**Ensuring equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing are integral to the University of Stirling’s Covid 19 recovery and future delivery plans**

There is a clear opportunity for the University now, as it enters probably the most transformational period of redesign and redirection since its inception, to eradicate persistent, systemic inequalities, to promote equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), to strengthen community and good relations between staff and students with different backgrounds & characteristics, and to maximise productivity and impact.

Key to this is the fundamental consideration of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in any aspect of the University’s strategic planning, policy development, decision making and operational delivery that is likely to have an impact on people. This includes all key areas including learning and teaching, assessment, research and innovation, staff support, workload planning, student support, campus development and access to services and facilities.

**The EDI impacts of Covid 19 and response and recovery plans:** Covid 19 is known to have disproportionately affected people from different equality groups with different circumstances. It is highly likely that response and recovery plans will have a similarly disproportionate effect on members of our community. Unmitigated, these disproportionate impacts could manifest as disadvantage, discrimination or structural inequalities, meaning that people who share a protected characteristic will be negatively affected and experience worse outcomes.

**The purpose and importance of equality impact assessment:** Equality impact assessment (EIA) is a thought and engagement process which is intended to help create a culture of inclusion, fairness, transparency and respect for diversity. It involves meaningfully assessing the impact of a decision or activity to determine how it could have a positive, or negative, impact on people because they share a particular characteristic.

In the same way that they would consider risk, financial implications and reputational impact of decisions or actions, put simply, **staff must routinely consider the impact of plans, decisions and activities on people.** Each decision or action should be assessed for its impact – negative or positive - on people with a range of characteristics. These questions should be asked each time:

1. Will this policy/practice/activity/proposal affect people?
2. If yes, will this be likely to result in a differential impact for people sharing a particular characteristic, and, if so, could this result in disadvantage, discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act (2010)? ([PCs listed here](#PCs))
3. If yes, is that differential impact lawful, justifiable and proportionate? (See [full guidance for definitions provided by the Equality Act 2010](https://stir.app.box.com/file/676999536175))
4. If you have identified a risk of disadvantage, discrimination, harassment or victimisation against people who share a particular characteristic, what action should be taken to mitigate the risk?
5. Does this policy/practice/activity/proposal help the University to fulfil its statutory duties to promote equity and good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not?
6. If the answer to (v) is no, what steps can be taken/adjustments made to ensure that it does?

**Engagement & consultation:** To identify and understand differential impacts, it is imperative to understand the views and experiences of people with different characteristics, and to draw on data, research and local and national surveys e.g. NSS. Staff should build appropriate engagement/ consultation mechanisms into policy making, planning and design of activities.

**Conducting an EIA:** Equality impact assessment is the responsibility of every member of staff working in the University, not one person or team. The EIA should be carried out by, ideally, at least two staff from the area of the University that is responsible for the decision, activity or policy. It is recommended that Faculties and Professional Services identify staff who can be trained in carrying out EIAs.

The University has published an [equality impact assessment template](https://stir.box.com/s/8osdsxwjg7tuokp892hhl59ecxslahmf) to help structure thoughts, and associated guidance.

**The legal framework:** Whilst compliance should not be the primary consideration, it is important to remember that the University is subject to statutory duties to prevent discrimination, promote equality and good relations, and to consider the EDI impacts of decisions before they are taken. It is also a [statutory requirement to publish the findings of equality impact assessments.](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/assessing-impact-public-sectory-equality-duty-scotland.pdf)

**The Equality Act (2010)** [EA 2010] requires universities to, in the exercise of their functions, pay due regard to the need to:

* Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
* Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
* Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, in particular, the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

The Equality Act requires universities to consider **nine protected characteristics** when carrying out its public sector duties. These are: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage & Civil Partnership Status, Pregnancy & Maternity, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Race and Religion and Belief. The full guidance includes a definition of discrimination as defined under the EA 2010. The University’s EIA template requires staff to also consider the impact of decisions, policies and in relation to caring responsibilities, experience of the care system, gender identity, mental health/wellbeing and socio-economic background.

**Illustrative examples of EIAs**: The [full guidance](https://stir.app.box.com/file/676999536175) provides some examples of policies and decisions that are currently being considered, and provide some pointers on some of the EDI issues that should be considered.

**Further guidance and reading**

Further guidance can be provided by contacting [equality@stir.ac.uk](mailto:equality@stir.ac.uk)

EHRC [guidance on the statutory duty](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/assessing-impact-public-sectory-equality-duty-scotland.pdf) to carry out EIAs and on [carrying out EIAs in light of Covid 19](https://stir.app.box.com/file/685831367681)

Advance HE further [reading and resources on equality impact assessment](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/strategic-equality-impact-assessment-eia)

UUK [guidance](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/principles-considerations-emerging-lockdown-uk-universities-june-2020.aspx?utm_content=buffer7e5e6&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=UUK) on principles for universities to follow when reactivating campus provision including EDI considerations

A [collection of articles](https://wakelet.com/wake/f4bc3fbd-b6d2-4d4a-8819-861ba1056304) exploring the EDI implications of CV19

**Dean of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

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