University of Essex Access Forum (EAF)

Terms of Reference

1.0 Origins

The University of Essex Access Forum (EAF) exists to support excellence in all aspects of the provision of inclusive access at the University of Essex (including: physical and intellectual access; student learning and teaching, staff employment; visitor experience).

The EAF is guided by the following:

1.1 Legislation

- The Equality Act 2010 (replacing the DDA 1995 & 2005)
- The Public Sector Equality Duty, 2010 (replacing the Disability Equality Duty, 2006)

1.2 The University of Essex Equality and Diversity Framework and Sub-Strategy 2015-18

1.3 Guidance supporting legislation and other good practice design guidance, including:

**General access**

- Approved Document M, 2004 (Access and Use of Buildings) to the Building Regulations

**Fire safety**

- British Standard 9999:2008 - Code of practice for fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings

1.4 Other good practice guidance produced by:

- The Equality and Human Rights Commission
- The Centre for Accessible Environments
- The Equality Challenge Unit

2.0 Definition

2.1 The terms *access, or inclusive access*, as used here, relates to the ability of all members of the university community (students, staff and visitors) to participate as fully and equally as possible in the life of the university. ‘Access’ has a particular, though not exclusive, concern for matters relating to disability.
3.0 **Aims**

3.1 The aim of the University of Essex Access Forum is to be a positive and proactive force, promoting excellence (and progress towards excellence) in the provision of access in all aspects of life at the University of Essex.

4.0 **Objectives**

4.1 To raise access issues for debate, and to investigate and follow up; to be available for consultation; to be involved in and to influence decision-making on any matter relating to access brought to the attention of the group.

4.2 To provide a considered view on the university's response to the legislative requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and to Parts M and B of the Building Regulations.

4.3 To assist with the implementation and updating of the recommendations and outcomes of the University's Equality and Diversity Policy and Strategy.

4.4 To report to the Equality and Diversity Committee (EADC) annually and to suggest agenda items for discussion by the EADC as appropriate.

4.5 To contribute to other University and Student Union committees where relevant, either by means of representation in person, or via reports/minute-sharing etc.

4.6 To be involved at the earliest reasonable opportunity in discussions with Estates Project Officers relating to new-build capital projects, and projects entailing significant alteration to or refurbishment of campus facilities, via the following means:

- Head of Equality and Diversity, or delegated member of Essex Access Forum, to be represented on all Building Projects Steering Groups, embedding an inclusive access perspective in early design processes and decision-making from at least RIBA Stage C onwards.

- EAF inclusion on Estates bulletin regarding pending works and works in progress (i.e. ensuring advance notification of pending works)

- The development and ongoing review of University inclusive design protocols, concerned with the specifics of the University of Essex setting. These will be supplementary to Approved Documents M and B of the Building Regulations, and BS8300:2009 (which will otherwise remain the default guidance).

5.0 **Referral of business to the Access Forum**

5.1 Any member of the university community (staff and students) may refer a matter directly to the Access Forum for discussion or advice; likewise any member of the public, where the matter relates to University of Essex property, facilities or services.

5.2 Matters for consideration by the forum may also be generated out of email-based discussion via access-forum@essex.ac.uk, its main vehicle for communications, and used variously for:

- Informal discussion/debate and dissemination of ideas.
- Encouraging new interest and involvement in access issues among members of the wider university community who may not necessarily be regular attenders at forum meetings.
5.3 The regular/daily business of the forum shall be filtered via access-exec@essex.ac.uk, a smaller executive group whose purpose is to prevent overload of the wider forum and to manage early stage and/or confidential matters.

6.0 Membership

6.1 EAF seeks to represent all members of the university community and its membership aims to reflect this. The forum is actively promoted among the wider university community in order to ensure an active and diverse membership.

6.2 Membership is open to any staff member or student (disabled and non-disabled) with an interest in, or a responsibility for, matters relating to or impacting on inclusive access.

6.3 EAF shall work co-operatively alongside those university offices and bodies (i-xi) which have a key role in the provision of access, or whose work frequently impacts on access:

i. Student Support Office
ii. Equality and Diversity
iii. Estates Management Services (EMS)
iv. Human Resources Equality and Diversity Committee (HREDG)
vi. Information Systems Services
vii. Occupational Health
viii. Health and Safety Committee
ix. The Students’ Union
x. Trade Unions
xi. Security

7.0 Administration of the Forum

7.1 The Access Forum shall meet a minimum of once each term.

7.2 The Chair shall be elected each academic year.

7.3 Secretary: minute-taking to rotate

7.4 A summary report of the Access Forum’s activities shall be submitted to the annual meeting of the Human Resources & Equality and Diversity Group (HREDG).

7.5 The EAF shall review its Terms of Reference annually.