SOAS
University of London

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing (EDIW)



Annual Report 2025/26

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Foreword

When we developed the new equity, diversity, inclusion and staff wellbeing (EDIW) plan we were determined to ensure it reflected our unique culture and community, supported the SOAS strategy 2026 – 2030, and reflected the current social and political context.

Society changed significantly over the course of the last EDI strategy and we are still adapting to the legacy of the Covid pandemic, changes in how we communicate and interact with each other, the impact of new and emerging technologies and AI, as well as public and political discourse surrounding Equality Act definitions, academic freedom and freedom of speech.

While grappling with the challenges above, the higher education sector as a whole is facing unprecedented funding challenges, making it more important than ever that our approach to EDIW is evidence-based, prioritized and embedded into everything we do.

Despite this backdrop, it has been truly inspiring to see SOAS staff and students engaging with our EDIW plan and objectives. The commitment and generosity with which people have given their time and energy, despite many competing deadlines, makes the next three years even more exciting, as we see our aims and vision materialise.

To give just a few examples: our staff network members, Chairs and Executive Sponsors; our Wellbeing Ambassadors; all the people who generated and analysed data by protected group and/or completed an equality impact assessment; trade union colleagues for feedback and insight on our policies; members of our self-assessment teams and the EDIW Committee; everyone who has attended our training and events; our Estates team who change the flag on the top of the building regardless of the weather; and the brilliant and talented students who have worked with us on a variety of projects.

Realising this plan is a team effort and it is amazing to see us collectively establish:

One SOAS: Diverse by nature, inclusive by design

Claire Herbert
Head of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing

Our strategic vision and operational plan

SOAS launched the **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing (EDIW) Plan 2026-2030** at the beginning of the year. Aligned with the SOAS Strategy, the plan sets out a clear framework for embedding equity, diversity, inclusion and staff wellbeing across all aspects of university life and advancing our vision of:

One SOAS: diverse by nature, inclusive by design

SOAS is one of the most diverse higher education institutions in the UK. Our global outlook, with a specialist focus on Africa, Asia and the Middle East, combined with our location in the heart of London, creates a uniquely international and vibrant community. We are proud to welcome students from more than 150 countries, and to benefit from the wide range of perspectives, experiences and identities represented across our staff and student populations.

However, diversity is not a proxy for inclusion. To enable every member of our community to thrive, we must ensure that equity and inclusion are intentionally embedded within our culture, structures, systems, and decision-making processes. Community is at the heart of SOAS, and being inclusive by design means proactively creating an environment where everyone feels respected, supported, safe and able to succeed.

To achieve this vision, the EDIW Plan 2026-2030 is structured around four interconnected EDI Objectives:



Figure 1: the four pillars of the EDIW plan

Together, these objectives, or strategic pillars provide the foundation for delivering meaningful and sustainable progress on EDIW across SOAS.

This annual report fulfils SOAS' legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and establishes a baseline against which progress on the EDIW Plan 2026-2030 can be measured. It provides an overview of the diversity of our staff and student communities and highlights the key activities, achievements and outcomes delivered across the four pillars, as we continuously evolve to become not only diverse by nature, but truly inclusive by design.

One SOAS

Snapshot

The figures below provide a snapshot of the diversity of the whole SOAS community. Data is presented for **One SOAS** (all staff and students combined), as well as separate staff and student profiles. The rest of the report breaks down this data into further detail.

Sex:

One SOAS: 61% female

Staff: 58% female

Students: 63% female

Ethnicity:

One SOAS: 61% racialised

Staff: 51% racialised

Students: 70% racialised

Disability:

One SOAS: 12% disabled

Staff: 8% disabled

Students: 15% disabled

Sexual Orientation:

One SOAS: 13% LGBO

Staff: 10% LGBO

Students: 15% LGBO

Terminology

Throughout this report, certain terms are used to describe communities in relation to the data presented:

- The term 'racialised' is used to describe staff and students who are from Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic backgrounds. Where possible more granular ethnicity data is presented, acknowledging that umbrella categories can mask data trends and experiences of specific ethnic groups.
- 'LGBO' is used to accurately express the sexual orientation data being presented, which refers to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual staff and students and those who have selected the 'Other' category.
- Sex assigned at birth is analysed using the terms 'male' and 'female'. We recognise that we have more work to do in presenting data for trans, non-binary and intersex members of our community and we are looking at ways to include this without inadvertently identifying individuals.

Data

- Staff data has been analysed using HESA Heidi Plus or internal databases. SOAS data has been benchmarked against London institutions and UK institutions that are available in the HESA Staff record. The latest HESA data is from the academic year 2024/2025.
- Some of the protected characteristics or additional information, such as sexual orientation, religion or belief or grade are not available in the HESA data; therefore, they have been analysed using SOAS internal databases and appended to the HESA data for SOAS.
- The HESA data does not include casual staff or agency staff and since 2019/20 institutions are not obliged to return data on professional services staff. Most institutions still return this data, but it does mean that not all professional services staff will be included in the benchmark figures.
- Unless otherwise stated, all student data in this report has been sourced from Heidi Plus Gold using the Full Person Equivalent (FPE) dataset, which is based on the HESA Student Record return and refers to the UK domiciled student population. This provides a consistent source of student demographic data across UK higher education providers.
- Data on student nationality includes both UK and International students.
- Religion and Belief data is not available through the HESA Student Record and has therefore been sourced from institutional student records, and includes both UK and international students.
- Our non-disclosure data is reported in three ways in this report. 'Prefer not to say' refers to people who have responded to the question about their equality data and decided not to disclose, 'Not Available' refers to people who have decided not to answer the question, and 'Unknown' refers to an aggregation of both of the aforementioned categories.

Non-Disclosure Figures

We encourage all members of the SOAS community to keep their EDI information up to date. Staff are reminded annually by Human Resources to review and update their personal information, while new colleagues are encouraged to provide their EDI data through the New Starter process. Equality data is also reviewed as part of the annual HESA return to support data quality and accuracy.

The charts below show staff and student non-disclosure rates for the 2024/25 academic year. Improving the completeness of EDI data remains an important priority, as robust data helps us better understand the experiences of our community, identify inequalities and target interventions effectively. During 2026/27, the EDIW team will work with colleagues across data and communications functions to strengthen trust and transparency around EDI data collection, helping staff and students understand how their information is used to support a more inclusive, representative and welcoming SOAS. A key measure of success will be a reduction in non-disclosure rates in future reporting.

Staff

Staff non-disclosure rates are relatively low for ethnicity and disability and are much higher for religion and belief and sexual orientation. This is partly due to historical data gaps, as information on these characteristics has only been routinely collected from new starters in recent years. As a result, the data presented reflects both current disclosure patterns and the continuing need to encourage existing staff to review and update their personal information.

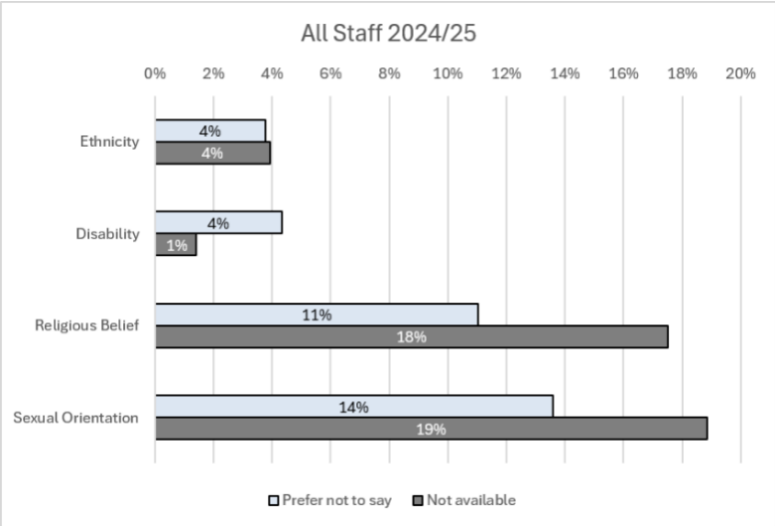


Figure 2: staff non disclosure rates

For students, 'prefer not to say' and 'not available' have been combined into non-disclosure rates, due to small numbers. Ethnicity and sexual orientation are the only protected characteristics these are available for, and similar trends are seen as above, with a low ethnicity non-disclosure rate, and a higher proportion of students not sharing their sexual orientation with SOAS.

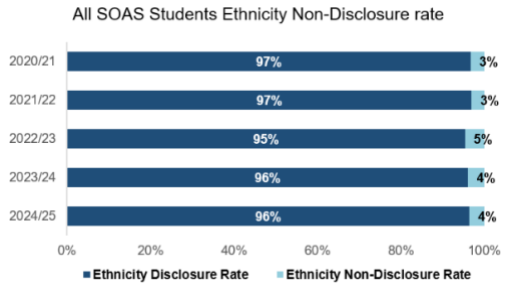


Figure 4: student ethnicity disclosure rate

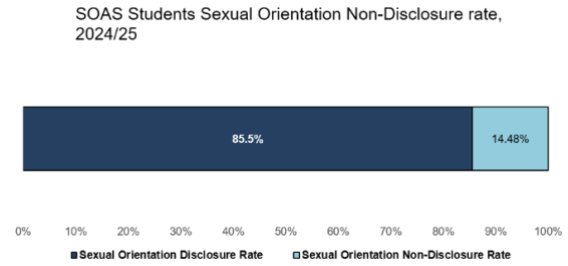


Figure 3: student sexual orientation disclosure rate

Over the 26/27 academic year, we aim to see significant shifts in non-disclosure rates, particularly for sexual orientation and religion and belief, with an increase in staff and students actively updating their data.

Sector Benchmarks

In order to provide comparison and perspective, we have benchmarked SOAS for gender, ethnicity, and disability. In each case the SOAS University of London population is compared to the London benchmark, which includes providers located in London within the Heidi Plus FPE dataset, and the sector, which encompasses all providers included in the Heidi Plus FPE dataset including only approved providers across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Staff

SOAS continues to have a highly diverse workforce compared with the wider higher education sector. In 2024/2025, women represented 58% of staff, exceeding both the London and UK sector averages of 55%. The proportion of staff sharing they are disabled has increased steadily over the past five years, rising from 6.5% to 8%, in line with trends across London institutions and the wider UK sector. SOAS also continues to have a significantly more ethnically diverse workforce than comparator institutions, with the proportion of racialised staff increasing from 42% to 51% over the last five years, compared with growth from 25% to 31% across London institutions and from 15% to 20% nationally. Just over half of SOAS staff are employed in academic roles, a slightly lower proportion than the London and UK averages, although sector comparisons may be influenced by differences in how institutions report professional services staff data.

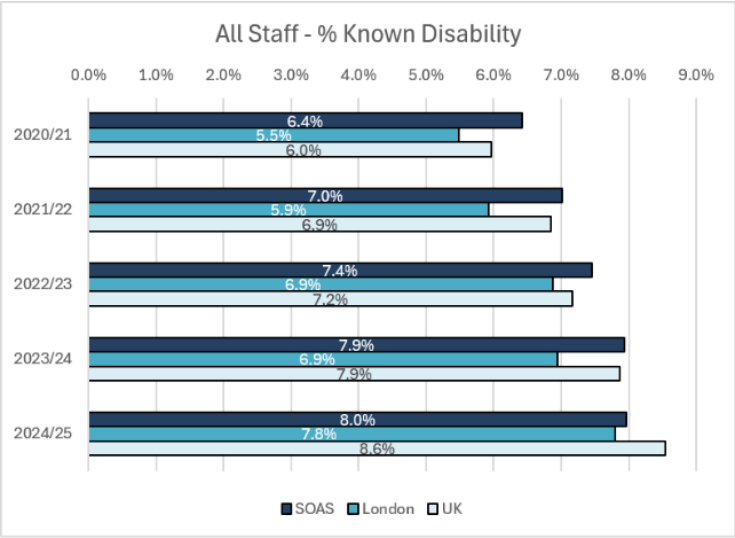


Figure 6: staff disability sector comparison

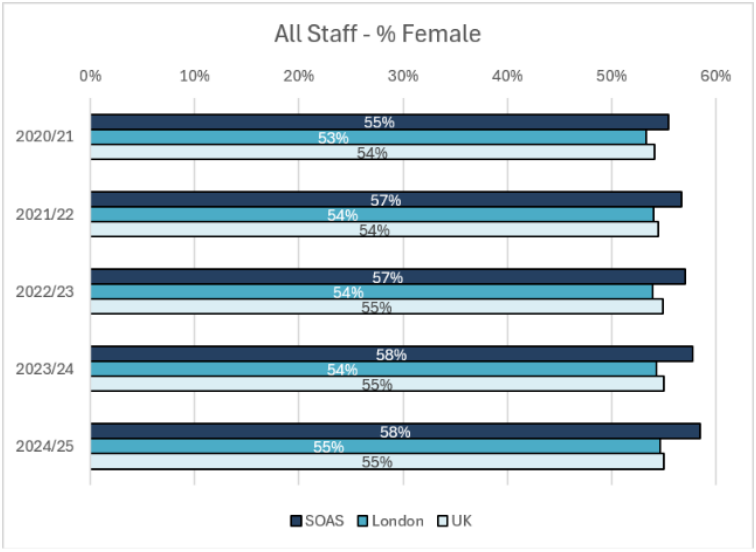


Figure 5: staff sex sector comparison

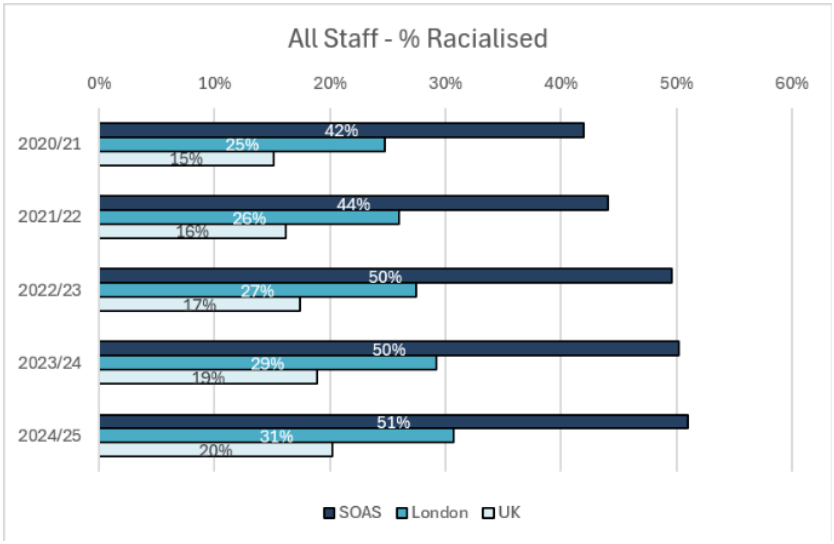


Figure 7: staff ethnicity sector comparison

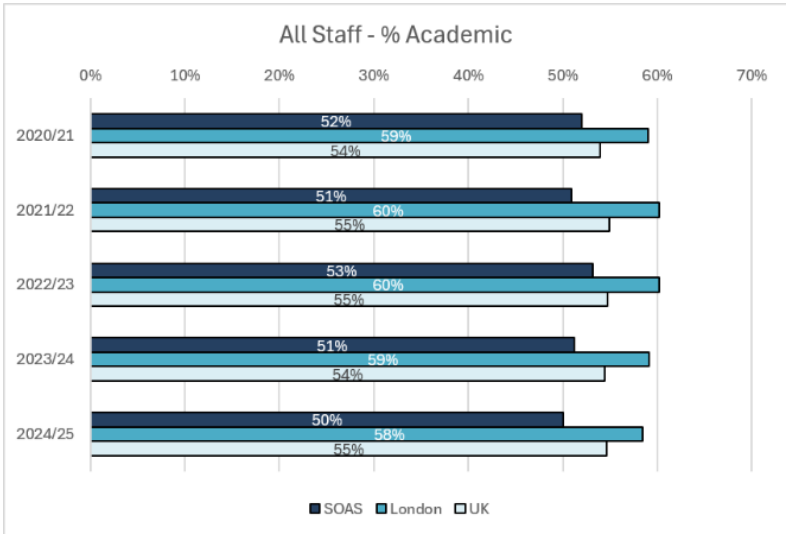


Figure 8: academic staff sector comparison

Students

SOAS continues to demonstrate a distinct student profile when compared with both London and sector benchmarks. The proportion of racialised and female students remains higher than either comparator group, reflecting the geographical and discipline focus of SOAS. In contrast, disability rates, while broadly comparable for much of the period shown, have fallen below both benchmark groups in the most recent year, although the numbers are smaller for this group and more susceptible to annual fluctuations. Together, these trends highlight the distinctive demographic profile of the SOAS student population and indicate areas where continued monitoring and support remain important.

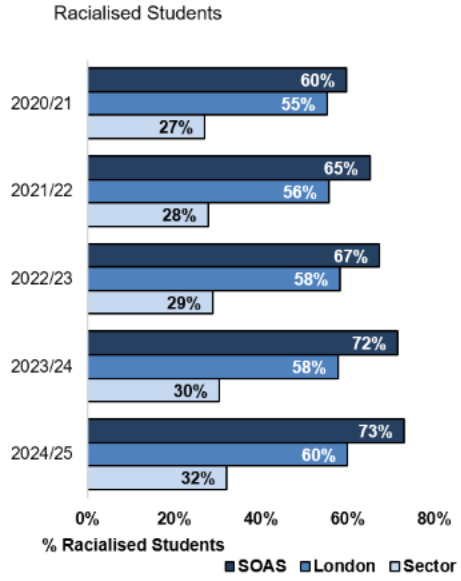


Figure 9: student ethnicity sector comparison

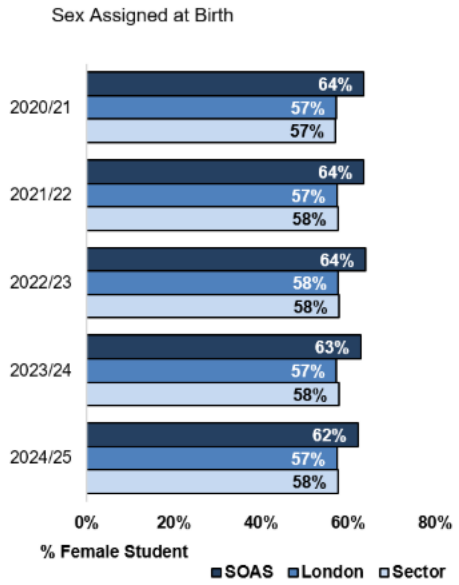


Figure 11: student sex sector comparison

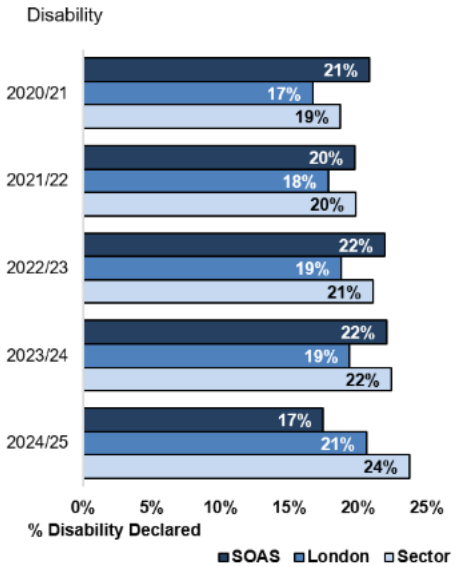


Figure 10: student disability sector comparison

In 2024/2025, almost 70% of SOAS UK students were enrolled on Undergraduate Taught (UGT) programmes, representing a slightly higher proportion than London institutions and a similar profile to the wider UK sector. The proportion of PGR students is broadly in line with both London and national benchmarks, while the proportion of PGT students is around seven percentage points lower than the London average. Over the past five years, the composition of the student body has shifted, with UGT enrolments increasing by 16 percentage points and PGT

enrolments decreasing by 14 percentage points, emphasizing the importance of focusing on potential enablers for postgraduate study, as set out in the SOAS strategy.

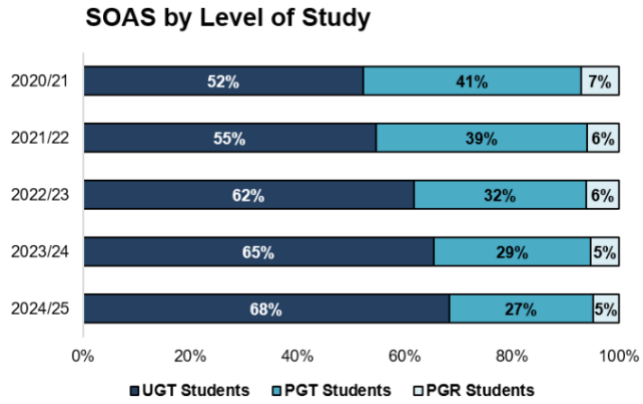


Figure 12: SOAS by level of study

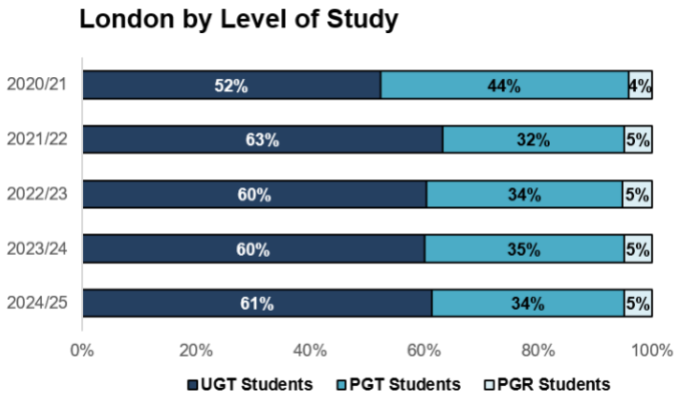


Figure 13: London by level of study

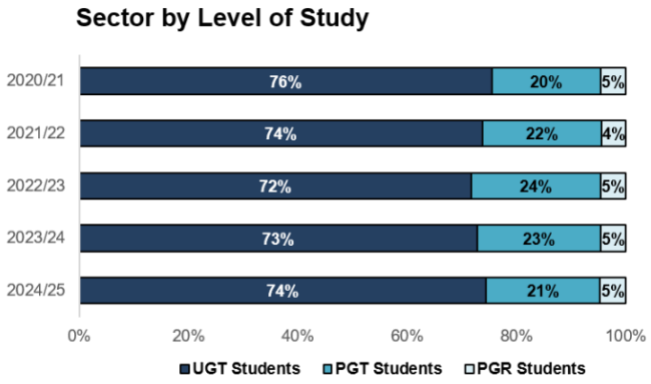


Figure 14: Sector by level of study

Diverse by nature

International Student Profile

International students represent 25% of all SOAS students and are a fundamental part of our diverse and globally connected community. Due to different reporting and admissions systems for UK and international students, we have different demographic data sets. Consequently, the student demographic analysis presented elsewhere in this report focuses on UK-domiciled students only and this section provides insight into the characteristics and experiences of our international student population, helping to present a more complete picture of the diversity that defines SOAS.

International students are particularly concentrated within postgraduate provision. Nearly half (49%) are enrolled on Postgraduate Taught (PGT) programmes, 41% are studying at Undergraduate Taught (UGT) level, and 10% are undertaking Postgraduate Research (PGR). As a proportion of each cohort, international students comprise 15% of UGT students, 46% of PGT students and 53% of PGR students, highlighting the significant contribution international students make to postgraduate study and research at SOAS.

Consistent with wider trends at SOAS, the international student population is predominantly female (65%). The cohort is also highly ethnically diverse, with 78% of international students identifying as racialised and 53% identifying as Asian. This diversity is particularly important in the context of postgraduate education, where the UK-domiciled student population is less ethnically diverse, with 53% of PGT students and 54% of PGR students identifying as racialised, compared to 79% of UK-domiciled UGT students. It is also notable that 16% of international students select the ethnicity category "Other", compared with 8% of UK-domiciled students, suggesting there may be opportunities to further review and enhance the inclusivity and representativeness of ethnicity categories used across the institution.

The age profile of international students reflects their strong representation within postgraduate study, with 35% aged 21-24 and a further 37% aged 25 and over. Disability disclosure rates among international students are lower than among UK-domiciled students, with 9% sharing they have a disability compared with 20% of UK-domiciled students. This may indicate opportunities to strengthen awareness of support services and encourage disclosure where students feel comfortable doing so. Similarly, 14% of international students identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other (LGBO), compared with 16% of UK-domiciled students, highlighting the diversity of the international student community across multiple dimensions of identity.

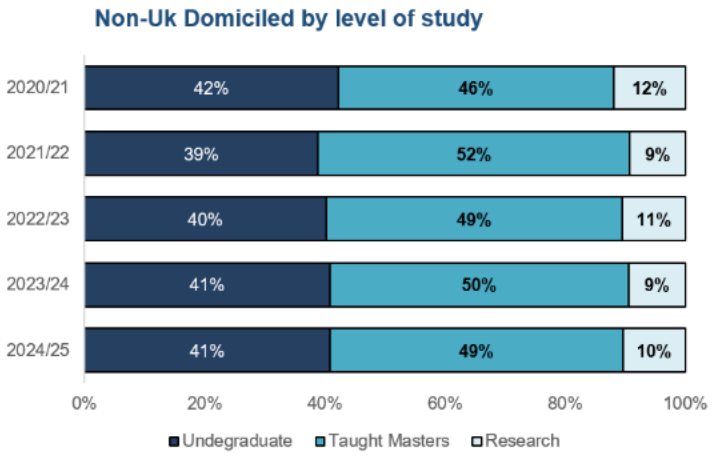


Figure 17: Non-UK Domiciled by level of study

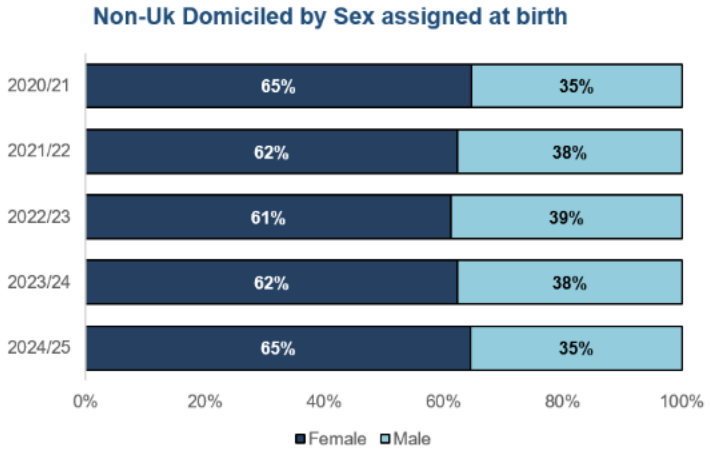


Figure 15: Non-Uk Domiciled by sex

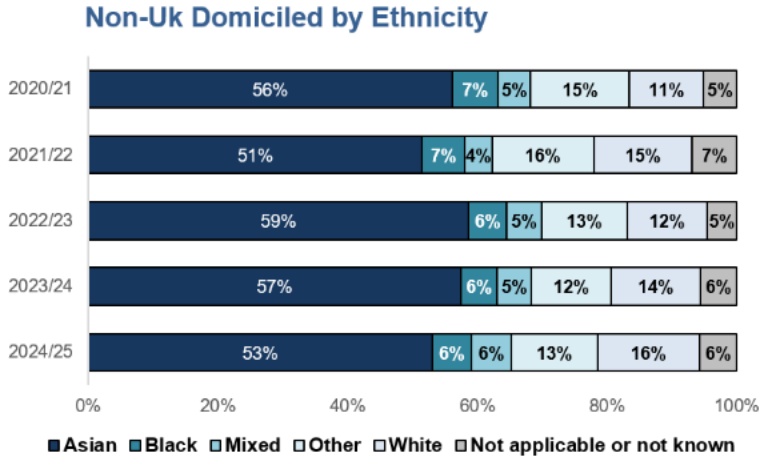


Figure 16: Non-UK Domiciled by ethnicity

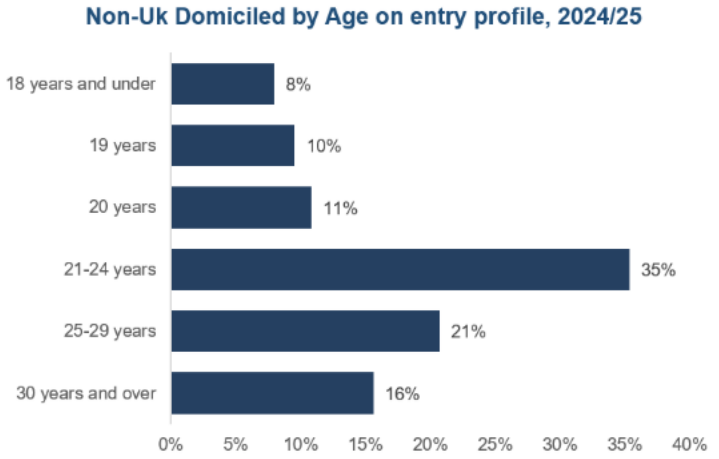


Figure 18: Non-UK Domiciled by age

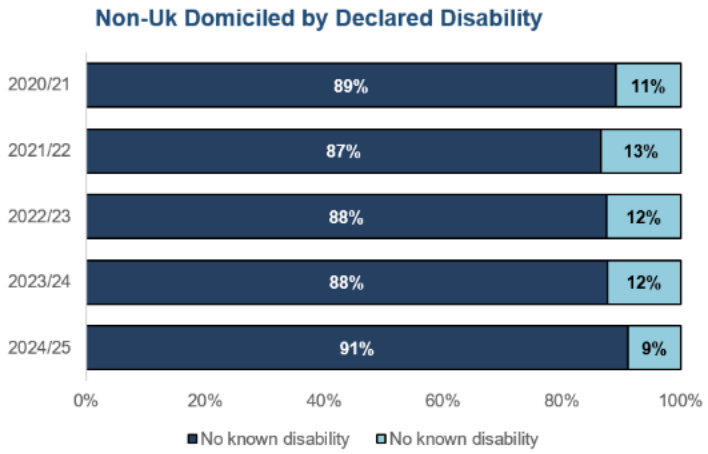


Figure 20: Non-UK Domiciled by disability status

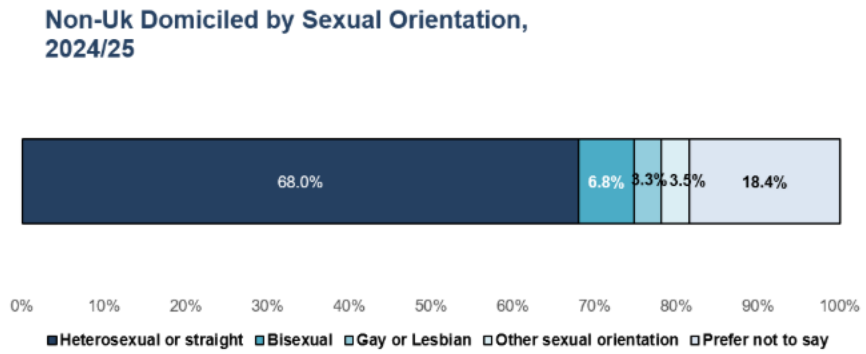


Figure 19: Non-UK Domiciled by sexual orienation

Sex

Staff

SOAS continues to have a predominantly female workforce, with women consistently accounting for a greater proportion of staff than men. This trend is particularly evident within professional services, where women represented 63% of staff in 2024/25, compared with 37% men. Within the academic workforce, the gender distribution is more balanced, with women accounting for 54% of staff and men 42%.

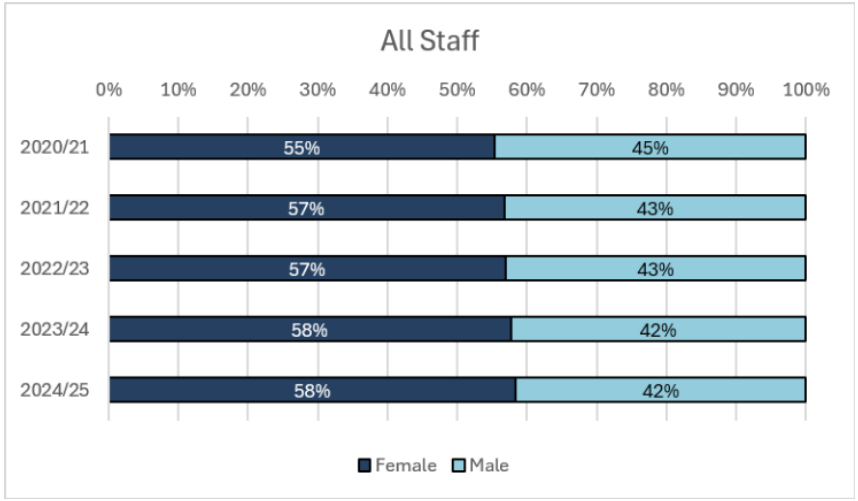


Figure 22: Sex-all staff

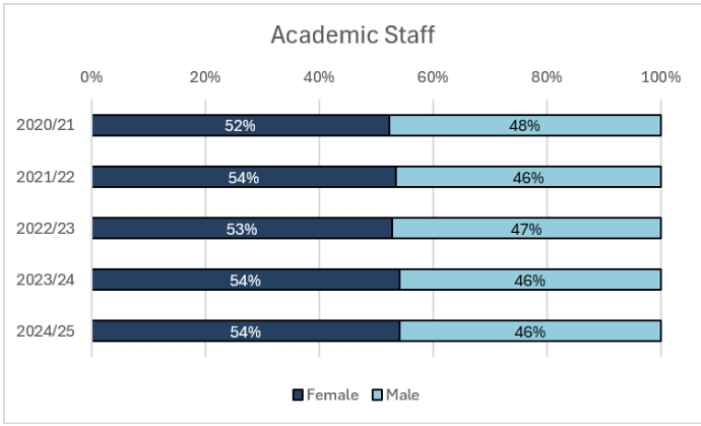


Figure 21: Sex-academic staff

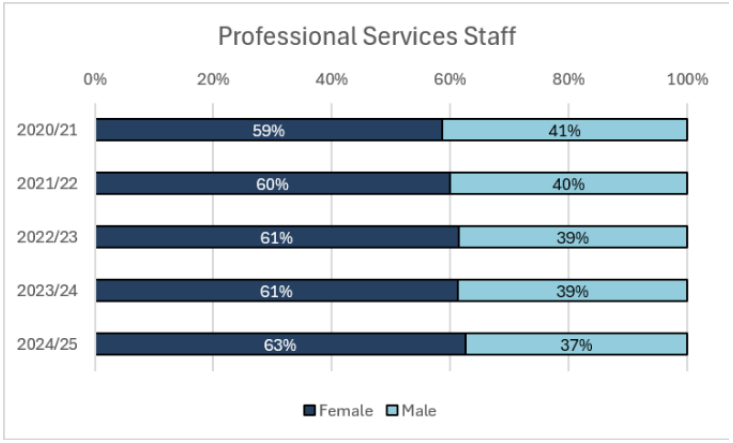


Figure 23: Sex-professional services staff

While women are well represented overall, representation decreases at more senior academic levels, where men comprise 52% of Professors and women 48% of Professors. Within professional services, women continue to form the majority of staff at Grades 5-8; however, representation at senior Grades 9 and 10 has reached parity, with women and men each accounting for 50% of staff at these grades.

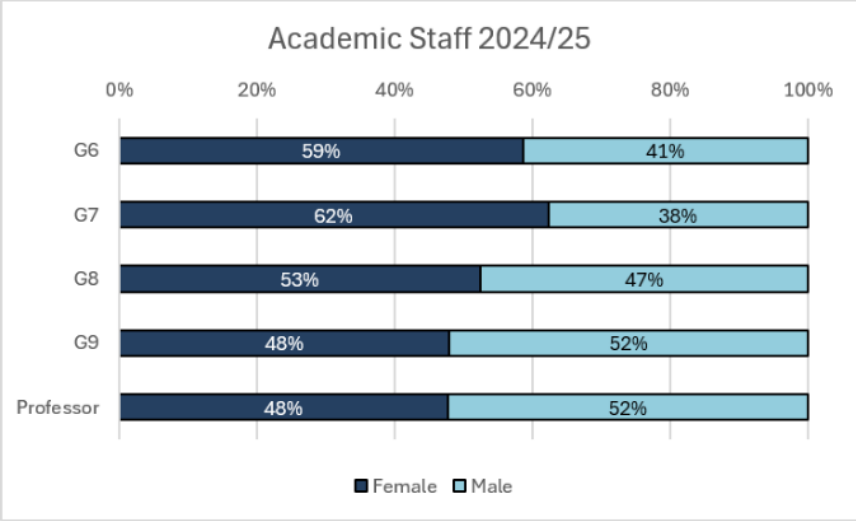


Figure 25: Academic staff- sex x grade

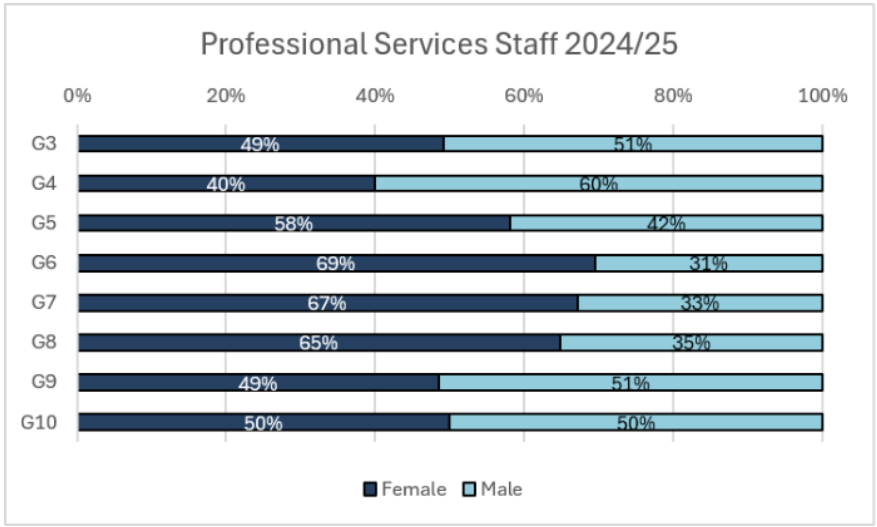


Figure 24: Professional services staff-sex x grade

Students

The student population continues to be predominantly female across all levels of study, with the overall gender profile remaining relatively stable over time. While female students continue to represent the majority of the student body, the gender balance at undergraduate level has narrowed slightly, driven by a 3-percentage point increase in male students over the past five years. The most balanced gender distribution is seen among Postgraduate Research (PGR) students, where the 2024/25 cohort comprised 52% women and 48% men.

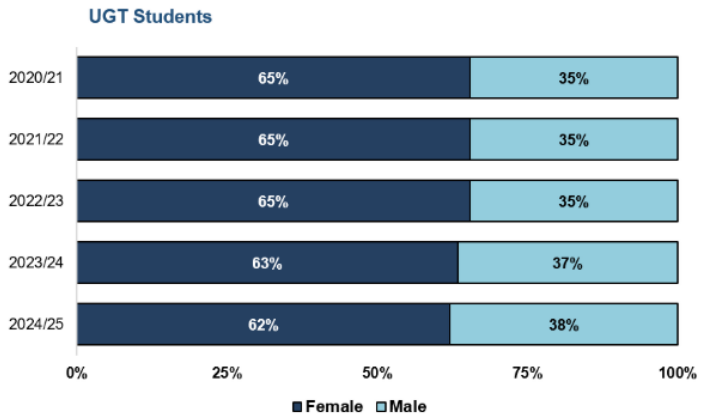


Figure 26: Sex-UGT students

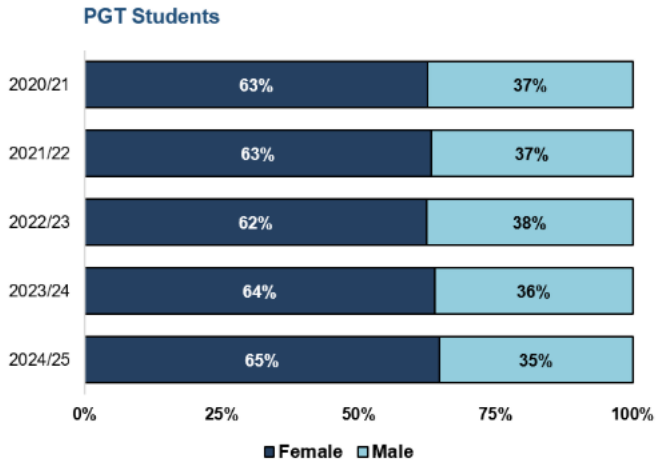


Figure 27: Sex-PGT students

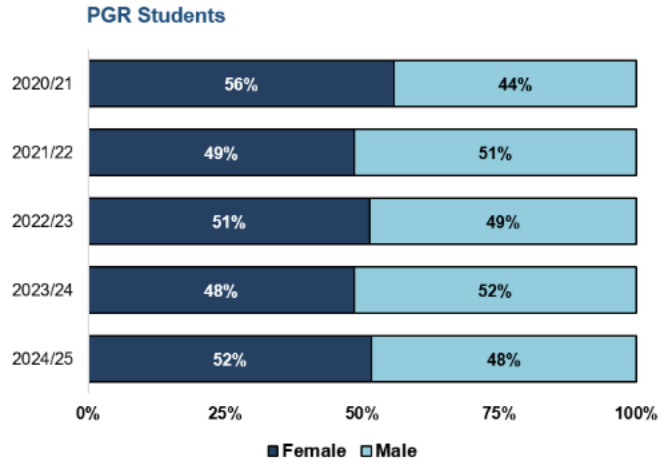


Figure 28: Sex-PGR students

Ethnicity

Staff

SOAS has a highly diverse workforce, with racialised staff now representing the majority of employees at 51%, compared with 41% who identify as White. Over the past five years, the proportion of racialised staff has increased by nine percentage points, reflecting continued growth in workforce diversity across the institution. This trend is evident across both professional services and academic staff groups. Among professional services staff, the proportion of racialised colleagues increased from 43% to 49% between 2020/21 and 2024/25, while among academic staff representation grew more rapidly, rising from 41% to 53% over the same period.

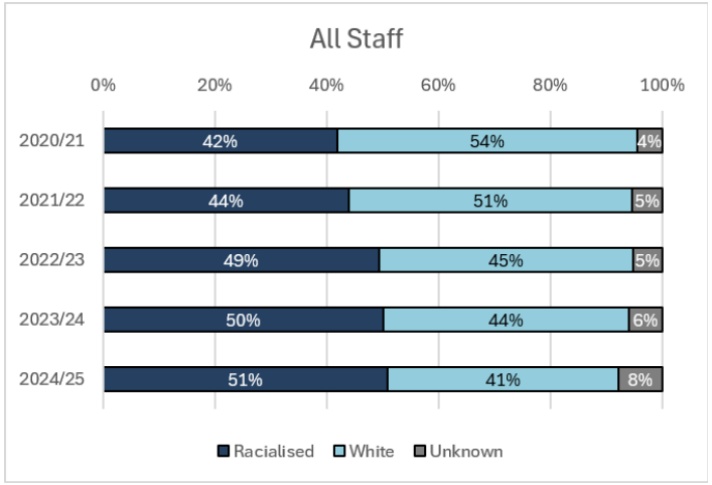


Figure 30: Ethnicity-All staff

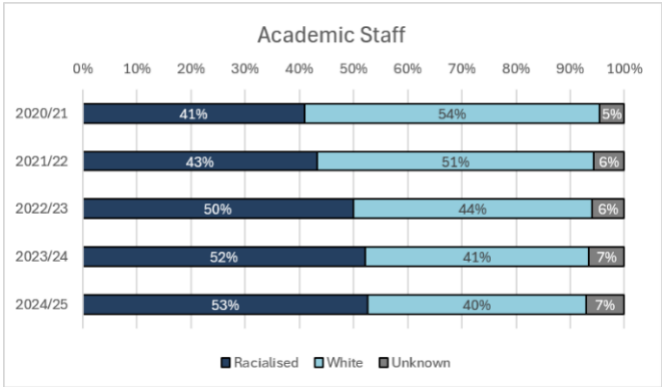


Figure 29: Ethnicity-Academic staff

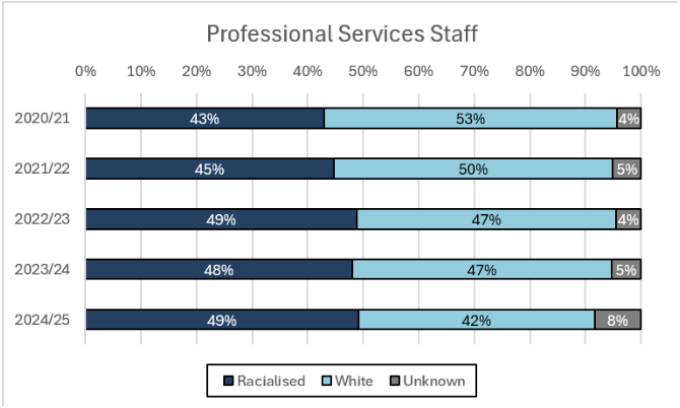


Figure 31: Ethnicity-Professional services staff

Over the past 5 years, among academic staff, the proportion of Asian colleagues increased from 20% to 29%, while the proportion of Black colleagues rose from 6% to 9%. Within professional services, representation of Asian staff increased from 16% to 19%, while the proportion of Black staff remained relatively stable over the same period. It is also notable that 10% of staff identify their ethnicity as "Other", highlighting the importance of ongoing work to review and enhance ethnicity data categories to ensure they are representative of the diverse identities and experiences within the SOAS community.

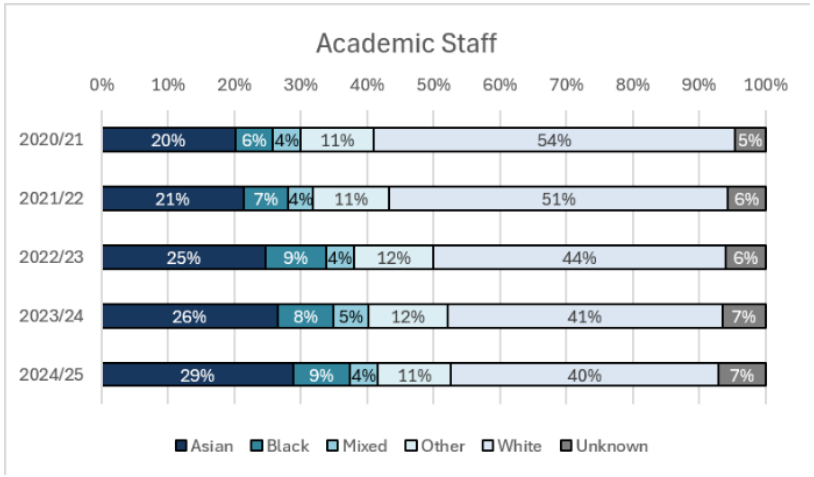


Figure 32: Detailed ethnicity- Academic staff

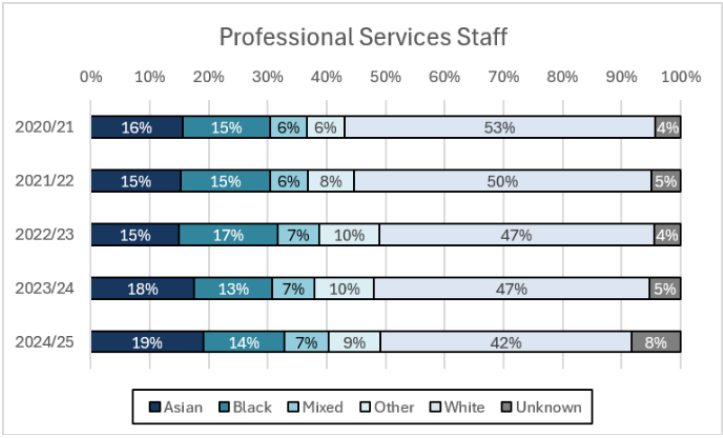


Figure 33: Detailed ethnicity- Professional services staff

A more detailed analysis of ethnicity by grade highlights persistent disparities in representation at senior levels across both academic and professional services career pathways. While Asian colleagues are well represented in junior and mid-level academic grades, comprising 30% of Grade 7 academics (which is the equivalent of Lecturer level), representation decreases substantially at the most senior levels, with Asian staff accounting for 17% of Professors. For Black academics, we see good representation at Grade 7, 8 and Professorship, but a dip at Grade 9, which is concerning for our future pipeline of Professors.

Within professional services, Black colleagues represent 31% of staff at Grade 3 but their representation declines progressively with seniority, falling to 16% at Grade 6 and with no Black staff represented at Grade 10 in 2024/2025. Conversely, White staff remain disproportionately represented in senior leadership and higher-grade positions across the institution.

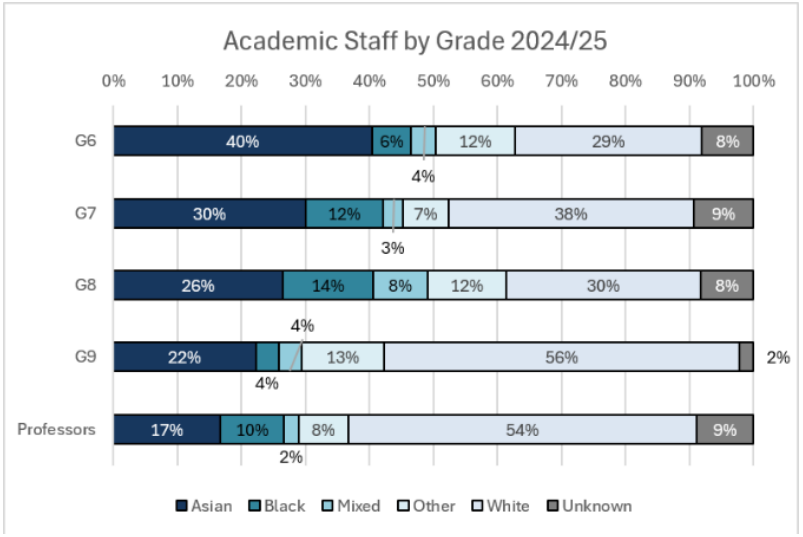


Figure 35: Academic staff- ethnicity x grade

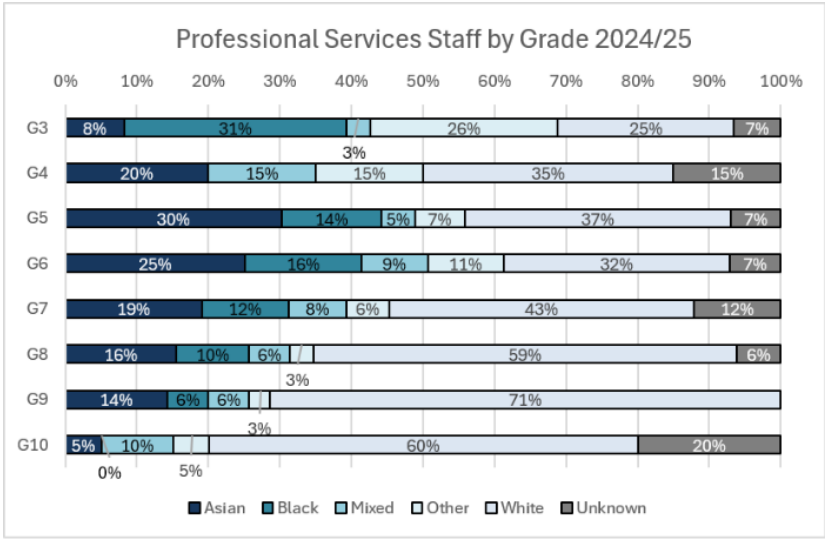


Figure 34: Professional services staff- ethnicity x grade

Intersection of race and ethnicity

An intersectional analysis of ethnicity and gender highlights continued underrepresentation of racialised women in senior roles across SOAS. Among female academics, 51% of Professors are White, while within professional services, White women account for 70% of female staff at Grades 9 and 10. These patterns indicate that, despite progress in workforce diversity overall, racialised women remain less likely to be represented in the most senior positions across the institution. Addressing this disparity is a shared priority within both the Race Equality Charter and Athena Swan action plans, which focus on strengthening recruitment, progression and leadership development pathways to increase the representation of racialised women in senior roles.

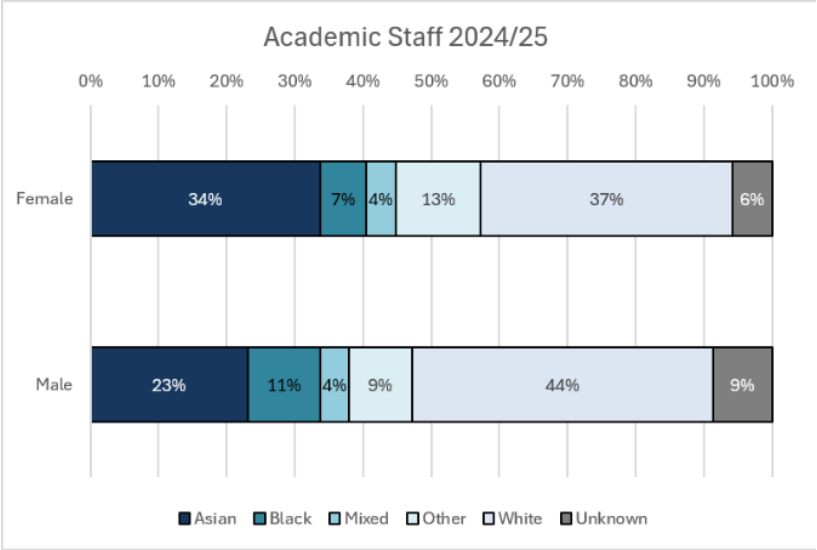


Figure 36: Academic staff-sex x ethnicity

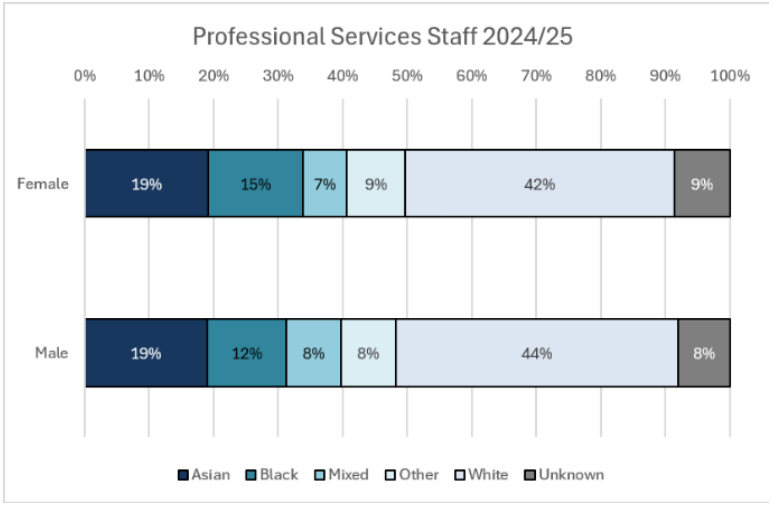


Figure 37: Professional services staff- sex x ethnicity

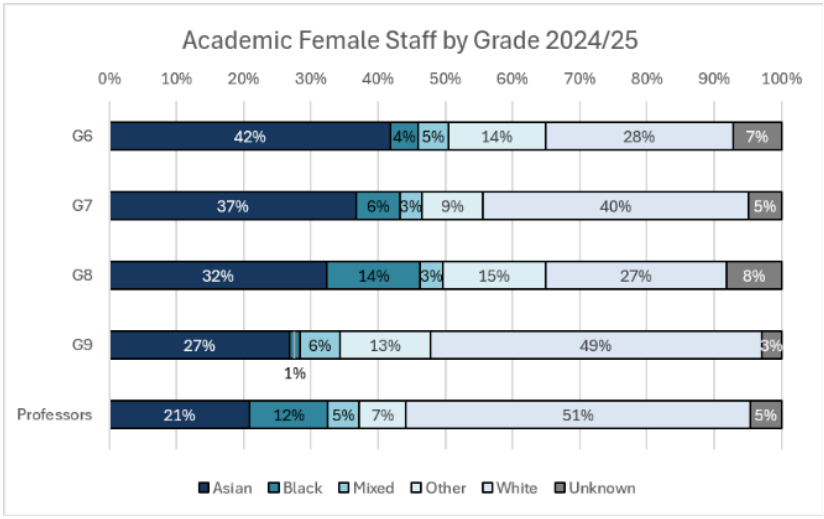


Figure 39: Academic female staff-ethnicity x grade

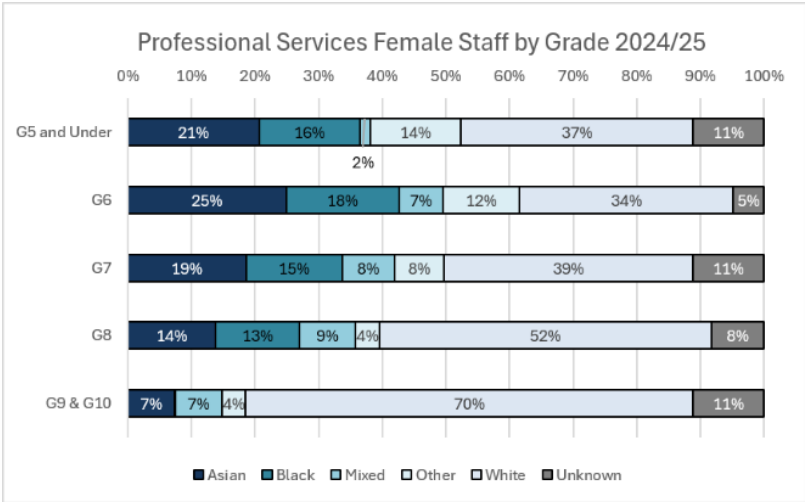


Figure 38: Professional services female staff-ethnicity x grade

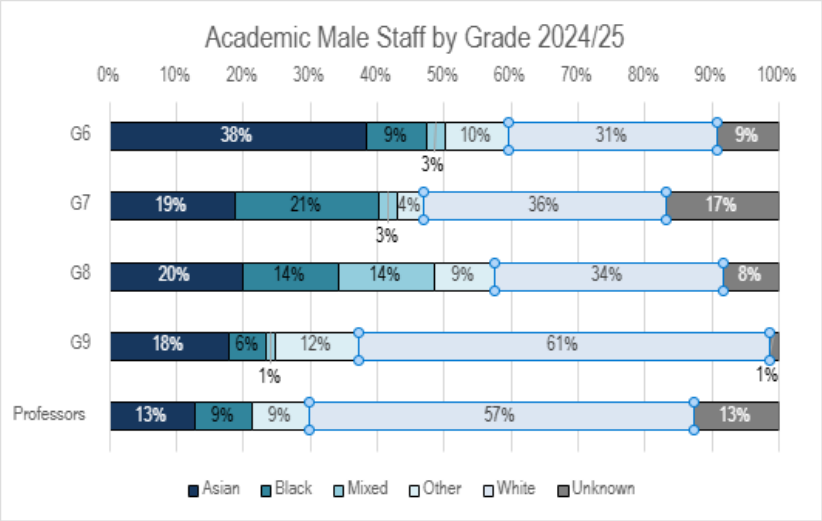


Figure 41: Academic male staff- ethnicity x grade

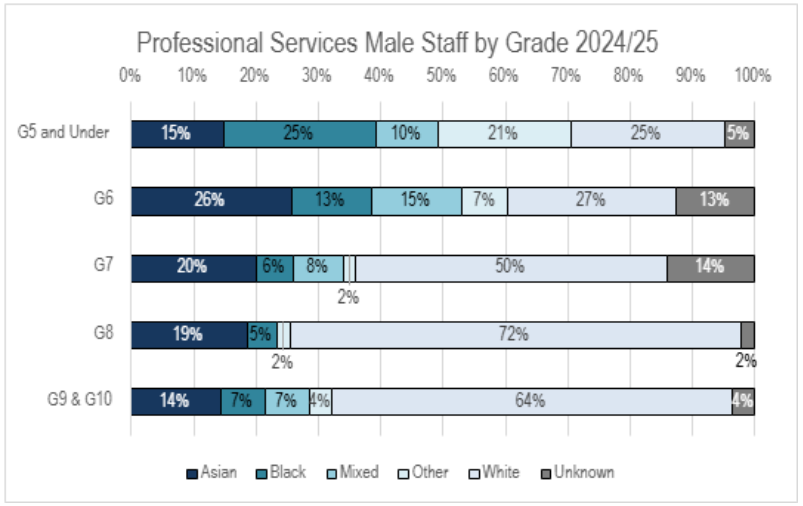


Figure 40: Professional services male staff- ethnicity x grade

Students

The ethnic diversity of the SOAS student body has continued to increase throughout the reporting period. In 2024/2025, racialised students represented 79% of Undergraduate Taught (UGT) students, 53% of Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students and 54% of Postgraduate Research (PGR) students.

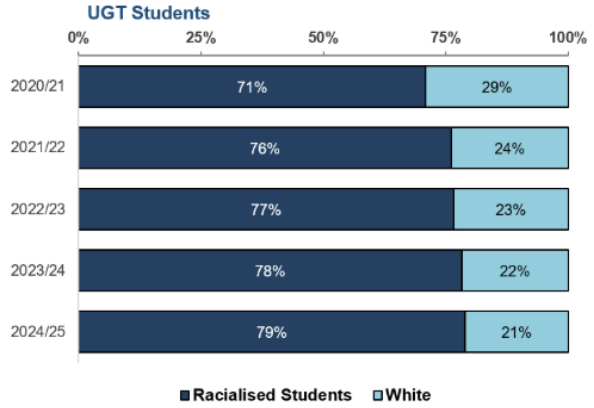


Figure 42: Ethnicity- UGT students

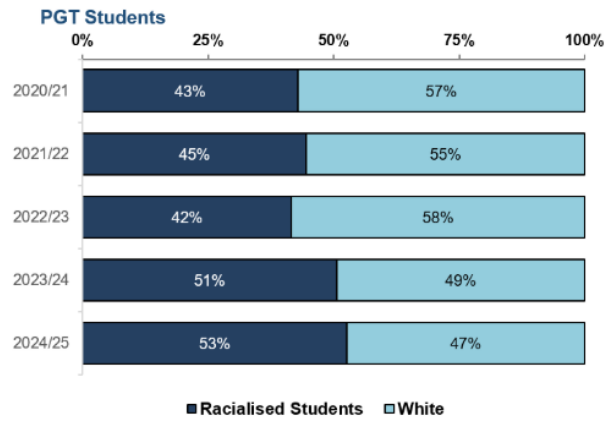


Figure 43: Ethnicity: PGT students

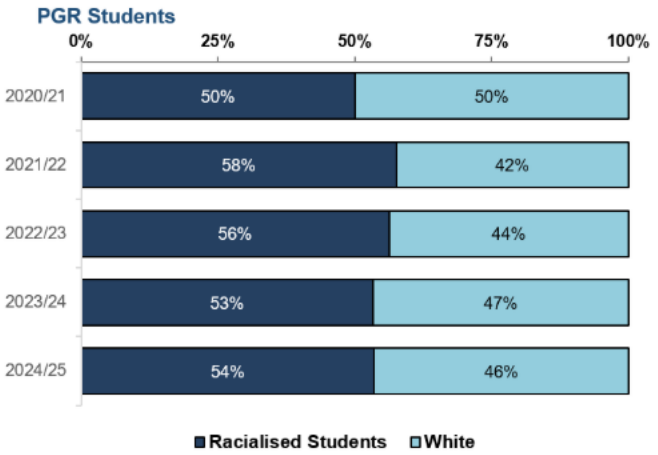


Figure 44: Ethnicity-PGR students

The ethnicity profile of SOAS's UK-domiciled student population has become increasingly diverse over the reporting period. The proportion of White students has declined, while the representation of Asian, Black and Mixed ethnicity students has generally increased across the student body. This trend is most pronounced at Undergraduate level, where Asian students now comprise almost 40% of students and White students account for 20%. However, diversity decreases at postgraduate level, with Asian students representing 19% of PGT students and 23% of PGR students, while White students comprise approximately 45% of both PGT and PGR cohorts.

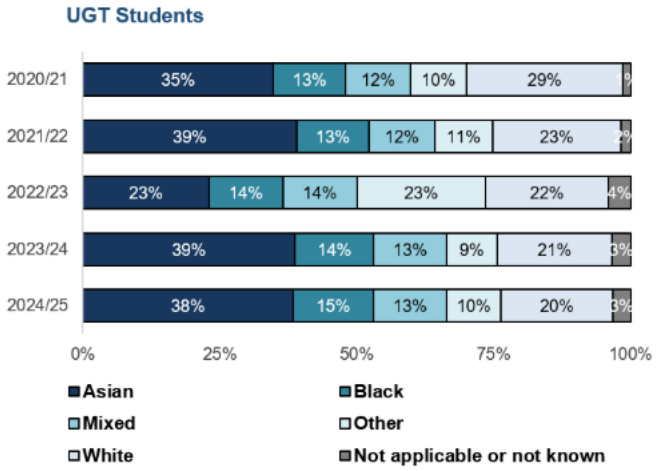


Figure 46: Detailed ethnicity-UGT students

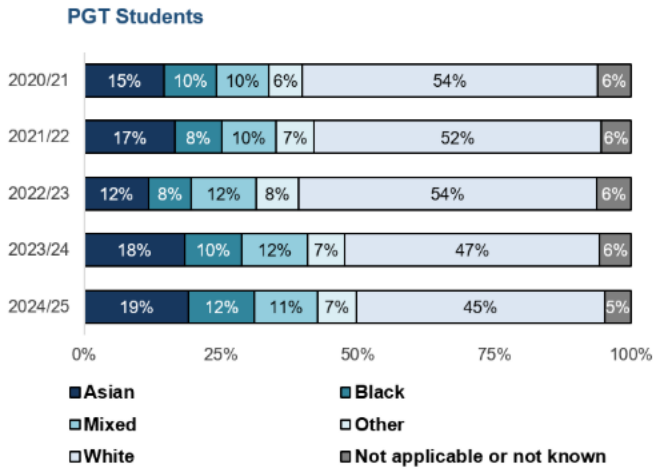


Figure 45: Detailed ethnicity-PGT students

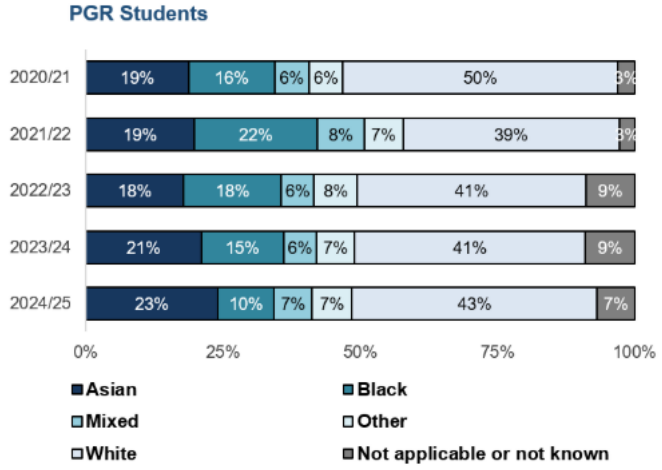


Figure 47: Detailed ethnicity-PGR students

The ethnicity degree awarding gap remains one of the most significant equality challenges facing the higher education sector. The 'awarding gap' measures the difference in the proportion of White students achieving a First or Upper Second-Class (2:1) degree compared to students from

other ethnic backgrounds. Addressing this disparity is a key institutional priority, supported through the Access and Participation Plan, the Race Equality Charter action plan, and the Degree Awarding Gap Task and Finish Group.

Analysis over the past five academic years shows that the racialised awarding gap has remained persistent, exceeding 10 percentage points in each of the last four years. More detailed analysis highlights disparities in higher degree outcomes across all racialised groups. While approximately one quarter of White students graduate with a First-Class degree, only 7% of Asian students and 8% of Black students achieve the same outcome. Similar patterns are evident among Mixed and Other ethnic groups, indicating that the awarding gap is not confined to any one community but affects racialised students more broadly.

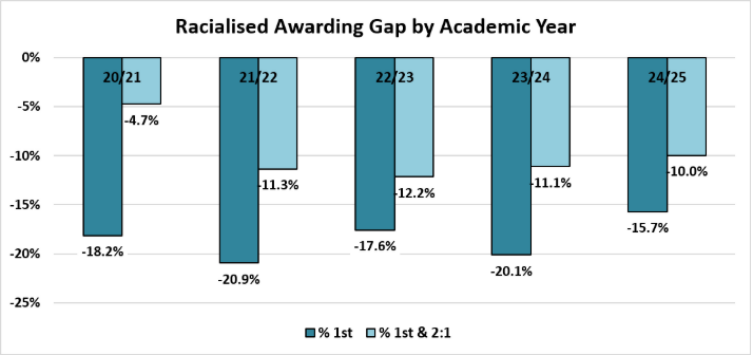


Figure 48: Racialised awarding gap by academic year

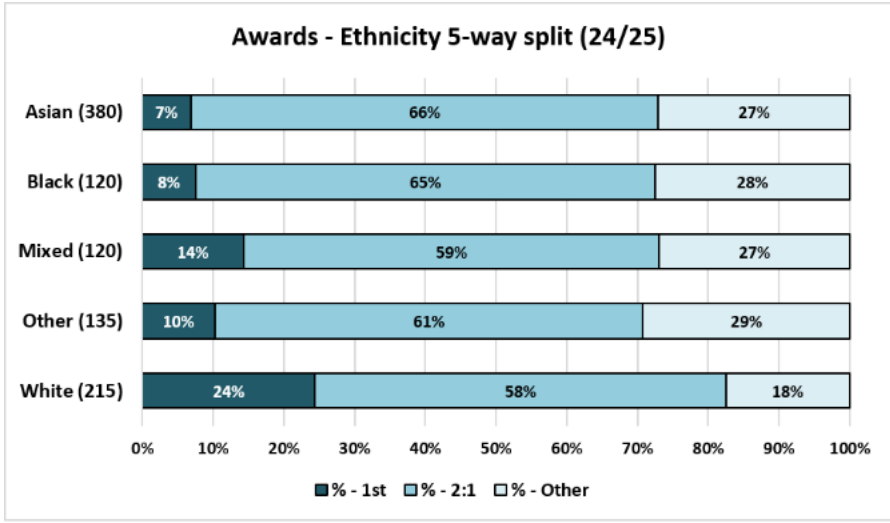


Figure 49: Detailed racialised awarding gap

Disability

Staff

The proportion of staff who have shared that they are disabled has increased over the 5 years from 6% to 8%. The rate is slightly higher among professional services staff than academic staff.



Figure 51: Disability- All staff

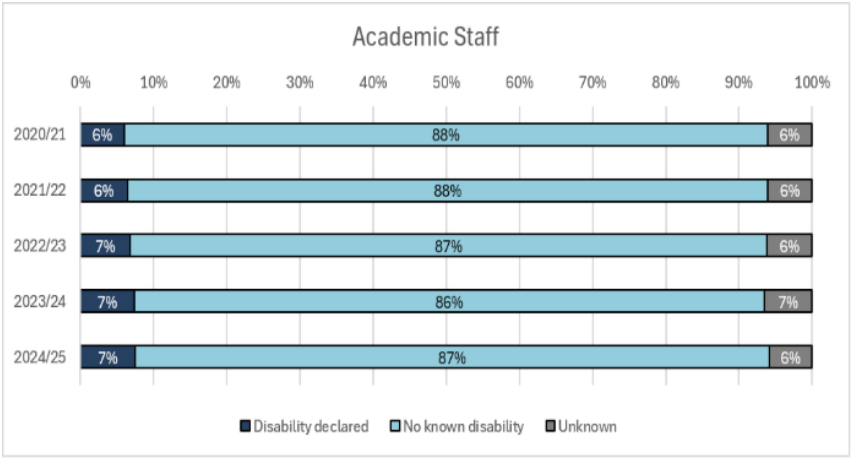


Figure 50: Disability-Academic staff



Figure 52: Disability- Professional services staff

The most prevalent disabilities are long term illness or health conditions and mental health conditions. In academic staff they make up 56% of all known disabilities and in professional services staff they are 54%. The third highest proportion is learning differences, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD[1].

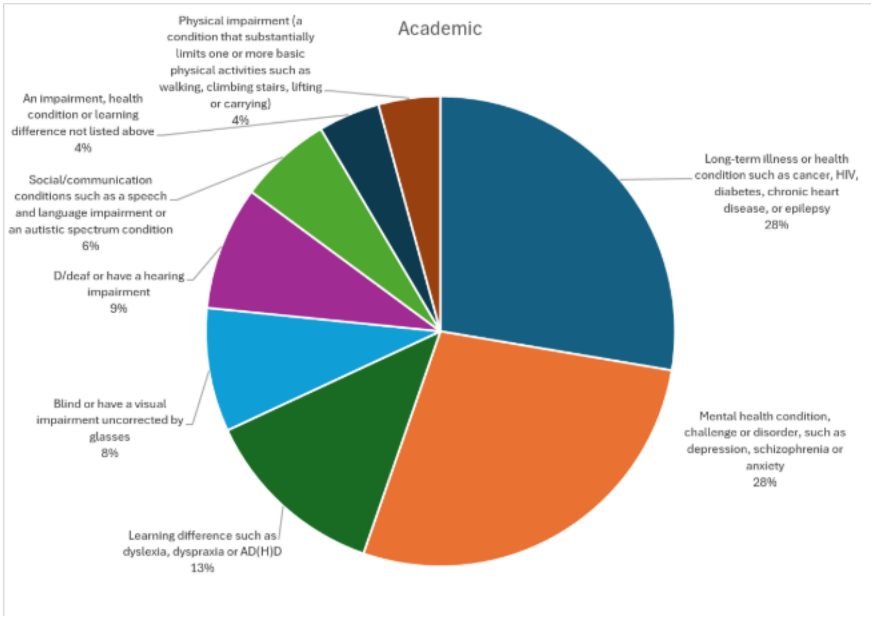


Figure 54: Disability type- Academic

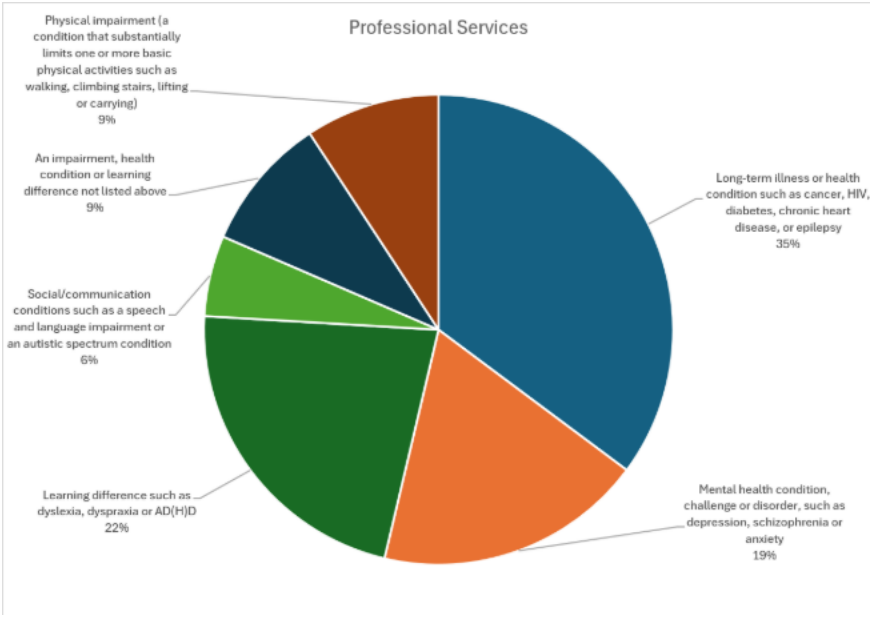


Figure 53: Disability type- Professional services

Students

In 2024/25, 17% of Undergraduate Taught (UGT) students, 19% of Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students and almost one quarter of Postgraduate Research (PGR) students shared with SOAS that they are disabled. While disclosure rates decreased among UGT and PGT students over the last year, they remained stable within the PGR population. Benchmark comparisons suggest that disability disclosure continues to be an area of

[1] SOAS uses the disability categories and terminology mandated by HESA, so the language used here is different to the language and terminology we would advocate and use on campus.

focus across the higher education sector. Analysis of shared disabilities shows that learning differences, including dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD, account for 32% of disclosures, while 21% relate to mental health conditions or challenges.

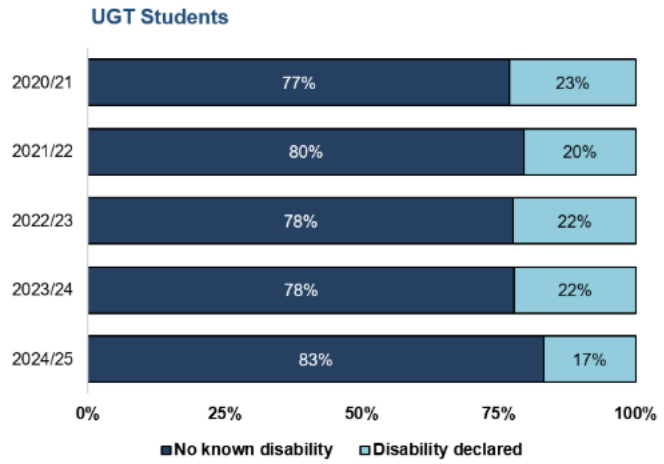


Figure 56: Disability-UGT students

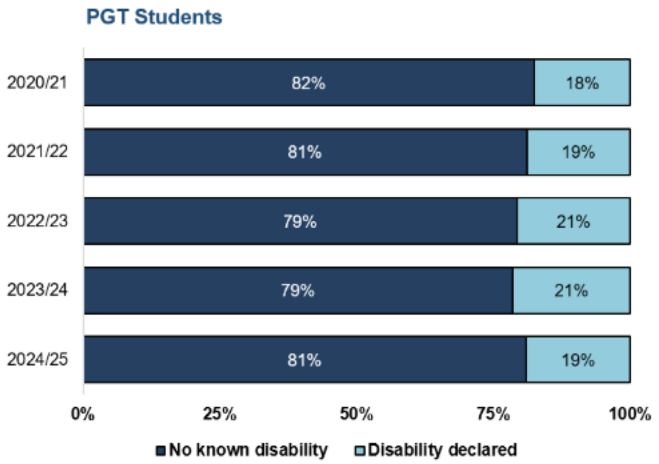


Figure 55: Disability-PGT students

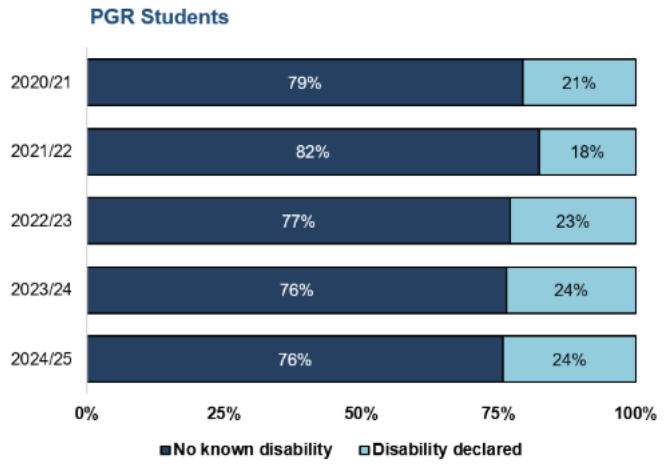


Figure 57: Disability- PGR students

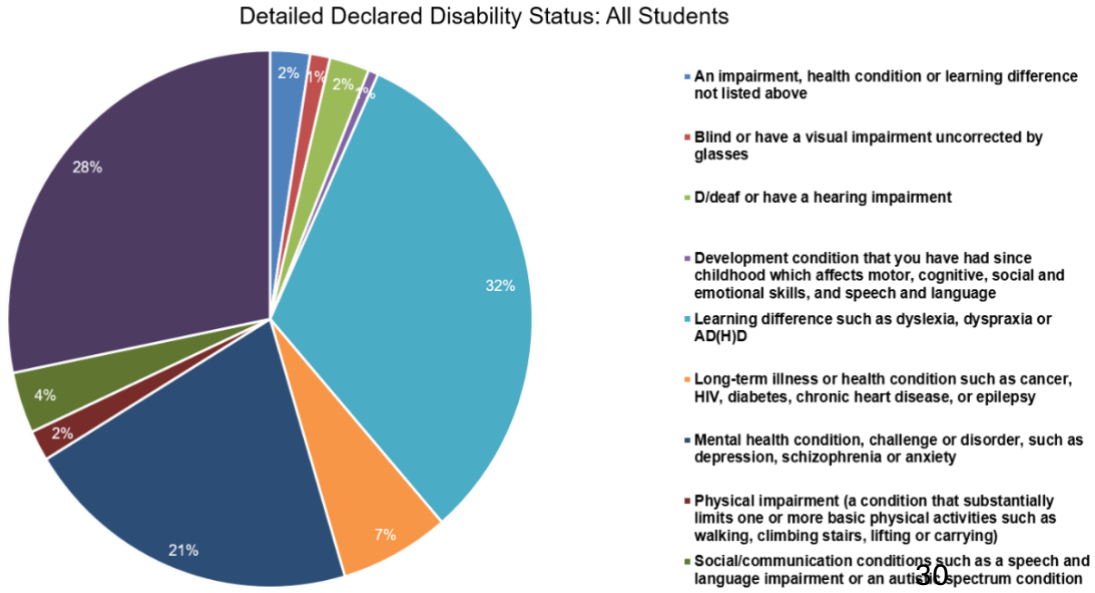


Figure 58: Disability type-all students

Nationality

Staff

The international profile of the SOAS workforce remains a distinctive strength and reflects the institution's global focus and academic specialism. Between 2020/2021 and 2024/2025, the proportion of staff from the UK decreased slightly from 60% to 57%. This overall figure masks notable differences between staff groups: 74% of professional services staff are from the UK, compared with 42% of academic staff. Academic colleagues also have a substantial international presence, with 40% originating from outside the UK. These patterns are consistent with SOAS's role as a globally oriented institution, attracting expertise and perspectives from across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

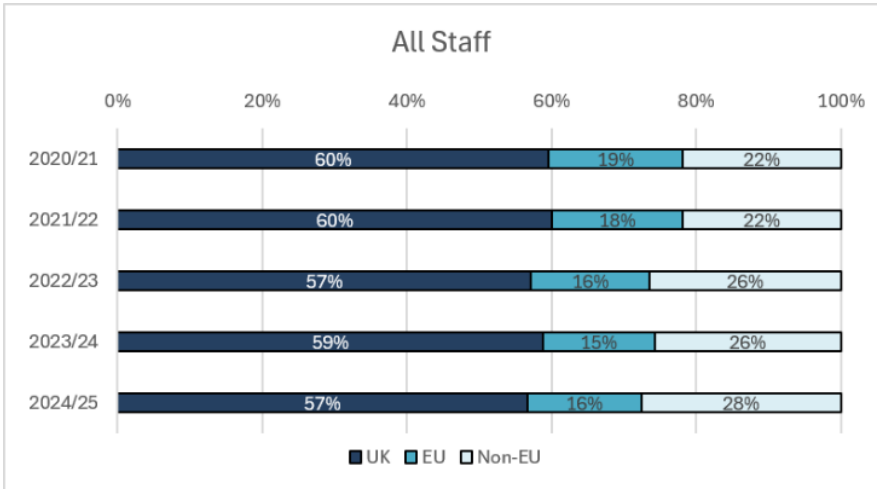


Figure 60: Nationality-All staff

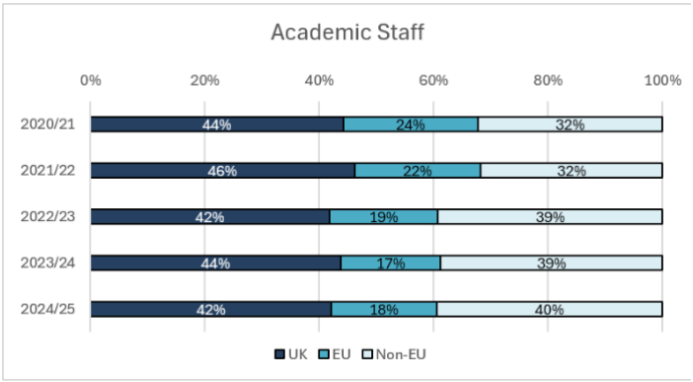


Figure 59: Nationality-Academic staff

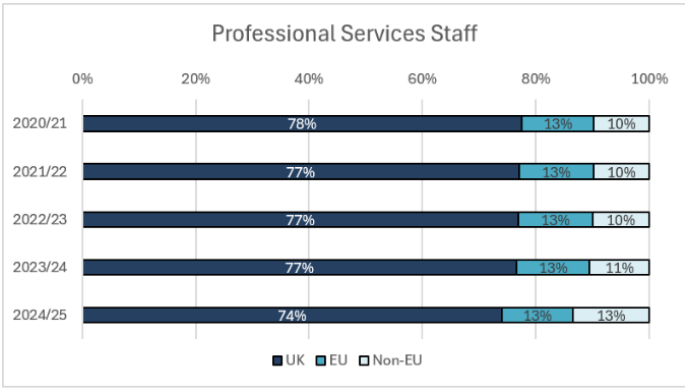


Figure 61: Nationality-Professional services staff

Students

The nationality profile of the student population varies considerably by level of study. Undergraduate students are predominantly UK-domiciled, with 77% of students coming from the UK. In contrast, postgraduate provision is significantly more international in character, with 44% of PGT students and 55% of PGR students originating from non-European countries. These patterns have remained broadly consistent across the reporting period.

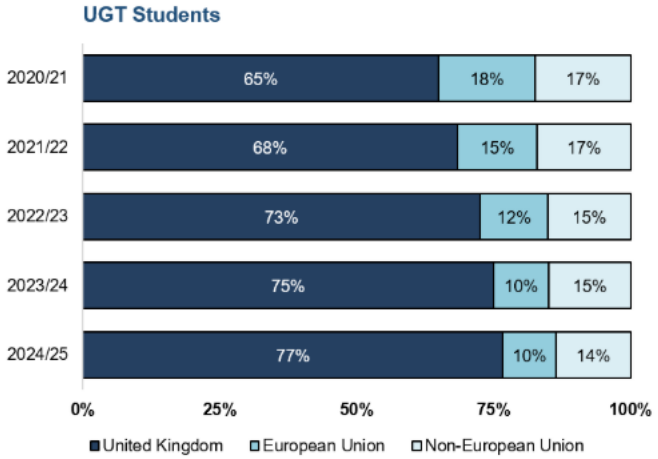


Figure 63: Nationality-UGT students

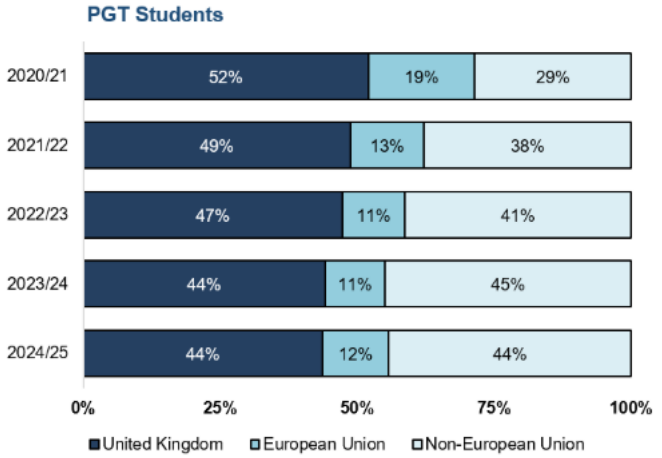


Figure 62: Nationality-PGT students

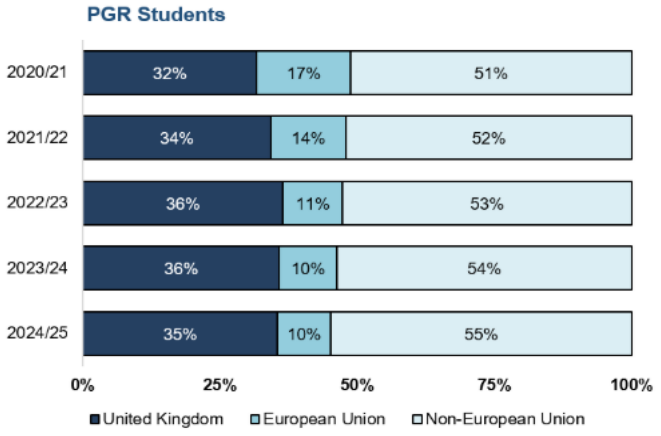


Figure 64: Nationality-PGR students

Age

Staff

The proportion of SOAS staff under 35 has increased from 23% in 2020/2021 to 29% in 2024/2025. The proportion of professional services staff under 35 is 35% while the proportion of academics under 35 is 23%. The academic age distribution represents a more aging workforce compared to the professional service cohort. The proportion of professional services staff 66 and over is lower than the proportion of academics in that age bracket (1% compared to 6%).

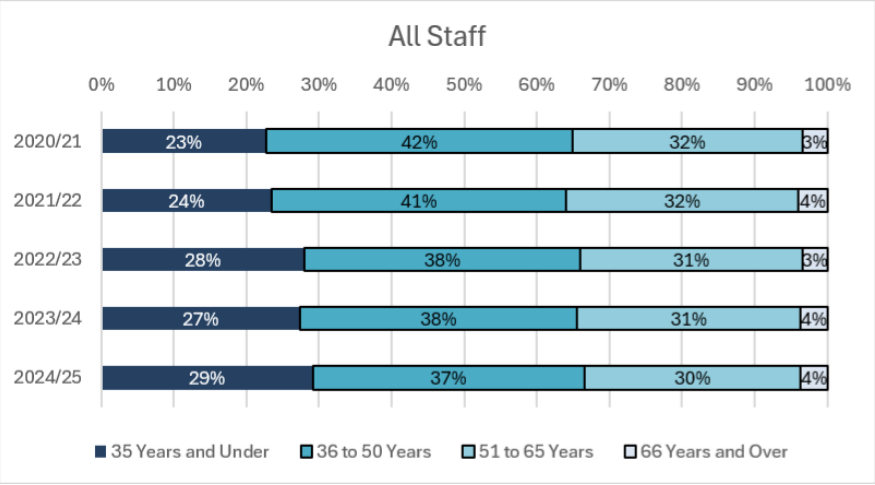


Figure 66: Age-All staff

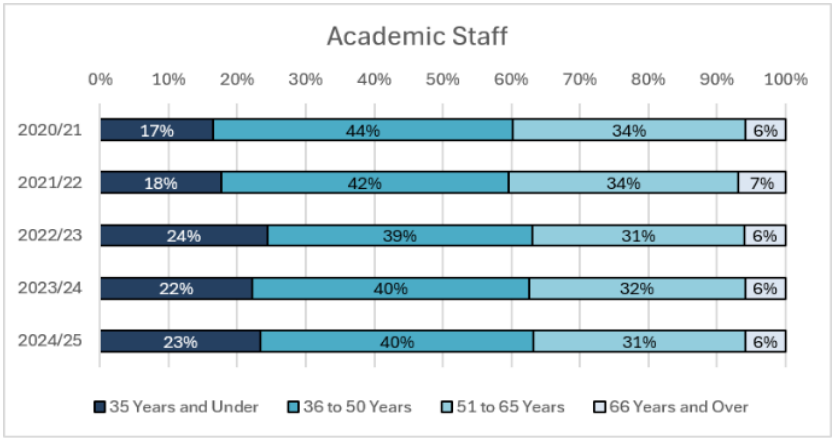


Figure 65: Age-Academic staff

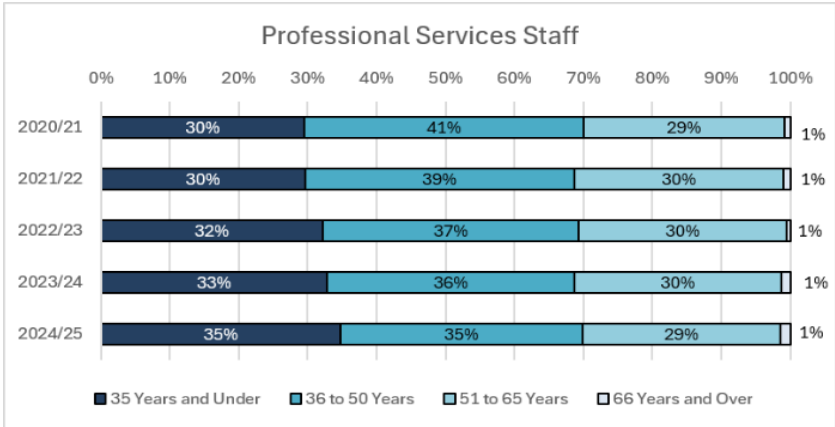


Figure 67: Age-Professional services staff

Students

The age profile differs notably by level of study. Undergraduate provision is primarily composed of younger entrants, while PGT and PGR students display an older age profile. Over time, the undergraduate population has become predominately represented by the younger age group 18-20 years of age, whereas PGR students continue to be predominantly mature learners. These patterns highlight the differing characteristics and support needs of students across levels of study.

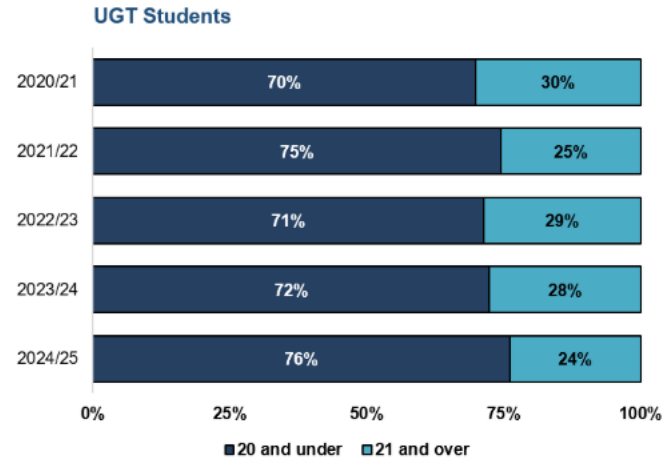


Figure 69: Age-UGT students

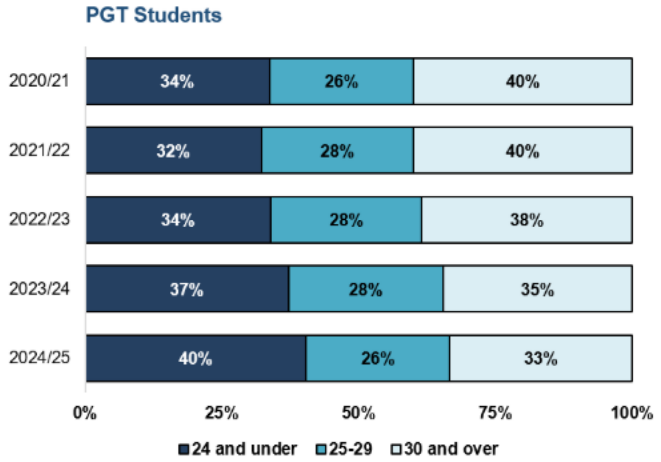


Figure 68: Age-PGT students

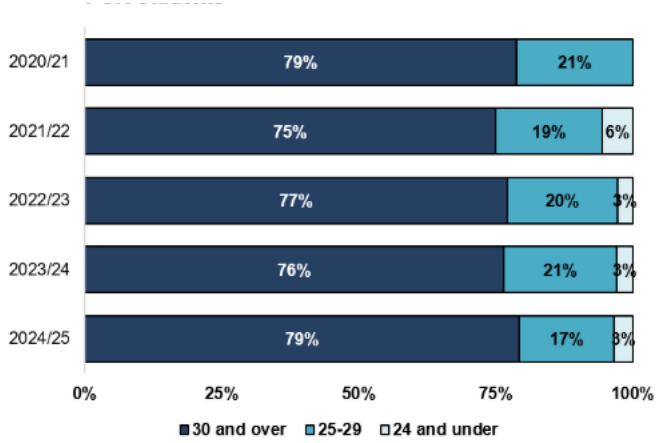


Figure 70: Age-PGR students

Sexual Orientation

Staff

Sharing of sexual orientation data among staff has improved significantly over recent years, enhancing SOAS's understanding of the diversity of its workforce. The proportion of staff whose sexual orientation was recorded as unknown has fallen from 56% in 2021/2022 to 32% in 2024/2025. Increased disclosure has primarily been driven by a rise in the number of staff identifying as heterosexual, alongside smaller increases in the proportion of staff identifying as bisexual, gay or lesbian.

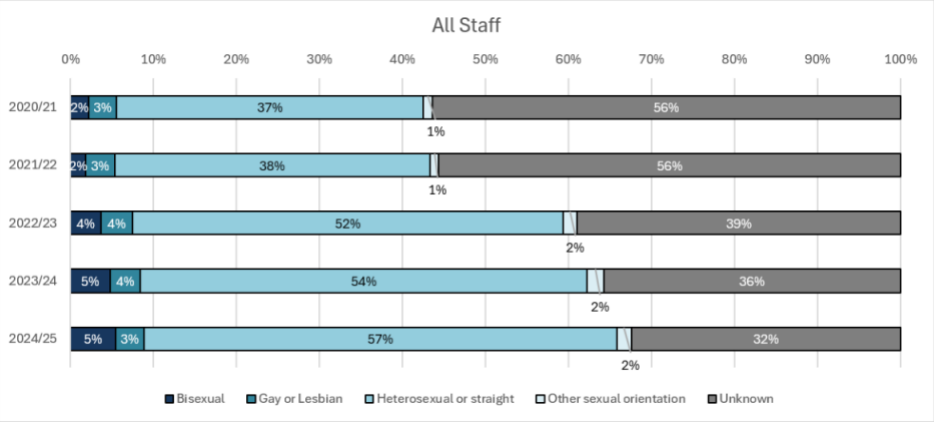


Figure 71: Sexual orientation-All staff

Students

Sexual orientation data indicates notable differences across levels of study. In 2024/2025, 9.7% of UGT students identified as LGBO, compared with 19.7% of PGT students and 18.5% of PGR students. This is particularly noteworthy given that UGT students have the highest disclosure rates, with only 11.5% choosing not to disclose their sexual orientation, compared with 18.4% of PGT students and 19.9% of PGR students.

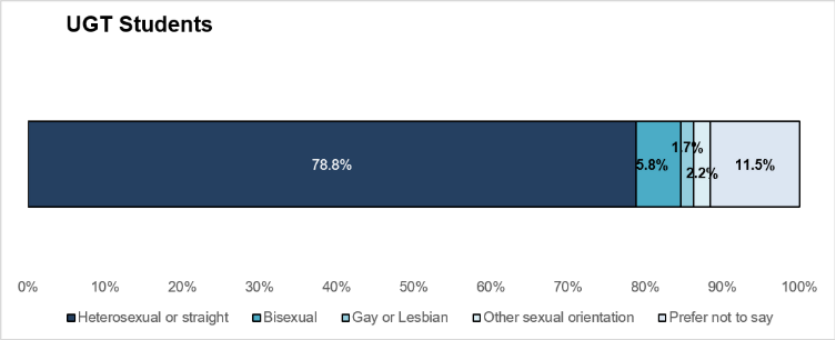


Figure 72: Sexual orientation-UGT students

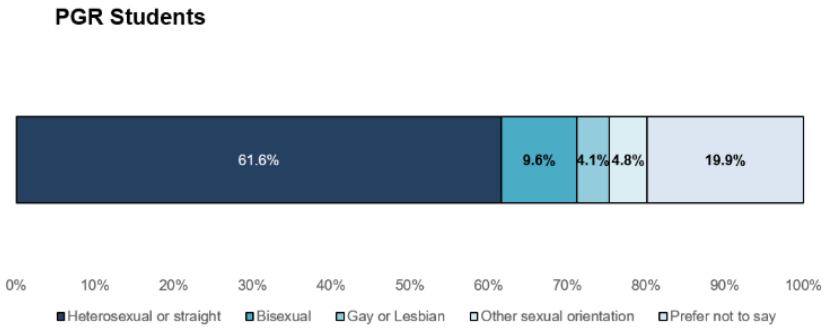


Figure 73: Sexual Orientation-PGR students

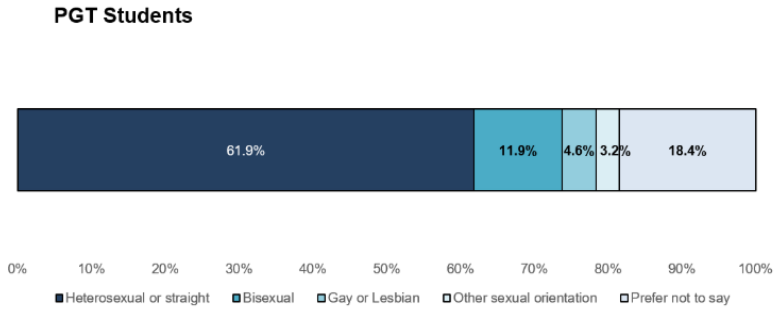


Figure 74: Sexual Orientation-PGT students

Religion and Belief

Staff

Sharing of religion and belief data among staff has continued to improve over recent years, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity of the SOAS workforce. The proportion of staff whose religion or belief was recorded as unknown decreased significantly from 49% in 2021/2022 to 29% in 2024/2025. Among those who have disclosed, the largest group identify as having no religion (30%), followed by Christian staff (22%) and Muslim staff (10%).

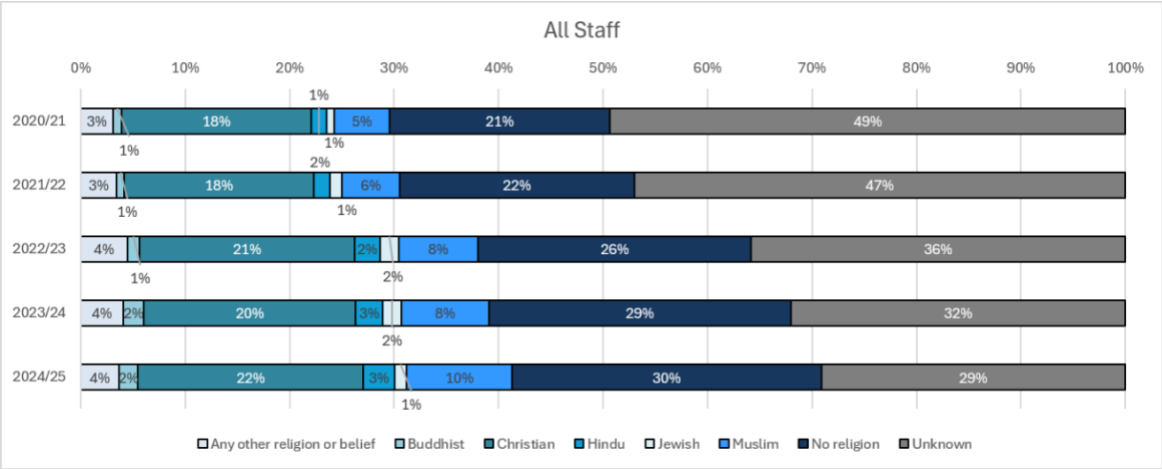


Figure 75: Religion and belief-All staff

Students

The religion and belief profile of the student population reflects the distinctive diversity of the SOAS community. Muslim students are the largest faith group, comprising 45% of students in 2024/2025 and showing steady growth over the last three years. Students reporting no religion

represent the second largest group at 25%, followed by Christian students at 14%. While these figures demonstrate the rich diversity of faith and belief across the student body, the data also highlights areas where further work is needed to improve confidence in equality data collection. For example, current records indicate that 0% of students identify as Jewish, which is not reflective of the known composition of the SOAS community.

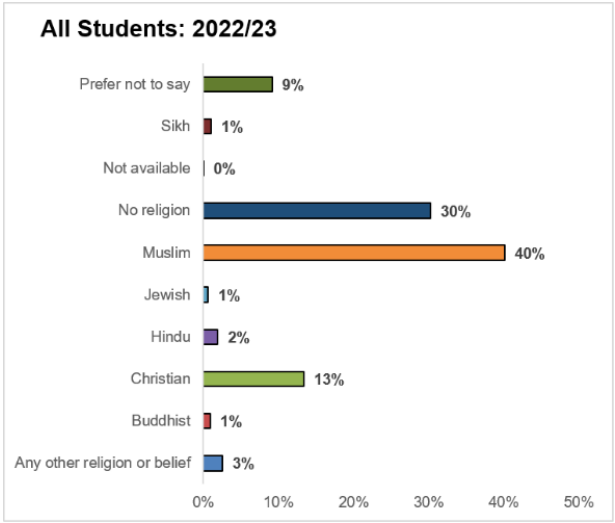
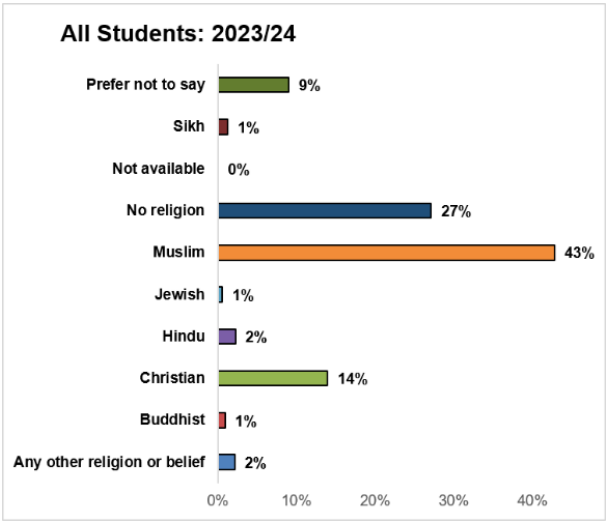


Figure 77: Religion and belief-All students 22/23



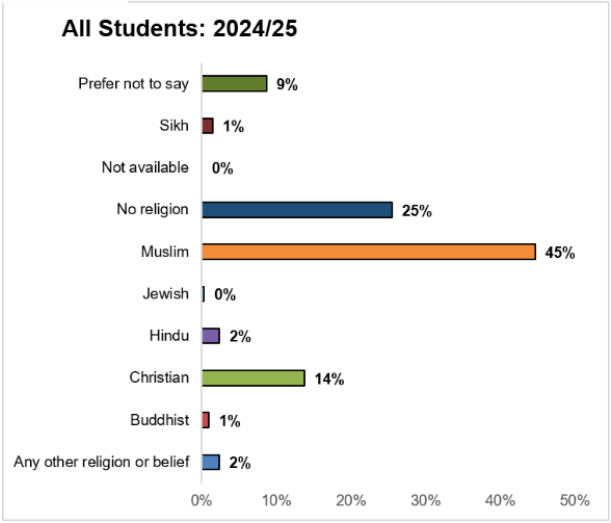


Figure 76: Religion and belief-All students 24/25

Inclusive by design

As this report demonstrates, SOAS benefits from a rich diversity of staff and students, reflecting the global perspectives and experiences that define our community. However, diversity alone is not a measure of inclusion. We need to be inclusive by design, intentionally weaving EDIW into everything we do. Below are some highlights from the 2025/2026 academic year (September 2025-August 2026) detailing how we are intentionally embedding inclusivity into the fabric of the institution.

Empower & Enable

Over the past year, the EDIW team has continued to strengthen the implementation of EDIW initiatives across SOAS through targeted training, policy development, and community engagement.

The mandatory **EDIW induction** for new starters was brought in-house and redesigned to reflect the SOAS context, enhancing belonging, community and awareness of key topics including microaggressions, micro-kindness, privilege and allyship. A new **Where Do You Draw the Line?** programme was piloted within the Library department to help colleagues identify and challenge bullying, harassment and sexual harassment, and EDIW has also been embedded into the induction programme for new Heads of Department. Training and event evaluations remained consistently strong, with average feedback scores of 4.7/5 across measures of inclusivity, relevance, quality, and facilitation.

The **Report + Support** platform was refreshed and relaunched to improve accessibility and user experience. Following the relaunch, reports submitted through the platform increased by 100%, demonstrating enhanced awareness and engagement. The team also worked with a student co-creator to evaluate student awareness, access and experience of the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Policy and Report + Support tool. Recommendations from this project are being implemented to support the platform's ongoing development and effectiveness.

SOAS continued to prioritise staff wellbeing through regular communications, Mental Health Awareness sessions for managers and staff, and stress support workshops and drop-in sessions. As a result, SOAS achieved one of the highest **Employee Assistance Programme** utilisation rates in the sector, with the wellbeing platform engagement reaching 33% during the last academic year. To further embed wellbeing across the institution, a network of 20 **Wellbeing Ambassadors** was launched across 10 Directorates and Colleges. All ambassadors are trained Mental Health First Aiders and provide confidential signposting and local wellbeing advocacy.

Positive action leadership and development programmes have continued to support progression and representation. Over the past three years, 22 colleagues have participated in the **Aurora Leadership Development Programme** for women. This year, three times the number of colleagues took part in the **B-MEntor** programme compared to the previous year, reaching 43 participants, including 22 mentees and 21 mentors. These initiatives contribute to SOAS's commitment to increasing the representation of racialised women in leadership roles. Participants in these programmes were also offered opportunities through a new internal shadowing programme to support the practical application of learning and career development.

The team reviewed and updated several key **policies** during the year, including the Menopause Policy, Drug, Alcohol and Addiction Policy, Dignity and Respect Policy, and Personal Relationships Policy. Engagement with EDIW **communications** also remained strong, with 20% of staff subscribed to the EDIW mailing list, receiving regular updates on events and resources to help embed inclusive practice across the institution. The EDIW intranet pages have also been updated and modernised, to increase engagement and accessibility with core information.



Figure 79: Report + Support poster

Engage and Exchange

The 2025/2026 academic year marked a significant milestone in strengthening community and belonging at SOAS through the establishment of five new **Staff Networks**. These include dedicated networks for women, global majority colleagues, disabled colleagues, LGBTQIA+ colleagues, and colleagues with a faith or belief, alongside the One SOAS Community network for allies. Each network is supported by a dedicated budget and Executive Sponsor, reflecting the institution's commitment to fostering an inclusive and representative workplace. Since their inception, more than 10% of staff have engaged with Staff Networks, demonstrating strong interest in employee-led communities. Over the year, focus has

been placed on building sustainable engagement structures, including the introduction of an automated sign-up process linked to network Teams communities. A Staff Network Celebration Event in May 2026 marked the launch of the Staff Network Co-Chair role, creating new opportunities for staff leadership and participation. Through dedicated training and resources, Co-Chairs are being equipped to lead network activity independently, helping to further strengthen staff voice, community connection and inclusion across SOAS.

A wide-ranging programme of **EDIW events** and awareness initiatives has also contributed to community engagement throughout the year. Activities included events marking Black History Month, International Women's Day, Pride and Disability History Month, alongside highly attended webinars delivered during Race Equality Week and Women's History Month. Staff participation was further encouraged through wellbeing and community-building initiatives, including the successful Step into May campaign, which engaged more than 100 staff in a month-long team wellbeing challenge. Together, these activities have helped foster a stronger sense of connection and belonging across the SOAS community.

Collaboration and co-creation have remained central to the institution's approach to EDIW. During the year, a student co-creator partnered with the EDIW team on a project exploring ethnicity categories and institutional representation at SOAS. The project engaged over 100 staff and students in discussions about the inclusivity and representativeness of ethnicity categories used across the institution. Findings from this work will inform future initiatives to improve data disclosure and data quality, supporting SOAS's ability to better understand and respond to the diverse experiences of its community.



Figure 80: Staff network celebration event 2



Figure 83: SOAS Pride stall 1



Figure 82: SOAS Pride stall 2



Figure 81: Staff network celebration event1

Explore and Enrich

A key priority throughout the year has been understanding and addressing issues that disproportionately affect underrepresented groups, while recognising the importance of intersectionality in shaping individual experiences.

Significant progress has been made in advancing disability equity across SOAS. A new **Reasonable Adjustments Policy** for disabled staff was introduced, supported by regular disability equity training for both managers and staff to build confidence, understanding and inclusive practice. To further strengthen institutional accountability, a **Disability Self-Assessment Group** was established to undertake a comprehensive review of disability equity across the institution. SOAS also achieved **Disability Confident Level 1** status, reinforcing its commitment to inclusive recruitment and employment practices, including offering guaranteed interviews to disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for a role.

The EDIW team's participation in the **Degree Awarding Gap Task and Finish Group** led to the development of a **Race Equality Mapping Project** aimed at identifying and capturing the impact of previous race equity initiatives across SOAS. The project sought to preserve institutional knowledge, understand barriers to implementation, and identify factors that have contributed to progress in reducing awarding gaps.

Engagement from staff informed a comprehensive report and a set of six core recommendations and a Learning & Teaching Implementation Plan to help advance race equality across the institution.

There has also been a renewed focus on addressing workplace stress and promoting a healthier working environment. A **Stress Risk Assessment Focus Group** was convened throughout the academic year, bringing together colleagues to explore the causes and impact of stress at SOAS. Insights gathered through this consultation process are informing the development of an institutional action plan, as well as a review of the Stress Risk Assessment process, to ensure a more proactive and effective approach to supporting staff wellbeing.

Embed and Evaluate

Over the past year, SOAS has continued to strengthen the EDIW considerations into its core systems, processes and governance structures, supporting a more strategic and sustainable approach to institutional change.

A key priority shared across both the Race Equality Charter and Athena Swan action plans is increasing the representation of racialised women in mid to senior leadership roles through recruitment, development and progression opportunities. To support this objective, a target of 20% representation of racialised women at Grades 9 and 10 has been incorporated into the **institutional scorecard**, ensuring progress is monitored and reviewed at Executive level.

Staff wellbeing has also been embedded more systematically within existing people processes. Wellbeing-focused questions have been introduced into the annual **Performance Development Review** (PDR) process, supported by guidance for managers on facilitating meaningful wellbeing conversations with their teams. In addition, targeted **wellbeing workshops** have been delivered across multiple departments, raising awareness of available support and encouraging proactive approaches to maintaining wellbeing during periods of increased pressure.

The EDIW team has worked closely with colleagues across the institution to embed inclusive practice into strategic initiatives. This includes collaboration with the Research and Culture team to integrate EDIW considerations into preparations for the **Research Excellence Framework** (REF) 2029, supported by a programme of dedicated training sessions designed to underpin the REF Code of Practice.

Significant progress has also been made in modernising SOAS's **Equality Impact Assessment** (EIA) process. The previous manual process has been redesigned and digitised, incorporating automated workflows and approval mechanisms to improve accessibility, consistency and accountability. Following successful piloting across the institution, further refinements are underway ahead of wider implementation. Once fully

embedded, the enhanced process will strengthen the consideration of equality impacts across policies, procedures and operational decision-making.

Governance arrangements have been strengthened through a review of the **EDIW Committee's Terms of Reference** and membership. The committee's remit has been expanded to include staff wellbeing, ensuring a more holistic approach to inclusion and employee experience. The inclusion of Staff Network Co-Chairs as committee members will further strengthen opportunities for staff voice, enabling insights from employee communities to inform institutional decision-making while maintaining direct links to Executive Board oversight.

The 2025/2026 academic year also marked the first full year of **implementation of SOAS's Race Equality Charter and Athena Swan action plans** following the award of Bronze status in May 2025. Robust governance arrangements have been established to drive delivery, including regular progress monitoring, quarterly reporting to the EDIW Committee, and dedicated Strategic Oversight Groups for both charters. These groups bring together stakeholders from across the institution to review progress, maintain momentum and assess impact against key success measures, ensuring accountability for the delivery of long-term equality objectives.

Looking Ahead to 26/27

Explore some of the activities we have planned over the 2026/2027 academic year to further embed EDIW across SOAS:

Empower & Enable

We will continue to strengthen the knowledge, confidence and capability of staff and students to contribute to an inclusive, respectful and supportive community. This will include enhancing the training and development offer for different audiences, promoting greater awareness of policies, the Report + Support platform, wellbeing resources, and equipping managers and leaders to champion EDIW within their local areas.

Explore & Enrich

We will deepen our understanding of the experiences of different groups across the SOAS community to inform meaningful and sustainable change. Through targeted consultation and partnership working, we will explore areas where barriers to inclusion may exist and identify opportunities to improve equity, wellbeing and belonging. This work will strengthen our understanding of intersectional experiences and contribute to wider institutional priorities.



Figure 84: the four pillars of the EDIW plan

Embed & Evaluate

We will further embed EDIW considerations into governance, decision-making, policy development and everyday practice across the institution. We will continue to strengthen the use of data, evaluation and equality impact assessments to ensure that progress is evidence-based and transparent.

Engage & Exchange

We will continue to foster a culture of belonging, collaboration and respectful dialogue through staff networks, events, communications and community engagement initiatives. Building on the foundations established over the past year, we will expand opportunities for staff and students to connect, share experiences and contribute to institutional conversations.



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