Staff Network guide

Setting up a staff network

Our Staff networks provide a safe space for colleagues with shared identities or circumstances to connect with others, share experiences and challenge organisational practices to create a more inclusive working environment.

Staff who are interested in setting up a staff network should first read our Staff Network Agreement to ensure they are happy with the conditions set out in this document. Particular attention should be paid to the following requirements:

- Staff networks should support staff from underrepresented groups and those facing inequities in the workplace and are only open to those who are a part of the community that the network aims to support.
- Staff networks should meet at least once a term to hear from network members.
- Staff networks need to have a minimum of 10 members.
- Staff network are to engage with the central EDI Team by ensuring the Chair/co-chairs attends Voice and Influence Group meetings, consulting on University policy/practice, and submitting an annual report each year.

Once the Staff Network Agreement has been accepted, the staff member should contact the central EDI Team to register their interest in starting a network. Once this is approved, the staff member should seek to find at least 10 members of staff who are interested in joining the network. The EDI Team can advise on suitable communication channels.

Once there are at least 10 members of staff who are interested in being a part of the network, the staff member should arrange a meeting for all interested parties to:

- Agree on a mission statement which outlines the purpose of the staff network. This needs to be sent to the EDI Team.
- Discuss roles and responsibilities of those in the network – we advise that each network have two co-chairs and at least two committee members to support with the running of the network. You can find out more about roles and responsibilities for staff networks in the section below.
- Agree on how often the network will meet – network meetings are an essential part of staff networks and amplifying employee-voice. We require networks to meet at least

once a term, however networks can choose to meet more frequently than this if they would prefer. Issues or discussion points that arise from network meetings should be fed back to the EDI Team during Voice & Influence Group meetings (or before if urgent).
- Discuss any specific awareness/commemoration days, weeks or months the network either wants to highlight or run events for.

Once this has been done, the network will be officially recognised as a University staff network. The EDI Team can support with the creation of a webpage as well as promoting the network to help recruit more members. Channels for promotion include:

- All staff bulletin
- Digital screens across campus
- HR bulletin
- Yammer
- EDI bulletin
- Staff Welcome and Engagement Events

Running a staff network

Roles and responsibilities

Chair/co-chair

The Chair is the overall lead for the staff network who manages the group and is responsible for communications, activities, arranging meetings, and producing annual reports. The chair may choose to delegate these responsibilities to a committee. This role may be shared and it is recommended that it is rotated every three years.

In recognition of the work involved in running a staff network, and the important role staff networks play in amplifying employee-voice and supporting the creation of a more inclusive working environment at the University, chairs and co-chairs will be given 4-hours a month to dedicate to their network activities. In addition to these 4-hours, chairs and co-chairs will also be given time to attend the Voice & Influence Group meetings, which take place four times a year, and time to attend network meetings. Staff network chairs and co-chairs should inform their line managers of this protected time when they take up the position, and direct them to the EDI Team if any clarification is needed.

Anyone from within the network can apply for the role of chair/co-chair when the tenure of the current chair/co-chair is coming to an end. Applications should be submitted to the current chair/co-chair and/or staff network committee, and if there are more than two applications for this role, these will be circulated to network members for a vote.

The chair/co-chair is expected to attend the Voice and Influence Group meeting every quarter. These meetings have been established by the EDI Team so that the chairs/co-chairs of the staff networks can feed back on matters arising from their members and to consult on University policy and guidance.

Chairs/co-chairs cannot provide ongoing wellbeing support and are not responsible for dealing with potential grievances around discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying that are brought to their attention. Instead, they should signpost staff to the appropriate services, policies and procedures and wellbeing support. However, if chairs/co-chairs notice a pattern in the experiences of their network members, or within a certain area of the University, this should be raised with the EDI Team.

<u>Committee</u>

We recommend that staff networks have at least two committee members to support with the running of the network. The nature of these positions can be determined by the chair/co-chairs, based on the needs of the network. However, we would suggest that it would be useful to have committee positions that focus on communication with staff network members and network events. The chair/co-chair should invite interest from the network for committee positions, and if more than two members apply for the same committee position these should be put to staff network members for a vote.

<u>Senior Executive Sponsor</u>

Each staff network has a Senior Executive Sponsor who is a senior member of staff at the University. As well as being an active advocate for the network, Senior Executive Sponsors use their connections and knowledge to support the network and to develop their understanding and awareness of how behaviours, policies, and practices impact on the lived experiences of people within the University. This helps to ensure that different experiences and perspectives are considered in high-level discussion and decision-making.

Staff network membership

Staff network membership is open to all staff working at the University who identify with the identity or experience that the staff network is dedicated to. Staff networks are not open to those outside of this community. This is to ensure that staff networks hear directly from staff with lived experience and can focus solely on amplifying their voices and improving their experience of working at the University. Staff networks can involve wider staff in their work through events if they so wish. Whether networks open their events up to all staff will be decided by the network.

Staff networks are responsible for determining the openness or confidentiality of their group membership.

Staff network members are to adhere to the same University policies that apply to all staff. We recognise that there may be a range of views and experiences between staff in the same network, however staff are expected to treat each other fairly and with courtesy, respect and consideration at all times. Network Chairs should raise any instances of unacceptable behaviour by members with the relevant HR Business Partner, who will be able to advise on the best course of action.

We recognise that identity is multi-layered and take an intersectional approach to our work. We therefore encourage all of our networks to work collaboratively with other staff networks to fully represent the diversity of our staff. Staff can also choose to be part of more than one network.

Staff network meetings

Network meetings provide a space for network members to meet and discuss their experiences of working at the University. How these meetings are run can be decided by the network, however they should take place at least once a term to ensure that the views and voices of network members are heard regularly and can be fed back to the EDI Team. Discussion points from network meetings can be raised at the Voice and Influence Group meetings, or before if urgent action or advice is required.

Voice and Influence Group meetings

Voice and Influence (V&I) Group meetings are held with all the chairs/co-chairs of the University's staff networks and the EDI Team. They provide an opportunity for chairs and co-chairs to feedback on the views, experiences and concerns of their members. This can then be shared with the relevant teams and departments in the University by the EDI Team, with the aim of improving the experience of network members at the University.

V&I Group meetings are also an opportunity for network chairs/co-chairs to collaborate with one another, identify any similarities in the experience of network members, and be involved in wider University activities including policy consultation and EDI events.

Events and projects

Staff networks have access to the EDI Team central budget for events and projects that support the University's EDI objectives and help to create a culture of belonging at the University. Networks should contact the EDI Team with details about the event or project, including information on the expected date, audience (whether open to network members or all staff), purpose, and expected cost.

The EDI Coordinator also provides support to the Network Chairs, for example booking rooms, promoting events, and developing publicity materials.

Closing a staff network

If an existing staff network wishes to close, the chair/co-chairs should contact the EDI Team for advice.