

Policy Title: Severe Weather Policy

Decision: Screen out the policy and mitigate the impacts on equality by amending or changing the policy

Contact: Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Date of Completion: 18 August 2025

Part 1: Policy Scoping

Information about the policy

Name of the Policy

Severe Weather Policy

Is this an existing, revised, or new policy?

New

What is it trying to achieve? (For example, intended aims and outcomes)

The purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather. The policy outlines the University's response to severe weather conditions as notified through the UK Meteorological Office ("Met Office") by assessing the risk and implementing appropriate actions. Severe weather may affect normal operations or in extreme cases result in the closure of all (or some) campuses and move activity online.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the policy? If so, explain how below.

Yes, it is anticipated that the following categories might be expected to benefit from the introduction of this policy: disability, age, dependants and men and women generally.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

University Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee

Who owns and implements the policy?

The Chief People Officer owns the policy. All staff and students are responsible for implementing the policy.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to or weaken the intended aim or outcome of the policy?

Yes

If yes, are they financial, legislative or other?

Other: Lack of compliance with the policy.

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

- Staff
- Students
- Other service users (for example: prospective students or conference delegates)
- Trade Unions

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

Policy: People, Place and Partnership – Delivering Sustainable Futures for All Strategy

Policy owner: Vice-Chancellor

Policy: Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Risk Assessment Procedure

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Crisis Management Plan

Policy owner: Chief Strategy and Finance Officer

Policy: Ulster University Balconies Procedure

Policy owner: Chief Strategy and Finance Officer

Available evidence

What evidence or information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Please specify details for each of the Section 75 categories below.

Religious Belief

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2024, our staff profile was 52.0% Catholic and 48.0% Protestant. Compared with 6 February 2019, this indicates a 2.9% increase in Catholic staff.

In the Academic Year (AY) 2023 – 2024, 58.3% of our students identified as Christian and 11.1% identified as having 'No Religion'. Compared with AY 2018-2019, this indicates an 18.2% decrease in students who identified as Christian and a 2.5% decrease in students who identified as having 'No Religion'.

Political Opinion

The University does not collect information on Political Opinion or make assumptions regarding Political Opinion based on Community Background.

Racial Group

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2024, our staff profile was 92.8% White and 7.2% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME). This indicates a 1.8% increase in BME staff compared with 2019.

In AY 2023 – 2024, 9.9% of students identified as BME. This indicates a 4.9% increase in BME students compared with AY 2018 – 2019.

Our BME profile suggests that we are twice as diverse as the local population, as the Northern Ireland Census 2021 suggests that 3.4% of the NI population is BME.

Age

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2024, 31.1% of our staff were in the 46-55 age band and 25.8% of staff were in the 36-45 age band. 26.2% of

staff were aged '56 and above', which represents a 3.8% increase compared to 2019.

In AY 2023 – 2024, the majority of students (67.0%) were aged '21 and under 40'. This indicates a 5.6% increase in students within this age band compared with AY 2018 – 2019.

Marital Status

The University's EO data were reviewed. In February 2024, 56.0% of staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership', a decrease of 6.0% compared to 2019.

In AY 2023 – 2024, 63.8% of students were 'Single', a 14.6% decrease compared with AY 2018 – 2019.

Sexual Orientation

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 74.0% of staff were 'Heterosexual'; 4.3% were 'LGBT+' and 21.4% were 'Not Known'.

Although we collect student data on sexual orientation, this is not considered to be reliable.

Men and Women generally

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 58.0% of staff were 'Female'. This indicates a 2.0% increase in female staff compared with 2019.

In AY 2023 – 2024, 61.2% of students were 'Female', a 4.3% increase compared with AY 2018 – 2019.

Disability

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 6.0% of staff declared a disability, an increase of 1.2% compared with 2019.

In AY 2023 – 2024, 8.4% of students declared a disability, an decrease of 2.0% compared with AY 2018 – 2019.

Our disability declaration rate is lower than expected, compared with the local population. The NI Census (2021) found that 24% of the NI population stated that their day-to-day activities were limited because of a long-standing health problem or disability.

Dependants

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 43.8% of staff had dependants. This indicates a decrease of 3.9% compared with 2019.

In AY 2023 – 2024, 11.4% of students declared they had dependants, a decrease of 4.6% compared to AY 2018 – 2019.

Needs, experience and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy or decision? (Please specify for each of the Section 75 categories below the needs, experiences and priorities)

Religious Belief

None identified

Political Opinion

None identified

Racial Group

None identified

Age

Anecdotally, as people get older they are more likely to acquire disability or long-term health conditions. Disabled people may encounter additional barriers to attendance at work in bad weather conditions. See disability section below.

Marital Status

None identified

Sexual Orientation

None identified

Men and Women generally

Anecdotally, pregnant workers or those with additional caring responsibilities that may encounter additional barriers to attendance at work in bad weather conditions.

Disability

According to an online [article](#) in HR Magazine it is noted that: "Employers should be particularly mindful of people with a disability or health condition as extreme weather conditions such as heat can make them particularly vulnerable."

Dependants

An article by [Employment Law Solutions](#) states: "In the event that adverse weather affects usual childcare arrangements, for example, the closures of schools or

nurseries, parents may find it difficult to attend work, particularly in the current public health climate.

Employees are entitled to take unpaid time off to care for dependants and this right will apply where unforeseen circumstances cause a breakdown in childcare arrangements, this is however restricted to only as much time as is necessary to make alternate arrangements.”

Additional websites contain relevant information including: [“If an employee’s child’s school is closed or their normal childcare arrangements are disrupted, they could have the right for time off to look after them.”](#)

[This should be agreed between the employee and the employer.”](#)

[“If you are a parent, you may not be able to organise alternative childcare, so under these circumstances you may be able to take unpaid leave, sometimes called ‘dependent leave’.”](#)

Consultation

Consultation with relevant groups, organisations or individuals about the policy can provide useful information about issues or opportunities which are specifically related to them (that is evidence to inform the policy).

Please indicate whether you carried out or intend to carry out any consultation exercises prior to equality screening?

Yes

The following groups will be consulted as part of development of the Severe Weather policy:

- Trade Unions
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team
- University Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee
- Senior Leadership Team

Part 2: Screening questions

Introduction

The answers to the following screening questions will assist the University in making a decision whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment on the policy. The following information is provided to help you to identify and comment on the level of likely impact of the policy in question 1 to 4.

Select 'major' impact if:

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there are insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

Select 'minor' impact if:

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunities for particular groups of disadvantaged people;

- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations;
- e) Differential impact observed and opportunities exist to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Select 'none' if:

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations;
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations.

Taking into account the evidence presented in Part 1, please complete the screening questions (Question 1 to 4).

Screening questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 categories?

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious Belief**

This policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

What is the level of impact?

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**

This policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Level of impact

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**

This policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Level of impact

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**

This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category, particularly where there is an intersection between age and disability. The policy provides for those with long-term health conditions that may cause additional barriers to attendance at work in bad weather conditions.

Level of impact

Minor positive

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**

This policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Level of impact
None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**

This policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Level of impact
None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women generally**

This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The policy provides for those with caring responsibilities or who are pregnant where this causes additional barriers to attendance at work in bad weather conditions.

Level of impact
Minor positive

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**

This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The policy provides for those with long-term health conditions that may cause additional barriers to attendance at work in bad weather conditions.

Level of impact
Minor positive

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**

This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The policy provides for those with caring responsibilities where this causes additional barriers to attendance at work in bad weather conditions.

Level of impact
Minor positive

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?

Religious Belief

No, the purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Political Opinion

No, the purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Racial Group

No, the purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Age

No, the purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Marital Status

No, the purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Sexual Orientation

No, the purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Men and Women generally

No, the purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Disability

No, the purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Dependants

No, the purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Religious Belief

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious Belief**

This policy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief as it bears no relation to good relations.

Level of impact

None

Political Opinion

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**

This policy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different political opinion as it bears no relation to good relations.

Level of impact

None

Racial Group

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**

This policy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different racial group as it bears no relation to good relations.

Level of impact
None

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

Religious Belief

No, this policy bears no relation to good relations.

Political Opinion

No, this policy bears no relation to good relations.

Racial Group

No, this policy bears no relation to good relations.

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

5. Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy or decision on people with multiple identities? (For example, disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men, and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Yes - where age, disability, sex or dependants intersect with other Section 75 categories, this policy is likely to positively impact on those people.

Disability Duties

6. Does the policy provide an opportunity to encourage disabled people to participate in University life?

Yes, it helps to ensure, as appropriate, the health and safety of disabled people in severe weather conditions.

7. Does the policy provide an opportunity to promote attitudes towards disabled people?

No, the purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather.

Part 3: Screening decision

Based on the evidence considered and outlined in Part 1 and the responses to the screening questions (Part 2), please indicate the screening decision for this policy.

Note: The University should take particular care not to screen out policies that have a procurement aspect if there is potential to promote equality of opportunity through the procurement of services.

- ☐ **Screen in** the policy (that is, subject to an Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **major** in respect of one, or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories.
- ☐ **Screen out** the policy without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted (that is, **no** Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **none** in respect of all of equality of opportunity or good relations categories.
- ☒ **Screen out** the policy and **mitigate the impacts on equality by amending or changing the policy**, or by **developing an alternative policy or action** (that is, **no** Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **minor** in respect of one or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen in' the policy), please provide details of the reasons.

Not applicable

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen out' the policy), please provide details for the reasons.

Not applicable

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen out' the policy), and mitigate the impacts on equality of opportunity by amending or changing the policy, or by developing an alternative policy or action, please provide

reasons to support your decision, together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

The likely impact is **minor** in respect of one or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories. However, this impact is likely to be positive.

The purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard staff, students, and visitors on or travelling to, or from, campuses during periods of severe or adverse weather. The policy outlines the University's response to severe weather conditions as notified through the UK Meteorological Office ("Met Office") by assessing the risk and implementing appropriate actions. Severe weather may affect normal operations or in extreme cases result in the closure of all (or some) campuses and move activity online.

In line with University policy, the policy will be reviewed 2 years after it has been implemented and if necessary amended.

Timetabling and prioritising

If the policy had been '**screened in**' for an equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of effect on equality of opportunity and good relations:

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of social need

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of effect on people's daily lives

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of relevance to the University's functions

Not applicable

Note: The Total Rating Score will be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the University in timetabling. Details of the University's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable will be included in its quarterly Screening Reports.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

Not applicable

Approval and authorisation

Screened by: , Geoff Gillan

Position or Job Title: Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Date screened: 15 August 2025

Approved by:



Position or Job Title: Chief People Officer

Date approved: 18 August 2025

Review

This policy is due for review (in terms of its impact on equality of opportunity and good relations) by the policy owner on: 18 August 2027