



Annual Equality Report

Data reporting period: 1 August 2023 – 31 July 2024

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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 work of the committee is key for the successful delivery of our University strategy: Marjon 2030

This report, developed by the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee highlights progress made against the equality objectives & priorities set out in the 2023 report, focussing on:

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

Of particular note is the progress made against Gender Equality objectives. The University was proud to be successful in achieving the Athena Swan Bronze Award in April 2025 and this provides an important platform on which to build going forwards.

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.

This objective has been fully met as our Athena Swan Bronze Award application was submitted in January 2025 and we received news in April that we had been successful. The panel commended the strength of leadership in establishing gender equality across the University, particularly noting the VC's initial statements, our emphasis on embedding Equality Impact Assessments into our processes and the focus on men's mental health initiatives. The approval means that our 5 year Action Plan is now in operation, covering 5 areas: 1) Improved proportional gender representation in our organisational structure, 2) Enhanced professional recognition and support, 3) Valuing an inclusive culture where everyone belongs and has voice, 4) A physical space safe and accessible to all genders that is clearly signed, and 5) Promoting wellbeing awareness. The self assessment team are now the MAST (Marjon Athena Swan Team) and responsible for taking this work forward, with accountability to the EDI committee. One of the key year 1 priorities is getting our staff networks up and running as these underpin much of the wider work. So far, the Men's and the Disability networks have had initial meetings with plans for the Women's network at an advanced stage.

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

The male student degree awarding gap was 12.8% for 22/23, compared with 6% gap at Marjon the previous year. The 22/23 figure compares with 'benchmark' group 7% gap and 'all HEIs' 2% gap. This reflects significant gendered differentiation at Marjon. The gap between male and female students in terms of attainment started to close between 21/22 but has reemerged.

The APP project 'Study Skills for All' incorporated activities to increase engagement and thereby attainment for this target group by providing more visible opportunities for asynchronous study skills support through the online platform Studiosity and in-person study skills tuition through AIM the university's academic and information literacy skills programme. In 23/24, a targeted communication campaign was launched specifically to increase awareness of these interventions amongst the male student population, which increased male awareness slightly, evident in an increase in bookings for AIM and account creation for Studiosity, but unfortunately, this did not convert into definitive engagement (namely, AIM attendance and Studiosity usage) suggesting additional barriers for male students in study skills intervention engagement.

Additionally, the Going Places bursary was created to enable widening participation students to access development opportunities outside of the curriculum, with a view to enhancing completion and attainment rates. 21% of satisfied applications in 23/24 were from male students, the majority of which achieved good degree outcomes (2:1 or above). This bursary provided opportunities for students to engage in activities that bolster academic attainment, including Mental Health First Aid training, short courses specific to outdoor adventure instruction and attendance at professional competitive sports symposiums. This suggests that it is essential to continue to offer this bursary in the coming academic years to allow extracurricular opportunities to enrich the university experience for this target group.

1.3 Implement People Strategy to increase male employment.

Male staff employment rates are at 32.7% of total staff (slightly down on the previous year's 37%), this compares with 41% in our 'benchmark' group and 45% for 'all HEIs'. The disparity with female staff employment rates exists across all quartiles, but particularly in the lower 3 quartiles where men make up between 29% and 31.5% of all staff, with the upper quartile consisting of 39.7% of staff. The differential between these quartiles creates additional challenges as it significantly impacts our Gender Pay Gap results. Addressing both these issues remains a key objective, identified in both our Gender Pay Gap reporting and our Athena Swan Action plan, with the first of our 5 Athena Swan 'Areas for Impact' focusing on this challenge.

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

Actions were taken to ensure the policy remains updated with a full review undertaken by Summer 2024 which included input from MSU and the student LGBTQIA+ society. The reviewed policy was approved and published on the website. Moving forwards, we will need to continue to ensure our policy meets the needs of transgender staff and students. In light of the Supreme Court Hearing, we will review the policy once further guidance has been received.

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.

A combination of technical difficulties allowing staff to access the training package, and changes implemented by the training provider, delayed this action being achieved. It remains a key objective to ensure our staff receive appropriate training in an accessible way, but a different approach may be required to effectively meet this need.

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

The degree awarding gap was 17% in 22/23, compared with 18% gap at Marjon the previous year. The 22/23 figures compares with 'benchmark' group 17% and 'all HEIs' 13%. Due to a very small cohort size of students from ethnic minorities (i.e., ethnic groups other than White British group) this data is unreliable due to low statistical significance. However, the APP has a number of interventions aimed at improving attainment for students from ethnic minorities. The Going Places bursary was created to enable widening participation students, including those from ethnic minorities to access development opportunities outside of the curriculum, with a view to enhancing completion and attainment rates. 2% of the total applications satisfied were from students of ethnic minorities. Although this is a relatively low number, this is consistent with the general population of ethnic minority students at Marjon. Additionally, the APP has ringfenced sport scholarships for ethnic minority students who have demonstrated skill at a national sporting level. In 23/24, 5% of awarded scholarships were offered to students from ethnic minorities.

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

Numbers of staff with ethnic groups other than white ethnicities are 4% (compares with 'benchmark' group 11% and 'all HEIs' data of 18%). Staff leavers in the year from ethnic groups other than white ethnicities totals 11%.

Attracting more staff from minority ethnic groups remains an important challenge. In the coming year we aim to establish a number of new staff networks, including a Black and Minority Ethnic network. All the networks have 3 primary purposes of peer networking, creating a robust stakeholder voice channel to ELT via the EDI committee, and, where appropriate, offering a specialist sounding board for University decision makers. We hope that we can successfully establish this group, and that they may be instrumental in helping improve the whole employee journey for black and minority ethnic staff, in turn improving recruitment and retention.

Equality Objective 3: Mental Wellbeing

3.1 Implement actions for mental health and wellbeing strategy

The current approach to the strategy will change moving forward. Instead of existing as a standalone document, the strategy will be embedded within the Access and Participation Plan (APP) framework. This integration will provide a structured mechanism for monitoring, reporting, and accountability, ensuring that mental health and wellbeing objectives are fully aligned with institutional equity priorities.

A priority action for implementing the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is the development of stronger collaborative relationships across the city. A physical workshop was held in July 2025 with representation from Livewell Southwest, the police, and the three universities (University of Plymouth, Arts University Plymouth, and Marjon). The workshop aims to extend reach further by including third sector charities and organisations, ensuring a more joined-up approach to student wellbeing in 2025-2026.

A data sharing agreement has already been agreed by all partners, creating a foundation for more effective collaboration. Work is in progress to explore joint training opportunities that will strengthen wellbeing and support provision for all students in Plymouth. Alongside this, efforts are being made to standardise data collection across institutions, enhancing how student data is used to strengthen existing mental health support pathways and ensuring a consistent, evidence-based approach to service delivery.

3.2 To achieve the Mental Health Charter Award from Student Minds

The university had initially aimed to achieve the Mental Health Charter Award from Student Minds. However, the associated costs of pursuing the award were reviewed and deemed too high to continue.

The Mental Health Charter Committee will continue to lead internal work to strengthen and develop the Charter strands across the university. Progress in this area will be aligned with the Access and Participation Plan (APP) framework to ensure that mental health and wellbeing objectives are monitored, reported, and embedded within the university's broader equity and participation priorities. This approach sustains momentum on mental health and wellbeing, even without engaging in the formal award process, while maintaining accountability and alignment with sector expectations.

Several positive developments demonstrate the university's commitment to strengthening mental health and wellbeing support. Student feedback, alongside survey responses, has been a key driver in creating actions through the Student Wellbeing Services (SWS) team, improving both visibility and accessibility of services. This has included providing more opportunities for students to feed back through the Student Experience Council and ensuring student representation on the Mental Health and Wellbeing Committee.

Resource has been reviewed within very tight boundaries, leading to the recruitment of new counsellors (partly complete/ongoing). Care has also been taken to ensure that induction and wider messaging does not mis-sell SWS as a crisis service, with work in this area ongoing. A

“Transition to University Day” was trialled in September 2024, which received excellent feedback and has now become an annual action. In addition, a year-round suggestion box and digital feedback link are being introduced, encouraging co-creation of services and providing instant opportunities for students to shape provision.

The physical environment has also been improved. The SWS welcome area has been enhanced with a bookcase and more comfortable waiting area (partly complete/ongoing), and the reception desk was lowered following feedback, which received positive comments from staff and students alike.

Service quality has been strengthened through practical changes, including a personalised SWS answerphone message that now signposts to external support (NHS Mental Health Crisis Line and Samaritans), safeguarding drop-ins for staff offered twice weekly, and improved customer service measures such as opening doors in readiness for drop-ins. Guides and videos have been created for staff use of the CPOMS system (completed/ongoing), with training offered to ensure consistent practice.

Partnership work has been a further area of success. Student feedback through the Mental Health and Wellbeing Group highlighted the value of links with Samaritans, and a partnership with a timeline and action plan will be discussed in January 2025 (ongoing). Links have also been built with external providers offering specialist support, including Ahimsa (domestic violence support), New Hope (bereavement support), Eating Disorder Service, and “Coffee with Cops,” ensuring students can access appropriate external services with ease.

Innovation has also been demonstrated through the launch of a new SWS app, accessible via desktop at the welcome desk, providing advice and signposting to services (completed). Quick guides, service descriptors, and videos have been developed to make services more accessible to students, while additional resources for academic staff.

Taken together, the reviewed strategy, the embedding of a wide range of practical actions and service improvements demonstrate the university’s sustained commitment to student mental health and wellbeing. Moving forward, integrating this work within the Access and Participation Plan (APP) framework, the university ensures that progress is measurable, accountable, and aligned with broader equity objectives, while continuing to respond to student voice and sector best practice.

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.

Degree outcomes for MIH (code 55) students were 80% received 1sts/2.1s (‘good’ degrees) which compares very favourably with other groups, for example across all disabled student qualifiers, 77% got ‘good’ degrees and for qualifiers who hadn’t declared a disability, 75% got good degrees. Therefore, the awarding gap is a positive one (+2%) at Marjon for ‘all’ disabled students, in comparison within the ‘benchmark’ group the gap is also +2%, for ‘all HEIs’ it is +3%.

There are a number of activities in the Access and Participation Plan that are aimed at continually

improving attainment for students with a declared disability. The Study Skills for All project provided more visible opportunities for asynchronous study skills support through the online platform Studiosity and in-person study skills tuition through AIM the university's academic and information literacy skills programme. Use of Studiosity by students with a declared disability increased by 53% in 23/24, many of which who were repeat users of the platform. Qualitative feedback from students with declared disabilities on these study skills interventions relayed positive comments around platform accessibility, confidence building and improved understanding of study skills concepts.

Additionally, the Going Places bursary provided opportunities for students with declared disabilities to engage with extracurricular opportunities such as the International Computer Driving License, acupuncture for sports therapy and Makaton for augmented communication. 45% of satisfied applications were from students with declared disabilities.

Finally, as part of the Inclusion by Design APP project, Marjon Student Changemakers successfully concluded two projects developed to tackle disable student inequity and by extension, attainment and completion, through consideration and removal of barriers to study success. Namely, the two student-led projects focused on building awareness of the barriers to campus inclusion and belonging by neurodivergent students and assessing the physical accessibility of campus by redesigning the campus map for wheelchair users.

Equality 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.

The Marjon Futures service offers professional, impartial, and friendly careers, employability and enterprise advice to all Marjon students and graduates irrespective of background or circumstance. The team recognises that students join Marjon with a range of past experiences that will inform their aspirations and goals. Futures are proud to meet students, and in turn graduates, where they are, and work with them to achieve their goals without preconception or bias. The team are ambitious for service users and recognise that promoting independence and curiosity supports social mobility.

In practice, this includes offering 1:1 appointments that are situated and in person, or virtually through Teams. This recognises the preference of some students to meet in person but also recognises the barriers some students and graduates might face to visit campus. Timings of 1:1s are also considered to provide a spread through-out the week, and at times which can accommodate students and graduates who are working. When booking an appointment service users are invited to alert the team of any adjustments, or preferences they may have to make their appointment as effective as possible.

Recognising that it is impossible to offer a 24/7 service, Futures provides comprehensive digital resources through Handshake, that are available to Marjon students and graduates. Ensuring information is available even when service users need it. These resources also include tailored support for students with specific equality, diversity, and inclusion challenges, reflecting Futures aim to support the entire Marjon community.

Challenges associated with the cost-of-living means most students have secured, or need to secure, opportunities to work alongside their studies. Futures utilise Handshake, My Marjon and a weekly digital bulletin to alert the students and graduate (via social media) community of opportunities that the team are aware of. Support is offered with job applications and preparing for interview.

Recognising the challenges associated with geographical location, Futures also uses Handshake and My Marjon communications to raise awareness and build connections with opportunities outside of the immediate location. This now includes regional, national, and international opportunities including paid work and graduate schemes.

Going Places Bursaries

Marjon Futures Service offers students enriching career, travel, volunteer, enterprise and professional development opportunities, helping students to be the best they can be. Marjon Futures, through its Employability Bursary Scheme (Going Places) is able to provide financial support to students for professional development opportunities. The Going Places Bursary plays a key role in supporting the principles outline in the Marjon Equality Report by helping to remove financial barriers and ensuring that all students – regardless of their

background have equal access to bursary funding for career enhancing opportunities and experiences. The bursary encourages students to engage in additional learning and development that compliments their degree programmes and supports their individual career aspirations, promoting both inclusions and achievement across the student community.

Turing Scheme

Plymouth Marjon University is proud to participate in the UK Government's Turing Scheme, which provides funding to support international study and work placements for all Marjon students. The scheme is specifically designed to support widening participation students by prioritising those from low household incomes, those who face financial barriers to mobility, and students who are underrepresented in international experiences. Crucially, additional funding is available for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), ensuring that individual support needs are met and equitable access is maintained. This targeted support reflects the university's ongoing commitment to inclusion, social mobility, and expanding global opportunities for all students.

The team carefully monitors graduate outcomes data, and whilst recognising the limitations of the data, benchmarks Marjon graduate outcomes against sector. This data is used to inform project design for the Access and Participation Plan and promotes cross-departmental working to support social mobility.

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.

A Marjon Student Colleague working group was established with the aim of reviewing and improving current practices for recruiting and supporting Student Colleagues across Marjon. This group included a range of colleagues from across the University including Student Recruitment, The People Team and the Welcome Team. The group devised guidance for Student Colleague roles to clarify the application and interview process. Video guidance was also included as part of the advert to ensure the information was presented in a range of ways. In addition, the group reviewed existing interview practices for Student Colleague roles, updating where required, such as by sharing interview questions in advance to ensure inclusivity.

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

In 2024–25, the university developed a new Curriculum Framework to embed holistic, inclusive, and future-facing pedagogical approaches across all programmes. This work is guided by a values-led Learning Design model grounded in institutional Pedagogic Principles that promote care, inclusivity, flexibility, and collaboration. Learning and assessment practices are now intentionally aligned to the development of the Marjon Attribute, our model of educational gain, which articulate academic, personal, and career development through eight graduate attributes. These include Criticality and Creativity, Inclusivity and Collaboration, Engagement, and Professionalism.

Each attribute is embedded at every programme level through module content, pedagogy, and assessment. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) underpins inclusive curriculum planning, and the rollout of formative assessment practices strengthens student engagement and success. To ensure ongoing enhancement and equity of experience, a robust evaluation strategy is in place. This includes a new Educational Gain Survey to capture self-reported student development, mapping exercises to track attribute progression, and process and impact evaluations aligned to TEF and Access and Participation Plan priorities. Through this joined-up strategy, Marjon is creating a student experience that values diverse learner journeys, builds belonging, and equips graduates with the skills and dispositions needed to thrive in their personal and professional lives.

Equality 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, 360 feedback.

PDR completion rates for academic year ending 2024 were 53%. The instigation of a University-wide organisational change process immediately prior to the end of the reporting year is partly the reason for the low return rate and we plan a renewed focus on these in the coming year. In particular there is a planned focus on 'Team Marjon', using PDR objectives to embed our culture of inclusion, wellbeing, collaboration, accountability, and sustainable development and growth.

Results from the previous staff survey informed the Athena Swan action plan, especially in areas around engagement, belonging and purpose, wellbeing and support as well as specific questions about how comfortable our staff are challenging inappropriate behaviour and emphasising our values. This year's mini survey the "5-minute voice" followed up on some of the key points to check on, and re-focus, progress.

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

Our hybrid working policy, stemming initially from the covid period, has continued to operate this year, allowing staff (where roles allow) the option of working up to half their time from home. We continue to operate Maternity and Paternity/Co-Parent offering above the statutory minimum and whilst fluctuating, our recently established Parent and Baby room (for feeding and expressing) has been in use.

Looking ahead, we aim for the development of staff networks to further promote inclusion and creating an environment where everyone is comfortable being themselves at work. This will be promoted by the 3 roles of the networks: peer networking, creating a robust stakeholder voice channel to senior management, and, where appropriate, offering a specialist sounding board for University decision makers.

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

The Curriculum Framework provides the structure and vision for Marjon's academic offer. It brings coherence across programmes, articulates the Marjon Attributes, and embeds evidence-informed practice through six components: Learning Design, Assessment, Pedagogic Principles, Curriculum Connected Research, Transitions, and PALS. Through competitive pilot projects, a number of staff have led innovation from plan to practice, shaping institutional resources and processes ready for adoption in 2025–26. The projects have covered: Learning Design; Assessment; Curriculum Connected Research; Pedagogic Principles; Marjon Attributes & Educational Gain; PALS (Peer Assisted Learning Support); Transitions.

Together, these projects have laid strong foundations for embedding the Curriculum Framework across all programmes. Their collective value lies in producing guidance, resources, and tested processes that will:

- support programme (re)validation,

- enhance student belonging, continuation, and attainment,
- strengthen employability and graduate outcomes, and
- provide robust evidence of educational gain for internal enhancement and external accountability.

The pilots have also been a powerful demonstration of institution-wide collaboration, with more than 75 colleagues from across academic and professional services contributing as project members or critical friends. This breadth of engagement has not only ensured the pilots' success but also modelled the kind of cross-university partnership that the Framework itself is designed to foster.

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.

Our campus has continued to develop over the last 12 months with a focus on repair and maintenance to ensure a healthy and accessible campus for all. Alongside this a number of projects were started in 24/25 to develop the campus which will complete in 25/26 that contribute to our social responsibility. We continue to innovate towards Marjon zero, consolidating recently fitted ground source, solar and LED technology. July 2025 saw the installation of over 40 LoRaWAN IoT/Smart devices to sub-meters throughout campus. This installation allows much more granular utility monitoring supporting better building management and data driven decision making around utility import and use. As the campus continues to develop, behavioural change campaigns will be launched to further reduce carbon emissions through "lights off, doors and windows closed" initiatives. During the coming year a full review of the Campus Development Plan will be undertaken.

Equality Objectives

A full list of the current equality objectives can be found within the Equality and Diversity Policy here:

[Equality-and-Diversity-Policy.pdf](#)