

**Lancaster University**

Staff Networks Framework

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**Lancaster University**

###### Staff Networks Framework

1. Introduction

1.1. The University is committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and recognises that real support is needed to empower all staff are to reach their full potential and to excel in the changing context of Higher Education. For these reasons the University currently supports the following five staff networks:

* LU Women’s Network
* LU Parents’ and Carers’ Network
* Disabled Employees Network
* LU Young Staff Network
* Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT+) Staff Network
  1. Purpose of Staff Networks

Staff networks provide a valuable channel:

* To support staff from different protected characteristic groups.
* To enable the University to gain a better understanding of issues faced by staff in the workplace.
* To influence wider University policy.
* To act as a consultative mechanism for the University.
* To support the implementation of the University’s statutory obligations regarding its duty under the Equality Act 2010.
* To share experiences and provide mutual support to staff.
* To build strong communities by working effectively together in a supportive way.

2. Purpose and Scope

2.1 This framework is designed to facilitate the work of existing and new staff networks within the University by setting out the roles and responsibilities of both the networks and the University. It includes guidance on structure, support, resourcing and responsibilities.

2.2 The framework has been informed by good practice within and beyond the University together with direct feedback from the current staff and ally networks, and wider engagement with staff through the EDI Stakeholders’ Engagement Forum.

**3.**  **Benefits of Staff Networks to the University, Staff and Students**

3.1 There are many benefits that staff networks offer to the University, individual staff members and also the students. Some of the benefits to these key stakeholders are listed below:

* **University**
* Staff networks provide feedback, and unique insights and perspectives enabling the University to engage directly with the concerns of under-represented groups.
* Active consultation with staff networks improves policies, procedures and decision making.
* By demonstrating that diversity is valued, the University can attract, develop and retain talented people.
* Staff networks can help tackle discrimination in the workplace through access to information and improved awareness.
* Staff networks help the University progress its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010.
* **Staff**
* Being a member of staff networks can increase motivation and engagement, fostering a sense of belonging.
* Members of staff networks have increased access to information and role models within the University.
* Members of staff networks have the opportunity to raise their concerns, in a safe and confidential environment.
* Staff networks enable staff from protected characteristic groups and their allies to recognise that they are part of and have a vital role to play in the University.
* Staff networks provide a networking opportunity for staff and a coordinated voice on equality issues within the University.
* Members of staff networks can influence the University’s work on Equality Objectives, policies and actions.
* Members of staff networks can influence University policies, procedures and decision making through consultation and compiled network feedback.
* **Students**

Staff networks can also provide an invaluable insight into the needs and expectations of students from diverse communities and backgrounds. This information can help the University to improve services to meet the needs of students from diverse groups and communities.

Where the needs of both staff and students overlap (such as with Parents’ and Carers’), both students and staff will be able to join the same network, enabling student policies and systems to improve.

4. Process for Establishing a New Staff Networks

4.1 The minimum membership required to form a Staff Network will be 5 LU staff members, including minimum 2 identified leadership team (as set out in Section 7.1). This is to ensure that there is a sufficient need and want for the network from the staff base, and that initial membership is sufficient to prevent dissolvement of the proposed network.

4.2 Should a group of staff wish to create a new recognised and university-supported staff network, covering any protected characteristic(s) covered by the Equality Act 2010, they should directly email the EDI Team ([edi@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:edi@lancaster.ac.uk)) with their proposal. This email should include the names of all proposing staff members, a brief rationale for the need or the network, and identify the staff members willing to take leadership positions for the process.

4.3 Subsequently, the necessity for the network, including consideration of whether it is already catered to within an existent network or could be created as an extension of a current network will be discussed.

4.4 If the idea proposed network is supported by the EDI Team, an EDI Advisor will support the intial leadership team to create the proposed network’s draft Terms of Reference to be reviewed and approved by the University EDI Committee. Once Terms of Reference have been agreed by the University EDI Committee, an EDI Advisor will support with set up of a formal leadership team; creation of Teams site, email or other space as necessary; and promotion and communications surrounding the network.

4.5 Where a group of less than 5 employee's believes a new network might be appropriate, they should contact the EDI Team to discuss the idea. We recognise that, as an institution with a large amount of staff each in separate working systems and departments, it may be difficult to initially connect with other members of a group.

**5.** **Disbandment or merging of a Staff Network(s)**

5.1 In the event that an existing staff network's membership fall below the minimum requirement of five, the EDI Team will support the leadership of the network to increase membership through promotions and communications related to the network. If, after one term, the membership remains insufficient, the network and the EDI Team in consultation with the leadership team can recommend to the University EDI Committee to disband the staff network.

5.2 If a staff network decides to merge with another existing staff network, they should directly send an email to the EDI Team (edi@lancaster.ac.uk) with their proposal. The email must include the names of all proposing staff members, a brief explanation for the disbandment or merging, and specify the percentage of network members supporting this decision.

5.3 If a network considers disbandment or merging, the EDI Advisor will assist with archiving network documents and resources or facilitating their integration into an existing staff network.

5.4 The University EDI Committee in consultation with the EDI Team will be the ultimate decision-making forum in relation to the above.

6. The Role of Allyship Networks

LU also recognises that some existent or proposed networks may benefit from the existence of an Allyship network, where members of the staff outside of their network wish to show support, learn more about the barriers and challenges, and encourage active allyship for the members of the network. In these scenarios, the existent staff network will be referred to as the ‘primary Staff Network’, in relation to the allyship network.

These Allyship Networks will be regarded as a sub-network of the primary staff network. The leadership team of the primary Staff Network will be responsible for the management and delivery of the allyship network. However, the EDI team will support in administrative work, event delivery and network planning as appropriate.

Though Allyship networks will not be allocated any additional funding, the ally network leadership team benefit from the same time allocation as outlined in section 8.3. Where funds are required, this is typically expected to come from the primary Staff Network’s budget. Where the funding needs of an allyship network are too large to be appropriately covered by their primary staff network, the network leadership team(s) should speak directly with the EDI Team to explore alternative options.

All further information in this document regards Allyship Networks as sub-sections of their primary Staff Networks.

7. Structure of Staff Networks

7.1 Accountability of Staff Networks

* + Each staff network will work/liaise directly with the University’s EDI Team, situated in the University’s People and Organisational Effectiveness division.
  + EDI Advisors will act as a lead and key point of contact for the staff networks, and work collaboratively where needed to support intersectional queries.
  + Communications with the EDI Advisors will largely be managed by the networks’ leadership teams, as outlined in their responsiblities below.
  + Each Network will have agreed Terms of Refence setting out the aims & Objectives of the network, code of conduct, membership/termination of membership, meetings and voting, accountability, role of the AGM, election of officers, terms of office and Finance/Budget etc.
  + Network leadership teams will be formed in accordance with the network’s agreed Terms of Reference.
  + The leadership teams of networks will be comprised of a minimum of 2 named officers of the network, with a maximum of 5 named officers. Where a network leadership is not large enough to have members individually fill each of the officer roles below, it may be appropriate that members of the leadership team take on multiple responsibilities in a balanced measure.
  + The recommended roles and responsibilities are detailed below, however, where fewer members volunteer to take on officer responsibilities, it may be necessary for roles to be redesigned to cover all the below responsibilities.

7.2 Chair

Each staff network will have a Chair or Joint Chairs. The Chair or Joint Chairs will be elected by the network. The responsibilities of the Chair or Joint Chairs are to:

* Chair staff network and steering group meetings efficiently through the use of carefully structured agendas and encouraging participation from all members.
* Facilitate discussions and decision making at network meetings.
* Ensure all members understand their collective responsibility for any decisions.
* Represent the staff network at the termly EDI stakeholders engagement forum, and other EDI meetings and conferences etc. as and when appropriate.
* Act as an advocate for the staff network within the University.
* Be a point of contact for new and existing members of the network.
* Oversee the staff network budget in consultation with the network and in coordination with the University’s EDI team.

7.3 Vice Chair

Where there is a single Chair elected, the staff network will also have a Vice-Chair who will be elected by the network which they represent. Where Joint Chairing arrangements are in place, a Vice Chair is not necessary. The responsibilties of the Vice Chair are to:

* In the absence of Chair, carry out the above responsibilities.
* Raise awareness of the activities of the staff network throughout the organisation.

7.4 Treasurer

Each staff network will have a Treasurer who will be elected by the network. The responsibilities of the Treasurer are:

* Regularly attend staff network and steering group meetings.
* Coordinate budget requests to the EDI Team, including internal and external procurement requests, resource purchases and payments for external services, such as memberships, speakers or consultants, as required by the network.
* Track funding used by the network to ensure no overspend and appropriate useage of funds.
* Provide an annual budget forecast detailing how the budget allocated to the network is expected to be spent, meeting deadlines as set by the EDI Team.

7.5 Secretary

Each staff network will have a Secretary who will be elected by the network. The responsibilties of the Secretary are:

* Regularly attend staff network and steering group meetings.
* Co-ordinate activities of their network by, organising meetings and sending out agenda and note taking.
* Undertakes other administrative duties as required.
* Maintains a member email distribution list.
* Be a point of contact for new and existing members of the network.

7.6 Other Officers

Each staff network has the option of having other officers as appropriate, who will be elected by the network. For example:

* a Communications officer might hold responsibility for creation and distribution of network promotional materials, as well as ensuring regular communications with members are maintained.
* a Socials Officer may be responsible for the social network aspects, such as organising termly coffee catch-ups, or hybrid new member introduction events.
* An Allyship Officer may be primarily responsible for the management of the related Allyship Network.

7.7 Network Representational Roles

Each staff network has the option of having other named representatives (Subject Expert) to be identified as and when necessary by the network’s leadership team and defined within the network’s Terms of Reference. Responsibilities of Network Representational Roles might include:

* Utilising or developing relevant skillsets to support the delivery of the network.
* Providing a unique perspective on specific areas of the network as outlined in their Terms of Reference.
* Attendance or support at digital, in person or hybrid events.
* Learning from the network officers with a view to stepping into a officer role in the future.

7.8 Senior Network Champions

Each Staff Network will have a Senior Network Champion, who is member of staff and routinely attends the University EDI Committee.

The role of the Senior Champions will be:

* To interact with Staff Network Leadership Team on a regular basis.
* To act as senior sponsor for the network, championing, promoting and representing the network across the University.
* To consider the impact of EDI Committee work on their sponsored/affiliated network.

8. Support and Resourcing

8.1 Budget and Expenditure

Each of the recognised staff networks will be allocated an annual budget, for use within the University’s budgetary year (1st Aug – 31st July). Funds will not be carried over to the following year if they are not used.

These funds are to be used to support the activities of the networks as well as the representation of the networks locally, regionally, and nationally. The budget will be managed collaboratively by the Chair(s) of the staff network, the assigned Treasurer of the network, and the EDI Team. Overall accountability for the budget remains with the Director of People & Organisational Effectiveness (POE).

Where it is deemed that purchase of a specific resource will benefit multiple or all staff networks, the funding for this will be equally split across the related networks where needed, following agreement with the relevant network leadership teams.

8.2 Support from EDI Team

The EDI Team will:

* Help with the planning and delivery of staff network activities and facilitate consultation on University policies, strategies and initiatives as and when required.
* Provide on-going support to ensure the effectiveness of the staff networks.
* Oversee the networks’ budget management, including supporting procurement and sourcing of services and resources.
* Act as an advocate for staff networks within the University.
* Signpost network members to appropriate guidance and support to address any work related concerns.

8.3 Time for Staff Networks’ Activities

There are many ways for staff to get involved with the staff networks in the same way as staff get involved in a whole host of activities as part of the wider Lancaster community. Typically, being a staff network member won’t need any kind of formalised arrangement and getting involved will be about living our values. Managers are encouraged to promote opportunities for staff to join relevant networks and wherever possible, support them to participate. Staff networks will typically hold monthly, one-hour meetings as well as collaborating through MS Teams on an ad hoc basis.

For those who wish to take on a role as part of a network leadership team (for example Chair/Joint Chairs, Vice Chair, Secretary, Communication Officer and Treasurer) or as a network rep (as outlined in section 7), a discussion should take place between line manager and staff member to consider any conflicting priorities that may arise.

It is anticipated that staff network leadership team members will need to commit around 5 hours per month (60 hours per year) whereas for a network rep, it will be around 2 hours per month (12 hours per year). Being part of a staff network leadership team or a network rep is subject to line manager agreement and should be recorded as part of workload allocation or the PDR process. It should be considered as a good development opportunity.

There may also be opportunities for staff involved in networks to attend conferences, training sessions, focus groups, webinars etc. These should be discussed and agreed locally with line managers.

8.4 **Meetings**

Staff network meetings will typically be held on Bailrigg campus and/or via MS Teams. Network meetings are open to all staff members who identify themselves as a member of the group that the network supports and represents.

8.5 **Notification of Meetings**

The network Chair/Joint Chairs will aim to provide an annual timetable for the network meetings to its members. However, in addition to these meetings there may also be ad hoc and/or reactive sessions or focus groups that needs to be held at short notice as and when required.

8.6 **Facilities**

The University will provide access to equipment and facilities for the officers to enable them to fulfil their expected duties provided within the work environment through the standard University procedures.

9. Responsibilities

Staff Network Leadership Team & Members should aim

* To develop and publicise network aims and objectives and review these regularly to ensure that they meet the needs and expectations of members and the University.
* To consult with and advise the University on development and implementation of policies in an appropriate manner to reduce any negative impact on protected characteristic group staff and students.
* To be a source of information and guidance for the University at a Senior Management level regarding issues affecting protected characteristic groups of staff and students.
* To develop and publicise an annual programme of objectives and events for the network and review of past activities.
* To provide a budget forecast for the network, working closely with the EDI Team to process access to funds and procurement requests via the processes laid out in the related [Staff Networks Budget Management Processes document (Appendix A)](#_Appendix_A)
* To provide a supportive and well-publicised forum for employees who are covered by the aims and objectives of the network.
* To provide an ‘open’ session at meetings for those with an interest in the network’s agenda, or for speakers who are not members to attend.
* To advertise and communicate widely, using various communication channels, to ensure that all staff are aware of and have access to the activities of the network.
* To raise issues of collective concern with the University and work with the University to address these concerns.
* Where an individual employment issue is raised, signpost the individual to HR and other channels of support.
* To engage with the University’s EDI Committee via the EDI Forum and where appropriate, by attending the University’s EDI Committee.

The University as an entity should aim:

* To consult with the staff networks when reviewing or developing relevant employment policies/procedures, strategies and service developments, allowing adequate time for sufficient responses to be collated and presented.
* To consider the views and comments of the staff networks in any policy consultation and feedback to the staff networks on the outcomes of consultation.
* To provide an annual budget for staff network activities, coordinated through the University’s EDI Team.
* To publicise the networks and the importance and value of participating in staff networks’ activities.
* To promote the networks to new and existing employees and encourage managers to release employees to participate in them.
* To enable an open and safe environment for staff concerns to be raised through the staff networks, listening and proactively responding as appropriate.
* To act as point of liaison for EDI related questions raised through staff networks, through the University’s EDI Team, supporting the network leadership teams to contact and interact with the correct university departments.
* To respond to EDI training needs of the wider workforce as identified by the staff networks.
* To take part and promote initiatives developed by the staff networks, enacting promotion on a fair and equitable basis, through the appropriate communication channels.
* Where appropriate, to invite Staff Network Lead(s) to report to the EDI Committee on particular matters of interest.

**10.** **Further Information**

For more information, please contact the University EDI Team on at [edi@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:edi@lancaster.ac.uk)

# Appendix A

LU Staff Networks Budget Management Processes

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# Process for Accessing Staff Network Funds

For all networks, to minimise the workload on the networks’ leadership teams, purchasing and procurement will be supported directly by the relevant EDI Advisor. Where necessary, the EDI Advisors will manage approvals of spending from senior members of the EDI Team. This may be required for:

* Booking of external speakers
* Provision of bespoke training
* Utilisation of new resource providers, where a required resource is not available through the university’s current approved providers.

## Internal expenses

E.g., Catering, printing

* Network leadership team decide on services required as a group and identified treasurer contacts [edi@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:edi@lancaster.ac.uk).with request.
  + For catering, this should include items required, quantities, location details and event timings/purpose.
* EDI Team will then manage the booking, forwarding booking confirmation and correspondence to the network.
* For any purchases made in this way, ample time must be provided for the costs to be processed and approved.
* Please allow at least 2 weeks for catering requests and 3 weeks for large printing requests.

## External small purchases (up to £100)

E.g., Colouring pencils, disposable crockery, raffle prizes

* Network leadership team(s) decide on services required as a group and identified treasurer contacts [edi@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:edi@lancaster.ac.uk) with request.
  + For consumables such as stationary or decorations, an Amazon link should be provided, or equivalent link from other provider. In the case that the resource is not purchasable from an approved university supplier, the EDI Team will advise on alternatives or processes.
  + The network should also provide an appropriate delivery location and named contact responsible to collect the delivery. Alternatively, it will be delivered to the EDI Team and collectable from the POE Building.
* EDI Team will manage the purchase, forwarding receipt of purchase and estimated delivery dates to the network.
* For any purchases made in this way, sufficient time should be provided for delivery. *Please note that Amazon does not guarantee next day delivery for all items.*

## External large purchases (over £100)

E.g., Pull-up banners, external speakers, membership of external organisations

* Network leadership team decide on services required as a group and identified treasurer contacts [edi@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:edi@lancaster.ac.uk) with request.
* EDI Team may arrange a meeting with the network leadership team to discuss the request and confirm details as appropriate. It may also be appropriate to consult with other network leadership teams before agreeing any purchase, particularly to ensure that the actions of one staff network is not detrimental to any of the others.
* EDI Team will process the purchase order and handle delivery of any physical items to ensure goods are received.
* For external speakers or guests, the network will be responsible for managing the attendance of the guest. The EDI Team may be in attendance also, but this is not guaranteed.

# Usage of LU Brand on Materials

The EDI Team can advise on appropriate use of LU Branding (including the use of network logos) on materials intended for repeat usage at events, distributable flyers, or reusable signage.

The EDI Team are working with the LU Marketing Team to develop a range of template materials for use by networks to minimise delay on production of these resources. Please contact [edi@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:edi@lancaster.ac.uk) directly to be granted access to these templates as they are developed. It is asked that general [University brand guidance](https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/current-staff/communications-and-marketing/marketing/resources/) and [branded templates](https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/current-staff/communications-and-marketing/marketing/resources/templates/) be utilised and considered upon the requests of all materials.

For purchases with design requirements (such as pull-up banners), ample time must be provided to allow graphic design, marketing approval on usage of branding, and production of the materials. A good estimate for these types of requests would be 4-6 weeks.

# Commitment to sustainability and accessibility

Due regard should be paid to Lancaster University’s [Sustainable Procurement Policy](https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/media/lancaster-university/content-assets/documents/sustainability/BrandedMerchandise.pdf) and all requests for collateral items are to be made with consideration to the [University’s sustainability aims and strategy](https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/sustainability/). In the first instance, treasurers can contact [edi@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:edi@lancaster.ac.uk) directly for sustainability purchase guidance and advise. Additionally, general marketing and sustainable procurement guidance can be made via [marketing-services@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:marketingservices@lancaster.ac.uk)

Creating accessible materials, goods and services are encouraged to promote inclusive and intersectional practices that are beneficial for everyone. Network Chair(s) can liaise with the EDI team to ensure accessibility guidance and requirements have been met in relation to any purchase requests. Quick links to existing guidance and resources on accessibility can be found below:

* [Creating Accessible Resources](https://development.lancaster.ac.uk/mod/page/view.php?id=446) - Internal Moodle training on good practices in creating accessible materials
* [Accessibility guide for website editors](https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/toolkit/accessibility-guide/) – Internal CMS guidance on [Accessibility Regulations 2018](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps) that public sector websites are accessible to everyone, including an [Accessibility checklist](https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/toolkit/accessibility-checklist/)
* [Make PDFs accessible (Acrobat Pro)](https://helpx.adobe.com/uk/acrobat/using/create-verify-pdf-accessibility.html#make_PDFs_accessible) - Online Adobe step-by-step guidance via the ‘Make Accessible’ feature in Acrobat Pro
* [UK Government Accessibility Guidelines](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/publishing-accessible-documents) - Learn how to publish accessible documents to meet the needs of all users under the accessibility regulations
* [UK Government Accessibility Blog](https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/)

# Storage of Materials

It may be that some materials are intended for use across several events, or all in-person events in the future of the staff network. If these cases, if the Network leadership team do not have access to an easily accessible secure storage location, they may be able to utilise the EDI Team’s facilities.

Physical resources may be able to be securely stored for future use with the EDI Team in the POE Building. This may include banners and signage, consumable materials, hard-copy resources etc.

If the staff network are storing the physical materials themselves, the EDI Team is to be advised on which member of the leadership team is responsible for the materials, and where they are being stored. This is purely to allow the materials to be retrieved should a leadership team member fall ill or be unable to attend campus on the day the materials are required.

For digital materials, such as branded designs, email templates, event plans, risk assessment, the EDI Team can provide a secure storage location on SharePoint for each network to use, on request. Access to these files can be edited as priority if/when the staff network leadership team changes members.

# Tracking and Approval of Funding

Any purchases made by the staff networks will be processed through the EDI cost code.

The EDI Team will be responsible for raising all purchase orders and tracking the purchases made by each network, and handling any financial reporting required.

Networks should also keep track of their own expenditure using a [simple network budget tracker (Appendix B)](#_Appendix_B). This is to ensure ease of access to: view remaining budget; track purchases requested and delivery; ensure no duplication of requests.

Where a request is submitted that is not deemed appropriate use of university funds, the EDI Team will liaise with the staff network leadership team to discuss and suggest and alternate solution.

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# Simplified Process Visual

# Appendix B

Simplified Network Budget Tracker

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| Date of Request | Purchase Type | Item | Reason for purchase | Cost | Date processed by EDI | Goods received |
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