Annual Equality Report

2021-2022

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Introduction and Executive Summary

Plymouth Marjon University is committed to equality, to being a community where diversity is respected and valued, and which encourages all students and employees to fulfil their potential. Furthermore, we seek to empower a community where unacceptable behaviour is challenged in an appropriate way. Our values of Humanity, Curiosity, Ambition and Independence are at the heart of everything we do. They encourage both the ability and the aspiration to improve lives for all. Put simply, Marjon expects every individual in the Marjon community to behave with fairness and decency to each other.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee undertakes key duties including fostering an inclusive environment, providing leadership on equality diversity and inclusion and horizon scanning and engaging external partners. The EDI committee draws together activity that is undertaken across the university including as part of the People Strategy, Teaching and Learning Strategy, Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy, Access and Participation Plan and Campus Development Plan. To consolidate more fully the different strands of activity the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy was updated during 2021-22 to ensure it was reflective of current legislation and meets Marjon's commitment. We also piloted a revised equality impact assessment that is based around our values.

This report, developed by the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee highlights progress made against our equality objectives. In addition to the report a data file of key indicators in relation to protected characteristics is available upon request. The progress includes work on gender equality that will support a submission for Athena Swan accreditation, pedagogic innovation projects that support an inclusive approach, and significant progress implementing the mental health and wellbeing strategy and working towards the Mental Health Charter Award.

The report also highlights area where progress continues to be required, in particular in 2022 a key priority is to implement and ensure a high uptake of the Race Equity training, continuing to increase the diversity of the staff population and reduce the gender pay gap, continuing to implement more systematically inclusive teaching, learning and assessment processes that support good degree and outcomes for all students and conducting an accessibility audit to support prioritisation of activities to improve accessibility on campus. I look forwards to working with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee and the wider Marjon community to ensure we continue to make progress against the equality objectives and ensure Marjon is a fair and inclusive community where every voice and action counts.

Professor Michelle Jones

Chair of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee

Equality Objective 1: Gender equality

1.1 Establish an Athena Swan working group to develop and monitor implementation of an action plan. Submit for Small and Specialist Institution Award before 2023.

1.2 Implement Access and Participation Plan activities to reduce male degree attainment gap.

1.3 Implement People Strategy to increase male employment rates.

1.4 Implement actions from the learning following the implementation of the policy for transgender, gender diverse and non-binary staff and students.

1.1 Establish an Athena Swan working group to develop and monitor implementation of an action plan. Submit for Small and Specialist Institution Award before 2023.

During 2021-22 the Athena Swan self-assessment team was formed. Led by Associate Professor Julia Stewart the team met five times, including an introductory training session run by Advance HE (Higher Education). The team have gathered most of the core statistical data required and have started some initial data processing. Smaller subgroups have been assigned to consider specific themes, for example, reviewing the maternity process, promotion and progression, and recruitment. Groups are both looking at the data and suggesting areas for inclusion in the action plan or that we may need to do further quantitative or qualitative research on. It is exciting that team members have different areas of interest and are keen to take different themes on and we hope this will drive things forward. As part of the 'assessing our culture' phase, the team hosted a world café table at the Curiosity Conference "Fostering Inclusion and Challenging Culture" in September 2022 and are also engaging with staff and students through Antler and individual team meetings. Continued support for the self-assessment team to progress to a submission is a key priority for 2022-23. The Small and Specialist Institution Award is being withdrawn by Advance HE during 2022 and replaced with the Transformed Charter which is the current award being worked towards. Alongside this activity the People team developed and launched the Menopause and Hormone Change Policy, which is an important positive step, in particular given our staff demographics.

Our work towards the Athena Swan award will play a big part in further exploring and reducing our Gender Pay Gap. In March 2022, our gap increased from 2021 but remained below sector and national averages. The Median pay gap between males and females was 8.9% which remains below the national average (15.4%) and higher education sector (16.2%). The gender pay gap is primarily driven by professional services and manual roles. Although the pay gap increased slightly the professional services gap is the second lowest since reporting started, when it was 16.5%. There remains a need to recruit more males into the lower quartiles in order to see this gap close, whilst also working towards overall more balanced gender representation (equality objective 1.3). The mean gender gap between males and females was 7.1% which remains below the national average (14.9%) and the higher education sector (18.3%).

There is some evidence within the data of a gap between job applications and successful applications for some protected characteristics, particularly ethnicity and disability. The application numbers are reassuring in that we are attracting a variety of applicants. The people team are reviewing the detailed data to see at what point the gaps appear, particularly whether this is at shortlisting stage (which is done with hidden names and identities) or at interview stage. This will support us to develop actions around this data.

1.2 Implement Access and Participation Plan activities to reduce male degree attainment gap.

Marjon student population consists of 45% male, 55% female and 0% other gender identity. There are students who identify in other gender categories however these are statistically insignificant and therefore are not able to be included in HESA reporting (Higher Education Statistics Agency). The proportion of males is slightly higher than benchmark (38%) but is lower than in previous years at Marjon (48 to 49%). Supporting more disadvantaged male students to access all the resources at their disposal to improve their grades is a key theme from the Access and Participation plan working group. Whilst the attainment gap remains and male disadvantaged students are 13% less likely to get a good degree (First or 2-I) it is closing, from a 35% gap in 2019 and 20% gap in 2020. Activities have included investing in Studiosity to support attainment, investing in a Marjon Change Maker project specifically to work on supporting male students to use the library and study skills, moving our study skills support into the library to make it more accessible and reduce the stigma (from Student Wellbeing and Support).

1.3 Implement People Strategy to increase male employment rates.

For the purpose of HESA returns staff gender data is classified as male, female, or other gender identity. The staff population continues to consist of a higher proportion of female staff (65%) compared to our benchmark group (58%) and all HEIs (54%). The proportion of male employees has slowly been rising from 33% to 35% over the last three years. Male colleagues now include more of our part-time workforce now than previous 27% vs 21% last year. The gender balance of the Board of Governors is balanced at 50% male and 50% female. Increasing male employment rates remains a priority to support the staff balance more closely mirroring our student population which comprises 45% male and 55% female. During 2021-22 new starters included 54% males and so there is some evidence of progress that will hopefully be reflected in future reports.

Supporting our work to increase male employment rates, especially those in the lower pay quartiles, and creating a more balanced workplace age profile, we have created an initiative to incrementally replace typically lower graded administrative positions with holistic and developmental graduate internships. During 2021-22 we had ten graduate intern opportunities across professional services and within our academic schools. We are working to ensure there are high quality graduate development opportunities across all departments. We have evidence of attracting and recruiting male graduate interns within areas that have previously been largely female.

1.4 Implement actions from the learning following the implementation of the policy for transgender, gender diverse and non-binary staff and students

The introduction of the policy for Transgender, Gender Diverse and Non-Binary Staff and Student Support in September 2020, provided a safe and helpful avenue for individuals within the University community to get practical and emotional support to identify as themselves. The University strongly believes that providing a safe place for individuals to be their authentic selves within their studies/ work and amongst their peers and colleagues, particularly where that involves using names/pronouns/titles/gender identities that are different to that ascribed at birth, will enable individuals to focus on their studies and work, aiming to be the best they can and reach their potential. In 2021-22, 10% of students declared not same gender as assigned at birth, and the proportion of students declaring this is increasing quite steadily (7% 2020, 6% 2019).

Since the introduction of the policy, Student Wellbeing and Support has engaged with increasing numbers of students who request support. Often this is in practical terms (system name changes for instance) however the discussion between individual and responder covers a wide-ranging remit and has been received extremely well by those it was designed to support. The policy has now been in

place two years and is in the process of reviewed with feedback from both users and staff involved in the processes. There will be some small changes to the policy to recognise some of that learning (for instance, the Welcome Desk will have an added contact to ensure post reaches individuals with name changes).

In setting the equality objective for implementing the learning following the learning from introducing this policy, we recognised that our main record systems – UnitE for students and iTrent for staff provided us with some difficulty in updating records in terms of recognising the diversity of gender and we are working with the owners of those systems to rectify this over time.   A guide was provided which set out options that systems should have in place for titles, gender and sexual orientation fields.

- For UnitE, students are now able to use a wider range of titles, gender and sexual orientation fields though when the University reports to HESA (the higher education statistics agency) it is noted that we are obliged to report sex as female, male or other.   In addition, UnitE would ideally be able to hold pronoun use, however this is not currently possible – we await future releases of the system in order to incorporate this. The restrictions which are imposed externally from HESA and from UnitE itself are limiting and we will continue to challenge where we are able to as an organisation.
- For iTrent, staff are able to use a range of titles and sexual orientation fields. Gender again is more problematic as the system is required by law to use sex fields of female or male for HMRC purposes and submissions fail if we add further options. In similarity to UnitE, iTrent does not currently have a field for pronouns but we continue to raise this as problematic with the system providers and feel it is only a matter of time before this will be added.

Equality Objective 2: Racial equality

2.1 Implement Advance HE Race Equality Training, monitoring completion rates and ensuring at least 50% of staff and all managers engage.

2.2 Implement access and participation plan activities to reduce degree attainment gap for ethnicity awarding gap.

2.3 Implement people strategy to attract and recruit more staff from minority ethnic backgrounds.

2.1 Implement Advance HE Race Equality Training, monitoring completion rates and ensuring at least 50% of staff and all managers engage.

The AdvanceHE Race Equality training has been prepared (including videos outlining Marjon's contextual data) and was launched at the Curiosity Conference in September 2022. The Curiosity conference themed around 'Fostering Inclusion and Challenging Culture' included invited speakers Professor Osama Khan 'Race equality as an institutional agenda: action plans, evaluations, campaign, and advocacy' and Dr Mershen Pillay 'Deimperialising Knowledge and Decolonising Higher Education'. Completion rates of the training will be provided in next year's annual report.

2.2 Implement access and participation plan activities to reduce degree attainment gap for ethnicity awarding gap.

The ethnicity degree awarding gap was 5% in that 75% of students from a minority ethnic background received a good degree (First of 2-I) compared to 80% of white students, though due to small numbers it is not considered statistically significant. This awarding gap is slowly improving and better than benchmark institutions (12% gap). The proportion of students from a minority ethnicity continues to be persistently low at 7% which is below benchmark institutions (13%); but it is broadly comparable to that of Plymouth (7%) and the South West (8%).

In the Office for Students dashboard, data is still considered insufficient to state whether we have an ethnicity awarding gap, but many of our Access and Participation projects support all students from a less represented background. Projects which work on attainment include investing in the Studiosity study support platform, investing in AIM study skills sessions, and the Oracy project which supports students with oracy skills, with the goal of improving their attainment.

2.3 Implement people strategy to attract and recruit more staff from minority ethnic backgrounds.

There has been no progress in altering the profile of the staff base, and it remains that just 4% are from minority ethnicities including 1% Asian, 1% Black and 2% dual/mixed ethnicities and minority ethnic groups not already included. This is below our benchmark Institutions (8% ethnic minority) though it relatively closely reflects the population of Plymouth, which was 94.9% white in the 2021 census. New starters to Marjon were just 2% from ethnic minorities and so further work is needed to progress this objective.

Equality Objective 3: Mental Wellbeing

3.1   Implement actions for mental health and wellbeing strategy.

3.2   To achieve the Mental Health Charter Award from Student Minds

3.3   Implement access and participation plan activities to enable more students with mental ill health to succeed in their studies and ensuring no gap in attainment or graduate-level employment compared to other students.

3.1   Implement actions for mental health and wellbeing strategy

The numbers of students registered with a mental ill health condition with the Disability team during the year was 210 which equates to 29% of the total number of students declaring a disability, health condition or learning difficulty to the team. When compared with previous year data, this shows an upward trend in students declaring a mental ill health condition from 27% in 2020 and 26% in 2019. An additional 4% (30 students) registered with an autism spectrum condition and a further 19% (140 student) under the category of "two or more conditions". These other categories are critical as they will often include students with anxiety and/or other mental health illness. Under recording is of course also important to note, the disability team often work with students for instance on dyslexia support who share informally that they also have a mental health condition but are unwilling to declare this more formally. Several actions have been completed and/or progressed linked to the strategy (and objective 3.2) including:

- Reviewing and updating policies and procedures: to reflect more inclusive language e.g., 'Fit to Study' changed to 'Support to Study' and work to implement a new three stage model for 'Support to Study' that incorporate a definition of what Marjon expects from their students e.g., attendance, participation, engagement and mental health and wellbeing.
- We are working on an operational plan to take us to 2024, anticipating a further increase in student numbers and the general trends of increased demand. As part of this, we need to further develop a robust Student Wellbeing & Support infrastructure that reduces risk and is safe, ethical, and sustainable moving forward.
- Student information: more holistic signposts / linking in with social prescribing teams. Promoting and fostering positive mental health in our community by offering alternative support mechanisms and linking in with the social prescribing team in Plymouth (Wolsley Trust) for more collaborative projects and bridging the gap between university support and NHS support.
- Communicating our services to staff: Lunch and Learn with the student wellbeing support team launched during June 2022 – five sessions offered ranging from learning about how to support transgender students to how to signpost students for extenuating circumstances.
- Student Wellbeing and Support Annual Survey: launched during June 2022 asking students to rate our services (eg academic support, disability support) but also requests students to rate using the Student Minds questions to begin to understand and measure services.
- Celebrations and awareness raising, we supported Autism Acceptance Week in April 2022 and Mental Health Awareness week in May 2022, our aim is to normalise mental ill health and conditions such as autism, encourage conversations and connections with others and promote pro-active wellbeing practices for all.
- We also increased the amount of communication this year around our services, including a "Where to get support" poster in all flats and on all campus noticeboards, as well as in a Student Planner which is produced each year for new students.

- The Chapel building has been rebranded to be called The Octagon; the home of chaplaincy. This was to make it more user friendly and accessible. Chaplaincy has increasingly become a place of refuge for students who identify themselves as LGBTQ+, who are socially anxious, experiencing poor mental health, or who are neurodiverse. Our chaplains find themselves supporting many more students with their everyday wellbeing.

There has been significant focus on supporting staff with their mental health and wellbeing. As part of the Mental Health Working Group, the People and Head of Business Partnering has been working alongside other key staff across the institution to align the People & Organisational Development work with the Mental Health Strategy. Progress so far includes a mental wellbeing staff policy which serves as a tool to educate the workforce as well as practical steps to take if they are worried about their colleague, the aim is to destigmatise and prompt conversation. There has been an increase in the number of counsellors for staff referrals, providing our staff with more choice in terms of the sex of the counsellor and ensuring that staff can find a counsellor they connect with, to gain the best support possible. Alongside this work, we have invested in mental health first aid training and by the end of the year will have over 50 staff trained in this area. Names of trained staff will be made available so that any member of staff can approach them for advice and support if needed, and future training sessions will be targeted at managers so that we can ensure all managers have the knowledge to support their teams. Additional workshops are regularly arranged and advertised to staff throughout the year, with regular reminders of the support we can offer staff via our employee assistance package alongside other services such as the Samaritans and Shout.

3.2 To achieve the Mental Health Charter Award from Student Minds

The University Mental Health Charter Framework is a set of evidence-informed principles to support universities to adopt a whole-university approach to mental health and wellbeing. The Charter is composed of 18 themes across four domains: learn, support, work, and live. Within each of the themes, the Charter sets out several principles of good practice that universities can follow to achieve a whole-university approach. To pass the assessment criteria a whole-university approach is expected and must include both resourced, effective, and accessible mental health services and proactive interventions. Furthermore, universities must provide an environment and culture that reduces poor mental health, as well as supporting good mental health, and facilitating staff and students to develop insight, understanding and skills to manage and maintain their own wellbeing.

The actions listed in 3.1 link to this objective. Several workstreams have been established and through this a range of collaborative projects have commenced. This includes a collaboration between Marjon Sport and Health and the Student Wellbeing team to develop and launch the Marjon Wellness Pass in 2022. This provides students with access to a range of activities including physical activity (classes/swimming), social events such as e-sports and colour run and cooking healthily for just £20. There is an additional project looking at the potential for online support and identification of students with mental ill health using artificial intelligence. Within our academic strand of work, we have received ethical approval and launched a survey to academic staff into how teaching and learning practices impact on wellbeing for both students and staff. We have around 15 students as part of the Mental Health Working Group. Some of these are keen to implement specific projects around mental ill health. We have agreed within the group that our focus must be on improvements to how we approach mental health and wellbeing, rather than solely on receiving the award, particularly as the cost is currently likely to be over £8000. We continue to play an active role in the Charter Framework group, working to influence it and gain as much learning as possible, but may not apply for the Award if the cost remains inaccessible.

3.3 Implement access and participation plan activities to enable more students with mental ill health to succeed in their studies and ensuring no gap in attainment or graduate-level employment compared to other students.

In the latest Office for Students dashboard data for students awarded degrees in 2021, there was a positive degree awarding gap for students with mental ill health conditions compared to those with no disability declared. 80% of students with a declared mental health condition attained a good degree (First or 2.I) which is 2pp higher than those without a declared disability (78%). Overall, Marjon continues to attract a higher proportion of students with a declared disability (24%) than our benchmark (20%).

During the academic year 2021/22 the Careers and Employability Service worked with colleagues in the Student Support and Wellbeing Service to create resources to support students with declared disabilities to access Careers, Employability and Enterprise guidance in an effective and appropriate manner. On average, students with a disclosed disability made more use of Futures Online, the online careers development platform than students without a disability and within the cohort, students who declare having three or more impairments and / or disabilities are using Futures Online the most.

Objective 4: Social Mobility

4.1   Implement access and participation plan activities to provide quality careers advice, enrichment experience and mentoring to people from disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances.

4.2   Implement people strategy provide employment opportunities, above the living wage, to students from disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances and adopt employee recruitment practices which promote a level playing field for people from disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances.

4.3   Implement the learning and teaching strategy ensuring holistic and inclusive pedagogical approaches and supporting personal and career development.

4.1   Implement access and participation plan activities to provide quality careers advice, enrichment experience and mentoring to people from disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances.

Supporting those from more disadvantaged background to access and succeed has always been important through Marjon's 183 years of providing education and so were pleased to be ranked first in England for social inclusion in the Good University Guide 2023. Marjon continues to attract a high proportion of first-generation students, with 53% of new entrants declaring parents do not have a higher education qualification.

The Careers and Employability Service offers a wide range of support and opportunities to students to enhance their mobility including access to bursaries and international experiences as well as access to individual support and careers development guidance. Of the students and alumni who applied for financial support in the form of bursaries, either to take part in international experiences, undertake business start-up or to develop their employability in other ways 48.4% were categorised as POLAR 1&2 whilst 51.6% were categorised as POLAR 3,4 & 5. Marjon also made use of Turing funding to support a further cohort of 39 students to participate in international enrichment experiences, with 56% of the total funding provision being available to support from students from disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances.

4.2   Implement people strategy provide employment opportunities, above the living wage, to students from disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances and adopt employee recruitment practices which promote a level playing field for people from disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances.

The 'student colleagues' scheme aims to provide high-quality work experience to Marjon students, and to make that work consistently excellent in terms of development and professional training. It supports the Access and Participation Plan in achieving specific targets to improve Marjon graduate outcomes and eliminate identified gaps in graduate employment for students from low participation neighbourhoods and for students with disabilities. The scheme design is underpinned by local and institutional theories of change. Locally, the theory posits that students employed through the scheme experience high-quality employment which equips them for future careers better than if they had not participated. This enhances employment prospects for any student, regardless of background or experience and helps to mitigate the identified employment gaps. The goal is that impact is evidenced by Colleagues reporting higher levels of graduate employment than non-colleagues in the Graduate Outcomes survey. Progress continued to be made on developing and implementing the student colleague's framework and developing a student employment ethos.

The number and type of roles continued to increase across departmental areas and has included student ambassadors, student IT support advisors, welcome desk ambassadors, resident student

assistants, Marjon change makers, laboratory assistants, Covid support ambassadors and student as researchers. In 2020, 172 students were employed as colleagues.

In 2020 a Marjon Change Maker project was undertaken to review the experiences of students working for Marjon. Evaluation explored student colleague satisfaction with aspects of the scheme. Satisfaction was high (90%+) for 'recruitment', 'readiness to do job', and 'gaining skills'. Satisfaction was slightly lower but high (<89%) for 'communication with managers', 'feedback from managers', 'belonging', 'communication with the People and Organisational Development unit', and 'feeling valued'. The results were used across 2021 and 2022 to develop the scheme and implement improvements. In 2022 the results were specifically followed up within the Student Ambassador scheme with multiple changes made to improve accessibility and work satisfaction.

In 2022-23 the impact of the Marjon student colleagues will be formally evaluated following a successful research funding bid by Professor Jennie Winter, Elpida Achtaridou and Dr Sue Cooper to explore evaluation approaches for small number (relative to sector) access and participation plan projects funded by TASO (Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education). Applying transformative evaluation will support line managers to explore the student colleague's significant change stories and they will be brought together to share and communicate these stories to better understand their practice and its context.

4.3 Implement the learning and teaching strategy ensuring holistic and inclusive pedagogical approaches and supporting personal and career development.

The University is formalising a model of educational gain required for the Teaching Excellence Framework, that outlines our social learning paradigm. The foundations of the model are supporting positive mental wellbeing, positive self-efficacy and enhancing reflective and metacognitive ability. The key to the inclusive approach is authenticity of experience. There are key threads to this holistic and authentic approach that also include education for sustainable development, research and inquiry, data literacy and leadership skills. Employability skills are embedded within the curriculum model and monitored regularly via the Futures Platform and 'Career Pulse' surveys.

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 'student outcome' data indicates an upward trend over 4 years for progression and we are above sector for students in all ABCS (Associations Between Characteristics of Students) quintiles and for students who declare a disability. There is alignment in gender progression with sector although a small gap between those identifying as female and male. Overall data suggest all students are being prepared for life after university and are experiencing positive outcomes in OfS (Office for Students) terminology. TEF 'student experience' data suggests the University is above sector for all students regardless of gender, IMD identifiers, disability and ethnicity. It is worthy of note that a number of Pedagogical Innovation Forum (PIF) actions are focusing on supporting our work on authenticity and inclusivity, including projects on mental wellbeing, inclusive assessment, digital pedagogy and metacognitive enrichment.

In terms of protected characteristics not otherwise covered in this report it is worth noting that Marjon continues to attract a relatively higher proportion of mature students aged 21 to 24 years (27%), 25 to 29 years (11%) and 30 years and over (23%), collectively mature students comprise 61% of our student population compared to 55% at benchmark institutions. More students aged 25 years and above achieved a good degree (82%) in comparison to those aged 21 to 24 years (77%) but both groups were below those aged 18 to 20 years (88%).

Objective 5: Marjon Community

5.1 Embed Marjon values at the heart of everything we do, taking personal responsibility to tackle behaviours that do not meet these values and monitoring of actions through feedback surveys, PDRs (Performance Development Reviews), 360 feedback.

5.2 Continue work to create a positive and inclusive working environment as set out in the People Strategy.

5.3 Implement the learning and teaching strategy establishing creative learning communities.

5.4 Implement campus development plan initiatives to promote a healthy and accessible campus that is socially responsible, contributes to Marjon zero and reduces inequalities due to disability.

5.1 Embed Marjon values at the heart of everything we do, taking personal responsibility to tackle behaviours that do not meet these values and monitoring of actions through feedback surveys, PDRs, 360 feedback.

The PDR completion rate for 2021 was 98% for eligible staff (263, from our total pool of 368 staff). This compares to a completion rate of 90% in 2020 and 88% in 2019. The 105 staff who do not require PDRs are those who are currently in a probation period or have recently passed their probation, are on planned long term absence from work eg. Maternity leave or are absent on long term sickness. Development sessions were offered to support managers undertaking effective PDRs. All PDRs include a section on living the values and require a discussion about how the values are embedded within all activities. Feedback to the team Marjon staff survey summarised in objective 5.2 reinforces the impact of embedding the values.

5.2 Continue work to create a positive and inclusive working environment as set out in the People Strategy.

The experiences during Covid-19 continued to impact both positively and negatively during 2021-22. We implemented a pilot year of hybrid working enabling staff to combine working at home and located on campus. Prior to implementation a Pulse survey was conducted to explore the implementation. Alongside the Pulse surveys in 2021-22 the biennial team Marjon survey was completed. The team Marjon staff survey ran for 5 weeks, from April to May 2022 and 215 responses were received, which equates to a response rate of 51% of salaried staff, but only 5% of hourly paid staff. After a difficult two years during the pandemic, and an operationally complex academic year, we expected this survey to highlight where our challenges are, as well as where we are continuing to do well. Perhaps not surprisingly, compared to our extremely high results in the last survey in late 2018, the results on many questions dipped. The responses reflect challenges faced and the ongoing "pandemic fallout". Overall, the responses highlight some significant strengths, and we maintained high scores in most questions; over half of the questions scored over 70% and just under a quarter scored over 80%.

Positive feedback was provided aligned to our values and the Marjon community; our commitment to students and our hybrid working flexibility. In the survey 96% of staff reported they understand the university's values, 89% indicated they were able to identify with the university values and 86% agreed that people are willing to help each other, even if it means doing something outside their usual activities. Some of the new questions in the survey also illustrated the positive working environment for instance 82% agreed they feel valued by their team.

Areas where clear improvement is needed included learning and development, pay and progression and change management. To some extent this might reflect the legacy of Covid-19, but initiatives already in place through the People strategy respond to some of the feedback provided. One of the most significant developments during the year was the increase of learning and development opportunities. We have launched Marjon LEaP (Learn, Enhance and Progress) as our development programme, with sessions already available for staff to book onto. The sessions initially focused on upskilling managers to build confidence, and focus on areas such as performance management, absence management, undertaking effective and impactful PDRs in a hybrid working environment. Additional sessions are planned include team motivation, emotional resilience and leading change, and then sessions for the broader staffing body on project management and disclosure training. Learning & Development application processes have been reviewed and refined to move the process online and make it more efficient and more accessible for a hybrid workforce.

Staff turnover, excluding atypical staff, was 14.4% with 94 members of staff leaving in the 2020/21 HESA data reporting period. The reason for departure includes retirement (3%), resignation (52%), redundancy (13%), voluntary severance (23%) and other (9%). The turnover rate of 14% is marginally higher than the most recent benchmark data supplied by UCEA (Higher Education Workforce Survey 2019) which shows a sector average of 11.1%. The exit interview process is being redesigned, to ensure we can capture key insights and feedback from departing staff that could identify themes or areas for focus and improvement within the institution.

In terms of other protected characteristics not otherwise covered in the equality report and objectives 40% of staff reported themselves as Christian religion and belief and 60% had not specified had no religious belief or preferred not to disclose. Improving data quality and encouraging staff to update their HESA profiles remains important.

In relation to sexual orientation of staff 81% identified as heterosexual, 3% as bisexual, 1% as gay man, 1% as gay woman/lesbian and 15% declined to specify or had unknown sexual orientation. While the proportion of staff declaring as heterosexual has risen compared to previous years so too has the proportion of staff declaring as bisexual.

5.3   Implement the learning and teaching strategy establishing creative learning communities.

The social learning paradigm and focus on authenticity of experience has meant the Curriculum Model encourages activities and approaches such as those espoused by the Student-Led Knowledge Exchange project where triads of learning are formed between creative university, student and stakeholder communities. Work-based and placement activities are embedded, and the peer review process will be updated to strongly align with Advance HE Professional Standards Framework. It is worthy of note that the University was judged 3rd in England with its response to the pandemic and ranks first in England for learning community (NSS 2022).

In terms of other protected characteristics not otherwise covered in the equality report and objectives an increasing proportion of students identified themselves with no religion (68%) compared to previous years (60%). Otherwise, 10% identified their region or beliefs as refused/not known (10%), Christian (15%), any other region or belief (2%), Buddhist (1%), Hindu (0.2%), Jewish (0.1%), Muslim (1%) and Sikh (0.1%). There may be some missing data within this information that impact on this reporting.

In relation to sexual orientation of students 89% identified as heterosexual, 6% as bisexual, 1% as gay man, 2% as gay woman/lesbian, 1% as other sexual orientation, 0.2% as asexual and 0.6% as self-identifying as queer. The proportion of students declaring as heterosexual has been decreasing annually (93% last year to 89%) this year and the proportion of bisexual orientation has been increasing annually (3% last year to 6%). Indeed, in the Student Experience Survey in 2021, 15% of UG students and 14% of PG students said they identified as LGBTQ+. This increasing diversity is positive in terms of reinforcing an inclusive community, but we also need to ensure we continue to implement positive policies, procedures and actions.

5.4 **Implement campus development plan initiatives to promote a healthy and accessible campus that is socially responsible, contributes to Marjon zero and reduces inequalities due to disability.**

The academic year saw significant progress in terms of social responsibility and work towards Marjon zero, recognised through our success in becoming a finalist in the Green Gown UK and Ireland awards. Following installation of over 3000 LED lights, a new buildings and energy management system, new transformers and 2000 solar panels which collectively targeted savings 300 tonnes of carbon emissions last year this year focused on a major capital project installing ground source heat pumps; all of this work has been supported through successful bids for the public sector decarbonisation funding. A ground source heat pump powered heating system network was identified as the most effective way to achieve zero carbon heating for the campus during the work undertaken as part of the University's Campus Development Plan. It was a challenging implementation year due to the tight time frame imposed by the funding but across the year over 50 bore holes were dug across campus to enable heat pumps to deliver heat to our main educational buildings, student village and staff houses. The ground source heat pump project targets savings of 600 tonnes of carbon emissions, meaning a net reduction of 80% of scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 2023 compared to our 2005 baseline.

Accessibility across campus remains a challenge and the equality, diversity and inclusion committee identified the requirement for a full audit and action plan to be developed during next academic year. In the meantime, a number of small improvements were made including improvement to hearing loops in highly used campus spaces, improvements to support those with visual impairment (eg stair markings), and improvement to fire doors. It was agreed that any new campus development activities (refit of spaces and/or new spaces/buildings) would proceed with an inclusivity by design approach and a standardised best practice list of expectations would be developed. This approach has been implemented in some spaces, for example the new post-graduate research student hub includes wider access doors, height adjustable desks, turning space for mobility aids and adjustable lighting.

Equality Priorities for 22-23

The equality objectives continue to provide a useful framework to monitor progress and prioritise activity. Aligned to the equality objectives the key focus for 2023-23 include:

- Implement Advance HE Race Equality Training, monitoring completion rates and ensuring at least 50% of staff and all managers engage (equality objective 2.1).

- Conduct an accessibility audit to support prioritisation of activities to improve accessibility on campus (equality objective 5.4)

- Continue to increase the diversity of the staff population and reduce the gender pay gap (equality objectives (equality objectives 1.3 and 2.3)

- Continue to implement more systematically inclusive teaching, learning and assessment processes, embedding students as co-creators, that support good degree and outcomes for all students (equality objectives 4.3 and 5.3)

- Continue progress on developing and implementing the Athena Swan action plan working towards improved gender equality (equality objective 1.1)

- Continue progress implementing the mental health and wellbeing strategy and work towards Mental Health Charter Award criteria (equality objectives 3.1 and 3.2)

- Enhance our links with external equality groups and ensure we communicate and celebrate National/local events to raise awareness and advocate for equality.