

Bristol Medical School Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) strategy

Vision statement

As a Medical School we believe that everyone in society no matter their community or background has the right to good health and excellent quality healthcare. We recognise the role medical schools can play in creating, continuing, and undoing the long-standing inequalities and inequities in health education and research provision.

To achieve this, we are working with key partners across health, research, and education, and engaging the local community to make sure their voices are heard. This includes working through our education and research programmes to identify and address inequities, working across communities to increase the diversity of participants in research and increasing diverse representation at all levels of our staff and student populations.

We will create a culture of belonging by promoting inclusion and actively challenge exclusion in all its forms. In doing so we will create a safe environment that will recognise and celebrate individuality, where everyone can flourish.

Principles on the way we will work together.

Lived Experience, wellbeing, and mental health.

We acknowledge that our school has not always valued diversity, challenged stigma, and recognised the personal impact of discrimination in higher education. We will:

- Include the voices of those with lived experience of discrimination (including staff, students, and the public) in our decision making.
- Be mindful of the impact of broader political and social changes which can significantly impact the wellbeing of students and staff. We will react to these developments, and support those doing this work.
- Acknowledge the emotional and mental health impact that EDI work has on staff and students from groups that experience discrimination and provide additional support for staff working in this space.
- Develop our knowledge of how to undo long held inequities and inequalities. Where this knowledge is lacking, we will partner with colleagues from inside and outside the organisation, including local community groups.

Safety and Accountability

We acknowledge that those undertaking EDI work do not always feel safe, and that our organisation has not always been accountable to staff, students, and marginalised communities. To achieve this, we will:

- Support individuals who experience any negative consequences (including all forms of violence) because of their work within this space. Every person at the medical school should feel safe to undertake EDI work and be free of negative consequences for speaking out.

- Take a zero-tolerance approach to any form of bullying, harassment, and discrimination. This includes, but is not limited to sexism, ageism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and all forms of disablism.
- Be accountable to staff, students, and the community for the work that we are doing, setting measurable goals, and openly reporting against them, with annual reporting to staff and students.
- Use accessible and inclusive language in all communication.
- Communicate any situations when we are unable to deliver on these goals, openly explaining why, and what we will do instead.
- Welcome all feedback on EDI projects and the culture within the school, making sure all staff, students and members of the Bristol community have a voice in these conversations.

Workload and Recognition

We acknowledge that historically EDI work has not been recognised as being as critical to the organisation as other activities, and people doing the work have not been given allocated time in their working day. To deal with this we will:

- Make sure that all staff doing EDI work, including mentoring, have time and support to do this work.
- Fairly share the responsibility for EDI work across the workforce and guarantee this work does not further disadvantage the people who are most impacted.
- Guarantee students and staff who are not funded by the school benefit from this work, which may include career development opportunities and financial compensation for time spent on EDI projects.
- Make sure EDI work done by staff benefits their career development, as well as being recognised in promotion for both academic and professional services staff.
- Celebrate the diverse ways in which staff and students contribute to the creation, delivery, and administration of this work. This will be recognised through celebration events, awards and more, shared within the organisation, sector, and community.
- Prioritise the development of an evidence-based approach to EDI work, acknowledging the importance of all data sources. Where this does not exist, we will gather it. This will be regularly reviewed and reprioritised as required.

Priority areas

These priority areas have been identified from looking at data the school currently holds, and discussions with staff and students from diverse communities. They are not a list of everything that needs to be changed in the school, but the areas staff and students have asked us to work on as a priority. Some of our priorities are very specific because we have done work in this area and are clear what needs to be done, other areas are broader where we may need to better understand what actions are needed.

Building a safe and fair medical school

- Increase awareness of how to report all forms of discrimination and improve the support and process for reporting.

- Develop a sexual violence policy for the medical programme and work with organisation to reduce sexual assault and sexism on campus and in NHS spaces.
- Raise cultural awareness among staff and students, of different religions and practices. Supporting staff and students to maintain their well-being, for example when fasting.
- Make sure all staff and students have access to pronoun badges and feel safe to wear them.

Supporting students and staff in difficulty

- Increase the understanding of the challenges faced and support needs of staff and students with mental health challenges, neurodiversity, LGBTQ+ identities, communities who experience racism and those with disabilities.
- Increase understanding of support needs for international students throughout their time in the Medical School
- Develop a medical school workload model to support staff workload and ensure an equitable balance of work.
- Improve support/ process for students and staff to change their names and be used by correct pronouns.

Increasing diversity in our staff and student population. Making sure there is diversity in senior academic and professional services positions.

- Increase ethnic diversity of students studying postgraduate qualifications both taught and research populations.
- Increase numbers of Black staff and female clinicians, by increasing opportunities and removing obstacles.
- Support minority ethnic staff and part-time staff into school leadership positions
- Produce internal annual reports of progress made in EDI to inform priorities going forward and communicate to staff and students.

Promoting and providing mentoring opportunities with diverse role models.

- Provide additional support, such as meetings with senior staff, to increase the promotion of minority ethnic and part-time staff.
- Identify and celebrate a range of diverse role models for staff and students.
- Promote and run mentoring opportunities for staff and students.
- Work with the NHS to improve visibility of support for LGBTQ+ well-being.

Adopting new approaches to make sure we hear diverse staff and student voices and increase community within the school.

- Continue to build understanding of diverse staff and student needs around well-being.
- Develop a plan to engage with diverse staff and students from different communities to make sure their voices are heard by leaders and informing decisions in the school (e.g., Post Graduate Researchers PGR, Early Career Researchers)
- Set up a social fund open to anyone to run events or set up networks that will support well-being and connection of staff and/or students.
- Increase opportunities for staff and students to connect through joint events.

Helping students to access support, by better communicating and simplifying our processes.

- Work with disabled students to improve the process for sharing reasonable adjustments through their student journey.
- Improve access to resources to support neurodiverse staff and students.

- Improve awareness around resources that are in place to support well-being, and support for parents and carers.
- Review the systems and processes that are in place to support staff and students to identify problem areas.

Making sure our language in our education, research and general communications is accessible.

- Review communications to students to make sure language is inclusive for all students.
- Work with school communications team to make sure school communications, including website and SharePoint are accessible and meet national standards.
- Work with General Medical Council to challenge the language used to describe disability and improve support for students with disabilities to get reasonable adjustments.

Tackling inequalities in our education programmes and supporting all communities to be successful

- Continuing to reduce the awarding gap for medical students and gather data on the award gap for students studying postgraduate taught programmes.
- Increase training to help people be aware of unconscious bias that might make them treat people different to themselves, less favourably and explore making it required for all staff who teach and students to attend.
- Check and change language in education programmes to make sure it is inclusive with a focus on feminism that acknowledges the diversity of women and transgender identities.
- Make sure General Medical Council 'fitness to practice' rules on Mental Health are included in the Medical Programme.

Tackling health inequalities in research

- Complete a check of funder and partner equality statements to understand their requirements.
- Work to engage and promote the inclusive research culture activities that are happening across the organisation.
- Work with research staff to support and educate them on improving diversity in research studies and trials with a focus on minority ethnic participants.
- Develop support for staff to authentically explore and tackle inequalities in their research.