**Russell Group response to the APPG on Diversity and Inclusion inquiry into equity in the STEM workforce**

The Russell Group represents 24 leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining an outstanding teaching and learning experience and world-leading research. Our universities teach a quarter of all undergraduates and support over a quarter-million jobs (directly and indirectly) across the UK. Graduates from the 24 universities account for 80% of all UK university qualifications in medicine and dentistry, 61% of qualifications in mathematical sciences and 53% of qualifications in physical sciences.[[1]](#footnote-1) We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry.

# Russell Group data

## Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) [[2]](#footnote-2) shows that there has been progress in the number of staff from under-represented groups working in STEM departments at Russell Group universities:

Gender

## The number of women increased by 18% between 2013/14 and 2018/19, compared to a 14% increase in the number of men. This has led to a slight narrowing of the gap between the ratio of men to women (from 53:47 in 2013/14 to 52:48 in 2018/19).

Ethnicity

## 18% of staff at Russell Group universities working in STEM departments are from Black, Asian and mixed-race backgrounds.[[3]](#footnote-3)

## Between 2013/14 and 2018/19, the number of mixed-race staff in Russell Group STEM departments increased by 65% and Black and Asian staff numbers have increased by 40% and 42% respectively. This compares to a 13% increase in White staff over the same period.

Disability

## In 2018/19, 4% of staff in Russell Group STEM departments were known to have a disability.

## Disabled staff numbersincreased by 58%between 2013/14 and 2018/19, compared with a 15% increase in staff who have no known disability.

# Approaches to supporting EDI in research

## The challenges faced by underrepresented groups vary, both between different groups and between different institutions, roles and environments. This means that no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach is likely to work in supporting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), and that a range of different approaches are required to support the success of groups facing different challenges.

## Through consultation with a number of stakeholders within the research community and our members, we have identified several ideas and examples of good practice which universities, funders and other stakeholders can consider to support a more equitable research environment and culture. These include:

### Addressing some of the potential consequences of very short-term contracts (which can be particularly challenging for those with caring responsibilities who are likely to find it more difficult to move regularly between jobs and job locations) and exploring the development of bridging funding schemes

### Ensuring career progression is open to those from all backgrounds, including those with caring responsibilities and disabilities, by offering appropriate part-time and flexible working options for staff, and taking account of career breaks when assessing productivity

### Providing specialised mentoring schemes for underrepresented communities

### Finding ways to reward contributions to equality, diversity and inclusion, such as within hiring and promotion criteria, application processes for internal funding and through other awards.

## Some specific examples from Russell Group universities which illustrate the range of approaches to supporting an equitable environment in the STEM workforce include:

* **Equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, Imperial College, London:** Imperial’s strategy, *Inclusive Excellence*, has been developed in consultation with the College’s community and has seen the appointment of the College’s first Assistant Provost for EDI. The strategy includes commitments to: refresh the membership of its Council to reflect the diversity of its stakeholders, ensure those with significant management responsibility receive appropriate EDI training, identify and nurture talent from under-represented groups and incorporate consideration of EDI in the design of research projects that have a direct impact on people.[[4]](#footnote-4)
* **Unconscious Bias Observers, University of York:** introduction of unconscious bias observers within the University of York's chemistry department helped lead to significant increases in the percentage of female researchers employed within the department. There have also been significant improvements in the recruitment ratio of women to men for teaching and scholarship staff. Analysis of recruitment trends since the introduction of unconscious bias observers as shown female and male appointment rates are now equivalent, indicating a gender-neutral recruitment process.
* **Postdoctoral researcher contract extensions, University of Birmingham:** the University used an EPSRC ‘Inclusion Matters’ grant to create a pilot scheme to support the career progression of postdoctoral researchers from underrepresented backgrounds working in physical science and engineering research. Participants were provided with a three- month extension to their contracts and offered bespoke training packages designed to develop them as independent researchers. The postdoctoral researchers involved spent time away from their main project, working with an experienced mentor to write papers, develop individual fellowship proposals, and grow their academic and industrial networks. Three female engineers, one of whom has a disability, were supported successfully in the first pilot phase of the programme. The participants reported increased confidence in their research ideas and said working with mentors improved their understanding of the career options available to them. The University of Birmingham is currently working with funders to identify opportunities to carry the successful pilot forward and extend this kind of support to individuals from a wider range of groups underrepresented within the physical sciences.

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1. HESA student data 2018/19. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Unless otherwise indicated, data is taken from HESA staff record 2018/19 (most recent year of data published) – analysis performed on staff (academic and non-academic) working in the following cost centres: Agriculture, forestry, and Veterinary science; Architecture and planning; Biological, mathematical and physical sciences; Engineering and technology; Medicine, dentistry and health. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For the purposes of our analysis, we have not included staff for whom ethnicity is indicated as ‘unknown’ in the dataset. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Imperial College, London (2018) Inclusive Excellence: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/equality/public/Inclusive-Excellence-brochure-for-EDI-Strategy-2018.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)