

Policy Title: Direct Awards Contract Policy

Decision: Screen out

Contact: Head of Procurement

Date of Completion: 27 March 2026

Part 1: Policy Scoping

Information about the policy

Name of the Policy

Direct Award Contracts Policy

Is this an existing, revised, or new policy?

Existing

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

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on what constitutes a Direct Award Contract (DAC), what must be considered before one is awarded and the consequences of doing so. It also outlines the process for approving DACs, in line with the Delegated Authority Framework (section 4.29). The Policy is designed to ensure all procurement activity reflects legal, ethical, and regulatory obligations, and is underpinned by the core objectives of the Procurement Act 2023 (Value for Money, Maximising Public Benefit, Sharing information regarding a procurement tender, acting with integrity) and must be read in conjunction with the University's Procurement Policy.

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

No

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Finance Directorate – Procurement initiated and wrote the policy.

Who owns and implements the policy?

The policy is owned by Chief Strategy and Finance Officer and implemented by the Procurement team.

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?

Financial: none

Legislative: changes to UK procurement legislation (Procurement Act 2023) for above threshold contracts

Other: The Department for the Economy requires the University, as part of the annual assurance statement, to confirm that all procurement activity by the organisation is undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation, and DACs are justifiable with appropriate approval obtained.

In line with the Delegated Authority Framework, the Resource Committee receive a quarterly report on all Direct Awards above £50k, issued by the University, along with justification and confirmation of whether Procurement advice was offered and accepted in each case.

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)
- Other public sector organisations
- Voluntary sector organisations
- Community organisations
- Other - Suppliers, funders

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they and who owns them?

Policy: Ulster University Procurement Policy

Policy owner: Chief Strategy and Finance Owner

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.

Note: Evidence can come from many sources. Examples include the University's management information systems, internal or external research, surveys or consultation exercises. The Equality Commission has produced a guide to [signpost to S75 data](#). Anecdotal evidence, such as feedback from service users may also be used.

Religious Belief

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2025, our staff profile was 52.6% Catholic and 47.4% Protestant. Compared with 6 February 2020, this indicates a 2.9% increase in Catholic staff.

In the Academic Year (AY) 2024 to 2025, 64.5% of our students identified as Christian and 12.2% identified as having 'No Religion'. Compared with AY 2019 to 2020, this indicates an 9.4% decrease in students who identified as Christian and a 0.5% 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 2025, our staff profile was 92.3% White and 7.7% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME). This indicates a 2.1% increase in BME staff compared with 2020.

In AY 2024 - 2025, 9.8% of students identified as BME. This indicates a 4.3% increase in BME students compared with AY 2019 to 2020.

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 2025, 30.1% of our staff were in the 46-55 age band and 26.1% of staff were in the 36-45 age band. 25.4% of staff were aged '56 and above', which represents a 3.2% increase compared to 2020.

In AY 2024 to 2025, the majority of students (61.2%) were aged '21 and under 40'. This figure is almost identical to the percentage of students within this age band during the AY 2019 to 2020 (61.5%). The number of students within the '18 and under 21' category has grown 1.7% compared to 2020, sitting now at 29%.

Marital Status

The University's EO data were reviewed. In February 2025, 54.5% of staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership', a decrease of 5.5% compared to 2020.

In AY 2024 to 2025, 71.8% of students were 'Single', a 4.4% decrease compared with AY 2019 to 2020.

Sexual Orientation

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2025, 74.2% of staff were 'Heterosexual'; 4.4% were 'Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB)' and 21.4% were 'Not Known'. This indicates a 2.8% increase in LGB staff compared with 2020.

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 2025, 58.4% of staff were 'Female'. This indicates a 2% increase in female staff compared with 2020.

In AY 2024 to 2025, 59.3% of students were 'Female', a 1.6% increase compared with AY 2019 to 2020.

Disability

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2025, 6.2% of staff declared a disability, an increase of 1.1% compared with 2020.

In AY 2024 to 2025, 7.9% of students declared a disability, a decrease of 3.1% compared with AY 2019 to 2020.

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 2025, 43.5% of staff had dependants. This indicates a decrease of 2.7% compared with 2020.

In AY 2024 to 2025, 10.8% of students declared they had dependants, a decrease of 3.9% compared to AY 2019 to 2020.

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

None Identified

Marital Status

None Identified

Sexual Orientation

None Identified

Men and Women generally

None Identified

Disability

None Identified

Dependants

None Identified

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 were consulted in the development of this policy:

- Senior Leadership Team
- Resources Committee

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**

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it is technical in nature.

What is the level of impact?

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it is technical in nature.

Level of impact

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it is technical in nature.

Level of impact

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it is technical in nature.

Level of impact

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it is technical in nature.

Level of impact

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on Sexual Orientation

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it is technical in nature.

Level of impact

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on Men and Women generally

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it is technical in nature.

Level of impact

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on Disability

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it is technical in nature.

Level of impact

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on Dependants

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it is technical in nature.

Level of impact

None

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

Religious Belief

No, the policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Political Opinion

No, the policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Racial Group

No, the policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Age

No, the policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Marital Status

No, the policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Sexual Orientation

No, the policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Men and Women generally

No, the policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Disability

No, the policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Dependants

No, the policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

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**

The policy is unlikely to impact on good relations for this group, as it is technical in nature.

Level of impact
None

Political Opinion

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on good relations for this group, as it is technical in nature.

Level of impact
None

Racial Group

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on good relations for this group, as it is technical in nature.

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, the policy has no relevance to good relations; it is technical in nature.

Political Opinion

No, the policy has no relevance to good relations; it is technical in nature.

Racial Group

No, the policy has no relevance to good relations; it is technical in nature.

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).

No

Please specify the relevant Section 75 categories concerned below.
Provide details of the policy impact and data which describes the policy impact.

The policy has no relevance to equality and good relations as it is technical in nature.

Disability Duties

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

No, the policy does not encourage disabled people to participate in University life; it is technical in nature.

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

No, the policy does not provide an opportunity to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; it is technical in nature.

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.

The likely impact is **none** in respect of all of equality of opportunity or good relations categories.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on what constitutes a Direct Award Contract (DAC), what must be considered before one is awarded and the consequences of doing so. It also outlines the process for approving DACs, in line with the Delegated Authority Framework (section 4.29) and must be read in conjunction with the University's Procurement Policy.

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

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.

Not applicable.

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.

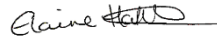
Note: The Total Rating Score will be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the University in timetabling. Details of the University's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable will be included in its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

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

Not applicable.

Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Elaine Hartin



Position or Job Title: Chief Strategy and Finance Officer

Date screened: 27 March 2026

Approved by:



Position or Job Title: Chief People Officer

Date approved: 27 March 2026

Review

This policy is due for review (in terms of its impact on equality of opportunity and good relations) by the policy owner on: 27 March 2028