Embedding equality consideration into academic programme development and delivery:
A mainstreaming approach

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Where did we start?

Our approach
Moving the equality agenda ‘from the margins to the mainstream’¹ ²

Improving attainment and the student experience through quality enhancement:

• QAA Quality Code

• Specific duty to mainstream the consideration of equality and due regard to the PSED for all protected characteristics

• Practice based approach to embedding equality consideration

¹ Thomas et al, 2005
² May & Bridger 2010
‘It moves (equality consideration) from being a legislative requirement to something which shows the potential for improvement’

QAA Quality Code and Scottish specific duties:

• Equality impact assessment used as a *tool* and a vehicle for engagement

• The process of mainstreaming equality contributes to continuous improvement and better performance = quality enhancement

• Quality enhancement = strategic linkage / operational relevance / professional practice
Project aims:

• Creative, effective and efficient approaches to considering equality and complying with legislation

• Mainstreamed processes and reporting mechanisms to evidence consideration of equality

• Institutional capacity to engage effectively - all functions and decisions

• An enduring strategy, process and capacity to meet the duty
Where are we now?

Progress so far
‘It has brought equality to the forefront of our thinking by requiring us to write it down’

Institutional capacity to engage effectively:

• All academic areas engaged in considering equality and assessing impact as an integrated part of day to day practice

• Consideration of equality mainstreamed into governance and management structures and processes

• Equality is on the agenda!
Developing an approach to embedding equality in learning and teaching
A blank sheet of paper:

- No template
- No guidance
- Just institutional commitment from the top and facilitated support
Challenges:

• The ‘I already do this’ factor

• We have a learner support function for all that

• I’m too busy

• A blank sheet of paper is difficult
‘An opportunity for people to think for themselves in the context of their own work’

- Time out to develop understanding of equality perspectives
- Work with different colleagues
- Engage in dialogue and debate
- Playing to academic strengths – research and inquiry
- Draw on people’s intrinsic commitment to provide the best experience and outcomes for students
‘We tend to take equality and diversity impact to be minimal – an assumption based on a lack of any major or obvious disruption’

Architecture: UG programme group identified:

• The need to articulate explicit evidence of equality consideration in programme monitoring, review and evaluation

• Benefits of reflection and a critical friend process

• A cyclical approach to continuous improvement through quality enhancement action planning
‘This has prompted us to talk about the culture of assessment and think about it differently’

School of Design: 1\(^{st}\) Year Assessment group - key elements:

- Student voice – understanding impact of current practice
- Separation of pastoral support and effective assessment through mitigating negative impact by consideration of assessment methods / criteria
- Stimulus for dialogue with other academic colleagues about learning and teaching practice
‘Unfounded assumptions can be made about what’s good for students’

Post-graduate School Student feedback group’s focus:

• The process as a mechanism to highlight issues both in respect of where action is and is not being taken

• Consideration of the appropriateness of the mechanisms for student feedback and the results it produces
‘We assume a lot and don’t collect enough information’

Implications for inclusive learning and teaching at GSA:

• Equality consideration placed at the heart of the development of learning and teaching practice

• Development and delivery are based on evidence and understanding rather than assumption

• Cross departmental working to tackle identified equality impacts linking to internal and external priorities / drivers
“This is just the beginning for this work which will provide quality improvement in our programme”

Value of the approach in an academic context:

- Grass roots development
- Relevant and appropriate within a framework
- Mainstreaming
- PSED = fostering good relations through dialogue
A quality enhancement approach =

Applying an equality perspective to programme development and delivery

Mainstreaming equality consideration in an academic context

Quality programmes and inclusive delivery accessible to all students

ATTAINMENT FOR ALL