



Equality Impact Assessment on Ulster University's Relocation of the School of Health Sciences

FINAL REPORT

February 2021

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1. Executive Summary

This report presents the results of an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) which was undertaken by Ulster University to assess the impact of the changes outlined within the University's linked Consultation Document – '*A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences*'.

The decision to move to an EQIA followed feedback received from consultees on the initial decision to 'screen out' the 'policy' from a full EQIA. Following the feedback and reflecting the significance of the decision and the relatively unique approach to optionality of location, Ulster University established an EQIA Working Group in February 2020 to oversee the exercise.

The EQIA Working Group prepared an EQIA Consultation Report Document, and an associated pro forma questionnaire based around a series of questions pertinent to the EQIA. These were published on 1st September 2020, and the consultees listed on Ulster University's consultee list were notified. Consultees were asked to complete the response pro forma by 24th November 2020 – this being the end of the twelve week consultation window.

In addition to the impacts, mitigations and alternative policies documented in the EQIA Consultation Document, consultees suggested additional impacts, mitigations, and alternative policies. In making its decision, the SLT were tasked with giving consideration to inputs that informed the creation of the EQIA Consultation Document, the EQIA Consultation Document itself, and the detail of each consultee response. Steps were taken to ensure appropriate regard was given to all of these matters, and to the inputs and outputs from the linked process '*A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences*'.

Ulster University (UU) would like to record its thanks to all who contributed to this EQIA process, recognising of course the unique circumstances and pressures that we all face ourselves in during the pandemic. UU would like to acknowledge the inputs of:

- the full range of stakeholders who have provided perspective over the last number of years as the relocation of the School has been considered;
- the colleagues from the School, other UU departments, the trade unions, and the students' union who joined and played an active part in the activity of the EQIA working group (overseeing steps 1-4 of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI)'s seven step guidance for the undertaking of an EQIA); *and*
- the consultees who took the time to complete responses to the EQIA consultation.

Further copies of this report are available on the University's website at www.ulster.ac.uk/peopleandculture/employee-benefits/equality-diversity/equality-scheme/completed-equality-impact-assessments

This document can also be made available on request, in alternative formats and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.

If you require the report in an alternative format, or have any queries about this document, contact Cara McShane on 028 7012 4871 or by email c.mcshane@ulster.ac.uk.

2. Introduction

I. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland (NI) Act 1998

Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 requires that Ulster University (designated by the Secretary of State as a public authority for the purposes of Section 75), when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

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

Without prejudice to its obligations above, a public authority must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group.

The University sets out in its Equality Scheme how it proposes to fulfil its statutory duties under Section 75.

II. The Relocation of the School of Health Sciences

With the decision made to relocate the University away from the Jordanstown campus, a decision was required on the future optimum location(s) of the School of Health Sciences. In the document, *'A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences'* three options were set out for the future provision of undergraduate courses – the campuses at Belfast, Coleraine or Magee. In each option it was expected that postgraduate provision would be located in Belfast.

An 'Equality Screening' exercise was undertaken as part of the work to develop the options for the future location of the School. In undertaking this exercise, impacts were identified in relation to some of the Section 75 characteristics, but it was considered that these could be mitigated by a series of actions and activities.

A Consultation process was commenced in February 2020 in relation to *'A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences'* and the linked Equality Screening documentation. In line with the 'Screening Flowchart' as set out in Appendix 1 of the Guide to Statutory Duties (Procedure for Conduct of Equality Impact Assessments), the University 'monitored' feedback received from consultees. A decision was made in line with the 'Screening Flowchart' to re-consider the screening decision, and as a consequence of this, the decision was made to amend four of the Section 75 categories so that they were classified as 'Major' rather than 'Minor' in terms of the potential to impact on equality of opportunity. They were *Age; Men and Women Generally; Disability; and Dependents*. On that basis, the policy was screened in for an EQIA thereby enabling an in-depth analysis of a 'policy' to

determine the extent of the impact on equality of opportunity for the nine equality categories. The concurrent consultation was paused until such time as an EQIA Consultation Document was prepared and both consultation processes could commence together.

III. The EQIA Working Group

In line with the University's Equality Scheme, an EQIA Working Group, consisting of colleagues with relevant professional experience and interest was established in March 2020 to conduct the EQIA. The EQIA Working Group met thirteen times between April and September 2020, and undertook the activity required in Steps 1-4 of the ECNI's Guidance. The Working Group was chaired by Brian McAuley, Director of Faculty Operations (Faculty of Life and Health Sciences) and was made up of representatives from the Trade Unions, the School of Health Sciences, the Students' Union and the People and Culture Directorate.

IV. The EQIA 'Final Report'

Step 6 of the ECNI's Guidance requires that once a decision has been made on the 'policy', a report is prepared and published. This report therefore duly outlines the results and outcomes of the Equality Impact Assessment.

3. The EQIA Process: Steps 1 to 5

1. Defining the Aims of the Policy

The EQIA Working Group reviewed, amended, and finalised the aims of ‘the Policy’ – representing **Step 1** of the ECNI’s guidance on conducting an EQIA. An abridged version of the ‘Policy Aims’ is contained below, reflecting the specific and unique context of the exercise. The full detail of the ‘Policy Aims’ is contained within Section 7 of the EQIA Consultation Document.

In 2021 Ulster University will open a new innovative, transformative and vibrant campus in Belfast city centre. Once this new campus is opened the Jordanstown campus will – with the exception of a small number of specialist areas remaining on site – be closed down. This represents a significant change for current and future students, for our staff, and for other key stakeholders. This change provides the opportunity for the University to consider how best to continue to impact as a regional University across Northern Ireland, and how to consolidate and locate its curricular offerings across the three campus locations of Belfast, Coleraine and Magee.

In the document ‘A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences’, the University sets out three location strategies for the school. In each of the three options, it is envisaged that postgraduate provision will be located on the Belfast campus. Undergraduate provision will either be based on the Belfast, Coleraine or Magee campuses. The University sets out in ‘A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences’ that whilst there are three options for undergraduate provision, Magee is the preferred location. Each campus provides the opportunity for greater alignment of expertise and experience across disciplines within different Schools.

The University was seeking to determine the future optimum base(s) for the School to:

- Enable the School to continue to sustain and build on its long track record of excellence;
- Continue to make an impact in delivering healthy communities in Northern Ireland, drawing on the University’s exceptional breadth and depth of experience;
- Sustain the School’s strong history of interdisciplinary teaching, supporting Allied Health Providers (AHPs) and Healthcare Scientists in sharing their skills and creating opportunities for AHP students to share elements of education with student nurses and doctors, and also with other AHPs; *and*
- collaborate with broader multi-professional health workforces operating in flexible teams working across primary care and local hospitals – a focus on change as set out in ‘*Closing the gap: key areas for action on the health and care workforce*¹’ and ‘*AHPs into Action*.’²

¹ The Health Foundation / The King’s Fund / Nuffield Trust - March 2019

² NHS England - January 2017

The core focus therefore was to draw on Ulster University's exceptional breadth of educational and research experience, and campus locations in relation to the course provision of the School of Health Sciences.

II. Consideration of Data and Research

Step 2 of the ECNI's seven steps requires consideration of qualitative and quantitative data and research. In this regard, the EQIA Working Group considered the following pertinent data sets, documents, inputs, and reports:

- Comments and feedback from work undertaken by the **School of Health Sciences EQIA Working Group** across fourteen meetings held between April and August 2020;
- **The University's Equal Opportunity (EO) Monitoring Databases:**
In addition to standardised EO monitoring, additional EO data relating to academic, technical and administrative staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students was commissioned for the purposes of this EQIA;
- **Equal Opportunity Profile quantitative data:**
Data was considered in relation to key stakeholders impacted by the relocation of the School;
- **Results of Stakeholder Engagement Staff Survey undertaken in October 2019 – qualitative and quantitative:**
During internal consultation between 27 September and 16 October 2019 on the relocation of the School of Health Sciences, all staff within the School were invited to participate in a 'Stakeholder Engagement Staff Survey';
- **Outputs from wider Stakeholder Engagement Process August – December 2019** covering a total of 1,110 individual contributions. Two key documents were utilised by the EQIA Working Group:
 - School of Health Sciences Stakeholder Engagement – Executive Summary Report, *and*
 - Instant Report from engagement session held on Jordanstown Campus on 18th October 2019;
- **Post Consultation Feedback document on the Relocation of the School of Health Sciences January 2018** covering 11 responses from staff in the School, 6 from staff in other parts of the University, and 2 from other organisations.
- **Ulster University's Equality Scheme** – as published in 2017.

In the EQIA Consultation Document, pertinent qualitative and quantitative data from the sources outlined above was presented based on each of the Section 75 Categories in turn.

III. Consideration of Impacts

Step 3 of the ECNI’s seven steps requires an assessment of impacts. In preparing the Impact section of the EQIA Consultation Document, the EQIA Working Group structured the content based on each of the Section 75 Categories in turn and giving consideration to intersectionality.

The full consideration of impacts is contained within the EQIA Consultation Document, however an abridged list of some of the impacts identified with the four Section 75 categories where it was considered that the impact could be ‘Major’ are provided below:

Section 75 Category	Impact
Men and Women Generally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of School staff are female - Women typically more likely to have caring responsibilities and may require flexible working and may be unable to commute long distances – consideration also of time, cost and wellbeing; • Impact on career progression and willingness to remain employed at UU given significantly longer commutes; • Time, cost, and practical and safety implications of studying at one campus and having a placement closer to another campus; • Cost and accessibility of greater car travelling and associated parking; • Data in respect young women being more likely to attend university than men; • Impact on users of the podiatry clinic if the clinic were moved to Coleraine or Magee.
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient volume of, and position / location of, disabled spaced – impact on wellbeing and health of disabled colleagues; • Insufficient frequency of, and position / location of public transport provision at all three campuses; • Dispersed and inaccessible locations at the older campuses in Coleraine and Magee – with restricted and often impractical or non-traversable access. Impact on staff health and wellbeing, and an inconsistent experience for disabled staff / students; • Overall impact on mental health, wider health, and wellbeing; • A disempowering environment for staff / students; • Specific impact on podiatry clinic users – many of whom have long term conditions and would not be able to access a service located in Coleraine or Magee.

Dependents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts that have been mentioned in previous Section 75 categories such as limited transport and infrastructure links; and time and cost to travel; and additional cost for caring support based on longer commutes; • Impacts on the ‘sandwich generation’ with responsibility for both children and for older relatives – enhance stress and issues of wellbeing; • Impact on a parent or carer’s ability to be flexible where sudden circumstances arise that may require them to get back home urgently.
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It might be reasonably expected that older staff and students are more likely to have caring responsibilities which might impact on their ability to commute longer distances than are currently the case; • It might be reasonably expected that older staff and students may be more likely to be disabled / have a long-term health condition, and depending on the condition or disability, it is feasible that it could be exacerbated by a commute which is longer than is currently the case; • The potential loss of more mature staff with significant experience who would potentially not choose to be relocated to Coleraine and Magee based on increased journey time and associated complexities in balancing work, childcare and social commitments.

IV. Consideration of Mitigations and Alternative Policies

Step 4 of the ECNI’s seven steps requires a consideration of how the impacts identified at Step 3 might be mitigated; and how alternative policies might better promote equality of opportunity. In preparing this section of the EQIA Consultation Document, the EQIA Working Group structured the possible mitigations based on a series of ‘themes’, referencing each theme back to relevant Section 75 Categories. The ‘themes’ (each of which had a subset or possible mitigations) were:

- Working Patterns and Approaches;
- Terms and Conditions;
- On-Campus Car Parking;
- Public Transport Infrastructure;
- Student Travel and Accommodation;
- Campus Accessibility;
- Childcare Facilities and Care Support Packages;
- Timetabling;
- Campus Induction;
- Tailored Peer Support;
- Widening Access; *and*
- Intersectionality.

In the EQIA Consultation Document, the University acknowledged that “...people – students and colleagues – do not neatly fit into one Section 75 category – no individual is the same. Therefore, pure statistical information does not, and cannot capture these unique circumstances and complexities. Where a combination of factors impacts a student or colleague, the University will consider specific impacts and mitigations on a case by case basis.”

V. Consultation Process

Step 5 of the process requires that the ‘Consultation Process is Undertaken.’ In accordance with its Equality Scheme and the requirements of Section 75, an EQIA Consultation Report and Questionnaire / Response Pro-forma were prepared and made available on 1st September 2020. The online proforma contained a series of specific questions which consultees were asked to respond to.

The following steps were undertaken in respect of the Consultation Process:

- all representatives of organisations on the University’s standard Section 75 consultee list were invited (via email) to participate in the consultation exercise (consultees were also invited to request a ‘virtual’ face-to-face meeting to present their views – no requests were received);
- the Consultation Documentation was posted on the University’s website in a number of separate locations, including at <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/peopleandculture/employee-benefits/equality-diversity/equality-scheme/consultation-exercises>;
- the report was made available by request in alternative formats (no requests were received);
- in the email contacting consultees to notify them of the process, an offer was made to consultees to request ‘virtual’ face-to-face meetings should they so choose (no requests were received); *and*
- An update mail was sent to the consultee list to remind them of the invitation to contribute two weeks before the consultation closed.

The launch of the EQIA coincided with the (re)launch of the linked *A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences*. The (re)launch of this consultation provided an opportunity to further reference the EQIA process:

- the section of the University’s website which contained this linked consultation also referenced, and provided a link to, the EQIA;
- communication in respect the consultations was made via the University’s Linked In channel and social media feeds; *and*
- a coordinated communications approach overseen by marketing and communications colleagues.

4. The Decision Making Process

Given the concurrent processes in respect of *A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences* and the *EQIA on the Relocation of the School of Health Sciences*, and the significant data available as inputs and outputs in both regards, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of the University established a small sub-group of the SLT to:

- consider in the round the inputs and the responses received to both consultations;
- to give appropriate regard to the wide range of inputs and outputs that needed to be considered as part of the decision-making process; *and*
- to prepare appropriate reports for the full SLT that would accompany the access to all inputs and outputs that the SLT would also receive.

The sub-group – which met eight times - consisted of members of the SLT in their capacity as decision makers in relation to the ‘policy’, as well as a number of advisors representing - for example - equality, estates services and faculty operations and administration.

In relation to the EQIA process, the sub-group were given access to and considered:

- I. Evidence that informed the work of the EQIA Working Group. Specifically:
 - The screening proforma completed on the policy prior to the decision to move to an EQIA;
 - Results of a staff survey undertaken in October 2019 in respect the School relocation – qualitative and quantitative data;
 - Outputs from a wider ‘Stakeholder Engagement Process’ in relation to this matter as undertaken between August and December 2019; *and*
 - A ‘Post Consultation Feedback’ document on the Relocation of the School of Health Sciences from an exercise undertaken in January 2018;
- II. The EQIA Consultation Document which - amongst other matters - sets out the impacts and mitigations identified by the EQIA working group; *and*
- III. The responses from consultees to the EQIA consultation.

In addition to the EQIA documentation, the sub-group was in receipt of inputs and outputs from the linked *A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences*.

At its eight meetings and in work undertaken between meetings, the sub-group considered and reviewed the range of materials provided.

The decision-making members of the sub-group prepared a report and PowerPoint document for the full SLT in relation to *A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences*. This report also referenced pertinent data and information in relation to impacts and mitigations from the EQIA process, ensuring that equality matters were factored into more than just the EQIA documents presented to the SLT as part of their decision-making process.

In addition, documentation was prepared in relation to the Equality Impact Assessment process, inputs and outputs for the full SLT.

At a meeting prior to the meeting where they would meet to seek to make a decision, the SLT were informed of the requirements on them as decision-makers in line with the ECNI's guidance.

In advance of the meeting of the full SLT as the decision-makers to consider the matter, the SLT were given access to and asked to consider, the full range of documents referred to on the previous page – lettered A-C.

At a meeting of the SLT, in their capacity as the decision-makers in this regard, held on 27th January 2021, representatives from the Faculty of Life and Health Sciences presented the documentation in relation to *A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences*. The advisors from the sub-group also attended the first part of this meeting and this included the presentation of documentation in relation to the EQIA, and the provision of responses to questions as raised by members of the SLT. Advisors were then absented from the meeting to allow for the SLT to consider, discuss and reach their decision.

5. Consultee Response Rates

The twelve week EQIA consultation process ended on 24th November 2020. Note – the linked *A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences* closed two weeks after that date.

An online proforma with a series of specific questions was made available for respondents to provide feedback on the EQIA Consultation Document. Responses in this format were received as follows:

- Five colleagues from Ulster University submitted substantive responses i.e., responded to most / all of the questions;
- One anonymous responder submitted substantive responses i.e., responded to most / all of the questions;
- Two colleagues from Ulster University submitted short responses where answers were provided to one or two questions;
- One anonymous responder submitted a response solely to state locational preference;
- A small number of individuals commenced a response, typically entering just their name / email address – it is assumed that these were individuals who were curious to look through the questionnaire. As no responses were received to the substantive questions, these responses were discounted.

In addition to the responses received using the online questionnaire, three other responses were received in the following formats:

- A word document submission structured using the questions in the proforma referred to above;
- A pdf document which did not follow the questions posed in the proforma referred to above; *and*
- A submission from an Ulster colleague to both the EQIA consultation and the concurrent consultation on the Relocation of the School of Health Sciences.

Note – in the case of the first two documents referred to immediately above, the respondents also submitted specific and substantive responses to the process for ‘A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences.’ There was overlap between the submissions from the two consultees in their responses to the linked consultations – and in some cases, commentary provided in the EQIA consultation response was more pertinent for consideration in respect the linked consultation – in such scenarios, the team analysing the linked consultation considered those points in their analysis.

6. Consultee Response – Key Findings

I. *Additional Data, Needs or Issues*

Respondents to the consultation were asked to comment on any data, needs, or issues that were not identified in section 7 of the EQIA Consultation Document. For completeness, both the SLT sub-group and the full SLT were provided with the full detail of consultation responses. Consideration was given to those responses made by consultees in this regard, which can be broken down into three categorisations. The treatment of each response was based on the categorisation:

1. Matters which were not included within section 7 of the EQIA consultation – given that these matters were not referred to in the EQIA Consultation Document, they were specifically referenced in documentation prepared for the SLT sub-group and full SLT meeting;
2. Matters which were *already included* within section 7 of the EQIA Consultation Document but which were referenced again by consultees. These matters were *not* specifically referenced in documentation prepared for the SLT sub-group and full SLT meeting, but the SLT sub-group and full SLT membership were in receipt of these pieces of feedback by virtue of the full consultee response being provided to them;
3. Matters which may have an equality element but were considered to be more pertinent to the linked process on ‘*A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences.*’ In some instances, consultees responded to both Consultation Documents and made the same or similar points in both. These matters were referred to the team overseeing the analysis of the linked consultation. Note – again, the SLT sub-group and full SLT membership were in receipt of these pieces of feedback by virtue of the full consultee response being provided to them.

II. *Impacts*

In undertaking its work, the EQIA working group identified a range of impacts. The SLT sub-group and the full SLT meeting were directed to consider all impacts outlined in a) the Consultation Documentation as part of the decision-making process and b) to access and consider the full detail of the consultee responses – including the substantive responses received by the consultees that did not use the preferred online proforma.

In the documentation prepared for the SLT sub-group and the full SLT meeting, reference was made to the need to consider both the impacts as contained within the EQIA Consultation Document, as well as to the following ‘impacts’ as categorised based on the responses made as part of the consultation process:

Potential Impacts Raised in the EQIA Consultation that Relate to the EQIA

- a) Accessibility, Commuting, and Wellbeing
- b) ‘Impractical’ or ‘Inappropriate’ Mitigations which create additional impacts / issues
- c) Recommendations to Consider Additional Data in relation to additional impacts / issues

In relation to a) Accessibility, Commuting, and Wellbeing, the following key points were made by consultees:

- That for some staff, the move to Coleraine or Magee was not a viable option or choice – it was simply impossible;
- That impacts raised in the EQIA associated the impacts with one or some specific Section 75 categories, where their impact could be felt across more or all of the categories;
- That there would be an impact on married couples and those in relationships as a consequence of a longer commute;
- A need for greater specificity on the wider health and wellbeing impacts of a longer commute;
- Whether the University was appropriately considering its duty of care to staff and students with a disability and meetings its statutory obligations;
- The specific impact on widening access given the additional cost and commitment of travel and accommodation in more than one location; *and*
- The impact on existing staff and students with disabilities given that the consultation report is viewed as “...*just simply accept[ing]...the likelihood that staff (and students?) with a disability will not relocate...*”

In relation to b) ‘Impractical’ or ‘Inappropriate’ Mitigations which were seen as creating additional impacts or issues, the following key points were made by consultees:

- The disconnect between considering innovative / new approaches to timetabling with the reality of current 9-5 course operations; and the impacts that could be created by such changes;
- The impact of out-of-hours and extended commuting times to accommodate innovative / new approaches to timetabling;
- The need to source and fund additional staff to make innovative / new approaches to timetabling work;
- The need to allow flexible / remote working to make innovative / new approaches to course structure and timetabling work – and the impact on the structure of the course and students;
- Suggested childcare solutions that could result in the impact of a child spending longer in car seats to travel to new places of childcare / education; and the impact on the child of a forced move to a new place of childcare / education;
- The impact on existing staff and students at Magee if the car parking mitigations suggested for staff and students travelling longer distance were introduced – for example creation of a ‘them and us’ scenario; *and*
- The perception that retirement was being suggested as a mitigation. *Nb the reference to retirement in the Consultation Document was “For those colleagues considering their retirement options or approaching that stage, consideration will be given to what can reasonably be accommodated in individual circumstances.”*

In relation to c) Recommendations to Consider Additional Data in relation to additional impacts / issues, the following key points were made by consultees:

- The EQIA refers to the impact of travel time generally but it has been suggested that **specific** and actual detail for staff and students should be considered as part of the process;
- An in-depth review of student placement allocation in each course;
- Data in relation to declared disabilities and associated preference for locations;
- Specific and actual statistics on use of personal cars and public transport;
- Consideration of proportional Multiple Deprivation Measures in the north west and lack of access at present, and to address these issues to enhance provision in the region;
- Data in relation more widely to community impacts; *and*
- Data in respect to the responses of staff with a declare disability – “...*out of the 12 staff recorded as having declared a disability not one indicated that they would be willing to relocate to Magee campus.*”

Potential Impacts Raised as part of the EQIA consultation that *may* have equality implications but are considered to be pertinent to the wider consultation on the future location of the School

- a) Business Impact
- b) Staff Impact
- c) Student Placement Impact
- d) Healthcare Impact
- e) Other Impacts
- f) Recommendations to Consider Additional Data

In each of these matters, detailed and specific qualitative and quantitative information as made by consultees was included within the documentation presented to the SLT sub-group and full meeting of the SLT.

Some of the specific matters raised in this regard are listed below (structured alongside the a) to f) categorisation used above). *Nb on occasion a similar point was made in more than one category – such points are mentioned once below.*

In relation to a) Business Impact, the following key points were made by consultees:

- Prospective students’ preference for Belfast;
- The viability of UU’s courses should QUB envisage an opportunity in Belfast;
- The loss of experience and expertise should existing colleagues choose not to relocate / move to QUB should they enter the ‘market’;
- The ability of the university to replace colleagues with new hires with similar experience and expertise; and in a timely manner;
- The possibility of cancelled or postponed courses should there be a shortfall in staff numbers;
- Reputational impact of the matters considered above;

- The impact on the Magee campus should the School not relocate there;
- A reference to perspective and comments that the consultee attributed to the DoH – for example in relation to maintaining courses in Belfast which align with cancer care at the Belfast City Hospital;
- A perception that Magee would not have the capacity to house the entire school, and that the benefits of a move to Magee were based on “...a *small financial saving...*”; *and*
- The possibility of QUB moving in to satisfy existing user of the Jordanstown podiatry clinic.

In relation to b) Staff Impact, the following key points were made by consultees:

- The negative impact of regular remote teaching for staff and students;
- Impact on capacity to undertake research / teaching / supervision from a two-location strategy; *and*
- Impact on research culture from more and longer commuting.

In relation to c) Student / Student Placement Impact, the following key points were made by consultees:

- The accessibility of physiotherapy placements being compromised by a non-Belfast base;
- The ability of Trusts to fulfil all placements in the pandemic, with private options / solutions being used in Belfast which were not seen as feasible in Coleraine or Magee; *and*
- The opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity for those from more deprived areas – specific opportunity suggested in this regard in and around Magee.

In relation to d) Healthcare Impact, the following key points were made by consultees:

- Whether another School which does not as specifically impact on Healthcare in Northern Ireland would be better suited for a move;
- More evidence needing to be provided in respect interprofessional learning opportunities;
- Reference to comments that the consultee attributed to the DoH in respect of the benefits from Undergraduate and Postgraduate provision being based in the same space; *and*
- Consideration of social and economic benefits in regions.

In relation to e) Other Impacts, the following key points were made by consultees:

- The issue of impact on carbon footprint;
- A perception that the consultation process has been created to retrofit a solution that has already been made; *and*

- A perception that with Covid-19 now is not the time to be consulting on and making such a move.

In relation to f) Additional Data, consultees suggested that the following be considered as part of the process:

- Risk assessments;
- The impact on staff and students from remote teaching; and from a split-campus location;
- The ability of Coleraine or Magee to accommodate a school of this size;
- How to measure current and therefore baseline the 'status quo' of staff and student experience;
- A rural impact assessment;
- Impact on rural service; *and*
- The impact of BREXIT.

In addition to categorisation as set out above in relation to 'impacts', a small number of comments were made by consultees in respect the way that the EQIA process was undertaken as well as the language that was used.

III. Mitigation and Alternative Policies

The process to develop the EQIA Consultation identified a series of mitigations / alternative policies which might address identified impacts based on the relocation of the School. Reflecting the inter-sectionality of many of the mitigants, the EQIA Working Group created a 'categorisation' approach which was the basis of the mitigants included within the EQIA Consultation Document:

- Working Patterns and Approaches;
- Terms and Conditions;
- On-campus Car Parking;
- Public Transport Infrastructure;
- Student Travel and Accommodation;
- Campus Accessibility;
- Childcare Facilities and Care Support Packages;
- Timetabling;
- Campus Induction;
- Tailored Peer Support; *and*
- Widening Access.

Consultees identified a small number of additional mitigants which were:

- The offer of specific financial support for staff and overnight accommodation should staff have to travel to Magee;
- The provision of leisure facilities in Coleraine or Magee for students and staff;
- The perceived benefits that arise from a Coleraine move – stated as “...shorter commute to and from Belfast... more abundant outdoor pursuits, flexible learning spaces and synergies with existing programmes...allow[ing] the AHPs to keep their own individual identity...”; *and*

- That basing all activity at Magee would mitigate the “...wider issues of health inequalities, promoting social and economic well-being...[the] potential to improve diversity and good relations as Derry City and Strabane District Council area is less politically and culturally diverse than Belfast...”

In relation to ‘alternative policies’, there was very limited feedback from consultees. The SLT sub-group and full SLT were informed of the following suggestions:

- Splitting the School;
- Basing both Undergraduate and Postgraduate provision at Magee; *and*
- Basing everything in Belfast and looking at what other Schools could be based in Coleraine and or Magee.

IV. School Location

In the EQIA Consultation exercise, respondents were asked to provide their perspective on the following:

There are three options proposed for the relocation of the School of Health Sciences. Which do you believe has the potential to least adversely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations?

Responses to this question were received as follows:

No.	Type
8	Respondents using the University’s EQIA proforma stated - All (postgraduate and undergraduate) provision to be based at the Belfast campus
1	Respondent using the University’s EQIA proforma stated - Postgraduate provision to be based at the Belfast campus, undergraduate provision to be based at the Coleraine campus
1	Respondent selected an option that was not listed as one of the three options - All (postgraduate and undergraduate) provision to be based at the Magee campus.
1	Response as follows “...There is a new campus there in the city centre. It seems perverse and extraordinary not to use it for Health Sciences, and instead to send them [staff and students] far away where a majority of those involved do not want to go...”
11	Total

7. The Decision

It is recognised that the presentation of three options and the particular needs and perspectives of a range of stakeholders results in a diverse range of opinions. As the ECNI acknowledge in their guidance on EQIAs, "...[a] *highly structured approach to decision-making may not be possible, given the types of data, both quantitative and qualitative, which will be drawn upon.*"

The SLT in making their decision did so on the basis of giving due consideration to a range of data, reflecting a range of options presented; the ambition and aims for the relocation; impacts on staff and students (current and future); healthcare considerations; business and financial matters; and of course, the matters raised from an equality perspective. To ensure that matters relating to equality were given appropriate focus, the University:

- Established a sub-group of the SLT to give full consideration to all matters;
- Provided the full SLT with information relating to their responsibilities in regards the role of the 'decision-maker' in line with ECNI guidance documentation;
- Provided the full SLT with detailed documentation in relation to the EQIA, and the full detail of all EQIA consultation responses;
- Provided the full detail of the EQIA consultation responses to the SLT well in advance of the meeting at which the SLT would seek to make its decision;
- Structured and referenced key equality matters and themes in the report prepared by the SLT sub-group in relation to the linked '*A Consultation on the Location of the School of Health Sciences*'; and
- Ensured separate agenda items and discussion points at the meeting at which the SLT would seek to make its decision (nb agenda items and discussion relating to equality at both the portion of the meeting at which the advisors were present, and the portion of the meeting attended just by the SLT in their capacity as the 'decision-makers'.')

Having considered the full range of information available to them as inputs and outputs from the two concurrent consultation processes, the SLT as the decision makers reached the conclusion that ***the School of Health Sciences should be relocated to Magee for Undergraduate provision and Belfast for Postgraduate provision.***

The SLT agreed to establish an overarching implementation board, appropriately resourced to plan for and oversee the implementation of the decision, and to give ongoing focus to equality matters. The board will be tasked with consideration of all pertinent data, identified impacts and mitigations as have been hitherto identified, and with the consideration of additional data, impacts and mitigations as are identified through the implementation process. Given the specificity of the impact on individual members of staff, the board will be responsible for considering appropriate planning and steps in relation to both the impact on individuals as well as collective impacts. The EQIA Consultation Document had specifically referred to the criticality of working with impacted individuals to best understand and seek personally relevant mitigations - and this important focus was recognised by the SLT and expressed as

a key part of the work overseen by the board responsible for implementation of the relocation.

The SLT acknowledged that whilst there was feedback around the feasibility of some of the suggested mitigations, that all mitigations suggested by both the EQIA Consultation Document and consultees will be given through consideration as part of the work of the board. No mitigations identified by either the EQIA working group and as documented in the EQIA consultation, nor by consultees were ruled out³. The implementation board will be established as soon as is practical and contain the perspective, experience and expertise of a wide range of colleagues across the University.

The decision was considered and endorsed by the Council of the University at a meeting on the 1st of February 2021.

8. Step 7 of the EQIA process

The publication of this EQIA Final Decision Report represents the conclusion of Step 6 of the seven steps as set out by the ECNI in relation to an EQIA.

Step 7 requires that a ‘public authority’ monitors for adverse impact and publishes the results of the monitoring. In line with commitments in its Equality Scheme, Ulster University will monitor the implementation of the relocation of the school in respect both adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity, and to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity in line with ECNI guidance.

In addition to the ongoing work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion section to collect, collate and analyse equality data, EQIA monitoring data will be formally reviewed annually and such review will be shared with the Council of the University, the ENCI, made available to all consultees, and published on the University’s website.

As was stated in the EQIA Consultation Document, in line with the Equality Commission’s guidance and the University’s commitment to continuously improve, the University is committed to monitoring for any future adverse impacts in relation to the relocation of the School. At both the time of undertaking the EQIA and in preparing this EQIA Final Report, the Covid-19 pandemic continued to impact on all aspects of life. As at February 2021, whilst trends and statistics are available, the full picture in terms of definitive impact on specific groups of individuals is still emerging. In addition, there is still significant work to be done to understand the medium and longer term impacts from a health and societal perspective. In this context, monitoring the ongoing impacts in relation to the move of the School of Health Sciences will receive appropriate focus.

³ With the exception of the small number of mitigations which were suggested by consultees as arising should the location chosen have been different to the decision to base Undergraduate provision at the Magee campus and Postgraduate provision at the Belfast campus.