

Final Equality Impact Assessment Record

Title of policy/ practice/ strategy/ legislation etc:

Post-school education, research and skills: Purpose and Principles

Minister: Minister for Higher and Further Education and Minister for Veterans

Lead official: Stuart Greig, Deputy Director, Reform, LLS

Directorate: Division: Lifelong Learning and Skills, Reform Division

Is this new policy or revision to an existing policy?

It is new policy. The development of the Purpose and Principles will fulfil the Scottish Government's commitment to publish a statement of strategic intent for the system following the Scottish Funding Council's recommendations in its review "[Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research](#)".

Screening

Policy Aim

Scotland's post-school education, research and skills system sits at a crossroads. In terms of educational outcomes, quality of research, growth in apprenticeships and globally recognised institutions – we have a strong story to tell. Yet we know that a confluence of social and economic factors such as an ageing workforce, globalisation, the climate emergency, financial pressures, pace of technological change and pandemic response are challenging both the expectations of learners and employers and the traditional assumptions, structures and modes of delivery for skills, education and research.

These drivers mean that we must now reimagine and reform our post-school education, skills and research landscape to deliver for learners, employers and for Scotland as a whole. The Purpose and Principles for post-school education, research and skills fulfils this need setting out a long term aim and strategic policy narrative for the system to meet its future challenges. It will form the decision making framework on which future reform of this system is based.

Engagement took place throughout the development of the Purpose and Principles in phases as outlined in the [Scope and Approach](#). Most recently, engagement up to March 2023 took

place on an interim version of the [Purpose and Principles](#) published in December 2022. This interim version articulates the need to provide more flexible opportunities for more people to access the right learning at the right time, to attract and retain talent, and to support the teaching and research base in its own right as well as in its role as an international asset. It also sets out that there needs to be collective responsibility to ensure that people have the skills they need at critical points throughout their lives and that employers invest in the skilled employees they need to grow their businesses. A final version will be published accompanied by supporting documents on engagement, evidence, outcomes, and impact assessments.

In developing the Purpose and Principles the Scottish Government is mindful of the three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Where any negative impacts have been identified, we have sought to mitigate/eliminate these. We are also mindful that the Equality Duty is not just about negating or mitigating negative impacts, as we also have a positive duty to promote equality.

National Outcomes

The Purpose and Principles contributes to a range of National Outcomes both directly and indirectly.

Primary National Outcomes links

Education: We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society

Economy: We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy

Children and Young People: We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential

International: We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally

Fair Work and Business: We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone

Secondary National Outcomes links

Communities: We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

Culture: We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely

Environment: We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment

Health: We are healthy and active

Human Rights: We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination

Poverty: We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally

As part of developing the Purpose and Principles, we are setting system outcomes for each Principle to help define success and the metrics we will use to measure progress towards it. The development of outcomes is based on logic models which have been built through engagement with stakeholders. These will continue to be refined.

Who will it affect?

The Scottish Government believes that the Purpose and Principles, must guide our decision making in the face of a challenging set of imperatives for reform. The Purpose and Principles, along with supporting documents, provide a vehicle to drive reform in the post-school system as part of a wider programme of reform. The Purpose and Principles will change the post-school system and will have an impact on people who are no longer in compulsory education now and in the future. It will also affect people working in or connected to the different public, private or third sector organisations and businesses within the system.

This strategy will impact on people throughout Scotland with one or more of the protected characteristics directly and indirectly, through their participation in the post-school education, research and skills system as part of their lifelong learning journey or through paid or community-based work.

What might prevent the desired outcomes being achieved?

Lack of Collaboration

The development of the Purpose and Principles is taking place within a complex and rapidly changing national and international context. Policy development relies on successful joint working and collaboration with a range of stakeholders including learners, employers of all shapes and sizes from the public and private sector and parts of the economy and wider society who benefit most directly from the current system as well as the staff and leaders of the agencies, non-departmental public bodies and institutions who are responsible for delivery. The current engagement programme has secured interest and willingness to understand the issues, barriers and potential solutions. If we can't engage and continue to secure that essential level of collaboration as we move forward into the reform space, it is hard to see how we can achieve the desired outcomes from the Purpose and Principles.

Lack of Coherence

The learner journey needs to make sense from a learner's perspective, helping them to fulfil their potential. There is a wider education reform programme underway including a National Discussion on Education, a Qualifications and Assessment Review and a Skills Delivery Landscape Review. Lack of transparency and collaboration across these reviews, understanding the full breadth of a learner journey, could lead to diverging policy direction. The Purpose and Principles should also coherently link to the National Strategy for Economic Transformation so that public investment in work-focussed education and skills development is aligned to economic priorities providing solid careers and transferrable skills across the foundational, tradeable and global economy. Careful monitoring of existing and new programmes as they are developed and implemented will be essential to the development of the Purpose and Principles and implementation of the initial priorities.

System Impacts

The development of the Purpose and Principles will form a decision making framework for future reform. The Purpose and Principles will be accompanied by supporting documents detailing strategic action. The implications of the Principles and the implementation of initial actions along with current financial imperatives may impact on the structure of the system including on the opportunities available to learners and the staff working in the system.

Screening of actions will be assessed and impact assessments will be undertaken where required to ensure that negative impacts are minimised, and equality is fostered as the policy develops as part of a programme of reform.

Data and Understanding

Data collection and sharing across the system is fragmented. Quality, availability and comparability is variable making the establishment of a shared evidence base and robust understanding of outcomes and impacts challenging. This includes data on some protected characteristics. The evidence gathering process for the EQIA has highlighted some gaps in key areas – for example, understanding outcomes of different learner journeys, data that allows robust comparison of delivery and outcomes across the system, and incomplete intersectional protected characteristics data. As future specific policy decisions arise from the Purpose and Principles, data collection and /or reporting on current and new programmes will be improved such that we can assess the impact of our efforts to target specific groups who face barriers or discrimination to the system and promote equality.

Intersectionality

We recognise the importance of capturing intersectionality by which we mean:

- A recognition that people are shaped by simultaneous membership of multiple interconnected social categories.
- The interaction between multiple social categories occurs within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g. laws, policies, governments). A recognition of inequality of power is key to intersectionality.

- Structural inequalities, reflected as relative disadvantage and privilege, are the outcome of interconnected social categories, power relations and contexts.¹

We aim to recognise this through three aspects of our work. First, we will seek to recognise our experiences and power dynamics as policy makers in shaping this work and subsequent reform. Second, we will use data to understand existing structural inequalities. For example, there is often insufficient data across the range of intersectionality of protected characteristics, however, we do know that some groups of people experience additional challenges, for example young disabled people are less likely to have good employment outcomes²; men from 'White' ethnic groupings who live in disadvantaged areas are less likely to achieve positive destinations and attainment³, similarly women from a minority ethnic background who have a learning difficulty are doubly disadvantaged⁴. Finally, we will recognise intersectionality by ensuring that we seek and hear the data and voices of people with intersectional lived experience such that it positively influences policy making and system design.

This write-up of the EQIA follows the standard template which asks for responses based on individual protected characteristics. Intersectional issues have been identified where data is known but the above approaches will ensure that we build intersectionality into our policy development. As the subsequent equality impact assessments for individual reform action are developed, further evidence gathering may be required to identify how the policies and interventions being designed can address any intersectional barriers faced by people in fulfilling their skills potential.

¹ [Using intersectionality to understand structural inequality in Scotland: evidence synthesis - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/evidence-synthesis)

² [Conclusion: key issues young people in Scotland are facing - The life chances of young people in Scotland: evidence review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/evidence-review)

³ [Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 5: 2023 Edition - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/summary-statistics) Supplementary Tables

⁴ [Learning disabilities and ethnicity: achieving cultural competence | Advances in Psychiatric Treatment | Cambridge Core](https://www.cambridge.org/core)

Stage 1: Framing

Public Sector Equality Duty Requirements

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (regulation 5) requires that a listed public authority must make such arrangements as it considers appropriate to review and, where necessary, revise any policy or practice that it applies in the exercise of its functions to ensure that, in exercising those functions, it complies with the Equality Duty. The Scottish Government meets its obligations under Regulation 5 by requiring Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) to be carried out for all policies and practices. By undertaking an EQIA as part of the process of developing the Purpose and Principles, the Scottish Government has sought to demonstrate “due regard” to the Equality Duty of eliminating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. As we progress with the development of the projects the EQIA will be revised in line with changes made. As the implementation of the Purpose and Principles develops as part of a programme of reform, more detailed EQIAs for specific policy decisions in the future are recommended.

Results of framing exercise

In addition to our broad stakeholder engagement, we held 2 workshops to support the framing exercise with a range of policy leads across SG to consider impacts of the Purpose and Principles for post-school education, research and skills. The results from the evidence gathering, policy framing exercise and stakeholder engagement can be found in the data and evidence gathering section below.

Extent/Level of EQIA required

An EQIA will be conducted for the Purpose and Principles to consider the impacts it will have on those with protected characteristics. As future specific policy decisions arise from the Purpose and Principles implementation as part of a programme of reform, we recommend that full and detailed EQIA is taken to

understand the impacts for those with protected characteristics and their intersectionalities.

Stage 2: Data and evidence gathering, involvement and consultation

Stakeholders

A wide range of stakeholders have been part of the ongoing engagement programme for the Purpose and Principles. Most of these conversations, if not all, will have touched on some protected characteristics. The full list will be provided in the final publication of the Purpose and Principles and engagement write-up. However, at this interim stage, the following stakeholders have provided specific information or more detailed discussion on barriers or action that they take related to one or more protected characteristics.

Scottish Funding Council⁵
Skills Development Scotland
Student Awards Agency Scotland
Developing the Young Workforce
Universities Scotland
Colleges Scotland
Universities - University of Highlands and Islands, Robert Gordon
Colleges – Glasgow Kelvin, North East Scotland College, Edinburgh College
Aberdeen Foyer
Inspiring Young Voices
CLD Standards Council
The Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities
Unions – UCU, EIS, Unison, STUC
Scottish Wider Access Programme
SG officials

Include here the results of your evidence gathering (including framing exercise), including qualitative and quantitative data and the source of that information, whether national statistics, surveys or consultations with relevant equality groups.

Refer to Definitions of Protected Characteristics document for information on the characteristics.

⁵ [Equality and diversity \(sfc.ac.uk\)](http://sfc.ac.uk)

Age

Evidence Gathered and Strength/Quality of Evidence

Secondary Data or literature

In 2020, the proportion of people in Scotland aged 16-64 with low or no qualifications was 9.7 per cent. The proportion of those with low or no qualifications is higher in the younger (16-24) and older (50-64) age groups than the other age groups. Since the series began in 2007 there has been a decrease across all age groups, the biggest of which has been for 50-64 year olds (down from 25.4 per cent in 2007 to 13.0 per cent in 2020).

Young people form the largest proportion of people in higher and further education⁶ in Scotland. In the 1980s almost a third of students left school by age 16 (after S4), whereas in 2021 only 11% did so. In total 25.1% of young people leaving school (S4/5/6) in 2021/22 went straight to employment⁷ with most school leavers entering the post-school education and skills system whether taking further or higher education at college or university. For example, around 20% of all Scotland's young people aged 18 and 19 are currently at college for higher or further education⁸.

According to the 2022 Annual Participation Measure (APS), which reports on the economic and employment activity of 16-19 year olds in Scotland, the proportion of youth participating in productive activities such as education, training or employment was 92.4%⁹. The largest proportion of 16 to 19 year olds who are 'not participating' in education, training or employment are concentrated in the most deprived areas; 44.9% of those 'unemployed seeking' employment and 39.2% of those 'unemployed not seeking' employment live in the 20% most deprived areas. It could be argued that this group of people are not being well served by the post-school system.

The number of young people leaving school each year is projected to increase until 2030 but will then decline which could impact on numbers enrolling for places at college or university in the longer term¹⁰. However, with fast technological and societal changes it is likely that people will need to continue to learn throughout their lives whether in formal or informal educational or work settings, suggesting that demographic profiles are likely

⁶ Higher Education is defined in Scotland as qualifications at SCQF level 7 or above, excluding Advanced Highers [Interactive Framework | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(scqf.org.uk\)](https://www.scqf.org.uk)

⁷ [Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 4: 2022 Edition \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

⁸ [College Statistics 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](https://www.sfc.ac.uk)

⁹ [Annual Participation Measure | Skills Development Scotland](https://www.scotland.gov.uk)

¹⁰ [Population Projections | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk)

to change over time requiring tailored response from education and training providers.

Across all pathways the majority of demand is from young people but the system is also accessed by people across the age spectrum. In 2020-21, 41% of people at university full-time were aged 20 or under while 55% of students studying a first degree were aged 20 or under¹¹. A further 35% were aged 21-24 years and 12% were aged 25-29 years. When it comes to the number of Scottish domiciled students, 48% of people at university full-time were 20yrs or under; 29% of people were 21-24yrs; 10% were aged 25-29 and 13% were aged over 30 years.

In postgraduate study learners were generally slightly older. In 2020-21, of the total number of full-time students in postgraduate study, 50% were aged 21-24, 29% were aged 25-29 and 21% of the students were aged over 30 years.

This pattern was slightly different for apprenticeships. In 2020-21 37% of MAs were aged 16-19 but the most prevalent group for MAs were aged over 25 years (42%).¹²

Similarly, the biggest cohorts at college are those aged 16-19, but with 87 part-time enrolments aged under 5 and 116 part-time enrolments aged over 85 in 2021-22, colleges do currently cover the whole age spectrum. This is more pronounced with part-time courses, many of which may only be a few hours in total, but even with full time courses there were 316 aged under 16 and 42 aged 65 or over¹³.

In the college workforce the 51 and over age group accounted for 48% of the overall staff in 2020-21. Reform action that impacts on staffing cohorts could disproportionately impact older workers.

Engagement Comments

Principle 1 - High Quality Opportunities Issues

Through our engagements, stakeholders told us that many older adults can face barriers to the system such as:

- Lack of awareness of what the skills system can offer including from perspective of accessibility, formats, community languages etc.
- Lack of support to re-enter education e.g. with applications, leading to missed opportunities.

¹¹ [Official statistics | HESA](#)

¹² [Modern Apprenticeships | Skills Development Scotland](#) See Modern Apprenticeships Supplementary Tables for age breakdowns.

¹³ [College Statistics 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](#) See Table 8 in background tables.

Principle 3: Globally respected

International students may be slightly older and have different commitments to domestic students e.g. may need different types of housing. Access to visas can also be difficult.

Principle 4: Agile and Responsive

Adult learners that we engaged with raised that barriers for some are:

- Financial worries as potential learners have to consider giving up part or all of their income or in some cases benefits to return to college or university.
- Some employers do not offer flexibility to allow adult returners to continue to work as well as study.
- Full-time courses can restrict the time available to seek employment alongside study.

The respondents suggested that these barriers could be overcome by:

- Employers offering flexibility to work and study.
- Ensuring that timetables of full-time courses offer flexibility to work alongside study.

Principle 5: Transparent, Resilient and Trusted

Through our engagements with stakeholders the following barriers were suggested:

- Investment isn't made effectively and equitably in all young people.
- The statutory school leaving dates are often not aligned to employer recruitment schedules.
- Some adult returners shared that they are not entitled to discretionary funding if they are not in receipt of a bursary. Those that are eligible for a bursary become ineligible for universal credit and this can be a financial barrier.
- Some adult returners are required to self-fund due to previous funding access through studying university courses/part of a university course that in some cases they dropped out of.

Respondents suggested that barriers could be addressed through:

- Removing some of the inconsistencies in financial support.
- More awareness raising on available financial support.
- Discretionary funding to support adult learners with equipment required for their studies eg. a laptop¹⁸.

¹⁸ [Note that various discretionary funds do currently exist.](#)

Summary

The current system is heavily weighted towards young people but the range of economic, social and political drivers is likely to increase the desire for lifelong learning from employers and learners, while the projected demographic shifts will mean that education and skills providers will also need to increasingly cater for the needs of older learners. Barriers currently exist for some young people around financial support, pastoral support and recognition of prior learning and for older people around flexibility of learning modes as well as financial restrictions, digital exclusion, recognition of prior learning and experience and motivation to learn when faced by other financial and life pressures. These barriers will be important across protected characteristics for example younger or older women with children will face specific financial and life pressures as will disabled people or carers. Many of these barriers are already reflected and referenced in the Adult Learning Strategy which has a range of strategies to address barriers including strengthening partnerships and access and support for online learning¹⁹. The Purpose and Principles supports an approach that addresses these barriers. We will have due regard to addressing these barriers as part of the programme of reform and subsequent policy developments.

Source

[Interactive Framework | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(scqf.org.uk\)](https://www.scqf.org.uk)

[Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 4: 2022 Edition \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

[College Statistics 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](https://www.sfc.ac.uk)

[Annual Participation Measure | Skills Development Scotland](https://www.skillsdevelopment.scot.nhs.uk)
[Population Projections | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk)

[Official statistics | HESA](https://www.hesa.ac.uk)

[Modern Apprenticeships | Skills Development Scotland](https://www.skillsdevelopment.scot.nhs.uk)
[College Statistics 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](https://www.sfc.ac.uk) See Table 8 in background tables.

[Adult learning strategy 2022 to 2027 - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot)

[Estranged students in Further \(FE\) and Higher Education \(HE\) - experiences: research - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

¹⁹ [Adult learning strategy 2022 to 2027 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

Data Gaps Identified

Data on age is generally good. Sufficient data on age and its intersectionality with other protected characteristics is a data gap. There is a lack of reported data on outcomes related to age.

In May 2023, we published a draft version of the EQIA to provide further opportunities for stakeholders to provide relevant evidence and insights to inform the development of the EQIA.

Disability²⁰

Evidence Gathered and Strength/Quality of Evidence

Secondary Data or literature

The proportion of disabled people (using the Equality Act definition) aged 16-64 with low or no qualifications (19.1%) is over twice as high as those who are not disabled (7.2%). Over the past year, however, the proportion for those who are disabled has fallen at a faster rate (down 3.3 percentage points) than for those not disabled (down by 1.6 percentage points).²¹

Disabled people are more likely to have no or low qualifications compared to non-disabled people. Data from the Scottish Core Surveys dataset showed that only 39.3% of people with long-term limiting physical or mental health conditions had post-school level qualifications compared to 56% of those with no limiting condition. UK based data from ONS shows that disabled men were three times less likely to gain qualifications than non-disabled men (18.1% compared with 6.3%). This inequality was smaller for women (14.6% compared with 5.6%)²² .

In 2021/22, 92.3% of school leavers who were declared or assessed as disabled went into work, training or further study 3 months after the end of the school year. This compares to 95.8% of school leavers who were not declared or assessed as disabled.²³

²¹ [Equality Evidence Finder](#)

²² [ONS Data: Disability and education, UK: 2019](#)

²³ [Chapter 3: School Leaver Destinations - Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 5: 2023 Edition - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Annual Participation Measures show that disabled young people (age 16-19) are less likely to be in HE (8.5% compared to 20.8% for non-disabled); more likely to be in FE (17.5% compared to 9.3% for non-disabled) and less likely to be in employment (11.9% compared to 17.8 for non-disabled).²⁴

Among the Scottish domiciled students' entrants to full time first-degrees in 2021 16.3% had a declared disability. In the college sector 19.3% of enrolments to full-time HE courses were students with a declared disability and 27.9% were enrolments to full-time FE courses were from students declaring a disability. In university, mental health and learning difficulties comprised almost two thirds of the disability types. In college, mental health and learning difficulties comprised just under half of disability types with just under a third registering two or more disabling medical conditions.²⁵ 22.6% of all college credits were delivered to disabled students in 2020-21 – a rise from 17.1% in 2016-17.

The proportion of Modern Apprenticeship (MA) starts self-identifying with an impairment, health condition, additional support needs or learning difficulty (I/HC/LD) was 13.3% (3,334 starts) in 2021/22. This is compared to 13.0% in 2020/21 and 15.4% (4,220 starts) in 2019/20. The proportion of Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) starts self-identifying with an I/HC/LD has risen year on year from 8% in 2016 to 17.6% in 2020²⁶.

In 2019, a SAAS led report into disability related student support identified that there is a lack of clear information and guidance available about disability student support across FE and HE making it difficult for students to understand what support is available and how to access it²⁷.

Engagement Comments

Principle 1 - High Quality Opportunities Issues

Through our engagement, stakeholders informed us of potential barriers for people with disabilities including:

- People with learning disabilities can end up in college without making choices about their future and often repeat modules without receiving a high quality education.
- If learners are continual academic repeats, they may find they are not then entitled to full support to study.

²⁴ [Annual Participation Measure | Skills Development Scotland](#) (Tables on equality breakdowns)

²⁵ [Report on Widening Access 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](#)

²⁶ [Bespoke tables from SDS provided for Purpose and Principles.](#)

²⁷ [saas-disability-related-student-support-summary-report.pdf](#)

- There may be a lack of provision in Scotland for high complex needs students in a Further Education (FE) mainstream setting and this can have implications for travel. ²⁸
- Travel can be a barrier for disabled students to access education physically.
- Access to equipment, funding and resources can be a barrier for disabled people.
- Digital inclusion can be a barrier to students accessing the system. Glasgow Disability Alliance reference that *disabled people are 4 times as likely to face digital exclusion* ²⁹.
- Support for communication needs can be a barrier for some learner and greater consideration of communication needs is often required.
- Older disabled people faced combined barriers to accessing education.

Stakeholders shared that the following could address the outlined barriers:

- The establishment of Corseford College has shown that there was a need for provision in Scotland for high complex needs students in FE mainstream settings.
- Flexible learning such as home learning or tailored learning may be required in some cases to ensure accessibility.
- Online options can support people who cannot travel for study or international conferences.
- Assessment approaches need to be accessible and appropriate to disability.
- Equipping academics and staff with knowledge and skills to support learners effectively through workforce development.
- FE and HE institutions could provide Easy Read, video alternatives etc. to support communication needs.
- Bridging the education gap for disabled people who weren't legally entitled to post-16 education until 2004 is important.

Principle 2 - Support for learners

Respondents shared that the following barriers exist for some disabled students:

- Disabled students may struggle to access all aspects of learning at a pace that is suitable.
- Students studying less than 50% FTE are not currently entitled to Disabled Students' Allowance which can be a barrier.

²⁸ Capability Scotland statistics suggest that Scottish students with additional complex needs may travel to England to access tailored FE provision.

²⁹ [GDA Connects • Glasgow Disability Alliance](#)

- Disabled students need access to suitable student accommodation and student support.
- Disabled people are less likely to be in employment and often earn less than non-disabled people.
- Late diagnosis of disabilities can be a barrier.
- The availability and ease of accessing social care and necessary support, alongside learning opportunities can be a barrier.

Respondents suggested that the following could help to address barriers that are faced by disabled students:

- Students should be supported to access academic and non-academic (e.g. social) elements of courses equally.
- Support for disabled people as they enter and learn within the labour market should be improved.

Principle 3: Globally respected

No comments have been made to date about specific barriers for international students or in the research sphere. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as future policy decisions are made as part of the programme of reform and we recommend that impact assessments considered.

Principle 4: Agile and Responsive

Stakeholders involved in engagement on the Principles shared that:

- For those acquiring a disability in their working life, accessing learning to reskill is vital and not always available.
- Undiagnosed learning disabilities can be a barrier for young people and adult returners, e.g. undiagnosed dyslexia.

To address these barriers, respondents suggested that:

- FE and HE institutions could do more to share their challenges, solutions and expertise to each other and the wider system in working with disabled people.
- Timely diagnosis of disabilities and available support is vital and diagnosis waitlists have been impacted by the legacy of Covid.

Principle 5: Transparent Resilient and Trusted

Stakeholders that we engaged with reported that the following barriers exist in the system:

- The understanding of the rights of community learners are often unclear compared to FE and HE learners.
- Transitions are a barrier for some disabled learners. There is often a lack of join up and support at transition points for disabled learners and often a new system needs to be used. The transition from school can be very challenging for disabled young people and their parents/carers.
- Delays to Needs Assessments in HEIs can lead to support being implemented too slowly for students to benefit in their first semester.
- Institutions may not have appropriate policies to ensure all aspects of equality.
- The attainment gap at school can be a barrier to later opportunities.

Stakeholders shared that these barriers could be addressed through:

- Institutions having appropriate policies in place to ensure all aspects of equality through good regulation.

Summary

Evidence suggests that while disabled people are more able to access the system than in the past, there is still considerable scope for improvement in access and support to achieve improved attainment. A range of barriers identified through engagement include ensuring good advice and choice; ensuring that teaching modes and assessment are adapted; ensuring the training and development of staff to support disabled students and ensuring that institutions have strong equality policies with good monitoring and a diverse committed leadership group. Transitions were highlighted as a very difficult time for disabled people and given lower employment rates and higher levels of poverty amongst disabled people, lack of income to allow studying can be a key barrier.

Source

[Annual Participation Measure | Skills Development Scotland](#)

[Report on Widening Access 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](#)

[saas-disability-related-student-support-summary-report.pdf](#)

[Corseford College, West Scotland \(capability.scot\)](#)

[GDA Connects Glasgow Disability Alliance](#)

[Disability and education, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Data Gaps Identified

Data on disability in general is good. There is less data available across different types of health – physical, mental, neurological and the impact different circumstances can have on participation/access/attainment to the system and the impact on economic and social outcomes for disabled learners.

Sufficient data on disability and its intersectionality with other protected characteristics is a data gap.

Sex³⁰

Evidence Gathered and Strength/Quality of Evidence

Secondary Data or literature

In 2021/22, 96.3% of female school leavers were in a positive destination such as work, training or further study 3 months after leaving school. This compares to 95.2% of male school leavers.³¹ Both figures have been trending upwards since 2016, apart from a dip in 2019/20.

The proportion of men with low or no qualifications is 10.8% whereas for women it is 8.6%.³²

In 2020-21, of both full-time and part-time enrolments in colleges, female enrolments were higher than male enrolments. This pattern has been the main trend since 2011-12 apart from 2016-17 when slightly more men enrolled than women. A Gender Action Plan³³ is in place to try to move to a more equal 50:50 split.

Despite higher participation and attainment of women in the post-school, inequalities still need to be addressed such as unequal domestic burdens falling upon women and bias in assessment, recruitment and promotion – as well as the practical barriers that disproportionately affect women because of their place in society.³⁴

³¹ [Chapter 3: School Leaver Destinations - Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 5: 2023 Edition - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

³² [Equality Evidence Finder](#)

³³ [Institutional Gender Action Plan Guidance 2020-23 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](#)

³⁴ [Report: Gender Equality in Higher Education - Maximising Impacts](#)

Women and girls generally outperformed men and boys in educational attainment at senior phase of school and post-school, but this advantage does not translate into higher pay for women graduates.³⁵ Subject segregation, using Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as an indicator, was still prevalent in Scotland's educational institutions and in apprenticeships³⁶ despite various long-running action plans aimed at reducing this.

While women tend to choose creative arts and design, allied sciences, business and administration as their higher education courses, men tend to prefer engineering and technology, physical sciences, computer sciences and business and administration.

Enrolment in Post Graduate Research was higher for men while Post Graduate Teaching and Undergraduate degrees was higher for women. This trend has been the same over the last 30 years, however, in the latest [2020-21 HESA data](#), the number of women enrolments in post-graduate research also rose above that for men³⁷.

In Scotland, men are more likely to take up modern apprenticeships (MA) than women. In 2021-22 there were less women MA starts than there were men (61% to 39%). This trend has remained the same since 2015-16 with between 38-40% female starts compared to 60-62% male. Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) are more equally distributed between male and female young people³⁸.

The difference in MA starts is partly because of the nature of apprenticeship frameworks which are often in traditionally male occupations such as construction and mechanics³⁹. However, there has been substantial work to increase the choice of MA frameworks, and this is beginning to create better gender balance in terms of participation although occupational segregation remains (for example, men training in construction and women training in care).

³⁵ [Policymakers \(closethegap.org.uk\)](https://closethegap.org.uk)

³⁶ [Scotland's Gender Equality Index 2020 \(data.gov.scot\)](https://data.gov.scot)

³⁷ [HESA statistics](#)

³⁸ [SDS data provided for Purpose and Principles](#)

³⁹ A report by EHRC in 2019 noted that "Scotland is the only country where female apprenticeship starts remain lower than males. It is noted in the report that there is a significant "gendered spend" on apprenticeships in Scotland with spend per male apprentice being 53% higher than for female apprentices. This reflects the significant and persistent levels of occupational segregation in the Scottish apprenticeships programme, as well as wider trends in employment, given that in Scotland, apprenticeships are only awarded to those already in employment". In the two largest sectors, Construction and Engineering, 1.6% and 2.1% respectively of apprenticeship starts were female in 2011, while 0.8% of Child Care and 16% of Business and Administration starts were male.

[Modern Apprenticeships | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://equalityhumanrights.com)

Females account for 61% of all staff headcount in colleges in 2020-21 and females account for 55% of teaching and 68% of non-teaching staff. Any reform action that impacts on staffing levels could disproportionately impact women.

In colleges around 53% of senior management positions are taken by women.⁴⁰

Principle 1 - High Quality Opportunities Issues

Stakeholders discussed that the following barriers exist in the current system:

- Women are more likely to have childcare and/or caring responsibilities, often increasing with age. These responsibilities can prevent learning due to time and financial barriers.
- Women may be less likely to have space to study which can be a barrier.
- Occupational segregation stereotypes can make it harder for some women to enter certain professions.
- Men are less likely to apply for and obtain a degree place and more likely to opt for a MA placement.

Stakeholders suggested that these barriers could be reduced by:

- Ensuring part-time opportunities for learning and funding can support learners to be flexible and study around their other commitments.
- Continue policies seeking to positively influence occupational segregation by gender, although recognising that this issue has deep cultural roots.

Principle 2 - Support for learners

Through engagements stakeholders shared that the following can be barriers:

- Access to childcare and nurseries.
- Women are more likely to suffer from poor mental health and therefore likely to require more support.
- Women's earnings 5 years post-graduation are, on average, lower than men which could impact on their choices.

Stakeholders shared that these barriers could be reduced through:

- More access to local and affordable childcare and nurseries.

⁴⁰ [College Staffing Data 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](https://www.sfc.ac.uk/College-Staffing-Data-2020-21)

- More carers will benefit when they study through the removal of the education restrictions so full-time students receive Scottish Carer's Assistance⁴¹.

Principle 3: Globally respected

During engagements, stakeholders shared that a barrier is:

- Evidence shows that gender equality issues impact HE systems worldwide – ‘with unequal access to HE in many countries, fewer resources and opportunities available to women, the existence of violence against women affecting students and staff, and sustained underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in HEIs. Despite women succeeding academically, it is more challenging for women to succeed in their careers both within and outside academia following their studies.’⁴²
- More research testing is done on men than women.
- More senior research posts at University are taken by men than women.

Stakeholders suggested that this barrier could be reduced by:

- Ensure that research outputs and participants are representative of the population.
- Continued support to reduce violence against women and girls on campus.
- Continued action to reduce gender pay gap and occupational segregation.

Principle 4: Agile and Responsive

No comments have been made to date about specific barriers for this protected characteristic although many issues discussed above in terms of care constraints needing flexible and affordable learning options, as well as the restrictions of occupational segregation and gender pay gap are relevant. We are continuing to engage but comments and evidence are welcome.

Principle 5: Transparent Resilient and Trusted

Respondents through our engagement shared that barriers exist including:

⁴¹ [Changes to Scottish Carer's Assistance - Scottish Carer's Assistance: consultation analysis - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/analysis/changes-to-scottish-carer-s-assistance)

⁴² [Report: Gender Equality in Higher Education - Maximising Impacts](#)

- More women staff are increasingly providing pastoral support to students. This can affect career prospects.
- Gender based violence and sex discrimination can be barriers.
- There can be a reduced preference for women in in-work training opportunities in some professions.

Respondents shared that some identified barriers could be minimised by all institutions demonstrating better and accountable care for their students to ensure that there are safe spaces to learn with zero tolerance for sexual harassment or abuse.

Summary

The evidence shows that women tend to be more engaged with the post-school system than men but their increased attainment is less well reflected in earnings and progression in the labour market. Women are more likely to have caring responsibilities meaning that they face barriers of location, time, finance and access. Occupational segregation remains an issue with MA frameworks in Scotland and across the education and skills system. Participation and attainment of men in the post-school and particularly those from more deprived areas is low.

Source

[Policymakers \(closethegap.org.uk\)](https://closethegap.org.uk)

[Scotland's Gender Equality Index 2020 \(data.gov.scot\)](https://data.gov.scot)

Skills Development Scotland data provided for Purpose and Principles
HESA statistics

[Modern Apprenticeships | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://equalityhumanrights.com)

[Leave no one behind - The Health Foundation](https://www.healthfoundation.org.uk)

[Report: Gender Equality in Higher Education - Maximising Impacts](https://www.gov.scot)

[Changes to Scottish Carer's Assistance - Scottish Carer's Assistance: consultation analysis - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

Data Gaps Identified

There is a wide range of data collected on sex but more data could be analysed and reported to understand participation, attainment and outcomes and its intersectionality with other protected characteristics.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Evidence Gathered and Strength/Quality of Evidence

Secondary Data or literature

There is no published data on learners in the system who are either pregnant or have very young children, however qualitative evidence from a report in 2013 showed that the majority of mothers who were pregnant whilst studying did not feel that their institutions supported them with specific problems in terms of finances and taking time out.⁴³

The teenage pregnancy rate is at the lowest level since reporting began at 23.9 per 1,000 women (equivalent to 3,300 teenage pregnancies). Teenage pregnancy rates in Scotland vary by region. In 2020 NHS Highland recorded the lowest overall rate amongst the mainland NHS Boards while NHS Fife recorded the highest (18.3 and 28.9 per 1,000 women respectively). In 2020 under 16s accounted for 5% of teenage pregnancies and under 18s for 31%. The vast majority (69%) were to those aged 18 and 19 years at conception.⁴⁴ As this age group are those most likely to be in college, university or apprenticeships, it is likely that some will become pregnant during their training.

Low attainment can be a cause and a consequence of teenage pregnancy and can lead to exclusion from education with teenage mothers being less likely to finish their education, this can be due to a lack of facilities including for childcare and for discriminatory and stigmatising attitudes⁴⁵.

Young mothers tend to have lower educational levels compared to older mothers when their first child is born, which impacts on subsequent career prospects. Although young mothers do resume education at a later stage, they remain less well educated compared to older mothers who have continued to upgrade their qualifications at a higher rate. They are less likely to be in work when their first child is 10 months old, with education being found to be a key predictor of later employment⁴⁶. Young mothers are one of the key priority groups to tackle in order to prevent child poverty.

⁴³ [4 Further and Higher Education - Scottish Government Equality Outcomes: Pregnancy and Maternity Evidence Review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

⁴⁴ [Teenage Pregnancy Report \(publichealthscotland.scot\)](#)

⁴⁵ [Early Pregnancy and Education in the UK \(2020\)](#)

⁴⁶ [Every Child, Every Chance: The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22: Annex 3 – Equality Impact Assessment \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Engagement Comments

Principle 1 - High Quality Opportunities Issues

Stakeholders shared that the following barrier exists:

- Women may have to leave institutions to have a baby and could lose funding credit for learning undertaken before leaving.
- Barriers exist inhibiting an easy return to the system following pregnancy.
- When a student is on maternity leave, funding stops for general undergraduate packages, potentially making it more difficult for students to resume their studies. However, nursing/ midwifery students are able to continue to access their support during maternity leave due to the policies within their specific funding package.

It was suggested that these barriers could be reduced by:

- A funding credit system that supports those who are pregnant to return to the system.

Principle 2 - Support for learners

Stakeholders shared that barriers exist in the current system and include:

- Timing before, during and after pregnancy e.g. after maternity leave and before 1140 hours Early Learning and Childcare policy⁴⁷ is available.
- Childcare may be especially challenging.
- Options for flexible courses e.g. There is a more limited offer by some institutions of online evening courses.
- Access to childcare at or near to colleges/universities can be a barrier.

Stakeholders suggested that these barriers could be addressed through:

- Support for pregnant students to stay in education.
- Support to address stigma/attitudes.
- Offering flexible courses to accommodate for childcare.

⁴⁷ [Early learning and childcare expansion - Early education and care - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Principle 3: Globally respected

No comments have been made to date about specific barriers for this protected characteristic. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as future policy decisions are made as part of the reform programme and we recommend that impact assessments are considered.

Principle 4: Agile and Responsive

No comments have been made to date about specific barriers for this protected characteristic. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as future policy decisions are made as part of the reform programme and we recommend that impact assessments are considered.

Principle 5: Transparent Resilient and Trusted

No comments have been made to date about specific barriers for this protected characteristic. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as future policy decisions are made as part of the reform programme and we recommend that impact assessments are considered.

Summary

While there is little data on pregnancy and maternity this will be an issue, particularly for mothers, and will create barriers in terms of funding and timing. It will be important for providers to ensure that learning is not lost and returns to the system can be accommodated.

Source

[Scottish Government Equality Outcomes: Pregnancy and Maternity Evidence Review](#)

[Teenage Pregnancy Report \(publichealthscotland.scot\)](#)

[Early Pregnancy and Education in the UK \(2020\)](#)

[Every Child, Every Chance: The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22: Annex 3 – Equality Impact Assessment \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

[Early learning and childcare expansion – Early education and care – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Data Gaps Identified

Robust data for this group is a gap.

Sufficient data on pregnancy and maternity and its intersectionality with other protected characteristics is a data gap.

Gender Reassignment

Evidence Gathered and Strength/Quality of Evidence

Secondary Data or literature

There is limited specific evidence on the experiences of transgender people in the system although broader evidence points to needs to increase employment opportunities, share good practice in service provision, reduce quality of life issues particularly around mental health and reduce experiences of harassment and domestic abuse⁴⁸. Widening Access statistics show that 255 Scottish domiciled learners in full-time first degree education identify as transgender with 26,295 identifying as a gender assigned at birth and 6,735 were unknown⁴⁹.

A LGBT Youth Scotland survey from 2017 reported that 39% of transgender young people who responded to a survey of LGBT+ young people had experienced bullying at college and 28% had experienced bullying at university. 63% of LGBT+ young people respondents and 68% of transgender young people respondents who had experienced bullying said that it had negatively affected their educational attainment and reported negative impacts on their mental health and self-esteem. 27% of transgender young people respondents left education as a result of homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia in the learning environment and half rated their school experience as “bad”⁵⁰.

The findings of a 2017 survey by the Scottish Trans Alliance showed that 21.2% of non-binary people had avoided education because of a fear of being harassed⁵¹.

Source

[Transgender Experiences in Scotland Research Summary \(2008\)](#)

⁴⁸ [Transgender Experiences in Scotland Research Summary \(2008\)](#)

⁴⁹ [Report on Widening Access 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](#) Background Tables 16

⁵⁰ [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People, FINAL March 2018.cdr \(lgbtyouth.org.uk\)](#)

⁵¹ [Mckendry & Lawrence 2017 \(trans.ac.uk\)](#)

[Report on Widening Access 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](https://www.sfc.ac.uk)

[Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People, FINAL March 2018.cdr \(lgbtyouth.org.uk\)](https://lgbtyouth.org.uk)

[Mckendry & Lawrence 2017 \(trans.ac.uk\)](https://trans.ac.uk)

Data Gaps Identified

Robust reported data for this group is a gap due to small population numbers.

Sexual Orientation

Evidence Gathered and Strength/Quality of Evidence

Secondary Data or literature

Data is collected on the sexual orientation of full-time, first degree students. In 2020-21 71% of entrants identified as heterosexual; 8% identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual and 21% refused to answer, said 'other' or 'unknown'⁵². There is little data from other sectors and limited evidence on views and experiences and whether these differ depending on sexual orientation. However a report by Stonewall finds that "Students intend to be more open about their sexual orientation and gender identity in higher education, with overall levels of openness increasing from 64% at school to an expected 82% at university or college. When researching university choices, around a third (31%) of LGBT+ students paid specific attention to LGBT+ services. These included mental health support services (47% extremely interested) and university or college reputation in equality and diversity (46% extremely interested). 30% were extremely interested in LGBT+ societies and 21% were extremely interested in support networks for LGBT+ students". Despite this, the report shows that 42% of LGBT+ students have hidden their identity for fear of discrimination and 47% have been the target of negative comments of conduct from other students.⁵³ More general publications show the continued high levels of discrimination; with 18% in an Equality Network publication reporting personal experience of discrimination in the education system, although this specific reference seems to be referring more to school than post-school.⁵⁴

⁵² [Report on Widening Access 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](https://www.sfc.ac.uk) Background Tables 16

⁵³ [LGBTQ+ facts and figures | Stonewall](https://www.stonewall.org.uk)

⁵⁴ [The-Scottish-LGBT-Equality-Report.pdf \(equality-network.org\)](https://www.equality-network.org)

Engagement Comments

Principle 1 - High Quality Opportunities Issues

Respondents reported that the following barrier exists:

- LGBT+ young people often rate their experience of school as bad due to bullying and there is a link between bullying and low attainment. The LGBT Youth Scotland reported that bullying had negative impacts on mental health including stress, anxiety and depression, damage to self-esteem and feeling unsafe⁵⁵.

Respondents shared that this barrier could be reduced by:

- There is a need for providing a positive lifelong learning experience and possible extra support later in life.

Principle 2 - Support for learners

Stakeholders who engaged shared that:

- People who identified as LGBT+ are more likely to be unemployed⁵⁶.
- The Thriving Learners Survey into student mental health found that LGBT+ students had higher rates of perceived stigma, having experienced a serious psychological issue and self-harm⁵⁷
- There need to be safe spaces for LGBT+ students to study i.e. non-homophobic spaces.
- Attitudes towards sexual orientation differ in different countries and cultures and there needs to be sensitivity and awareness to different attitudes.

Stakeholders felt that these barriers could be reduced through:

- Improved collaboration to support learners to transition to employment.
- Consideration of different attitudes towards sexual orientation in different countries and cultures.

Principle 3: Globally respected

No comments have been made to date about specific barriers for this protected characteristic. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as future policy decisions are made as part of the reform programme and we recommend that impact assessments are considered.

⁵⁵ [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People, FINAL March 2018.cdr \(lgbtyouth.org.uk\)](#)

⁵⁶ [Sexual orientation in Scotland 2017: summary of evidence base - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

⁵⁷ [MHF Thriving Learners Report.pdf \(mentalhealth.org.uk\)](#)

Principle 4: Agile and Responsive

No comments have been made to date about specific barriers for this protected characteristic. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as future policy decisions are made as part of the reform programme and we recommend that impact assessments are considered.

Principle 5: Transparent Resilient and Trusted

No comments have been made to date about specific barriers for this protected characteristic. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as future policy decisions are made as part of the reform programme and we recommend that impact assessments are considered.

Source

[Report on Widening Access 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](#)

[LGBTQ+ facts and figures | Stonewall](#)

[The-Scottish-LGBT-Equality-Report.pdf \(equality-network.org\)](#)

[Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People, FINAL March 2018.cdr \(lgbtyouth.org.uk\)](#)

[Sexual orientation in Scotland 2017: summary of evidence base - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

[MHF Thriving Learners Report.pdf \(mentalhealth.org.uk\)](#)

Data Gaps Identified

Robust reported data for sexual orientation and intersectionalities in relation to access, experience and outcomes of the system is not readily reported although it is collected for many (but not all) aspects of the system. Quality of data is problematic because of high levels of non-response.

Race

Evidence Gathered and Strength/Quality of Evidence

Secondary Data or literature

In 2020, the proportion of the population with low or no qualifications was higher amongst the 'White'⁵⁸ population aged 16-64 (9.7%) compared with the 'Minority ethnic' population aged 16-64 (9.0%). From 2019-20 the decrease in the proportion of the 'Minority ethnic' population aged 16-64 with low or no qualifications (down by 6.3%) is higher than for the 'White' population aged 16-64 (down by 1.7%).⁵⁹

Amongst the ethnic groups for whom figures are available, the ethnic group with the lowest percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination in 2021/22 was 'Mixed or multiple ethnic groups' at 94.6%. This was followed by 'White Scottish' and 'White non-Scottish', both at 95.6%. Whereas the ethnic group with the highest initial positive destination was 'African/Black/Caribbean', with 98.8%, followed by 'Asian Pakistani' at 98.6%.⁶⁰

The data from Annual Participation Measure of 16-19 year olds shows that in 2022 42.4% of young people of 'White' ethnicity were in school, 19.8% were in higher education; 9.8% were in FE; 18.4% were in employment and 1.8% were in training and development⁶¹. For 'Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups' including 'Asian', 'African', 'Caribbean', 'Black', 52.3% were in school, 27.7% were in higher education, 7.8% were in further education and 6.5% were in employment.⁶² The ethnic group with the lowest percentage of people in a positive initial destination are 'White non-Scottish' at 95.1% and 'White Scottish' at 95.5%. Whereas the ethnic group with the highest initial positive destination were the 'Black community', with 97.5%. They are followed by 'Asian-others' at 97%⁶³.

⁵⁸ For the purposes of the analysis presented here "White" includes "White - Scottish", "White - Other British", "White - Other". 'White: Other' includes 'Irish', 'Polish', 'Gypsy/Traveller', 'Roma', 'Showman/Showwoman' and 'other white ethnic groups'. 'Minority ethnic groups' includes 'Mixed or multiple ethnic groups', 'Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian', 'African, Scottish African or British African', 'Caribbean or Black', 'Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab' or any other ethnic groups.

⁵⁹ [Skill profile of the population | National Performance Framework](#)

⁶⁰ [Chapter 3: School Leaver Destinations - Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 5: 2023 Edition - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

⁶¹ [Data for 'White' ethnicity is only available for 2021.](#)

⁶² [Annual Participation Measure | Skills Development Scotland](#) (Equality breakdown tables)

⁶³ [Supporting documents - Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 4: 2022 Edition - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

In 2020-21, 10.6% of Scottish-domiciled entrants to full-time first-degree courses at university were of 'Black' and 'Minority ethnicity'. A review of racial harassment in British Universities in 2019 noted that victims of racial harassment were reluctant to come forward because of a lack of faith in the complaints process while staff members who made a complaint were met by a fragmented complaints system. The research found that many universities were taking a range of steps to address problems including anonymous reporting, better support for victims and proactive communication. ⁶⁴

In the college sector, 8.0% of enrolments to full-time HE level courses were by 'Black' and 'Minority ethnicity' students, and 7.2% of enrolments to full-time FE level courses were from 'Black' and 'Minority ethnicity' students. ⁶⁵

The percentage of MA starts identifying as being from a 'Mixed or Multiple ethnicity', 'Asian', 'African', 'Caribbean' or 'Black' or 'Other ethnic group' remains quite low but has been increasing steadily from 2015/16 to 2021/22, from 1.6% to 3.1%^{66 67}. Gender splits are relatively equal for people from minority ethnic communities on MAs, but it does appear that there is an increasing proportion of 'Mixed or Multiple ethnicity', 'Asian', 'African', 'Caribbean' or 'Black' or 'Other ethnic group' starting their apprenticeships later in life. In 2021/22, 54% of ethnic minority starts were aged 25 and above compared to 41.7% of MA starts of 'White' ethnic groups.

On Ukraine, officials have identified the following numbers as an indication of how many students may be affected by the ongoing situation. Statistics below are based on published statistics covering 2020-21 academic year. Numbers below should be used as a rough guide only. Other students will be directly affected by the crisis due to close family links, dual nationality or close associations:

- a. University Students - In 2020-21, there were around 275 Russian domiciled students, 80 Ukrainian domiciled students and 10 Belarusian domiciled students at Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs). If we consider nationality rather than domicile, we have around 380 Russians, 125 Ukrainians and 25 Belarusians.
- b. College Students - In 2020-21, there were around 0 Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian domiciled students at Scottish Colleges (rounded to zero). If we consider nationality rather than domicile, we have around 175 Russians, 45 Ukrainians and 10 Belarusians.
- c. University Staff - In 2020-21, Scottish universities employed around 110 Russian nationals, 25 Ukrainian nationals and 5 Belarusian nationals.

⁶⁴ [Racial harassment in British universities: qualitative research findings \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://equalityhumanrights.com)

⁶⁵ [Report on Widening Access 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](https://sfc.ac.uk)

⁶⁶ [equality-action-plan-2020.pdf \(skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk\)](https://skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk)

⁶⁷ [Modern Apprenticeships | Skills Development Scotland](https://skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk)

To note: domicile is based on the country the student was living in prior to study and nationality is their legal status. Hence, numbers of domicile and nationality should not be combined as the same students may appear in both figures.

SFC College data (FES) has a 'Groups of Specific Interest' flag that can be used to identify asylum seekers. In 2020-21, there were around 2,190 enrolments identified as asylum seekers using the Groups of Specific Interest flag in the FES data (rounded). Many of these enrolments are on ESOL courses (English to Speakers of Other Languages).

Engagement Comments

Principle 1 - High Quality Opportunities Issues

Respondents through engagement shared that barriers include:

- Cultural differences in occupational perceptions about what success looks like.
- Some sectors can find it harder to attract groups of people as a result of cultural differences.
- Barriers to access the system for asylum seekers/refugees, who are more likely to be minority ethnic.

Principle 2 - Support for learners

Stakeholders shared that barriers exist including:

- The timing of learning options to accommodate caring responsibilities of minority ethnic carers, who are more likely to be women can be a barrier.
- Barriers to participation, e.g. language.

Stakeholders suggested that the following could help to minimise barriers:

- Support required, e.g. face-to-face, online learning options, available at different times of the day to accommodate those with caring responsibilities.
- High quality student support / language support.
- Identifying student mentors from a similar background to the student can sometimes help.

Principle 3: Globally respected

Stakeholders shared that barriers exist including:

- Structural barriers for international students and educators, e.g. visas, international fees.
- Existing tensions about international student numbers and available student accommodation and resources and attracting global talent to Scotland.
- Cultural sensitivities in research.

Stakeholders shared that the following could support minimising the barriers:

- Addressing structural barriers to value international expertise removing barriers to high quality research created through international collaborators.
- Research needs to be mindful of cultural sensitivities and to background check any research, R&D, project commissioned to strengthen our global contribution to research and innovation.

Principle 4: Agile and Responsive

No comments have been made to date about specific barriers for this protected characteristic. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as future policy decisions are made as part of the reform programme and we recommend that impact assessments are considered.

Principle 5: Transparent Resilient and Trusted

We heard from respondents about barriers to consider. These included:

- Consideration of race impacts for 2nd/3rd generation immigrants should be given.
- There will be a growing minority ethnic population in coming years and potentially growing refugee and asylum seeker populations.
- Sufficient representation.

Respondents suggested that the following could support minimising barriers:

- Increasing sufficient representation of racial/cultural diversity at senior levels in HE and FE.
- A greater need for new arrivals to be considered who are likely to be from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- "Targeting funds" carefully to avoid discrimination and promote equality.

Summary

There is a need for nuanced consideration of ethnicity in the post-school system. A distinction needs to be made between international students whose needs may relate to support with visas, accommodation, logistics, cultural awareness; refugees whose needs may relate more to finance, language, understanding options and cultural awareness and Scottish/British resident people from minority ethnicities who tend to be well represented in the post-school sector for HE and may or may not need additional support. Across all groups different cultural perceptions of a positive outcome will be important. There is some evidence that despite higher attainment, pay and progression remains low for many, but not all, minority ethnicities suggesting ongoing discrimination in aspects of the labour market. A lack of representation at senior levels within the system is problematic and there remains an underlying issue around the effectiveness of systems to deal with and support victims of racial harassment.

Source

[2011 Census - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

[Data for 'White' ethnicity is only available for 2021.](#)

[Annual Participation Measure | Skills Development Scotland \(Equality breakdown tables\)](#)

[Supporting documents - Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 4: 2022 Edition - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

[equality-action-plan-2020.pdf \(skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk\)](#)

[Modern Apprenticeships | Skills Development Scotland](#)

Data Gaps Identified

More data on race and its intersectionality with other protected characteristics could be analysed and reported but administrative data is collected.

Religion or Belief

Evidence Gathered and Strength/Quality of Evidence

Secondary Data or literature

Amongst full-time first-degree students, people who don't identify with any religious belief make up 60% of the student population. This is followed by the following student populations, 'Christian' at 25%, Muslim at 4% and 'Hindu', 'Sikh', 'Jewish', Buddhist' are all represented by less than 1%⁶⁸. Similar evidence is not available for apprenticeships or college entrants. Scottish Government are engaging with Lord Mann on tackling antisemitism in FE and HE⁶⁹.

Engagement Comments

Principle 1 - High Quality Opportunities Issues

Stakeholders suggested the following to support reducing existing barriers:

- Encouragement of people into areas of education outwith what some faith groups see as 'traditional' occupations.
- Consider that some faith groups are predominantly located in certain geographic areas and the demographics of students.
- Demographics of faith and belief in Scotland are changing. Institutions and curriculums need to adapt to changing needs.

Principle 2 - Support for learners

Stakeholders reported the following barrier:

- Poverty levels can mean a lack of access to FE amongst some faith communities⁷⁰. 'Muslim' adults are much more likely to be in relative poverty than other religious groups, despite there being a relatively high proportion in the student population at 4%, compared with the overall population of 'Muslims' being less than 2% of the Scottish population⁷¹.

Stakeholders suggested the following support to reduce barriers:

- Well publicised and effective support mechanisms where issues around faith and belief are raised.

Principle 3: Globally respected

⁶⁸ [Report on Widening Access 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](https://www.sfc.ac.uk) Background Table 16

⁶⁹ [Antisemitism within higher education: roundtable discussion - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

⁷⁰ [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2017-20 \(data.gov.scot\)](https://data.gov.scot)

⁷¹ www.equalityevidence.scot

No comments have been made to date about specific barriers for this protected characteristic. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as future policy decisions are made as part of the reform programme and we recommend that impact assessments are considered.

Principle 4: Agile and Responsive

No comments have been made to date about specific barriers for this protected characteristic. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as future policy decisions are made as part of the reform programme and we recommend that impact assessments are considered.

Principle 5: Transparent Resilient and Trusted

Stakeholders suggested the following barriers:

- Institutions may not take into account the wide variety of religious observances, e.g. Ramadan which can be a barrier, e.g. for timetables.
- There are different approaches to the adoption to the definition of antisemitism and islamophobia and the impact on students and this is a barrier. Lord Mann's report (2023) calls for a renewed effort from all UK universities and colleges to make Jewish students safe and feel safe on campus⁷².
- Lack of representation at senior levels.

Stakeholders suggested the following could support to reduce barriers:

- Offering of prayer rooms and chaplaincy and similar services available to a wide cross section of faith and beliefs.
- Visible and agreed measures and policies in place to combat hate crimes in relation to faith and belief, such as antisemitism.
- Improved visible representation at senior level for people of different faith and belief groups.
- Providing access to Kosher and Halal food options for learners and staff.

Summary

There is a lack of published data around the protected characteristic of religion in the system. This makes it difficult to monitor delivery and outcomes. Barriers may exist from the system if adequate provision is not made and from within different religious groups who may have narrower views of successful outcomes.

⁷² [PDF-Antisemitism-Report-2023.pdf](#)

Source

[Report on Widening Access 2020-21 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](https://www.sfc.ac.uk)

www.equalityevidence.scot

[PDF-Antisemitism-Report-2023.pdf](#)

[Antisemitism within higher education: roundtable discussion - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Data Gaps Identified

More data on religion and belief and its intersectionality with other protected characteristics could be analysed and reported but administrative data is collected for universities and colleges. There is a data gap related to outcomes.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

(the Scottish Government does not require assessment against this protected characteristic unless the policy or practice relates to work, for example HR policies and practices - refer to Definitions of Protected Characteristics document for details)

Evidence Gathered and Strength/Quality of Evidence

Information about marital status of different age groups is available from census data. However, that data in relation to staff employment is not available.

Data Gaps Identified

Sufficient data on marital status is a gap along with its intersectionality with other protected characteristics.

Stage 3: Assessing the impacts and identifying opportunities to promote equality

Having considered the data and evidence you have gathered, this section requires you to consider the potential impacts – negative and positive – that your policy might have on each of the protected characteristics. It is important to remember the duty is also a positive one – that we must explore whether the policy offers the opportunity to promote equality and/or foster good relations.

Do you think that the policy impacts on people because of their age?

Age	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for your decision
Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	X			The analysis of our evidence suggests that the Purpose and Principles Strategy may particularly positively affect age by ensuring that all people receive access to high quality opportunities through the system. It may help to advance equality of opportunity, for age by ensuring that education, skills and training received post-school is equitable and supportive and of a high quality. It may also have a positive effect in fostering good relations by ensuring that the system is trusted, transparent and well governed. As specific future policy decisions are made it is important to ensure that promoting age equality is achieved.
Advancing equality of opportunity	X			See above.
Promoting good relations among and between different age groups	X			The analysis of our evidence suggests that the Purpose and Principles Strategy may particularly positively affect good relations among and between different age groups by ensuring that all people receive access to high quality opportunities and that they are supported in doing so, regardless of their age as they move through the system.

Do you think that the policy impacts disabled people?

Disability	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for your decision
Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	X			The analysis of our evidence suggests that the Purpose and Principles Strategy and Principle two may particularly positively ensure that people are supported throughout their learning journey and those who need support most receive it. This supports the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. As specific future policy decisions are made it is important to ensure that promoting disability equality is achieved.
Advancing equality of opportunity	X			See above.
Promoting good relations among and between disabled and non-disabled people	X			If successfully developed and implemented, the Purpose and Principles will ensure that more disabled people are able to participate in system with access to required support and high quality experiences. Increasing the proportion of disabled people in the system could enable good relations between disabled and non-disabled learners.

Do you think that the policy impacts on men and women in different ways?

Sex	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for your decision
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	X			The analysis of our evidence suggests that the Purpose and Principles Strategy may particularly positively affect the elimination of unlawful discrimination based on sex by ensuring that all people receive access to high quality opportunities through the system. Ensuring the system is agile and responsive in addition to supportive and equitable intends to positively impact women and the learning and training that they are able to participate in. Ensuring that they have the right support when needed and access to high quality experiences should support the elimination of the discrimination we know they can face, particularly in relation to pregnancy/maternity/caring responsibilities and occupational segregation.
Advancing equality of opportunity	X			See above
Promoting good relations between men and women	X			Ensuring that the system is agile and responsive to ensure everyone collaborates within the system will support the promotion of good relations between men and women. However, women are more likely to work in the sector than men so any reform that subsequently changes provision may impact on women more than men.

Do you think that the policy impacts on women because of pregnancy and maternity?

Pregnancy and Maternity	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for your decision
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	X			The Purpose and Principles may help to advance equality of opportunity for this protected characteristic based on the analysis of our evidence. Ensuring that everyone has the right support is in place when needed and access to high quality opportunities may support the elimination of the discrimination in relation to pregnancy, maternity and caring responsibilities. Future specific policy decisions will consider the impacts on these protected characteristics.
Advancing equality of opportunity	X			See above.
Promoting good relations	X			Promoting good relations to support the equality of pregnant women or those on maternity will be encouraged through the agile and responsive and supportive and equitable principles of the strategy.

Do you think your policy impacts on people proposing to undergo, undergoing, or who have undergone a process for the purpose of reassigning their sex? (NB: the Equality Act 2010 uses the term ‘transsexual people’ but ‘trans people’ is more commonly used)

Gender reassignment	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for your decision
Eliminating unlawful discrimination			X	There is limited specific evidence to suggest that the Purpose and Principles Strategy will have a positive or negative impact on gender reassignment equality as while the Purpose and Principles will clearly set out our ambitions in respect of equality and the elimination of discrimination, insufficient data is available to be clear on direct impacts. As future specific policy decisions are made it is recommended that impact assessments are conducted to assess specific impacts.
Advancing equality of opportunity			X	See above.
Promoting good relations			X	See above.

Do you think that the policy impacts on people because of their sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for your decision
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	X			There is limited specific evidence on sexual orientation. The Purpose and Principles will set out to positively impact on equality through all principles to address existing barriers in the system and ensure that everyone has access to high quality opportunities and a supportive and equitable system.
Advancing equality of opportunity	X			See above.
Promoting good relations	X			The Purpose and Principles will set out to positively impact to promote good relations through all principles to address existing barriers in the system through positive collaboration.

Do you think the policy impacts on people on the grounds of their race?

Race	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for your decision
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	X			The analysis of our evidence suggests that attainment from school may be lower and wages received may be lower. The Purpose and Principles Strategy may particularly positively affect race by aiming to ensure that all people receive access to high quality opportunities in the system and it is supportive and equitable addressing existing discrimination. It also recognises and will continue to support increased diversity amongst senior system leaders.
Advancing equality of opportunity	X			See above.
Promoting good race relations	X			The Purpose and Principles may also have a positive effect in fostering good relations by ensuring that the system is trusted, transparent and well governed promoting positive representation. As specific future policy decisions are made it is important to ensure that promoting race equality is achieved.

Do you think the policy impacts on people because of their religion or belief?

Religion or belief	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for your decision
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	X			Whilst there is a lack of published data around the protected characteristic of religion in the system the Purpose and Principles will not discriminate against people based on their religion or belief and specific policy decisions in the future should positively impact on removing barriers to the system.
Advancing equality of opportunity	X			The Purpose and Principles aims to ensure that everyone has access to a supportive and equitable system and promotes the advancing equality of opportunity.
Promoting good relations	X			See above.

Do you think the policy impacts on people because of their marriage or civil partnership?

Marriage and Civil Partnership⁷³	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for your decision
Eliminating unlawful discrimination			X	Sufficient data on marital status and its intersectionality with other protected characteristics in terms of employment in sector is a data gap and therefore there is insufficient evidence to be clear if the Purpose and Principles will have a positive or negative impact.

⁷³ In respect of this protected characteristic, a body subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (which includes Scottish Government) only needs to comply with the first need of the duty (to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010) and only in relation to work. This is because the parts of the Act covering services and public functions, premises, education etc. do not apply to that protected characteristic. Equality impact assessment within the Scottish Government does not require assessment against the protected characteristic of Marriage and Civil Partnership unless the policy or practice relates to work, for example HR policies and practices.

Stage 4: Decision making and monitoring

Identifying and establishing any required mitigating action

Have positive or negative impacts been identified for any of the equality groups?	Yes, overall there are positive intended impacts for the age, disability, sex, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation equality groups.
Is the policy directly or indirectly discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010 ⁷⁴ ?	No, the Purpose and Principles for Post-school Education, research and skills are not intended to be discriminatory.
If the policy is indirectly discriminatory, how is it justified under the relevant legislation?	N/A
If not justified, what mitigating action will be undertaken?	N/A

Describing how Equality Impact analysis has shaped the policy making process

Informing Policy Development

Data collected and engagement undertaken during the EQIA development has identified existing barriers and enablers within the post-school education, research and skills system. This understanding has informed the development of the Purpose and Principles. The EQIA demonstrates the need for any subsequent policy decisions arising from the Purpose and Principles as part of the reform programme to conduct robust impact assessments picking up on some of the key trends mentioned here and utilising the range of engagement already undertaken. Where necessary, and depending on the area of reform, we recommend working with equalities groups' and staff/student representative bodies to conduct more detailed research to better understand how we can take action to address the barriers individuals

⁷⁴ See EQIA – Setting the Scene for further information on the legislation.

and groups face in accessing, participating or working within the post-school education, research and skills system.

The evidence that has been gathered to date highlights that there is likely to be an overall positive impact from the Purpose and Principles on all equality groups, however more data may be required to monitor this impact on some equality groups such as religion and sexual orientation. As the policy decisions are made based on the Purpose and Principles as part of a programme of reform, we recommend working with stakeholders and conducting the necessary impact assessments.

The development of the Purpose and Principles has included consideration of inequalities that exist in the post-school education, research and skills system and protected characteristics. While this is considered across all of the Purpose and Principles, we have specifically created a Principle to outline our commitment to support individuals in an equitable way:

Supportive and Equitable: People are supported throughout their learning journey, particularly those who need it most.

We recognise and have heard through engagement the barriers that people with protected characteristics can face and the number of different learner journeys that happen along with the importance of recognising success in many different ways.

In our final publication we will set out our commitment to equality as one of our core missions:

Equality

That opportunities are available to all based on their ability to learn and that learning presents a pathway out of poverty. That learners who need it most are financially supported to complete their chosen pathway. That we work hard so that those who face the greatest barriers to accessing opportunities are supported and encouraged to do so, based on a genuine understanding of what they need to succeed and, that we use the strength of our social research on poverty and society to further support this work.

Gaps in Evidence

During the collection and analysis of evidence and knowledge some data gaps were identified including data on intersectionalities between protected characteristics. A [draft EQIA was published](#) to support the

collection of information and knowledge to address some of the identified gaps outlined in Stage 2. Future monitoring and evaluation will seek to address these data gaps and ensure that accurate and robust information is available in the future to inform future policy decisions.

Cost/resourcing implications

As future policy decisions arise from the implementation of the Purpose and Principles costs and resourcing implications should be considered.

Monitoring and Review

As part of the Purpose and Principles, we will be articulating a set of outcomes and evidence measures that will allow us to monitor our progress. We have developed specific strategic system outcomes including for the Supportive and Equitable Principle:

System Outcomes

Supportive and Equitable

- The public funding system for student support is perceived as fair, transparent and accessible by learners, providers and employers.
- Learners have access to holistic, person-centred support, empowering them to access, sustain and complete their learning.

High Quality

- The system supports a culture of lifelong learning with a 'no wrong door' approach, where learners have equity of access and opportunity to fulfil their interests and potential.

These strategic outcomes will drive performance in the system. They will influence the development of a National Impact Framework which the Scottish Funding Council will use to hold colleges and universities accountable⁷⁵ as well as link to the implementation and monitoring of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation⁷⁶ and to the implementation of SFC and Skills Development Scotland's current collaborative work through the Shared Outcomes Framework. There is a

⁷⁵ This was set out in SFC's [Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability](#).

⁷⁶ [Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#)

raft of data already being collected across the system which can be utilised to monitor activity and outcomes. There is a known need to improve comparability of some of this data and to undertake some additional evaluative activity, as the programme of reform is implemented. As specific policy decisions are made in the future as part of this reform programme, further consideration will be given to measuring and monitoring impacts on equality and protected characteristics. Monitoring and evaluation plans will also be established to check that outcomes are maintained or improved and that any unintended outcomes are identified and tackled promptly.

Stage 5 - Authorisation of EQIA

Please confirm that:

- ◆ This Equality Impact Assessment has informed the development of this policy:

Yes No

- ◆ Opportunities to promote equality in respect of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation have been considered, i.e.:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation;
- Removing or minimising any barriers and/or disadvantages;
- Taking steps which assist with promoting equality and meeting people's different needs;
- Encouraging participation (e.g. in public life)
- Fostering good relations, tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Yes No

- ◆ If the Marriage and Civil Partnership protected characteristic applies to this policy, the Equality Impact Assessment has also assessed against the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in respect of this protected characteristic:


Yes

No

Not applicable

Declaration

I am satisfied with the equality impact assessment that has been undertaken for Purpose and Principles of Post-school Education, Skills and Research and give my authorisation for the results of this assessment to be published on the Scottish Government's website.

Name: Naureen Ahmad 

Position: Deputy Director, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Authorisation date: 4 July 23