

GSA SUMMARY REPORT OF EQUALITY CONSIDERATION AND ASSESSMENT OF EQUALITY IMPACT

Date of Assessment:	July 2017	
School or Executive Group Area:	Innovation School	
Department:	Product Design	
Lead member of staff: e-mail:	Irene Bell i.bell@gsa.ac.uk	
Area of decision making/title of policy, procedure, programme or relevant practice:	BDes/MEDes Product Design	
Please indicate if this is:	New:	
	Existing/Reviewed:	X

1. Summary of how equality, diversity and participation have been considered and due regard given to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED):

This equality impact assessment was undertaken in response to changes and updates to Programme Documentation for BDes/MEDes Product Design. It has been an opportunity to apply due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty in relation to our practices and how those practices address the three needs of PSED with regard to all of the protected characteristics identified.

The process of examining our Programme structures and processes through the lens of the PSED for each protected characteristic has been fundamental in identifying where good practice exists and areas that might need adjustment or refinement. It has been an opportunity to reflect on recent curricular and organisational changes and their effectiveness and to draw out areas of practice that could be enhanced or re-designed to better address issues of equality, diversity and participation within the taught curriculum. The ultimate aim would be to ensure that by mainstreaming equality, disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics will be minimised and at best eliminated. This reflects GSA's iterative approach to mainstreaming equality through continuous evaluation of our Programmes and the implementation of enhanced practice, reported and monitored through the PMAR process and through feedback mechanisms with staff and students through SSCC's, planning and curriculum development.

2. Evidence used to make your assessment:

The headings in section 3 will demonstrate how the subject and practice seeks to advance opportunities for all students including those with protected characteristics. The examples cited demonstrate good practice, particularly where there is equality consideration for specific protected characteristics.

Statistics were used to analyse trends, whilst anecdotal and qualitative evidence has been used to explore our practices and their impact on the student experience.

PMAR Equality and Diversity Statistics

- The PMAR Equality and Diversity statistics with regard to gender, domicile, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious belief and disability were analysed for the academic years 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16, to identify the characteristics and any trends related to the discipline's demographic and support the analysis of any changes or adjustments to our practice that might arise in light of the specific needs of people with protected

characteristics. From the data analysed there were no significant changes to the demographic over the three years. Product Design as a subject area has in general a 50/50 split with regard to female/male gender descriptions, 'other' was not introduced as a category until year 2015/16 of which there was no representation. Data reflects representation across sexual orientations and the percentage of students preferring not to disclose sexual orientation has fallen from 14% to 9% in the period 2013/14 to 2015/16. There was a slight decrease in the number of students entering education at age 16/17 (from 4% to 2.4%) over the three years and a slight increase in the number of students in the 40+ category (from 0% to 1.6%). There was an increase in the number of student disclosure of disability over the three years, in particular 68% of those disclosing specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D in 2015/16, compared to 47% in 2013/14. The statistical information would suggest that more emphasis should be given to teaching and learning strategies to ensure that the needs of people with specific learning difficulties are given due consideration in the design and delivery of curriculum.

3. Outline any positive or negative impacts you have identified:

An awareness of protected characteristics and diversity in general is implicit in the design and delivery of curriculum. The opportunity presented here allows for those considerations to become explicit by generating an active engagement with the promotion of a proactive and systematic approach that meet the needs of people from protected characteristic groups.

Induction

- The induction process is critical to the student experience. It introduces them to the institution and their individual programme of study and it is the means by which they establish a subject identity and a sense of 'place'. The process has been refined over the last year with the introduction to the programme and all its components from H&S to timetables and learning and teaching practices delivered in sessions in week zero, so that 'new' students are familiarised with their surroundings and have been introduced to the staff and the studios prior to the start of term. The first week of term is dedicated to an 'Icebreaker' project which is delivered across all year groups. Students in each year group work in small teams to produce a short film. The brief is particular to each year group and designed to further introduce new students to each other and the rest of the year groups. The project concludes with a celebratory viewing of all the short films, the process is student led and the outcomes unassessed. It immediately establishes a cohort identity, whilst creating an informal collegiality within the working teams. Students reported the importance of the project in establishing collegiate responsibility, introducing a commonality of purpose, and opening up the diversity of expression from day one.
- There are aspects of the induction process that could continue to be enhanced. Direct entry students are expected to merge into a year group that is already established. This raises the importance of the induction process for direct entry students, and at each stage of transition for all students. Advanced materials pre-entry and prior to transition points would augment and expedite the induction process.

Individual Requirement Forms

- IRF's enable staff who work with students with declared disabilities to understand the impact of the disability on study and to mitigate the effects of those, through the delivery of curriculum. Each student with an IRF is assigned a personal tutor whose role is to discuss individual circumstances and to ensure that reasonable adjustments where required are in place. This might include, for example, follow up briefings for students with forms of Dyslexia or with language issues or timetabling tutorials around healthcare appointments. IRF's are used to support individual disability related need and to inform the development of a more inclusive curriculum design and delivery as the principles that underpin the

reasonable adjustments are in most cases transferable More systematic use of this data to inform curriculum design is planned and reflected in [the](#) action plan below.

Curriculum Design

- Project briefs are standardised across all year groups and have been developed to include a contextualising narrative, timetable, learning outcomes, assessment criteria and deliverables. This is augmented with further instruction on the VLE prior to reviews or presentations outlining more detailed expectations for each stage of the project, both collective and individual. Students are able to access learning materials remotely and are able to negotiate the times of reviews and presentations if they have family commitments for example, that might demand flexibility. Projects are refined yearly in response to staff and student feedback, this ensures that the tasks set are accessible to all and that the subjects covered are open and inclusive. This means that students can pursue their own area of enquiry with the support of staff. Topics around equality in all its contexts are openly discussed in a supportive and inclusive environment.
- Product Design as a subject places a strong emphasis on Design practice that is research-driven, end user focussed and recognises that the contribution of users and stakeholders throughout the process is key to the delivery of relevant and appropriately designed outcomes. Collaborative working and peer learning forms a significant part of the way that the courses are taught and the students learn. As a result, students are encouraged to respect the contribution of others, appreciate difference and engage in critical dialogue around a wide range of topics and themes.

Dr Nicolette Makovicky External Examiner for Product Design 2015/16 reported that; *“students identified a general emphasis on collaboration (with external partners and between themselves) and peer-learning as the most positive aspect of their learning experience and a valuable skill for future employment”*.

Students may often be challenged by the topics explored, but this is seen as a means to develop academic discourse, to open up new ways of thinking and doing and to encourage greater participation in both academic and public life. This is demonstrated in the diversity of topics explored in final year projects and the confidence with which students approach issues of diversity and equality.

This was commented upon by our External examiner; *“The students display great confidence in the topics they choose to tackle for their final year. These are big ‘thematic’ challenges that require a high degree of user engagement, strategic thought and clear communication. This pursuit of meaningful problems appears to sit at the core of the course – which is also to be commended”*. (Chris Downs External Examiner for Product Design 2015/16)

Examples of this can be seen in the topics explored by students as part of their Degree Submission. Some of the subjects explored were drawn from personal experience. This demonstrates the confidence of our students to undertake projects around the subjects of sexual orientation and disability with the intention to not only raise awareness but to share their experience with their peers and in a public forum. This generates positive equality consideration and the development of design propositions that respond to their research findings. One student developed a concept for a community platform that enabled and empowered gender non conformists on their unique journeys of self-discovery. Their design proposition focused on the creation of a community platform that supports social mobility and activism of gender non-conformists. Another student developed a design proposition that approached autism from an inclusive perspective that bridges the divide between Autistic and neurotypical people to create new ways to explore engage and empathise with Autism.

This would indicate that the academic environment provides the necessary support to foster good relations and to affect positive equality impact.

Collaboration however involves group work and group work may be challenging where communication skills are critical and where expectations are primarily peer driven. It should be acknowledged that many students thrive in this scenario and there is no evidence that students experience prejudice or feel compromised in a collaborative working environment.

- The curriculum is driven by an approach to user research and engagement that is underpinned by ethical consideration of the people the students are working with and the environments they are working in. This creates a culture where the needs of 'others' is foremost and is fundamental to the ethos of the Programme.
- Although Learning outcomes are described in accordance with year level objectives there is scope to consider in more depth how they may be perceived and understood by students.

Student Engagement

- The SSCC(Student Staff Consultative Committee) is the programme forum for students to feedback to staff on teaching and learning practices, projects, environment and policy. A representative is elected from each year group to gather comments from the other students in their year group and to represent and communicate the student voice. This may address issues around equality and diversity for example; one student raised the question of cultural and religious beliefs when the students were asked to develop a brand identity for an alcoholic drinks company. This generated an open discussion around religious belief and the cultural phenomena particular to a specific religion. It raised the question of equality in the project materials delivered and how we might mitigate any negative impact or exclusion as a result of cultural diversity in live project briefs.
- Student feedback and comment is during formative feedback, pastoral and 1:1 tutorials and through QEQ's (Quality Enhancement Questionnaires). Issues of inequality or identity based experience can be raised at these points. The External Examiner commented that students "praised their tutors for providing a supportive learning environment in which staff were available for contact and put an emphasis on their wellbeing" (*Nicolette Mackovicky External examiners report 2015/16*). This provides further evidence that students feel supported academically to explore difficult or challenging subjects.
- Pastoral tutorials have been re-introduced to support students new to the institution. Students meet with a member of staff 1:1 to discuss their experience and introduction to the programme. It is an opportunity to test if student expectations are being met. Students at this point may use the informality of this interaction to discuss particular needs.

Curriculum Delivery

- The curriculum is designed around timetabled teaching points and self-directed study. This enables students to plan their study time according to individual requirements. For example, self-directed study time might be organised around childcare commitments or prayer time. This structure develops time management skills and encourages autonomy and independence. Students are encouraged to email or speak to staff with regard to absence whether this is to adhere to religious holidays or to fulfil carer responsibilities or attend medical appointments.
- Timetabling is critical to the management of Programmes for both staff and students. Timetables are published yearly and all projects contain detailed breakdowns of individual tasks, staffing and project expectations. These are available in a physical and digital format

and can be accessed remotely in the event of a student being unable to attend, for example, due to religious holidays or childcare commitments.

- Student Handbooks are updated annually to ensure that information is active and current. This is available digitally and provides information on the services available to all students, including codes of practice, curriculum content and curriculum delivery. This ensures that all students are aware of their responsibilities, it promotes autonomy and fosters good relations.
- Collaboration involves group work and group work may have a negative impact on people with certain protected characteristics where communication skills might be critical and where expectations are primarily peer driven. It should be acknowledged that many students thrive in this scenario and there is no evidence that students experience prejudice or feel compromised in a collaborative working environment in relation to their identity or needs regardless of protected characteristic.

Staffing

- The current staff demographic in relation to gender types mirrors the student gender demographic with 3 female to 3 male members of staff.

4.Actions you have taken or planned as a result of your findings:

Action	Equality Impact	Person responsible	Time frame
Review Programme ILO's to ensure that they are accessible to all students and that different learning strategies and means of demonstrating achievement are considered in their re-evaluation.	Advance equality regardless of protected characteristic by providing clear criteria for achievement	Programme Leader & Programme staff.	September 2018
Review student feedback mechanisms to ensure that these are effective and that the data collected can be used to monitor equality impact across the delivery of curriculum.	Advance equality by explicitly seeking to learn more about students identity based experience to more effectively anticipate need and enhance the inclusiveness/accessibility of the curriculum and its delivery	Programme Leader and Programme staff	September 2018
Monitor student retention in relation to protected characteristics.	Generate a more accurate picture of the stats related to student retention to identify any relationship between protected characteristics and students who take leave of absence or who withdraw and use this data to inform programme enhancement.	Programme Leader	September 2018

Evaluate and re-design the current applicant interview process within the Programme with due regard to applicants with disability or other needs related to a protected characteristic.	Advance equality by ensuring that all applicants are fully informed of the process in advance of the interview and their needs anticipated and met.	Programme Leader	March 2018
Consult with students about the accessibility of curriculum including study and field trips.	Maximise participation rates and advance equality by ensuring our curriculum opportunities are accessible to all.	Programme Leader and programme team.	September 2018
Review and enhance the induction process for new students, including direct entry. Consider pre-entry materials and a change in the format of the programme welcome induction in week zero.	Provide an accessible and informative introduction to school policy, the programme structure, and the curriculum to ensure that all students are able to fully participate in all programme activities.	Programme Leader and Programme team	September 2017
Integrate equality considerations more formally within the programme planning process and the design of curriculum.	Ensure that all programme staff are fully aware of PSED and implement a team based approach to designing a programme which is inclusive and anticipates equality impact	Programme Leader and Programme staff	September 2018
Develop a more robust induction and monitoring process through pastoral tutorial specifically for advanced entry students.	Minimise any negative impact through discussion with staff in 1:1 tutorials by ascertaining if issues of inequality or discrimination have been raised and by responding to those in a timely and appropriate manner.	Programme Leader	September 2017
Review and update handbook glossary by highlighting key terms such as "group work", "collaboration".	Improve student understanding and capacity to engage with others in a respectful manner and foster good working relationships between people who share a protected characteristic and those that don't.	Programme Leader	September 2017

5. Where/when will progress and the outcomes of your actions be reported and reviewed:

Progress and outcome of proposed actions will be reported in the Programme Monitoring Annual Report. The effectiveness of any actions will be monitored through student feedback mechanisms and recorded through the PMAR process as part of the programme enhancement plan.

6. How will your actions and intended outcomes contribute to the delivery of GSA's equality outcomes:

- Equality Outcome 1 – by ensuring that a culture of respect for self and others is practiced and where prejudice is challenged and good relations fostered.
- Equality Outcome 2 – by ensuring that the diverse needs of the student cohort are anticipated and provided for through an environment that is accessible and inclusive and that curriculum is designed around diverse needs.
- Equality Outcome 5 – by ensuring that the staff cohort represents a diverse demographic that contributes to the design and development of curriculum, teaching and research within GSA.

The outcome of your assessment:

No action (no potential for negative or positive impact)

Action to remove barriers/mitigate negative impact

Action to promote positive impact

Sign-off, authorisation and publishing**Review Lead**

Name	Irene Bell
Position	Programme Leader
Signature	
Date	09/08/2017

Executive Lead

Name	Dr Gordon Hush
Position	Head of The Innovation School
Signature	Gordon Hush
Date	30-08-17

Equality Lead (Head of Student Support and Development)

Signature	Jill Hammond
Date	30.08.17