

GSA SUMMARY REPORT OF EQUALITY CONSIDERATION AND ASSESSMENT OF EQUALITY IMPACT

Date of Assessment:	November 2013	
School / Department:	Technical Support Department	
Lead member of staff:	John Ayers	
Location of impact assessment documentation (contact or web link):	j.ayers@gsa.ac.uk	
Area of decision making / Title of policy, procedure or relevant practice:	Policy / practice in respect of access to technical facilities for students	
Please indicate if this is:	New:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Existing/Reviewed:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Revised/Updated:	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Summary of how equality, diversity and participation have been considered and due regard given to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED):</p> <p><u>Background to TSD</u> The Technical Support Department (TSD) was created in 2011 to bring together student facing technical support staff from across all academic schools in GSA. Previously each individual department had developed their own policies and procedures in line with each academic school’s approach. It has been the aim of TSD to try to harmonise these approaches as much as possible to provide students with a common experience of support and access to facilities across GSA.</p> <p><u>Impact Assessment</u> This impact assessment forms part of the process of developing the TSD service across GSA. As part of the Equality Impact Assessment Process TSD have been looking at access to technical facilities and associated issues. By access we mean the process by which students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gain admission to core technical areas (shared general facilities and subject specific specialist areas) • gain admission to technical areas outside of their specialism • contact technical staff • receive technical help, guidance and skill development when it is required <p>It was found that whilst there were no formal policies around access there was a general aim of ‘fairness’ that had evolved historically. This had developed from the technical staff’s own sense of what the role entails and evolving mechanisms to cope with the number and breadth of students that we now support. For some staff fairness is a process of treating all students exactly the same, for others it is ensuring that all students receive the help that they need. In examining our approach we have aligned with the phrase: to “advance equality of opportunity” and, in reference to the Equality Act, recognise that different approaches are required depending not only on protected characteristics but also taking in to account individual student skill levels and background.</p> <p>This impact assessment provides a starting point for embedding equality consideration into the development of the TDS service across GSA. Further developments, including formal policy development, will be impact assessed on an ongoing basis.</p>		

Evidence used to make your assessment:

A series of focus groups were undertaken with students to gather initial qualitative evidence. This process was extremely enlightening will be repeated regularly.

Other evidence sources have included sitting on Staff Student Consultative Committees for all courses and using information gathered from departments during the annual Program Monitoring and Annual Review (PMAR) process. The academic department PMARs include analysis of student numbers, national and department specific student surveys and highlight specific issues raised by students, staff and external examiners.

The evidence base clearly lacks robust quantitative usage statistics for each technical area. Ways to capture usage information easily without disrupting student and staff workflow is currently being examined. A series of usage sampling approaches to capture baseline data for usage will be trialed. To enhance the evidence gathered in this way, opportunity for feedback to TSD from students will be widened using online and offline feedback forms and continue the focus groups.

Data for the gender split within the technical staff cohort informed the impact assessment. This indicates that the department corresponds with GSA as a whole. Within teams there is different picture with teams ranging from 71/30 (m/f) to 13/88 (m/f). See Appendix 1 for further detail. Data about other protected characteristics will be requested from HR.

Evidence will be examined as it is gathered, acting on individual feedback as it arises and collating usage data to enable us to see who uses the facilities. Analysis of the usage data will be undertaken and compared to GSA wide statistics to examine if any protected characteristics are unrepresented. This data gathering will be an on-going process and will be reported on as part of the PMAR process alongside any actions required to advance equality of opportunity.

Outline any positive or negative impacts you have identified:

Much of the evidence feedback received focussed on an uncertainty around knowing what facilities were available when and to whom. When students discussed times that they had been refused access they were unsure as to why this had happened or if it would happen again. There is a danger that students may misconstrue why they were refused access and incorrectly ascribe it to reasons linked to protected characteristics.

Conversations with technical staff focussed on difficulties around knowing whether someone has a protected characteristic and current mechanism for this being revealed to relevant staff in good time (especially for disability and pregnancy in relation to risks within workspaces). There was an awareness of speaking from a particular perspective (white, male, and middle class in many instances) and staff would appreciate guidance in understanding issues that may affect people with certain protected characteristics.

Summary of the actions you have taken or plan to take as a result:

Action	Timeframe
A robust evidence base will continue to be built through the sources and mechanisms highlighted above in order to understanding the equality impact of our policies and practice	Ongoing with annual report and review
In regard to access the access statement will be refined into a formal policy and impact assessed. Technical facilities will be designated as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • core drop in – induction required and then first come first served; • specialist accessible – access negotiated directly 	September 2014

with technical team; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> specialist embedded – project proposal and tutor support required. 	
Other related policies will be formalised, including impact assessments, by Sept 2014 and these will be published as a handbook as well as on our internal VLE.	September 2014
TDS will provide appropriate staff development opportunities in order that all staff will be made aware of their duties under the Equality act and encouraged to report any issues as they arise.	Programme of staff development to be in place by September 2014

Summary of what you anticipate will change as a result of your actions and where / when these will be reported and reviewed:

It is anticipated that students will be able to gain admission to technical areas and receive technical help, guidance and skill development in a consistent manner across all academic areas and regardless of protected characteristic.

In addition, staff will increase their understanding of equality related issues which will positively impact on the quality of service provided by TSD.

Monitoring and review will take place yearly via the PMAR process. We will build a review of the usage data and qualitative feedback in to our yearly planning cycle. I will request a yearly report from team leaders with a specific section on access/equality. These elements will inform the TSD strategic plan which will include an item to review access issues and inform the PMAR process.

State how these changes will contribute to the delivery of GSA's equality outcomes:

Actions support the delivery of equality outcomes (1), (2), (3) and (7) by ensuring that students are able to access the technical facilities and support they require regardless of protected characteristic and building capacity among staff to understand and positively engage with equality perspectives in their practice and interaction with students.

The outcome of your assessment:

- No action – no potential adverse impact
- Amendments or changes to remove barriers/ promote positive impact
- Proceed with awareness of adverse impact

Sign-off, authorisation and publishing:

Review Lead

Name	John Ayers
Position	Head of Technical Services Department
Signature	John Ayers
Date	November 2013

Executive Lead

Name	Craig Williamson
Position	Registrar
Signature	Craig Williamson
Date	April 2015

Equality Lead (Head of Student Support and Development)

Name	Jill Hammond
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Date	April 2015