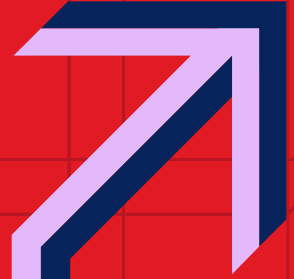


**Mc  
Graw  
Hill**

**Intentionality  
for Inclusivity:  
The Journey  
at Middlesex  
University**



Education has changed in a myriad of ways over the millennia, but one of the most noticeable changes is the diversity of those being taught. Historically, learners tended to be from similar social, economic and ethnic backgrounds, predominantly white and male.

Today, we find that across educational settings, local learners make up a smaller proportion of the total group than those from further afield. In higher education especially, the number of students studying outside the country they were born in is notably high. Indeed, lecturers share anecdotes of their cohorts being made up of learners from over 100 nationalities.





As such, issues of diversity are integral to teaching in 2022. The discourse around it and its related areas, equity and inclusion, has become increasingly pertinent in the learning and education space. As a result, many institutions have focussed their efforts on how best to support diversity, equity and inclusivity (DEI).

In this paper, we shine a light on how DEI efforts at one university in the UK are being combined strategically with something else: intentionality.

By definition, intentionality is the act of being deliberate or taking an action with purpose. At Middlesex University (MDX), it is explained as the difference between passive thinking and proactive thinking and then acting upon those thoughts.

“Everyone will say DEI is important but being intentional is the hook that brings about change. This is the difference. It is not good enough to say we want to improve. Intentionality means that there are actions and behaviours that follow.”

**Anna Kyprianou, PV-C for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Middlesex University**

In this paper, we look at how the institution has built a robust and holistic approach to DEI, blending intentionality with action, which is making a difference to the whole MDX community; students and staff.

# About the University

MDX's history can be traced to 1878 when its founding institute, St Katharine's College, was established in Tottenham as a teacher training college for women. Having merged with several other institutes across north London, MDX was consolidated in its current form in 1992. It is one of the post-1992 universities (former polytechnics) that radically transformed higher education at the time.

From the 1990s, MDX began to develop its international presence with an overseas regional office in Kuala Lumpur. By 1995, a network of regional offices had opened across Europe, India, China and the Americas. MDX opened its first overseas campus in Dubai (2005) followed by campuses in Mauritius (2009) and Malta (2013) and has over 100 academic partnerships around the world. Recognised as a pioneer internationally, MDX has been awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize three times and received the Queen's Award for Enterprise for its international work twice.

Over a ten-year period, MDX consolidated several London campuses into one at Hendon, where all its London-based teaching now takes place, investing over £250m to transform the campus into one of London's largest state-of-the-art campuses.

Today, MDX London is a global and diverse community with over 21,500 students representing 165 nationalities and globally over 44,000 students through its campuses in Dubai, Mauritius and other academic partnerships. Around 60% of London based students are women and 70% identify with an ethnic group broadly categorised as Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic ('BAME').



# 1878

Middlesex University  
was formed in 1878.

# 44,000

Today, it is a hub for around  
20,000 students in the UK and  
just over 40,000 globally across  
three international campuses.

# 60%

60% of London based  
students are women.

# 70%

70% identify with an ethnic  
group categorised as Black,  
Asian, Minority Ethnic ('BAME').

# Middlesex and DEI – Stakeholders



## Dr Deeba Gallacher

**MSc, Ed D., SFHEA**

Dr Deeba Gallacher has held the position of Head of Academic Practice at Middlesex University since 2014, previously a Senior Research Fellow at the institution exploring issues surrounding the student experience, equality, diversity and inclusion and progression and achievement. Taking an evidence informed approach, Deeba is passionate about supporting staff in curriculum enhancements to provide a high quality experience for students and having their practice recognised within national and international frameworks (Professional Standards Framework, National Teaching Fellowship, Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence).

Starting her career in 2002, Deeba continues to work in the area of academic development having gained a PG Cert HE (2013), Ed.D (2012) and is a Senior Fellow (2015) of AdvanceHE authoring a number of publications on the topics of the first year experience, transition, diversity, equality and inclusion.



## Anastasia Calin

Anastasia was the Vice President for the Student Union for Science and Technology from 2021-2022, and currently is working as a Project Admin in the MDX Mental health and Wellbeing team. She is also a full-time medical biochemistry student.



## Dr Sandra Appiah

**PhD, SFHEA, FRSC, MRSB**

Dr Sandra Appiah currently works at the Department of Natural Sciences, Middlesex University, UK. She is an experienced Senior Lecturer who specialises in teaching biochemistry and pharmacognosy. Her roles also include Teaching and Quality Lead in the Faculty of Science and Technology. Sandra co-leads a Biosensor Research Group dedicated to developing novel biosensors for the early detection of chronic diseases such as Alzheimer's disease and myocardial infarction. Her research specialism extends to the study of aberrant cell signalling pathways involved in leukaemia and Alzheimer's disease with drug combinations designed to modulate different cell death processes.



## Anna Kyprianou

**CCMI, CMgr, Chartered CCIPD**

Anna is currently Pro Vice-Chancellor for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Middlesex University. This is a cross-cutting academic leadership and development role that strengthens the connections with, and the voices of, staff and students and supports the University on its culture development and change journey, especially in the area of inclusivity.

Anna has worked with the strategic development of organisations and their management teams for over thirty-five years. She is a Companion of the Chartered Management Institute and a Companion of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.



## Dr Alison Megeney

**BSc (Hons) MSc, PhD, FHEA, FIMA, NTF**

Alison is currently the Deputy Dean Education for the Faculty of Science and Technology at Middlesex University.

Prior to this role, she was Faculty Head of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (LTSE) for the Faculty of Science and Technology, and Director of Undergraduate Design Engineering and Mathematics Programmes.



## Ivan Purnev

**BSc, MSc**

Ivan is a Senior Graduate Academic Assistant in Biomedical Science at Middlesex University. He works with students on undergraduate programmes to support their learning by organising interactive support sessions, providing formative feedback, co-supervising and supporting research projects. Ivan also leads laboratory and seminar sessions in molecular biology. In terms of pedagogy, he is interested in researching and developing tools and practices that consciously include principles of diversity, equality and inclusion in higher education to ensure representation for students from ethnic, gender diverse, and LGBTQ+ minority groups. Ivan completed his BSc in Biomedical Sciences and MSc by Research with a focus on DNA methylation and cancer at Middlesex University.



## Dr Helen Roberts

**BSc(Hons), PhD, PGCertHE, SFHEA**

Dr Roberts is Programme Leader for the Faculty of Science and Technology Foundation Programme at Middlesex University, and leads modules related to Life Sciences, Anatomy and Physiology. Dr Roberts also contributes to the teaching of epigenetics, physiology, pharmacology, molecular biology and cell biology on undergraduate and postgraduate modules, and supervises a number of undergraduate (BSc) and postgraduate (MSc, MRes and PhD) research projects. She also coordinates a research track investigating the epigenetic regulation of aberrant cellular behaviour and subsequent skeletal tissue morbidity, and has a particular interest in the role of epigenetics and autophagy in the regulation of osteosarcoma metastasis and chemoresistance.



## Duncan Allardyce

**BSc (Hons), MSc, MPhil/PhD**

Duncan is a Lecturer in Biochemistry within the department of Natural Sciences at Middlesex University. He is a core member of the Biochemistry and foundation year teaching teams, in addition to leading modules across a variety of programmes. His research area investigates drug design from a computational level with molecular modelling, through to enzymatic, cellular and proteomic analysis. Applications include cancer therapeutics with selective targeting and understanding of structure-activity relationships.

# Middlesex and DEI – the History

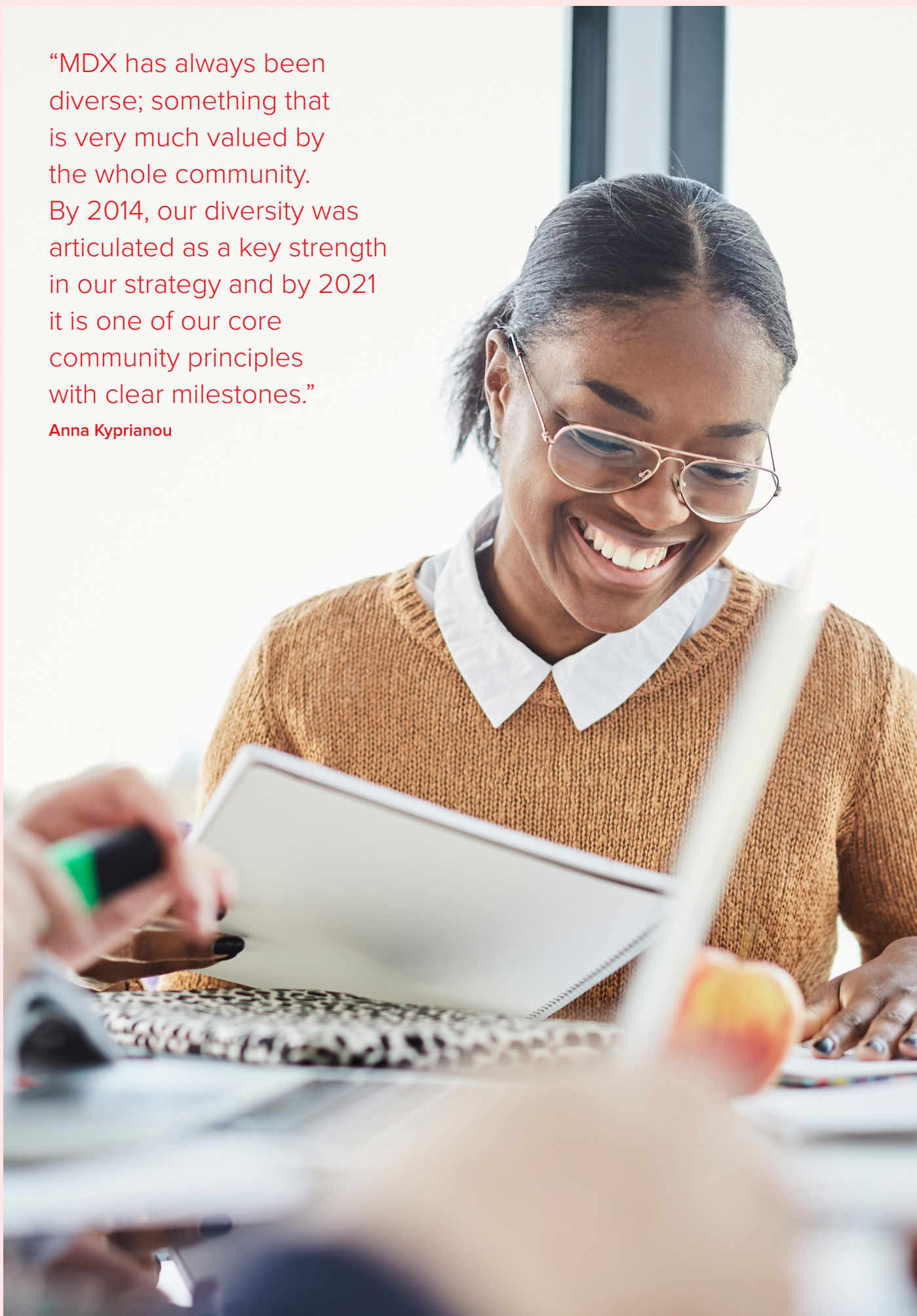
The suite of people we spoke to about DEI efforts at MDX agreed that, despite DEI being central to the university for years, the institution saw a shift in energy devoted to these efforts after the Black Lives Matter movement. From that point, various workstreams and project groups were set up across the university to bring together voices and experiences, build awareness and understanding, and shape strategy. Other key players leading DEI efforts at MDX share that COVID helped drive a renewed focus on the importance of these initiatives. Sandra Appiah, senior lecturer in the Natural Sciences Department, commented that being distanced from day-to-day university life meant that staff were able to gain a little more headspace to devote to DEI thinking. She shared that the pandemic drove home the inequalities at play, making it abundantly clear where the issues were and what could be done to rectify these.

Concerning the work being undertaken to do this, the stakeholders we spoke to made it clear that two core pillars are at play: culture and curriculum. Whilst these two areas can be seen as parallels, they are very much intertwined and one pillar could not stand without the other.



“MDX has always been diverse; something that is very much valued by the whole community. By 2014, our diversity was articulated as a key strength in our strategy and by 2021 it is one of our core community principles with clear milestones.”

**Anna Kyprianou**



# Middlesex and DEI: Culture

“Diversity is in our DNA.”

Anna Kyprianou

The university has set initiatives in place to ensure they create a culture that is as supportive and inclusive of students and staff as possible. Anna Kyprianou is the PVC for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. In her words, what the team at MDX are looking to do is to “construct an organisation that is overtly inclusive.”

Passionate about DEI on account of her academic background in human resources and a personal commitment to “fairness”, Anna shared that her role at MDX is to keep the dial moving on projects around DEI. She said that keeping momentum going is relatively easy; indeed, she said she is “knocking on an open door.” Reflecting further she said, “There isn’t even a door, because people are genuinely committed to fairness and justice.”

Progressing the work in this area has highlighted three key issues:

- Intentional considerations and communications around DEI need to be constant.
- Links to local communities can elevate understanding.
- DEI is continually evolving.

**Intentional considerations and communications around DEI need to be constant**

“Our University Executive Team are also very aware that this isn’t something that’s a ‘nice to have’. They are committed to embedding it in our day-to-day practices too.”

Anna Kyprianou

Integral to the strategy of the university around DEI is that it is “everyone’s responsibility”, Anna commented. She is looking to ensure that it is “hardwired” into everything we do.

Dr Deeba Gallacher is the Head of Academic Practice Enhancement and plays a central role to ensuring DEI is at the forefront of minds in the design and delivery of learning and teaching. Her role focuses on bolstering best practice teaching and learning across the university, showcasing best practice in a range of disciplines and creating spaces to discuss DEI within their learning environment. “Working in HE, especially at a widening participation, post-1992 institution like MDX, the diversity of our students and staff is something that is actively championed,” she said. She believes that her experience has shown that colleagues want to actively support, recognise and celebrate diversity in the teaching space but require guidance in how to do this, acknowledging that the context of DEI is fluid, as represented in the language associates with the area. Staff and students from across the institution over three campuses (London, Dubai and Mauritius) have come together over the past 18 months to develop an ‘Inclusive Curriculum Framework’ to provide inclusivity as the underlying principle to all we do.



A key part of these frequent meetings is the sharing of ideas and best practices concerning DEI and the shaping of where we want to be institutionally to ensure our approach is consciously improving. This frequency keeps it high on the agendas but thinking and being intentional about what they are looking at is key to moving forward. “The goal is to get staff to reflect on how they can continually enhance their practice. How can the design of curriculum promote student belonging, acknowledging difference and enable student choice. Keeping dialogue open in a variety of forms, staff development session, open space discussion sessions help to do this,” explained Deeba.

Another key pillar of communication at MDX is dialogue. The aim of dialogue at MDX is to build a culture where it can be delivered comfortably with no fear of ramifications, without the worry of offence. “We need to call issues out when we see them; we need to be able to say, ‘That upset me’ without other people taking offence,” Anna said.

To this end, an online presence was built on the university website where people could report issues around DEI anonymously. Additionally, Deeba shared that the university had recently rolled out a “safe space” project, geared for staff, where they can discuss issues linked to DEI in an environment in which they feel comfortable.

“There’s always a willingness to talk around DEI issues but it often comes with concerns that they might be saying or doing the wrong thing or offending others as highlighted in the fluidity of language and terms. The spirit of the movement is about supporting people on what they can do and how they can tackle difficult situations and decisions.”

**Dr Deeba Gallacher**

Like communications, dialogue should be intentional, Anna highlighted. “It isn’t enough to just talk. It’s how we act on what we learn,” she said.

## Links to local communities enrich understanding

Anna shared that building cross-cultural communities has afforded her and the staff at MDX an enhanced understanding of others lived experiences. Their relationships with local networks can be used as sounding boards to unpick specific issues arising. This is important at MDX, with Anna highlighting that her close links to local religious groups have deepened and developed so when issues arise, as they inevitably do, those expert voices help shape the responses to specific situations.

## DEI is continually evolving

Anna explained that “Learning is a personal experience and every issue the students face is one that’s personal to them.” With the demographics, learning patterns and behaviours of students evolving constantly, it is impossible for work on DEI ever to be truly complete. Deeba agreed with this sentiment, sharing that the work on DEI “will never be complete; contextual changes have contextual impacts.”

Although work on DEI will never truly end, Anna commented that she believes MDX to be on the “right path” for it and that rather than focusing on the deficit we should “celebrate and embrace the journey we are on with DEI.”



# Middlesex and DEI: Curriculum

“We want there to be richness within all facets of curriculum design and delivery.”

**Dr Deeba Gallacher**

Building a culture that recognises the individual is crucial at MDX and it is evident that this is a fundamental piece of their identity as a university. What is being done concerning teaching and learning is also of paramount importance. We spoke to two of the team at MDX whose roles focus on these areas.

Dr Alison Megeney is the Deputy Dean for Education in the Faculty of Science and Technology.

Alison and her team are focused on three core goals:

- **Decreasing attainment gaps**
- **Increasing student satisfaction scores**
- **Increasing student confidence**

Deeba’s work is closely intertwined with Alison’s. She explains her role as centred around the development of colleague best practices through several initiatives, with DEI being an important pillar. Deeba explains, “A key aspect of my role is to support colleagues academic staff development; having practice recognised and awarded whilst also supporting their enhancement.”

Her goals are to support staff to be highly intentional in inclusivity in curriculum design and to facilitate best practice curriculum design discussions to enhance teaching and learning. By supporting staff in these areas, the goals are very much aligned with those of Alison and of the university itself.

## **Decreasing attainment gaps**

Concerning gaps in attainment, Alison shared that each year the university analyses the performance of all learners across all disciplines to identify any gender or racial/ethnic attainment gaps. If gaps are found, Alison and her team look to the teaching leads to put together a strategy to address the situation.

## **Increasing student satisfaction scores and bolstering student confidence**

A number of those we spoke to highlighted the importance of aspiration and role models for students concerning satisfaction and engagement. Indeed, Sandra Appiah, a senior lecturer in chemistry/ biochemistry who serves as a champion for DEI efforts both at the subject level and across the university, is leading on research into this. What the topic highlights is the importance of a diverse staff body alongside course materials that showcase the work of a broad spectrum of academics.

Deeba explained, “Role modelling and representation is also hugely important. What kind of support are learners seeing in front of them? How are we inspiring our students? We want to present a diverse picture which supports them with their aspiration.”

Thinking around these areas has had an impact at MDX. Anastasia shared that she found an enormous psychological reassurance when starting her studies to see staff and students from a range of backgrounds. She believes that staff had given a great deal of thought to ensuring the students were settled. She pointed to the way her instructor had brought in an older student who was not from the UK to set the scene for her studies. Asked how this made her feel, Anastasia shared that she realised she was not “alone” in being new to the country. She highlighted that this gesture helped her realise she was “good enough” to be there.

Aspiration is important concerning the materials the students are looking at. Sandra explained, “If students don’t see themselves in the literature, as the doctor, for example, it’s harder for them to aspire to that. It will have an impact on a psychological level.”

This is something Anastasia agreed with. Not seeing underrepresented authors was said to “build negative self-talk,” she said. “If I don’t see those people, then I question if it’s for me; it makes me feel that I can’t achieve. When you see someone as the same gender as you, you see that person as a model. Not having that is destructive.”

A huge amount of work is devoted to ensuring students at MDX are not going to face this issue, which is where the annual reviews Alison and her team complete tie in and where the Inclusive Curriculum Framework comes into play.



# Inclusive Curriculum Framework

“Teams of people across the university have come together to come up with this framework. We see it as a guide for how to think about inclusivity about curriculum development and student experience.”

**Dr Alison Megeney**

The Inclusive Curriculum Framework is the result of years of work by stakeholders spanning the university. What it delivers is a set of guidelines, including a comprehensive set of prompts that faculty can use to shape the inclusivity of their curriculum. It brings together all the work done at both cultural and curriculum level that ties back to the university’s goal of keeping DEI at the forefront of people’s minds.

Anna gave the background to the work, sharing, “For the past few years we’ve taken big steps at engaging stakeholders from across the university in putting together these inclusive curriculum principles.” She explained that between 70 and 80 staff had worked with students to create the document. Calling the efforts “a collaborative venture,” she said the framework is designed to encourage intentionality in curriculum and course design.

At the heart of the project is a core set of prompts to make teaching staff reflect on what approach and resources they are using and how they are getting concepts across.

“It’s about enhancement across the whole of the university. Sharing the excellent practice within but also recognising more needs to be done. The coherence and consistency so the students receive parity in their experience is important.”

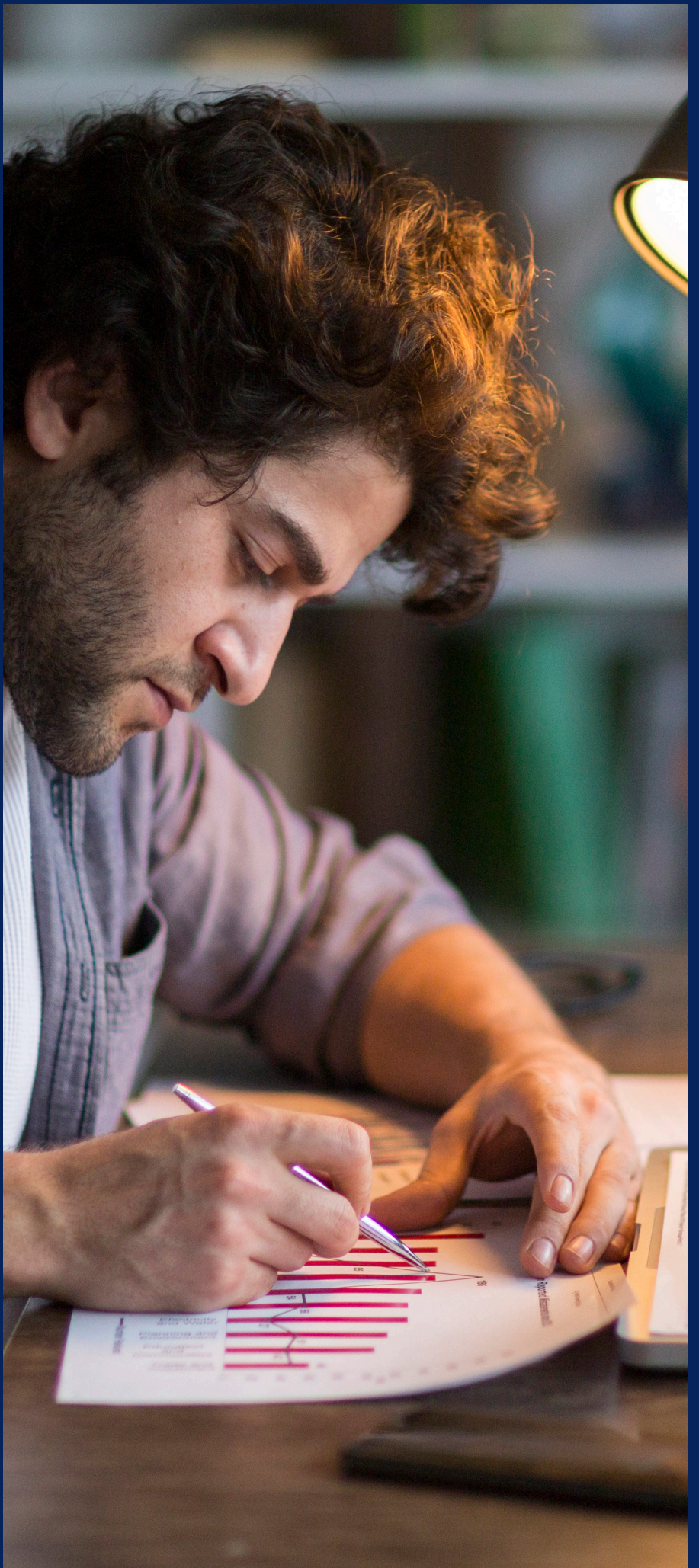
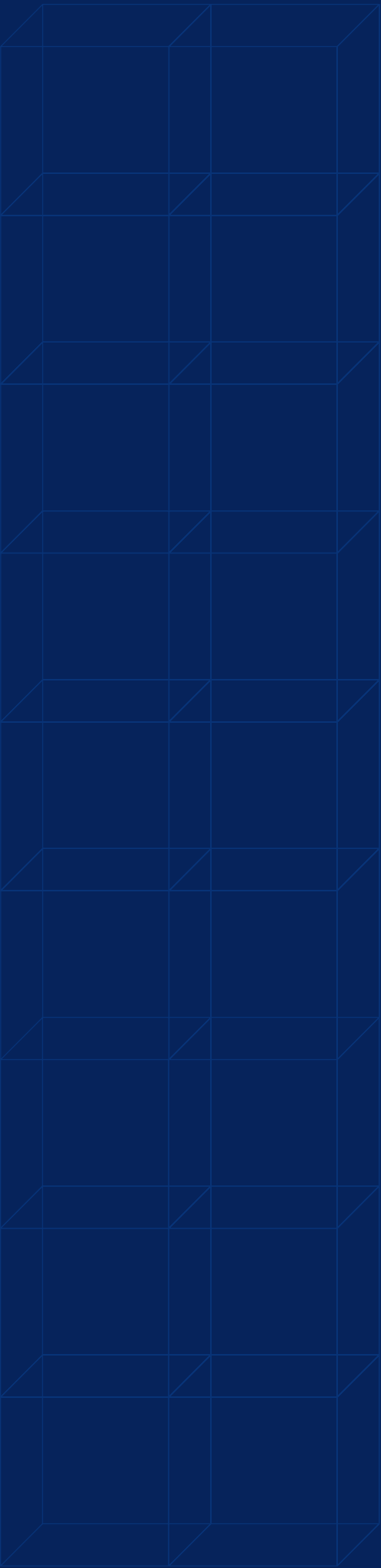
**Dr Deeba Gallacher**

It is by no means a short document, and Alison admits that it is no easy task asking staff to keep on top of it all. “We don’t expect staff to be able to do it all at once; we don’t expect them to unpack all the questions we’re asking immediately,” she said.

The rollout of the Inclusive Curriculum Framework is vital in getting teams to engage with it. In Sandra’s words, “We don’t want to just publish the framework and hope people read it. This is something we can live and breathe.”

This is where Deeba’s role has multiple facets. “One of the roles I play is a ‘face’ associated with the work, alongside many other colleagues who have shared their expertise to develop the inclusive curriculum framework. It gives me the opportunity to engage others in dialogue about the work in a variety of different spaces. she said. “Awareness of this work is really important and it’s a crucial step in progressing our goals that are an integral part of our values here at MDX.”

Alison explained that they have put together a series of events over the year to cover the use of the guidance around reviewing and validating the curriculum in play, encourage awareness of the efforts, and bring people together to discuss the topics. “We put on a series of events to discuss the process and to showcase the spirit in which they should be used. We’d do a full day, half-day events and a series of workshops and discussions throughout the year.” The idea of the events is to keep momentum and dialogue around these topics at the forefront of people’s minds and highlight good practices among the teams working on them.





## DEI at Subject Level

The outcomes of the suite of activities from MDX come to fruition when we shine a spotlight on what is being done at the subject level. We spoke with the natural science team, which is headed up by Sandra Appiah.

Their efforts are focused on three key areas, with their goals aligned to the university's, of providing both a culture and a curriculum that are intentionally inclusive.

Speaking to the team, core areas of focus include:

- **Reading lists**
- **Awards**
- **Communication and delivery**

Each of these areas is approached with intentionality, with clear goals, as the team explain.

### Reading lists and intentionality

“It really dawned on us, the problem of not having the representation we should in the curriculum: in the literature, the textbooks, the case studies and the examples we use.”

**Dr Sandra Appiah**

Because of this, Sandra explained that the team had begun a large project to review in detail the course content. They sought to ensure the authors of the material were from diverse backgrounds and set to work investigating the backgrounds of the authors and co-authors before substituting some of the content to reflect a more inclusive curriculum.

Already a customer of McGraw Hill, Sandra reached out to the academic consultant to share her goal. Together, they built out a course that blended McGraw Hill's work with content from other publishers, creating a set of materials bespoke to their needs. The content in its entirety was then put together under one cohesive platform.

Duncan Allardyce works as a lecturer in Biochemistry at Middlesex University. He is the module lead for several modules in the natural sciences department. Duncan shared that he had heard how much this effort had been

recognised by learners. “We hear positive feedback on this,” he said, adding how students were delighted to see authors who are people of colour folded into the course.

### Awards and intentionality

Another key area Sandra and her team were keen to explore was being intentional with the students they nominated for awards and bursaries. The team shared that they are explicit in their thinking about whom to put forward and nominate and that they are as inclusive as possible.

“We're intentional in what we do. We make sure we're going across all ethnic groups. That's something that's intuitive for us. We do help students progress, not just when it comes to their academic work, but beyond that. We choose our best students, but we try to be conscious in our decision making to help with the representation.” – Sandra Appiah

### Communications and delivery and intentionality

“We're talking and we are thinking about it more. We're looking to make sure the course works for all of the learners.”

**Duncan Allardyce**

Duncan and another colleague, Ivan, share that the Connect platform they use as part of their teaching is another way that they can support their diverse learners. Ivan Punev is a senior graduate academic assistant at MDX. From a learning and teaching angle, he facilitates sessions, organises and leads varied student support sessions, develops interactive learning sessions, and provides formative assessment feedback. He shared that Connect supports students of diverse backgrounds because it is always on and always available. “Some students may be looking after children; they may be part-time,” he said. “Other students might be juggling their learning with employment, and they might not be able to make every class. Using Connect means they can fit in their learning with their lives.”

Dr Helen Roberts, a senior lecturer in life sciences at Middlesex University, expanded on that point, saying, “The flexibility of the platform is really useful as the foundation year has such a range of students. We have international students and mature students in our cohorts and the flexibility of virtual labs and quizzes have been incredibly useful. We’ve even seen students asking for more quizzes and more homework, which is unheard of!”

Helen shared that another focal area for the team is the considerations around assessment. “They need to support inclusivity, too,” she said. “We look to use a variety of formats to assess performance, from poster presentations to essays to exams. We want learners of all backgrounds to be supported.”



## DEI: The Student View

The student represents an evaluation of the efforts being made at cultural, curriculum and subject levels at MDX. As Deeba puts it, “We can see how well our efforts work from what students tell us, from the student survey, from module results and feedback.”

Anastasia Calin was the MDX-Student Union Vice President of the Faculty of Science and technology. We spoke to her about her perceptions of both the culture and the curriculum at MDX.

### A student’s perspective of the culture at Middlesex

Concerning the culture Anastasia became immersed in at the start of her studies, she shared that she felt “welcomed from the first day,” which made it easy for her to adapt to university life. The diverse student body and teaching team, to her, makes it easy to “find inspiration.” She commented that diversity helps her to be “driven to understand others and their needs and their goals.”

Considering what her time would have been like without the efforts focusing on DEI across the university, Anastasia shared that she felt it would be limiting. “When you are in a place where you don’t see people from other cultures or backgrounds, all you have is your own pre-existing ideas,” she said. Learning from others is “a thing of beauty” that, by all accounts, has benefitted her learning and her experience of university life.

Anastasia shared how the intentionality that the teaching teams demonstrated in their approach to new learners joining the university had paid off. She shared that the introductory lectures at the start of the term were coupled with smaller sessions with cohort leaders. “Our programme lead wanted to get to know us and for us to get to know him,” she shared. The bringing in of a third-year student from another country made her feel at ease and comfortable, she said.

“When the lecturer has an accent and brings in a student who isn’t from the UK, it shows you there is space for you, and space for your own evolution.”

Anastasia

### A student’s perspective of the curriculum at Middlesex

Anastasia admitted diversity in the sciences still has a way to go. She points to the fact that female figures in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are “rare”, but she knows work is being done to bolster the curriculum in terms of bringing in underrepresented groups to those she is learning about.

### Concluding comments

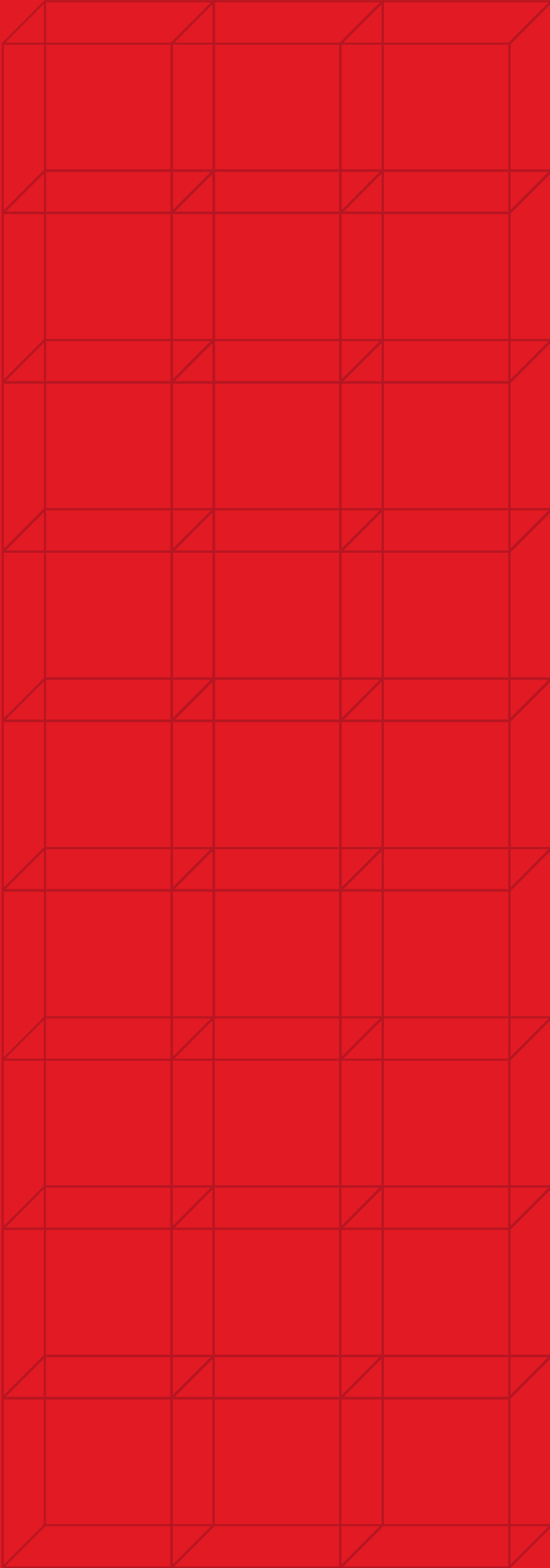
Anastasia’s views inevitably cannot represent an entire student body, but using her thoughts as a measurement of how well the work around DEI at MDX is being received shows that it is going in the right direction.

One of the main goals of the university is for DEI to be talked about and presented constantly, and, on this, Anastasia commented, “The students are speaking about it, the lecturers are speaking about it, and the non-academic staff are talking about it.”

If that is not a sure sign of the success of the journey MDX are on, then Anastasia’s commentary on the topic of role models might just be.

“I have been able to find them here.”

Anastasia Calin



We believe in unlocking the potential of every learner at every stage of life. To accomplish that, we are dedicated to creating products that reflect, and are accessible to, all the diverse, global customers we serve.

We know that the journey to equity is a long one, but we are committed to thinking and acting intentionally – from producing inclusive language guidelines for authors, purchasing images that better reflect diversity for our image banks, expanding our author base, and listening and learning from our institutional partners.

Our work with Middlesex shines a spotlight being intentional for the sake of inclusivity. We look forward to continuing our journey in this area, moving forward to support equity, inclusion, and diversity in all forms.

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