

**EDC12D012**

**Title:** RCUK Expectations for Equality and Diversity  
**Circulation:** Equality and Diversity Committee – 19 February 2013  
**Agenda:** EDC12A002  
**Status:** Open  
**Version:** Final

---

## **BRIEFING NOTE – RCUK EXPECTATIONS FOR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

### **1. Background**

On 17 January 2013 RCUK issued the following statement of expectation for those institutions in receipt of their funding:

“In line with legislation in the *Equality Act 2010*, higher education institutions must have policies in place to address equality and diversity issues. RCUK has developed the [Statement](#) (*shown in full at Appendix 1 of this Committee document*) to assess whether these policies are working in practice, embedded at all levels in institutions, and take account of the whole spectrum of equality and diversity issues.

RCUK will review the overall effectiveness of organisations’ approaches at a departmental and institutional level through its Audit and Assurance Programme. We will also discuss equality and diversity during institutional visits.

Professor Rick Rylance, Chair of Research Councils UK, said: “RCUK promotes and supports equality and diversity within research at all levels. The rewards of diversity are significant: recruiting staff from the widest possible pool unlocks talent and thus contributes to the success of research and brings major benefits to the UK’s economy and society. However, despite positive progress, there are still too many groups under-represented and I hope that RCUK’s emphasis on equality and diversity will stimulate further action across the research community.”

The Statement sets out RCUK’s expectations and provides suggestions for evidence that institutions may wish to use. At this time, RCUK does not require formal accreditation, such as Athena SWAN, for grant funding; however, we will be reviewing and may consider such measures if there is no evidence of improvement.

David Willetts, Minister of State for Universities and Science, said: "We are committed to ensuring that the UK research base remains world-class and that we attract and retain the brightest and best researchers, regardless of their background. I welcome the RCUK Statement. It will provide an incentive to universities to improve the impact of their equality and diversity policies, ensuring that the workforce reflects society and makes use of all the talents available to it."

The Statement has been informed by RCUK's work over the last year with relevant sector organisations and universities to review ways in which equality and diversity can best be supported in research. "

The statement was also supported by David Ruebain Head of the Equality Challenge Unit, the body established to guide and advise the Higher Education Sector on equality and diversity matters, and which also runs and directs the Athena Swan award structure jointly with HEFCE.

## **2. The University's Current Position**

The University holds a Bronze award for Athena Swan and has several Schools undertaking awards as part of the drive towards Silver status. The primary trigger for this was the announcement of the NIHR to tie future funding to institutions who have achieved Silver Athena Swan status.

It is a member of Stonewall and has an objective of participating and gaining a rank within the Stonewall Workplace Equalities index. Time and resource permitting this will be done as a Spring and Summer project for inclusion in their Autumn 2013 ranking exercise.

The University has had in place a Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan which has achieved a wide range of actions across campus.

There are clearly stated equality objectives and parameters within the University's Action Plan to support the Implementation of the Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers which is regularly reviewed by the Research Staff Working Group chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor, Prof. David Richardson.

As part of REF2014 equality training has been provided to all those involved in selection panels and an impact assessment was undertaken as part of the Mock exercise. Both the training and the impact assessment will be repeated as part of the work moving towards the final REF submissions.

The University is a member of the Two Tick Scheme designed to support recruitment of disabled people.

Extensive work was recently carried out on Faith Consultation to ensure facilities are provided to support both students and staff from a wide range of practicing religions or those without a religion who may benefit from quiet or spiritual space. As a result of this a Faith Committee is to be established and a policy is being formulated.

The University has access to an increasing range of disaggregated statistics, both internally and through the national HEIDI database, which is helping decision makers understand how the demographic of staff and post graduate students is changing and from there how best to target support and ensure mechanisms for achieving wider equality.

### **3. Challenges**

Within its statement the RCUK says it has not yet tied funding streams to achievements of certain standards but that the situation will be monitored and if it is not satisfied with progress it will consider doing so.

It also lists seven different standards or resources for supporting achievement of equality, including Athena Swan, HEIDI and Stonewall. These represent only a few of the range of standards currently available to pursue. With most there is an annual cost – often in the range of £2,000 - £3,000 involved in membership per annum and, in addition, there is the cost of resource in maintaining the standard on an on-going basis. This means making well informed, targeted choices which will achieve a beneficial difference to students or staff, strengthening the University's position as a place of study and work.

### **4. Next Steps**

The Equality Office, in liaison with HRD, ISD and the Research Staff Working Group will compile an overview of existing, current and HEI relevant equality standards, costs involved in joining and maintaining each, attempted assessment of effectiveness, area of equality targeted. At the next Committee meeting a report will be made considering the main standards currently used within the HE sector and looking at how effective each might be in achieving real change.

The Equality Office will also review how we demonstrate our achievements on equality and how this can be improved or made fully transparent, to meet the requirements of RCUK institutional visits and Audits.

It is recommended that the University continue for this academic year with its current involvement with Athena Swan and planned involvement with the Stonewall Equality Index but doesn't extend rapidly in any other direction until an evaluation has been carried out and discussed. It may be feasible to link in with other standards if synergy can be achieved, complementing current work, and where a standard will result in real and effective change.

***Helen Murdoch***  
***Equality and Diversity Office***  
***Feb 2013***

### RCUK's Statement of Expectation for Equality and Diversity

An organisation's success and competitiveness depend on its ability to embrace diversity and draw on the skills, understanding and experience of its people. The potential rewards of diversity are significant: recruiting staff from the widest possible pool will unlock talent and make a major contribution to the impact of research and will benefit the economic and social wellbeing of the UK. RCUK expects that equality and diversity therefore is embedded at all levels and in all aspects of normal research practice.

RCUK expect those in receipt of Research Council Funding to:

- Promote and lead cultural change in relation to equalities and diversity
- Engage staff at all levels with improving the promotion of equality and diversity
- Ensure all members of the research workforce are trained and supported to address disincentives and indirect obstacles to recruitment, retention and progression in research careers
- Provide evidence of ways in which equality and diversity issues are managed at both an institutional and departmental level.

Research Councils recommend that the evidence includes:

- Participation in schemes such as Athena Swan, Project Juno, Investors in People, Stonewall, Diversity Champions, and other similar initiatives to demonstrate departmental level action
- Input prepared for the REF research environment at Unit of Assessment level.
- Appropriate benchmarking data (e.g. HEIDI equality reports from HESA data)
- Evidence of the application of the 'Every Researcher Counts' resource to support this work
- Other available and pertinent management information.

RCUK will:

- Review the overall effectiveness of the approach at a departmental/institutional level through its audit and assurance programme
- Discuss equality and diversity at institutional visits
- Reserve the right to introduce more formal accreditation requirement for grant funding should significant improvement not be evidenced.

Useful Links:

- Athena Swan
- Project Juno
- Research Excellence Framework
- HEIDI Equality
- Every Researcher Counts
- Investors in People
- Stonewall