



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Equality Impact Assessment

Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014)

Code of Practice

This document is available on the College website: www.stran.ac.uk

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Equality Scheme

Stranmillis University College, in response to the statutory obligations placed upon it by the Northern Ireland Act 1998, produced a revised Equality Scheme which was approved by the Equality Commission in June 2012.

The College committed in the Equality Scheme to screen College policies and to identify those which would be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).

This EQIA on the College's Research Excellence Framework (REF) Code of Practice has been carried out after a screening process which identified that the REF Code of Practice should be subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment. This report will be reviewed after the College carries out a consultation process and considers responses received from consultees.

REF 2014 and the College's REF Code of Practice

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 is the new system put in place by the four UK Higher Education Funding Councils for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions, replacing the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) carried out in 2008. The REF submission is an institutional return which is intended to enhance and optimise the reputational and financial position of Stranmillis University College. The College's REF Code of Practice has been developed to ensure that all staff engaged in excellent research are recognised in a selection process that is fair, evidence-based and transparent, and which promotes equality, avoids discrimination, and complies with legislation.

Consideration of Available Data & Research

The College has used both quantitative and qualitative data in carrying out this process. The College drew upon its own employment and equality data, information from the Census of Population 2001 and information from other bodies such as the Equality Challenge Unit. In its analysis of the data, the College used the Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment published by the Equality Commission.

Potential Adverse Impact

An assessment of the impact of the REF Code of Practice in relation to the nine equality dimensions identified in Section 75 has been carried out.

It must be noted that there is a very small group of staff participating in the College's REF submission (5 in total.) This makes it difficult to draw conclusions about potential evidence of barriers to access or opportunity. Reporting on REF participants is also difficult, as breakdown of the data into subsections under each equality dimensions could allow individuals to be identified.

However, the following points are noted:

- 67% of staff eligible to participate in the REF return are female, 33% are male. However, 40% of staff included in the REF return are female and 60% are male. The College is aware that, within Higher Education across the United Kingdom, women are less likely than men to participate in REF.
- Approximately 6% of eligible staff have a disability. No staff with a disability were included in the REF return.
- The College is aware that, within Higher Education across the United Kingdom, black and minority ethnic staff are less likely than staff from other backgrounds to participate in REF however there are no such staff among the eligible employees in College.

Mitigating Adverse Impact

The College's REF Code of Practice seeks to facilitate participation by staff in the REF return. Eligible staff will normally be expected to produce four excellent research outputs which meet the College's quality thresholds which are set out in the Code of Practice. However, some employees may encounter personal circumstances that prevent them from completing this level of research outputs. There are a number of provisions in the Code which mean that eligible staff may be submitted even if they have fewer than four research outputs. These are referred to as "Clearly Defined Circumstances" and "Complex Circumstances"

The Code of Practice sets out how appropriate reductions can be made to the number of research outputs required from staff members, by consideration of individual staff circumstances.

Given the range of circumstances considered and addressed within the REF Code of Practice, this policy could therefore benefit staff across a number of equality dimensions.

Consultation

This EQIA Report will be available for distribution to consultees, and the College will consider any responses received from consultees. The report will be revised and issued after the College has considered responses received from consultees.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Section 75 Duties of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

In the context of the Section 75 duties of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act), an Equality Impact Assessment is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, whether that policy is written or unwritten, formal or informal, and irrespective of the scope of that policy or the size of the public authority.

The assessment must make reference to the nine equality dimensions as defined in Section 75 of the Act, i.e. religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, disability and dependency.

The primary function of the EQIA should be to determine the extent of differential impact upon the relevant groups and in turn whether that impact is adverse, that is, whether it has a negative impact on groups or individuals in relation to one or more of the nine equality categories. In light of this assessment, if it is decided that the policy has an adverse impact, then the public authority must consider alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity

1.2 Stranmillis University College's Obligations

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires Stranmillis University College (the College), when carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity within the nine categories of persons, namely:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group,
- age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without, and

without prejudice to the obligations above, to also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The main groups within each of the nine categories are identified at Appendix One. The College has set out in its Equality Scheme how it has proposed to fulfil its statutory duties. Revised and newly-formed policies have been screened to assess whether they impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity using the following criteria:

- What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?
- To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?(minor/major/none)

- Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

The College will consult on this EQIA. The purpose of consultation will be to seek the views of consultees in relation to the findings of the EQIA and to assist the College in its consideration of the additional measures to mitigate any adverse impacts.

2. BACKGROUND

Stranmillis University College was founded in 1922 to provide state-funded teacher education in the northern portion of the recently partitioned island. The new Northern Ireland government decided to open its own non-denominational College and purchased Stranmillis House, with its very attractive and historic campus of 18 hectares only three kilometres from the centre of Belfast. The College's track record in teacher education since 1922 has been second to none.

To complement its teacher education courses at Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), (Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Masters of Education (M.Ed.) level, a new BA (Early Childhood Studies) degree was launched in September 1996. A BSc (Health and Leisure Studies) degree was then introduced in September 1998. A part-time Master of Teaching degree and a part-time MA (Early Childhood Studies) are now also available. Teacher education at pre-service and in-service levels remains our core activity. Our four year, full-time B.Ed. degree prepares students to teach in nursery, primary and special schools. There is also a more restricted full-time B.Ed. provision for those wishing to teach Business & Enterprise, Mathematics/Science, Religious Studies and Technology and Design in the post-primary and further education sectors. A one year, full-time PGCE course is available for Early Years specialists.

Stranmillis University College is a legally and financially autonomous institution. It is academically integrated with Queen's University Belfast.

The College is an Equal Opportunities Employer and it is committed to ensuring that all staff are afforded equality of opportunity.

2.1 Policy Aims & Objectives: REF 2014 and the College's REF Code of Practice

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 is the new system put in place by the four UK Higher Education Funding Councils for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions, replacing the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) carried out in 2008. The REF submission is an institutional return which is intended to enhance and optimise the reputational and financial position of Stranmillis University College.

The College's REF Code of Practice has been developed to ensure that all staff engaged in excellent research are recognised in a selection process that is fair, evidence-based and transparent, and which promotes equality, avoids discrimination, and complies with legislation.

The Code of Practice:

- sets out how the College intends to meet the requirements of its funding body (currently the Department for Employment and Learning – DEL) and REF;
- provides guidance for staff charged with responsibility for making decisions about staff inclusion in the REF 2014; and
- provides transparent guidelines for staff considering entry to the REF 2014 and those with an interest in the selection process.

The College offered all eligible staff the opportunity to be included in the REF submission. Briefings and training were provided, and the availability of reduced number of research outputs (for those with particular individual circumstances) were regularly articulated. Staff “self-selected” into the College’s REF submission.

The College’s REF Code of Practice seeks to facilitate participation by staff in the REF return. Eligible staff will normally be expected to produce four excellent research outputs which meet the College’s quality thresholds which are set out in the Code of Practice. However, the College acknowledges that some employees may encounter personal circumstances that prevent them from completing this level of research outputs. There are a number of provisions in the Code which mean that eligible staff may be submitted even if they have fewer than four research outputs:

(a) Clearly Defined Circumstances:

- those who are determined to fit the category of early career researcher, as defined in the REF 2014 Guidance on Submissions (REF 02.2011)
- staff working part-time
- individuals who have taken periods of maternity, paternity or adoption leave
- those who have been on secondment or have taken career breaks outside the higher education sector, during which the individual did not undertake academic research.

(b) Complex Circumstances

- disability (the University College defines disability as per the Disability Discrimination Act 1995)
- ill health or injury
- mental health conditions
- constraints related to pregnancy or maternity, in addition to a period of clearly defined period of maternity leave
- childcare or other caring responsibilities
- gender reassignment
- other issues related to the equality dimensions cited in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.

Given the range of circumstances considered and addressed within the REF Code of Practice as outlined above, this policy could therefore benefit staff across a number of equality dimensions.

The College produced and developed its REF Code of Practice over a number of years. The REF census date was 31 October 2013. 53 members of lecturing and research staff were eligible to be included in the College's REF submission, and 5 were included in the final submission.

2.2 Relevant Legislation

There is a wide range of relevant legislation which may impact upon the College in relation to its work relating to the REF submission and Code of Practice. The following link is to a web page on the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's website. This web page lists the main pieces of anti-discrimination legislation and other relevant law.

http://www.equalityni.org/sections/default.asp?cms=The Law The legislation&cmsid=4_278&id=278&secid=5

2.3 Impact of the Policy

This is a new policy, specifically developed for the REF 2014. Staff have self-selected to be included in the submission.

The College is conscious that its submission is very small in comparison to many other Higher Education institutions. As only 5 staff are included in the College's submission, detailed breakdown across all equality dimensions cannot be provided in this document, as the College needs to maintain confidentiality of equality data. However, the following points are noted:

- 67% of staff who are eligible to participate in the REF submission are female, 33% are male. However, 40% of staff included in the REF return are female and 60% are male.
- Approximately 6% of eligible staff have a disability. No staff with a disability were included in the REF return.
- No staff aged under 40 years are in the REF submission.
- Participation rates in the REF submission across a number of equality dimensions (e.g., staff who have dependants, are comparable to the population of eligible staff.

3. CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

The College has considered data and research findings from a number of sources such as:

- Employment equality, e.g., data collected for a number of annual monitoring returns,
- Results of the Census 2001 and 2011 (where 2011 data are available)
- Higher Education Statistics Agency
- Equality Challenge Unit
- Department of Enterprise Trade & Investment (Northern Ireland) – DETI(NI).

The College resurveyed staff to collect further monitoring data and give staff the opportunity to provide data where no information had been provided to date.

4. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

The College has assessed the possible impacts of its REF Code of Practice and REF 2014 submission in relation to the equality dimensions within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. A statistical analysis has been carried out using equality data held in the College's HR Department. The analysis covers the following 7 categories as specified in Section 75:

- Age
- Dependants
- Disability
- Gender
- Marital Status
- Racial Group
- Religious Belief

The College does not currently collect monitoring data on political opinion or sexual orientation.

4.1 Age

The REF Code of Practice makes provision to encourage and facilitate participation of staff who are “early career researchers.” There is scope to reduce the number of research outputs required in such cases.

Although this measure is not specifically targeted at younger workers, it is possible that younger workers may be more likely to be at an early stage in their research career, therefore this measure could potentially be beneficial to younger workers.

All staff included in the REF 2014 submission are aged over 40. Of the staff eligible to participate in REF, 7.7% are aged under 40.

4.2 Dependants

There are provisions in the REF Code of Practice to facilitate staff who, due to issues relating to dependants (e.g., staff who have taken maternity/ paternity leave) may otherwise find it difficult to participate in the REF return. The College REF Code of Practice provides scope to reduce the number of research outputs required by individual employees in such cases.

Participation rates in the REF 2014 submission (analysed by this equality dimension) are comparable to the population of eligible staff.

4.3 Disability

There are provisions in the REF Code of Practice to facilitate staff who, due to issues relating to disability may otherwise find it difficult to participate in the REF return. There is scope to reduce the number of research outputs required in such cases.

The DETI Labour Force Survey (LFS) April - June 2013 estimates that approximately one in five (18.9%) persons aged 16-64 in Northern Ireland, had a current long-term disability.

The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) reports that, at national level in the UK, the proportion of academic staff who have declared a disability is 2.9%

Approximately 6% of staff who are eligible to participate in the REF return have declared a disability, therefore the proportion of academic staff in College who have declared a disability is higher than the national average in Higher Education. No staff with a disability were in the REF 2014 submission.

4.4 Gender

The College is aware that, in the Higher Education sector across the UK, female staff are less likely to participate in REF. The ECU noted that the profile of academics carrying out research suggests that women are underrepresented (HESA 2006/07).

In 2013, ECU reported that, of eligible academic staff within the Higher Education (across the UK) is 42% are women and 58% men.

In Stranmillis University College 67% of staff eligible to participate in the REF submission are female, 33% are male. However, 40% of those included in the REF return are female and 60% are male.

4.5 Marital Status

Participation rates in the REF submission (analysed by this equality dimension) are comparable to the population of eligible staff in the College.

4.6 Racial Group/Ethnicity

The 2011 census data shows that 98.2% of the NI population is white and 1.8% of the NI population is made up of other non-white ethnic groups.

Data compiled by ECU indicates that at national level 88.3 % of eligible academic staff are white and 11.7% are from black and ethnic minority groups.

The College is aware that, within Higher Education across the United Kingdom, black and minority ethnic staff are less likely to participate in REF.

The profile of academics carrying out research suggests black and ethnic minority staff are underrepresented (HESA 2006/07).

Research by the Equality Challenge Unit indicates that BME staff are more likely to experience heavy workloads, a lack of mentoring and support for career development and have fewer opportunities to develop research capacity¹.

There are no staff from these groups among College staff eligible to participate in REF. The College view is that it should take measures to attract more applicants from ethnic minority groups.

4.7 Religious Belief

Participation rates in the REF submission (analysed by this equality dimension) are comparable to the population of eligible staff. The 2011 census indicates that the proportion of the population by religious denomination and 48.36% is Protestant and 45.14% is Catholic.

5. CONSIDERATION OF MEASURES TO MITIGATE ANY ADVERSE IMPACTS

The College has given careful consideration to measures which seek to eliminate or mitigate adverse impacts identified in Section 4. The following steps have already been undertaken to mitigate adverse impacts and to encourage more staff to undertake REF-returnable research activity:

- Implementation and revision of an “Increased Flexible Working” policy to facilitate consideration of changes to working hours and/or duties to accommodate individual staff circumstances, e.g., those with caring responsibilities;
- Delivery of a programme of research seminars, sharing learning from colleagues’ research activity (this is aimed at helping encourage colleagues to become research active at a REF returnable level);
- Mentoring and support from two Visiting Professors (both women) with an international research profile;
- Individual mentoring sessions provided by established academics to support early career researchers with publications and funding applications.
- Provision of financial support for staff undertaking doctoral study;
- Support for staff delivering papers at national and international conferences;
- Training for staff involved in a number of activities addressing equality of opportunity, relating to REF (e.g., management of individual staff circumstances)
- Guidance documentation for staff to assist them in submitting applications for research grants;
- Sabbatical leave, on successful application, available for research activity.

The College has reflected on the data analysis and work undertaken for this Equality Impact Assessment, and is now proposing to implement a number of further measures:

¹ Equality Challenge Unit 2009. Staff Working in Higher Education.

- In view of the small number of disabled people among the College's eligible workforce – to seek guidance and input from the Equality Challenge Unit and Disability Advisory Service to encourage and facilitate an increase in the recruitment of people with a disability;
- In view of the small number of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds among the College's eligible workforce – to seek guidance and input from the Equality Challenge Unit and Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities to encourage and facilitate an increase in the recruitment of people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

6. CONSULTATION

This EQIA report will be made available to consultees for a consultation period of 12 weeks from 28 February to 23 May 2014. The College will write to all those listed in its Equality Scheme.

This Equality Impact Assessment and the REF Code of Practice will be placed on the College website. These documents will also be made available, on request, in alternative formats, where reasonably practicable. Consultees will be informed that individual consultation meetings with representatives of particular interest groups can be arranged on request.

The revised EQIA report, including information about the consultation process and addressing the comments made, will be prepared and published in due course.

The consultation period will last 12 weeks from **Friday 28 February to Friday 23 May 2014**.

APPENDIX 1

Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland purposes

Please note, this list is for illustration purposes only, it is not exhaustive.

Category	Examples of Groups
Age	For most purposes, the main categories are: those under 18; people aged between 18 and 65; and people over 65. However, the definition of age groups will need to be sensitive to the policy under consideration. For example, (i) in relation to employment policies the middle aged are often a vulnerable group, pensionable age is different for men and women and legal ages for working and voting vary; (ii) in relation to policies concerning young people narrower age bands are likely to be more appropriate.
Marital status	Married people; unmarried people; divorced or separated people; widowed people.
Men and women generally	Men (including boys); women (including girls); transgender people; transsexual people.
Persons with a disability	Persons with a disability as defined in Sections 1 and 2 and Schedules 1 and 2 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
Persons with dependants	Persons with primary responsibility for the care of a child; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a person with a disability; persons with primary responsibility for the care of a dependant elderly person.
Political opinion	Unionists generally; Nationalists generally; members/ supporters of any political party; other.
Racial group	Chinese; Irish Traveller; Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Black African; Black Caribbean; White; mixed ethnic group; any other ethnic group; nationality.
Religious belief	Protestant; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Islam / Muslim; Sikh; Buddhist; other religion; people of no religious belief.
Sexual orientation	Gay; lesbian; bisexual; heterosexual.

APPENDIX 2

Analysis of eligible staff data in College by equality dimension

Age	Number	%
18-39	4	7.7
40-49	22	42.3
50-59	19	36.5
60-69	7	13.5
Total	52	100.0

Dependants	Number	%
Yes	22	42.3
No	11	21.2
No information provided	19	36.5
Total	52	100.0

Disability	Number	%
Yes	3	5.8
No	49	94.2
Total	52	100.0

Gender	Number	%
Female	35	67.3
Male	17	32.7
Total	52	100.0

Marital status	Number	%
Married	29	55.8
Single	10	19.2
Other and/or no data	13	25.0
no data	9	17.3
Total:	52	100.0

Race/Ethnicity

Ethnic Origin	Number	%
White British	36	69.2
White Irish	3	5.8
No data	13	25.0

Total	52	100.0
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Religious Belief	Number	%
Protestant	36	69.2
Roman Catholic	13	25.0
Non determined or Other	3	5.8
Total	52	100.0