



EQUALITY OUTCOMES

April 2017

Introduction

Robert Gordon University based in Aberdeen is one of nineteen Scottish higher education institutions. It has a mission to transform people and communities. It does this by ensuring that our discovery of knowledge and our dissemination of scholarship have the greatest possible economic, social and cultural impact.

The university is responsible for providing professional relevant degree-level education and training as well as undertaking research and commercial knowledge exchange activities. It does this across a range of disciplines organised into eleven academic Schools and one Graduate School. The academic units are supported by a number of professional support services.

In the 2015/16 academic session the university had around 12,000 enrolled students and, as of the 3 February 2017 (the date of the gender pay gap report, published alongside these Equality Outcomes) employed 1,478 individuals.

The university is a recognised charity and is incorporated under a statutory instrument. In 2015/16 56% of the university's funding came from the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (or SFC). Through the Further and Higher Education Act (2002) the university is designated as a public authority and as a consequence has obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other prohibited conduct;
- Advance equality or opportunity by having due regard in particular to the need to: remove or minimise disadvantage; meet the needs of particular groups that are different from the needs of others; and encourage participation in public life; and
- Foster good relations, which involves in particular the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

The university's strategy outlines a number of commitments. The university's Equality Outcomes, encompassing both the university's employees and its students, have been aligned to these strategic aims where relevant:

- Our university: actively embrace diversity and equality through the student and staff experience;
- Breaking down barriers: increase access for learners traditionally facing greater barriers to higher education;
- Achieving graduate employability: shape creative, professional and engaged individuals;
- Supporting student success: support learners through each step of their educational pathways; and
- Enriching the student experience: unleashing individual potential through a complete RGU experience.

Evidence and consultation

In developing these Equality Outcomes, the university has analysed the following sources of evidence:

- Statistical data on the demographics of the student body including the changing demographics of that body with new cohorts of students.
- Quantitative and qualitative data from a range of student experience questionnaires, including the National Student Survey, the university's own survey and the international and distance learning student barometers.
- Student achievement data (this measures overall student transition between academic years at undergraduate level and stages at postgraduate level and also examines good honours degree outcomes).
- Student employability data from the university's data submission to the HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) destination of leavers in Higher Education survey.
- A range of statistical data on the demographics of the staff body examining range of staff at different levels within the organisation and in different disciplines as well as representation amongst the senior management team and the university committee structure.
- The university's equal pay audit information which has examined the pay of staff by gender since 2006 and by disability, age and race since 2010.
- A specific question concerning student and staff experiences of discrimination contained within the annual student experience questionnaire and the biennial staff commitment survey.

Where relevant, and possible, the university also uses information as part of its monitoring of equality data which allows it to benchmark our performance against other Scottish and UK higher education institutions through various publications and data sources made available by the Higher Education Statistics Agency and the Equality Challenge Unit. We have also examined other data external to the higher education sector, for example the most recent census data available for the region we operate within and for staff data from the DLA Piper benchmarking of HR datasets.

This data is also supplemented through a number of other mechanisms for capturing staff and student feedback on their experiences on a more ad hoc basis:

- Student complaints and appeals
- Staff grievances and disciplinary issues; and
- Student representatives meetings with the Deputy Principal and Principal.

Annually the university considers the whole range of its equality monitoring data through two main processes:

- A central review of the data is undertaken by a sub-group of the university's Equality and Diversity Advisory Group which draws out the main themes from the previous year's data set and, where appropriate,

recommends appropriate actions to address any areas for particular concern.

- Individually, the university's Schools and Departments review the data sets that relate to their specific activity. In the academic areas of the university this is specifically commented on in the School- and Faculty-level annual appraisal process. In the professional support departments this is reported to the appropriate monitoring group within the university, for example staffing issues are monitored through the Staff Governance Committee and research matters through the Research Committee.

The university seeks to actively engage with organisations supporting equality and diversity and has developed key partnerships with a range of different organisations operating in different spheres. The following provides an overview of these relationships:

- At a national sectoral level: the university is actively engaged in the work of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU). The university has in recent years participated in a number of projects with the ECU which have assisted develop the university's approach to equality and diversity. Through this organisation maintains regular contact with those working in equalities and diversity across the Scottish higher education sector seeking advice and guidance where appropriate from them on particular issues.
- At a regional level: the university works with the Grampian Regional Equality Council to support their work (GREC). The university has been a supporter and contributor to the activities of the organisation.
- With other local public authorities: the university has engaged with different public authorities in the development of its equality outcomes and on working with particular issues.

In addition it is important to note that the university works with a range of organisations that are active in promoting the equality of particular protected characteristics. As an example in one strand, disability, the university works with a wide range of specific organisations:

- At a national level: At a national level the Disability and Dyslexia Centre is an active member of the National Network of Disability Coordinators in Scotland and the Heads of Disability Services Network. The Centre works closely with external support agencies such as the RNIB, Action on Hearing Loss and with Disability practitioners throughout the UK through the JISCMail Dis-forum mailbase. The team participate in the Scottish Mental Health Advisory network and in ATANET, the network of Assistive Technologists in Scotland.
- With other public authorities : the university has worked for a number of years with practice educators in NHS Grampian, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council. Recently this work was expanded to include Moray Council. Disability, Dyslexia and Mental Health Awareness Session are delivered regularly and have formed part of the CPD for Social Workers in Aberdeen City.
- At a regional level: the university works with the North East Sensory Centre, Specialist Resource Solutions (for Students on the Autism

Spectrum) and with local support organisations such as Dyslexia North East, to support understanding of the support available to students. The university actively participates in events with local schools Careers and Guidance Teachers. As part of this work the Disability and Dyslexia Centre Manager recently gave a talk to SCILL, and local organisation for parents of children and young people with additional support needs.

In addition the university participates in a number of other schemes which provides comparative information against which to measure the university's approach to equality and diversity. These include:

- the Athena SWAN Chartermark which is concerned with the advancement of the careers of women across all academic subjects and support services;
- the Stonewall 'Gay by Degrees' annual survey for applicants to universities;
- the LGBT Youth Scotland Chartermark which provides standards for organisations providing services to LGBT youth; and
- the Government's 'Disability Confident' scheme for encouraging and enabling job applicants who have disabilities.

The university's published mainstreaming report (available on the university's equality and diversity webpages) provides information on the university's Equality and Diversity Advisory Group and the role of staff and student equality champions who have shaped these Equality Outcomes. As part of this process relevant student and staff groups have been consulted as have partner organisations that the university works with.

In developing these Equality Outcomes the university has drawn upon this range of data, partner organisations and benchmarking processes to assist shape the outcomes and example actions articulated in the remainder of the document.

Our university: embrace diversity and equality within the student and staff experience;

Relevant protected characteristics:

- All

Relationship to the general duties:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations

Evidence of the equality issues:

The university has long developed systems of equality monitoring that seeks information on staff and students' age, disability, gender and race; but has only recently sought information on staff and students' religion and belief and sexual orientation. In seeking this information it is noticeable that staff and students are less likely to provide information on these characteristics than others. Additionally it is also the case that the numbers of students who declare a disability confidentially to the disability and dyslexia service are higher than those declaring a disability within the university's monitoring of equality annually as part of student enrolment. The university has recently completed analysis of a significant range of data relating to gender of academic staff across the university as a whole and in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) subjects, as part of its application for the Athena SWAN Bronze Award. The analysis led to several conclusions regarding current gender balance and to a commitment to actions to address these issues.

A number of student societies exist for different protected characteristics various faith groups and LGBT+ students. Additionally there is a gender equality society and a mental wellbeing society and a women's society has operated in the past, although this is now developing into a students' women's network. Additionally the university runs an inclusion Facebook group for students. In recent years three staff networks have developed: a LGBT staff network, a Women's staff network and a BME staff network. The university has allowed these groups to develop through demand rather than establish them 'top down' but this has led to a situation where some protected characteristic groups might appear to be better supported than others within the university community.

A similar issue arises out of the fact that in recent years the university has through its student and staff equality champions run awareness raising weeks on different equality strands. As some of these weeks have been more successful than others there is anecdotal information that some staff and students may unintentionally feel excluded rather than belonging to a more inclusive community.

The university's Board of Governors is committed to broad gender balance in its membership and has recently commenced an annual equality monitoring process of its members. Within the university, as in the higher education sector generally, there are still certain protected characteristic groups (e.g. women and BME staff) that are less visible in senior leadership roles and in the university's committee structure.

Example actions that will be taken in order to achieve the outcome:

- The university's inclusivity statement is promoted further
- The activities of the university's staff and student equality champions raises awareness and knowledge
- Annual awareness raising activities around the protected characteristics
- Development and support of staff networks for specific groups of staff (e.g Women's Network, LGBT Network and BME Network)
- Participation in various assessment and benchmarking schemes (e.g. the Disability Confident scheme and ECU Race Chartermark)
- Incorporate into academic promotions processes consideration of fractional contracts and other circumstances in a similar fashion to REF 2014
- Provide informal support mechanisms to staff in preparing cases for promotion to discretionary academic and research posts
- Develop a Code of Practice to ensure compliance with the *Concordat to support career development of researchers*

Example outputs	Specific measures	Long-term contextual indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of information to staff and students on why equality monitoring is undertaken • Recruitment to ensure a broadly gender balanced Board and other institutional committees • Probation and induction processes revised to improve take up of equality and diversity training • Make available to staff, and job applicants, information on the university's approach to equality and diversity and any specific services available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased disclosure rates on equality monitoring amongst staff and students • Student satisfaction • Targeted staff and student surveys • Specific questions on staff and student experiences of discrimination • Feedback via staff and student equality champions • Equal Pay Audits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A university where the staff and student experience matches the ambitions contained within the university's inclusivity statement • A narrowing of the pay gap between staff within different protected characteristics

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide unconscious bias training to staff involved in the recruitment and selection process• Undertake biennial reviews on the justification for, and level of, individual attraction and retention premiums• Continue to review the use of gender neutral language during the recruitment process• Continue to identify and address anomalies within historic pay arrangements• Continue to participate in the Aurora programme to develop women's leadership roles• Include equalities information within the university's <i>Right Click</i> guidelines on the use of social media		
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Breaking down barriers: increase access for learners traditionally facing greater barriers to higher education.

Relevant protected characteristics:

- All

Relationship to the general duties:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity

Evidence of the equality issues:

The university has several Schools which at undergraduate level have significant gender differences. In the School of Computing & Digital Media and the School of Engineering male students dominate; whereas in the School of Health Sciences and the School of Nursing & Midwifery female students dominate. These differences reflect national and historic differences in choice of discipline made by individuals on the basis of gender. The Scottish Government has indicated that it has a policy objective over the long term to ensure a greater gender balance of students studying different subjects. Reflecting this the Scottish Funding Council has committed itself to long term ambition to reduce the number of subjects with extreme gender imbalance (defined as a 75/25 ratio or greater) by 50% by 2025-26 and eliminate extreme imbalance completely by 2030-31. The university through its most recent Outcome Agreement for 2017-20 has committed itself to achieving this ambition.

There are, of course, other access issues that different student groups face:

- The recent passing of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act results in new duties the university will implement in order to ensure greater access to the university's curriculum;
- Broadly, the university's UK-student population is in line with the ethnicity of the region from which the university recruits the majority of its students, although there are some differences between subject areas;
- Recently, the Students' Association has passed a motion at its Annual General Meeting in relation to the relative lack of gender neutral toilets on campus; and
- Equally we noted that those who enter the university as articulating students from College, often with advanced standing, often represent a more diverse cohort than 'traditional' school leavers entering the first year of a degree course.

Example actions that will be taken in order to achieve the outcome:

- Focused recruitment activity on particular groups of under-represented students around particular subject areas
- Support and advice provided to different equality characteristics regarding the specific support available at university
- Support and advice on the application process provided to specific groups of students (for example, disabled applicants)
- The physical and virtual space of the university is reviewed regularly for its accessibility

Example outputs	Specific measures	Long-term contextual indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake an examination of the decliners' survey to gain a greater understanding of why students are not converting from application to acceptance • Participate in the various schemes on equitable admissions • Continue profile raising activities amongst potential undergraduate applications • Programme of works carried out in line with an accessibility audit of the campus • Advice on applying to, and the expectations of, the university and its inclusive approach during the applicant process • Develop and implement an action plan in compliance with the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual equality monitoring of the student population and student intake • Monitoring of student applicants, offers to enrolments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A home student population broadly representative from the populations it is drawn from • A decline in the gender gap in particular subject areas

Supporting student success: support learners through each step of their educational pathways.

Relevant protected characteristics:

- All

Relationship to the general duties:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity

Through monitoring of student achievement rate data it has been observed that across the institution some groups of students from protected characteristics (race and disability) do not appear to achieve as good honours classifications as others. Numbers are small and therefore this difference may not be statistically significant, but the university will continue to monitor this trend on an annual basis. A similar trend is observable amongst students with disabilities across the undergraduate curricula.

It is however noticeable that the university's data on good honours degrees suggest that some protected characteristic groups (e.g. BME students, disabled students and male students) perform less well than other groups of students.

Example actions that will be taken in order to achieve the outcome:

- Consideration of equality strands and outcomes in the development of the university's curriculum
- Consideration of equalities outcomes and monitoring data in School- and Faculty-level annual appraisal exercise

Example outputs	Specific measures	Long-term contextual indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness raising provided to academic staff on some of the issues that the protected characteristics present in a university environment• Equality Impact Assessment process for curriculum changes is developed and implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student non-continuation/success rates• Student Achievement Rates• Good Honours Degree achievement• Targeted student surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Similar HESA non-continuation rates between different protected characteristic groups• Similar student achievement rates between protected characteristics• Similar achievement of a Good Honours Degree between protected characteristics

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the impact of equalities and diversity on the timetabling of examinations• Appropriate support to different student groups to enable similar rates of achievement by all• School management and course teams responding proactively to concerns raised through equality monitoring and student feedback• Targeted advice provided to specific groups of students, including those entering directly into second or third year of an undergraduate degree• Develop an action plan for the roll out of content capture by lecturers		
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Enriching the student experience: unleashing individual potential through a complete RGU experience.

Relevant protected characteristics:

- All

Relationship to the general duties:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations

Evidence of the equality issues:

Indications from the university's equality and diversity monitoring of its student body suggests that the number of disabled students is increasing. There is also evidence from the university's student support services that the number of students presenting with mental health issues is increasing year-on-year.

The university has a dedicated Disability and Dyslexia Service, but no other dedicated services for particular protected characteristics. One example of this is that increasingly there has been a trend students present at the Disability and Dyslexia Service who have concerns relating to our protected characteristics, for example matters relating to pregnancy or transgender support. Further consideration is required to ascertain whether students from other protected characteristics might require additional specific services and information.

The university's internal student experience questionnaire reveals that certain protected characteristics (e.g. male students, LGBT students and disabled students) are significantly less satisfied with their experience than others. Notwithstanding this observation regarding male students being less satisfied than female students there is evidence from staff and students of what has been described as a 'lad culture' of misogyny on campus amongst students.

Example actions that will be taken in order to achieve the outcome:

- Specific support and advice provided to specific groups of students
- Review policies and services for specific protected characteristics, e.g. pregnant students and transgender students
- Appropriate support groups and societies for students established and nurtured
- Consideration of equality outcomes in the annual appraisal of student-facing support services

- Participation in appropriate benchmarking activities aimed at student support (e.g. LGBT Youth Scotland Chartermark)

Example outputs	Specific measures	Long-term contextual indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revised policy on students, pregnancy and parenthood • Implementation of a Transgender Policy • Development and deployment of targeted services for specific groups of students • Enhanced mental health and wellbeing support • Profile raising of the student equality champions • Implement a strategy to tackle sexual violence on campus in line with UUK guidance • Activities of the student societies that support and represent specific protected characteristics, including the development of a students' women's network and a students' parents group • All student clubs and societies are inclusive of all students • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student satisfaction (both the university's internal student experience questionnaire and the external national student survey) • Student feedback • Student responses to question around discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A campus where diversity is positively acknowledged and celebrated amongst the student body • Similar student satisfaction rates between different protected characteristic groups.

Achieving graduate employability: shape creative, professional and engaged individuals;

Relevant protected characteristics:

- All

Relationship to the general duties:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity

Evidence of the equality issues:

One of the key characteristics of the university's teaching portfolio is the strong professional and vocation nature of its curriculum. The university's takes deliberate steps to embed activity which supports graduate employability into its curriculum and is proud of its extremely strong graduate employability record. Notwithstanding this strong record there our equalities monitoring suggests that students from specific protected characteristic groups (i.e. disabled students and BME students) have less positive employment outcomes than other students.

The university has started to provide careers advice which is targeted to some protected characteristics (LGBT students) and groups of students that contain high numbers of BME (black minority ethnic) students (e.g. The university's international cohort). The university accepts that the coverage of this advice is patchy across different protected characteristics.

It is also recognised that as the university does more to encourage gender balance across its teaching portfolio there may be issues for groups of students as they move into professions which have similar gender imbalance.

Example actions that will be taken in order to achieve the outcome:

- Specific support and advice provided to students from specific protected characteristics groups
- Support to specific subject areas with low rates of participation by certain protected characteristic groups

Example outputs	Specific measures	Long-term contextual indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of appropriate careers information and advice targeted around the concerns of specific student groups • Subject area support for specific groups of students, e.g. disabled or BME students into the Creative Industries or Women into Engineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment rates of graduates • Further study rates of graduates • Professional level employment rates of graduates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar rates of postgraduate study between different protected characteristics • Similar rates of professional level employment between different protected characteristics