

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY REPORT 2021

5.1 ELIMINATING UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND VICTIMISATION**Included in this section:**

Training and Capacity Building, Creating an Antiracist University, Gender Pay Gap, Equal Pay Report, Transgender Policy, Access and Articulation, SFC REACH Project, Gateway to Medicine, Gender-Based Violence

5.1.1 TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The University is delighted to have, through a competitive tender process, selected Skill Boosters to provide a suite of online training on EDI and other workplace topics. Courses were launched to staff in February 2021.

5.1.2 The courses entitled *Inclusion Essentials* and *Understanding Race Bias* are mandatory for all staff and new staff must complete both courses within three months of commencing employment (these trainings replace the University's previous mandatory training on EDI). The University has full control of the system associated with this and will therefore be better able to produce uptake statistics and use those to encourage engagement with the training and achieve the target of 100% completion rates.

5.1.3 There are also ten specific trainings available on creating meaningfully inclusive workplaces, focussing on disability, transgender people, gender equality, unconscious bias, microaggressions and becoming an active bystander.

5.1.4 In addition, staff have the opportunity to access over fifteen courses on working effectively and leading and managing people, with some courses being particularly welcomed at this time, such as how to work effectively from home, managing online meetings and effective leadership.

5.1.5 The courses are interactive and video-based and early feedback from staff indicates that this format conveys the messages effectively and powerfully. There is a strong focus on lived experience and this has a positive effect on learning.

5.1.6 Since the publication of the 2019 report, a number of other training opportunities have been made available to staff. These include:

- Virtual training for 360 staff on race and racism (further information in Section 5.1.13)
- Specific training for SMT on leading an anti-racist organisation (further information in Section 5.1.13)
- Specific training for new teaching staff on creating learning materials and environments which take account of EDI
- Schools were offered Unconscious Bias awareness raising sessions in 2019 and all Schools participated in this
- The School of Social Science organised and delivered, in partnership with the Scottish Trans Alliance, a session on Trans Awareness. There is a plan to roll this out further across the University.
- Sociology hosted a session on Decolonising the Curriculum in 2020. Dr Meera Sabaratnam from SOAS provided the keynote speech
- Schools have continued to support colleagues to attend the AHE Aurora leadership programme for women (14 colleagues have attended so far in 2020/21)
- The Scottish Stammering Association delivered a virtual training session open to all staff in March 2021

5.1.7 Actions:

Achieve 100% completion rates of the online mandatory training on *Inclusion Essentials* and

Understanding Race Bias by September 2022 and maintain these rates through proactive analysis of uptake data and targeted action (Actions 4.5 and 7.1)

5.1.8 CREATING AN ANTI-RACIST UNIVERSITY

The events sparked by the tragic killing of George Floyd on 25 May 2020 have had a significant impact across the world and on our University community. There have been representations made to the University since that date via social media, open letters and direct e-mails to the Principal and others. Many of these have asked for a clear statement from the University on its stance on race equality. There were also examples cited of alleged racism and micro aggressions occurring at the University.

5.1.9 The University responded to the direct e-mails and letters and offered specific engagement and followed this up by meeting individuals and groups to discuss experiences or ideas. The University's stance was communicated in the first of a series of joint statements from the Principal and the AUSA President on 10 June 2020. The statement fully condemned racism, provided a statement of solidarity, offered options for support and provided information about current activities related to race equality. This was followed up with a statement on social media, committing the University to adopting a transparent approach towards our progress on race equality and to amplifying the voices of those who are treated unjustly.

5.1.10 Since then an accelerated programme of work has continued to tackle racism on campus and to understand the barriers faced by our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and students. We have responded to the urgent call to action made by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and Universities UK (UUK) through their powerful studies and have begun to carve out what an anti-racist University of Aberdeen would look and feel like and what the enablers and barriers to achieving this are. We have started listening and consulting and our current vision for an anti-racist university is that it would have the following key features:

- Understanding distinction between inclusion/racial equality and anti-racism
- Acknowledging that racism exists on our campus
- Safe spaces for discussion
- Embedding transparency and accountability
- Understanding structural/systemic disadvantage

Through

- Collaborative approach across the University
- Challenging and educating ourselves
- Engaging in difficult conversations and proactively adopting new ways of working where appropriate

The University has taken the following steps to date to move towards an antiracist culture.

5.1.11 RACE EQUALITY STRATEGY GROUP (RESG)

Chaired by the University's Senior Race Equality Champions (Vice-Principal Education and Head of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition) and comprising representatives from across the University, including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and students, the RESG has been established to drive progress on race equality. It also acts as the Self-Assessment Team for the University's work on the Race Equality Charter (REC) Bronze application. The Group has met three times to date and has reviewed the outcomes of the listening activities (further information in Section 5.1.13), reviewed initial data sets and taken forward the Tackling Racial Harassment Action Plan. It is driving progress on enhancing reporting mechanisms, the collection and sharing of data, raising awareness at senior levels and embedding a culture of tackling racial harassment in our partnerships and external relations. Its core purpose is to oversee the development of a University Race Equality Strategy.

5.1.12 RACE CHARTERS

The University signed up to the Race Equality Charter (REC), managed by AHE, as a platform to interrogate systemic race equality issues across all aspects of the University – staff and

student progression, recruitment, attainment, representation and experience. It is a framework for tracking progress and demonstrates the University's commitment to tackling race inequalities. A Bronze application will be submitted by February 2023.

In 2020 the University signed up to the AHE Declaration on Race and the School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition signed up to the British Medical Association Charter on Racial Harassment.

5.1.13 LISTENING ACTIVITIES

The University released a discussion video on race and racism in August 2020 to launch its Listening Phase on race equality. The video featured a conversation between the Senior Race Equality Champions and two medical students and explored the issues highlighted to the University in an open letter to the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition from the Black Medical Students Association. Since then, a range of discussions have taken place and the key themes emerging are:

What constitutes a feeling of 'belonging' in a University and how to foster this/increasing visible role models

- It has become clear that the University must address the lack of representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in its staff and senior staff groups. Discussions have indicated that some staff and students regularly felt that they didn't 'belong' at the University, because of their ethnic origin.
- The School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition and the School of Law have started to address this through the appointment of Race Equality Champions. All Schools and Directorates are required to appoint Race Equality Champions by the end of March 2021.
- EDIC considered the potential for 'positive action' measures to increase representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff at senior levels and this has been approved in principle by SMT
- A successful Black History Month in October 2020 provided opportunities to listen, learn and reflect by showcasing Black role models, talent and achievements (further information in Section 5.2.1).

Training and capacity building

- Training for staff is critical to ensure that staff recognise the issues, can identify racism, feel empowered to be an active bystander and to engage in conversations on race.
- Through a competitive tender process undertaken in 2020, the Challenge Consultancy was selected to deliver race training to UMG and frontline Professional Services staff. 360 members of staff are undertaking this training between January and March 2021. The training comprises, for example, discussion and reflection on white privilege, white fragility, identifying and tackling microaggressions, becoming an active bystander, opening conversations on race, and provides resources so that staff can self-educate.
- The University appointed AHE to provide strategic support over a twelve-month (January 2021 – December 2021) period to enhance consultation opportunities, understand how the University's Race Equality Strategy should be developed and provide senior-level guidance. This has already had an impact, with AHE working closely with the Senior Equality Champions and the Equality and Diversity Adviser on articulating what our antiracist University would mean for staff, students and the wider community. AHE have also provided targeted sessions for SMT where leadership of an anti-racist culture was analysed and discussed.

Reporting procedures

- Although the University does have clear reporting procedures in place, the responses to the Listening Phase indicated that these need to be communicated more effectively

and that there needed to be visible staff who can support students who wish to make a complaint - formal or informal.

- The Race Equality Champions noted above will be able to take on this role, but the University will also launch an anonymous reporting tool by the end of the academic year 2020/21 which will signpost to support and offer a conversation with an appropriate member of staff.

De-colonising the curriculum

- Work has commenced on establishing a working group to review and implement change on this issue, which has been raised during the Listening Phase. The Vice-Principal Education is a co-chair of the Advance HE/QAA Scotland Anti-racist Curriculum Project and has also begun discussions within the University's Schools on this topic. SMMSN has been working closely with the Black Medical Students Association to make changes to the medical curriculum.

5.1.14 Horizon Scanning

The University has welcomed the reports of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) – [Tackling Racial Harassment: Universities Challenged](#) (2019) – and Universities UK (UUK) - [Tackling Racial Harassment in HE](#) (2020) - and has considered them carefully. Both reports point to systemic racism in UK universities and the recommendations have been analysed and will be actioned, the University wholeheartedly accepts the findings of both reports and is responding to the call to action. An action plan to address the EHRC report was approved in January 2020 and this will be enhanced to consider the recommendations of the UUK report which was published at the end of November 2020.

5.1.15 Actions:

Develop and implement a Race Equality/Antiracism Strategy by September 2021 (Action 4.1)

Analyse feedback on the Race Equality training launched in January 2021 and agree training approaches for refresher training/reflection and additional training for groups of staff (Action 4.2)

Implement and launch new racial harassment reporting system with regular communication of the reporting options by June 2021 (Action 4.3)

Develop and launch new race equality webpage and monitor traffic by May 2021 (Action 4.4)

Achieve 100% uptake on Understanding Race Bias online training by September 2022 (Action 4.5)

Develop, launch and deliver a Race Communications Plan (Action 4.6)

Working group which has been established to recommend a set of terminology/definitions to be used in the University to present its recommendations by September 2021 (Action 4.7)

Establish a network of Race Equality Champions by end April 2021 (Action 4.8)

Submit an application to the Race Equality Charter by February 2023 (Action 1.3)

5.1.16 **GENDER PAY GAP**

The University's most recent full Gender Pay Gap Report 2020 can be found here: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/Gender%20Pay%20Gap%20Report-v8Final.pdf>

- 5.1.17 The University's 2020 mean Gender Pay Gap is 19.5% and median is 20.2%. In April 2020, the University reported its Gender Pay Gap for the previous year (2019) which was 20.6% (mean)

and 22.4% (median). Overall, the mean Gender Pay Gap has reduced since reporting commenced in 2017 by nearly 3% as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Gender Pay Gap 2017 – 2020

Year	Mean (%)	Median (%)
2017	22.4	22.2
2018	22.03	22.7
2019	20.6	22.4
2020	19.5	20.2

5.1.18 Closing the gap is a long-term strategic objective for the University. While we recognise that there are complex societal, cultural and occupational factors which have a direct impact on the gender pay gap, Aberdeen 2040 specifically includes the following commitment:

We will eliminate pay gaps across all protected characteristics

5.1.19 The University acknowledges that there are many factors that can contribute to the discrepancies and it is therefore important that the multiple data elements impacting Gender Pay Gap are monitored as per Figure 3 below.

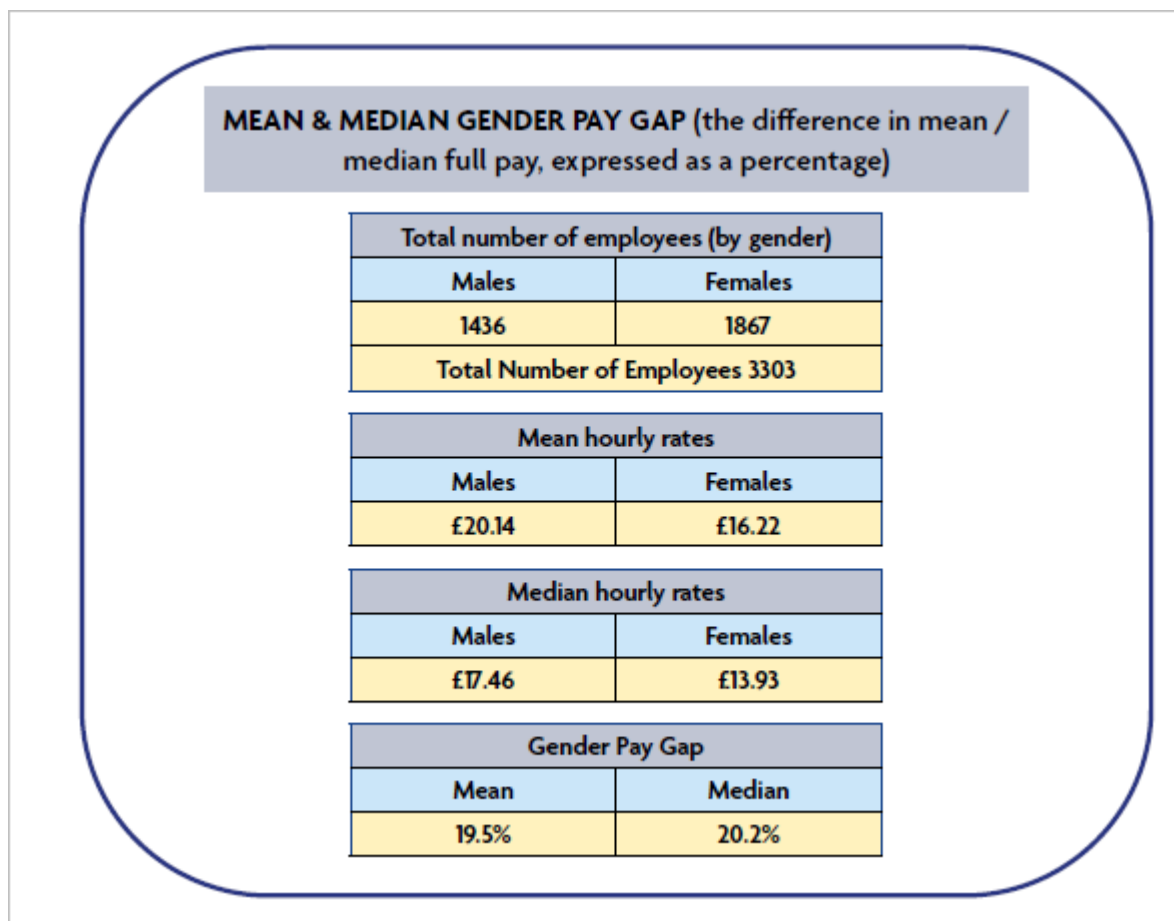


Figure 3: Mean and median gender pay gap

5.1.20 The main factor influencing the Gender Pay Gap within the University is vertical and horizontal segregation because of under- and over – representation of females at different levels, grades and posts (including Professorial staff).

5.1.21 Females are under-represented at senior posts and/or over-represented in lower grades and mid-level posts. If females are under-represented, the ratios are highly impacted by even small

changes in the high-level posts, for example, high earning female(s) leaving the organisation or high earning male(s) being recruited.

5.1.22 Actions being taken to address the pay gap and which are part of the Gender Pay Gap report include:

- Strategic commitment to eliminating all pay gaps
- Monitoring of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on gender pay gaps e.g. in temporary contracts and promotion prospects
- Regular pay gap monitoring (including the gap at School level) to support a range of activities, including monitoring the professorial gender pay gap, informing the recruitment process, supporting Athena Swan applications and considering the impact of the promotions process on the pay gap
- Social Observer Bias in Promotions Scheme has been developed to introduce a range of measures to support chairs of promotion committees to identify bias and take action to reduce it. For example, observers will sit in the promotions committees with the sole purpose of raising and noting bias in the dialogue and decision-making processes.
- Monitoring of gender balance on University committees and action taken where appropriate
- Regrading Policy launched in 2021 for Professional Services staff
- In 2021 the Promotions Annual Review Group will continue their work on a broader review of the promotions process
- Trade Union representatives acted as observers in the promotions committees in 2020
- Mentoring and coaching is available to all staff in the University.

5.1.23 EQUAL PAY REPORT

The University publishes an Equal Pay Report every three years and the most recent report can be found [here](#)

5.1.24 The fifth report was published in April 2020 based on data obtained from the HR/Payroll System as at 31 August 2019. This covered three equality strands: gender, ethnicity, and disability.

5.1.25 This demonstrated that the University's overall Gender Pay Gap in 2019 was 20.2% (a slight improvement from 2016 when the gap was 23%). The gap is indicative of the uneven distribution of males and females across the pay grades. The under-representation of females at higher grades is a factor in weighting the overall gender gap in favour of males.

5.2.26 It also demonstrated that there are no significant pay gaps across individual grades and none which exceeded the 5% recommended threshold. The report highlighted, however that females do appear to be disadvantaged in relation to contribution point salaries. On average 11% of the male population are in receipt of the top contribution point salary compared to 8% of females.

5.1.27 Actions being taken to address Equal Pay and which are part of the Equal Pay Report include:

- Undertake a robust Equal Pay audit, using an independent provider and which will follow all criteria required for the audit as per the Equality and Human Rights Commission guidelines
- All gaps of 5%> or repeated gaps of 3% to be investigated on an annual basis



- Continue to monitor the rates of successful and unsuccessful promotions/regrading applicants
- We will also explore the issue regarding contribution applications when our Contribution Procedure is available (this is currently paused due to the impact of Covid-19 on the University's financial sustainability).
- In addition to the above, we will continue to publish our Gender Pay Gap report and progress actions which will enable equality in pay.

5.1.28 TRANSGENDER POLICY

The University agreed and approved a [Transgender Equality Policy](#) in 2020. The policy applies to staff and students and provides guidance on support with transitioning, both internal and external to the University.

5.1.29 Actions:

Develop supporting guidance for the Transgender Equality Policy by September 2021 through consultation with staff and student groups (Action 9.1)

Roll out associated training on the Policy and Guidance to staff, exploring online options by December 2021 (Action 9.2)

5.1.30 ACCESS AND ARTICULATION

Since the last report in 2019, the University has created an Access and Articulation Team which is part of the Directorate of External Relations. This Directorate is represented on EDIC by the Director of External Relations (who is also a member of the Senior Management Team). The Access and Articulation Team is also represented on other relevant internal committees which are related to EDI work. The University created two Dean positions in 2019: Dean for Access, Articulation and Outreach and Dean for Student Support. The Deans work closely with the team on all aspects of their work and in the dissemination of the widening access agenda across the University. As a result of this new robust structure the Access and Articulation Committee was created in 2019 to replace the former Widening Access Committee and Articulation Committee. The Committee is cross institutional in nature and has a dedicated subgroup on Vulnerable Groups.

5.1.31 Widening access is one of the key strands of Aberdeen 2040. The Access and Articulation Team provides pre-entry support to applicants who meet widening access [criteria](#). The team works with school pupils, further education college students and mature applicants who meet one (or more) of the relevant criteria and aspire to study at the University. The Access and Articulation team also provides support and advice for parents, guardians, teachers and any other interested individuals or agencies. The work of the team has had to adapt rapidly in view of the pandemic, to successfully move support to a virtual format.

5.1.32 Within the widening access criteria are students who would identify as belonging to one of the Vulnerable Groups (as defined by the Scottish Funding Council). The categories of students, that currently come under umbrella term vulnerable groups, are as follows:

- Care Experienced (Care Leavers)
- Estranged Students
- Student Carers (Unpaid carers)
- Gypsy, Roma, Traveller
- Veterans and Armed Forces
- Refugees & Asylum Seekers

5.1.33 The University has signed up to several external, nationally recognised, schemes, awards and commitments since 2019 in relation to its work with vulnerable groups and also works with

partners both regionally and nationally to implement them. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Care Experienced (Care Leavers) – the University has signed up to the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant.
- Estranged Students – the University has committed to the Stand-Alone Pledge
- Student Carers (Unpaid Carers) – the University has received the Carers Trust
- Going Higher in Scotland recognition award.
- Veterans and Armed Forces – the University has signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant.

The University is currently working towards gaining University of Sanctuary status in support of student refugees and asylum seekers.

5.1.33 The University, in 2021, established a sub-group of its Access and Articulation Committee to review and monitor its work with students from vulnerable groups and its commitments with external organisations in this area. This sub-group is led by two of the University's Deans – the Dean for Student Support and the Dean for Access, Articulation and Outreach. The group is also considering structures, future practical and policy work.

5.1.34 A team of student interns has been employed, to capture the views and opinions of students who belong to or are representative of one (or more) of the vulnerable groups. The findings of this project will inform the work of the sub-group and the further development of support, events and information for students in this category. The internship will end in April 2021, but the aim is to set up a widening access student forum which can inform future policies and practices relating to widening access across the full student journey.

5.1.35 SFC REACH PROJECT

The University continues to host a branch of the Scottish Funding Council-funded REACH Project which works with pupils aged S4-S6 who are interested in studying either Medicine or Law. In April 2020 Reach Aberdeen moved to a 'target pupil' approach in line with the recommendations set out by the Commission on Widening Access. The project supports pupils who meet one of the following widening access criteria: SIMD20, SIMD40, care experienced, young carer, estranged, eligible for free school meals, refugee or asylum seeker or resident in an area considered to be Remote and Rural. REACH Aberdeen works with 76 schools across Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Moray, Highlands, Orkney and Shetland. The programme supports these pupils by providing taster days, application support, mentoring opportunities, information, advice and guidance. REACH responded to Covid-19 challenges by transferring events to a virtual format where possible. Where this was not possible, new initiatives, such as e-mentoring, were created to ensure that pupils received the information and support that they required.

5.1.36 GATEWAY TO MEDICINE SCHEME

[Gateway to Medicine](#) (G2M) is a widening access scheme designed to support students access the MBChB degree.

5.1.37 The course continues to be delivered as a partnership between the University and NESCOL. In addition, there is an opportunity for students to train as bank Healthcare Support Workers because of strong support from our partner health board NHS Grampian. Following the very positive outcome from the first cohort, the Scottish Government awarded additional places (increased to 25) and confirmed funding until academic year 2022/23.

5.1.38 The number of students applying for the G2M has increased year on year and is perhaps indicative of the need for the programme and its growing success. The number of students coming to the course from a REACH school has also increased which may be due to effective promotion in target schools. Overall, the progression rate to the MBChB from the three G2M cohorts, who have completed thus far, is 95% (62/65). Two of the students who did not progress transitioned to degrees in medical sciences.

Table 3: G2M recruitment 2017- 2020

Cohort	Target	Applicants	Interviewed (% applied)	Enrolled (% interviewed)
1 (2017)	20	N/A	21 (N/A)	21 (100)
2 (2018)	25	41	31 (75.6)	19 (61.3)
3 (2019)	25	98	50 (51.0)	25 (50.0)
4 (2020)	25	108	67 (62.0)	27 (40.3)

5.1.39 A mixed-methods evaluation study comprising both quantitative (enrolment and progression data) and qualitative (interviews) data continues, and an interim report has been presented to Scottish Government (November 2020). This review indicated that the programme enabled students experiencing disadvantage to overcome barriers to entry by providing an alternative route into medicine. In particular, the course proved appealing due to the personalised nature of admissions. The opportunity to undertake bank work as a healthcare support worker along with the provision of a bursary in the G2M year also proved attractive elements of the programme and addressed practical issues and provided security. The high progression rate (95%) from the G2M to MBChB is encouraging. Similarly, the student feedback received highlights the value of the programme in supporting entry to medicine. Students have reported feeling academically and emotionally prepared to undertake study on the MBChB because of completing the G2M. Furthermore, they reported that a career in medicine is within their reach and they began to develop an identity as a medic and an awareness of the skills required to be a doctor. All 62 students who have progressed to the MBChB are still in the programme, though 5 have had to repeat a year. This leaves us with 24 in year 1, 22 in year 2, and 16 in year 3.

5.1.40 GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The University is working closely with AUSA to implement enhanced support for staff and students who experience gender-based violence (GBV).

5.1.41 In 2019 a joint 'Statement of Commitment' was signed between the University and AUSA, which pledges implementation of a 'zero-tolerance' approach to all forms of sexual harassment/GBV.

5.1.42 A working group consulted with staff and students on their experiences of GBV through an online survey and launched a new online tool in 2019 to enable and encourage reporting of concerns and incidents of GBV as well as signpost to relevant support. Since its launch the reporting tool has helped to support students and staff in seeking direct support (from HR or the Support Services) for cases of GBV and abuse. Improvements to the system have been made following input from Trade Unions and the GBV Working Group and its success means that we will expand the tool to cover all forms of abuse and harassment.

5.1.43 Cards have been distributed to staff to provide information on how to handle a disclosure of GBV. This reflects the recommendations of the Equally Safe in HE (ESHE) Toolkit, launched after the University's earlier work, and which we have also adopted.

5.1.44 The University participated in a Scottish-wide research project on GBV, facilitated by the University of Strathclyde and linked to the ESHE Toolkit. As a part of the project we carried out surveys and focus groups aimed at exploring GBV issues. This consultation enabled identification of key priority areas for the GBV working group.

5.1.45 The University is currently participating in a national project called 'Combat Misconduct', as one of five pilot institutions, which is being organised through AVA (national domestic and sexual abuse charity). This project has been extended considering the impact of Covid-19 and aims to develop new tools (e.g. e-learning programmes and an impact assessment matrix) and to support universities to evaluate the impact of GBV interventions.

5.1.46 The University has linked with sector colleagues through AMOSSHE Scotland to contribute to, and develop, a short online training course for all University staff on GBV. This was launched



in November 2020 and the 17 contributing Universities have committed to make this available to all universities in the UK.

5.1.47 Actions:

Publish a new, comprehensive policy and accompanying procedures supporting the statement of commitment, enshrining its values into University policy by June 2021 (Action 5.1)

Continue to partake in pilot training for staff and look to roll this out to all frontline support staff and Senior Personal Tutors (Action 5.2)

Work with AUSA to develop and deliver Consent training to students entering the University and to all student leaders (Club Captains and Committees and Society Presidents and Committees) (Action 5.3)

Work with local partners and institutions (RGU, NESCOL, Police Scotland, ACC and NHS) to further the idea of a "Fearless Aberdeen" (Action 5.4)