



Equality Outcomes 2025–2029

Contact SRUC's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead for more information about our equalities work or to request this document in an alternative format or community language.

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More information about Scotland's Rural College is available on our website www.sruc.ac.uk

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Foreword from our Principal and Chief Executive Officer

This report sets out the milestones for the next phase of SRUC's equality, diversity and inclusion journey. Despite current global pressures, SRUC remains committed to joining with other Scottish tertiary institutions to tackle not only our own most significant inequalities, but also those experienced across the tertiary education sector as evidenced in the National Equality Outcomes. I have also been engaging in discussions with colleagues about the importance of institutional neutrality and ensuring staff and students are supported to express lawful views and engage in respectful debate. These important conversations are a vital component of SRUC's independence, culture and contribution to national and global policy.

SRUC has experienced a truly exceptional 12 months. With the historic award of Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) and the opening of our School of Veterinary Medicine, it's been a year simply unmatched in the history of our organisation.

Among our many other notable accomplishments over the last few years, in 2024 SRUC achieved a [Bronze level Athena Swan award](#), demonstrating our commitment to advancing gender equality and our prioritisation of increased inclusivity. The delivery of our Athena Swan action plan is a significant focus on our revised equality outcomes. I am particularly looking forward to us achieving the EmilyTest Charter. We must do our part to tackle gender-based violence in the tertiary education sector, and to support the range of national equality outcomes focused on ensuring students and staff feel safe and that they belong on campus.

Our EDI audit completed in 2023–2024 told us there are pockets of good practice at SRUC, and that we need to proactively share to embed EDI consistently across our institution. Work to review and implement new institutional models, policies and practices will help to achieve this. In addition to our work gender equality, the EDI audit has evidenced a need to focus our equality outcomes on becoming an anti-racist institution, improving support for staff and students with disabilities (specifically mental health, physical disabilities and neurodiversity), and creating a culture of belonging across SRUC's community.

Our recent transformative accomplishments and renewed strategic focus are reshaping SRUC into an institution of the future, which is particularly important considering the challenges faced by universities and colleges. Our EDI work is an important part of how we embrace change, innovate to be successful and equip our students to be successful leaders of the future.

Wayne Powell.

Professor Wayne Powell
Principal and Chief Executive

Context for this report

This report presents SRUC's equality outcomes 2025–2029 only.

Please also see our Equality Outcomes 2021–2025 progress report 2025 and mainstreaming update [published separately](#). Full information about SRUC can be found on our [website](#).

Legislative context In Scotland

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the public sector equality duty (PSED) which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In Scotland, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (and subsequent updates¹) provide a framework to support public authorities like SRUC to meet the general duty. The [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) (EHRC)² monitor and regulate compliance with the public sector equality duty and relevant regulations in Scotland.

¹ See list of regulations on the Equality and Human Rights website at [Regulations for the Specific Duties | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)

² <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/guidance-scottish-public-authorities>

British Sign Language Action Plan 2024–2030

In May 2024, SRUC published a revised [British Sign Language \(BSL\) local action plan](#) and [BSL translation](#) to support the Scottish Government's revised [British Sign Language National Plan 2023 to 2029](#). This action plan forms part of our equality outcomes priorities.

Athena Swan Bronze Award

The [Athena Swan Transformed Charter](#) encourages and recognises an institution's commitment to advance gender equality. In November 2024, SRUC achieved its first Athena Swan Bronze Award. Our [whole institution application](#) provides a robust analysis of our employee data including recruitment and promotions information through a gender lens. SRUC embedded the Athena Swan Culture Survey questions within our EDI Audit commissioned through Advance HE (December 2023 – April 2024).

Our published [Athena Swan application](#) analysis and accompanying action plan (October 2024 – October 2029) forms an important part of our equality outcomes evidence review and supporting activity. The Athena Swan information is not replicated in this report, however we have referenced it as appropriate.

Tackling persistent inequalities together

The Scottish Funding Council and Equality and Human Rights Commission published the [Tackling Persistent Inequalities Together](#) report in 2023 outlining the persistent inequalities in the Scottish tertiary education system. The report includes National Equality Outcomes that Scottish institutions are asked to adopt where these align with institutional evidence and resource.

Additional links to evidence in support of the National Equality Outcomes are available in the [National Equality Outcomes Data and Reporting Guidance](#). These are not replicated in this report.

Development of SRUC's Equality Outcomes 2025–2029

Our equality outcomes review has been evidence-led using SRUC's evidence, external evidence and the National Equality Outcomes to develop equality outcomes that are targeted at our biggest inequalities.

Previous work to evidence action plans as part of our Athena Swan application and review of our British Sign Language action plan (both completed in 2024) also contributed to our equality outcomes review.

SRUC's strategic context and values

After gaining taught degree-awarding powers in 2024, SRUC aims to become a distinctive university college at the heart of the natural economy, characterised by a unique combination of education, research, Innovation and enterprise, and commercial ventures. Our over-riding aspirations are to:

1. Create a high-performing Innovation and skills ecosystem that is built on the needs of a natural capital-based economy
2. Use Taught Degree Award Powers to drive new relationships and alliances both nationally and internationally.
3. Champion new ways of working and the focused mobilisation of resources across the Scottish and International economy ecosystem, to help address the big challenges that we face on a global basis.

Evidence shows that diverse organisations work smarter, encourage innovation, and maximise the creativity that is fundamental to academic and commercial excellence. Our approach to diversity and inclusion aims to foster an environment that enables all staff and students to engage with today's intellectual and global challenges while realising their own potential.

SRUC's **RISE** values underpin everything we do and are an important anchor for our equality work and the culture of inclusivity that we strive for at SRUC.

- **Respect** everyone's contribution
- **Innovate** for success
- **Support** each other
- **Excel** in everything we do

Addressing lessons learned

In reviewing and reporting on progress against our previous equality outcomes we identified some lessons learned.

Measuring success

Measuring the impact of our equality work to date has been difficult due to the broad framing of previous equality outcomes (i.e. applicable to all protected characteristics equally), and success measures being the completion of the action rather than resulting impact.

We have addressed this through the development of focused equality outcomes, and with each outcome having overarching measures of success.

Embedding EDI actions

In developing a central activity tracker to manage and report on progress against our equality outcomes, it was clear that ownership of actions had not been clearly communicated.

We have addressed this by developing high level actions that have been agreed with senior leaders and that align with their own strategies. Senior leaders are responsible for determining specific milestones, timelines and resources and will report to the EDI Committee on progress against the high level action only.

Flexibility in action planning

Throughout the four year equality outcomes cycle there has been a gradual change in priorities due to SRUC's own evolution as an institution (e.g. gaining Taught Degree Awarding Powers), and external changes (e.g. publication of National Equality Outcomes). This has resulted in a slight mismatch between actions agreed in 2021 to the work we started to focus on in 2024.

We have addressed this by planning for the first two years of our equality outcomes cycle. These will be reviewed for our April 2027 progress report and further actions will be identified as appropriate. We believe this will give us flexibility to focus on actions that support wider organisational change and priorities.

Review of evidence and consultation

Our equality outcomes have been developed using external and internal evidence, and in consultation with both staff and students as described below.

EDI Audit 2023–2024

The EDI Audit commissioned through Advance HE (December 2023 to April 2024) remains a key source of information that has informed our equality outcomes.

Three out of eight report recommendations focused on 'Providing specific training, resources and support to improve the experiences of staff and students' including those:

- from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and to support increased representation,
- with disabilities,
- in relation to gender and sexual orientation.

The other recommendations focused on wider improvements in relation to signposting to information, communication about our EDI work and priorities, using co-creative relationships to support EDI priorities and policies, improved use of EDI data, and adequately prioritising and resourcing EDI work.

Cross-SRUC consultation exercise

A series of consultation conversations (on campus and online) and discussions with several SRUC committees and teams reached approximately 70 participants (October to December 2024). The sessions were run by SRUC's EDI Lead. Attendees broadly agreed with the priority areas of feeling safe, disability (with attendees narrowing this priority to mental health, neurodiversity and physical access), race, and gender. Priority actions that could address the inequalities were also discussed.

In recognition of the equality groups highlighted in SRUC's EDI Audit, specific engagement events were held for women, our minority ethnic community, people with direct or indirect experience of disability, and our lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) community. This was a new approach for

SRUC, and the sessions were generally well attended. The session for minority ethnic staff and students had low attendance.

SRUC data review

SRUC's data in relation to the National Equality Outcomes has been reviewed. This used:

- Student data available via SRUC's EDI data dashboard and student voice/survey publications.
- SRUC's employee and Board demographic data.
- SRUC's EDI audit results.

Internal engagement on actions and draft equality outcomes

The EDI Lead has met with relevant senior managers to discuss the equality outcomes and proposed actions that came from the consultation conversations. The high level actions presented beneath each equality outcome are the result of those conversations.

The draft equality outcomes and example actions were shared internally and received 21 responses (all from staff). The consultation confirmed that the wording and focus for each equality outcome is clear (average rating was 4 out of 5, where 5 equals very clear). Some slight changes to wording were suggested and these have been considered. Participants also shared a few further actions that their team could contribute.

Further information about our evidence

SRUC's full evidence analysis is shared in the accompanying published [equality impact assessment](#).

SRUC's Equality Outcomes 2025 – 2029

Our equality outcomes 2025–2029 are shared below alongside key actions and outcome level measures of impact. Appendix A maps the National Equality Outcomes we have adopted under each of our equality outcomes.

Equality outcome 1: All staff and students at SRUC respect diverse perspectives in a collaborative environment where people belong and feel safe

Relevant protected characteristics: Age, Race, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief, Disability, and Pregnancy and Maternity.

Relevant aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty: Eliminating discrimination, victimisation and harassment; Advance equality of opportunity; Foster good relations.

By 2029, outcome success measures will:

- Establish baseline data and trends through Inform and Support data reports by protected characteristic.
- Show improved overall staff and student responses to survey questions about belonging (2024 baseline neutral to 'agree') and no significant differences by protected characteristics.
- Reduction in instances of bullying and harassment (repeat staff/ student survey by December 2028).
- Show proportionate staff leaver data over the outcomes cycle.
- Show improved trends and increased engagement from minoritised groups through student voice mechanisms.

Actions to delivery equality outcome 1 include:

1. Delivery of the Athena Swan priority 'Feel safe at work and on campus'. Led by various teams.
2. Staff skills development on inclusive language; unconscious bias; and challenging microaggressions such as misogyny, homophobia, sexism and racism. Led by Learning and Organisational Development Team.

3. Develop videos and lived experience stories about SRUC's staff and students into a central resource. Led by EDI Lead.
4. Learning and Teaching strategy activity – work on personal growth and collaboration. Led by Head of Learning and Teaching.
5. Addressing inequalities in student voice and involvement in [Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme](#). Led by Academic Enhancement.

Equality outcome 2: SRUC provides support that enables disabled and neurodiverse staff and students to fulfil their potential

Relevant protected characteristics: Disability with a focus on mental health, physical disability and neurodiversity. SRUC adopts the social model of disability where people are disabled by societal barriers.

Relevant aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty: Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; Advancing equality of opportunity.

By 2029, outcome success measures will:

- Show improved overall staff and student responses to survey questions with no significant differences by disability and positive qualitative responses specifically on reasonable adjustments.
- Increase in disabled employee representation (target at least 5%).
- Show improved feedback through student voice mechanisms.
- Show positive trends in student retention, attainment, and graduate outcomes.
- Ad hoc review of complaints and comments linked to specific actions.

Actions to delivery equality outcome 2 include:

1. Delivery of SRUC's British Sign Language action plan. Led by various teams.
2. SRUC website review to include use of images and accessibility. Led by Digital Team.

3. Delivery of the Student Mental Health Strategy. Led by Head of Student Support Services.
4. Review of student Reasonable Adjustment policy. Led by Quality Manager and CELT.
5. Annual review of SRUC's Registration process. Led by Registry and IDS.
6. Improved public information about physical access to campuses. Led by EDI Lead and Campus & Estates.
7. Improvements to campus open days e.g. quiet spaces and video previews. Led by Marketing.
8. Development of Elmwood golf course. Led by Campus & Estates.
9. Learning and Teaching Strategy, specifically work on inclusivity of learning environments and assessment practices. Led by Head of Learning and Teaching.

Equality outcome 3: SRUC is an anti-racist institution, where all staff are equipped to build anti-racism into the curriculum, research, student experience, and SRUC's wider policies and culture

Relevant protected characteristics: Race, Religion or Belief.

Relevant aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty: Eliminating discrimination, victimisation and harassment; Advancing equality of opportunity; Fostering good relations.

By 2029, outcome success measures will:

- Show increase in minority ethnic representation in student and staff demographics.
- Establish baseline data and trends through Inform and Support data reports disaggregated by race.
- Show positive trends in student retention, attainment, and graduate outcomes.

- Show positive trends in student voice mechanisms.

Actions to delivery equality outcome 3 include:

1. Delivery of International Student Recruitment Project including relevant training for teams directly affected. Led by Transformation team.
2. Establish cultural competence training for all staff. Led by EDI Lead.
3. Develop actions to build knowledge and culture change through conversations and external voices. Led by EDI Lead.
4. Learning and Teaching Strategy activity and embedding SEED competencies into the curriculum (see [SEEDABLE](#) framework). Led by Head of Learning and Teaching.
5. Explore slavery and SRUC's history. Led by Library Services Lead.
6. Explore and employ as appropriate positive actions measures in recruitment. Led by Recruitment Manager.

Equality outcomes 4: There is equity for all staff and students of all genders across SRUC's programmes of study, career opportunities, family leave arrangements, involvement in EDI work, and in the provision of campus facilities

Relevant protected characteristics: Sex, gender reassignment.

Relevant aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty: Advancing equality of opportunity; Fostering good relations.

By 2029, outcome success measures will:

- Athena Swan measures are published separately.
- Show improved gender balances across programmes of study.

Actions to delivery equality outcome 4 include:

1. Delivery of the Athena Swan priorities. Led by various teams. Priorities include:
 - Governance and institutional policy.

- Employee engagement.
 - Lifestyle policies and office facilities.
 - Recruitment and promotion.
 - Workload allocation.
2. Delivery of Boards of Study (BoS) gender action plans. Led by BoS Chairs.

Appendix A: National Equality Outcomes mapped to SRUC's Equality Outcomes 2025–2026

There are no national equality outcomes for marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

National Equality Outcomes not adopted by SRUC

- The retention outcomes for university students aged 25 and over will improve. Not adopted – no significant differences in completion by age.
- The success rates for college students aged under 19 will improve. Not adopted – no significant differences in completion by age.
- The success and retention rates of college and university students who declare a mental health condition will improve. Not adopted – no significant differences in completion by disability.

National Equality Outcomes adopted under SRUC Equality Outcome 1

- Trans staff and students report feeling safe to be themselves in the tertiary system.
- Disabled staff and students report feeling safe in the tertiary system.
- Staff and students feel supported and safe and are confident that complaints of harassment or bias on the grounds of race will be dealt with appropriately because complaints procedures are fit for purpose and offer effective redress (also relevant to SRUC's equality outcomes 3).
- Students and staff report that they have confidence in institutional report and support mechanisms because they are fit for purpose (religion or belief).
- Staff and students know how to access support about sex-based violence, harassment, and abuse, report their experience and feel properly supported in doing so because the services are fit for purpose.
- Institutions can evidence approaches that prevent and respond to violence, harassment and abuse.

- Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual students reporting that they feel safe being 'out' at university and college.

National Equality Outcomes adopted under SRUC Equality Outcome 2

- Disabled students report feeling satisfied with the overall support and reasonable adjustments received, including from teaching staff, while on their course.
- Increase the representation of disabled staff in the workforce and on College Boards and University Courts (where representation is not proportionate to the relevant population). For workforce only. We will explore gathering relevant baseline data for SRUC's Board under mainstreaming activity.
- Men (staff and students) know how to access mental health support (recognising intersectionality within that group).

National Equality Outcomes adopted under SRUC Equality Outcome 3

- Institutions should have regard to attainment levels by racial group and ensure that their curriculum is diverse and anti-racist.
- Increase the racial diversity of Court members and address any racial diversity issues in college Boards (where representation is not proportionate to the relevant population). We will explore gathering relevant baseline data for SRUC's Board under mainstreaming activity.
- Increase the racial diversity of teaching and non-teaching college staff to align with student representation in the sector (where representation is not proportionate to the relevant population).

National Equality Outcomes adopted under SRUC Equality Outcome 4

- Institutions will have regard to significant imbalances on courses and take action to address it.



SRUC

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