

## **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025**



## Introduction

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy sets out our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion for the next four years. It is a public declaration of our commitment to seek to develop a community that is fully inclusive, recruiting and retaining staff and students from all sectors of society. We aspire to achieve real and lasting progress for diverse groups and individuals and the implementation of the Strategy will be underpinned by an Action Plan, monitored by the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Founded in 1845, the RAU is as relevant today as it has been throughout our history. Our purpose bears testament to the foresight of our founders as we aim to equip a new generation to meet the most pressing challenges that face us in the world today – climate change, sustainable land use, biodiversity loss, heritage management and so on.

We are a 'university without walls' and our global footprint is expanding with new developments in China, Uzbekistan and the United Arab Emirates in particular. We are science-based and practice-centred, committed to practical research, innovation and learning with strengths in enterprise and land management. With more than half of our research judged 'world-leading and international in quality', we are the leading specialist university in England.

The University is committed to promoting equality of access and outcome for all, celebrating diversity and providing an inclusive learning and work environment for students and staff to become a beacon of equality, diversity and inclusion within the land-based sector.

We want all our students, staff and stakeholders to feel they are an integral part of the RAU community, and together we will create an inclusive culture where everyone can contribute to university life, knowledge and growth. The University will make this commitment a reality through this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

## Our Purpose and Mission

Our founding purpose is to cultivate care for the land and it is more relevant and vital than ever; climate resilience, nature recovery, food security, clean water, health, wellbeing and thriving communities all rely on how we treat the land. Our mission as educators is to equip a new generation to thrive through change at this time of transition, uncertainty and turbulence. We recognise that the achievement of these aims requires equality in participation and progression, and that success means that promoting equality, diversity and inclusion must be shared by everyone in our community.

## Our Values

At the RAU our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy incorporates our institutional values. Our commitment to a collaborative and open-minded way of working and resourceful, responsible and inclusive attitude confirm our strong responsibility to equality.

We acknowledge the fundamental value and dignity of all individuals and we are committed to maintaining an environment that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination and respects diverse traditions, heritages and experiences.

We are committed to a safe, welcoming and inclusive community where diversity is valued accepted and celebrated.

We challenge inequality and have a sense of professional responsibility for creating a culture which encourages representation of different perspectives and demonstrates respect. We support each other to speak out about inappropriate behavior by intervening and helping as colleagues and active bystanders.

Our values set out our attitude to embedding equality and promoting diversity and inclusion, including the way we lead and the way we work with each other and our partners. They promote a culture of respect, dignity and inclusivity.

## The Public Sector Equality Duty

As a Higher Education provider, the RAU will continue to demonstrate how we meet the requirements of the Equality Act known as the Public Sector Equality Duty. It consists of a general duty and further specific duties. The general duty takes the form of broad equality requirements. The specific duties outline how we as a public body are required to go about achieving the general duty. Taken together the Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to be proactive in approach.

The General Equality Duty requires the RAU to demonstrate how we ensure due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The RAU will use the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to drive equality, diversity and inclusion, meet our statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010, enhance our work with external bodies and support our continued success as a University.

The General Equality Duty specifically outlines the following characteristics (known as protected characteristics) against which the duties above will be considered:

- Age
- Disability, including learning disabilities
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

The RAU will promote all aspects of the General Equality Duty to ensure they are upheld by our staff, students and stakeholders through ongoing communication and consultation as well as monitoring and acting upon our equality data.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the RAU

The RAU recognises the following definitions of equality, diversity and inclusion:

<b>Equality</b>	ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally in relation to their needs
<b>Diversity</b>	acknowledging the range of difference within our community between individuals, cultural, social and intellectual contributions and seeking to utilise the talents and experiences that each one can bring to the RAU
<b>Inclusion</b>	working together with staff and students to create and implement flexible services, practices and procedures that take appropriate accounts of the needs of the RAU community, enabling each person to express themselves and realise their potential

The RAU will increase our understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion, including the challenges that our students and staff may face, and develop a culture which empowers individuals to raise issues and make change. Through the implementation of this Strategy, we give due regard to the elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (as cited under the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty).

## Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The RAU's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy demonstrates our commitment to work together to create a University community where diversity is recognised, valued and celebrated. We will proactively advance equality and inclusive practice in our staff and student recruitment and admissions processes, in our research activity, in our teaching, within the campus environment and in the experiences we offer to our academic and professional services and the student community.

## **Our Strategic Objectives for enhancing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2021-2025**

The RAU have identified areas of strength and areas for improvement, which have informed the creation of this Strategy. Our strategic objectives are summarised below:

### **1. Embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into all Aspects of University Life**

At the RAU, we will work to raise awareness and promote equality in a way that informs our culture and practices, is inclusive and removes any form of less favourable treatment or harassment. We seek to provide a learning, working, social and living environment which addresses the needs of our University community and which is accessible, safe and welcoming. To enable our commitment to equality and diversity and result in real change, this will be embedded into our structures and culture to help shape our behaviour.

Actions will include: ensuring everyone understands their responsibilities to foster an inclusive learning, working and social environment and are aware of relevant good practice policies, guidance and support services. We will work to ensure diversity is reflected in our decision-making bodies and committees, and that they actively contribute to promoting equality and inclusive practice. We will develop accessibility and inclusive practices to accommodate the needs of our staff, students and visitors when considering our current campus and future developments. We are committed to ensuring that all our employment policies and practices for staff are fair, advance equality of outcome, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations. We will promote our commitment to a culture based on the principles of respect, dignity and inclusion for everyone.

Specific actions since 2021 show we have:

- An elected Students Union Officer with an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion remit, to champion equality issues within the student community, and take part in University committees and meetings so together we make changes at the RAU
- In 2023, we began flying the Progress 'Pride' flag at the RAU and held our first Pride Event for students and staff; our LGBTQIA+ Society led awareness and training sessions for staff and we introduced rainbow lanyards and stickers for staff and students
- Celebrated events including World & University Mental Health Day, Dyslexia Awareness Week, International Women's Day and Women's History Month, World Health Day and Black History Month. We run awareness events, have inclusive displays and mini exhibitions in our Library and share news and stories internally and via social media
- Implemented TalkCampus, an online peer support platform form for students, which can be accessed in 26 languages. Anonymised data from the service allows the identification of trends so that support can be tailored to meet current needs
- Worked to embed our University Values, including our commitment to being inclusive. Our values feature within our job descriptions, selection processes, and our annual

appraisals require all staff to identify actions they've taken to demonstrate the values in action.

- In 2022 we held an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion themed Staff Development Week for all staff, and welcomed experts to train, challenge and inform us
- Revised and mandated the use of Equality Impact Assessments with training and support available for all staff
- Introduced mandatory in-person Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training for all staff, to supplement online and in-person training including Anti-Semitism awareness from the Union of Jewish Students and Active Bystander training from the Hollie Gazzard Trust for staff and Students Union Officers, and all students leading societies supported by the Students Union have benefitted from this training too
- Our 2023 Staff Survey focused on equality issues and feedback is informing actions

## 2. Review and Revise the RAU's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Governance Structure

The effective delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda across the University will be strengthened by the review and establishment of a more appropriate governance and management structure. A governance structure that ensures different points of views and perspectives from staff are represented, at different levels and functional responsibilities, and students, will enable the development of more informed and targeted approach and plans for the delivery of this work. Formal elements to this governance structure are the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Actions will include: a review of the RAU's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the development of revised terms of reference, membership and responsibilities.

We have:

- In 2022, our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee was reviewed and replaced by a new, action-focused Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and supported by staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions, representing each area of the University
- In 2021 members of the University's Governing Council received interactive Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training to supplement online training

## 3. Attract, Retain, Develop & Support a Diverse Staff and Student Population

Achievement of our objectives relies on equality in participation, progression and success for all. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy supports the RAU's goal to attract, retain and develop a diverse university community and ensure that everyone can attain and succeed to the best of their abilities. We seek to create a working, learning, social and living environment that will enable all our staff and students to achieve their potential, whilst they experience and celebrate diverse cultures, knowledge and identities.

Actions will include: a review and revision of the staff Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Policy and associated processes with a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion; ensuring we engage and inspire students from diverse backgrounds to apply to the RAU, at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and making sure our admissions processes are fair and inclusive; ensuring we monitor and address differences in outcomes and opportunities for our staff and student bodies, and promote equality in participation and progression.

Specific actions since 2021 show we have:

- Staff and students working together to develop our access and participation plans, with regular monitoring and reviews to drive improvements. The plan sets out how we will improve equality of opportunity for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access, succeed in and progress from the RAU
- An annual Wellfair for staff and students to socialize and met some of our partners, including TalkCampus, Young Carers Gloucestershire, mental health charities
- An international orientation week for all international students, to help integration in the UK and student life; we hold regular social events for international students to provide support and understand challenges and we offer cultural awareness and language skills classes free of charge
- Provided interim support for disabled students whilst they apply for central government funding via the Disabled Students Allowance. This means they get support more quickly and their student experience is improved
- A dedicated Hardship fund for students who are held back by financial barriers
- Distributed funds to enable students struggling financially to attend social events such as the RAU Students Union May Ball; this has brought greater engagement and enjoyment of student life
- Raised awareness of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activities via social media, Library blogs and internal communications
- Reviewed the University's staff Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Policy in 2022 in order to embed equality and promote diversity, followed by a review of all supporting documents, including job adverts and job descriptions to promote fair and inclusive practice
- We have developed partnerships to attract a wide range of job applicants - we are working with local Job Centres, and have attended and held Jobs Fairs; we work with Standguide; Seetec Pluss and the Employment and Skills Hub at Forwards Gloucestershire to understand the needs of individuals and to support their transition to work at the RAU
- Enhanced opportunities for flexible working, ahead of changes in legislation
- In 2022 we were recognised as an 'Inclusive Employer' in Gloucestershire and we became a Disability Confident Employer

#### 4. Use Robust, Reliable Equalities Data to Target Activities

Underpinning the success of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, the need has been identified to continuously improve a framework for robust and reliable equality data to be collected, analysed, reported and shared.



It is recognised that to ensure the actions we take to promote equality, diversity and inclusion are effective, we need to gather and analyse data on our staff and students as a function of their various protected characteristics, and this includes capturing data on the student experience. This facilitates a clearer picture of variations in staff and student recruitment, progress and retention that are associated with diversity and allow us to more effectively monitor the impact of any policy or procedural initiatives. To demonstrate the seriousness of our intent to achieve real change, we will be as transparent as possible (within the proper bounds of individual confidentiality) about these data, how they compare to other universities and to national and international benchmarks.

Actions will include: Production of an annual diversity data report to include anonymised staff and student data, to facilitate the tracking of year-on-year changes and the identification of trends to provide an evidence-base to support other actions. To encourage staff to record and maintain their diversity details within the iTrent system. To build the confidence of staff and students in our ability to handle data confidentially and to use it responsibly.

Specific actions since 2021 show we have:

- Asked all new staff to record their diversity data within our secure HR system, and remind staff regularly to review and update their data
- Produced an annual diversity report since 2021, analysing staff data for each of
- the protected characteristics to inform actions
- Carefully recorded and analysed student data, identifying trends and taking appropriate action

## Governance and Responsibilities

Responsibility for this Strategy and its delivery rests with the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group, championed by the Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and supported by the Director of Human Resources. Work will be steered by the RAU's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group in consultation with the staff, trade union, Students Union and students. Aspects of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are reported to the Governing Council through the Remuneration Committee.

Specific responsibilities include:

- **The RAU Community** - All staff and students and other stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure that their actions comply with the requirements of University Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the University's Equality Strategy. This is to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and advance good relations between different equality groups.
- **The Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group** – is responsible for providing a consistent lead on equality and diversity issues, and for promoting equality and diversity strategies. The Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group will ensure that the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is implemented effectively and that appropriate action is taken against anyone within the University who does not act in accordance with the equality duties.
- **The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group** – has responsibility for the approval of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategies, policies and procedures and for overseeing their implementation. The Steering Group reports to the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group which has the authority to make decisions or to recommendations for approval.
- **All managers** – are responsible for ensuring that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is implemented and maintained within their area of responsibility, confirming all staff are fully informed about their responsibilities and receive support and training in carrying them out. Managers are responsible for taking appropriate action if they are aware of any acts of discrimination within their areas of responsibility, with support available from Human Resources.

## Concerns and Complaints

At the RAU, there is a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation and it is important that any concerns or complaints are raised as soon as possible, promptly addressed and appropriate remedial action is taken.

**Students** are encouraged to raise concerns with a member of staff. Students who believe they have been subjected to discriminatory behaviour or harassment should refer to the Bullying and Harassment Policy or the Zero Tolerance Policy Statement on Sexual, Emotional, Physical Abuse, Violence or Harassment. Both policies are available on the University website and on request from Academic Services.

**Staff** who feel they have been subjected to discriminatory behaviour can make use of confidential services provided by the Employee Assistance Programme to discuss their concerns, or talk to a Harassment Advisor; contact details are available on the intranet or from the Human Resources department. Staff should refer to the University's Dignity at Work Policy and the Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure for further details, both of which can be accessed via the intranet or from Human Resources.

