

## EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<b>Policy, practice, process or service title:</b>	<b>MSc Sustainability in Agriculture and Business</b>
<b>Policy, practice, process or service lead/ owner:</b>	Reader Senior Lecturer
<b>Others involved in EqlA assessment group</b>	Assessment group included: As above
<b>Policy, practice, process or service implementation date:</b>	01/09/2024

### 1 Framing the policy, practice, process or service

#### 1.1 Briefly describe the outcomes, aims and purpose of the policy, practice, process or service:

Academic programme at SCQF level 11.

The proposed programme will provide students with a specialist grounding in agricultural systems, natural capital and enterprise, building on the current SRUC provision in organic farming and professional practice in agriculture, and reframing this towards nature-based approaches.

The proposed programme will retain the existing successful delivery formula which enables students in employment and with different life circumstances to achieve their optimum level of award. The programme taps into the need for sustainable management of land and water resources, supporting biodiversity and working to address societal challenges and will typically be based on one to three years part time distance learning for awards from PGCert to MSc. The programme can be spread over four (PGCert & PGDip) or six (MSc) years to suit individual student circumstances, thus increasing the accessibility of the programme.



Students will study a range of modules which encompass real world applications and will gain specialist knowledge through their learning experience by acquiring specific skills relevant to the subject area, but also valuable academic and work-related skills. This will include critical analysis of information, and encourage self-reflection throughout the learning journey, leading to enhanced personal development and employability. MSc students will carry out in-depth independent research project.

### **1.2 Is the policy, practice, process or service new or being changed, reviewed or stopped?**

Revalidation of existing programmes of study.

### **1.3 Who is affected by this policy, practice, process or service?**

SRUC students, SRUC staff.

### **1.4 Are there any other SRUC policies that may be affected by this policy, practice, process or service?**

List here any other policies that may be affected by changes you make to this policy, practice, process or service, so that any equality impacts found here can be shared with those policy, practice, process or service leads. You may need to consider where there might be cumulative impacts across several policies, practices, processes or services.

This programme on its own will not affect other SRUC policies as it is the same format as preceding and other existing provision. There are policies that may affect this programme, particularly but not exclusively in relation to the distance learning format. Examples include fees and funding, and also services that impact on the ability of distance learning students to progress such as digital accessibility. Laptops can (and have been) offered to support students.

## **2 Evidence relevant to the policy, practice, process or service including consultation**

The information you gather in this section will:

- help you to understand the importance of your policy, practice, process or service for different equality groups,
- inform the depth of equality impact assessment you need to do (this should be proportional to the potential impact on equality groups), and

- provide justification and an audit trail behind your decisions, including where it is agreed an equality impact assessment is not required.

**2.1 Evidence:** Set out in the table what you know about the experiences of people in terms of each equality group. Consider the diversity within each group (e.g. experiences of people from different religions or faiths) as well as the differences between groups. There may also be cumulative barriers experienced by people when you look at more than one group together (e.g. experiences of women of different minority ethnic groups, so the intersectional impact of sex and race).

You can add more rows to present the evidence if required.

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy, practice, process or service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
<b>All equality groups</b>	1. SRUC's current approach to course delivery.	Flexible entry requirements promote inclusivity and equal opportunities, and the mostly online and asynchronous nature of the programme enables students to learn at their own pace, while potentially enhancing opportunities for a wider applicant pool to access Higher Education by accommodating a wider range of life circumstances. This can give benefits across all equality groups.
<b>Age</b>	1. <a href="#">Reports &amp; Insights Part 2: Postgraduate study preferences.</a> 2. Market analysis (SRUC data). 3. SRUC student outcomes. 4. SRUC entry requirements.	Only a quarter of returning students are seeking traditional on campus degrees (1).  Market analysis suggested that "Preferences for flexibility at postgraduate level correlate with preferences for less intensive study. Three-quarters of prospective online masters students plan to study part-time. This raises the possibility that a large proportion of people considering an online Masters are doing so to train or reskill alongside work (2).  No age specific equality issues: students across a wide age range have successfully graduated from the existing programmes. The general age of a cohort may be varied due to the format and subject areas, but there is no evidence to suggest that age could be a barrier (3). Postgrad entry requirements are linked to qualifications (e.g. Honours degree) and / or experience that may be correlated to age, but evidence relating to postgrad study and mode of delivery supports the distance learning (DL) format (4).

<b>Equality characteristics</b>	<b>Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)</b>	<b>What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy, practice, process or service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).</b>
<b>Disability</b>	1. SRUC anecdotal information/ SRUC policy to support reasonable adjustments.  2. Current course format.	SRUC has supported students with disabilities through a person centred approach and providing support as needed e.g. a folding chair where someone needs to rest during a field trip; targeted student support where Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) require this. SRUC Education Manual supports reasonable adjustments. There is no evidence from current provision that there are barriers to students with a disability (1).  There are multiple methods of engagement due to the blended delivery format. There may be visits to physically inaccessible locations or to locations where service animals are not appropriate or permitted (2).
<b>Race</b>	1. SRUC data.	No cultural knowledge required for course content. The subject matter does not present an opportunity to challenge or discuss cultural stereotypes.  There is low representation of BAME students (1).
<b>Sex</b>	1. SRUC data.	Variable gender balance in cohorts, but this is not linked to relative success on the basis of sex (1).
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	1. SRUC data. 2. <a href="#">University of Glasgow regulations</a> .	This has not been experienced to date for cohorts on current provision (1). Deferral time is factored into the programme which would allow for gender reassignment. This is currently at the discretion of the University of Glasgow regulations which restrict the timeframe for PGCert/Dip to 4 years, and MSc to 6 years (2).  Other SRUC policies such as the Mitigating Circumstances policy may be appropriate according to specific unforeseen circumstances.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	1. SRUC data.	No known impact of sexual orientation (1).

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy, practice, process or service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	1. SRUC Data.	No known impacts of religion or belief (1). Face to face or other live sessions which may impact religious festivals are not mandatory. All students are asked for dietary preferences for study weekends when catering is provided.
<b>Pregnancy or maternity</b>	1. SRUC Education Manual. 2. SRUC evidence. 3. Anecdotal feedback.	<p>SRUC provides student guidance on pregnancy and maternity: students may interrupt their studies for the purpose of maternity leave at any time from 28 weeks of the pregnancy for a maximum period of 12 months, taken as one continuous block (1). There are also options through SRUC's deferral process to defer study which could facilitate periods of maternity/paternity. Evidence shows that students have successfully completed programmes having had a baby, in some cases without any interruption to study (2). Risk Assessments incorporate pregnancy where applicable.</p> <p>In response to student feedback that <a href="#">University of Glasgow regulations</a> which restrict timeframes for completion did not sufficiently accommodate maternity and wider issues around maternity through the allowed maximum period of study, the University did extend the maximum study period by one academic year to accommodate a specific case (3).</p>
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>		N/A

**2.2 Consultation and stakeholder involvement:** Speaking to people who will be affected by your policy, practice, process or service can help clarify the impact it will have on different equality groups. Describe below what you learned from the consultation/ involvement. Consultation can take time so make sure that you build this into your policy, practice, process or service review/ development timeline.

Note who you consulted with, when you consulted with them, and what they told you about the impact of your proposed policy, practice, process or service.

Relevant evidence was used from the literature and from previous experience on Distance Learning programmes.

### 2.3 Record here if you need to undertake a full equality impact assessment based on your evidence above.

Outcome of Step 2 following initial evidence gathering and relevance to equality characteristics	Yes/ No (Y or N)	Next steps
There is no relevance to equality.		Proceed to sign off (step 5) to agree with decision makers that no EqIA is required based on current evidence
There is relevance to some or all of the equality groups.	Y	Proceed to Step 3: complete full EqIA
It is unclear if there is relevance to some or all of the equality groups.		Proceed to Step 3: complete full EqIA

### 3 Impact on equality groups and changes to policy, practice, process or service

You must consider the three aims of the general duty for each protected characteristic. The following questions will help:

- **Is there potential for discrimination, victimisation, harassment or other unlawful conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010?** How will this be mitigated?
- **Is there potential to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who do not?** How can this be achieved?

- Is there potential for developing good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not? How can this be achieved?

**3.1 Does the policy, practice, process or service have any impacts (whether intended or unintended, positive or negative) on any of the equality characteristics?** In the tables below, record the impact of the policy, practice, process or service, as it is planned or as it operates, might have on each equality characteristic and describe what changes in policy, practice, process or service or actions will be required to mitigate that impact or to take advantage of a positive impact.

Equality group	Public sector equality duty	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
		Positive impact	Negative impact	No impact	
<b>All equality groups</b>	Potential for discrimination			x	Marketing for wider audiences, using varied images and student testimonials may be beneficial for multiple equality groups.
	Potential to advance equality of opportunity	x			
	Potential to foster good relations				
<b>Age</b>	Potential for discrimination			x	
	Potential to advance equality of opportunity			x	
	Potential to foster good relations			x	
<b>Disability</b>	Potential for discrimination			x	Wheelchair accessibility and access to trips may present barriers to people with a physical disability. The types of trips involved are linked to the nature of the subject area which involves e.g. visits to farms. An alternative equivalent experience is provided through recordings and video with captions, for any student who is unable to attend face to face or other live events. This gives parity of experience. Where data is collected on site
	Potential to advance equality of opportunity	x	x		
	Potential to foster good relations			x	

Equality group	Public sector equality duty	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
		Positive impact	Negative impact	No impact	
					<p>visits, the data is collated, and the same information provided to all students, which has positive benefits for those with disabilities. This approach may also support other equality groups in addition to providing as equivalent an experience as possible for students with physical disabilities. There may be some locations where animals such as service dogs may not be appropriate or allowed. There is no precedent for this in current provision and the situation would need to be managed on a case by case basis and taking into account other policies or Health &amp; Safety issues.</p> <p>The flexible nature of the programme may be supportive to students with other disabilities such as SpLD, as well as having potential benefits for other equality groups. Following digital accessibility requirements is also appropriate for supporting wider equality groups.</p>
<b>Race</b>	Potential for discrimination			x	Admission to the programme is based on entry criteria. International qualifications are given due consideration and equivalence.
	Potential to advance equality of opportunity	x			
	Potential to foster good relations			x	
<b>Sex</b>	Potential for discrimination			x	



Equality group	Public sector equality duty	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
		Positive impact	Negative impact	No impact	
	Potential to advance equality of opportunity			x	
	Potential to foster good relations				
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	Potential for discrimination			x	Permitted periods of deferral may be beneficial for this and other equality groups.
	Potential to advance equality of opportunity	x			
	Potential to foster good relations			x	
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Potential for discrimination			x	
	Potential to advance equality of opportunity			x	
	Potential to foster good relations			x	
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	Potential for discrimination			x	All students are asked for dietary preferences for study weekends when catering is provided. This may be of wider benefit e.g. to students with food intolerances.
	Potential to advance equality of opportunity	x			
	Potential to foster good relations			x	
<b>Pregnancy or maternity</b>	Potential for discrimination			x	Risk assessment. Awareness of implications e.g. toxoplasma on sheep farms, or childcare requirements and how this might be impacted by timing of field trips etc – provide alternative / equivalent experience which is also of benefit to other equality groups or for people with caring responsibilities.
	Potential to advance equality of opportunity	x			
	Potential to foster good relations			x	
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	Potential for discrimination			x	
	Potential to advance equality of opportunity			x	

Equality group	Public sector equality duty	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
		Positive impact	Negative impact	No impact	
(in employment only)	Potential to foster good relations			x	

**3.2 Think about and describe below how your assessment impacts on your policy, practice, process or service review or development timeline including but not limited to:**

- Procurement criteria: do you need to include specific equality criteria as part of the technical specification?
- Communication plan/ products: do you need to communicate with people affected by this policy, practice, process or service in a specific format (e.g. audio, subtitled video, different languages)?
- Cost: do you propose any actions because of this assessment which will incur additional cost?
- Resources: do the actions you propose require additional or specialist resource to deliver them?

**Communications** – ensure that learning material and assessment is accessible (font size, colour, access to transcript etc). Guidance for this is directed through SRUC's Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT).

No other impacts on the development of the course have been identified.

**3.3 Record the outcome of this assessment below having considered the potential or actual impacts of your policy, practice, process or service on equality groups.** Choose from one of the following (mark with an X or delete as appropriate):

**Note: You must take action to remove barriers or take advantage of positive opportunities BEFORE the policy, practice, process or service goes live.**

Please select (X)	Implications for the policy, practice, process or service
x	<b>No major change:</b> Your assessment demonstrates that the policy, practice, process or service is robust. The evidence shows no potential for unlawful discrimination and that you have taken all opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, subject to continuing monitoring and review.

	<b>Adjust the policy, practice, process or service:</b> You need to take steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality of to foster good relations. You have set actions to address this and have clear ways of monitoring the impact of the policy, practice, process or service when implemented.
	<b>Continue the policy, practice, process or service:</b> The policy, practice, process or service will continue despite the potential for adverse impact. You have justified this with this assessment and shown how this decision is compatible with our obligations under the public sector equality duty. When you believe any discrimination can be objectively justified you must record in this assessment what this is and how the decision was reached.
	<b>Stop and remove the policy, practice, process or service:</b> The policy, practice, process or service will not be implemented due to adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated.

#### 4 Monitoring the policy, practice, process or service impact and further actions

It is important to continue to monitor the impact of your policy, practice, process or service on equality groups to ensure that your actual or likely impacts are those you recorded. Your monitoring information will also inform a future review of the policy, practice, process or service.

##### 4.1 Record in the table below how you intend to monitor the impact of this policy, practice, process or service on equality groups. In the table below you should:

- list the relevant measures,
- Identify who or which team is responsible for implementing or monitoring any changes
- Where the measure will be reported to (e.g. committee, ELT, Board) and how often.

Measure	Lead department/ individual	Reporting (where/ frequency)
Demographic of intake and analysis of outcomes	Data provided via the Quality Team (AMR data reports and data reports dashboard)	Annual (feeds into AMR process and via Board of Studies into Annual Quality Dialogue)

<b>Feedback from course applicants and participants</b>	Module leader/s/ Year Tutor/s/Programme Leader/s	Annual through AMR process
---	--	----------------------------

**4.2 Record further actions or changes required after the policy, practice, process or service is implemented in the table below. Make it clear if there are no outstanding actions.**

Action	Lead department/ individual	Action target date
N/A		

**5 Sign off and future review**

Equality impact assessments must be signed off by the relevant Head of Service/ Department, even where an EqIA is not required. Also note here when you plan to review the policy, practice, process or service and accompanying EqIA which should be no later than 5 years from policy, practice, process or service implementation.

**5.1 Senior Responsible Owner/ Committee sign off.**

Job/ Committee title: Revalidation Panel  
Date: 15/02/2024

**5.2 Equality impact assessment review date.**

Date: 14/02/2030

**Important: You must send the final version of this equality impact assessment to:**



- the Equality Diversity & Inclusion Lead.
- the Communications team for publication on SRUC's equality page on the external website.

<b>Document control</b>		
<b>Document control:</b>	V0.1	
<b>Date policy, practice, process or service live from:</b>	[DATE]	
<b>Review/ Approval Group:</b>	[project board if relevant or delete]	
<b>Last reviewed:</b>	Date	
<b>Review cycle:</b>	[No more than three years]	
<b>Document change log</b>		
<b>Version/ Author</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment</b>
V0.1/ Senior Lecturer/Reader		