

Annual Equality Report

Data reporting period: 1 August 2022 – 31 July 2023

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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.

This report, developed by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee highlights progress made against the equality objectives & priorities set out in the 2021-22 report:

* Objective 1: Gender Equality
* Objective 2: Racial Equality
* Objective 3: Mental Wellbeing
* Objective 4: Social Mobility
* Objective 5: Marjon Community

In addition to the report, a data file of key indicators in relation to protected characteristics is available upon request.

Our 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.

## **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 divergent 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.**

The Marjon Self-Assessment Team have been in place since March 2022 and have met 15 times. Significant work has been achieved, large amounts of data analysed and additional research conducted. Quick wins have been identified and delivered, making a real difference to specific staff groups, and policies have been updated to promote more inclusive language relating to gender. Three potential priorities have been identified for our action plan (out of 4-8).

Membership of the group has changed since its formation, and there was a change of Chair in summer of 2023. The next steps are to engage further with Advance HE to discuss our findings, identify further priorities and undertake more research into areas of potential concern. The estimated submission date was considered and a submission in 2024 is proposed.

Our work towards the Athena Swan award will play a big part in further exploring and reducing our Gender Pay Gap. In March 2023, our mean gap of 8.5% was higher than we would like but is still well below national and sector averages having fallen 1.5 percentage points since 2022. Our median gap of 23.1% is more of a concern, being uncharacteristically high, and sitting above sector and national averages for the past 2 years. It is important to note that the figures do not indicate that we are paying women and men differently for the same job. Our median gap is a reflection of the fact that we have more women in our lower 2 payment quartiles than the organisational average, and more men in our higher 2 payment quartiles than the organisational average, which is a different type of challenge and one we need to consider addressing within the Marjon context.

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

Marjon student population as reported to Higher Education Statistics Agency (known as HESA) consists of 45% male, 55% female and 0% other gender identity. There are students who identify in other gender categories at the University, however these are statistically insignificant and therefore are not able to be included in HESA reporting. The proportion of males is slightly higher than benchmark (39%) but is the same as the previous year although that was 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. The attainment gap between male and female students increased steadily between 2019 and 2021, from -10pp to -12.3pp in 2021, and has reduced to -6 percentage points in 2022. We are likely to write a new target around attainment into our new Access and Participation Plan for 2025.

**1.3** **Implement People Strategy to increase male employment.**

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 (55%). The proportion of male employees (35%) has now remained stable for two years, previous to this it had been slowly rising from 33% in 2019/2020. Male colleagues as a proportion of our part-time workforce dropped this year from 27% to 23% but is still higher than the pre-covid figures of 19-21%. The gender balance of the Board of Governors has changed only very slightly this year at 40% male and 60% 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 2022-23, new starters included 42% 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 2022-23 we had nine 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 divergent and non-binary** **staff and students**

Since the inception of the policy for Transgender, Gender Divergent and Non-Binary Staff and Student Support in September 2020, we have worked with many students to ensure they are able to get personal detail changes in place quickly and without fuss. The process is working well with great feedback from students overall, although we need to continue to ensure everyone in the community is aware of the policy and how to request changes. During the last three years, there have been opportunities for learning which have allowed us to improve the processes we employ and adapt the policy accordingly. Although the policy supports practical issues which transgender students need to overcome, in engaging with students, we are able to signpost to the internal emotional support available to them and to external organisations for specialist advice.

During the time of managing changes for students, we have noted that our student and staff records systems have begun to be able to incorporate fields to give meaningful identities, however our internal systems are hampered by external factors (for example, we must use female or male for our returns to HMRC).

As reported last year our current systems have improved but still have limitations: -

* 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/ student colleagues are able to use a range of titles and sexual orientation fields, and this year the system has been updated by the provider to allow preferred pronouns to be recorded.
Gender again is more problematic as the system is required by law to use sex fields of female or male for HMRC purposes (ie. Based on an individual’s legal status) and submissions fail if we add further options.

Approximately 5% of our total student count in 2021/22 had informed us when they enrolled that their gender identity was different to that assigned at birth. This is very slightly lower than our 2019/20 and 2020/21 data however we know that many current students are in a transition stage (due to contact re informal change of names) and therefore we expect minor increases to this data in the future. What is critical is that whatever the data shows, we support students who are transitioning or who identify as transgender to use the identity they need at university.

Moving forwards, we need to ensure we continue to highlight the ease by which students are able to get changes in place quickly via the Student Wellbeing and Support Team; to encourage staff to use fields such as pronoun use on forms and processes so that students do not fear being mis-gendered and we will continue to work with our system providers to make our systems as inclusive as possible.

## **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.**

Implementation of the Advance HE Race Equality Training was paused following the announcement from Advance HE that they would be reviewing the content of the training due to the potentially contentious content provided by a particular contributor around academic freedom of speech and white supremacy within academia. However, following meetings with Advance HE to discuss further and seek advice, the decision was made by the EDI Committee to continue with the implementation of the training but to provide a range of alternative resources to offer alternative viewpoints. The training will be implemented during the 2023-24 academic year.

In addition to the Advance HE Race Equality training being prepared (which will include videos outlining Marjon’s contextual data), the Curiosity conference in September 2022 was themed around ‘Fostering Inclusion and Challenging Culture’ included invited speakers Professor Osama Khan talking on ‘Race equality as an institutional agenda: action plans, evaluations, campaign, and advocacy’ and Dr Mershen Pillay discussing ‘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.**

The ethnicity degree awarding gap was 18%, seen in the fact that 60% of students from a minority ethnic background received a good degree (First or 2-I) compared to 78% of white students. This awarding gap changes quite dramatically from year to year which is a reflection of the small numbers of students in the ethnic groups counted each year and, although disappointing, is comparable with the benchmark institutions (16%). The proportion of students from a minority ethnicity background continues to be persistently low at 7% when compared with benchmark institutions (15%); but it is comparable to that of Plymouth (6%) and the South West (7%) when compared to 2021 Census data. (See: [How life has changed in Plymouth: Census 2021 (ons.gov.uk)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000026/) and [South West England Demographics | Age, Ethnicity, Religion, Wellbeing (varbes.com)](https://www.varbes.com/demographics/south-west-demographics) ).

In the Office for Students dashboard, data is still considered insufficient to state whether we have an ethnicity awarding gap, though aggregated data from several years shows this may be an issue. 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 change in the profile of the staff base, and it remains that 4% of staff 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 (11% ethnic minority) though it closely reflects the population of Plymouth, which is stated as “predominantly white (94%)” with the other 6% being made up of ethnicities that are considered minority ethnic. If we look a little wider – the South West is also predominantly white (93%). (See: [Plymouth Demographics | Age, Ethnicity, Religion, Wellbeing (varbes.com))](https://www.varbes.com/demographics/plymouth-demographics) and [How life has changed in Plymouth: Census 2021 (ons.gov.uk))](https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000026/). New starters to Marjon with minority ethnic groups accounted for approximately 4% with a further 4% not declaring their ethnicity so we would hope to see this increase reflected in next year’s data.

## **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**

Data shows increasing numbers of the Marjon community are acknowledging a mental health condition. The numbers of students registered with a mental ill health condition with the Disability team during the year was 230 which equates to 30% 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 29% in 2021, 27% in 2020 and 26% in 2019. An additional 4% (35 students) registered with an autism spectrum condition and a further 15% (115 students) 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. Degree attainment rates of a First/2.1 degree are very good for students declaring a mental health condition suggesting that support for students is enabling them to overcome barriers.

Of note also, are the increasing numbers of staff feeling able to record that they have a mental health condition (11% this year compared much lower numbers in the previous three years 0-8%).

Several actions have been completed and/or progressed linked to the strategy (and objective 3.2) including:

* Rolling out a 4-week immersive module to more programmes, and changing induction to be “longer and skinnier” to support settling in.
* Completing a second annual survey of Student Wellbeing and Support with both students and staff bringing out key areas of success and for improvement.
* Developing new policies and procedures including a new Safeguarding Policy; new Procedure to use in the Event of the Death of a Student which includes guidance around suicide; new Trusted Supporter Protocol to ensure we appropriately involve supporters of students who may be at risk, and a new protocol for informing relevant staff of student risk.
* We have redeveloped links with Elm Surgery in order to improve support particularly for students with mental ill health conditions or disabilities.
* Our work with the NHS around Frequent Use of Emergency Department was written up and highlighted by NHS project managers as a successful and simple intervention.
* We continue to work with the NHS Plymouth Suicide Prevention Partnership and are discussing the potential for a joint project this year to better support student mental health.

There continues to be a significant focus on supporting staff with their mental health and wellbeing. As part of the Mental Health Working Group, the People Team and Head of Business Partnering continues to work alongside other key staff across the institution to align the People & Organisational Development work with the Mental Health Strategy. There has been a further 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.

**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 Mental Health Working Group, established in April 2022, works closely on activities towards the Charter but has so far agreed not to apply due to the prohibitive cost of above £9000.

The Secretary of State for Education requested all universities to join the Charter Framework in summer 2023, and our hope was that this may reduce the cost of the Award due to increasing income from other universities. There is now a working group within Student Minds looking at a lower cost version of the Award for small and specialist institutions, and we will await the outcomes of this, but continue to agree that the cost is currently too high to apply.

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 2022, there was a positive degree awarding gap for students with mental ill health conditions compared to those with no disability declared. 81.5% of students with a declared mental health condition attained a good degree (First or 2.1) which is 4.6pp higher than those without a declared disability (76.9%); an increase year on year from 2pp. (The University’s HESA data, which includes more students, also shows a favourable comparison – First or 2.1s being achieved by 84% of students with a mental health condition versus 78% for students with no declared disability).

There was also no significant gap in graduate-level employment in the latest data, with the four-year aggregated data showing 71.4% of students who had reported a mental health condition in graduate level employment or study, compared to 71.6% of those with no reported disability.

During the 2022/23 academic year, Futures, Marjon’s Careers, Employability and Enterprise service continued to work with colleagues in Student Support and Wellbeing Service to ensure that all students, including those with declared disabilities had access to effective and appropriate information, advice, and guidance. Whilst reasonable adjustments are offered to all students accessing the Futures service, the recording by the Disability team on Futures online, that a student has given permission to share that they have registered with them better equips the Careers and Employability Coaches to support the student.

On average, students with a disclosed disability continue to make more use of Futures online. Over the 2022/23 academic year on average, per month, students with a disclosed disability completed 10.7 activities compared to the entire population completing 9.5 activities. Students with a physical impairment or mobility issue completed the most total activities over the year (191), with students with a mental health condition or a longstanding illness or health condition coming joint second, completing 165 activities.

 

## **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** I**mplement 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 54.6% (21/22 data) 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 all 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 this year, either to take part in international experiences, or to develop their employability in other ways, 39% were categorised as POLAR 1&2 whilst 61% were categorised as POLAR 3,4 & 5. Marjon also made use of Turing funding to support a further cohort of 17 students to participate in international enrichment experiences, with 53% of the total funding provision being available to support from students from disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances.

Additionally, six ‘Be Enterprising’ bursaries were awarded. 80% of recipients were categorised as POLAR 1 & 2 and 20% were categorised as POLAR 3, 4 and 5.

Futures online, available 365-days a year, provides flexible on-demand resources to meet the needs of students who, because of their circumstance are often time poor. On average during the 2022/23 academic year, students who declared that their parents did not have a higher education qualification completed five activities a month on Futures online compared to students whose parents did have a higher education qualification, who completed six activities a month. However, students categorised POLAR 1 & 2 completed on average, 10.9 activities a month, compared with students categorised POLAR 3,4 & 5 who completed on average, 8.9 activities a month.

**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 Marjon Student Colleagues scheme continues, offering high quality work to Marjon students and supporting them through the Student Colleagues Skills Framework. The goal is that Marjon Student Colleagues reach higher levels of graduate employment than non-colleagues, thus demonstrating the support of the scheme.

Students are encouraged to use the Skills Framework to plan their development goals and recognise their achievements. The Skills Framework is used, for example, in all individual job adverts for the Student Ambassadors scheme, so they will be clear on taking on any specific job which skills will be developed (e.g. working an Open Day, attending a Careers Fair).

The variety of roles has slightly decreased in 2022-23, due to merging of some roles and the ending of some covid-specific roles, but work continues to be high quality.

We have analysed the Student Experience Survey, which was done over December 2022 to April 2023, comparing Student Colleagues with all students, and discovered that:

* Student Colleagues tend to be slightly more advantaged.
* Student Colleagues tend to work in paid work for slightly fewer hours than students working other roles (and this is probably related to a limit we have of 16 hours per week working).
* There is no evidence that working as a Student Colleague reduces study time in a negative way.
* Student Colleagues show significantly higher levels of belonging, feel more supported and connected to Marjon than other students.

The results of this have set our objectives for this year, recognising the value of the scheme but needing to ensure that students from all backgrounds can access the scheme and get through the stringent application process.

In 2022 the impact of the Marjon student colleagues was 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).

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

The University is currently developing a new curriculum framework for implementation in 2024 onwards. This framework is built on principles of access, inclusivity, and holism. This framework will internalise the model of educational gain submitted for the 2022 Teaching Excellence Framework, that outlines our social learning paradigm. The foundations of the model support positive mental wellbeing, positive self-efficacy and enhance reflective and metacognitive ability, and the key to the inclusive approach is authenticity of experience. Employability skills are embedded within the curriculum model and have historically been monitored using the ‘Career Pulse’ survey hosted by the Futures online platform. Moving forward, a Careers & Employability Survey reflecting the university’s new curriculum framework and in-house digital strategy has been developed to support personal and career development.

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.

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 (26%), 25 to 29 years (11%) and 30 years and over (23%), collectively mature students comprise 60% of our student population compared to 57% at benchmark institutions. More students aged 25 to 29 years achieved a good degree (76%) in comparison to those aged 21 to 24 years (73%).

## **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 2023 was 60% for eligible staff. This compares to a completion rate of 88% in 2022, 98% in 2021 and 90% in 2020. This decline is unfortunate, and planned measures to address this include a change in scheduling of the PDR window to ensure that they are completed by the end of the academic year, rather than the end of the calendar year.

The 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 e.g. 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.

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

Throughout the year, several adjustments were made to formal and informal committee structures to assist with improvements in communications channels. The purpose being to enable greater opportunities for enabling employee voice. Open ideas continued to operate with a reasonable level of engagement.

Further consideration will be given to running further staff engagement surveys to effectively measure our working environment.

Staff turnover, excluding atypical staff, was 15.4% within the 2022/21 HESA reporting period. The reason for departure includes retirement (6%), resignation (66%), voluntary severance (15%) and other (12%). The turnover rate of 15.4% is higher than the most recent benchmark data supplied by UCEA (Higher Education Workforce Survey 2019) which shows a sector average of 11.8%, although lower than the turnover rate in the wider economy of 18.8%[[1]](#footnote-1). This increase is primarily due to a voluntary severance scheme that was run in Spring 2023.

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

The University is currently developing a new curriculum framework for implementation in 2024 onwards. This framework is built on principles of access, inclusivity, and holism and will result in changes to the Curriculum Model and Learning and Teaching Policy. These changes will reflect the growing imperative that students learn collaboratively and creatively which will be communicated through newly developed graduate attributes and pedagogic principles.

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 religion or beliefs as refused/not known (10%), Christian (15%), any other religion 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 impacts 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 reporting of 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****.**

**Social Responsibility/Marjon Zero**

1. Consolidation of decarbonisation initiatives particularly ground source heat pumps and solar panel installations.

**Accessibility Improvements**

As part of the wider first floor refurb of Dix Hall of Residence, several accessibility improvements were implemented. The main objective was to provide better accommodation on the ground floor for students with accessibility needs. This was achieved and encompassed the provision of: -

1. An external marked and lit ramp to the front of the building.
2. Level access and wider door to the rear of the building.
3. New cabinets and fittings to the two ground floor kitchens (lowered worktops, height adjustable sink, more easily operated built-in appliances).
4. Digital access control.

In consultation with current residents, a number of improvements were suggested and implemented in Village houses 22 & 23: -

1. Lowered worktops in kitchens.
2. New oven and hob – similar to those installed in Dix, making them easier to operate.
3. Presence detector lighting (no need to physically switch on/off).

In discussion with wheelchair users: -

1. Addition of ramp and rails to East smoking shelter

Feedback on the accessibility improvements has been very positive.

## **Equality Priorities for 23-24**

The equality objectives continue to provide a useful framework to monitor progress and prioritise activity. Aligned to the equality objectives the key focus for 2023-24 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 1.3 and 2.3)
* Through the curriculum framework review, implement more inclusive teaching, learning and assessment processes 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, working to implement guidance from the Higher Education Mental Health Taskforce (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.
1. <https://www.ucea.ac.uk/library/publications/he-workforce-report-2019/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)