

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Council Election 2024

Candidate Statements

Maria AYZ

I have over 20 years' experience in the field of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in a range of public sector institutions, with the last 9 years being at the University of York serving as Head of the Equality and Diversity Office (Job share).

I have demonstrated leadership by working collaboratively across teams and through governance structures and processes to deliver a range of strategic and operational plans for the university. I am recognised as a credible and trusted advisor, manager and peer, regularly invited to provide balanced judgement on a range of university issues.

I believe I can add value to the Council and its decision making as I bring diversity of thought and experiences both from my professional role and from my multiple minoritised personal identities. I also bring a sincere, informed perspective from the many trusting professional working relationships I have built, without prejudice or compromising confidentiality.

The EDI agenda is going through a transformation, both globally and locally in our ever-stronger and more socially aware staff and student communities. The development of the University's new EDI Strategic approach and objectives builds on our early founding principles of social justice and equality, and also closely aligns to the mission and vision of the current University Strategy 2030. I believe I bring the personal and professional insight and experience to drive the future direction of both agendas.

I am fully committed to enhancing my knowledge and contributing to the Council's oversight of the affairs of the University and am keen to contribute my own understanding of the University's work and culture to benefit future decision making.

Neil BOOKER

I am deeply passionate about the University of York and its success. Even in challenging times, I believe it's a fantastic place to work, filled with amazing people dedicated to making a difference.

After watching Alice Maynard's video (current Chair of the University Council), where she emphasized curiosity and courage as essential traits for Council members, I felt inspired to submit my nomination. I am comfortable raising difficult questions and engaging in meaningful discussions with senior colleagues, tackling complex issues to drive clarity and action—especially on topics that may have previously gone unanswered.

As a former York student, my love for the University brought me back years later to work here as a Project Manager. Over the past five years, I've had the privilege of working across academic departments, professional services, and centrally in the Vice-Chancellor's office. This broad experience has allowed me to collaborate with a diverse range of colleagues and gain insights into the University's inner workings from multiple perspectives. My project portfolio has further enhanced my understanding of the varied needs and challenges facing our staff and student communities.

I consider myself an empathetic, critical thinker with a strategic mindset—able to view issues from all angles and focus on effective solutions. I believe these qualities, along with my experience, would bring a balanced and insightful perspective to the Council.

Despite recent challenges, my commitment to the University remains strong, and I would be honoured to help shape its future.

Joanne CASEY

Earlier this year, I received my 25-year long service award. The work that I've done over that time has developed just as the University has. I've held communication roles in IT Services, the Library, and now

the central Communications team: I've worked with colleagues in departments and services right across the University. This has allowed me to see how staff in different areas of Professional Services work at and engage with the University.

I'm committed to the University. I see the importance of our role in changing the lives of students, and our place within the city. Living locally to the University, I'm aware of our impact on the wider community and responsibility to our neighbours. The most important thing I've learned in my time here is that we can find and maintain a balance where each of us matters and where we all offer something valuable to the organisation.

Communicating, recognising concerns and sharing solutions are core skills for me; I'm confident liaising with colleagues at all levels of the University. I can be your voice and support University Council to make strong and well-informed decisions.

Robyn COOPER INGLIS

I am standing for election to University Council to use my skills and experience to make a positive contribution to the University's governance, and its vision of a University for Public Good. Having worked as a researcher (Department of Archaeology, 2011-18), and in research support (2019-Present), I have developed a holistic understanding of research and the people and systems that support its development and delivery, as well as the unique contributions universities make to wider society, and the challenges they face.

I approach challenges positively and with curiosity, seeking long-lasting solutions that benefit all parties. In supporting research development, I work with diverse teams of academic, professional, and external colleagues to develop new research initiatives. In doing so, I act as a critical friend, constructively challenging colleagues and supporting them to increase the success of their initiatives, skills that I would bring to Council's scrutiny of information and explanations supplied by University officers. At all times, I act with honesty and integrity, with full respect for confidentiality, highlighted through my roles in reviewing and recommending projects for internally-distributed funding.

I have an aspirational but pragmatic approach to organisational strategy development. As a Commissioner and Leadership Team member of the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission (2022-24), I worked to shape the Commission's second phase to 2027, including how best the Commission could harness the potential of universities to deliver regional climate action. Within York, I drove development of the York Environment Sustainability Institute's 5-year strategy, which has focussed the institute's activities and resources, and increased researcher engagement. Alongside building my knowledge of organisational and departmental planning, these experiences have shown me how to navigate the challenging but necessary conversations that arise when working to define and achieve shared goals, whilst maintaining respect and ultimately building stronger, more successful teams.

Dave DISTON

I am running for Council because I am passionate about the University of York's future. The University has had civic ambitions since inception in 1963; the recent affirmation and expansion of Public Good as a fundamental driver of our activities, broadcasts the University's aspiration to be an engine for societal change and is a vision I want to help steward through my membership of Council.

Having been employed at York since 2017, I have a deep understanding of the University's motivations, issues, and opportunities: I have knowledge of multiple aspects of University operations. In addition, from personal experience of UK and EU university life from many sides (under-/post-graduate student, academic and finally Professional Services), I have an appreciation of different viewpoints and the ways in which University activities interface (and sometimes conflict).

In my current role as Head of Research and Innovation Development, I have a broad remit, which includes supporting the University research community to create excellent impact-rich research, across all three University faculties. In addition, my well-developed internal and external professional networks (including other HEIs, industry, civic organisations and charities), gives me a clear understanding of how the University fits into the broader UK and international landscape.

Finally, I am a natural problem solver and collegiate team leader/member: consistent feedback from team members relates to the cultivation of inclusive, engaging, and cooperative environments, where individuals feel respected and empowered. If elected, I would bring this spirit and my broad, but deep, perspective on HE to the role.

Sarah FRANKLAND

Over my nine years working at the University I have progressed through roles in four sections, from cleaning to marketing to my current role as Strategic Programme Manager within DTEF, which gives me a unique insight into York. During this time I have also completed a MSc in Senior Leadership and currently represent the University in local neighbourhood groups, and I am dedicated to promoting York and ensuring everyone gets the best possible experience at the University.

I am committed to promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and chair the Accessibility Working Group which considers physical access to campus. I set up Streetwise, late-night patrols to offer wellbeing support to students, and my work with colleagues across the HE sector continuously boosts my knowledge of HE and wider trends. My experience as Departmental Safety Officer alongside my work on the physical estate has given me the ability to balance legal compliance with a people-first and commonsense style.

I understand the tensions between the University's aspirations and our practical limitations, be they the physical estate, infrastructure, finances and systems which shape what we can deliver, and pride myself on making pragmatic decisions which align with the Vision for York and the University's values.

My approach is always to research, learn and enquire when faced with new challenges and areas outside my expertise, and to not accept the most obvious solution but to understand the heart of an issue and find innovative ways of addressing it.

I would be proud and honoured to serve the University on the University Council, and believe that my knowledge, skills and experience both at York and in other HE organisations will allow me to help York achieve our ambitions. Ensuring rigorous, practical decision-making keeping our EDI commitments at the heart of what we do.

Helen POYER

I have worked at the University since 2011 and have advanced in several positions within postgraduate research professional services support. Latterly, I was Manager of the central Postgraduate Research Administration team and worked very closely with the York Graduate Research School. I now manage a new UKRI AI Centre for Doctoral Training in Safe AI at the Institute of Safe Autonomy, and I am keen to represent PSS perspectives I have gathered from both central services and my current grant-funded role. I love working with, and supporting, postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and I am passionate about championing the best possible experience for them. PGRs are a huge asset, especially given the research-intensive status of the University, and are often referred to as the 'backbone of the higher education sector'. Universities are responsible for creating and sharing knowledge, and PGRs are at the forefront of this process. Their numbers are small, certainly compared to the taught provision, and can sometimes be overshadowed when it comes to important process and policy discussions. By being elected to University Council, I would be bringing my wealth of experience and knowledge of the PGR experience at York to ensure that the, often more unique, issues that affect PGRs are kept at the fore.

I am interested in all aspects of the University's remit. I am a curious person, often with many questions, and I am keen to understand and challenge existing views as appropriate, bringing a fresh and energetic presence to Council, whilst maintaining integrity at all times.

I am fully committed to the University and its success. I have worked with professional support staff from every area, and I see just how hard everyone works to ensure an excellent student experience at all levels. I would be very pleased to represent this at Council.

Tom RAWLE

Making a difference. That is the main reason that I am running for election to Council. These past years have been tough for all of us involved and having worked in various departments (both centrally and academically as a manager and as an administrator), I know how important a PSS representative is to ensure that decisions are made for the best interest of our community. As someone who is used to bringing together different roles, grades and with different abilities to make new processes and efficiencies are areas that I have thrived in. From student welfare, continuous professional development to finance, HR and recruitment, my 6 years at York has enabled me to understand how to make efficiencies and processes to benefit academics, staff and students alike. Having sat on various faculty and department committees, I am a clear determined individual who makes the PSS voice be heard especially with the recent 'Change The Work' decisions that have been implemented. These coming years will be challenging however working together for a better university is something that I am highly committed to and am starting to implement within the departments I am part of.

I am someone who is committed to having an honest, collegiate, equal university. I believe I would be a positive addition to the University Council.

Claire WILKINSON

I have been working at the University for nearly 13 years and 24 years in higher education. With my expertise as a highly-skilled disability specialist and a disabled staff member, I can continue to enhance a sense of belonging, build effective working relationships with others and help create an inclusive culture for both staff and students.

I have been involved with charitable work and volunteering for many years and have served as a trustee for a large national charity for 8 years. This experience enhanced my leadership skills, my ability to navigate challenging issues in a constructive and positive manner and my understanding of governance for large, culturally complex organisations.

York is experiencing its challenges as we face external pressures around funding uncertainties and regulatory conditions, but I am passionate and committed to the long-term success of our organisation. I am willing to invest time and effort to understand these challenges and meaningfully contribute. As we navigate change and uncertainty, I can draw upon the significant connections I have in my role and with many colleagues across the University and I always act with compassion, integrity and an openness to listen to others. I think it's important to be personally connected to the University and to feel strongly about what it's trying to achieve.

I would hope to be able to draw on the realities of my day-to-day work to provide valuable insight whilst understanding the wider impact on strategic issues.

I recognise that all members of the University community contribute to its success, whatever their role or background and I fully support the University's vision to be a university for public good.

I would be grateful for your support.
