

## Equality Screening Template – Section 75 of Northern Ireland Act 1998

**Please complete the coversheet details below:**

**Policy title: Review of the Postgraduate Award (PGA) Scheme**

**Decision (delete as appropriate)**

~~Policy screened in~~

~~Policy screened out **with** mitigation or an alternative policy adopted~~

Policy screened out **without** mitigation or an alternative policy adopted

**Contact: Johanne McCullough**

**Date of completion:**

**For Equality Unit Completion:**

Amendments requested?                      Yes / No

**Date returned to Business Area:**

**Date final version received:**

### **Content**

**Part 1. Policy scoping** – asks public authorities to provide details about the policy, procedure, practice and/or decision being screened and what available evidence you have gathered to help make an assessment of the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

**Part 2. Screening questions** – asks about the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories. Details of the groups consulted and the level of assessment of the likely

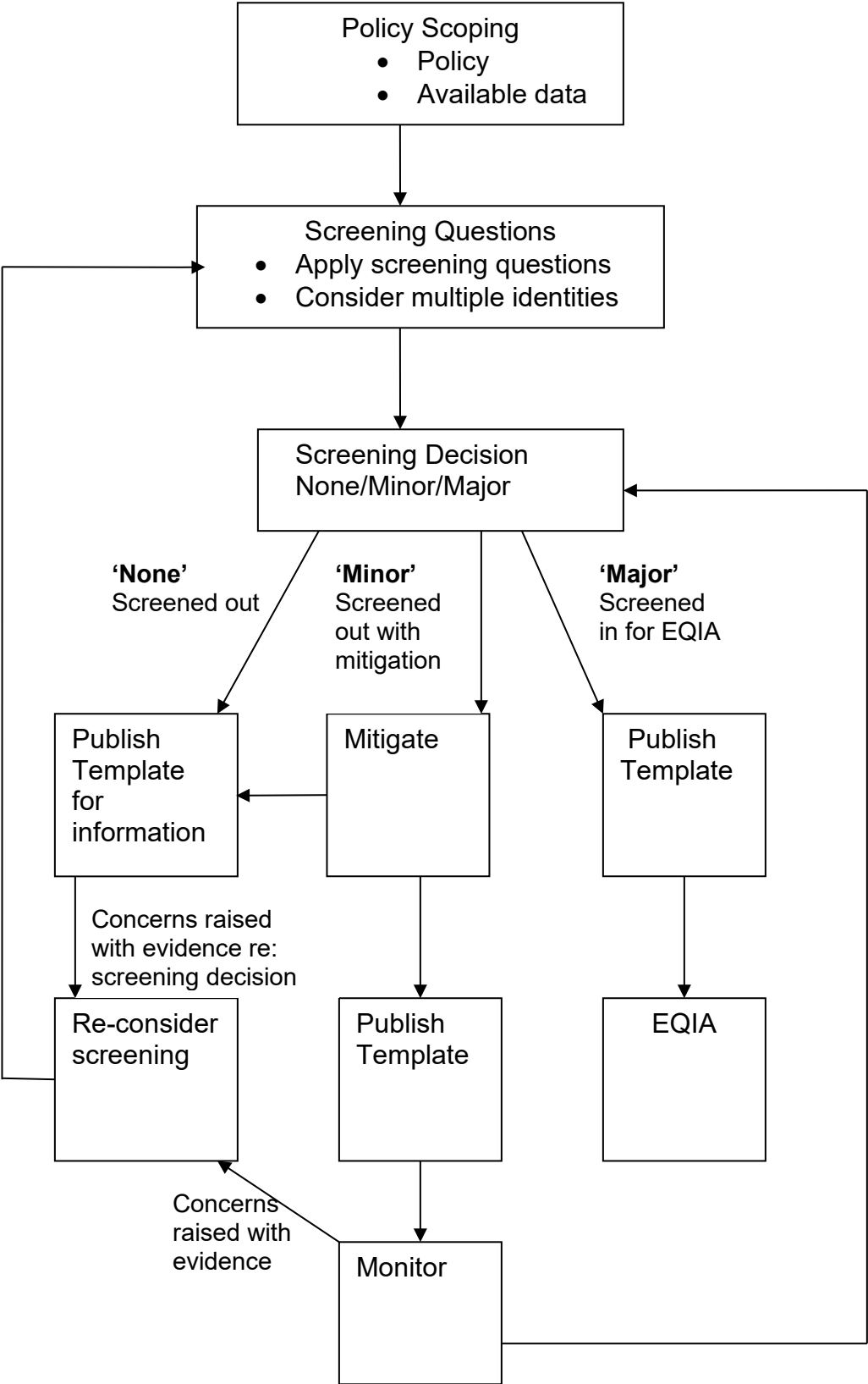
impact. This includes consideration of multiple identity and good relations issues.

**Part 3. Screening decision** – guides the public authority to reach a screening decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA), or to introduce measures to mitigate the likely impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

**Part 4. Monitoring** – provides guidance to public authorities on monitoring for adverse impact and broader monitoring.

**Part 5. Approval and authorisation** – verifies the public authority's approval of a screening decision by a senior manager responsible for the policy.

Flowchart for the equality screening process and decision.



## Part 1. Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

### Information about the policy

Name of the policy

Review of the DfE Postgraduate Award (PGA) Scheme

---

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

Revised

What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes)

The aim of this review is to consider the options for delivering the DfE Postgraduate Award Scheme going forward to ensure it aligns with the Minister's economic priorities, reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland Economy and delivers value for money in relation to the funding provided by the Department.

Options include:

1. Business as Usual - Continue to ringfence funding for PGA Scheme at current level.
2. Business As Usual optimised – Continue to ringfence research funding for PGA Scheme at current level with changes to enhance Scheme impact and align more closely with Ministerial priorities - (e.g. this could include a focus on specific sectors, with quotas set for place-based awards / students from specific backgrounds or with specific characteristics, or an increase in quotas for international/non – UK resident students).
3. Increase Scheme funding to support 1000 PhDs p.a (staged over 3 years, in line with PhD duration). Increase (by 37%) the number of funded PhDs from current level of 729

to 1000 p.a, as per original target of the DfE Higher Education Strategy “Graduating to Success” (2013-20), via securing an increase in allocated R&I funding or by increasing the proportion of the annual R&I block grant ringfenced for PhDs.

4. Reduce Scheme funding by 50% (staged over 3 years in line with PhD duration) – continue to fund all industry/university collaborative (CAST) PhDs and a reduced number of general PhDs and seek to reallocate 50% of funding as annual block grant R&I funding.
5. Reduce Scheme funding by 80% (staged over 3 years in line with PhD duration) – continue to fund university/industry collaborative (CAST) PhD awards only and seek to reallocate remaining funding as annual block grant R&I funding.
6. Close the Scheme (staged over 3 years in line with PhD duration) and reallocate all funding as annual block grant R&I funding.

Should the preferred option for delivering the Scheme include the continuation of ringfenced funding to support PhDs, the consultation will include proposed changes to the DfENI Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) to align them more closely with the UKRI’s T&Cs. Key proposed changes include:

- Change to eligibility criteria to define ROI nationals as ‘Home students’.
- Increase the quota of international students eligible from 15% to 30%.
- Availability of part time Studentships.
- Enhanced leave provision including short-term leave for emergencies and compassionate leave.
- Provision of Keeping in Touch (KiT) days in respect of maternity leave.
- Change to the hours of paid work students are allowed to undertake during studentship.

The DfE Scheme ringfences funding to support the equivalent of 729 PhDs each year, split between QUB (473) and UU (256). This does not represent the full postgraduate PhD population in NI HEIs, as PhDs may also be funded directly by the HEIs, be self-funded or receive funding from charities and other funding bodies such as the UKRI Research Councils. **This consultation is in respect of the DfE funded postgraduate PhD population only, which currently amounts to around 30% of the total number of PhDs in NI.**

---

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?

If so, explain how.

There are no specific Section 75 categories expected to benefit from the options being reviewed under the Consultation as to how the funding is distributed to the HEIs i.e. whether the Department continues to ringfence the funding for the PGA Scheme, or the research funding is provided to the HEIs via QR/HEIF (subject to necessary approvals).

It is expected, however, that the following Section 75 categories would benefit from the proposed changes to the current Terms and Conditions which are included in the Consultation:

**Age:** The current PGA Scheme is open to students of all ages from 18 onwards who hold a first or upper second-class degree. However, the changes to the policy are designed to ease access to postgraduate PhD research study in particular, which mature students (21 and over) are demonstrably more likely to utilise and need. Therefore, older age groups of students are expected to benefit from this policy.

**Marital Status:** The current PGA Scheme does not exclude anyone on the basis of marital status. However, the changes to the policy are designed to ease access to postgraduate research PhD study in particular, which students of a marital status other than single are more likely to utilise and need. Therefore, this group of students is expected to benefit from this policy.

**Dependants:** The current PGA Scheme does not exclude anyone on the basis of whether or not they have dependants. However, the changes to the policy are designed to ease access to postgraduate research study in particular, which students with dependants are more likely to utilise and need. Therefore, this group of students is expected to benefit from this policy.

**Women:** The current PGA Scheme does not exclude anyone on the basis of gender. However, the changes to the policy are designed to ease access to postgraduate research study in particular, which women who are typically responsible for caring responsibilities are more likely to utilise and need. Therefore, this group of people is expected to benefit from this policy.

**Disabled:** The current PGA Scheme does not exclude anyone on the basis of disability. However, the changes to the policy are designed to ease access to postgraduate research study in particular, which students with a disability are more likely to utilise and need. Therefore, this group of students is expected to benefit from this policy.

---

## Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The PGA Scheme was introduced in 2002 by the then Minister for Employment and Learning. This review has been led by the Department for the Economy's Higher Education Research and Knowledge Exchange Branch (HERKEB), headed by June Faccini.

---

## Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Scheme is owned by the Department for the Economy and is implemented by the Department's Higher Education Division (HERKEB), Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and

Ulster University (UU). The Scheme is administered by the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on the Department's behalf.

---

### **Implementation factors**

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

If yes, are they (please delete as appropriate)

financial

~~legislative~~

other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### **Main stakeholders affected**

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon? (please delete as appropriate)

staff

service users

other public sector organisations

~~voluntary/community/trade unions~~

other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### **Other policies with a bearing on this policy**

- what are they?
- who owns them?

- The draft Programme for Government 2021 owned by the Northern Ireland Executive includes the outcome 'Everyone Can Reach Their Potential' and makes reference to 'Skills and Attainment'.
- Various policies within the Department will impact upon this policy, including in particular the implementation of the Minister's Economic Vision and the Skills Strategy.
- Budgeting policies at a UK level will have an impact on this policy.



## • Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data. The Commission has produced this guide to [signpost to S75 data](#).

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

DfE publishes statistics on enrolments at NI Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by available equality categories. [Enrolments at NI HEIs by equality categories - 2017/18 to 2021/22 | Department for the Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](#) These are sourced from Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data. It should be noted that this information is in respect of all HE enrolments and is not specific to those students funded by DfE, however, it does demonstrate the current profile of students at the local HEIs.

Available HESA statistics for Academic Year (AY) 2021-22 are included in the relevant sections below. The following points should be noted in relation to these statistics:

### Notes:

1. Information on disability and ethnicity is collected on the basis of a student's self-assessment.
2. Religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and therefore can have a high non-response rate.
3. Information on religion, marital status and dependents is only collected for NI domiciled students studying at NI HE institutions.
4. Information on ethnicity is only collected for NI domiciled students studying at NI HE institutions.
5. Enrolments at the OU (where the national centre is located in NI) have been removed from the figures for religion, marital status and dependants due to high levels of unknowns.
7. Due to small numbers and issues of disclosure, students of 'other' sex are included in total figures, but not in separate breakdowns.
7. To prevent the identification of individuals, figures in the attached table are rounded to the nearest 5, with 0, 1 and 2 rounded to 0.  
Due to rounding, the sum of numbers in each row or column may not match the total shown.
8. Percentages are based on unrounded figures and rounded to the nearest integer.
9. Students with unknown information/information refused are included in totals and percentage calculations.

Equality monitoring information in respect of the PGA Scheme is collected each year by the HEIs as a condition of funding. The information is obtained for both applications and awards. Data received for the years 2021/22 and 2022/23 (where relevant) has been used as evidence for this impact assessment.

1. Data collection categories for groupings vary between the HEIs and HESA categories making direct comparisons difficult. This has been rectified for 2023/24
2. Categories used by each of the HEI for data collection categories vary from applications and awards.
3. Ulster University does not collect data on sexual orientation. This is an optional category.

## Religious belief evidence / information:

Information on religious belief is only collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in respect of Northern Ireland (NI) domiciled students studying in NI. Moreover, it is important to note that religious affiliation is not a mandatory question, and it can have a high non response rate.

The latest available data (for academic year 2021/22), shows the following religious composition of postgraduate researchers at NI Higher education Institutions (HEIs), with Roman Catholic students outweighing the number of Protestant students:

### NI domiciled enrolments at NI HEIs (exc OU) by religion - 2021/22

| Religion       | PGR          | PGR % | Total enrolments | Total enrolments (%) |
|----------------|--------------|-------|------------------|----------------------|
| Protestant     | 425          | 35%   | 12,920           | 31%                  |
| Roman Catholic | 510          | 42%   | 22,010           | 52%                  |
| Other          | 40           | 3%    | 680              | 2%                   |
| Not known      | 75           | 6%    | 2,080            | 5%                   |
| No Religion    | 165          | 14%   | 4,260            | 10%                  |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>1,210</b> |       | <b>41,950</b>    |                      |

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

The Equality Monitoring Data returned by the HEIs for 2021/22 and 2022/23 in respect of religious belief for the PhD studentships is reflective of the religious composition of the entire student population in NI and Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) student population. The exception was QUB awards in 2021/22 when more Protestants were awarded studentships than Catholics, but this appears to be a one-off rather than reflective of the general trend, with more studentships awarded to Catholics (25%) than Protestants (20%) once again in 2022/23.

This suggests that students of certain religious beliefs are not disproportionately more likely to utilise or need the PGA Scheme. It is worth noting the high no response rate for this category at QUB (blank) and UU (information withheld).

### QUB and UU Awards for DfE funded PGA Scheme 2021/22 and 2022/23 by Religion

| Religion             | PGA Scheme 2021/22 |              |           |             | PGA Scheme 2022/23 |              |           |             |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
|                      | QUB Awards         | QUB Awards % | UU Awards | UU Awards % | QUB Awards         | QUB Awards % | UU Awards | UU Awards % |
| Information Withheld |                    |              |           |             | 75                 | 48%          |           |             |
| Protestant           | 46                 | 27%          | 89        | 30%         | 32                 | 20%          | 83        | 21%         |
| Roman Catholic       | 43                 | 25%          | 104       | 35%         | 39                 | 25%          | 143       | 36%         |
| Other Christian      | 3                  | 2%           |           |             |                    | 0%           |           |             |

|                |            |     |            |     |            |    |            |     |
|----------------|------------|-----|------------|-----|------------|----|------------|-----|
| No religion    | 11         | 6%  |            |     | 10         | 6% |            |     |
| Blank          | 68         | 40% |            |     |            |    |            |     |
| other religion | 1          | 1%  |            |     | 1          | 1% |            |     |
| Muslim         |            |     |            |     |            |    |            |     |
| Neither        |            |     | 106        | 35% |            |    | 166        | 42% |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>172</b> |     | <b>299</b> |     | <b>157</b> |    | <b>392</b> |     |

Source: Data provided by HEIs

## Political Opinion evidence / information:

The PGA scheme does not exclude anyone on the basis of political opinion.

Information on political opinion is not collected by HESA or via the equality monitoring form for the PGA Scheme. It is understood, however, that there is typically a strong correlation between religious belief and political opinion in Northern Ireland and, on that basis, the evidence pertaining to religious belief could be broadly taken to apply here also.

## Racial Group evidence / information:

Information on ethnicity is only collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in respect of UK domiciled students studying in NI.

As shown below, the ethnic composition of UK domiciled postgraduate research students is similar to the known ethnic composition of the total NI student population. White is by far the most prevalent grouping in all categories, reflective of the ethnic composition of NI's total population.

As shown below, the ethnic composition of the PGA scheme or the total Postgraduate Research population in NI, is not dissimilar to the known ethnic composition of the total NI student population. White is by far the most prevalent grouping in all categories, reflective of the ethnic composition of NI's total population.

This evidence, therefore, does not suggest that any racial grouping in particular is more likely to utilise or need the Postgraduate Award Scheme and associated financial support.

### UK domiciled enrolments at NI HEIs by ethnicity - 2021/22

| Ethnicity       | PGR   | PGR % | Total enrolments | Total enrolments (%) |
|-----------------|-------|-------|------------------|----------------------|
| White           | 1,320 | 92%   | 48,365           | 92%                  |
| Irish traveller | 0     | 0%    | 25               | 0%                   |
| Black           | 15    | 1%    | 430              | 1%                   |
| Indian          | 10    | 1%    | 330              | 1%                   |
| Pakistani       | 5     | 0%    | 120              | 0%                   |

|                             |              |    |               |    |
|-----------------------------|--------------|----|---------------|----|
| Bangladeshi                 | 0            | 0% | 50            | 0% |
| Chinese                     | 5            | 0% | 170           | 0% |
| Other Asian                 | 10           | 1% | 335           | 1% |
| Mixed                       | 25           | 2% | 545           | 1% |
| Other                       | 10           | 1% | 175           | 0% |
| Unknown/Information refused | 35           | 2% | 1,750         | 3% |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>1,430</b> |    | <b>52,290</b> |    |

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

### NI HEI Awards for DfE funded PGA Scheme in 2021/22 by Racial Group

| Ethnicity                   | Total PGA Scheme 2021/22 |             |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
|                             | Number                   | %           |
| White                       | 417                      | 89%         |
| Black                       | 6                        | 1%          |
| Asian                       | 15                       | 3%          |
| Mixed                       | 5                        | 1%          |
| Other                       | 28                       | 6%          |
| Unknown/Information refused |                          |             |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>471</b>               | <b>100%</b> |

### QUB and UU Awards for DfE funded PGA Scheme 2021/22 by Racial Grouping

| Ethnicity                                | PGA Scheme 2021/22 |              |           |            |
|--|--------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
|  | QUB Awards         | QUB Awards % | UU Awards | UU Award % |
| White                                    | 153                | 89%          | 264       | 88%        |
| Arab                                     | 1                  | 1%           |           |            |
| Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi     | 1                  | 1%           |           |            |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian          | 2                  | 1%           |           |            |
| Asian or Asian British - Pakistani       |                    | 0%           | 2         | 1%         |
| Black or Black British African/Caribbean | 3                  | 1%           | 3         | 1%         |
| Chinese                                  | 1                  | 1%           | 2         | 1%         |
| Mixed - White & Asian                    | 1                  | 1%           |           |            |
| Mixed - White & Black Caribbean          | 2                  | 1%           |           |            |
| Other Ethnic Background                  |                    | 0%           | 17        | 6%         |
| Other Asian Background                   | 4                  | 2%           | 3         | 1%         |
| Other Mixed background                   | 2                  | 1%           |           |            |
| Other Black Background                   |                    | 1%           |           |            |
| Indian                                   |                    |              | 8         | 3%         |

|                   |     |    |     |  |
|-------------------|-----|----|-----|--|
| Prefer Not to Say | 1   | 1% |     |  |
| Not Stated/Blank  | 1   | 1% |     |  |
| <b>Total</b>      | 172 |    | 299 |  |

Source: Data provided by HEIs

As shown above, the ethnic composition of the PGA scheme is not dissimilar to the known ethnic composition of the total postgraduate research students and NI student population. White is by far the most prevalent grouping in all categories, reflective of the ethnic composition of NI's total population.

This evidence, therefore, does not suggest that any racial grouping in particular is more likely to utilise or need the Postgraduate award scheme and associated financial support.

---

### Age evidence / information:

HESA collects information on the age of enrolments, with categories ranging from 20 and under, 21 to 24, and 25 and over. For the year 2021/22, the HEIs provided data on the age of PGA studentships using different categories and therefore a direct comparison of the figures is not possible.

As shown below, the known age composition of postgraduate research students is different from that of the total NI student population. However this is expected as postgraduate students are typically 21+ years of age.

#### Enrolments at NI HEIs by age group - 2021/22

| Age group          | PGR   | PGR % | Total enrolments | Total enrolments (%) |
|--------------------|-------|-------|------------------|----------------------|
| 20 and under       | 0     | 0%    | 21,790           | 31%                  |
| 21 to 24 inclusive | 520   | 22%   | 18,085           | 26%                  |
| 25 - 29 years      | 845   | 35%   | 10,800           | 16%                  |
| 30 years and over  | 1,015 | 43%   | 18,895           | 27%                  |
| <b>Total</b>       | 2,380 |       | 69,565           |                      |

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

## QUB and UU Awards for DfE funded PGA Scheme in 2021/22 by Age

| Age group    | QUB PGA Scheme 2021/22 |             |
|--------------|------------------------|-------------|
|              | Number                 | %           |
| 24 or Under  | 102                    | 59%         |
| 25-29        | 38                     | 22%         |
| 30-39        | 23                     | 13%         |
| 40-49        | 6                      | 3%          |
| 50-59        | 3                      | 2%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>172</b>             | <b>100%</b> |

| Age group    | UU PGA Scheme 2021/22 |             |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
|              | Number                | %           |
| 20-30        | 161                   | 54%         |
| 31-40        | 73                    | 24%         |
| 41-50        | 44                    | 15%         |
| 51-60        | 19                    | 6%          |
| 60+          | 2                     | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>299</b>            | <b>100%</b> |

Source: Data provided by HEIs

This evidence suggests that older students are more likely to utilise and need the PGA Scheme and associated financial support. The spread of ages of postgraduate research students tends to be wider than that for undergraduate students, meaning that if there is to be any change to the total number of funded PhD studentships in NI the impact will be less focused on a particular narrow age group of students.

## Marital Status evidence / information:

As shown below, the marital status of postgraduate research enrolments is different from that of the total NI student population, in that a higher percentage of students fall within categories other than “single”.

### NI domiciled enrolments at NI HEIs (exc OU) by marital status - 2021/22

| Marital status  | PGR          | PGR % | Total enrolments | Total enrolments (%) |
|---|--------------|-------|------------------|----------------------|
| Single (never married or never in civil partnership)          | 780          | 65%   | 35,550           | 85%                  |
| Married or in civil partnership                               | 280          | 23%   | 4,200            | 10%                  |
| Separated (but still legally married or in civil partnership) | 15           | 1%    | 235              | 1%                   |
| Divorced or civil partnership dissolved                       | 15           | 1%    | 225              | 1%                   |
| Widowed   | 5            | 0%    | 40               | 0%                   |
| Co-habiting   | 75           | 6%    | 995              | 2%                   |
| Unknown   | 35           | 3%    | 705              | 2%                   |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>1,210</b> |       | <b>41,950</b>    |                      |

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

The data provided by QUB for PGA Scheme in 2021/22 (see below) is similar to the total NI student population rather than the postgraduate research student population with 84% of the PGA studentships being awarded to ‘single’ students. On the other hand, Ulster University

equality monitoring data is not dissimilar to the total postgraduate research population i.e. 59% of PGA studentships are 'single' compared to 65% of the total postgraduate research population.

#### QUB and UU Awards for DfE funded PGA Scheme 2021/22 by Marital Status

| Marital Status    | PGA Scheme 2021/22 |              |            |            |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------|------------|------------|
|                   | QUB Awards         | QUB Awards % | UU Awards  | UU Award % |
| Single            | 145                | 84%          | 177        | 59%        |
| Co-Habiting       | 9                  | 5%           | 24         | 8%         |
| Divorced          | 1                  | 1%           | 4          | 1%         |
| Married           | 12                 | 7%           | 74         | 25%        |
| Prefer Not to Say | 3                  | 2%           |            |            |
| Civil partner     |                    | 0%           |            |            |
| Seperated         | 2                  | 1%           | 5          | 2%         |
| Unknown           |                    | 0%           | 13         | 4%         |
| Widowed           |                    | 0%           | 2          | 1%         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>172</b>         |              | <b>299</b> |            |

Source: Data provided by HEIs

This evidence suggests that students who are single are more likely to utilise and need the DfE PGA Scheme and associated financial support, but to a lesser degree than is the case for the total NI student population.

#### Sexual Orientation evidence / information:

The requirement upon students to provide information in relation to sexual orientation is currently optional. HESA does not collect data on the sexual orientation of enrolled students in NI HEIs and the only available data in respect of the DfE PGA Scheme is from QUB. As such the information available is insufficient for comparison purposes.

#### Men & Women generally evidence / information:

As shown below, the gender composition of postgraduate students in NI is not dissimilar from the gender composition of the total NI student population, where female enrolments outweigh male enrolments.

## Enrolments at NI HEIs by sex - 2021/22

| Sex          | PGR          | PGR % | Total enrolments | Total enrolments (%) |
|--------------|--------------|-------|------------------|----------------------|
| Male         | 1,095        | 46%   | 28,665           | 41%                  |
| Female       | 1,285        | 54%   | 40,800           | 59%                  |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>2,380</b> |       | <b>69,565</b>    |                      |

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

In respect of the PGA scheme, the data provided by the HEIs in 2021/22 indicated that while QUB's data reflected the HESA data, UU awarded a higher proportion of studentships to male students. UU advised that there were no changes in marketing and recruitment mechanisms during this cycle to account for a higher number of male studentship holders that year. UU surmises that as restrictions imposed in Northern Ireland to address COVID-19 were only easing in spring and summer 2021, candidates with studentship offers may have had external factors that influenced their decision on whether to accept a studentship offer, particularly for women e.g. caring and family demands (which tended to be borne more by women), access to childcare and mental health (a pre-existing gender gap in mental health widened during lockdowns).

The evidence would suggest that this was an anomaly rather than the norm as the data provided for 2022/23 reflected a higher proportion of studentships awarded to females than males. The data for 2022/23 has been included for this grouping to demonstrate.

### QUB and UU Awards for DfE funded PGA Scheme 2021/22 and 2022/23 by Gender

| Sex          | PGA Scheme 2021/22 |              |            |             | PGA Scheme 2022/23 |              |            |             |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
|              | QUB Awards         | QUB Awards % | UU Awards  | UU Awards % | QUB Awards         | QUB Awards % | UU Awards  | UU Awards % |
| Male         | 75                 | 44%          | 173        | 58%         | 63                 | 40%          | 172        | 44%         |
| Female       | 97                 | 56%          | 126        | 42%         | 94                 | 60%          | 218        | 56%         |
| Not Given    |                    |              |            |             |                    |              | 2          | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>172</b>         |              | <b>299</b> |             | <b>157</b>         |              | <b>392</b> |             |

Source: Data provided by HEIs

This evidence, therefore, does not suggest that any gender grouping in particular is disproportionately more likely to utilise or need the DfE funded PGA scheme and associated financial support.

---

## Disability evidence / information:

The available evidence indicates that the majority of students including postgraduate students at NI HE Institutions have no known disability.



### Enrolments at NI HEIs by disability - 2021/22

| Disability status      | PGR          | PGR % | Total enrolments | Total enrolments (%) |
|------------------------|--------------|-------|------------------|----------------------|
| Disabled               | 390          | 16%   | 9,630            | 14%                  |
| Not disabled/Not known | 1,990        | 84%   | 59,940           | 86%                  |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>2,380</b> |       | <b>69,565</b>    |                      |

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

The Equality Monitoring Data on awards provided by the HEIs (below) indicates that in 2021/22 the majority of students who were awarded studentships have no known disability. This would align with the HESA data on enrolments at NI HEIs by disability, shown above.

### QUB and UU Awards for DfE funded PGA Scheme 2021/22 by Disability

| Disability   | Postgraduate 2021/22 |              |            |             |
|--------------|----------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
|              | QUB Awards           | QUB Awards % | UU Awards  | UU Awards % |
| Yes          | 28                   | 16%          | 48         | 16%         |
| No           | 144                  | 84%          | 251        | 84%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>172</b>           |              | <b>299</b> |             |

Source: Data provided by HEIs

### Dependants evidence / information:

The available evidence indicates that the majority of students including postgraduate research students at NI HE Institutions have no dependants, however, the known dependency profile of postgraduate enrolments is significantly different from that of the total NI student population, with a higher percentage of students with dependants, particularly young people/children.

### NI domiciled enrolments at NI HEIs (exc OU) by dependants status - 2021/22

| Dependants                    | PGR          | PGR % | Total enrolments | Total enrolments (%) |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-------|------------------|----------------------|
| Young people/children (YP/C)  | 225          | 19%   | 4,330            | 10%                  |
| Other relative/friends (OR/F) | 20           | 2%    | 325              | 1%                   |
| Both YP/C & OR/F              | 25           | 2%    | 455              | 1%                   |
| No dependants                 | 880          | 73%   | 36,100           | 86%                  |
| Unknown                       | 60           | 5%    | 740              | 2%                   |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>1,210</b> |       | <b>41,950</b>    |                      |

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

The data provided by the HEIs on PGA Scheme participants reflects the HESA data in particular the proportion of postgraduate research student with no dependants. This evidence, therefore, suggests that postgraduate research students utilising the PGA Scheme and associated financial support are more likely to have dependants than is the case for other NI students.

#### QUB and UU Awards for DfE funded PGA Scheme 2021/22 by Dependants

| Dependants                   | PGA Scheme 2021/22 |              |            |             |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
|                              | QUB Awards         | QUB Awards % | UU Awards  | UU Awards % |
| Both children & older people | 1                  | 1%           |            |             |
| No dependants                | 127                | 74%          | 223        | 75%         |
| Other Relatives/Friends      | 2                  | 1%           | 4          | 1%          |
| Young People/Children        | 9                  | 5%           | 67         | 22%         |
| Not Known or Answered/Blanks | 33                 | 19%          |            |             |
| Other                        |                    |              | 5          | 2%          |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>172</b>         |              | <b>299</b> |             |

Source: Data provided by HEIs

---

## Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision?

Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below:

### Religious belief

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure the current Postgraduate Award Scheme reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, irrespective of religious belief.

Catholics make up the majority of the Northern Ireland's entire student population. However, the available evidence (shown in the previous section) suggests that students of certain

religious beliefs are not disproportionately more likely to study postgraduate courses including the PGA Scheme.

The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for students of different religious beliefs.

---

## **Political Opinion**

Information on political opinion is not collected by HESA or via the equality monitoring form for the PGA Scheme.

However, it is understood that, to some extent, political opinion can be seen to align with religious belief in Northern Ireland, and if religious belief is taken as a proxy for political opinion - see narrative in Religious belief section above.

---

## **Racial Group**

The delivery options in the consultation are designed to explore ways to deliver the Scheme going forward to ensure it meets the needs of both the PhD researcher, irrespective of racial group, and the NI Economy.

The available evidence (shown in the previous section) does not suggest that certain racial groupings utilise or need postgraduate research study and associated financial support, over others in any way that is particular to this policy.

---

## **Age**

The delivery options in the consultation are designed to explore ways to deliver the Scheme going forward to ensure it meets the needs of both the PhD researcher, irrespective of age, and the NI Economy.

The available evidence (shown in the previous section) suggests that older students are more likely to utilise and need postgraduate research study and associated financial support.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs of the PGA Scheme i.e. part-time study and an increase in the number of hours a student is allowed to work part-time, are designed to help facilitate older students who may have increased financial responsibilities.

---

## **Marital status**

The delivery options in the consultation are designed to explore ways to deliver the Scheme going forward to ensure it meets the needs of both the PhD researcher irrespective of marital status, and the NI Economy.

The available evidence (shown in the previous section) suggests that students of a marital status other than single are more likely to utilise and need postgraduate research study and associated financial support.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs of the PGA Scheme i.e. part-time study, and an increase in the number of hours a student is allowed to work part-time, are designed to help facilitate married students who may have increased financial responsibilities.

---

## **Sexual orientation**

The delivery options in the consultation are designed to explore ways to deliver the Scheme going forward to ensure it meets the needs of both the PhD researcher, irrespective of sexual orientation, and the NI Economy.

Whilst data in relation to sexual orientation is not available, the design of the options does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for students of different sexual orientations.

---

## **Men and Women Generally**

The delivery options in the consultation are designed to explore ways to deliver the Scheme going forward to ensure it meets the needs of both the PhD researcher, irrespective of gender and the NI Economy.

While females are more likely to enter higher education than males, the evidence (shown in the previous section) does not indicate that any gender group is disproportionately more dependent on postgraduate research study and associated financial support.

As women, however, tend to be the main caregivers in NI, the introduction of part-time study is likely to contribute to meeting the needs of women seeking to combine study and their caring responsibilities.

---

## **Disability**

The delivery options in the consultation are designed to explore ways to deliver the Scheme going forward to ensure it meets the needs of both the PhD researcher and the NI Economy.

The available evidence (shown in the previous section) does not indicate that students with or without disabilities are more dependent on postgraduate research study over others. The introduction of part-time study is likely to contribute to meeting the needs of some students

with disabilities who may find it helpful when combining study with managing their disability or condition.

---

## **Dependants**

The delivery options in the consultation are designed to explore ways to deliver the Scheme going forward to ensure it meets the needs of both the PhD researcher and the NI Economy.

Given the age profile of postgraduate research students, students with dependants are more likely to utilise postgraduate research study and associated financial support. As the proposed changes to the PGA Scheme's T&Cs include the provision of part-time study and improved terms for compassionate leave, they can be expected to have a positive impact on students with dependants.

---

## Part 2. Screening questions

### Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the Screening Questions 1-4, which follow.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

### **In favour of a 'major' impact**

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are

concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;

- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

### **In favour of 'minor' impact**

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

### **In favour of none**

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

## Screening questions

### 1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Please provide details of the likely policy impacts and determine the level of impact for each S75 categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

#### Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector, and individual students, irrespective of religious belief.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs of the policy will be applicable to all students irrespective of religious belief.

The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for students of different religious beliefs.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor / Major /~~ None (delete as appropriate)

#### Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:

Information on political opinion is not collected by HESA or via the equality monitoring form for the PGA Scheme. However, it is understood that there is a strong correlation between religious belief and political opinion in Northern Ireland and, on that basis, the evidence pertaining to religious belief could be broadly taken to apply here also.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor / Major /~~ None (delete as appropriate)

#### Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector, and individual students, irrespective of racial groupings.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs of the policy will be applicable to all students irrespective of racial groupings.



The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for students of different racial groupings.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / ~~Major~~ / None (delete as appropriate)

#### Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, irrespective of age. The spread of ages of postgraduate research students tends to be wider than that for undergraduate students, meaning that if there is to be any change to the total number of funded PhD studentships in NI the impact will be less focused on a particular age group of students.

The available evidence indicates that the changes to the T&Cs also considered in the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on older students. This is because older students are more likely to utilise postgraduate provision and associated financial support. However, as the proposed changes in the T&Cs seek to improve the support for, and the access to, postgraduate research provision, the impact is anticipated to be positive.

What is the level of impact? Minor / ~~Major~~ / ~~None~~ (delete as appropriate)

#### Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, irrespective of marital status.

The available evidence indicates that the changes to the T&Cs also considered in the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on students with of a marital status other than single. This is because these groups are more likely to utilise postgraduate provision and associated financial support. However, as the proposed changes in the T&Cs seek to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate provision, the impact is anticipated to be positive.

What is the level of impact? Minor / ~~Major~~ / ~~None~~ (delete as appropriate)

#### Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, irrespective of sexual orientation.

Whilst HESA data in relation to sexual orientation is not available, the design of the options does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for students of different sexual orientations.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / ~~Major~~ / None (delete as appropriate)

#### Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, irrespective of gender.

While females are more likely to enter higher education than males, the evidence (shown in the previous section) does not indicate that any gender group is disproportionately more dependent on postgraduate research study and associated financial support.

As women, however, tend to be the main care givers in NI, the proposed changes to the T&Cs seek may improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate provision for women.

What is the level of impact? Minor positive / ~~Major~~ / ~~None~~ (delete as appropriate)

#### Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, irrespective of gender.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs of the policy will be applicable to all students irrespective of disability.

The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for students with or without disabilities, however, the proposed changes to the T&Cs may improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate provision for those with disabilities.

What is the level of impact? Minor positive / ~~Major~~ / ~~None~~ (delete as appropriate)

#### Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern

Ireland economy, the higher education sector, and individual students, irrespective of whether or not they have dependants.

The available evidence indicates that the changes to the T&Cs also considered in the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on students with dependants. This is because these groups are more likely to utilise postgraduate provision and associated financial support. However, as the proposed changes in the T&Cs seek to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate provision, the impact is anticipated to be positive.

What is the level of impact? Minor / ~~Major~~ / ~~None~~ (delete as appropriate)

**2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories? Yes/No**

Detail opportunities of how this policy could promote equality of opportunity for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

**Religious Belief – Yes/No**

If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector, and individual students, irrespective of religious belief.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs of the policy will be applicable to all students irrespective of religious belief.

**Political Opinion – Yes/No**

If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector, and individual students, irrespective of political opinion.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs of the policy will be applicable to all students irrespective of political opinion.

**Racial Group – Yes/No**

If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector, and individual students, irrespective of racial grouping.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs of the policy will be applicable to all students irrespective of racial grouping.

**Age – Yes/No**

If Yes, provide details:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector, and individual students, irrespective of age.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs will be applicable to all students irrespective of age.

The available evidence indicates that the policies considered in the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on older students. This is because older students are more likely to utilise postgraduate provision and associated financial support. As the proposed changes to the T&Cs in the consultation seek to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate provision, it is anticipated that they will better promote equality of opportunity for students of different ages.

If No, provide reasons:

**Marital Status – Yes/No**

If Yes, provide details:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector, and individual students, irrespective of marital status.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs will be applicable to all students irrespective of marital status.

The available evidence indicates that the policies considered in the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on students with marital status other than single. This is because these groups are more likely to utilise postgraduate provision and associated financial support. As the proposed changes to the T&Cs seek to improve the level of

support for, and the access to, postgraduate provision, it is anticipated that they will better promote equality of opportunity for students with different marital status.

If No, provide reasons:

### **Sexual Orientation – Yes/No**

If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector, and individual students, irrespective of sexual orientation.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs of the policy will be applicable to all students irrespective of sexual orientation.

### **Men and Women generally – Yes/No**

If Yes, provide details:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector, and individual students, irrespective of gender.

Some of the proposed changes to the T&Cs will be applicable to only female students such as the provision of Keeping in Touch (KiT) days following maternity leave.

While females are more likely to enter higher education than males, the evidence (shown in the previous section) does not indicate that any gender group is disproportionately more dependent on postgraduate study and associated financial support. As the proposed changes to the T&Cs seek to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate provision, it is anticipated that they will better promote equality of opportunity for women.

If No, provide reasons:

### **Disability – Yes/No**

If Yes, provide details:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, irrespective of gender.

The proposed changes to the T&Cs of the policy will be applicable to all students irrespective of disability.

The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for students with or without disabilities, however, the proposed changes to the T&Cs may improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate provision for those with disabilities.

If No, provide reasons:

### **Dependants – Yes/No**

If Yes, provide details:

The options in the consultation are designed to explore how PhD funding will be delivered going forward to ensure postgraduate researcher support reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, irrespective of whether or not they have dependants.

The available evidence indicates that the changes to the T&Cs also considered in the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on students with dependants. This is because these groups are more likely to utilise postgraduate research provision and associated financial support. However, as the proposed changes in the T&Cs seek to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate research provision, the impact is anticipated to be positive.

If No, provide reasons:

### **3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

Please provide details of the likely policy impact and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:

The options being considered in the consultation i.e. how PhD funding will be delivered going forward and proposed changes to the T&Cs of the scheme will not impact on good relations between students of different religious beliefs.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / ~~Major~~ / None (delete as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:

The options being considered in the consultation i.e. how PhD funding will be delivered going forward and proposed changes to the T&Cs, will not impact on good relations between students of different political opinion.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor / Major /~~ None (delete as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

The options being considered in the consultation i.e. how PhD funding will be delivered going forward and proposed changes to the T&Cs, will not impact on good relations between students of different racial groupings.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor / Major /~~ None (delete as appropriate)

#### **4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

Detail opportunities of how this policy could better promote good relations for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

##### **Religious Belief – ~~Yes/No~~**

If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

The options being considered in the consultation focus on how the PGA Scheme is delivered in NI and whether the Department should continue ringfencing research funding specifically for PGA students. The consultation also considers proposed changes to the T&Cs to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate research provision. There are no opportunities to better support good relations between students of different religious beliefs.

##### **Political Opinion – ~~Yes/No~~**

If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

The options being considered in the consultation focus on how the PGA Scheme is delivered in NI and whether the Department should continue ringfencing research funding specifically for PGA students. The consultation also considers proposed changes to the T&Cs to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate research provision. There are no opportunities to better support good relations between students of different political opinions.

##### **Racial Group – ~~Yes/No~~**

If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

The options being considered in the consultation focus on how the PGA Scheme is delivered in NI and whether the Department should continue ringfencing research funding specifically for PGA students. The consultation also considers proposed changes to the T&Cs to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate research provision. There are no opportunities to better support good relations between students of different racial groupings.



## Additional considerations

### ***Multiple identity***

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

*(For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).*

The options in the consultation as to how the Scheme is funded will not impact on students with multiple identities. The proposed changes to the T&Cs of the scheme will provide advantages to students with multiple identities through improved support and access to postgraduate research study on a part-time basis.

- Older
- Women
- Disabled
- Not single
- Those with dependants.

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

As shown in the evidence section above, each of these categories are demonstrably more likely to utilise postgraduate research provision (“older” in terms of older students, **not** older students i.e. 60yrs+) with the exception of disabled and women whose numbers are consistent with the total NI enrolments in HEIs. As such, it is anticipated that the proposed changes in the T&Cs will have a positive impact on students falling into one or more of these categories.

### Part 3. Screening decision

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

Policy screened out **without** mitigation or an alternative policy adopted.

The equality screening has identified a number of minor impacts from the proposed changes to the T&Cs under consideration for equality of opportunity, however, all of the impacts identified are positive in nature, and so an equality impact assessment has not been deemed necessary.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced - please provide details.

As a condition of funding, each year the Higher Education Institutions are required to gather equality monitoring data on both applicants and awards in respect of this scheme. This data is routinely monitored by the Department, and therefore should any adverse impact arise from the changes to the T&Cs, this will inform future planning and policy development.

Any further policy decisions taken in relation to how the Scheme will be delivered will be considered and subjected to equality screening, where appropriate.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

## Mitigation

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed, or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

If so, **give the reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

N/A –all minor impacts are anticipated to be positive.

## **Timetabling and prioritising**

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been '**screened in**' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

### **Priority criterion – Rating (1-3)**

Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations – N/A

Social need – N/A

Effect on people's daily lives – N/A

Relevance to a public authority's functions – N/A

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

If yes, please provide details.

## **Part 4. Monitoring**

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

The options contained in the consultation will be monitored throughout further policy development and implementation to ensure any outcomes are identified and assessed for their impact on equality of opportunity and good relations. Following the consultation the preferred option will be screened.

## **Part 5 - Approval and authorisation**

Screened by: J McCullough  
Position/Job Title: Deputy Principal  
Business Area/ Branch: HERKE  
Date: 20 June 2024

Approved by: June Faccini  
Position/Job Title: Grade 7 – Head of Branch  
Business Area/Branch: HERKE  
Date: 20 June 2024

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each policy screened should be 'signed off' and approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy, made easily accessible on the public authority's website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.