


Sector impact assessment

Name of policy/initiative/project	Review of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)
1. What are the aims of this policy/initiative/project?	The review aims to evaluate the ECU, and its implications for the promotion of equality and diversity in the sector.
2. At what stage of the development process is this SIA being undertaken?	The assessment follows completion of the ECU evaluation in 2009, and precedes submission of its findings to the HEFCE Board.
3. Do existing data sources enable us to provide evidence of impact? If not, how should we best gather evidence?	There are a number of data sources that provide evidence of impact. These are: two independent evaluations (one in 2005 and another in 2009); annual reports, Board papers and observance, Funders Forum meetings, and HESA data on staff and students.
Regulatory impact assessment	
4. Will this policy/initiative/project require HEIs to pay for or carry out additional work in response to our demands? If yes, please describe the additional work	The Unit receives a total of £1,137,548 per academic year in funding, of which £967,608 comes from HEFCE. If anything, the services provided by the ECU reduce the amount of work required by institutions because it is a shared service.
5. If so, do the benefits of doing this to the delivery of HEFCE strategy, the HE sector, the HEI itself and others outweigh what we have asked HEIs to do? If yes please describe the benefits	<p>The ECU provides a shared service to the sector. If the Unit did not exist, HEFCE and HEIs would have to make a significant internal investment to promote equality and diversity and meet their legislative requirements, thereby helping them to avoid unwitting discrimination. This meets our equalities objectives under the existing legislation to promote equal opportunity, but also specifically our Key Performance Target 19 to increase the number of senior staff in HEIs from under-represented groups.</p> <p>We believe that the financial burden of top-slicing funding from HEI's core grant is offset by a variety of benefits to Institutions that outweigh the burden.</p>
6. How have you arrived at this judgement? Please refer to the results of consultation and other supporting evidence.	An Independent evaluation by PricewaterhouseCoopers showed that since its last evaluation in 2005, the Unit was highly regarded by the sector and had met all of its objectives. Findings from this evaluation concluded that the ECU, had raised the profile of equal opportunities in higher education (HE) and perceptions of their work was valued by the sector. It is a well-respected body that is recognised by the HE sector as a legitimate use of public funds, and for developing equality and diversity within the HE sector.
Equality and diversity	
7. Which individuals or groups are likely to be affected by this policy/initiative/project?	This policy will primarily affect staff and students within the HE sector, particularly those from disadvantaged or under-represented groups.
8. What is the likely impact on these groups (is it positive, negative or neutral)?	Positive. It will ensure that the needs of these groups are better met, targeted actions are taken to avoid unwitting discrimination, and that equal opportunities are promoted and embedded across the HE sector.
9. If negative, what actions have been taken to mitigate the effect?	We do not believe there are any negative effects on equality groups arising as a result of this policy.

10. Can this policy/initiative/project be used to ensure and promote both equality and diversity? If so, how?	Yes. This policy will help to ensure that equality and diversity is promoted throughout the sector. It also helps HEIs meet their obligations, and ensures that effective programmes and policies are developed to target discrimination and to increase equality of opportunity.
Sustainable development	
11. What is the likely impact of this policy/initiative/project on sustainable development? Is it positive, negative or neutral?	<p>On the negatives side, the ECU publishes a large number of guidance and reports and sends these to HEIs free of charge. Events, consultations and meetings all require a large amount of travel for the ECU staff to visit institutions, and for service users to access the ECU.</p> <p>On the positive side, the next three-year strategy will require the ECU to diversify their income stream and seek to become more economically self-sustaining.</p> <p>The ECU contributes positively to HEIs' social sustainability and social cohesion by promoting equality and diversity. It also contributes to economic sustainability in that it increases the potential for all students and staff to achieve by promoting equal opportunities.</p>
12. If negative, what actions have been taken to mitigate the impact?	<p>The ECU initiated an internal project in 2007 with the view toward improving staff awareness of environmental impact, working in eco-friendly ways, optimising the use of space within the ECU offices and storage facilities, and optimising operational capacity. The ECU now has an active recycling policy in place and all printing is done on recycled paper (including publications). They have also reviewed their lighting and heating requirements, and have instituted an 'AIR CON' policy. They are also looking at establishing a 'cycle to work' scheme and a flexible working policy for staff to reduce their environmental impact.</p> <p>In addition, the ECU publications are available online free of charge, and institutions are increasingly using this as a more effective method to access publications.</p>
13. How can this policy/initiative/project be used to create opportunities to support sustainable development? Please indicate how you have exploited these opportunities or why you have been unable to do so.	HEFCE can do more to encourage the ECU's practical expression of its commitment to sustainable development, including embedding it within their core services. HEFCE will include this requirement within their next funding agreement to make sustainable development issues a priority in their work.

Certification by Director

This is a fair assessment of the impact of this policy/initiative/project on the HE sector, taking into account the regulatory burden imposed. The policy/initiative/project has been appropriately designed to meet our equality obligations and promote equality and diversity and sustainable development.



Signed

Date 30 July 2009

