

University of
South Wales
Prifysgol
De Cymru

University of South Wales

Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report

1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

FINAL REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2016/20

Should you require this document in an alternative format or if you have any queries relating to this report, please contact:

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
This document is available in Welsh

1. Introduction and background

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 the University is required to develop a Strategic Equality Plan (SEqP) and publish an Annual Report by the 31st March each year. The report must cover the period of 1st April to 31st March of the previous year.

The SEqP Annual Report must detail:

- The steps we have taken to identify and collect relevant information;
- How we have used this information to meet the three aims of the public sector duty;
- The reasons for not collecting relevant information;
- A statement on the effectiveness of the arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information;
- Progress towards fulfilling each of our equality objectives;
- A statement on the effectiveness of the steps we have taken to fulfil each of our equality objectives;
- Specified employment information.

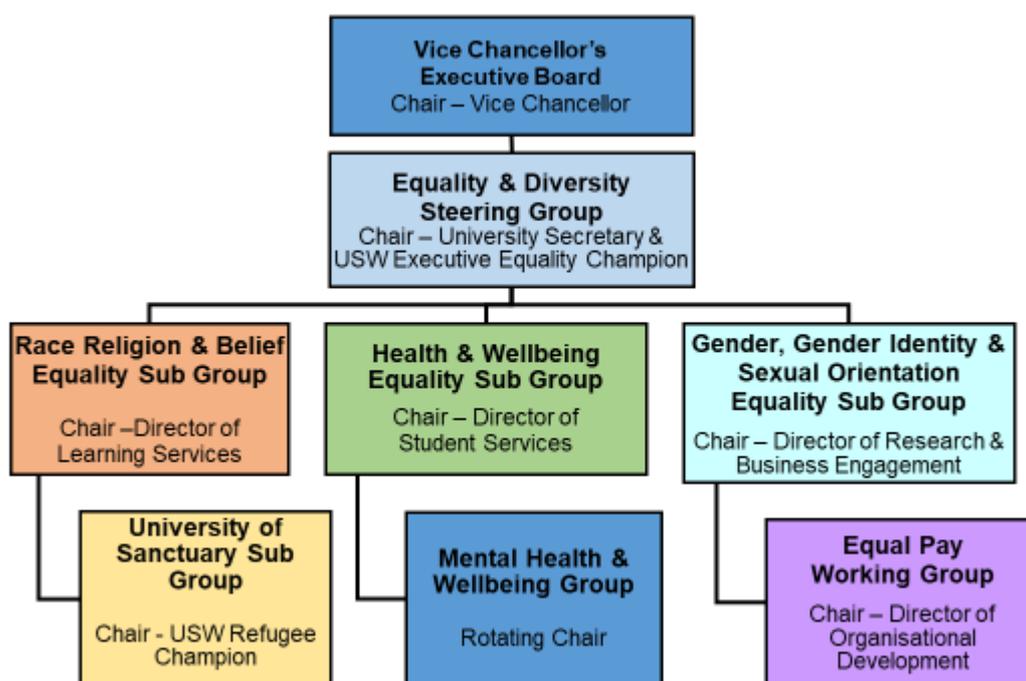
The University of South Wales (USW) Group had a SEqP for 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2020. This is the fourth and final Annual Report for the SEqP. It is for the University of South Wales and covers the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020. There are separate annual reports for the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama and The College Merthyr Tydfil.

The 2016 to 2020 SEqP outlined eight Strategic Equality Objectives for the USW Group. Details of these objectives and progress towards meeting them is outlined within section 4 of this report. Appendix 1 contains a detailed table of progress and Appendix 2 contains the specified employment information.

2. Equality Governance at University of South Wales

The equality, diversity and inclusion agenda at USW is championed by the University Secretary. The University Secretary chairs the Equality & Diversity Steering Group (EDSG), which meets termly and has representation from all departments, faculties, Trade Unions, Students' Union, The College Merthyr Tydfil and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. The group considers all equality issues and protected characteristics, oversees compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and provides strategic direction for the USW Group's equality agenda. EDSG has overarching responsibility for the implementation and review of the SEqP.

In addition to EDSG, the University has equality sub groups that are responsible for progressing the equalities agenda for specific protected characteristics.



All equality sub groups meet termly and feed into EDSG. They are chaired by senior colleagues and have representation from faculties, departments, the Students' Union and Trade Unions.

3. Identifying, Collecting & Using Relevant Information

3.1 The Steps Taken to Identify and Collect Relevant Information

Under the Equality Act statutory duties for Wales, equality monitoring data of staff and students is classed as 'relevant information' to support the Strategic Equality Plan.

USW monitors all protected characteristics of staff through a HR system. Applicants are able to input their equalities data confidentially as part of the application process. This enables HR to produce yearly statistical analysis on the success rate of candidates through all stages of the recruitment process by protected characteristics. The HR system contains a 'self-service' option for existing staff to provide their own equality data.

Student enrolment takes place at the start of each academic year through an online system, which includes equality monitoring for all protected characteristics. This data is stored securely and used anonymously to report on student populations of equality groups (Student Equality Data Report, Appendix 3) and to understand the student experience for different protected characteristic groups. Both this and the Employment Information reports are scrutinised by EDSG, the relevant Equality Sub Group and the USW HR Committee.

The SEqP 2016/20 for 2016/2020 contained a specific strategic equality objective "*to enhance the collection, analysis and monitoring of equalities data and relevant equalities information*". Significant work has been undertaken to implement this objective and ensure that the University has a robust evidence base in which to assess its equality priorities and measure progress. This includes increasing the disclosures of protected characteristics, detailed analysis of data for Athena Swan and an in depth scrutiny of pay data for all protected characteristics for a comprehensive Equal Pay Review. This evidence base has been used to assess the priorities for the SEqP 2020/24 and will continue to be developed throughout the duration of that Plan.

3.2 How the institution has used relevant information to meet the public sector duty

All actions within the SEqP have been developed based upon relevant information gathered through consultation and engagement and detailed analysis of data, in addition to other relevant equalities information.

The SEqP 2016/20's Strategic Equality Objectives and detailed Strategic Equality Action Plan that underpins these objectives, all focus upon meeting the three aims of the public sector duty:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups;
- Foster good relations between different groups.

Relevant equality information is used to monitor implementation of the duties and, where relevant, features in the action plan table of progress (Appendix 1).

Extensive monitoring of relevant information is undertaken as part of USW's Athena Swan work. Athena Swan recognises the commitment to advancing gender, race and gender identity equality within higher education. During 2018/20 USW undertook detailed analysis of the staff experience in relation to these characteristics, including: statistical data, focus groups, interviews and surveys. An intersectional approach was used throughout. The work resulted in a successful Athena Swan Bronze Award. A detailed Athena Swan Action Plan 2019/24 is now being implemented to further promote equality and inclusion in relation to gender, race and gender identity.

2019/20 also saw the University conduct an Equal Pay Review for all protected characteristics. This analysis involved reviewing pay gaps within grades, in addition to overall pay gaps for all protected characteristics. Overseen by the Equal Pay Working Group, the review resulted in a series of recommendations that will now be implemented through the duration of the SEqP 2020/24.

The Race, Religion & Belief Equality Sub Group continued to meet termly and undertook detailed analysis of staff and student race equality data. A research study into the experiences of BAME staff and students at USW commenced, including detailed analysis of secondary and primary data. The recommendations from this research study will be released in February 2021 and will be implemented throughout the duration of the SEqP 2020/24.

Regular engagement with the LGBT+ Staff Network, Disability Staff Network Group and Women in Academia Network takes place to progress the agendas in relation to their respective protected characteristics. These networks also play a vital role in providing feedback on areas for institutional improvement and development in equality and inclusion. Engagement with these networks has resulted in the creation of a Women's Leadership

Development Programme, which is now in its fifth cohort, and the launch of a Trans Equality Policy Statement, Trans Equality Guidance and a Trans Allies Initiative. The LGBT+ Network have been hugely influential in USW securing status as a Stonewall Top Trans Employer and 24th position in the Workplace Equality Index.

3.3 Reasons for Not Collecting Relevant Information

The University collects all protected characteristics for staff and students, with the exception of the following:

Pregnancy and Maternity

Information on pregnancy/maternity is not collected during enrolment/recruitment. However, USW supports students who are pregnant or have recently given birth through its guidance for students on pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption and through the Student Advice Zones. Human Resources holds information on staff on pregnancy/maternity for the purposes of administering maternity leave.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Data on marital and civil partnership status is not collected for students. As marriage and civil partnership is not a protected characteristic for the higher education provisions, there are no plans to introduce monitoring of this characteristic. In both staff and student systems, the gender-neutral title 'Mx' is available for use.

3.4 Statement on the Effectiveness of Arrangements for Identifying and Collecting Relevant Information

Significant efforts are made to identify, collect, analyse and use relevant information for all protected characteristics. The arrangements in place for this are effective, with new ways of using relevant information developed, reviewed and revised regularly.

The robust equality governance structures in place at the University ensure that there is detailed focus upon examining the evidence base for equality and inclusion priorities and analysis of the impact of actions undertaken, in addition to understanding and implementing research and good practice guidance.

4. Strategic Equality Objectives – Progress Report

In line with our statutory duties, section 4 of this report contains a summary of progress we have made towards fulfilling each of our strategic equality objectives throughout the duration of our SEqP 2016/20. Further detail about the actions undertaken during 2019/20 is available within the Strategic Equality Action Plan Table of Progress in Appendix 1.

1. CULTURE & GOVERNANCE

To promote dignity, respect, inclusion and fairness within the university community to embed equality into the decision making of the USW Group.

Significant work was undertaken throughout 2016/20 to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion into decision-making at USW and promote a positive, fair and inclusive culture.

Key areas of progress include:

- A comprehensive equality governance structure that has enabled commitment from and engagement with equality and inclusion agendas across all protected characteristics from all faculties and departments and ensured positive collaborative work with the Students' Union and Trades Unions.
- Considerable work to implement the PREVENT Duty, with the delivery of training and development of policies, protocols, risk assessment and Engage web tool for External Speakers.
- Support for staff and students has been available through the Dignity Advisers Scheme, which provides confidential support for anyone experiencing an issue related to discrimination, harassment or victimisation, and our Fair Play 30 Equality Champions scheme, staff who are advocates for furthering equality and inclusions across the University and supporting colleagues to implement changes within their areas. The scheme was the recipient of the Guardian Advancing Staff Equality award in 2019.
- Equality Impact Assessment forms and guidance have been redeveloped, with a process for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments embedded into course re/validations. This is an area that will be further progressed through SEqP 2020/24.

2. COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

To ensure that engagement takes place with staff, students and local voluntary sector groups from protected characteristics through collaboration, communication and consultation.

Our engagement with staff and students from protected characteristics has increased throughout the duration of this plan and will continue to be a focus throughout the SEqP 2020/24.

- The LGBT+ Staff Network is a thriving community working actively to further equality at USW, the Disability Staff Network Group is a growing group of colleagues actively supporting USW to further promote disability equality and a newly formed BAME Staff Network is supporting colleagues, whilst working to drive forwards race equality at the University.
- The Student Union have been active partners in all our equality and inclusion work throughout the duration of this Plan, including extensive support from the Student Union Gender Identity Officer in developing our Trans Equality Policy Statement, Trans Equality Guidance and Trans Allies Scheme.
- Various events and campaigns to promote equality and inclusion have taken place throughout 2016/20 through our staff networks, Student Union, Chaplaincy, Equality Team and various staff groups. Examples include several mental health and wellbeing campaigns run by our Mental Health Champions, a week of events for Refugee Week run by the University of Sanctuary Group, a Rainbow Month of several events and workshops hosted by our LGBT+ Staff Network, International Day of Disabled People and #PurpleLightUp campaigns lead by our Staff Disability Network Group and annual International Women's Day lead by our Athena Swan lead, amongst many others.
- A detailed staff engagement programme spanning throughout 2017/19 was undertaken in preparation for our Athena Swan Bronze Award submission. Focusing upon the experiences of colleagues in relation to gender, gender identity and race, detailed statistical analysis, focus groups, workshops and 1:1 interviews ensured a detailed exploration and development of an evidenced based five year action plan.
- During 2020 specific engagement was undertaken with BAME staff and students through primary research to explore experiences of studying and working at USW. This exploratory research study will yield a series of recommendations being released during spring 2021. These recommendations will be implemented through the SEqP 2020/24. USW became a member of the Race Equality Charter in November 2020. These recommendations will support the University in its journey towards developing a submission for the Charter.
- Development of the SEqP 2020/24 was informed by engagement with the voluntary sector in a collaborative event with Cardiff University and Cardiff Metropolitan

University. Equality organisations across the third sector in South Wales contributed to our understanding of perceptions of and access to higher education for students and as employers within the region. Our SEqP addresses key areas of focus from this engagement.

3. DIVERSITY OF STUDENT BODY & STUDENT EXPERIENCE

To attract, select and retain a diverse range of students to study at USW Group and create an environment that encourages and supports all students to actively engage with the University and Colleges to realise their full potential.

The actions within this strategic objective focus upon the student experience at USW, with a particular focus upon attracting and retaining Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic students to study at USW and reducing the attainment gap. Whilst some progress has been made, further progress will be driven through the SEqP 2020/24, **with race equality being a primary focus of this plan.**

- The continuation gap (the gap between the proportion of BAME students and White students that have passed their first year at the first attempt) has fluctuated throughout the duration of this Plan, with the gap standing at 8.1% during 2019/20. Exploration of this has been undertaken through the exploratory research study, with recommendations about how to reduce this gap due in spring 2021.
- Similarly, the attainment gap (the gap between the proportion of BAME students and White students that achieve a 1st or 2:1) has fluctuated throughout the period, with the gap during 2019/20 being 12.9%. Further understanding of the reasons for this gap, and the measures that can be taken to reduce it, will be undertaken during 2020/24, with the work driven through the recommendations of the BAME staff and students exploratory study and the University's Race Equality Charter work.
- There has been a slight increase to the population of UK BAME undergraduate students during 2019/20 (6.7%), with a slight reduction in the numbers of UK BAME postgraduate students. The SEqP 2020/24 commits the University to developing and implementing a strategy to increase the proportion of UK BAME studying at USW.
- USW continues to support care leavers through a number of initiatives such as a nominated support person, a care leaver guide, advice from the Student Money Support Team, and a Care Leaver Bursary. A digital campaign was launched to encourage care leavers to let us know of their care leaver status so we could provide these services. During 2020, there were 43 care leavers enrolled at USW.

- A detailed proposal to provide adjustments to the examinations timetable during 2019 and 2020 was implemented, to support Muslim students when the main examinations period coincided with Ramadan. This was operational during 2019, with the support not needed during 2020 due to the suspension of examinations due to Covid-19. The principles agreed within this process will continue to be adopted as needed during times when examination periods coincide with Ramadan.
- USW has made considerable progress in developing its policies and support for trans and gender non-conforming students, with the introduction of trans equality training, a Trans Equality Policy Statement, Trans Equality Guidance, a dedicated trans advice email with specific support in place from members of the Advice Zone and a Change of Name Policy. Further work will be undertaken during 2020/24 to embed and enhance these policies and processes.
- USW has provided disability awareness training on a number of topics over the duration of this Plan, such as deaf awareness, mental health awareness, disability awareness, an introduction to specific learning difficulties, mental health first aid, and ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training).

4. ATTRACTING, RETAINING & DEVELOPING STAFF

To attract, retain and develop a diverse range of people to work for the USW Group and to enable those that work for the Group to have access to open and transparent career development and progression.

This strategic equality objective focused upon promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity amongst staff, whilst there was some progress on this, further focus has been placed on this area during 2020/24.

- A recruitment project commenced in 2019/20, which will see the University's recruitment processes and practices changed considerably. Equality and diversity has been embedded into this project and anonymous shortlisting will be introduced through it. The new recruitment site will have a focus upon increasing the diversity of the workforce and will be launched in 2021.
- The University has retained its accreditation as a Level 2 Disability Confident Employer. A Staff Disability Network Group was launched in December 2019, which has increased our engagement with disabled colleagues and lead to the development

of a Reasonable Adjustments Passport, which will be launched during spring 2021. The SEqP 2020/24 has committed the University to achieving Level 3 Disability Confident Leader status by March 2024.

- The University has been a member of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Scheme since June 2016 and has entered the Workplace Equality Index for four consecutive years. This programme has driven improvement across the University in promoting LGBT+ equality and creating a more inclusive environment for our staff. This has been evident through rapid improvement in the Index, from 301st in 2017, to 104th in 2018, to 43rd in 2019 and then to 24th in 2020. The LGBT+ Staff Network contributed significantly to this improvement, organising events and campaigns to raise awareness, supporting staff and students and working collaboratively with colleagues to develop policies and processes that support equality.

5. ACCESSIBILITY

To ensure USW Group buildings and infrastructure reflect the diverse needs of the University and College communities and provide accessible and inclusive working and learning environments.

This strategic objective focuses upon three main areas of accessibility; the environment, IT and inclusive learning and teaching. Audits and access developments have been undertaken throughout the duration of this Plan, with plans to further increase accessibility prioritised within the SEqP 2020/24.

- A full Access Audit of our campuses took place, with priority work undertaken through a rolling programme and embedded into future development plans. A further Access Audit will be undertaken during the lifespan of the 2020/24 Plan.
- USW has created an Accessibility Working Group, which has representatives from across the University and meets regularly to assess and implement accessibility measures for all USW's web delivered services. The group is ensuring compliance with the newly introduced Accessibility Regulations.
- Considerable work has been undertaken by USW's Centre for the Enhancement of Learning & Teaching (CELT) to further inclusivity in learning and teaching. Key areas of progress include: embedding universal design for learning in all education development activity; delivering bespoke workshops on different aspects of inclusive curriculum

including development of inclusive practices resources; and development of two Communities of Expertise in Refugee and Migration Studies and Decolonising the Curriculum. The Refugee and Migration Studies Community of Expertise contributed to a successful series of Refugee Week events during June 2020.

- CELT has lead a year long research project exploring the BAME staff and student experience at USW. This research will be a key driver for taking forwards and implementing the recommendations as part of delivery of the SEqP 2020/24.

6. INCLUSIVITY IN RESEARCH

To develop an inclusive approach to research conducted by USW Group staff, whereby the involvement of people from protected characteristic groups is promoted and barriers to the participation of people from diverse groups are removed.

This strategic equality objective focused upon promoting greater participation in research by protected groups, using inclusive principles within research and addressing inequalities in research careers and outcomes, paying particular attention to gender.

- USW has undertaken considerable work to further the gender, gender identity and race equality agendas through its Athena Swan work throughout the duration of this Plan and was successfully awarded an Athena Swan Bronze Award in April 2020. As part of this award, the University has developed a detailed and extensive action plan for progressing these areas of equality over the next four years. Considerable work will be undertaken to implement this plan, which sits alongside the SEqP, throughout 2020 to 2024. The University will need to evidence change and progress in order to be able to renew the Bronze Award in 2024.
- The University has developed and continues to lead a [Wales Women in STEM Network](#), which is a pan higher education and industry network to support, connect and inspire women across Wales. Following a successful launch in both South and North Wales, the network has continued to run a series of sessions sharing research, insights and stories of women in STEM and continues to grow in size and strength.
- In addition to the Network, the University is leading on the reintroduction of the Women in Universities Mentoring Scheme (WUMS). An online matching platform has been developed, with a pilot that commenced in September 2020 between USW and Aberystwyth University. To date, 50 mentors have registered, with 10 pairs of

mentors/mentees matched. Following the pilot, WUMS will be relaunched to all Welsh universities.

7. EQUAL PAY

To undertake Equal Pay Reviews of the USW Group every three years and implement the actions arising from the resulting Equal Pay Action Plans.

In line with the statutory duty, this strategic equality objective focused upon the analysis, review and action related to pay equality for staff from protected characteristic groups.

- An Equal Pay Review was conducted in 2016 in relation to age, disability, sex and race. A series of recommendations were developed that were delivered in partnership with the Equal Pay Working Group.
- The Equal Pay Working Group reconvened during 2020 to undertake a further Equal Pay Review, this time extending the review to age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, race and religion/belief. As in 2016, the Review included detailed analysis of pay gaps within grade in addition to pay gaps for each protected characteristic. The analysis concluded that there were no pay gaps within grades; the University's robust grade analysis process ensures that colleagues from different protected characteristics receive equal pay across all grades.
- The 2020 Equal Pay Review revealed mean pay gaps of:
 - Disability – 8%
 - Race – 0.4%
 - Religion/belief – -6%
 - Sex – 10%
 - Sexual orientation – 0.8%
- Recommendations were developed through the Equal Pay Review, which will meet termly throughout the duration of the SEqP 2020/24 to oversee their implementation.

8. DATA COLLECTION & MONITORING

To enhance the collection, analysis and monitoring of equalities data and relevant equalities information.

This strategic equality objective aimed to strengthen USW's approach to the collection and analysis of equalities data in order to further develop our evidence base of equalities information.

- Annual Student Equalities Data Reports have been developed and published throughout the duration of this Plan and have been an important source of information for measuring progress and undertaking Equality Impact Assessments.
- Further work will be undertaken throughout the duration of the SEqP 2020/24 to strengthen our approach to analysis of and to address the collection and analysis of student continuation and attainment data. This will be driven through both the SEqP 2020/24 and the University's work towards the Race Equality Charter.

5. Conclusion

This report reflects upon progress during the fourth and final year of USW's Strategic Equality Plan for 2016 to 2020. Considerable work has been undertaken towards fulfilling the University's eight strategic equality objectives over the four years of the scheme. Whilst it is recognised that there is still much further work to be done, the work undertaken throughout the duration of this SEqP provides a good basis on which to build upon for the next Strategic Equality Plan.

In an ever-changing society, with Covid-19 and the recent Black Lives Matter protests highlighting the need for an increased focus upon equality and inclusion, we are aware of the acute need for our Strategic Equality Plan for 2020/24 to drive further change. Within this Plan, we intend to prioritise key areas of change for the next four years and take positive steps to build upon the work we have already undertaken and positively impact upon outcomes for our staff and students from protected characteristic groups.