

Higher Education Funding Council for England

Title	Call for evidence for identifying sector-leading and innovative practice in advancing equality and diversity
To	Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions Heads of HEFCE-funded further education colleges Heads of providers with specific course designation or degree awarding powers
Of interest to those responsible for	Equality and diversity; Human resources; Student services; Governance
Reference	Circular letter 16/2016
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Enquiries to	Peter Mason, tel 0117 931 7316, email p.mason@hefce.ac.uk

Dear Vice-Chancellor or Principal

Call for evidence for identifying sector-leading and innovative practice in advancing equality and diversity

1. In HEFCE's 2016 Grant Letter from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, we were requested to collect evidence of sector-leading and innovative practice in advancing equality and diversity across the sector. To this end, we are launching a call for evidence (see Annex A, available to download alongside this circular letter at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/CL_142016/) to seek examples of initiatives, interventions, policies or processes demonstrating such practice.
2. HEFCE sees equality and diversity as essential pre-conditions for excellence in the higher education sector. Ensuring staff and student communities are diverse and representative is a legal obligation for institutions receiving HEFCE funding, as part of their public sector equality duty. It is also a matter of social justice and good business practice, so these principles should be hard-wired into universities' missions and values. HEFCE is committed to helping to embed them, as we have set out in our Equality and Diversity Statement and Objectives 2016-17 (HEFCE 2016/05, www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201605/).
3. Although HEFCE's statutory remit for equality and diversity in the higher education sector only extends to institutions that receive HEFCE funding, we recognise that many alternative providers pay great heed to advancing these principles. So as not to miss out on any good practice that they might be demonstrating, we are extending this call for evidence to all providers with specific course designation or degree awarding powers.
4. While this call is entirely voluntary, we would encourage you to consider sharing any practice that could help us better understand what works in advancing equality and diversity in higher education, and inspire other institutions in the sector with their practice. External consultants will analyse these responses to identify case studies covering a range of protected characteristics and institutional functions (such as teaching and learning, research, estates, staff

recruitment and student admissions). We will then invite a number of contributors to a workshop later in the summer to assist in the evaluation of the findings, which will be published in a final report in late 2016.

5. We request that evidence is sent in the form of separate Word documents for each example to hefceequality@ecu.ac.uk. The closing date for this call is 2 September 2016.

6. We would also like to draw your attention to a related piece of work. In August 2016, HEFCE will be conducting a mapping exercise of equality objectives published by higher education institutions as required by the Public Sector Equality Duty. This will involve downloading webpages containing equality objectives and analysing the content. No content will be reproduced without the consent of its owners. The aim of this exercise is to gain a better understanding of where institutions are focusing their equality and diversity resources and how they are meeting their legal obligation to publish equality objectives. The findings of this analysis will be published in a final report in late 2016 alongside the findings of the call for evidence.

7. If you have any queries about these projects, please contact Peter Mason (tel 0117 931 7316, email p.mason@hefce.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely

Yvonne Hawkins

Director, Universities and Colleges