



Royal College of Art

**Equality,  
Diversity  
& Inclusion**  
**Annual Report**  
**2023/24**

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## Glossary

ADO	Academic Development Office	MRes	Master of Research
EB	Executive Board	P&VC	President and Vice Chancellor
EDI	Equity (Equality), Diversity, and Inclusion	REC	Race Equality Charter Mark
FACE	Fashion Academics Creating Equity	SAT	Self Assessment Team
HE	Higher Education	SoA	School of Architecture
MA	Master of Arts	SoAH	School of Arts & Humanities
MDes	Master of Design	SoC	School of Communication
MFA	Master of Fine Art	SoD	School of Design
		SSRi	Small Specialist Research Institute

# Introduction

**The Royal College of Art (RCA) is committed to creating an environment of mutual respect, where differences are valued and respected, and where innovation, creativity and diversity can flourish.**

Positive working relationships – whether between staff and staff, staff and students or students and students – are central to this. Mutual respect is facilitated by the promotion of our College values of Integrity, Inclusion, Collaboration and Curiosity, alongside a culture of zero tolerance to bullying and harassment.

As we close the chapter on the Becoming Anti-Racist Action Plan, initiated in response to the Nous Group recommendations from March 2021, this year's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report reflects on the progress we have made so far while looking ahead to future initiatives. We continue to embed anti-racist practices throughout the RCA, and aim to establish a stronger framework through the Race Equality Charter (REC) self-assessment process to ensure the sustainability of this work. Our ongoing commitment to fostering a truly inclusive environment for staff, students, and the wider College community remains at the forefront of everything we do.

In academic year 2024/25, we will undertake a review of the College's General and Antisemitism Anti-Discrimination Statements. This process marks the next phase in aligning our institutional statements with our values of Integrity, Inclusion, Collaboration and Curiosity. The review will engage diverse voices from across the RCA community, ensuring that our statements are responsive to the unique challenges and opportunities present in our evolving institution.

This report also marks a significant realignment of the EDI Committee with the newly formed REC Self-Assessment Team (SAT). The REC work, launched at RCA in September 2023, sees the College taking part in this Small Specialists Research Institutions (SSRi) pilot and provides a framework for measuring the impact of our ongoing work. The REC provides an opportunity to guide our progress in an intersectional way as we work to address systemic inequalities.

The RCA community has undergone numerous major changes since 2021, and our focus on the wellbeing and accessibility of students and staff has been strengthened through initiatives such as the introduction of AccessAble and the Wellbeing Steering Group. This group has been instrumental in promoting mental health and overall well-

being, ensuring that our RCA community feels supported. Additionally, the College has seen an increase in diverse donor-led and College-funded scholarships, which are creating greater access to our world-leading art and design education, for which the RCA has been rated QS number one for the last ten years. This reinforces our ongoing efforts to widen participation, particularly for those from underrepresented backgrounds.

Moreover, the staff and student awards EDI champion category recognises individuals who make a positive impact on our inclusive culture. These awards are a testament to the exceptional contributions made by those who champion equality and actively shape a more inclusive RCA.

We recognise that the RCA is a highly diverse and intersectional community of staff and students. Navigating the complexity of these intersections is at the core of our EDI approach, as we strive to foster an environment where everyone, regardless of their identity, feels valued, respected, and empowered to succeed.

## Context

The Office for Students (OfS) has set targets to achieve equality of opportunity in higher education. The targets aim to eliminate gaps in entry rates at the most selective universities between the most and least represented groups; drop-out rates between the most and least represented groups; degree outcomes between white and Black students; and degree outcomes between disabled and non-disabled students.

In this context, the RCA is working to identify and actively address any imbalances, gaps or barriers that may hinder equality of opportunity for our staff, students, and applicants. We acknowledge that inequality and discrimination are intersectional. And we know that there is work to be done so that our policies work in practice, our



aims become actions, and our values are upheld in every part of the institution.

The RCA celebrated its tenth year of being voted the number one world-leading art and design institution by QS. The college also saw a number of changes to its senior leadership team saying farewell to Dr Paul Thompson and Professor Naren Barfield, while welcoming Professor Christoph Lindner as our new President & Vice-Chancellor.

The College also welcomed just under three thousand students in 2023/24, and currently has 878 staff based across three sites in Battersea, South Kensington, and White City.

Building on the College's commitment to EDI the RCA Strategic Plan and operational plan 2022–27 aligns EDI objectives within the following areas:

## Enabler 1: Values

### Curiosity

We have a tenacious commitment to innovation and are open to change. We positively interrogate ideas, assumptions and plans and welcome the honest scrutiny that is alive in a learning community.

### Inclusion

We celebrate diversity, and we embrace difference as a source of strength. We strive for an inclusive RCA community, removing barriers and challenging exclusionary and discriminatory practices.

### Collaboration

We value what happens together and we help and support each other to achieve our collective goals. We work in partnership with our students, staff, alumni and organisations and communities across the globe to make a lasting difference.

### Integrity

We are always willing to listen, we offer constructive feedback, and we promote accountability, building relationships of mutual trust and respect. We are resilient in the face of challenges, pursuing outcomes with individual, cultural, societal, and economic impact.

These values support the convictions that demand the RCA becomes an anti-racist institution and an institution that commits to equity, diversity, and inclusion goals, including reaching net zero in recognition of the disproportionate impact climate crisis has upon vulnerable communities and biodiversity.



# Enabler 2: People

We are advancing our equality, diversity, and inclusion objectives, supporting a college community which is diverse, multicultural, and inclusive, as we enact our action plan to become an anti-racist institution.

The RCA's educational ethos, as expressed in its Student Charters and its Learning and Teaching Strategy, is one of creative and intellectual challenges. The RCA is a diverse international community of artists, designers and thinkers who are expected to assess the boundaries of their practice and discipline.

The RCA recognises that equality of opportunity and the promotion of diversity are not only ethically fundamental, but they are also crucial to its academic, social, and commercial success.

An inclusive and fair environment provides an array of benefits, such as increased morale, an expansion of the range of skills and experiences available, an enhanced ability to attract and retain talented staff and policies such as maternity, paternity, shared parental leave, flexible working.

The College's Council has ultimate responsibility for compliance with the College's equality obligations. The Chief Operating Officer and Head of Equity and Inclusion have overall responsibility for the Equality & Diversity Policy, while the People & Culture and Registry teams ensure the policies are reviewed and revised, as necessary.



The RCA collates, checks, reflects on, and annually publishes equality information as part of the Equality Act 2010's public sector equality duty, gender and equality pay gap. This report outlines the RCA's Equality Action plan and the progress we are making. This report also aims to highlight projects and initiatives that are supporting equality, diversity, and inclusion across the institution, and share equality data about our staff and students in the 2023/24 academic years.

# EDI Data

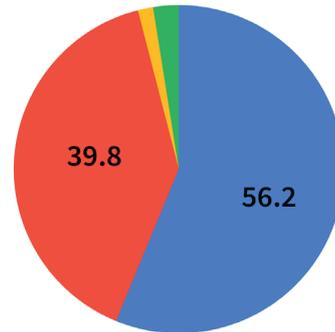
Over the last year there has been a focus on collecting and collating staff and student EDI data to support the colleges annual statutory Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) submission requirements, as well as provide the opportunity to measure the impact of initiatives to diversify recruitment and progression alongside the ongoing projects that support widening participation and engagement with the College.

## Staff data

EDI Dashboard – August 2024

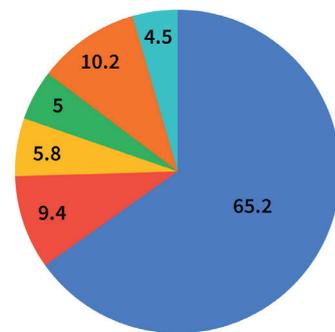
### Gender

● Female ● Male ● Other ● Prefer not to say



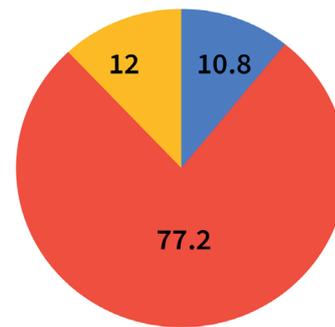
### Ethnicity

● White ● Asian or Asian British ● Black or Black British ● Mixed ● Not stated ● Other ethnic groups



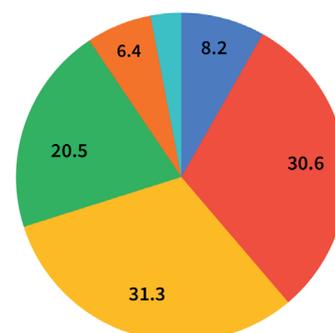
### Disability

● Yes ● No ● No known



### Age

● Under 30 ● 30s ● 40s ● 50s ● 60–65 ● Over 65



# Staff recruitment data

The College received 4,925 applications during the Academic Year 2023/24 of which 691 applicants were shortlisted and 169 appointed.

The tables below provide a breakdown of percentage of applications to appointment by the age, gender, ethnicity and disability.

Interview packs include questions based on the College values with the EDI related questions covered in the Inclusion section. All panel members are expected to have completed or refreshed (where applicable) the mandatory Race Equity and Recruitment and Selection training.

Age	Application	Shortlisted	Appointed
<18	0%	0%	0%
18-30	39%	34%	32%
31-40	32%	33%	33%
41-50	17%	19%	21%
51-60	10%	13%	13%
61+	2%	2%	2%

Gender	Application	Shortlisted	Appointed
Female	58%	59%	63%
Male	38%	35%	32%
Other	2%	3%	3%
Prefer not to say	2%	3%	2%

Ethnicity	Application	Shortlisted	Appointed
Ethnic Minority	41%	30%	30%
White	40%	50%	49%
Other	2%	3%	3%
Prefer not to say	12%	14%	15%
Unknown	4%	3%	3%

Disability	Application	Shortlisted	Appointed
Yes	8%	13%	11%
No	86%	80%	80%
Prefer not to say	6%	7%	9%

# Gender pay gap

This data has been gathered and reported for both the previous and current years (2022 and 2023), and the high-level results shared in the table below.

	2022	2023	UCEA Benchmark 2022
Mean Pay Gap	12.11%	7.19%	
Median Pay Gap	15.31%	0%	3.9%

It is difficult to accurately attribute the reason for this change in the gaps. However, a high-level assessment gives the following possible reasons for the closed gap specifically under median pay:

- The median hourly pay increased from £25.28 per hour in 2022 to £28.03 per hour in 2023. This is the equivalent of Grade 8 spine point 40, up from Grade 8 spine point 38, and is the grade at which our Associate Lecturers (ALs) are paid.
- A high volume of ALs were introduced during this submission year, having been assimilated across from Visiting Lecturer status during our de-casualisation process. They were engaged for the 2022/23 academic year (approximately 185 full-pay relevant ALs as of 5 April 2023).

# Ethnicity pay gap

A three-year ethnicity pay gap snapshot will be produced in Autumn 2024. This will be the first time the college has been able to collate this information. We will continue to monitor this and will also engage specialist resources to provide more clarity and analysis of our data, giving more insight into what has produced these results and consequently, what can be done to further improve both our gender and ethnicity pay gaps. Some initiatives we have undertaken and intend build upon over the next 12 months are:

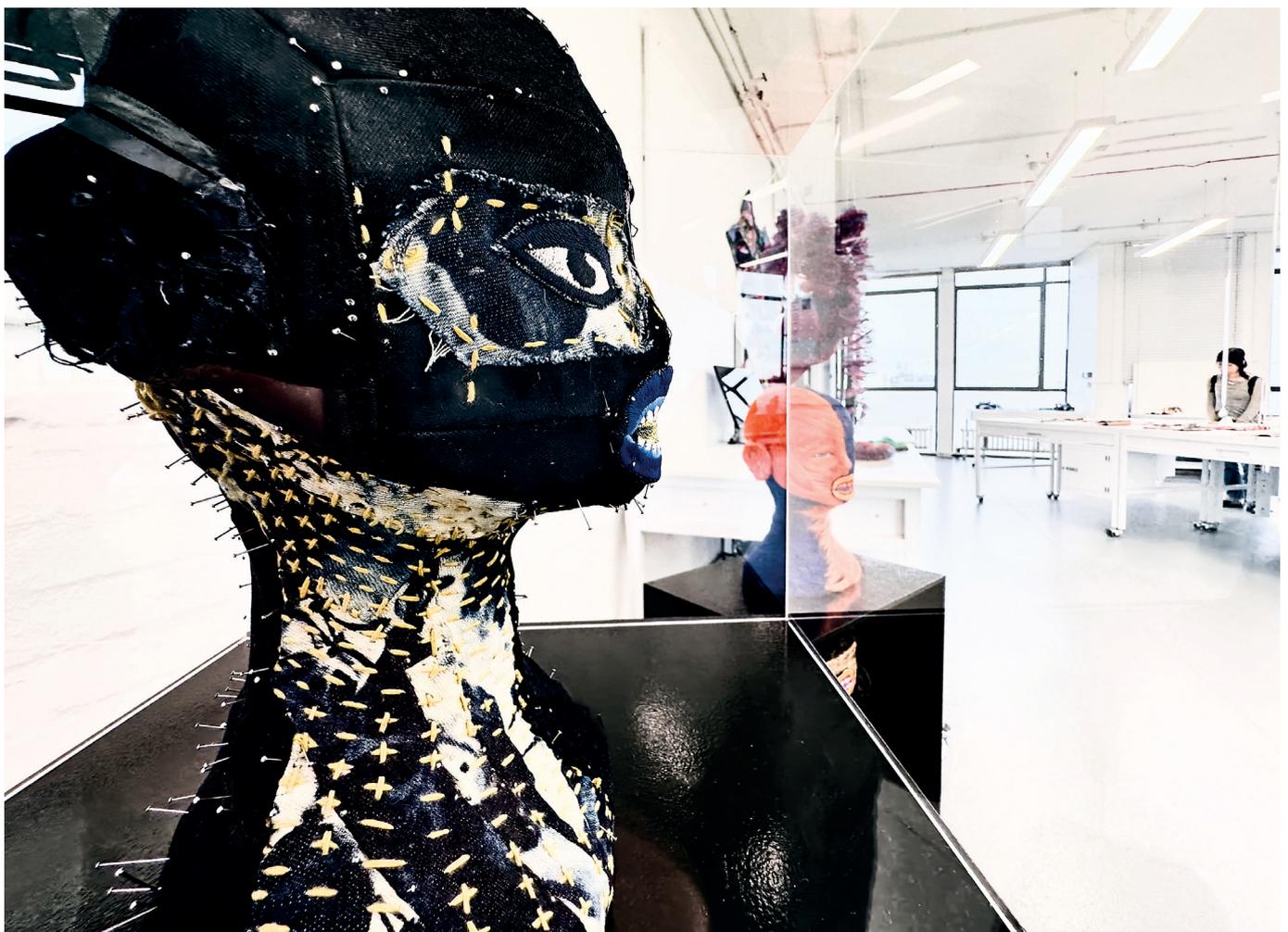
- Aurora Alumni network, mentoring scheme and annual symposium
- Gender mixed selection panels/inclusive recruitment practices i.e. gender neutral ads
- Launch of new Flexible Working Policy with supporting management guidance
- Publication of workforce demographics within People Data reports for all units
- Become an accredited Living Wage Employer with the LW Foundation
- Promotion of our Total Reward package for Attraction and Retention e.g. family friendly leave policies
- Launch of new Menopause Policy and Line Manager forum
- International Women's Day event / Network
- Inclusive leadership programme for managers and leaders of the RCA
- Undertaking EDI pulse surveys as part of Race Equity Charter, intersecting Race and Gender
- Launch of Mental Health Wellness Action Plan framework.

# EDI mandatory training rates

EDI mandatory training completion rates were identified as a priority in AY 2022/23. This continued into AY 2023/24 through the encouragement of completion in schools and department and monitoring completion through probation and appraisal reviews. The College set an ambitious target to increase completion rates to 80%.

## Completion rates for August 2024

Race Equity Training Module 1	84%
Race Equity Training Module 2	83%
Unconscious Bias Training	86%
Diversity at Work	87%
Prevent 2021	77%
All mandatory training	71%

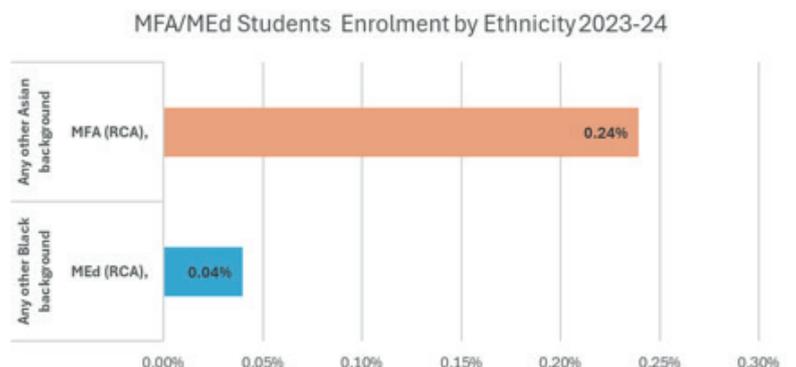
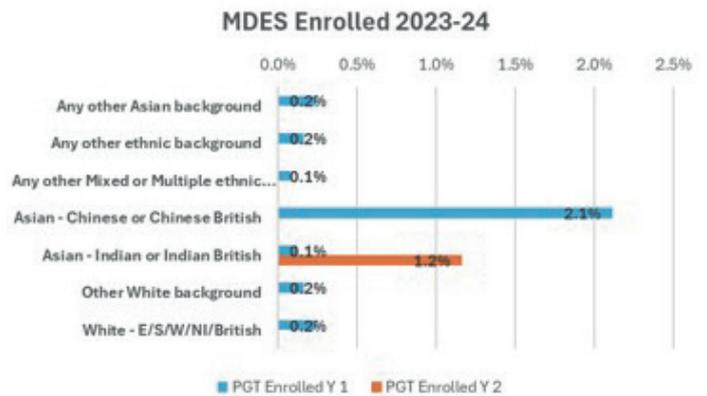
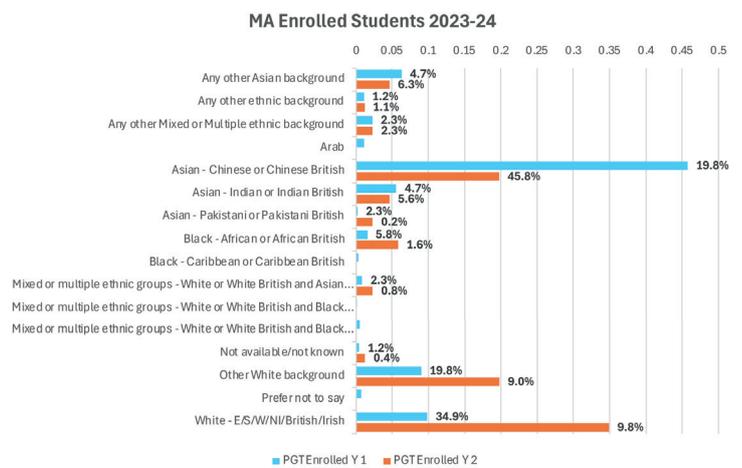
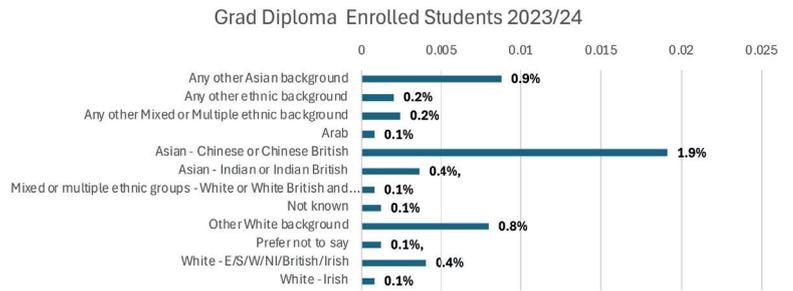


# Student data

EDI mandatory training completion rates were identified as a priority in AY 2022/23. This continued into AY 2023/24 through the encouragement of completion in Schools and department and monitoring completion through probation and appraisal reviews. The College set an ambitious target to increase completion rates to 80%.

## Enrolment by programme and ethnicity

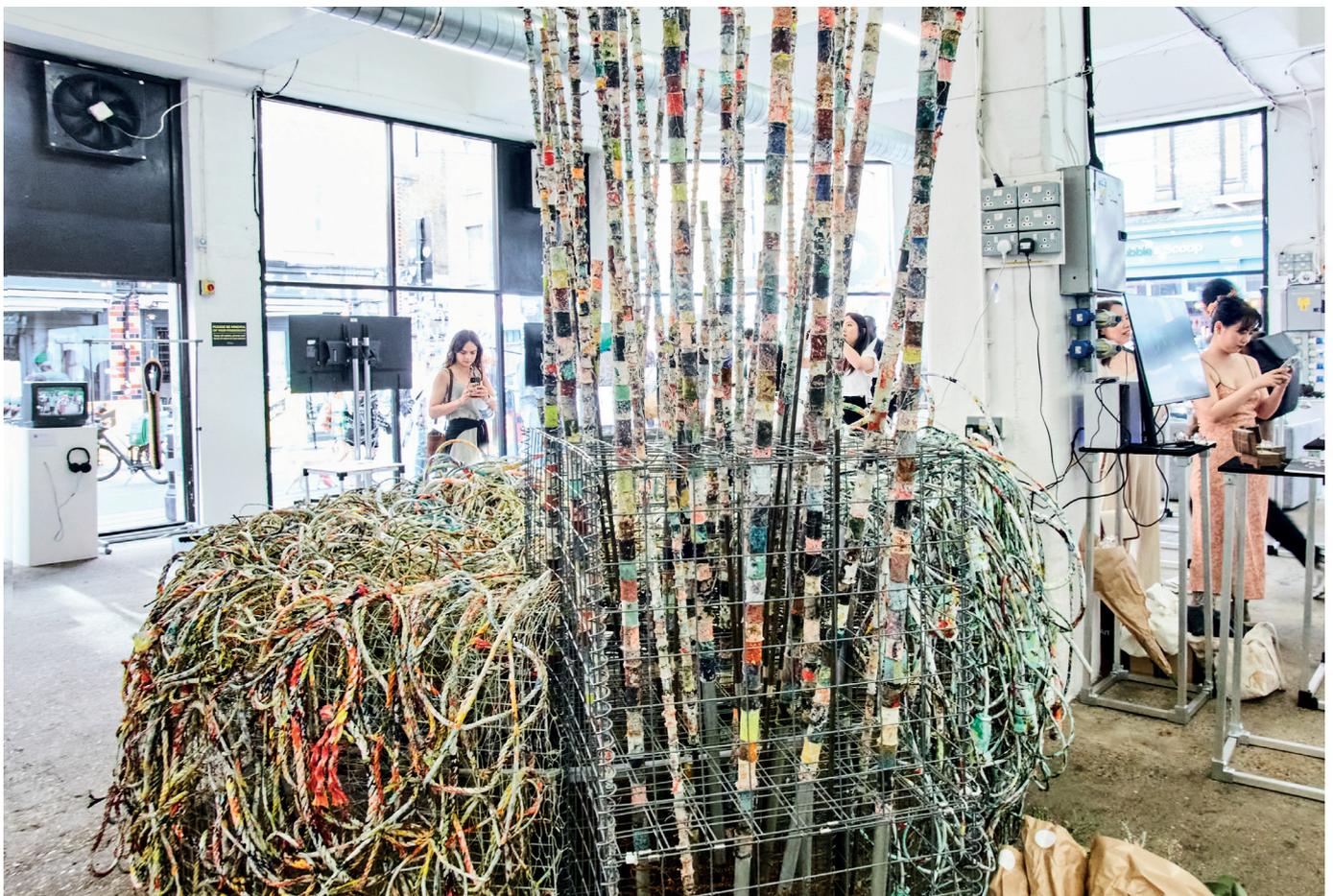
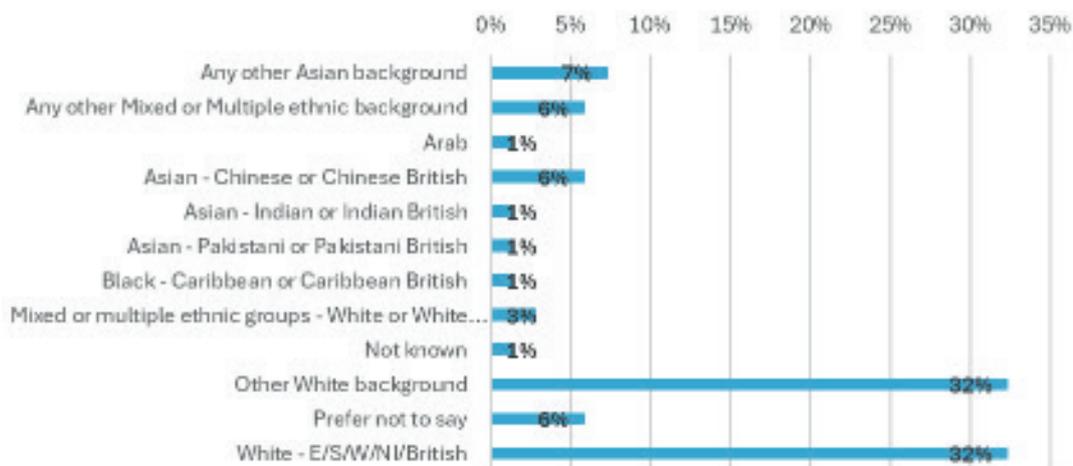
Student enrolment in 2023/24 is reflected by programme and ethnicity. Student data is collated for the annual HESA return from August to October. The Graduate diploma has two cohorts per year. This is the second year of the one-year MA programme and the introduction of the MFA which provides the opportunity for students choose from a set of varied electives to gain their qualification. The Charts below show the percentage of post graduate taught students enrolled at October 2023/24



## Postgraduate Research enrolment

The chart below shows the number of students new and continuing students enrolled in 2023/24 was 68 the table below shares the percentage of students by ethnicity.

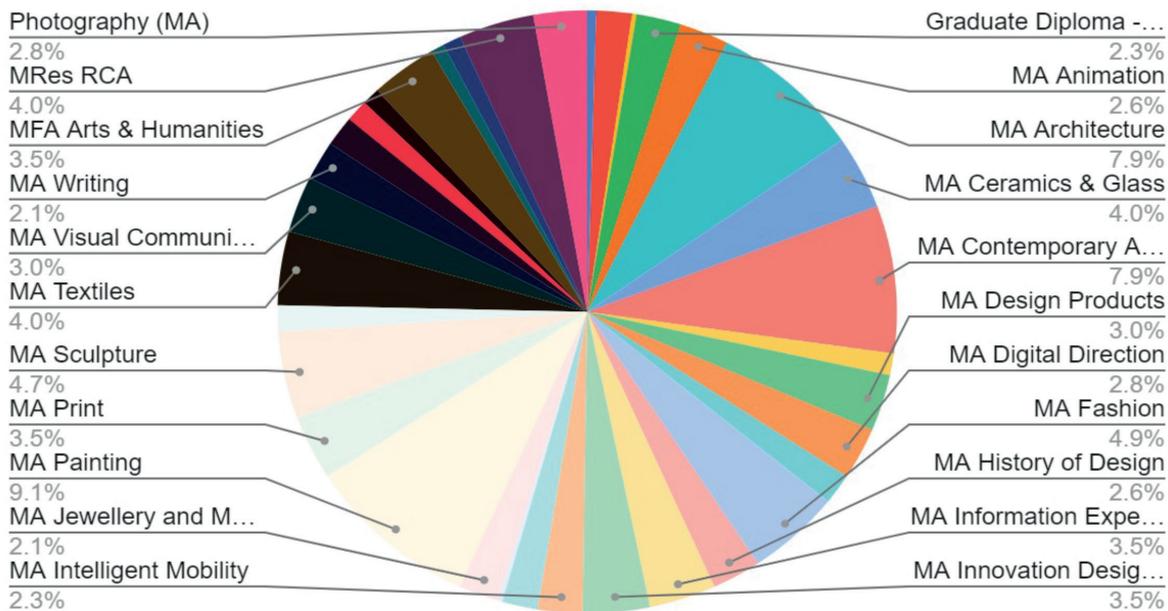
**PGR Student enrolment by Ethnicity 2023-24**



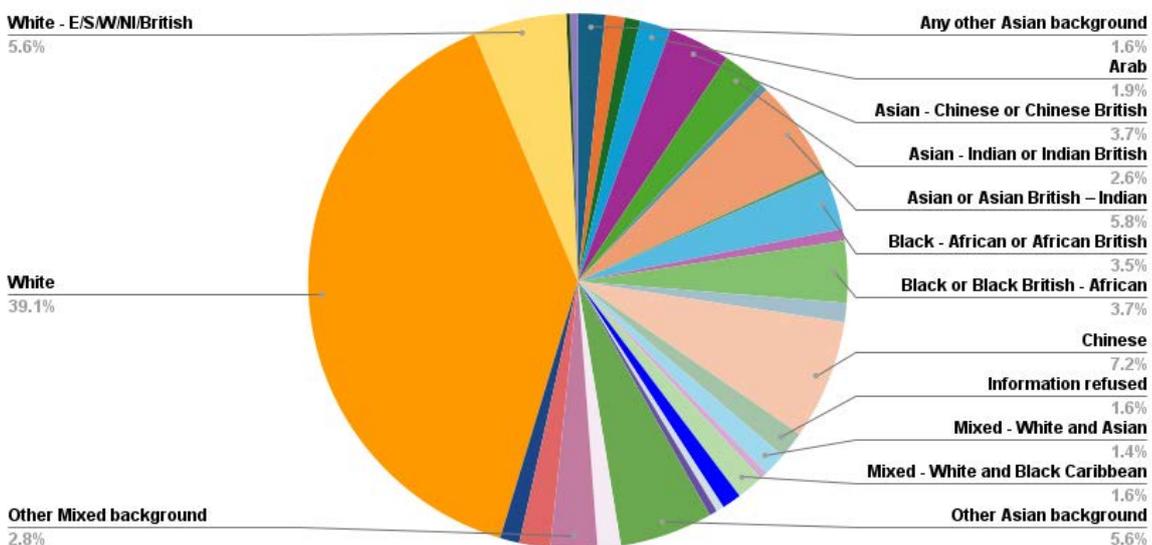
## RCA Scholarship Programme

The RCA scholarship programme is growing, with over 300 scholarships available during 2023/24 academic year. These awards supported students in financial need and those from under-represented groups, including students with disabilities and students with refugee and

asylum seeker status. Various types of scholarship are available from Full fee payment plus living costs, Full fee payment, Partial fee payment, Contributions to living costs. Whilst most scholarships are aimed at UK (Home) students there are also international scholarships available.



Total Number of student Scholarships by Programme



Total Number of Students Supported by Ethnicity

# EDI Objectives

## Becoming Anti Racist Action Plan review

In July 2020, the RCA committed to become an anti-racist institution, building a community which is diverse, multicultural, and inclusive for all students and staff and where everyone can teach, learn, work and practice in a shared spirit of cultural exchange. The Becoming anti Racist action plan was developed by recommendations from independent consultants Nous Group, following listening sessions with staff, students, and alumni across the RCA with support from RCA's trade unions.

Following discussion and approval at Council the Action plan approved and published in May 2021. The Action Plan takes on board in full all of Nous' seven recommendations to:

### Areas of Action

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Governance & accountability	Staff training & support	Complaints procedures	Diversify staff	Widen student participation	Student support	Decolonise the curriculum

## Areas of Action

Chapter	Action	Initiatives
<b>Governance</b>	Implement effective, governance accountability and transparency of anti-racism work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of EDI Centre (Head of EDI &amp; EDI Officer)</li> <li>• Establishment of EDI Committee and working groups</li> <li>• Collection and reporting on EDI data</li> <li>• EDI annual report</li> <li>• Race Equality Charter Mark</li> <li>• REC Survey</li> </ul>
<b>Training</b>	Improve anti-racism training and support for staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing monitoring of mandatory EDI training completion rates</li> <li>• Race Equity Training</li> <li>• Diversifying staff</li> <li>• Unconscious bias</li> <li>• Prevent 2021</li> <li>• Inclusive Leadership programme</li> <li>• Inclusive Recruitment training ( VCO recruitment)</li> </ul>
<b>Complaints &amp; Procedures</b>	Review complaints policies and procedures for students and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti discrimination statements</li> <li>• EDI policy update</li> <li>• Report and Support</li> <li>• Equality Impact Assessment</li> </ul>
<b>Diversifying Staff</b>	Diversify staff through recruitment and progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDI representation on recruitment panels</li> <li>• Mandatory recruitment panel training</li> <li>• Inclusive recruitment training for PVC recruitment panel</li> </ul>
<b>Widening Participation</b>	Widen participation of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarships</li> <li>• Summer School</li> <li>• International student recruitment events</li> </ul>
<b>Student</b>	Roll out anti-racism training and support for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration events with Students Union including</li> <li>• Access to race equity training modules on Student Orientation hub</li> </ul>
<b>Decolonise Curriculum</b>	Decolonise the curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with The Library, ADO, and Student networks to support with resources and events.</li> <li>• Across RCA module on Equality social justice and climate</li> </ul>

# EDI Objectives 2024/25

<b>EDI Vision Framework</b>	Creating an EDI Framework that embeds, enables, and celebrates the work of our staff and students up to 2027 in accordance with the strategic and operating plans
<b>Reviewing and closing the Anti-Racism Action Plan</b>	Review the progress to becoming anti-racist, close down the plan and set the next direction
<b>Establishing EDI baseline at the RCA</b>	Establishing baseline across all areas of EDI, to facilitate future programmes of work
<b>EDI calendar</b>	Provision of EDI Calendar for all dates, with a meaningful recognition of a select few key dates, signed off by the EDI Committee
<b>Leading on continual reflection as part of the Inclusive Leadership programme</b>	Following the inclusive leadership programme, continue to liaise with Deans Directors to understand and establish how lessons learned during the programme are embedded in their areas and the college culture/environment
<b>Advisory and Policy Development</b>	Advising across the College on policy, practices, processes, pay gaps, complaints, procedures, Anti-Discrimination Statements, procurement, unions
<b>EDI Annual Report</b>	Complete and archive Annual EDI Reports in order to be a position to move to business as usual from AY 24/25 onwards
<b>Support the Dubai planning work from an EDI perspective</b>	When required, join the TNE Dubai People and Culture workstream chaired by the COO. The workstream will come into effect once the negotiations with TECOM reach a certain milestone. The Head of EDI will be a core member of the group and will help educate/resolve/drive forward any cultural sensitivities for staff and students working/studying in Dubai.
<b>Monitor and advise on REF from an EDI perspective</b>	The next REF will likely have a greater emphasis on EDI and People and Culture impact. Although the timeline has been deferred, work with People and Culture and the Research Office to make sure the EDI requirements are fully embedded and implemented.
<b>Race Equality Charter pilot</b>	Workstream 1: Quantitative data
	Workstream 2: Qualitative Data
	Workstream 3: Governance and Senior leadership Commitment
	Workstream 4: Communications, Marketing and RCA Narrative
	Workstream 5: Analysis, Benchmarking and Action Planning

# EDI Committee

EDI welcomed the Dean of School of Communication as the Chair of the EDI Committee in May 2023 and a new EDI officer in September 2023. This provided an opportunity to review and revise the Terms of Reference for the EDI committee to Streamline and align the Committee and it is reporting with other College committee. (See Appendix 1 & 2) The terms of reference will be reviewed on an annual basis at the first meeting of each academic year, with the meeting taking place on a termly basis.

## Governance

The EDI Committee advises on EDI projects, initiatives, and pilots across the College. This year the EDI Committee has overseen Race Equality initiatives such as the Race Equality Charter and My Name Is Campaign, as well as ensured the EDI Calendar is celebrated and recognised in a meaningful way. It has also approved and discussed accessibility initiatives such as our Digital Accessibility Champions project that looks at our online and digital accessibility, as well as AccessAble partnership to ensure the accessibility across all three of our campuses. The Committee has welcomed new HR policies and processes such as the menopause policy, the improvement in family leave and engagement plans such as line manager forums.

## Race Equality Charter (REC) Mark

On 12 September 2023, the RCA signed up to participate in the Small Specialists Research Institutions pilot for the REC, recommended by the EDI Committee and agreed and approved by Senior Leadership. In January 2024, an announcement was made to the College to all staff. The College is one of only fifteen small specialist and research institutions invited to participate in the pilot. Advance HE runs the REC this allows the college to measure the impact of our work with the opportunity to be awarded our efforts in supporting the representation, progression and success of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic staff and students on the college's journey to become an Anti-Racist Institution.

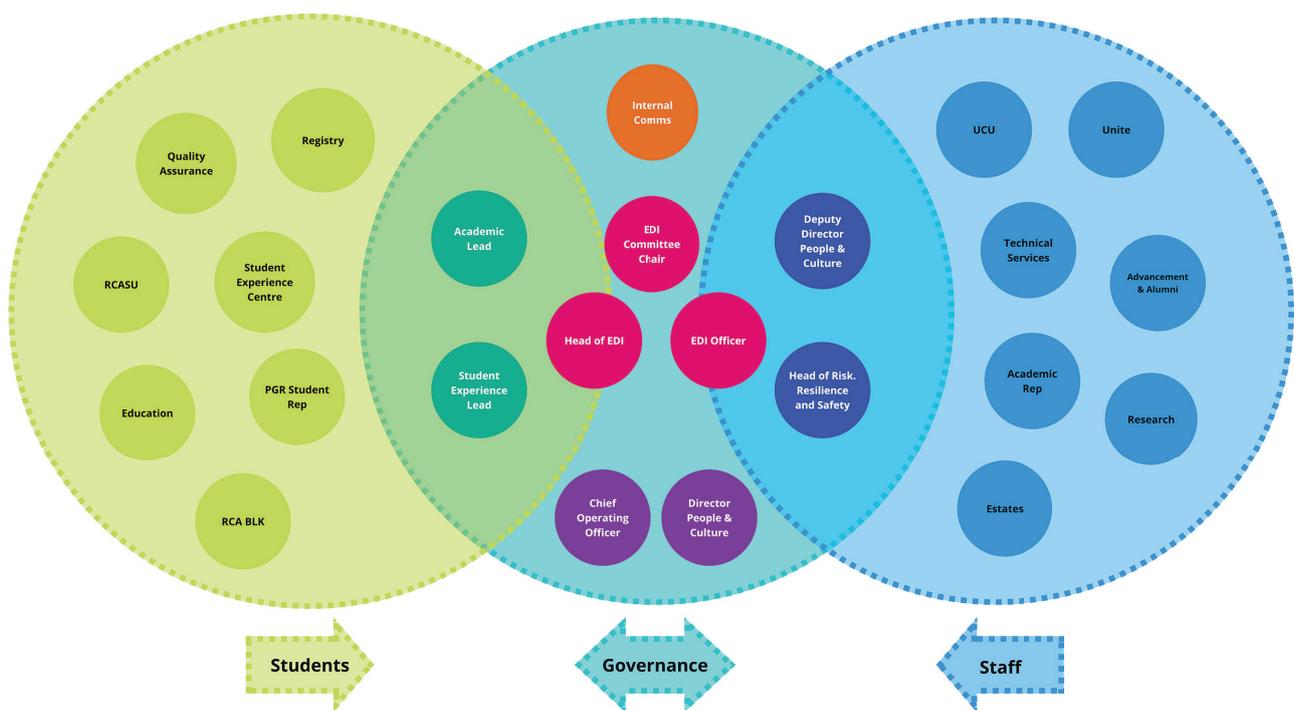
Being part of a small specialist institutions pilot means that institutions like the RCA can better reflect the nuances and challenges faced by institutions of this size and can adapt the charter's principles to create a more equitable process. The RCA will also be able to co-create a framework for a specialist REC award that adapts the usual asks of the 19 mandatory datasets and allows the flexibility required to report on small numbers in alternative methods through qualitative data such as staff surveys, pulse surveys or focus groups.

The REC will be overseen by the Self-Assessment Team (SAT) and associated staff and student working groups. This structure is a first of its kind for the College, seeing colleagues from across Professional, Technical, Academic and Students coming together united in Race Equity.

# Self Assessment Team

The Race Equality Charter Mark (REC) Self-Assessment Team (SAT) will work as a group to drive forward the development and improvement of practical steps towards the advancement of equality and measurement of the impact of EDI initiatives. They will be responsible for self-analysis and strive to ensure that the principles of the Race Equality Charter Mark are embedded throughout the culture of The Royal College of Art.

## Race Equality Charter: Self Assessment Team and Working Groups



## REC Survey

The first action for the REC was to undertake a Staff REC Pulse Survey to identify a baseline across the College and to start to set priorities from this. We have worked with a survey company to ensure that the results are confidential and voluntary and completed engagement exercises to ensure participation. The next action will be to complete the same exercise from a student perspective.

The REC Staff survey took place over the summer between 5th August and closed on 9th September. The Survey was delivered by People insight and staff were invited to complete the survey following some drop-in sessions with the EDI officer to share more information on REC and the college's participation. 48 % of staff completed the survey and the results will be shared once the data has been analysed by the survey.

# EDI at the RCA

This section includes a snapshot from areas where EDI good practice has developed and is becoming embedded. Schools and departments are encouraged to share their EDI initiatives and practices annually.

## EDI Centre

The EDI team were welcomed into the People and Culture team this year and are building on the existing relationships to further embed EDI practices in all people practices and strategy.

Our EDI Calendar has recognised dates across the year engaging a large number of students, staff, alumni and public, working with colleagues from RCA Library, Student experience, People and Culture and Communications and Marketing. Notable events include the RCA's first ever International Women's Day event, which saw speakers from across all areas of the College share their experiences from a woman's journey in the workplace, covering issues such as imposter syndrome, menstruation, menopause, and childcare.

During Race Equality Week, the team hosted a captivating film screening and Q&A with the Director of 'Barrel Children: The Families Windrush Left Behind'. The sold-out event was hosted at RCA Battersea, where we delved deeper into

the heartwarming and eye-opening stories of reconciliation and rediscovery within a new world that made little sense to the children left behind. Neurodiversity Celebration Week highlighted a series of neurodiversity focused short films from students past and present and current researchers, culminating in a panel event to discuss the impact of neurodiversity on the art and design sector and how the RCA can learn more.

## People & Culture

The People & Culture team have made significant progress on a number of EDI-related topics. A number of our policies and processes have been updated and new policies formulated to better support our colleagues across the College.

We have created and published a Menopause Policy. This was shared in draft form at our International Women's Day event, with attendees able to provide feedback. The Flexible Working Policy has been updated to reflect the recent (April) changes in law, which give all employees day 1 rights to request flexible working. Management guidance has been produced to support the implementation of this policy. The recent Carers Law has been incorporated into our policies and processes.

As part of recent negotiations with our Unite colleagues, we have increased our paternity leave provision from two weeks to six weeks. During these negotiations we also agreed to achieve parity on annual leave provision for all colleagues by October 2025. This has resulted in an increased allowance of two days from October 2024, with an additional three days in October 2025 – bringing all staff to an allowance of 30 days. Additionally, in collaboration with our Unite and Technical Services colleagues we have published a transparent Regrading Process, designed to provide Professional Services colleagues with a clear understanding of the requirements and process to request a grading review of their role.

We have amended our contracts to ensure sick pay parity across academic and professional/technical services colleagues. Previously, professional/technical services staff were not eligible for College sick pay until they had completed six months service, whereas academic staff had to complete three months service. All staff now need to complete three months service.

Advanced HE Aurora Programme places have been offered following a competitive application process. The College funds four places on this programme for female leaders, at grade 7 or above.

Information on all of these topics was shared at a Line Managers Forum on 14 May, which was attended by more than 40 managers. This was the first of an ongoing series of Line Manager Forums, designed to be an interactive, collaborative space and will be held quarterly.

The College's Wellbeing Strategy Group was set up in 2023 and reports into the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee. The group is co-chaired by the Head of Student Experience and the Deputy Director of People & Culture. With representation from staff and student departments across the College and RCASU, the group is responsible for identifying the mental health and wellbeing needs of our staff and student community and producing an action plan outlining the next steps of our journey. The group worked collaboratively

to produce the RCA Wellbeing Plan covering 2023 to 2025. The plan is underpinned by the University Mental Health Charter and the College's strategy is aligned to this with People & Culture leading the 'Work' theme which focuses on staff wellbeing. The plan outlines a number of workstreams and initiatives including policy revisions and the introduction of wellness action plans. All activities are on track for their scheduled completion dates.

Our People Data reports also have EDI dashboards included that report on trends on the demographics of our organisation with regards to ethnicity, gender, age, and disability each month. People and Culture have supported the EDI committee with the development and implementation of the REC pulse survey and will continue to support the committee with the interpretation of results and associated actions.

The College has made a commitment to revisit and review the anti-discrimination statements as a result of conversations with our TU colleagues and other stakeholders. People and Culture have led these conversations and will continue to support the EDI committee with the future work in this area.

The Disability Confident scheme is a UK government initiative designed to encourage employers to become more inclusive and accessible to disabled people. The RCA gained Disability Confident Committed Status (Level 1) in October 2022, which ensures that we meet minimum standards for Disability recruitment practices. The three level award scheme, aims to help recruit, retain, and develop disabled employees by providing them with guidance, support, and recognition, ensuring Disability Inclusion is at the heart.

The RCA has committed to progressing to 'Disability Confident Employer' (Level 2) by September 2025, with a further commitment of becoming 'Disability Confident Leader' (Level 3) by 2027, in order to broaden and deepen our existing commitment.

At these further levels, a thorough self-assessment will be carried out to review practices against a set of criteria related to recruitment, employee support, and staff development, as well as working closely with disabled staff and students to help inform our work. The RCA will demonstrate the steps taken to be more inclusive and supportive of disabled employees, such as providing adjustments in the workplace and promoting inclusive recruitment practices.

# Student Experience

Student Experience continues to align with its EDI objectives and advancement. Through a range of

initiatives, we aimed to enhance student welfare, access to services, and community building, with a particular focus on addressing the needs of underrepresented and marginalised groups. An overview of key efforts are listed below:

**Health Promotion Initiatives:** We successfully secured grant funding from the Central and Northwest London NHS Trust, which will be used to second a Mandarin-speaking health advocate from King's College London. This advocate will provide vital support to all students, with a focus on our Chinese student population, helping them navigate health services and improve access to literacy support services. This initiative strengthens our commitment to culturally competent welfare support.

**Advancing Campus Accessibility:** In collaboration with our Estates team, we launched AccessAble at the RCA. This digital platform provides



comprehensive access guides for students, staff, and visitors, improving physical access to our campuses and ensuring that all members of our community feel welcome and included.

**Enhancing Mental Health Support:** Our Counselling team is now the most diverse it has ever been, with two-thirds of staff coming from global majority backgrounds. Building on this progress, we plan to launch a men's reflective conversations group in the 2024/25 academic year, addressing specific mental health needs of male students – a crucial and often overlooked aspect of mental health support.

**Disability and Financial Assistance:** This year saw the introduction of a new Disability Policy, furthering our commitment to inclusive education. Additionally, our scholarship and financial assistance fund continues to provide crucial support to students from disadvantaged and oppressed backgrounds. We also continue to offer free period care products for all students, ensuring their basic needs are met.

**Global Café Events:** We continued to host our Global Café events, fostering informal conversations and networking opportunities. These events are open to all students and organised around shared themes, promoting cross-cultural understanding and community-building.

**Supporting Students Training:** To better equip staff with the tools to support students, we launched the 'Supporting Students' training as a mandatory online module. This training focuses on raising awareness of student mental health and providing staff with resources and approaches to supporting students facing complex and challenging circumstances.

**Consent Training:** We introduced consent training for the first time, embedding it into the student online orientation programme. This initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to fostering a safe and respectful learning environment.

**Reflective Practice Pilot for Academics:** A reflective practice pilot was approved for the School of Arts & Humanities (SoAH), providing a space for academics to process their experiences and emotions. This pilot was introduced in SoAH due to the high number of students with complex needs, offering much-needed support for staff as they navigate these challenges.

Together, these initiatives reflect our ongoing commitment to advancing EDI through tangible, student-centred actions, fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable experience for all.

## Estates

The RCA Estates team are engaged to provide an accessible and inclusive space for working and studying at the RCA. Within our limited footprint we strive to use all spaces to support the ever changing needs of our RCA family. The recent area of attention was to support the creation of the Calm Space within the RCA Kensington Library. We are now working with the guidance provided within the AccessAble report to improve accessibility to areas highlighted on the report. EDI is a focal point within all supplier engagements, inclusive of the current Catering review, looking to ensure we can provide a dynamic offering, to support across diverse cultural and dietary requirements.

# Academic Development Office

We have focused our efforts on 'Staff training & support' and 'Decolonising the curriculum' specifically through two MEd/PG Cert units called 'Designs for Learning' and 'Education for Change'. Both units critique structures of power as they relate to educational access, inclusion, and outcomes. For example, in 'Designs for Learning' participants are encouraged to collaboratively develop a series of imagined students who are then used as a reflection point throughout the unit when considering the impact of curriculum choices. The learning outcomes of both units include reference to accessibility and inclusion.

We also introduce the '8 habits of inclusion' during programme induction and ensure that there is an opportunity to collectively reflect on how we can demonstrate the principles of generous thinking when we share ideas, perspectives and experiences.

It is notable that so many of the MEd students decided to focus their independent research projects on aspects of equity and inclusion. For example, one student developed a fantastic project on culturally responsive teaching that involve a series of On AcrossRCA we are mindful of all of the areas of action but have paid particular attention to 2 and 7.

All tutors who deliver AcrossRCA take part in development sessions before the unit starts. In 2023 we introduced a training session on intercultural exchange in response to feedback for more guidance on teaching diverse groups. Delivered by the Academic Skills team, the development sessions focus on understanding some of the cultural differences and approaches to learning in our students, and equipping tutors with the skills to effectively deliver an inclusive



pedagogy. This development session was a success and will be delivered with further material in 2024.

By its nature, AcrossRCA needs to be relevant to all of our students, and we are mindful of not only delivering a western centric curriculum with associated reference material. The AcrossRCA themes are global issues and therefore need to include global perspectives. In order to decolonise the curriculum, we have deliberately opened the reference lists to all staff and students to contribute to. There is no particular set reading list, instead we have Padlet's that function as the repository for references. When researching the topics that are pertinent to them, we encourage all students and staff to share relevant links for further reading/watching through the Padlet's. These do not start fresh each year but are shared with incoming students and build with the growing body of knowledge.

## Decolonise Curriculum

All our MRes teaching (in both pedagogical approaches, as well as curriculum content) aims

to be inclusive. We team teach and as a team share and check all lecture and seminar content, updated annually to ensure a diverse range of voices and references.

This also includes ensuring our guest lecturers are diverse and represent a range of identities and backgrounds.

### **Diversity Staff**

This past academic year began with hiring new MRes research tutors to join the team, and we are delighted to have appointed Burton Nitta, a collaborative Anglo Japanese duo, and had staff diversity as one of our key hire aims alongside research quality and teaching experience and fit.

### **Staff Training**

Our team undertake annual training to ensure we are equipped and aware of delivering inclusive and diverse teaching approaches and that staff are supported in managing diverse student needs.

### **Student Support**

MRes HoP and team work closely with student support to ensure we are aware and understand all our student inclusion plans and needs, and are also able to refer and support our students who need different kinds of support during the programme, with an emphasis in this past year on mental health support needs.

# Library

The Library continued to promote Black History Month, Disability History Month, Neurodiversity Celebration Week, International Women's Day, LGBT Pride Month, and South Asian Heritage Month through themed displays in the Library and curated online reading lists. We supplied graphics to promote books tied to further events promoted by the EDI Team such as Deaf Awareness Week.

We partnered with Student Support for Wobble Week in November 2023 to provide relaxing activities in the Library such as colouring and puzzles to help students to unwind.

In May 2024 we launched a new dedicated Calm Space within the Library. This room provides an environment where students can retreat from their studies or practice, and enjoy quiet reflection or relaxation. It is equipped with blackout blinds, adjustable lighting, plants and a variety of comfortable seating. We have worked with Student Support to ensure that this was promoted to students during the assessment period, and particularly to neurodiverse students.



The Library's first 'artist in residency' for 2023 was Beth Malcolm, Technical Instructor for Graduate Diploma. Beth's work explored the symbolic and physiological form of the ear and what it represents. Beth also reflected on the nature of engaging with the Library space and its collections as a neurodivergent person.

The Library also hosted a exhibition of student work entitled 'Uncharted Paths' from 1 August - 28 September 2024. Curated by MA Curating Contemporary Art students Yuying Chan and Hoi Man (Clara) Lai, the show featured work by 11 students' who identified as neurodiverse or having SpLD, alongside a selection of books from the collection. This curated display aimed to deepen appreciation and awareness of the creativity and perspectives within the neurodiverse community. A highlight of the exhibition was the interactive maze journey, designed to simulate distinct symptoms of SpLD and the challenges posed when exploring different areas of the library.

This year the Reader Services team built relationships with the newly founded RCA Africa society. We set up a dedicated book suggestion form for the members, and hosted a 'Blackout' event in the Library where African writers shared their latest work. We have since also engaged RCA Africa to take up the next Library residency from October 2024.

The Library continues to ringfence a dedicated fund for purchasing books by and about BIPOC. £3713 was spent in 2023-24 on over 150 items. A cumulative list of acquisitions has been made available via Padlet.

A new fund dedicated to diversifying the collection was also created for 2023-24 with £2620 being spent on 118 items.

The liaison librarians also continued to develop the zine collection to ensure representation of marginalised voices, and acquired further titles on wellbeing on the ebook and audiobook platform Libby.

# Engagement, Brand & Marketing

This summary reflects the extensive efforts by the Engagement, Brand & Marketing team to promote Equality, diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) across the College. The highlights emphasise how EDI principles are being embedded across various platforms, initiatives, and campaigns.

## **Social Media Campaigns**

A significant number of social media posts, with over 170 focused on EDI topics, including celebrations of International Women's Day, Black History Month, Disability History Month, and International Students Day. These posts highlight the diverse student and staff community.

## **Podcasts**

A series of five podcasts focusing on a wide range of EDI themes, such as accessible making, inclusive design, and celebrating underrepresented communities, providing a platform to discuss relevant issues.

## **Scholarships & outreach**

The team has been actively promoting scholarships, including producing social media posts and website interviews to encourage a diverse range of applicants. The outreach program in architecture aimed to increase awareness of creative careers among young people from diverse backgrounds.

## **Events & workshops**

Key initiatives such as the Open Day at the Battersea campus and the Snap Lens Lab brought young people closer to creative subjects, focusing on increasing access and participation.

## **Digital accessibility**

Enhancements to the RCA website and hosting a

digital accessibility ‘lunch & learn’ demonstrate a proactive effort to ensure that the College’s content is accessible to all, further embedding EDI into day-to-day communications.

### **Staff Engagement**

The team has also played a vital role in supporting EDI within the staff community through the Race Equality Charter Survey and the RCA Staff Awards, which recognise contributions to diversity and inclusion.

The Engagement, Branding and Marketing Team’s approach reflects a strong commitment to not only promoting but actively embedding EDI into of College communications practice.

## **Research & Innovation**

The Research Office team works hard to ensure EDI considerations inform everything we do. This is essential if we are to provide a research culture and environment at the RCA that is genuinely supportive and inclusive for all our academic and research staff, whatever their career stage, and for our research students.

The Head of Equity & Inclusion is a formal member of the College’s REF Strategy & Oversight Group, as well as a member of the REF working group on people and culture. This means not only that we are able to ensure we take account of best practice in supporting our diverse staff to succeed in research, but also that EDI is part of our formal REF governance structure.

The Research Office complies with the EDI requirements of external research funders such as UKRI by implementing inclusive demand management processes for funding schemes and supporting academics in addressing the EDI components of funding proposals and research projects.

The Head of Doctoral Programmes works closely with the EDI team to ensure that equity and inclusion inform our doctoral programmes and support, and our termly Doctoral Training Programmes weeks have included sessions on aspects of EDI in relation to the PhD student experience. Regular training is provided for new PhD supervisors, and refresher sessions are provided for experienced supervisors, as well as regular training for staff who chair PhD viva exams, to ensure that best practice is followed, and all students are supported to achieve the best outcomes. The Research & Innovation teams have a high rate of compliance with completing mandatory training in EDI and other related modules, which is an indication of the teams’ commitment to these principles.

## **School of Architecture**

The School of Architecture (SoA) EDI Report 2023/24 highlights the proactive steps taken to foster an inclusive environment through governance, staff support, student engagement, and curriculum transformation. Below is a structured overview of the key initiatives:

### **Governance & Accountability**

- **Inclusive Event Planning:** Launched a Welcome Event to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for staff and students.
- **Policy Guidance:** Provided advice on using inclusive language in policies and addressing sensitive themes during governance meetings.
- **Event Support:** Supported events like Grenfell and SU PalSoC with bespoke catering and allocated budget for the Queer x Time lecture series.
- **Cultural Integration:** Introduced a monthly culture group meeting to boost community engagement.

### Staff Training and Support

- Occupational Health and Flexible Working: Offered tailored work arrangements for staff returning from sick leave or surgery, ensuring their well-being.
- Pregnancy Support: Provided flexible office hours and work-from-home options for pregnant staff.
- Inclusive Workplace: Fostered a supportive environment, encouraging staff to seek help when needed.
- Training: Encouraged continuous learning through mandatory training on Moodle, with many staff trained as Mental Health First Aiders.

### Complaints Procedures

- Accessibility and Transparency: Established clear and confidential complaint procedures, regularly updated based on feedback.
- Inclusive Complaint Handling: Created an EDI-trained team to handle complaints with consideration for diverse backgrounds.

### Diversity in Staffing

- Inclusive Hiring: Diversified the curriculum and teaching staff through inclusive hiring practices, especially in the History & Theory department.
- Leadership in Queer Education: Staff leadership in queer education through the global QuEAN network and Architecture LGBT+ initiatives.

### Widening Student Participation

- Proactive Admissions: Enhanced selection processes to reflect diverse educational backgrounds and portfolios.
- External Partnerships: Collaborated with the Stephen Lawrence Trust, enabling disadvantaged graduates to mentor current students.
- Scholarship Programs: Launched scholarships such as the Karakusevic Carson Scholarship and the Carpenters Bursary, supporting disadvantaged students.



- Support for Disadvantaged Students: Provided mentorship through the Dean's involvement with New Architecture Writers.
- Financial Accessibility: Reduced financial barriers for students by making field trips and materials more affordable.
- Diverse Representation: Ensured that guest panels and lecture series reflect diverse perspectives, applying queer and feminist approaches to challenge traditional norms.

### **Student Support**

- Inclusive Recognition: Celebrated diverse student achievements, like a deaf ID student recognised for excellence in Media Studies.
- Support for Neurodiverse Students: Tailored learning environments and materials to meet the needs of neurodiverse students, including adjustments to visual materials and shared resources.
- Accessibility in Learning: Added closed captions to online content and provided flexible options for students with disabilities, like recording lectures to address anxiety and processing difficulties.
- Stabilising Timetables: Simplified timetables and ensured consistent adherence to schedules to reduce student anxiety.

### **Decolonise the Curriculum**

- Curriculum Review: Ongoing reviews of curricula to integrate perspectives from underrepresented voices and cultures, ensuring the inclusion of diverse cultural content across all programs.

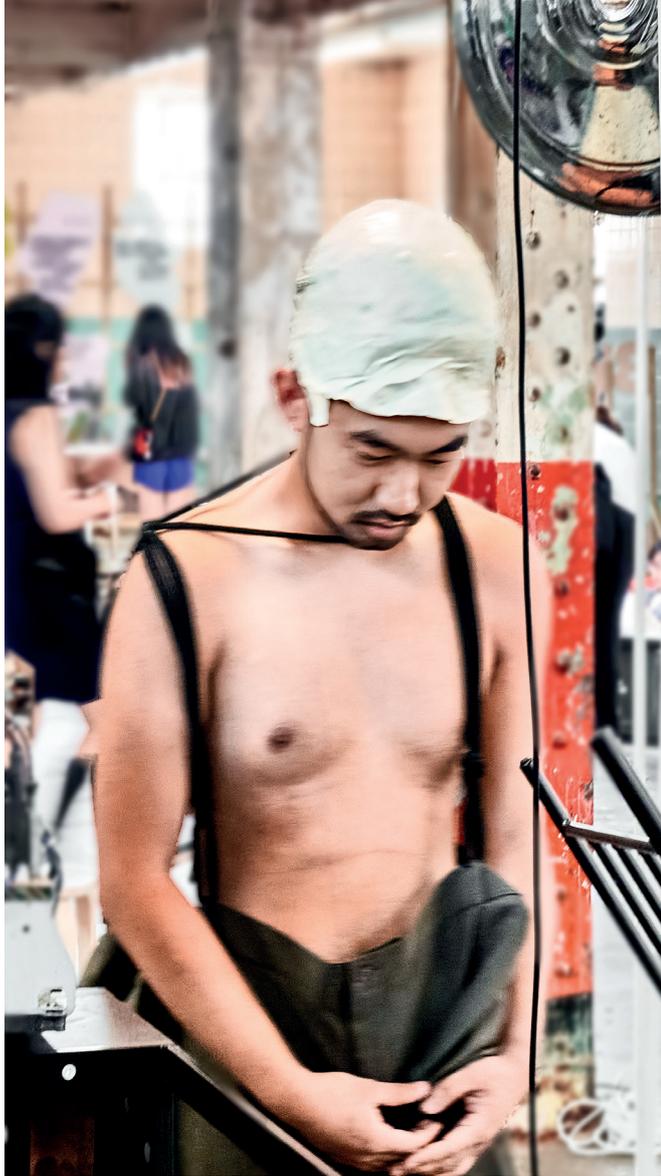
The School of Architecture (SoA) continues its commitment to embedding EDI principles across multiple levels, ensuring a supportive, inclusive, and accessible environment for all staff and students.

# School of Communication

Katerina Athanasopoulou - led on Labyrinth workshop that included student support and multi-faith spirituality in a creative and meaningful way, and SoC students found the experience moving. The workshop took place in the Garden House in May 2024, with RCA's Specific Learning Differences (SpLD) Coordinator Qona Rankin, and Imperial College Chaplain Andrew Wilson. Students found the experience moving: they described it as calming, a way to let go of everyday pressures in favour of quiet contemplation; one student said that it reconnected him with his experience from years ago, as a Buddhist monk. Led by Tom Simmons, Snap Lens Lab is provided specifically for 18+ year olds from underserved communities in London.

Through cultural visits, technical workshops, feedback sessions, presentations and mentoring led by RCA faculty and Snap experts, students engage and experiment with what augmented reality is and can be. EDI is at the heart of the School Wide Unit, Making Worlds with Others and Living Worlds of Theory. This is reflected in the engagement with communities, the tutor team, the themes of the reading, and the themes of the course. Such a deep and continued commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion does not come for free.

On the one hand, we find that many of our tutors are marginally employed, which can hardly be disconnected from the positionalities they navigate, and on the other hand, we notice that certain critiques coming from the student body reflect the deep disinterest in EDI issues that plague our historical moment. Despite these tendencies, we notice that the SWU functions to stage and deepen commitments from students, communities, and tutors. For communities the SWU is a meeting space that enables activities,



# School of Arts & Humanities

The School of Arts & Humanities (SoAH) demonstrates an ongoing commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) through a range of initiatives integrated into its teaching, learning, and community-building practices. Each programme has made deliberate efforts to create inclusive environments, ensuring that diverse voices and perspectives are represented and that students are supported in ways that respect their individual needs. These efforts include developing collaborative platforms, revising curricula, promoting respectful engagement, and addressing key issues such as decolonisation, accessibility, and social justice. Some examples include:

## **Applied Art**

The Well-making platform, led by Mah Rana and Katie Spragg, enhances student well-being by integrating care and mental health into craft-based learning.

## **Contemporary Art Practice (CAP)**

Contemporary Art Practice foregrounds women, Black, Asian, and queer speakers in its Lecture Series, and the CAP etiquette guidelines promote an inclusive space free from discrimination, co-created by staff and students.

## **Curating Contemporary Art (CCA)**

CCA explores global curatorial practices through Transnationalism, guest lecturers, and international partnerships, with an ongoing commitment to ethical practice through its group Memorandum of Understanding and decolonisation efforts.

## **History of Design (HoD)**

HoD introduced Communities of Practice workshops and adapted teaching materials for students with specific learning needs. The programme continues to focus on decolonising approaches and offers option courses on diverse geographies.

meeting, and inspiration that can infuse other moments with a fresh perspective.

For tutors the continued learning from each other's pedagogies, approaches and reflections provides a deeply satisfying working experience. For students, the SWU opens up methods of engagement, reflections on their approach, and inroads to deep learning about the space of art and design in our contemporary moment. The unit allows our staff and students to learn from some leading organisations and individuals working across different fields of social justice. Some of the organisations, groups and communities we work with include Masbro Youth Club, Phoenix Academy, Accumulate, Deaf Rave, SWARM, For Brian and Headway. Over the last three year's our work has enabled students to confront the privileged position in which the RCA is situated and to question and embrace the possibilities of friendship, community building and collaboration inside and outside the institution.

## Photography

The programme co-creates a Studio Etiquette document with students to promote respectful engagement, and it plans to revive a Feminist Reading Group as a platform for EDI discussions.

## Print

Print celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity in teaching and ensures a range of voices addressing race, class, and disability in its seminars and reading lists. Sculpture: Regularly updated reading lists cover race, class, and disability, and the programme developed a Behaviour Code with students to ensure respectful studio conduct and shared spaces.

## Writing

Writing promotes respectful engagement with diverse reading lists and targeted recruitment efforts leading to increased representation of Black British students. SoAH's ongoing EDI initiatives seek to foster inclusivity, ensure diverse perspectives and support students in an equitable learning environment.



# School of Design

MDes Design Futures is committed to diversifying its staff. It has hired five new school-wide tutors, increasing diversity from the perspectives of disciplinary background, institutional background (previous place of employment) and nationality.

MDes Design Futures has recruited a more internationally diverse cohort thus widening its student participation. In the 2023/24 academic year, student reps in the Design Futures programme came up with initiatives and organised extracurricular events to promote networking, connection with external experts, and skills enhancement, including a series of guest talks, a reading group, a PhD application support group, all with support from tutors. These initiatives created a sense of community and belonging in the programme.

Decolonise the curriculum: MDes Design Futures have made a conscious effort to have more diverse guest lecturers in the programme and increase the participation of women to bring different perspectives into the curriculum. In the Entrepreneurship unit, a male-dominant discipline and practice, Dr Alessio Franconi and Dr Ravi Sikhwal invited mainly women with expertise in founding businesses, leading startups, and innovation to share their experiences with students.

MA Fashion collaborated with MA Design Products to design clothing that address mobility challenges. PP Yimeng won the Snowdon Award Helen Hamlin for their innovative designs.

# Appendix 1

## The Race Equality Charter Principles

REC is underpinned by five fundamental guiding principles. Members of the SAT and working groups, are committing to following these principles in how they approach race equality and address their institutional culture:

1. Racism is an everyday facet of UK society and racial inequalities may manifest themselves in everyday situations, processes, and behaviours. Racial disparities are a critical issue in outcomes for staff and students, recognising that racial inequalities are not necessarily overt, isolated incidents.
2. The UK higher education sector will not reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of the whole population and until individuals from all ethnic backgrounds can benefit equally from the opportunities it affords.
3. In tackling racial inequalities, it is important that actions are aimed at achieving transformational and long-term institutional culture change, avoiding a deficit model where actions are aimed at changing the individual.
4. Staff and students from racially minoritised ethnic backgrounds are not a homogeneous group. People from different ethnic backgrounds have different experiences of, and outcomes from and within, higher education, and that complexity needs to be considered in analysing data, developing solutions, and implementing actions.
5. Embracing intersectionality, from analysing data to developing actions, can better support institutions to tackle racism within the higher education sector.

# Appendix 2

## RCA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee

### 1 Terms of Reference

1.1 Purpose and Scope

1.2 The EDI committee is the body tasked with the strategic management of the EDI programme within the College. It will set the EDI agenda across the College, oversee implementation, and monitor progress on a regular basis. It will ensure that equality and diversity principles are fully embedded in the College going forward, so that the College can be upheld as an exemplary organisation in terms of its EDI achievements.

1.3 The EDI committee will report to the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Planning and Resources Committee (PRC), with oversight from Senate for updates on progress.

1.4 The Royal College of Art cannot reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of the whole population and until individuals from all backgrounds can benefit equally from the opportunities it affords.

1.5 Monitor the implementation of the College's equity and inclusion strategic objectives and operational plan, as outlined in the EDI action plan in conjunction with the overarching College Strategy:

a. Monitor the College's compliance with statutory and legal obligations in respect of equity

and diversity, reporting to SMT, Council and Senate as appropriate.

b. Review and analyse equality and diversity data, identifying trends and making recommendations to SMT, Senate and the Council to address issues arising from the analysis.

c. Identify and share good practice on EDI across the College.

d. Convene and review the progress of EDI-related working groups tasked with taking forward specific pieces of work in between Committee meetings.

### 2. Membership

2.1 The membership of the EDI committee must consist of senior managers who are able to take strategic decisions on equality and diversity matters within the College and take steps to ensure they are implemented.

2.2 It is important that the EDI committee contains a good balance of academic, professional services and technical staff at all grades and a representation of individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds.

### 2.3 Ex officio members:

- Senior academic (Chair)
- Head of Equity and Inclusion
- Director of People and Culture
- Academic Registrar
- Director of Estates
- Director of Communications & Marketing (C&M)
- Head of Student Experience
- Student Union Community Officer
- Student Union President
- UCU EDI representative
- Unite EDI representative
- Pro-Vice Chancellor, Research, and Innovation
- Pro-Vice Chancellor, Education & Student Experience
- Director of IT, Library and Technical Services (ILTS)

### 2.4 Appointed members:

- Two School Assistant Deans nominated for a two-year term to sit on the EDI Committee.
- One School Assistant Dean per working group.
- RCA BLK
- RCA Disabled Students Network (DSN)

### 2.5 Secretary: EDI Officer

Admin support: Governance Office

The EDI Committee meets once every term.

The quorum has five members.

## 3. Accountability and reporting

3.1 Governance of the EDI Committee will be to report to the Planning and Resources Committee with oversight from The Senior Management Team, and Council for updates on progress.

## 4 Term

4.1 Committee membership will be for up to three years in the first instance, or for the members' duration at the RCA if this is shorter than three years. Committee membership will be reviewed annually.

4.2 The Chair will serve a term of two years with an additional year extension where needed or desired.

## 5. Administration (e.g., scheduling, agendas, and minutes)

5.1 This committee will be administered by the EDI Centre in alignment and with support from the College Secretariat.

5.2 The EDI Committee will meet once every term, agendas, papers, and minutes will be distributed in line with current committee notification policies.

5.3 EDI Working group meetings will be scheduled to take place between committee meetings and will submit or table updates on progress to the committee.

## 6. Observation

6.1 The Committee will allow up to two people per committee meeting to observe the meeting. These observers will not have any decision-making power but will be able to engage in the meeting.

6.2 The process for observation of the committee will be through an application form to express an interest. This will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis.

6.3 Observers are only allowed to attend one EDI Committee per academic year.

# EDI Team



**Isabella Kpobie-Mensah**  
Head of Equity & Inclusion



**Fiona Dorrington**  
Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Officer

