

# EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2024 – 2026



ONE WORLD  
ONE HEALTH  
ONE RVC

## EDI STRATEGY

### MISSION

Our core mission is to create a diverse, inclusive, caring and compassionate university, where every individual - regardless of their background, identity or experience, feels valued, respected and empowered. We are committed to fostering a culture of equity, dismantling barriers to access and success, and to promoting diverse perspectives that enrich all our activities.

### COMPASSIONATE...

as we strive for happy, healthy and resilient individuals and communities.

### PROFESSIONAL...

as we aspire to the highest standards of behaviour and conduct in all our work and study.

### RESPECTFUL...

of one another, with tolerance and understanding at the heart of our desire to create a diverse, inclusive and open culture.

### COMMITTED...

to our work and study, to our research and innovation, to our teaching and our learning, to the student experience, to the prevention and cure of disease, to the care of animals, and to our people.

### CURIOUS...

in all our endeavours as we improve, evolve and innovate, being the best we can be.





## OVERVIEW

The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) is a world leading veterinary and biomedical sciences university, with a declared mission “to be a leading international authority in education, clinical care, research, expert opinion and employment in veterinary and biomedical sciences”. Our core values of compassion, professionalism, respectfulness, and commitment speak to our institutional determination to undertake our mission in a manner that aspires to the highest standards of behaviour, a culture that is open and inclusive, and a full commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

Whilst we work within the legislative framework provided by the Equality Act 2010 for all organisations, our aim is to go beyond our legal statutory duties and integrate EDI into all our operations and processes, and in the daily experiences of all members of our community.

## THE VALUE OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

For a Higher Education (HE) institution to fully realise the benefits of a diverse community it is critical to have an equitable and inclusive environment where everyone feels able to participate and achieve their full potential.

The HE sector, like most of society, faces numerous challenges of inequalities for both students and staff. Pay and awarding gaps, lack of diversity, recruitment and promotion gaps, lack of representation in research and unrepresentative curricula, are some of the all-too familiar issues in the sector. The daily experiences of students and staff in HE often includes accounts of sexism, racism, ableism and other prejudices, both inside and outside of their universities. Critically, EDI is still largely not viewed as core business when it comes to developing and implementing institutional policies, values

and behaviours; this needs to change. There is an urgent need to take action and the will and commitment of every institution and of the wider sector is required.

# WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the RVC is a stated objective in our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

Over the last few years, we have strived continuously to build an inclusive RVC. In this journey we have been dedicated to learning from our experiences, committed to listening to the voices of our community and strived to adapt our practices to be more inclusive and equitable. We have – and will keep on – creating opportunities to engage with our staff and students on a continuous basis on EDI related issues, so that together as a community we can shape our future direction.

Notable outcomes of our initiatives so far include:

- We expanded our engagement with various external equality charters that are designed to drive forward cultural and systemic changes, by establishing

national and international frameworks to promote equal opportunities for students and staff with particular protected characteristics. We have renewed our Athena Swan Institution Bronze Award, furthering our commitment to Gender equity. We have had internal initiatives such as the Race Equality Task Group (RETG), which engaged with the staff and student community on issues relating to race, and produced a report with a series of recommendations for the RVC. Following on from the RETG, we signed up to the Race Equality Charter. In addition, we have taken up membership to Stonewall, the Disability Confident Scheme and the Hidden Disabilities scheme. These all support our work towards Race, LGBTQIA+ and Disability equity.

- We have significantly reviewed our EDI leadership and management structure. These changes have been made with the key objective of developing and progressing our EDI work with a strategic vision that holistically covers the needs of students, staff and all areas of the institution. We have created of a new role of Vice-Principal for EDI, with strategic oversight for EDI. Furthermore, we recognised the need for operational support to advance our EDI work and committed the financial and human resources to create the EDI Unit, initially comprised of the Head of EDI and the EDI Coordinator.

This is RVC's first EDI strategy; it is a strategy for our whole community, and it aspires to be accessible and actionable across all our activities.

The strategy rests on evidence base developed from institutional data sources such as the Race Equality Task Group (RETG), the RVC wide consultation through the Athena Swan survey and focus groups, progress against our current Equality Objectives and Action Plan, and information and priorities in the wider Higher Education EDI landscape. In addition, the strategy has drawn on the requirements of our existing commitments under the University's Access and Participation Plan, the Athena Swan Charter and the Race Equality Charter.

In setting out our vision for EDI we are mindful that many intersecting factors shape the individual identities and experiences of our community; these include the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act (2010) and more, including - age, disability, sex, gender identity, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, the experiences of being a parent or carer.

We live in a society that has deep inequalities and different biases. It is only by all different participants acknowledging and understanding these biases that we will be able to take the action required to create genuine, sustainable change and develop a diverse and inclusive community.

The EDI strategy does not stand alone; it will support the delivery of the wider RVC strategy across its mission pillars of education, research and clinical care and will aim to reflect the EDI objectives embedded in other sub-strategies. Whilst building on our achievements to date, the strategy aims to be forward looking and bold in articulating a vision that will see EDI genuinely embedded in all our activities and in our institutional culture.

The strategy aspires to focus not only on our systems, and policies, but also on our institutional culture, so as to allow us to build momentum for sustained and sustainable positive change.



# OUR COMMITTMENT

## Our EDI strategy focuses on four key objectives:

- Integrating and embedding EDI into all aspects of RVC life.
- Attracting, retaining and supporting diversity.
- Actively working to dismantle structural barriers.
- Creating a culture of inclusivity that engenders belonging.

The RVC is dedicated to being an organisation in which equity, diversity and inclusion underpin all that we do. In pursuing our mission to educate, undertake research and provide clinical care, we remain committed to creating an inclusive, diverse, and welcoming community, where our students and staff work together to ensure professionalism, mutual respect and collegiality are at the

core of all activities.

Our EDI strategy is for our entire community. It aims to be proactive, accessible, and implementable across our organisation – in our teaching, our research and clinical missions, our student and staff experiences and in our interactions with clients, stakeholders and partners - locally and globally.

# OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND ASSOCIATED PRIORITIES

A fully comprehensive approach will require that, through policy and practice, we entrench EDI as a constant in all our activities.

## We will

- I. Develop approaches to our processes and systems that allow for the consideration of EDI in all decision-making.
- II. Ensure that all members of the RVC governance and senior leadership are fully equipped to lead on EDI by including specific training on how to recognise and address issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- III. Provide regular EDI training and education to the RVC community such that they have the confidence to support,

- to challenge and to actively include EDI perspectives in their routine activities.
- IV. Widen our commitment to EDI to include our relationships with external partners, contractors, and suppliers.
- V. Raise the profile of EDI work by incorporating it into the institutional ecognition and reward processes.
- VI. Ensure we use reliable data as our evidence base to inform anddrive our EDI work, impact assessments and annual reporting.

Integrate and embed EDI into all aspects of RVC life, for our students, staff, partners, clients, and all stakeholders.



# DIVERSITY

# EQUITY

# INCLUSION

Attract, retain and support a diverse student and staff population.

We aspire to be a diverse, global institution in which different groups are welcomed and represented in all levels.

## We will:

- I. Work with other mission areas in RVC, be ambitious in actively developing plans to encourage a more diverse, global population to join our institution.
- II. Build on our current and future charter mark memberships (Athena Swan, Stonewall, Disability Confident Scheme, and the Race Equality Charter) to create genuinely meaningful impact on the experiences of the students and staff that they represent.
- III. Develop networks to enhance the learning, teaching and work experience for students and staff.
- IV. Be intersectional in our EDI approach.
- V. Ensure that our infrastructure – our buildings, campuses and technologies are inclusive and accessible.







Recognising that diversity alone does not guarantee equity and inclusion, we need to proactively harness the diversity that we have. Acknowledging and addressing structural barriers will include taking positive action where required, in order to create more equitable outcomes.

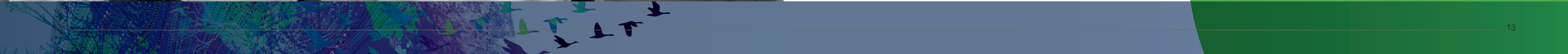
We **will:**

- I. Enhance our support for students from under-represented backgrounds to ensure their success and to address diversity-related gaps in their experience and attainment.
- II. Develop processes to allow us to identify and nurture talent from underrepresented groups in our staff, to provide more equitable opportunities for career development.

- III. Develop frameworks to ensure that our curricula and pedagogy are inclusive in all respects, including in the decolonising domain.
- IV. Develop equitable partnerships in our educational, research and clinical activities.



Actively work to dismantle structural barriers.







True inclusion can only happen when every single student and member of staff feels safe to bring their whole selves to campus and feels they belong in our community.

The responsibility for building an inclusive community lies with the institution, but also within each individual member of our community.

## We will:

- I. Encourage and expect inclusive behaviours from all.
- II. Create EDI-focused induction for students and staff joining our institution. These will be designed to raise awareness of EDI issues, emphasise the importance of EDI in RVC and to define expected standards of behaviour.
- III. Work with the RVC Students Union to promote a common EDI vision and to get engagement from our students.

IV. Promote robust reporting and supporting structures through which staff and students can raise concerns.

V. Recognise and celebrate the diversity of our students and staff.

Create a culture of inclusivity that engenders belonging in the RVC community and that generates credibility and trust.



# HOW WE WILL DELIVER OUR OBJECTIVES

From this strategy, will develop an Equality Action Plan which will fully articulate the actions, progress indicators, measures of success and timescales for our strategic priorities.

EDI work cannot be left to those directly affected or discriminated against, and all members of the RVC community are expected to own and act upon our EDI strategy.

For our objectives to develop into the cultural change we aspire to, all individuals, teams, and departments must be empowered and enabled to identify how they can change to include EDI in the way that they work and study.

Several groups and individuals have additional responsibilities in the delivery of our objectives.

These are: The RVC Council, the College Executive Committee (CEC), the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDC), the EDI Unit and Heads of Department with the support of departmental EDI Champions.

Key enablers in the delivery of our objectives are:

- Transparent, reliable and robust data
- Providing reliable and robust data which will support the monitoring of progress and evaluate impact. To avoid duplication of effort, data-gathering and analysis will as far as possible, be consistent with the demands of external bench-marking schemes and annual reporting activities.
- Education, Communication and Engagement
- A clear EDI training, communication and engagement plan for students,

staff and stakeholders, will support the implementation of this strategy.



“Every individual matters.  
Every individual has a role to play.  
Every individual makes a difference.”

**Jane Goodall**

**IDENTITY**

**EQUITY**

**DIVERSITY**

**INCLUSION**

**BELONGING**

## EDI GOVERNANCE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The EDC which is chaired by the Vice-Principal for EDI and comprises membership from all areas of the RVC including staff, students and Trade Union representatives, will provide the oversight and updates on progress made towards the EDI strategy and will ultimately report to the CEC.

The EDC provides direction and guidance on the prioritisation of activities and areas of focus through the various institutional equality action plans such as the Equality Objective and Action Plan, the renewed Athena SWAN Action Plan (2022-2027) and any future action plans.

The EDC will also work through the newly developed EDI Action Groups to support and advance the strategic objectives.

The College Executive Committee (CEC) will hold key accountability for ensuring progress is made in all areas of EDI.

The EDI Unit will lead and coordinate all activities, working with the departments and various teams across the institution.

The Heads of Departments, with the support of departmental EDI Champions, are responsible for the delivery of their local EDI action plans and the continued promotion of EDI within their departments.

RVC Council has overall accountability for legal compliance.





Established in 1791, the RVC is the UK's longest-standing veterinary college – with a proud heritage of innovation in veterinary science, clinical practice and education.