

# Student Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2018-19

## Introduction

The Student Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2018-19 provides an overview of the equality and diversity data on our student population at Brunel University London and reports on our current equality and diversity activity and priorities as part of the University's Equality and Diversity Strategy 2015-20. It seeks to monitor the impact of any changes to students with protected characteristics under the equality legislation to ensure an inclusive environment is provided where all students are able to study, live and relax free from prejudice, discrimination or harassment. It also seeks to flag the need for any more extensive investigation into any areas that are of particular concern and to report them to the Student Experience and Welfare Committee and Senate accordingly. The University is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion where all students are able to reach their full potential.

## Current Legal and Regulatory Context

The UK political and educational framework currently set out a range of equality duties requiring higher education to demonstrate their commitment to and scrutiny of an inclusive student community. The key duties are as follows:

1. Under the Equality Act 2010, the University must have due regard to the need to:
  - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic\* and those who do not
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The protected characteristics are age, race, religion / belief, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity.

2. In addition, the Equality Act (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 requires the University to publish:
  - equality objectives at least every four years
  - information to demonstrate their compliance with the equality duty, at least once a year. This should include information relating to people who share a protected characteristic who are either in employment or education affected by its policies and practices.
3. In addition to the Public Sector Duty, the University has a duty under the Human Rights Act 1998 not to act incompatibly with rights under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the Convention).
4. The regulator, the Office for Students, requires institutions to deliver positive outcomes for students ensuring:

- that all students, from all backgrounds, and with the ability and desire to undertake higher education, receive a high quality academic experience, with their interests protected while they study (or in the event a provider, campus or course closes)
- that all students are able to progress into employment or further study, and their qualifications hold value over time.

In order to achieve this equality of opportunity the OfS has set long term ambitious targets to eliminate inequalities with a particular emphasis on the following:

- the gap in entry rates and participation at higher tariff providers between the most and least represented groups
- the gap in non-continuation between the most and least represented groups
- the gap in degree outcomes between white and black students
- the gap in degree outcomes between disabled and non-disabled students.

Brunel is required to set its own working targets to achieve these targets in the form of an Access and Participation Plan. The 5 year plan for 2020-21 is currently under-development and is led by the Vice Provost (Education). It should be noted that three of the underrepresented groups defined by the OfS also coincide with the equality protected characteristics: age, ethnicity and disability.

- 5 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator in its recent Good Practice Framework for Disciplinary Cases stated that: “Providers should raise awareness of the behaviour and conduct expected of students, using educational initiatives to challenge negative attitudes and stereotypes, and equip staff and students to identify and challenge unacceptable behaviour.”
- 6 In line with the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Higher Education Code of Governance, the University has a duty to promote equality and diversity in all aspects of our community life and work.

## **Brunel Equality and Diversity Strategy**

The Brunel 2030 Vision set an ambitious target of enabling students to realise their potential irrespective of social or cultural backgrounds. Our Vision places equality and diversity at the heart of all we do and inspires us to excel by working together to maximise the benefits of our diverse community.

We are currently working to the University’s Equality and Diversity Strategy 2015-2020 which supports the University’s Vision and is guided by its values. The Strategy sets out our proposals to meet our legal duties under the Equality Act but also to promote a culture where the diversity of our students is valued. Our equality and diversity values are at the core of developing an innovative, creative and inclusive environment: enhancing networks to support protected and underrepresented characteristics. It applies to all individuals who study, work for us or visit, and to

those who are more broadly associated with Brunel and includes staff, alumni, visitors, contractors, suppliers, and partners regardless of any social or cultural difference.

## **Student Population Data**

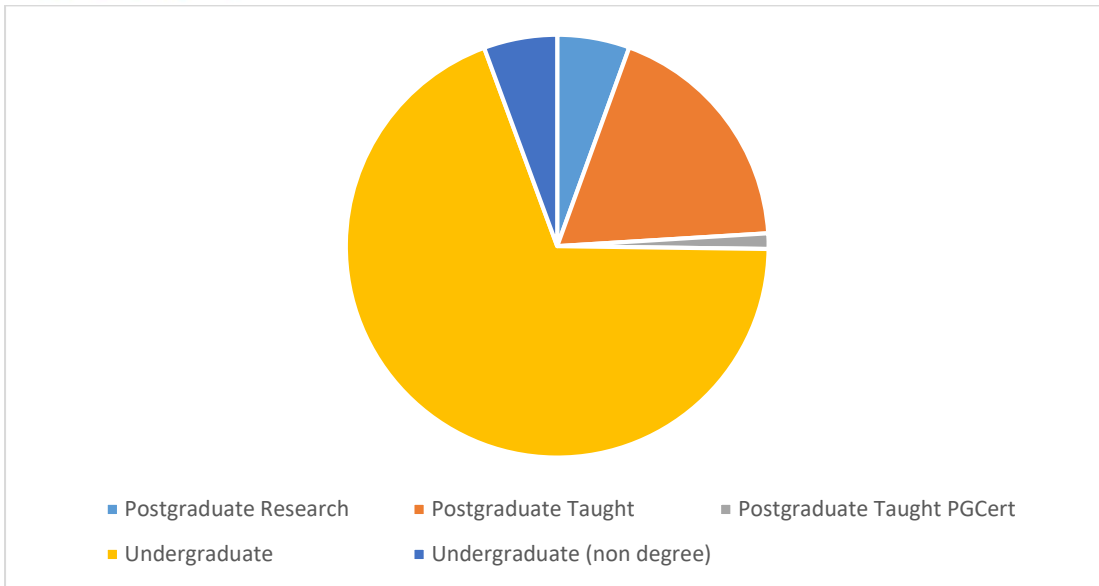
The next section will present an analysis of student data for the University across the last five years and looks at overall student population plus undergraduate attrition and degree awards for students for seven of the nine protected equality characteristics. Note Universities are not required to report on the remaining two: maternity and pregnancy, and marriage and civil partnership. The whole population data includes students on undergraduate and integrated masters' programmes, post graduate taught and post graduate research programmes for this current year 2018-19; whilst the further outcomes analysis in this report focuses specifically on key issues and patterns amongst the undergraduate students for 5 years to 2017-18. The data source is Brunel Internal Data May 2019 (via Planning).

## **Whole University**

Prior to looking at the characteristic data in detail, this section introduces the average levels of student population and attrition and attainment levels across the whole university. This academic year 2018-19 Brunel has a current student population<sup>1</sup> of 14,683 which is an increase of 6% from 13,893 in 2017-18. The majority of our students are studying undergraduate programmes and this year sees the highest total population size of the last five years at 10,981 against a 5-year average of 10,105. Taught postgraduate courses (including PGCE) are also at their highest at 2,889 compared to a 5-year average of 2,687. However the number studying postgraduate research degrees have decreased from 884 in 2017-18 to 813 this year, with a 5 year average of 990. For further breakdown of the student population in 2018–19 see Figure 1 overleaf:

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<sup>1</sup> All population numbers quoted represent total headcount of all in-year registrations, including Foundation years, Apprenticeships, other non-degree UG programmes like Community Nursing, exchange and associate students, etc. This is considered to be the most appropriate basis to look at equality characteristics, but may differ from other published population snapshot data.



**Figure 1: Course Group Data 2018-19**

### Attrition

In 2017-18 first-year attrition within Brunel’s undergraduate cohort (across mainstream Bachelor’s, Foundation and Integrated Master’s programmes) was encouragingly at its lowest in the last 5 years at 9.7%. This was a decrease from 12.1% in 2016-17 and a 5 year average of 11.5%.

### Attainment

There is a steady increase in the number of undergraduate students achieving a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1 classification which is generally welcome. With a five year average of 71.8%, outcomes in 2017-18 were at their highest at 73.6%.

The remainder of this section will examine the equality data for the student population:

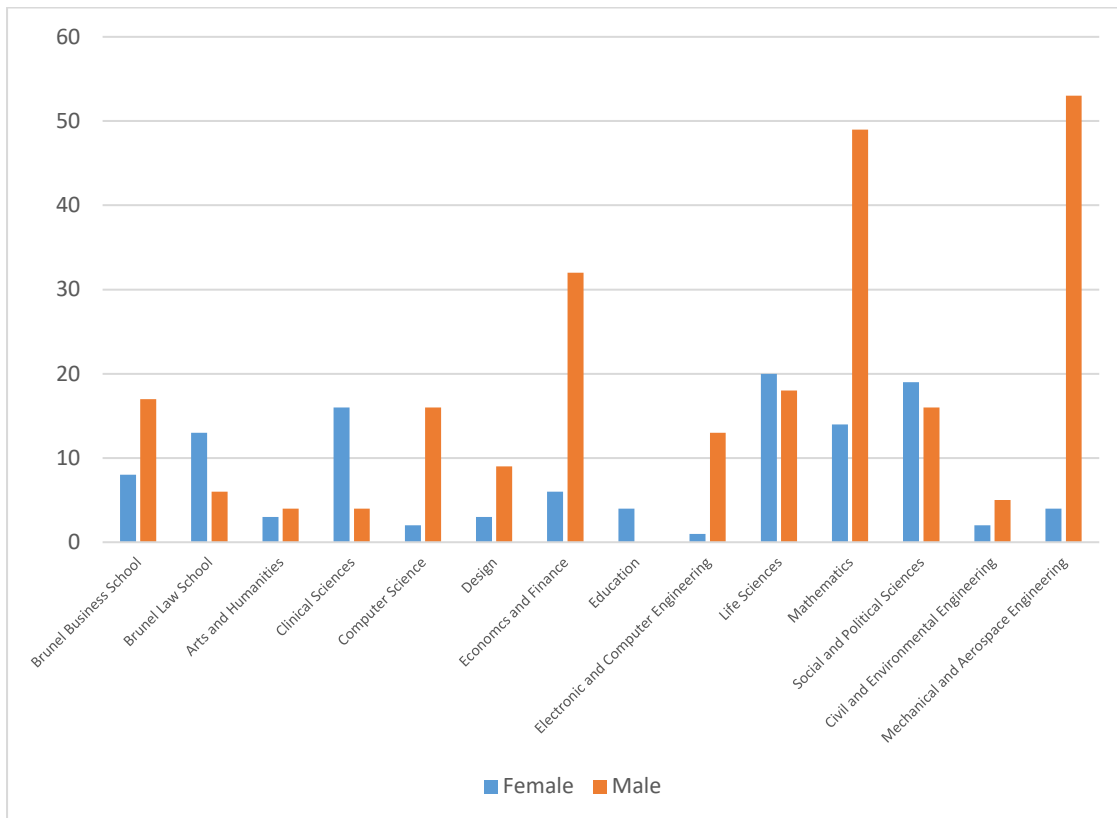
#### 1. Gender

There is disappointingly a significant gender gap in 2018-19 between male and female students with current proportions of 54% and 46% respectively with proportions very consistent over the last 5 years. This differs from the UK higher education sector average where 56.7% were female students last year (Advance HE, Equality in Higher Education, Students’ Statistical Report 2018). However Brunel’s gender mix is heavily influenced by our subject mix, notably with CEDPS provision (77% male this year and on average over the last five years) pushing our proportion of males up.

### Attrition

Male undergraduate students are more likely to leave in their first year, with an attrition rate of 12% compared to 6.9% for females. Overall there is a small decrease since 2016-17 from 14.9% and 8.9% respectively. However these vary considerably

across Colleges and Departments as seen below in Figure 2. There are particularly high attrition rates for male students in the Departments of Economics and Finance, Mathematics and Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering. There is also high attrition rates for male placement students where the gap is 15.2% compared to 8.2% for female students.



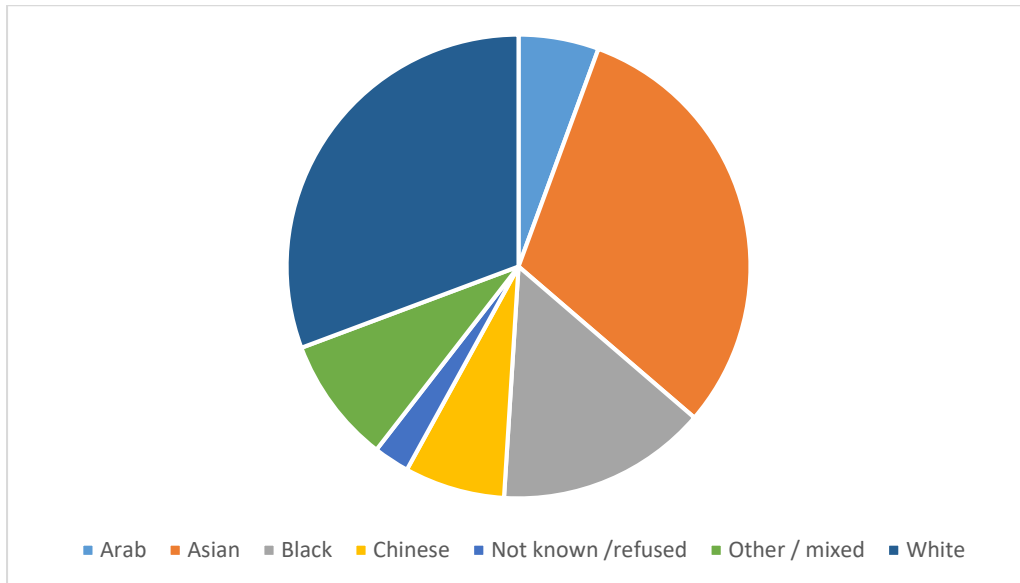
**Figure 2: Student attrition by gender and academic department**

### Attainment

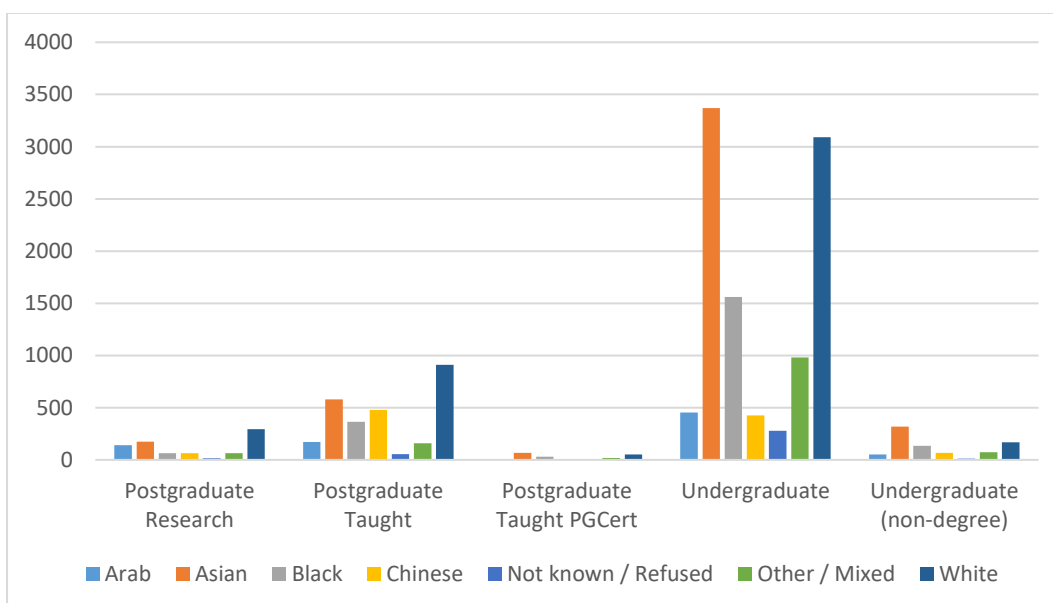
Both female and male undergraduates are generally continuing to improve in terms of outcomes in both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2:1 classifications with female students achieving slightly higher outcomes. In the last 5 years this has increased from 74.3 % to 79.1% for female students and from 63% to 68.8% for male students. However there was a significant decrease in attainment of these classifications last year for female students in the College of Engineering, Design and Physical Sciences dropping from 81.6% in 2016-17 to 70.7% in 2017-18.

## 2. Ethnicity

The University continues to have a very diverse student population with 58% of students coming from Black, Asian and minority ethnicities (BAME), an increase from 55.8% in 2017-18. This is considerably higher than the higher sector education average which in 2017-18 was 22.7% (Advance HE, Equality in Higher Education, Students' Statistical Report 2018). Asian and white students are consistently the largest groups across all course types as shown in Figures 3 and 4 below:



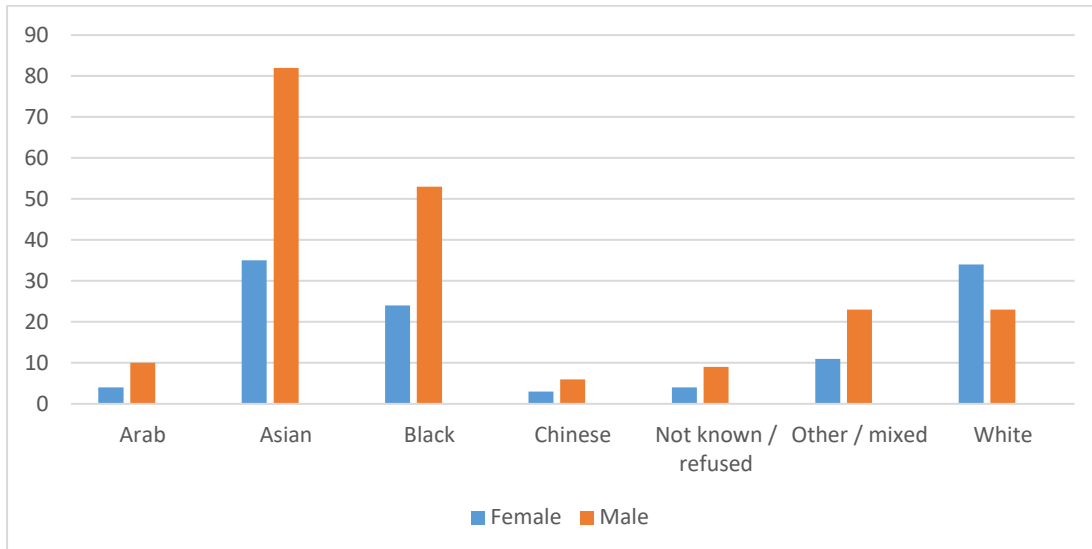
**Figure 3: Percentage of student population by ethnicity 2018-19**



**Figure 4: Student population by ethnicity and course type 2018-19**

## Attrition

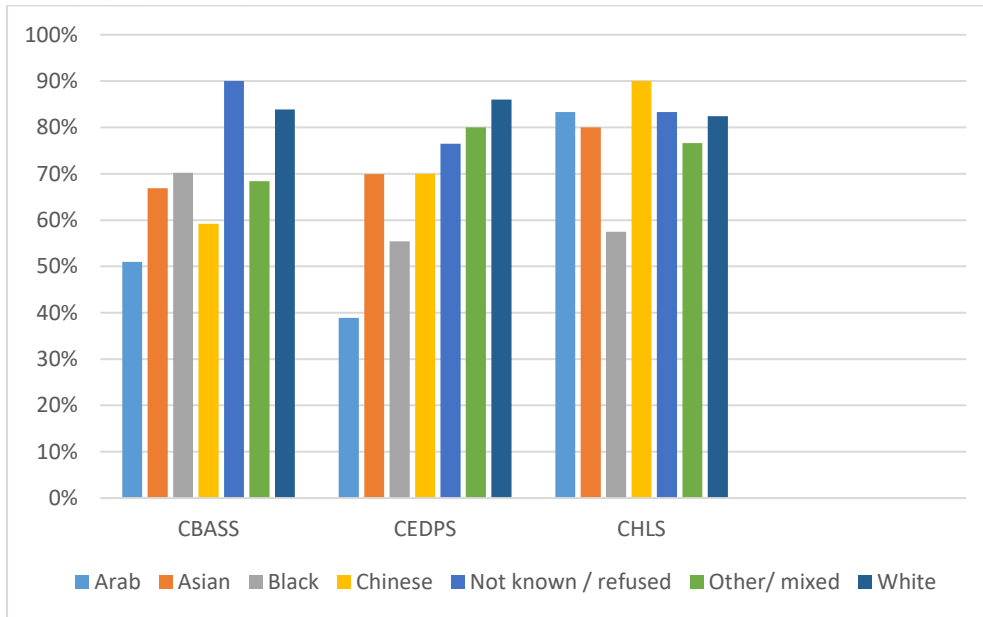
First year undergraduate attrition varies from year to year for different ethnic groups but there is a consistently higher rate among black students, particularly black male students (17.8% in 2017-18). It is also high for males compared to females 6.9% compared to 12% in 2017-18, across all ethnicities, as demonstrated below:



**Figure 5: Student attrition by ethnicity and gender**

## Attainment

BAME undergraduates as a whole continue to achieve fewer 1<sup>st</sup> and 2:1 classifications compared to white students. In 2017-18 this was 67.8% compared to 84.4%. However they are closing the gap compared to 5 years ago when it was 61.8% compared to 79.1%. Outcomes for black students are particularly concerning with only 62.8% achieving a 1<sup>st</sup> or a 2:1 compared to 75.5% among non-black students in 2017-18. For more detail of 2017-18 see Figure 6 overleaf:



**Figure 6: Attainment data for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2:1 classifications by ethnicity for each college 2017-18**

There also continues to be a gap between gender outcomes although this varies between ethnicity and from year to year. However it is consistently most significant for black male students as demonstrated in Table 1 below which has the breakdown by percentage and the total student population for 2017-18 and for the 5-year period:

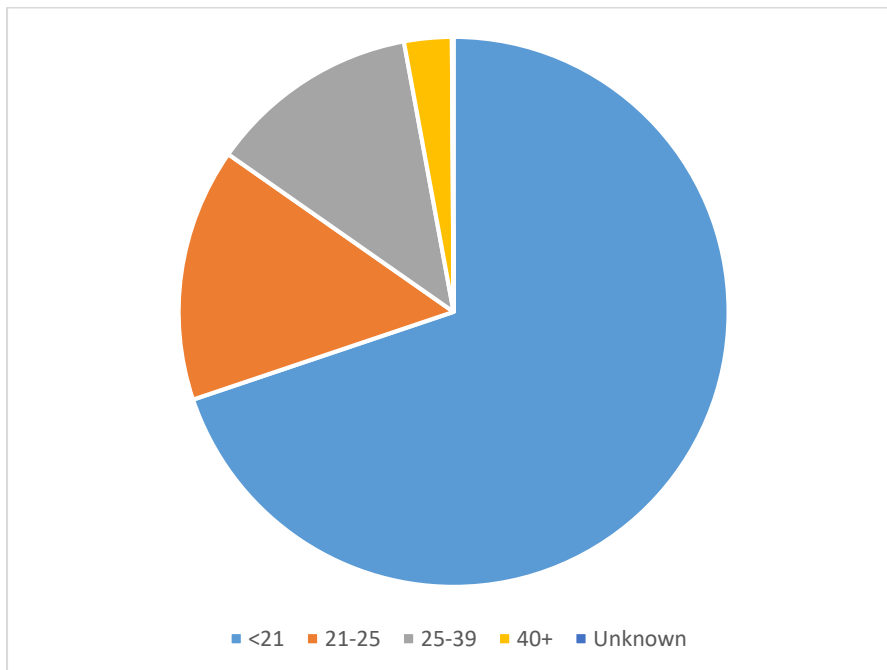
**Table 1: attainment for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2:1 classifications by ethnicity and gender**

		2017-18		5-year total	
		Percentage	Student Total	Percentage	Student Total
<b>Arab</b>	<b>Female</b>	60.9%	23	70.9%	83
	<b>Male</b>	46.2%	52	49.8%	104
<b>Asian</b>	<b>Female</b>	75.5%	273	75.1%	423
	<b>Male</b>	65.0%	314	63.7%	1198
<b>Black</b>	<b>Female</b>	70.9%	148	67.8%	662
	<b>Male</b>	54.0%	137	53.7%	409
<b>Chinese</b>	<b>Female</b>	68.8%	32	54.8%	143
	<b>Male</b>	63.8%	47	44.8%	116
<b>Not known / refused</b>	<b>Female</b>	88.9%	18	76.3%	87
	<b>Male</b>	80.0%	25	65.8%	106
<b>Other / mixed</b>	<b>Female</b>	81.3%	75	78.8%	390
	<b>Male</b>	66.7%	69	66.5%	296
<b>White</b>	<b>Female</b>	87.5%	312	85.1%	1688
	<b>Male</b>	81.3%	358	79.3%	1823



### 3. Age

The majority of students at Brunel are aged between 18 and 20 years and described as young. In 2018-19 90.5% of undergraduates are <21 compared to 8.7% post graduates. 40.2% of post graduates are aged 21 -25 which is an increase from 36.4% in 2017-18 and 41.4% are aged 25-39 which is a slight decrease from 41.4% in 2017-18. See Figure 7 below for current student population by age:



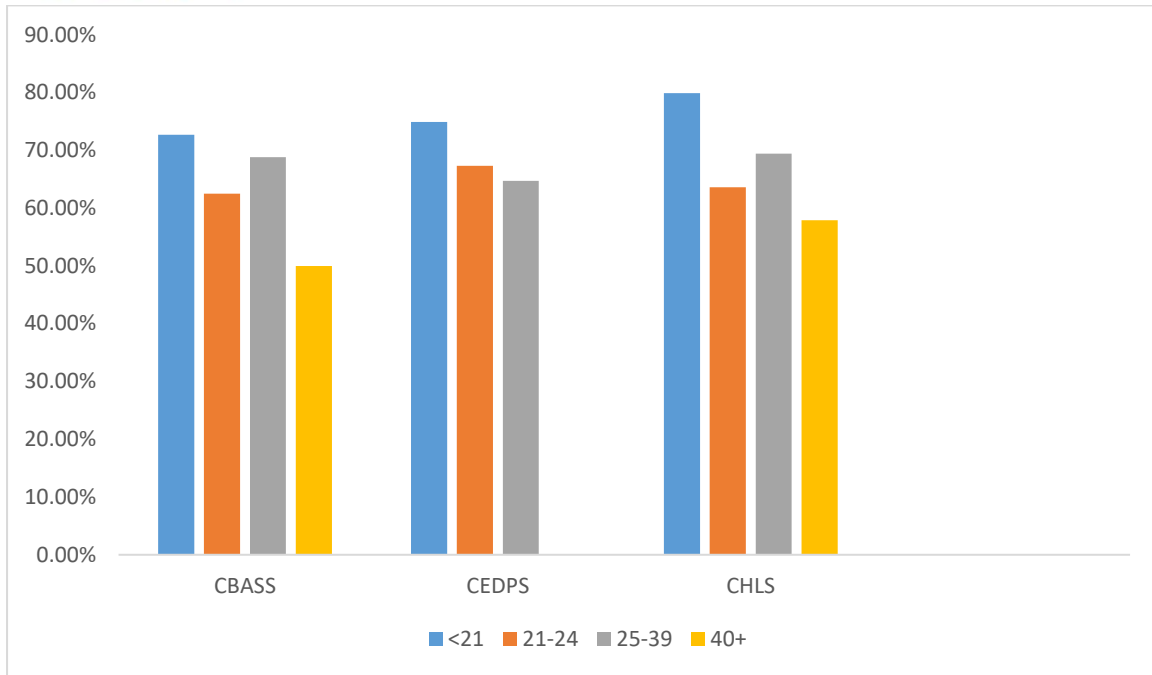
**Figure 7: Student population by age 2018-19**

#### Attrition

In 2017-18 there was a slightly higher rate of first year attrition for mature compared to young undergraduates, 10.6% to 9.6% but this is not significant and the year before it was slightly higher for young students with rates of 11.1% and 12.3% respectively. However there are some more significant patterns among specific groups; after excluding international students (who tend to be slightly older on entry). Home fee-status students aged 21-24 have notably higher attrition (13.4% in 2017-18 and a 5-year aggregate of 14.9%) than young Home students (10.3% in 2017-18 and 12.5% over the last 5 years).

#### Attainment

There has been a gap in outcomes between young and mature students over the last 5 years, with an average of 73.3% compared to 63.3% obtaining 1st and 2:1 degrees. In 2017-18 this gap by age remains at 10% which is a concern. For more detail by College see Figure 8 below:



**Figure 8: Attainment data by age per college for 2017-18**

In addition the attainment gap for age and ethnicity is concerning with significant under-performance by BAME mature students as shown in the table below:

**Table 2: attainment for student outcome by ethnicity and age for 2017-18**

		1 <sup>st</sup>	2:1	2:2	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Ord	Total student population
Arab	Young	17.6%	38.2%	27.9%	13.2%	2.9%	285
	Mature	0%	0%	85.7%	14.3%	0%	41
Asian	Young	19.2%	51.9%	22.2%	2.8%	3.9%	3,063
	Mature	21.6%	35.3%	31.4%	55.9%	5.9%	381
Black	Young	15.5%	50.6%	25.1%	2.9%	5.9%	1,423
	Mature	8.7%	37.0%	41.3%	10.9%	2.2%	315
Chinese	Young	16.4%	49.2%	21.3%	11.5%	1.6%	395
	Mature	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%	0%	11.1%	125
Not known / refused	Young	22.5%	60.0%	17.5%	0%	0%	230
	Mature	66.7%	33.3%	0%	0%	0%	45
Other / mixed	Young	21.1%	53.9%	18.8%	1.6%	4.7%	816
	Mature	18.8%	50.0%	31.3%	0%	0%	124
White	Young	39.3%	45.5%	11.7%	2.1%	1.4%	3,646
	Mature	38.8%	41.8%	15.3%	2.0%	2.0%	637

#### 4. Disability

10.5% of our students had a declared disability in 2018-19 which is in line with the previous year and compares to a 5-year average of 9.5%. This is higher within the undergraduate population at 11.2% and slightly lower in the postgraduate population at 9.3%. However the total figure is still lower than the UK average in higher education which was 12.0% in 2017 -18 (Advance HE, Equality in Higher Education, Students Statistical Report 2018).

Students who chose to can declare a disability although there are likely to be more within the population who chose not to. These include a wide range of conditions including physical impairments, mental health and learning difficulties. There is no obligation for them to declare a disability although if they do the University can work to ensure that the appropriate support is put in place. The three with the highest population represented are learning difficulty, mental health conditions and a long standing illness or health condition. Whilst students with learning difficulties have remained very consistent over the last 5 years, we can see that the other two have increased significantly particularly students with mental health conditions as demonstrated by Table 3 below:

**Table 3: student population by type of disability 2018-19**

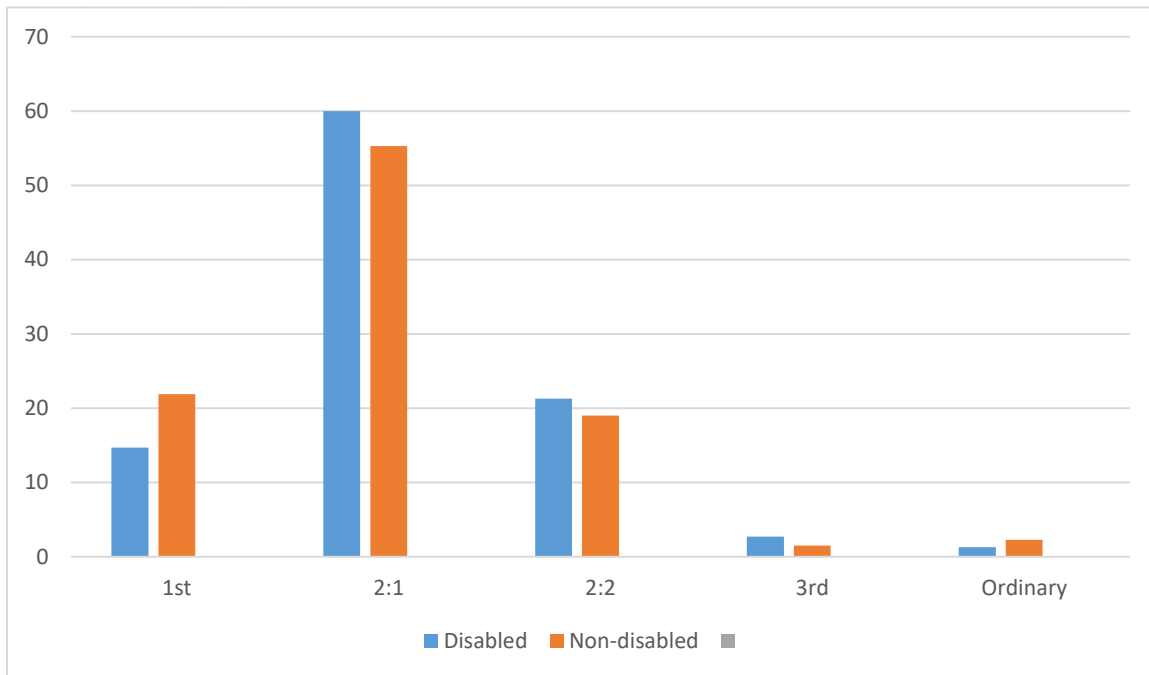
<b>Disability</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>
<b>Learning difficulty</b>	590	579	595	591	592
<b>Mental Health conditions</b>	152	161	232	314	397
<b>Long standing illness or health condition</b>	111	121	156	169	176
<b>Other disability</b>	103	97	91	112	116
<b>Multiple disabilities</b>	48	69	80	91	96
<b>Social / communication impairment</b>	38	38	48	60	63
<b>Wheelchair / mobility</b>	52	41	41	48	41
<b>Deaf or partial hearing</b>	16	26	39	36	35
<b>Blind or partially sighted</b>	14	19	18	19	23

### **Attrition**

Among undergraduates, disability does not have any significant impact on attrition rates. For 2017-18, first-year attrition was 9.8% among disabled students compared to 9.7% among non-disabled, whilst on a five-year basis disabled students have actually shown lower attrition than non-disabled.

### **Attainment**

Undergraduates declaring a disability have actually had better degree outcomes than non-disabled students in each of the last 4 years, with 75.9% achieving 1<sup>st</sup> and 2:1s in 2017-18 compared to 73.3% of non-disabled. See figure overleaf for comparison between disabled and non-disabled students.



**Figure 9: Disabled student outcome data for 2017-18**

However, after excluding international students (less likely both to declare a disability or to obtain a First or 2:1), outcomes look much more similar between disabled and non-disabled Home students – respectively 76.8% and 75.9% obtaining a 1st or 2:1 in 2017-18. Again, while disabled students’ outcomes look slightly better, this is not statistically significant. Nevertheless, this equality in outcomes suggests that Brunel’s disability support services are proving effective in mitigating the disadvantage that disabled students might otherwise face to obtain good academic outcomes.

## 5. Sexual Orientation

Students are asked to self-assess their sexual orientation towards people of the same sex, opposite or different sex or to both sexes. The University only began to more actively seek such data a few years ago, and this report represents the first time we have reported on outcomes against this characteristic. Data quality has improved quite significantly over the last 5 years with the number of students we lack data for decreasing from 4,499 to 169, and small but steadily increasing number of students declaring as bi sexual or gay as demonstrated by the table below:

**Table 4: student population by sexual orientation over the last 5 years**

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
<b>Heterosexual</b>	8,196	10,394	11,236	12,235	13,034
<b>Bisexual</b>	128	172	221	259	285
<b>Gay man</b>	53	71	80	79	91
<b>Gay woman / lesbian</b>	29	31	26	34	44

<b>Missing</b>	4,499	1,948	790	326	169
<b>Information refused</b>	534	699	673	752	828
<b>Other</b>	157	196	202	208	232

Some 652 students identified as LGBT (i.e. gay, bi, other from table above), 4.8% of the population with a declared sexual orientation. Of these, 370 were women (5.9% of women), and 282 were men (3.8% of men). While the proportion of gay women looks markedly low at just 0.6% of the female population, there are higher proportions of women in other LGBT categories – including 72% of those declaring as bisexual last year were women. There is a particularly low absolute number declaring as lesbian which is concerning and further understanding as to why this might be is required such as whether Brunel is not seen as a lesbian friendly or whether they are choosing not to declare their sexuality.

### Attrition

Attrition for undergraduates by sexual orientation in 2017-18 was 9.7% for heterosexuals (exactly in line with the university average): better for bisexual and other sexualities at 8.5% and 5.6% respectively; but worse for gay male students at 12.5%. Data for gay women is too limited to draw conclusions from, with just 6 such students in their first year in 2017-18, and previous years looking similar. However the 5-year attrition rate for gay women is 21.2% (7 students out of 33) and whilst numbers are small, this is a rather higher rate which should be carefully monitored in future years.

### Attainment

Both gay men and gay women have excellent outcomes with 100% achieving a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1 classification in 2017-18 in both cohorts; though based on very small graduate numbers of just n=7 and n=2 respectively. Bisexual students at 67% (from n=21 graduates) are below the university average of 75% but this is not statistically significant.

## 6. Religion

Along with a diverse ethnicity, Brunel also has a very diverse population with regards to religion. This is another characteristic for which the University has sought to improve student declaration rates over the last few years; the table below just shows data for the last 3 years, as previous years are rather less complete (e.g. status not known for 4,438 students in 2014-15 compared to just 138 in 2018-19). This report also represents the first time we have reported on outcomes split by religion or belief.

**Table 5: Student population by religion over the last 5 years**

	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>
<b>Christian</b>	2,664	3,303	3,585	3,782	3,934
<b>Muslim</b>	2,060	2,773	3,139	3,605	4,031
<b>Hindu</b>	628	803	873	1,002	1,146

<b>Sikh</b>	259	353	356	403	389
<b>Buddhist</b>	243	239	216	224	214
<b>Any other religion or belief</b>	91	123	131	148	137
<b>Spiritual</b>	88	112	135	122	121
<b>No religion</b>	2,697	3,309	3,429	3,610	3,816
<b>Not known</b>	4,438	1,877	717	279	138
<b>Information refused</b>	394	580	608	680	723
<b>Jewish</b>	34	39	39	38	34

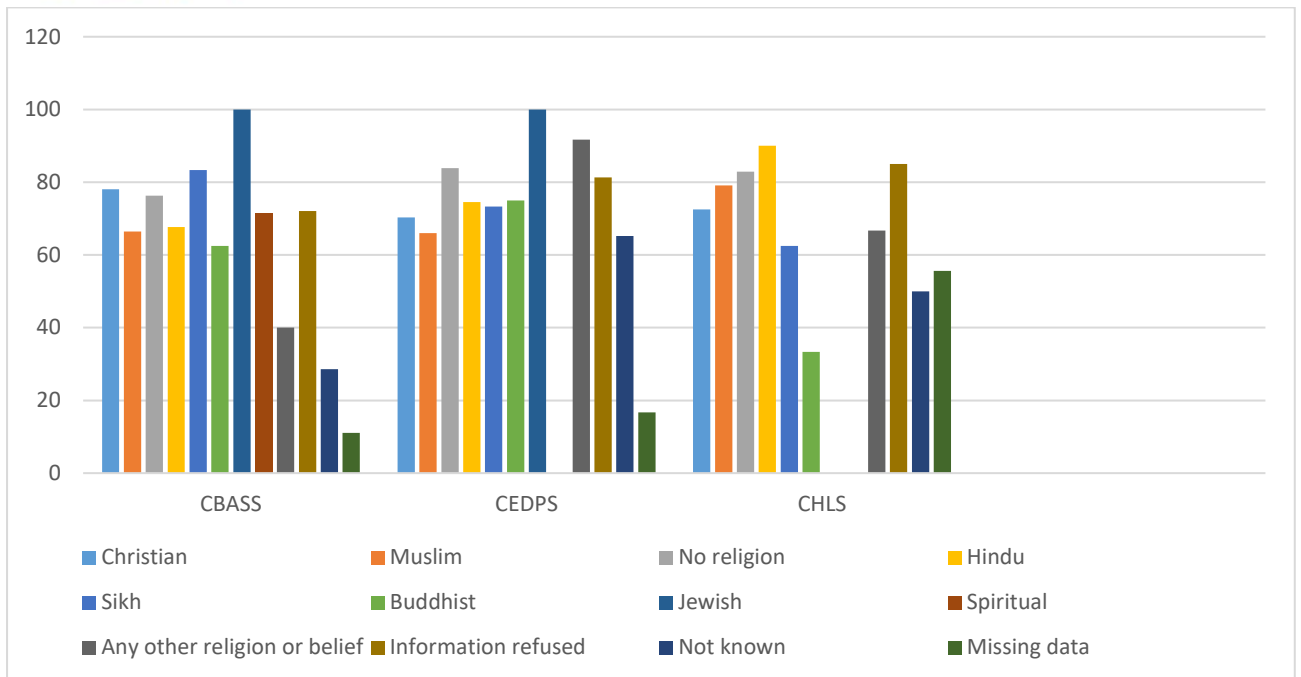
Those declaring as Christian, Muslim or no religion account for 80% of the population both in 2017-18 and on average over the last 3 years. However mixes have been changing within this, and 2017-18 was the first year we have had more declared Muslim than Christian students. It should be noted how few Jewish students we currently attract.

### **Attrition**

There is no significant difference in undergraduate first year attrition per religion with Muslim students very slightly higher at 9.8% compared to the average of 9.7%, and students with no faith having slightly lower attrition at 8.6%. The two groups where attrition is higher are Buddhist students 14.3% and Jewish students at 22.2%. However these cohorts are much smaller (see numbers in table above) so are not significant.

### **Attainment**

There is a worrying gap in undergraduate degree outcome between Muslim students, Christian students and students with no religion. In 2017-18, some 68.1% of Muslim students achieved a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1 classification compared to 74.3% of Christians and 80.5% of students with no religion. However Christian students' outcomes have fallen more significantly since the year before from 78.4%. Buddhist students also achieve few high classifications at 63.2% although this picture does vary across the University, see Figure 10 below:



**Figure 10: Student outcomes 1<sup>st</sup> and 2:1 classification by religion for 2017-18**

## 7. Gender Reassignment

The University is required to ask students whether they are the same sex as at birth. This data remains completely confidential unless the students chose to inform the University in a formal capacity. Whilst many students in the past have chosen not to provide this data, this is slowly changing: in 2013-14 we had 19 students who disclosed as transgender whilst in 2018-19 we have 79 students who are no longer the same sex as they were at birth. This is an increase from 60 the year before.

### Attrition

There is higher than average attrition for transgender students which in 2017-18 was 33%. Whilst the numbers are very small at 10 and therefore not significant, this should be monitored carefully.

### Attainment

Outcomes have improved dramatically for the small numbers of transgender students over the last 5 years with an increase from 33.3% achieving a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1 classification in 2014-15 to 90.9% in 2017-18. However again, this is based on very small numbers.

## Commentary and Recommendations

The analysis of the equality data provides some very useful insights into our current population and the rates of student success. Brunel should be very proud and celebrate our diverse student community and their achievements. However it is also apparent that there are various gaps within the population and their outcomes which are worrying and need to be noted and addressed. In terms of the population imbalance the widest gaps are female and mature students.

With regards to the student groups who are not achieving the same outcomes as their cohort, those of most concern are male students, BAME students, Muslim students and mature students.

It is recommended that we build on the strong foundation already created to take positive action to create a more fully inclusive environment where all our students are able to succeed. This should include:

- ensuring that all prospective and current students regardless of their social or cultural background via the University's website and communications channels are aware that they are welcome at Brunel and can have the best quality student experience and reach their full potential.
- extending the work of the Widening Participation and Student Success teams who already develop and deliver interventions particularly focussed on these communities strengthening the numbers and their outcomes such as Urban Scholars Programme, outreach packages, stem activities, specific support for students.
- understanding better why the outcomes for male students, BAME students, Muslim students and mature students are lower than other students, particularly the Muslim students which is a new finding and given they are now the biggest religious group equates for a significant number. It would also be helpful to look at the intersectionality data for ethnicity and religion to further our understanding.
- continuing the development of inclusive curriculums, reading lists, role models etc to ensure that the University's teaching and learning is reflective of our diverse community. For further information on current activities and proposals see Access and Participation Plan. The Athena Swan Scheme is another initiative that also helps to address gender underrepresentation and potential barriers to attainment. Several of the University's departments have and are seeking awards.
- ensuring that the appropriate policies and procedures are in place to support the academic staff to be working with such a diverse population.
- building confidence and skills across the University through training, awareness sessions and campaigns to ensure strong student outcomes across the whole student populations.
- continuing to review and monitor our student population. In the future this should include analysis of the postgraduate students' outcomes and more detailed comparison with national and sector data.



## Current Equality and Diversity Activity

The University's student equality and diversity activity was delayed this year with the departure of the former manager in spring 2018. The new Student Equality and Diversity Manager took up her role in late October 2018. Her primary role is to ensure that the University meets its statutory and legal equality duties and all students are able to study, work, relax and socialise free from prejudice, discrimination, bullying and harassment. The aim is to proactively advance equality and inclusive practice throughout the campus environment and ensure that equality of opportunity is at the heart of our education provision and at the core of our student support activities. In practice this involves the provision of guidance and advice to staff across the university about student related equality and diversity matters, ensuring the University meets its legal duties and that equality and diversity is embedded in relation to the student experience. It includes keeping policies, procedures and codes of practice in relation to student equality and diversity updated and supporting the University independently to resolve queries and provide advice and guidance on procedures and related issues.

Early priorities have focussed on the following:

**Transgender students:** Over recent years it has become apparent that Brunel did not have a policy or guidance for transgender students. This was resulting in insufficient levels of knowledge and confidence around this student community across the University often leading to inconsistent and ill-informed practice towards trans\* students. Also very worryingly there are anecdotally high levels of bullying, abuse and harassment towards these students on campus. We have now developed a new policy for transgender students in collaboration with trans\* students and staff across the University which will provide a framework for how the University will support students who express their gender identity differently to their sex at birth. The policy was launched by the Provost at the end of March 2019 and we hope that it will provide support for how the University community will meet its legal requirement to ensure these students are treated fairly and equally, and have the same opportunity to reach their full potential and to have a good student experience at Brunel. It should be noted that there is quite an extensive implementation plan to be able to achieve this and ensuring that the University's procedures, practice and systems are compliant will be a priority over the coming months.

**Sexual Violence and Harassment:** Universities UK published a report Changing the Culture in autumn 2016 following the work of a taskforce which had examined violence against women, harassment and hate crime particularly prioritising issues of sexual violence and harassment. They recognised that the potential impact of any such incident on a student may be so serious in nature that universities must be equipped to respond effectively and engage in prevention initiatives. UUK made a set of wide ranging recommendations with key aspects including senior leadership, institution wide approach, prevention and response. Brunel took this issue very seriously and over the last couple of years, including developing the "report and support" portal, first responder training and shortly to be launched online module for staff. However there is more still to do. We have set up a new working group to

ensure we have considered and met all UUK's recommendations and the first priority is to develop a policy on sexual violence and harassment. In the meantime we have produced a policy statement on this issue.

**Dignity at study:** Our current policy, which was designed to support students in incidences of bullying and harassment, has not been revised since 2013. It has increasingly become out of date and not fit for purpose. Students are struggling to access it or find it helpful and staff are finding it difficult to navigate with out of date systems and therefore finding it increasingly hard to support their students appropriately during these difficult incidents. We have held a couple of focus groups ahead of reshaping the policy and are now rewriting it to make it applicable and user friendly for our current student population.

**Awareness and Training:** A key part of the student equality and diversity agenda is to raise its profile through training sessions, initiatives, events and presentations across the whole university community. Notable activity this year has included contributing to events organised by the Student's Union with talks at the Rugby Club Conference in January, a workshop as part of LGBT history month in February and contributing to a panel at the Women in Leadership Conference in March; and speaking at a Widening Access Awareness Day for future students with disabilities. In addition we have developed and delivered training to various groups including for the Graduate School, the GLASS learning day in April and a session with the Student Support and Welfare Team on the new transgender policy with more planned for the rest of the academic year.

### **Commentary and Priorities**

The last 6 months have seen a main focus on beginning updating and development of key policies and procedures that the University urgently requires. It is essential that we have a robust framework to support students who potentially are being treated unfairly and unequally. Due to gaps in staffing in this area over recent years and considerable reprioritisation in the higher education sector, a large backlog of other guidance and policies has accrued that require the same treatment. This has inevitably lead to inconsistent practice across the University and varying levels of awareness and confidence of equality and diversity issues making it very challenging to ensure all students are able to have the best student experience. These include but are not exhaustive:

- Online harassment policy
- Maternity and pregnancy policy
- Policy to support disabled students
- Guidance for young carers
- Student equality and diversity policy
- Guidance on faith and financial loans
- Hate crime policy
- Accessible childcare facilities / breast feeding policy
- Guidance on religious inclusion

Over the coming months we will prioritise and continue the review and updating process. With a strong policy framework in place we will be able to extend the work on awareness campaigns and training sessions to build knowledge and confidence on equality and diversity across the whole university community.

In addition we are shortly to commence the development of the new Equality and Diversity Strategy for the University as our current one 2015–20 terminates next year. It is intended that this will be bold and inspirational in line with the University's 2030 Vision. Increasingly a whole university approach is required for the equality and diversity work which historically has tended to be split between staff and student issues with different systems and procedures. It is anticipated that the new strategy will provide a robust foundation for all our equality and diversity agenda going forward.

The University has a duty to demonstrate that it has considered equality issues when developing, reviewing or implementing a policy, practice or procedure. The elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, creation of equality of opportunities and the fostering of good relations are vital aspects of this process. Many institutions including Brunel use the equality impact assessment to do this and whilst it is not a legal requirement, it is widely recognised as a credible and established tool to demonstrate due regard to the public sector equality duty which is required by law. There is currently mixed practice across the University with too many departments neglecting the process completely or only paying it sparse attention. This needs to be addressed promptly through more training and awareness to ensure that the University upholds its Equality Duty at all times.

It has also become evident that whilst having a diverse student population which should be celebrated, this also brings its own particular challenges. We are seeing an increase in bullying and harassment, micro-aggressions and generally unacceptable behaviour as demonstrated by the increase in use of the report and support portal and anecdotal reports. Certain student cohorts seem to be particularly at risk e.g. LGBT students, disabled students and certain faith and ethnic communities. However often they do not use the formal channels to report this behaviour seemingly resigned to this antisocial behaviour. We urgently need to do a piece of work around defining our values and communicating what behaviours and attitudes are acceptable and what are not. This will help us meet the third duty under the equality act to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. We have already started reviewing the student charter in conjunction with the Students Union and are planning to develop student training and an awareness campaign for 2019-20.

## **Conclusion**

Analysis of student equality and diversity data and activity continues to provide a vital insight into the student population at Brunel and their levels of success. The aim is to ensure that all students have equal opportunity for success reaching their full potential in an inclusive environment. We recognise that there are currently various groups who are potentially disadvantaged as a result not able to achieve the same outcomes as others and / or who do not have such a quality student experience

during their time here and it is our duty to investigate these and report them accordingly. In order to rectify this we need to constantly monitor the student community, capture their outcomes and experiences and address any disadvantage or unequal treatment.

The University is committed to working towards all students reaching their full potential and will continue to build on a collaborative approach with the Staff Equality and Diversity Team, the Access and Participation Team and the Student Success Project to eliminate any unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, foster good relations between all students and staff, and to ensure all students irrespective of their social or cultural identities have the equal opportunity to do so.

Henrietta Spalding, Student Equality and Diversity Manager

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