

BUCS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN (DIAP)

APRIL 2025



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

CONTENTS

3	Foreword
4	Introduction
8	About BUCS
10	Context (Where are we now?)
11	Five Pillars of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan
12	1 Strategy and Leadership
13	2 Governance
14	3 Representation
15	4 Stakeholders
16	5 Data
17	2-3 Year Outlook
18	Review and Embedding



FOREWORD

FROM THE

CHAIR OF

TRUSTEES

It is integral to the mission of British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) that we strive to ensure that all students in the UK feel welcomed into the sporting and active wellbeing communities that exist across our members and through the programme of activities that we run. Regardless of background or circumstance, sport and active wellbeing at integral to the University experience and support great outcomes for students on the field of play, in their academic performance and their future career prospects.

With this as context, we have reflected hard on our approach to equity, equality, diversity and inclusion, and present with pride the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) for BUCS.

Higher Education sport represents a key engagement, retention and transition point in the journey of many participants in sport and physical activity, and the breadth of activities in our programme is matched only by the diversity of students that can be seen each week organising and supporting others, and representing universities in their chosen sports. BUCS plays a key role in enabling people from all backgrounds to pursue their goals and interests and contribute to their sporting achievements.

Having launched our latest organisational strategy in 2023, this DIAP sits at the heart of our approach to build a more inclusive

model of university sport and active wellbeing where every student feels welcome, and that they belong. In accordance with our governance requirements BUCS is fully committed to the implementation of what is set out below in our Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

We recognise that BUCS are in the early stages of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) journey, and therefore this DIAP will provide clarity on the steps which BUCS will undertake to establish our baseline, to collect data and allow future iterations of the DIAP to be informed by insight.

Through this plan we will ensure that our Board and staff are focused on removing barriers and providing an excellent experience for all students. BUCS is committed to creating a student sport and physical activity experience, where all students have the opportunity to participate and, in an environment where diversity is celebrated.



Professor Amanda Broderick
Chair of Trustees,
British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS)



INTRODUCTION

WELCOME FROM BUCS

It is with great satisfaction and immense pride that we present to you the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) for British Universities Colleges and Sport (BUCS). Higher Education sport represents a key engagement, retention, and transition point in the journey of many participants in sport and physical activity. The breadth of activity and competition is matched only by the diversity of students representing universities in their chosen sports. BUCS plays a key role in enabling people from all backgrounds to pursue their goals and contribute to their sporting achievements. The creation of our DIAP aligns with our new strategy, highlighting and reinforcing the central role of inclusion throughout its actions and objectives.

We will use the DIAP and actions it inspires to ensure that our Board and staff are focused on removing barriers and providing an excellent experience for all students. BUCS is committed to creating a student sport and physical activity experience in an environment where diversity is celebrated. We recognise that BUCS is in the early stages of our Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) journey, and therefore this DIAP focuses on establishing our baseline, collecting data and allowing future iterations of the DIAP to be informed by insight.



INTRODUCTION

IMPORTANCE TO BUCS

As a System Partner and a key organisation in helping to deliver the Sport England Strategy “Uniting the Movement”, BUCS is committed to ensuring people from all backgrounds can participate, compete, and volunteer in university sports activity and competition.

The DIAP supports the broader aims of BUCS through:

- Ensuring our staff, Board, stakeholder Committees and stakeholder groups are more representative of the student population we serve
- Establishing new standards of operation and governance for our staff and Board
- Gathering a baseline of data related to identity across our staff, Board and stakeholder Committees.



INTRODUCTION

EEDI AND GOVERNANCE

BUCS will embed this DIAP as a companywide priority, from our operational day to day focus, through to the work of the Board and its sub-committees. We recognise that inclusive governance practices can lead to a more engaged and innovative workforce, where diverse perspectives contribute to better decision-making and problem-solving.

We will be working to establish how we can embed the principles of EEDI across our governance and operational structure. This includes but is not limited to:

- Discussions at Board consistently ensuring consideration of EEDI.
- Our Independent Non-Executive Trustee EEDI Lead, will strategically guide and support our work in this area.
- Our sub-committees and stakeholder groups will also ensure that EEDI is a regular topic and discussion point in all meetings to ensure EEDI is embedded into the fabric of our work.
- Through regular CPD opportunities and our training plan, staff will be supported to embed EEDI into their work programmes.
- We will continually review our policies and procedures, ensuring the voices and priorities of those from underrepresented groups are embedded throughout.



INTRODUCTION

HOW HAS THE DIAP BEEN CREATED

The DIAP has been created with support from AKD Solutions along with input from these individuals and groups:

- BUCS Board EEDI Lead Trustee
- Governance and Nominations Committee
- Senior Leadership Team
- HR and Operations Team
- Governance and Compliance Team.

It was developed over several months through a step-by-step approach, guided by the Partner Support Questionnaire (PSQ). The self-review component helped identify our initial action areas, which are organised under the PSQ's five pillars. BUCS Staff and the Board have been engaged and updated at regular intervals throughout the process. We will continue to communicate

our learnings and developments with our staff, Board, volunteers, and stakeholders as we progress.

Our DIAP is also part of a requirement in the revised A Code for Sports Governance, which asks organisations funded by UK Sport and/or Sport England to publish 'clear ambitions to ensure that their leadership represents and reflects the diversity of the local and/or national community.' The code requires all organisations to:

- Create a DIAP that identifies actions needed to achieve support and maintain their ambitions
- Demonstrate a strong, public commitment to promote, embed and advance diversity and inclusion on the Board, Senior Leadership Team and beyond
- Agree the DIAP with UK Sport and/or Sport England
- Publish and review this on at least an annual basis.



ABOUT BUCS

BUCS was created in 2008 as a result of the merger between University Colleges Sport (UCS) and British University Sport Association (BUSA). BUCS has been at the forefront of creating and delivering opportunities for students in the UK to compete in a wide range of sports events, leagues and competitions ever since.

As an organisation, we:

- Offer 55 sports through a diverse competitions programme, including weekly leagues and events
- Work across 158 member institutions
- Facilitate higher education sport pathways for more than 100,000 students

Highlights of the annual competition calendar are:

- **BUCS Big Wednesday** - our team finals event displaying Championship and Trophy finals across 16 league sports
- **BUCS Nationals** - the largest annual multi-sport event in the United Kingdom

To support and enhance delivery, BUCS has five key development partnerships with National Governing Bodies of Sport. These partnerships support a member of BUCS staff to grow and develop opportunities for students. These include partnerships with:

- Football Association
- Rugby Football League
- Rugby Football Union
- Lawn Tennis Association
- British American Football Association

Programmes designed to promote sport and physical activity among students include:

- The UNiversal Gym programme
- The Active Wellbeing fund



BUCS is dedicated to creating the next generation of leaders. We have been working with universities and partners to create and deliver opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills through clubs, committees' events, and competitions.

BUCS also represents the Higher Education sector on the international stage and is a member of both the European University Sports Association and International University Sports Federation. As a result, British students have the opportunity to represent GB Students in international sports competition. University sport plays a pivotal role in the talent and performance pathways of many sports and BUCS helps athletes to progress their aspirations and performance levels.

Sport England as a System Partner also recognises BUCS – one of more than 120 key organisations across the country that have been identified as significantly contributing to the delivery of their Uniting the Movement strategy.



CONTEXT

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The past 12 months have seen significant changes for BUCS, strategically, operationally, and in staffing. In 2023 both the CEO and Chair left their roles, and recruitment took place over 2024. Professor Amanda Broderick joined the Board of Trustees as the new Chair in January 2024 and Will Roberts joined BUCS as CEO in June 2024. BUCS also appointed Maria Karlsson as Head of HR and Operations in 2024 and completed the recruitment into the Governance and Compliance Team, filling posts which will be key to supporting the delivery of this DIAP.

Within this period, the organisation has also created and launched its new Strategy – with the vision “To deliver outstanding student sporting experiences that inspire, develop and unite”. This will be underpinned by our core values: Inclusive, Innovative, Respectful and Dynamic.

This period of transition allows BUCS to approach this DIAP with a fresh perspective and outlook. We will use this opportunity to ensure the organisation is realistic and accountable. The initial stages of the action plan will focus internally on our staff and the Board of Trustees before expanding into the wider higher education landscape in future iterations. It has begun this process with the recruitment of the Board’s first EEDI Lead, Kath Russ, who took on the role in Jan 2024. Kath will support and guide the executive team as it delivers elements of the DIAP. Finally, BUCS has appointed a Head of Belonging (EEDI) to lead the implementation of the DIAP and support staff.



FIVE PILLARS OF THE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

01 STRATEGY AND LEADERSHIP

By this we mean the management and leadership of the organisation at senior leadership and leadership team levels.

Change will be enacted through the creation and execution of strategies and operational plans and overseen by the Board of Trustees.

02 GOVERNANCE

By this we mean the governance of our organisation including BUCS Board, associated sub-committees of the Board, commission groups and the compliance by BUCS to A Code for Sports Governance and the Charity Governance Code.

03 REPRESENTATION

By this we mean the recruitment, induction, training, and support that we provide to our staff, Board and beneficiaries on EEDI.

04 STAKEHOLDERS

By this we mean our member universities, their students, investment partners, the wider sporting ecosystem operating across the United Kingdom, operational partners, and commercial partners.

05 DATA

By this we mean data and insight relating to BUCS staff, Board of Trustees, and the wider Higher Education landscape. This will include but is not limited to:

- EEDI demographics
- Protected characteristics.

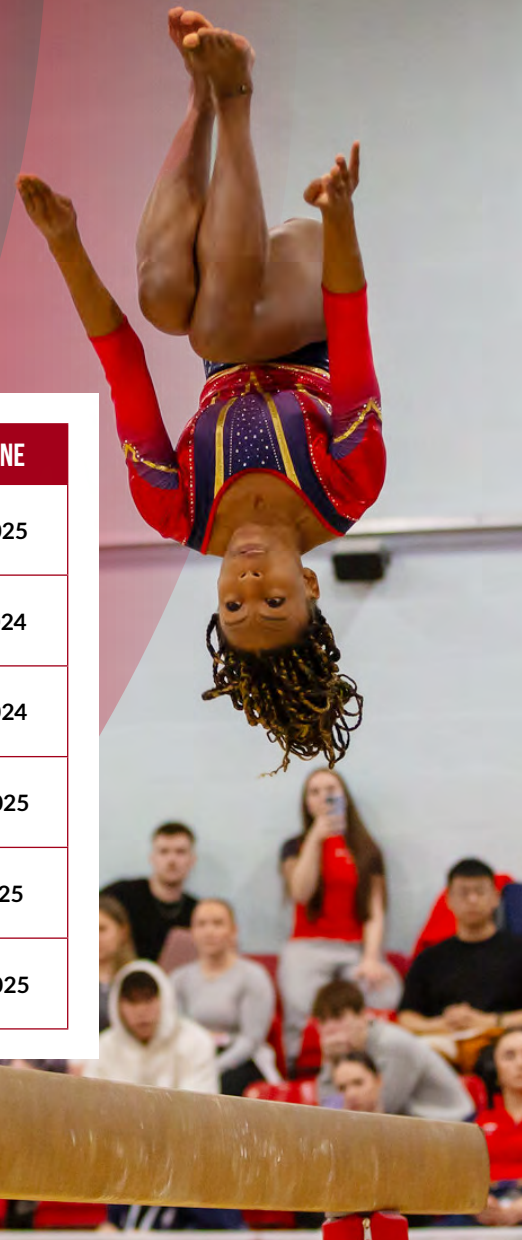
These will be benchmarked against Office for National Statistics and the Equality Act 2010.



01 STRATEGY AND LEADERSHIP

Objective: To embed EEDI across the strategy. The senior executive staff team and Board will be visible, passionate and have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience needed to cement an inclusive culture throughout the organisation.

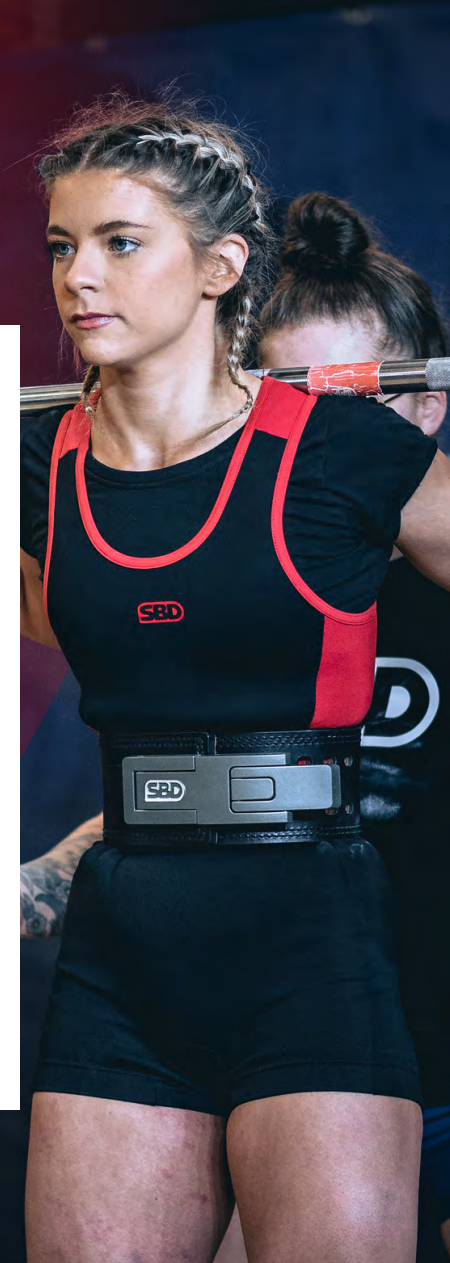
ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
To create and publish an approved (by Sport England and the BUCS Board) Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.	Governance Manager	Feb 2025
To appoint a Board Trustee with lead responsibility for EEDI and for them to champion this area across all Board matters.	BUCS Board	Jan 2024
To take a proposal to BUCS Board to use existing external funding to recruit and appoint a Head of Belonging to lead the work on EEDI across the organisation.	BUCS SLT	Jun 2024
To undertake an annual review of the DIAP within 12 months of its approval – setting out progress and key learnings and using these as the basis for the next plan.	Head of Belonging	Dec 2025
To ensure all staff and Board members are clear and understand their legal responsibilities as clarified in the Equality Act 2010 and obligations in relation to A Code for Sports Governance and the Charity Code for Governance, for example through EEDI training.	Head of HR & Operations	Jul 2025
To embed EEDI into BUCS operational planning, by including in organisational and departmental objective setting which shape individual work programmes.	BUCS SLT and Head of Belonging	Aug 2025



02 GOVERNANCE

Objective: To establish EEDI as a key consideration within BUCS governance infrastructure by including EEDI all BUCS governance structures and documentation.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
To establish an internal belonging working group, with defined terms of reference. This will focus on research and insight, stakeholder engagement and strategy creation.	Head of Belonging	Mar 2025
To establish Terms of Reference for the belonging working group – showing how work areas will align with the wider BUCS governance.	Governance Manager	Feb 2025
The belonging working group will meet at least three times in the year 2025.	Governance Manager	March - Dec 2025
The belonging working group will establish clear reporting channels with the Board of Trustees, aligning with Board minutes.	Head of Belonging	Apr, Jul & Oct 2025
To have EEDI as a standing agenda item on all Board meetings and where appropriate on sub-committees.	Head of Governance & Compliance	Jan, Apr, Jul & Oct 2025
The Head of Belonging and SLT will ensure that the company's EEDI work areas are embedded into operational plans with input from all staff.	Head of Belonging	Aug 2025
BUCS will monitor delivery against the DIAP and communicate progress to stakeholders at regular intervals (at least two times per year).	Head of Belonging & Governance Manager	Jun & Dec 2025



03 REPRESENTATION

Objective: For BUCS to better understand our people and promote a staff and governance infrastructure that is representative of the broad sector which we operate within.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
To review and amend all recruitment policies for BUCS – benchmarking against ONS data. This will include a review of job posting sites and use of advert routes that will allow more diverse candidates to be reached.	Head of HR & Operations	Apr 2025
To review and where necessary amend all recruitment, retention, and promotion procedures for BUCS.	Head of HR & Operations	Apr 2025
To review and update our recruitment processes using people analytics to promote a diverse pool of candidates.	Head of HR & Operations	Apr 2025
To identify EEDI knowledge gaps within the organisation and identify the training needs for staff in equality, diversity, and inclusion.	Head of HR & Operations and Head of Belonging	Mar 2025
To deliver relevant and appropriate EEDI training for all BUCS staff and Board Trustees to improve awareness and understanding and ensure individuals have an appropriate level of knowledge and skill to fulfil their role.	Head of HR & Operations and Head of Belonging	Jul 2025
To start mapping i) map the membership of committees/working groups which are linked into/ supported by the BUCS infrastructure ii) consider the diversity of the membership of those committees/working groups and iii) (if appropriate) consider how BUCS may be able to influence the composition of such committees and working groups such that their membership becomes increasingly reflective of the communities which BUCS serves.	Governance Manager	Apr – Jun 2025



04 STAKEHOLDERS

Objective: To enable/empower our stakeholders to have confidence that BUCS approach and commitment to progress EEDI is significant and sustained and that our members and partners acknowledge BUCS as knowledgeable and influential in addressing and promoting EEDI.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
To create a stakeholder engagement plan – covering the breadth of organisations that BUCS engages and interacts with.	CEO/ Head of Governance & Compliance	Apr 2025
To undertake a mapping of stakeholders to allow BUCS to better communicate and influence key partners on its EEDI work.	Head of Governance & Compliance	Apr 2025
To create a training plan for staff collaborating with stakeholders on EEDI areas.	Head of Belonging	Sept 2025
To report on progress against this DIAP to stakeholders at regular intervals throughout the year	Head of Digital & Engagement	Apr & Oct 2025

05 DATA

Objective: That BUCS will have accurate and consistent demographic data for all staff and Board members – enabling informed and insight driven decisions to be made on the recruitment, retention, development, and training of them. Data will be benchmarked against relevant data sets that include, but are not limited to, ONS data and the Equality Act (2010).

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
To establish EEDI baseline data for all staff at BUCS through an audit. This will be reviewed annually once established.	Head of HR & Operations and Head of Belonging	Sep 2024
To establish EEDI baseline data for all Board Trustees at BUCS through an audit. This will be reviewed annually once established.	Head of Governance & Compliance	Oct 2024
To benchmark audit questions for EEDI metrics against relevant legislation and best practice monitoring questions.	Head of HR & Operations and Head of Belonging	Sep 2024
To publish demographic data on the staff and Board demographics annually – including in the Annual Governance Statement and Annual Report.	Head of Governance & Compliance	Dec 2024
To begin data capture and insight work on the student athletes in BUCS Competitions structures.	Insight Officer	Apr – Oct 2024



2-3 YEAR OUTLOOK

BUCS acknowledges that we are at the start of our EEDI journey. The creation of this DIAP provides us with the framework to understand our current position, identify tangible steps to take and ensure that this important aspect of our work remains a central focus.

The Board and Senior Leadership Team acknowledge that there is much work to undertake in the coming years and creating a baseline of our current position is a key priority for the next 12 months. Laying this platform will then enable BUCS to drive forward with certainty of focus and impact. Once this work has been undertaken, BUCS will then be able to lead, challenge and influence EEDI with its members, stakeholders and partners with confidence and clarity.

IT IS OUR AMBITION THAT BY 2027...

- Our DIAP will be embedded within our operational planning – regularly discussed and updated by both Board and staff.
- Our Board will be representative of the community that BUCS serves and is knowledgeable in all aspects of EEDI.
- Progress against the DIAP will be published in the Annual Governance Statement and feature as an update in the AGM.
- BUCS will be clear on the priorities for EEDI across the organisation and has clear operational plans in place to achieve these.
- BUCS will be supporting member organisations and will be recognised for its work in EEDI, by the number of universities that are being engaged.
- BUCS will understand the demographic breakdown of its participants, understand the barriers faced by students and work in partnership to overcome these and increase the diversity of future students engaging in BUCS programmes.
- BUCS will produce and regularly review an EEDI Strategy that is linked to the overarching BUCS Strategy.
- BUCS will be driving the EEDI agenda for Higher Education sport, advocating, supporting, and celebrating all aspects of society.



REVIEW AND EMBEDDING

HOW WILL THE DIAP BE EVALUATED

The DIAP will be embedded into the organisations operational plans and reviewed through ongoing staff performance management and Board effectiveness evaluation. The DIAP will be published on the BUCS website, will feature in the Annual Governance Statement, and will be updated on in the Annual General Meeting.

In addition, BUCS Stakeholders will receive regular updates and communication to inform them of the DIAP, its content and delivery updates. BUCS Members will receive regular updates through the following mechanisms:

- Senior Managers Executive
- Senior Managers Network
- Advisory Group
- Regions and Nations meetings
- Student Officer Network.

The data prescribed as part of this DIAP will be captured, analysed, and used to inform BUCS operational and strategic decision making. It will be used to measure progress against our EEDI operational objectives.

It will feature in all departmental plans and will be a central feature of BUCS Governance Action Plan. Alongside shaping our organisation's work, recruitment and succession planning will be a key focus of the plan. This will help ensure our staff and Board reflect the diversity of our Higher Education Institution members and the student population.

The launch of this DIAP marks a significant moment in BUCS' EEDI journey and we are wholeheartedly committed to driving meaningful change across our organisation and the communities we serve.



