



The School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy
2023 - 2027

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the strategic approach of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (SMMSN) at the University of Aberdeen towards upholding the highest principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The aim is to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for every member of staff and every student within the School and that the culture supports everyone to achieve their highest potential.

This is a school-level strategy document and is therefore intended to be part of the wider EDI Strategy of the University and to complement existing EDI related activities of the University. Information relating to these activities can be accessed [here](#) (for staff) and [here](#) (for students). It is also intended to provide a strategic framework to guide the EDI related activities of the five institutes which form the SMMSN.

The definitions of equality, diversity, and inclusion that we use are:

EQUALITY

Equality in working and studying environments means equal opportunities and fairness for staff, students, job applicants and prospective students. It is where individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect and where rights are respected irrespective of their age, disability (including physical, cognitive and mental health conditions leading to disability), race and ethnicity, gender, gender re-assignment, marriage or civil partnership, sexual orientation, parent or care-giver status, pregnancy, religion or belief, socio-economic status or any other characteristics.

DIVERSITY

Diversity is about recognizing, respecting, and celebrating differences and the benefits this brings. A diverse environment is one in which a wide range of identities, backgrounds and mindsets coexist and contribute in different ways. This includes people with different ages, religions, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientation and those with disabilities.

INCLUSION

An inclusive environment is one in which everyone feels they belong, their contribution is valued, and they are able to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances. An inclusive work and study environment has fair policies and practices in place and enables a diverse range of people to work and study together effectively.

EQUITY

Equity acknowledges that opportunities are not the same amongst different groups or individuals. Resources and opportunities are shared based on what each individual requires. All individuals should be treated justly and fairly.

The School EDI strategy complements the commitments of the University's [Aberdeen 2040](#) vision and the four strategic themes within it: Inclusive, Interdisciplinary, International and Sustainable. The principles and values expressed in other strategic initiatives such as the Advance HE's Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter and Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index 2022 also served as guiding principles in the development of the strategy.

Responsibility for the implementation of the EDI strategy belongs to all staff and students within the School.

OUR VISION AND VALUES:

Our vision is to foster a culture of fairness within the School where differences are valued and respected. It is recognised that the research, teaching and working environments are improved through equality, diversity, and inclusion. To achieve this, the School will engender the following values:

1. **We are all in this together:** Successfully upholding equality, diversity and inclusion is everyone's responsibility. It should be integrated into all areas of School activity.
2. **We will be willing to share experiences, to listen and to learn:** The landscape of equality, diversity and inclusion is ever-changing. We each have a responsibility to ensure that we uphold the highest standards and values of equality, diversity and inclusion through our words and actions. None of us should be afraid to ask for support or share our experiences. We should listen with care, compassion, and patience. Staff and students are encouraged to learn continually. Good practice should be highlighted, acknowledged, and shared. The goal is to create a culture where everyone has a greater understanding of the experiences of others, and always treats others with respect, empathy, and compassion.
3. **We will always meet our obligations:** There are obligatory commitments from regulators and funders regarding compliance with EDI standards in the Higher Education sector. The compliance with these EDI standards will be our priority. Everyone will be expected to work towards meeting these standards with full commitment.
4. **We will create a nurturing environment:** All staff and students should feel welcome and have a sense of wellbeing and belonging. Ideas that promote a nurturing environment for our community are welcome as we aim to continually improve our place of study and work. All suggestions for improvement should be sent to smmns.edi@abdn.ac.uk. Feedback should also highlight areas where the School has failed to uphold our core values. Stakeholders who are required to provide adjustments to individuals who need additional support, will be fully consulted.
5. **We will have zero tolerance for any form of discrimination or bullying:** We will treat all cases of discrimination and bullying seriously. In practical terms, we will listen to individuals with concerns and will act in a timely manner to stop further harm by following appropriate University procedures. We will investigate any concerns before any action is taken. Action may include a range of measures from mediation to dismissal depending on the specifics of each case but will always be appropriate.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND COMMITMENTS OF THE SMMSN EDI COMMITTEE

The School, through its School EDI Committee, commits to the following:

1. **To facilitate the implementation of the inclusive commitments of Aberdeen 2040 and EDI charters:** Evidence shows that such actions ultimately improve the culture and environment for everyone.
2. **To monitor and improve what we are doing:** The School will make sure that the values, commitments, and strategic objectives described in this document are implemented. We will constantly monitor the progress towards our vision and modify plans as required based on measures of success and feedback from our community.
3. **To use evidence to inform our decision-making:** The development of meaningful EDI actions must be underpinned by evidence. Benchmarking and subsequent monitoring of the position will be undertaken to ensure that actions are being appropriately implemented. The School EDI Committee will facilitate the creation and maintenance of systems that ensure that quantitative and qualitative data can be gathered to support actions and decisions relating to EDI matters.
4. **To work with external placement providers to ensure our core values are shared with and upheld by partner organisations and our volunteers:** We will work with external providers of placements to ensure a positive experience for our students. We will develop a mechanism to share information and experiences so that we are able to address any concerns raised by students when in partner organisations.
5. **To work with the University EDI Committee, other School EDI committees and University-wide Equality networks and groups to implement and share good practice and policies:** One of the primary roles of the School EDI committee will be to implement policies passed by the University. These will be influenced by University-wide networks such as the staff LGBTQIA+ or the Parents and Carers network. The School EDI-leads meeting is a forum to share good practice and common issues and will also influence our work.
6. **To help our staff and students understand requirements and responsibilities with respect to equality, diversity, and inclusion:** The School EDI committee will work with colleagues from Human Resources, other relevant individuals and networks to provide opportunities to undertake meaningful and relevant EDI training and awareness-raising activities.
7. **To listen and act where appropriate:** We will listen to what staff and students have to say about equality, diversity and inclusion and implement change where needed. We want to hear all comments, positive or negative, about how we as the School EDI Committee are doing. We welcome comments and suggestions at any time to smmsn.edi@abdn.ac.uk.
8. **To be accountable to staff and students within the School:** We will do this by sharing information on what we are doing, both within the School and publicly on our website. This is both to celebrate success but also to highlight areas for improvement.

CONTEXT AND WHERE WE ARE NOW:

School level:

- All five institutes within the School hold the Athena SWAN bronze award. Their individual action plans can be found [here](#). The School aims to apply for a School-level Athena SWAN award in 2023.
- The University conducted a staff survey in 2020 and the results can be accessed [here](#). The report includes a red-amber-green report of how all the Schools within the University fared.

University level:

- The work of the University's EDI Committee including the minutes of recent meetings and Meetings Digest can be accessed [here](#).
- The University is applying for the Race Equality award and work that is ongoing on this front can be accessed [here](#).
- The University's Antiracism Strategy can be accessed [here](#).
- The University holds a Stonewall Silver Award for its support of LGBTQIA+ students and staff. More information is available [here](#).
- Diversity initiatives such as Disability confident, British Sign language, Inclusive Facilities and relevant action plans can be accessed [here](#).
- Work on Decolonising our Curriculum can be accessed [here](#).

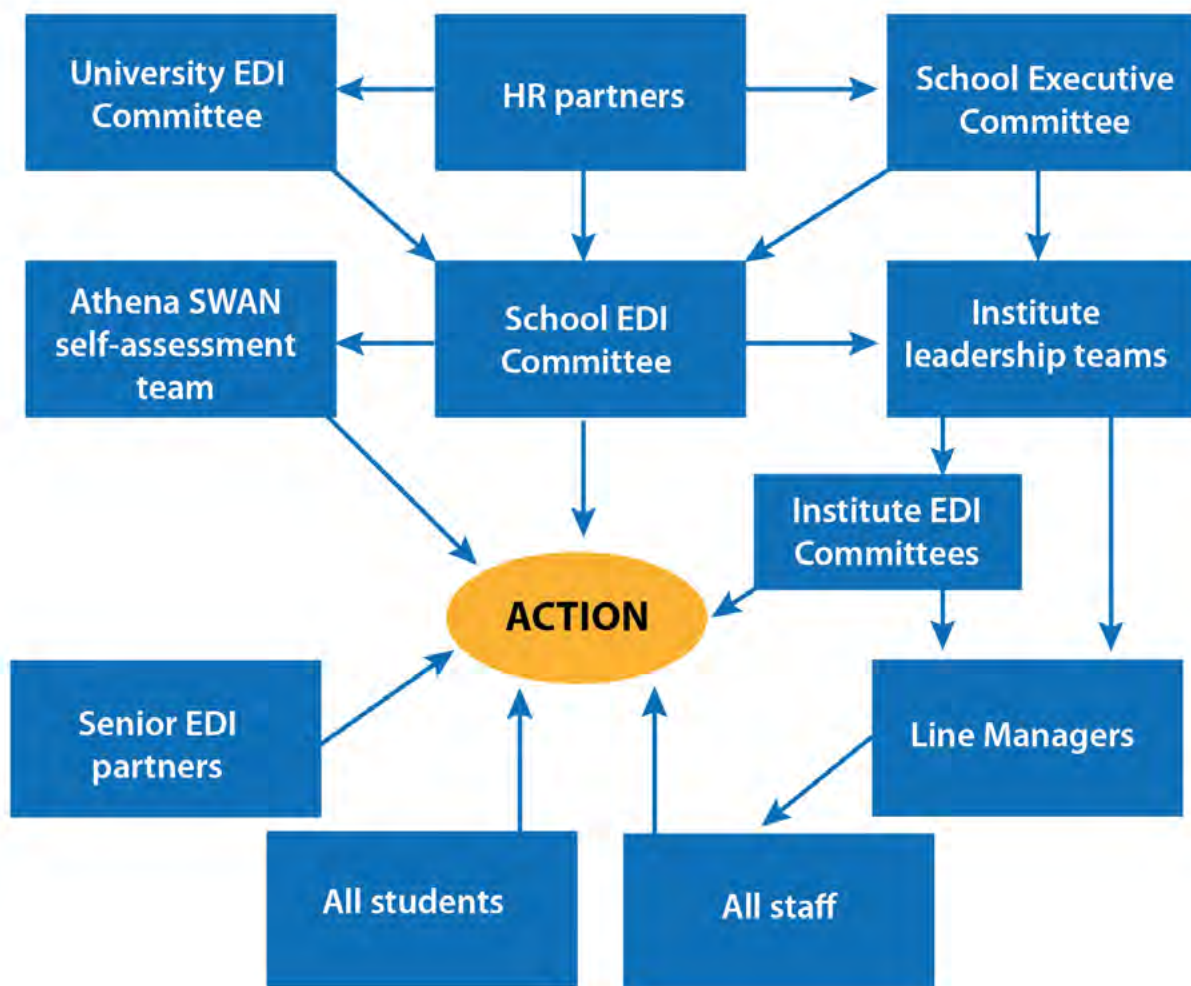


STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The actions outlined here are strategically important and will help us achieve our vision. These are by no means comprehensive but attempt to cover the broad areas of action that we will work on within the next five years. The School Executive and Institute leadership teams will be responsible for resource allocation to empower us to fulfil these actions. While suggestions are made regarding the key actors in implementing and evaluating each action, it will be the responsibility of every member of staff and student within the School to contribute towards achieving these actions.

While the action plan below names a group or committee as the “owner” responsible for driving the action to completion, all of us are stakeholders and the complex interactions of the various stakeholders responsible for implementing the Action Plan is shown in the organogram in Figure 1 reiterating the need for everyone to engage with this strategy.

Figure 1: Organogram showing the various stakeholders responsible for each EDI strategic



Item	Action	Rationale and specific actions	Group or Committee responsible for the action
1	To implement the Inclusive commitments of Aberdeen 2040 within SMMSN	The Aberdeen 2040 strategy charts the direction of the University of Aberdeen for the next 20 years. We will work with the University's EDI Committee to implement specific actions within our school	School EDI Committee
2	To prepare and submit a School-level Athena Swan application and implement its actions	All five Institutes within the School have a bronze-level AS award and are at various stages of renewal and Action implementation. There is a considerable degree of overlap in many of these actions. By submitting a School-level application, resources will be pooled. Submitting a School-level application also ensures that all institutes benefit from actions implemented. We will work with the University's Athena Swan partner to submit a School-level AS application and continue work on implementing action plans	School Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team (AS SAT) and Institute AS SAT teams
3	To fully implement the University's antiracism strategy and actions from the Race Equality Charter	The University is in the process of submitting a Race Equality Charter bronze level application. It has also recently published an ambitious antiracism strategy 2022-2025. The School EDI Committee will perform relevant actions to implement the antiracism strategy and the Race Equality charter within the School. We will disseminate information amongst staff and students about the ongoing Race Equality charter work outcomes from surveys and planned actions. We will work with our School's race champions to implement actions at School-level	University Race Equality Strategy group, School Race champions
4	To work with HR partners where necessary to implement policies specifically designed to tackle EDI issues	Specific HR policies may need to be developed for EDI-related issues. We will work with HR to undertake this	School and Institutes' EDI Committees
5	To improve systems and processes in collecting equality, diversity, and inclusion related data	This will help in self-assessment, continual improvement and to support concrete implementation plans. We will work with HR, and the senior management of the School and University to ensure we have improved data systems	Senior EDI partners and HR partners
6	To run staff and student culture surveys and focus groups where needed	To collect appropriate quantitative and qualitative data we will run staff culture surveys which we will analyse and use to benchmark, develop and implement actions and measure progress	School Athena Swan SAT
7	To implement EDI-related training to all staff and students. School Executive, Institutes' Leadership Teams, EDI and HR Partners and School Staff Development Strategy Group	It will be essential to develop, implement and monitor uptake of meaningful EDI-related training for all students and staff. We will also target Line Managers to ensure they are trained appropriately	Staff Development Strategy group, along with EDI partners and HR partners
8	To monitor our reporting mechanisms to ensure that staff and students can raise issues	We want everyone to have a sense of belonging to the School. When issues are raised, we will close the loop where possible so people who have raised the issue are aware that action has been taken	School EDI Committee. HR partners
9	To work with placement providers so that students' experience in terms of EDI while on placements are similar to that while on University campuses	We will develop a mechanism to share information and experiences so that we are able to address any concerns that students raise when in partner organisations. This includes for example placements in industry, clinical placements in healthcare setting, and Schools' placement	Relevant Institute EDI Committees and Education Lead teams

Being a strategic document, a detailed implementation plan and evaluation process is not described in this document. It is envisaged that each Institute within the School will develop an implementation plan based on the profile of their staff and students according to identified areas of priority. The respective Institute level EDI committees and the leadership teams are responsible for delivering these action plans with the support of the School EDI Committee, and to evaluate and report back to the School EDI Committee and School Executive.

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Alternative Formats:

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team by emailing smmsn.edi@abdn.ac.uk

