**Equality Impact Assessment for remote working and learning as part of ‘Advanced Protection’ measures in response to COVID-19 pandemic**

The vast majority of staff and students have been working and studying off-campus since 16 March 2020. This has presented both opportunities and challenges to individuals and the University as a whole and necessitated work to be carried out at pace in order to ensure staff were equipped to carry out their role effectively and students were able to continue with their studies.

Following moves to different levels of protection as set out in our Business Continuity Plan, we have undertaken Equality Impact Assessments for remote working and learning, and returning to work on campus. Each time the University moves into a different level of protection, we will revisit the EIA to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The four levels of protection are (i) Advanced (the most stringent) (ii) Enhanced (iii) Sustained and (iv) Targeted. As of 5 January 2021, the University is in Advanced Protection.

 This Equality Impact Assessment builds upon the first Equality Impact Assessment conducted in April 2020, and does not present an exhaustive list of impacts; it sets out what we have identified to date, having drawn on the knowledge and expertise of people from both within and outside our community. Some of the impacts have changed or are no longer applicable, as we have continued to adjust and adapt to working and studying from home in the context of an ongoing global pandemic.

Requiring staff and students to continue to work and study remotely presents both opportunities and challenges. There is a level of increased flexibility for both staff and students but it also requires staff and students to adopt and maintain different approaches to working and studying, whilst dealing with an uncertain environment and the cumulative effect of multiple lockdowns and the ongoing impact of a global pandemic.

Of the 757 staff who responded to of our ‘Working during COVID-19’ staff survey, run in May 2020, the majority felt that the University had managed the transition to different working environments well and overwhelmingly colleagues appreciated the efforts of, and consideration given by, others. However, while many staff have clearly found solutions to specific challenges arising from their own personal and professional circumstances, it was clear that for others this remains a very difficult moment of transition and the impact is considerable. In addition, many colleagues asked questions and were anxious about their return to on-campus working.

The following specific aspects of working and studying from home, a combination of which affect all staff and students to a greater or lesser degree, have been considered:

* Continuing to balance work/study and caring responsibilities, particularly for staff and students with children
* The cumulative effect of multiple lockdowns and dealing with an uncertain external environment that restricts travel and contact
* Adjusting to and maintaining learning and working in new ways
* Using electronic devices from home
* Delivering teaching remotely
* Accessing teaching remotely
* Learning to use new software/needing to develop new skills
* Undertaking work outside job descriptions
* Developing/undertaking different forms of assessment

A wealth of information and guidance to support staff and students during this time has been published. This assessment does not repeat that, but seeks to identify additional mitigating actions to address identified negative impacts. In line with our aspiration to go beyond legislation wherever possible, and to obtain a holistic overview as possible, a broader range of protected characteristics than those contained within the Equality Act 2010[[1]](#footnote-1) have been considered. In addition, when considering the impact on disabled staff and students, thought has been given to the following:

* Physical impairments
* Mental health conditions
* Those who may not have disclosed a disability
* Those who do not have a diagnosis of a disability but are living with a significant health condition or impairment

Whilst we are aware that significant numbers of staff have not disclosed information such as whether they consider themselves to have a disability, the current situation provides an opportunity for reporting managers to encourage staff to do this, for example through completion of a relevant risk assessment.

**Table 1: Equality Impact Assessment: home-working and online teaching/assessment by protected characteristic - staff**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Protected characteristic** | **Potential positive impacts**  | **Potential negative impacts** | **Mitigating actions to address identified negative impacts** | **Person(s)/service responsible** |
| Age | The ‘pivot’ or ‘sandwich’ generation (over 50’s with caring responsibilities for both children and parents) may find it easier to balance work with caring responsibilities | Setting up a work station at home can be hard for those who live with their parents or in cramped shared accommodation (primarily young people)Early-years childcare commitments (primarily younger people) can make home working difficult Staff aged over 70, who are classed as vulnerable, may feel particularly anxious  | Working from home risk assessment carried out and appropriate adjustments facilitatedFlexible approach to fulfilling requirements of role and focus on outputs rather than time spent on tasks Ensure no staff aged over 70 working in a role that may require them to be present on site e.g. in a food outlet or shop, security staff, cleaning staff are asked to come into work | Reporting managersOccupational HealthCERDirector of People and CultureAge Inclusion Champion |
| Disability – physical and long-term illness | Reduced frequency of travel on to campus may be a benefit for some disabled staffWorking in home surroundings may be a benefit for some disabled staff | A lack of suitable home-working equipment may lead to pain/discomfortRestrictions on ability to move around freely outside the home may exacerbate existing health conditions and sense of isolation.Those who are required to exercise in line with physiotherapy routines may also be greatly impacted by the closure of gyms and leisure centres.Being required to self-isolate for a long period of time due to being in a vulnerable group could lead to a deterioration in mental health. Staff with a long-term health condition, who are classed as vulnerable, may feel particularly anxiousStaff who are ‘clinically vulnerable’ and have a higher risk in relation to COVID-19 due to having a long-term illness may have concerns regarding immunity to infection, but staff may have other diseases, such as HIV that do not make them ‘clinically vulnerable’ but mean they share concerns regarding immunity to infection | Working from home risk assessment carried out, adjustments made as necessary, risk assessment revisited periodically to ensure it remains fit for purpose Staff can request DSE equipment required to work at home safely, which can be collected or delivered Opportunities offered to staff with a health condition or impairment to discuss changes to the working environment and what it might mean for them and adjustments made as necessary. Frequent contact maintainedEnsure no staff with a health condition that puts them in the ‘vulnerable’ category, working in a role that may require them to be present on site e.g. in a food outlet or shop, security staff, cleaning staff are asked to come into work | Reporting managersOccupational Health |
| Disability – mental illness (includes, but is not limited to, anxiety, stress, depression, bipolar, eating disorders, learning disorders, OCD, PTSD) and neuro-diversity (includes dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, Autistic Spectrum) | Increased flexibility in deciding when work is carried out may be a benefit for some neuro-diverse staff  | The cumulative impact of multiple lockdowns and the uncertainty of the external environment pose potential challenges for staff with mental health challenges or disorders, which include:(i) heightened levels of anxiety (ii) an increased risk of condition worsening (iii) a reduced level of support from external health professionals e.g. counsellors(iv) reduced ability to focus on work (v) increased tensions in home environment caused by reduced ability to control condition (vi) fatigue from the cumulative effect of continued restrictionsPotential causes of anxiety/stress for neuro-diverse staff include:(i) a change of structure and routine, including working pattern and methods of communication/feedback (ii) reprioritisation of work(iii) being asked to undertake different work(iv) a change to normal place of work(v) working in close proximity of other people in the household – impact of noise and possible lack of dedicated workspace(vi) Reduced opportunity for informal conversations and lack of confidence in reaching out to colleagues for interaction or support (vii) IT literacy – staff with learning difficulties may find it difficult to stay in touch  | Staff with a mental health condition to be given an opportunity to discuss any proposed changes to their duties with their line manager before any changes are imposed. Reasonable adjustments put in place, where possible, in response to any identified negative impact  Regular contact, using an agreed method e.g. via Zoom or by phone, to keep track of workload, establish goals and respond to potential challenges Include reference to the specific support available to staff with health conditions or impairments in relevant University-wide communicationsContinue to promote wellbeing webinars through University communications. These workshops and sessions cover stress, resilience, anxiety, relaxation and sleep and are available as recordings for both staff and students | Reporting managersOccupational HealthMental Health First AidersHealth ChampionsDisability Inclusion ChampionOH CER |
| Gender[[2]](#footnote-2) | Staff going through transition may find being less visible to others easier | Potential causes of anxiety/stress for trans staff include:(i) staff undergoing transition who need to live in their acquired gender for at least 2 years in order to obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate may have their transition delayed due to social distancing/lock down measures (ii) planned operations as part of transitioning may be delayed or cancelled (iii) the physical appearance of trans staff may change significantly during the period of home-working and if little face-to-face interaction takes place, trans staff may be anxious about returning to the workplace Some trans or non-binary staff may be in isolation with unsupportive family, and/or they may not be out to their family. This can cause emotional distress, depression etc, and the cumulative effect of multiple lockdowns may exacerbate isolation and poor mental healthStaff in abusive home situations, including emotional abuse and harmful traditional practices such as honour violence (predominantly women) may use campus as a refuge and either cannot work from home because of limitations imposed by an abusive partner/family member or are further exposed to an abusive situation | Trans staff to be given particular opportunities to discuss the impact of changes to the working, and wider, environment on their transition Trans staff to be given every opportunity to participate in virtual meetings Include reference to the support available to trans staff, including staff networks and the ‘Supporting trans and non-binary staff’ document, in relevant University-wide communicationsCheck-in regularly with staff to ensure they remain connected with workRaise safeguarding concerns if there are signs that something might be wrong e.g. meeting requests continually being declined, non-attendance at meetings that had been accepted citing technical problems, emails not answered or always answered at a particular/irregular time, obvious increase in levels of anxiety Maintain communications around availability of Report and Support Raise awareness of potential issue and available support in ongoing all-staff communications | Reporting managersNamed People and Culture contactsCERDirector of People and CultureTrans Inclusion ChampionLGBT+ ForumEssex LGBT AllianceReporting ManagersAll staffSafeguarding OfficersCERDirector of People and CultureGender Inclusion Champion |
| Marriage and civil partnership (including those who are single) |  | Staff who are single and live alone may rely on work for their social interaction and the absence of this may cause anxiety/stress/loneliness Single parents may find it particularly difficult to balance work, caring responsibilities and teaching children who need to be home schooled during lockdownHome schooling also contributes to strains in marriage/civil partnership due to the increased levels of responsibility that need to be juggled with the demands of University work Staff going through divorce or relationship breakdown may be particularly vulnerable to poor mental health  | Particular attention paid to the wellbeing of staff who live alone or who are going through a relationship breakdownMaintain communications around availability of Report and Support  | Reporting managersCERDirector of People and culture |
| Pregnancy and maternity | Pregnant staff may find it helpful to work from home if it becomes uncomfortable or difficult to travelAll pregnant staff will have a risk assessment to judge whether it is safe for them to workBeing on maternity leave while colleagues are all working from home may make staff feel less disconnected from work than they may otherwise have felt  | Reduced contact with a pregnant member of staff might result in less frequent monitoring of pregnancy risk assessment to ensure it remains fit for purpose Reduced opportunity to interact with others during pregnancy and following the birth of a baby could cause anxiety/stressStaff who are pregnant and classed as vulnerable, may feel particularly anxious, and pregnant staff in general may also be anxious owing to worries about the child, becoming infected with COVID during pregnancy and how this may impact their health, the pregnancy and health of the childBeing out of the workplace on maternity leave during this period may lead to increased feelings of isolation and being disconnected from work  | Reporting managers with a member of staff in their team who is pregnant should remove or manage any risks, and if this cannot be done, suitable alternative work or working arrangements will be offered. Reporting managers to regularly revisit pregnancy risk assessment, adapting it as necessary Ensure no pregnant member of staff working in a role that may require them to be present on site e.g. in a food outlet or shop, security staff, cleaning staff is asked to come into work | Reporting managersOccupational Health |
| Race | Staff subjected to inappropriate behaviour or comments from others (both within and outside the University) based on their ethnic background may find being required to stay at home a temporary reprieve  | Black academic staff who are already being subjected to micro aggressions as a way of undermining them, may find themselves increasingly oppressed and marginalised during this timeEvidence to show the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people are at greater risk of death from COVID-19 may lead to heightened levels of anxiety Heightened awareness of the Black Lives Matter movement during lockdown may have increased the sense anger/frustration/vulnerability of some staffAdditional challenges are posed for staff teaching online on the subject of race and racism in light of the global focus on Black Lives Matter and initiatives to decolonise the curriculum. There is a greater risk of misunderstanding and unexpressed tension given that some students may be reluctant to engage more fully online. Additionally, a misuse of the chat function may arise, as using this mode of communication is more aligned with conveying ‘gut reactions’, and less time is taken than when we have to express verbally, where we may take more care about what we say and how this impacts others.Staff subjected to harmful traditional practices such as honour violence (predominantly black, Asian and minority ethnic women and children) may be particularly vulnerable during the lockdown period  | Raise awareness of potential and available support, including staff networks and new YUFE wide BAME mentoring scheme being developed for staff, through ongoing work associated with the Tackling Racism Working Group, the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team and in ongoing all-staff communicationsMaintain communications around availability of Report and Support  | CERDirector of People and CultureRace Inclusion Champion Global ForumBAME ForumTacking Racism Working GroupRace Equality Charter Self- Assessment Team |
| Religion or belief | Increased flexibility due to home-working may make it easier for some staff to observe their religion or belief  | On campus facilities may not be available, which may limit the opportunity to observe some faith practices and may make it harder for new staff to find a community or connect with chaplains/advisers to support their expression of faith. Staff of faith may not wish to engage in online worshipExtended teaching times (into evenings and weekends if necessary) may mean some staff are asked to work on Holy days | Include reference to the availability of the Faith Centre and possible alternative ways to worship e.g. live-streamed religious services, in communications to staffConsider setting up virtual groups for religious communities, including group prayer and discussion groups onlineSurveys to staff about the impact of COVID to include questions about faith, religion or belief Ensure requests not to teach at a particular time, on a particular day for religious reasons are considered sensitively and fulfilled wherever possibleStaff encouraged to take their annual leave and make requests in good time so that any necessary cover arrangements can be made | Faith and Community ManagerCERDirector of People and CultureReligion or Belief Inclusion ChampionInclusion Champion for Jewish staff and studentsPeople and CultureSWISFaith Centre ChaplainsReporting managers |
| Sexual orientation |  | Some LGBTQ+ staff may be in isolation with unsupportive family, and/or they may not be out to their family. This can cause emotional distress, depression etc, and the cumulative effect of multiple lockdowns may exacerbate isolation and poor mental healthMembers of the LGBTQ+ community also more frequently experience isolation and loneliness, and so it's likely that LGBTQ+ people living alone or in self-isolation will experience increased feelings of loneliness beyond what their cis/straight /colleagues experience.  | Include reference to internal and external support networks e.g. the LGBTQ+ Forum, the Essex LGBT Alliance and Outhouse East in communications to staffPromote the ‘Supporting trans and non-binary staff’ document in communications to staff Continue to promote wellbeing webinars through University communications | CERDirector of People and CultureSexual Orientation Inclusion ChampionLGBTQ+ Staff Forums and NetworksOH |
| Caring responsibilities including caring for vulnerable adults and/or disabled children | Increased opportunity to spend time with children | Potential causes of anxiety/stress for staff with caring responsibilities include:(i) trying to balance working from home and caring responsibilities, including home-educating children and keeping young children occupied within the confines of one house (ii) taking on additional responsibilities in relation to caring for older or vulnerable family members (iii) needing to devote additional time to caring for older or vulnerable family members, meaning less time for relaxation and taking care of own wellbeing  | Ensure staff are kept informed of the University’s approach to supporting staff with caring responsibilities and available networks for supportEnsure maximum flexibility in terms of working patterns is retained. Managers should discuss suitable work patterns with individuals through open and honest conversations about what works best for that person and adapting as necessary as the days and weeks progress. Managers must focus on work output, as opposed to time spent ‘at the desk’, to help staff to balance their work and home priorities. Managers must consider additional flexible options to support staff such as allowing staff to buy additional annual leave/exchanging salary for additional annual leave or offering flexible bank holidays– rather than requiring staff to take these days as paid leave, allow staff to work on a bank holiday if they wish and take the days off at another time of their choosing to better fulfil/share caring responsibilities.Positive discussions around reducing working hours temporarily or taking a career break to take place as appropriate, prompted by the individual member of staff Ensure pathway to permanency and promotion criteria and procedures take into account the impact COVID-19 has had/could have/might have on staff with caring responsibilities, including additional flexibility and space for applicants to comment on this in applications, and training and guidance for Academic Staffing Committee | CERDirector of People and CultureReporting managersParent’s Support NetworkAcademic Staffing Committee |
| Socio-economic background  |  | Uncertainty over job stability could be particularly worrying for staff from low socio-economic backgrounds Staff on furlough may be anxious about when/if they are going to return to the workplace and the ongoing impact this has on their ability to meet their financial commitments | Recognition of this to be reflected in University-wide communicationsMessages around accessing the Staff Hardship Fund to continue Encourage staff on furlough to attend relevant webinars run by Organisational Development as a means of support and information | CERDirector of People and Culture |
| Being estranged |  | Lack of family support network, at a time when others may be spending more time with, or connecting with, their families could cause increased feelings of loneliness and isolation  | Frequent contact maintained with staffKnown community support groups highlighted in relevant University-wide communications  | Reporting managersCER |

**Table 2: Equality Impact Assessment: home-working and online teaching/assessment by protected characteristic – students**

If a student has any concerns during normal office hours they can contact SWIS via the 'drop in ' service which is continuing to operate a remote support service by telephone, live chat or email via the Student Service Hub (<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/mental-and-emotional-health/mental-and-emotional-health-support>). The Assessors who operate this service are able to offer direct support or signpost to more specialist services.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Protected characteristic** | **Potential positive impact**  | **Potential negative impact** | **Mitigating actions to address identified negative impacts** | **Person(s)/service responsible** |
| Age | Reduced frequency of travel on to campus may be a benefit for some mature students  | Setting up a work station at home can be hard for those who live with their parents or in cramped shared accommodationAdditional requirement to support home schooling of children (for mature students) Early-years childcare commitments (primarily mature students) can make studying from home difficult which may result in students achieving a worse than expected outcomeStudents aged over 70, who are classed as vulnerable, may feel particularly anxious  | Information provided to students includes advice/guidance on studying at home and balancing study and childcare commitment and how the University will take this into account as part of assessment processes Extenuating circumstances forms/guidance include explicit reference to how having caring responsibilities will be taken into account in assessment processes  | Academic SectionCER |
| Disability - physical and long-term illness | Reduced frequency of travel on to campus may be a benefit for some students with a physical disability Working in home surroundings may be a benefit for some disabled students | A lack of suitable home-working equipment may lead to pain/discomfortRestrictions on ability to move around freely outside the home may exacerbate existing health conditions and sense of isolation.Those who are required to exercise in line with physiotherapy routines may also be greatly impacted by the closure of gyms and leisure centres.Being required to self-isolate due to being in a vulnerable group could lead to a deterioration in mental healthStudents who are ‘clinically vulnerable’ and have a higher risk in relation to COVID-19 due to having a long-term illness may have concerns regarding immunity to infection, but students may have other diseases, such as HIV that do not make them ‘clinically vulnerable’ but mean they share concerns regarding immunity to infection | Reasonable adjustments to remain in place to support students and to be clearly communicated within departments and to academic staff, via DDLOs and DMsLiaison between SWIS, DDLOs, and DDEs regarding awareness of reasonable adjustments for remote studies and examsLines of communication between Personal Tutors and students to remain open and office hours to be maintained Information provided to students includes advice/guidance on keeping safe and well with specific reference to health conditions or impairmentsAll communications are sensitive and do not ‘other’ disabled students  | DDEsDDLOsSWISPersonal TutorsCERDisability Inclusion Champion |
| Disability – mental illness (includes anxiety, stress, depression, bipolar, eating disorders, OCD, PTSD) and neuro-diversity (includes dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, Autistic Spectrum) | Reduced frequency of travel on to campus may be a benefit for some students with poor mental healthStudents who find it difficult to contribute in a group setting might find it easier to participate electronically | The cumulative impact of multiple lockdowns and the uncertainty of the external environment pose potential challenges for students with mental health problems or disorders, which include:(i) heightened levels of anxiety(ii) an increased risk of condition worsening (iii) a reduced level of support from external health professionals e.g. counsellors(iv) reduced ability to focus on work study(v) increased tensions in home environment caused by reduced ability to control condition (vi) Reduced opportunity for informal conversations and lack of confidence in reaching out to others for interaction or support (vii) fatigue from the cumulative effect of continued restrictionsPotential causes of anxiety/stress for neuro-diverse students include:(i) a change of structure and routine, including study pattern and methods of communication/feedback (ii) a change to normal place of study(iii) working in close proximity of other people in the household – impact of noise and possible lack of dedicated workspace(vi) Reduced opportunity for informal conversations and lack of confidence in reaching out to peers/staff for interaction or support  | Reasonable adjustments to remain in place to support students and to be clearly communicated within departments and to academic staff, via DDLOs and DMsContinue to promote wellbeing webinars through University communications. These workshops and sessions cover stress, resilience, anxiety, relaxation and sleep and are available as recordings for both staff and studentsLiaison between SWIS, DDLOs, and DDEs regarding awareness of reasonable adjustments for remote studies and examsLines of communication between Personal Tutors and students to remain open and office hours to be maintained ‘Chunk’ learning activities into smaller sections and give each one an estimated time for completionCommunications to students include clear messaging around support available to disabled students, including those awaiting a diagnostic assessment Source a suitable alternative assessment until a full diagnostic assessment can take place face to face. This ‘Evaluation of Needs Assessment’ will ensure that adjustments can be put in place for students. This form of assessment is currently accepted by SFE for award of DSA to students with disabilities Ensure that methods used to evaluate students’ digital literacy are appropriate for all students and they reach those in digital need | DDEsDDLOsSWISPersonal TutorsCER |
| Gender | If students are not visible, it could limit any bias based on physical characteristics from both teaching staff and fellow studentsStudents subjected to inappropriate behaviour or comments from others (both within and outside the University) based on their gender identity or presentation may find being required to stay at home a temporary reprieve  | If students are not visible, assumptions could be made about students’ gender from their names, potentially leading to some students being misgenderedPotential causes of anxiety/stress for trans students include:(i) students undergoing transition who need to live in their acquired gender for at least 2 years in order to obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate may have their transition delayed due to social distancing/lock down measures (ii) planned operations as part of transitioning may be delayed or cancelled (iii) the physical appearance of trans students may change significantly during the period of virtual learning and if little face-to-face interaction takes place, trans students may be anxious about returning to campus/seeing people face-to-face againStudents in abusive home situations including emotional abuse and harmful traditional practices such as honour violence (predominantly women) may use campus as a refuge and either cannot study from home because of limitations imposed by an abusive partner/family member or are further exposed to an abusive situation | Reinforce importance of using gender neutral language in guidance provided to teaching about delivering learning onlineInclude reference to the support available to trans students in relevant University-wide communications e.g. relevant student societiesEncourage all staff and students to add their gender pronouns to their Zoom identityMaintain communications around availability of Report and SupportContact to be maintained with students who are known to be vulnerable in this way Raise safeguarding concerns if there are signs that something is wrong e.g. obvious increase in levels of anxiety, marked difference in engagement in learning  | Organisational DevelopmentCERTrans Inclusion ChampionCERGender Inclusion ChampionSWIS Departmental staff |
| Marriage and civil partnership (including those who are single) |  | Students who are single and live alone may rely on the social interaction they get through being a student and the absence of this may cause anxiety/stress/loneliness and reduce their sense of belongingStudents who are single parents may find it particularly difficult to balance study, caring responsibilities and teaching children who need to be home schooled during lockdownStudents going through a divorce or relationship breakdown may be particularly vulnerable to poor mental health | Include reference to relevant information/support available to students in relevant University-wide communications e.g. relevant student societies, Students’ Union servicesMaintain communications around availability of Report and Support | SWIS |
| Pregnancy and maternity | Pregnant students may find it helpful to work from home if it becomes uncomfortable or difficult to travel | Reduced contact with ‘first point of contact’ might result in less frequent monitoring of pregnancy risk assessment to ensure it remains fit for purpose Reduced opportunity to interact with others during pregnancy and following the birth of a baby could cause anxiety/stressStudents who are pregnant and classed as vulnerable, may feel particularly anxious, and pregnant staff in general may also be anxious owing to worries about the child, becoming infected with COVID during pregnancy and how this may impact their health, the pregnancy and health of the child | Staff assigned as the ‘first point of contact’ for a pregnant student to maintain regular contact and revisit pregnancy risk assessment, making changes as appropriate  | Staff assigned as ‘first point of contact’ for pregnant studentsSWIS  |
| Race | If students are not visible, it could limit any bias based on physical characteristics from both teaching staff and fellow studentsStaff subjected to inappropriate behaviour or comments from others (both within and outside the University) based on their ethnic background may find being required to stay at home a temporary reprieve  | If students are not visible, assumptions could be made about students’ race/ethnicity from their names, potentially leading to biasEvidence to show the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people are at greater risk of death from COVID-19 may lead to heightened levels of anxietyStudents subjected to harmful traditional practices such as honour violence (predominantly black, Asian and minority ethnic women and children) may be particularly vulnerable during the lockdown period | Include consideration of bias in guidance provided to teaching about delivering learning online Unconscious Bias online resource updated to include a section on ‘Education’ Ensure students know where they can go for information, help and support and staff supporting students are equipped to deal with students’ concerns Promote available support including student societies and new BAME mentoring scheme for students, through ongoing work associated with the Tackling Racism Working Group, the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team and in ongoing all-student communicationsMaintain communications around availability of Report and Support | Organisational DevelopmentRace Inclusion Champion CERStudents’ Union SocietiesTacking Racism Working GroupRace Equality Charter Self- Assessment Team |
| Religion or belief | Increased flexibility due to home-working may make it easier for some students to observe their religion or belief | On campus facilities may not be available which may limit the opportunity to observe some faith practices and may make it harder for new students to find a community or connect with chaplains/advisers to support their expression of faith. Students of faith may not wish to engage in online worshipExtended teaching times (into evenings and weekends if necessary) may mean some students have lectures scheduled on Holy days | Include reference to the availability of the Faith Centre and possible alternative ways to worship e.g. live-streamed religious services in communications to students Surveys to students about the impact of COVID to include questions about faith, religion or belief Consider setting up virtual groups for religious communities, including group prayer and discussion groups online  | Faith and Community ManagerCERReligion or belief Inclusion ChampionInclusion champion for Jewish staff and studentsPeople and Culture SWISFaith Centre ChaplainsSU Faith Societies |
| Sexual orientation |  | Some LGBTQ+ students may be in isolation with unsupportive family, and/or they may not be out to their family. This can cause emotional distress, depression etc, and the cumulative effect of multiple lockdowns may exacerbate isolation and poor mental healthMembers of the LGBTQ+ community also more frequently experience isolation and loneliness, and so it's likely that LGBTQ+ people in quarantine alone will be experiencing increased feelings of loneliness beyond what their cis/straight friends/peers are experiencing.  | Include reference to internal and external support networks e.g. LGBTQ+ student societies and Outhouse East in communications to studentsPromote wellbeing resources through relevant University communications | CERStudents’ Union societies |
| Caring responsibilities, including caring for vulnerable adults and/or disabled children | Increased opportunity to spend time with children | Potential causes of anxiety/stress for students with caring responsibilities include:(i) trying to balance studying from home and caring responsibilities, including home-educating children and keeping young children occupied within the confines of one house (ii) taking on additional responsibilities in relation to caring for older or vulnerable family members (iii) needing to devote additional time to caring for older or vulnerable family members, meaning less time for relaxation and taking care of own wellbeing  | Information provided to students includes advice/guidance on balancing study and childcare commitment and how the University will take this into account as part of assessment processes Extenuating circumstances forms/guidance include explicit reference to how having caring responsibilities will be taken into account in assessment processes   | CERAcademic Section |
| Socio-economic background |  | Students, particularly from low socio-economic backgrounds, who need to work to support their studies may have lost their jobs, leading to increased anxietySome students from low socio-economic backgrounds may not have access to the same digital technologies as other studentsStudents from low socio-economic backgrounds may have been quite severely affected by working in a crowded home environment, where they may also have been sharing computers and competing for clear Wi-Fi access  | Messages around accessing the Student Hardship Fund and other potential financial support to continue Ensure that methods used to evaluate students’ digital needs are appropriate for all students and they reach those in digital need | CERSWISDepartmental staff |
| Being estranged |  | Lack of family support network, at a time when others may be spending more time with, or connecting with, their families could cause increased feelings of loneliness and isolation  | Known community support groups/mechanisms highlighted in relevant University-wide communications Proactive contact from SWIS (recognising that this relies on self-disclosure) | CERSWIS |
| Care leavers |  | Lack of family support network, at a time when others may be spending more time with, or connecting with, their families could cause increased feelings of loneliness and isolation  | Known community support groups/mechanisms highlighted in relevant University-wide communications Proactive contact from SWIS | CERSWIS |

1. In line with the University’s aspiration to go beyond legislation wherever possible and to obtain a holistic overview and understanding of the impact that University activities have upon equality and inclusion, a broader range of characteristics than those contained within the Equality Act 2010 have been considered. The protected characteristics contained with the Equality Act 2010 are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Consideration of the impact upon gender should be inclusive of all genders across the gender spectrum including (but not limited to): trans, non-binary, pangender, cisgender\* women, cisgender\* men, and individuals undertaking gender reassignment. The Equality Act 2010 identifies ‘gender reassignment’ as a protected characteristic, which is the process of transitioning from one gender to another. The University’s policies go beyond the requirements of legislation and protect a broader group of people than those covered by the term ‘gender reassignment’ and include all trans and non-binary people.
\* Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)