



Belonging report

September 2025

Belonging report

Belonging at Northeastern University London means that every person who comes through our doors brings extraordinary value – your unique background, perspectives, and abilities are among our greatest strengths. Our different identities and lived experiences aren’t just celebrated here; they are essential to our creativity, innovation and excellence as a global university.

We are committed to sustaining a supportive environment where you’re invited to be fully yourself and to support others to do the same, to share your insights, ask bold questions, and collaborate with minds that challenge your thinking. From our global curriculum and experiential teaching methods to London’s multicultural backdrop and vibrant student and staff communities, we encourage you to participate fully and thrive – here you don’t just find your place, you help create it. Your story matters, your voice is needed, and you belong here.

Belonging at Northeastern University London is championed by a range of teams and people across the organisation including our dedicated EDI committee that reports directly to our Executive Committee, chaired by our Assistant Dean and Director of Belonging, and comprising four Associate

Directors across our three faculties and apprenticeships. We all work together to ensure your belonging journey is inspiring and supported every step of the way.

You can contact the team at any point at belonging@nulondon.ac.uk

In this latest report you can find out more about our key achievements in Belonging and how we have performed against our main objectives from January to September 2025. Our previous Belonging Report covering Sept 2024 to January 2025 can be accessed [here](#).

Key sectoral achievement:

During this academic year, Northeastern University London has been one of nineteen contributing members of Advance HE’s co-development group for the new [Inclusive Institutions Framework](#).

Our current Belonging Team



Dr Niamh Bhalla, Assistant Dean, Director of Belonging, Associate Professor Art History



Toby Chai, Associate Director Belonging Social Sciences, Lecturer in Architecture and Design



Dr Lauren Adams, Associate Director Belonging Apprenticeships, Assistant Professor Biological & Academic Practice



Dr Hossein Dabbagh, Associate Director Belonging Humanities, Assistant Professor Philosophy



Dr Marianna Macedo, Associate Director Belonging CoMENS, Assistant Professor Data Science



Goal #1 - Increasing the diversity of our student body

Widening Participation

We were pleased to report that we exceeded our targets for the 2023-24 academic year, and we are monitoring the ongoing applications for the 2024-25 academic year:

	September 2023 entry	September 2024 entry	September 2025
% of underrepresented students - UK applications	35%	29%	33.7%
% of underrepresented students - UK offers	24%	31%	29.9%

Note: numbers are up to date as of 28/07/2025

Widening Participation Outreach

The Widening Participation (WP) team and student ambassadors have visited an additional 10 schools across London for careers fairs, engaging with over 150 Year 7-13 (aged 11-18) students.

- We hosted 20 “Discover Days” throughout the spring and summer terms, with over 300 students from Years 8 to 12 (aged 12-17) visiting our campus. These young people explored university life through campus tours, Q&A sessions with our student ambassadors, and subject-specific workshops including English and psychology taster sessions
- We hosted three additional visits from IntoUniversity centres, a key charity partner, engaging with 107 students through Primary Focus days, Buddy Programme visits, and a Primary graduation event
- We continued our successful partnership with The King’s Trust (formerly The Prince’s Trust), hosting multiple groups of students at risk of exclusion for Discover Days, with 82 students participating across seven separate visits throughout the spring term

Widening Participation Outreach (continued)

- We began working with Debate Mate, hosting the Debate Mate Primary Cup with around 170 primary school students from 11 different schools across East London, providing a university experience and culminating their award-winning social mobility programme
- We successfully completed our Innerscope KS3&4 aspire programme with two local London primary schools, culminating in campus visits where students participated in academic taster lectures and worked with student ambassadors
- We hosted four additional on-campus meetings as part of our partnership with Parent Power, including a special half-term session where parents could bring their young people along. We delivered expanded sessions covering student finance, post-16 education options, careers after university, and degree apprenticeships, including a special half-term session where parents could bring their young people along. We delivered expanded sessions covering student finance, post-16 education options, careers after university, and degree apprenticeships

When asked what they found most useful about the programme, one Year 10 student commented:

I enjoyed the interactiveness of this program and how it helped me as a student to see leaving in a new light and motivated me to improve my education & self being”.

Innerscope programme Bow School

When asked what was most helpful about the visit, a Year 12 student shared:

The start of the day where we were given information on the many opportunities available to us in the future”.

from a March 2025 Discover Day

When asked about the most valuable part of the activity, a Year 11 student commented:

Knowing how to pick the right university and do my personal statement”.

from a June 2025 Discover Day

When asked about the difference the activity made to student perceptions, a teacher from Hendon School noted:

Dispelled myth of all universities being ‘old’, introduced them to studying abroad, taught them about student life outside of studies, introduced them to disciplines/course titles and structures”.

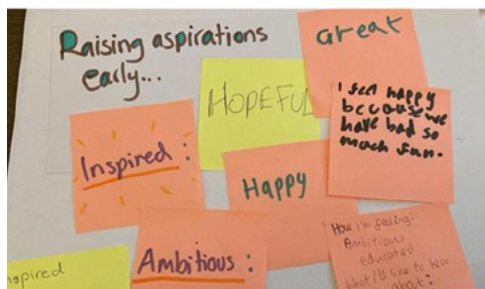
from a March 2025 Discover Day

Summer School

In July 2025, the WP team hosted our third on-campus summer school, welcoming 59 Year 11 (aged 15-16) students from across London, the Southeast and the Midlands for an immersive four-day experience.



Students participated in interdisciplinary academic taster sessions covering law and politics, English, history and philosophy, and psychology and business, giving them valuable insight into studying these subjects at university.



Alongside academic sessions, they engaged in workshops on study skills, student finance, and student life, equipping them for their transition to sixth form, college, and beyond. The week concluded with a celebration event on Friday afternoon, attended by parents and guests, marking a successful and inspiring programme.

A quote from a Year 11 student on LinkedIn:

“I'm thrilled to say that this week has been one of the most transformative of my life - a week that pushed me far beyond my comfort zone and helped me step out of the introverted shell I've often stayed in.”

OfS Funded Outreach

We successfully reached over 500 students across several outreach events between February and June. Our primary impact came through three major career fairs - the Ignite Your Imagination STEM Careers event in February, the Southwark Careers Fair in May, and the Elephant and Castle careers fair in June. We also participated in smaller events including the Youth Assembly and two regional meetings, plus the BoE Virtual Apprenticeship Fair which focused on data science degree opportunities. By combining large public career fairs with smaller targeted sessions, and utilising both in-person and virtual formats, we were able to connect with students across different settings and reach a diverse range of interests throughout the period.

Breaking barriers: Career-building work experience for year 12 students

Participants from local schools with high proportions of students less likely to progress to higher education explored careers across five sectors: accounting and finance, data science, science, social research and transport planning.



Through hands-on projects delivered with industry employers and current Northeastern University London apprentices, students gained authentic insights into these professions while developing practical skills and confidence.

The programme also introduced students to degree apprenticeships as a financially accessible higher education pathway combining academic study with paid professional experience.



This year's scheme reached 228 young people, building on a successful pilot programme across 2023-2024 academic year with 83% of participating students reporting they were unsure they'd have found work experience without the scheme. Many found meeting current apprentices "relatable" and "inspiring." By showcasing how degree apprenticeships lead to rewarding careers in high-demand sectors, this initiative provided crucial learning and networking opportunities for underrepresented students facing barriers to higher education access.





Goal #2 - Increasing feelings of belonging within the university community

A key goal of our Belonging institutional action plan is to promote belonging holistically in Northeastern University London's culture. We are pleased to report that we have undertaken an increasingly broad range of activities in this area.

Belonging engagement stand

In late April 2024, our Belonging team held a student engagement stand in the Hub to introduce students and staff to Northeastern University London's new vision for Belonging and answer any questions they had. This face-to-face opportunity allowed our community members to connect directly with the team and share their thoughts on how we can continue to build an inclusive community where everyone belongs.

Synergy Group updates

Our Synergy Groups are staff-led groups for all staff and students formed around shared characteristics or experiences. They exist to:

- Celebrate our diverse identities and lived experiences.
- Provide professional development, networking and mentorship opportunities for their members.
- Provide advocacy and support to our university teams on matters related to the purpose of the group.
- Where relevant, engage in the development of community and industry partnerships and support and draw upon education activities related to their mission.
- Become a core part of the University fulfilling its core belonging objectives across teaching, research, professional departments and student life.

Women's Network

Over the past year, the Northeastern University London Women's Network has continued to grow in both reach and impact, creating meaningful opportunities for connection, learning, and support across our university community. From speaker-led discussions to the launch of our first peer-to-peer mentoring programme, we remain committed to empowering women through inclusive, thoughtful initiatives.

Mentor Coaching Programme launch (May 2025)

In Spring 2025, members of the Women's Network launched our first Mentor Coaching Programme, designed to foster a culture of support, learning, and empowerment across the university. This peer-led initiative connects experienced mentors with mentees seeking guidance on professional growth, leadership, and work-life balance.

Programme Objectives:

- Cultivate a coaching and mentorship culture within the University.
- Offer personalised development support through monthly mentor-mentee sessions.
- Create networking and learning opportunities through targeted workshops and seminars.
- Empower people to build confidence, clarify goals, and expand their impact.

Looking Ahead

The Women's Network remains focused on building an inclusive, energising space where women across our university feel heard, supported, and inspired. With the success of our pilot mentoring programme and our growing calendar of wellness and leadership events, we are excited to continue evolving in response to the needs of our community.

Thank you to all the staff, faculty, and volunteers who have contributed their time, energy, and ideas to make these initiatives possible.

LGBTQ+ Synergy Group

This past quarter, the synergy group ran a trans+ community cafe as our Pride headliner this June. This aimed to bring together a safe space where voices could be heard and where everyone could have fun! The café included tea and baked goods from an independent vegan female led company, the Female Glaze. There were also prizes and interactive games.



Addition of new Synergy Groups

Earlier this year, we did an open call for new Synergy Group proposals to expand our support for specific community groups. We are delighted to introduce two new synergy groups: AFaN and Ubuntu.

All Faiths and None (AFaN)

The mission of AFaN is to provide an inclusive space for interfaith and non-religious dialogue, value reflection, and community-building. The group welcomes all staff and students—religious, spiritual, secular, or questioning—and aims to encourage respectful dialogue about values, purpose, and identity.

We've established a formal leadership team. Hossein Dabbagh continues to serve as Chair and is now joined by Deborah Walker (Co-Chair) and an advisory group comprising Kate Grandjouan, Catharine Brown, and Saxony Andres. The team is now meeting regularly to plan activities that align with our Belonging goals and support the holistic well-being of our community.

Our work supports the Belonging goal of increasing feelings of community, recognition, and inclusion. While still in the build-up phase, the AFaN group is helping to:

- Create safe, pluralistic spaces for meaningful dialogue across differences.
- Support student and staff wellbeing by engaging the spiritual and existential dimensions of belonging.
- Provide leadership opportunities, listening, and shared learning, especially for individuals from minority or underrepresented worldviews.

We are committed to our events and structure continuing to evolve in a collaborative and inclusive direction, aligned with Northeastern's global Belonging priorities.

Ubuntu Black Network

The Ubuntu Black Network aims to support Belonging by facilitating a space where black members of our community and beyond are celebrated. All are welcomed to stand in solidarity, to learn and to connect with others.

We are getting ready for our launch.

Everything we do is intended to align with the university's aim of increasing feelings of belonging among our Black community on campus through celebration of identity and empowerment.

During the launch, we'll be sharing our vision and mission, and we also look forward to having a cultural table to showcase the diversity in Black identity. We are looking at ways to collaborate with other colleagues during Black History Month and are aiming to curate an event of our own too. Our focus will remain on the university's aims, and we hope that these events create a greater sense of visibility for the Black community and belonging and increased connection with the wider community.



Teaching and Learning

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an approach to teaching and learning that proactively accommodates the needs and abilities of all learners. The UDL Teaching & Learning Taskforce at Northeastern University London has developed an actionable strategy for enhancing inclusivity and accessibility in teaching and learning through the implementation of UDL principles.

These include:

- Updates to the accessible teaching & learning materials guidelines which will help faculty implement UDL principles in their classroom materials and assessment design.
- A programme of training sessions and fora where faculty and professional service staff can discuss challenges and success stories of UDL in their experience.
- Expansion of the taskforce next semester to include representatives from all administrative and student-facing departments, to develop a more comprehensive cohesive strategy.

Course design review: Fostering Belonging and inclusive practices in our classrooms

The Belonging team undertook a comprehensive review of faculty course design forms in relation to inclusivity and accessibility in Teaching & Learning. The exercise revealed impressive expertise in inclusive teaching practices across the University. Students continue to benefit from thoughtful, innovative approaches that demonstrate faculty commitment to developing excellence in inclusive education.

Key areas of excellence included:

- Outstanding use of co-creation and community agreements.
- Diverse assessment options accommodating different learning styles.
- Sensitive incorporation of lived experience while avoiding cultural stereotyping.
- Skilful engagement with challenging ideas through empathy and respectful disagreement.
- Enhanced accessibility through flipped learning models.
- Creative intercultural empathy-building through objects and texts.
- Commitment to global perspectives preparing students for international workplaces.
- Increased use of accessible teaching resources, particularly in slide design and lab work accessibility.

This review confirms our faculty's dedication to creating learning environments where every student belongs and thrives and has helped us to develop targeted initiatives to further enhance our progress in this area in the next academic year.

Experience/education session: Dealing with complex histories of scholarship and disciplines

Changing sector and societal values call us to re-evaluate how both we as educators and our students critically engage with course content. However, acting on these changes can present challenges in the classroom. In April, the Belonging team convened an Experience/education session that addressed how we can engage with material that has complex or problematic legacies within our disciplines.

The session invited presentations from three colleagues across our faculties to share experiences dealing with complex histories in their disciplines followed by a broader discussion with attendees. Colleagues covered the integration of positionality in the classroom, how to introduce diversity in disciplines with fixed curricula and the discussion of problematic histories tied to core material. Faculty emphasised the importance of addressing complex histories which can have benefits in addition to promoting critical awareness as it can drive engagement with students. The discussion highlighted several strategies such as embedding positionality in reflection exercises, contextualising curricula historically and modelling respect for diverse perspectives to students. A discussion between the presenters is being published soon as a podcast on the faculty resources canvas for those who could not make it to the event.

Belonging deep dives reading group - Energizing Learning: The Instructional Power of Conflict

The Belonging team facilitated our second reading group session which was focused on navigating conflict in the classroom. The reading, *Energizing Learning: The Instructional Power of Conflict* by David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson explored a diverse range of pedagogical approaches to conflict in the classroom and their effectiveness. The reading group received engagement from a wide range of staff from all faculty areas as well as professional and support staff. This event proved to be a space for stimulating debate and interdisciplinary learning. Inês Castro, Assistant Professor of Biology, kindly shared her takeaways from the session:

This session was a great opportunity to discuss a topic - conflict - that I sometimes struggle to include and allow students to explore in classes. The article we focused on raised some controversy on its own, which was fantastic and right on point! At a time where we're struggling to get our students to think critically about what they're learning, this has inspired me to introduce a debate in the next course I'm teaching, which I'm hoping will be a good opportunity for students to explore a complex topic (Gene editing) and come out of it with some new tools to use in their studies."

Award-winning apprenticeship provision

In June we were proud to be awarded '**Best Apprenticeship in IT**' at the national Apprenticeship Guide Awards, with judges praising our exceptionally high retention rates and the support we provide for our learners. Building on this success, we are delighted to announce that we have been shortlisted as finalists for the 'Learning Provider of the Year' at the Multicultural Apprenticeship Awards. Both reflect our ongoing commitment to fostering a sense of belonging, where every apprentice feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

Huge congratulations also go to Elishia Alleyne and Haseeb Ahmed – two of our very own apprentices who are finalists in the 'Health, Medical & Social Care' category at the Multicultural Apprenticeship Awards. Such a nomination recognises their dedication, talent, and positive impact. We look forward to cheering them on at the awards ceremony in November.

Partnering for Inclusive Apprenticeships

Northeastern University London has become a patron of the Multicultural Apprenticeship & Skills Alliance, reflecting our commitment to championing belonging within education and the workplace. The Alliance works nationally to promote and celebrate the achievements of apprentices from diverse backgrounds, connect employers with underrepresented talent, and shape best practice in inclusive skills development. As a patron, the University plays an active role in supporting these aims – contributing expertise, sharing success stories, and engaging with a network of employers, training providers and community organisations to create pathways that enable all learners to thrive, regardless of background.

Mental health: Our renewed focus

As part of Northeastern University London's ongoing commitment to supporting student mental health and wellbeing, we have re-registered for the **University Mental Health Charter (UMHC)**. The UMHC Framework offers universities research-backed strategies to create a more supportive environment for student and staff mental health. To drive this work forward, Caroline Evans (Head of Student Support) is leading a new internal group, consisting of appointed Leads for each of the five domains of the UMHC:

- **Learn** - led by Alison Statham (Associate Dean of T&L (Students)) & Lynette Thompson (Associate Director for T&L)

This domain ensures that the way students learn and study supports their mental health and wellbeing.

- **Support** - led by Sharon Godfrey (Lead Mental Health Adviser)

This domain ensures that we are providing the right mental health services and help when students and staff need it.

- **Work** - led by Caroline Ward (HR Director)

This domain focuses on creating a healthy workplace environment for all University staff.

- **Live** - led by Benjamin Pigott (Residence Life Manager)

This domain focuses on building a campus community where everyone feels safe, included, and supported in their daily life.

- **Enable** - led by Jas Verdi (Director of Student Engagement)

This domain establishes the leadership, coordination, and foundational practices that make effective mental health support possible across all areas of the University.

Creating a mentally healthy university takes all of us working together—we'd love to hear from students and staff who want to contribute ideas or get involved.

Some recent initiatives from the 'Support' domain include:

- The creation of a Service Evaluation Feedback form.
- Planning workshops for other professional services to promote the Mental Health & Student Support teams.
- Liaising with the 'Live' domain to promote 24/7 external support platforms Uwill and Togetherall.
- Preparing mental health promotional events for the academic year.

Research

Inclusive Research Practice

Research conducted at the university is increasingly attentive to EDI and Belonging principles, both in terms of research content and methodology. This includes:

Projects that explore issues related to social justice, inequality, identity, and representation. Some examples of recent activity:

The Multiracial Pasts, Equitable Futures (MPEF) phase of the Northeastern-funded TIER 3 Mapping Black London project, led by Prof Olly Ayers (History), has made significant EDI progress, centring on embedding Black British history into the UK National Curriculum and improving access to culturally responsive teaching resources. Key efforts include producing a comprehensive report on the place of Black History in the curriculum, convening a focus group with teachers to identify needs, and hosting an Educator Influencers' Event with policymakers to bridge classroom practice and policy. These efforts have resulted in a completed 6-week Key Stage 3 scheme of work with subject-specific Black British history resources across history, English, geography, and computer science. Some specific EDI outputs include student-friendly glossaries, worksheets, and home learning resources to ensure accessibility, as well as a planned microsite to make materials widely available. These initiatives will be piloted in schools toward the end of the year, with feedback loops via surveys, focus groups, and classroom observations, ensuring the content is refined for wider adoption and long-term inclusion in UK education.

Sofia Andreia Teixeira's (NetSI) recently funded project on improving PrEP policies for MSM in Portugal and France through

causal interference and data-driven modelling, led by INSERM.

Riccardo DiClemente's (NetSI) Leverhulme Research Project Grant application on wetland conversion and urban displacement, which aims to reveal the relationships between urban form, housing, and environmental vulnerability, addressing how urban sprawl onto wetlands can exacerbate social and environmental inequalities.

The adoption of participatory and co-produced research approaches, particularly where research engages with underrepresented or disadvantaged communities.

A growing awareness of the importance of inclusive language, accessibility, and cultural sensitivity in research design and dissemination.

Researcher development and culture

EDI is embedded in our researcher training and development programme, Northeastern University London Academy (NULA), including sessions on research ethics, integrity, and inclusive methodologies. For example, our session on co-production for research and its impact, led by David Phipps, Head of Research Impact Canada, highlighted how knowledge mobilisation can enhance the societal value of research by supporting engaged scholarship from inception to impact. It outlined practical approaches for embedding stakeholder engagement from the outset of research partnerships, and for aligning those partnerships with EDI principles from the start.

Early-career researchers are encouraged to consider EDI dimensions in their research planning. In addition, efforts are underway to strengthen support for diverse research careers, including inclusive mentoring and development opportunities.

Breaking barriers online series

Led by Niamh Bhalla, Assistant Dean, Director for Belonging, Associate Professor Art History and Dina Rabie, Assistant Professor in Economics

We hosted online workshops open to other universities with expert speakers around the theme of individual and institutional barriers for those underrepresented in research careers.

Diversity is fundamental to fostering innovative research environments and producing groundbreaking research that addresses complex global challenges. Research demonstrates that diverse teams generate more creative solutions, challenge conventional thinking, and produce higher-impact outcomes by drawing on varied perspectives, experiences, and methodological approaches. However, systemic barriers continue to limit the participation and progression of under-represented groups in academia, undermining the sector's capacity for innovation and discovery.

The workshop series addressed critical diversity challenges in academic research cultures through a three-session programme that explored barriers at individual, institutional, and sectoral levels. Distinguished experts Dr. Mahima Mitra (University of Oxford), Professor Christina Hughes (University of Kent), and Dr. Thandiwe Hara (University of Oxford) led these sessions which attracted 78 attendees from nine universities, demonstrating significant cross-institutional engagement. The workshops provided empirically grounded insights into career progression barriers, promotion processes, and research funding accessibility.

Research Excellence Framework

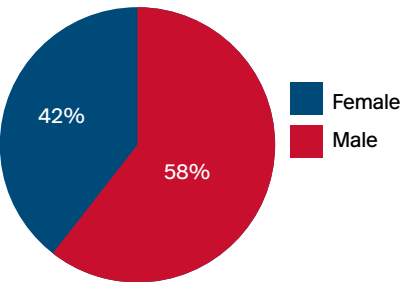
Northeastern University London will be making its first submission to the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF 2029, to be submitted in 2028). EDI is a central element of REF 2029, embedded across the assessment framework, and we are currently developing the necessary processes and structures to ensure compliance and embed EDI principles throughout our submission. This includes establishing mechanisms to conduct equality impact assessments, drafting a robust Code of Practice, providing EDI training to key decision-making committees, and ensuring that diversity is considered in the selection and presentation of research outputs. While we await several critical decisions from REF, and we will continue to develop our approach and adapt it as further guidance is released.



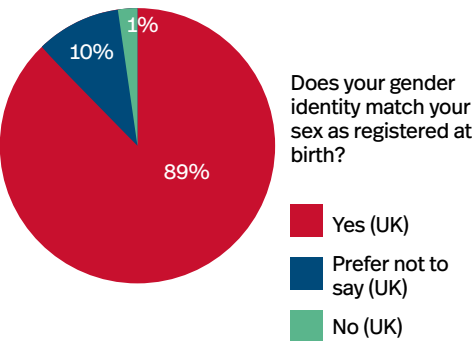
Goal #3 - Increasing the diversity of our faculty and professional staff

Human Resources

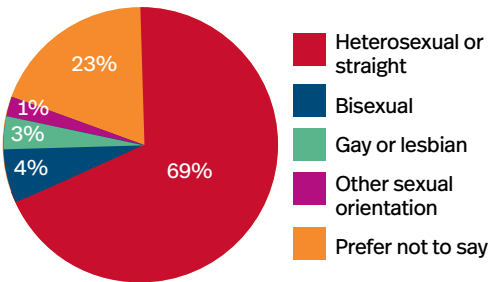
Gender of all staff August 2025



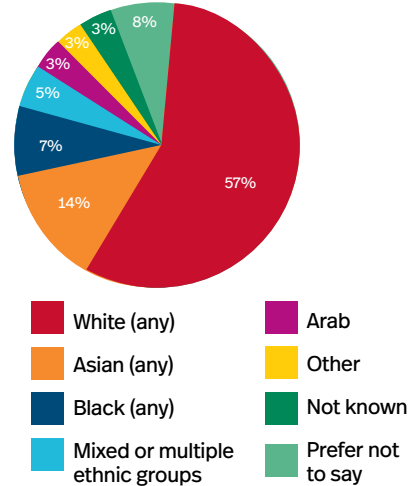
Disclosure of trans status of all staff August 2025



Sexual orientation of all staff August 2025



Ethnicity of all staff August 2025



We are proud to note that we have either exceeded or met sector averages regarding our diversity of staff in several areas. 58% of our staff identify as female, exceeding the HE average of 55%¹. 75% of our staff have responded to our trans disclosure question, showing higher rates of engagement compared to trends in the sector where 55%² of HEI staff have responded to this question. 34.8% of staff that have disclosed their ethnicity identify as global majority, showing an increase from 30.8% in January 2025. This exceeds the sector average of 19.1%³ in the UK. 8% of those who responded to our sexual orientation survey identified as gay, bisexual or other; resonating with the sector average of 8%.⁴

We've had Workday for almost a year and have integrated our recruitment processes on this system. We will be working on diversity reporting in terms of candidate profile and review where our jobs are being advertised, to ensure we are reaching as wider candidate pool as possible. We will also seek advice from Guild HE and Advance HE on recruitment advertising and a review of our job description template in terms of wording will ensure there is no gender bias.

We are also reviewing our promotion applications and where possible, looking at the diversity of the applicants. While the numbers are small, we may only be able to undertake high level monitoring, but we will also look to work with the Women's Network and others to support female early career academics.

As part of our Gender Equality plan, we also have a commitment to survey staff on a range of topics, which we hope to do early next year.

We are also hoping to run some neurodivergence training (open to all staff but primarily aimed at line managers) in the Autumn term. The aim of this being to guide and assist managers with reasonable adjustment requests and to ensure harmonious working relationships where neurodivergence can be celebrated.

¹ AdvanceHE. Equality in higher education - Staff statistical report 2024.

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*



Goal #4 - Build community partnerships that fulfil Belonging objectives

The University continues to build and deepen its partnerships with wide-ranging community, industry and public organisations. Recent highlights include:

London Data Week

As part of London Data Week in July, in association with The Alan Turing Institute, Northeastern University London hosted a Mapping our Stories Through Data community event highlighting the work of Mapping Black London and other Belonging-relevant themes. This was an interdisciplinary, interactive, initiative with a focus on our local area and open to the local community.

Multicultural Apprenticeships & Skills Alliance Patronage

We are proud to have become a patron of the Multicultural Apprenticeship & Skills Alliance (MASA). Becoming a patron of the MASA reflects the University's commitment to championing belonging and inclusivity within education and the workplace. The Alliance works nationally to promote and

celebrate the achievements of apprentices from diverse backgrounds, connect employers with underrepresented talent, and shape best practice in inclusive skills development. As a patron, the University plays an active role in supporting these aims—contributing expertise, sharing success stories, and engaging with a network of employers, training providers and community organisations to create pathways that enable all learners to thrive, regardless of background.

Entrepreneurship programme with City of London Education Strategy Unit

The City of London Education Strategy Unit partnered with the University for an entrepreneurship programme for its schools. The Unit oversees 17 academies and schools across London and provides referrals for City of London companies to providers of degree apprenticeships. School pupils joined from across the City of London to gain insights into entrepreneurship in the heart of our vibrant start-up ecosystem, learning about new kinds of possibilities for their futures.

AI Skills Bootcamp for social mobility with The Diana Award and ServiceNow

In May, the Duke of Sussex **announced** that The Diana Award, an international recognition set up in memory of the prince's late mother, was launching 'Pledge to Invest' in the leaders of the future. 'Far too many young people are locked out of leadership pipelines because we've failed to build truly inclusive and accessible pathways', the prince told Knowledge 2025, a conference in Las Vegas arranged by ServiceNow, a major provider of artificial intelligence agents.

Those words helped set into motion a collaboration between The Diana Award, **ServiceNow** and Northeastern University London, who ran an **accelerator programme** for young changemakers referred by the award.

The University is now in discussions to expand the collaboration to reach larger cohorts globally.



Goal #5 - Review policies and procedures through the lens of equity

We have recently updated a suite of student welfare policies such as the Student Welfare Policy, Sexual Misconduct Policy, and Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy to align with the new OfS regulation: 'Condition E6: Harassment and sexual misconduct' which came into effect from 1st August 2025.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an approach to teaching and learning that proactively accommodates the needs and abilities of all learners from the very first steps in course design.

The UDL Teaching & Learning Taskforce at Northeastern University London has developed an actionable strategy for enhancing inclusivity and accessibility in teaching and learning through the implementation of UDL principles.

The three-year strategy will:

- Augment existing faculty guidelines with current best practice.

- Host targeted workshops for faculty and professional service staff, in order that we as an institution understand how to efficiently and effectively adapt existing material and resources to learners with different needs.
- Integrate UDL into policies, programme reviews, and course design processes.
- Collect information, data, and feedback on the effectiveness of the integration and implementation.
- Iterate and evolve.

Our UDL strategy embeds inclusive and equitable values in a way which aligns with Northeastern University London's existing ethos of experiential learning.

Ethics and Research Integrity

The University's Research Ethics and Integrity Policy ensures that all research involving human participants is designed and conducted in ways that uphold ethical standards and protect participant welfare. Particular attention is given to the inclusion and safeguarding of vulnerable or marginalised groups. The policy requires researchers to consider issues such as power imbalances, accessibility, informed consent, and potential harm, and to take steps to ensure inclusive and respectful research practices.

Research data management and EDI

The university's Research Data Management Policy sets out a comprehensive framework for the secure, ethical, and legally compliant management of research data. While the policy does not explicitly reference EDI, it contributes to EDI-related aims through safeguards for personal data, responsible data sharing, and required ethics approvals for projects involving human participants.

The policy mandates the creation of Data Management Plans (DMPs), which must account for ethical data collection and protection, particularly when handling sensitive or identifiable data. This is especially relevant in research involving vulnerable or marginalised groups. Researchers will also be supported through training and guidance to manage data responsibly and transparently.

Implementation of our new Freedom of Speech Code of Practice

The University's new [Freedom of Speech Code of Practice](#) has been successfully implemented as a cornerstone policy that reinforces our commitment to both academic excellence and inclusive

community values. Developed in conversation with our existing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy alongside our Student Welfare, Sexual Misconduct, and Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment policies, the Code demonstrates our understanding that freedom of speech and academic freedom are not in tension with Belonging principles, but rather are inherently necessary to their achievement. True belonging and inclusion can only flourish in environments where all community members feel safe to express ideas, challenge assumptions, engage in rigorous debate, and contribute their unique perspectives. The Code's integration with our welfare and safeguarding frameworks ensures that we protect both the fundamental right to free expression and the dignity and wellbeing of all community members. By positioning freedom of speech as essential to creating genuinely inclusive academic spaces where diverse voices can be heard and respected, the implementation process has strengthened our institutional commitment to fostering an environment where scholarly inquiry, open dialogue, and inclusive practices mutually reinforce one another in service of our educational mission and research excellence.

Looking Ahead

The Belonging Open Forum 2025 -

Following the success of our first-ever Open Forum last year, we're thrilled to announce its return this coming October (keep your eyes peeled for the date announcement!). The event will include an introduction to our Belonging vision, updates from our synergy groups, an open Q&A, and opportunities to connect with key teams from across the University. Come along to listen, be part of the conversation, and help shape how we build a sense of belonging across the University.