



University of South Wales

Annual Equality Report

1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

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

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Introduction

Welcome to the University of South Wales' (USW) Annual Equality Report. This report documents the University's progress in meeting its statutory duties and institutional commitments in relation to equity for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The report is published in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) Regulations 2011 and demonstrates how the University is working to address structural disadvantage, advance equitable outcomes, and foster inclusive environments across its functions as an employer, education provider and civic institution.

USW's approach to equity is grounded in a clear recognition that differential outcomes are shaped by structural, socio-economic and intersectional inequalities. As Wales' leading widening participation university, USW has a distinctive role in advancing social mobility and supporting access, progression and success for learners from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds. This report therefore focuses not only on compliance, but on how equity is embedded across policy, practice and decision-making to address persistent gaps in participation, experience and outcomes.

The report provides an overview of governance arrangements for equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), outlines how relevant information is identified, collected and used, and summarises progress made during the first year of delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024 - 2028. It reflects a shift towards a more consistent, evidence-informed and outcomes-focused approach, combining quantitative data with qualitative insight drawn from the lived experiences of students and colleagues.

This reporting period represents an important stage in strengthening the University's focus on socio-economic inclusion, widening participation and equitable progression. The report therefore highlights areas of progress alongside areas where further action is required, recognising that activity alone is insufficient without demonstrable impact on equity and social mobility.

It should be noted that while the University of South Wales Group includes USW and its subsidiary institutions, the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and The College Merthyr Tydfil each publish their own Annual Equality Reports. This report relates solely to the University of South Wales.

Through the publication of this report, the University seeks to provide transparency, demonstrate accountability, and support continuous improvement in delivering equitable outcomes for students, colleagues and communities, ensuring that opportunity, success and belonging are not limited by socio-economic background or other structural barriers.

Our legal duties

Under the Public-Sector Equality General Duty, public bodies must:

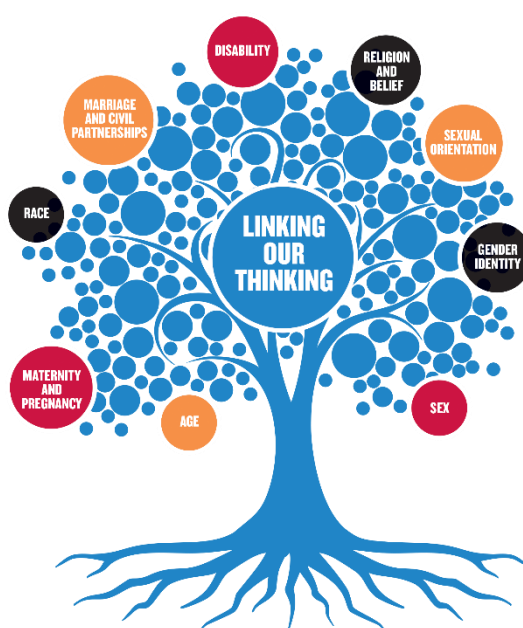
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protective characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

And to have due regard for advancing equality by:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010



Here at USW, we use the term Gender Identity as it is a more inclusive term and includes people who do not see themselves as having their gender reassigned. We use gender identity rather than gender reassignment throughout this document. Someone's gender identity is a person's internal, deeply held sense of their own gender.

As well as the general duty, we must meet the specific duties, which are set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties), and the (Wales) Regulations 2011.

These duties came into force in Wales on 6 April 2011 and include:

- developing four yearly Strategic Equality Plans
- involving and engaging stakeholders including the public when developing plans, policies and shaping services

- undertaking appropriate equality impact assessments
- collecting and publishing information about equality, employment and differences in pay
- promoting equality-based staff training
- considering equality when buying services and agreeing contracts
- publishing our Annual Equality Report
- reviewing our equality plans and objectives to make sure they are current
- making sure people can access the information we provide.

USW Equality Commitment

We are committed to transforming our approach to equity and inclusion through self-reflection, active challenge, meaningful engagement, and robust scrutiny. We recognise that this journey requires courage, including sitting with discomfort to address difficult issues, engaging in brave conversations, and taking purposeful actions to achieve true equity for all.

Our commitment is rooted in collaboration and co-production with our students, colleagues, and communities. Together, we will create equitable spaces where individuals are valued beyond the constraints of labels or boxes. Our goal is to ensure that equality and equitable outcomes are embedded at the heart of everything we do.

Inspired by the lived experiences of our students, colleagues, and communities, we are dedicated to breaking down barriers and challenging stigmas. We will foster a shared sense of belonging within the USW family, uniting us in our mission. While we have made progress, our data shows that we still have significant work to do to achieve genuine equity and inclusion for all.

We aspire to maintain an inclusive learning and working environment where diversity is celebrated, equity is advanced, and everyone has access to success and progression. By adopting a zero-tolerance stance on discriminatory behaviours and practices, we will invite challenge and scrutiny from within and beyond the organisation. We will work in partnership with the Student Union, Trade Union, staff networks, and the Critical Friends Group chaired by Sanjiv Vedi OBE, along with Newport's pioneering Youth Development Project, Urban Circle, to ensure a transparent and accountable approach to tracking our progress.

Our commitment is more than words. Grounded in evidence-based research and enriched by consultation and engagement, our action plan aligns with the USW 2030 strategy, embedding equity and inclusion into the fabric of our institutional business plans. We are determined to be measured by meaningful change, holding ourselves accountable every step of the way.

Who we are

The University of South Wales (USW) is one of the UK's most dynamic and forward-thinking universities, committed to creating a brighter future for our students, communities, and partners. With a focus on innovation, sustainability, and real-world impact, we thrive on empowering individuals and transforming industries economically, socially, and culturally.

Collaboration is at the core of everything we do. USW works closely with business leaders, industry professionals, and social enterprises to co-create solutions that

meet real-world challenges and deliver exceptional outcomes for both learners and organisations. From energy and health to security and sustainability, our research and innovation drive progress on some of the world's most pressing issues.

As a vocationally driven university, USW is dedicated to preparing students for the demands of today's workforce and the challenges of tomorrow. Employers actively shape our curriculum to ensure it aligns with their future needs, creating a seamless pipeline of skilled graduates ready to contribute meaningfully to key industries. This close partnership means that our graduates consistently meet the expectations of employers and make an immediate impact in their chosen fields.

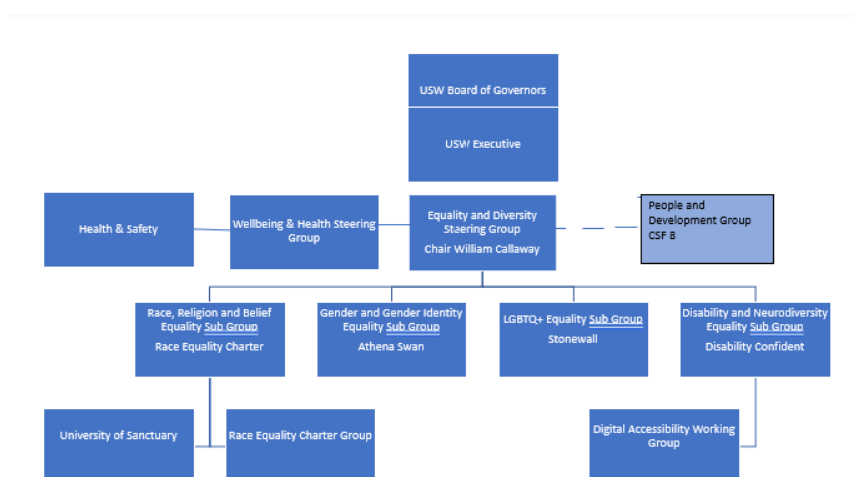
USW is proud of its role as an inclusive, multi-disciplinary university. Almost half of our students come from the most disadvantaged areas in Wales, reflecting our commitment to widening access and fostering success for learners from all backgrounds. This achievement sets us apart, significantly exceeding the average for higher education institutions across Wales and the UK.

Our campuses in Cardiff, Newport, and Pontypridd provide vibrant and diverse environments for learning and growth. At USW, we are not just a university; we are a hub of innovation, collaboration, and opportunity, driving positive change for our students, partners, and the wider world.

How we monitor our progress

Diagram 1 illustrates the University of South Wales (USW) governance structure, highlighting groups responsible for reviewing strategies, monitoring EDI initiatives, and ensuring progress.

The Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG), chaired by the University's Secretary, forms one of three governance pillars, alongside the Health and Safety Committee, and the Wellbeing Steering Group. Reporting directly to the Executive Leadership Team and Board of Governors via the Culture, People and Values Committee, this structure underscores the strategic importance of EDI and ensures accountability at Executive levels. In alignment with the University's Critical Success Factor (CSF) 8, and the People Development Group, the EDSG oversees equality compliance, strategic direction, including quarterly reviews of the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP).

Diagram 1

Identifying, Collecting & Using Relevant Information

The Steps Taken to Identify and Collect Relevant Information

Under the Equality Act's statutory duties for Wales, equality monitoring data for colleagues and students is considered "relevant information" to support the Strategic Equality Plan.

Equality Monitoring for Colleagues

USW collects equality data for all protected characteristics of colleagues through its online recruitment and HR systems. Applicants confidentially provide their equality data as part of the recruitment process, enabling HR to generate annual anonymised reports on candidate success rates across all recruitment stages, segmented by protected characteristics. Existing colleagues can update their equality data at any time through the HR system's "self-service" option. This data is summarised and presented in Appendix 1.

Equality Monitoring for Students

Student enrolment, conducted annually through an online system, also includes equality monitoring for all protected characteristics. The collected data is stored securely and used to generate anonymised reports on the representation of different equality groups within the student population. These findings are detailed in the Student Equality Data Report, included in Appendix 2.

Reporting and Analysis

The Employment Information and Student Equality Data reports are submitted annually to the Equality, Diversity, and Safeguarding Group (EDSG), the USW Executive Team, and the Culture, People, and Values Committee. These reports provide critical insights into trends and imbalances, informing the development and progression of the equality agenda at USW.

Reasons for Not Collecting Relevant Information

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

Pregnancy and Maternity: Information on pregnancy/maternity for students is not collected during enrolment. 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 colleague on pregnancy/maternity for the purposes of administering maternity and paternity leave.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: Data on marital and civil partnership status is currently collected for colleagues, but not for students. As marriage and civil partnership is not a protected characteristic for the higher education provisions, there are no plans at present to introduce monitoring of this characteristic for students. For both colleagues and students, the gender-neutral title 'Mx' is available for use in both systems.

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

The University demonstrates a strong commitment to identifying, collecting, analysing, and utilising relevant information. Robust equality governance structures underpin this process, ensuring a comprehensive and focused approach to examining the evidence base for equality and inclusion priorities. These structures enable thorough analysis of the impact of actions taken, while also fostering the integration of research findings and best practices into institutional policies and practices.

Annual Equality Progress Report 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025

USW Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 2028

The SEP aligns with the **USW 2030 mission**:

"Changing lives and our world for a better tomorrow: USW will be a leading UK university, maximising positive impact for our students, partners, and communities."

This vision underpins the **Three Pillars of Impact**:

1. **Students**
2. **Colleagues**
3. **Communities**

These pillars guide the University's equality objectives, driving transformative change with the overarching goal of fostering a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment for all. With the overall objective of:

'Ensuring a clear focus upon under-represented groups to proactively close gaps and outcomes. Achieved through sustainable diversification and inclusive practice creating a shared sense of belonging.'



WE WILL COMMITMENTS

Under each Equality Objective through collaboration and co-production we have set a number of We Will commitments utilising and aligning to our CSFs data.

Highlighting pinch points and areas of work required if we are to:

Create an equitable and inclusive environment where our students, colleagues, and partners can collaborate, innovate, and thrive.

First year review 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025

At the one-year review point variability in approaches to evaluation was identified, presenting a risk that activity may be progressed without sufficient understanding of its effectiveness or impact. This highlighted the importance of moving beyond delivery-focused reporting towards a more consistent and proportionate evaluation framework. Without this, there is a risk that effort is concentrated on activity rather than outcomes, which can contribute to limited sustainable change.

The findings reinforced the value of a mixed-method approach to evaluation, combining quantitative data with qualitative insight drawn from the lived experiences of colleagues and students. This approach will support a more authentic assessment of progress, strengthen learning, and help maintain engagement over time.

Strengthening collaboration and clarifying accountability will be important in improving coordination, ensuring effective use of resources, and supporting more consistent delivery going forward.

This following section outlines progress across the 3 Pillars' in the 1st year of USW Strategic Equality Plan 2024–2028.



Pillar 1 Overview

The overarching aim of Pillar 1 is to embed equity, dignity, respect and belonging across the full student lifecycle from outreach, access and transition through to progression, awarding and graduate outcomes. Activity recognises USW's role as Wales' leading widening participation university and its responsibility to address structural, socio-economic and intersectional inequalities affecting under-represented student groups.

Key Areas of Activity - Examples of Good Practice

Targeted Outreach and Widening Participation (WP)

USW has demonstrated strong progress in advancing equitable access to higher education through targeted widening participation outreach. WP engagement increased by 228% and enquiries by 215%. Activity is systematically monitored through the Future Students Performance and Review Group, with data disaggregated by priority group to support an evidence-led approach to addressing access gaps.

Transparent Support and Early Decision-Making

As part of the University's Fees and Access Plan, University Ready funding was strategically invested to widen participation and promote equality of opportunity. This included the creation of video content amplifying the voices and experiences of underrepresented students at the University of South Wales (USW). In addition, a

comprehensive mock interview programme was delivered to all Nursing and Midwifery applicants, strengthening fair access to professional courses and supporting student success.

Holistic Student Support and Financial Inclusion

The launch of a [Digital Hardship Scheme](#), alongside catering discounts funded through bursary underspend, demonstrates a joined-up and responsive approach to supporting student wellbeing and continuation. Early work to address additional costs of study further reflects USW's commitment to tackling structural disadvantage.

Collaborative Community Engagement

Partnerships with third sector and local authority organisations (including Llamau, Care2Work and local councils) strengthen inclusive recruitment and access. Initiatives such as HE4ME and residential summer schools raise aspiration, build confidence and demystify university life for under-represented learners.

Inclusive Careers and Employability

Through the Careers Plus Delivery Plan, 439 students from under-represented backgrounds have been supported via curriculum-embedded employability activity, inclusive employer engagement and confidence-building approaches, directly addressing differential graduate outcomes.

Safe, Trauma-Informed Student Support

The introduction of a new Sexual Misconduct and Violence Policy, supported by clear guidance and referral pathways, reflects best practice in trauma-informed, student-centred policy implementation.

Inclusive Curriculum and Community-Embedded Employability

Strategic partnerships, including Sound Progression, embed inclusive work-based learning within the curriculum, providing equitable access to creative industry experience and supporting positive graduate outcomes.

Inclusive STEM Outreach and Progression

Year-round STEM outreach, targeted initiatives such as CyberFirst Schools, and strong FE partnerships support aspiration, attainment and progression for under-represented learners.

Inclusive Recruitment and Learning in Operational Policing

An evidence-led EDI approach, inclusive recruitment practices, curriculum enhancements and tailored ESL support demonstrate sector-leading inclusive practice.



Pillar 2 Overview

Progress under Pillar 2 focuses on strengthening an inclusive, representative and supported workforce, recognising that colleague experience is fundamental to student success and institutional impact.

Key Areas of Activity – Examples of Good Practice

Measuring Colleague Experiences of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Colleague Survey provides an important benchmark for understanding colleagues' experiences of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) at the University of South Wales (USW). Overall, USW achieved an EDI score of 71%, exceeding both Higher Education sector and post-92 benchmarks, indicating generally positive perceptions across the institution.

Most colleagues reported positive experiences, with 69% feeling they are treated with fairness, dignity and respect, and 71% agreeing that USW respects individual differences. However, psychological safety remains an area for improvement. While 62% felt able to report bullying, harassment or discrimination without fear of negative impact, only 58% agreed it is safe to speak up and challenge existing practices.

The majority of respondents reported not having experienced discrimination (87%) or bullying or harassment (81%) in the past 12 months. Nonetheless, a minority continue to report experiences of discrimination (6%) and bullying or harassment (10%), highlighting the need for ongoing focus on prevention, reporting confidence and support.

Survey results varied by role, location and demographic group. Professional services colleagues reported more positive experiences than academic and research staff, while colleagues based at Newport reported less positive experiences, particularly in relation to fairness, respect and harassment. Differences were also evident across age, disability status and sexual orientation, with some smaller groups reporting lower psychological safety and higher negative experiences. These findings should be interpreted with caution where numbers are small, but they indicate areas for targeted action.

Qualitative feedback reinforced these findings, highlighting concerns about neurodivergence and disability awareness, ageism, inconsistent reasonable adjustments and gaps between stated EDI values and lived experience. At the same time, many colleagues expressed strong alignment with USW's values and appreciation of its commitment to EDI.

While USW performs well against sector benchmarks, the findings emphasise that benchmark performance does not equate to success for all colleagues. The

experiences of under-represented and marginalised groups remain central to USW's EDI work. The survey findings will continue to inform the Strategic Equality Plan and associated action plans, with a focus on improving psychological safety, confidence in reporting and equitable experiences for all colleagues.

Embedding Anti-Racism and Equity in Colleague Development

USW has adopted an evidence-led and reflective approach to embedding anti-racism and equity across the colleague journey. Following a review of engagement with the initial Anti-Racist Training provision, a refreshed institutional offer *Equity at USW* has been introduced.

This includes a revised Anti-Racist Induction for new and existing staff and a programme of in-person anti-bias and cultural reflection sessions. These sessions support colleagues to engage meaningfully with issues of race, power, difference and discomfort, and are embedded within professional services redesign activity to support sustainable cultural change.

Inclusive Leadership Capability – PGCert Equity at USW

The PGCert *Equity at USW* has been established as a core development pathway to build inclusive leadership capability across the University. Delivered in partnership with Centre of Education of Learning and Teaching (CELT) and external specialist organisations, the programme centres lived experience, applied learning and reflective practice.

A rolling delivery model from 2025/26 ensures scalability and institutional embedment. This work reinforces equity as a shared leadership responsibility and supports improved representation, progression and inclusive decision-making.

Equity by Design and Data-Informed Transformation

An Equity by Design approach underpins major organisational transformation. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is now embedded within significant change activity, supported by the establishment of an EIA Board from 2025/26.



Pillar 3 Overview

Activity under Pillar 3 reflects USW's role as an anchor institution, working collaboratively to support social justice, regional wellbeing and inclusive growth.

Key Areas of Activity - Examples of Good Practice

Inclusive STEM Outreach and Community Engagement

FCES demonstrates sustained good practice through a comprehensive, year-round STEM outreach programme delivered across South East Wales. During the reporting

period, activity engaged over 1,000 pupils from 15+ schools, with targeted initiatives such as Girls into STEM addressing under-representation. Community capacity-building is embedded through the recruitment of USW students as STEM Ambassadors, delivery of local STEM clubs and the development of bilingual Welsh-medium STEM activities, strengthening aspiration, inclusion and progression.

Community-Engaged Research and Progression Pathways

FBCI exemplifies inclusive community engagement through research-led widening participation and progression initiatives. Funding secured for doctoral studentships embeds widening participation principles within postgraduate research pathways. Teaching delivered within community settings through Reaching Wider supports confidence-building and progression to Foundation Year routes, while sustained partnership with community organisations strengthens trust-based engagement and long-term impact.

Community-Engaged Research and Inclusive Policy Development

FLSE demonstrates good practice through participatory research and inclusive policy development across Wales. Funding bids submitted during the period embed community-led activity to ensure research reflects lived experience and regional diversity.

The establishment and strengthening of the Ethnic Minority Research Advisory Group (EMRAG) further supports inclusive research governance, meaningful stakeholder engagement and policy-relevant impact. Including EMRAG first conference.



University wide EDI Initiatives, Workshops and Community Sponsorship

During the 2024–2025 reporting period, the University delivered a comprehensive programme of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, workshops and community sponsorship activity across all three Strategic Equality Plan pillars. Demonstrating a sustained, whole-University commitment to advancing equity, dignity, respect and belonging for students, colleagues and communities.

University Wide EDI Initiatives

Race Equality Charter

During this reporting period, the University concentrated on developing and embedding the foundations of its five-year Race Equality Action Plan. The focus was on evidence gathering, institutional analysis, and structured planning to ensure long-term impact. This work was coordinated by the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team (RECSAT), which brought together staff and student representatives with lived experience and accountability to lead meaningful change.

Key Actions:

- RECSAT working subgroups to focus on priority: Inclusive Culture, Data-Driven Insights, Equitable Student Outcomes; Meaningful Student and Staff Engagement and Diverse Talent Development
- Drafted SMART action points through subgroup workshops, plenary sessions, and reviews to ensure practicality, alignment with Charter requirements, and long-term relevance.
- Submitted the University's Race Equality Charter application, marking a significant milestone in embedding race equity within institutional strategy 31st March 2025.

Progress:

- Strengthened institutional understanding of race equity challenges through data analysis, staff/student engagement, and benchmarking against sector practice.
- Developed a robust five-year Race Equity Action Plan that aligns with the Strategic Equality Plan and will underpin race equity activity across the University.
- Secured senior leadership commitment through regular updates to the Executive Leadership Team and the Board of Governors, reinforcing accountability at the highest level.
- Established clear governance mechanisms and accountability structures to monitor delivery of actions from 2025/26 onwards.

The University's focus in 2024/25 was therefore on laying the foundation for sustainable race equity work. The submission of the REC application in March 2025 represents key achievements, positioning the University for the effective implementation of its Race Equality Action Plan in the 2025/26 academic year and beyond.

Athena Swan

During this reporting period, the University focused on preparing for Athena Swan Bronze renewal through a structured process of self-assessment, evidence review, and action planning. This work was led by the Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team (SAT), which adopted a reflective and evaluative approach to understand progress to date and identify areas requiring further improvement.

Through self-assessment, action planning and review, Athena Swan supports continuous improvement and accountability in advancing gender equity. While originally established to address the underrepresentation of women in STEMM disciplines, the Charter now promotes gender equity across all roles and functions, with increasing emphasis on intersectionality and lived experience.

Key Actions:

- Commenced preparations for Athena Swan Bronze renewal, including a comprehensive review of existing governance and processes.
- Reviewed the current Athena Swan action plan in detail, assessing the effectiveness and impact of completed and ongoing actions.
- Triangulated mandatory equality data with internal qualitative evidence, including insights from the Staff Survey, to deepen understanding of staff experience.
- Undertook reflective analysis to identify key priority areas for future action, ensuring alignment with emerging gender equity themes and institutional priorities.

Progress:

- Strengthened institutional understanding of gender equity challenges through data analysis and qualitative insight into staff lived experience.
- Embedded a reflective, evidence-based approach to assessing progress and identifying areas for improvement.
- Ensured Athena Swan activity remained aligned with broader equality objectives and responsive to intersectional considerations.

The University's focus in 2024/25 was therefore on reflection, evaluation, and preparation for Athena Swan Bronze renewal. This groundwork has positioned the institution to move forward with a refreshed and evidence-led action plan, supporting sustained progress on gender equity in 2025/26 and beyond.

University of Sanctuary Activity

Scholarships

Both PG scholars successfully completed their awards. One of the scholars achieved a distinction and was [recently interviewed by the BBC and S4C](#) about the importance of education for folks seeking sanctuary. The other scholar gained refugee status during the last 6 months and is now applying to do a PhD at USW. For this year's intake, both scholarships were awarded but one dropped out too late for us to find a replacement so only one PG scholarship has been awarded.

At UG level, both Sep 2025 UG scholarships were awarded. This is the third year of USW offering UG scholarships which means we now have 5 UG sanctuary scholars studying at USW.

USW continues to be unique in Wales in offering free language assessments to refugee and sanctuary seeking students as [language competency is acknowledged](#)

[to be the single biggest barrier to HE study](#) faced by forced migrant students. In this time period, USW administered 18 language assessments for refugee/sanctuary seeking applicants. Following the assessments, 12 applicants were able to progress directly onto awards while 6 were provided with full-time language places on its pre-session summer preparation course. These were all students eligible student finance and who would not have entered HE were these schemes not in place.

Ukraine partnership

USW renewed its formal MoU with the Kharkiv State Academy of Physical Culture – for the third year. Given the terribly difficult circumstances in which our Ukrainian colleagues are operating, progressing the partnership has been challenging. Nevertheless, initiatives have taken place with plans in place for a number of collaborative activities, including:

- In March 2025 Elizabeth Coombes' team ran a joint mini-conference on the importance of music therapy for trauma – with KSAPC colleagues sharing their experiences.
- In November 2025, USW sent a letter of support and solidarity to KSAPC together with a short video to be used at their annual conference.
- January 2026 will see the [launch of a mentoring programme](#) between USW and KSAPC academics
- Spring 2026 will hopefully see the launch of a bespoke programme of English for academics – designed and delivered online by the USW Centre for International English.

Sanctuary work

- USW awarded approximately 12 free sports passes to refugee and sanctuary seeking students enrolled on our courses.
- USW signed an MoU with the [Breaking Barriers charity](#) – an organisation that helps refugees access education
- USW academics delivered sessions for the City of Sanctuary, Sanctuary in Politics course delivered at Cardiff University in September 2025.
- USW staff are currently working with the Royal College of Nursing to recruit and deliver an access to [health care pathway course](#) for sanctuary seekers in Wales

University wide EDI Workshops

To note the below highlight university wide EDI workshops and does not reflect the breadth of EDI workshops undertaken in individual departments and or faculties.

- **Anti-Racism Workshops**
Delivery of anti-racism training across academic and professional services, supporting active allyship and cultural change.
- **Anti- Bias and Cultural Reflection Sessions**
Facilitated sessions supporting reflection on bias, power and inclusion.
- **Neurodivergence Awareness and Inclusive Practice Training**
Co-produced workshops supporting inclusive practice and understanding of neurodivergence.

- **Advance HE – Enabling a Racially Inclusive Curriculum**
Workshops delivered in collaboration with CELT to support inclusive curriculum design.
- **Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Workshops**
Curriculum-focused workshops supporting inclusive teaching and assessment practice.
- **Student-Facing EDI Workshops**
EDI and race equity workshops embedded within selected academic modules.
- **Leadership and Management Development Sessions**
Sessions incorporating equality, dignity, respect and inclusive leadership principles.

University wide EDI Community Sponsorship

To note this sponsorship is in addition to USW Corporate Sponsorship.

- **Reggie and Riddim**
USW EDI Team provided sponsorship for the 2024 Reggae & Riddim Festival, held in Newport from 26–28 July, as part of its commitment to equality, diversity and community engagement. Delivered by Urban Circle Newport in partnership with Jamaica's Rastafari Indigenous Village, the festival supports a School and Community Creative Arts Development Project engaging young people from Newport schools and community groups.

The project focused on young people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds, providing opportunities to develop key life skills alongside access to training and qualifications in areas such as dance coaching, youth work, first aid and food hygiene. Through creative arts and music, the initiative aimed to build confidence, skills and a strong sense of identity among vulnerable young people in the local community. Celebration of community culture through music, dress, dance and cultural expression.



- **Nation of Sanctuary Woman of the Year Award**

Sponsored by the USW EDI Team. This award celebrated extraordinary women whose courage, compassion, and leadership are reshaping our world. It honours those who boldly challenge injustice, break new ground, and disrupt the status quo, creating lasting change and opening doors for others. Through their vision, advocacy, and unwavering commitment to equality and inclusion, these women transform lives, strengthen communities, and inspire hope for a more just and welcoming society for all.



- **LezDiff Cardiff International Lesbian Film and Arts Festival**

The three-day festival aimed to increase the visibility and representation of Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer (LBQ) women in the UK and internationally, while encouraging their participation in the creative arts, particularly film. Sponsored by USW EDI Team and supported by EDI Ambassadors, the programme featured film screenings, performances, panel discussions and community events across multiple venues in Cardiff.

Highlights included screenings of *Professor Marston & The Wonder Women* and *Rafiki*, discussions on disability, representation and inclusion in film, and performances celebrating LGBTQ+ history and creativity. Founded in 2022 by USW Film lecturer Rachel Dax, the festival prioritised inclusivity, equality of participation and opportunities for connection, learning and creative engagement.



Welsh Language

The University of South Wales is committed to promoting the Welsh language and celebrating Wales' rich cultural heritage as a core part of our equality, diversity and inclusion agenda. Through the work of the Welsh Language Unit and colleagues across the institution, we continue to create opportunities for students and staff to use, develop and value Welsh in their studies, work and daily lives. From national cultural events and scholarships to employability modules, awards and translation services, our activities demonstrate how small actions can have a meaningful impact, helping to strengthen Welsh-medium provision, and ensure that Welsh language and culture are visible, accessible and thriving across the University.

Below is activity undertaken by the University's Welsh Language Unit during 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

St David's Day Awards: In February 2025, the Welsh Language Unit launched the inaugural 'Gwnewch y Pethau Bychain/ Small Actions Count' awards for colleagues who had contributed to Welsh culture and language across the University. The Awards are designed to showcase the small but impactful actions colleagues take to support Welsh language and culture, such as raising awareness of Welsh language services, normalising the use of the Welsh language and embedding it within academic provision, teaching Welsh, and supporting the Welsh language within professional services. Nominated by the Welsh Language Unit, 5 colleagues across the University's departments and faculties. received Welsh themed prizes which include Bara Brith, Tregroes Waffles, Welsh Brew Tea, Welsh cakes and locally made chocolates.

Events for USW students and colleagues: The Welsh Language Unit organised 14 Welsh language and cultural events for students and colleagues, with a further 7 events specifically for students, and 6 for colleagues. Events included regular Welsh 'Chat Clubs', Shwmae Day and St David's Day Celebrations and Welsh Student Performances for Welsh Language Music Day.

Welsh-medium Scholarships: From November 2024 to 31 March 2025, the Welsh Unit received 87 applications for USW Welsh medium scholarships. 42 students were awarded USW Welsh medium scholarships, totalling £14,250.

Employability Modules: Participation in additional 5-credit Welsh Employability modules has increased in each academic year, helping to prepare more students for a bilingual workplace. Funded by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and USW, there are modules at level 4, 5, and 6 for fluent speakers, and 2024-25 saw the introduction of new level 4 provision for non-fluent speakers. This provision has been popular amongst students from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, including an international student who joined the module after studying Welsh on Duolingo.

WJEC Welsh Language Skills Certificate: In 2025, 21 USW students and colleagues undertook the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol Welsh Language Skills Certificate, the second highest number of entrants amongst all Welsh HEIs.

University Translation Service: The Unit was established in August 2023, and during the reporting period, processed 1988 translation and proofreading requests and translated 2,249,913 words.

Urdd Eisteddfod and Tafwyl: The University sponsored the popular Soprano Alto choir competition at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Montgomeryshire, and continued its sponsorship of the annual Tafwyl festival, held in Bute Park and organised by Menter Iaith Caerdydd, securing a digital sponsorship package.

National Eisteddfod: The University welcomed hundreds of visitors to its stand at the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd in August. Colleagues from across the University worked together to showcase USW during Eisteddfod week providing a packed programme of events and activities on our USW stand on the Maes at Ynysangharad Park, as well as offering accommodation in our Halls of Residence, welcoming hundreds of guests onto campus, and hosting events and tours of our facilities at our Treforest and Glyntaff campuses.

University and Careers Taster Day: The University played a key role, alongside colleagues from Cardiff and Cardiff Metropolitan Universities, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, and Cardiff Council's Welsh Language Team, in the delivery of an inaugural Welsh language event for over 700 sixth form students. Now, an annual event, the purpose is to encourage Welsh speaking students to consider Welsh-medium HE study and work opportunities, emphasising the importance of maintaining and utilising bilingual skills, after leaving school.

Conclusion

This Annual Equity Report demonstrates the University of South Wales' continued commitment to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion across its students, colleagues and communities during the 2024–2025 reporting period.

Progress made during the first year of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024–2028 evidences clear intent, strengthened governance and sustained institutional effort to embed equity, dignity, respect and belonging at the heart of the University. This includes a strong and explicit focus on addressing structural and socio-economic disadvantage, reflecting USW's role as Wales' leading widening participation university.

The evidence presented highlights meaningful advances across all three Strategic Equality Plan pillars. USW has strengthened equitable access, participation and progression for students through targeted widening participation activity, inclusive financial support, trauma-informed policy development and curriculum-embedded employability initiatives. These actions support social mobility by addressing barriers that disproportionately affect learners from under-represented and socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, whose educational outcomes have historically been shaped by structural inequality.

For colleagues, survey data indicates positive performance against sector benchmarks for dignity, respect and fair treatment. However, qualitative insight and disaggregated findings reinforce the need for continued focus on psychological safety, confidence in reporting, consistent reasonable adjustments and equitable progression. The refreshed anti-racism and equity development offer, introduction of the PGCert Equity at USW, and embedding of Equality Impact Assessment within organisational change signal a shift towards sustainable, evidence-led cultural transformation that recognises how socio-economic context, power and structural barriers shape workplace experience and opportunity.

USW's wider civic impact is demonstrated through its role as an anchor institution supporting social mobility, inclusive growth and regional wellbeing. Inclusive STEM outreach, community-engaged research, University of Sanctuary initiatives and targeted community sponsorship illustrate a partnership-based approach to widening opportunity and addressing socio-economic disadvantage, ensuring community voice and lived experience inform institutional practice.

The first-year review of the Strategic Equality Plan has been instrumental in identifying areas for improvement, particularly the need for more consistent evaluation, clearer accountability and a stronger focus on outcomes rather than activity alone. This learning is critical to ensuring that widening participation and equity activity translates into demonstrable improvements in access, progression, attainment and graduate outcomes, mitigating the risk of EDI fatigue and fragmented delivery.

Overall, the evidence confirms that while progress has been made, inequities persist and continued, focused effort is required. USW recognises that benchmark performance does not equate to equitable experience for all, particularly for those affected by socio-economic disadvantage and intersecting forms of marginalisation.

Guided by the need to draw upon robust data, lived experience and partnership working, the University remains committed to transparency, accountability and meaningful change.

As USW moves into the next phase of its Strategic Equality Plan, it does so with a clearer understanding of what works, where further action is required, and how equity can be embedded by design. This report reaffirms the University's determination to advance social mobility and widening participation, and to create an inclusive environment in which all students, colleagues and communities can thrive, contribute and belong, regardless of socio-economic background or structural barriers.

Appendix 1 – Staff EDI Data

Appendix 2 – Student EDI Data

Appendix 3 - EDI Comms Events and Campaigns

Appendix 4 - FBCI EDI Events