

Policy Title: Decision to cease theatre operations at the Riverside Theatre from 31 July 2025

Decision: Screen out for EQIA.

Contact: Gareth Kennedy, Interim Director of Campus Life

Date of Completion: 4 July 2025

Part 1: Policy Scoping

Information about the policy

Name of the Policy

Decision to cease theatre operations at the Riverside Theatre, Coleraine campus from 31 July 2025.

Is this an existing, revised, or new policy?

This is a new policy/decision. The Riverside Theatre has been in operation for 48 years and the University has decided to cease theatre operation at the Theatre from 31 July 2025.

What is it trying to achieve?

Several reviews of the Theatre have been completed which have identified that the building is nearing its end of life and requires a £23m rebuild.

The Riverside Theatre has been under review for some time.

The University remains committed to its core purpose: to deliver high-quality teaching and impactful research across our multiple campuses; and in the face of unprecedented financial challenges, with the funding model in Northern Ireland currently acknowledged as unsustainable, it is more important than ever that we focus our resources on core academic activities.

The University has supported and delivered the Riverside Theatre as a civic asset for fifty years, the building itself has now come to the end of its life and requires significant capital investment to remain in use. This is estimated at £745,000 in the immediate term alone and is in addition to the annual running costs of £495,000.

In March, the University wrote to the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to ascertain the Council's interest in assuming the overall running of the Theatre on a full repairs and insurance (FRI) leaseholder basis, but this option has not been accepted by the Council at this time.

Ulster University remains open to working with local partners and stakeholders to explore new ways to support arts and culture in the region, even as we navigate these constrained times.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the policy?

No. The decision applies to all section 75 categories equally.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is the primary forum in the University for considering strategic and operational matters at a senior level. The SLT made this decision in May 2025. The University Provost is implementing the decision and the Interim Director of Campus Life is overseeing the process.

Who owns and implements the policy?

The Provost owns the policy and its implemented by Interim Director of Campus Life

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: funding for renovations, rebuild of Theatre and ongoing operational costs provided by external source. The opportunity of taking on the operations of the theatre has been provided to Causeway Coast and Glens Council who haven't made a decision on this to date.

Main stakeholders affected

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

- Staff
- Students – as audience
- Other public sector organisations, that is, Causeway Coast and Glens Council
- Voluntary sector organisations, that is, Ballywillian Drama Group
- Community organisations, that is, Youth Theatre Group
- Members of the public - as audience.

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they and who owns them?

Policy: Health and Safety Policy

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Organisational Structure Change Policy?

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Redundancy Policy

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Coleraine Master Plan

Policy owner: Chief Strategy and Finance Officer

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

Policy owner: Vice Chancellor

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.

The University has equality data on staff whose posts may be affected due to closure. This relates to five staff working in the Theatre and therefore in order to protect anonymity, equal opportunities data for these staff will not be included.

No data are available in regard to the equal opportunities profile of audience members.

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. Certain representative community groups have made use of the Theatre, however other venues are available locally.

Political Opinion

None identified. Certain representative community groups have made use of the Theatre, however other venues are available locally.

Racial Group

None identified. Certain representative community groups have made use of the Theatre, however other venues are available locally.

Age

None identified. Certain representative community groups have made use of the Theatre, however other venues are available locally.

Marital Status

None identified. Certain representative community groups have made use of the Theatre, however other venues are available locally.

Sexual Orientation

None identified. Certain representative community groups have made use of the Theatre, however other venues are available locally.

Men and Women generally

None identified. Certain representative community groups have made use of the Theatre, however other venues are available locally.

Disability

None identified. Certain representative community groups have made use of the Theatre, however other venues are available locally.

Dependants

None identified. Certain representative community groups have made use of the Theatre, however other venues are available locally.

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 were consulted as part of the Festival Events Ireland International Ltd review:

- Causeway Coast and Glens Council
- Senior Leadership Team
- Internal University Faculties and Directorates
- Local MLAs and Councillors
- National Arts and Cultural Organisations
- Arts Council NI

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 for this group. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

What is the level of impact?

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality for this group. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Level of impact

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality for this group. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Level of impact

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality for this group. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Level of impact

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality for this group. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Level of impact

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality for this group. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Level of impact

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality for this group. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Level of impact

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality for this group. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Level of impact

None

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality for this group. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

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. It is recognised that the Theatre has reached the end of its life and that major investment (both capital and

recurrent) would be required to replace it. No viable alternative proposal to underwrite the financial cost has been put forward to reverse this decision.

Political Opinion

No. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity. It is recognised that the Theatre has reached the end of its life and that major investment (both capital and recurrent) would be required to replace it. No viable alternative proposal to underwrite the financial cost has been put forward to reverse this decision.

Racial Group

No. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity. It is recognised that the Theatre has reached the end of its life and that major investment (both capital and recurrent) would be required to replace it. No viable alternative proposal to underwrite the financial cost has been put forward to reverse this decision.

Age

No. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity. It is recognised that the Theatre has reached the end of its life and that major investment (both capital and recurrent) would be required to replace it. No viable alternative proposal to underwrite the financial cost has been put forward to reverse this decision.

Marital Status

No. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity. It is recognised that the Theatre has reached the end of its life and that major investment (both capital and recurrent) would be required to replace it. No viable alternative proposal to underwrite the financial cost has been put forward to reverse this decision.

Sexual Orientation

No. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity. It is recognised that the Theatre has reached the end of its life and that major investment (both capital and recurrent) would be required to replace it. No viable alternative proposal to underwrite the financial cost has been put forward to reverse this decision.

Men and Women generally

No. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity. It is recognised that the Theatre has reached the end of its life and that major investment (both capital and recurrent) would be required to replace it. No viable alternative proposal to underwrite the financial cost has been put forward to reverse this decision.

Disability

No. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity. It is recognised that the Theatre has reached the end of its life and that major investment (both capital and recurrent) would be required to replace it. No viable alternative proposal to underwrite the financial cost has been put forward to reverse this decision.

Dependants

No. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity. It is recognised that the Theatre has reached the end of its life and that major investment (both capital and recurrent) would be required to replace it. No viable alternative proposal to underwrite the financial cost has been put forward to reverse this decision.

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 between people of different beliefs. The policy has no relevance to good relations.

Level of impact

None

Political Opinion

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different political opinions. The policy has no relevance to good relations.

Level of impact

None

Racial Group

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

The policy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different racial groups. The policy has no relevance 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, the policy has no relevance to good relations.

Political Opinion

No, the policy has no relevance to good relations.

Racial Group

No, the policy has no relevance 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).

No. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity.

Disability Duties

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

No. The decision to cease theatre operations has been taken as the building is ageing and requires a significant financial investment if it is to remain health and safety compliant. The funding required for such an investment is not available, due to unprecedented financial pressures on the Higher Education sector.

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

No. The decision to close the Theatre has been taken as the building is ageing and requires a significant financial investment if it is to remain health and safety compliant. The funding required for such an investment is not available, due to unprecedented financial pressures on the Higher Education sector.

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 decision to cease theatre operations has been taken as the building is ageing and requires a significant financial investment if it is to remain health and safety compliant. The funding required for such an investment is not available, due to unprecedented financial pressures on the Higher Education sector

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

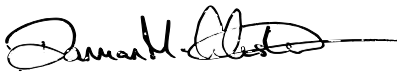
Note: The Total Rating Score will be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the University in timetabling. Details of the University's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable will be included in its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

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

Not applicable

Approval and authorisation

Screened by: 
Position or Job Title: University Provost
Date screened: Tuesday 1 July 2025

Approved by: 
Position or Job Title: Chief People Officer
Date approved: Friday 4 July 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: 4 July 2027