



Mainstreaming Report 2021

Introduction

SRUC is a unique organisation founded on world class and sector-leading research, education and consultancy.

Today, SRUC is on a journey to become Scotland's enterprise university at the heart of our sustainable natural economy. Our mission is to create and mobilise knowledge and talent – partnering locally and globally to benefit the natural economy. SRUC envisages a natural economy fuelled by responsible use of our natural resources: people, land, energy, water, animals, and plants.

SRUC employs approximately 1,300 staff operating from 6 campuses, 5 farms, 24 consulting offices, 6 research centres, 7 veterinary surveillance centres and a veterinary and analytical laboratory located primarily across Scotland.

As a Higher Education Institution, we have specialist expertise in Education and Research and offer unrivalled links with industry through our Agricultural Business Consultants. We provide a unique offering of delivering learning and teaching at SCQF Levels 3-12 (i.e. Access Courses through to PhD).

We have approximately 5,000 students comprising a combination of: short full time, block release, part time (day release), other part-time day courses, evenings and weekends only, assessment and work based learning, distance and flexible learning, as well as full time at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

We are committed to meeting the needs of a diverse backgrounds of students which goes beyond those outlined in the general protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 and includes socio-economic factors, those who come from the criminal justice system (ex-offenders), care experienced and carers. When a student's individual circumstances require SRUC action a personal support plan will be created and agreed to ensure appropriate support, action and review is undertaken.

Recognising our various obligations, and in response to the fact that the agriculture sector is predominantly male and that the more traditional gender roles which tend to persist in rural areas as an institution, we identified gender diversity as a priority area of compelling need, and hence it has been a key area of focus within the organisation. This is reflected in our bronze level application to Athena Swan.

However SRUC's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion has a wider remit than gender; our aim is to be totally inclusive and can be summarised using our Values : RISE.

- **Respect** everyone’s contribution – by ensuring that they have the opportunity to participate and be heard
- **Innovate** for success – by considering the different skills, knowledge and experience that each individual colleague or student can bring
- **Support** each other – by implementing the policies and practices that will develop the supportive culture we aspire to and by calling out those who do not
- **Excel** in everything we do – by being a strong advocate for inclusion and giving it due consideration in our day to day activity thereby supporting SRUC to meet its objectives in this respect

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Requirements are contained within the Equality Act 2010. The aims of the requirements are to :

1. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
2. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
3. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The Scotland Specific Duties set out how we evidence our progress in respect of these. This mainstreaming report is a fundamental requirement of the legislation and provides commentary on impact to date and plans for the future. It is structured as follows :

- An outline of the impact SRUC has experienced as a result of “mainstreaming” activities supporting the achievement of these aims.
- Commentary on how our overarching objectives for the next four years will further impact the organisation (more detail on individual projects and actions is included in our Equality Outcomes report).
- Board diversity information including gender breakdown and plans for improving diversity among members

The information produced to support the requirements of the legislation are largely contained within the [Equality Outcomes Report 2021](#) incorporating :

- Progress on equality outcomes 2017 – 2021
- Equality outcomes 2021 – 2025
- Employee Information 2021 including comparison with 2019
- Recruitment data 2021
- Other employee information (development and retention) 2021

Further information regarding pay is available in the following :

[Equal pay statement 2021:](#)

- A statement on equal pay, including commentary on occupational segregation, for race and disability

[Gender Pay Gap Report 2021](#)

Section 1 – Reporting on Progress

We have developed Equality Outcomes and specific actions in relation to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty which are described in our Equality Outcomes report. In order to demonstrate mainstreaming we will describe the impact achieved and how the three requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty have become integral to how we function as an organisation.

- **Equality and diversity is firmly embedded in our management, leadership and governance structures and practice**

It is essential to have well informed and proactive leadership to ensure that :

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion issues are considered in the development of strategic objectives and the development of operational plans that will support the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- That processes exist which will advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- There is high-level role modelling in place which will demonstrate the importance of fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

There is a clear increase in the visibility of senior leaders demonstrating involvement and allyship as a result of improved Board gender balance, the appointment of a Board Equality Champion who attends EDIC and members of the Executive Leadership Team becoming directly involved in operational Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activity e.g. chairing key committees and groups such as EDIC and our Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team.

Over the period the Equality, Human Rights and Inclusion Committee has developed and is now the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC). The EDIC has a stronger Term of Reference and membership includes SRUCSA and Trade Union participants as well as representation from specific initiatives such as Athena Swan and the Rainbow Staff Network. Improved communication to and from EDIC is also developing increasing engagement with the wider organisation on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion issues.

Following a period without dedicated resource, the profile and focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activity has been strengthened through the approval and



appointment of a specialist position – the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Lead post. The creation and appointment to this full time position is, along with the governance arrangements described above, a tangible commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Contributing to this increase in focus and awareness is activity to ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion forms an integral part of our internal and external communication plans. There are now direct links with the externally focused Social Media Team and new website content has been published with further updates planned to coincide with the publication of PSED reports. The EDI Lead also sits on the Internal Communications group and new intranet content has been developed to provide easily accessible sources of information. There are dedicated Yammer and Blog channels within our internal communication tools which are seeing increased interaction and further contributing to increased awareness is a programme of activity taking place both internally and externally relating to marking months/weeks and days of recognition relating to protected characteristics and also health and wellbeing more generally.

In order to have maximum impact all policies, processes and practices must give due consideration to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in their development and implementation. SRUC has developed an Equality Impact Assessment process as required by the Public Sector Equality Regulations and this is available to all employees. It has been used when assessing the impact of organisational transformation proposals and their implementation as well as with HR employment policies however overall, the process has not been as widely used in more operational situations and has not had the impact that was anticipated as a result of this sporadic implementation. Further work is planned in this regard.

We have shown leadership and delivered impact internally and also outwith SRUC as a result of being a Living Wage accredited employer. This is a commitment to our employees and, through our procurement process, to contractor employees to pay the appropriate living wage and reduce/eliminate the use of zero hours contracts. Our external impact is further enhanced by our procurement process which requires companies tendering for a contract to provide information on their equality provision in relation to their organisation and, where appropriate, to the team working on the contract being awarded.

- **A culture which is underpinned by dignity and respect, values all employees, learners and stakeholders resulting in parity of experience in an inclusive learning and working environment:**

Progress towards this outcome is heavily influenced by the actions taken and success of the first outcome ie the leadership demonstrated in the organisation. The visible commitment to not only equality but also our Values demonstrated by our leadership provides essential role modelling for students and staff. The increased focus on EDI related communication described above has contributed to raised awareness of expectations and support available in this regard.

Actions to develop the desired outcome have been taken not only by management but also by students – standing for appointment as Liberation Officers through the Student Association – and by employees who have established the Rainbow Staff Network which supports LGBTQI+ employees and a related Ally programme which in itself sets expectations about behaviours and further develops the culture of dignity and respect.

Through the requirements of initiatives such as the Athena Swan Charter, British Sign Language and Corporate Parenting plans we have developed further actions which will contribute to the culture which will support every student and employee to access to opportunities is in place, contribute and succeed. As the plans are implemented and other actions developed, our improved data will allow measurement of progress and the use of surveys will provide students and employees with the opportunity to comment on their experiences and perception of the culture that has developed.

The revised employee policy development process undertaken with the trade unions which incorporates our Equality Impact Assessment process will be used to review our Dignity at Work policy and topic specific policies such as Trans Support and Sexual Orientation which will describe the expectations of colleagues in relation to these. Communication and training related to the new policies will take place in an environment which already has a solid foundation of knowledge through existing training for students and employees. Data is important in measuring this outcome; not the student and employee data referenced elsewhere but data relating to the numbers and reasons for grievances and disciplinary issues.

- **There is equality of opportunity of employees, learners and stakeholders in recruitment, retention and progression**

Efforts have been made over the past few years to ensure that our prospectus and other materials are reflective of the fact that study opportunities are available to all. However, from the analysis of student numbers carried out over the period 2016/17 – 2019/20 it is difficult to assess any impact on any protected characteristic

representation among the student body – largely due to the short period of time covered. Activities to increase the diversity of our students will take a longer period to show impact. Headlines in each area are noted below :

- Gender – the gender gap among full time students has widened slightly but has closed for part time students. Overall the gender balance has remained static within the FE population however in all years the HE population comprised of mostly males this difference has increased from 31%F to 44%F bringing it closer to a gender balance. With regard to retention the number of students who withdrew each year was relatively evenly split between males and females in terms of percentages with more females than males withdrawing in most years.
- Gender Identity – 85% of students stated that their gender identity was the same as that which they were assigned at birth, 6% said to the contrary and the remaining 9% did not wish to answer the question. As a large majority stated their gender identity was the same it was not deemed necessary to do further in-depth analysis of this characteristic as the results would largely mirror the gender analysis already reported.
- Age – age distribution is, as to be expected, largely determined by level of study and influenced by the number of places available at these levels. As a result in all years the age group with the highest number of students was 21 and under, making up over 50% of the entire student population each year. All age groups represented similar rates of withdraw ranging between 9% and 16% and there are no significant peaks or troughs in any given year or group
- Religion – in the years 2016 to 2020 the majority of SRUC students identified as having No Religion (70%) followed by Christian – all denominations (19%), with all remaining religious categories making up 3%. The remaining 9% did not answer.
- Race – the population for years 2016–20 mostly comprised of students identifying as White (at least 97%). The other ethnic groups made up 2% to 3% of the remaining population as a whole. Among those students identifying as “White – all denominations” the withdraw rate has remained similar throughout the four years at an average of 13%. The low counts of the remaining groups make analysis by percentage difficult however it would not appear that there is any strong correlation between ethnicity and withdraw rates over the last four years.
- Disability – In each year of the study over 75% of the student population stated that they had no known disability and there are no significant changes in the percentages between the years.
- Sexual Orientation – In each year at least 90% of the student population chose to answer the question on their sexual orientation. Over 90% of all respondents in each year identified as Heterosexual/straight followed by an average of 3% identifying as Bi/bisexual. The remaining groups accounted for approximately 1% each of the student population yearly. Although twice as many students identified as Bi/bisexual



in the two latter years of the period compared to the former two years most groups saw little or no change in percentage over the four years.

What is clear is that the student population is, aside from gender/gender identity, undiverse being predominantly white, straight, able-bodied and with no religion. There would appear to be no clear relationship between a protected characteristic and retention and success rates however it is clear that our recruitment practice needs to be developed to specifically address the need to improve the attractiveness of SRUC to potential students with protected characteristics. The subject areas in which we operate are often historically identified with particular characteristics e.g. agriculture is a predominantly male, white industry therefore there are many challenges to overcome. There has been a lot of consideration given to the content of our prospectus and other promotional material and the representation contained within these and it may be that this has had an impact on the gender balance of our HE student body however it is too soon to make any direct link. The data gathered will be considered when developing our practice.

Data has also been gathered to provide a picture of our employees at March 2021 and to allow a comparison with the situation in 2017. The main impact of our increased focus on equality, diversity and inclusion in the period would appear to be increased levels of awareness of the importance of providing equality data and comfort with doing so. The levels of employees indicating that they preferred not to respond or just not answering a question at all decreased dramatically in almost all areas. This has been augmented by improvements in data recording mechanisms and messaging.

However, similar to the picture with students, what the data has shown us is that our workforce is very undiverse with little change in percentages across the board. Key information continues to be that our gender balance has remained static with women representing 57% of employees and that within this traditionally gender-biased areas of activity have maintained that bias although comparison has been impacted by the changes that have taken place in structure and therefore reporting formats. Analysis of our recruitment data has shown little change in the gender mix of applicants. The representation of other protected characteristics continues to be low and therefore the short period of time that has passed since the last publication of data is not sufficient to demonstrate any sustained change in data.

We have amended our recruitment processes to raise awareness of the support available to disabled applicants and the amendments that can be made to recruitment and employment processes to assist individuals. Although these amendments in our recruitment processes have begun with more planned change is a function of turnover as well as recruitment and our turnover rates are low so impact will take time to be evidenced. As time progresses we will be in a position to measure the impact these changes have had.

We are confident that, once studying or employed with SRUC we provide support and employment policies that are considerate of all; individual student support plans are established and various support mechanisms are in place for employees including occupational health, confidential counselling and advice, personal development opportunities.

The challenge, which we are keen to embrace, going forward is to take policies and practices which are designed for the entire student and/or employee body and to adapt these to complex individual circumstances to ensure equality of opportunity. We have some experience of this already e.g. students undergoing a gender transition, and will use our learning from situations such as these to ensure that our policies, procedures and practices are flexible enough to provide the required level of support to everyone.

Section 2 – Plans for the next 4 years and their impact

The SRUC Strategic Plan 2018–23 articulates the importance of offering choices equally – be they academic or vocational. Doing this relies on an inclusive approach to teaching, understanding the needs of all students and ensuring that our application, registration and teaching processes identify and address the needs of potential and existing students. Our approach, offering many routes into training and academic study and supporting student progression from entry level right through to PhD, is in itself inclusive providing options to students at all stages in their lives and careers and supportive of every individual situation and background. Our journey to be gain degree awarding powers (teaching) requires a defined approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion which will support all staff and students to have an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents

We are in the process of developing an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy, supported by the Equality Challenge Unit, to identify the organisational aims in this regard and the equality related actions necessary to ensure on-going legal compliance but also to support the attainment of the goals articulated in the Strategic Plan. The EDIC will play an important part in the development of these plans which will be signed off by the Executive Leadership Team and presented to the Board. This strategy document and related plan will provide a focus to our efforts and ensure that :

- the actions contained within pre-existing plans are brought together and compliment one another
- that each area of activity is given adequate time and effort to develop and embed practice before focus moves to another subject area (this does not mean that there will only be activity taking place in relation to one protected characteristic, rather that all necessary activity will take place but that one area will be the main focus in a specified period of time).

- The organisation will, in a specified period of time, have progressed in terms of the policies, processes and practice relating to all protected characteristics and wider considerations to deliver an organisation where everyone, whether employee, student or visitor, will feel valued, listened to and free to be themselves.

The EDIC will be responsible for the assessment of progress and success; this will be done using regular reporting on plans of action, the provision of data to demonstrate change and the feedback gathered through surveys.

Data and action completion will provide a measure of progress; creating and implementing policies will support equality and a change in numbers e.g. an increase in students from minority ethnic backgrounds, a gender balance in currently gender disparate subject areas show that we have achieved a diversity targets however in relation to inclusion the key indicator of impact will be the opinions expressed by staff and students in survey responses and subject specific focus groups.

Section 3 – Board Gender Representation

SRUC is a company limited by guarantee, a charity, a Scottish Higher Education Institution (HEI) and a public body. As such it has various obligations, particularly the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance (2017) and the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018.

In accordance with the requirements of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act, the following describes SRUC’s progress towards the gender representation objective.

The gender balance of non-executive directors on the SRUC board since 2018 is shown in the table below:

| Date | No. of NED Positions | Male | Female | % Female |
|------------|----------------------|------|--------|----------|
| April 2018 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 30% |
| June 2019 | 12 | 7 | 5 | 45% |
| June 2020 | 12 | 6 | 6 | 50% |
| Jan 2021 | 11 | 7 | 5 | 45% |

As referenced above this change in gender balance over the period has acted as a clear indicator of the importance SRUC has placed on gender representation at all levels and in all areas of operation in this period. As a result of the male-orientation in our sphere of



operation attracting qualified female applicants has always been problematic and therefore required focussed effort.

During this period, 2 rounds of recruitment took place, in the first half of 2019 and in the latter half of 2020. Both rounds involved the assistance of recruitment consultants and advertising in a range of outlets, including websites/organisations specifically targeting female board level applicants.

In the 2019 round, two positions were advertised. Nearly fifty responses were received of which 14 were from female applicants, representing 28% of the total. In the end, due to the excellent response, three applicants were appointed. Eight interviews were held and all three appointments were female.

In the 2020 round, three positions were advertised. Seventy-four responses were received of which 14 were from female applicants, representing 19% of the total. The number of responses was exceptional, with a significant number of very high calibre applicants. Thirteen interviews were held, three of which were women. In light of the responses, it was decided to take the opportunity to make additional appointments to anticipate future rotational retirements and to avoid a further round of recruitment during a year when planning for the first Chair election would take place. Six appointments were made, one of which was female. The appointments have been staggered over a period of 9-10 months.

The data shows that the representation objective was achieved during mid-2020. However, given the relatively small numbers of members, rotational retirements and appointments will result in fluctuation of the gender balance. This has been shown by the initial three new appointments in December 2020 and was further affected by the unanticipated retirement of a female member in the Autumn of 2020.

As recently recruited new members join the Board during 2021, the percentage of female members will fall again. Another round of appointments is anticipated in 2022 and efforts to attract female candidates will again be prioritised.



Copies in alternative formats and community languages will be made available on request.

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