



MAINSTREAMING REPORT

April 2021

1. OVERVIEW

This report describes how the University mainstreams its consideration of its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Information is provided on the following:

- i. How the University's statutory obligations are reflected and integrated within the University's strategy;
- ii. How senior leadership around equalities is provided;
- iii. Details of the University's equality and diversity policy and inclusivity statement;
- iv. How the University collects, monitors and uses equality and diversity data to assist in meetings its statutory obligations;
- v. What support the University provides its staff in relation to equality and diversity;
- vi. What support the University provides its students in relation to equality and diversity;
- vii. How the University reports its activities in relation to equality and diversity; and
- viii. What enhancements the University has made to its approach to mainstreaming since it last published a report in 2019.

2. INTEGRATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGY

The University developed a recast strategy map in 2018 which embeds the principles of equality and diversity. The stated purpose of the University is 'to be an innovative, inclusive, impactful, professionally-focussed University' with a culture which values and celebrates 'authenticity, approachability, collaboration, innovation, ambition and respectfulness.'

The University maintains a strong commitment to the active promotion of equality and diversity across all of its activities and in doing so ensures a robust approach to issues of discriminatory practices towards staff, students and external stakeholders. As part of its equality and diversity reporting in 2021, the University has published the following equality outcomes:

- i. Improved retention rates for those more likely to withdraw;
- ii. Increased achievement of Good Honours for students with characteristics with achievement below that of the University average;
- iii. Increase in the overall satisfaction of students with characteristics who have a satisfaction rate below that of the University average;
- iv. Increase the proportion of male students who take up a place at the University;
- v. Greater flexibility for staff, creating opportunity and maintaining an inclusive working environment;
- vi. Increased and more purposeful engagement with staff across all equality strands;
- vii. The number of applications from candidates for senior positions reflect the demographics of the University.

3. LEADERSHIP AROUND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The strategic leadership of the University is the function of the Board of Governors. The most senior management group at the University is the Executive who are advised on equality and diversity matters by the equality and diversity sub-committee. The Vice-Principal of Corporate Operations has lead

responsibility for equality and diversity and as such chairs both the Equality & Diversity Sub-Committee and the Equality and Diversity Forum.

The sub-committee's role is to ensure that mainstreaming of equality is undertaken across the range of the University's management functions. As a result, the membership of the committee is varied and incorporates staff and students across a range of areas. This includes representation from professional support departments including: Access, Planning, Student Life, HR, Marketing, Research Strategy & Policy; student representation from the Students Union with the President of Education & Welfare and the Vice-President of Welfare; members of the equality and diversity forum, elected through the group to represent the forum at the committee; and members of the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. The full remit of the equality and diversity sub-committee is as follows:

- i. Formulate and monitor the University's response to sector and societal developments related to equality, diversity and widening access;
- ii. Working in partnership with the RGU union, to inform strategic equality and diversity priorities and direction, based on robust evidence, data, involvement and consultation with the University's Equality and Diversity Forum and other appropriate stakeholders;
- iii. To review, approve and monitor the equality outcomes to ensure appropriate progress and consistency across the university in support of its commitment to the promotion of equality and the elimination of discrimination;
- iv. To ensure data-gathering, analysis, measuring and evaluating impact for different protected characteristics and other widening access groups against the public sector duties to eliminate discrimination, promote good relations and foster good relations;
- v. To monitor and contribute to the implementation of the university's equality outcomes and associated action plans;
- vi. To ensure University equality outcomes, related reporting and initiatives are widely shared and discussed across the university at all levels (including at Committee, Academic Council and Board levels) to help promote an understanding of the relevance to specific functions and teams;
- vii. To consider the recommendations of and other matters raised by the equality and diversity forum.

As well as the equality and diversity sub-committee, the University also has an Equality and Diversity Forum, which has a purpose to understand the lived experience of staff and students in the community. It is important to note that the sub-committee and the forum are considered equal but with different purposes. The forum includes membership from staff equality networks, staff equality champions, student equality champions and staff from Student Life, Human Resources and Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access (DELTA). The forum has a remit to:

- i. To provide a forum to consider, align and support the delivery of different types of equality and widening access activities, reporting and self-evaluation.
- ii. To consider, reflect on and evaluate the impact of the University's equality outcomes and activities.
- iii. To consider intersectionality of protected characteristics and other access issues considered within data-gathering and analysis, and to make recommendations to the Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee.

- iv. To consider what equality and diversity awareness-raising, training and development is required within the University, and to make recommendations to the Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee.
- v. To establish, consider and support the recommendations of equality and diversity-focused working groups.

To provide focus to the University's consideration of the protected characteristics, the University has appointed staff Equality Champions, roles that are available to any member of staff and are appointed for a term of three years. The University has assigned a member of HR staff to each equality champion to provide support, advice and additional briefing. The role of the Equality Champion is to: (i) contribute and provide challenge to the Equality and Diversity Forum in the equality strand being championed; (ii) to seek the engagement of employees and, where appropriate, students in the work and activities of the Equality & Diversity Forum; (iii) to provide leadership in the University in the area championed; (iv) to keep up to date on developments in the area championed.

In addition to the staff equality champions, the students' association annually appoints a number of student equality champions. The student champions undertake a similar role to staff equality champions amongst the student body liaising closely with the staff champions. The student equality champions are full members of the Equality & Diversity Forum. The students' association choose the designation for these champions. At the current time student equality champions exist for the following characteristics: mature students, disability and inclusion, race, women, mental health, trans, and sexual orientation.

4. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY AND INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the University to actively promote equality and diversity across its functions, and to eradicate discrimination on unlawful or unfair grounds as required under the Equality Act (2010). All employees, students and visitors to the University have an individual duty to ensure that equality and diversity is actively promoted. The Equality and Diversity policy, approved by the University's Board of Governors, outlines the University's expectations of the roles and responsibilities that various individuals have by virtue of their position in promoting and embedding the principles of equality and diversity. The policy was reviewed in early 2021 to ensure it continues to be fully compliant and meets best practice in the sector.

The policy statement of the Equality & Diversity policy also serves as the University's inclusivity statement and as such, the two documents should be read in conjunction. The inclusivity statement amplifies the aspiration contained within the University's strategy to promote an inclusive working and studying environment. The full statement is as follows:

RGU strives towards creating a working, learning and social atmosphere which is inclusive and harmonious. The University will achieve this by:

1. Meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duties and the Scottish Specific Duties for Equality;

2. Embracing a positive attitude towards the promotion of equality on the basis of age, disability, ethnic origin, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation to ensure all reach their full potential;
3. Being prepared to understand that fairness and equality is not always about treating people similarly but can sometimes mean treating people differently;
4. Acknowledging and celebrating the breadth of experiences and perspectives that people from diverse backgrounds bring to the life of the University;
5. Eliminating discrimination and prejudice by empowering people to treat each other with respect.

All new policies and substantial changes to current policies are subject to impact assessment and the University is committed to ensuring that all impact assessments are published alongside the related policy. The University's impact assessment process includes equality and human rights, ethics, sustainability and privacy.

5. COLLECTION, MONITORING AND USE OF EQUALITIES DATA

Equalities data on staff

The University collects a range of data on staff in relation to equality and diversity. Employees are asked to provide details on each of the protected characteristics. As part of the University's public sector equality duties, the University has published a range of data on its employees (*link to be added when published*). This report includes information on the following:

- The split of full time and part time staff;
- The composition of employees by sex, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation and religious belief alongside grade, contract status, working hours, uptake of family leave, promotions and leadership development;
- The composition of applicants to the University by sex, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation and religious belief looking at applications, interviews and appointments.

These data have been analysed and considered in the development of the University's Equality Outcomes for 2021 – 2025. The University's Staff Governance Committee monitors these data through regular reports on employee data.

Equalities data on students

The University currently collects equalities data from students at the point of enrolment on the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender identity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. These data are analysed on an annual basis as part of the University's Institutional Appraisal process, considered by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. These data have been used to inform the development of the University's equality outcomes for 2021 – 2025.

Equalities data on the Board of Governors

The University's Board of Governors has undertaken comprehensive equalities and diversity monitoring on an anonymous basis. The composition of the Board includes both appointed and elected membership and has achieved the aims set by the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act.

6. SUPPORT FOR STAFF

In order to support staff to discharge their duties, as outlined in the university's equality and diversity policy, all new staff are required to undertake a mandatory on-line equality and diversity training module. The training is available on the university's virtual learning environment for existing staff. It provides information on the university's legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and also discusses individual responsibility. The training module explains how certain behaviours impact on other people and may contravene the university's obligations around equality and diversity. It also provides information on how to challenge inappropriate and unacceptable behaviours.

The University goes further than its statutory obligations, enhancing staff benefits in supporting employees on maternity, adoption, parental and paternity leave. The University regularly develops and enhances its family friendly provision with the aim of supporting working parents and cultivating an environment where parents, and women in particular, do not feel they have to make a choice between their career and caring for their family. In recognition of the disproportionate impact the covid-19 pandemic has had on female staff in particular, the University is now undertaking activity to extend flexible working provision to support staff to remain in employment and ensure their career progression is not interrupted.

Employees who are on long term sick leave also benefit from the university topping up statutory sick pay to full pay for up to 6 months (depending on length of service) and half pay for the same length of time. All staff who are absent due to a mental health illness are referred to Occupational Health so that work related issues can quickly be resolved. The university offers staff an independent confidential employee assistance service which offers support, information, expert advice and specialist counselling. There are also Fair Treatment Advisers within the HR Department who offer advice and support to staff who are involved in a workplace dispute or are unhappy with the treatment they are receiving.

Many of the professional & support departments operate a flexi-time scheme which allows staff to start and finish at different times as long as they are working their contractual hours. Academic staff also have significant flexibility when not timetabled to teach. The flexi-time scheme offers staff a better work-life balance, aiding mental wellbeing and allowing staff to continue to meet family commitments out-with the workplace.

The university has staff equality champions which are another source of support and advice to staff members in addressing equality issues specific to a particular equality strand. The university has recently decided to open the champion role up to all staff so that staff from different backgrounds, with varied experiences, are able to contribute. Further support for individuals can be accessed through the staff networks that currently exist for LGBT+ and women staff. To provide a wider range of support, the university is exploring options for developing other equality strand networks. These will be open to all staff, with the purpose of providing a confidential and supportive forum to share knowledge and good practice relating to equality issues through networking, and to increase the positive profile of all staff through events and initiatives.

7. SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Providing appropriate support for students to succeed in their studies and grow as individuals is a cornerstone of the University's strategy. This includes a commitment to sustain a culture that promotes and supports positive wellbeing to ensure that students thrive and graduate with a positive outcome.

The RGU Student Union has a number of liberation groups and equality champions as a source for safe space discussions for students to interact with their peers. In the last year this has included the launch of a Black Liberation Network, as a safe space for BIPOC individuals to engage in activism and to find community support. The University firmly recognizes the importance and the benefits of ensuring that student voices, across a range of characteristics and experiences, are heard and reflected in the decision-making structures of the University. As noted above, student representatives including equality champions and elected representatives are active and valued members of the University equality and diversity committees.

The University provides a range of support to the student population through the work of the Student Life department, primarily by the dedicated Inclusion Team, supported by others in Student Life. The Inclusion Centre provides support to students through support for additional exam arrangements, dyslexia screening and evaluation, an in-house assessment of needs, support with applications for disabled students' allowance, liaison with external agencies and support for organising in-class support.

In recent years the University has responded to a number of growing issues in the University sector relating to student support as follows. The University's sustained commitment to support student's mental wellbeing is carried out in partnership with the Students' Union and underpinned by the joint Student Mental Health Agreement, signed in 2018. This sets out the University's joint commitment with the Students' Union to improve the mental wellbeing of all students and staff, to change perceptions of mental health among the student community, challenge negative attitudes, promote positive outcomes and support strategies to maximise the student and staff experience. The University has a range of support mechanisms for students relating to their mental health and wellbeing, primarily the University's Counselling Service. This service has crucially continued to be accessible to students throughout the pandemic with a move to online provision and more flexible hours to meet student needs. Additional check-in services have been introduced through School wellbeing check-ins to provide an additional touchpoint for students to ensure that they are aware of the support services available to them. The University's online wellbeing programme, Silvercloud, is available to both students and staff and provides CBT modules to support mental wellbeing at a pace which suits the individual. Where students may have a need for immediate support, the University has trained a number of front-line academic staff as Mental Health First Aiders to enable them to support students at the point of need. As a result the University has a holistic package of mental health support to ensure that students are able to access the support they need, when they need it.

To ensure that students at RGU feel safe and supported through all aspects of the student journey a

wide range of activities are undertaken. The University is committed to a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and harassment. To provide individuals with a safe and supportive environment in which to report any instances of violence or harassment, the University enhanced its Report & Support platform, including providing additional materials and support during the period of lockdown in response to the widely-reported national trends of an increase in domestic violence and abuse during the period of lockdown. When individuals make a report through the online platform, they are supported by the University's trained First Responders. The University has 34 members of staff who have received specialist training from Rape Crisis Scotland who are able to support individuals who make a disclosure through the online platform. Further to the established reporting mechanisms, the University also actively undertakes campaigns to highlight positive relationship behaviours and to tackle unacceptable behaviours. This includes campaigns centred on Health Relationships, consent training, bystander intervention and encouraging positive citizenship. Working in partnership with the Student Union and the Student Sports Club, there have been similar campaigns calling for an end to dangerous and unacceptable behaviours associated with sports club initiations.

The Report and Support Platform has been enhanced further to act as a reporting platform for other forms of violence and harassment, particularly to enable reports of hate crime, racism, micro-aggressions, and bullying and harassment to ensure that individuals have a safe place to report these issues and that they receive the support needed as these issues are resolved.

8. ENHANCEMENTS TO THE UNIVERSITY'S APPROACH TO MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY

Since the university last published a report on progress, the university has made the following enhancements to its approach to mainstreaming equality:

- i. Largescale consideration of student equality data: To better understand the student journey and identify where interventions may be needed, there is embedded consideration of student equality data in the annual institutional appraisal process, both at an institutional level and at a course level aided by the development of an equality and diversity dashboard through Tableau. The dashboard has been enhanced and improved upon year and year, and provides data across protected characteristics, with the option to look at an intersectional analysis relating to the student population, retention, achievement, satisfaction and employability. The improvements that have been made to the dashboard have allowed for a clear series of institutional trends to be identified which have now formed the basis of the 2021 – 2025 equality outcomes relating to students.
- ii. Support for staff equality networks: The University has had two longstanding staff equality networks, the RGU women's network and the Rainbow network for LGBT+ staff. In the past two years there has been increased efforts to broaden the number of individuals engaged in meaningful equality and diversity activity through the staff networks. Significantly in the last year, a new staff network has emerged for Race Equality, with the support of the HR department. Increasing engagement with staff on equality and diversity activity is an ongoing piece of work for the University and will form the basis of one of the equality outcomes for 2021 – 2025.

- iii. HR allocated equality strands: Members of the HR team have been allocated an equality strand with the purpose of close working with staff equality champions and staff networks to ensure the University is always developing and enhancing its approach to staff equality. This builds on the commitment to broaden engagement with staff on equality and diversity.
- iv. Revised and new policies to embed equality and support staff and students: In the past two years, the University has implemented a Transgender Equality Policy for staff, which details the support and advice available from the University for individuals who are undergoing or have undergone any form of gender reassignment, while also providing guidance to managers and colleagues on support. HR have also worked closely with the staff gender equality champion to develop new guidance for managers supporting women going through the menopause, which seeks to destigmatise this topic and enable open conversations between staff and managers on beneficial support, recognising the impact that this can have on day-to-day working life. This year the University's Dignity at Work & Study Policy will be reviewed to take in to greater account issues around both gender-based violence and racial harassment, incorporating best practice across the sector.
- v. Increased awareness raising and support for equality campaigns: The University has taken conscious steps to continually raise awareness of equality and diversity issues and to participate in national campaigns as part of a commitment to building a welcoming and inclusive learning and working environment. Much of the capacity for this activity is enabled through staff and student networks but does also reflect an internal change in communications. In the last two years the University has participated in Grampian Pride, with a float in 2019 and virtually in 2020 and has supported a campaign for Rainbow Lanyards on Campus. Activities for Black History Month in October 2020 were developed in part to respond to the findings of the EHRC report in to racial harassment at universities, with the University engaging with students to begin discussions on required changes to eradicate racial harassment.
- vi. Changes to Executive Leadership and Management Structure for Equality & Diversity: Executive responsibility for Equality and Diversity now sits with the Vice-Principal of Corporate Operations who also chairs both the University's equality committees. The membership, structure and remit of the equality committees have developed to include staff and students with a wide range of backgrounds and expertise to ensure that the membership is diverse and representative of our university community. In the last two years the group has also been re-aligned with the University's structure of governance committee to ensure that initiatives, issues and campaigns to promote equality and diversity across our community are brought within the decision-making structures of the University.
- vii. As a future enhancement the University will appoint an Equality and Diversity Advisor. This post will support activities to research, develop and embed activity to promote equality, build equitable relations between people and to ensure that the University has an inclusive environment and culture.