



EDI SMART OBJECTIVES

2025-2026

Group members

Colleges

- Banbury and Bicester College
- Bracknell and Wokingham College
- City of Oxford College
- Farnham College
- Guildford College
- Merrist Wood College
- Reading College
- The Leys College

Training

- Activate Apprenticeships
 - Activate Business School
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Our next steps: a roadmap to achieve our EDI objectives

Based on the findings in our 2024-2025 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report, conversations with staff and students gathered since April 2025, and changes in the EDI landscape on a local, national, legal and education-centric space, it has been necessary to put together five EDI aims for our organisation.

EDI Aim

AIM 1: ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE:

We will be open, transparent and accountable regarding EDI at Activate Learning. Everyone who connects with Activate Learning, both online and in person, will know what EDI means to us, and those who access our organisation as staff, volunteers and learners, will be given the knowledge, skills and support to strengthen and uphold our culture of inclusion and belonging.

AIM 2: PRIMARY FOCUS = ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

We will make our spaces accessible and inclusive so that everyone feels that they belong at Activate Learning.

AIM 3: PRIMARY FOCUS = STUDENT SUPPORT

We will continue to build on the support we offer students in their learning and safeguarding experiences to ensure that they feel seen, respected, included and valued, and that they are supported in turn to respect, celebrate and include others.

AIM 4: PRIMARY FOCUS = STAFF SUPPORT

We will continue to build on the support we offer staff, whatever their role at our organisation, so that they feel seen, respected, included and valued, and that they are supported to respect, celebrate and include others, meet legal obligations and model ways of creating an organisational culture in which everyone feels that they belong

AIM 5: PRIMARY FOCUS = EFFECTIVE GATHERING AND USE OF DATA

We will continue to work to make our organisation, and all who participate in it as staff, students and volunteers reflective of the demographics in the communities we exist to serve, where everyone has a fair opportunity to achieve their potential. We will do this using an evidence-based approach to set our priorities and track our progress.

The five aims cover:

- ▶ organisational culture
- ▶ accessible and inclusive environments
- ▶ student experience
- ▶ staff experience
- ▶ effective gathering and use of data

All five EDI aims were chosen following discoveries made in this year's report as well as wider work carried out by the EDI Manager, incorporating feedback from staff and students.

The EDI Committee will support our organisation to work towards these aims through the completion of deliverable SMART objectives – specific, measurable, accountable, realistic and time-bound goals that elevate us from simply gathering data to putting our findings into action.

The objectives, housed in their own planning document, will be refreshed annually, and our progress and challenges within this academic year will provide the narrative for next year's report.

We look forward to progressing our EDI aims and ambitions with increased involvement, connection and support across our organisation.

Working together, we can create a culture in which everyone feels that they learn, thrive and belong.

SMART objectives for 2025-2026

AIM 1: ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE:

We will be open, transparent and accountable regarding EDI at Activate Learning. Everyone who connects with Activate Learning, both online and in person, will know what EDI means to us, and those who access our organisation as staff, volunteers and learners, will be given the knowledge, skills and support to strengthen and uphold our culture of inclusion and belonging.

► Why this aim?

At Activate Learning we believe that inclusion is everyone's right and responsibility, and that everyone deserves to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect. We are a very large organisation, comprising of approximately 2,500 staff and 25,000 learners, all with different identities, experiences, and perspectives, but united in our common purpose: using forward-thinking approaches to transform lives through learning.

We know from countless research sources that creating fair, safe, inclusive and respectful organisational culture helps people to learn, develop and grow in line with our learning philosophy. Inclusion is, as a result, one of the key pillars of our 2025-2030 organisational strategy.

It is therefore vital that we establish a clear position, as signed off by our leaders, on EDI and what it means to us as an organisation, as well as providing staff with EDI knowledge and skills, and psychologically safe spaces for staff and students to share their experiences and needs with us.

► What will we do to move closer to this aim during this academic year?

1. We will sign up to the Association of Colleges' (AoC) EDI Charter by the end of November 2025 to demonstrate our commitment to EDI as part of the wider Further Education and Higher Education sectors. Our Chief People Officer and EDI Manager will lead on the administrative work required to complete this process, which involves gathering signatures from our CEO and Chair of Governors and submitting our commitments in written form to the AoC.

The EDI Committee is collectively responsible for ensuring that all our work meets or surpasses the objectives laid out in the AoC EDI Charter, to ensure we are fulfilling our responsibilities, which will be reviewed at each EDI Committee meeting.

2. We will have a formal, public position on EDI and Activate Learning, signed off by our Group Executive Team and Board of Governors, and made accessibly available to all staff and students by March 2026. This work will be led by the EDI Manager with support from the Head of Employee Experience, the Chief People Officer, and the Group Head of PR & Communications.
3. The EDI Manager will design bespoke mandatory in-person EDI training for all staff at Activate Learning by March 2026 and will deliver this to the Senior Leadership Team and the EDI Ally Network by May 2026. We will have a concrete delivery plan in place by May 2026 for rolling out training to all staff from the start of the 2026-2027 Academic Year.

AIM 2: PRIMARY FOCUS = ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

We will make our spaces accessible and inclusive so that everyone feels that they belong at Activate Learning.

► Why this aim?

As we strive to become a leading organisation for neurodivergent and disabled students, and with an ever-increasing interest in EDI matters within our workforce and student populations due to current local, national and international events, now is the time for us to harness, refine and master disability inclusion practices.

Furthermore, the local communities we exist to serve have become more diverse and catering to the needs of all students and staff, whatever their religion or belief, and whatever their health and disability status, is of paramount importance.

This will support our organisation's continued growth and strengthen its reputation in the communities we exist to serve.

► What will we do to move closer to this aim during this academic year?

1. We will begin fundraising for a disability-inclusive bus to ensure all our learners and staff can attend trips, team days and organisational events, with a goal of acquiring at least 50% of costs through funding bids and fundraising events held this year – we estimate this to total £20k, meaning we would need to achieve our fundraising target of at least £10k this academic year. This work will be overseen by the EDI Committee's Curriculum Manager, with support from the Mind Green team.
2. By May 2025, our online spaces, including our social media and webpages, will showcase a diverse range of staff and students and their voices. Our Group Head of PR & Communications will lead on this work.

Staff and student voices will also be more sought after and showcased in newsletters, internal communications, data analysis and reports as an ongoing matter for all EDI Committee members to champion, to support our accountability, immediate work and longer-term goal setting.

3. The EDI Manager will meet at least once per month with the Employee Wellbeing Lead to ensure that EDI and Wellbeing work remains aligned and rooted in principles of psychological safety and wellbeing. This will commence from December 2025 and be an ongoing task, with the EDI Manager reporting key findings to the EDI Committee at each meeting thereafter.
4. Our policy team will ensure that universal policies (ones that affect staff, students and the public) will all be made accessible, with a HTML full version and an easy-read, pictorial option available publicly on our website by the end of this academic year. This work will be supported and promoted where necessary by the Group Head of PR & Communications and the EDI Manager.



AIM 3: PRIMARY FOCUS = STUDENT SUPPORT

We will continue to build on the support we offer students in their learning and safeguarding experiences to ensure that they feel seen, respected, included and valued, and that they are supported in turn to respect, celebrate and include others.

► Why this aim?

This aim is in line with Government guidance on British Values, Ofsted principles on inclusion, and in meeting our legal obligations and striving for best practice in education and safeguarding. We know that when students feel respected and safe they are more likely to disclose any harm they have experienced, and to learn with greater ease and confidence.

► What will we do to move closer to this aim during this academic year?

1. We will create a campaign, including lesson plans for non-SEND students and staff CPD resources, to support SEND inclusion from staff and students across all Activate Learning sites. This work will be led by the Director of High Needs Commissioning and Delivery and Group Director of Student Experience and Safeguarding, and completed by May 2026.
2. By March 2026 we will create and implement an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Student Ally Network, modelled on the existing Wellbeing Ally framework, to champion inclusion and local student engagement. This network will include Looked After Children, Care Leavers, Young Carers and Young Parents as well as students with other marginalised identities and experiences, as we have identified the need to centre the voices of our most vulnerable learners, which include these groups.

The Director – Designated Safeguarding Lead will lead on this work with support from the Group Director of Student Experience and Safeguarding and the EDI Manager. We will measure success by holding ourselves accountable to the

timeframe we have committed to, and through monitoring feedback from students regarding their awareness of the opportunity and the experiences of those who join the network.

3. To continue our work on decolonising the curriculum, by January 2026 we will analyse the data from our FE and HE Surveys carried out last year. By April 2026 we will then use our findings to lead conversations with students through the EDI Ally Student Network and other spaces to create a plan of action by the end of the academic year. We will track progress by providing updates at each EDI Committee meeting. This work will be led by the Group Director of Digital Education and Artificial Intelligence, and the Director of High Needs Commissioning and Delivery, along with the Curriculum Manager.



AIM 4: PRIMARY FOCUS = STAFF SUPPORT

We will continue to build on the support we offer staff, whatever their role at our organisation, so that they feel seen, respected, included and valued, and that they are supported to respect, celebrate and include others, meet legal obligations and model ways of creating an organisational culture in which everyone feels that they belong.

► Why this aim?

When people feel that they belong and can learn, grow, develop and connect meaningfully and authentically at work, they give their best work, stay longer at organisations and can contribute to a healthy and supportive workplace environment, which benefits everyone. There are fewer absences due to stress, less staff turnover and lower spending on recruitment and legal fees, and greater retention and loyalty to an organisation and its purpose.

Being inclusive is good for everyone and makes excellent business sense. It's also a pillar of our values and we believe it's the right thing to do. Our workforce are role models to our students and within the communities we exist to serve, and we want to make sure that we are known as an organisation that cares about everyone.

► What will we do to move closer to this aim during this academic year?

In addition to providing comprehensive bespoke mandatory training, here are some things we will be focussing on this year to support our workforce:

1. By March 2026 we will create and implement an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Staff Ally Network, modelled on the existing Wellbeing Ally framework, ensuring there is at least one trained EDI Ally per campus to champion inclusion and local staff engagement. The EDI Manager will lead on this work with support from Group Campus Directors and the Staff Voice Network. We will measure impact through staff feedback.

2. We will strengthen employee knowledge around sexual harassment and third-party harassment, ensuring our organisation's legal compliance, through the development and rollout of updated guidance materials and manager toolkits by July 2026 and a thorough audit of related policies and processes by April 2026. The EDI Manager will lead on this work in collaboration with the Group HR Manager, with support where required from the Head of Employee Experience. We will measure impact through post-session feedback and tracking any related HR case data trends and use this data to review and improve any resources and approaches in sharing them.
3. We will continue to provide an online psychologically safe space for all staff to explore EDI matters through bi-monthly Inclusion in Action Network meetings. EDI Ally Network members will be encouraged to attend whenever possible to represent the voices of staff working at their campuses. We will gather feedback after each network meeting to monitor its efficacy and continue to improve this space. The EDI Manager will organise and facilitate these meetings and advertise them on Viva Engage, and will require EDI Committee support in advertising and encouraging attendance across the organisation.
4. We will continue to provide staff with opportunities to learn and develop by running monthly workshops on requested topics. These may also include opportunities to hold space following local, national and international events that impact EDI so that staff with lived experience can share their experiences and feelings, and allies can learn how to offer effective support. In addition, we will post monthly content on our EDI Viva Engage page for staff to connect with regarding Inclusion Calendar days and current events, opening this up as another avenue to capture and centre staff voice on EDI matters. The EDI Manager will lead on this work.

AIM 5: PRIMARY FOCUS = EFFECTIVE GATHERING AND USE OF DATA

We will continue to work to make our organisation, and all who participate in it as staff, students and volunteers reflective of the demographics in the communities we exist to serve, where everyone has a fair opportunity to achieve their potential.

We will do this using an evidence-based approach to set our priorities and track our progress.

► Why this aim?

Using an evidence-based approach to providing support helps us to make informed decisions rather than acting on biases, assumptions or trends that may not be reflective of the needs of those accessing or seeking to access Activate Learning as students or staff.

► What will we do to move closer to this aim during this academic year?

- 1.** We will continue to drive completion levels of staff diversity data profiles, with an increase in complete employee profiles of at least 10% by the end of this academic year and explore barriers to sharing demographics data so that we can better understand our staff identities, experiences and support needs. This data will be compared to local 2021 Census data and other relevant local and national data. The EDI Manager, with support from the Head of HR Operations, will lead on this work. They will receive support in plugging these efforts through communications from the Group Head of PR & Communications. If we reach our target in data completion rates, we will look to implement other forms of pay gap reporting from the next academic year, such as ethnicity pay gap reporting.
- 2.** By May 2026 we will review our full approach to recruitment, retention and staff learning and development opportunities – from advertising to recruitment to retention, with a focus on our approach to hiring in management

and leadership roles, and the pathways we are using to support positive action in improving diversity. This work will be led by the EDI Manager and the Talent Acquisition Manager, with support from the Head of Employee Experience and the Head of Talent Development.

- 3.** We will continue to carry out gender pay gap reporting and present a proposal to address imbalances to the Group Executive Team by January 2026, with an agreed strategy ready to be implemented from September 2026. The EDI Manager, Head of Employee Experience and Head of HR Operations will lead on this work with support from the Chief People Officer.
- 4.** By May 2026 we will create a strategic plan to grow our High Needs Provision. This work will be led by the Director of High Needs Commissioning and Delivery and the Group Director of Student Experience and Safeguarding.
- 5.** We will compare our student demographics data at colleges across each county to local 2021 Census data and other relevant local and national data, with an additional lens of exploring student makeup across different faculties. Our Group Director of Quality and Consistency will lead on this work and present findings by May 2026 to help us make targeted approaches to welcoming and supporting under-represented students.