

Equality Assessment – completion guidelines

Introduction

This is a guidance document to aid your understanding of both the spirit and the letter of equality assessments (EAs)¹. You should read it in conjunction with the resources on the website (www.southampton.ac.uk/ea), including the downloadable *Flowchart* and *Tips for your EA*².

In this context, 'Activity' covers the whole spectrum of policies, procedures, services, projects, academic programmes and other significant initiatives or changes that could warrant equality assessment.

Local or one-off activities such as purchase of a single item of equipment do not necessarily warrant an EA.

Essentials

The EA is a two-stage process captured through two complementary but separate pro-forma templates:

- **Part 1: Screening** examines the overall equality impact of the activity, and thus determines whether there is a case for proceeding to a full assessment. Where several activities are assessed together, screening should help you determine the priority areas.
- **Part 2: Assessment** is required only where the screening has identified medium or high risk. The assessment explores the equality impact in more detail, perhaps including further research or consultation. One outcome is an action plan, setting out steps identified to reduce detrimental impact and to promote equality of opportunity.

These templates are presented as MS Word documents. Once complete, you should convert them to .pdf (Adobe Acrobat) for wider distribution.

Aim to keep your EA documents reasonably compact. Readers should be able to grasp the essence of the screening and assessment in a few pages, whether or not they are familiar with the activity in any detail. However, where it aids the narrative you could also split the original text boxes, add extra rows within tables or modify the template in other ways.

Irrespective of the templates, it is the process that is key. The EA is a mechanism to demonstrate how we have considered the fairness of the activity for current and

This is a transparent process, so any internal documents or URLs cited should be accessible to most or all University staff.

If you select an 'Other' option at any point, you should explain what additional group you are referring to.

¹ You may sometimes see references to Equality Analyses, or Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs or EqIAs). These are effectively the same.

² Both documents are downloadable from <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/diversity/policies/ea/index.page>

People

The activity may be clearly owned by a single professional service group (PSG), faculty or academic unit, or it may have a wider ownership, for example a multi-disciplinary project. The core EA team should represent the full ownership. Possibly in Part 1 and certainly in Part 2 the team should extend to include others with relevant experience or expertise, for example trade union or student representatives. These additional people could join either for the life of the EA or on a case-by-case basis. However the taskforce is set up, on the form(s) you should give the names, job titles and roles of all the individuals involved.

The 'manager responsible' for Part 1 may continue with Part 2, or hand over to someone else. In each case they would normally sign off the completed pro forma.

You will need to report your conclusions to the Part 2 assessment and action plan. Ideally this should be an existing senior group or ongoing committee that can both monitor and assist with implementation.

Protected characteristics

As a University, our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) legally requires us to consider age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation in all our activities. More information is given under Section 6 below.

Within the screening or assessment, you should also determine how the activity might affect people in relation to:

- Subsets of a characteristic, for example a particular religious group
- Multiple areas of equality, for example how it might affect minority ethnic women, disabled older people, etc.
- Those who may be disadvantaged for less-obvious reasons, such a non-visible disability (deafness, autism) or people who are based at satellite locations
- Potential for both direct and indirect discrimination, for example key activities held outside core working hours or in certain locations could indirectly discriminate against individuals with care responsibilities.

Consider also the consultation and communication methods: would any individuals or groups find it difficult to participate? If so, could you provide reasonable alternatives?

Bear in mind that populations, and their mix of characteristics, could change in the future.

Where necessary the [Diversity team](#) can provide further guidance. Additional resources are available from the Diversity website or: www.southampton.ac.uk/ea .

You may also wish to consider, in the context of internationalisation, the activity's impact on international staff and students. Examples might be where UK law or cultural norms could differ from those in someone's home country, or whether there are opportunities to assist integration into the wider University community.

What happens to these documents?

The library on the internal-facing EA Sharepoint site is a single point of reference for the ongoing project team, and for those involved in any Part 2 Action Plan. Sharepoint also safeguards documentation against any changes of individual roles and team structures over time. After completion of each part, it is the project team's responsibility to upload the file(s). The site includes a reminder of how to upload and tag your files:

<https://groupsite.soton.ac.uk/Administration/Equality-Assessments/Pages/Home.aspx>.

You no longer need to send documentation to Diversity, unless you have a query.

On the templates, you have the option of adding a summary highlighting the main reasons for making a decision, and the most significant actions flowing from this. Diversity can optionally put this text as an example of good practice on the public-facing website.

PART 1: Screening

1. Activity details

An activity may be:

- New, ideally still in planning/development, or otherwise newly-launched
- Ongoing and undergoing its first EA
- Ongoing and now undergoing a repeat EA, for example following completion of part/all of the earlier action plan, or following significant external changes.

The named manager will normally sign off Part 1 (section 4).

2. Purpose of the activity

Consider whether the activity will affect other people beyond staff and students. Legally, we also need to consider suppliers, contractors, visitors (for example recruitment days, public lectures) and members of the public on campus.

3. Evidence

Before you proceed to Question 4, gather the evidence needed to assess how far the activity is relevant to our equality duties. This might include existing evidence linking to the activity and its potential impact such as:

- Specifications, measurements etc underpinning the activity
- Results of recent surveys; complaints and grievances
- Experience of other organisations with a similar activity
- Staff, student and/or wider population data.

Sometimes it may pay to include more detailed research immediately as this may confirm the decision of whether or not to proceed. For a very extensive activity, detailed evidence will be needed anyway, and it may be more helpful to have this to hand sooner rather than later.

You may have to determine how much weight any incomplete, speculative or anecdotal evidence should carry.

You will need to have analysed sufficient valid and reliable data, where this is available, to determine the way forward. Equally, your initial findings may indicate a need for more detailed investigation (for example further consultation or data mining) in Part 2.

4. Relevance to equality duties

Here, based on prior evidence, you will need to categorise your activity in terms of its high, medium or low relevance to equality. This can be both the potential for adverse impact and for positive contribution.

Determining the level of relevance helps to prioritise the order in which you decide to work through your activities. It also helps you decide what level of detail is required and the extent to which you need to consult with others. You can find more guidance on the relevance test on the website.

Decision approval

The signatory should normally be the responsible manager named in section 1. They will have reached that decision in conjunction with the other named stakeholders. You may wish to add further notes to support your decision, particularly if it was marginal.

Even if you consider this is a low-impact activity, you might still draw on the assessment to make local changes or inform future activities.

PART 2 – Equality Assessment

Introduction

You need to complete the Part 2 assessment only when the Part 1 Screening identified potential high or medium impact(s). Part 2 will exist as a separate document.

Within your responses to Questions 6 and 7, it is important to reflect on any quantitative and/or qualitative data that was collected for Part 1 and used in order to assess the level of relevance to equality.

5. Activity

As this is a self-contained document, some of the information here will mirror your responses in Part 1.

You will need to identify a relevant committee or other group to whom to present the assessment. The committee's role will be to:

- Agree the findings and action plan
- Monitor and review the action plan at least once

6. Detrimental impact

You should consider whether this activity would a detrimental or negative impact on any of the listed grounds.

If so, tick the second column in the table and summarise your findings in the third column. If appropriate, add extra lines into the table to reflect subsets of a single characteristic. For example, an activity may have a significant detrimental impact on individuals with a certain disability, but have little impact on the wider disabled population.

You should ensure that action(s) to mitigate each detrimental point are included in section 8. Explain if you are unable to fully address a point in the near future due, for example, to dependency on another project being completed. In such cases consider a partial or temporary solution in the action plan.

7. Promoting equality of opportunity, inclusion and fostering good relations

Consider where there is potential to promote equality of opportunity, inclusion and/or good relations. Promoting equality of opportunity can link with wider requirements, initiatives, policies and values, and is often contributes to mainstreaming E&D more broadly.

Examples might include enabling reasonable adjustments more readily, or improved community engagement.

8. Action Plan

Please itemise any action you plan to do to change elements of the activity:

- a) to remove the potential for discrimination, or
- b) to promote equality of opportunity, inclusion and/or good relations

Your action plan should be SMART: Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

Add further columns and/or rows as required.

9. Reporting and review

Set out here your reporting mechanism. This should centre on an existing senior group or ongoing committee. Their role is to both monitor the action plan and where appropriate assist with implementation.

While the action plan will have target dates for individual activities, the review date that you give here is for a longer-term review of the activity and its EA.