RCSI UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

RCSI EDI Strategy 2024 - 2027

rcsi.com/equality-diversity-and-inclusion

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Introduction

Everything we do is shaped by our mission: 'To educate, nurture and discover for the benefit of human health'. RCSI's new strategic plan, launched in September 2023, sets out a roadmap for how we will enhance our contribution and innovate for a healthier future.
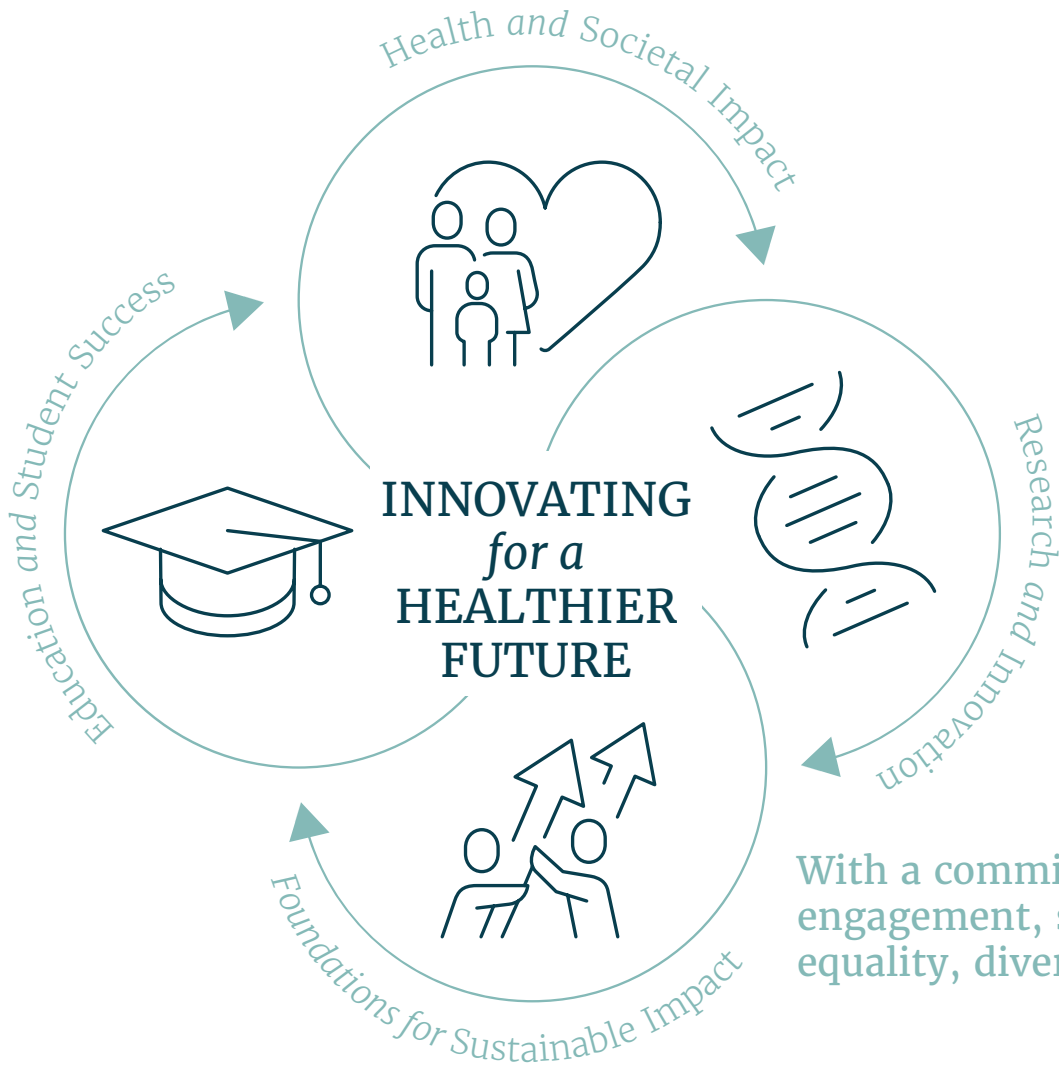
Our goal to embed a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion is a priority under one of our four strategic themes - Foundations for Sustainable Impact. Delivering such impact can only be achieved through investment in our people, infrastructure and operations. RCSI's values of Respect, Collaboration, Scholarship and Innovation continue to guide our culture. By integrating equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the University, we will continue to develop our inclusive culture where everyone can bring their true selves to RCSI as a student, staff member or visitor.

As signatories to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) we expand our commitment to achieving equality, diversity and inclusion through our close alignment with SDG 3 'Good Health and Well-being' and SDG5 'Gender Equality'. We are proud of what has been achieved to date, while recognising the need for continuous investment and support to ensure that RCSI continues to exemplify a more equitable environment for all. Together with the Senior Management Team, we will guide, champion and back our collective ambition to deliver that environment.

Professor Cathal Kelly
Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive/Registrar

Health *and* Societal Impact

Education and Student Success

Research and Innovation

INNOVATING
for a
HEALTHIER
FUTURE

Foundations for Sustainable Impact

With a commitment to quality, engagement, sustainability, and equality, diversity *and* inclusion

Innovating for a Healthier Future

Foreword

When RCSI's EDI Unit was established in 2017, the term 'EDI' was not well-known to many of our colleagues, and our focus, as a unit, was to change that and embed EDI within RCSI. Seven years on as we launch this new EDI Strategy, I'm pleased to say that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and the EDI Unit's work is widely recognised across the institution, and EDI is no longer a new acronym that needs to be explained!

Over the last number of years, the work of the EDI Unit has evolved from being a new concept in supporting RCSI's commitment to a positive culture, to being an intrinsic aspect of our identity. In our most recent EDI Staff survey, almost 90% of respondents reported that the culture and atmosphere in RCSI is inclusive and friendly to all, while over 90% recommend RCSI as a good place to work. Much of this is down to RCSI's leadership team, the great work of our HR department, and the institution's strategic principles to prioritise quality, equality, diversity, inclusion and sustainability. Mostly, however, it is down to RCSI's people: our students, staff and stakeholders.

Our people make our culture what it is, and we know that they will play a substantial role in the successful implementation of our new EDI Strategy, which is organised into three strategic pillars:

· **Strategic Engagement and Alignment**
· **Inclusivity and Respect**
· **Awareness and Communication**

Through this new strategy, we want to build on the successes of the last seven years and look forward to achieving an Athena Swan Silver Institutional award which will demonstrate sustained and continuous impact and commitment to a more equitable environment for all. Our ambitious Athena Swan action plan reaches right across the institution, and will be enabled by our network of advocates and champions. We recognise the engagement and commitment to EDI across RCSI, and want to harness this great work being done throughout RCSI, by celebrating everyone's contribution to EDI in its many forms, whether joining an event, reviewing the curriculum, attending training, embedding UDL principles or calling out harmful behaviour.

So, if you were to ask me what the impact of this strategy will be, I hope that every person in RCSI will know the importance and value of embedding EDI in everything we do, that they understand the connection between EDI and respect, tolerance and safety, and that we evolve from a team of four to a movement of hundreds!

Ms Liz Hughes
Head of EDI - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Vision

RCSI is committed to embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) across everything we do. We actively work to foster an inclusive and vibrant university community where every member of our student and staff body is respected, valued, and celebrated for their unique, diverse and intersecting identities. We will maintain our investment in developing collaborative programmes and initiatives. Our goal is to raise awareness, educate and empower our community, while achieving positive and lasting change.

Introduction to Strategic Pillars

In 2018, RCSI launched its first EDI Strategy and Action Plan. The strategy document defined a structured and methodological approach to the institution's EDI work and served as a proactive and collaborative approach to advancing the EDI agenda at RCSI.

RCSI received an Athena Swan Bronze award in 2018 and renewed our institutional bronze award in August 2023. The Athena Swan charter is a framework that is used nationally and internationally to support and transform equality in higher education and research. This strategy aligns with the objectives set out in RCSI's Athena Swan Institutional Action Plan as well as the RCSI Strategy 2023-2027 - Innovating for a Healthier Future.

Since 2018 a number of key institutional policies and EDI initiatives have been launched including our Gender Identity and Expression, Dignity and Respect and Domestic Violence and Abuse Leave Policies, as well as our Race Equality Action Plan, and the Speak Out reporting tool. To facilitate student and staff engagement with EDI, three Forums have been created: Race Equality, VisABILITY, Ending Sexual Violence and Supporting Survivors and Promoting Consent (ESP).

Internal EDI networks, including our Pride, Multicultural and Women's networks have also been established.

It is against this backdrop that we outline RCSI's EDI goals and actions for the coming years, with a specific focus on:

- **Strategic Engagement and Alignment:**
  Ensuring that EDI is mainstreamed throughout RCSI, aligned with the current institutional strategy and delivered in partnership with key functions throughout RCSI.

- **Inclusivity and Respect:**
  Continuing to promote safe, inclusive, positive work and study environments across RCSI through a range of means including existing mechanisms such as Speak Out and institutional reporting.
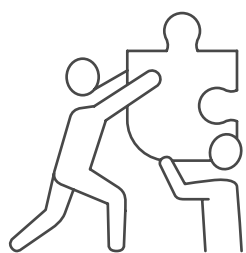
- **Awareness and Communication:**
  Building on existing institutional knowledge of and interaction with EDI and its central role in RCSI through targeted, creative and engaging approaches.

Strategic Pillars

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Pillar 1:
Strategic Engagement and Alignment

Pillar 2:
Inclusivity and Respect

Pillar 3:
Awareness and Communication
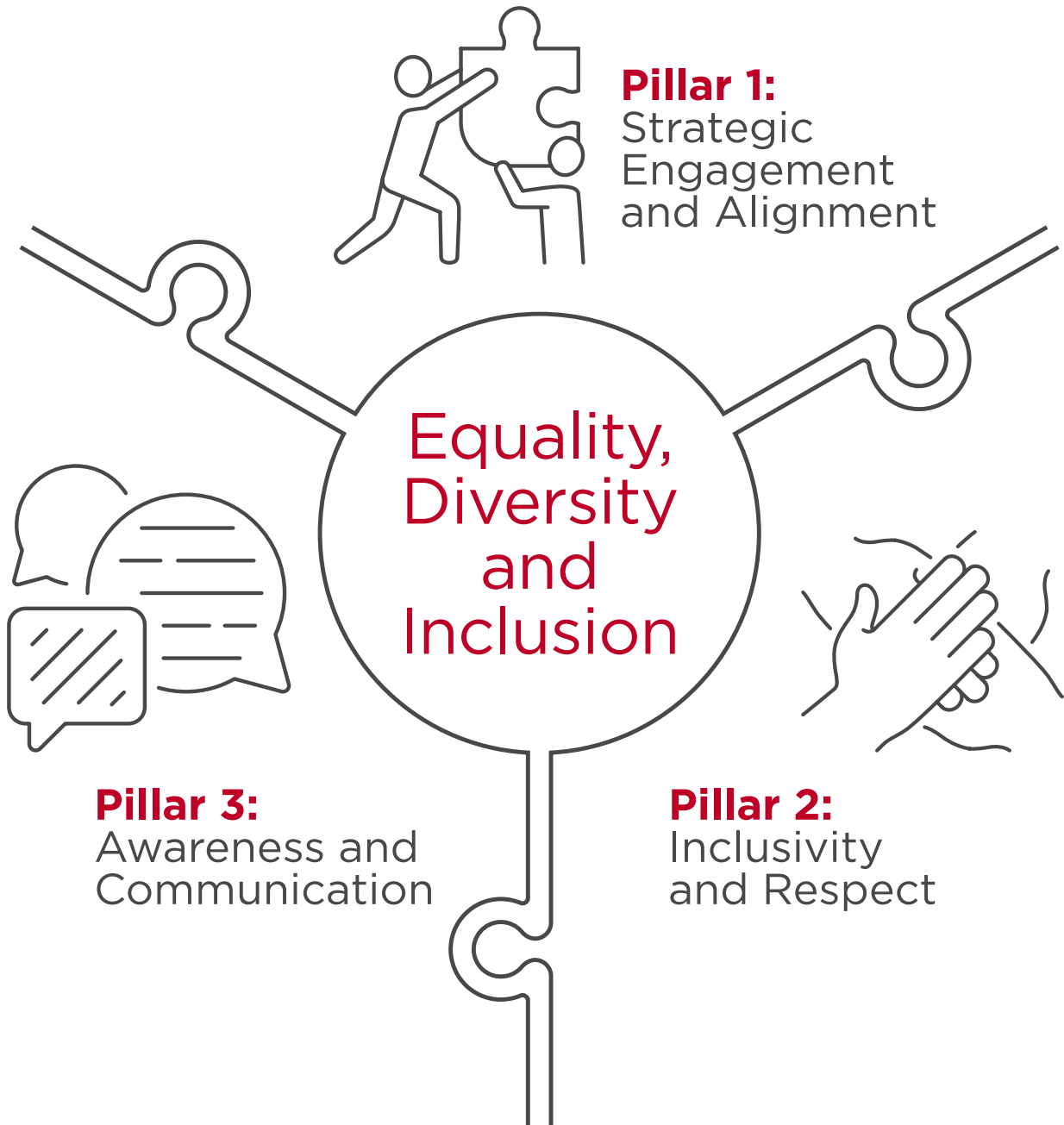
Pillar 1:
Strategic Engagement and Alignment

RCSI's Strategy, Innovating for a Healthier Future (2023-2027) establishes EDI as one of the institution's Key Principles underpinning its work throughout the strategy's life-cycle. This is a commitment that speaks to the experiences and expectations of both staff and students, and encompasses multiple areas of institutional activity.

Through this EDI Strategy, the EDI Unit will concentrate its activities on cohesively aligning with the overarching goals within the institutional strategy, with a particular focus on:

- **Athena Swan:** As a critically important mechanism underscoring institutional EDI strategy and activity, the EDI Unit will consistently embed Athena Swan principles through the implementation of the institution's Action Plan. Ongoing collaboration with colleagues remains central to our way of working, in particular, our partnership with HR empowers both teams to effect positive cultural change. Specific areas of activity pertaining to Athena Swan include, but are not limited to recruitment, retention and progression.

- **Data and Research:** Research initiatives within the EDI Unit support our culture of continuous improvement and innovation. A qualitative and quantitative approach to research will be embedded, including data gathering and analysis through a number of research approaches, such as demographic information collection, surveying and focus groups. This continuous research will act as a conduit for impact assessment and evidence-based decision making. The EDI Unit and the Office of Research and Innovation will continue to collaborate to provide support to researchers. The EDI Unit will also continue to lead and participate in research projects supported by national and international funders.

- **Leadership Engagement:** RCSI's Senior Management Team (SMT) is committed to embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion throughout the institution, as outlined in Innovating for a Healthier Future – RCSI Strategy 2023-2027. The role of SMT members will be pivotal in mainstreaming EDI across RCSI in their roles as champions, advocates and role models through their leadership and support of committees, forums and targeted initiatives.

Pillar 2:
Inclusivity and Respect

As a central institutional value outlined in RCSI's current strategy, Respect also forms part of this EDI Strategy's second pillar. In order to promote equality, diversity and inclusion across the institution, we must ensure that our study and work environments are inclusive, productive and safe spaces, free from bullying, harassment or other forms of harmful behaviour.

In addition, an intersectional approach will be followed to ensure that the diversity of lived experiences and perspectives are central to the EDI Unit's activities. This will inform our work on:

- **Safe and Inclusive Study and Work Environments:** We will promote an environment which upholds the dignity and respect of students and staff and supports every individual's right to study and work in an environment which is free from any form of harassment, intimidation or bullying. Tools and supports like Speak Out, our anonymous reporting tool, will instill a culture of reporting and accountability. We will maintain our collaboration with clinical partners to align our collective ambition in this regard.

- **Robust Policies and Processes:** Through the lifetime of this EDI Strategy, a continuous focus will be maintained on evaluating and evolving policies and processes to ensure that they are robust and supportive to all. The EDI Unit will continue to contribute to the Institutional Policy Review Group and annual update process to ensure that policies are aligned with legislative changes and sectoral best practice. We expect that new Equality Legislation will be introduced during the lifetime of this strategy.

- **Role Modelling and Representation:** The EDI Unit promotes environments where diverse lived experiences and perspectives are not only acknowledged, but celebrated. To uphold this commitment, we will ensure and encourage diverse and inclusive representation in areas such as our committees, panelists and speakers at our events and on our recruitment panels. Our overarching goal is to actively nurture EDI principles in all decision-making processes across RCSI.

Pillar 3:
Awareness and Communication

As part of the development of this EDI Strategy, research was conducted to discern knowledge and understanding of both the work of the EDI Unit, and the wider topic of EDI across RCSI. While this research indicated a cohesive level of engagement, this is something that will be built upon over the course of the strategy.

Central to the enhancement of existing engagement and awareness of EDI, and its relevance to students and staff alike, will be the implementation of a range of targeted measures, which will include:

- **Professional Development:** Given the strategic institutional role EDI plays, it is critical that this is reflected in the Professional Development Plan structure, and assigned a significance within both individual and team development. This objective also supports our goal to ensure that our staff feel that each person is accountable in some way to deliver a more equitable environment in RCSI.

- **Training, Awareness and Communication:** As part of the ongoing training planning of the EDI Unit, new and creative forms of awareness raising, development and communications will be introduced during the course of this strategy to maximise understanding and engagement. Our ambition is to build on existing foundational knowledge and equip our colleagues to engage with more complex EDI issues, which will advance our intersectional action plan.

- **Champions and Advocates:** During the course of this strategy, we will empower all students and staff to take collective responsibility in embedding a culture of EDI across RCSI. We will adopt an ethos of one small change - moving from the notion of an EDI Unit of four to an organisation of 1,300 staff - recognising and celebrating contributions across the board.

Delivery and Oversight of Strategy

Delivery

This EDI Strategy will underpin and guide the activity of both the EDI Unit, and all aspects of RCSI's EDI activities. As noted within the Strategic Pillars, a number of key structures will be central to the delivery of this strategy, namely the delivery of the Institutional Athena Swan Action Plan.

This work will be complemented by the delivery of fora Action Plans including Race Equality, VisABILITY and Ending Sexual Violence, Supporting Survivors and Promoting Consent (ESP) fora. Staff-led networks will continue to foster a sense of community and belonging by creating safe spaces to share and learn from their unique experiences.

We will support our overall mission - **'To educate, nurture and discover for the benefit of human health'** by incorporating EDI subject matter into our curricula and teaching and learning materials, while embedding equality grounds into interactive learning tools, including case-based learning and simulation.

Promoting an institutional culture that values equality, diversity and inclusion starts at the first interaction staff and students have with RCSI, from interview and induction, and it remains a central tenet of their experience at the institution, through training and professional development. Fundamentally, delivery of this strategy belongs to everyone at RCSI.

Oversight

RCSI's EDI Governance and Reporting Structure, set out above, will continue to provide expert, methodical oversight and engagement on the delivery of the EDI Strategy. Through this structure, regular reporting is provided to the institution's SMT, on progress and impact of the EDI Unit's activities.

EDI related action plans are reviewed and approved by SMT, this includes the Institutional Athena Swan Action Plan and ESP, Race Equality and VisABILITY action plans. Progress updates and reports are presented to SMT on a regular basis. This activity aligns with our HEA reporting requirements as well as RCSI's overall commitment to statutory reporting.
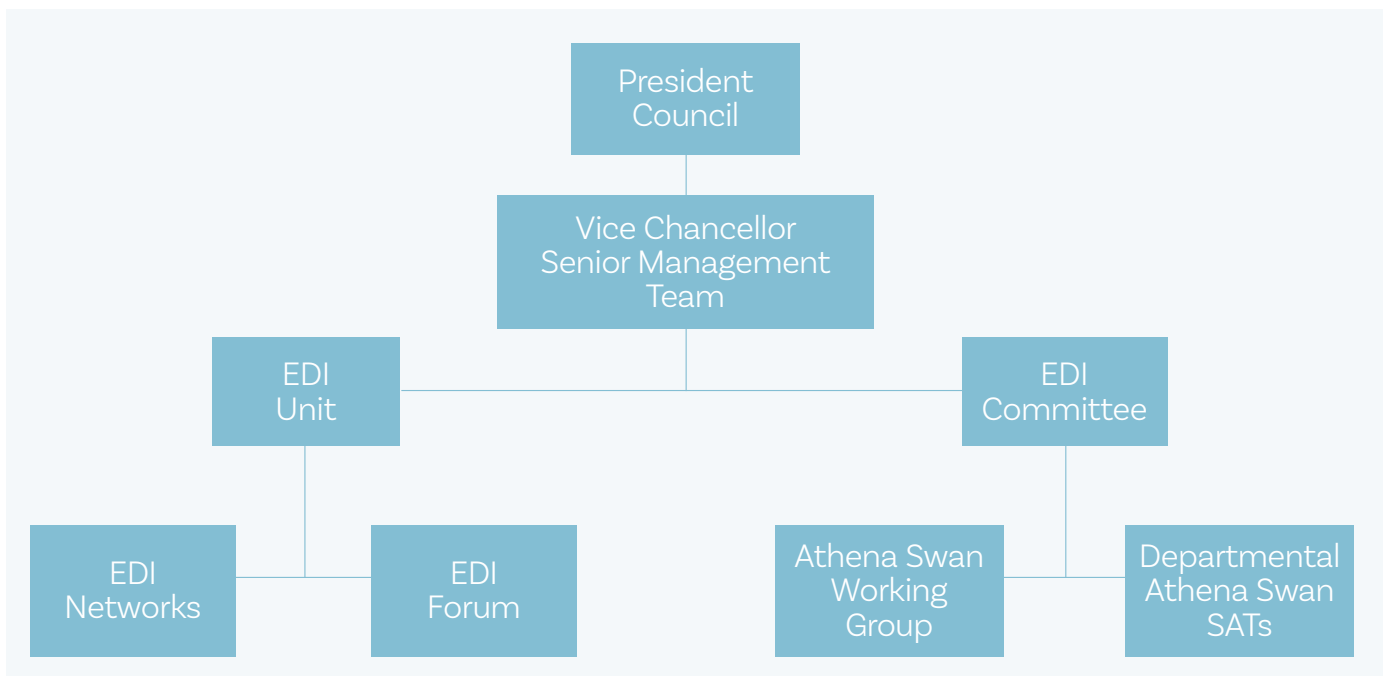
RCSI EDI Governance and Reporting Structure

Key Strategic Impact Outcomes:

By the end of this Strategy:

- **Athena Swan:** RCSI will have achieved an Institutional Athena Swan Silver award. This award will demonstrate RCSI's ability to deliver meaningful and impactful institutional change.

- **Safety and Wellbeing:** Students and staff will have a greater sense of safety and wellbeing, due to an open and inclusive work and study environment where a culture of reporting is promoted and accountability is ensured. EDI will continue to play a positive role in making our working environment as inclusive and welcoming as possible.

- **Recognition of EDI Contributions:** We will have recognised and celebrated EDI contributions from students and staff through ongoing participation in fora, networks and programmes as well as recognition through the PDP process.

- **Partnership:** Our clinical colleagues will feel a greater sense of ownership and influence in embedding EDI in their work environment and creating a more positive culture.

- **RCSI's Position:** RCSI will have maintained and developed its position as a recognised leader in EDI in the HEI sector and beyond.

By the end of 2027, widespread recognition that EDI is who we are and what we do will be achieved.

Positive Action Statement

RCSI is a community of academic, research and professional staff working collaboratively to lead the world to better health. Here, you will thrive in an innovative and inclusive atmosphere and your personal development and wellbeing will be supported. We invite you to join us to help deliver on our exciting mission "To educate, nurture and discover for the benefit of human health".

We seek candidates whose experience to date has prepared them to contribute to our commitment to the Race Equality Action Plan at RCSI. Our students come from all walks of life and so do we. We hire great people from a wide variety of backgrounds. This makes our university stronger and ensures we hire the best talent."

- statement used in all RCSI recruitment adverts to encourage a diversity of applicants.

@rcsi_edi

@RCSI_Equality

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RCSI

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