

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Strategy: 2024-2026



Foreword

As a species, we are amazing: we can inhabit almost any environment; we have developed science and technology to overcome a huge range of problems; we create art for the pleasure of it; and we can communicate our experience so that we learn from each other. Different cultures adapted to different climates, terrains, ecosystems, and from that, gained different experiences. The UK population comprises people with many different backgrounds, both geographically and socially, creating a rich diversity of culture.

Why, then, is the acoustics profession, and engineering more widely, not as diverse as the situations it faces? That is the question to answer and challenge to overcome, because a profession that does not understand the challenges faced broadly by society risks not understanding, or even noticing, its needs.

Without diversity in our profession, there are likely to be questions that we do not even think to ask, let alone know the answers to.

It is therefore essential that the acoustics profession, and the Institute of Acoustics with it, strives for a membership representing everyone. Within the Institute, we can best do this by creating an environment in which people can openly be themselves and gain the support they need to achieve their full potential. The increasingly global reach of the IOA will also aid diversity, opportunity and richness if overseas members are welcomed and empowered to participate. We can then encourage our members to do the same within their organisations, especially those in leadership roles.

We cannot improve the diversity of our profession by working alone: we need to work together to understand the challenges faced by our peers and how we can work together to overcome them or remove them entirely. That is the aim of the IOA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group, and the ambition of the President and President Elect.

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Chair of the IOA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group



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Introduction

Acoustics in the UK, like UK engineering professions generally, faces a skills shortage¹, and encouraging people from all social and ethnic backgrounds into the profession increases the pool of available acousticians. But there are many benefits of inclusivity and diversity beyond that. Perhaps the most essential is the improvement of collective intelligence: a team comprising diverse people who think differently to each other, but with the right skillset for the current task(s) in hand, will have had different experiences, leading to different inspiration and ideas and fewer areas with limited or no awareness². The acoustics profession can only serve society properly if we understand challenges faced by as many people as possible, and we can best do that by enabling all areas of society to be heard within the profession. If areas of society are unintentionally excluded from teams working in acoustics, the acoustics profession misses out on their experiences and viewpoints, which then affects the delivery of services to society.

According to the 2021 Census, 51.0% of the UK population as a whole is female and 49.0% male³. As of August 2023, the most recent date for which data was available for at the time of writing, 14.7% of the IOA membership⁴ was female and 84.8% was male, which is hugely different to the UK population as a whole, and not quite as encouraging that the number of women in STEM generally (16.5%)⁵. Furthermore, 0.5% of the IOA membership indicated they are transgender during the last membership renewals

¹ The Royal Academy of Engineering, “Why is D&I important?,” 2022. [Online]. Available: raeng.org.uk/diversity-in-engineering/business-benefits-key-facts. [Accessed 27 April 2022].

² M. Syed, *Rebel Ideas: The Power of Diverse Thinking*, London: John Murray, 2021.

³ [https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/male-and-female-populations/latest#:~:text=The%20data%20shows%20that%3A,up%2029.2%20million%20\(49.0%25\)](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/male-and-female-populations/latest#:~:text=The%20data%20shows%20that%3A,up%2029.2%20million%20(49.0%25))

⁴ Student, Affiliate, Technician, Associate, Member, Fellow and Honorary Fellow

⁵ Engineering UK, “Women in Engineering - Trends in women in the engineering workforce between 2010 and 2021”. [Online]. Available <https://www.engineeringuk.com/media/318036/women-in-engineering-report-extended-analysis-engineeringuk-march-2022.pdf>. [Accessed 14 May 2024].



(which is broadly in-line with the overall population of England and Wales⁶), and 0.3% were 'unknown', which is possibly an indicator that we are not even providing the right options for members to select. Other reasons some members do not answer these questions is that they do not understand the terminology, they do not agree with the act of categorisation or they may have reservations about disclosing the information.

In terms of ethnicity, the categories for IOA members to select have not historically aligned with those used for official data gathering, therefore comparisons cannot be easily made. Ethnicity is unknown for 5.4% of IOA members

For sexual orientation, 19.5% of members selected 'prefer not to say' and the information is also unknown for a further 6.4% of members; such a high level of uncertainty makes comparison with UK-wide data challenging.

One of the key tasks of the Working Group is to suggest ways that options provided during membership data gathering could be made more relevant to current and potential members. We are doing this by using resources such as the UK Government recommendations for public sector organisations on how to ask users for equality information, the Office for National Statistics questions developed for the recent 2021 England and Wales Census and recently updated (26/04/2022) advice on the collecting of diversity monitoring data from Advance HE (the higher-education-sector owned and led charity that provides advice and guidance to the higher education sector).

The IOA has much work to do to improve diversity, and to build trust in membership data gathering and provision of options that cover more of the membership.

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/genderidentity/bulletins/genderidentityenglandandwales/census2021#gender-identity>



Definitions

- Equity: recognising that people are individuals with their own circumstances and support requirements.
- Diversity: including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds, ages, physical and mental health, genders, sexual orientations.⁷
- Inclusion: the act of including someone or something as part of a group, list, etc.⁸
- Institute of Acoustics: the UK's professional body for those working in acoustics, noise and vibration and its work overseas.
- Executive Committee: a group comprising the President, Immediate Past-President, President-Elect, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and Chief Executive of the Institute of Acoustics.
- Council: the governing body of the Institute of Acoustics comprising the members of Executive committee, three Vice Presidents (Groups and Branches, International Affairs and Engineering Division) and nine elected ordinary members
- IOA employees: people employed by or contracted to the Institute of Acoustics.

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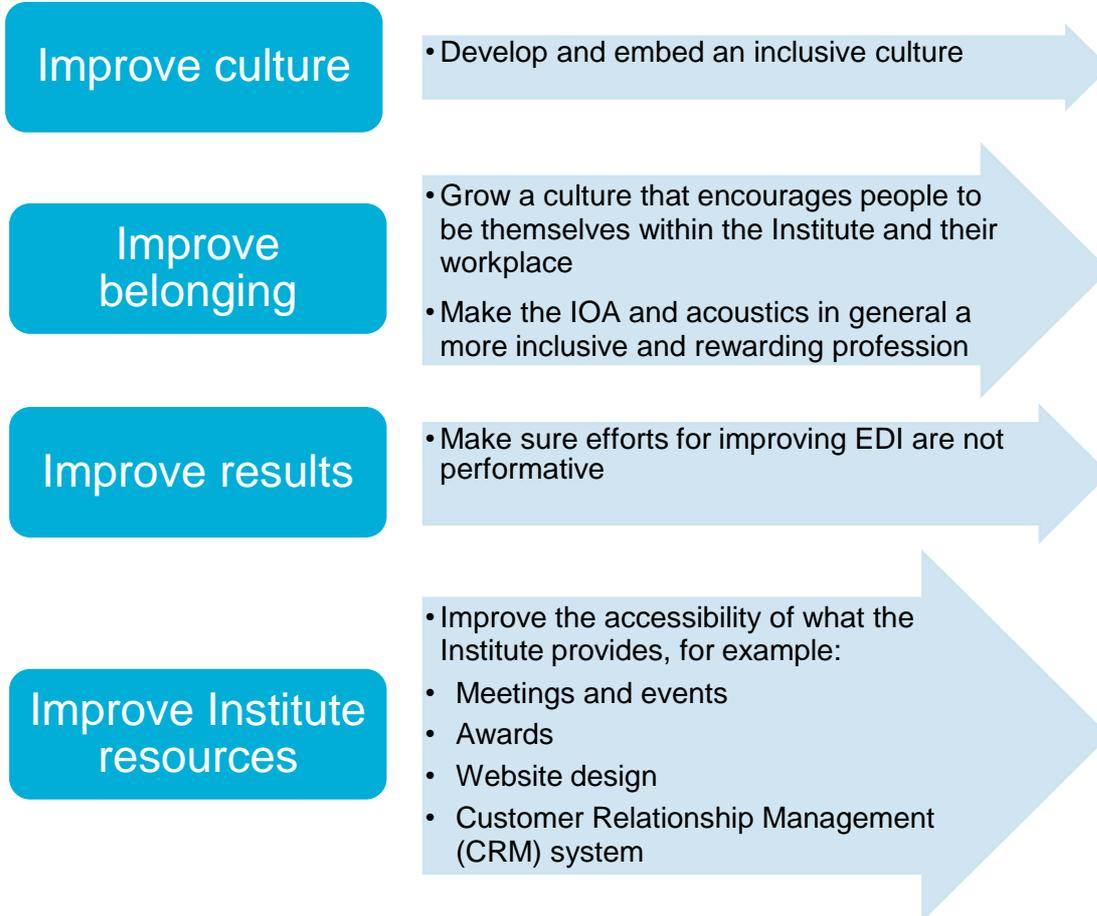
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8962281/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Oxford%20English,etc.%E2%80%9D%20%5B1%5D>

⁸ <https://www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk/about/what-is-workplace-inclusion/>



Purpose (Why?)

There are several aspects to the purpose of the EDI Strategy.





Vision (How?)

There are several areas to work on, as illustrated below.

Experience of individuals (members, prospective members, students, IOA employees, general public)

Improve sense of belonging in the Institute so that people feel included

Create accessible website, meetings, events and awards

Develop a welcoming Institute

Facilitate participation among all members in Leadership of the Institute (e.g. Executive Council, Council, committees)

Conduct of teams (Executive Council, Council, committees, IOA employees)

Embed EDI in the work of the Institute

Create more diverse teams

Request an EDI representative on each Institute committee



Policies, procedures and protocols

Improve the way the Institute operates

Create policies that improve equity and inclusion

Bring membership data gathering in-line with best practice

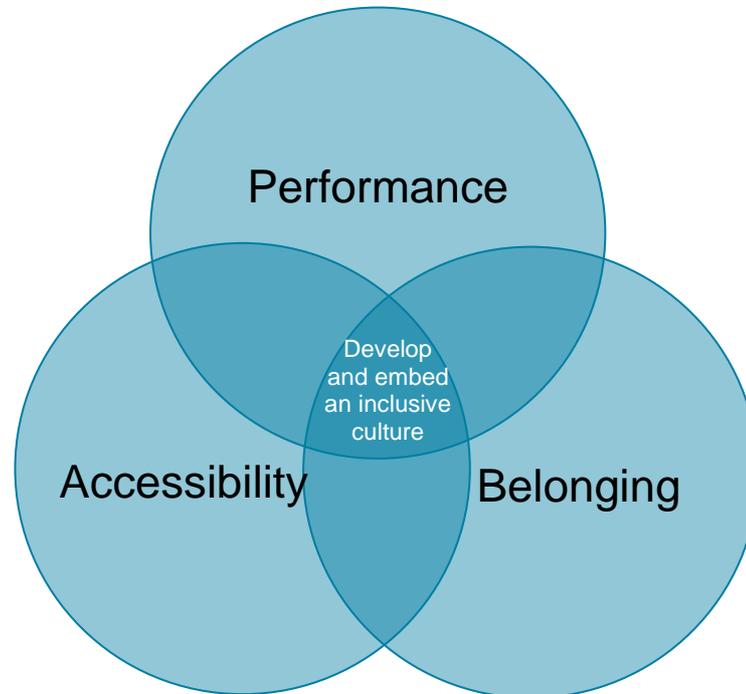
Provide members with EDI resources that are useful and easy to find

Provide mechanisms for feedback that are sensitive, sincere and anonymous

Regularly review and progress the EDI Strategy



Priorities (What first?)



EDI Principal	Priority	2 nd Stage	Further Work
Performance	<p>Harness the power of diversity and inclusion to enhance services and products provided by our members.</p> <p>Request an EDI representative on each Institute committee.</p>	<p>Improve the capacity for innovation by enabling collaboration with all our peers.</p>	<p>Seek to collaborate with other engineering organisations to support the industry as a whole</p>



EDI Principal	Priority	2 nd Stage	Further Work
	<p>Improve membership data gathering so that progress can be monitored.</p>	<p>Consider how STEM outreach opportunities can reach students from diverse backgrounds, particularly those from currently underrepresented groups.</p> <p>Benchmarking with exemplar organisations in sibling and unrelated sectors.</p>	
<p>Accessibility</p>	<p>Create a website and CRM system, activities, meetings, events, membership applications and awards that are inclusive, accessible and desirable for everyone.</p>	<p>Develop a support team who are able to assist with accessibility difficulties in person and online.</p>	



EDI Principal	Priority	2 nd Stage	Further Work
Belonging	Attract, develop, support and retain representation from diverse identities, backgrounds and circumstances across all membership levels within the Institute and encourage the same in workplaces.	<p>Improve representation of currently underrepresented groups at all membership grades and in all institute activities.</p> <p>Improve representation of currently underrepresented groups within Institute leadership teams.</p>	<p>Continue to collect diversity data and strive to do so in an accurate and sensitive way.</p> <p>Improve mechanisms for reporting and providing support for members who have experienced harassment, microaggression or other forms of discrimination.</p>

Governance (Who is Responsible?)

Overall accountability for achieving the objective and aims set out in this strategy will be held by the Institute of Acoustics Council.

Training

EDI training, delivered by external providers, will be offered to members in Leadership positions (e.g. President, President Elect, members of Council, Chairs of standing committees) and IOA Office staff every two years to ensure that newly appointed people, including the newly elected President Elect, have received it.

The EDI Working Group will continue to raise the awareness of members of issues such as unconscious bias, microaggressions and the difficulties faced by different members through articles in the Acoustics Bulletin, on the IOA website and on social media.



Acknowledgments

This EDI Strategy has been prepared by the Institute of Acoustics Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group.