

Appendix 2

Examples of activities and civic contributions across the University, which have helped to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Widening Access and Participation

The government regulates the University's Widening Access and Participation Plan, which includes an account of expenditures, projects and future plans to widen access and participation to groups that are under-represented in Higher Education (HE).

A copy of the Widening Access and Participation Annual Review 23/24 can be found on our [webpages](#) showcasing a wide range of engagements, activities, and events. The Educational Partnerships and Policy and Community Partnership teams have undertaken with widening access schools and community partners.

Outreach, Events and Community Engagement

The Chair of Council, Dr Jenny Pyper, spoke at an event on the Coleraine campus in March 2024, as part of the School of Geography and Environmental Sciences' commitment to raise awareness on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) issues, and to celebrate International Women's Day (IWD) 2024. The campaign theme for IWD 2024 was "Inspire Inclusion". The event aimed to showcase the work of prominent women and to inspire the new generation of leaders, and in this context the Chair of Council's talk was entitled "Between a rock and a hard place – my journey from the School of Geology to Stormont". The event was very well attended by staff and students from across the University.

Following significant stakeholder engagement, the School of Medicine led the University to sign the GLADD charter calling for a ban on so-called "conversion therapy" and a commitment to continuing to champion the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals within medicine and medical education. It is yet too early to evaluate the impact of this action, but Ulster University is now aligned with most other medical schools in the UK.

Ulster University have signed up to the ONUS Charter pledge, to provide staff with sensitive, useful, confidential information on how to get help in

their workplace and will facilitate flexible working hours in cases of domestic violence. The Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence encourages employers to attain the Charter Award by demonstrating excellence in their workplace policy in supporting abuse victims.

Ulster University Students' Union's International Students Society-Magee, in collaboration with the university's International Student Advisory Services (ISAS), Global Opportunities team, Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME+) Network and Visit Derry~Londonderry hosted an 'International Diversity Celebration' event at the Derry~Londonderry campus in October 2023. The event highlighted diverse cultures and traditions from local esteemed restaurants and talented artists, some of whom are current or past students at the university. The event booked out within 3 days of registration opening and it was an enormous success. Staff and students along with their spouses, partners, and friends, joined the event with full enthusiasm, with several donning their traditional attire.

This event was an opportunity to not only increase awareness about the cultural diversity at the university but also to learn about the opportunities to study or volunteer abroad, especially for the students through university's Go Global programme. Guest speaker Steve Lazars also spoke of the importance of ethnic minority entrepreneurship and its role in building better economic and social inclusion.

A 'Diwali Celebration Event' was held on the Derry~Londonderry campus in November 2023. The event was hosted by Ulster University Students' Union's International Students Society-Magee, in collaboration with the university's BAME+ Network. The event facilitated discussion among the participants about Diwali and its significance in the Hindu religion and traditions.

Ulster University Students' Union's International Students Society Magee in collaboration with Ulster University's Global Engagement Office, Ulster University's BAME+ Network, Choices Now and 360* Wellness Entrepreneur, hosted its second annual 'International Diversity Celebration' event at the Derry~Londonderry campus last month. The event featured diverse cultures, traditional delicacies, and talented artists, some of whom are past or current students at the University and having booked out within 3 days of registration opening, it was an enormous success. The 'International Diversity Celebration' event presented an opportunity to not only increase awareness about the cultural diversity at the University but also to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing and a sense of belonging in a diverse community.

Such events are especially important as they not only facilitate raising cultural awareness by bringing staff, students, and local community together to learn about different cultures and traditions, but they also help in building new friendships and collaborations, allowing for different opportunities to work together. This is especially important for members of the international community who are away from their home country.

Ulster University teamed up with the Belfast and Foyle Pride festivals to host events at its Belfast and Derry~Londonderry campuses to promote LGBTQIA+ inclusion, led by university staff and students. The University partnered with the Belfast Pride Festival to offer an amazing viewing gallery of the parade as it turns onto Royal Avenue. In July 2023, the Belfast campus opened its doors and offered 'a room with a view' for people with additional access requirements, particularly for neurodivergent individuals who would like to see the parade from a quieter area. The University's Staff Disability Network provided complimentary refreshments to those that used the space. The Belfast campus was also lit up over the weekend with rainbow colours in celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community.

An Inclusion Hour was held in July 2023 (1-2pm) with LGBT+ Network member, Dr Victoria McCollum, who led an online Inclusion Hour 'Hidden Histories of Queer Love, Sex and Relationships before the Liberation in Northern Ireland (NI)'.

In line with one of our core values of Inclusion and in support of our LGBTQIA+ community, the University established a Pride Working Group in April 2023 to prepare and plan for our attendance and contributions at Pride Parades this year. The Pride working group is an extension of the LGBT+ Network at Ulster University, their goals are to create a safe space for staff and PhD Researchers, Increase LGBT+ visibility across Ulster University and affect positive change.

Improving Accessibility: Institutional Digital Accessibility

Digital Services offer IT assistance to staff and students outside core hours in evenings and weekends, this is known as our "extended IT support". Digital Services Assistant (DSA) posts cover our IT Service Desk during these hours and were traditionally casual contracts filled by students at the University. In September 2023, we successfully moved from casual to permanent contracts offering greater benefits whilst encouraging external applicants to become part of our team. Flexible employment encouraged wider groups, in particular, applicants seeking part-time employment, or

those with parental or caring responsibilities to apply. Flexible shift patterns helped employees to fit job responsibilities around personal responsibilities.

Improving Accessibility: Physical Accessibility

In February 2024, Accessibility Advisors within the Student Wellbeing supported the introduction of Changing Places facilities, which were introduced at Magee, providing appropriate changing facilities for disabled persons and their careers.

Disability Initiatives

In June 2023, the Graduate Boost Programme was completed. This involved a 15-week internship for graduates, addressing the challenges for disabled graduates securing highly skilled employment in NI. This programme was delivered in partnership with Specialisterne, Disability Action NI, USEL and NI Employers, Department for the Economy (DfE) and Department for Communities (DfC). The result of which being that 18 disabled graduates completed paid internships with 12 NI employers, gaining skills in leadership and confidence. The programme had a 100% retention and completion rate with 72% entering employment on completion.

Graduates with both visible and invisible disabilities who completed Ulster University Business School's flagship 'Grad Employ NI' programme in 2021-22 received ongoing support and mentorship throughout the current year 23-24. All participants remain in meaningful employment and are thriving, contributing positively to their own lives and the local economy.

Athena Swan Charter

The University achieved its first Athena Swan Bronze Charter Award in 2014, which was renewed in 2017, and we were awarded Silver in 2023. The University holds 14 Athena Swan awards recognising our gender equality efforts and the promotion of inclusive working practices. Additionally, Ulster University have supported 18 Aurora leadership training programmes for women.

Women in Business and Leadership

Ulster University maintains its female leadership programme. Aurora is Advance HE's leadership development initiative for women who would like

to develop and explore issues relating to leadership roles and responsibilities.

From January 2024 to April 2024, Ulster University delivered 'Brave Women in STEM'. This module was 15 credits and part of the PG Cert in Professional Development (funded via DfE Skill Up). It entailed Blended Delivery, with three half-day workshops spread across six weeks.

The primary audience included women aspiring to graduate roles, primarily those in STEM. The programme sought to rectify historical imbalances and gender disparities in leadership, particularly in STEM sectors. 35 women in STEM sectors applied and joined the module, with an overall 97% Module completion rate.

Mentoring groups were also established with senior female leaders in STEM/education (using Ulster University alumni networks). Positive feedback from participants included developing increased confidence, networks and appetite for career progression. There has also been a successful funding bid from DfE to run the programme again in January 2025 to include female graduates from Arts and Social Sciences.

Religious Inclusion and Equality

In November 2023, Chaplaincy spaces were established on the Belfast campus - Birley Building. This has provided a specific space for the various chaplaincies together with students and staff to meet on the Belfast campus.

In October 2023, Muslim prayer room/ablution facilities were established on both the Magee campus and the Coleraine campus. This provides a purpose designed space on these campuses for our Muslim colleagues/staff to pray.

New Horizon Christian Festival August 2023: An annual Christian Festival which has taken place on our Coleraine campus for over 30 years growing in scale each year. It brings 3000 to 4000 people on campus each day over the 10 day festival from creche, youth groups, SEN children and adults alike. This festival brings many families onto our campus annually with a vast age range of children showcasing our facilities across accommodation, sport, teaching rooms and community to the younger generation who may choose to study at Ulster in years to come. It also helps to build our relationship within the domestic market and local community. Generating

over £100k of revenue for Ulster to reinvest in its core business and development.

Parents and Carers

As part of Ulster University's Athena Swan Action Plan (2023-2028), a Returning Carers' Scheme (RCS) has been established to support all staff on return from extended leave (normally 4 months or more) for reasons connected to caring. This includes adoption leave, additional paternity leave, maternity leave, or leave to care for a dependent. The Scheme aims to assist the career and professional development of individuals affected by periods of leave for caring responsibilities.

Updated 'Family friendly' policies: Adoptive Leave, Career Break, Dependant Leave including Bereavement Leave, flexible working, parental leave, paternity leave (including Adoptive Paternity Leave) and Shared Parental leave. Further details on our family friendly policies can be accessed on our [webpage](#).

Emergency Special Leave: Fertility Treatment Leave is included, and for unexpected or emergency situations, employees should contact their line manager as soon as possible, to advise that the leave is required, to explain their situation and the time they need off work. The University recognises that appointments and subsequent time off during fertility treatment may be required at short notice and managers are asked to be as flexible as possible.

We are still a member of the 'Breastfeeding welcome here scheme' which is an initiative that aims to make it easier for mums to recognise places where they can breastfeed their baby when they are out and about. The University has joined a network of 'Breastfeeding Welcome Here' venues that include many cafes, restaurants, shops and other businesses across NI, and in doing so has agreed that:

- Breastfeeding is acceptable in all areas of the business premises open to the public.
- A mother who is breastfeeding in an area of the business premises open to the public will not be asked to move to another area or stop breastfeeding.
- All staff members will be aware of the scheme and be supportive of breastfeeding mums.
- They will display the Breastfeeding welcome here scheme window sticker and membership certificate.

Childcare working group

Ulster University has established an internal working group, under the chair of our Dean of EDI to explore the feasibility of providing childcare facilities for both staff and students. We are undertaking a number of actions, including a review of the approach adopted by other employing and service providing organisations, a review of our campus estate for any possible future provision and the extant local childcare arrangements that are provided close to our campuses. This will also include a staff and student survey to identify the type of provision most needed by our proposed users.

It is hoped that this will assist us to develop a more detailed scope for childcare provision within the University identifying possible options on a way forward including the possible costs, opportunities and risks associated with same. These actions will form a paper that will be presented to the Senior Leadership Team to make an informed decision on our way forward.

Neuroinclusive Professional Network

Ulster University's Neuroinclusive Professional Network, or NeuroNetwork in short was created on World Autism Day, April 2024. Ulster University's NeuroNetwork is for neurodivergent people including our students, academic and professional services staff, alumni, employers, and allies/supporters. The new network aligns with Ulster University's diversity networks, offering opportunities to raise awareness, increase understanding, celebrate neurodiversity, boost employment, and engage in impactful, collaborative initiatives.

Women's Network (WN)

The network is now in its fifth year of operation and continues to grow in membership with support from internal and external partners. The focus of the network remains on influencing, advocating and campaigning for policy development that supports women in the workplace.

Membership numbers are steadily increasing with 577 members across the institution, mainly through attendance at corporate induction events. This year WN opened the network to PhD Researchers given many of them take on staff related responsibilities throughout their time at Ulster.

In May 2024, at the Ulster Excellence Awards, The Women's Network Operations Team was named winner of the EDI: Team Award 2024. As a voluntary team of women working across different departments and roles within the University, this award recognises a strong community of women and male allies that recognise, celebrate, and collectively advocate for opportunities which enable women to fulfil their potential.

In 2021, the University signed the White Ribbon NI Pledge where people, especially men, are encouraged to make the Promise to never commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women. Ulster University is the first HE institution in NI to gain the White Ribbon NI Accreditation, signalling the University's commitment to the issues. Building on our work with Ulster University Health, Safety and Wellbeing team, the University's Domestic Abuse Policy was launched and in November 2022 we gained the White Ribbon Accreditation. As part of White Ribbon's Listen, Learn, Lead Action Plan, the institution hosted in partnership with White Ribbon NI, a White Ribbon Gala on 30 November 2023 to raise awareness on this issue. IWD is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women on 8 March and marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. This year's theme was #InspireInclusion. When women themselves are inspired to be included, there's a sense of belonging, relevance and empowerment. In celebration of IWD, the network facilitated, in partnership with Ulster University Business School and Ulster Talks, a lunchtime event on the Belfast campus with over 100 attendees across Ulster University.

Professor Monica McWilliams, academic, human rights activist and former politician delivered a talk on 'Unfinished business - to collectively forge a more inclusive world for women'. Professor McWilliams spoke from the heart about her journey in politics and the many challenges she faced during her time of the Good Friday Peace Agreement negotiations.

After the original programme's success, the Women's Network re-launched its dynamic mentoring programme in January 2024 to foster more professional development and lasting relationships within Ulster University. Open to all staff members, the programme promotes cross-departmental connections and offers tailored, one-on-one mentorship experiences. Participants are matched based on compatibility, and the programme includes orientation, ongoing support, and regular progress evaluations.

In partnership with the Ulster University Wellbeing team, the WN organised an online event attended by 143 people during Menopause Month in October 2023.

In March 2024, as part of Endometriosis Action Month, the WN co-hosted a webinar in collaboration with Employee Wellbeing and the Staff Disability Network with 25 attendees. This event included a panel discussion focussed on endometriosis, specialist advice provided by Kathleen King an external independent advocate, support for reasonable adjustments provided by Angela Getty of the EDI team and testimonials from Ulster University staff. As a result, the University has signed up to be an Endometriosis friendly employer.

In June 2024, WN held an online conference entitled 'Overcoming your inner critic' in partnership with Ulster University Wellbeing and the Faculty of Computing and Built Environment. The conference focused on imposter syndrome and identifying practical tools and strategies to overcome times of self-doubt and self-belief. Tina Calder, CEO Excalibur Press, discussed her career award-winning journey in journalism and her personal struggle overcoming that feeling of doubt and worth. This was then followed by a panel discussion with Paul O'Brien, Head of Research and Innovation at BT, Treasa Rice, CEO Glow NI and our own network member Suzanne Bell, Timetabling and Planning manager. A total of 115 members attended the event and attendees commented on the usefulness of the event in providing so many tips and tools to manage this issue.

The Women's Network are a member of Women in Business and currently have 245 WIB members. Our institutional membership offers staff individual access to an online dashboard to view upcoming events and resources, as well as offering discounted rates in the Centre of Learning and the opportunity to host Women in Business events.

Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic, and International (BAME+) Network

Ulster University's International Student Advisory Services (ISAS), BAME+ Network, and Magee Islamic Society organised and hosted the Eid-ul-Fitr Festival in June of 2023 at the Derry~Londonderry campus. This event provided an opportunity for BAME+ and international staff and students to connect with local students, staff and the local community over tea, coffee, and snacks, and to find out more about what this festival means to Muslims across the world.

The Personalised Medicine Society, the Ulster University BAME+ Network and St John Ambulance NI hosted a Restart a Heart (RSAH) event at the Derry~Londonderry campus in October 2023. This event was an opportunity

to increase public awareness of cardiac arrests, and the number of people trained in lifesaving CPR and defibrillation. Every October, an alliance of partners all over the world (including UK Ambulance Services, universities, and other charitable and public sector community-based organisations and first aid training organisations) come together to promote Restart a Heart, by organising and facilitating training events and by providing opportunities for people to learn CPR and defibrillation digitally in the safety and comfort of their workplaces or in their own homes. This year, 'Restart a Heart 2023' actively promoted the use of public access defibrillators and highlighted health inequality around access. At this campus event, staff and students were given the opportunity to perform CPR and use a defibrillator, giving them the opportunity to practice CPR in a simulated environment, and signposting them on where to find the location of nearest defibrillator in local areas. By educating as many people as possible we can ensure that those who have a sudden cardiac arrest, have the best chance at survival.

The BAME+ Network proudly celebrated its third anniversary in November 2023, with a grand event held on each of the university's three campuses. The Belfast, Coleraine, and Derry~Londonderry campuses were buzzing with excitement and unity as students and staff came together to honour the achievements and contributions of the BAME+ community, at the end of November. Each event, which highlighted the rich cultural heritage of the BAME+ community, was a true testament to the commitment and dedication of the organisation in promoting equality, diversity, inclusion, and social harmony within the university and beyond. With the theme of 'Celebrating Unity in Diversity', the anniversary celebration aimed to create a platform for open dialogue, cultural exchange, and appreciation of various ethnic backgrounds.

The festivities welcomed distinguished guests, including university representatives, regional community groups, and members of the BAME+ Network organisation right across the three campuses. The vibrant atmosphere was further enlivened by the powerful community-focused traditional music, colourful decorations representing diverse cultures, and mouth-watering delicacies from various cuisines. The Diverse Youth Network (DYNI), Belfast City of Sanctuary (BCOS) and All Nations Ministries (ANM) were a few of the represented external groups. Throughout the day, attendees were treated to a multitude of captivating talks and exchanges relating to dances, songs, and other artistic expressions, representing the cultural mosaic of the BAME community. The event offered a glimpse into the richness and vibrancy of different ethnic heritages. Moreover, the anniversary celebration provided a platform for networking and knowledge-sharing, as students and professionals shared their experiences,

challenges, and successes in the pursuit of education and career aspirations. Throughout its existence and presence in the university, the network has organised several activities. Its Interactive sessions, workshops, and panel discussions allowed for open conversations on themes such as cultural identity, discrimination, and breaking barriers.

In January 2024, the BAME+ Network hosted an award ceremony on the Belfast Campus to celebrate the achievement of individuals who successfully completed the digital literacy programme. This ceremony aimed to recognise the dedication and accomplishments of the participants in enhancing their digital skills. The agenda for the event included keynote speakers, presentation of awards to our deserving participants, speeches, and tea/coffee to finish. The Awardees and their families brought their own food to the ceremony making it even more of a cultural celebration.

LBGT+ Staff Network

In June 2024, the Network hosted their one-day conference 'Queer/ing Research' that offers postgraduate researchers the opportunity to present queer research and provide them with experience of planning and managing a conference.

In June 2024, the Network hosted the third Tenx9 storytelling event in the Black Box. Nine members each shared a 10-minute story based on the theme of 'Love'.

In June 2024, the Research Insights blog partnered with the Network to centre queer focused research. During their Research Hour segment to highlight the range of research projects seeking to support members of the LGBTQIA+ community and promote equality and diversity within society.

In July 2024, as part of the University's Belfast Pride activities, the Network hosted a breakfast on the Belfast campus with 40 people attending. During the parade, the Network hosted lunch for an accessible area on the Belfast campus to enable 30 people to observe and enjoy the parade from a quiet and comfortable space. In August 2024, the Network and the University collaborated to organize the attendance of 20 people at Causeway Pride. 25 people attended the Foyle Pride parade representing both the Network and the wide University community.

The Network partnered with the University (the School of Arts and

Humanities) and Dublin Pride to stage a two-day showing of the play 'Nancy Boy Shenanigans' at the Derry~Londonderry Playhouse in August 2024.

Staff DisAbility Network (SDN)

During the reporting period the SDN participated in new colleague welcome events promoting a positive, inclusive environment for new staff at Ulster University. These events provide the opportunity for new employees to learn about the work of the different networks, where intersectionality has led to collaborative working, and create connections as they commence their new role.

The SDN collaborated with the Women's Network and Employee Wellbeing to deliver an event in support of Endometriosis Action Month. To raise awareness, the event informed delegates of the symptoms and impact of this health condition and gave the opportunity to hear personal, lived experience from some staff. A panel discussion empowered delegates to ask questions, and to hear of the support available in the University in terms of supportive policies and initiatives, including Ulster University's Protocol for Making Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Staff.

Following the provision of Changing Places Rooms on each campus, the SDN furnished members with personal RADAR keys to aid entry, in confidence, to these facilities.

To assist Ulster University in its duty to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and to encourage participation by disabled in university and public life, the SDN hosted a suite of training and raising awareness sessions highlighting the isolation that d/Deaf people can experience, whilst promoting social inclusion of those with hearing loss. Funded by DfC, sessions included d/Deaf Awareness and d/Deaf Culture, Lip Reading, and an introduction to British Sign Language (BSL). Through this funding, staff were also encouraged to participate in a 10-week BSL course delivered at the University's Belfast and Coleraine campus locations. This course taught participants the fundamental skills of BSL, learning basic signs, fingerspelling, and simple sentence structure, enabling participants to use BSL to engage in simple conversations, enhancing their personal and professional interactions with the d/Deaf Community.

The SDN maintains engagement with the wider University and civic community; and has representation on university-wide committees, such as

the EDI Steering Group; Employee Experience Panel; Network Leads Group, and Wellbeing Champions.

During the reporting period, the Network continued to raise awareness of disability and medical conditions, and celebrating World Health Day, via its social media Twitter account.

Within the estates team at Ulster University a member of staff was upskilled on the Reasonable Adjustments Training (April 2024) provided by the Staff Disability Network. This aided and supported the team member to complete the ES DSE Assessor training (June 2024).

Inclusivity in the curriculum

Ulster University collaborated with Specialisterne NI within the reporting period to implement and facilitate the Empower program which was offered to Ulster University student cohorts. The Empower program supports people across NI who are autistic and/or neurodivergent, who have a disability or a health condition. Empower supports people 16+ to secure careers across all sectors and all levels of careers and will also support people considering self-employment. There were 26 participants in total, 25 of those are signed up for the Empower social programme which provides access to social activities and peer support. This has supported students by highlighting additional support to transition into placements/graduate roles.

Graduates with both visible and invisible disabilities who completed Ulster University Business School's flagship 'Grad Employ NI' programme in 2021-22 received ongoing support and mentorship throughout the current year 2023-2024. All participants remain in meaningful employment and are thriving, contributing positively to their own lives and the local economy.

Student-developed and student-delivered EDI training on discrimination and microaggression in the School of Medicine (sexual orientation, men and women generally, racial group, religious belief, persons with disability and without): 78 students took part in the EDI training, which was delivered by six students from the school of medicine. The benefit of this was students reported a better understanding of unconscious and conscious biases and feel empowered to speak up against inequity. Two students used their learning from this training to support their peers who had been victim to microaggressions in line with University policy. Students cited this training as their reason for coming forward in support of their peers and students with

protected characteristics were provided with support they otherwise would not have accessed.

National open-source EDI training for clinical educators in collaboration with QUB and NIMDTA (racial group, sexual orientation, disability and persons with dependants and persons without) was made available. The outcome of this action is that clinical educators across the UK now have access to university developed EDI training. The training has been viewed 385 times and has a feedback rating of 4/5 stars.

Clinical educators' provided feedback such as "I am better placed and more confident in my role with students, how to challenge stereotypes and to think about my biases and how these could impact on my student groups." Students also provided positive feedback. For example saying, "As a student it is reassuring to know that this type of training exists and is being encouraged".

The School of Medicine provided online safeguarding training for physician associate students to complete level 1 and level 2 safeguarding for children and young people. The outcome of this is developing future healthcare professionals who are competent, compassionate, deliver excellence as part of a team and do so openly and act with integrity and candour.

The School of Medicine has included areas such as domestic violence, deprivation of liberty and child abuse in their curriculum learning for students. This was implemented over the course of 3 months from August to October of last year. The impact of this is developing future healthcare professionals who are competent, compassionate, deliver excellence as part of a team and do so openly and act with integrity and candour.

Special Interest Group on Inclusive Teaching (SIGIT)

To promote inclusivity in teaching and learning, the Special Interest Group on Inclusive Teaching (SIGIT) organized eight meetings in 2023-2024. Ulster University Business School staff and students actively participated, collectively reflecting on and identifying best practices to enhance the educational experience for all.

As a part of the Ulster University Business School's Special Interest Group, a Queer Inclusive Teaching Webinar was held in January 2024. This was led by an Ulster University lecturer in HE Practice, on approaches to supporting our LGBTQ+ students and making our teaching approaches more inclusive

to this population of students. A total of 16 members of academic staff attended, with a recording made available across the university. The impact of this was that staff members were informed about challenges LGBT+ students might face, and how these students can be supported. They also had an opportunity to reflect on how their teaching may not be inclusive and commit to actions for improvement for next academic year.

The inaugural SIGIT Conference on Inclusive Education will take place in September 2024 at Ulster University's Belfast campus. Eighty staff members have already registered. This event will be a platform for sharing best practice, inspiring transformative changes in teaching methods, and ultimately making Ulster University teaching more accessible and inclusive for everyone. We will explore the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to create learning environments that cater for diverse needs. This conference will promote equal opportunity for all learners, foster inclusion, and nurture positive relationships among students and staff from diverse backgrounds.

To expand our inclusive network across all university campuses in the 2024-2025 academic year, we plan to organise campus-based workshops to fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing among all staff.

The MarTech Laboratory (SLaTE) Project

The MarTech Laboratory, through its innovative internship and event programs, has played a pivotal role in supporting both international students in addressing equality and inclusion in HE extra-curricular learning. This initiative provided equal opportunities for international students, who may face challenges in gaining real-world experience and professional development in their university setting. Recognising these barriers, the Lab created several structured opportunities through internships and events that offered practical, hands-on experience in digital marketing, making significant strides in promoting equality of opportunity.

The impact of this initiative has been multifaceted:

- a) Equality of Opportunity: The program significantly improved access to professional experiences for international students, bridging the gap between academic learning and practical application.
- b) Internship Participation: The initiative engaged numerous students across campuses, including dedicated MarTech Connectors who supported peers in achieving certifications.

- c) **Certification Success:** Since inception, approximately 450 students have completed certifications, with significant numbers in the past year being international participants, highlighting the inclusivity of the project.
- d) **Direct Impact on Career Prospects:** The internships provided students with concrete skills and certifications, which are crucial in securing employment. The result has been a more equitable distribution of opportunities, with international students now equipped to compete in the global job market.
- e) **Strengthened University Reputation:** By promoting diversity and inclusion through such initiatives, the MarTech Laboratory has enhanced the university's reputation as a leader in providing equal opportunities and supporting international students. This approach is attractive to more students globally and fosters stronger relationships within the international education community.

The Student Success Centre

The Student Success Centre (SSC) was established in January 2024 and 10 Core staff were recruited. The SSC aims to provide a fully inclusive approach to facilitating different methods of study to ensure that all students are confident and have a stronger ability to achieve academic success. SSC have created an academic hub of Academic/Maths/Digital/Study Skills.

The SSC has developed a sustainable scale of delivery to provide a range of enhanced support for increasing diversity. This enhanced approach recognises the diversity of the student body, including neurodiversity and educational needs. SSC models its initiatives on a Universal Design for Learning model (UDL) acknowledging the spectrum of different learners' abilities and experiences, hence providing multiple ways Ulster University can engage within their academic journey as engaged learners.

Between January and May 2024 there has been 2000+ Student engagements. The SSC provides one to one referrals (referred by academic staff or self-referral), small group teaching, extended induction and pre boarding period to introduce academic skills earlier. The SSC has built sustainable digital assets into Blackboard Ultra and their website which are available 24/7.

The SSC has developed an easy way for students (who have declared a disability/neurodiverse within their UCAS form) and their families to understand what each campus is like prior to their first day, easing some of those tensions around entering new spaces. Using VR headsets, students

can get an overview of all campuses, from lecture halls, catering facilities to accessible toilets.

This initiative developed in early Spring 2024, is now ready to be a sustainable roll out for 1000+ first year applicants who have declared a disability/neurodiverse within their UCAS form. Along with those who have indicated anxiety around arrival, they will be sent a headset to their home address in the summer months.

As part of the induction process, the SSC also supports the student body through EDI training, by sustaining a respectful, diverse and inclusive community that recognises differences and values every student at Ulster. Early Spring saw the development of a modular framework of EDI, for students at Ulster. This initiative from the SSC has collaborated with Ulster University Students' Union Student Panel and the wider student body. The training was delivered to 2000+ students, providing insights into some key equality, diversity and inclusion concepts such as Disability Ally Training and Neuroinclusive Training.

The SSC has initiated an extended transition programme supporting students who return from a Leave of Absence, linked with disability status. The extended transition programme provides support through 1-1 meetings and academic support for return to study. Induction and Transition Student Success Officers meet and liaise with returning students to ensure their return is supportive and that they have access to the services they require to return to academic study. This extended transition support links directly with all Student and Graduate Success student services and other support organisations.

The SSC has initiated a range of workshops, talks and 1-1 sessions to support underrepresented groups entering HE, 100+ young people have engaged with this initiative. In early spring the SSC supported Voice of Young People in Care, Include Youth, Alternatives NI and the NI Careers Service. This raised awareness of the additional support potential students will receive.

The Student Wellbeing team are now operating clinics that are held on all campuses including Belfast, Derry~Londonderry and Coleraine. These clinics are effective in introduction to services, campus tours, important on fees and finance and managing expectation to ease the transition to HE at university. The Student Wellbeing team work to promote early identification and engagement from individual students to ensure support provision is timely and impactful. Increased engagement in needs assessment provision

and service results in students being able to fully access their learning and increase the likelihood of success.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Ulster University in partnership with Department of Health NI Health Services and Queens University Belfast have engaged together throughout the year to provide critical services for students who require highly specialised referral and support services. In partnership with the NI health service providers, the project partners are seeking to support students in HE across the region via the NI Student Mental Health Project. Initially this project was due to the increased likelihood of cases of critical mental health in 20-24 year olds and the increased transient student population. As a result of this project approximately 40 students from Ulster University are engaged and supported through the project to support health, wellbeing, and engagement in their HE journey.

Sunrise Socials: Due to the remarkable growth of the 'Sunrise Social' phenomenon across the world, and the substantial recognition of the benefits experiencing sunrise has for a person's mental health and wellbeing. Ulster University Students' Union Sport facilitated opportunities for students to connect and be physical active at sunrise during Freshers' Fortnight. Students were transported to surrounding areas of natural beauty near their campus of study, taking in East Strand, Portrush and Cavehill, Belfast. 124 students attended events across campuses.

Wellbeing Walking Group: This initiative was created, in conjunction with Student Wellbeing, to encourage students to take time away from their desks and stretch their legs around Derry~Londonderry every Wednesday lunchtime. It allowed attendees to not only exercise but have a chat with wellbeing staff and find out info on help available to them. 30 students took part, and staff and 2 students gained walking leader qualifications off the back of the group being set up.

Ulster University have a variety of mental health courses that highlight the importance of Mental Health Awareness and ensuring that people seek help and support. These include inhouse sessions on,

- Mental Health Awareness
- Stress Management
- Personal Resilience
- Mental Health First Aid

We also have numerous external courses that have been delivered by Action Mental Health (Wellbeing Toolbox Talks):

- Aware (Mood Matter course looking at Mental Health in the Workplace)
- Mindwise – Mental Health Awareness in the workplace
- Michael Lynch: Men's Self Talk
- Business in the Community: Sleep and Rest, Men's Mental Health, Building
- Mental Fitness

Each of these highlights the importance of connecting with others and building supportive relationships with others. This is something we also promote with our articles in Insight.

Additionally, Ulster University has offered the following to staff:

- Training delivered by Onus (Domestic and Sexual Abuse Charity) who spread awareness of Domestic and Sexual Abuse with includes signposting to services. We also hosted the Onus Annual Awards in November 2023.
- Sessions with Carers NI. These have been information and awareness sessions that give attendees information on caring, Carers Networks, support carers can have and how to connect in with support services. Sessions with The Alzheimer's Society were also arranged, which raise awareness of the conditions and provide support and signposting for individuals with the condition and their loved ones.
- Confidence building workshops with DCM Ireland.
- Health Checks delivered by JACE Medical, Cancer Focus, Health Matters and Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke. (These have been delivered across all three campuses).
- Talks from Cancer Focus on how to reduce the risk of cancer for both men and women.
- Information talks from staff and external speakers on Menopause.

Good Relations - Regional Engagement (NI)

The priorities of the Regional and Community Engagement Portfolio are driven by commitments made under the People, Place and Partnership Strategy, establishing Partnerships with Purpose to ensure that Ulster University is:

- A key partner for the cultural and social life of our communities through enacting outreach, transforming lives and partnering with the community.
- Investing in places for people and communities on our vibrant campuses.

- Driving the regional economy through our multi-campus model of regional delivery.
- Driving innovation as a key partner for industry through research, skills and talent development.
- Enhancing the social life of our campuses by promoting and supporting student safety, encouraging social sustainability and collaborating in regeneration.

The University has developed multiple formal and informal practical partnerships with regional community, statutory, voluntary and business partners. All of these have clear terms of reference and are directly related to university priorities as set out in the People, Place and Partnership Strategy.

The Systemic Regional Engagement and Development programme currently includes regional councils, business chambers of commerce, schools, sports clubs, festivals, arts organisations, further education colleges, Northwest Migrants Forum, Belfast and Derry~Londonderry learning cities, Governmental planning groups and young peoples' support agencies such as, Impact, Barnardo's, VOYPIC, and Springboard. In addition, there is significant cross border partnerships with the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor and projects such as Atlantic Futures. This is a shared island research project by Atlantic Technological University, Ulster University, University of Galway and University of Limerick with workstreams including digital mental health, business scaling and female entrepreneurship.

Societal impact from regional engagement activities varies in its nature but examples include:

- MoU with Atlantic Technological University and an Inaugural Stakeholder Talks Series.
- Delivery of Scholarships to promote widening access and educational achievement.
- Formal joint working partnerships such as the agreement of DCSDC.
- Strategic Growth Partnership, formation of NWRC and Tertiary Education.
- Cluster, Project Development with ICT and John Hume Foundation for £7m development and partnership with National Association of Councillors to deliver training on Economic Development for NI members.
- A Regional outreach Programme to Secondary School Principals and an end of programme forum for 75 principals in the University.

- Local partnership initiative with Mountsandell to support important archaeological heritage.
- A full Programme of on/off campus activity that draws key groups together to:
 - a) Celebrate key days - IWD, Pride, Black History Month.
 - b) Support other communities - Ukrainians in NI Exhibition and Art Sale, Korean Peace Exhibition, NI Advancing Race Equality Awards.
 - c) Thought leadership – summits, seminars, conferences on Digital Futures, Justice, Tourism, Tackling Paramilitarism, Hume Foundation, British-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference.
 - d) Cultural activities - John Hume in Europe Exhibition, Science Festival Foyle Cup.
 - e) Look North Festival, learning cities, Halloween.
 - f) Research excellence - RIA Rhyming Weavers and Atlantic Futures.

Community engagement Good Relations - Carrick Hill Volunteering

The Carrick Hill area neighbours the Belfast campus. The Carrick Hill community association is active and has been vocal in opposition to the development of the campus and associated student housing over several years. Outreach from the University with community leads had historically been reactive in terms of issue resolution but in 2023 a series of proactive positive engagements were planned to bring the community and University closer together.

As part of the closer engagement with Carrick Hill residents, the University reached out to ask “what good looked like” to them in terms of the University as a new neighbour. After a series of exchanges, the community identified a problematic flashpoint spot in their area that they wanted to transform into a positive place for young people to promote wellbeing and academic aspiration. Together the University worked with community representatives to co-design a mural with positive messaging, harnessing volunteer talent within the professional services of the University. The process culminated in a weekend of mural painting with university staff, community residents, local business and a mural artist to transform the space. This demonstrates Ulster University embracing community engagement to deliver bespoke benefits to the heart of the community. It has volunteers from within and outside the university coming together for a common goal. The community association are now planning to turn a series of workshops following on from this in which the University will be a supportive partner.

Community Engagement Good Relations - Belfast

A key focus for Ulster University in the opening of the new Belfast campus was to engage meaningfully across multiple communities, schools, interested parties/collaborators, businesses, festivals and arts/ cultural organisations to create a connected ecosystem of people, place and partnership aligned to the University strategy. This was realised, and prevails, as a connected neighbourhood engagement programme.

The University reached out to a diverse range of groups and organisations to create a network of purposeful connections and activities. These include but are not limited to:

- University Community Safety Forum. Over 30 people and organisations attended to address community safety issues including the impact of drug-taking, the DoJ's consultation on Anti-Social Behaviour, the impact of cuts on other community safety initiatives in the area and increased attention to sexual assault and emerging evidence of hate crime.
- Work with young peoples' organisations such as Children's Law Centre.
- Include Youth, Voypic and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum Northern.
- Ireland has resulted in initiatives such as The Youth Assembly on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which we hosted on the Belfast campus.
- Collaborations with Belfast City Council are regular and ongoing. As part of the City Centre Tasking Group, we have been taking joint action on issues of Community safety. In collaboration with the Future City Centre Group, we are supporting action to improve the public realm in Belfast and to lobby the Department for Infrastructure for improvements in public transport.
- Work with schools is also wide ranging. In 2023 we delivered the North Belfast Schools Arts Exhibition where over 250 parents, teachers and young artists attended a launch of a 3-day exhibition of sixth form arts co-ordinated and curated by the University.

This local reach also has a wider societal element exemplified in the University's active engagement with the Ukrainian Society in NI. In the initiative "Visas for Ukrainians", we worked in collaboration with the Ukrainian Society in NI and the Ukrainian Consul in Edinburgh, to organise a passport renewal system for Ukrainians in October 2023 on campus. Over 100 at-risk refugees attended.

Arts and Cultural activities range from Mela to Ulster Orchestra and Tradfest. In Tradfest hundreds of musicians and thousands of guests make

the Belfast campus their home for a week each July. As part of Belfast International Arts Festival, the University held the “acoustronic” event on the Belfast campus in 2023 and in 2024 the North Belfast festival and the University collaborated on four distinct events.

The University sits as an advisory partner for organisations such as North Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership, Great Place North Belfast, North Belfast Area Planning Group, Cathedral Quarter Business Improvement District, Cathedral Quarter Trust, Ministerial Advisory Panel on South Belfast WUA, North Belfast Healthy Cities and Holy Lands Planning Groups. This embeds the University into the strategies and planning on regeneration, economic, educational, wellbeing and culture. The University is a lead agency promoting EDI at all levels of our engagement. Our activities in relation to gender, age, race, community background and disability have already changed the physical and social environment. These will continue to form the basis of our contribution to the wider society.

New Belfast Campus Development and Opening: The overall aim of the project was to build an inclusive University-community relationship in preparing for the opening of Ulster University’s new Belfast campus bringing 15,500 staff and students to North Belfast in the most significant regeneration project in the city since 1998 and the most dramatic moment of culture change in University Education in the Area in 50 years. The challenge was twofold: Firstly, managing the impact of constructing a 1 million sqft. development metres away from an established residential community. Secondly, making the University meaningful and beneficial in an area where only 3.6% of residents are enrolled in HE – the lowest in UK.

The impact from each of the five solution strands was:

1. Creating a trusted “Neighbourhood Forum” for issue resolution and relationship building, delivering:
 - a) Infrastructure improvements, new traffic calming/crossing measures in key junctions.
 - b) Multiagency safety group and contractors’ community work programme established.
 - c) Dedicated police officer and enhanced parking enforcement in residential areas.
 - d) Daily issue resolution system active and 100+ parking, ASB and noise complaints resolved.
2. Minimise traffic impact and achieve a 70% modal shift.
 - a) Through social media, community engagement, partnership with Translink and parking enforcement agencies, a 69% modal shift was achieved.

3. Increase educational achievement through showcasing “Taking Boys Seriously” research project:
 - a) A level the percentage of pupils achieving grades A-C has risen from 53% to 70%.
 - b) Number of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs with English and Mathematics has nearly doubled.
 - c) 49 pupils received offers of Higher/ Further Education places (38 chose Ulster University).
 - d) Percentage of pupils getting three ‘good’ A level grades has risen from 30% to 70%.
 - e) A/AS level results were the best in the history of the school. All boys passed every exam.
4. Engage with local community on benefits available to them from the new campus.
 - a) “Community Benefit Framework” programme is operational with 25 active projects.
5. Training and employment opportunities for the community.
 - a) 5361 weeks of training, placements and apprenticeships delivered. Equivalent to 103+ years.

Gold Winner - Heist Award 2023

Best Community/Business Engagement Campaign/Initiative. Judges’ Comments: "An outstanding example of higher education at its best. In tune with the community and delivering results through multiple communication channels – congratulations, Ulster University.”

Winner - Aisling Awards 2023. Best Brand Award for community impact.

Finalist – 2024 NI Responsible Business Awards: Collaborative Action – TBA September 2024

Business engagement – Chambers of Commerce

Schools Outreach Team: To support equality of access and to contribute to social mobility and economic development in NI, through consultation with schools and community groups. The Development and Alumni Relations Office worked with the Schools Outreach Team to identify that lack of finance remained the most significant barrier for those young people with potential from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds to progress to a HE. As a result, the Ulster University Community Scholarships

were launched for a third year in April 2023 to target school/college leavers with potential and who meet the following criteria.

Non-care experienced applicants must:

- Be in receipt of an offer from Ulster University and have confirmed Ulster as their first choice.
- Have a permanent home address in NI.
- Be first in family (this means their parent(s) have not gone to university) to undertake an undergraduate degree (or equivalent) in the UK, Ireland or abroad. However, if a parent is currently studying for their first degree or has graduated within the last 5 years, the application will still be considered. Applicants can apply if they have siblings who are at university or who have graduated.

Care experienced applicants must:

Be in receipt of an offer from Ulster University and have confirmed Ulster as their first choice.

- Have a permanent home address in NI.
- Be care experienced.

In addition to the above criteria, all applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Be currently in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and/or Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).
- Be the main carer for a family member or dependent.
- Be care experienced.
- Be in receipt of Personal Independence Payments.
- Permanently reside in an area of high deprivation/low participation.

Ulster University Community Scholarships were awarded to 30 students entering courses in AY2023-24.

In January 2024, a further 28 scholarships were announced for students entering courses in AY2024-25.

Feedback received from the winners of the Ulster University Community Scholarships included the following statement: "Receiving a Community Scholarship has relieved financial pressure on me. I have been able to care

for my mum and my two children and have not had to worry about working more hours to make ends meet. The mentoring support has been invaluable to me over the last academic year. Thank you for providing this opportunity." (First Year Ulster University Community Scholarship Student).

Campus Life Disability Sport NI Sessions

To encourage individuals with a disability to get involved in sporting activity through the promotion of a range of DSNI targeted activities.

Providing sport and physical activity with the support of DSNI for individuals with a disability amongst current staff, students and local community, with the potential to build toward a Boccia/Goalball club in 24/25. To encourage more women to progress through coaching pathways and into leadership positions within sport, Ulster University Students' Union offers funding for members and current coaches. This initiative was extended this year to incorporate undergraduate physiotherapy students who worked with Ulster University sports clubs and teams, providing in-competition first aid support. This is an ongoing provision.

13 female students completed coaching qualifications this academic year and 6 female medical support personnel were involved with Ulster University sports clubs.

SSI Women's Student Coaching Academy

Spearheaded by Student Sport Ireland (SSI), funding has been secured by SSI from Sport Ireland to deliver a Women's Student Coaching Academy across the island of Ireland to member colleges and universities.

The development of the academy is led by a working group of sports officers from colleges and universities, of which Ulster University is included. The rationale behind the academy is to increase the number of women coaching at any level in sport. It sets students on a trajectory to coach at a higher level and thus increase the number of women coaching in high performance sport and provides the support to realise this. The support will take the form of bursaries (college dependent), branded clothing, a place on the relevant coaching qualification, educational workshops in areas relevant to coaching such as nutrition, safeguarding young people, psychology, and finally, access to a coach mentor.

12 women students involved in academy and qualified in sport of choice.

7 women empowered to further progress their coaching development.

Relevant clubs to benefit through additional coaching resources and improved knowledge. This inspires members to seek similar opportunities.

Supercup NI July 2023

Accommodating and catering to over 300 young kids participating in the International SuperCup NI Football Tournament, hosting domestic, national and international teams from as far as Japan and Bermuda.

We are increasing numbers year on year, exposing many youths to the Coleraine campus showcasing its facilities and offering for potential future recruitment.

Chinese Language School

Hosting 300 children weekly on our Belfast Campus via our partnership with the Chinese Language School for their lessons and assessments.

Opening the Belfast Campus doors to additional teaching and learning for youths from a range of backgrounds and cultures across our society and community.

Halloween Festival October 2023

Causeway Coast and Glens Halloween Festival 2023. They relocated their event to Ulster for the first time in 2023 which was a huge success and will return for 2024.

This event brought thousands of people from our local community onto our Coleraine site to enjoy celebrations and festivities. It is a fantastic event, building on our people, place and partnership principles, investing in and embedding Ulster into the local community.

ResLife (Student Living)

The following events have been run in ResLife, creating good relations and increasing cultural awareness:

- October 2023 - Black History Month Movie Night.
- November 2023 - Thanksgiving Get Together - Smores Kit.
- November 2023 - Culture Potluck – bring food for sharing from your own culture.
- November 2023 - Diwali – Culture Food and Music.
- December 2023 - Christmas Events all month (Culture) in December - Mince Pies, Light Switch on, Best Flat, Jumper, Movies, Karaoke, Crafts, Snacks, Walks, Carols and Gift Bags.
- February 2024 - LGBTQ+ – Film Fridays LGBTQIA + movies genre for the month.
- February 2024 - Chinese New Year – Snacks and origami.
- March 2024 - Holi Festival - Cultural Food.

In Ulster University accommodation we hosted Scottish Fiddle 6-8 October 2023, which increases the cultural diversity within student living.

Formal partnership with Manchester United Foundation

Ulster University is in partnership with the Manchester United Foundation which will focus on delivering positive outcomes and providing opportunities for young people across the Foyle Learning Community. Our inclusive educational outreach for schools is designed to raise aspirations, widen participation and increase attainment across both primary and post-primary sectors in preparation for engagement in higher-level learning.

Building on the success of the United Business programme delivered on campus, a Manchester United Foundation School Partnership Officer will now be based full-time at Ulster University on the Magee Campus.

Manchester United Foundation use football to engage and inspire young people to build a better life for themselves and unite the communities in which they live. Dedicated staff deliver football coaching, educational programmes and personal development, providing young people with opportunities to change their lives for the better.

Ulster University's three-year agreement with Manchester United Foundation will support schools' outreach in partnership with the Foyle Learning Community. Pupils in Derry~Londonderry will learn business and entrepreneurial skills to increase their engagement in education and give them greater confidence in their own abilities. At the forefront of the scheme is the Foyle Learning Community, which has a leading role in educational attainment in the city and reflects Ulster University's commitment to opening

doors to HE. Ulster University aims to create shared spaces for education that can bring together communities while offering aspiration-raising engagement for young people.

TAMHI ('Tackling Awareness of Mental Health Issues')

Ulster University Screen Production students and graduates have collaborated to create a moving documentary that offers a poignant look into the outstanding work of North Belfast mental health charity, TAMHI. The documentary looks at the origins of TAMHI and its mission to promote positive mental health and wellbeing in local communities and schools throughout North Belfast and beyond. By harnessing the power of play and sport, particularly football, TAMHI is making a real difference in an area that has been recognised for having one of the highest suicide rates in Europe.

At the heart of this documentary is the build-up to TAMHI's charity 'United for United' football match which took place on 24 June 2023 at Solitude in North Belfast.

The charity football match, sponsored by Ulster University and other local organisations, was a resounding success with a stadium filled to capacity and much needed funds raised for TAMHI's ambitious upcoming projects. These funds will not only bolster TAMHI's efforts in NI but will also pave the way for similar programmes in Great Britain.

Additional Awards

Global Student Living Award for Best Student Wellbeing throughout the UK and Ireland as voted by our students for 2023.

Global Student Living Award for top 5 Best Booking Experience Award for UK and Ireland 2023.

For 2024 Ulster University have been nominated in the top 5 for Best Student Wellbeing Award and Best Moving in Experience.

End of Document.