).

In line with its commitment to EDI, the University established the role of Institutional Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, in 2017. The role of the Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is to provide strategic leadership to EDI, liaising with students and staff at all levels of the institution to create a culture where equity, diversity and inclusion are embedded into all that we do, from strategic planning to operational activity.

To ensure that the University effectively discharges its responsibilities in respect of EDI, the University has an Equality Steering Group (ESG) – a strategic advisory group that reports to University Court via the Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee (JPPRC). Chaired by the Senior Deputy Principal, and with both staff and student representatives within its membership, the ESG oversees compliance with the statutory equality duties and ensures effective delivery of the University's equality outcomes and supporting strategies.

The ESG in turn delegates responsibility for operational development and implementation activity to several action groups, as appropriate to strategic objectives. At present, these include the:

- **Health and Wellbeing Group** – responsible for the coordination of work relating to staff and student health and wellbeing, including the delivery of outcomes set out in our Mental Health Strategy.
- **Tackling Gender Based Violence Steering Group** – responsible for overseeing the joint strategy on preventing and tackling gender-based violence.
- **Anti-Racism and Race Equality Group** – responsible for developing the Anti-Racism and Race Equality Strategy.

- **Gender Equality Group** – which coordinates and drives the institutional gender equality work and the Athena Swan submissions, as well as identifying and sharing good practice between Faculty Self-Assessment Teams.

The Equality Forum is a longstanding forum within the University that operated with contributions of identified Equality Champions from different areas of the University and provided a constructive point of focus for the equality agenda. From 2020/21, however, a broader, refreshed group of Champions constituted a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum. This new Forum forms a two-way communication channel between staff and students, and the formal strategic groups leading on specific aspects of the EDI agenda.

In March 2021 University Court approved our [equality outcomes for 2021-25](#) that guide our work in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. These priorities were identified through a period of engagement with the University community.

#### **4. External Environment**

There are a range of external influences, which shaped our approach during the previous two years, these included:

- Equality law and associated equalities, diversity and inclusion duties. In 2020, the Scottish Funding Council signed a memorandum of understanding with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), with the aim of identifying sector wide persistent inequalities, and set measurements to address these. Due to COVID-19, their work on this had not progressed as anticipated and the sector had been requested to progress Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirements as usual. On 18 January 2023, Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published ‘Tackling Persistent Inequalities Together’, the report outlines the persistent inequalities in the tertiary system and asks institutions to address them by contributing to a set of National Equality Outcomes (NEOs) as part of their Public Sector Equality Duty. The University of Stirling Equality Outcomes Action Plan will be revisited in the academic year 2022/23 to take into account the newly published EHRC and SFC National Equality Outcomes guidance.
- Charities law and regulations overseen by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). The Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 is the primary piece of charity law in Scotland.
- Requirements of the Scottish Funding Council, including the governance requirements of HEIs laid down in its Financial Memorandum and Accounts Direction.
- Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance.
- The [EHRC Inquiry into racial harassment in higher education](#) and the subsequent report [Tackling Racial Harassment: Universities Challenged](#). This report significantly influenced the University’s work on race equality in 2021-23.
- The 2016 [UUK Changing the Culture Report](#) and [follow up reports](#), the [Scottish Government’s Equally Safe](#) work, including the [Equally Safe in HE Toolkit](#) have shaped our response to gender-based violence.
- Complaints handling statutory requirements set out in the 2021 Model Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) for the HE sector, as overseen by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO).



- Safeguarding the members of each institution’s community of students, staff and the wider public, through compliance with health and safety legislation, in particular the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- The Scottish Government Framework for Fair Work.
- Requirements of professional bodies and other regulators relevant to the wide range of HEIs’ activity, including Quality Assurance.

## 5. Staff Equality Monitoring Information

The University publishes a Staff Equality Monitoring Report biennially. Appendix 2 provides an overview of the profile data for staff at the University.

Information on seven of the protected characteristics is requested as part of the recruitment process for all staff. For several years, the University has been collecting data on age, disability, race and sex from all applicants. In early 2010, we added the additional equality characteristics of gender reassignment, religion & belief, and sexual orientation, as well as a question on caring responsibilities. We do not collect information on pregnancy at the point of recruitment, and we do not currently collect information on marriage and civil partnership status.

The data presented in Appendix 1 shows relatively few significant changes in comparison to the data reported in 2020:

- i. The overall gender balance has remained relatively stable between 2019-2022, although the balance at senior level has shifted in favour of women.
- ii. Staff disclosure of a known disability has increased since 2018 (3%) to 5.3% in 2022. The proportion of staff for whom disability information is not known has decreased from 11% in 2018 to 9% in 2022.
- iii. There are increases between 2018 and 2022 for groups of staff declaring their Religion/Belief as Hindu (0% to 0.5%), Jewish (0% to 0.4%), and Muslim (0% to 0.8%). The proportion of staff declaring no religion or belief has increased from 41% in 2018 to 46.2% in 2022.
- iv. The number of staff who have not recorded their sexual orientation has halved from 9% in 2018 to 4.7% in 2022, however the proportion of staff who prefer not to answer has increased from 11% to 18.5% in the same time period. Rates of staff identifying as Bisexual has increased slightly from 1% in 2018 to 1.9% in 2022, and staff identifying as Gay / Lesbian has increased from 2% in 2018 to 3.1% in 2022.

The scope of the collection of data on the protected characteristics of staff at the University has recently been reviewed with a view to modernising our approach. It is intended that, as a result, future statements on employee equality information will show enhanced rates of disclosure across all characteristics. The broadening of category options in the 2023 data refresh will continue the University’s strong tradition of inclusion and welcoming of a diverse and supportive community.

As part of this revised approach, a campaign is planned to encourage staff to review and refresh their data where appropriate. The Employee self-service facility will be updated and positive impact will be promoted among the staffing community. It is anticipated that this will encourage higher rates of disclosure.

## 6. Examples of Mainstreaming Equality

We are unable to highlight all examples of mainstreaming across the University, so this report focusses on key developments in mainstreaming activity. The following examples are structured under each of our equality outcomes and incorporate the three components of the Equality Act General Duty:

- Elimination of discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

### Equality Outcome 1 – Gender Equality

**Improving representation of women in professorial and senior leadership roles and in governance committees, so that representation better reflects the overall gender diversity of the university population.**

The University strives to have a diverse representation on its governance body, Court. As of April 2023, 40% of the membership of University Court, our governing body, were female.

Table 1: Membership of University Court

Category of Membership	Sex	Proportion of Membership at April 2021	Proportion of Membership at April 2023
All members of University Court <sup>2</sup>	Female	42%	40%
	Male	58%	60%
Non-Executive Members of University Court <sup>3</sup>	Female	42%	40%
	Male	58%	60%

There is good representation of female leaders, and this reassures us that our culture is one in which women are encouraged, supported and empowered to progress into senior positions. The proportion of women in the role of Institutional Dean and Dean of Faculty is currently 56%. In addition, 55% of our Executive Team are women.

A range of actions have been introduced and are planned across the institution to enhance gender equality. These include continued investment in Aurora (the development programme for female staff) and training delivered for staff on the academic promotions process with dedicated sessions

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<sup>2</sup> The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 includes duties relating to Board diversity. Scotland's HEIs are subject to the duty to publish information about the sex of their board members.

<sup>3</sup> As defined by Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018. The Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 includes the following representation objective: a public board is to have 50% of non-executive members who are women.

that focus on encouraging and equipping women, as well as those in underrepresented groups, for promotion.

The introduction of more inclusive and progressive working practices via the University’s Agile Working Framework has widened opportunities for women in senior roles. Qualitative feedback from female respondents of a recent pulse survey, aimed at evaluating the impact of implementation of the Framework, indicates that the Agile Working Framework has played a key role in:

- Attracting women to work in senior roles at the University of Stirling
- Supporting the retention of female staff in senior roles at the University
- Contributing to the development of an inclusive and progressive culture at the University.

Over 93% of women in senior roles who responded to the survey indicated that their work/life balance has improved as a direct result of the implementation of the Agile Working Framework.

The work undertaken around supporting and empowering females towards promotion has resulted in an improved gender balance at senior level, with females accounting for 47% of all grade 10 staff.

### Academic Promotions

The balance of male/female applications during the academic promotions round over recent years has shifted from 42% female in 2019/20 to 60% female in the most recent 2021/22 round (see Table 2).

Table 2: Percentage of Total Applications for Academic Promotion by Gender and Year

	2019/20		2021/22	
Application Stage	Female	Male	Female	Male
Application for Promotion	42%	58%	60%	40%
Progressed to Committee	38%	62%	62%	38%
Successful	55%	45%	63%	37%

Additionally, the proportion of applications from women that were successful increased from 55% in 2019/20 to 63% in 2021/22. More than two thirds of the 45 women who attended our Preparing for Promotions sessions in 2021 applied for promotion in 2022, and of those more than 65% were successful.

### Narrowing the Gender Pay Gap

In 2020 our mean gender pay gap was 18.72% (18.61% median) in favour of men, and the University committed to narrowing this. As part of this commitment a number of actions and initiatives were implemented, which are referenced elsewhere in this report. As a result, our mean gender pay gap narrowed to 14.12% (16.21 % median) as at 1 August 2022.

The narrowing of the gap can be attributed to an overall increase in the average pay of women since 2020. In addition, the proportion of women at the highest rates of hourly pay (quartile 4) has increased since 2020, accounting for almost 50% (from 48% in 2020).

Similar to 2020, there are currently no significant pay gaps in the average basic pay of men and women in the same pay grade for grades 1 to 9. The average basic pay of men in grade 10 was higher than that of women in 2020, which remains the case. However, the gender pay gap in this grade has narrowed from 6.63% in 2020 to 5.59%.

A robust framework for Grade 10 pay arrangements is in place, although an incremental spinal structure does not exist in this grade due to the diversity of senior posts of different size, scope and level of seniority. Whilst the proportion of females within Grade 10 has increased since 2020, the average salary for women in this grade remains lower than that of men, in part due to the average length of service in the grade still being higher for men.

**A culture where gender-based violence is actively challenged, robustly tackled and people experiencing gender-based violence are respected, supported and empowered.**

The University and Students' Union launched our first joint Preventing and Tackling Sexual Violence and Misconduct Strategy in 2017. The strategy committed the University and Students' Union to take all steps within our power to prevent, tackle and respond appropriately and supportively to incidents of sexual violence - in all its forms - that may affect our students, staff and those who use our facilities and services.

The University is now building on this work, paying regard to research, guidance and developments in the external environment. University Court approved our revised Gender Based Violence Strategy 2021-24 in June 2021. In line with the aims and definitions of the Scottish Government's Equally Safe Strategy, the scope has been broadened to explicitly cover all forms of Gender-Based Violence as well as sexual violence.

A comprehensive GBV communications plan was developed during the 2021/22 Academic Year. Through taking a whole institution approach, the mission is to present a consistent, confident, joined up narrative that tackles myths about GBV, support options available and prevention steps.

Following consultation with the University community, including staff, students and victim/survivors of GBV, the University and Students Union adopted a new GBV campaign, Erase the Grey. Originally created and launched by Glasgow Caledonian University, Erase the Grey has been adopted by several other higher education institutions across Scotland. The campaign challenges stereotypical attitudes and behaviours and reiterates an unambiguously zero-tolerance approach towards GBV. The formal launch of a new GBV Strategy in partnership with the Students' Union during 16 Days of Action in November 2021, alongside the launch of the Erase the Grey campaign. Additionally, there has been investment in First Responder training and training for a further group of Sexual Violence and Misconduct Liaison Officers (SVMLOs) who provide support to members of the University who have been affected by GBV.

Since September 2020, all new and returning students have been encouraged to complete an online GBV module, 'Don't Be a Bystander Be a Friend'. This module sets out our community response to preventing GBV – covering topics including consent, the role of the bystander in the prevention of GBV, how to access support, and how to support friends in challenging situations. In 2021/22 evaluation data received provides evidence that the module had a positive impact in terms of

attitudinal change and increased knowledge. 91% of students agreed that they had the necessary skills to discuss with others about sexual assault compared with 44% pre-course. 100% of students completing the post session feedback agreed that they knew where to go to get support if they or a friend had been a victim of GBV, compared to 64% pre-course.

The University adopted the Report and Support system in 2020 and continues to regularly promote it through staff and student communications. We have seen we have seen an increase in the number of students reporting incidents of GBV in 2021/22. This is considered to be a positive outcome as it demonstrates increased confidence amongst members of our community to disclose and seek support.

Additionally, First Responder Training sessions were provided for staff to provide practical advice and guidance on how to initially support, signpost and refer someone who discloses that they have experienced GBV. 100% of staff completing the post session feedback agreed that they now have a good understanding of how to escalate a disclosure of gender-based violence within the University, compared to 50% before the session. 100% of staff attending the session agreed that they now had a good understanding of what support is available for them should they receive a disclosure of gender-based violence. This is compared to 39% prior to attending a session.

### **Equality Outcome 2 – Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Our commitment to supporting a physically and mentally healthy community across our students and staff continues to be a key priority. In delivering the joint University of Stirling and Stirling Students' Union Mental Health Strategy 2021-24 we continue to foster and nurture a culture and environment which recognises the link between mental health, wellbeing, performance and impact, and which enables our community to talk openly about mental health without stigma or fear. The University regularly introduces themed campaigns to foster a culture of respect and awareness around health and wellbeing matters.

As part of the University's response to the impact of Covid19, in spring 2020, and in partnership with the Students' Union, we launched 'Be Connected', a programme of social, health and wellbeing, learning and cultural activities to foster a sense of community and support wellbeing for both staff and students. The programme was inspired by the '5 ways to wellbeing' and is based around the principles of: Connect with others; Get active; Learn something new; Give; and Take notice. This has successfully continued beyond the lockdown period and offers a full programme of events, activities and resources year-round, in person as well as online.

Our programme of capital investment continues to deliver improvements focused on improving the experience and wellbeing of our community, including the recent completion of the revitalised Campus Central Hub, through a £23m investment to provide exceptional social and study spaces for our university community. The University has developed a suite of dedicated wellbeing spaces, including the Library Wellbeing Space, which is equipped with fiction, self-help literature and supporting materials, and provides a quiet safe space with views of the campus loch for students to relax and gather thoughts. 2022/23 also saw the launch of the Loch View Wellbeing Suite, a dedicated space in the Cottrell building to promote student wellbeing through a range of group activities, access

to resources and wellbeing staff, a student-sponsored Sensory Room, and a range of sensitively designed spaces to promote wellbeing.

The University has continued to make significant progress in its approaches to mental health and wellbeing support. This includes increased investment in the Mental Health, Wellbeing and Counselling Team with resources targeted to respond to peaks in student demand; the introduction of the One at a Time Counselling model which has resulted in significant reductions in waiting times, launch of a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training programme for staff; and introduction of new digital solutions (including Together All, a 24/7 digital platform available free of charge to all students and staff) to enhance wellbeing and mental health support. Additionally, we have further increased our student support team – across Student Money, Mental Health, Student Advice and the Student Hub to ensure students receive the support they need as quickly as possible.

Evaluation has found that satisfaction with University counselling service remained high. For example:

- 92% of students reported that one at a time counselling helped them in overcoming the problem that made them come to the service.
- 85% of students reported that Counselling has helped to improve their overall experience of University.
- 88% of students were satisfied with the wait time for their appointment.

Recognising the clear links between financial insecurity and stress and mental ill health, the University has proactively developed a range of support mechanisms to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis and will remain agile to the needs of our community in response to this developing issue. Examples of support mechanisms in place to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis include access to warm spaces, increased accommodation enhancement funding, and access to free car parking for a period of two hours per day. The University has also launched its “Too Good to Throw” initiative, alongside the Student Union’s Community Fridge and Pantry and Heat and Eat Stations.

In May 2020, the University introduced an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to provide staff and their families with support for a range of personal or work-related issues. During 2022 the EAP usage rate was 14% of staff and the gender split of this usage was 79% female and 21% male. In partnership with Innovate Healthcare, the University launched the Peppy digital health app in November 2022 which offers a range of tailored content and support specifically on menopause health and men’s health. The app is accessible to all staff, including their spouse or partner. Staff also have discounted access to an extensive range of exercise facilities that support physical health.

### **Fair Work**

The University values the skills, experience and the involvement of its employees to provide an inclusive and supportive culture and working environment. We remain committed to Fair Work principles through providing a healthy work-life balance and through a commitment to paying the Real Living Wage to employees since 2015. We continue to apply supplements on the grading structure in line with the Real Living Wage published rates.

Additionally, the University has consistently moved towards more stable contracts for staff and moved away from the use of zero hours contracts.

### **Progressive Working Practices**

The University values the skills, experience and the involvement of its employees to provide an inclusive and supportive culture and working environment that values a positive work life balance. This includes the partnership approach that has been developed with the local campus trade union representatives that has enabled the development of a number of progressive approaches to working practices.

The University has reflected on the positive aspects for staff arising from homeworking during the pandemic. To transition from conventional working practices and provide a modern workplace, we have embedded a new Agile Working Framework – an informal, principles-based approach that enables progressive working practice to support agility, growth and high performance.

### **Staff Engagement**

Be Heard is the University's new approach to listening to staff, to seek their feedback and understand their experiences at work. A key aspect of the approach has been the introduction of pulse surveys where staff are invited to participate in short, focussed surveys on a range of topics through their employment journey.

One such pulse survey was undertaken during January 2023 to understand the lived experience of the Agile Working Framework in practice, to test the principles-led approach, and to gain insight into how new ways of working were enabling and contributing to the delivery of strategic priorities and meeting staff expectations. The survey attracted a response rate of 51% from those eligible to participate (n = 749), which is 20% higher than the average response rate for pulse surveys. At an institution level, 79% of individuals (approximately 8 out of 10 staff), responded favourably to the survey (i.e. provided an agree or strongly agree response), demonstrating an overall positive experience of the Agile Working Framework since its introduction. Additionally, 84% of individuals agreed or strongly agreed that agile working enhances their ability to deliver priorities successfully and 68% felt their work life balance had improved because of the Agile Working Framework.

## **Equality Outcome 3 – Student Success**

### **Learning, Teaching and Student Experience**

Providing high quality learning, teaching and support to enable an outstanding student experience has remained a core principle of the University. Our tailored, well-planned and agile response to the Covid-19 pandemic was commended in the University's most recent ELIR and resulted in the University maintaining a UK-top 30 position for overall student satisfaction<sup>4</sup> in the NSS, with a score in 2022 of 80%, above both the Scottish sector average (79%) and the UK sector average (76%). Building on the successes of online learning, the University will this year implement a learning community approach focussing on connected face-to-face teaching on campus and inclusive hybrid learning to maintain an excellent teaching and learning experience.

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<sup>4</sup> Based on institutions included within the Guardian University Guide 2022

The principles that inform our approach in this space include the following: be kind and supportive; be flexible and inclusive; encourage active learning and use assessment for learning; engage students as responsible partners in their learning; build resilience into our teaching.

In the 2021-22 academic year, 73% of undergraduate students were awarded first class or upper second-class Honours degrees. This level of attainment was consistent across individuals who identified with a specific protected characteristic including a Black, Asian or other minority ethnic background or a disability (see table 3). It is of note that there has been an increase in the percentage of students from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background achieving a first class or upper second-class Honours degree between 2017/18 (56%) and 2021/22 (75%).

Table 3: Percentage of students awarded first class or upper second-class Honours degrees by protected characteristic

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
<b>Overall All</b>	77%	76%	74%	78%	73%
<b>Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Background<sup>5</sup></b>	56%	74%	67%	74%	75%
<b>Disability</b>	76%	68%	73%	76%	74%
<b>Sex (Female)</b>	79%	79%	78%	80%	74%
<b>Sex (Male)</b>	74%	72%	69%	74%	72%

For the past three years, Stirling has maintained a UK top-30 position for overall student satisfaction, and in 2022 achieved a score of 80%, above both the Scottish sector average (79%) and the UK sector average (76%). An excellent student experience remains a priority for the University across all levels of study.

Across the student population, we continuously monitor our students’ sense of belonging, community, and wellbeing. The latest NSS data shows a 4.8% decrease in learning community scores from 2021 to 2022 (70.7% to 65.9%). The average learning community score across Scotland decreased by 2.4% during the same period. This will be a priority focus as we strive to develop a greater sense of wellbeing and community for all.

Very positively, the University achieved excellent results for overall satisfaction in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) of 84%, remaining above the UK sector average (82%) and the

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<sup>5</sup> We use Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background to acknowledge in part the constituent groups that make up the collective group that do not identify as White. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and students are not a homogenous group and people from different ethnic backgrounds have different experiences of and outcomes from higher education. That complexity needs to be considered in analysing data and developing actions. Moreover, all individuals have multiple identities, and the intersection of those different identities should be considered wherever possible. We recognise that our intersectional analyses have some way to go; we wish nevertheless to demonstrate a respect to different ethnic groups that make up our diverse population and by doing so aim for greater insight into the issues facing those specific groups.



Scottish sector average (79%), with particularly excellent scores in relation to teaching and learning resources.

The student voice is paramount in developing and designing improvements to the student experience. As such students are encouraged to provide feedback on their learning experience through: Student Staff Feedback Committees (SSFCs), Elected module, programme and faculty officers, early semester check-ins, module evaluations and student surveys and, 'Thoughts on' campaigns. The feedback gathered through these methods is considered through annual programme reviews to drive improvements.

To enhance the University's ability to make meaningful change in line with student feedback, we have implemented a new approach to module evaluation using Evasys. This has enabled a more rapid module evaluation and made it simpler for staff to access and act upon feedback through implementing relevant changes at a module level.

Making the transition to higher education can be daunting. As such, the University offers a wide range of welcome activities and resources to help students settle in and know where to access support. This includes a Stirling Essentials module to help prepare students in advance of arriving, subject-based welcome sessions to get to know staff and other students, and Welcome Wednesdays which provide students who arrived later to campus to ask any questions they may have about starting at university. In recognition of our growing population of international students and the additional challenges around transition which this group may experience, we have this year introduced a new two-week induction programme for international students which has attracted very positive feedback to date.

We have identified aspects of curriculum design, delivery, assessment and academic policies which unduly exacerbate stress and as such our approach to inclusive assessment has been identified as good practice in the sector and has been shared with other institutions. For example, we have continued to use online assessment after students indicated that it has reduced stress for them during Covid and reviewed our policies and processes around extenuating circumstances and extensions to simplify the process for students and recognise more causes of students requiring mitigation such as financial hardship. We are developing academic staff assessment literacy around authentic and compassionate assessment through our Learning and Teaching Festival and other events and resources.

Additionally, we continue to develop support for personal tutors and in September 2022 offered training from experts in Student Support Services and experienced personal tutors on approaches for personal tutors. We have also developed a resource hub and support contacts for personal tutors.

We continued to remove barriers to learning and maintaining an excellent student experience for disabled students for whom Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH) is essential to their experience, and their ability to remain, thrive and succeed at university. Approximately 5% of students across the institution from all modes of study and fee status access NMPH support (see table 4). Typically, 55% of students who are needs assessed are recommended NMPH support and may use one or more types of support. Evaluation findings indicated that student satisfaction with Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH) Support Services is 4.5 out of 5.

Table 4: NMPH Support

Year	Total no. of students receiving NMPH support	Mental Health Mentors	Proof Readers	Study Skills Tutors	Autism Support Workers	Personal Learning/ Library Assistants (PLA)
2019/20	758	458	180	396	32	63
2020/21	743	422	165	402	40	53
2021/22	805	451	191	480	51	69

**Note** – the reduction in students accessing mental health mentor support in 2020/21 is due in part to the pandemic, and in part to more students accessing Mental Health Adviser support which does not require a needs assessment to take place first.

The overall non-continuation rate of full-time undergraduate students under the age of 21 declined from 12.1% in the 2017-18 academic year to 6.78% in the academic year 2020-21. It is of note that non-continuation of female students has been consistently greater than that of male students since the 2017-18 academic year. Students with a disability or from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background have been consistently more likely to continue past their first year of study, in comparison with the overall non-continuation rate, since academic year 2017-18 (see table 5).

Table 5: Non-continuation rate of full-time undergraduate Scottish domiciled students (under 21)

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>Overall</b>	12.1%	9.97%	6.53%	6.78%
<b>Female</b>	7.17%	6.05%	3.93%	4.30%
<b>Male</b>	4.93%	3.89%	2.52%	2.48%
<b>Disability</b>	10.81%	7.73%	6.41%	9.22%
<b>Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Background</b>	9.20%	15.56%	3.75%	3.66%

#### **Equality Outcome 4 – Anti-racism, Race Equality and Interculturalism**

Recognising the issues highlighted through the Tackling Racism on Campus collaborative project across the Scottish higher and further education sector, the University has established a race equality and anti-racism group which is now overseeing the implementation of a Court approved race equality strategy to ensure the University is an inclusive, welcoming and safe place.

Through this strategy, we are implementing a range of measures to develop a greater understanding of our community, continue to foster a culture in which rights are protected, respected, supported and empowered, and tackle any behaviour which affects the safety or dignity of our community. These measures include making it easier to report racism or incidents or harassment, continuing to strengthen our approach to misconduct investigations, enhanced training for staff on cultural competencies and preventing and responding to racism, an increase in staff resources for international students within Student Support Services, a greater understanding of changing

demographics and cultures on campus and development of our relationship with key partners including Police Scotland.

To further diversify leadership and tackling the under-representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic leaders at the University we have invested in supporting early-career academics and professional services staff from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds who are about to take their first steps into a leadership role through the Advance HE Diversifying Leadership Programme. The Diversifying Leadership Programme explores themes of power and influence, demystifying leadership, cultural identity and cultural capital, increasing visibility and authentic leadership and features leadership stories from high-profile HE leaders.

The University is working towards a curriculum which is inclusive for all its students. Our Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement strategy and the strategies which support our Equality Outcomes all prioritise the development of inclusive curricula and approaches to teaching that challenge and seek to overcome systemic inequalities, including structural racism, gender inequity, mental ill health, and inaccessibility. We will ensure that our curriculum enables our students to recognise, understand and celebrate difference and delivery of our programmes is flexible and accessible to meet the needs of diverse learners.

In 2022/23, we established a new Inclusive Curriculum Working Group, bringing together academic experts in equality, inclusive curriculum development and pedagogy, along with student representation. The aims of the group are to stimulate discussion, reflection and action at Stirling whilst developing a cross-institutional network of colleagues who can share best practice and support collective enhancement to the curriculum and learning environment. Significant progress has already been made to support our diverse student population. For example, we have appointed a Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and a Dean for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience to lead developments in this area, delivered numerous events and workshops focused on the inclusive curriculum, shared good practice from colleagues across the University, such as how we avoid a single story in practice and how we write inclusive module descriptors and shared good practice from across the sector on decolonising the curriculum and other inclusive curriculum resources. A dedicated Learning and Teaching Share Point site includes a wealth of guidance and good practice resources to support staff to develop inclusive curricula, and a new manifesto for inclusive curriculum is under development.

In the 2022-23 academic year, we are continuing to develop and build on these positive approaches, as mainstream activity. We will also focus on initiatives that promote interculturalism and will work to address systemic inequalities in learning and teaching including those arising from a legacy of colonialism, historic racial bias or other inequalities. The University is proud to attract an increasingly diverse student and staff population, with students from over 135 nationalities enrolled in our programmes and academic staff from over 59 countries. We recognise the importance and value of developing inclusive curricula and pedagogy that broaden critical thinking and reflect and harness the diverse experiences and cultural backgrounds of our global community.

The University recently revised its Communication Charter, with input from both students and staff. The Charter is intended to provide a set of principles on how staff and students will communicate with each other to build positive, meaningful and respectful relationships. This continues to be a key

priority for future action. Staff and students are expected to abide by the Respect at Work and Study Policy. In addition, our Student Charter and the Code of Student Discipline set out our expectations of our student population to treat one another with dignity and respect.

### **Equality Outcome 5 – Inclusion**

Providing a high-quality learning and teaching experience for all students, regardless of their background, is a core ambition of the University. We are proud to be a destination of choice for students, both home and internationally contributing to our vibrant student community.

Delivering a seamless learner journey and a high-quality student experience have remained at the core of institutional priorities throughout the turbulent period brought about by the pandemic. In 2021/22 the University developed a blended learning approach taking advantage of Technology Enabled Education (TEE) which focuses on engagement and connection by building and maintaining vibrant communities. Learning from the lessons of the pandemic this approach aims to retain and build on what was successful from online learning – considering the materials, resources and approaches that worked well digitally. Additionally, we have reviewed our approach to assessment, promoting authentic assessment and inclusive assessment by reducing our reliance on campus examinations which has been welcomed by many students with disabilities and specific learning difference. Accessibility of our online materials and website has also been improved and we have introduced laptop loans and free e-textbooks to improve accessibility and reduce the cost to students.

As a signatory of the Universities UK Fair Admissions Code of Practice, the University is committed to a fair and transparent admissions process that seeks to minimise barriers for applicants and address inequalities is outlined. Our approach to ensuring fair access is outlined in full within the Admissions Policy, which also support recruitment of care-experience students, carers and estranged students.

The University is a place where everyone is treated with respect and where ability, not background, is valued. In 2020/21, 31% of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants came from the most deprived (MD40) postcodes, and 14% of the same entrant group were from a more deprived (MD20) region – exceeding the 2021 target set by the Commission on Widening Access. The University continues to develop the internal infrastructures that support broader widening access ambitions, including the expansion of the portfolio of college articulation routes and contextualised offers for eligible applicants. Furthermore, through Scotland’s Community of Access and Participation Practitioners (SCAPP), Stirling is the host University for the Development Coordinator role, the purpose of which is to set up and drive the national Widening Access and Participation Network for Scotland. The University is, therefore, at the centre of this developing network along with schools, colleges, the voluntary sector, professional bodies and employers. Additional financial support for students from a widening participation background has been enabled in 2022/23 with a series of scholarships for undergraduates, postgraduate masters and PhD students, enabled by a successful alumni fundraising campaign.

The University recognises the importance of early engagement with students to build on and support students’ aspirations for higher education. Our engagement with all four SHEP agencies (LEAPS, Lift Off, Aspire North and Focus West) continues with plans this year to undertake increased partnership work. Additionally, the University has partnered with MCR pathways across the region to further

support disadvantaged school pupils through a mentoring programme. The University will continue to work closely with the Scottish Wider Access Programmes (SWAP), including the provision of induction support for new entrants. Through Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners (SCAPP), Stirling is the host University for the Development Coordinator role, the purpose of which is to set up and drive the national Widening Access and Participation Network for Scotland.

The University will continue to champion fair access and transitions, building on our established success in meeting CoWA targets. In 2021/22 over 13% of the University's full-time first degree SDUE population came from the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland. A new widening access strategy will be developed this year to capture this positive trajectory and to further promote accessible routes to higher education, fair admissions, transition and induction, alongside retention and support.

The University recognises the unique set of circumstances faced by estranged students, care experienced students, and those with caring responsibilities, and is committed to supporting these students throughout their student journey. Students can access comprehensive pre-application and transition support, and once they start at Stirling, they will be given a single point of contact to ensure an individualised package of support is implemented, including mental wellbeing support. The University has published a Student Carers Policy, which addresses the challenges that Student Carers may face and it outlines the University's commitment to providing support to this group of students. Additionally, the University was awarded the 'Going Higher for Student Carers' Recognition Award by Carers Trust Scotland.

The University continues to work closely in partnership with Stirling Council's programme of support for refugee and asylum seekers – offering information, advice and guidance sessions on accessing higher education as well as providing pathways to higher education support. A number of Sanctuary Scholarships have been introduced in 2022/23 for undergraduate and postgraduate students in the UK who have applied for asylum or are staying in the UK as refugees or on humanitarian grounds.

We are committed to ensuring that our LGBTQ+ students and staff feel safe, respected and free to be themselves in their place of study and work. Students can access the LGBTQ+ Student Support Network which was created to provide tailored support for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, and can also become a member of the student LGBTQ+ society. In 2022, the University's Careers and Employability Service received a prestigious award from LGBT Youth Scotland. Achieving the LGBT Charter at Silver level recognised the hard work and dedication of staff to develop a comprehensive webpage on LGBT inclusion in the workplace which signposts to inclusive employers and resources, and welcomes training and the review of policies, practice and resources that aim to ensure that the Careers and Employability Service goes beyond meeting legislative needs and is as inclusive as it can be for students, staff and the wider community.

# Appendix 1 – University of Stirling Staff Profile Overview data 2018-2022

## Gender

Table 1: Overall Gender split at University

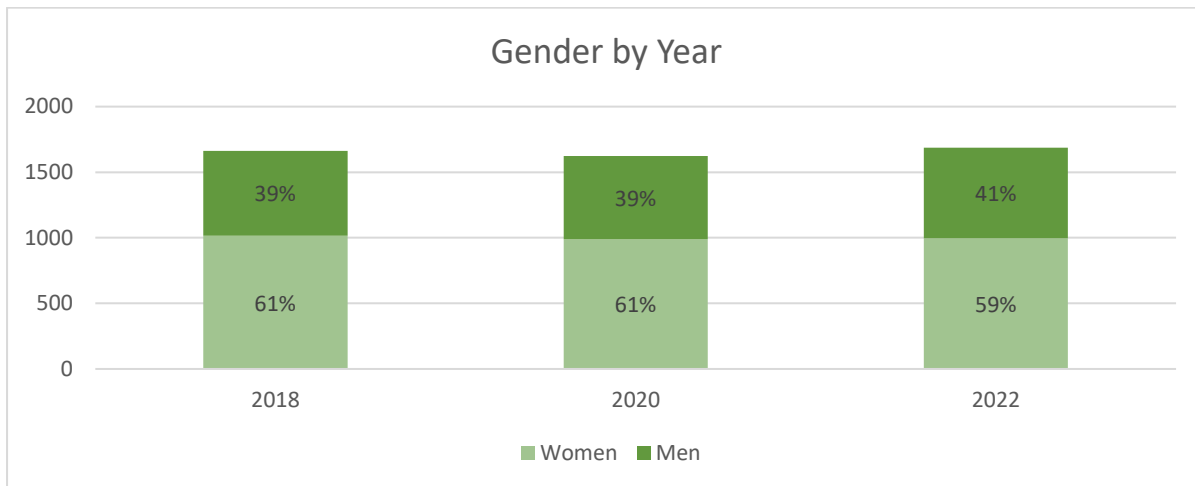


Table 2: Gender breakdown by grade

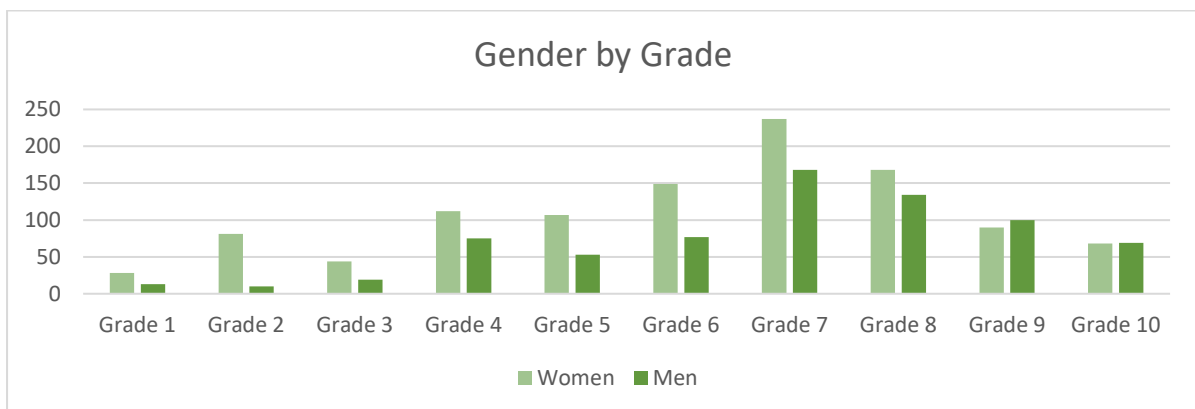
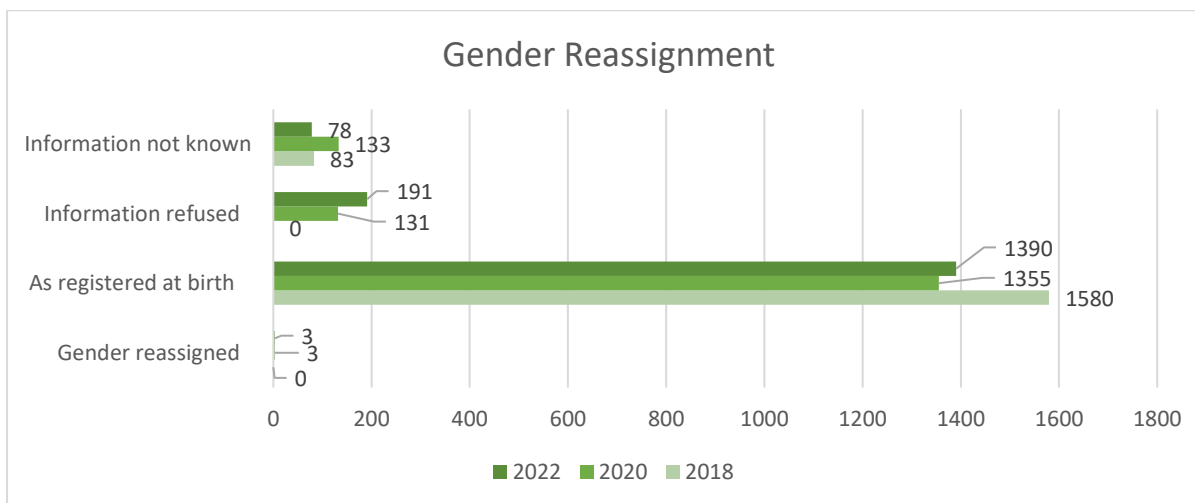
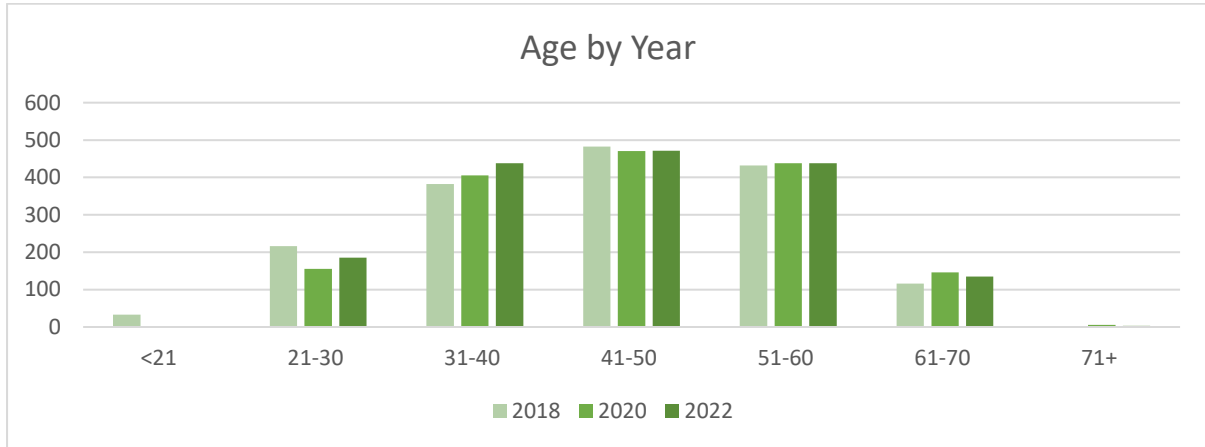


Table 3: Gender Reassignment at University



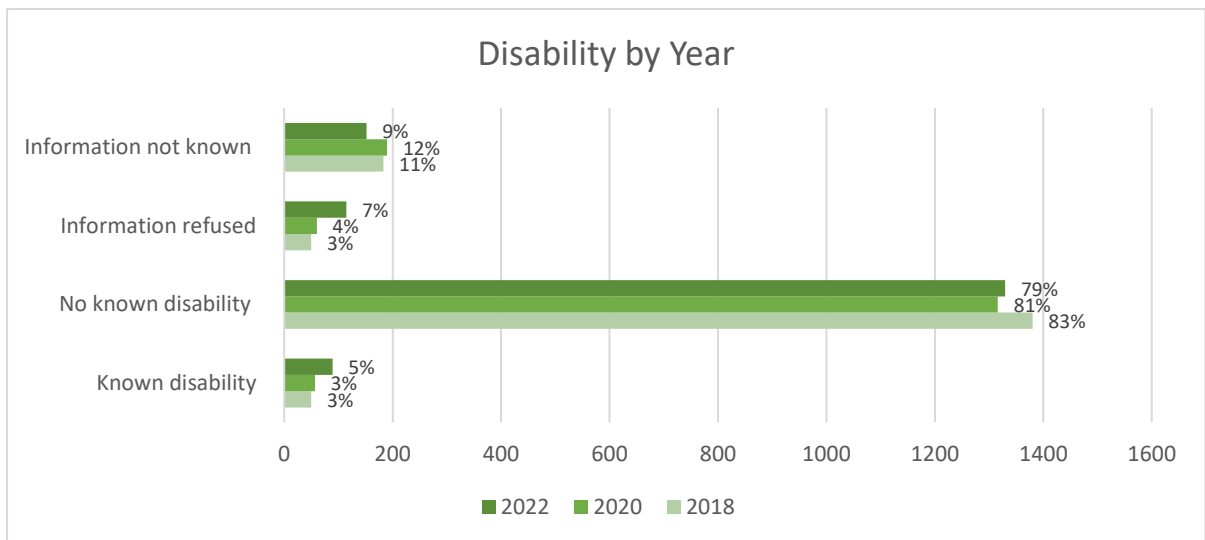
## Age

Table 4: Overall Age Profile at University



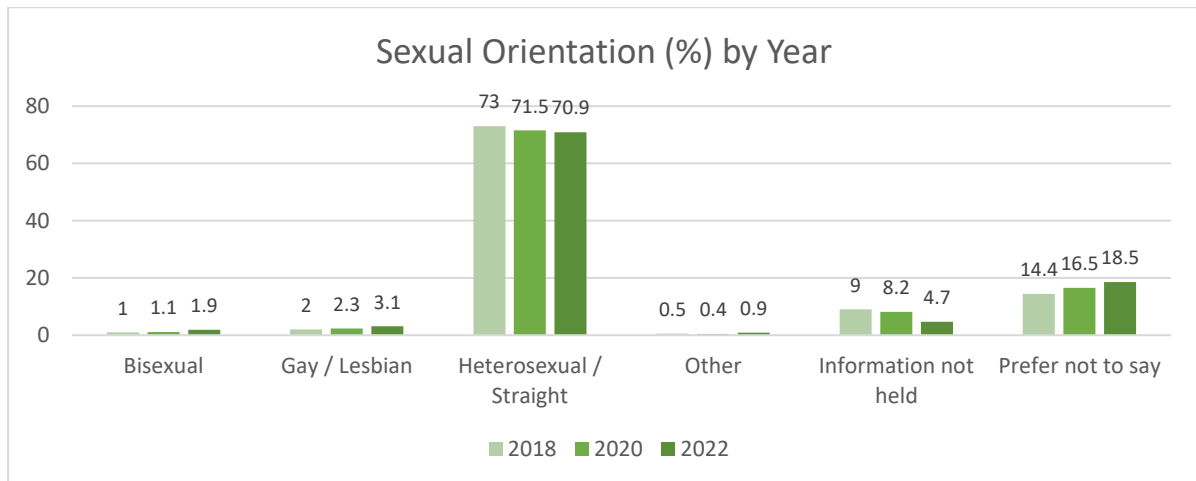
## Disability

Table 5: Disability at University



## Sexual Orientation

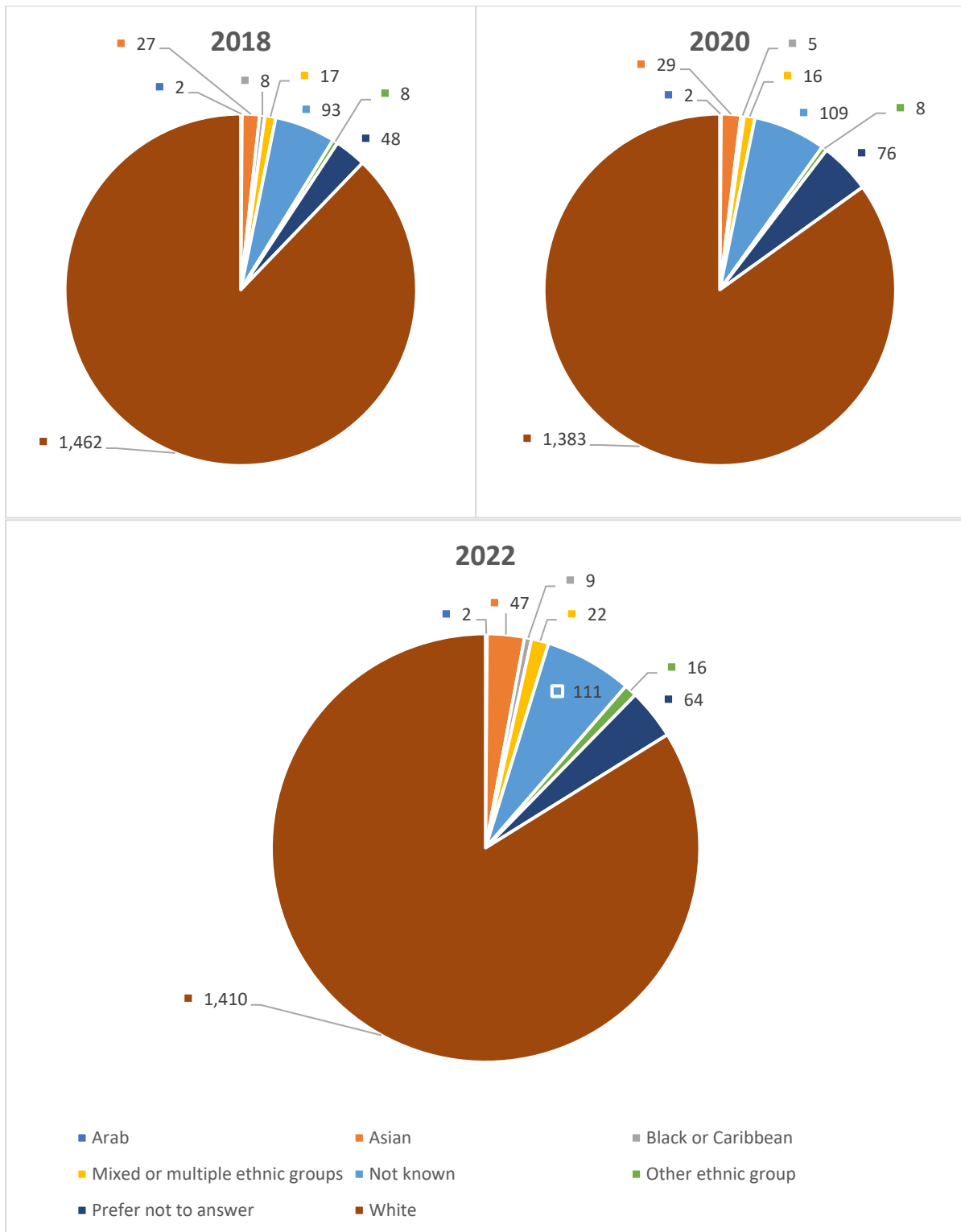
Table 6: Sexual Orientation at University





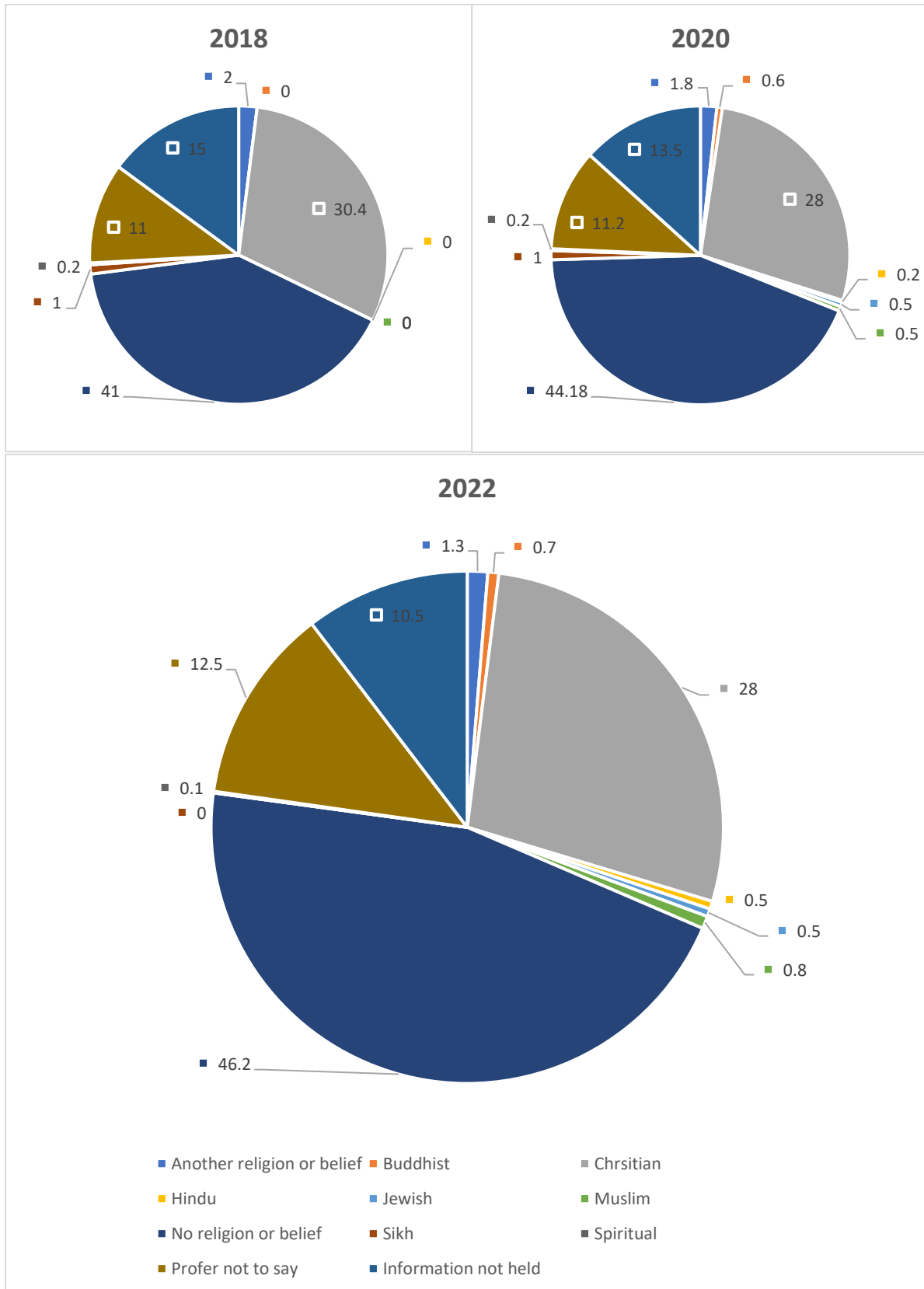
## Ethnicity

Table 7: Ethnicity at University



## Religion or Belief

Table 8: Religion or Belief at University



## New Staff from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 to 31 July 2022

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Female	344	59%
Male	235	41%
<b>Age Banding</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
< 21	5	1%
21 - 30	173	30%
31 - 40	184	32%
41 - 50	105	18%
51 - 60	74	13%
61 – 70	37	6%
71	1	0%
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Disability	29	5%
Information refused	120	21%
No known disability	400	69%
Information not known	30	5%
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Information not known	173	30%
Gender reassigned	0	0%
As registered at birth	406	70%
<b>Religion</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Information not known	66	11%
Another religion/belief	4	1%
Buddhist	3	1%
Christian	104	19%
French reformed	1	0%
Hindu	4	1%
Jewish	1	0%
Muslim	11	2%
No religion or belief	263	45%
Prefer not to say	121	21%
Spiritual	1	0%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Arab	1	0%
Asian	26	4%
Black or Caribbean	10	2%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	10	2%
Not known	119	21%
Other ethnic group	7	1%
Prefer not to say	30	5%
White	376	65%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Bisexual	28	5%
Gay	21	4%
Heterosexual	335	58%
Information not held	21	4%
Other	6	1%
Prefer not to say	168	29%

### Leavers from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 to 31 July 2022

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Female	352	60%
Male	232	40%
<b>Age Banding</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
< 21	5	1%
21 - 30	136	23%
31 - 40	150	26%
41 - 50	132	23%
51 - 60	91	16%
61 - 70	68	12%
71 +	2	0%
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Disability	25	4%
Information refused	108	18%
No known disability	398	68%
Information not known	53	9%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Arab	1	0%
Asian	22	4%
Black or Caribbean	7	1%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	8	1%
Not known	105	18%
Other ethnic group	5	1%
Prefer not to answer	41	7%
White	395	68%
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Information not known	189	32%
As registered at birth	395	68%
Gender reassigned	0	0%
<b>Religion</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Information not known	78	13%
Another religion/belief	8	1%
Buddhist	4	1%
Christian	101	18%
French reformed	1	0%
Hindu	3	1%
Jewish	1	0%
Muslim	10	2%
No religion or belief	241	41%
Prefer not to say	135	23%
Spiritual	2	0%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Bisexual	22	4%
Gay	14	2%
Heterosexual	333	57%
Information not	27	5%
Prefer not to say	187	32%
Other	1	0%