

# Single Equality Scheme 2008–11

## Strategic Priorities



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# 1 Introduction

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- 1.1** This is the first Single Equality Scheme (SES) from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). It states our commitment over the next three years to ensuring that our policies and services reflect the diverse needs and experiences of all the people we serve. It is a framework that will help us fulfil the single public equality duty under the Government's new vision for equality, *Framework for a fairer future: The Equality Bill*, which for the first time includes age, sexual orientation and religion or belief. This scheme is in three separately published parts: our Strategic Priorities, our Action Plan and our Evidence Base.
- 1.2** Our ambition is to ensure equality of opportunity for all, unlocking the talents of people and communities from all backgrounds. We are committed to recognising and addressing the barriers and opportunities relating to race, gender (which includes gender identity and the national gender pay gap), disability, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation, as well as the other barriers like socio-economic group and region, where these are relevant to our policy remit.
- 1.3** Our aim is not only to comply with the law, but to demonstrate best practice and ultimately to be an exemplar in the field of equality and diversity. We recognise that we have a lot to do to achieve this goal, but we believe that this scheme, in reflecting our progress to date, is an important first step.

# 2 How DIUS contributes to equality in the UK

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- 2.1** The creation of DIUS in 2007 brought together three closely-linked policy sectors that are critical to determining the UK's future economic and social well-being:
- Further education (FE) and skills
  - Higher education (HE)
  - Science, research and innovation

The UK can only succeed in a changing world if we develop our skills to the fullest possible extent, carry out world-class research, and apply knowledge to create innovative products, services and businesses. We recognise that future economic and social well-being is dependent on an inclusive and equitable approach.

- 2.2** DIUS leads on two of the Government's Public Service Agreements (PSAs), published in the October 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07) for 2008–11:
- PSA 2: 'Improve the skills of the population, on the way to ensuring a world-class skills base by 2020'.
  - PSA 4: 'Promote world class science and innovation in the UK'.

They reflect the key role that education, skills, science, research and innovation have to play in relation to many of the Government's longer-term and cross-Departmental strategic objectives.

- 2.3 In addition, DIUS is contributing to the cross-Government PSA 15: 'Address the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief'.
- 2.4 Six Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs) support the achievement of our PSA objectives. (See Annex I.)
- 2.5 We believe that a commitment to equality and diversity is critical to ensuring that we are able to deliver the Government's wider goals and the DSOs. We have therefore linked our equality priorities to underpin and support each of our DSOs.
- 2.6 We can only deliver this important and ambitious agenda if we seize the opportunities afforded by engaging all individuals, communities and businesses so that we can deliver the skills, knowledge, innovation and success that the UK needs.

## 3 Who this scheme is for

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- 3.1 This scheme is for all our staff, stakeholders and delivery partners. Equality outcomes must matter to all of us if we are to develop evidence-based policies that take our customers' different needs into account, and enable us to deliver high-quality services. We will only succeed if we lead by example – by investing in our future and creating an inclusive culture, by valuing people and by giving a lead to other employers as we do so.

## 4 Our approach

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- 4.1 To make our SES more user-friendly and accessible, we have produced a set of documents, rather than one long report. This will enable the parts of the scheme to develop and be added to as new data and insights come to light. The component parts of the scheme are:
- our Strategic Priorities
  - our Action Plan
  - the Evidence Base.

## 5 Strategic priorities

- 5.1 Whilst our Action Plan sets out all that we are doing to deliver on this agenda, we believe it is important to identify overarching priorities for DIUS as a whole. These are the strategic priorities where we believe we can have most impact both externally and internally across our policy and delivery areas:

### Priority 1

Understand more about the issues that people across our policy sectors face in relation to disability, gender (including gender identity and the national gender pay gap), race, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation and other barriers, so that we can better address disadvantage and inequality among our service users.

### Priority 2

Increase the participation and attainment of under-represented groups, including women, disabled people and black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, across FE and skills, HE and science-related subjects.

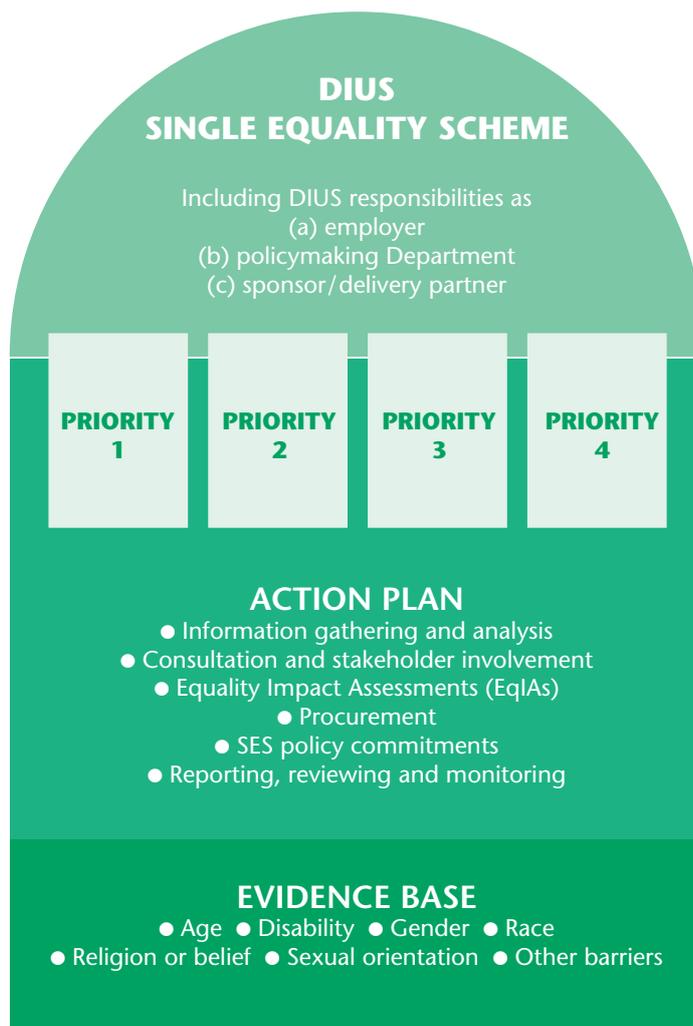
### Priority 3

Engage all sections of society in the science agenda, to help build awareness and interest and increase public participation in science-related activities.

### Priority 4

Build the capacity and commitment of senior DIUS staff to lead DIUS in becoming an exemplar organisation on equality, diversity and inclusion.

- 5.2 We believe having these strategic priorities will enable us to take a more coordinated and centralised approach to addressing the barriers to equality, diversity and inclusion. Table 1 on page 8 highlights the key outcomes we would expect against our strategic priorities once we have successfully implemented the actions in the Action Plan that accompanies this narrative.



## 6 About the Action Plan

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- 6.1** We have developed a comprehensive SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) Action Plan which sets out how we will take forward this SES to deliver on this agenda. The Action Plan is primarily for internal use, to assist us in assessing and managing progress towards improving equality and diversity. It sets out what action DIUS plans to take and by when, in these respects:
- as an employer
  - as a policymaking Department
  - as a sponsor/delivery partner of the FE and HE sectors, and of science, research and innovation activities.
- 6.2** As well as tracking progress against our Action Plan, we will also meet our legal requirements by tracking progress with regard to:
- information gathering and analysis
  - consultation and stakeholder involvement
  - Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs)
  - procurement (our tendering and purchasing policies).
- 6.3** We will regularly monitor, review and report progress against these actions, and will publish an annual progress report on the DIUS website.
- 6.4** By considering progress from several perspectives, we believe we will build credibility with stakeholders and will be able to show that we are truly striving to be exemplary in our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

## 7 Assessing the evidence base

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- 7.1** We recognise that there have been many important developments and achievements across the sectors we work with. However, there are still a number of challenges for us to focus on. One is to develop a comprehensive and credible evidence base, which will underpin our actions and against which we can monitor our progress. For example, we know that there are areas where the evidence is weak or incomplete. This applies particularly to the wider equality strands of age, sexual orientation, religion or faith, gender identity and the national gender pay gap. We have decided that rather than publish this evidence in a one-off annual document accompanying the scheme, we will publish what data we currently have and update it at regular intervals as new data and insights become available.

## 8 Accountability

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- 8.1** This work is overseen by the DIUS Board. Stephen Marston, Director General of Further Education and Skills, is the Board's Diversity Champion. He is supported through a cross-DIUS Diversity and Inclusion Programme Board. The programme board will monitor progress on a regular basis and hold individual owners of the actions in the Action Plan accountable for progress.

## 9 Scrutiny

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- 9.1** The Department is a public authority and has legal duties to promote equality of opportunity and to eliminate discrimination and harassment. We are held to account on this by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and through the equality scheme and EqlAs that we publish.
- 9.2** We plan to establish an External Equalities Advisory Group in 2009, to advise and challenge us on our approach to progressing equality and diversity, so as to support our strategic priorities and help us deliver the key outcomes we have identified.

## 10 Consultation and stakeholder involvement

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- 10.1** In developing this scheme we consulted our own employees and a wide range of external stakeholders. The aim was to raise awareness of the scheme and encourage everyone to consider what more is needed, as well as to allow us to better understand the wide range of issues facing our diverse customer base. We have also engaged fully with the Trade Union Side.
- 10.2** We have used the responses from the consultation to inform our plans on equality, diversity and inclusion across DIUS. This has enabled us to streamline our initial proposals and focus them on the outcomes we want to achieve. We have identified a clear set of strategic priorities and set out what action we plan to take, by when, for each of them. We can now adopt a more explicitly evidence-based approach to planning and delivering measurable outcomes, which will ensure that the action on all equality strands is in line with the current legal requirements, as well as those in the forthcoming Equality Bill.
- 10.3** A key conclusion from the consultation was that we should list not only actions we plan to take in relation to the current statutory race, gender, and disability duties, but also those in relation to gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age. We recognise that in many areas our awareness and understanding of the issues affecting these groups in our sector is still quite limited. However, this scheme sets out our intention to investigate what else we may need to do to address barriers to equality and inclusion.

- 10.4** The consultation also indicated that we should focus on setting and delivering a few strategic outcomes which will strengthen the work we are charged with delivering and have wide-reaching impact, rather than a long list of smaller ambitions. This is now reflected in the four strategic priorities and SMART actions we have identified, which support delivery of our DSOs.
- 10.5** We thank those who have contributed to this scheme and look forward to their continued involvement as we develop this work.

TABLE 1: Strategic priorities and key outcomes.

Priority	Our 6-month vision	Our 12-month vision	Our 3-year vision
1. Understand more about the issues that people across our policy sectors face in relation to disability, gender (including gender identity and the national gender pay gap), race, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation and other barriers, so that we can better address disadvantage and inequality among our service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ We will have identified the gaps in our data and started to develop plans to fill them</li> <li>■ We will have begun to engage more fully with those working on equality and diversity in the education sector, to add their perspective on equality issues to our own</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ We will have updated evidence to enable us to identify areas where there are further gaps in data</li> <li>■ We will start to see EqIAs that fully explore data gaps and areas of inequality and set out plans for addressing them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ We will have a more compelling and comprehensive set of actions to address barriers to equality in our sectors</li> <li>■ We will have developed and delivered information, advice and guidance (IAG) which challenges barriers to equality and helps our stakeholders and customers tackle issues they may face</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ We will have information on EqIAs that are planned, under way or completed, which affect employees and service users</li> <li>■ We will continue to raise awareness of and share best practice in conducting EqIAs</li> </ul>		

Priority	Our 6-month vision	Our 12-month vision	Our 3-year vision
<p><b>2. Increase the participation and attainment of under-represented groups, including women, disabled people and black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, across FE and skills, HE and science-related subjects</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ We will see the start of Apprenticeships ‘critical mass’ pilots to support atypical apprentices (such as women and those from BME groups) through their experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ We will see a reformed applications and admissions process to improve fairness for prospective HE students</li> <li>■ We will know of any further action needed to address differentials in attainment at degree level between white and BME groups and between women and men</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Up to 15,000 women will have achieved positive outcomes (such as career progression or improved earnings) through the Women and Work Sector Pathways initiative</li> <li>■ We will have applied lessons from Apprenticeships ‘critical mass’ pilots</li> <li>■ Positive outcomes will have been achieved for some 400 women entering, returning or progressing within science education and technology (SET)</li> <li>■ The Assisted Living Innovation Platform research will have started to identify how technology can enable those with chronic long-term conditions to live independently</li> <li>■ Other innovation platforms will seek to improve the experiences of disadvantaged and disabled people</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Engage all sections of society in the science agenda, to help build awareness and interest and increase public participation in science-related activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The DIUS consultation on <i>A vision for science and society</i> will help us identify challenges with regard to public participation and engagement</li> <li>■ We will have increased the number of Science and Engineering Ambassadors from 20,000 to 27,000, actively encouraging more applications from women and people from BME backgrounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ We will use the results of the consultation to draw up future action plans for engaging all sections of society in the science agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Our evidence base and future plans will show progress towards all sections of society getting involved with science activities</li> </ul>

Priority	Our 6-month vision	Our 12-month vision	Our 3-year vision
<p><b>4. Build the capacity and commitment of senior DIUS staff to lead DIUS in becoming an exemplar organisation on equality, diversity and inclusion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ We will have a plan to raise awareness among DIUS staff of their individual and collective responsibilities</li> <li>■ We will have appointed DIUS Champions to liaise between staff and senior management, and will provide information and support to DIUS colleagues on equality and diversity issues</li> <li>■ We will have agreed a programme of EqlAs for new and existing policies affecting both DIUS staff and service users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A range of learning and development resources will be in place to train DIUS staff in their individual and collective responsibilities and legal duties. This programme will include a series of inspirational speakers who will use their personal experience to bring diversity and inclusion issues alive</li> <li>■ Internal DIUS Champions across a range of grades and levels will provide equality advice and expertise to colleagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Equality, diversity and inclusion will be embedded within policy areas. We will be aware of barriers to diversity and accountable for addressing them</li> <li>■ We will have a comprehensive set of actions to address the equality issues that DIUS as a Department faces.</li> <li>■ We will have evidence of our progress</li> </ul>

## Annex I: DIUS Public Service Agreements and Departmental Strategic Objectives

DIUS leads on two of the Government's Public Service Agreements (PSAs) for 2008–2011:

- PSA 2** Improve the skills of the population, on the way to ensuring a world-class skills base by 2020
- PSA 4** Promote world-class science and innovation in the UK

We also contribute to many of the PSAs led by other Government Departments, including:

- PSA 15** Address the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief

In supporting the achievement of our PSA objectives, six Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs) set out in greater detail the actions DIUS will take over the period from 2008 to 2011:

- DSO 1** Accelerate the commercial exploitation of creativity and knowledge, through innovation and research, to create wealth, grow the economy, build successful businesses and improve quality of life
- DSO 2** Improve the skills of the population throughout their working lives to create a workforce capable of sustaining economic competitiveness, and enable individuals to thrive in the knowledge economy
- DSO 3** Build social and community cohesion through improved social justice, civic participation and economic opportunity by raising aspirations and broadening participation, progression and achievement in learning and skills
- DSO 4** Pursue global excellence in research and knowledge, promote the benefits of science and society, and deliver science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills in line with employer demand
- DSO 5** Strengthen the capacity, quality and reputation of the Further and Higher Education systems and institutions to support national economic and social needs
- DSO 6** Encourage better use of science in Government, foster public service innovation, and support other Government objectives which depend on DIUS expertise and remit

For more information about PSAs, see [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/3680.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/3680.htm)

For more about the DIUS DSOs, see [www.dius.gov.uk/mission.html](http://www.dius.gov.uk/mission.html)

Visit the DIUS website at [www.dius.gov.uk](http://www.dius.gov.uk)





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