

Advance HE EDI Conference 2026

Embedding EDI in Higher Education: Tradition Retold, Borrowed Insights, and Bold Innovations

Session abstracts

Day 25 – 26 March 2026

Keynote, 10:05 - 10:25, Manchester Suite

A(nother) leadership paradox: Equity in HE is important; but please be quiet(er) about it

Professor Donna Whitehead, Vice-Chancellor, University of Brighton

Universities across the sector are wrestling with financial sustainability challenges in a shifting political and regulatory landscape. In this context, leaders are facing complex and competing priorities. In the keynote, Donna will be sharing her reflections on the leadership paradoxes that exist, how they might become more complex as we move forward, and how she navigates these to ensure that she continues to leverage her leadership to drive equity.

Panel, 10:25 - 11:10, Manchester Suite

Courage and pragmatism in inclusive leadership

Professor Donna Whitehead, Vice-Chancellor, University of Brighton, Professor Frances Corner, Chair of the Maudsley Charity, board member of LAMDA, Creative UK and the All-Party Parliamentary University Group and Professor Zainab Khan, Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Resources & Transformation, London South Bank University

Following Professor Donna Whitehead's keynote on the urgency and opportunity of inclusive transformation, this panel brings together Vice-Chancellors and senior sector leaders to examine how executive decision-making can meaningfully advance EDI during a period of significant challenge for higher education. Chaired by Advance HE's CEO Alistair Jarvis, the discussion will build on Donna's reflections on leadership courage, institutional transformation and the realities of taking difficult but necessary steps. Joined by Prof Frances Corner (recently stepped down as VC of Goldsmiths, University of London) and Prof Zainab Khan (PVC, LSBU), the panel will explore the sector context, approaches and perspectives on inclusive leadership, and where opportunities for more inclusive and sustainable change lie amid ongoing pressures.

Parallel Session 1, 11:25 - 12:25

Session 1.1

Reimagining equality impact assessments in higher education: A participatory workshop introducing an innovative equality analysis framework

Professor Chantal Davies, Professor Ruth Healey, Dr Holly White, Dr Kim Ross and Chantal Worsdell University of Chester and Melanie Ctofts, University of Hertfordshire

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Manchester Suite

This engaging, game-based workshop introduces a new Equality Analysis Framework (EAF), developed through sector-wide research and co-production. Designed to embed equality impact assessments (EqIAs) into everyday institutional practice, the EAF emphasises proportionality, intersectionality, and capacity building. Participants will tackle evolving, scenario-based challenges in groups, applying the EAF to real world complexities while navigating wildcards and stakeholder prompts. The session culminates in a reflective plenary to share insights and strategies. Participants will leave with practical tools, renewed

confidence, and a fresh perspective on making EqlAs more inclusive, impactful, and embedded in institutional decision-making.

Session 1.2

The inclusion tapestry: Co-creating and analysing inclusive cultures through creative expression

Professor Virginie Grzelczyk, Aston University

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Milano

The Inclusion Tapestry is a creative project developed at Aston University for National Inclusion Week 2025. Staff, students, and community members were invited to doodle, write, and share reflections on "What does inclusion mean to you?" on a large roll of paper. The tapestry became a collaborative artwork capturing personal voices of belonging. Aston is now analysing these contributions to identify themes and compare them with national inclusion frameworks and trends. This interactive session recreates the experience, inviting delegates to co-create a new tapestry while exploring how community voices retell and reshape institutional EDI narratives.

Session 1.3

When EDI meets martial arts: Flow, formlessness and institutional change

Dr Sammy Li and Loreal Stokes, University of Birmingham

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Brussels Suite

What can Bruce Lee teach us about surviving and thriving as EDI practitioners? This engaging and interactive workshop draws on the "Be Water" philosophy to help reimagine flexibility, adaptability, and strength in navigating UK universities' increasingly politicised EDI landscape. Grounded in cross-sector and global insights, the session offers practical tools, space for reflection, and new ideas for sustaining EDI work under pressure. Join us to co-create strategies that flow around barriers and harness the power of water: formless, adaptive, and unstoppable.

Session 1.4a

Back in the closet? LGBTQIA+ students in distance learning

Dr Andrew Potter, Dr Leigh Downes, Professor Caroline Derry, Dr Ellesar Elhaggagi, Aimee Waterer and Xinyi Lu, The Open University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

What is it like to be an LGBTQIA+ student in distance learning? Does the relative anonymity of the online learning environment allow greater opportunity to learn without fear of discrimination, or does it just feel like being shoved back in the closet? This project takes a students-as-partners approach to investigating the LGBTQIA+ student experience of distance learning. We explore complex issues of disclosure, the pitfalls of quantitative data, and what it means to bring your authentic self to online learning.

Session 1.4b

Assessing inclusively: A reflective and collaborative tool to strengthen inclusive assessment design

Dr Rebecca Quew-Jones and Joanna Clarke, University of Portsmouth

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

This engaging session introduces the Inclusive Assessment Tool, a practical and novel resource to help HE teaching teams reflect on and enhance inclusivity across the assessment lifecycle. Through demonstration and case examples, participants will discover how the tool supports meaningful dialogue, consistency and shared responsibility for inclusive practice. Delegates will leave equipped with actionable ideas to review inclusive assessment within their pedagogical practice, addressing resistance and fatigue while raising awareness of barriers to access, participation and attainment.

Session 1.5a

Closing the awarding gap – listening to our black science students

Jennie Bellamy and Dr Louise MacBrayne, The Open University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

Our actions have helped reduce the awarding gap for our Black first year science students from 30% to 3%. By listening directly to Black students talking about their study experiences and linking their key themes to an intersectional study and statistical testing we have been able to make changes to curriculum content, encourage the development of a support network, and end the requirement for students to request alternative materials. There's more to do, but how exactly did we act on these messages from marginalised voices?

Session 1.5b

The sum of many parts: Embedding intersectionality in HE practices

Dr Pradeep Passi, University of Salford

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

The Equity Ambassadors project was established in 2023 and is a partnership with the Students' Union. Central to this project are 18 students employed via the Students' Union to explore the lived experiences of our students through outreach and engagement activities. As such, the Ambassadors are grassroots, peer-to-peer researchers gathering feedback on students' experiences. This session will include an overview of the activities and listening events that the students have led, the key themes from the feedback of over 1000 students and detail how we are developing our policies and processes with a focus on student lived experiences.

Session 1.6a

EDI data: Developing a road to success

Naheed Nazir and Amraze Khan, Manchester Metropolitan University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

Developing impactful evidence-based approaches ensures EDI is truly embedded within organisations to improve experiences of diverse staff and students. In a data rich world, how can we truly do this effectively? This interactive session will showcase the newly innovative EDI Data approach developed and currently utilised within Man Met University, who have been named the top performing institution for EDI in The Times Higher Education Honorex EDI index in 2024. Come along to find out more about how you can embed a sector leading approach to make real impact!

Session 1.6b

Leaving the silo behind - transforming Northumbria's approach to EDI by shifting the focus from characteristic-based actions to comprehensive inclusivity

Rachel Brown and Fiona Snook, Northumbria University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

Join Northumbria University to hear how they have streamlined their work managing equality actions, reducing siloed thinking and facilitating a more intersectional and efficient approach, maximising the impact from resources. This includes the creation of an Equality Actions Dashboard showing progress at a glance for each Charter and internal equality action plan. You will hear how they are creating an environment where all colleagues and students feel they belong by ensuring EDI principles are at the forefront of decision making, enabled by visible support and engagement from senior leaders and a revised EDI governance structure.

Session 1.7

Walking the talk: Exploring threshold concepts in EDI practice

Simran Kaur, University of Strathclyde

Walkshop session (60 minutes), Room 110

This bold, interactive walkshop invites conference delegates to explore the complexities of delivering impactful Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training and engagement. Drawing on the framework of Threshold Concepts, participants will examine why ideas such as structural inequality can be challenging to grasp and how to guide others through these learning barriers. Through reflective, movement-based activities, delegates will identify enablers of engagement, practise strategies for addressing resistance, and build confidence in facilitating difficult conversations. This innovative approach promotes empathy, curiosity, and resilience, offering fresh, courageous ways to embed EDI within institutional culture and foster genuine, lasting inclusion.

Parallel Session 2, 12:35 - 13:35

Session 2.1

The antiracist university - a play

Dr Sheena Kalayil and Dr Andy Smith, University of Manchester

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Manchester Suite

THE ANTIRACIST UNIVERSITY is a play, in which you the audience are the actors. Six volunteers will read out a script which provokes an inclusive discussion on racism, acknowledging that each person, dependent on their lived experience, area of expertise and world view, will have their own understanding of racism and antiracism. Our play can be used alongside existing initiatives to create a more inclusive, anti-racist and 'call it out' culture. Alongside our academic careers, we are creative practitioners: Andy Smith is an

acclaimed theatre-maker, and Sheena Kalayil is an award-winning novelist. We channelled our creativity to co-write our play.

Session 2.2

A tale of two halves: Reflections from De Montfort University's REC silver journey

Annette Hay and Dr Hardeep Basra, De Montfort University

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Milano

This workshop revisits De Montfort University's journey to achieving the Race Equality Charter Silver Award. Centring collaboration and authentic partnership between academics and professional services, it explores how equality narratives move from aspiration to action. Highlighting the university's whole-institution approach to anti-racism through the EDI Office and the award-winning Decolonising DMU project, it reflects on successes, tensions, and the gap between rhetoric and reality. Examining resistance and resilience in advancing race equity, participants will gain insights into lessons learned, translating REC commitments into meaningful change across governance, education, and practice, and sustaining progress through uncertainty and organisational change.

Session 2.3

Seen, safe, understood: Equitable safeguarding in higher education through multi-agency and intersectional approaches

Noor Da Silva and Hannah Roche, University of Northampton and Huma Abbasi, Northamptonshire Police

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Brussels Suite

Black and minoritised students navigating abuse during their studies face additional barriers and systemic inequalities to help-seeking and safety, compounded by structural inequities within higher education. This workshop combines multi-agency police frameworks with Black feminist, by-and-for VAWG approaches to translate real-world, survivor-centred learning into higher education. Participants will explore intersectional risk assessment tools, address gaps in safeguarding, and co-design culturally competent, actionable strategies, ensuring no student is left behind while equipping institutions to meet the growing complexity and demands of supporting diverse student needs.

Session 2.4a

From induction to inclusion: Empowering student voices at durham

Ayrton Magaia, Durham University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

This session showcases Durham University's student induction module, developed collaboratively with students to foster a respectful, inclusive campus culture. Aligned with Office for Students recommendations and our Inclusive Durham Framework, the module promotes engagement with non-credit bearing, educational-adjacent content and encourages active participation in shaping community values. Attendees will explore strategies for increasing student engagement, discover which platforms drive meaningful interaction, and learn how staff are supported in delivering inclusive messaging. The session also highlights reporting and evaluation mechanisms used to measure impact and demonstrates how student-led design contributes to a stronger sense of belonging and a positive university experience.

Session 2.4b

Breaking barriers: New report calls for urgent action on ethnic diversity in higher education leadership

Dr Louise Oldridge and Dr Jessie Pswarayi, Nottingham Trent University and The Association of Heads of University Administration

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

Despite decades of EDI initiatives, professional services leadership in UK Higher Education remains overwhelmingly white. This session, based on AHUA-commissioned research, exposes systemic barriers faced by ethnically minoritised staff—ranging from opaque promotion pathways to performative diversity practices—and amplifies their lived experiences. We will explore why frameworks like Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter have yet to deliver equity for this overlooked group and share actionable strategies for authentic change. Through interactive discussion, delegates will co-create solutions to dismantle structural inequities and reinvigorate institutional inclusion. Join us to move beyond tick-box compliance toward transformative, sector-wide accountability.

Session 2.5a

Co-Creation in action: Aston University and partners driving disability inclusion across the midlands

Rabia Ahmed and Corinna Fletcher, Aston University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

Discover how Aston University is driving regional change through inclusion, collaboration and civic engagement. This session highlights the University's role in co-delivering the Birmingham Disability Festival 2025 with local and regional partners, aligning with the Disabled Student Commitment and the Aston Civic Agreement. Attendees will learn how cross-sector partnerships are creating new spaces for disabled voices, transforming accessibility in higher education and the wider community. Join us to explore practical examples of co-creation, policy alignment and leadership that make the Midlands an exemplary region for disabled people and inspire inclusive practice across all sectors.

Session 2.5b

Including students with intellectual disabilities in higher education

Deirdre Bonar and Sylvia Healy, TU Dublin

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

Despite ambitious intentions outlined in international documents (UNCRPD; UN SDGs), people with intellectual disabilities (ID) have limited options upon leaving school, rarely including higher education. The Irish government committed to widen opportunities for these students in its National Access Plan 2022-2028, leading to an investment of €11 million shared among 11 Universities, including TU Dublin, to launch new programmes for students with ID. In this session, the programme's co-ordinators will reflect on their experiences and learnings from its development and delivery. Insights are shared from students on their experience of higher education in what has been a transformative experience.

Session 2.6a

Celebrating diversity: Student-led EDI training

Dr Maria Canal and Adella Tobing, University of Manchester

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

Discover how a bold partnership between the Students' Union and academic staff transformed EDI training into an engaging, inclusive experience. Replacing passive online modules, this interactive session—delivered to over 1,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students—fosters belonging from day one. With 97% positive feedback and 95% of students reporting increased confidence in applying their learning, this scalable model offers a powerful approach to embedding EDI into institutional culture. Join us to explore how co-creation and interactivity can empower both students and educators to drive meaningful, lasting change.

Session 2.6b

Evaluation of offline adjustments and improving accessibility for distance learning science students

Dr Christopher Hutton and Dr Fiona Aiken, The Open University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

There is a legal requirement to provide students who have declared disabilities with reasonable adjustments which address their learning needs. One way that accessibility can be improved for students with barriers to studying on screen-only materials is through producing printed versions of the materials, so-called “print packs” in the Open University. The efficacy of print packs as a means of providing reasonable adjustments to some disabled students and those in secure environments on Earth and Environmental Science modules through student surveys and staff focus groups was evaluated. We will share the results and recommendations from our research.

Session 2.7a

Integrating cultural humility and anti-racism into postgraduate healthcare curricula

Vittoria Sorice, University of Derby / Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Dr Jill Gould, University of Derby

Ten-minute thesis (10 minutes), Room 110

Discover how the I-CHARM pilot is advancing cultural humility and anti-racist practice in postgraduate healthcare education. This session shares practical insights and key findings from an interactive, research-informed workshop, highlighting effective strategies to challenge bias and foster equity in academic and clinical settings. Join us to explore evidence-based approaches, engage in reflective discussion, and take away actionable ideas for building inclusive learning environments that respond to today’s EDI challenges

Session 2.7b

Student perceptions of inclusivity at Hartpury University

Elizabeth Bradley, Covey Hartpury university

Ten-minute thesis (10 minutes), Room 110

Whilst Office for Student data suggests marginalised groups at Hartpury have comparable experiences overall, the impact of support mechanisms on the student experience has not been determined. This study therefore aimed to 1) understand how inclusive the culture at Hartpury is perceived to be by students, 2) recognise how Hartpury can improve inclusivity for those within marginalised group(s), and 3) identify perceptions of marginalised groups without representation at Hartpury.

Session 2.7c

Racialised experiences in higher education: A case study of students at an english university

Dr Nishani Jeyapalan, University of Bedfordshire

Ten-minute thesis (10 minutes), Room 110

It is crucial that HEIs celebrate student diversity, yet minority ethnic students still face language barriers, microaggressions and cultural misunderstandings; heightened for international students. Commissioned to inform a Race Equality Charter submission, this qualitative study centred minority ethnic voices through five focus groups (n=28) and two interviews (n=2), analysed via theoretical framework analysis. Four themes emerged: everyday racialised harm; epistemic marginalisation and intragroup racism; low-trust, high-burden reporting; and student-led solutions. Recommendations include anonymous/self-service reporting, transparent pathways, staff and student dialogue forums, and culturally competent wellbeing support. Grounding institutional actions in lived experience can convert performative EDI commitments into measurable change.

Parallel Session 3, 14:20 - 15:20

Session 3.1

Tackling gender stereotypes through play: A hands-on workshop on the laleolab board game and its pedagogical implications

Dr Andreana Pastena, Universitat de les Illes Balears and Ninna Makrinov, David Reynolds, Sara Parisi and Mercy Lio, University of Warwick

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Manchester Suite

How do we move beyond theory to actively dismantle gender norms and stereotypes in education? This hands-on workshop introduces LaleoLab, an innovative board game that makes tackling unconscious bias collaborative and memorable. Experience the game firsthand – a creative twist on 'Taboo' designed to reveal and challenge gendered assumptions and foster knowledge of famous individuals who challenged those. Then, join a critical discussion on its pedagogical power and practical application. Leave with a bold, innovative strategy to embed EDI directly into your classroom and inspire an inclusive institutional culture through play.

Session 3.2

What are you hiding - and why? An invitation to explore unrecognised and unheard experiences among disabled H.E staff - and what can happen when untapped potential is released

Jane Cordell, Result CIC

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Milano

Do you see your difference as strength? Can the characteristics that make us feel marginalised be turned around and used as a way to embed EDI practice within ourselves and our institutions? Join our session with a focus on disability, neurodiversity and mental health and see how RESULT harnesses the lived experience of our coaches, trainers and clients to transform thinking, develop better EDI practice and encourage sustainable change. Our track record of supporting people and organisations with diverse experiences of marginalisation demonstrates that institutional and societal change starts with you. We are what we do; you can be too.

Session 3.3

The venus fly trap - A decolonial perspective on EDI work in UK-based student unions

Yasir Yeahia, Birmingham City University and Ananya Sreekumar, Warwick Students' Union

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Brussels Suite

Our session dissects the "Tradition Retold" theme by examining how Student Unions (SUs) perpetuate inequitable EDI structures. Using a decolonial framework, we expose how the system recruits and burdens marginalized officers with excessive, uncompensated labour. Listening to anonymised stories across previous Officers from marginalised backgrounds, delegates will gain tools to consider structural changes to ensure authentic and supportive representation.

Session 3.4a

Professor Etlyn Kenny, Olivia Barfi, Asli Kandemir, Nosheen Qamer and Kally Bharti, University of Birmingham

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

Discover ASPIRE—a bold capacity building pilot for embedding EDI into institutional research culture. This session shares practical insights from its evidence and implementation, highlighting how ASPIRE supports inclusivity, intersectional leadership, and community co-creation. Learn how it addresses sector-wide challenges, including navigating career progression and adopting inclusive behaviours, while fostering resilience and sustainable change. Join us to explore how ASPIRE moves institutions beyond compliance towards authentic transformation.

Session 3.4b

Taking decolonising the curriculum forward at the University of Manchester

Dr Lou Shirley, University of Manchester and Sohini Biswas, University of Manchester Students' Union

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

Tired of theory? This session showcases a practical, student-led Decolonisation Toolkit built for tangible, incremental curriculum change. This session offers concrete steps for transitioning any institution from simply acknowledging inequality to actively implementing a structured, sustainable, and student-centred decolonisation strategy. We will share strategies on improving assessment, diversifying knowledge systems, and implementing clear language guidelines. Learn how to turn ambitious conversations into sustainable action, all created thanks to student-staff partnership.

Session 3.5a

The Women in academia (WinA) Project: A mixed-methods approach to advancing women's careers

Associate/Assistant Professor Talar Moukhtarian, University of Warwick

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

This session presents key findings from the Women in Academia (WinA) Project, a UK-wide mixed-methods study examining structural and cultural barriers shaping women's academic careers. Drawing on large-scale survey and interview data co-produced with sector stakeholders, it outlines practical, evidence-informed strategies to advance gender equity across eight themes: systems, leadership, job security, funding, valuing all roles, caregiving, inclusion, and wellbeing. Delegates will gain actionable insights to inform leadership, policy, and institutional culture. Aimed at senior EDI leaders and researchers, the session offers clear pathways to drive meaningful and sustainable change in higher education.

Session 3.5b

Good practice benefits everyone: 20 years of advancing gender equity at Chemistry at York though embedding innovation and quiet culture change

Dr Leonie Jones and Dr Derek Wann, University of York

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

This presentation will reflect on the 20 years of advancing gender equity at Chemistry at York, the first department to achieve and continuously hold Athena Swan Gold. Focusing on insights, innovations, embedding culture change and the overarching principle that good practice benefits everyone. The Athena Swan framework has been central to the Department's equality journey, taking a data-driven approach to identify barriers, understand lived experience, implement targeted change, and measure outcomes. We will reflect on ingredients for success and consider how lessons learned over the last two decades might be applied while considering the challenges of the current HE landscape.

Session 3.6a

Muddling to flourishing: An institutional response to disabled students' stories

Dr Anne Shaw, University of Greater Manchester

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

Join us for an engaging session that brings research to life. This session shares insights from doctoral research exploring the impact of lecturers and students' attitudes on disabled students' lived experiences within a UK university through Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. The study reveals how lecturers and students shape a continuum of experiences from 'muddling' to 'flourishing', offering recommendations for more inclusive learning environments. Building on these findings, we present our institutional response: innovative Disability Inclusion staff training empowering staff to better meet diverse needs. Come away with reflective insights and ideas to reject ableism and reinvigorate EDI practices in your institution.

Session 3.6b

What disabled graduates won't tell you – employability problems, challenges, opportunities, and the subtle missing links

Dr David Gordon, De Montfort University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

This presentation gives a self-experienced and Commerce/University related view of the transition of disabled students from university to the workplace. Although universities provide employability training and coaching for students, disabled students frequently experience three levels of challenges: 1. Ill-informed advice on employment and disability, 2. A support gap between university and employment, and 3. Acceptance at a localised, team level. This research (pilot stage) gives an overview of the challenges, opportunities, and optimising approaches from a university and employer perspective. The session will be engaging, informative and provide participants with a toolbox of considerations for disabled student interaction.

Session 3.7

Step into their shoes: Sustaining black community co-creation in HE

Dr Nicole Lotz, The Open University

Walkshop session (60 minutes), Room 110

Black belonging matters, especially in distance education. This walkshop introduces the Black STEM Hub, a co-created community led by Black students and staff at the Open University. Through a persona-based walking dialogue, participants will explore the lived experiences of marginalised groups and co-develop strategies to sustain inclusive engagement under financial constraints. The session offers a unique, movement-based format that fosters empathy, reflection, and practical action. Delegates will leave with insights and tools to embed equitable co-creation with Black communities into their own practice, even in resource-limited settings.

Parallel Session 4, 15:35 - 16:35

Session 4.1

Working together is success: Using external partnership to build psychologically safe development programmes

Nate Belgrave and Hannah Rustomjee, University of Manchester

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Manchester Suite

Join us in a dynamic session exploring the impact of long-term external partner engagement – across almost a decade in partnership in Northern England! We will identify how the approaches we have been instilled with by Kaizen – an external training and development consultant – have influenced change across different university structures. When using coaching principles to engage groups, we root ourselves in psychological safety. By generating such buy-in, we move ourselves into a space of deeper engagement with others – allowing us to focus on embedding intersectionality and creating space for risk-taking, innovative approaches to developing understanding in others.

Session 4.2

Testing a student-centred guide for inclusive practice: Insights from doctoral research

Dr Rehana Awan, The Open University

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Milano

This 60-minute interactive workshop invites participants to engage with a newly developed student-centred guide, grounded in my doctoral research exploring the lived experiences of Black and Brown students in higher education. The guide synthesises key areas of concern, direct student quotations, relevant literature, and practical recommendations for addressing barriers to access, participation, and success.

Session 4.3

Measuring inclusion and equity of curricula, resources, teaching, and assessment – a novel approach

Dr Antony Aleksiev, Applied Inspiration and Karolina Chojnacka, The Academy of Contemporary Music

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Brussels Suite

This workshop will showcase and engage you in a simulation of a novel approach for measuring and enhancing inclusivity and equity of HE curricula, learning, teaching, and assessment. Based on impact assessment principles, our approach employs an original framework of evidence-based standards and a toolkit to evaluate and drive EDI. It specifically targets protected and at-risk student groups and has a demonstrable potential for changing institutional culture and practice. In the workshop, you will find about the 'what', 'why', and 'how' of the approach, trial its use for reviewing a programme, and discuss its real-time analytical outputs.

Session 4.4a

Five key questions' approach to equality impact assessments: Moving away from obscure policy and governance terminology to meaningful localised impact understanding

Nilisha Vashist and Catherine Long, University of Leeds

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

This paper presents a refreshed approach to EIAs where we move away from complicated procedures and jargon to a 'five key questions' approach. This enables staff to meaningfully think through their initiative and understand what is needed to make an assessment that is useful on the ground level while minimising workload associated with EIAs to enable the most robust decision-making. I will discuss how we are embedding this approach at different levels- from governance papers, academic realignment, training and development programmes to Athena SWAN action plans, to enable meaningful EDI consideration as the University (and sector) undergo transformation.

Session 4.4b

Revolutionising equality impact assessments: Embedding inclusion through innovation

Amy Hedges, Durham University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

This session showcases Durham University's bold new approach to Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), transforming them from a compliance exercise into a strategic tool for cultural change. By harnessing Microsoft Power Apps and linking outputs directly to the institutional risk register, the refreshed process enhances accountability, transparency, and evidence-based decision-making. Participants will gain insight into how technology can streamline EDI processes, strengthen governance, and drive meaningful impact. Join us to explore how EIAs can reshape organisational culture and create meaningful, measurable impact across higher education.

Session 4.5a

(Not so) subtle acts of exclusion: How to understand, identify, and stop microaggressions

Professor Jerome Cranston, University of Saskatchewan

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

Subtle acts of exclusion (SAEs) (Jana & Baran, 2020) are subtle, indirect actions or words that can make a person or group feel excluded, unwelcome, or not like they belong, often due to unconscious bias. Also known as microaggressions, SAEs can be consciously intentional or unconsciously unintentional and serve to communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights. This workshop invites participants to identify and address unintentional behaviours that make individuals feel marginalized and/or excluded.

Session 4.5b

Old tools, new insights - re-introducing the Advance HE equality in higher education student statistical report

Dr Panagiota Sotiropoulou, Advance HE

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

Come along to this session to discover how a long-standing sector staple has been boldly reimaged. Now in its 18th year of publication, the Advance HE Equality in Higher Education (HE) Student Statistical Report has evolved from a static PDF into a set of dynamic, interactive Tableau dashboards. This session offers a hands-on tour of the new format, empowering users to explore, tailor, and interrogate EDI data like never before. Whether you're new to the report or seeking fresh insights, come and join to uncover how tradition meets innovation in understanding the student EDI landscape across UK HE.

Session 4.6a

Embedding inclusive leadership: Intentional about inclusion leadership programme

Mona Patel and Amraze Khan, Manchester Metropolitan University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

Learn about how Manchester Met designed their flagship inclusive leadership programme in collaboration with their leadership and management community. This engaging session will explore key aspects of the programme's content, delivery method and share the extremely positive impact the programme has had on the institutions culture of belonging for staff and students. Hear directly from the programme lead who can share insights of success and also lessons learned from implementing an organisation wide inclusive leadership programme. The session is ideal for HEIs wanting to embed inclusive practice across their university to impact their diverse communities.

Session 4.6b

Professor Dr Ale Armellini, Jovana Radulovic and Dr Becky Quew-Jones, University of Portsmouth, University of Portsmouth

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

In this interactive workshop, discover how flexible assessment design can contribute to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into institutional culture. Drawing on the University of Portsmouth's Assessment Choice Pilot, participants will explore how offering students choice in assessment instruments can support diverse learning needs while influencing curriculum design, staff practice and governance. Through hands-on activities and structured discussion, delegates will gain practical strategies to enhance accessibility, promote student agency, and embed inclusive assessment practices sustainably. This session is ideal for educators and leaders seeking evidence-informed approaches to drive meaningful institutional EDI change.

Session 4.7a

Students taking resits need specific support: Embedding equity and inclusion in assessment

Dr Karen Lander, University of Manchester

Ten-minute thesis (10 minutes), Room 110

Students undertaking resits often face inequities linked to socio-economic status, disability, care responsibilities, or mental health, yet resits remain largely invisible in policy and pedagogy. This ten-minute thesis shares findings from a student-partnered inquiry at the University of Manchester, revealing that students value targeted feedback, clear expectations, and academic contact. Delegates will learn how resit support can be reframed as fairness-focused intervention, reducing barriers for marginalised groups and promoting inclusion. By highlighting practical strategies, this session considers how universities can embed EDI principles into assessment, retention, and student success initiatives, turning resits from hurdles into opportunities for learning and confidence-building.

Session 4.7b

Data drives for borrowed insights: Building trust and engagement in EDI data

Laxman Godhania, City St George's, University of London

Discover how the Data Drive campaign builds trust among staff and students to confidently share their data and understand why this matters. Learn how improved data insight reveals the true makeup of our community, enabling more targeted, evidence-based initiatives that drive meaningful and lasting change across the institution.

Session 4.7c

Acknowledging ageism: An unexplored aspect of the mature student experience

Millie Bolt, University of Leeds

Ten-minute thesis (10 minutes), Room 110

Age is an underexplored area within EDI work, despite being one of the Equality Act 2010's protected characteristics. Furthermore, the extent to which mature undergraduate students experience ageism during their studies has not been asked before in UK HE. A research project from the Leeds Institute of Teaching Excellence (University of Leeds), undertaken by EDI Officer, Millie Bolt sought to ask this question within qualitative study. This session will share insights and explore how acknowledging ageism can be turned into addressing ageism in order to boost mature undergraduate student's experience and sense of belonging.

Session 4.7d

Embedding equity and accountability: Integrating EDI and CPD into global teaching frameworks

Ambreen Tajmal Queen, Mary University of London

Ten-minute thesis (10 minutes), Room 110

As higher education becomes increasingly global, ensuring fairness and consistency for both educators and students is essential. This session explores how Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) can be embedded into international teaching frameworks through structured professional development and accreditation. Drawing inspiration from sectors such as healthcare and law, where continuous professional development and accountability are standard practice, the session highlights how similar approaches can strengthen inclusivity and transparency in higher education. Delegates will gain practical insights into aligning global teaching standards with EDI principles to foster belonging, mobility, and professional excellence across the academic community.

Day 2 – 26 March 2026

Keynote, 09:40 - 10:20, Manchester Suite

British, Bangladeshi, Muslim, Teacher - and Not a Terrorist: Identity, Prejudice, and the Responsibility of Universities

Professor Osama Khan, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Aston University

What does it mean to be British, Bangladeshi, and Muslim in modern Britain? In this talk, I share my personal journey of building a family, a career, and a life in the United Kingdom while confronting the quiet and sometimes explicit assumptions that often follow Muslim identity. Despite decades of professional contribution to British higher education, I have learned that identity can still precede achievement in the eyes of others.

Through personal stories and data, I explore how anti-Muslim prejudice continues to shape experiences in our society and, at times, within our universities. But this is not a talk about victimhood. It is about responsibility.

Universities must be places where human dignity is non-negotiable, where difficult conversations can happen openly, and where disagreement is handled with civility rather

than fear. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are not abstract principles for me; they are the foundation of a thriving academic community.

If we cannot speak honestly with one another, challenge assumptions, and listen with empathy, we risk losing the very purpose of the university. A truly inclusive campus is not one that avoids tension, it is one that embraces dialogue, respects difference and allows diverse voices to shape our shared future.

Parallel Session 5, 10:35 - 11:35

Session 5.1

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Equality Charters in Higher Education

Sally Baden, Advance HE and Dr Fabiana Fausto McCracken, Queen's University Belfast

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Manchester Suite

This interactive session will share ongoing work at Advance on developing theories of change and evaluating the impact of Equality Charters, engaging participants in reflection and feedback.

Session 5.2

Holding space for linguistic inclusion: Language, belonging and equity in higher education

Kathryn Cridland, University of Greater Manchester

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Milano

Many students in higher education speak more than one language and bring with them diverse ways of thinking, communicating and knowing. This interactive workshop explores how educators can use that richness to make learning more inclusive for everyone. We'll explore how students' languages can be powerful tools for understanding, connection and belonging, while still supporting academic English. Drawing on research from a widening participation university, the session offers practical activities, reflection and discussion. Participants will leave with ideas and strategies for embedding linguistic inclusion into everyday teaching and curriculum design.

Session 5.3

From paralysis to principle: Leadership, impartiality and cohesion in higher education

Robiu Salisu, Advance HE

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Brussels Suite

Higher education institutions are navigating one of the most complex moments in their modern history. Antisemitism, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred, geopolitical polarisation, and contested narratives of free speech are shaping campus climate, staff wellbeing, student belonging and institutional reputation. This session explores what principled leadership looks like when communities feel vulnerable and scrutiny is intense. Drawing on Advance HE's national work on community cohesion, academic freedom and EDI, it moves beyond reactive crisis management to examine institutional impartiality, the limits of neutrality, and the strategic choices required to build safe, rigorous and inclusive academic communities.

Session 5.4a

How and why to implement a whole provider systemic approach (and overcome a historical bias towards project-based inreach and outreach in access and participation)

Elizabeth Garnham, University of the West of England

Oral presentation (30 minutes), Brussels Suite

Twenty years after AimHigher, access and participation work in higher education remains dominated by inreach, outreach, mentoring, and summer school style activity. Yet persistent

equality gaps and financial pressures call for a more systemic response. Elizabeth Garnham, EDI Business Partner at UWE and former head of equality of opportunity at the OfS, considers whether EDI should be understood not as a service or add-on, but as a transformation and change function? Using UWE's anti-racism strategy as a basis, this presentation explores how we can move beyond traditional approaches to implement and evaluate systemic change that embeds equality of opportunity at the heart of institutional strategy.

Session 5.4b

From rhetoric to responsibility: Cross-institutional insights on staff development and internationalisation

Associate/Assistant Professor Hardeep Basra, Wendy Ramku and Dr Sumeya Loonat, De Montfort University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), Brussels Suite

Amid decades of internationalisation policy and a lag between rhetoric and practice in higher education institutions, international students are persistently framed through homogenous labels and deficit narratives, which narrows institutional responses and obscures structural responsibilities. This paper presents the findings of a cross-institutional synthesis of case studies from four UK universities and interrogates policies, professional development, and governance processes surrounding internationalisation. By focusing on systemic gaps in staff development and the inertia of institutional structures, the paper highlights how equity and belonging require embedding EDI in policy, process, and organisational systems beyond pedagogical intentions.

Session 5.5a

Stories that shift power: Co-creating narratives for inclusion and belonging

Michelle-Louise Yembra, City St George's and Kiren Chima, University of London

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

Storytelling can be a radical act of inclusion, a way to humanise policy, amplify underrepresented voices, and reimagine institutional culture. This interactive workshop will explore how storytelling has been used across City St George's to advance equity through campaigns such as Visible Voices, Diversify Your Mind, Wall of Extraordinary Women and more. Participants will examine how these initiatives centre lived experience to foster belonging and drive culture change. Delegates will then be supported to design their own storytelling concepts, learning how narrative practice can become a sustainable tool for empowerment, visibility, and shared accountability in higher education.

Session 5.5b

Creating an equitable student support system

Jenny Husbands Imperial College London

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

This project aimed to address concerns expressed by students about the inadequate support offered by a traditional model of Personal Tutoring, specifically in relation to complex student issues and demographics. Personal Tutors were replaced with a student-initiated and student-centred approach, which incorporated student-led initiatives, to give students a locus of control, to promote equity, inclusion, transferable skills and most importantly, to address issues of intersectionality, which resulted in poor student retention, especially for the online programme. The results were that student attrition decreased from 8% to 3% and there were improvements in inclusivity and collaboration for those with complex needs

Session 5.6a

Making connections: Co-designing staff voice in decision-making and governance at University of the Arts London

Professor Silvia Grimaldi, Nigel Ball, Loretta Jiayi Mao and Veron Lai, University of the Arts London

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

How can service design reshape governance and culture in higher education? Making Connections explores how service design and co-design can strengthen authentic staff voice and drive cultural change from within. Drawing on research at University of the Arts London, the project reveals how designing systems that make decision-making visible, reciprocal and inclusive transforms consultation into collaboration. With participatory and design-justice approaches, embedding qualitative research and co-designing with staff across the university, we produced a range of outcomes focussed on trust, clarity, reciprocity and recognition, connecting grassroots energy, ambition, imagination with decision-making processes, accelerating the university's ability to reach EDI goals.

Session 5.6b

Embedding EDI and wellbeing: Practical strategies for inclusive governance and culture

Hayley Pickard-Dumas and Helen Mclean, University of Hull

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

Join us for an interactive session on embedding Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) and staff wellbeing into governance, culture, and everyday practice. Discover practical strategies to drive meaningful, sustainable change, promote accountability, and foster inclusive, people-centred workplaces. Through guided reflection, discussion, and real-world examples, you'll explore how to overcome common sector challenges and empower colleagues at all levels to be part of the change. Leave with actionable insights, tools, and inspiration to create environments where everyone feels valued, respected, and able to thrive. A must-attend for leaders, practitioners, and teams committed to bold, innovative approaches.

Session 5.7

London Met's education for social justice: A whole-institution framework catalysing cultural transformation

Marva de la Coudray and Dr Precious Nonye Sango, London Met University

Walkshop session (60 minutes), Room 110

How do we embed social justice into the very fabric of higher education? Join this walkshop to explore London Met's sector leading, Education for Social Justice Framework (ESJF), a values-led and data-informed approach to rehumanising pedagogy and driving cultural transformation. Through guided discussion and interactive reflection, participants will examine the realities of implementing inclusive and decolonial practice at scale—navigating tensions, sustaining momentum and strengthening action through a whole institution approach. Delegates will gain practical tools and inspiration to shape their own catalysing innovations.

Parallel Session 6, 11:45 - 12:45

Session 6.1

Not a Linear Journey: Reflections from Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter Silver and Gold

Syra Shakir, Leeds Trinity University, Caroline Fox and Kevin Johnson, Newcastle University, Francisca Farache and Helen Gray, Brighton University

Panel session (60 minutes), Manchester Suite

As the higher education sector places increasing emphasis on moving from commitment to demonstrable impact, achieving a silver or gold award under the equality charters continues to be a marker of embedded work, credibility and a long-term commitment to strategic change. Our session will highlight recent strong Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter Silver and Gold awardees.

Speakers will reflect on their charter work and how their innovative practice helps to shape change. Rather than presenting Silver or Gold as a linear or uniform journey, the session will

surface common patterns, persistent obstacles, and critical success factors that cut across different institutional types.

Designed for practitioners currently working towards Silver or Gold, this session will offer practical, transferable insights grounded in real assessment outcomes. Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of what assessors are looking for, where institutions most often stall, and how to avoid performative compliance in favor of embedded, credible EDI practice.

Session 6.2

Embedding equity for international academics: A co-designed inclusion toolkit

Dr Sanchari Deb, Newcastle University

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Milano

International academics are central to vibrant UK universities, yet policy commitments often miss daily realities. This practical session spotlights common barriers and introduces a co-created Inclusion Toolkit that turns “EDI intent” into everyday action. Expect an overview, interactive scenarios, and simple templates linking challenges to concrete steps across induction, mentoring, and workload design. It’s ideal for EDI practitioners, leaders, HR, managers, and academics seeking evidence-based tools to refresh narratives, strengthen belonging, and improve retention without added bureaucracy. You’ll leave ready to pilot changes immediately, adapt the toolkit to your context, and build momentum for measurable improvements in international colleagues’ experience.

Session 6.3

Moving beyond institutional resistance to decolonial and anti-racist education with the internationally relevant curriculum scales (IRCS)

Dr Julia Bohlmann, Samarth Pinnamaraju, Donald Reid, Nighet Riaz, Yufan Chen and Colette Mair, University of Glasgow

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Brussels Suite

Despite growing awareness of the need to decolonise university teaching, higher education curricula continue to privilege dominant knowledge traditions. Building on Quinlan and Thomas (2023; 2024), we developed Internationally Relevant Curriculum Scales (IRCS) as a structured framework to help educators to assess the international relevance and cultural inclusivity of university courses and programmes, guide curriculum revisions and improve engagement and outcomes for international and racially minoritised students. This workshop introduces IRCS as a tool to reduce institutional resistance to decolonial and anti-racist education by generating evidence on student perception that can be used for self-reflection, staff development and institutional benchmarking.

Session 6.4a

Rethinking EDI through internal funding: The collaborative cultures experience

Dr I Lin Sin, Dr Emma Compton-Daw and Dr Sharada Davidson, The University of Strathclyde

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

This session considers how targeted internal funding allocations can bridge the gap between institutional EDI commitments and the complex realities of under-representation within the research and innovation landscape. It spotlights the innovative work of Collaborative Cultures - a Wellcome-funded programme at the University of Strathclyde - embedding EDI principles across research culture initiatives, including two internal funding schemes targeting under-represented staff. By centring the voices of the delivery team and applicants, it provides an honest, reflective account of the opportunities, challenges, and biases that shape the design and uptake of funding and considers how these can be applied to wider selection processes.

Session 6.4b

Empowering change: LJMU's diversity & inclusion funded projects

Helen Cooper, Phil Bakstad and Moni Akinsanya, Liverpool John Moores University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

In January 2023, Liverpool John Moores University launched a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion Fund, designed to support staff-and student-led projects that tackle inequality, promote representation, and embed inclusive practices. These initiatives are directly shaping university policy, resources, and inclusive culture and the programme was shortlisted for the Times Higher Education Outstanding Contribution to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Award in 2025. This presentation will outline the development of the scheme, the scope of projects funded and provide participants with opportunities to explore how to develop similar schemes in their own institutions.

Session 6.5a

Co-design and creating equitable research careers: lessons from the EDI Caucus

Dr Jos Collins, Professor James Richards and Professor Kate Sang, Heriot-Watt University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

Funded by UKRI and BA, the EDI Caucus has been a three-year project to accelerate equity within the UK's Research and Innovation sector. The team - with diverse backgrounds including disabilities, neurodivergence, and minority groups – have co-designed all approaches to research with the people who are ultimately those affected by EDI policies. EDICa has developed policy-change recommendations based on real-world experiences, and site-specific interventions; identifying where change is most profound, and where the responsibility and accountability for meaningful change lies. This session will showcase the central role of co-design in the work of the Caucus, and what happens next.

Session 6.5b

What we can learn from cultural competency training in higher education

Dr Zoe Vaill, University of East Anglia

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

Cultural competency training (CCT) is a powerful tool in helping higher education improve its culture by creating safer and more inclusive environments free from bias and discrimination. This session introduces a CCT programme developed by the Wellcome Trust-funded IDEA Initiative, designed to build research and EDI skills among staff and students. From the design and delivery of the training to participant recruitment, evaluation and lessons learnt we will explore our pilot programme and how CCT can positively influence culture within higher education.

Session 6.6a

Inclusive intelligence: Tackling bias in AI for higher education

Kathryn Bradley and Sami Karamalla-Gaiballa, The University of Manchester

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

How can we ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion in a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence? This session explores the risks of bias in AI and its implications for higher education. Through real-world examples and reflective discussion, it offers practical strategies for embedding inclusive practice in digital transformation. Join us to challenge assumptions, share experiences, and explore ethical approaches to emerging technologies.

Session 6.6b

Equity at manchester - ensuring all voices are heard

Kathryn Bradley and Sami Karamalla-Gaiballa, The University of Manchester

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

Discover how Equity at Manchester is transforming Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) from a compliance exercise into a powerful driver of cultural change. This session shares our innovative, university-wide approach to embedding EDI within governance, policy and

everyday decision-making. Learn from real experiences—successes, challenges and authentic service-user perspectives—and gain practical tools to implement EIAs in your own institution. Join us to explore how co-creation, compassionate leadership and intersectionality can deliver measurable equity and sustainable impact across higher education.

Session 6.7a

From adjustment to belonging: Embedding EDI through international student support

Dr Lei Zeng, University of Manchester

Ten-minute thesis (10 minutes), Room 110

This engaging session positions proactive international student support as a bold and strategic Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) intervention within UK higher education. In a concise presentation followed by an interactive discussion, it showcases innovative practices such as co-created peer-mentoring schemes that foster belonging and ease cultural and academic transitions. Participants will be invited to reflect on their own learning experiences in unfamiliar contexts, prompting empathy-driven dialogue on institutional change. Through this shared reflection, the session highlights how embedding inclusive, equity-centred support structures can strengthen intercultural understanding, enhance student success, and align internationalisation with genuine EDI transformation.

Session 6.7b

Invisible journeys: Embedding inclusion for commuter students in higher education

Dr Clara Montgomery, Queen Mary University of London

Ten-minute thesis (10 minutes), Room 110

Commuter students face hidden challenges that shape attendance, wellbeing, and belonging. This presentation contrasts commuter student experiences at an urban university (QMUL) and a rural university (Harper Adams), revealing how context, commute, and culture intersect to affect engagement and success. Drawing on co-created research with students, it highlights practical strategies for embedding commuter-inclusive practices within EDI frameworks and institutional policy. Delegates will leave with clear, transferable insights for enhancing equity and belonging for all students.

Session 6.7c

Seeing inclusion differently: Partnering with guide dogs UK to create a more accessible campus

Angela Johnson and Amy Hedges, Durham University

Ten-minute thesis (10 minutes), Room 110

This session showcases Durham University's partnership with Guide Dogs UK to deliver Sighted Guide Training for staff, equipping them with the skills to safely and respectfully support people with sight loss. Through this cross-sector collaboration, over 160 participants have already benefited from this training which aims to enhance accessibility, confidence, and inclusion across campus. Participants will hear about the initiative's impact, future plans to deliver training in-house, and practical takeaways to foster inclusivity in everyday interactions. Join us to explore how small actions can create lasting cultural change and make higher education environments more equitable for all.

Session 6.7d

Decoding the student voice: Equity strategies for vocational and racially minoritised learners

Dr Lindsey Munro, Manchester Metropolitan University

Ten-minute thesis (10 minutes), Room 110

Vocational and other minority students often face hidden barriers in their transition to HE—barriers misunderstood or overlooked due to outdated assumptions and a persistent deficit mindset. This session explores how academics can challenge these misconceptions by decoding the student voice, understanding prior learning, and using data, focus groups, and

reciprocal mentoring to build a fuller picture of the student experience. We'll share practical strategies and real examples of what works (and what doesn't) to reduce differential gaps and drive meaningful institutional change. Together we can rethink how we know our students and how that knowledge can transform equity.

Parallel Session 7, 13:30 - 14:30

Session 7.1

Disrupting racist barriers in NHS settings: Creating global majority nurse leaders through Intersectional power and systemic transformation

Jo Sullivan, Surya Nayak and Chidinma Oforji, University of Salford

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Manchester Suite

This session introduces a pioneering Global Majority Leadership Programme for NHS nurses, co-developed with NHS England to challenge systemic inequities in healthcare leadership. Grounded in intersectionality and institutional critique, the programme empowers Global Majority professionals to lead with confidence, resilience, and clarity. Delegates will explore how psychological safety and lived experience drive transformative change, and how honorary lectureships amplify impact within Higher Education. Through interactive discussion and practical insights, participants will gain tools to embed inclusive leadership models in their own contexts. This original, cross-sector initiative offers a bold blueprint for equity-driven transformation across healthcare and education.

Session 7.2

Bystander intervention training for research culture

Dr Leanne Tyson and Zoe Vaill, University of East Anglia

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Milano

Bystander Intervention Training (BiT) is a practical approach to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion within research culture. The session introduces BiT as a tool to help researchers recognise and respond to inappropriate and harmful behaviours – including harassment, exclusion and discrimination – before they escalate. Through facilitated discussion and roleplay, attendees explore safe, constructive strategies for intervention, grounded in real-world scenarios. By stepping up, individuals can contribute to a more respectful, and collaborative environment where everyone feels respected and supported.

Session 7.3

From data to change: A systemic approach to closing the awarding gap

Dr Obehi Sule and Dr Ayosola Odunlami, Anglia Ruskin University

Interactive workshop session (60 minutes), Brussels Suite

Persistent awarding gaps call for action grounded in evidence. This session introduces HAGEM—the Holistic Awarding Gap Evidence Model—developed from a systematic review of 42 UK studies. HAGEM offers a structured, six-phase approach to move from data to genuine institutional change, providing practical strategies for inclusive curriculum development and systemic transformation. Participants will gain insights into embedding equity and accountability at all levels, moving beyond symbolic compliance to achieve measurable, lasting outcomes for student success.

Session 7.4a

The C-DICE EDI toolkit – moving the dial on EDI training for research professionals beyond mandatory to transformative

Sarah Gomes, Dr Lu Ge, Sharon Henson, Dr Kathryn North, Dr Lennie Foster, Mofesola Olaoye, Loughborough University and Dr Claudia Favero, Amy Beierholm and Professor Ian Jefferson, University of Birmingham and Sarah Macmillan, Imperial College London and Dr Taghi Miri and Dr Katy McKenzie, University of Nottingham

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

Explore the real impact of EDI on research and how to integrate it meaningfully into your work. This session will showcase the free EDI toolkit and demonstrate how it can transform proposals and research practice, highlighting the benefits for higher education institutions. Using a real-world scenario, we examine the consequences of including or omitting EDI considerations in research decisions. You will have the opportunity to test your understanding in an open, discussion-based learning environment where diverse perspectives are valued. The session encourages individuals to think beyond compliance and understand the implications of EDI for research quality, integrity, and impact.

Session 7.4b

From awareness to action: EDI required learning for all staff

Ayrton Magaia, Durham University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 104

This session introduces a fresh, community-informed approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion/ required for all staff. Participants will explore the how to embed strategic policies and procedures, positive behaviours, and active bystander tactics, while understanding how EDI aligns with Freedom of Speech principles. The session offers a holistic view of inclusion across the University, supported by new evaluation metrics to measure impact. Designed to foster respectful dialogue and cultural change, it reflects the lived experiences of our community and equips staff with practical tools to create a more inclusive environment.

Session 7.5a

Listening with care: Embedding non-violent and trauma-informed practice in dignity and respect support

Michelle-Louise Yembra and Kiren Chima, City St George's University of London

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

This presentation shares the evolution of City St George's Dignity and Respect Adviser (DARA) scheme, formerly the Bullying and Harassment Advisers, into a cross-sector-inspired model grounded in empathy and psychological safety. By drawing on practices from healthcare, counselling, and mediation, the team has developed a trauma-informed and non-violent communication approach to supporting staff and students. The presentation will explore how moving from compliance-based processes to compassionate, restorative dialogue has transformed organisational culture, improved confidence in support systems, and strengthened trust within the university community. Delegates will gain insight into replicating similar models in their own contexts.

Session 7.5b

Practicing a listening approach to promote inclusion at Leeds Beckett University

Eleanor Broadbent, Vanysha Sahota and Elisabeth Cleary, Leeds Beckett University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 105

How can Listening Sessions strengthen and embed an institutional approach to address inequalities? Join Leeds Beckett University's EDI Team to hear about our experience of facilitating listening exercises on a range of challenging EDI-related topics including current societal events, anti-racism, the EHRC Supreme Court Ruling and Code of Practice consultation, and academic Freedom of Speech in the classroom.

Session 7.6a

Finding our feet: Building inclusive cultures through a developing faculty EDI committee

Dr Elizabeth Dombi, University of Strathclyde

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

Building inclusive academic cultures is a complex, ongoing journey. The session shares the experiences of a developing Faculty EDI Committee at the University of Strathclyde, exploring how frameworks such as Athena SWAN have shaped structure and governance, and how they inform teaching, research, knowledge exchange and staff wellbeing.

Attendees will hear reflections on success and challenges, navigating competing priorities and fostering a shared purpose. Through interactive discussions and practical examples, participants will gain insights and inspiration, recognising that meaningful change develops over time and requires sustained effort.

Session 7.6b

Once upon a time in academia: Breaking the “good girl” culture to embed EDI through courage, accountability and leadership

Associate/Assistant Professor Elena Tsalaporta, Munster Technological University

Oral presentation (30 minutes), 109

What happens when courage replaces compliance in higher education? In this inspiring and thought-provoking session, Dr Elena Tsalaporta shares her journey of leading change in a male-dominated discipline through her publication “Sustainability, Pandemia and Women in Academia: Breaking the ‘Good Girl’ Culture to Enhance Sustainability in Engineering Education.” Drawing on lived experience and institutional leadership, she explores how empathy, accountability and inclusive governance can transform academic culture. Participants will reflect, connect and leave with practical ideas for embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within their own contexts and for rewriting what authentic leadership looks like in academia.

Session 7.7

Revisiting the PSF2023: Reflecting on inclusive practice

Dr Anja Finger

Walkshop session (60 minutes), Room 110

The Professional Standards Framework 2023 (PSF2023) emphasises inclusivity, both in terms of inclusive practice which is to be evidenced by applicants for each of the four categories of fellowship and as extending the range of staff who can apply. This walkshop session provides space:

- to critically reflect on the Framework and meanings of inclusivity;
- to share examples of inclusive practice (including relevant strategies, policies, procedures, or initiatives);
- to build skills of evidencing and communicating such practices;
- and to network with others interested in forming communities of inclusive practice.

Parallel Session 8, 13:45 - 15:30

Session 8.1

Difficult decisions and high stakes: Free Speech, Academic Freedom and Inclusion in 2026

David Bass, Advance HE and Arif Ahmed, Office for Students and Sinéad Hesp, The University of Manchester and Naomi Waltham-Smith University of Oxford

Specialist Session (45 minutes), Manchester Suite

Higher education is at a pivotal moment for freedom of speech and academic freedom. Institutions face intensifying legal, regulatory and cultural pressures as the introduction of regulation in England and recent court cases (such as the Supreme Court judgment in *For Women Scotland*) reshape the sector landscape.

This plenary creates space for open dialogue on how universities can navigate competing rights, manage risk, approach questions of neutrality/impartiality, and uphold inclusive academic communities. Drawing on leading sector voices and legal expertise grounded in institutional practice, the session will explore decision-making and legal/regulatory requirements in complex cases. Delegates will have the opportunity to engage in a discussion reflecting sector concerns and emerging challenges and a facilitated, live Q&A with the regulator for English providers, Prof Arif Ahmed.

Session 8.2

From evidence to action: Advancing disability inclusion in higher education

Dr Melanie Best, Ride Higher and Dr Ruth Gilligan, Advance HE

Specialist Session (45 minutes), Milano

This session introduces the RIDE Higher framework for staff disability inclusion (part of the National Association of Disabled Staff Networks) and Advance HE's Inclusive Institutions Framework – two new sector-wide approaches to progressing inclusion. We will explore how these frameworks and our collaboration support institutions to improve experiences and outcomes for disabled staff through a joined-up, whole-institution lens that centres disabled voices. Aligning with the conference theme of tradition retold and bold innovation, we will share emerging insights, invite critical reflection, and outline plans to co-create a library of effective practice, empowering conference attendees to drive meaningful change in their own roles.

Session 8.3

Unconference session: Shaping the conversation together

TBC

Unconference session (45 minutes), Brussels Suite

Step into a space where the agenda is created by you. This unconference session replaces traditional presentations with a collaborative, participant-led conversation shaped in real time by those in the room. Bring your provocations, questions, experiences, and ideas to an open and supportive space for reflection and discussion. Sessions are informal, interactive, and discussion-based, no slides or lectures. Anyone can suggest a topic and help facilitate the conversation; no “expert” status required. Join us to share, listen, and help shape the EDI conversations that matter most to you.

Session 8.4

Old tools, new insights - re-introducing the Advance HE equality in higher education student statistical report

Dr Panagiota Sotiropoulou and Jonathan Neves, Advance HE

Specialist Session (45 minutes), Room 104

Now in its 18th year of publication, the Advance HE (AHE) Equality in Higher Education (HE) Student Statistical Report has evolved from a static PDF into a set of dynamic, interactive Tableau dashboards. This session offers an overview of the new format, highlighting key findings and empowering users to explore, tailor, and interrogate EDI data like never before. Whether you're new to the report or seeking fresh insights, come and join us, for an opportunity to uncover how tradition meets innovation in understanding the student EDI landscape across UK HE and engage in a relevant Q&A session with AHE representatives and peers.

Session 8.6

Borrowed Insights from K-Drama: Retelling EDI Traditions and Prototyping Bold Innovations

Dr.Lindy-Ann Blaize Alfred, Birmingham City University

Specialist Session (45 minutes), Room 109

In the last 5–10 years, Korean culture has become increasingly ubiquitous worldwide. Why? Research suggests that globally resonant media, such as K-dramas, leverage narrative immersion, emotional hooks, and cultural novelty to sustain engagement and even create addictive viewing patterns (Su & Yang, 2025). My own experiences of learning through popular culture have opened my eyes to new ways of doing and being.

I started with the premise that there must be something positive we can learn and harness from this phenomenon – something we could apply to creating equitable spaces in higher education. This session leverages K-dramas to interrogate entrenched EDI traditions, borrow practical insights, and co-create bold yet feasible innovations for UK HE. Participants will use a critical media lens to retell exclusionary practices, then engage in accelerated co-Creation activity to design micro-policies, curriculum tweaks, or student-experience interventions with 90-day pilots and measures.

The design aligns with the conference theme – Tradition Retold, Borrowed Insights, and Bold Innovations – and foregrounds agency, belonging, and strengths-based inclusion.

Please note attendees for this session need to have watched: Itaewon Class (esp Kim To-ni and Ma Hyun-yi's stories) and/or Extraordinary Attorney Woo.

