

Policy Title: Research Strategy 2023 – 2028: A Strategy for Research Excellence, Inclusion and Impact

Decision: Screen out

Contact: Natalie Dallat

Date of Completion: 10 August 2023

## Part 1: Policy Scoping

### Information about the policy

Name of the Policy

Research Strategy 2023 – 2028: A Strategy for Research Excellence, Inclusion and Impact

Is this an existing, revised, or new policy?

This is a new Strategy.

What is it trying to achieve?

The Strategy sets out to:

- empower our Academic and Research staff to undertake interdisciplinary Research in a supportive environment to produce internationally excellent and world-leading outputs and transformative impact.
- foster a positive Research culture where all Academic and Research staff are supported and enabled to develop and engage in meaningful Research careers.
- focus on our Research community, with interventions and support for Early Career Research, EDI and to foster a truly inclusive Research and innovation system that values and nurtures a wide range of careers and career paths.

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

Note: The Section 75 categories are:

- religious belief
- political opinion
- racial group
- age
- marital status
- sexual orientation
- sex
- disability
- dependants

Yes. Racial Group, Men and Women Generally. The Strategy offers a consistent approach to supporting all Academic and Research staff regardless of their Section 75 category.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Director of Research & Impact wrote the policy.

Who owns and implements the policy?

The Strategy is owned and implemented by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research).

## 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 from the Department for the Economy, availability of Research funding

Legislative: Changes to National legislation and policies relating to Research governance and ethics

Other: The Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2028 Guidance on Submission (still to be published)

## 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 ✓
- Trade Unions ✓

## Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they and who owns them?

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

Policy owner: The Vice-Chancellor

Policy: Equal Opportunities Policy  
Policy owner: Chief People 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.

**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 following evidence was considered in the development of this Strategy:

- Ulster University's Staff Equal Opportunities data 6 February 2023
- Ulster University's Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on the Research Excellence Framework 2021

## Religious Belief

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2023, our staff profile was 48.6% Protestant and 51.4% Catholic. Compared with 6 February 2018, this indicates a 4.1% increase in Catholic staff.

On 6 February 2023, our Academic staff profile was 41.9% Protestant, 58.1% Catholic and our Research Only staff profile was 39.8% Protestant, 60.2% Catholic.

---

## 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 2023, our staff profile was 93.5% White, 6.5% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME). This indicates a 1.8% increase in BME staff compared with 2018.

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

On 6 February 2023, our Academic staff profile was 91% White, 9% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and our Research Only profile was 74.5% White, 25.5% BME.

---

## **Age**

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2023, almost one third (32.1%) of our staff were in the '46-55' age band. 25.4% of staff were in the '36-45' age band and 26.7% of staff were aged '56 and above', which represents a 4.4% increase in '56 and above' compared to 2018 (22.3%).

On 6 February 2023, over one third of our Academic staff (36.45%) were in the '46-55' age band, 26.91% were in the '36-45' age band and 26.91% were aged '56 and above'. There were no Academic staff in the '16-25' age band.

On 6 February 2023 over one third (41.7%) of our Research Staff were in the '26-35' age band, with 31.9% in the '36-45' age band, 12.3% in the '46-55' age band, 9.8% in the '56 and above' age band and 4.4% in the '16-25' age band.

---

## **Marital Status**

The University's EO data were reviewed. In February 2023, 57.1% of staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership', a decrease of 6.7% compared to 2018 (63.8%).

In February 2023, 61.2% of Academic staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership' and 19.3% were 'Single'.

In February 2023, 29.4% of Research Staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership' and 40.2% were 'Single'.

---

## **Sexual Orientation**

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2023, 72.2% of staff were 'Heterosexual'; 3.6% were 'LGBT+' and 24.2% were 'Not Known'.

In February 2023, 69.3% of Academic staff were 'Heterosexual'; 3.8% were 'LGBT+' and 26.9% were 'Not Known'.

In February 2023, 63.2% of Research Only staff were Heterosexual; 4.4% were 'LGBT+' and 32.4% were 'Not Known'.

---

## **Men and Women generally**

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2023, 57.9% of staff were 'Female'. This indicates a 2.6% increase in female staff compared with 2018.

In February 2023, 51.8%% of Academic staff were 'Male' and 48.2% were 'Female'. In February 2023, 46.1% of Research Only staff were 'Male' and 53.9% 'Female'.

---

## **Disability**

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2023, 5.6% of staff declared a disability, an increase of 0.5% compared with 2018.

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 health problem or disability.

In February 2023, 5.3% of Academic staff and 4.4% of Research Staff declared a 'Disability or a long-term Health Condition'.

---

## **Dependants**

The University's EO data were reviewed. In February 2023, 44.1% of staff had dependants. This indicates a decrease of 4.3% compared with 2017.

In February 2023, 46.9% of Academic staff and 19.6% of Research staff had dependants.

---

## Needs, experiences 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?

### Religious Belief

None identified.

---

### Political Opinion

None identified.

---

### Racial Group

BME representation declines dramatically as you move up the levels of seniority particularly for those in Academic roles. Removing barriers can ensure BME Researcher careers are able to advance in the same way as their White colleagues.

---

### Age

None identified. However, Research support is provided targeted at different career stages. Anecdotally, ECRs may require additional support and development compared with more established Researchers but this only correlates indirectly with 'age'.

---

### Marital Status

None identified.

---

### Sexual Orientation

None identified.

---

### Men and Women generally

The Equality Impact Assessment on the Research Excellence Framework 2021 identified a lower selection rate for women compared to men. The priority in going



forward is to continue to progress the Athena Swan agenda so as to encourage and support the involvement and promotion of women in Research.

---

### **Disability**

Disabled staff may require reasonable adjustments to enable them to carry out Research and the Research potential of such staff will be developed by ensuring appropriate support mechanisms are in place.

---

### **Dependants**

See 'Men and women generally'. Removing barriers can ensure people with dependents can carry out Research in the same way as those without.

---

### **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.

A number of workshops were held with a wide range of stakeholders:

- Associate Deans for Research & Innovation
- Research Directors
- Heads and Members of Research Culture Groups
- Research & Innovation Management 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**

What is the level of impact?

None. The Research Strategy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The Strategy offers a consistent approach to supporting all Academic and Research staff regardless of their Section 75 category.

---

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

None. The Research Strategy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The Strategy offers a consistent approach to supporting all Academic and Research staff regardless of their Section 75 category.

---

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

Minor. The Research Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category. 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. The University will continue to progress the Race Equality Charter agenda, to improve the representation, progression and success of BME Researchers.

---

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

None. The Research Strategy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The Strategy offers a consistent approach to supporting all Academic and Research staff regardless of their Section 75 category.

---

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

None. The Research Strategy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The Strategy offers a consistent approach to supporting all Academic and Research staff regardless of their Section 75 category.

---

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

None. The Research Strategy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The Strategy offers a consistent approach to supporting all Academic and Research staff regardless of their Section 75 category.

---

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

Minor. The Research Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category. 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. The University will continue to progress the Athena Swan agenda to encourage and support the involvement and promotion of women in Research.

---

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

None. The Research Strategy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The Strategy offers a consistent approach to supporting all Academic and Research staff regardless of their Section 75 category.

---

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

None. The Research Strategy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this category. The Strategy offers a consistent approach to supporting all Academic and Research staff regardless of their Section 75 category.

---

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

**Religious Belief**

No, the Research Strategy aims to provide equality of opportunity in Research to all Section 75 categories.

---

**Political Opinion**

No, the Research Strategy aims to provide equality of opportunity in Research to all Section 75 categories.

---

**Racial Group**

No, the Research Strategy aims to provide equality of opportunity in Research to all Section 75 categories.

---

**Age**

No, the Research Strategy aims to provide equality of opportunity in research to all Section 75 categories.

---

**Marital Status**

No, the Research Strategy aims to provide equality of opportunity in Research to all Section 75 categories.

---

**Sexual Orientation**

No, the Research Strategy aims to provide equality of opportunity in Research to all Section 75 categories.

---

**Men and Women generally**

No, the Research Strategy aims to provide equality of opportunity in Research to all Section 75 categories.

---

**Disability**

No, the Research Strategy aims to provide equality of opportunity in Research to all Section 75 categories.

---

**Dependants**

No, the Research Strategy aims to provide equality of opportunity in Research to all Section 75 categories.

---

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**

None. The Research Strategy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief. The Strategy has no relevance to good relations.

---

**Political Opinion**

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

None. The Research Strategy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different political opinion. The Strategy has no relevance to good relations.

---

**Racial Group**

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

None. The Research Strategy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different racial group. The Strategy has no relevance to good relations.

---

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

**Religious Belief**

No. The Strategy has no relevance to good relations.

---

**Political Opinion**

No. The Strategy has no relevance to good relations.

---

**Racial Group**

No. The Strategy 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). (Please select one answer)

Yes. The Strategy is likely to have a positive impact in regard to 'Race', and 'Men and Women' generally, and in particular 'BME women' (whose representation declines dramatically as you move up the levels of seniority particularly for those in Academic roles).

---

### **Disability Duties**

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

Yes, the Strategy fosters a positive Research culture where all Academic and Research staff are supported and enabled to develop and engage in meaningful Research careers.

---

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

No. The Strategy aims to provide equality of opportunity to all.

---

## 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 Strategy is focused on the development of Ulster University's Research community and culture, providing a supportive environment for all our Researchers and investing in the infrastructure upon which Research can thrive. The Strategy promotes excellence in all aspects of Research and sets out the areas of strategic Research themes for the University.

In line with University Policy, this Strategy will be reviewed two years after implementation.

---

## 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

If yes, please provide details.

Not applicable

## Approval and authorisation

Screened by:



Position or Job Title: The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research)

Date screened: 04/08/2023



Approved by: Please insert electronic signature here

Position or Job Title: Chief People Officer

Date approved: 10/08/2023

## Review

This policy is due for review (in terms of its impact on equality of opportunity and good relations) by the policy owner on: 10 August 2025