



EQUALITY OUTCOMES PROGRESS REPORT

April 2019

Introduction

In April 2017, the university published a set of five equality outcomes as follows:

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

The first five sections of this report provide a report of actions and activities the university has undertaken in the past two years to achieve each of the five equality outcomes. The final section provides an outline of future actions which the university will implement over the next two years.

Equality Outcome 1: Embracing diversity and equality

In the past two years the university has engaged in the following activities to mainstream equality and diversity to be an inclusive university:

- Promoted equality in our recruitment process: Unconscious bias training has been embedded in training provided to staff involved in recruitment activities. Recruitment specialists based in the HR department provide training on unconscious bias during recruitment and how to mitigate the effects of it to ensure a fair and equal recruitment process.
- Supported women's career development: Continued to actively participate in the Advance HE 'Aurora' programme which is designed specifically for advancing the careers of women working in higher education and has supported a number of staff through this, earning recognition in the Scottish Parliament for this commitment. Over the past six years the university has supported 63 members of staff to participate in the programme.
- Raised awareness of equality issues: Through the use of internal communications, the university has promoted equality and diversity to our staff and students. Communications publish a weekly bulletin in which information about our staff networks, updates to policies and equality & diversity events are advertised. Events highlighted in this way have included a walk on campus led by the university chaplain to mark Scottish Interfaith Week and Trans Day of Remembrance, which the university marked for the first time in 2018 with a guest speaker who reflected upon their own experience of transitioning at work.
- Enhanced our family friendly provision: Following a review of our family friendly policies, these have been updated to provide improved support to working

parents to help foster 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. By enhancing our family friendly provision we are providing improved options for staff to remain in the workplace, rather than taking a career break, supporting them to achieve their promotion potential.

- Worked in partnership with the staff women's network: The Women's Network provided support to the university's Honorary Graduation ceremony on International Women's Day 2018 for outstanding women in the community. The subsequent summer graduation ceremony thereafter featured more honorary female graduates than previous years. The women's network empowers women to meet, share information, provides support and, through establishing a visible presence on campus ensures that the university remains a vibrant and inclusive environment.
- Supported the staff LGBT+ network to improve inclusivity on campus: The university provided funding for rainbow lanyards as requested by the LGBT+ network for staff, students and allies to wear to promote an inclusive atmosphere at the university for LGBT+ staff and students. To date, 600 lanyards have been distributed. The LGBT+ network runs a series of events on an annual basis including monthly coffee on campus and film nights to allow staff to meet, share experiences and discuss campaigns or initiatives.
- Measured our inclusivity for LGBT+ staff: A sub-group of the university's equality and diversity advisory group has been set up to develop and submit an application to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index to measure our inclusiveness in our practices for our LGBT+ staff. The first application was made in 2018 and forms the basis of improvement actions to ensure we are delivering an inclusive workplace for all our staff. The university intends to apply again in coming years, continuing to build upon our current performance. Informal feedback from Stonewall indicated that staff feel very positively about the culture of the university for LGBT+ staff.
- Undertaken partnership working with student equality champions: The university is in the process of applying for a LGBT Youth Chartermark award to demonstrate our commitment to our LGBT+ students. This application is being progressed in partnership with our student sexual orientation and Trans equality champions to ensure that it is reflective of the lived experiences of students in our community.
- Improved the quality of student equality data: the university has carried out annual equality monitoring of all students, for the first time through RGU Insight which has provided a greater richness of data, allowing for intersectional analysis. This exercise has led to amendments to the equality monitoring questions that we ask at enrolment to align with best practice, which will be implemented for the 2019/20 academic session. This will include a greater transparency over the reason for collecting the data and how it will be used, with the intention that this will positively impact disclosure rates.
- Met our goal for gender balance on the Board of Governors: The Board composition includes both appointed and elected membership and will also

include trade union nominated members, in due course. In recruiting new members, the Board ensures that discussions are held with a panel that includes members of both genders, while candidates of both genders are encouraged for the elections held by the staff and student body. As of January 2019, the number of female members of the overall Board has increased to 44%, whilst the lay membership of the Board currently sits at 6 male and 6 female Governors.

- Taken steps to implement gender balanced committees: This has commenced with a requirement for Schools to put forward two representatives to Academic Council, one male and one female. Academic Council are responsible for the overall planning, co-ordination, development and supervision of the academic work of the university and as such have a senior role at the organisation.

Evaluation

To ensure that the university is delivering an inclusive and welcoming campus, an annual student experience survey (SEQ) is carried out. This includes a question on whether a student has been subject to, or witnessed, harassment or discrimination based upon a protected characteristic. For the most recent data available, the vast majority of respondents to the survey have not been subject to, or witnessed any harassment or discrimination. While there are a small number of incidents reported through the questionnaire and therefore still areas for improvement, the university considers this a positive measure of how we have embedded equality and diversity in to our community.

Equality Outcome 2: Breaking down barriers

It should be noted that the university undertakes a range of activities to widen access to the university's courses associated with socio-economic background in line with its strategy and Scottish Government policy. This section of the report addresses the university's activities in relation to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

In the past two years the university has taken a range of actions to break down barriers facing learners in accessing higher education as follows:

- Developed our first British Sign Language action plan: Our plan sets out our commitment to breaking down barriers for BSL users to access and participate in university life and to improve our services for all BSL users. The plan was developed through a short-life working group and was subject to public consultation in conjunction with the University of Aberdeen, North East Scotland College and Aberdeen City Council. The university will report on the activities undertaken in support of the plan in the 2021 progress report. A specific question to monitor the number of BSL users who are students at the university has been introduced to the online enrolment monitoring form which will support further actions.
- Enhanced provision for gender diverse students: Implemented a number of gender neutral toilets across the university's Garthdee campus.

- Implemented activity to challenge gender imbalance: As part of the university's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council, the university has widened the remit of our institutional gender action plan, from a previous focus on subject-level severe gender imbalance. The plan has been revised to streamline a range of activities to address gender inequality including: staff gender imbalance and Board level gender imbalance; embedding the needs and rights of trans and gender diverse students and staff; and implementing and delivering a strategy to address gender based violence.
- Embedded an inclusive approach for applicants: Members of the Inclusion team attend open days and applicants days to talk directly to potential students about the support available at the university. For students who have disclosed a disability and accepted an offer, the Inclusion team will develop a support package in partnership with the student to ensure they receive the support they need. This may include providing a dyslexia assessment, or an assessment of needs for DSA. It may also include visits, walking through an example timetable, meeting the disability contact and other members of School staff, working with Accommodation to make adaptations to their living space or with Estates to make adaptations on campus. Other things may include mobility training for blind and visually impaired students. Transitions events are held for students on the autism spectrum and with chronic mental health conditions so they can meet key support staff and see the campus when it is less busy.
- Promoted gender-balanced view of subjects: A number of Schools have undertaken a review of their marketing and recruitment materials to ensure they are promoting a gender-balanced view of the university and our courses. This includes providing a gender balance amongst staff at events, where possible.

Evaluation

Breaking down barriers to education is an ongoing goal for the university, in part measured by enrolment figures. In recent years the university has seen an increasing number of students declaring a disability at enrolment, an increasing percentage of students declaring their sexual orientation and an increase in students declaring their gender identity at enrolment. Currently, the university enrolls one of the highest numbers of students with a disclosed disability and one of the highest percentages of BME students in Scotland; this is larger than the proportion of the local school leaving population. The university is actively engaged with the Scottish Race Equality Network Forum to further address representation of minority ethnic groups.

Equality Outcome 3: Achieving graduate employability

In the past two years the university has carried out the following activities to support the achievement of this outcome:

- Revised our employability support: Launched a new careers and professional development platform – eHub – which contains resources and tools to ensure students are prepared for their careers upon graduation. An app version of the platform has also been launched. The eHub aims to recognise that the student

journey is not always linear and recognises that various life skills are important to employability.

- Provided support and guidance on equality and diversity matters in recruitment and the workplace: the employability hub provides a range of resources and offers support to students with a protected characteristic who may be concerned on if it will affect them in the workplace. This includes advice on how to identify diversity positive employers, decide how and whether to disclose personal circumstances and to understand their employment rights.

Evaluation

The university is continuing to improve the support we offer our students to achieve positive employment after graduation. In the past two years, the number of students who have disclosed a disability has steadily increased, and with that the university has seen a narrowing of the gap between the employability rate of graduates with a declared disability and those with no declared disability. In particular, respondents to the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) for 2016/17 who declared a specific disability such as dyslexia, mental health, physical disability and a visual disability reported employability rates for being professionally employed or in graduate study, above the university average.

Equality Outcome 4: Supporting student success

In the past two years the university has undertaken the following activities to support student success:

- More effective use of equality and diversity in course appraisal: The 2017/18 annual course appraisal was supported by data from the university's new business intelligence package. This includes a range of data related to performance and includes a set of equality information to allow course leaders to identify if there are any inequalities occurring at a course level which can be highlighted and addressed through this process.
- Built understanding of unconscious bias issues: Members of the gender working group developed a pilot briefing session to be rolled out to Schools and Departments around unconscious bias and how it can affect the learning and teaching environment. This includes discussions on how to develop gender neutral classrooms and is intended as an introductory session to begin the process of embedding the concept of unconscious bias among staff. A number of Schools and Professional Support Departments have received the briefing and this will continue in the 2019/20 academic session. In order to assess impact, the university will consider a staff questionnaire to understand how the briefing has been received and used.
- Improved accessibility to our learning material: Implemented a lecture capture relaunch project to deliver an increase in use of lecture capture across all Schools. In 2017/18 the project resulted in a significant increase in uptake by staff members and access by students. The increase in availability of lecture

capture provides benefits to all of our students but particularly those who may be unable to attend a lecture, have difficulties note-taking or have a different learning style. Further improvements and capacity building will take place to increase the use of lecture capture across the university.

Evaluation

The university has continued to improve the retention rates for protected characteristics that have in the past had higher retention rates. For our Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrant (SDUE) population, the retention for male students has increased over the past three years and is now equivalent to the retention rate of female students and exceeds the Scottish average. The university has also seen positive trends in the retention rate for our SDUE students over the age of 21. While this is below the university average, the retention rate has continued to improve and is also above the Scottish average for this age group.

Equality Outcome 5: Enriching the student experience

Over the past two years the university has undertaken the following activities to provide a high quality experience for all of our students:

- **Taken steps to address gender based violence on campus:** To support the development of our approach to tackling gender based violence we have worked in partnership with our Student Union, the Equally Safe in Higher Education toolkit creators, Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis and Rape Crisis Grampian. We have implemented an online reporting and support platform which may be used by any students or staff to report instances of gender based violence. Individuals who make a report may speak with a trained member of staff if they wish, but they are also provided with a range of support materials including details of external organisations which can provide support. A number of staff have received training and the university has undertaken an awareness raising campaign which has been recognised with a nomination for NUS Scotland's Campaign of the Year 2019 awards.
- **Launched a new Mental Health Agreement:** The mental health agreement is based on NUS Scotland guidance and outlines the university's and the student union's commitment to improving the mental wellbeing of all students through activities and initiatives. This includes signposting students to available resources, both internal and external.
- **Widened portfolio of student equality champion roles:** RGU:Union has recast the student equality champion roles resulting in the highest number of student equality champions being appointed for the 2018/19 academic session. This includes champions for the following: trans, women, sexual orientation, disability & inclusion, mental health and mature students, age, ethnicity and postgraduate students. The equality champions represent these groups at university committees and take the lead on liberation campaigns and arranging fundraisers and events.

- Enhanced student satisfaction monitoring by protected characteristic: The enhancement in the provision of equalities data as part of the course appraisal process mentioned above has also led to similar improvement in the provision of student satisfaction by protected characteristic.

Evaluation

Over the past two years the university has taken steps to increase support and undertaken awareness raising for our trans and gender diverse learners. The percentage of learners who disclose that they have a gender other than that assigned at birth has increased over the past five years. The overall satisfaction rate, as recorded by the student experience questionnaire, for individuals who are a gender other than that assigned at birth has improved and is now above the university average.

Future actions over the 2019-21 period

In reviewing the range of activity outlined above, the university's Equality and Diversity Advisory Group have observed that activities have perhaps been disproportionately focused on the protected characteristics of disability; gender; gender reassignment; and sexual orientation. As a result the university will seek to refocus activities over the next two years to address this imbalance.

The university will continue to build upon the progress made with the above activities and progress the following:

Equality Outcome 1: Embracing equality and diversity

1. Align the university's equality outcomes and activities to the university's recently approved strategy.
2. Conduct a full review of the induction processes to improve take up of equality and diversity training.
3. Continue to undertake biennial reviews on the justification for, and level of, individual attraction and retention premiums and address anomalies within historic pay arrangements.
4. Review the university's 'Right Click' social media guidelines to ensure they cover the range of protected characteristics and align with the Dignity at Work & Study Policy.
5. Review the existing Children on Campus policy to deliver a more inclusive and welcoming environment to student parents.
6. Relaunch the annual staff satisfaction survey which will provide a measure of staff sense of belonging.
7. Develop a gender expression policy to support our gender diverse students.

Equality Outcome 2: Breaking down barriers

1. Undertake an examination of the decliners' survey to gain a greater understanding of why students are not converting from application to acceptance.
2. Participate in the various schemes on equitable admissions.
3. Continue profile raising activities amongst potential undergraduate applications.

Equality Outcome 3: Achieving graduate employability

1. Consider institutional actions to support positive destinations of students with a declared disability;
2. Provision of appropriate careers information and advice targeted around the concerns of specific student groups.

Equality Outcome 4: Supporting student success

1. Consideration of equality strands and outcomes in the development of the university's curriculum;
2. Equality impact assessment process for curriculum changes is developed and implemented;
3. Consider the impact of equality and diversity on the timetabling of examinations;
4. Appropriate support to different student groups to enable similar rates of achievement by all;
5. Targeted advice provided to specific groups of students, including those entering directly into second or third year of an undergraduate degree.

Equality Outcome 5: Enriching the student experience

1. Develop and implement a gender expression policy to formalise the guidance that is in place for all of our Trans, gender-fluid and non-binary students in accessing support services.
2. Development and deployment of targeted services for specific groups of students;
3. Activities of the student societies that support and represent specific protected characteristics, including the development of a students' women's network and students' parents group.