This programme sets out Equality Challenge Unit activity and support for 2016. Those we work with expect and deserve a professional, expert and responsive service from us. Alongside the programme of work set out in the following pages we will be introducing and committing to the following:

= A dedicated named single point of contact for you who will ensure your needs are represented within ECU

= A commitment to answer the majority of queries in one working day, with a maximum response time of no more than five working days where further research is necessary

= An online subscribers hub with research and guidance exclusively for members

= Provision of networking opportunities, seminars and webinars

= An annual conference

= Feedback from applications to ECU’s Equality Charters within two months of the results

= A commitment to review the Charters processes to ensure they are as expedient and efficient as possible

= Improved communications delivered through our investment in new customer relationship software

= Liaison and collaboration with other agencies and bodies to ensure resources are used efficiently
The benefit of this for you will be:

= Clear and timely communications and interactions with ECU
= Greater efficiency for your institution
= Support when and where you need it
= ECU services and support that are developed with you, for you
= Joined up thinking across the sector
We present this programme in a period of great change. Change for ECU and change for the sector.

In February 2015, HEFCE and DELNI concluded that due to changes in the student funding environment from 2016 they would no longer be in a position to fund ECU’s work in England and Northern Ireland.

With great input, engagement and feedback from you, ECU has reflected on our strategy and mission and our unique place within the higher education landscape. This has informed the development of a revitalised ECU. An ECU which from January 2016 for the first time became a membership organisation for universities and higher education colleges in England and Northern Ireland.

I’d like to thank all of you that have supported and fed back to us during this period of self-reflection and change. I’d also like to thank the Scottish and Welsh Funding Councils for their continued support, allowing us to build a programme that is UK wide.
ECU is not unique in having to respond to a changing funding environment. The sector continues to manage and evolve in response to emerging priorities, policies and legislation and in response to ever tougher demands on budgets. We have listened to the feedback you have given us. We will be more responsive as an organisation; we will deliver more targeted support; we will provide an authoritative voice and thought leadership for the sector on equality and diversity. Crucially we will continue to help you improve outcomes for your staff and students. We will also continue the conversation with you to better understand your needs and shape our support. At the same time we will seek to provide all this as efficiently and economically as possible, working with other organisation to maximise impact.

This programme sets out our activities to support you through 2016, and how together we can continue to advance equality in higher education.

David Ruebain,
Chief Executive,
Equality Challenge Unit
ECU believes that the benefits of equality and diversity and inclusive practice are key to the wellbeing and success of individuals, the institution’s community, the competitiveness and excellence of institutions, and to the growth of the sector in a global economy.

Our approach is evidence-based, using research to identify and develop initiatives that change practices that unfairly exclude, marginalise or disadvantage those with certain protected characteristics. This evidence supports institutions to remove barriers to progression and success for all staff and students.

In 2014 we launched our strategic plan for 2014-2016. In this we set out our priorities for advancing equality and diversity, targeting action on the areas that still remain a challenge for the higher education sector across the UK and colleges in Scotland.
Our priorities for the strategic plan were developed in consultation with institutions, sector bodies, partner organisations and individuals. Through our latest rounds of consultation with you, which have informed the programme for 2016, we believe that the current strategic plan continues to provide a clear focus for our work.

In the following pages we set out three themes of work to help us meet our strategic priorities in a way that you told us makes sense for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why we focus on this</th>
<th>Illuminate the evidence</th>
<th>Articulate for the sector</th>
<th>Champion the case</th>
<th>Transform practice</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 2016 this means</strong></td>
<td>Providing you with robust evidence on equality and diversity, helping you understand issues and providing an empirical base for your and ECU’s work</td>
<td>Opinion and journal articles that will help you articulate why equality is important Working with the sector and media, securing positive coverage of the benefits of equality and diversity work for your staff and students</td>
<td>Helping you to respond to emerging legislation including equality metrics and the provision of targeted information for sector leaders</td>
<td>To change cultural and systemic practices that unfairly exclude, marginalise or disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why we focus on this</strong></td>
<td>Our evidence-based and outcome-led approach remains vital to build change programmes</td>
<td>To assist external bodies and external influencers to understand the context and challenges of higher education</td>
<td>So vice-chancellors, principals and leaders can understand their role and take forward advancing equality in their own context</td>
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<td>Continued development of ECU’s Equality Charters and inclusive practice projects that help you deliver real change in your institution</td>
</tr>
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</table>
We have developed a clear understanding of your priorities.

We consulted with you through our annual survey, subscription survey and focus groups.

We have designed a programme that will help you address your priorities.

We are changing to be more responsive and deliver work that will help you advance equality and diversity.

You said, we listened.
In our consultation you told us:

You would like ECU to be an authoritative voice on equality, within your institution and nationally.

You wish to see us providing space and tools for a community that shares good practice and for ECU to facilitate a knowledge base and sustainable networks.

You would like us to support your institution with tools to advance equality across the sector.

These form the three themes through which our programme for 2016 will be delivered.
You said that you want us to keep you in the picture and provide support on emerging policy, legislation and national trends for the sector, speaking strongly for the sector on matters that are important for advancing equality.

- **We will ensure you have all the latest news relating to equality in HE**
  We will keep you up-to-date with developments from around the sector through two email news updates a month, social media and through our online subscribers hub.

- **Supporting you to respond to policy and legislation that affects your institution**
  We will ensure that institutions receive comprehensive, easy-to-understand advice relating to any national and international developments affecting equality and diversity in your institution.

- **Access to compelling research**
  Targeted, contextualised, summarised, renowned and high quality research for our members to cite when making the case for equality and to understand issues locally.
Helping you address your priorities in 2016

Spring
= Managing the Disabled Students’ Allowance
   We will facilitate and share good practice on how institutions can minimise the detrimental impact changes to DSA will have on disabled students.

Summer
= Governing bodies handbook
   Our updated governing bodies handbook will outline the responsibilities of governing bodies in relation to equality and diversity.

Autumn / winter
= Benchmarking data
   Our statistical reports, with information on the make-up of staff and students in the UK, will provide you with a national picture with which to effectively measure your own performance.

Throughout the year
= Responding to evolving HE regulation
   We will feed into the debate as higher education legislation evolves, supporting you to consider the equality implications as they emerge.

Resources:
At least 4 advice and guidance publications

Value:
At least 80% of institutions find our publications and guidance helpful

Impact:
Reduction in your resources and time spent considering how to implement change
You have told us that you would like more support to address local equality concerns. Partnering with your institution we will support you to achieve your own equality aims and objectives.

- **Training and resources**
  We will increase the number of training packages and supporting resources that you can use in your university or college.

- **Dedicated consultancy and membership support**
  A dedicated first point of contact will be provided to all subscribers to help you get maximum benefit from ECU. Universities that subscribe directly to ECU will be provided with a day of focused expert consultancy.

- **Active support for in ECU’s Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charters**
  We understand that support is crucial to help you participate in ECU’s Equality Charters and implement actions that make sense for your institution. A programme of workshops and a developing bank of effective practice case studies will facilitate your success.
Helping you address your priorities in 2016

Spring
= **Governing bodies**
  Unconscious bias training for governing bodies delivered jointly with the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

Summer
= **Unconscious bias resources**
  A range of training materials aimed at a number of different audiences including academics and senior managers will be released.

Throughout the year
= **Advice on using data**
  We will produce a number of factsheets on how institutions can make the most of data, and the type of data they should be collecting.

= **Equality Charters support**
  We will develop and deliver further workshops and factsheets on how to engage with ECU’s Equality Charters and develop practice that will increase successful participation.

= **Tailored consultancy**
  A focused consultative day for institutions that subscribe directly to ECU, supporting you on a range of equality issues and needs.

**Resources:**
At least 8 factsheets and effective practice case studies that you can use locally

**Value:**
80% of institutions subscribing directly utilise their consultancy day, and 80% of them find it valuable

**Impact:**
Increased success in ECU’s Equality Charters; reduced expenditure on meeting equality objectives
Developing a community of good practice

We will harness the collective expertise of the sector’s equality and diversity professionals to create a strong knowledge base and sustainable network committed to sharing resources, exchanging ideas and promoting good practice.

- **Access to the ECU subscribers hub**
  Our new online subscribers hub will provide institutions with a portal to share ideas and case studies.

- **Participation using our wide range of training materials**
  Comprehensive, easy-to-understand packages that can be delivered by staff in your university or college.

- **ECU conferences, events and bespoke services**
  Network and knowledge building through a number of ECU’s events throughout the year, including conferences, training programmes and opportunities to meet with colleagues from across the higher education sector.
Helping you address your priorities in 2016

Spring
= Widening participation
A two-year facilitated programme of action learning sets for programme participants to increase diversity within widening participation.

= Recruitment and selection
A series of training sessions focussed on how to ensure fairness when recruiting and selecting staff for promotion.

Summer
= Student inductions
We will deliver training specifically aimed at small and specialist institutions on managing successful student induction.

Autumn
= Conferences
An annual conference, open to all, but with free spaces for subscribing universities and colleges.

Webinars and micro training sessions delivered at regional and Charters’ networks.

Throughout the year
= Promoting dignity at work
We will deliver workshops on how to promote a culture of dignity and respect among staff.

Resources:
At least 6 ECU facilitated or run conferences and seminars are delivered.

Value:
A minimum of 200 colleagues across the sector are provided with the opportunity to network.

Impact:
Joined up policy thinking and analysis. Increased knowledge sharing. Reduction in expenditure on training and conferences.
ECU’s Equality Charters

Our Equality Charters support the delivery of all four of our strategic aims. The Charters also require a big commitment from participants, so it is important that we ensure you are properly supported to participate successfully, and that they develop with the sector.

For members who are thinking about joining the Charters, we will support you with advice, guidance, and effective practice examples, helping you prepare for your first submission.

ECU’s Equality Charters enable organisations to apply for an award recognising their commitment to, and progress on, equality and diversity.
Race Equality Charter
In January 2016 we launched our Race Equality Charter. The Charter aims to improve the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education.

We will work alongside universities in reviewing their organisational practices, and will enable them, through advice and practical support, to advance race equality throughout their institution.

Athena SWAN Charter
Participation in Athena SWAN continues to grow. In 2015 we received 268 applications and in May 2015 Athena SWAN was expanded to recognise work undertaken in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL). It now also includes professional and support roles, and work undertaken to address gender equality more broadly, as well as for trans staff and students.

We are committed to making ECU’s Athena SWAN as efficient as possible, while retaining its aim of driving cultural and systemic change to advance gender equality.
Helping you address your priorities in 2016

- Aligning ECU’s Equality Charters with all of your work
  New processes at ECU will ensure that the Charters inform our policy work and in turn policy work helps the evolution of the Charters.

  Athena SWAN networks will be supported by ECU and designed to complement ECU’s regional equality networks.

- Supportive materials and sharing effective practice
  Workshops to support institutions engaging with ECU’s Race Equality Charter or arts, humanities, social science, business and law departments making submissions for the first time. Workshops for aspiring Silver and Gold Athena SWAN applicants.

  A range of case studies and sharing of effective practice for both Charters will help you develop effective practice that supports your applications.

- Making Athena SWAN accessible for all institutions and departments
  Further development of bespoke application processes for small and specialist institutions along with continued support for the Athena SWAN small and specialist network.

  Provision of effective practice for AHSSBL departments and guidance on including professional and support staff in your application.
= **Meeting promises set out in the Charters’ handbooks**
  We will continue training Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter panellists and chairs through a new series of interactive webinars and face-to-face training sessions, preparing them for panels and ensuring robust, consistent and transparent outcomes.
  We will provide you with timely feedback on your application outcome.

= **Developing an online submission system**
  Ongoing development of an electronic system for Athena SWAN submissions, reducing the burden on you, and allowing us to process the awards rounds more efficiently and quickly.

**Resources:**
At least 10 training sessions and workshops, and quarterly effective practice case studies

**Value:**
An increase from a baseline of 80% of subscribers taking part in Equality Charters

**Impact:**
Consideration of, and action towards equality and diversity mainstreamed in the sector
Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) supports higher education institutions across the UK and in colleges in Scotland to advance equality and diversity for staff and students.

ECU provides research, information and guidance, training, events and Equality Charters that drive forward change and transform organisational culture in teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange. We have over ten years’ experience of supporting institutions to remove barriers to progression and success for all staff and students.

ECU believes that the benefits of equality and diversity and inclusive practice are key to the wellbeing and success of individuals, the institution’s community, the efficiency and excellence of institutions, and the growth of further and higher education in a global environment.

We are a registered charity funded by the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and Universities UK, and through direct subscription from higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland.