FROM
INCLUSION TO
IMPACT

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY (2026-2029)

QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST
ESTP1845

DRAFT CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

CONTENTS

Foreword

VICE CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT
PROFESSOR SIR IAN GREER

I am exceptionally proud of our reputation for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ("EDI") at Queen's.

EDI is not just a moral imperative, but a source of strength - one that drives research excellence, enriches education, and enhances societal impact.

However, despite good progress over the last few years, there is, and always will be more to do.

Our ambition is clear: to be the sector-leading university in the UK and Ireland for this work.

From Inclusion to Impact provides a new framework for embedding EDI across teaching, research, leadership, governance, and engagement. In particular, it supports Strategy 2030's goals to:

- Be a leading employer for equality, diversity and inclusion.

- Deliver a transformative and inclusive student experience.

- Foster a creative and collaborative research culture.

- Promote social cohesion and tackle inequality through civic engagement.

In order to deliver lasting impact, we must look beyond individual initiatives and challenge the ways of working, structures, practices, and policies that may unintentionally reinforce inequality.

This will require deliberate, active, and sustained effort from all of us.

This is the first time Queen's has articulated a single, strategic vision for EDI across the University.

It sets out our commitment and how we can more effectively harness and integrate the expertise of our academic, professional services, research, and student communities.

It is my hope that, through working together, we will shape a more inclusive environment for our staff and students - one that strengthens Queen's reputation as a leader in equality, diversity and inclusion but also in research, teaching and employment practices.

PRO VICE CHANCELLOR
(EDUCATION AND STUDENTS)
PROFESSOR JUDY WILLIAMS

At Queen's, our mission is to deliver a transformative student experience — one that empowers every learner to realise their full potential and thrive within a community where all feel valued, respected, and supported.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) sits at the very heart of this mission.

It shapes every aspect of the student journey, from the way we teach and assess, to how we design spaces, services, and opportunities that nurture a genuine sense of belonging. EDI is not an add-on to education; it is the foundation of our *Student Success Strategy*, which aims to enable every student to flourish academically, personally, and professionally.

Our approach is guided by the belief that inclusion must be designed in from the start. This means removing barriers to participation and embedding the principles of *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)* across our systems, curricula, and wider student experience. We are committed to creating an environment where students do not need to do more to achieve the same, instead have equitable access to succeed and thrive.

Our EDI Strategy, *From Inclusion to Impact*, brings this vision to life through three interconnected pillars:
1. **Inclusive culture and leadership:** fostering a community that celebrates diversity, prioritises wellbeing, and models inclusive leadership at every level.
2. **Diverse people and practice:** recognising the richness of our student body and ensuring equitable access, representation, and opportunity across all aspects of university life.
3. **Engagement and meaningful impact:** empowering students as partners in shaping an inclusive Queen's, where every voice matters and contributes to change.

My own experiences have deeply influenced my understanding of inclusion and accessibility. As someone who is dyslexic, I know first-hand the power of supportive teaching, inclusive design, and mentors who believe in your potential. These experiences underpin our commitment to ensuring that higher education and the wider student experience are truly accessible, not only opening doors, but ensuring that every student who walks through them feels they belong.

ASSOCIATE PRO VICE CHANCELLOR FOR EDI PROFESSOR PETER ROBERTSON

As Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at Queen's University Belfast, I am very proud to introduce our first EDI Strategy, **From Inclusion to Impact**.

This marks a significant step forward in aligning our commitment to all nine protected characteristics with Strategy 2030.

It seeks to brings together our various EDI action plans for staff and students, reinforcing our leadership in this space — even as EDI faces global challenges.

It seeks to introduce new governance arrangements, key performance indicators and ways in which we can track progress, or address concerns.

We understand that people encounter all sorts of barriers to progression in their studies, research and work.

They can arise as a result of race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, nationality, language barriers, disability and/or caring responsibilities – and more often than not, a combination of many of these.

However, I've seen the resilience of individuals from all backgrounds, in and outside of work, who with the right support, can thrive to the benefit of themselves and those around them.

As someone who, like Judy, is also living with dyslexia but also an incurable blood cancer, I've experienced both the barriers and the power of effective support throughout my academic career.

I would like others to feel and experience that same positive impact, through our work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

While my personal experiences and insight drive my commitment to this role and work, I look forward to working with you, the wider Queen's community on bringing this strategy to life, because it belongs to all of us.

INTRODUCTION

Queen's University Belfast is a civic university with a global outlook, serving more than 25,000 students from over 120 countries and employing 4,500 staff from 92 nations.

Our diverse community is central to our mission and strengthens our teaching, research, and societal impact. *From Inclusion to Impact* sets out how we are seeking to embed and integrate equality, diversity and inclusion into the most important aspects of university life.

The most impactful strategies are those which are co-designed and developed through consultation with key stakeholders. This is why we would like your feedback on this document and the proposals contained within it.
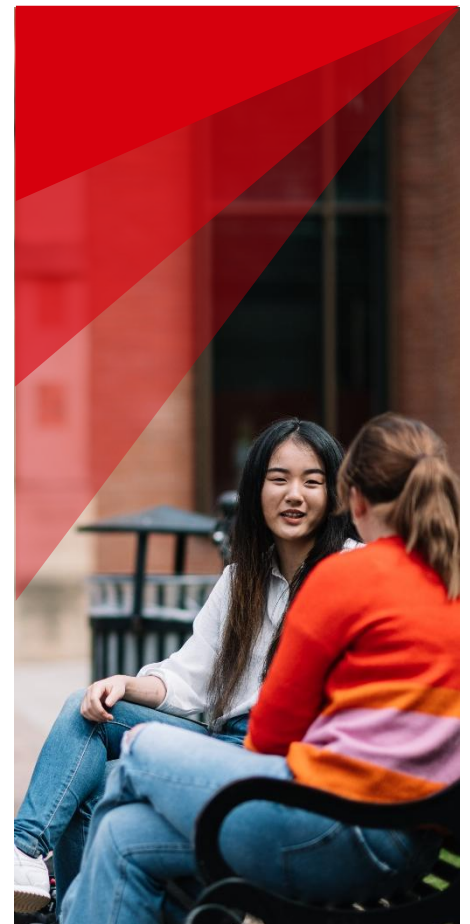
OUR REPUTATION

As stated by the Vice Chancellor in his Foreword, we have a strong track record of advancing equality - from establishing the Queen's Gender Initiative in 2000, to achieving Institutional Athena Swan Gold in 2024.

We currently hold 15 School Awards, making us sector-leading in gender equality within Higher Education; we have made significant progress in the areas of LGBTQIA+ and Race inclusion, we support staff through PRISM (LGBTQ+) and iRISE (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and International) and networks such as CONNECT (Carers) and IOLRA, MORRA, MORE (Regional and Minority Languages).

Likewise, our students can join clubs and societies to engage in events and celebrations, meeting people from similar or different cultural, ethnic and other backgrounds.

We are a University of Sanctuary, providing scholarships for refugees and asylum seekers and we have recently gained Gold STARS status for our work on sustainability, diversity and inclusion.

At Queen's, we recognise that true inclusion involves a continuous and evolving journey.

Our focus is firmly fixed on embedding real, measurable and impactful change.

You have told us, overall, that EDI is moderately well embedded where you work, but we also understand that there is an inconsistency to approach too.

OUR EDI
MISSION

Our EDI mission is to deliver transformative education, internationally renowned and impactful research, and meaningful civic engagement with local and global communities — underpinned by principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.

OUR EDI
VISION

Our EDI vision is for Queen's to be a university where everyone belongs and is supported to succeed - a place where inclusion is actively nurtured, rigorously sustained, and part of our ways of working, researching and studying.

STRATEGY 2030

As a public authority, designated for the purposes of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, we have statutory duties to promote equality and equality of opportunity. These are reflected in our Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan and we report on progress annually to Senate and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland through our Section 75 Annual Progress Report.

We have also committed to promoting gender equality through our Athena Swan Gold Action Plan; to race equity through our Race Equality Charter (REC) Action Plan and to other areas such LGBTQIA+ and disability inclusion through our Diversity Mark work.

From Inclusion to Impact is designed to ensure that all of the work we are doing to progress EDI, through our various action plans, directly relates to an overarching strategic direction.

Strategy 2030 sets out our ambition to "establish a transformative staff, student and alumni experience with wellbeing, inclusivity and cultural diversity to the fore"; in order to do so, we are required to ensure that our objectives align with strategic priorities and are translated into clear, quantifiable outcomes.

It is intended that *From Inclusion to Impact* will be a core enabler of Strategy 2030 aligning with four strategic priorities; People; Financial Sustainability; Infrastructure and Technology and four strategic enablers: Education and Skills; Research and Innovation; Global Reputation and Partnerships; Social and Civic Responsibility.

WHAT WE ARE SEEKING TO **ACHIEVE**

We are seeking to achieve a clearer, more effective and integrated way of embedding EDI into our research, teaching and work.

We are also seeking consensus on the most effective way to achieve this – and would value your views by engaging with us, through the consultation process, on the development of the final strategy document.

If EDI is to be **truly embedded** and operationalised across the University, for both our staff and students, we believe that we need to adopt some new approaches. Some of these proposals include, for example, a new governance framework through the establishment of an EDI Strategic Oversight Group; a centralised EDI Team responsible for advising staff and students on all nine protected characteristics; and agreement of new EDI Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) so that we are tracking progress against those areas of highest positive impact for our staff and students.

This would also allow us to develop greater institutional awareness of our underpinning EDI activities and action plans; introduce a more consistent approach to equality screening and equality impact assessments; agree on embedding of strategic EDI deliverables into Faculty and Directorate Plans; and gaining institutional support and engagement with all our stakeholders.

A new governance framework to measure progress and success through the establishment of a new **EDI Strategic Oversight Group.**

A **centralised EDI Team**, responsible for all nine protected characteristics, who will provide expert advice and support on the delivery of all staff and student EDI activity.

Agreement of **new metrics and KPIs** for our work on EDI.

Effective governance and robust performance monitoring are fundamental to delivering meaningful and sustainable progress in EDI. Strong governance provides the structural framework through which accountability, transparency, and strategic alignment are achieved. For us, this means ensuring that responsibility for advancing EDI is clearly defined, appropriately resourced, and embedded across every level of leadership and decision-making from Senate through to Faculties, Schools, and Directorates.

A well-designed governance structure will enable us to move beyond compliance and towards active stewardship of inclusion. It will ensure that EDI priorities are considered in strategic planning, policy development, and resource allocation, and that progress is monitored through established reporting mechanisms. By integrating EDI within existing governance & planning frameworks — rather than treating it as a parallel or peripheral activity — the University demonstrates that equality and inclusion are core to its institutional mission and values.

Equally important are Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which transform EDI objectives into tangible and measurable outcomes. They allow us to benchmark performance internally and externally, ensuring alignment with national frameworks such as Athena Swan, the Race Equality Charter, and other sector standards.

Through the combined use of strong governance and well-defined KPIs, we can ensure that EDI remains an integral part of its institutional performance and culture, supporting compliance with statutory equality duties but also promotes continuous improvement, data-informed decision-making, and demonstrable impact.

From Inclusion to Impact sets out clear priorities and actionable EDI goals across teaching, research, leadership, governance, and engagement.

It is designed as a core enabler of Strategy 2030, which commits Queen's to:

Be a **leading employer** for equality, diversity and inclusion with an organisational culture that **empowers staff** to produce their best.

Deliver a **transformative student experience** with **inclusivity** and **cultural diversity** at its heart.

Foster a **creative, inclusive** and **collaborative research culture**.

Tackle social inequality and **promote cohesion** through **civic engagement** and **lifelong learning**.

These are our four strategic goals. And we seek to deliver these through three mutually reinforcing pillars: Inclusive Culture and Leadership, Diverse People and Practice, and Engagement and Impact. Together, these pillars provide the framework for embedding inclusion across all aspects of University life.

Through Inclusive Culture and Leadership, we will seek to develop a University culture where respect, fairness, and belonging are integral to how we lead, work, and study. Inclusive leadership will be championed at every level, empowering staff and students to contribute their best and ensuring that equality and inclusion are reflected in decision-making, governance, and accountability.

Our Diverse People and Practice pillar focuses on ensuring that Queen's attracts, supports, and retains a diverse community of staff and students. We will embed inclusive practice in recruitment, progression, teaching, research, and support.

Through Engagement and Impact, we will extend Queen's role as an anchor institution that drives positive social change. By working collaboratively with civic, community, and global partners, we will tackle social inequality, promote cohesion, and demonstrate leadership in advancing equality and inclusion beyond the University.

1. INCLUSIVE
CULTURE & LEADERSHIP

OBJECTIVE: To embed inclusive leadership and an equitable culture across all levels of Queen's University Belfast, ensuring that diversity and belonging are integral to decision-making and everyday practice.

KEY DELIVERABLES

Introduce new mandatory EDI elearning modules for all staff at Queen's University including modules on diversity & inclusion, bullying & sexual harassment and unconscious bias.

Introduce new requirements to integrate equality screening into the policy development and review process, providing training, advice and support to staff on a bi-annual basis.

Ensure greater use of any staff surveys, pulse surveys and Staff Forum initiatives to capture staff experiences on culture and leadership, disaggregate feedback data by protected characteristics to identify patterns and trends.

OUTCOMES (YEAR ONE)

- >85% of staff complete new mandatory EDI eLearning modules in Year 1 (with targets set by Oversight Committee for each subsequent reporting period).
- Develop and publish quarterly reports of a) number of policies screened b) number of policies under screening and c) numbers of staff (and their work areas) attending equality screening training.
- Develop reports with qualitative and quantitative EDI data from any institutional staff survey, pulse survey or Staff Forum initiative.

2. DIVERSE PEOPLE & INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

OBJECTIVE: To attract, support, and retain a diverse community of staff and students, ensuring equitable access, progression, and recognition in all University activities.

KEY DELIVERABLES

To assist in the review of our recruitment processes and to help identify and remove any barriers to fair and equitable treatment and opportunities for employment.

To conduct an annual review of recruitment and progression data to improve representation across grades.

To progress further institutional accreditations driving forward positive change across all protected characteristics.

OUTCOMES (YEAR ONE)

- To analyse and report on data relating to underrepresented groups (e.g. women in senior roles, minority ethnic staff and students, LGBTQIA+ staff and students and those who are living with disabilities or long term conditions etc).
- To analyse and report on the impact of any implemented interventions designed to reduce any known recruitment and/or progression gaps.
- To progress further institutional accreditations e.g. the "Disability Confident" Commitment and LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Business Charter.

3. ENGAGEMENT & IMPACT

OBJECTIVE: To foster partnerships, dialogue, and innovation that advance equality, diversity, and inclusion within Queen's and across the wider community, demonstrating measurable social impact.

KEY DELIVERABLES

Establish a new EDI Strategic Oversight Group to monitor, evaluate and report on progress against KPIs and to lead on engagement with key stakeholders.

Develop our profile and relationship with Russell Group Universities, Advance HE, the NI business and community / voluntary sector and government departments and to advance our EDI work and influence broader societal change.

Publish an annual EDI Engagement Report detailing progress against agreed metrics demonstrating our outreach activities, their visibility and impact.

OUTCOMES (YEAR ONE)

- Identify and agree engagement KPIs for key EDI events and engagement activities for Year 1; reporting quantitative and qualitative data for each of these across all nine protected characteristics.
- Provide annual report on community and stakeholder engagement metrics (e.g. participation rates, co-designed initiatives, qualitative impact evidence) at key EDI events.
- Establish metrics and mechanisms to measure impact of our outreach activities, their visibility and impact.

MEASURING **IMPACT**

The University challenges itself to continually improve and will, with your help, seek to create a new set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to manage and monitor progress towards key EDI goals.

These will be developed as a result of the consultation process with you and considered for implementation by the University.

It can sometimes be difficult to identify key metrics in EDI work but examples could include:

EXAMPLE KPIs

Reflective gender representation (%) at senior levels for Academic and Professional Services Staff – in line with workforce composition data.

Reflective Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic representation (%) at senior levels for Academic and Professional Services Staff – in line with workforce composition

Reflective LGBTQIA+ disclosure rates as part of annual Equality Monitoring process (with % improvement targets set on an annual basis).

Reflective disability disclosure rates as part of annual Equality Monitoring process (with % improvement targets set on an annual basis).

>85% of staff complete new mandatory EDI eLearning modules in Year 1.

To undertake gender, race and disability pay gap reporting on an annual basis, reporting any identified pay gaps and associated action plans to reduce them.

To achieve further institutional accreditations (e.g. Disability Confident and LGBTQIA+ Business Charter) and maintain Swan Gold / REC Bronze status.

MEASURING IMPACT

Embedding EDI is not a single initiative but a transformational process that requires a significant cultural shift across the entire Queen's community.

To guide this process, we propose to use a **five-stage model** for embedding cultural change:

Implementing *From Inclusion to Impact* will require cultural transformation. Cleary's Model of Cultural Integration provides a structured approach to embedding change by aligning values, behaviours, and systems across the institution. It recognises that lasting inclusion emerges when organisational culture evolves in tandem with strategic intent, rather than as a parallel process.

By applying Cleary's model, we can ensure that EDI principles are woven into the formal structures (such as governance, policies, and procedures), the informal culture (shared values, language, and everyday behaviours), and the strategic drivers (leadership, performance measures, and institutional priorities). This holistic approach supports the creation of a consistent and reinforcing system where inclusion is experienced across all aspects of University life.

The model also emphasises engagement and co-creation, encouraging dialogue between leadership, staff, and students to surface assumptions, challenge resistance, and build shared ownership of change. This participatory approach aligns strongly with the EDI Strategy's pillars of Inclusive Leadership and Culture, Diverse People and Practice, and Engagement and Impact, ensuring that the Strategy is not only implemented but also lived and sustained.

Ultimately, Cleary's framework helps Queen's move beyond compliance towards a genuinely inclusive culture — one in which equality, diversity, and inclusion are integrated into decision-making, reward systems, and daily practice, reinforcing Queen's commitment to being an open, fair, and globally engaged institution.

STAGE 1

ARTICULATE

The first step is to **clearly articulate** the key elements of Queen's future, as expressed in our EDI Vision, EDI Mission and this document. Communicating this vision will not be limited to EDI-specific contexts but will be woven into our wider conversations on Education, Research, Enterprise and all other core activities

STAGE 2

ATTRACT & ENGAGE

Once our vision is clear, we will **attract and engage** our community by embedding EDI into our shared language and everyday narrative. EDI will not be seen as an add-on, but as integral to who we are. Students and staff will become EDI ambassadors for our inclusive vision.

STAGE 3

EQUIP & APPLY

Through carefully designed EDI training, resources, systems, policies, and processes, we will **equip** staff and students with the knowledge and confidence to put EDI principles into practice in their everyday work and study.

STAGE 4

EVALUATE & ASSESS

We will **evaluate and assess** our EDI progress, measuring whether our initiatives, new governance and reporting processes, and training are delivering meaningful, positive change for our community.

STAGE 5

ASSIMILATE

Finally, we will **assimilate** EDI into every aspect of University life. This means everyone – from first-year students to final-year PhD candidates, from new starters to senior leadership and Senate – will actively demonstrate the values of equality, diversity and inclusion in all they do.

HOW WE PLAN TO REPORT ON PROGRESS

Associate **Pro-Vice-Chancellor for EDI** is the executive lead, reporting to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students).

A new EDI Strategic Oversight Group will monitor progress, ensure alignment with Strategy 2030

Faculties, Schools, and Professional Services will develop local EDI action plans aligned to this strategy.

Progress will be reported annually to University Management Board and Senate.
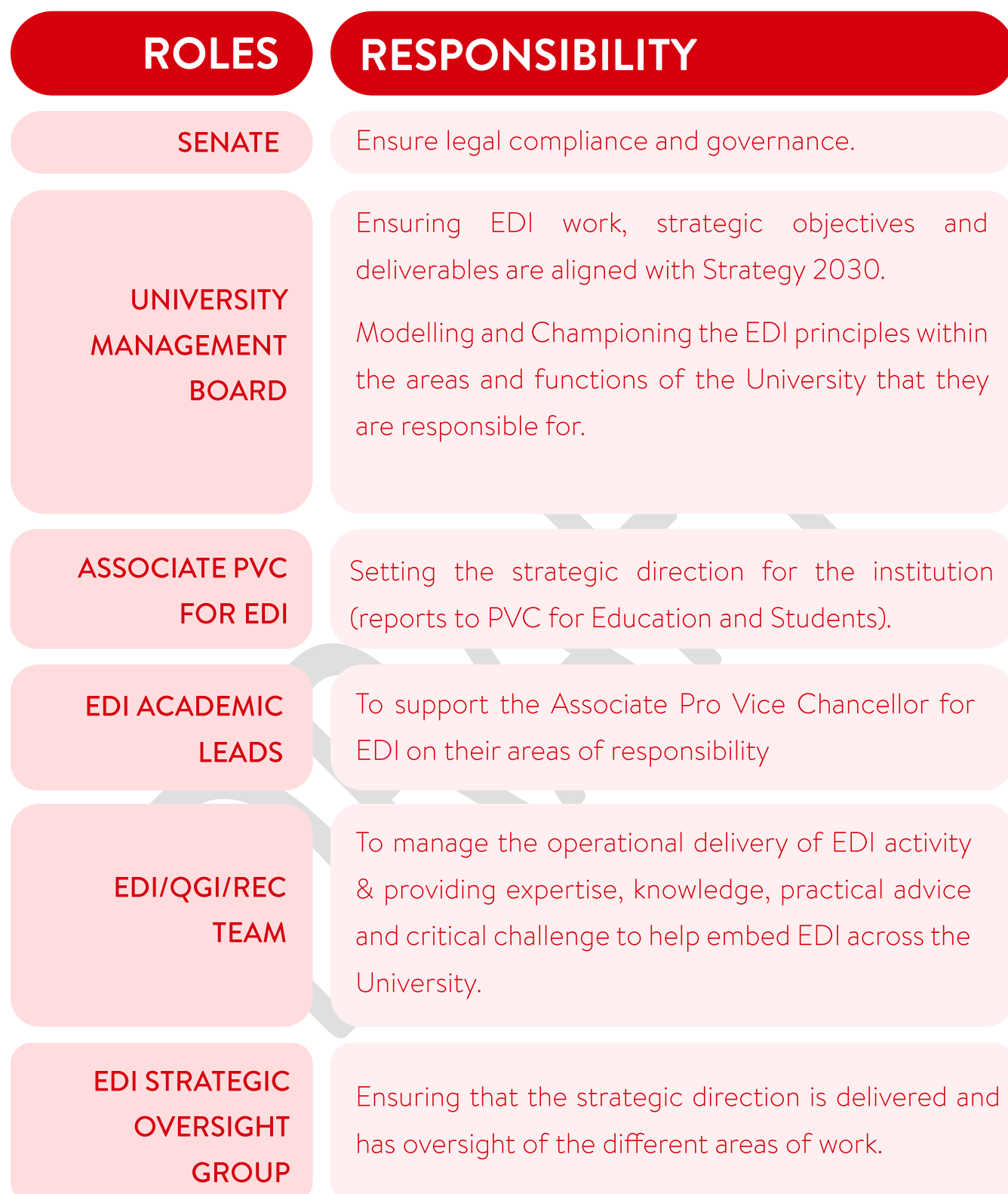
The Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for EDI will lead the agenda, reporting directly to the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students.

A new EDI Strategic Oversight Group will monitor progress, ensure alignment with Strategy 2030, and hold action owners accountable.

Faculties, Schools, and Professional Services will develop local EDI action plans aligned to this strategy.

We will pull and present EDI data from our Athena Swan action plan, Race Equality action plan, and all other underpinning action plans, on a real-time basis, providing our EDI Oversight Committee with a high-level overview of progress.

This data will be analysed and presented to the **EDI Oversight Committee** and relevant Self Assessment Teams (e.g. Athena Swan and Race Equality), Staff Networks and to Faculties, Directorates and areas of research.

ROLES	RESPONSIBILITY
SENATE	Ensure legal compliance and governance.
UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT BOARD	Ensuring EDI work, strategic objectives and deliverables are aligned with Strategy 2030. Modelling and Championing the EDI principles within the areas and functions of the University that they are responsible for.
ASSOCIATE PVC FOR EDI	Setting the strategic direction for the institution (reports to PVC for Education and Students).
EDI ACADEMIC LEADS	To support the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for EDI on their areas of responsibility
EDI/QGI/REC TEAM	To manage the operational delivery of EDI activity & providing expertise, knowledge, practical advice and critical challenge to help embed EDI across the University.
EDI STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT GROUP	Ensuring that the strategic direction is delivered and has oversight of the different areas of work.

THE GROUPS BELOW WILL HELP INFLUENCE THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR EDI AT QUEEN'S.

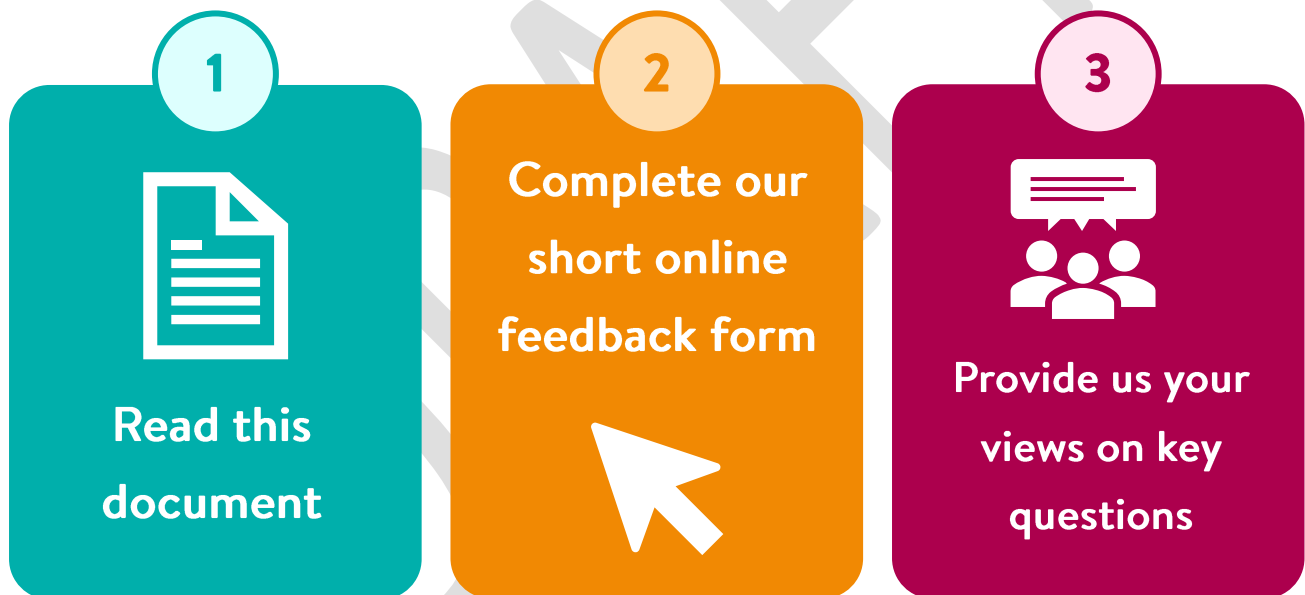| GROUP	RESPONSIBILITY
FACULTY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES EDI COMMITTEES (WITH STUDENT REPRESENTATION)	To make this Strategy and associated EDI activities relevant in their local area and to be the link to the EDI Strategic Oversight Group.
ATHENA SWAN SELF-ASSESSMENT TEAM (GENDER EQUALITY)	Work as a multidisciplinary team to gather the necessary data and evidence and analyse the findings to help write a high-quality self-assessment submission and ensure the implementation of the associated Athena Swan / QGI actions.
RACE EQUALITY CHARTER SELF-ASSESSMENT TEAM (INCLUDES STUDENT REPRESENTATION)	Work as a multidisciplinary team to help deliver the REC Action Plan.
STAFF NETWORKS: PRISM, IRISE, CONNECT, DISABLED STAFF NETWORK, IOLRA.	Grass root peer support and campaigning networks that bring people with shared experiences together, liaising with the EDI Oversight Group on areas of shared interest.
STUDENTS UNION AND STUDENT SOCIETIES	Ensuring that the student voice on EDI issues is reflected in both strategic and operational EDI
TRADE UNIONS	Ensuring trade unions are appropriately consulted.
LINE MANAGERS	Ensuring line managers have ownership on the delivery of local EDI Action Plans.

REFLECTING YOUR VIEWS

We recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of this new EDI Strategy. We have developed a short questionnaire for you to complete and return to us.

This sets out some areas we would like your feedback and an opportunity for you to highlight any areas we may not have identified for consideration.

Your views and opinions are important to us.

They will help us understand where we need to focus our attention and give us an evidential basis so that we can make further refinements to this Strategy.

As such, we would be very grateful if you would:

1

Read this document

2

Complete our short online feedback form

3

Provide us your views on key questions

We will then review your feedback, consider how best we reflect this into our final Strategy document and share our findings with you once Senate has approved the way forward.