

The **In a Nutshell** guide to...



## **Equality Impact Assessments**

**Kingston University** London  
The Equality Unit

# The In a Nutshell guide to... Equality Impact Assessments

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## WHAT ARE THEY?

Equality impact assessments are similar to a quality assurance process and are **action orientated**.

**Example:** Our data shows us that certain student groups are awarded fewer 1<sup>st</sup> class and 2:1 degrees. In order to find out why this is and whether we can do more to support the success of these students, we need to explore the factors that may contribute to this.

We need to ask questions such as:

- What are our student [equality groups](#)?
- What qualifications do they enter the University with?
- What level of degree do they achieve?
- What are the differences in the outcomes for different student groups?
- What are the students' views on the reasons for their level of success?
- Are there particular difficulties faced by certain student groups?
- What could we do to minimise those difficulties?

We need to find answers to these questions using qualitative and quantitative data.

Having looked at the evidence, it may become clear that there are **actions** we can take to try and improve the situation. These will have to be prioritised and agreed and arrangements for reporting and monitoring put in place.

You can see from this example that an equality impact assessment is an equality assurance process; similar in approach to many of our existing quality assurance processes.

Equality impact assessment will only lead to sustained change if key departments and faculties work together and prioritised and agreed actions are carried out using existing line management structures, mechanisms and processes.

## HOW DOES THIS SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE UNIVERSITY?

Equality Impact assessments help the University to deliver its objectives which are:

“... to promote participation in higher education, ... to strive for excellence in learning, teaching and research; to realise the creative potential and fire the imagination of all its members; and to equip its students to make effective contributions to society and the economy”  
*(University Mission)*

“To improve and make more coherent the experience of students, through improving methods of teaching, the organisation and delivery of relevant administrative processes, the effective use of space and timetabling, and student support services, to make sure these meet the needs of students.”

“To review arrangements to understand the views and needs of all our students ...”  
*(University Strategic Plan 2008/09 – 2012/13)*

## WHAT WILL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS DO FOR ME?

Equality impact assessments:

- will help you identify which practices could be improved to better support participation and achievement
- will support you in focusing your energies on the actions which will make the most difference and so make better use of your time
- will improve the efficiency and reputation of the University
- will improve student / staff satisfaction
- will reduce the risk of possible discrimination action against the University
- are good for the business of the University
  - helping us attract people from a wider talent pool
  - equipping us to compete in a global economy

All of which benefit us as staff and students at Kingston University

## WHY DO WE NEED TO DO THEM?

### Legislation

The University is governed by **Public Sector Equality Duties** which direct us not to unlawfully discriminate and provide a mechanism to prove we don't.

Briefly, these are:

#### General Duties to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations

#### Specific Duties

Publish an Equality Scheme...	...explaining how the University will carry out the General Duties
Carry out Equality Impact Assessments...	...to investigate whether we are carrying out the General Duties and to set targets for improvement where necessary
Monitor...	...to see how we are performing and collect information in order to set targets for the future
Report...	...to let others, within and outside the University, know how we are performing
Review...	...to evaluate our progress and check whether we are achieving our targets

## Equality groups

Equality groups are the groups of people, defined in law, that we must consider in order to check that they are not inadvertently disadvantaged when we are carrying out the business of the University.

The groups we have to consider are in bold. The others are groups, which we are not currently obliged to include in the equality impact assessment process but the University has chosen to include.

- **age**
- **disability**
- **ethnicity**
- **religion or belief**
- **sex**
- **sexual orientation**
- pregnancy & maternity
- married or civil partnership
- gender reassignment

We will also be considering how we address socio-economic inequalities as part of the assessment process although we are also not required, by law, to do so.

## HELPFUL EXAMPLES

It might be helpful to provide examples of some of the areas we will be, and already are, considering and look at the questions we might ask.

**Marketing the University** – Is there any evidence to suggest that we are attracting enquiries from certain student groups more than other groups? What are we doing to attract the other student groups?

**Admissions** – Are there some groups which are less successful in the applications process for reasons other than qualification criteria? What are we doing to support these groups through the application process? Does any of our qualification criteria disadvantage certain groups of applicants?

**Progression** – Are there some groups whose members are more likely than others to leave certain courses? What are we doing to support the success of these groups and minimise the chances of them leaving?

**Graduate Outcomes** – Are there any groups which are achieving lower degree awards than other groups? What are we doing to improve the chances for these groups?

**Staff Recruitment and Selection** – We know from our monitoring data there are differences in the conversion from application to job offers for some of our staff groups. We have conducted a review of selection decisions and whilst on the whole the decisions seem fair, there are recommendations to improve the conversion rate. Some of these cover our systems, some our training (including work with faculties and departments) and some the support we offer to our applicants. We also have recommendations for the recruitment side. These recommendations have been prioritised and will be implemented over the next three years with urgent ones dealt with in year one. The report and the department's action plan agreed by the Director

of Human Resources will go from the Equality Unit to the Equality Committee for ratification (in between meetings Chair's action will be taken) and then to the Executive Board before external publication.

## THE PROCESS

### What are we looking at?

- Identify departmental or faculty strategies, policies, procedures, guidelines, provisions and criteria
- Allocate them according to where they fit in the [student lifecycle](#) and [staff lifecycle](#) structures

### What evidence should we use?

- Collect equality monitoring information we hold for the relevant area. We do not currently collect information on all equality groups. This is under review and the amount of information collected is likely to increase in the future.

Eg: Pre Entry: enquiries / applications

Admissions: applications / admissions

First Semester: admissions / retention / progression to 2<sup>nd</sup> year

On Course: progression to 2<sup>nd</sup> year / retention / progression / awards

Graduation / Employability: awards / employment information

- Qualitative information will also be available through existing feedback mechanisms – staff student consultative groups, course feedback, student liaison officers, complaints etc

### What to ask?

Consider the equality groups and ask whether there is, or could be, any possibility of inadvertent discrimination. Some of the questions we might ask are:

- Is there evidence that the policy **impacts** less favourably on any group(s)?
- Is there evidence of **lower participation/uptake** from any group(s)?
- Is there evidence of lower **success rates** from any group(s)?
- Do, or could, associated criteria disadvantage any group(s)?

### How to work together?

Departments – the owners of central policies and procedures – will look at top level University data to determine whether there is any evidence of differential impact.

Departments and faculties will work together to look more closely at all the factors which effect the student experience and consider their possible / potential / actual

influence on outcomes. Working together will enable us to consider how the implementation of a strategy, policy or procedure actually affects outcomes for students.

## What to do with what we find?

Where differences in admissions, retention or success are found ...

We need to consider whether:

- changing the way we do something
- the level of support we provide
- how we teach
- how we provide information

could have a positive effect for:

- **an identified student group** which might be underrepresented or have members who are not achieving their potential
- **everybody** – often a positive side effect of reviewing our processes for certain groups

We could do that by:

- Building consideration for the of needs of different student groups into existing planning / design / quality assessments structures?
- Consulting / involving those who are or could be affected

## STEPS TO PUBLISHING THE RESULTS

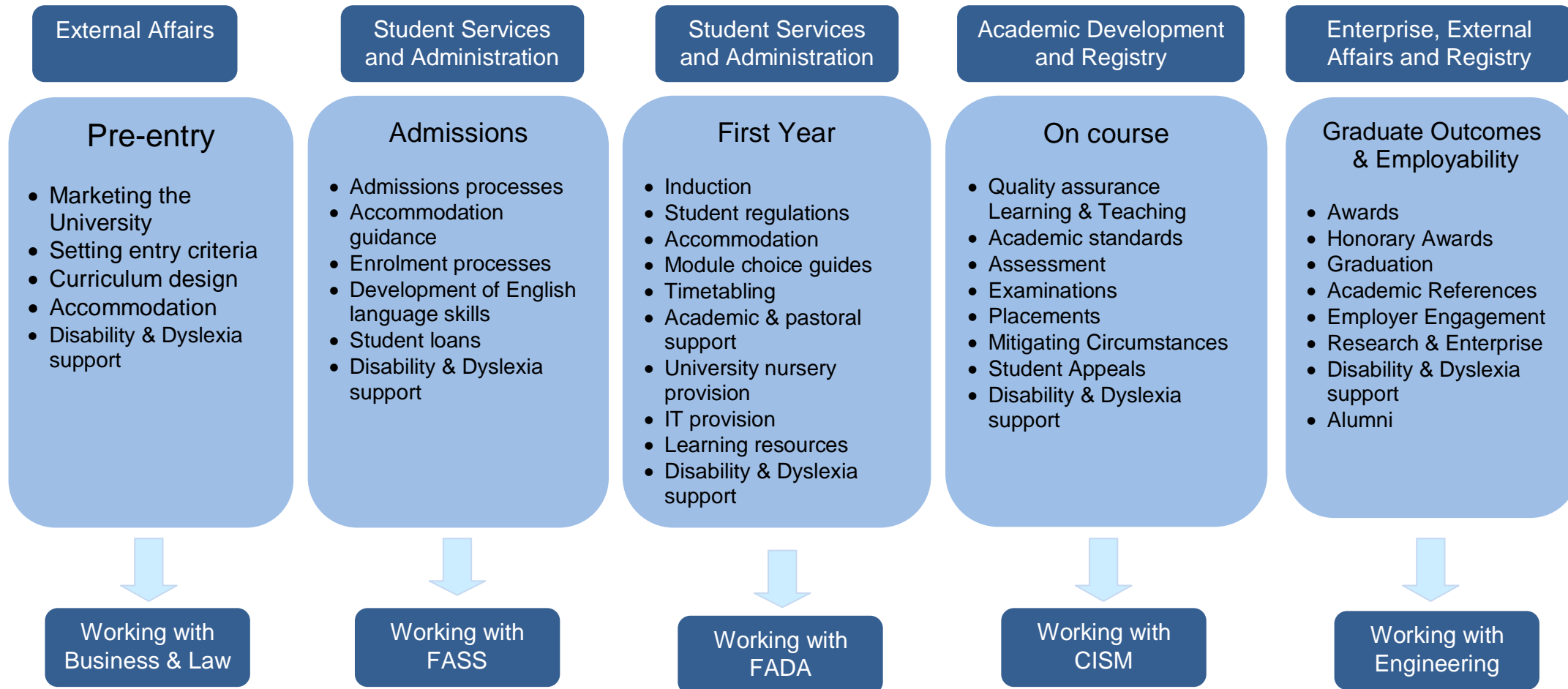
- Recommend actions / changes /amendments / projects / initiatives
- Report on outcomes of the assessment and include evidence used
- Propose a review date to evaluate the effect of changes
- Submit results to the Equality Unit for presentation to Equality Committee
- Reports will be submitted to Executive Board for agreement
- Equality Unit will publish Equality Impact Assessments online (internally and externally)

## INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- An improvement in the representation of certain groups
- An improvement in support for certain groups
- An improvement in retention / progression of certain groups
- An improvement in student satisfaction
- An improvement in the awards for certain groups
- An improvement in the employability outcomes for certain groups

# STUDENT LIFECYCLE

The diagram below give an indication of the main departments that issue the polices, the nature of the policies and the faculties participating for each stage of the life cycle



# STAFF LIFECYCLE

The boxes below give an indication of the type of policies and procedures which are relevant to each stage of the staff lifecycle.

## Department of Human Resources

### Pre-entry

- Recruitment and selection
- Staff Bureau rules and regulations
- Contracts issued by Academic Registry guidance(2)
- Part-time contracts

### Early Employment

- Induction processes
- Probation

### Employment

- Adoption leave & pay/policy & procedure
- Flexible working process policy
- Maternity leave and pay – policy & procedure
- Discipline procedure
- Grievance procedure
- Pay procedure

### Progression

- Staff Development Strategy
- Leadership and Management Development
- Career Development Framework
- Promotions procedure

### Exit

- Final Payment Procedure
- Redundancy policy
- Final Payment procedure
- Notice Period procedure
- Retirement procedure

## Working with identified faculties