Case Study
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Review
Edge Hill University

Overview
Edge Hill University is firmly established as one of the top post-1992 universities and has a Gold ranking in the Teaching Excellence Framework. In 2018 it won a Global Teaching Excellence Spotlight Award in recognition of ‘the quality of support and engagement infrastructure for students’.

The institution prides itself on being a champion of widening participation since it was established in 1885 as the UK’s first women’s non-denominational teacher training college. Since then, the theme of opportunity for all has remained a key component of the institution’s vision and is embedded throughout its activities.

Edge Hill recognised its successes among students, but strongly felt it needed to progress its equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) agenda and work among staff. Following the appointment of a new EDI Manager, Edge Hill wished to formalise their approach to EDI among staff and establish a new EDI Steering Group.

Edge Hill University therefore commissioned Advance HE’s research team to conduct a bespoke EDI review of its policies and to gather qualitative staff experiences.

Solution
The focus for the research team was to provide Edge Hill University with an evidence-based foundation and opportunity to adopt good practice from elsewhere in the higher education sector. In addition, gathering qualitative staff experiences would help Edge Hill University understand any EDI issues and concerns faced by staff.

Phase One – desk-based research
The team conducted desk-based research on four comparator institutions looking at ‘what works’ and best practice in regard to advancing (staff) EDI. With plans to establish an EDI Steering Group, Edge Hill University wished to develop a greater understanding of what EDI data to collate and report to university committees, and how to analyse this in a way that would bring about meaningful change. Edge Hill University also wished to consider what is covered in the Terms of Reference for EDI Committees in comparator institutions to ensure their Steering Group focused on the most important issues.

Phase Two – focus group testing
A member of the research team consulted with 12 academic and professional services staff in two semi-structured focus groups. This presented staff with the opportunity to discuss current EDI policies at Edge Hill University, as well as their ‘ideal’ vision of EDI at the institution. Staff could also discuss whether current EDI policies matched their lived experiences in their day-to-day role.
Impact

Advance HE produced a comprehensive report and recommendations, which identified key areas for Edge Hill University to consider to help improve its EDI policies. Recommendations were developed from the desk-based research and focus group testing, but also took into account the nuances and intersectionality of staff experiences.

Edge Hill University is now in a strong position to establish an effective EDI Steering Group, which supports the University to create a detailed action plan and develop updated EDI policies that reflect best practice in the sector.

Edge Hill University will also weave the main themes from the focus groups into the institution’s future EDI projects.

“EDI is a freshly invigorated area for our institution and this review has been so valuable as it will enable us to refocus our intuitive approach using evidenced based lenses. We’re really looking forward to making differences where our staff tell us they will have the most impact.”
Vicky Bosward, Senior HR Business Partner, Edge Hill University

About Bespoke Equality Research

Our Bespoke Equality Research helps institutions develop a clear picture of where they stand, helps raise the profile of equality issues with staff, and provides tailored data and advice. There are two types of audits for higher education institutions:

+ Our Equality Audits provide institutions with an overview of how equality and diversity are perceived and experienced in general and support institutions to sensitively explore equality characteristics which may have historically received less attention (such as sexual orientation, gender identity, or religion/belief).
+ Acting as a neutral third party, our Bullying and Harassment Audits provide support where institutions find it difficult to obtain information from staff regarding their experiences due to the sensitive nature of the issue.

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Join the conversation on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and give your take on how the sector are dealing with the challenges it faces.

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