UNIVERSITY OF YORK
EDI RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

2024

COMMUNITY.

EQUALITY.

CHANGE.

CONTENTS

CORE EDI RESEARCH AREAS

Introduction and Context

At the University of York, we are committed to being a University for public good. In order to achieve this strategic change by 2030, the University will adhere to four core principles (collaboration, internationalism, environmental sustainability and inclusion). It will also be guided by its EDI Strategic Objectives, which aim to:

- Deliver curiosity-driven and action-oriented research
- Provide education that empowers
- Create a community without limits
- Demonstrate local commitment on a global scale

A core part of this change will include adjusting our research environment. This is reflected in the University's 2023-2030 Research Strategy. This Strategy seeks to integrate the principles and priorities identified within both the University's vision and its EDI Strategic Objectives into its research culture and environment.

To support the University in integrating EDI within its research community, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Research Centre was formed through a two-year 'Enhancing Research Culture' fund to serve as a central hub for innovative research, with the following priorities:

- Generating research culture change regarding the priority given to EDI issues throughout the research process
- Improving EDI research practice in relation to marginalised researcher, participant and student experiences
- Enhancing EDI-related policy (e.g. educate or help reduce inequalities in research such as through the decolonisation of research)
- Increasing EDI research capacity within research centres and departments across the University of York (e.g. coordinate the embedding of EDI into research ethics processes)

Purpose of the Research Framework

Our aim as an EDI Research Centre is to become a key contributor to the centering of EDI in the research culture at the University of York. As a Centre, we encourage the embedding of EDI principles such as inclusivity, decolonisation and equity within all aspects of the research process—from research environments to the research projects themselves.

The framework seeks to outline how researchers can embed EDI throughout the research development process. It provides a range of case studies which detail how various EDI-research related successes were achieved by researchers here at University of York. The main purpose of these case studies is to provide tips that can be used by others to strengthen their EDI research profiles at any stage of their research career.

The EDI Research Framework will also identify core challenges that are still in the process of being addressed here at the University of York; subsequently highlighting actions taken to tackle these issues. The aim of this area of the framework is to:

1. generate additional EDI-research focused activities to further overcome these identified challenges, and
2. facilitate potential opportunities to engage with contributors to the framework, and so further improve the research practice, culture, community, and environment at the university.

The four core research areas covered within the framework are:

I. Dismantling systemic inequities through and within research: Actively identifying and addressing structural biases, inequities and exclusionary practices embedded within research processes, and in research environments.

II. Inclusive research methods and methodologies: Using research approaches that are accessible and relevant to all groups, encouraging participation from underrepresented communities, and using data analysis approaches that highlight and address disparities.

III. Decolonising research: Re-evaluating and restructuring research practices to challenge and remove colonial biases and power dynamics. Addressing the historical and on-going impacts of colonialism in the development and dissemination of research.

IV. Pedagogical research and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Promoting and implementing inclusive teaching strategies, examining diverse student experiences, and ensuring that educational research addresses and mitigates disparities.

CORE EDI
RESEARCH AREAS

Core EDI Research Area 1:
Dismantling Systemic Inequities Through and Within Research

Why This Matters

Research and research-focused initiatives that tackle systemic inequities can have long-term impacts on society. For instance, Generation Delta, funded by Research England and the Office for Students and triggered by the Leading Routes Broken Pipeline Report (Leading Routes, 2019), is a cross-university project (including Goldsmiths and the University of Sheffield) that focuses on racially minoritised female students. Its short-term goals are to redress structural institutional issues and support these students in progressing through the higher education system (with cross-institutional black female networks and mentorship opportunities); and in the long-term it is focused on increasing the numbers of black female professors in the UK. Focused on systemic inequities in access to health services, the ACCESS study, a collaborative study between Clinical Trial Units and researchers, aimed to identify the activities needed to improve the representation of under-served groups in clinical trials and to understand their research. From their work, STEP UP was developed to bridge the gap between identifying these barriers and understanding how to design accessible and inclusive clinical trials.

Similarly, research here at York has been, and continues to be, pivotal in dismantling systemic inequities. Professor Emeritus, Helen Petrie, for instance, has contributed towards reducing barriers in elderly access to core services (e.g. e-government and financial services), by developing methods for increasing the accessibility of these digital platforms. Moreover, in the Department of Education, the 'Share IT!' Project, led by Dr. Nadia Jessop, revealed perceived procedural injustice as a barrier to racially minoritised young women and girls reporting sexual harassment to the police, making key recommendations for change. Recognising that the research environment itself can be a place of inequity, the University is also involved in several research initiatives which focus on tackling biases in research practice, policies and regulations. Here at York, in addition to Athena Swan, the Yorkshire Consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education (YCEDE) and the White Rose Social Sciences Doctoral Training programme have had notable achievements in this area. For instance, the White Rose University Gender Equality College Connectivity Fund has funded projects focused on increasing gender equality in research.

However, research which seeks to generate effective and sustained change in relation to dismantling systemic inequities is not without its challenges. The most impactful research projects and initiatives at the University of York have had to overcome obstacles in order to achieve their intended outcomes. This part of the framework seeks to support and encourage further work in this area by outlining the influence of various research projects and initiatives. It will do so via case studies within three core areas:

- Dismantling systemic inequities within wider society (i.e., groups and communities)
- Dismantling systemic inequities within industry
- Dismantling systemic inequities within the research environment

For each case study, we will begin by emphasising the impact the work has had, highlighting the various benefits associated with research within these areas.

Case Study: Positive Action on Recruitment for PhD Studentships: The Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre

The Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre (VPRC) based at the Universities of York and Leeds successfully undertook positive action on recruitment with Post Graduate Researcher (PGR) opportunities; ring-fencing a PhD studentship at the University of York for a racially minoritised researcher.

Positive action on recruitment in PGR opportunities is now more firmly established practice within Universities. Having undertaken the process of ring-fencing at department-level, VPRC is keen to share learning that could support others to adopt similar approaches.

Ring-fenced PGR positions have to be supported by data showing under-representation. We are happy to share our learning on the legal, ethical and technical requirements, such as wording on public-facing information and advertising work we undertook outside standard academic networks.

We shortlisted and interviewed a very strong field of applicants before selecting a candidate who has a particular commitment to work that amplifies the voices of young people with lived experiences of racism.

This work was supported by the University of York's Equality and Diversity Unit's Race and Ethnicity Lead, as well as the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership (WRDTP), the department of Social Policy and Social Work (now the School for Business and Society) and the Yorkshire Consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education (YCEDE). VPRC is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

We are keen to connect with others to support similar projects. Please contact: kate.brown@york.ac.uk.

Social Justice and Equity

Inequity perpetuates existing power dynamics and hierarchies within society. Without intervention, these hierarchies continue to privilege certain groups while marginalising others, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage and exclusion. Research focused on dismantling systemic inequities within wider society can therefore contribute to a more just and equitable status quo by challenging discriminatory practices and advocating for positive change. Both as an academic institution and a 'University for Public Good', the University of York has a responsibility to promote social justice and equity within its community. Further commitment towards this agenda is urged upon us by the Public Sector Equality Duty; and the University's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (with the 10th goal being 'reducing inequalities').
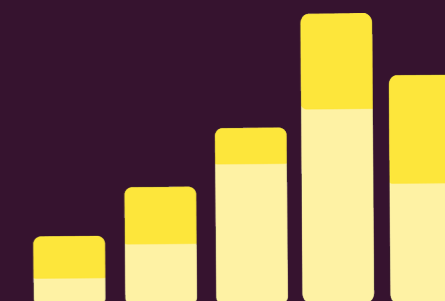
Case Study: Anna Einarsdottir - Understanding LGBT+ Networks and how to support them

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT+) network was an ESRC funded project carried out by the University of York Research team in partnership with NHS employers, Stonewall and the Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (ENEI). The project aimed to better understand how LGBT+ networks are run and what can be done to improve the relationships between colleagues and most importantly the wellbeing of LGBT+ employees. The initiative made use of surveys, case studies, interviews and network meetings/activities to achieve this aim with clear cut objectives in place to better understand how networks operate, who is involved, and their aims and influence (research summary for reading).

Outputs from the project included a networking forum for NHS staff members to share their experiences on LBGT+ networks and their views on how these can be maximised to create more inclusive workplaces. A video bank was also created showcasing LGBT+ identifying employees' and allies' working lives and their experiences of LGBT+ networks. This was done to help generate conversations about running, supporting and contributing to these networks. Additionally, the project hosted an online webinar sharing research outputs and offering discussions involving all those that contributed to the project. Perhaps most notably was the creation of the Toolkit designed to drive conversations about LGBT+ employee networks: it makes use of a film to transform research material into an accessible and engaging resource designed to trigger questions, open conversations, and enable networks. It also allowed people who are in networks and allies to make careful considerations about current practices and about how they can use the content of the toolkit to better support their members.

Case Study: Anna Bull - 1752 Group

The 1752 Group is a research and campaigning organisation that advocates for an evidence-based approach to addressing sexual misconduct within higher education, with a particular focus on staff-student sexual misconduct. It carries out media and awareness-raising work to make this issue visible, provides resources for higher education institutions to better tackle this issue, and engages with policymakers at local, national and international levels to improve mechanisms for addressing sexual misconduct and to work towards justice for those impacted. The 1752 Group has held funding from the Economic and Social Research Council, the British Academy, and the US National Science Foundation, and has produced a number of research, practice and policy outputs, such as a set of sector recommendations to address staff sexual misconduct in UK HE in partnership with the law firm McAllister Olivarius. In recognition of this work, international industry publication Times Higher Education named co-director Anna Bull as one of their 'Faces of 2021' noting that 'Dr Bull has been one of the strongest and most consistent voices against sexual misconduct in academia, while her research has made a substantial contribution to our understanding of the problem.'

The main challenge in this work has been translating evidence into change: getting institutions, the HE sector, and regulators to commit to impactful, systemic, evidence-based change. Even when presented with tangible steps that HEIs can take, amidst a challenging landscape for HE, this work is not being prioritised. Many stakeholders are willing to publicly state their support, but too often there is no action behind these words. Instead, there is a heavy reliance on voluntary initiatives, and a resistance to regulation, transparency, and shared standards.

Additional project outputs produced by The 1752 Group include a resource pack for UCU members to support work in this area; briefing notes addressing specific policy and practice issues; and workshops on professional boundaries and staff-PGR sexual harassment (piloted at University of York in partnership with the York Graduate Research School). They also offer bespoke consultancy and strategic planning work with HEIs.

Case Study: PGR Mentoring Scheme

There were a number of important external drivers for introducing mentoring for postgraduate researchers including sector-led directives to provide excellent standards of support (specifically through mentoring) and to afford researchers opportunities for their professional development. For example, the Researcher Development Concordat (2019) requires an allocation and protection of a minimum 10 days pro rata per year for researchers to engage in professional development and to "support researchers in exploring and preparing for a diversity of careers through the use of mentors, careers professionals, training and secondments". We also felt that the main stakeholders (PGRs, Postdoctoral/early career researchers, and the wider University all would benefit from PGR mentoring schemes (impact metrics from the scheme).

The existing University-wide mentoring scheme run by the People and Organisational Development (POD) team was a key factor contributing to the success of the PGR mentoring scheme. This scheme was launched for academic staff in 2018 based on a well tested model run by the University of Sheffield. The University of Sheffield is recognised as leading in the area of PGR mentoring. Developed primarily by Kay Guccione (now at the University of Glasgow) Sheffield offers a range of distinct mentoring initiatives for research students which have been adopted by a number of other institutions (including Cambridge, Bristol and King's College London). This approach helped to shape this initiative. The University mentoring scheme is objective-led and based on the mentor being at a more experienced level than the mentee and ideally from a different department to enable objective discussion. All mentors undertake three hours training, part of it combined to ensure that each party understands what is required. Mentors are recruited on a rolling basis and applications sought from mentees twice per year, in autumn and summer. Mentoring relationships typically last for six months. Both mentors and mentees complete an application form which asks them to identify the areas upon which they want to focus/can support. These include: career planning and development; work-life balance; next career step; fellowship/grant writing; increased self-confidence; increased self-reflection. The matching process is done manually by staff in POD to ensure that mentees are matched with a mentor who is willing and able to support their needs. POD also manages the scheme and conducts end of mentoring relationship evaluations.

The PGR mentoring scheme was able to capitalise on and benefit from the University's existing experience and expertise in mentoring, in addition to receiving significant administrative support from the team. Key aspects of the staff mentoring relationships are that they are confidential; time-bound; objective focussed and complementary to the guidance provided by peers and line managers. The deliberate matching of mentees with mentors from outside their immediate group or department provides a useful separation between the issues discussed within the mentoring relationship and those conducted with a line manager. To support this, the mentor training includes guidance around setting boundaries at the start of the relationship to minimise the risk of conversations straying into territory that is better suited to other relationships such as with a line manager, professional support staff or counselling/occupational health referrals where mental health is raised as an issue.

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**Case Study: Paul Cairns & Chris Power -
Accessible Player Experiences**

The accessible player experiences project aims to advance the accessibility of interactive systems, specifically digital games. It goes beyond making accessible game designs, for example personalising gaming experiences; rather, it focuses instead on furthering the discussions on dismantling systemic inequalities within the gaming industry and broader digital media landscape. Developing well-designed accessibility options allows players with disabilities to enjoy mainstream games without compromising the core game play experience, ensuring parity with players without disabilities.

In developing this research, probably the most important factor was that we worked with the charity AbleGamers. AbleGamers had a proven track-record both in supporting individual players to play and in advocating for accessibility to the game industry. This meant that they had the trust and engagement with a large community of players with disabilities. In providing research to support this community, we were keen to avoid treating people simply as sources of research data. The first step we took was therefore to set up the Player Panels by which anyone interested in the work and mission of AbleGamers could sign up to be involved in research whether with academics or games companies. We worked through the Player Panels to survey people about their experiences of playing digital games through a mix of surveys, interviews and single question engagements. And our goal was not to advance our own agendas but to give our players representation and voice in the academic literature. We were careful to ensure that our research was in support of the work of AbleGamers rather than the other way round.

The project has developed new processes to assist game companies in collaborating with players with disabilities. This includes developing a design approach to accessible player experiences (APX), which combines design tools and training courses. The APX Pattern Language created to help developers make accessible games is integrated into a course delivered by AbleGamers (a US based charity), and has seen great success, training over 500 game developers and raising $1.3M for AbleGamers. By working to dismantle systemic inequities within the gaming industry the research conducted by Paul Cairns and Chris Power ensures that mainstream games are accessible to as many people as possible in order to achieve the social connection and enablement that players with and without disabilities value.

Quality and Rigour

Prioritising research that addresses systemic inequities within groups and communities promotes a research culture here at the University of York where critical issues, both internal and external, affecting marginalised communities are not overlooked, and where fairness, transparency, and respect are foregrounded. As a result, our academic and research efforts remain relevant in addressing pressing societal challenges, advancing their potential for positive social impact.

Dismantling Systemic Inequities Through and Within Research

What's next?

While success has been made in relation to dismantling systemic inequities within the research environment, further research and initiatives are encouraged in three main areas.

- Integrating an evolving and interdisciplinary research culture
- Diversifying our research environment
- Considering alternative ways of fully engaging with the lived experience of those who experience systemic inequity

Integrating an evolving and interdisciplinary research culture

Here at the University of York, we need to more readily look outside of the typical ways that research has been done from a theoretical and practical standpoint. By instead promoting an evolving and interdisciplinary research culture which reflects more inclusive and representative approaches, we will not only further the dismantling of systemic inequities but also challenge the ossification of disciplines. To a limited degree, this is achieved at the University of York with a compulsory EDI module which trains everyone on their role in the process of dismantling systemic inequities within the research environment. In addition to this, there are a range of opportunities and resources for further training, with additional toolkits such as the Anti Racism toolkit providing guidance on antiracist research approaches. Further efforts are also seen in the use of key words related to the Sustainable Development Goals within Publication and Research (PURE). However, engaging with these is largely voluntary. This lack of accountability can have a negative impact on the University's research and the wider academic environment. One such impact is the lack of active encouragement to engage in interdisciplinary research. Interdisciplinary research provides a prime opportunity for researchers to learn from those in other disciplines who have more established profiles when it comes to dismantling systemic inequities - and so researchers should be required to consider how their projects can be developed with interdisciplinarity in mind. Several options to support those who want to get involved in interdisciplinary research at UoY include the Interdisciplinary Global Development Centre (IGDC), York Environmental Sustainability Institute (YESI) and the Centre for Women's Studies (CWS).

Diversifying our research environment

Within our research environment, increased diversity is also needed. It must be noted though that several initiatives have been formed to increase this diversity, particularly when it comes to providing equal opportunities for staff to obtain permanent Academic Research and Teaching contracts. One of the leading initiatives in supporting postdoctoral researchers is the Department of Health Sciences (DoHS) Contract Researchers Forum (CRF), funded by DoHS and chaired by its Co-Chairs. The CRF constitutes a researcher-led network that organises training, development and networking events for contract researchers. The CRF ensures that postdocs within the department feel supported and have a voice so that their opinions and views are communicated to other DoHS committees and senior management. The CRF also collaborates with other University departments to identify broader engagement opportunities. Over the past eight years, the CRF has grown significantly. They plan to continue providing training and networking opportunities for contract researchers by collaborating with other University departments and Universities. The CRF also regularly reviews their activities to ensure they continue to meet researchers' needs and uphold the Researcher Development Concordat's principles; for instance, by providing training and networking opportunities for contract researchers by collaborating with other University Departments. Such initiatives are necessary given that the tenuousness of 100% research contracts may be aggravated by inequities within the research environment (e.g. more support present if employed as part of a research team).

We can also learn how to increase the diversity among our researchers from steps in place at other institutions. For instance, at the University of Bradford, all pro-vice Chancellors receive an EDI-related responsibility, and the University of Sheffield ensures all staff members identify an EDI objective as part of their annual Personal and Development Reviews. Here, at the University of York, only PS staff have a similar requirement. Furthermore, the NERC SENSE Centre for Doctoral Training, associated with the University of Leeds, encourages PhD project supervisory teams to prioritise diversity in their composition—an aspect that will have significant impact if adopted here at York.

Considering alternative ways of fully engaging with the lived experience of those who experience systemic inequity

Research into dismantling systemic inequities may discourage some researchers due to the associated factors. For instance, some funding bids encourage researchers to declare relevant lived experiences (e.g., having a disability) to demonstrate their EDI consciousness. While having researchers with lived experiences can amplify the voices of underrepresented groups, ensure the use of accessible language, and provide a deep understanding of reflexivity, such personal disclosure might lead some researchers to avoid this field or seek alternative funding sources. Supporting initiatives like the 'Closing the Gap' network is a promising way to address this issue. These funding opportunities encourage researchers, both with and without lived experiences, to work collaboratively with members of the public or experts with lived experiences directly, thus promoting interdisciplinary approaches.

Furthermore, Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) ensures that research is directly informed by those it aims to benefit, enhancing its relevance and impact; and so is a good resource to tap into for support with this. PPI guidance has been developed by some of our academics. For instance, Dr. Liz Wands-Murray included PPI considerations within an EDI Consultation Document for Doncaster Local Authority. Additional support with this can be obtained through funding bodies, such as the NIHR, who support researchers through PPI training and actively encourage the incorporation of PPI within research practices and grant applications, recognising the clear benefits of patient involvement in improving health outcomes. Dr. Suman Prinjha is collaboratively working on the NIHR-funded UPTURN study, which aims to develop and evaluate a support package for COPD patients to increase the number who attend their Pulmonary Rehabilitation (PR) assessment, including views from deprived and ethnic minority communities to help reduce health inequalities. The study includes a broad PPI group representing all ethnic groups and four smaller community-specific PPI groups for the Bangladeshi, African and Caribbean communities. The project also has three PPI Leads as co-applicants on the grant application. The EDI team runs monthly EDI meetings that include the PPI Leads, as well as quarterly meetings with the EDI Oversight Committee, an independent group providing guidance and recommendations on their work, which also includes PPI representation.

Alternatively, funders can require researchers to include detailed considerations of positionality, recognising that the social and political context of the researcher impacts multiple aspects of the research process (Day, 2012; Gastaldo, 2015; Waterson & Rylko-Bauer, 2007). Below is an example of an adapted positionality grid that can be used as a starting point (figure 1).
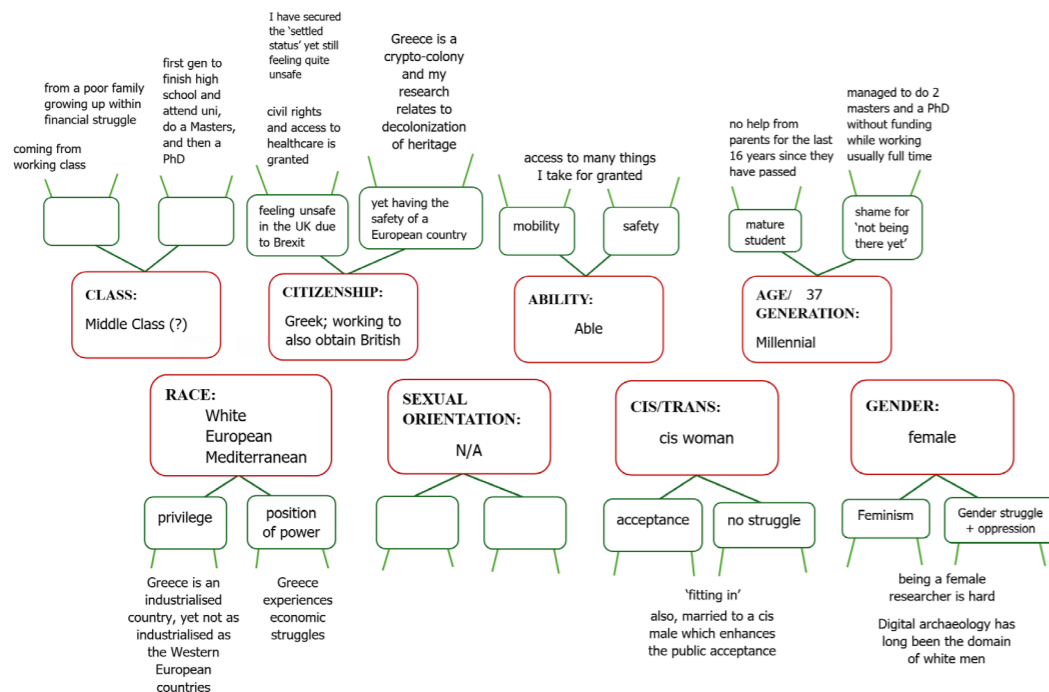
Figure 1. An example of an adapted positionality grid following the guidelines by Jacobson and Mustafa (2019), shared with permission from Despoina Sampatakou.

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Core EDI Research Area 2:
## Inclusive Research Methods and Methodologies

Why This Matters

Employing inclusive methods and methodologies is widespread practice within research at the University of York. It evidences a commitment to research integrity, and reduces biases and stereotypes within the entire research process, including research design, data collection and analysis. This occurs as a result of the impact of such inclusivity on mitigating the influence of preconceptions and promoting more accurate and nuanced findings. These findings are subsequently more likely to generate comprehensive and actionable insights that address complex social issues - revealing an intricate link between the use of these methods and dismantling systemic inequities. Work exemplifying this approach has been conducted by the Enhancing Audio Description Team, led by Professor Mariana López. The team explores how to implement accessible, personalised and inclusive film and television experiences for visually impaired audiences using a representative project advisory panel. Additionally, the Centre for Indigenous and Settler Colonial Studies actively collaborates with social and cultural institutions in the UK and Indigenous communities to ensure any research clearly reflects these individuals' lived experiences.

Incorporating inclusive research methods and methodologies is a complex process which can sometimes serve as a deterrent to others considering adopting this approach within their own work. Challenges are inevitable, however, projects undertaken at the University of York which have utilised more inclusive research methods and methodological approaches have been successful. Therefore, this aspect of the framework seeks to support and encourage the more frequent use of inclusive research methods and methodologies by outlining the influence of various research projects and initiatives. It will do so by focusing on two core aspects of inclusive research practice:

- **Using an Advisory board/ Scrutiny panel:** incorporating a diverse group of experts and stakeholders to provide guidance, oversight and feedback.

- **Using co-production/ co-creation/ collaboration:** engaging community members and stakeholders as equal partners in the research process to ensure that diverse perspectives are integrated from the outset.

For each case study, we will begin by emphasising the impact the work has had, highlighting the various benefits associated with research within these areas.
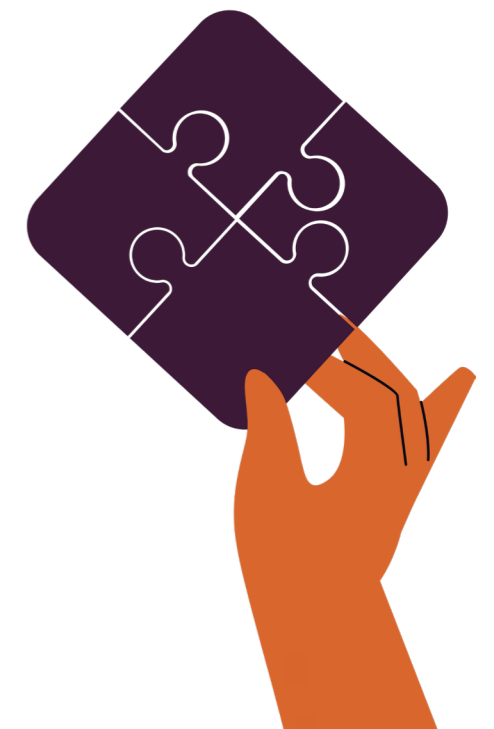
Case Study: Mary Laing - TransActions Project

TransActions is a project that focuses on the intersection of trans healthcare and sex work. The project seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of trans people who sell sex in relation to finding, accessing, and using health and well-being services in various parts of the UK. In alignment with inclusive research methods and methodologies, the project centres co-production from the point of project inception and grant development, to disseminating findings. Specifically, the principles of engagement, consultation, and centering sex workers as experts are core. Key findings from the project highlight the importance of intersectionality, and accounting for this in the context of healthcare provision. TransActions underscores that much can be learnt about providing good care to trans people who sell sex by listening to them, and responding to their suggestions around service provision. The research concluded that services must be trauma-informed and accessible; that staff should be trained appropriately; that lived experience amongst staff teams is beneficial; and that peer support is vital. By incorporating the perspectives of those with lived experiences, the project not only enhances the validity and impact of the research but also ensures that the outcomes are directly informed by those most affected, thereby fostering more equitable and effective service design.

This project originated from a piece of work completed by the same project team in 2017 which sought to understand the intersection of being both a sex worker and trans. One of the key challenges the team faced in developing the current research project on healthcare was access to time and resources. It took time to access funding for this second project on healthcare, given the very specialist focus. In addition, co-developing work across diverse partners each with competing priorities and different roles is incredibly time consuming. It is therefore vital to account for this when seeking to collaborate with partners operating across diverse spaces and sectors.

TransActions has been active in the context of knowledge exchange, and have distributed a booklet and shared the project with (amongst others) BAGIS (British Association of Gender Identity Specialists), the National Police SPOC (special point of contact) Officers Sex Work Network, The Welsh Gender Service, the Northern Region Gender Dysphoria Service and The Josephine Butler Society.

Improved Research Ethics

Inclusive methodologies prioritise ethical considerations, such as respect for participant autonomy, cultural sensitivity, and equitable representation, as well as the safety of all involved. This promotes ethical research practices and upholds the rights and dignity of research participants.

Facilitation of Understanding

Inclusive research methods promote understanding and collaboration by facilitating meaningful interactions between researchers and participants from diverse backgrounds. This fosters mutual learning and respect across boundaries; which ensures that research addresses the real-world needs and concerns of these populations.

Inclusive Research Methods and Methodologies

Case Study: David Stirrup - The Métis: a Global Indigenous People

The Métis is a co-produced project in collaboration with Métis scholar Chris Andersen (University of Alberta) and a range of Métis scholars and community members from different Canadian provinces. We are driven by two primary motivations: the first is to remember the long history of mobility, including transatlantic mobility, with which the Métis, a post-contact Indigenous people in Canada, are associated, and in doing so to contribute positively to current conversations about the impacts of both access to heritage and the control of historical narratives to identity, nationhood, and wellbeing. Our second is to contribute to the ever-growing palimpsests of urban and colonial histories by exposing and exploring sites of Métis presence in Imperial centres such as London, Paris, and even the battlefields of World War I.

The collective and co-produced nature of this project is rooted in Indigenous research practices, in which we prioritise walking and visiting as key methodologies. In doing so, we approach this work not in terms of data gathering and presentation, but as a process of non-hierarchical, reciprocal learning, which cultivates collective self-recognition in relation to the spaces and places Métis have historically inhabited. By walking/visiting these places, we metaphorically stretch the boundaries of the Métis homeland and reinvigorate Métis histories.

This project depends upon the involvement of a wide range of Métis stakeholders of all ages. Particularly significant to its development has been the contributions of the current Director of Health for the Métis Nation of Alberta, Reagan Bartel. Reagan's participation in on-site research in London has been instrumental in helping us understand how this work contributes to both individual and collective wellbeing through centring narratives of international advocacy and diplomacy, Métis modernity, courage, and pride. We are still at an early stage, but we hope this work will ultimately have broad impact at community level in helping younger and middle-aged Métis better understand the scale of Métis mobility and the deep impacts of Métis individuals in international locations. Meanwhile, the methodologies and heritage tour-building we are developing in Europe will ultimately be deployed in urban centres in Canada, where localised tours will contribute to that sense of emotional/mental wellbeing while also having a more direct physical impact in encouraging people to move more to explore the spatialised histories of Métis presence.

Enhanced Community Engagement

Inclusive research methods foster greater community engagement and participation by actively and meaningfully involving diverse and often marginalised audiences in the research process, from formulation of research questions to the interpretation and dissemination of results. This amplifies the voices of marginalised communities, foregrounding their experiences, and enabling their participation in decision-making processes. As a result, relationships are strengthened, trust is built, and a sense of agency, and ownership is fostered among all involved in the research process, challenging traditional research power dynamics.

Case Study: York Asia Research Network (YARN) - Oleg Benesch and Jon Howlett, YARN Co-Directorsavid Stirrup - The Métis: a Global Indigenous People

In Autumn of 2024 the York Asia Research Network (YARN) will celebrate its 10th anniversary. YARN was founded as the York Asia Research Group in 2014, as an initiative by Tara Alberts (History), Oleg Benesch (History), Jon Howlett (History) and Claire Smith (Politics). Since its inception, YARN has been highly interdisciplinary, and currently has over 130 staff and postgraduate members across all faculties, as well as in university administration. YARN has created a community that fosters Asian research, producing both tangible (REF environment) and intangible benefits for staff and students (community building). We hold Distinguished Speaker events once per semester. Our PhD conferences in June 2023 and June 2024 featured 28 student speakers from 10 departments and centres across the university presenting their research.

The founding principle of YARN was to provide visibility for York's existing strengths in research on Asia. The network has been very successful in this regard, establishing the university's reputation in this area nationally and regionally. YARN demonstrates a thriving research environment that attracts research students and strengthens their applications to funding bodies. Recent York graduates have obtained postdoctoral and tenure-track positions at top universities around the world, and have also taken positions with leading consultancy firms and governments in various countries.

Generation of Innovative Solutions

Inclusive research methods can stimulate innovation and creativity by encouraging the exploration of multiple perspectives and approaches to complex problems. This leads to the development of innovative solutions.

Case Study: Eppie Leishman - Renting your own place: Supporting people with learning disabilities at the edges of social care in social housing and the private rented sector

This National Institute for Health Research, School of Social Care Research funded project was undertaken by Deborah Quilgars, Eppie Leishman, Mark Wilberforce and Julie Rugg at the University of York working collaboratively with David Abbot (University of Bristol), Riverside housing provider, Learning Disability England, Housing LIN and Stephen Lee Hodgkins. The aim of this study was to understand the ways that people with learning disabilities could be better supported to access an enjoy living in their own tenancies in the community, when this is their choice. The project took place across 2 board stages. Stage 1 explored housing options, reviewed local authority strategies, and hosted regional and national roundtable events with professionals and experts by experience. Stage 2 focused on the experiences of individuals with learning disabilities who rent their own homes.

> **Informed Policy Formulation**
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> Inclusive research methods can lead to policy formulations that may more appropriately and adequately address the needs of diverse communities. This is because such methods generate findings that better reflect the lived experiences and perspectives of diverse and typically underrepresented communities, leading to culturally relevant knowledge that centres marginalised voices and experiences. Without these inclusive research insights, policymakers may overlook crucial factors and inadvertently develop ineffective or misguided policies.

This involved interviews with renters (35), as well as creative methods (booklets and cameras) used by 15 individuals to document their experiences and offer aedvice. Throughout the project, a collaborative advisory group worked together as the research team. Experiences of working together are often largely forgotten at the end of research projects. An advisory board guided the inclusive research, highlighting challenges and benefits for similar initiatives. This research paper reflects on the experiences of academics, collaborators and self-advocacy experts who undertook the project. Other resources for the project are available including easy-read and video options. They have also recently completed a short tour of visiting self-advocacy groups around England including in Halifax, Manchester and Worthing as well as a research launch in Oxford, all with the self-advocates involved with the project.

Initial project plans were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which required a shift to remote research methods. These presented several challenges/solutions. Interviews had to be conducted from a distance so technology was leveraged, for example, using Zoom for regular, accessible online meetings. When conducting online research, Zoom fatigue is something to be aware of; this was addressed by scheduling one-hour meetings. The research team also ensured measures were made to simplify meeting logistics (e.g., no passcodes, using a consistent meeting link). Engaging and maintaining communication with an advisory board is essential. This research utilised existing relationships between collaborators and self-advocacy experts to bridge gaps and build trust within an online research process. Despite the challenges of doing research at a distance, the self-advocacy experts grew their involvement in the project, challenging the traditional role of passive, consultative advisory group. Instead, they wanted to be actively involved in project meetings, contributing regularly and systematically with the researcher including in analysis and impact activities. This approach highlights the importance of avoiding an overly academic or researcher-focused mindset. This was enabled by maintaining consistent communication with reminders and timely updates to support self-advocacy experts. The researchers also point to the challenges with University systems which can be bureaucratic and inaccessible.

Additional insights into the research tools used in this project are worth noting. Initially, creative qualitative interview tools (including information sheets and consent forms) were developed based on extensive discussions with self-advocacy experts. Revisiting these discussions over several meetings allowed for the refinement of themes such as finding a place, community and renting advice. The University process for ethical approval can be complex and lengthy; thus, projets should advocate for streamlined, accessible documentation to prevent overwhelming participants. Continual involvement of advisory panels is crucial to ensure relevance and inclusivity. Finally, collaborative research should recognize the contributions of advisory board members and other collaborators, including in project information sheets and research outputs.

What's next?

To strengthen the University of York's emerging legacy of incorporating inclusive research methods and methodologies, additional work is needed in two core areas:

- Research partnerships
- Research environments

Research partnerships

A key aspect of inclusive research is being able to freely work not only with a range of diverse communities, but also with a variety of grassroots organisations within and outside of the UK. However, support for developing partnerships with non-UK organisations and communities is limited when such partnerships are being sourced within an internally funded research project. Furthermore, the forms associated with getting such partnerships signed off (when they are possible), are very complex and not easily translatable across cultures and languages. The process is conducted entirely in English, often necessitating researchers to manually translate and complete the forms on behalf of non-English-speaking partners, which is extremely laborious. There are two forms required: one at the bid stage and a more comprehensive one post-award. Information from these forms is collected and stored in an ad hoc manner, with no clear or known centralised database. As a result, partners must undergo the process anew for each grant even if due diligence has already been completed for a previous project. Further, the system is tailored for collaborations with UK institutions, creating hurdles for both large international partners, who may find requests for extensive documentation burdensome, and smaller partners, for whom many questions are irrelevant. Correspondence about the process frequently excludes the Principal Investigator (PI), further complicating communication. Despite the high workload involved in completing these forms, there is only a 25% success rate for bids, resulting in significant effort for uncertain outcomes. Moreover, the consequences of incomplete due diligence forms are not always clear. The Policy, Integrity and Performance team proposed a more welcoming and explanatory approach to replace this cumbersome process. Their suggestion included a welcome letter outlining expectations and requirements to enhance understanding and compliance, making the process feel supportive rather than punitive. However, this proposal has faced repeated delays, ostensibly due to the ongoing implementation of end-to-end processes.

A review conducted by Jonathan Ensor on behalf of the Stockholm Environmental Institute (SEI) York outlines some additional difficulties. Delays during the initial contracting stages can significantly hinder partnerships, with some partnership contracts taking nearly two years to be approved, thereby consuming almost half of the project funding period. Additionally, the requirement to provide receipts, purchase orders, and invoices after work completion is often burdensome, particularly for research partners in weak financial positions who cannot operate without upfront financial support. These challenges also create an administrative burden on staff members working with research partners, potentially discouraging valuable collaborations. In many cases the solution to resolve this barrier has been to contract these partners via external connections e.g., SEI rather than the university directly, although this may result in delays and worries of risks associated with research partnerships. To overcome these challenges, alternative methods may be adopted which can include the use of:

- per diems when conducting research with countries in the Global South
- banking apps such as SendWave or Western Union to pay or reimburse expenses of research collaborators/ participants in certain countries (particularly those where persons are highly unlikely to have bank accounts)

Adjustments such as these can facilitate the development of equitable research partnerships in all parts of the world. However, these may not always be feasible, and researchers are thus strongly encouraged to seek support prior to entering into research partnerships.

Not only are the processes particularly difficult to manage for international grassroots organisations, they also seem to favour partners who have a strong financial profile, or who already have strong links with other European countries, over those with a clear, transparent dedication to EDI. While these criteria ultimately come from the external funders themselves, the University recognises its social responsibility in this area.

Our [Research Integrity Framework](#) therefore advises against partnerships with organisations and/or funding bodies who stand in opposition to our corporate social responsibility (e.g. engage in firearms trade). However, the University is committed to academic freedom. Therefore, outside of these suggested guidelines, the onus of deciding whether or not to partner with companies without a clear EDI stance ultimately lies with research staff. The University recognises the implications of this - EDI-focused research will only be prioritised when funders are committed to EDI principles. Consequently, it has begun considering how to incorporate EDI considerations within the due diligence processes undertaken at the start of any research project. The [Due Diligence Pro Forma](#), based on [documents](#) provided by UKRI, now requires prospective collaborative research partners to provide details regarding their own research integrity (good standing), policies and procedures. Whilst this form evaluates the policies and processes around equal treatment of staff, there is no equivalent process for assessing research funders. Currently, whilst this is not a stated requirement, the

principal investigator is responsible for deciding whether or not a funder is suitable for them at their own discretion, highlighting the burden placed on researchers to manage this.

However, in recognition of the role of funders in this process, the University has also begun to actively encourage engagement with funding bodies like the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), which is committed to creating an EDI-focused research culture, as outlined in their multifaceted [action plan](#). The EPSRC has established five comprehensive action points aimed at fostering and embedding inclusive and diverse research practices to reduce inequities; encourage and enable participation; as well as investigate barriers to success and participation. Notably, these include the use of advisory boards to increase the diversity of decision-making panels within the organisation. Additionally, the EPSRC commissions EDI-related research to improve its internal practices, such as a [recent project](#) with the Royal Statistical Society and Alan Turing Institute to better understand the intersectional issues within their portfolio and potential biases in their

peer review processes.

In addition to this, the University is considering incorporating EDI into ethics forms in order to generate a research culture where all projects are developed with EDI in mind. In this way, it can ensure that EDI considerations are included at each stage of the research process, from conceptualisation and building the research team to knowledge translation and dissemination which should be transparent and accessible. Failing to incorporate EDI approaches can have significant negative consequences for marginalised groups, as exemplified by the historical case of [Henrietta Lacks](#). Whilst contemporary research is more ethically rigorous, it remains crucial that researchers, especially within a University for Public Good, avoid perpetuating marginalisation within research practice. [Research by Ruzycki & Ahmed et al., (2022)](#) provides an overview of how to incorporate EDI within research practices and members of the EDI Research Centre network will be working to develop a clear framework to support researchers in developing this skill. In the meantime, a suggested approach is detailed below (figure 2).

Ethically, researchers are increasingly called to consider EDI within their research. Please report on the extent to which you have considered the following:

Figure 2. Example flowchart guiding researchers through the research process with EDI related ethical considerations.

Lastly, research software also brings challenges to the inclusive research process. On the one hand, within some companies, the research software and tools commonly used tend to be quite expensive, and so require a great deal of funding to support the project as it progresses. Furthermore, use of expensive software can be a barrier to collaboration, or even engaging with research outputs if these are produced in a proprietary file format. On the other hand, the software used in the University may not be easily accessible to grassroots organisations or less well funded institutional partners. Here, prioritising commonly used packages and platforms with easily shareable outputs and using open source software where possible makes it easier for partners with fewer resources to collaborate and to engage with research outputs.

Research environment

Three main issues emerge in relation to the research environment:

1. The yardstick of a successful research project centres around the number of REFable publications it generates. However, within a research team with grassroots organisations, the main yardstick may be advocacy. There should therefore be a more multifaceted approach to research 'success'.

2. Many projects that use inclusive research methods and methodologies tend to be supported by postdoctoral researchers with strong expertise in this area. This means that these full-time postdoctoral research staff are employed 100% on these projects, and so do not have capacity to engage in EDI citizenship activity. This limits the extent to which this deep understanding of inclusivity is translated into our everyday working environment. We therefore lose out on the impact these staff can make to furthering inclusivity within research at the University through their expertise.

3. Prioritising inclusive research methods and methodologies may be a daunting undertaking, especially when funding is limited and one is a novice. The research process at the University of York incorporates several opportunities for research projects to be peer reviewed for instance within ethics applications. [Membership of ethics committees](#) here at the University is decided with EDI in mind (although this mainly relates to gender), but it is not the responsibility of these committees to provide support in relation to integrating inclusivity. This role typically lies within the remit of Research Advisory boards. While the use of these is not standard procedure here at York, a range of inclusive research support is nonetheless present within several University research centres, including the [Interdisciplinary Global Development Centre](#) and the [Humanities Research Centre](#), suggesting that this can become widespread practice over time.
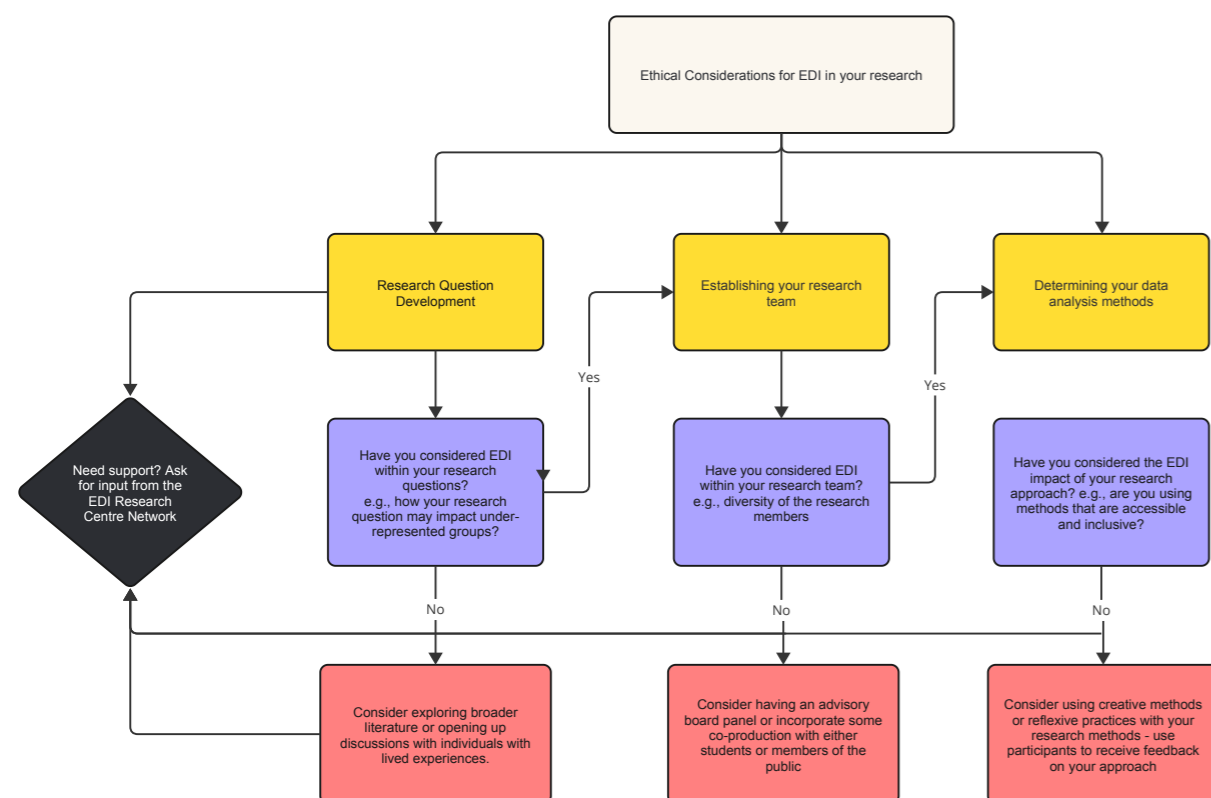
Core EDI Research Area 3: Decolonising Research

Why This Matters

The historical biases present during the colonial period continue to influence research practices across disciplines. Decolonising research is thus key to preventing the perpetuation of these harms. In fact, it can be argued that decolonising research should be standard research practice in research institutions such as the University of York, situated as we are in the United Kingdom—a country that played such a significant role in the colonisation process. Decolonising research involves the rejection of traditional research methodologies and frameworks that often reflect colonial histories and power dynamics. Core to the process is critically examining and challenging existing power structures and hierarchies within research that typically privilege certain voices and perspectives over others. In this way, it helps to reduce the perpetuation of colonial harms[1] by valuing, foregrounding and incorporating voices, perspectives, and experiences of those that have historically been marginalised and ignored, based on the perpetuation of colonial power structures. This has numerous implications. Firstly, it promotes agency and reciprocity in knowledge production through co-production and acknowledging expertise of marginalised and Indigenous communities, as evidenced in the University of Leeds co-production research toolkit. Secondly, it leads to more comprehensive and ethical findings, by ensuring that current research practice is culturally sensitive and appropriate—avoiding the imposition of dominant values and norms from the Global North that may not be relevant or respectful. Evidence of this within UoY is seen in:

the Ritualising Protection Project co-designed and led by the Centre of Applying Human Rights (CAHR) staff and the Nasa community of the Resguardo Indígena de Huellas Caloto and

the Humanities Research Centre (HRC) collaborative postgraduate project grants which offer opportunities for postgraduates to develop collaborative interdisciplinary projects and initiatives; some of the awarded projects have also involved collaboration/co-production of research with communities or users outside of academia.

Decolonising research requires a long-term commitment, and at times can be viewed as a daunting endeavour. Understandably, many may not feel confident or knowledgeable about where to begin, especially when challenges emerge. However, at the University of York, several researchers have achieved successes despite setbacks - these can be used as guides and sources of inspiration. Therefore, this aspect of the framework seeks to support and encourage the more frequent use of decolonised research practice by outlining the influence of various research projects and initiatives. It will do so by focusing on three core aspects:

Maintaining research spaces where authentic decolonisation discussions are encouraged: Creating and sustaining environments where transparent and honest dialogues about decolonisation can take place. These spaces prioritise marginalised voices and critically examine colonial legacies.

Decolonising research funding opportunities: Ensuring funding opportunities provide equitable access for underrepresented and marginalised groups.

Developing research partnerships within a decolonisation lens: Forming research collaborations that prioritise equity, mutual respect and the dismantling of colonial power dynamics.

For each case study, we will begin by emphasising the impact the work has had, highlighting the various benefits associated with research within these areas.

[1] Colonial harm: Physical, economic, political, social strategies of disempowerment

Case Study: YESI - Fellows Scheme

The York Environmental Sustainability Institute (YESI) Fellows scheme provides support for University of York (UoY) staff and collaborators (YESI Fellows) to undertake short projects developing interdisciplinarity (YESI Discipline Hopping Fellows), knowledge exchange (YESI KE Fellows), and international research activities in environmental sustainability (YESI International Fellows).

The YESI Fellows scheme overall targets researchers at all career stages, including ECRs, in order to:

- Facilitate environmental sustainability research across the sciences, social sciences, and arts and humanities, adding value and synergizing existing strengths to tackle the complex challenges of sustaining productive, resilient and healthy environments.

- Enhance the profile, impact and influence of the University's environmental sustainability research locally, nationally and globally, in line with the University's wider civic mission.

The initial driving factor for the development of YESI's fellows scheme was the need to ensure mechanisms to support environmental sustainability research as per the University's Sustainability Strategy and to enhance research income through improved interdisciplinary working, providing a space for researchers at all career stages to get involved. Details of the scheme were fleshed out following consultation with the YESI Steering Committee.

Dr Helen Davies - YESI Discipline Hopping Fellow
Project involving Environment and Geography, Health Sciences and Wolfson Atmospheric Chemistry Laboratories (WACL), Chemistry

…"The YESI fellows scheme gave me a great opportunity to move departments to work with some brilliant new colleagues and learn valuable new experimental skills in a different field. Not only did the funding give me the scope to test new ideas, but the results will also form the basis of preliminary data for future, larger funding applications. Overall, the project has been really interesting, useful and enjoyable!"…

Discussions highlighted a gap in ECR provision so all the different variants of the scheme created the opportunity for ECRs to be included and lead on the fellowships. The YESI Steering Committee suggested restricting overseas international fellows to those on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) list - country recipients of development aid, as researchers from high income countries are more likely to have access to other kinds of funded fellowships. Environmental Sustainability at York (ESAY) provided a way to channel funds and make the scheme happen.

YESI has a strong community which plays an active role in events and proposal development so these were the major stakeholders, though the scheme also attracted people who later joined the YESI community. The YESI team also needed to work closely with staff from finance, HR, and sought advice from departments/centres running other schemes, as well as talking to the global partnerships office and international partners.

YESI aimed to support Early Career Researchers (ECRs) by making them eligible to be Principal Investigators (PIs) alongside more experienced colleagues. This provided ECRs with valuable grant leadership experience, enhancing their CVs. It was particularly beneficial when they had a seasoned colleague on their team as a mentor, to help them navigate the York systems.

Dr Lisa Miller - YESI Knowledge Exchange Fellow
Project involving Physics, Engineering and Technology, Stockholm Environment Institute York, Environment and Geography

…"Our YESI fellowship was a fantastic opportunity for me to be a PI and lead a project, a rare opportunity for postdocs. The funding has allowed us to host a workshop that will lead to new ideas and support future grant proposals."…

Some of the challenges in developing the scheme given structures and processes in York:

- Collaborating across departments presented challenges due to differing procedures. The University of York is not yet optimised for seamless interdisciplinary work.

- International collaborators had difficulties obtaining visas from the UK Visa office which led to one project being shelved and others delayed.

- Extra support was needed from more experienced Co-Is in terms of DH and KE projects as induction processes on grant management also differed across departments.

The schemes are continually being refined based on feedback and any difficulties encountered. A key factor that should be highlighted within the approach is being able to use the fellowship funding to cover staff time, as this frees them up to focus on project work and delivery. Insights were also gained from the University SPARKS programme regarding financial management.

YESI additionally developed an interdisciplinary research training programme, including a pilot course held in January 2024 which focused on helping researchers, including PhD students and ECRs, to think more broadly about solutions to a research problem by understanding each other's values, root methods and concepts. The training workshop featuring a Dragons Den research pitching event and involving external guest "dragons" was well attended by a diverse range of members of the University and International fellows from Ghana, Nigeria and Pakistan who joined online. Going forward this training will be integrated into programmes offered across the university (e.g. via the Building Research and Innovation Capacity (BRIC) and Leverhulme Centre for Anthropocene Biodiversity (LCAB) teams, while also being adapted for delivery in overseas YESI fellows' institutions.

Contributing Towards an Egalitarian Society

As decolonised research is informed by colonial power dynamics, it is better positioned to shape policies and practices that are fair and effective for all segments of society. This promotes social justice and equality in academia, and society at large, by enabling the redistribution of power and resources more equitably.

Generative Knowledge Production

Decolonised research builds collaborative networks with communities who experience colonial harms[1]. This may encourage ongoing and sustainable mutually-beneficial research collaborations and minimise exploitative and extractive research dynamics. These collaborations will guard against knowledge production becoming stagnant, by ensuring that we (researchers) no longer rely on problematic and dominant methodologies and perspectives that reflect the reproduction of colonial hierarchies.

Incorporating perspectives, knowledge systems and methodologies that have traditionally been excluded and devalued can lead not only to innovative approaches and solutions to complex problems, but also findings that are more reflective of the complexities of real-world issues. This renders research outcomes more relevant and applicable to a wider range of communities and contexts, making the findings more useful and impactful.

Case Study: Stephanie Wynne-Jones and Keith Allen - Working to decolonise research practices mentoring programme

Supporting researchers in their decolonising efforts should be actively encouraged. The Culture and Communication Research Team has supported a series of pilot projects from across the Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences exploring decolonised and inclusive methodologies and epistemologies through the working to decolonise research practices mentoring programme. The projects encourage researchers to develop decolonised and inclusive research by thinking critically about who sets research questions, which methods are used to investigate them, how researchers collaborate with partners in an ethical and equitable manner, and who owns the resulting knowledge.

One such project is the Decentering Colonial Legacies in the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition (Penny Bickle & Stephanie Piper). It identifies and challenges the legacy of colonial language within research, and has seen success including presenting project outputs in two external conferences; Conferences on Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHAGS) in Dublin (2022) and the Theoretical Archaeology Group in Edinburgh (2022), as well as an internal teaching conference within the university about decolonisation and the curriculum. Most notably, a PhD position in the Department of Archaeology was an additional output from the project, highlighting that decolonisation efforts not only benefit researchers and those involved but also aspiring researchers.

Decolonising Research

Case Study: Avtar Matharu - Matharu Plots

An approach taken to drive behavioural and cultural change within the Chemistry community and broader disciplines that encourages expansion of global research and research culture, introduces decolonisation of research, and challenges and eliminates unconscious bias through creation of 'Matharu Plots'. A 'Matharu Plot' is a one page infographic, with explanatory narrative, that shows the geographical distribution of cited literature from within a report/dissertation/thesis/manuscript. The initiative starts a conversation, encourages discussion, challenges norms, allows for critical reflection, changes behaviour and culture, and delivers a meaningful, measurable output.

The initial intended audience was postgraduate taught students at York but this very quickly spiralled to other HEI's (national and global), industry and third-sector organisations. Major publishing houses are exploring the use of Matharu Plots to encourage diversity and inclusion within the publishing sector, especially at Editorial Board Level. Making a conscious effort to source and cite research from 'hidden' geographical regions enhances research skills and gives value and esteem to the cited researchers.
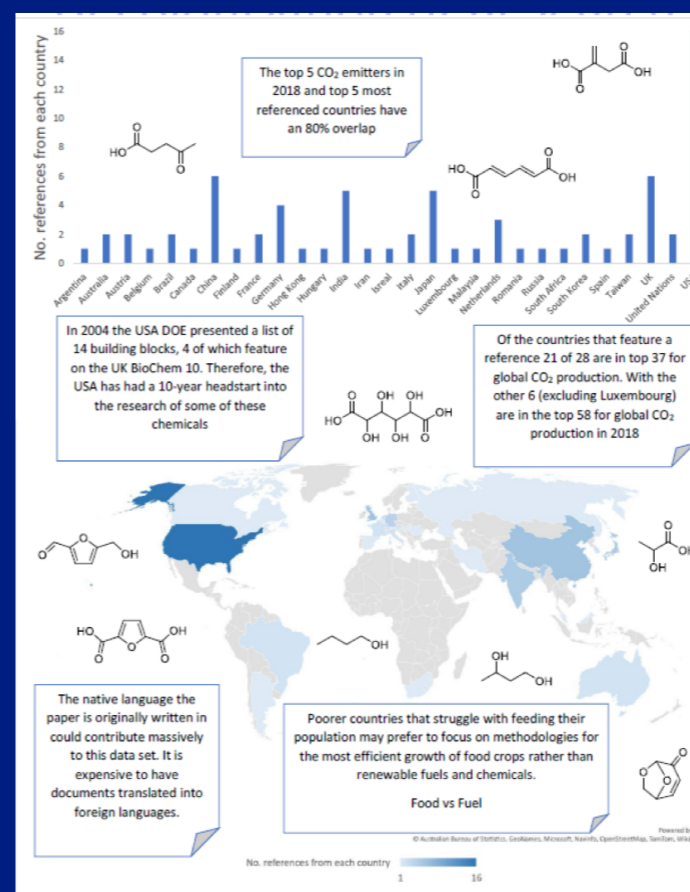
This is University of York's moment of change to be at the forefront of contributing to a healthy, dynamic and inclusive research environment through the adoption of Matharu Plots. Given that Matharu Plots are discipline-independent, they should be embedded within UG, PGT and PGR programmes. At UG and PGT level, a Matharu Plot should be integral to any 'project' module, whilst at PGR, any thesis submitted should include a Matharu Plot as part of their submission.

Ethical Integrity

By acting against the perpetuation of colonial legacies and historical injustices, decolonised research promotes ethical research practices. Through prioritising respect, reciprocity, consent, and collaboration with communities who experience colonial harms[1], it ensures that research benefits those who we research with.

Greater Inclusivity and Epistemic Justice[2]

Decolonising research ensures that the voices and experiences of marginalised and Indigenous communities are heard and respected, leading to more inclusive knowledge production. This also intentionally and purposefully engages them, promoting their agency and control over how their knowledge and experiences are represented and used.

[2] Justice towards people as knowers and producers of knowledge; valuing rather than silencing their knowledge and experiences; giving proper authorship to their ideas and contributions

What's next?

For decolonising research to become even more integrated into the research culture at the University of York, there are three core areas in need of attention:

- Promoting a widespread recognition that research is not neutral

- Developing an ethical framework for engaging with the Global South

- Prioritising an evolving commitment to decolonial objectives

Promoting a widespread recognition that research is not neutral

There are core tenets of research that are applicable across different disciplines, and applying decolonising research practices should be one of these. Only when this happens will researchers more readily deeply consider the positionality of their disciplines, institutions, research environments and research processes. A widespread recognition that research is not neutral is the basis of such positionality, and it is only such recognition that will move researchers away from superficial decolonised practices (e.g. simply mentioning non-Western researchers) to a critical engagement with research emerging from the Global North in a way that values all global knowledge. Evidence of success in relation to this does exist—for instance within the Global South Programme in the department of Archaeology which provides a two week visiting fellowship for visiting researchers to participate in scientific research.

Developing an ethical framework for engaging with the Global South

When it comes to ethics, frequently, research that engages with the Global South considers potentially triggering topics (such as the lived experiences of refugee and asylum seekers). The Global South can be a source of positive knowledge, and so researchers need to consider whether exploring such issues is inflicting unnecessary suffering that can be avoided. For instance, can research be modified to consider the needs of these communities to a greater extent. If the proposed research is deemed necessary, then researchers need to fully explore the physical and mental consequences for participants; and consider the ethics of asking them to relive their traumas for the sake of the proposed study. This will require incorporating outcomes that provide some sustained benefit for participants involved, thus fully respecting those sharing their stories. Such practices are essential to ensuring research methodologies are considerate of their impact on all parties involved. It is also important to look at the use of researchers from the global south as named contributors on research applications so that restrictions related to employing overseas researchers do not undervalue these researchers' contributions.

Prioritising an evolving commitment to decolonial objectives

Over time the University of York has seen an increase in research spaces dedicated to highlighting the need for decolonising research practices, including the Decolonising Network and the Africa Research Network at York (ARN). However, the development of spaces such as this has now stagnated, with few new changes emerging. Our approach needs to evolve to better reflect a commitment to decolonial objectives—embedding decolonising research within existing accountabilities and processes. If this were to happen, decolonised research would no longer sit in a few departments, but become a large-scale movement. One such measure can be normalising a collective-oriented approach which encourages all parties to be meaningfully involved—educating those who are novices in the area within a supportive environment; while also enabling collaborations with individuals who are experts in decolonised research practice. Such a trend has been started with the Anti-Colonial reading group here at the university.

The Anti-Colonial Reading Group (UoYACRG), a student-led group inspired by the symposium on Decolonising and Diversifying the Curriculum (June 19th 2023), is an example of an initiative that brings together members of the university community in decolonising efforts. Inspired by the rich ecosystem of innovative work presented at the conference, they wanted to contribute to this emerging space of critical praxis. Monthly 90-minute sessions from September 2023 to May 2024 were run. These were open to everyone regardless of personal or professional background. Attendees were encouraged to refrain from sharing their titles in order to dismantle potential hierarchical relationships within the space of the session. Sessions began with a brief presentation contextualising the reading before moving to an open discussion. The aim of the UoYACRG was to cover the entire breadth of anti-, de-and postcolonial literature. Therefore, the group read a variety of works (e.g. academic journal texts, fiction, philosophy, polemics) from a variety of geographic locations (e.g. from Africa, Asia, Native America and the Caribbean). The Reading Group impacted the university community in a manifest way. On the one hand, the Reading Group encouraged greater engagement with understudied and underrepresented material by providing a casual and relaxed space for open discussion. On the other hand, it created a public space for critical reflection with its half-day conference "Anticolonial Agendas: Interrogating Contemporary Notions of Decolonisation". This conference entailed two panels on anti-, de- and postcolonial theory and praxis followed by a keynote lecture. The panels, made up of staff and students from various levels of study and different personal and professional backgrounds, were interdisciplinary and anti-hierarchical, matching the Reading Group's egalitarian spirit. The keynote lecture, which was open to the public and incredibly well-attended, was delivered by Professor Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò (Cornell University) who discussed his latest work on the problems of decolonial discourses and the importance of African agency. This was followed by an engaging Q&A and drinks reception.

The conference was generously funded by the Department of Politics and International Relations. Without the funding it would have not been possible to put together such an important event and invite an internationally renowned speaker. Working with the Department and Dr Claire Crawford, a postdoctoral fellow in the Department who was actively involved with the Reading Group, enabled us to broaden the outreach of our initiative, attracting a larger audience and sharpening our profile within and outside of the University. While the Reading Group sessions had always only attracted a limited amount of people, the conference drew in a greater and more diverse audience. The Reading Group left a mark on the wider community of York, engaging both the university and the public in an important debate on decolonisation, anti-colonialism and postcolonial theory.

Core EDI Research Area 4:
Pedagogical Research and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
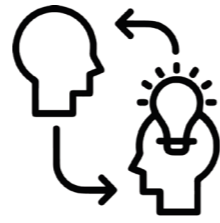
Why This Matters

The University of York has committed itself to ensuring fair outcomes for all its students. Core to the University achieving its goal is research which can inform our teaching practice - this includes pedagogical research and scholarship of teaching and learning[3] (SoTL). To support this research, there exists a range of SoTL resources, and the Inclusive Education team provides several funding opportunities. In addition to this, funding can be obtained through Environmental Sustainability at York (ESAY). With such funding, the York Interdisciplinary Module Scheme (YIMS) has been developed. This scheme encourages students to engage in modules outside their main degree. It offers students the opportunity to undertake an optional sustainability module outside of their own department and involves collaboration with students from various disciplines on real-world sustainability challenges. For instance, the Sustainability Clinic module enables students to work with local and regional organisations and businesses to achieve their sustainability goals. It thus supports them in developing interdisciplinary skills beneficial for future careers; equips them with the knowledge and competencies to tackle complex social and environmental issues; promotes inclusive and equitable practices, and contributes to the creation of sustainable and diverse work environments.

Such pedagogical research is beneficial to staff and students alike. For staff, it supports professional development, equipping them with knowledge on how diverse groups engage with teaching and learning; as well as with skills to manage and support all students effectively. For students, it enables the development of evidence-based practices that ensure any EDI-informed student-focused initiative is grounded in proven strategies that enhance student learning rather than perpetuate marginalisation (for instance, through considerations of intersectionality); it also helps identify barriers faced by underrepresented student groups, enabling the development of targeted interventions that not only address their specific challenges, but also enhance learning for all. For instance, in partnership with Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education, a 'No Gaps' project is underway which seeks to develop sustainable mechanisms for tackling the persistent ethnicity degree awarding gap between white and Black students at the University of York (which currently stands at a 13.7 percentage point difference); and between white and Asian students (which currently stands at 10.5 percentage point difference). Student belonging was also recently explored by the Psychology department where the impact of the existing curriculum on students' feeling accepted and understood at the University of York was evaluated using a series of interviews. Other universities have adopted similar noteworthy approaches. For instance, at the University of East London the Office for Institutional Equity, set up by Prof. Marcia Wilson, spearheads advancing equitable opportunities and outcomes for marginalised students by integrating non-discrimination into the university culture; it seeks to achieve this through a cross-institutional approach, involving not only outreach and training, but also guidance and resources.

On the whole, therefore, pedagogical research brings a range of benefits to the University. It informs how we teach, helping to identify effective teaching methods that can be put in place to accommodate the diverse learning styles and needs of our students in the classroom and in online courses. It also influences what we teach - insights from pedagogical research inform the creation of inclusive curricula that reflect diverse perspectives and experiences. Additionally, pedagogical research can exert an impact on how we engage with students outside of teaching - its findings help us to gain an understanding of the dynamics of student engagement which can then enable the designing of strategies for student support that encourage participation from all demographic groups. Pedagogical research is thus key to the University of York's identity as spearheading research-informed teaching. However, we realise that many staff may feel that such research lies outside of their expertise, and so only envision ongoing challenges. Therefore, this aspect of the framework seeks to support and encourage all staff to engage in pedagogical research by outlining the research process involved in various projects and initiatives within four core areas:

- **Effective teaching practice (including scaffolding, decolonising, and the use of digital technology):** teaching and learning methods that promote EDI, including the use of structured support and the re-examining and restructuring of curricula to address systemic biases and increase representation.

- **Evidence-based student support:** providing pastoral support using research and data-driven practices, ensuring available support strategies are effective and equitable to address diverse student needs.

- **Inclusive and diverse assessments:** employing assessment methods that accommodate students from various backgrounds, learning styles and abilities and provide equitable opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

- **Demystifying research and postgraduate study:** making the process, expectations and opportunities of research-based careers in higher education more transparent and accessible. This involves breaking down barriers, providing clear guidance and support for underrepresented and marginalised students, and making concerted efforts towards reducing the 'leaky pipeline'.

For each case study, we will begin by emphasising the impact the work has had, highlighting the various benefits associated with research within these areas.

Pedagogical Research and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Case Study: Jeremy Moulton - Optionality Project

In Spring Semester 2024, a piece of staff-student partnership research was performed, exploring whether there was a subject-specific case for utilising assessment optionality on Politics and International Relations degree courses. Using a student-centred approach, the project aimed to see if a clear case for using optionality existed, with the potential for this to be a motivator for innovations in assessment within this field. Undertaking staff-student partnership research has a number of benefits, including the potential for centering concerns of equality, diversity and inclusivity into the research process and, therefore, better understanding the thoughts and practices of the contemporary student cohort. One of the potential challenges in carrying out staff-student partnership research is finding a way to go beyond the "usual suspects", i.e. students that are the familiar faces in departmental activities. While these students can often provide valuable insight, they might not necessarily represent the full range of student perceptions of teaching and learning practices. Therefore, in the call for participants in the research, efforts were made to stress that all students were invited to participate - regardless of prior experience or involvement in the work of the department.

The research process began with a half-day workshop with the six Student Partners that joined the project. The Student Partners were a diverse group of students, representing a range of year groups, degree programmes, and experiences. In this first workshop, we co-created a subject-specific understanding of assessment optionality and made key decisions about the next stages of the research. The Student Partners selected a method of three focus groups with students in the department and we collaboratively developed

and finalised a script of questions for the Partners to ask their fellow students in those focus groups. The focus groups, which featured a total of 24 undergraduate Politics and International Relations students, ran over two weeks and were immediately followed with a final half-day workshop with the Partners. In this final workshop, the key research conclusions were discussed and defined - with a subject-specific case for optionality clearly established and student-centred recommendations also developed.

The benefits of the staff-student partnership approach to research were made extremely clear throughout this project. The ability to centre EDI issues, to conduct research in an ethical manner, and to provide clear and relevant conclusions showed why this is such a valuable method for investigating innovations into pedagogical practice. With the project finalised, next steps involve disseminating the research findings by publishing them as a contribution to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning literature.

Of course, there are also challenges to this mode of research that should be acknowledged and addressed. The norms of research funding and ethical review restrict the possibilities to be truly collaborative in co-designing research with the students. It would, for example, not be right to ask students to contribute heavily to designing a research project prior to making a funding bid without yet knowing if the funding would be in place to compensate those students for their contributions. Therefore, clear prior consideration of the possible paths of research and engagement that students may wish to select, as well as frank and open conversations about research limitations with partners, is a vital way to responding to these challenges.

Enriching Learning Experience

Pedagogical research enables the development of a range of strategies that can promote deep learning across diverse student groups. Overall this makes learning more enjoyable for students and motivates them to engage. Staff will also experience positive effects for instance as a result of increased student attendance.

Case Study: Yaprak Tavman - Co-development of a Problem-based learning (PBL) module in Economics in partnership with Students

The Department of Economics is introducing a new Problem-Based Learning (PBL) module in the academic year 2024-25 for second-year undergraduate students. Problem-based learning is a student-led approach that encourages exploration of real-world problems through group work and self-directed learning. The development of this module involved direct feedback from current Economics students who participated in a PBL taster session, and focus group discussions with students who have already experienced PBL in their degree programs to voice their concerns and expectations. The project contributes to inclusive and diverse assessments, and promoting an equitable and effective learning environment.

Problem based learning promotes inclusive and diverse assessments by encouraging diverse perspectives and solutions. This approach acknowledges and values different ways of thinking and learning, catering learning to a broader range of students. However, implementing PBL modules comes with some challenges that should be considered for those wishing to undertake a similar approach. As identified by thematic analysis of student responses from the project, challenges in developing a PBL module include:

A) **Scaffolding during transition and preparation:** Scaffolding is essential during the transition from passive learning to PBL. Clear communication between students and teaching staff about the expectations of the PBL module helps build student confidence.

B) **Defining problems is a complex process:** Ensuring module learning outcomes align with subject content and the transferable skills gained through self-directed learning and group work should be a focus during module development and refinement.

C) **Assessment Challenges:** Assessing PBL is challenging, in both implementation and outcomes, as it must balance knowledge acquisition and skills development. While various assessment methods can be employed in individual and group contexts, it is essential to ensure fair assessment of individual contributions, given the expectation for all group members to actively and equally participate.

D) **Reflection and Feedback:** Reflection and feed back are critical components of PBL. These skills can be effectively taught through the scaffolding process, enhancing the overall learning experience.

The insights from this project can enhance the development of similar inclusive and diverse modules across disciplines. It shows the importance of involving students in the planning and decision-making process, with the inclusion of this student-centred approach. This approach led to a final PBL module that fosters inclusive learning by encouraging self-reliance and making students' understanding more apparent. PBL has also been introduced at the University in various departments, including York Law School (since 2008), the Department of Environment and Geography, and three core modules of the BA Global Development Program (launched in 2019-2020). Despite its challenges, students value and enjoy PBL. Working with the same group throughout the module helps students develop better connections, enhancing peer learning and collaboration.

Increased Social Cohesion

Pedagogical research promotes understanding and respect among students from different backgrounds through the EDI-informed learning environments that it promotes. This supports the creation of a university campus where all students feel valued and included. As a result, a more harmonious, tolerant (and not hostile) campus culture develops where social fragmentation (where students segregate themselves into homogenous groups rather than interacting and learning from one another) is absent and biases are reduced.

Case Study: Lilian Joy and Cordelia Webb - Developing an Accessible Maths Project

There is very little in the literature about the experience of blind students studying a technical subject like Maths. Within the limited research, blind students are often participants rather than co-writers of the research. Another big gap in the literature is the voice of the transcribers or the note takers who work with disabled students, or the learning technologists who may work in the background to bring technology solutions to the mix. Even the tutor's direct experience and their solutions are rarely captured for others to learn from. The aim in bringing these voices together was to allow us to learn from each other and to make visible to others the interconnectedness of our roles.

Equitable Access to Resources and Support

Pedagogical research supports us in integrating equity in our teaching practice by providing the most suitable resources to students who most need it. This allows us to tailor our support in ways that reduce attainment gaps and enable better academic outcomes.

Our work together was a form of participatory action research (PAR). Even though we had all worked together with Natalie, some things were still not obvious until we got it down on paper. Reading each other's stories led to further insights and we then edited our own stories again. This kind of PAR relies on both serendipity and a shared passion to communicate. It could have included more stakeholders but not everyone who was approached had the time to contribute.

One of the purposes for capturing our journey together was to ensure tried and tested methods were not lost but could be stored as a kind of 'organisational memory' (Casey & Olivera, 2003). Maciej 's experience of working with Natalie is a case in point; he explains he had to ask his father, who had worked with Natalie before, how best to support her. When this knowledge and experience is not captured and made available to others, we have to reinvent systems and structures of support each time we encounter a disabled student. Although the story illustrates how individualised the support needs to be for Natalie, it also provides insights into some of the wins that can happen if information is shared.

We do not offer any further analysis of the combined stories but simply offer them as 'data' for others to reflect on or analyse relative to their own "positionalities and identities" (Villanueva & Di Stefano, 2017, p. 2). Many who have read the paper have expressed their thanks for helping them to understand the bigger picture. The aim is to continue to collect similar stories through more PAR projects and to develop a 'systems thinking' approach (Arnold & Wade, 2015) to the way disabled students are supported through higher education. Giving voice to our disabled students and support workers provides the equity we hope to see develop further in higher education STEM education.

References

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Case Study: Zoe Baker - [Care-Experienced Graduates' decision-making, choices and destinations project](#)

The Care-Experienced Graduates' decision-making, choices and destinations project was a 3-year British Academy funded longitudinal project—the first to provide a qualitative understanding of care-experienced students' transitions into graduate life. While increased research interest in care-experienced people has resulted in much-needed changes to policy and practice to increase opportunities and support for care-experienced people, there is a very real risk of research fatigue among the community as a result. In the Care-Experienced Graduates project, the participatory approach sought to thus avoid people 'feeling used' by actively engaging participants in the process of 'making change'—or in research terms, 'achieving impact'. Participants were the first to see and provide feedback on the draft recommendations from each project reporting, as well as any outputs from the project. In order to maintain transparency, they were regularly updated on what changes the research had led to so far; any impact *we* had made with the research; and the next steps for generating future impact. Participants were also regularly made aware that they could contact the researchers not only with questions about the research or about anything connected to the research that they wanted advise on, but also for a casual chat. In response to participants' requests to meet others, Zoom socials were also run, thus supporting them in extending their social networks.

Some of the research outputs from the project included a literature review providing an in-depth exploration on the current research knowledge on care-experienced graduate students' destinations and challenges faced while also outlining possible explanations for care-experienced graduates' patterns of postgraduate progression. [Phase one](#) explored the experience of care-experienced students' options and concerns regarding their impending transition out of HE. [Phase two](#) revisited participants around 6 months after graduation to explore their initial transitions out of higher education and their plans going forward. Phase three focuses on their experiences 12 months after graduating.

Enhanced Reputation

Institutions that actively support the advancement of more equitable ways of engaging with students, across all aspects of their university life, become known across the HE sector for their efforts in relation to championing EDI within the student experience. As a result of being seen as forward-thinking and socially responsible, these HEIs have an increased likelihood of attracting talented students, faculty, and funding.

These empirical reports ([PG progression article](#), [comic strip](#) and [an advice booklet being produced for CE graduates](#)) provide recommendations for policy and practices within higher education systems, informed by the experiences and thoughts of final year care-experienced higher education students. Some of these recommendations include; offering central mentoring programmes or similar which facilitate links between students and professionals in their intended field of employment, removing area restrictions in the provision of housing support (including social housing, support with rent payments, and council tax relief) to enable care-experienced graduates to relocate with reduced risk of homelessness and/or financial hardship and adopting trauma-informed approaches in workplace practices, policies and procedures. This will help in recognising, responding to and supporting those experiencing trauma as well as avoiding re-traumatisation.

Case Study: Jon Howlett - Decolonising Undergraduate History Modules

The project aimed to redesign the first year provision within the Department of History, primarily undertaken by Prof. Laura Stewart in 2019. The initial development of the modules involved consultations with student representatives and colleagues and the new first year modules were introduced in 2020/21.

A key part of the redesign process was to replace two modules with a European/North American focus - 'Citizens, Comrades and Consumers' and 'Rome to the Renaissance' with three modules - 'Introduction to World History'; 'Political Communities, Societies and Economies', and 'Knowledge and Beliefs'. This decolonisation effort was driven by three key shifts:

1. The department made a move away from teaching students a linear 'story' of history grounded in Western Europe

2. Introducing thematic modules that explore history in diverse contexts which allowed the increasingly diverse range of research undertaken by staff to be featured, focusing on a wider range of people and places, rather than shoe-horning people into a module teaching a fixed range of topics

3. The new modules deconstruct familiar concepts or narratives from diverse perspectives to encourage students to explore how historical knowledge is constructed, i.e., the power relationships 'behind the scenes'.

The benefits of this decolonised approach are evident in student feedback. For instance, the Knowledge and Beliefs module received feedback from 168 students (80% of the cohort), with 97% finding the course intellectually stimulating. Students appreciated learning about the origins of different ideas and beliefs and their impact on political, economic, and social structures. They also valued the broader historical focus beyond European history, which was predominant in their previous studies.

The success of these redesigned modules has influenced further curriculum reforms, including the new first-year module, 'Arguments and Analysis', introduced in 2023/24. Students praised the decolonised and diversified curriculum for its variety, the opportunity to explore unfamiliar types of history, and the extensive readings and case studies provided. This approach demonstrates the benefits of increased EDI consciousness by broadening the scope of historical inquiry, enhancing intellectual engagement, and fostering an inclusive learning environment that values diverse perspectives and experiences.

Increased EDI Consciousness

Pedagogical research informs the development of learning environments which focus on exposing all students to a variety of perspectives. This not only enriches the educational experience, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills; but also develops an EDI consciousness within students that better prepares them for the global workforce. For instance, students who experience diverse and inclusive educational environments are better prepared to work in diverse teams and understand global issues, which is highly valued in the workforce. This benefits students as well as wider society.

What's next?

Pedagogical research is one of the most burgeoning areas of research at the University of York, which is promising given its strong EDI focus. However, there are two main issues that can potentially delay further advancement of research in this area:

- The need for an ethical framework that guides best practice when researching our students

- Addressing the subtle but evident distinction between research and teaching and scholarship staff

Ethics

Most departments do not distinguish pedagogical research as unique. This means that such research is not governed by its own set of specific resources, namely its own ethics committee. Instead, these pedagogical researchers must submit their ethics applications to the standard departmental ethics committees. This thus raises some concerns in terms of future research delays, given the incoming centralisation of the university's ethics process. In the Research Centre for Social Sciences a distinct ethics board (The Economics, Law, Management, Politics and Sociology (ELMPS) ethics committee) exists for pedagogical purposes, increasing efficiency and raising research in this area to a higher level of importance. ELMPS, a sub-committee of the University of York's ethics committee, comprised of academic staff members across the five departments, PhD representatives and a lay member, brings together multiple disciplines to ensure any research carried out is carried out with research integrity in an efficient manner. This could be replicated in the imminent ethics changes - with an Ethics board reserved for SoTL scholarship.

Teaching and scholarship contracts

Staff employed on teaching and scholarship (T&S) contracts are restricted to engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), which is classed as distinct from pedagogical research in several ways. For instance, although there is little difference between the impact of findings derived from SoTL and those from pedagogical research, for valid structural reasons, T&S staff do not get similar levels of time to engage in SoTL, receive less research administrative support, and there is less research funding available. This has led to a research culture where sometimes the value of SoTL is not given equal status as research. However, there are numerous methods for T&S staff to develop strong research profiles, and several such initiatives are underway at the University of York.

For example, within the Psychology Department the Head of Department, Prof. Lisa Henderson has proposed a new initiative to facilitate pedagogical research, this initiative encourages and supports collaborations between Teaching and Scholarship (T&S) and Academic, Research, and Teaching (ART) staff. The aim is to capitalise on mutual benefits by utilising allocated T&S scholarship time, drawing on ART staff's research expertise in relevant fields (e.g., memory, learning, teaching practice, education policy), and meeting the requirement to engage in higher education research in the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP). They are currently seeking interest and feedback from T&S staff on how to implement this initiative effectively and have appointed a Senior Lecturer from T&S to oversee the project as part of their academic citizenship duties. The plan is to pilot the initiative in the next round of PGCAP projects, inviting proposals from both ART and T&S staff on areas of interest that can be developed into collaborative projects. The hope is that this would then initiate further long-term collaborations.