Thematic analysis

University of Manchester

25/09/2025

Methodology

We used Grounded Theory as an approach for gathering analysis with the goal to build theory grounded in participant experiences. It is an inductive, systematic, comparative method that allows concepts and theories emerge and avoids imposing bias. This methodology simultaneously uses data collection & analysis by constantly comparing the data and concepts.

We interviewed a total of 74 participants (33 staff and 41 students) of which 49 completed an anonymous diversity monitoring form, enabling us to understand the demographics of the focus group participants. The following information shows the diversity of the participants.

Staff:

- 27 respondents, 1 additional respondent is staff and student (82% completed form)
- 29% Academic (8 total, 2 Lecturer, 4 Senior Lecturer, 2 Professor), 7% Research (1 Assistant, 1 Associate), 57% PS (5 G1-4, 11 G5-7, no G8-9), 4% Technical (G5-7), 4% Other
- 70% on permanent contracts
- 70% work full-time
- 33% central PS, 22% FBMH, 19% FHUM, 30% FSE
- 63% disabled
- 19% from racially minoritised groups, 74% White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- 96% UK/British Nationals
- 88% female
- 81% women, 8% men, 11% non-binary
- 4% gender identity is not the same as assigned at birth (one respondent)
- 52% heterosexual, 41% lesbian, gay, bisexual or 'other'
- 66% have no caring responsibilities
- 37% no religion or belief, 22% Christianity, 15% Other

Students:

- 21 respondents, 1 additional respondent is staff and student (51% completed form)
- 41% Undergraduate, 41% Postgraduate Taught, 18% Postgraduate Research
- 18% FBMH, 55% FHUM, 23% FSE (all nine Schools represented)
- 5% disabled
- 86% from racially minoritised groups, 9% White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- 32% UK/British Nationals, 68% Non-UK/Overseas
- 27% no religion or belief, 36% Islam, 22% Christianity, 18% Christianity, 14% Hinduism
- 77% female
- 5% gender identity is not the same as assigned at birth (one respondent)
- 77% women, 18% men, 5% non-binary
- 77% heterosexual, 5% bisexual, 13% prefer not to say
- 77% have no caring responsibilities

Question 1: Is equity considered in processes and decision-making?

Staff themes:

- **Governance, clarity and accountability are weak**: Equity is undermined by the absence of clear and consistently applied policies. Where policies do exist, they are often vague, contradictory or tokenistic, leaving staff unsure of expectations. The lack of enforcement, monitoring and transparent evaluation means that rules can be bent when inconvenient, which fuels cynicism and erodes trust. Tensions between policies, such as freedom of speech and dignity at work, further highlight the uncertainty around boundaries of inclusive behaviour. Without stronger governance and tools for staff to seek redress, equity is not meaningfully embedded in institutional processes.

- **Leadership and culture do not consistently embed equity**: Senior leaders and line managers are not seen to model inclusive behaviour consistently, and the overall tone from the top is perceived as weak or absent. EDI is too often treated as an optional add-on or the responsibility of a few, rather than a shared cultural priority. Local culture dictates whether inclusion is taken seriously, meaning that progress is patchy across departments. While good ideas and initiatives are sometimes generated, they are rarely acted upon, and staff who wish to engage in equity work can be actively discouraged by managers citing workload or capacity. This disconnect between rhetoric and practice results in staff feeling unheard and undervalued.

- **People process reproduce inequity**: Recruitment, promotion and workload processes are widely seen as perpetuating inequities. Staff report that promotions are influenced by personal connections rather than merit, blind shortlisting is not in place, and job descriptions continue to reflect able-bodied assumptions. Workload models often fail to account for disability, neurodiversity or caring responsibilities, creating systemic disadvantage. The persistence of structural divides between professional services staff and academics compounds these inequities. Policies may appear acceptable on paper, but weak implementation undermines fairness in everyday practice.

- **Disproportionate burden on marginalised staff and lack of shared ownership**: Marginalised groups are frequently expected to shoulder the emotional labour of both experiencing exclusion and educating others, often at personal cost. Those on fixed-term or part-time contracts—groups more likely to be marginalised—feel especially vulnerable, fearing that speaking out could damage career prospects. Meanwhile, the colleagues most in need of behaviour change are often absent from EDI conversations or react defensively when challenged. This imbalance places an unsustainable burden on those already disadvantaged. Greater allyship, clearer behavioural expectations, and proper line manager training are needed.

Student themes

- **Unequal access to support services and resources:** Students' experiences show gaps in how equitably support is delivered. For example, disability accommodations are inconsistently applied, with some lecturers refusing to meet requirements and students

needing to chase support. International students are often excluded from financial aid programs and lack clear guidance on visas and sponsorship. While mitigating circumstances are described as fair and responsive, this appears to be the exception rather than the rule. These patterns suggest that equity is not systematically embedded in support processes—some groups receive strong, structured consideration, while others are left to navigate barriers on their own.

- **Accommodation and belonging challenges**: Housing experiences highlight inequities in how student needs and preferences are taken into account. Reports of unsafe, lower-budget accommodation raise concerns about health equity, while mismatched living arrangements (e.g., master's students housed with bachelor's students, or lack of consideration for lifestyle compatibility) affect students' sense of belonging. The lack of tailored approaches in housing allocation reflects a "one-size-fits-all" process that does not fully consider equity in decision-making, leaving some groups feeling overlooked and less supported in creating a safe and inclusive living environment.

- **Barriers to participation and integration for international students**: International students face layered challenges in both academic and social participation. They describe difficulties expressing themselves fluently in class, anxiety about being singled out, and barriers to forming friendships due to language differences. Group participation is hindered when smaller, more inclusive structures are not provided, and some domestic students struggle to understand their peers' English. Career barriers also emerge, as international students lack equitable access to guidance and sponsorship opportunities.

2. Are there unspoken practices that reinforce equity or inequity, even if unintentionally?

Staff themes

- **Informal practices and favouritism undermine fairness**: Unspoken dynamics in promotions, recruitment and development opportunities often privilege those already favoured by managers or perceived as more confident and vocal. Opportunities are frequently allocated through informal networks or personal rapport, rather than transparent criteria. This results in "personality contests," where louder, more assertive individuals progress more quickly than quieter colleagues, including those with hidden disabilities or from marginalised backgrounds. Favouritism—whether conscious or unconscious—reinforces inequity by rewarding visibility and connections over ability and contribution.

- **Policy inconsistency and lack of enforcement create inequitable norms**: Staff repeatedly noted that policies are applied unevenly, misunderstood, or simply ignored, creating inequities between departments and roles. Examples include differing probation terms for fixed-term contracts, inconsistent awareness of leave entitlements, and disparities in training expectations between professional services staff and academics. Even where equitable policies exist—such as recruitment practices—they are not always followed, leaving scope for bias and inconsistency. The absence of monitoring or accountability allows such practices to become normalised, embedding inequity across the institution.

- **Cultural norms and behaviours reinforce exclusion: everyday practices,** such as holding social events in pubs, choosing meeting locations that disadvantage some staff, or tolerating elitist and academic-centric language, can exclude individuals unintentionally. Male voices and those from privileged or majority backgrounds are heard and taken more seriously than women, people of colour, or colleagues for whom English is not a first language. Groupthink and the dominance of certain voices in institutional communications exacerbate feelings of exclusion. These cultural signals, though subtle, reinforce who is seen as belonging and who is marginalised.

- **Structural inequities persist despite stated commitments to equity**: Deep-rooted structural divides remain between academics and professional services staff, often manifested in differential entitlements such as annual leave or progression opportunities. Disabled staff are disadvantaged in recruitment and promotion due to a lack of adjustments, limited awareness, and reliance on external support services rather than institutional responsibility. Gendered, racial and class-based inequities also play out subtly, from how confidence is judged to how menopause is disregarded if it does not affect decision-makers directly. The persistence of such inequities—combined with weak transparency around processes like exit interviews—reinforces the perception that equity is aspirational rather than embedded.

Student themes

- **Assessment practices reinforcing hidden barriers**: The reliance on written, exam-heavy assessments and inconsistent feedback structures creates unspoken disadvantages for particular groups of students. Neurodivergent students, such as those with dyslexia, are disadvantaged when alternative formats (e.g., oral or practical assessments) are not available. International students face additional challenges when a high standard of English is implicitly assumed, limiting their ability to demonstrate subject knowledge equitably. These practices, while not intentionally exclusionary, embed inequity by privileging certain ways of demonstrating ability and overlooking diverse needs.

- **Inconsistencies in feedback and grading**: Students report a lack of clear, specific, and consistent feedback across markers. This inconsistency is not always explicit but creates inequities in learning opportunities, as some students benefit from constructive feedback while others are left without meaningful guidance for improvement. Uneven grading standards also erode trust in fairness and can unintentionally disadvantage groups who may already feel less confident navigating the academic system, such as international or first-generation students.

- **Social practices that exclude certain groups**: The ways in which socialising and societies are structured carry implicit norms that can marginalise students. Events centred around alcohol, or scheduled late in the evening, unintentionally exclude non-drinkers, religious groups, and commuting students. These "default" choices reinforce inequities by privileging students who live on campus and engage with mainstream drinking culture, while limiting the participation and sense of belonging of others.

- **Cultural and financial barriers for international students**: International students face compounded inequities through subtle practices that privilege home students. In group settings, cultural and language differences can lead to being given less visible roles, reducing opportunities for participation and confidence-building. Financial schemes often exclude international students, leaving them without safety nets available to their peers. While not explicitly intended, these practices normalise home students' experiences as the "default," unintentionally marginalising international students in both academic and social dimensions.

3. Based on the processes/practices, do you feel safe raising concerns? What happens?

- **Lack of psychological safety and fear of retaliation**: Many staff do not feel safe to raise concerns because of fear of career damage, reputational harm, or retaliation—particularly when the issue involves senior colleagues. Several described cases where speaking up led to job loss, removal from projects, or stalled progression, while the individuals accused faced little consequence, and in some cases were even promoted. The risks are seen as greater in academia, where hierarchies are strong and career paths precarious. This creates a climate where silence feels safer than reporting, and where only those planning to leave feel able to speak openly.

- **Weak and mistrusted reporting mechanisms**: Formal systems such as Report and Support and grievance processes are widely seen as ineffective, opaque, or not fit for purpose. Staff report hitting a "wall" after raising issues, with little visibility of what happens to their complaint or whether it is acted upon. Investigations are perceived as slow, defensive, and producing generic responses, with few tangible outcomes or consequences for perpetrators. This lack of transparency and accountability breeds cynicism, deters staff from using official channels, and leaves problems unaddressed.

- **Over-reliance on individual managers and local culture**: The experience of raising concerns depends heavily online managers and local departmental culture, rather than systemic safeguards. While some staff feel fortunate to have supportive managers who go "above and beyond," this is inconsistent and not the norm. Many managers are seen as ill-equipped to handle issues, avoiding escalation or "difficult conversations," particularly when the alleged perpetrator is a peer or friend. Without clear, empowered structures above the line manager level, staff are left uncertain about where to turn when problems arise within their own teams.

- **Emotional labour, distrust and erosion of wellbeing**: The process of raising concerns is described as stressful, isolating, and often futile. Staff must gather evidence and justify their experiences, only to encounter defensiveness, denial ("we're already doing that"), or dismissal through over-reliance on unconscious bias narratives. This burden falls disproportionately on those already affected by exclusion, further undermining their wellbeing. The repeated cycle of reporting without resolution has eroded trust, leaving staff feeling ground down, unsupported, and reluctant to raise issues in the future.

Student themes

- **Low awareness and visibility of reporting channels:** A recurring theme is that many students are simply unaware of where and how to report concerns. While those who have accessed services like Report and Support often describe them as effective, the lack of advertising and visibility means most students do not know such mechanisms exist. This gap creates inequity in who can access support—those with prior knowledge

benefit, while others remain excluded. Greater visibility and proactive communication are needed to normalise and encourage the use of reporting channels.

- **Fear of repercussions and lack of transparency**: Students express uncertainty about what happens once a concern is raised, which can deter them from speaking up. The absence of visible examples of actions taken fuels perceptions that reports may not lead to meaningful change. Combined with fear of repercussions, this lack of transparency undermines trust in institutional processes and can discourage reporting altogether, even in serious cases of non-inclusive behaviour.

- **Inefficient and unresponsive processes**: Several examples highlight frustration with the speed and efficiency of responses. Students who urgently needed to speak to someone were directed to fill out a form, and delays in response times left concerns unaddressed within stated deadlines. Reports being passed between multiple people without resolution make the process feel bureaucratic rather than supportive. These inefficiencies communicate a lack of urgency and can erode confidence that the institution takes concerns seriously.

- **Accessibility and anonymity barriers**: Current systems create practical and emotional barriers to raising concerns. Students note the absence of face-to-face reporting options, limited accessibility of contact details (such as phone numbers), and insufficient anonymity when raising sensitive issues. These barriers compound existing fears, making the process feel unsafe or too exposed. Without more accessible and confidential pathways, students are less likely to trust that their concerns will be heard and addressed equitably.

4. Are there clear expectations around inclusive behaviour in your team or department?

Staff themes

- **Lack of clarity, consistency, and accountability**: Many staff noted that expectations around inclusive behaviour are unclear, inconsistent, or poorly enforced across the institution. In some departments, there are clear guidelines, but these often make little difference in practice as implementation depends on the individual manager. While policies and training exist, they are frequently seen as box-ticking exercises, with no real accountability when expectations are ignored. Respondents stressed that there is a difference between setting expectations and holding people to account, and that performance review processes could provide a stronger mechanism for embedding responsibility.

- **Over-reliance on individuals and marginalised staff**: Equity and inclusion work often falls to small groups of committed individuals, disproportionately those already affected by inequities. Marginalised staff described being expected to shoulder the emotional labour of educating colleagues or representing diversity, often at personal cost. At times, managers even blocked staff from contributing to EDI efforts due to workload, sending mixed messages about whether inclusion is truly a shared responsibility. This reliance on individual champions rather than systemic integration leaves inclusion work fragmented and unsustainable.

- **Exclusionary culture and power dynamics**: A number of comments highlighted how organisational culture reinforces inequality. Professional Services staff reported feeling like "second-class citizens" compared to academics, with fewer opportunities for development. Teaching content was said to centre white, male, Western perspectives, which alienates diverse and international students. Staff also described middle-class norms excluding working-class colleagues, and "nice" colleagues silencing or appropriating ideas without consequence. Hierarchies, job insecurity, and defensive attitudes made it unsafe for many to challenge exclusionary behaviour, further entrenching inequity.

- **Weak leadership and missed opportunities for systemic change**: Senior leaders were seen as sending mixed or contradictory signals on inclusion, for example prioritising freedom of speech over dignity at work, or conflating equality with equity. Equity checks such as Equality Impact Assessments were often resisted or deprioritised, and internal expertise in anti-racism or neurodiversity was overlooked in favour of external consultants. While some localised progress exists—such as targeted training or recruitment accountability—these are uneven and rarely scale institution-wide. Respondents called for clearer leadership, a central resource hub, and practical tools (e.g., a working charter) to make expectations explicit and consistently applied.

Student themes

- **Unspoken and inconsistent expectations:** While inclusivity is generally perceived as a value of the university, expectations around inclusive behaviour are often left unspoken or only addressed briefly at the start of a programme. Students and staff note that inclusivity is sometimes framed as a static concept rather than something that evolves over time. In practice, this results in uneven communication—such as only some accommodations receiving guidance on tolerance—leaving many unsure of what inclusive behaviour should look like day to day. The lack of consistent reinforcement creates ambiguity and weakens shared accountability.

- **A Need for clearer guidance and active responsibility**: Both staff and senior students express a desire for more explicit guidance on what constitutes inclusive behaviour and how to respond to issues of discrimination. Some staff feel it is not their role to intervene, which can lead to exclusionary behaviours being overlooked. At the same time, students recognise that inclusion is not solely the university's responsibility—there is an expectation that they too must contribute actively. This highlights the need for stronger, shared ownership of EDI principles across all levels of the community.

- **A gap between institutional messaging and everyday practice:** The university communicates a commitment to diversity and inclusion at a broad level, but this is not consistently reinforced in teaching or everyday interactions. For instance, while respect for individuals is assumed as a baseline expectation, there is no clear articulation of how inclusivity should be practised in classrooms or teams. This gap between institutional statements and lived experience leaves students and staff uncertain about what inclusive behaviour means in practice and how it should be enacted in their own roles.

5. Have you witnessed or experienced a situation involving discrimination, bullying, or harassment?

Staff themes

- **Bullying and harassment is recurring and almost impossible to report when there is no support**: A recurring concern is the normalisation of bullying and harassment across the workplace. Staff described line managers yelling in public, bullying due to faith, sexual harassment, and senior staff misusing authority. These behaviours are often minimised with dismissive explanations such as "that's just the way they are" or reframed as personality clashes, leaving victims feeling unsupported. This culture enables aggressors to continue unchecked while those harmed are left to either endure the behaviour or remove themselves from the situation, resulting in silenced voices and talent loss.

- **Barriers to reporting and ineffective processes**: Many contributors highlighted that existing mechanisms to report discrimination, bullying, or harassment are ineffective, traumatising, or unsafe. Multiple people stressed that there is "no course of action that protects you," with investigations compromised by bias, conflicts of interest, and weak follow-up. Victims often fear backlash, being ignored, or labelled as troublemakers, leading them to prioritise self-protection. Processes such as mediation, grievances, or Report & Support were described as fragmented, inconsistent, and sometimes even harmful—especially when power dynamics meant the bully held an EDI or leadership role.

- **Discrimination against people with protected characteristics**: Discrimination against people with disabilities and other protected characteristics was repeatedly raised. Examples included staff with disabilities being excluded from high-profile projects, lecturers failing to consider reasonable adjustments, and disabled employees being held to identical performance expectations as non-disabled peers. Adjustments were applied inconsistently, often depending on managerial discretion, which placed the burden of advocacy on individuals themselves. Subtle discrimination, such as being overlooked for promotion, was described as difficult to prove yet deeply harmful to career progression and wellbeing.

- **Harmful organisational culture and impact on careers**: Underlying many experiences is a broader culture of silence, tribalism within management, and narrow definitions of "excellence." Staff reported being persuaded not to report misconduct, while managers often witnessed poor behaviour but deflected responsibility. In some cases, bullying also came from students, with disproportionate impacts on women and marginalised staff. The cumulative effect of these dynamics includes burnout, stress, loss of confidence, stalled career progression, and high attrition, particularly among underrepresented groups. The lack of systemic accountability allows harmful cultures to perpetuate, undermining both individual well-being and institutional inclusivity.

Student response

- **Discrimination exists but often goes unchallenged**: Although relatively few students report experiencing discrimination directly, incidents still occur and are often ignored by bystanders. For example, a female student was told, "this is why girls shouldn't do computer science," and not only did peers remain silent, but the GTA laughed. This reluctance to intervene—rooted in fear of "making a scene"—means that discriminatory behaviour can persist unchecked. The silence of witnesses compounds the harm by normalising exclusionary comments and behaviours.

- **Everyday microaggressions and class bias**: Students report experiencing subtler forms of discrimination such as microaggressions and class-based bias. A working-class student felt her accent led others to perceive her as less intelligent, while international students were singled out for their accents or excluded from key communication channels like WhatsApp groups. These micro-incivilities are not always overtly hostile but create a persistent sense of being undervalued, highlighting how discrimination often operates in quiet, cumulative ways.

- **Mixed experiences with reporting and support systems:** There are examples of effective resolution when systems work well—such as a student who, after complaining to the student union, felt heard, supported, and satisfied with the outcome. However, these positive cases contrast with broader confusion and scepticism about reporting procedures. Many students are unsure what processes exist, and some victims avoid reporting to prevent conflict. In some cases, staff feel students hold too much power in complaints processes, raising concerns about fairness and consistency.

- **Hostility towards staff and international students**: Discriminatory or bullying behaviours are not limited to peer-to-peer interactions; staff also face harassment. Lecturers describe being subjected to hostile questioning, derogatory comments in group chats, and even direct verbal abuse. At the same time, international students face exclusion and targeted remarks, such as having their accents mocked or being reduced to stereotypes. These patterns illustrate that discrimination affects multiple groups across the community and can take both explicit and subtle forms.

6. What do you think are the university's responsibilities to make a local & global impact in terms of equity and Inclusion?

Staff themes

- **Strengthening local partnerships and responsibility**: Participants highlighted the need for the university to support local businesses and communities more effectively. While the institution demonstrates strong external social responsibility in some areas, there is a sense that this is not matched internally, where staff and students still face barriers to equity and inclusion. By deepening partnerships with local enterprises and ensuring that investment and procurement choices support the region, the university could align its external impact with its internal commitments and strengthen its role as an anchor institution.

- **Using inclusive, collaborative and humble language**: The way the university communicates its impact matters. Current messaging can appear outdated, elitist, or as though the institution is prescribing "the right way" of living and learning. To make a genuine local and global impact, the university has a responsibility to adopt more collaborative, respectful, and humble language that reflects partnership rather than paternalism. This shift in tone would help amplify inclusion and ensure that external engagement feels authentic and mutually beneficial.

- **Addressing inequities in lived experience**: A recurring theme was the university's responsibility to support its own staff and students through pressing challenges such as the cost of living crisis. While there is ambition to "bring inclusion to the world," participants noted that the institution must also address inequities closer to home by making accessibility a stronger and better-defined priority. Ensuring that internal practices reflect fairness and care is vital for credibility and for modelling inclusive values externally.

- **Prioritisation, resource allocation and impact**: There is a perception that the university is attempting to excel in too many areas at once, which can dilute its effectiveness and impact. Participants suggested that the distribution of resources could be more strategic, with greater transparency around spending and even the introduction of a dedicated "novelty" budget to support innovative or community-focused projects. By making more intentional decisions about where to invest, the university could maximise its influence and demonstrate a clearer, more impactful contribution to equity and inclusion both locally and globally.

Student themes

- **Expanding outreach and representation:** Students believe the university has a responsibility to extend its outreach efforts to underrepresented groups both locally and globally. They value current initiatives, such as engaging primary school children in STEM subjects, but see scope for more systematic programmes that widen access to higher education. Locally, students suggest stronger engagement with surrounding communities, while globally, they call for more visible promotion of EDI work through social media and

public campaigns. This outreach is seen as key to breaking down barriers and inspiring the next generation of diverse students.

- **Strengthening support for international students**: A recurring theme is the need for greater structural and financial support for international students. Suggestions include more scholarships, buddy schemes, alumni networks, and field-specific support to ease adjustment to life in the UK. Students also highlight practical challenges, such as limited financial assistance during studies, difficulties with visas, and barriers to employment after graduation. Addressing these gaps is viewed as central to ensuring that international students feel fully included and able to thrive both during and after their time at the university.

- **Aligning partnerships with EDI values**: Students express concern that the university must carefully consider who it partners with, both in industry and academia. They want assurance that collaborations are consistent with the university's stated EDI values, and that ties with organisations or institutions perceived to have anti-EDI agendas—or problematic geopolitical stances—are avoided. In this sense, partnerships are seen as a reflection of the university's ethical commitments and aligning them with equity and inclusion goals is viewed as integral to its global impact.

- **Fostering inclusion within diverse student communities:** While diversity is celebrated, some groups still feel excluded or underrepresented in campus life. For example, cohorts in some master's programmes are dominated by one or two nationalities, leaving other students feeling marginalised. Similarly, students call for more visibility and celebration of minority cultures through events such as Bollywood nights. These examples suggest that the university's EDI responsibilities are not only external-facing but also internal, ensuring that all student groups feel included, valued, and able to participate fully in university life.

Extra information from Groups

1. Clarity on Inclusivity: The mission statement is bold, but the language around *inclusivity* needs clearer definition. Current practices, such as high entry requirements, create structural barriers that undermine the claim of being "the most inclusive university."

2. Acknowledging the Past: The university should take a reflective approach, similar to Truth and Reconciliation processes, by critically examining past practices that excluded certain groups and addressing their ongoing impact.

3. Importance of Culture: Culture underpins everything in the mission and pillars. While concepts like accountability and psychological safety are mentioned, the word *culture* itself is missing and should be made explicit.

Interesting points from SLT

Reward and recognition: Current approaches that highlight "VIPs" or "Superstars" risk being divisive. We should focus on inclusive recognition practices that celebrate collective contribution rather than elevating individuals disproportionately.

Bullying and culture: Experiences and reports of bullying are often filtered through cultural perspectives. It's important to acknowledge and understand these cultural lenses in how behaviours are perceived and reported.

Global and local impact: We need to strengthen the link between local initiatives and global impact. The plan should be embedded into business planning processes, scorecards, and deliverables, with clear mechanisms for how progress feeds into a central EDI scorecard.

Gender dynamics and responsibility: Women are disproportionately represented in teaching-focused contracts, while men more often pursue research income–generating pathways. This risks reinforcing new forms of gender segregation. In addition, we should monitor how opportunities are distributed and ensure they are equitably accessible. Final point on Gender, Power dynamics also play a role: men often show deference and competition with other men in senior roles, but patterns of engagement with senior women can be different. Similarly, dynamics among women in positions of influence need to be understood.

Clarity of focus: Given the scale of the institution, we need to avoid trying to include "everything." Concentrating on a core set of clear, understandable themes will support a stronger impact.

Leadership alignment: Strong and consistent leadership is essential. Currently, support for line managers is lacking, and the ability to handle issues effectively in the moment is weak. Greater alignment and support across all levels of leadership is required.

Reframing the DEI agenda: The broader DEI agenda is being challenged externally. To ensure resonance, it may be effective to reframe the conversation around fairness and inclusion, meeting people where they are and ensuring the language and approach connect meaningfully.

PNDR process: The PNDR process will be reviewed to integrate inclusion more explicitly into performance, development, and recognition practices.