



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EQIA) ON RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) CODE OF PRACTICE

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 dimension 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.