

SCONUL Equality, diversity and inclusion benchmarking data project

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Acknowledgments

The author would like to acknowledge all those who participated in the research including those who completed the questionnaire, took part in the focus group and in the series of in-depth interviews. Without their involvement it would not have been possible to have undertaken a meaningful investigation. I would also like to thank SCONUL for funding this research, and the project team for their input during the research process. In particular, thank you to Emma Adamson, Gary Elliott-Cirigottis, Stuart Dempster, Liyana Pama and Ann Rossiter.

The views expressed in this report are solely those of the author and research participants, and do not reflect those of SCONUL.

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Published: July 2022



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1 Introduction

Dear Colleagues

As part of the on-going commitment from SCONUL to help drive improvements in equality, diversity and inclusion across the library sector, we have commissioned research across the SCONUL community to explore whether it would be possible to develop baseline statistics in order to assess the impact of planned interventions to address the lack of ethnic diversity both in the HE sector and in the library profession.

The genesis for this activity was our report on the experiences of BAME staff in our member libraries, which is available here: https://www.sconul.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/BAME%20staff%20experiences%20of%20academic%20and%20research%20libraries_0.pdf

This initial investigation recommended 'SCONUL members should consider monitoring the ethnic diversity of their workforce to ensure that academic and research libraries have an evidence base to justify equality and diversity initiatives. This would assist the broader agenda of fostering ethnic diversity.'

We are delighted that this study shows that members believe we can and should capture this information. Doing so will provide an important benchmark that we hope will support individual institutions in measuring their own progress as well as supporting the sector in fostering greater diversity. Across the library community we have a shared understanding that changes are needed in thinking, attitudes and behaviour, including our own, and in policies and processes across our libraries and broader institutions in order to increase our diversity.

The SCONUL Services Group would like to thank the researcher Dr Mohammed Ishaq; those who took the time to contribute to the focus groups; who took part in interviews; and those who have helped assess the outputs of the research.

The SCONUL Board and team remains committed to ensuring that as library leaders we have the evidence, skills, confidence and knowledge to be effective agents of change within our own libraries and across our institutions. As well as undertaking this work, we have been working with Advance HE on Leading Change of Race workshops. The SCONUL Board has taken part and is taking the work on through a leadership circle, and we are now offering the training to members at a subsidised rate.

The SCONUL Board is the sponsor and driver of all this work and we aim to lead on and model the change we believe we need to see.

Andrew Barker

Chair, SCONUL

Gary Elliott-Cirigottis

Chair, SCONUL Services Steering Group

2 Executive summary

SCONUL commissioned research to inform decision-making about the inclusion of questions on ethnic diversity within its annual data collection exercise. The specific objectives of the project were:

1. To establish a clear picture of whether SCONUL member institutions are able to supply data on the diversity of their workforce with specific reference to groups or types of institutions if relevant.
2. To understand the barriers that may inhibit the provision of data, whether that be ethical considerations, institutional culture or systems, again with specific reference to groups or types of institutions if relevant.
3. To collect data to inform the writing of the questions on ethnic diversity for the SCONUL annual statistical return.

Research was undertaken using a combination of a questionnaire, a focus group and interviews with staff responsible for data collection at institutional level.

The research established that most SCONUL members would welcome the inclusion of questions on ethnic diversity in the SCONUL statistical questionnaire, recognising the importance of this evidence for benchmarking and developing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategies.

SCONUL members would be interested to understand the relationships between ethnicity and recruitment, contract status, training and promotion opportunities, leadership, etc., and are also interested in intersectionality (where an individual has more than one protected characteristic).

The main barriers to collecting this data were found to be:

1. Data protection regulations might limit the level of detail available to the library service, as there could be a risk of identifying individuals where numbers are low.
2. Data collection relies on individual members of staff providing the data in the first place, and people are not always willing to disclose such information (or to engage with the online self-service systems that record it).
3. The data is not readily available within the library service and would have to be requested from HR or another central service (where staff time might be limited).

Despite these possible challenges, SCONUL members believe that if SCONUL asks for data and this prompts members to request it from their institution, this in itself demonstrates good practice and supports the case for appropriate data to be collected and used to improve ethnic diversity (and EDI more generally) across the sector.

It is proposed that the core question should be: 'Please provide a breakdown of all staff in your library service by ethnicity', and that respondents should be invited to break this data down further by categories such as job role and contract status.

Institution mission group does not appear to have a significant effect on the responses of SCONUL members in relation to the collection of EDI data, but it was noted that those institutions in areas where there are large BAME populations are more likely to be pursuing policies aimed at advancing equality, diversity and inclusion.

SCONUL members are actively engaged with their institutions in the pursuit of external equality standards such as Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter, and in the implementation of internal good practice such as decolonising collections and EDI training. The research established the value of these activities for members but does not propose any specific questions for the SCONUL statistics in this area.

3 Summary of recommendations

Recommendations 1–8 below address the two key research objectives, while recommendations 9–12 relate to broader issues emerging from the research.

The ability of SCONUL member institutions to supply data on the diversity of their workforce

Recommendation 1 *SCONUL should include at least one question in the SCONUL statistics relating to the ethnic background of library staff.*

Members are supportive of this change.

Recommendation 2 *Such question(s) should be included even if response rates are low.*

The fact of their inclusion demonstrates SCONUL's commitment to supporting members on equality, diversity and inclusion, and helps members make the case within their institutions for appropriate data to be collected and made available, while the findings will inform future action.

Addressing any barriers that may inhibit the provision of data

Data protection regulations might limit the level of detail available to the library service, as there could be a risk of identifying individuals where numbers are low.

Recommendation 3a *Where there are low numbers of staff belonging to specific protected characteristics, these should be reported in a manner such as '< 5'.*

Recommendation 3b *Smaller ethnic groups should be clustered into larger categories (e.g. BAME).*

Recommendation 4 *SCONUL should NOT (at this stage) consider intersectionality in developing the question(s), due to the increased likelihood of identifying individuals.*

Data collection relies on individual members of staff providing the data in the first place, and people are not always willing to disclose such information (or to engage with the online self-service systems that record it).

Recommendation 5 *SCONUL members should seek to improve the quality of EDI data collected by encouraging staff members to increase disclosure rates for all protected characteristics.*

Strategies to help this could include: create a dedicated role of EDI champion/officer; relay the value of EDI data to staff to increase buy-in; improve IT systems to make it easier for staff to update their personal profile on online platforms.

The data is not readily available within the library service and would have to be requested from HR or another central service (where staff time might be limited).

Recommendation 6 *SCONUL members should work with their HR departments (or those holding staff data) in order to improve data collection and appropriate data sharing, bearing in mind the ethical implications generated by GDPR requirements.*

Recommendation 7 *HEIs should devote more time and resources to greater interrogation of EDI data to improve the granularity of data during the data analysis process.*

Recommendation 8 *SCONUL members should NOT develop independent data collection exercises separately from work done at institutional level.*

Additional recommendations emerging from the research

Recommendation 9 *HEIs and SCONUL members should do more to highlight the good work undertaken by both libraries and institutions in relation to EDI initiatives e.g. decolonisation, inclusive pedagogy and spaces, and reviews of collections and metadata; pursuit of accreditation and charter marks.*

Recommendation 10 *HEIs should seek to increase the diversity of their governing and decision-making bodies.*

Recommendation 11 *HEIs in areas with low BAME populations should do more work to prioritise EDI.*

Recommendation 12 *Leadership of both libraries and HEIs should play a more transformational role in promoting EDI.*

4 Introduction

This research was commissioned by SCONUL (Society for College, National and University Libraries) as part of its strategy to increase understanding of the make-up of the workforce, as measuring the diversity of the workforce is a prerequisite for effective monitoring and promotion of EDI in the library sector.

Over the past few years, SCONUL has prioritised the advancement of EDI among its member institutions (Ishaq and Hussain, 2019). This project represents part of SCONUL's continued drive to progress EDI, in member libraries as well as across the HE sector. Although most SCONUL member libraries are part of a wider institution, it should be acknowledged that there are a number of SCONUL members who are autonomous, such as national libraries and specialist institutions, and they too are very much part of SCONUL's drive to promote EDI among members.

Evidence suggests that workforce diversity is lacking in the Higher Education (HE) sector, including in the information and library profession (CILIP and ARA, 2015; Equality Challenge Unit, 2017; Ishaq and Hussain, 2019). However, the lack of reliable data means that attempts to address the issue are being stifled. Research published by Van Dyke and Gunaratnam (2000) noted that ethnic monitoring in HE had been limited and piecemeal, and as a result had been unable to identify social, economic and institutional factors to explain ethnic inequalities, including racism and discrimination.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC www.equalityhumanrights.com) has expressed concern that the careers of those with protected characteristics were being put at risk because of the failure of employers to 'collect meaningful data on representation in the workforce' (2018). As a consequence, the Commission stated that organisations were unable to remove barriers to the progression and representation of ethnic minorities in the workplace.

In order to deal with what it calls 'data deficit', the Commission announced plans 'to work with the Government and the Office for National Statistics, and other organisations working in this area, to support employers, by providing guidance on how to sensitively and consistently collect' such data (2018). The Commission has acknowledged that in many cases employers face barriers to collecting data, with some claiming that it is 'too intrusive and onerous'.

For SCONUL, access to reliable data would be helpful in establishing the level and nature of diversity among member institutions and the wider HE sector. It would also provide the following benefits that would assist long-term progress in advancing EDI:

- Allow SCONUL members to benchmark progress on diversity, staffing and leadership.
- Establish which groups with protected characteristics are more disadvantaged and suffer from unfavorable outcomes in the workplace, in relation to representation, promotion, discrimination, pay, training and development opportunities.
- Allow SCONUL members to cross-reference against multiple equality and diversity characteristics to capture issues of intersectionality.

5 Aims and objectives

The prime aim of this project was to investigate the current scope among SCONUL members for capturing EDI data as part of SCONUL's overall process of collecting and publishing statistics from member institutions. Specific objectives of the project were:

- To establish a clear picture of whether SCONUL member institutions are able to supply data on the diversity of their workforce with specific reference to groups or types of institutions if relevant.
- To understand the barriers that may inhibit the provision of data, whether that be ethical considerations, institutional culture or systems, again with specific reference to groups or types of institutions if relevant.
- To collect data to inform the writing of the questions on ethnic diversity for the SCONUL annual statistical return.

While the original intention of the project was to focus on investigating data specifically in relation to ethnic diversity, the research presented an opportunity to explore equality and diversity data more broadly across SCONUL members and HEIs. Therefore it was decided that there would be greater value in widening the scope of the research. Although the questions recommended for the SCONUL annual statistical return would focus on ethnic diversity, other aspects of the work would explore the issue of capturing EDI data more generally without specific focus on the strand of ethnicity. Also, by exploring EDI more broadly, the research would gain greater insight into developments in relation to EDI work and EDI data more generally across both members institutions and the HE sector.

6 Methodology

In this section, a summary of the methodology adopted for this study is presented. For a more detailed account of the methodological process adopted for this research project, please see Appendix 1.

The research deployed a mixed method approach, involving the collection of both quantitative data via a questionnaire, and qualitative data gathered from a focus group and in-depth interviews. **Phase one** involved the distribution of a questionnaire (see Appendix 2) to SCONUL members, i.e. libraries through SCONUL's channels of communication. *SurveyMonkey* was used as the platform for disseminating the questionnaire. **Phase two** of the research adopted a focus group involving SCONUL member institutions (see Appendix 3). The focus group was conducted via Teams due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and was recorded. **Phase three** of data collection was agreed in recognition of the fact that the vast majority of SCONUL member libraries (the exception being national libraries) are affiliated to HEIs, and therefore operate within a wider environment. It is the HEIs who have responsibility for collecting EDI data and for considering how their policies and decisions affect individuals who are protected under the Equality Act 2010 (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>). It made sense therefore to involve HEIs who host SCONUL members in the research. This third phase of data collection involved a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with HEIs (see Appendix 4).

The data collected from the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics to ensure that the results could be interpreted by a broad audience of stakeholders, thereby increasing the value and impact of the research. The data collected from the qualitative phase of the research was exposed to thematic analysis.

To ensure that the investigation adhered to ethical practices, the proposed research was put through the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) ethical approval process. This process assessed all stages of the planned research to ensure that it complied with the principles of anonymity, confidentiality, data protection and consent, in relation to both participants and the data collected.

7 Summary of findings

For full detail see appendix 7

Questionnaire

The questionnaire had a response rate of 48% (87 out of 182 members). Of the respondents, about half were confident that their library had access to EDI workforce data. A similar proportion agreed that they could provide such data to SCONUL if required, with an equivalent number being unsure about this.

Around 44% had requested data from their HR department, and of these half were satisfied with the data they received, others feeling that the level of detail was not sufficient for their needs, or that there were other difficulties involved in getting the data.

Reasons for requesting data were as follows (in order of most cited):

- To examine the level of workforce diversity/review demographic profile of staff.
- To support/inform workforce planning decisions including those related to recruitment and selection.
- To support the EDI agenda and the work of EDI groups.
- To address gender pay gap.

Seventy-six percent of respondents would welcome the inclusion of questions on EDI in the SCONUL statistical return. (Eighteen percent said 'don't know', and 6% 'no'.) Those in favour indicated the following areas of interest:

- The need to collect data on specific protected characteristics with most citing ethnicity.
- The need to collect data on the overall diversity of the library workforce.
- The importance of acquiring granular data that provides breakdown by protected characteristic and by for example job roles and pay grade.
- Questions that can provide data that establishes the level of diversity at senior management and leadership level.
- Questions that provide an insight into how recruitment processes operate in the library.

Fifty-one respondents had been involved in EDI initiatives at national level, most commonly the HE sector's charters on gender and race equality, Athena Swan, and the Race Equality Charter. Thirty-two institutions were involved in local initiatives, including the following (in order of most cited):

- Projects aimed at decolonising the library, creating more inclusive and accessible reading lists and diverse library collections.
- EDI training.
- Library-based EDI groups and committees.
- Mentoring schemes.
- Graduate traineeships.
- Apprenticeships for BAME staff.
- Projects and work related to 'anti-blackness'.
- Staff diversity networks.
- Appointment of library EDI champion(s).

The institution mission type seemed to have little bearing on the questionnaire responses.

Focus group

The focus group comprised nine senior representatives of SCONUL member libraries. The discussion broadly echoed the findings of the questionnaire, although it should be noted that while just over a third of questionnaire respondents expressed doubts about being able to provide suitable EDI data, the focus group participants were more confident in this area. Focus group participants were however concerned that the level of detail provided might not meet their needs. A participant suggested that libraries might attempt their own data collection if information was not forthcoming from the centre, but on the whole people felt that it was preferable to engage in a constructive discussion with HR (or other parties) to explore GDPR and other issues, with a view to producing more detailed data where possible. If SCONUL were to include EDI questions in the statistics collection exercise it would help members make a stronger case for better data collection within their institutions.

Some participants felt SCONUL should use only the data already collected for Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), though others argued that there was nothing that could not be asked.

Participants identified benefits in collecting EDI data, including:

- Helping to address the lack of diversity in the workforce.
- Tackling inequalities in their organisation.
- Helping their institution benchmark with other HEIs in relation to progress on EDI.

The group highlighted the challenges of obtaining data when staff might be unwilling to provide it, and asked what the library community might usefully do to encourage disclosure. One participant also pointed out the risk of those diversity characteristics that had a poor disclosure rate being left behind if SCONUL members were only able to get data on gender and race etc., and those characteristics inadvertently becoming priority areas at the expense of others.

It was suggested that institutions in areas where there were large BAME populations and that had a high level of BAME students might be more likely to pursue policies aimed at advancing the EDI agenda. Participants were therefore concerned that institutions that were not sufficiently diverse or were located in less diverse areas may lack the impetus to pursue diversity. Some participants also argued that the culture of their institution had a bearing on what information they could provide and what could be reasonably expected by SCONUL.

Interviews

Interviews were carried out with representatives of HR and other departments responsible for collecting and providing data. Interviewees would like to see more staff providing fuller EDI data, and recognised the need to build trust and confidence so that colleagues could see that their information would be safeguarded and used appropriately. One suggestion was to create staff networks around particular protected characteristics, and a number of institutions had dedicated EDI officers or champions. It was also important to raise awareness of the value of collecting EDI data, including through work on charter-marks and accreditation.

Not all institutions were involved in projects using EDI data, but those mentioned by interviewees were as follows:

- Positive action initiatives to address BAME staff under-representation in the library.
- One institution was the first university in the UK to be a signatory to the Race at Work Charter.
- EDI data used to support staff surveys and disability confident employer accreditation.
- Athena Swan and a specific programme targeting BAME women in leadership.
- Anti-racism project undertaken by one institution.
- Work on academic promotions.
- Race Equality Charter.
- An institution cited the work their library did on sexuality awareness including developing training packages aimed at different equality groups.

Interviewees noted that some institutional IT systems needed updating in order to make it easier for staff to update their own information.

Interviewees were very aware of the risks involved in providing data to other parts of the institution, and would not provide data to 'just anyone'. Requests should come through formal channels and those providing the data sometimes needed to limit the detail offered in order to protect individuals from being identified. They felt strongly that the ownership of EDI data should remain central, and that it would be unhelpful for other parts of the institution to embark on their own data collection exercises.

The interviews highlighted the importance of institutional leadership in promoting EDI, and the need to improve diversity on the key decision-making and governance bodies. It was suggested that pre-1992 and Russell Group institutions may have been slower to undertake EDI initiatives in the past, but that today all HEIs were more engaged in the EDI agenda regardless of mission or type, and that all were involved in benchmarking against competitors in this area.

8 Discussion and recommendations

Race and ethnicity was the most cited protected characteristic by participants during the primary data collection process (even though the research covered equality and diversity more broadly). This indicates the obvious need for greater racial diversity among SCONUL members and highlights the importance of the previous research undertaken on the lived experience of BAME staff, where the lack of ethnic diversity in libraries was a prominent theme (Ishaq and Hussain, 2019).

There is general symmetry in the responses from SCONUL members who took part in the questionnaire and focus group and HEIs who participated in the interviews. All agreed on the value of EDI data but also shared concerns about the difficulties their institutions faced in collecting the quality and level of data that they crave. Participants welcomed the opportunity to respond to questions on the diversity of their workforce in future SCONUL annual statistical returns and although almost half of questionnaire respondents were unsure as to whether they could provide this data, a similar number felt confident that they could. Focus group participants were more optimistic about overcoming any potential barriers in pursuing centrally held data than those that completed the questionnaire.

Recommendation 1 *SCONUL should include at least one question in the SCONUL statistics relating to the ethnic background of library staff.*

A lot of the challenges associated with collecting EDI data are linked to data protection regulations. These regulations have introduced an element of complexity into the data sharing process and have inadvertently hampered the ability of organisations and employers to undertake meaningful work on assessing the situation facing those with diversity characteristics in the workplace. The study findings mirror the complexities associated with EDI data collection in relation to organisations in other sectors as noted in investigations carried out by bodies such as the EHRC (2018) and Scottish Government (2021), both of which concluded that EDI data collection was challenging. In 2021, the European Commission (2021) published guidelines on how to improve the collection and use of EDI data. As long as data sharing adheres to GDPR requirements (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation>) and a credible rationale is provided for requesting access (e.g. to address lack of ethnic diversity) institutions are generally happy to provide access to EDI data that has been collected, so SCONUL members should be able to supply data on their workforce.

The main challenge in relation to sharing can arise where there are low numbers of staff belonging to specific protected characteristics. In such situations, where for example numbers are below five, this may be reported as '< 5' when the data is shared. If numbers are very low for particular ethnic groups, the groups may be clustered into one category (e.g. BAME) in order to allow the data to be shared. Even though clustering may still mean that in some libraries numbers are low, they may not be so low as to prevent the data from being shared. Ultimately uncertainty over being able to get data from all members or concerns about low numbers should not be used as a pretext to abandon attempts to collect EDI data. There has to be an acceptance that any exercise involving the collection of EDI data will have such drawbacks that will need to be negotiated.

Recommendation 2 *Question(s) on the ethnic background of library staff should be included even if response rates are low.*

Recommendation 3a *Where there are low numbers of staff belonging to specific protected characteristics, these should be reported in a manner such as '< 5'.*

Recommendation 3b *Smaller ethnic groups should be clustered into larger categories (e.g. BAME) for reporting purposes.*

The 'clustering' suggested above would help to provide insights into the situation for all BAME employees, but could not ascertain whether certain ethnic groups fare worse than others. It would nevertheless represent a useful starting point given that members are starting from a low baseline where they currently do not undertake ethnic monitoring. While there may be a temptation to introduce intersectionality into the equation, this should be resisted as it would increase the risk of identification. For example, if we ask for *ethnicity by job title*, this may be all right (if numbers are not too low), but if we ask for *ethnicity by job title and gender or disability*, then numbers become smaller. For this reason, it is recommended that the plan to collect data on ethnic diversity from members should not at this stage consider the question of intersectionality. That could be part of a future plan and would require further conversation.

Recommendation 4 *SCONUL should NOT (at this stage) consider intersectionality in developing the question(s), due to the increased likelihood of individuals being identified.*

The quality and robustness of data collected are influenced by the level of engagement of staff with the data collection process. More work is needed to increase disclosure rates for a number of protected characteristics. Evidence from this investigation suggests that having a dedicated role for EDI or EDI champions in individual departments or units can greatly help institutions embed EDI across all levels of the organisational structure. One institution had appointed EDI officers for each protected characteristic to progress EDI in specific areas and help tackle low disclosure rates by relaying to staff the value of EDI data and increasing trust in the data collection process. Disclosure rates could also be boosted by placing greater emphasis on the acquisition of qualitative data through, for example, staff focus groups and setting up specific networks or groups associated with each of the protected characteristics. Outdated IT systems were viewed as another impediment to collecting EDI data, and HR departments should invest in improving these systems; this would help staff to update their personal profile on online self-service platforms. Improvements to the quality and accuracy of the data is important in order to avoid making decisions on the basis of flawed or incomplete data.

Recommendation 5 *SCONUL members should seek to improve the quality of EDI data collected, by encouraging staff members to increase disclosure rates for all protected characteristics.*

In relation to data analysis, there was a perception that the lack of interrogation of EDI data collected by some institutions reduced the granularity of the data provided to members. SCONUL members affiliated to wider institutions would benefit from greater probing of data by those responsible for collecting and managing EDI data. The CIPD have noted the data-driven approaches to inclusion and how the production of comprehensive data can help support informed workforce decisions (2021). Where individual departments, such as libraries, are unhappy with the level and quality of EDI data available, they ought to engage in conversation with the centre about how to address this rather than considering their own data collection arrangements for which there is no appetite or support among HEIs in this research. In short, members can supply EDI data to SCONUL but have no control over the level of data they are able to provide and the depth of analysis that has been undertaken on that data.

Recommendation 6 *SCONUL members should work with their HR departments (or those holding staff data) in order to improve data collection and appropriate data sharing, bearing in mind the ethical implications generated by GDPR requirements.*

Recommendation 7 *HEIs should devote more time and resources to greater interrogation of EDI data to improve the granularity of data during the data analysis process.*

Recommendation 8 *SCONUL members should NOT develop independent data collection exercises separately from work done at institutional level.*

HEIs should be minded that the competitive nature of HE, especially in England and Wales, means that reputation on EDI can impact on competitiveness through the influence it has on staff and student recruitment. Therefore, showcasing the work being carried out by libraries and HEIs, especially around decolonisation, inclusive pedagogy, review of collections and metadata and inclusive spaces, can only be beneficial. HEIs should also do more to increase the diversity of their decision-making and governance bodies. In all these instances, having high-quality EDI data can only help support EDI-related initiatives.

Recommendation 9 *HEIs and SCONUL members should do more to highlight the good work undertaken by both libraries and institutions in relation to EDI initiatives e.g. decolonisation, inclusive pedagogy and/or review of collections and metadata,; inclusive spaces; pursuit of accreditation and charter marks.*

Recommendation 10 *HEIs should seek to increase the diversity of their governing and decision-making bodies.*

Institutions operating in areas with lower BAME populations should give more focus to promoting EDI. SCONUL members and HEIs based in areas with low levels of ethnic diversity should be more proactive in pursuing EDI to ensure that diversity is embedded consistently across HEIs to prevent the emergence of a two-tier system.

Recommendation 11 *HEIs in areas with low BAME populations should do more work to prioritise EDI.*

The leadership of both libraries and the wider institutions to which SCONUL members are affiliated should acknowledge the role they can play in promoting EDI, and the positive impact this can have in enhancing institutional reputation, especially given the growing competitiveness of the HE sector. Continued support for EDI from leaders, and greater leadership diversity, can be a powerful tool in achieving cultural change in organisations and creating inclusive institutions (Hussain and Ishaq, 2016).

Recommendation 12 *Leadership of both libraries and HEIs should play a more transformational role in promoting EDI.*

9 Recommended questions for SCONUL statistics

Recommended questions on ethnic diversity in relation to library and associated staff for consideration in future SCONUL annual statistical return

One of the key objectives of this research was to recommend questions on ethnic diversity that SCONUL could ask members and which could be reasonably responded to. Before presenting the recommended questions, it should be highlighted that input from the following has been helpful in construction of the questions:

- The questions recommended take into account some of the themes and issues that were indicated by SCONUL members in the questionnaire undertaken as part of phase one of this project. Therefore, the proposed questions are based on a degree of input from SCONUL members.
- The proposed questions take into consideration evidence in the literature about the penalties and disadvantages that BAME employees experience in UK employment. The data generated from the responses to the recommended questions will therefore provide an evidence base to support key policies and interventions.
- The recommended questions have been pilot-tested. Five HR departments from UK HEIs that took part in the interview stage of this research offered to 'role play' in order to test whether the questions could be answered if a SCONUL member were to submit a request for this information. Feedback received indicated that the data requested would be available and could be extracted from the data institutions already collect on staff. There was some hesitation about being able to extract information on training and development undertaken mainly because HR departments were not always aware of what courses staff had attended, whether internally or externally delivered. It is recommended, however, that this question be asked even if not all institutions are able to provide the data, as failure to do so should not become a pretext for exclusion.

Recommended questions on ethnic diversity

Based on evidence gathered from the research undertaken, it is formally recommended that the following questions would be appropriate for SCONUL to ask members to respond to in future annual statistical returns:

1. Please provide a breakdown of **all staff** in your library service by ethnicity using the classifications for ethnic groups listed in Table 1 below and currently used by HESA (see <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/ethnic>).

Table 1: Classification of ethnic groups*

1.	White
2.	White – Scottish
3.	Irish Traveller
4.	Gypsy or Traveller
5.	Other White background
6.	Black or Black British – Caribbean
7.	Black or Black British – African
8.	Other British background
9.	Asian or Asian British – Indian
10.	Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
11.	Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
12.	Chinese
13.	Other Asian Background
14.	Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
15.	Mixed – White and Black African
16.	Mixed – White and Asian
17.	Other mixed background
18.	Arab
19.	Other ethnic background
20.	Not known
21.	Information refused

*It should be noted that there are slight variations in classifications of ethnicity used in Scotland and Northern Ireland from those used in England and Wales. It is recommended therefore that SCONUL members in the aforementioned devolved nations consult the following link: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/ethnic-groups> and adjust the categories offered to staff when undertaking data collection

2. Please provide a breakdown of all staff in your library service by ethnicity/ethnic group in relation to the following:
 - a. By job role – senior manager, manager, professional; para-professional; other
 - b. By pay band (£9999 or less; £10000–19999; £20000–29999; £30000–39999; £40000–49999; £50000–£59999; £60000+)
 - c. By contract status – permanent; fixed-term; casual
 - d. By work pattern – full-time; part-time; other (including job sharing, compressed hours)
 - e. By duration in current employment.

Table 2: Value of employment variables included in the questions on ethnic diversity

Employment variables to consider in questions on ethnic diversity	Potential value of data acquired on variables
<p>Breakdown of all library staff by <i>ethnicity/ethnic group</i></p> <p>Recommended options would be those adopted by HESA in line with categories used in the 2021 Census.</p>	<p>Indicator of level of workforce diversity – help support rationale and measures to address lack of ethnic diversity</p>
<p>Breakdown of all library staff by <i>ethnicity and job role</i></p> <p>Recommended options for job roles based on most common usage in the sector would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior manager • Manager • Professional • Para-professional • Other 	<p>Indicator of level of ethnic diversity at particular levels of the organisation – support rationale and measures to address horizontal and vertical segregation, i.e. to see what can be done to improve ethnic diversity at middle and higher levels of the organisation and aid career progression of ethnic minority groups. Overall, data on ethnicity by job role would give an insight into representation of BAME staff at particular levels of the organisation.</p>
<p>Breakdown of all library staff by <i>ethnicity and pay</i></p>	<p>Indicator of level of diversity at particular levels of the job hierarchy and pay gap by ethnicity – This could support measures to improve diversity at middle and higher levels of the organisation, tackle ethnic pay gap and aid career progression of ethnic minority groups.</p>

Table continues

Employment variables to consider in questions on ethnic diversity	Potential value of data acquired on variables
<p>Breakdown of all library staff by <i>ethnicity and contract status</i></p> <p>Recommended options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent • Fixed-term • Casual <p>Evidence suggests that permanent and fixed-term are used most commonly used in the sector.</p>	<p>Indicator of whether ethnic minority employees are more likely to be on less secure contracts and terms and conditions – possible action to examine why and how this can be addressed to provide more job security for BAME employees. The categories for contract status are the ones in most common usage in the UK labour market. It is possible though that some employers/sectors may apply different labels to their definitions of contract status. However, the options recommended should be capable of being matched to their equivalent even in instances where different terms are used. This would be for members to determine.</p>
<p>Breakdown of all library staff by <i>ethnicity and work pattern</i></p> <p>Recommended options could be the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time • Part-time • Other including job sharing and compressed hours <p>Evidence suggests that full-time and part-time are most commonly used in the sector.</p>	<p>Indicator of whether ethnic minority employees are more likely to be on part-time terms and conditions of employment – possible action to examine why and how this can be addressed and how this negatively impacts career development. See also previous point above. The categories used for work pattern are those in common usage across the UK labour market. However, see previous point above about alternative terminology used by some sectors/employers.</p>

Table continues

Breakdown of all library staff by *ethnicity and duration in current employment*.

Indicator of the career journey of ethnic minority employees in current organisation – possible action to see if the employment journey has progressed or been stifled for ethnic minority employees, and if so support any investigation into cause. This will be a useful barometer of whether BAME staff take longer to progress their careers with a particular employer than their white counterparts, especially for those who have been in their current employment for a long period.

10 Conclusion

The core purpose of this investigation was to ascertain the scope for members to capture EDI data that could then be supplied to SCONUL as part of the annual statistical return exercise. In relation to the research objectives, the outcomes of the study reveal that it is feasible for SCONUL members to supply data on diversity, including ethnic diversity, as this data is collected by HEIs. There is also evidence to suggest that the main barrier or challenge in sharing the data are ethical considerations, particularly those surrounding GDPR requirements. However, these can potentially be overcome as long as the rationale for requesting the data is deemed credible and the process satisfies ethical concerns. What is problematic though and has been highlighted elsewhere in this report is that institutions face challenges in the quality and level of data they are able to collect and the level of analysis carried out on that data. Improvements in those areas identified in the recommendations including greater buy-in, trust and participation from employees in the data collection process as well as more detailed interrogation of the data. These appear to be integral to overcoming the challenges. This would simultaneously improve the quality of data that can be shared with libraries and in return supplied to SCONUL.

Overall, the research highlights that SCONUL members and HEIs are committed to fostering EDI within both the library profession and the wider HE sector. This is evident from the range of EDI work being undertaken, including projects that have resulted in the pursuit of accreditations and receipt of awards. EDI data provides an evidence base to formulate and justify appropriate policies, initiate action to improve outcomes for disadvantaged groups, and address inequalities in both the library sector and wider HE sector in the UK. Therefore, having access to such data will help to build on progress being made in the realm of EDI.

If the barriers to data collection can be overcome, evidence suggests that SCONUL members and HEIs across the HE sector are committed to advancing EDI. What was noticeable in the research, and perhaps indicates the shifting landscape in relation to EDI in the UK HE sector, was that the mission or institution type appears to have little bearing on the extent to which EDI is being prioritised with both bigger and older pre-1992 institutions and smaller and newer post-1992 institutions demonstrating similar levels of commitment.

According to one of the world's largest professional services organisations – PricewaterhouseCoopers – the disruption caused by the pandemic has strengthened a focus on diversity and equality:

As stakeholders and investors expect more transparency and commitment from organisations, building an inclusive and diverse workplace has never been more important. Organisations that collect and analyse data on the diversity of their workforce have a deeper understanding of their people and the lived experiences of their employees. They can use this data to identify any existing biases, gaps or issues and work towards improving them. (PwC, 2021)

The above quotation reinforces the value of EDI data for organisations, regardless of sector and recent developments. The Black Lives Matter Movement and the pandemic have re-energised debates surrounding discrimination, disadvantage, and inclusion, and have placed a spotlight on EDI issues. The benefits of EDI data especially in relation to the education sector have been further emphasised by Advance HE (2020).

SCONUL's plans to collect data on ethnic diversity in future annual statistical returns represents a useful starting point in developing a statistical evidence base to address inequalities and disadvantage in the workplace. If successful, future returns could consider broadening questions on diversity to collect data on other protected characteristics and also consider the issue of intersectionality. While asking members to collect data on ethnic diversity is an important first step in helping to address racial inequalities and foster ethnic diversity in SCONUL member institutions, it is worth pointing out that on its own there are limitations to the use of statistical data in helping to achieve these goals. It is equally important therefore to consider alongside this data any qualitative data gathered from this and any other projects undertaken.

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Appendix 1: Further details of the methodological process used in this study

Research phases and demographic profile of research participants

There were three phases of data collection in the study. **Phase one** involved a questionnaire undertaken of SCONUL members to collect views on the issue of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire underwent pilot testing to ensure reliability and validity. Several issues arose which required amendment to the questionnaire. These were captured fairly early in the process. *SurveyMonkey* was used as the platform for disseminating the questionnaire. The communication briefing to members included relaying the purpose of the research and how the involvement of respondents would be beneficial in meeting the aim and objectives of the research. The individuals among SCONUL members targeted were those deemed to be directly involved in workforce planning decisions in relation to their library service. This included senior staff such as library directors. Questions asked can be found in Appendix 2.

The questionnaire served multiple purposes. It allowed the opportunity to get engagement from as many SCONUL members as possible, thereby widening the opportunity for participation. It also allowed the gathering of useful quantitative data on the views of SCONUL members on issues relating to EDI data collection. Furthermore, the questionnaire provided an opportunity for respondents to indicate interest in stage two of the research – the focus group. The findings of the questionnaire contributed towards part-informing the design of the qualitative stages of the research.

SCONUL members who completed the questionnaire can be grouped into three categories that reflect their mission, or, where applicable, the mission of the wider institution to which they belong. These categories are:

- Pre-1992 universities: This category represents those members who are part of institutions that represent old and long-established universities. This includes Russell Group universities and other pre-1992 institutions established before the major restructuring of UK higher education in 1992. Most institutions in this category are classed as being research-intensive.

- **Post-1992 universities and Higher Education Colleges:** This category represents SCONUL members who are part of higher education colleges and so-called modern universities, established following the restructuring of UK higher education in 1992. Institutions in this category have a mission which is typically geared towards teaching and are therefore often classed as teaching-focused. They are also generally smaller than pre-1992 institutions.
- **Other:** This category represents national libraries that are not part of a wider institution, and other institutions which specialise in specific skills, training and unique educational provision.

Phase two of the research involved a focus group of SCONUL members. Participants were recruited via phase one of the research, where respondents were asked to indicate their interest in taking part. A list of those who expressed interest was created and scrutinised. In the end, interest in the focus group was oversubscribed. In determining the selection of participants for the focus group, consideration was given to the geographical location and mission group to which participants or their affiliated institutions belonged. This ensured that the focus group sample was representative of a cross-section of the SCONUL community. In total, nine respondents took part in the focus group. Details of the demographic profile of focus group participants can be found in Table 1. The final sample of focus group participants was made up of participants from all regions and nations of the UK except Northern Ireland. All focus group participants represented libraries that were affiliated to a wider institution within the UK higher education institutions (HEI) sector.

Table 3: Demographic profile of focus group participants

Focus group participant number	Region	Institution type/ mission
1	Yorkshire and Humber	Pre-1992
2	Wales	Pre-1992
3	Greater London	Pre-1992
4	Greater London	Pre-1992
5	South-west	Post-1992
6	West Midlands	Post-1992
7	Scotland	Pre-1992
8	Scotland	Post-1992
9	South-west	Pre-1992

It was acknowledged that whilst the questionnaire would provide some useful quantitative data, it would not provide the rich and deep data that would emerge from the focus group. The focus group also allowed participants to engage in a conversation on issues of common interest, including those that emerged from the questionnaire. As with the questionnaire, library directors/members of library senior management teams were targeted to make up the focus group participants. Themes for the focus group were partly informed by the results of the questionnaire and partly by the overall aim and objectives of the project. The focus group schedule can be found in Appendix 3.

Phase three of the research involved interviews with HEIs hosting SCOUNL members, in recognition of the fact that such libraries (the exception being national libraries) are affiliated to HEIs, and therefore operate in a wider context. Those targeted for the interviews had expertise in, or the remit for, equality and diversity, including involvement in the collection of EDI data and access to workforce data in their institution. The interviewees were therefore practitioners in HR departments or their equivalent, and/or equality and diversity officers/coordinators. As with the focus groups, the interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams. The research team used contacts from university HR networks and HR contacts in HEIs, including from among SCOUNL members, to target participants. In total, individuals from seventeen institutions indicated interest but only 12 participated. The final sample consisted of twelve interviewees representing a mix of pre-1992 and post-1992 institutions

plus a national library. The sample was representative of most geographic areas of the UK. The demographic profile of interviewees can be found in Table 2. Themes for the interview schedule centred around a combination of issues that emerged from the findings of the focus group and the overall purpose of the project. The interview schedule can be viewed in Appendix 4.

Table 4: Demographic profile of interviewees

Interviewee	Region	Institution type/mission
1	Greater London	Pre-1992
2	West Midlands	Post-1992
3	Scotland	Pre-1992
4	East Midlands	Post-1992
5	Wales	Pre-1992
6	Greater London	Pre-1992
7	Scotland	Post-1992
8	Greater London	National library
9	Greater London	Pre-1992
10	North- West	Pre-1992
11	South- east	Post-1992
12	East Midlands	Post-1992

Data analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics to ensure that the results could be interpreted by a broad audience of stakeholders, thereby increasing the value and impact of the research. The data collected from the qualitative phase of the research was exposed to thematic analysis. This process involves the use of categories and codes for common themes that emerge from the findings. The analysis of the qualitative data was further supported by the rich data collected directly from focus group participants and interviewees, which shed further light on the findings and increased the reliability and validity of the research.

Research ethics

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office, which implements the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. Once ethical approval was granted, the research officially commenced.

All three data collection instruments used involved the dissemination of a participant information sheet which provided an overview of the research and laid out the purpose of the investigation. It also communicated the voluntary nature of the research to would-be respondents and participants, and their right to withdraw their involvement at any point. The information sheet also set out the level and nature of involvement required of the part of participants, and how the data collected would be managed, including how it would be stored, protected, used and disposed of. Participants in the focus group and interviews were required to sign a consent form confirming their willingness to take part in the research and to being audio and video recorded, and to return the form via email to the research team.

In terms of data management, the data captured was stored securely on a password-protected device to ensure that it could not be accessed by any unauthorised party. Further security of the data was ensured, regardless of format, files being password-protected.

Both the focus group and interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service who also signed a data processing agreement to ensure the safeguarding and confidentiality of the data.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge that every research project has limitations. In this research it should be noted that there was no participation in either the quantitative or qualitative phases of the project by SCONUL members based in Northern Ireland. Secondly, participation by SCONUL members who are not part of a wider institution was low.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

1. Please tell us who you are:

- Name
- Job title
- Institution
- Email

2. Does your library service currently hold or have access to any EDI data related to your workforce?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

3. Where your library service is part of a wider institution, have you ever requested EDI data related to your workforce from the relevant department/unit within your institution?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Not applicable – i.e., library service not part of a wider institution

4. If you answered 'yes' to question 3, which of the following best depicts your experience (select one only):

- Received the data I was looking for easily and it included information related to job grade and job title of employees
- Received the data easily but it was not what I was looking for or was incomplete, e.g., did not provide data on employees' job grade/job title
- Received the data but it took a long time
- Received the data but there appeared to be a reluctance initially to provide it
- Did not receive the data because the institution did not have it
- Did not receive the data because the institution did not wish to provide it
- Did not receive the data and the institution provided no reason

5. If you answered 'Yes' to question 3, please briefly state the reason for requesting the data.
6. Would you welcome the inclusion of specific questions on the diversity of your workforce in future SCONUL annual statistical returns?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
7. If you answered 'Yes' to question 6, do you have any suggestions as to what questions should be included? Please state.
8. To what extent do you agree that you would be able to provide data on the diversity of your workforce if requested in the SCONUL annual statistical return?
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Don't know/ unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
9. If your library is part of a wider institution, e.g., a university, who do you think should be responsible for collecting and managing EDI data related to the workforce?
 - Library service
 - HR function
 - Both library service and HR function
 - Not applicable – library service not part of wider institution
10. If applicable, i.e., if your library service is part of a wider institution, do you foresee any barriers or challenges in pursuing EDI data from the relevant department in your institution?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know

11. Are you aware of any initiatives at national level that your library has been involved in (either unilaterally or in conjunction with the wider institution, where applicable) to help advance the EDI agenda, e.g., Athena Swan/Race Equality Charter? Please provide brief details.

12. Are you aware of any initiatives at local level that your library has been involved in (either unilaterally or in conjunction with the wider institution) to help advance the EDI agenda, e.g., library apprenticeships, mentoring schemes? Please provide brief details.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you are willing to assist further with this research project and are interested in being involved in a focus group of library directors/senior library staff to explore further the theme of equality and diversity data, please enter your contact details in the box below and complete the doodle poll.

Appendix 3: Focus group schedule

- Availability and access to EDI data.
- Value of EDI data both generally and specifically for SCONUL members.
- Challenges faced by SCONUL members when requesting/attempting to gain access to EDI data.
- Responsibility and ownership of EDI data.
- Confidentiality and safeguarding of EDI data.
- SCONUL members' views on providing EDI data and questions for the SCONUL annual statistical return, and the benefits of SCONUL membership.
- Role of leadership and libraries in promoting the EDI agenda.
- Connection between the pursuit of EDI and organisational culture and diversity of population.

Appendix 4: Interview schedule

- What EDI data does your institution currently collect in relation to staffing and what level of analysis is undertaken?
- What challenges does the institution face in collecting EDI data? What more can be done to improve EDI data collection?
- What is the value of collecting EDI data beyond any legal requirement?
- What initiatives or projects has EDI data been used to support by your institution?
- What is the process involved in collecting EDI data from staff?
- Do you think staff understand the benefits of the institution collecting EDI data? Does the institution engage with staff on its EDI mission?
- How does your institution respond to requests for data from other departments and units? Is there a process for sharing data with other departments that request EDI data to assist with their workforce planning?
- In general, is there support for the sharing of data with internal stakeholders (e.g., libraries) to assist wider institutional aims to advance EDI?
- How would your institution view the idea of individual departments collecting their own EDI data in order to meet their workforce planning needs if data was not forthcoming from the wider institution?
- Do you think that your institution has sufficient safeguards in place to prevent unauthorised access to staff EDI data?
- Does your institution have a dedicated role for EDI?
- How important is the role of leadership in your institution in advancing EDI?
- Do you think there is any connection between the mission of your institution and the pursuit of EDI?
- Do you benchmark against competitor institutions in relation to progress in EDI?

Appendix 5: Sample of participant information sheet

Name of Department/School: School of Business and Creative Industries

Researcher: Dr Mohammed Ishaq

Title of Research: SCONUL statistics – equality and diversity data investigation

Dear participant

I would like to invite you to take part in this research. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being conducted and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please feel free to ask questions if anything you read is not clear or you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you want to take part.

What is the purpose of this investigation?

Evidence suggests that workforce diversity is lacking in the Higher Education (HE) sector including in the information and library profession. The lack of readily available, accessible and reliable data means that attempts to address the issue are being stifled.

This research is in response to an invitation from SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries), who wish to commission research that will increase understanding of the makeup of the workforce of SCONUL members. SCONUL views measuring the diversity of the workforce as a prerequisite for effective monitoring and promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion in the library sector. This proposed project focuses on data, specifically data related to equality and diversity. It is envisaged that key outcomes of the research will include:

- An understanding of whether SCONUL members can supply data on the diversity of their workforce.
- An understanding of possible barriers that impede the availability and provision of data.
- Data that can help inform the writing of questions for the SCONUL annual statistical return.

As part of the project, I am keen to interview HR practitioners and/or equality and diversity officers at UK universities who have knowledge of and responsibility for collecting/ managing their institution's workforce data including equality, diversity and inclusion data and who may require access to this data. I am also going to undertake a focus group with SCONUL members to collate their views on the issue of EDI data.

The research is part of a wider project looking at a range of aspects related to HR issues and workforce development for SCONUL members. Hence, as an academic at the University of the West of Scotland, I am undertaking this part of the wider project on behalf of SCONUL.

Do you have to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary. I will describe the study and go through the information sheet, which will be given to you prior to the interview or focus group. I will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agree to take part. You are free to withdraw anytime without giving a reason.

What will you do in the project?

If you agree to participate in the research, you are required to take part in an interview or focus group. During the interview or focus group, I will lead a discussion on a number of themes and issues relevant to this research.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been chosen to take part because you represent a stakeholder whose contribution would be valuable in meeting the objectives of the research.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

During the research you will not be exposed to any physical, psychological or legal risk or harm. Interview and focus group themes will be structured in such a way as to protect your privacy and no pressure will be put on you to answer sensitive questions. All information provided will be anonymised and kept confidential.

What happens to the information in the project?

Every care will be taken to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. All information received will be stored securely and outwith the reach of any third party.

The University of the West of Scotland is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of this legislation.

What happens next?

If you are happy to be involved in the research then please proceed to take part in the interview or focus group, which will be viewed as your agreed consent, and sign the consent form. If you do not wish to be involved, then thank you very much for your time and you may leave.

Research ethics

This study was granted ethical approval by the UWS School of Business and Creative Industries Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions or concerns during or after the investigation please contact:

School of Business and Creative Industries

University of the West of Scotland

Paisley Campus

High Street

Paisley

PA1 2BE

Researcher contact details: Dr Mohammed Ishaq - mohammed.ishaq@uws.ac.uk

Appendix 6: Sample of consent form

Participant consent form

Name of Researcher: Dr Mohammed Ishaq

Please initial/check box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.
4. I agree to the interview/focus group being audio/video recorded

Name of interviewee/focus group participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Name of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix 7: Detailed findings

In this section a summary of the key findings that emerged from the three phases of the data collection process are presented.

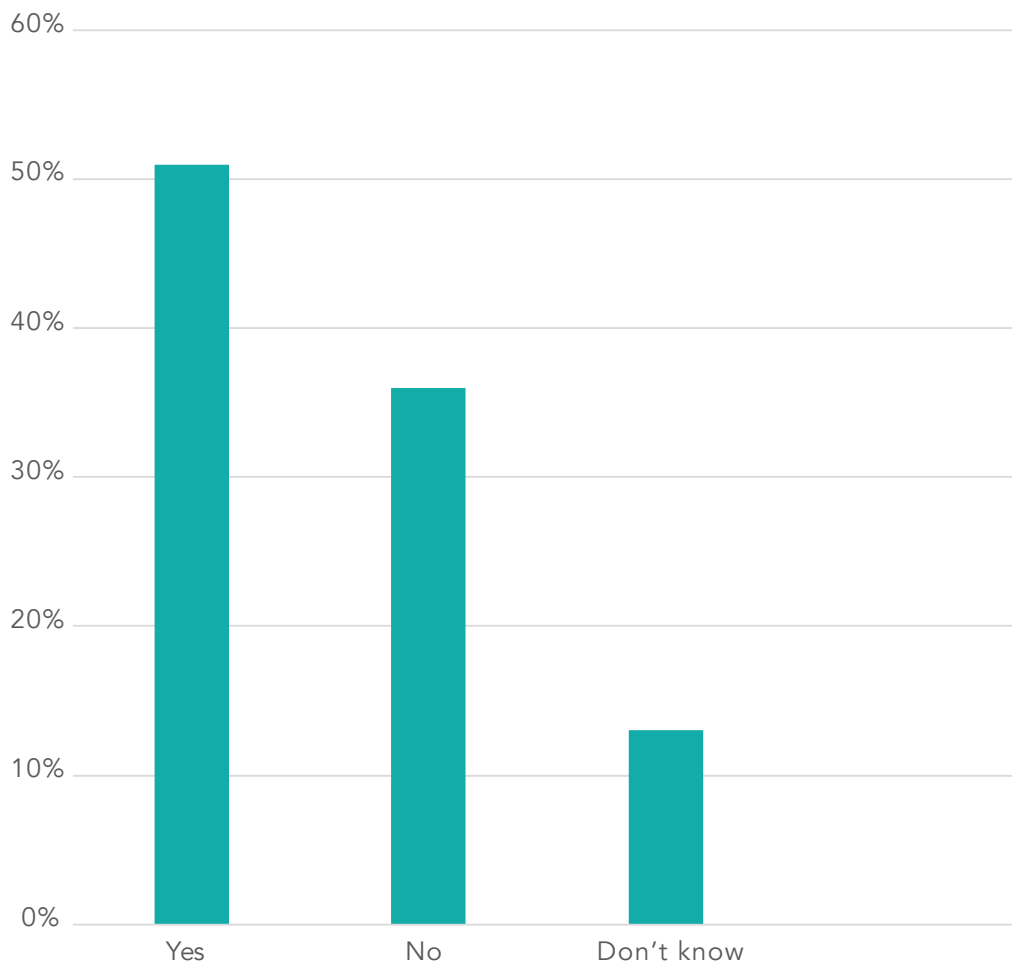
1 Summary of findings from questionnaire

Almost all (98%) SCONUL members who participated in the questionnaire were part of a wider institution, i.e., a university/other HEI. Just over half of respondents (51.7%) were from old and big institutions, including pre-1992 and Russell Group universities; 43.7% from post-1992 institutions, including HE colleges; and 4.6% represent the category 'other.' In total, the questionnaire was completed by 87 SCONUL members out of an overall membership of 182, representing a response rate of around 48%. The questionnaire captured engagement from SCONUL members representing the devolved UK nations (except Northern Ireland) as well as regional areas.

1.1 SCONUL members' access to EDI workforce data

Just over half of the respondents (51%) indicated that their library service held or had access to EDI data related to their workforce. Just over a third (36%) indicated they do not currently have access to workforce EDI data, whilst 13% did not know (Figure 1). In relation to the 36% of respondents who did not have access to EDI data, it is not clear whether this was because they could not negotiate access or because they had not asked for it. This question was asked because some SCONUL members would have requested access to data from the relevant departments to engage in EDI projects and initiatives, as noted in a later question.

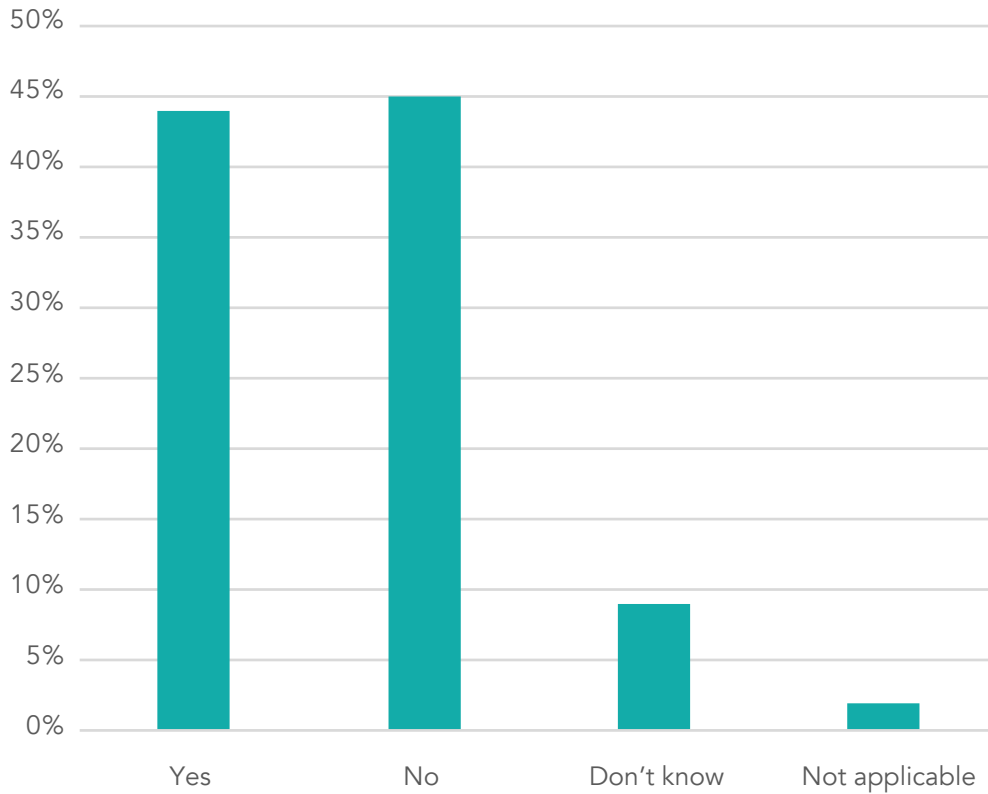
Figure 1: Whether respondents' library service currently holds or has access to EDI data related to the workforce



1.2 Request for access to centrally held EDI data and views on experience

When asked if member libraries that were part of a wider institution had ever requested EDI data related to their workforce from the relevant department in their institution (Figure 2), similar numbers indicated 'yes' (44%) and 'no' (45%), with 9% registering 'don't know.' Two percent of respondents were not part of a wider institution.

Figure 2: Whether respondents had ever requested EDI data related to their workforce from relevant department within their institution



Members who had requested EDI data from their wider institution were asked to comment on their experience. Half (50%) were satisfied with their experience, indicating that they had received the data easily. The data included information related to job grade and job title of employees. Just over a third (34%) got access to the data easily but found that the data did not contain details they needed, such as employees' job grade and job title. Small numbers of remaining members (6%) found that it took a long time to get the data. Others made reference to an initial element of reluctance on the part of their institutions to provide the data (6%).

1.3 Reasons for requesting centrally held EDI data

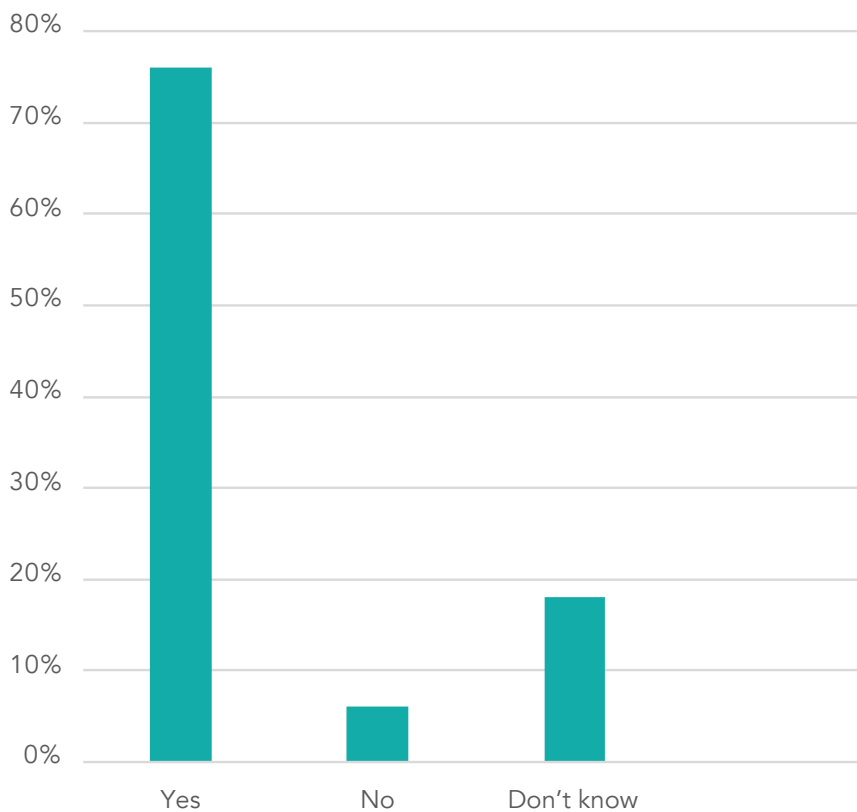
Of those respondents who had indicated that they had requested access to EDI data (44%), the bullet points below summarise the key reasons why this data was requested, in order of most cited:

- Examine the level of workforce diversity/review demographic profile of staff
- Support/inform workforce planning decisions including those related to recruitment and selection
- Support the EDI agenda and the work of EDI groups
- Address gender pay gap

1.4 Views on the inclusion of questions on workforce diversity in the SCONUL annual statistical return and suggestions for questions

When asked if SCONUL members would welcome specific questions on workforce diversity in future SCONUL annual statistical returns (Figure 3), 76% said yes and 18% don't know, with 6% saying no.

Figure 3: Whether respondents would welcome the inclusion of specific questions on the diversity of their workforce in future SCONUL annual statistical returns



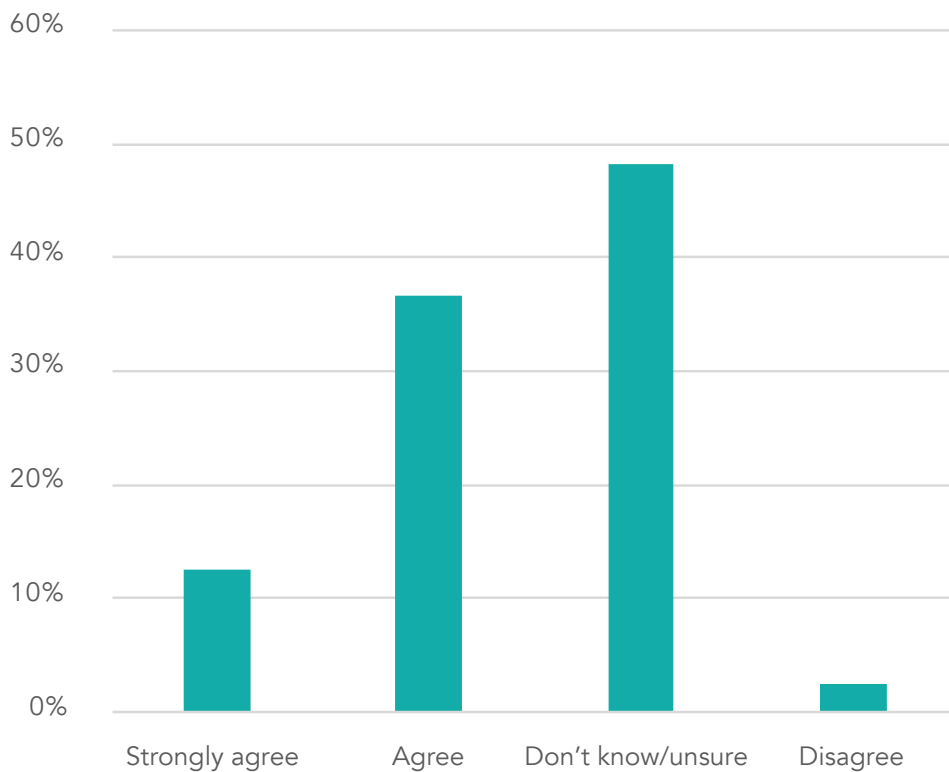
Although 76% of survey respondents would welcome questions on EDI in the SCONUL annual statistical return, of these only 37% chose to offer suggestions for themes that should be targeted. Respondents did not offer suggestions for actual questions, but rather offered views on areas that questions could focus upon. A number of respondents offered multiple suggestions, and these are listed as follows in order of most cited:

- The need to collect data on specific protected characteristics, with most citing ethnicity.
- The need to collect data on the overall diversity of the library workforce.
- The importance of acquiring granular data that provides breakdown by protected characteristic and by, for example, job roles and pay grade.
- Questions that can provide data that establishes the level of diversity at senior management and leadership level.
- Questions that provide an insight into how recruitment processes operate in the library.

1.5 SCONUL members' ability to provide data on workforce diversity for SCONUL annual statistical return

Respondents were asked the extent to which they felt they would be able to provide data on workforce diversity (Figure 4). Almost half (49.3%) noted 'strongly agree' or 'agree', whilst a similar proportion (48.2%) registered 'unsure' or 'don't know.' Only 2.5% stated 'disagree.'

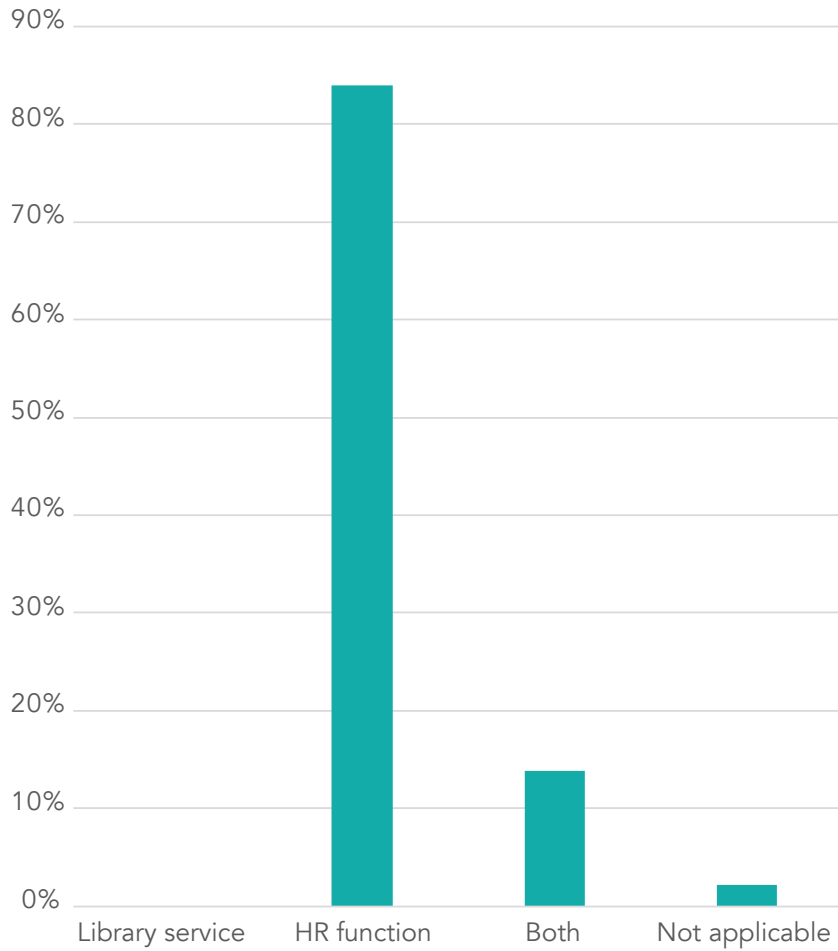
Figure 4: Extent to which respondents agree that they would be able to provide data on the diversity of their workforce in the SCONUL annual statistical return



1.6 Views on responsibility for collecting and managing EDI data

SCONUL members who were part of a wider institution were asked who they viewed as having responsibility for collecting and managing EDI data (Figure 5). An overwhelming 84% said the HR function, whilst only 13.8% selected both, i.e., the HR function and the library service. No one selected library service as having sole responsibility.

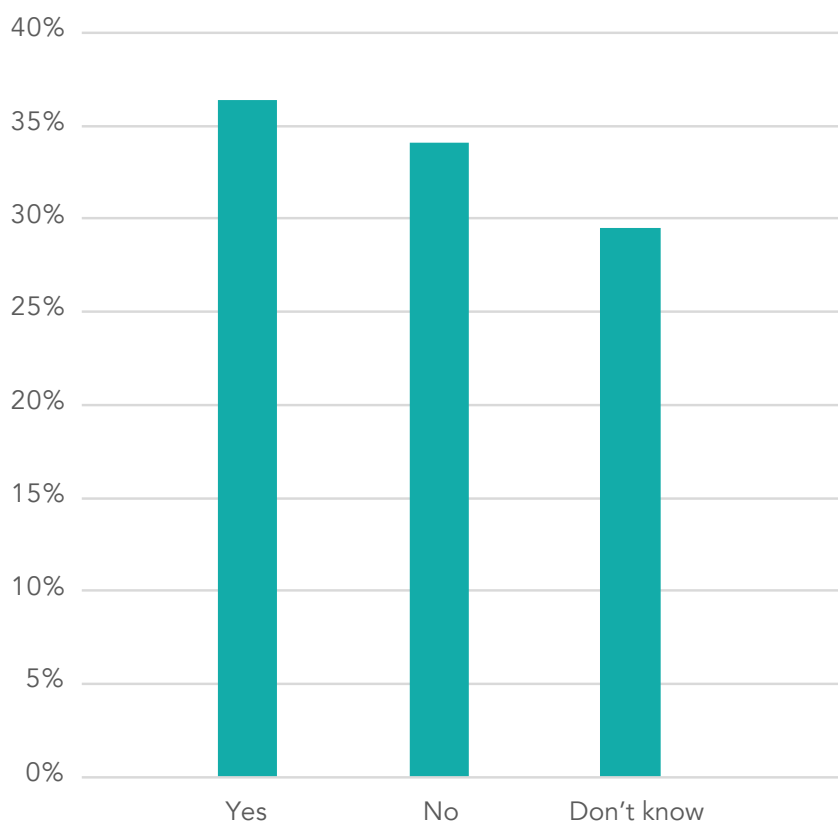
Figure 5: Respondents' views on responsibility for collecting and managing EDI data related to the workforce



1.7 Challenges/barriers in pursuing centrally held EDI data

SCONUL members who were part of a wider institution were asked if they foresaw any challenges when requesting EDI data from the relevant department within their institution (Figure 6). Around equal numbers stated 'yes' (36.4%) and 'no' (34.1%) with those stating 'don't know' not far behind on 29.5%.

Figure 6: Whether respondents foresee any challenges in the pursuit of EDI data from their institution



1.8 Involvement of SCONUL members in EDI initiatives at national level

National level initiatives refer to EDI initiatives that could be pursued by institutions and organisations nationwide, including by HEIs across the UK, and often lead to an award or accreditation to signify an institution's success in advancing EDI generally, or in relation to a specific protected characteristic. Examples of national initiatives include Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter (see <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/equality-charters> for an overview of national initiatives related to equality).

Respondents were asked whether they had been involved in any initiatives at national level in relation to EDI either unilaterally or in conjunction with their wider institution (where applicable). Fifty-seven respondents (65.5%) registered a response, of which 51 (89%) had been involved in some initiatives. Thirty-two institutions (63%) had been involved in multiple initiatives, whilst the remaining nineteen indicated only one initiative. The most common initiatives were those related to gender, such as Athena Swan (cited by around 88% of those who had indicated involvement in initiatives), and race, such as the Race Equality Charter (cited by around 63%). There was also some reference to schemes and programmes aimed at tackling discrimination against disabled people and the LGBTQ+ community.

When comparing involvement in national initiatives with the institution's mission type, there was little evidence to suggest that mission of institutions that SCONUL members belong to have any bearing on engagement in national initiatives.

1.9 SCONUL members' involvement in EDI initiatives at *local level*

Local level initiatives refer to EDI initiatives that are specific to an institution. They had been initiated by institutions to progress EDI for protected groups within the institution, to address discrimination and to improve the situation for minority groups. Some of these initiatives involved working with local communities.

63.2% of respondents answered this question, of which 83.6% identified initiatives. The rest registered 'no' or were 'not aware.' The key initiatives at local level that were referred to have been grouped and illustrated in the bullet points below in order of most cited:

- Projects aimed at decolonising the library, inclusive pedagogy, creating more inclusive and accessible reading lists, and diverse library collections
- EDI training
- Library-based EDI groups and committees
- Mentoring schemes
- Graduate traineeships
- Apprenticeships for BAME staff
- Projects and work related to 'anti-blackness'
- Staff diversity networks
- Appointment of library EDI champion(s)

Race or ethnicity was the most referred to characteristic, with almost half (48%) of respondents making reference to initiatives in this area. As with national initiatives, there was no significant influence of institution type or mission on the propensity of members to engage in local initiatives.

2 Summary of findings from focus group

The following findings emerged from phase two of the research involving a focus group with SCONUL members. Demographic details of focus group participants can be found in Appendix 1. Some selected quotes from participants are presented in this section but an additional selection of quotes can be found in Appendix 8.

2.1 Availability and access to EDI data

There is a general perception among SCONUL members that EDI data exists and is collected by institutions but lacks granularity due to lack of interrogation and detailed analysis of the data. There are also concerns about the robustness of the data and insufficient data being collected:

I could get very general data, you know, but it's the granularity that I'd probably want to be able to tackle the sort of dearth of black, Asian minority ethnic people in the library sector. (Focus group participant 4)

Overall, participants in the focus group did not envisage any challenges in getting access to data that existed. The problem was with the level of detail in the data due to the lack of probing of the data. This differed from the questionnaire results, where just over a third of respondents envisaged potential challenges if requesting EDI data from their institution.

2.2 Value of EDI data both generally and specifically for SCONUL members

The value of having EDI data was acknowledged by all focus group participants, with participants alluding to the benefit of data in terms of helping to address the lack of diversity in the workforce and tackling inequalities in their organisation:

Without the data how can we make plans to make changes, you know sector wide changes? Without that data we can't begin to tackle the underrepresentation of black minority ethnic groups when it comes to library work. (Focus group participant 4)

Participants also referred to the beneficial role that data can play in helping their institution benchmark against other HEIs in relation to progress on EDI.

2.3 Challenges in gaining access to EDI data

As noted above, there was a general perception that there were no major challenges in getting access to data from HR departments or their equivalent where the data existed or had been collected. There was a feeling that institutions were genuinely keen to make progress on EDI. However, incompleteness of the data, specifically the low levels of disclosure of certain protected characteristics, reduced the value and effectiveness of the data according to participants:

One of the questions we are going to be posing to the group of staff is how do we overcome this [the unwillingness of people to provide personal data]? Why do people feel uncomfortable about volunteering that information? What can we do as a library community to encourage people to provide that sort of data which will help to address problems? (Focus group participant 1)

2.4 Responsibility for and ownership of EDI data

There was consensus that in the main, HR departments, i.e., the wider institution, should have responsibility for data collection thereby confirming the findings from the questionnaire. However, SCONUL members were not averse to the idea of taking matters into their own hands if data was not forthcoming from institutions or if the data available was not accurate or granular enough:

I think if we are looking at this as a library sector then we have to take some responsibility in trying to get that data as well and look at ways in which we can get that data if it is not readily available via our HR systems. (Focus group participant 4)

There was caution expressed, however, about SCONUL members going it alone to collect data:

... we could get into hot water if we [SCONUL members] collect data anonymously. I can see it being questioned. If I can't get the data then actually, I'll just use this as a way to make noise in the university rather than bypass the university... I'd rather we get it [the data] properly done in the long term than just bypass and let the university get away with not actually doing what it should be doing. (Focus group participant 9)

2.5 Confidentiality and safeguarding of EDI data

There was general agreement that safeguarding of data would not be an issue for SCONUL members. Most did not regard the collection of data on the number of people who identified with various diversity characteristics, such as ethnicity and gender etc., as 'personal data' as long as it was not traced back to specific individuals. There was also a feeling that SCONUL members were no different from the wider institutions they were part of (where applicable) when it came to the safeguarding of data, and the real question was whether universities could safeguard the data.

2.6 SCONUL members' views on providing EDI data for the SCONUL annual statistical return and the benefits of SCONUL membership

In line with the results of the questionnaire, where a large majority indicated support, there was broad agreement among focus group participants that SCONUL should ask members to supply data on the diversity of the workforce in the annual statistical return regardless of whether this was possible. Not being able to provide the data would then allow members and SCONUL to establish where remedial action was required. There was a feeling that asking for this data may give members and their institutions a push to collect data:

I think we should. I think SCONUL should do it. I think, you know, yes there may be some challenges around collecting the data and the data accuracy, but I think it will give us all the impetus we need to work on those issues and to push and lobby to get the data. (Focus group participant 2)

One participant did express concern though about those diversity characteristics that had a poor disclosure rate being left behind if SCONUL members were only able to get data on gender and race etc., and as a result these areas became priority areas by default, and at the expense of others.

When asked about the kind of questions or information that SCONUL could request and what members would be happy to provide, views differed, with some arguing that there was nothing that could not be asked. Others were of the view that it was important to utilise data that was already there or collected by other agencies:

We should probably look at the data that is collected for HESA and try to map onto that and have a consistent you know set of questions around staff which is consistent with the HESA data... so similar data would be the best way to go. (Focus group participant 2)

Participants acknowledged that there were obvious benefits of SCONUL membership:

... there's a lot of benefits of SCONUL. But, you know as a head of service, I think the really key thing is that understanding of what is happening across the sector, the sharing of experience and the learning from other institutions. (Focus group participant 3)

2.7 The role of leadership and libraries in promoting the EDI agenda

As noted from the questionnaire results, participants highlighted the work being done by the leadership in SCONUL member libraries around EDI. In addition, there was acknowledgment of the work being led in general by academic libraries in areas related to EDI, such as decolonisation and inclusive pedagogy:

I think we are taking a broader inclusive approach. We have a unit that is going over every degree course and looking at it to make it more inclusive. We have a decolonisation project at our library. We're looking at making more diverse resources available. (Focus group participant 6)

2.8 Connection between the pursuit of EDI and organisational culture and diversity of population

Given that all focus group participants represented SCONUL members that were affiliated to a wider institution, the opportunity presented itself to explore whether the culture of institutions, and the level of diversity prevalent in the geographic areas where institutions were based, had any bearing on the extent to which EDI was being pursued. The views of focus group participants acknowledged that the level of ethnic diversity of the population where SCONUL members were located had an impact on the extent to which diversity was being pursued. For example, institutions that were in areas where there were large BAME populations, and had a high level of BAME students, were more likely to pursue policies aimed at advancing the EDI agenda. Participants were therefore concerned that institutions that were not sufficiently diverse or were in less diverse areas may lack the impetus to pursue diversity.

Some participants also argued that the culture of their institution had a bearing on what information they could provide and what could be reasonably expected by SCONUL.

3 Summary of findings from interviews

The following findings emerged from phase three of the research, which involved a series of interviews with individuals working in human resources and EDI roles in HEIs. Demographic details of interviewees can be found in Appendix 1. Some selected quotes from interviewees are presented in this section but a selection of additional quotes can be found in Appendix 9.

3.1 EDI data collected by institutions and level of analysis undertaken

All institutions represented in the series of interviews indicated that they collected data on the standard protected characteristics such as gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion or belief as would be expected in order to comply with equality legislation and to facilitate the completion of the HESA return. Some were now going further and had begun collecting data on additional non-protected characteristics, such as social class/ social mobility and educational attainment.

Disclosure rates for race and gender were generally fine, but low for sexual orientation, disability and religion or belief.

Yeah, I think disability, not just my institution, a lot of places, there's often difficulty in getting 100% data on it. There's a lot of "prefer not to say" or will not disclose because of the stigma attached around invisible disability, around mental health. (Interviewee 1)

It's poor for what we call the new protected characteristics such as sexual orientation and religion. (Interviewee 3)

Low disclosure rates for specific characteristics were attributed mainly to lack of trust and confidence in why information was being requested, and what the employer planned to do with the data. The consequence was that this had an impact on the accuracy and quality of the data held by institutions on staffing, and furthermore affected the ability to put it to good use to improve outcomes for those with protected characteristics.

The level of analysis undertaken of EDI data varied, with some institutions analysing data in greater detail than others. The level of resources available had a bearing on the level of analysis that was undertaken. However, if given time, most institutions were able to provide more detailed analysis where requested. For example, data on intersectionality was not provided as standard and needed to be requested.

The standard analysis undertaken often did not provide the level of granularity required, but this could be requested by specific departments or people working on projects connected to EDI, e.g., Athena Swan. There was also concern that sometimes a detailed breakdown of the data could compromise confidentiality:

In a specific department you might be getting down to single figures when looking for example at gender and ethnicity by grade so you could be identifying people basically. (Interviewee 6)

3.2 Challenges collecting EDI data

Outdated HR systems in relation to IT and software were viewed as an impediment to collecting EDI data when asking staff to update their personal data:

So, our HR system is pretty old. I mean it collects the basic data but it's not very good for reporting or producing dashboards for managers at local level. (Interviewee 2)

Unwillingness of staff to disclose information especially around disability (including mental health) and sexual orientation led to incomplete datasets. Institutions acknowledged that there was a lack of trust among staff about what data collected would be used for. They also conceded the need to do more work to increase confidence among staff, increase engagement and do a better job at communicating the value of collecting data to staff.

Older staff, and staff who had been employed in institutions for a considerable period of time, were more apathetic at updating their personal details in comparison to new staff. The addition of new EDI categories made the situation worse in relation to existing staff, who were less likely to go back into their profile to update it. There was also a challenge in getting some staff to engage with the online self-service system that was being used by institutions to collect personal data, including EDI data.

3.3 Improving EDI data collection

Institutions had instigated various strategies to improve EDI data collection:

We've tried a campaign. We've tried to make videos. We have tried to tell people what the data is going to be used for. But I think it comes down to how confident people are that the data is gonna be used in the way that we say it's gonna be used... so there is issue of trust in the organisation. (Interviewee 7)

Institutions needed to do more work to build confidence and encourage more engagement from staff in the data collection process. Some had begun to set up networks linked to specific protected characteristics to raise awareness of the importance of disclosing information to help the advancement of EDI.

3.4 Perceived value of collecting EDI data beyond legal requirements

Institutions cited a number of reasons why collecting EDI data beyond legal requirements was valuable. These included the need to assess the extent to which EDI initiatives and policies were effective and inclusive for particular groups and those with specific protected characteristics. Interviewees also viewed the value of EDI data as allowing an opportunity to assess the extent to which their institutions were inclusive as claimed and to create diversity conscious institutions. To help create a more diverse workforce was also cited, and social justice was a value alluded to by interviewees who viewed it morally right to advance the EDI agenda, and believe that data collection helps promote this objective.

3.5 Initiatives and projects supported by EDI data

Not all institutions were heavily engaged in EDI initiatives and projects based on the interviews conducted. However, those that were included several institutions involved in projects that centred around specific characteristics to advance their cause, progress and accreditations. These included the following:

- Positive action initiatives to address BAME staff under representation in the library.
- One institution was the first university in the UK to be a signatory to the *Race at Work Charter*.
- EDI data used to support staff surveys and disability confident employer accreditation.
- Athena Swan and a specific programme targeting BAME women in leadership.
- Anti-racism project undertaken by one institution.
- Work on academic promotions.
- Race Equality Charter.
- An institution cited the work their library did on sexuality awareness including developing training packages aimed at different equality groups.

3.6 Process involved in collecting EDI data from staff

All institutions collect data from new staff at the point of entry. This process seemed to be fairly consistent across institutions who were interviewed, regardless of institution mission or type:

We kind of get data when they're appointed through our recruitment process and at any point a staff member can update their details online and it's something we try and do at least once a year. (Interviewee 6)

A number of institutions had an online self-service system where staff could populate their personal data and update it, including their equality profile. Staff, particularly those who had been employed for a considerable period, were targeted via reminders to encourage greater engagement. Overall, there was a sense that since moving to online systems, staff were more likely to provide EDI data than when they were required to complete hard copies of forms.

3.7 Staff understanding of the benefits of collecting EDI data and institutional engagement with staff on EDI mission

There was a general perception that staff did not fully understand the benefits of collecting EDI data and this played a role in the lack of engagement in the data collection process. There was also a feeling that perhaps institutions were not doing enough to relay the benefits of collecting EDI data. Some had led campaigns but felt that these had not been effective. There was a sense that more concerted campaigns highlighting the value of collecting EDI data to support the EDI agenda were needed:

On the whole I don't think they (staff) do (understand the benefits). We have done a couple of campaigns but if they don't engage in the communication and read it, they don't necessarily understand it. So, we are looking at how to get that message across through different channels. (Interviewee 4)

Some interviewees felt that where institutions had been engaged in submissions for accreditation and charter marks, this helped to convince staff of the importance of EDI data. One institution noted how this had helped to raise awareness among their staff who had been otherwise disengaged.

3.8 Responding to requests for EDI data and the data sharing process

There is general support for sharing data with internal stakeholders such as Schools and departments within institutions, as long as a clear justification is provided about why the data is needed. The request would need to be made by a senior person, e.g., head of department, and only they would be given access to the data. Requests for data are considered by HR departments or their equivalent. There were concerns that requests for more granular data could lead to issues. The following quote provides an insight into how requests for data are treated, the criteria that need to be met for data to be released, and some of the challenges that need to be considered when sharing data:

We would look to see if any request was reasonable, whether they were entitled to that information and then provide it based on what we think was appropriate... so obviously as you get more granular, the easier it is to then identify someone, so we have to be careful with that. (Interviewee 4)

The research suggested that there is a fairly robust process in place at institutions when it comes to responding to internal requests for data. At times an element of judgement had to be applied by HR departments when data was requested. However, HR departments would err on the side of caution and no data is provided if they have any doubts. The robust process is designed to ensure that institutions comply with their legal requirements and don't fall foul of GDPR requirements. There was also a feeling that departments or units requesting data did not always appreciate the issues associated with identification and GDPR. A key concern for small departments centred around data being requested that made identification possible. It was deemed that it was easier to provide data for larger departments and schools. Sometimes data manipulation would need to be applied to ensure that the data provided did not betray confidentiality by identifying individuals:

What I tend to do is I would work; I would take the raw data that I have access to and kind of present in a summary fashion so it's all anonymised. If I am worried about low numbers, I kind of group things. I think there are reasonable safeguards in place. It would not prevent us sharing data internally. (Interviewee 12)

In general, there is support for the sharing of data with internal stakeholders such as libraries to assist with wider aims to advance EDI if the aforementioned criteria have been met.

3.9 Views on devolution of data collection to individual departments

Institutions do not support the idea of departments or units collecting their own EDI data where there was dissatisfaction with the quality of the data being collected by institutions. Instead, institutions suggest that departments/schools/units should engage in dialogue and conversations with HR to see where the gaps were, and concerns should be addressed in that way rather than resorting to separate data collection arrangements. Institutions cited concerns associated with departments or units attempting to collect data unilaterally:

You have to be really careful. It [the data] would need to sit with HR cause you need to have one central point where data is kept. It would be quite chaotic if staff data was kept in two places. You'd worry about GDPR issues. (Interviewee 1)

In general interviewees were alarmed at the prospect of any unit or department going it alone or taking unilateral responsibility for EDI data collection. There was a feeling that collecting data by individual departments would increase the danger of people being identified, as departments had smaller numbers in relation to the wider institution.

3.10 Safeguards to prevent unauthorised access to staff EDI data

Institutions are very confident that they have robust safeguards in place to prevent unauthorised access to EDI data related to staff:

Yes, yeah, no I'm, I'm, I'm really impressed by the processes that we have around all of that, both internal and external data. We've got a really strong corporate information management unit around that. (Interviewee 8)

3.11 Dedicated EDI role in institutions

Having a dedicated role for EDI is often viewed as an example of good practice, and a sign of commitment on the part of institutions and organisations, and most institutions interviewed had dedicated roles for EDI. In a number of cases more than one person was involved in EDI work. This reflected the growing importance attached to EDI from both a staff as well as student context. One example of this importance came from an institution which had dedicated equality and diversity officers for specific protected characteristics such as gender, race and disability. Overall, across the institutions interviewed, the dedicated roles ranged from the employment of EDI officers or coordinators in some institutions to the presence of several EDI champions or ambassadors at others. Those involved in EDI tended to be part of the HR departments or their equivalent in their institutions. Different labels were attached to those who had responsibility for EDI matters, including EDI officer, EDI coordinator and EDI manager.

There was also a feeling that the range of diversity characteristics and the complexity associated with them made the EDI agenda challenging:

I have to go and try and expand my knowledge of different things so I might try and understand more about disability or gender in the workplace or ethnicity in the workplace. (Interviewee 12)

3.12 Role of leadership in advancing EDI in institutions

There was consensus that leadership had a pivotal role to play in advancing EDI. The majority of interviewees believed that leadership in their institutions had made strides in championing EDI:

I think leadership is absolutely key in that staff are getting all the right messages from leadership and there is direct leadership involvement in EDI initiatives. (Interview 7)

However, a few interviewees felt that their institutions had not done enough in championing EDI:

I don't think we had a single initiative from the top. A lot of the initiatives have come from the work of other people. It's all very reactive, there's not a proactive approach from the senior leadership team. (Interviewee 12)

3.13 Institution mission and pursuit of EDI

There was a general perception that whilst institution mission or type and organisational culture historically did have a bearing on the extent to which institutions pursued equality and diversity, with post-1992 universities or teaching-focused HEIs associated with greater pro-activity in pursuing EDI, there was a feeling that this was changing. The majority view was that all HEIs were now more engaged in the EDI agenda regardless of mission or type. This was partly because there was an expectation (social justice case) around the pursuit of EDI, and partly the business case where progress on EDI was seen as necessary for institutions if they were to have a good reputation and be competitive:

My sense is from having worked in the sector and talking to colleagues at lots of different universities, that there was definitely a point I think where that was true [i.e., post-1992 better on EDI than pre-1992 and Russell Group]. However, today Russell Group universities are putting more resources into things like Athena Swan, etc. and there's more acceptance and discussion of EDI and perhaps a more positive culture, perhaps because they realised they needed to do more. (Interviewee 6)

There was a view that achieving greater diversity on the key decision-making and governance bodies of institutions would help promote EDI and make institutions more inclusive.

3.14 Benchmarking against competitors

The competitive nature of the Higher Education sector today, especially since the introduction of fees, means that most institutions benchmark themselves against competitors, particularly those in the same locality or region, and therefore having a good reputation for EDI is viewed as important. This was the case regardless of institution mission, with both pre-1992 and post-1992 institutions engaged in benchmarking exercises against competitors.

Appendix 8: Selection of quotes from focus group participants

Availability and access to EDI data

My understanding is that institutional data is very patchy. (Focus group participant 3)

... the same as everybody else at university level, we have gender, race, disability but it's absolutely at universal level, it's not even broken down by professional services. (Focus group participant 9)

We have asked for an extract for library staff only and there was a long delay in getting that. And apparently, it's been returned by our HR contact because it didn't look accurate. (Focus group participant 1)

... I believe the data does exist, but it is the level of detail that is lacking. (Focus group participant 7)

Value of EDI data both generally and specifically for SCONUL members

Without the data you can't measure anything can you? It's really important to have that data and to actively seek it and use it to make improvements. And then use that to base other initiatives on. (Focus group participant 7)

Without the data we cannot do effective benchmarking. (Focus group participant 9)

Challenges in gaining access to EDI data

I've certainly seen that there is an issue at a university level with reporting, self-reporting against some aspects of the protective characteristics. So, I think people tend to under-report around disability and also around sexual orientation. So, the data that we're given comes with those kinds of caveats and you can see the percentage who've refused to answer the questions against that data. (Focus group participant 2)

So, I think the door is open for us to do far more work and for this, you know, for accurate data being available, for cross-service, cross-faculty collaboration on this. (Focus group participant 3)

Responsibility for and ownership of EDI data

... if we don't have that drive and if it's always left to HR, we can't get the information from HR, therefore we can't do anything. We have to look at other ways in which we can try and get that data.' (Focus group participant 3)

'You know, that actually we collect a lot of data for SCONUL already so I don't, I'm not sure that it [collecting data ourselves] would not just be another thing to collect. (Focus group participant 7)

The role of leadership and libraries in promoting the EDI agenda

....I'm really mindful that we've set up a BAME mentoring scheme for example.' (Focus group participant 1)

I've discussed recruitment with some of my team who are out actively recruiting staff. And I have identified that with some individuals there's a tendency to recruit people who are just like them... I'm trying to challenge that with some individuals, you know, because that, that's not the way we should be doing our recruitment.' (Focus group participant 8)

I think at the moment an interesting thing has happened over the last year or so where two things have collided, which is the pandemic and all the inequalities and things that happen around that. But also, a raised awareness across institutions and organisations generally about the importance of equalities issues... institutions are realising that the big risk for them now is not addressing these issues. (Focus group participant 7)

Connection between the pursuit of EDI and organisational culture and diversity of population

I think it [the connection between size of BAME population and pursuit of diversity] probably makes a difference, if we're honest about it but it probably shouldn't be the easy, correct answer isn't it? (Focus group participant 6)

... we do try very hard. There is a growing awareness that we must do more, and I think in the past it was kind of taken as that you can't do much about the area and about the fact that you are in an 80–90% area that is white and so that is reflected both in the recruitment, the kinda student body. (Focus group participant 5)

Appendix 9: Selection of quotes from interviewees

EDI data collected by institutions and level of analysis undertaken

Religion's one that we're not confident in the data set either, because a lot of people are not telling us what their religion is. (Interviewee 7)

Perceived value of collecting EDI data beyond legal requirements

It can help us shape policy and specific initiatives. For example, if we take maternity and our policy on that was poor and wasn't really helping the individuals it was supposed to help then we can look at our policies and reshape and see if it was having a disproportionate impact.' (Interviewee 5)

'Obviously it's good to look at the legal requirement and I think that gives you a kinda of push. But on the other side you can see how diverse the staff group is. You can check to see whether your recruitment processes are fair, whether your promotion processes are fair or training or whatever.' (Interviewee 7)

'To look at our practices, to make sure they're not discriminatory in terms of culture to see who feels happy and if certain groups don't then why don't they? To feel that we are a diverse organisation but also an inclusive one. (Interviewee 9)

Staff understanding of the benefits of collecting EDI data and institutional engagement with staff on EDI mission

When people join, the questionnaire does say why EDI data is being collected and its benefits. But generally, there has not been a campaign to inform staff why we gather data. Therefore, I would say that some people might understand, others might not. (Interviewee 1)

We could certainly do more to engage with staff as they don't fully understand the benefits. (Interviewee 2)

I think we're getting better (in terms of engaging with staff). I think EDI at xxxxxx [name of institution anonymised] is becoming better, people are becoming more aware of its importance. I'm talking about senior management. I always felt that senior management were disengaged and saw it is as an add on but have now realised that our staff feel very strongly about it especially since the Black Lives Matter Movement. I think that changed a lot in the HE sector and everywhere. (Interviewee 9)

That's interesting [whether staff understand the benefits of EDI data]. No, I don't think the staff understand the benefits of us collecting the data. I also just don't think they trust that we will use data in the way they expect us to use it. (Interviewee 12)

Responding to requests for EDI data and the data sharing process

... identification could be an issue. So, we need to always be careful about how we provide, how we adhere to the data request because not everyone's going to have an understanding about the issues of identification and GDPR. Identification is the main concern we would have in relation to small departments. (Interviewee 3)

Requests for data are carefully considered. For instance, if it's less than five people and an individual(s) can be identified we would say we can't give you that data. (Interviewee 1)

The more detailed the request, not just around intersectionality but on other things, while it might be theoretically possible to do it and it's not necessarily that much work involved in manipulating and analysing the data, the usefulness of it can drop because if you're looking at gender and ethnicity by grade and in a specific department you might be getting down to single figures. (Interviewee 6)

There would have to be a legitimate reason and that reason would already have to be communicated with staff in terms of how we're using their data. (Interviewee 7)

There has to be a rationale for requesting the data and only data that we think they require is made available. (Interviewee 5)

So, with any data sharing within or outwith the organisation, we've got strict protocols... only when we as an organisation are satisfied that the data is being used for a purpose that's good and proper and meets all the requirements around things like GDPR and best practice then that data will be released. (Interviewee 8)

Views on devolution of data collection to individual departments

I'd be worried about data security, GDPR, disclosure, protection. And I would, well let's have a look at what we've got held centrally first and see if that's robust enough for what you're trying to do. If it's not robust enough for what you're trying to do, let's look at ways in which we can... cover any gaps for you. If you've got gaps in your data, where are they? And let's see if institutionally we can help to, to fill those gaps. I would be wary about doing it locally, to be honest...' (Interviewee 2)

My, my first concern would be legality... when I say that, it is about how is the data stored? How will the data be kept confidential and how would you ensure use of it would meet data protection, GDPR? (Interviewee 3)

I think in terms of them holding their own it's another place that, that data's being held and it doesn't need to be. I think there would be some issues around well why they would need to hold that data. You know, is there a business need or, or legitimate need for them to hold data? And I would, I would question that when we already hold it as an organisation. (Interviewee 4)

No, I wouldn't support it (data being collected elsewhere). I would be worried about the security of that data and the use and the processing of that data. It wouldn't be very clear to individuals that there were multiple data users or data holders. I'd be more interested in a conversation about what it is that they [departments] need and what purpose it's being used for, and whether or not they could use any of the existing reports in the first place. (Interviewee 5)

My own sense of what would happen is that staff wouldn't necessarily want to volunteer their data again to someone else... staff would be reticent to volunteer again what they've already volunteered to the centre. (Interviewee 11)

Safeguards to prevent unauthorised access to staff EDI data

Yeah, we have guidance and we have a full-time GDR person who provides advice on a regular basis. And if there's a breach we report it to him, he reports it to the information commissioner, we notify the individuals concerned. (Interviewee 1)

Yes, I am gonna say that. So, the staff EDI data is held in our system to which the access is restricted to those in HR. Yeah so, the access to that is restricted to those of us in HR and although the data is there on the self-service system, our managers have access to certain data, they don't have access to the diversity data... (Interviewee 4)

Yes definitely. In fact, we are ridiculously secure when it comes to data... I think we had a couple of breaches like minor things but alarming enough for people to really get on top of it. (Interviewee 12)

Role of leadership in advancing EDI in institutions

Yeah, definitely leadership very important: So; our previous boss, he was really good at kind of raising the importance of EDI and talking about it. (Interviewee 6)

I think from a senior level, EDI is taken incredibly seriously. We have four staff networks around EDI within the organisation... as an organisation we are really sitting up and taking notice and trying to make real change especially around the experience of staff within the organisation. (Interviewee 8)

I think our leadership is getting better. I think that Black Lives made a difference. I think they realise that they [leaders] play an important role in change and without them, change is far more challenging. (Interviewee 9)

Institutional mission and pursuit of EDI

I think historically post-[19]92s have been far better, I would say in terms of staff, profiling, diverse staff profile, whereas the pre-[19]92 places do not have this diverse staff profile. (Interviewee 1)

I used to work at a very big red brick Russell Group university before I came here and that had a very strong research agenda and I think [it] was more difficult to get the EDI message across, understood and anything done about it... it's possible though that things may have moved on this since then. (Interviewee 2)

