

Equality Impact Assessment of Procedure 09: Suitability / Fitness to Practice

By: Beth Edwards

Date: 04 December 2025

Project Aim	
<i>What does the project aim to achieve? (Please note the financial and / or non-financial outcomes and benefits).</i>	
<p>The Suitability / Fitness to Practice procedure seeks to ensure that there is a fair, transparent and consistent process in place for students who are involved in a suitability / fitness to practice investigation whilst undertaking a professional programme. This procedure identifies the processes that will be undertaken, the roles and responsibilities of staff and students, and timelines.</p>	

Project Title	Equality Impact Assessment of Procedure 09
Project Lead	Beth Edwards
Project Team	Kelly Fisher

What impact does the project, policy or practice have on people that share a protected characteristic?	
<p><i>Under the general Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) set out in the Equality Act 2010, the University must give 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The protected characteristics covered by the equality duty are: age, disability, gender reassignment (Trans), pregnancy and maternity, race (ethnicity), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation and the duty also applies to carers. The law requires that the University demonstrates it has given 'due regard' to the aims of the equality duty in its planning and decision-making processes.</i></p>	

Public Sector Equality Duty Requirements	Evidence	Detail of Impact (Positive/Neutral/Negative)
Eliminating Discrimination <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Is the project, policy or practice likely to treat anyone less favourably or disadvantage them because of their protected characteristics?</i>• <i>Could the project, policy or practice lead to different outcomes for different protected groups?</i>	<p>The policy explicitly requires that processes be non-discriminatory, impartial, and compliant with the Equality Act 2010, GDPR, and Data Protection legislation.</p> <p>A diverse panel is used when reviewing cases, supporting objectivity and reducing the risk of bias.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments are required on a case-by-case basis, particularly for students with disabilities, long-term health conditions, pregnancy, or mental health conditions.</p>	<p>Neutral to Positive, provided implementation is consistent.</p> <p>There is potential risk of negative impact if mental or physical health conditions are not considered with appropriate adjustment; mitigated through Wellbeing & Inclusivity Services and PLSPs.</p> <p>Clear safeguards exist to prevent discrimination and ensure fairness.</p>

	<p>Fitness to Practise (FtP) concerns may originate from health or disability-related issues; however, the Procedure emphasises early support and reasonable adjustments before any adverse judgement is made.</p> <p>The latest Annual Student Equality Report identifies that 25% of students at Bangor disclosed a disability, highlighting the importance of consistent application of adjustments.</p> <p>One of the reasons where a concern is raised is professional behaviour and attitude. Professional standards, expectations and relevant professional benchmarks are included in introductory content to courses. Of cases where this is the concern, action plans have been put into place on the majority of occasions, with progression to stage 2 of the process being less frequent. Student reflection can be used as an action within this procedure at School level.</p> <p>A proportion of cases related to issues such as falsifying documentation or criminal records, areas where equality mitigations are limited due to professional regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Overall, examples of reasons why someone is not suitable / fit to study (defined in point 6 of the Procedure) vary. In a case example of one academic school, the example of</p>	<p>Requirements for students to report changes in circumstances may disproportionately affect students with certain disabilities or mental health conditions; however, available support, confidentiality measures, and flexible responses reduce this risk.</p>
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	<p>'physical or mental health condition which, despite reasonable adjustments or treatment, affects a student's fitness to practise' was not used during the 2024-2025 academic year.</p>	
<p>Advancing Equality of Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Will the needs of staff and students with different protected characteristics be met?</i> • <i>Could the project, policy or practice lead to increased take-up / participation by protected groups?</i> • <i>Are there any opportunities to proactively advance equality for specific protected groups and / or between protected groups?</i> 	<p>Procedures include support from Wellbeing & Inclusivity Services. Students who disclose a disability or health condition are supported through the Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP) process, ensuring individualised adjustments aligned with course requirements.</p> <p>Opportunity for reasonable adjustments and flexible timelines. The timelines and processes associated with this procedure for students on programmes governed by professional bodies, for example, Nursing, include consideration of reasonable adjustments.</p> <p>Policy applies equally to students across a wide range of professional disciplines, supporting equal access to professions.</p> <p>Includes provisions for alternative outcomes (e.g., transfer to a non-placement programme).</p> <p>Numbers of cases, cause and outcomes are monitored with consideration given to equality characteristics and reported via institutional committees. Due to this line of reporting, this information is not provided in this impact statement.</p>	<p>Positive</p> <p>Supports equal access to professional careers by ensuring only behaviour or capability concerns (not protected status) are assessed.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments allow disabled students or those with health conditions to continue where appropriate. For students who declare a disability, health, or other additional support need, support will be offered prior to commencing studies and appropriate adjustments put in place (including consideration of the course requirements) through a Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP).</p>

<p>Promoting Good Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Have steps been taken to tackle prejudice and promote understanding?</i> • <i>How have relevant individuals, groups or organisations been involved / consulted in developing and impact assessing the project?</i> 	<p>The policy aims to protect the public and uphold professional standards, which promotes trust in students entering professions.</p> <p>Refers to national regulatory bodies with equality obligations.</p> <p>Provides transparency and accountability through structured processes and rights of representation.</p>	<p>Promotes professional integrity and public confidence in students from all backgrounds.</p> <p>Encourages fair treatment and clarity of expectations.</p> <p>Policy promotes a culture of respect and accountability, helping maintain good relations between the University, placement providers, and diverse communities.</p>
<p>Based on the above assessment, what course of action is required?</p>		
<p>No major change required</p> <p><i>The assessment has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to advance equality have been taken.</i></p>		<p>No adverse impact has been identified however the policy will continue to be reviewed in line with national guidelines and best practice of intervals no less than every 3 years.</p>
<p>Make adjustments to remove barriers or to better advance equality</p> <p><i>Note the adjustments that will be made to remove barriers identified by the assessment or to better advance equality.</i></p>		<p>N/A</p>
<p>Continue despite having identified some potential for adverse impacts or missed opportunities to advance equality</p> <p><i>Note the steps that will be taken to reduce or mitigate the adverse impacts.</i></p>		<p>N/A</p>
<p>Stop and rethink</p> <p><i>The assessment shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. Note the action to be taken to stop and / or rethink the project.</i></p>		<p>N/A</p>

How will the actual impact of the project, policy or practice be monitored once it has been implemented?

Continuous monitoring and reporting to Senate Regulations and Special Cases Committee occurs as part of the annual University Calendar. Any equality issues that arise will be explored and any reasonable adjustments shall be made.

This procedure is reviewed every 3 years by the Deputy Academic Registrar: Quality & Standards.

Publication

This Equality Impact Assessment will be published alongside the Procedure through Bangor University website

<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/regulations/index.php.en>