



# **Effectiveness Review of Ulster University's Second Disability Action Plan 2012 - 2018**

A six-year review

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## Introduction

As required by 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended), Ulster University must carry out a five-year review of its Disability Action Plan (DAP) and forward a report of this review to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. This review is required to take place at the same time as the University carries out its five-year review of its equality scheme. Ulster University carried out its five-year review of its equality scheme in 2017. However, due to resourcing issues, the five-year review of the DAP was postponed to 2018. To facilitate this, the Equality Commission allowed the 2012-2017 action plan to be extended for one year.

**This report outlines what the University's second DAP has achieved, what remains to be done, how it plans to build on the successes already achieved and meet the challenges identified.**

## What the University's second DAP has achieved

Whilst the main objectives of the DAP have always been to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life, the implementation of the University's DAP has resulted in a multitude of benefits/achievements for the University. These are summarised as follows:

- continuous formal monitoring and reporting via the Section 75 Annual Progress Report which ensures accountability for the delivery of agreed DAP objectives in all functional areas;
- the inclusion of disability issues on Faculty and Departmental agendas/work plans;
- increased representation of disabled people at the University;
- improved access to specialist resources due to a greater focus on a collaborative or 'multi-agency' approach to supporting disabled students and staff. This included the introduction of Employee/Student Assistance Programmes to support mental health;
- improvements to the quality and variety of support provided for students and staff at the University, including disability awareness training;
- a greater awareness of disability issues amongst staff, through an extensive disability awareness raising programme (complementing on-line awareness training), and continued mainstreaming of the disability duties via improved guidance on developing and revising policies, the University's policy screening pro-forma, Protocol for Making Reasonable Adjustments for staff and procurement documentation;
- continued direct, channel of communication with disabled staff and students via the Staff Disability Network and Students' Union Disability Sports Sub-Committee;
- improved disability disclosure rates as a result of improved guidance and more focused monitoring. In turn, this has resulted in more informed academic, estate and corporate planning;
- more established links with the external disabled community, particularly as a result of the University's sports outreach programmes and the Widening Access and Participation Strategy;

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- increased collaboration with the Students' Union, informing disability campaigns and events; and
- improved monitoring of disability and various disability issues.

These benefits have been achieved incrementally over the life of the DAP, as various contributory measures were completed within and across functional areas. Full details of each completed measure can be found in the University's Annual Section 75 Reports.

## What remains to be done

The University's second DAP achieved a variety of tangible outcomes for disabled people (described above); work is ongoing to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life within the University's third DAP. For example:

- All legacy 'ongoing' actions will now be considered to be mainstreamed, so that the third DAP consists of actions that are unique, new and relate specifically to the two disability duties. Where possible, quantifiable performance indicators and timescales will be implemented. This will improve the relevance and clarity of the third DAP;
- The new 'People and Culture Directorate' will establish a dedicated, well-resourced 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit', to ensure that the third DAP is delivered on schedule. The reinstatement of the Disability Duties Review Group (or similar) will increase engagement of staff and students with the DAP. It will also provide a better internal monitoring mechanism to ensure that:
  - there is no/minimal slippage of actions (timescales are realistic and are met);
  - the DAP is refreshed each year (it is a live, flexible document); and
  - the disability duties are embedded within the University's civic contribution activities.
- A well-managed programme of training is required within the third DAP, to ensure that specific training on the Disability Duties and the DAP is provided for University governors, office holders and academic staff. Disability equality training is required, along with awareness raising initiatives and training to dispel some of the myths and fears surrounding the abilities of disabled people and improve attitudes towards disabled people, especially in relation to mental health difficulties.

## How to build on success

Continued high-level commitment and good communication/publicity are central to building on the success of the second DAP. In order to celebrate and build on this success, the University will:

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- identify, exhibit and celebrate positive disability practice throughout the University:
  - publicise the success of the second DAP via Insight, email and on our web page;
  - disseminate the results of the Effectiveness Review to all staff and students;
  - regularly include disability-related articles within the University's Insight webpage and via internal email;
  - improve/increase communication and engagement with Faculty Boards, Departments and the Students' Union;
- develop the third DAP so that:
  - we continue doing what we do well. 'Ongoing' actions contained within the second DAP are assumed to be mainstreamed within respective functions;
  - all actions are unique, new and relate specifically to the two disability duties;
  - the staff and student 'attitudes to disability' surveys' results (key findings) are considered;
  - the clarity of the performance indicators is improved so that they are outcome focused (where possible) and measurable (quantifiable);
  - where possible, quantifiable timescales are implemented (to avoid further 'ongoing' actions);
  - functional leads and disabled people are involved from the outset;
  - it includes an action to re-run the staff and student 'attitudes to disability' surveys within its final year (so that we can monitor changes in attitudes towards disabled people);
  - it includes supporting actions to encourage/enhance disability disclosure;
  - it considers more effective ways of encouraging disabled people to put themselves forward for positions on the University's main committees;
  - two new dedicated positions for disabled student representatives on SU Council are developed; and
  - it considers different ways of encouraging participation of disabled students in the Sports Union.
- introduce more effective internal reporting structures to ensure that the third DAP is effectively implemented, monitored, reviewed and developed, and regains its prominence throughout the University (i.e. on Faculty boards, on Departmental agendas and throughout the Students' Union);
  - reinstate the Disability Duties Review Group (or similar); and
  - establish the most effective committee reporting framework to ensure that regular DAP updates are received by University Council;
- continue to mainstream the disability duties within its policies (i.e. include 'Disability Duties' questions within its policy screening pro-forma);
- continue to work with the Students' Union to promote disability equality;
- ensure disability equality and awareness training is provided to office holders, staff and students;
  - increase uptake of the mandatory disability awareness training;
  - provide specific training on the disability duties/DAP to increase awareness;
  - deliver disability equality training for staff; and

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- develop a programme of disability awareness training for staff, which is informed by the staff and student 'attitudes to disability surveys' results (key findings in regard to training requirements and awareness raising);
- continue to encourage disabled people to apply to work/study at the University; and
- disseminate the third DAP to all staff and students and upload it to the University's webpages.

## How to meet the challenges identified

In order to meet the challenges identified, the University will:

- re-state its commitment to implementing effectively the disability duties and **ensure that positive practice is maintained, celebrated and communicated** through the third DAP, **regardless of economic changes**;
- reinstate its Disability Duties Review Group (or similar cross-departmental working group) to lead, monitor, review and report annual progress on the DAP (i.e. co-ordinate the Plan) and to ensure there is no significant slippage of timescales. Annual reviews of the terms of reference and membership of this Group should ensure it remains focussed and dynamic;
- adopt a more collaborative approach by consulting and engaging more widely with disabled people to ensure that the University's third DAP is agile, user friendly and fit for purpose;
- ensure adequate data are collected to monitor the effectiveness of the measures (i.e. in terms of changes in attitudes and participation), and where necessary, mitigate any new challenges; and
- ensure that disability equality is embedded within all functional areas and reporting structures.

## Conclusion

The review of the University's DAP indicates that it has been effective in a variety of ways. For example, it has led to improvements in the way in which disability issues are monitored, managed, evaluated and reviewed at the University. This, in turn, has resulted in increased disclosure rates, enabling the University to assess changes in the participation of disabled people at the University. It has also resulted in increased access to education and services, as staff become more confident in interacting with disabled people.

However, the review also indicates that there is still much work to be done to build on previous successes and meet the challenges identified. To this end the University remains committed to implementing effectively the disability duties, through its third DAP.

## Introduction

As required by 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended), Ulster University must carry out a five-year review of its Disability Action Plan (DAP) and forward a report of this review to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. This review is required to take place at the same time as the University carries out its five-year review of its equality scheme. Ulster University carried out its five-year review of its equality scheme in 2017. However, due to resourcing issues, the five-year review of the DAP was postponed to 2018. To facilitate this, the Equality Commission allowed the 2012-2017 action plan to be extended for one year.

**This report outlines what the University's second DAP has achieved, what remains to be done, how it plans to build on the successes already achieved and meet the challenges identified.**

## Background

The University's second DAP was implemented in an environment where significant work had already been done to ensure that disabled people are not unlawfully discriminated against, as a result of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (as amended). This included the development of dedicated departments and staff to develop and promulgate policy and good practice on equality and diversity matters, including disability, in relation to both the staff and student bodies in the University, and to provide appropriate support to disabled staff and students at the University. AccessAbility Advisors were established within Student Support and an Equality and Diversity Services Manager within the Equality Unit co-ordinated the delivery of the DAP.

During the period of the second DAP, the University underwent, and continues to deliver to, a programme of significant transformational change, covering strategy, processes and structures. Like many change programmes of this size, this has presented challenge and opportunity across the institution, including within our own 'Equality Unit'. From a structural perspective, the Equality Unit moved into the Policy Implementation Unit in 2012 (and subsequent to the second DAP period had moved into the 'People and Culture Directorate'). In addition, the Disability Duties Review Group (DDRG), which was established in 2010 to monitor and review the DAP, was stood down during 2015/16. It is important to note that the team and colleagues have continued to focus on our DAP in this time, but as with any transformational change, delivery has on occasion been impacted by changes in duties, roles and responsibilities.

Consistent with the review of the first DAP, this review consisted of:

- an assessment of whether all actions scheduled within the 5-year DAP completed; and
- an assessment of the effectiveness of the actions contained within the DAP. This involved an investigation of whether:
  - awareness of the disability duties has increased within University staff;

- attitudes towards disability have changed (i.e. become more positive) in response to the action plans; and
- the participation of disabled staff and students has increased over the lifetime of the action plans.

In undertaking the review, our work included:

- a re-survey of staff and student attitudes to disability using modified versions of the staff and student disability surveys 2011 questionnaires to assess changes in attitudes towards disability and understanding of disability issues;
- a review of staff and student application and employment/enrolment data (e.g. FETO and UCAS data) to assess whether the University is attracting greater numbers of disabled applicants compared with 2012; and
- an analysis of disability/equality awareness training data, to assess whether learning objectives have been achieved.

## **What the DAP has achieved**

### **Key milestones/benefits/successes**

The DAP sets out to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life. Its implementation has resulted in a multitude of benefits/achievements for the University. These include:

- continuous formal monitoring and reporting via the Section 75 Annual Progress Report which ensures accountability for the delivery of agreed DAP objectives in all functional areas;
- the inclusion of disability issues on Faculty and Departmental agendas/work plans;
- increased representation of disabled people at the University;
- improved access to specialist resources due to a greater focus on a collaborative or 'multi-agency' approach to supporting disabled students and staff. This included the introduction of Employee/Student Assistance Programmes to support mental health;
- improvements to the quality and variety of support provided for students and staff at the University, including disability awareness training;
- a greater awareness of disability issues amongst staff, through an extensive disability awareness raising programme (complementing on-line awareness training), and continued mainstreaming of the disability duties via improved guidance on developing and revising policies, the University's policy screening pro-forma, Protocol for Making Reasonable Adjustments for staff and procurement documentation;
- continued direct, channel of communication with disabled staff and students via the Staff Disability Network and Students' Union Disability Sports Sub-Committee;
- improved disability disclosure rates as a result of improved guidance and more focused monitoring. In turn, this has resulted in more informed academic, estate and corporate planning;

- more established links with the external disabled community, particularly as a result of the University’s sports outreach programmes and the Widening Access and Participation Strategy;
- increased collaboration with the Students’ Union, informing disability campaigns and events; and
- improved monitoring of disability and various disability issues.

These benefits have been achieved incrementally over the life of the DAP, as various contributory measures were completed within and across functional areas. Full details of each completed measure can be found in the University’s Annual Section 75 Reports.

### Completion of Key Activities

From the outset, and because of the nature of the organisation, the timescales within the DAP were either aligned with the academic year, or scheduled for the life of the plan (i.e. were ‘ongoing’). Neither of these timescales aligns with the Section 75 Reporting Period (1 April - 31 March), and the ‘mismatched’ timescales have always led to results in the annual report being distorted. This is highlighted in the summary of the achievements for each reporting period (Table 1):

**Table 1 Completed DAP actions 2012 - 2018**

Reporting period	Number of Key Activities in plan	Fully achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved	Scheduled for completion during period
2012-2013	55	5 (9%)	41 (75%)	9 (16%)	8 (15%)
2013-2014	50	7 (14%)	40 (80%)	3 (6%)	7 (14%)
2014-2015	43	0	40 (93%)	3 (7%)	1 (2%)
2015-2016	42*	0	36 (86%)	6 (14%)	0
2016-2017	40**	4 (10%)	32 (80%)	4 (10%)	40 (100%)
2017-2018	38***	34 (89%)	0	4 (11%)	38 (100%)

\*One action (1c) was accidentally omitted from Section 2 of the Annual Progress Report (APR).

\*\* Three actions removed from the plan due to non-continuance of DDRG<sup>1</sup> (15a-15c). Action 1c reinstated to Section 2 of the APR.

\*\*\*Three of the four actions that were reported as completed in 2016-17 were reintroduced to the interim 2017-18 plan (3b, 3c, 6h). Actions 14 and 6n were removed.

<sup>1</sup> DDRG (The Disability Duties Review Group), which was established in 2010 to monitor and review the DAP, was stood down during institutional re-structuring in 2015/16.

At inception, the second DAP consisted of 55 actions. This in itself presented implementation and monitoring/reporting **challenges**. Only 29% (16) of the actions within the DAP were scheduled to complete during the life of the DAP. This is because the majority were legacy 'ongoing' actions carried forward from the first DAP<sup>2</sup>. Of those actions scheduled to complete during the life of the DAP, not all were completed on schedule, due to operational reasons (e.g. restructuring, resourcing and the annual planning cycle).

One action which was carried forward from the first DAP failed to complete in the second DAP, due to resource issues. This was 'continue to implement disability awareness/equality training for office holders (Council/Senate)'.

### **Required actions:**

For the purposes of the third DAP:

- assume 'ongoing' actions contained within the second DAP are mainstreamed within respective functions;
- all actions will be unique, new and relate specifically to the two disability duties;
- where possible, quantifiable performance indicators and timescales will be implemented (to avoid further 'ongoing' actions); and
- ensure office holders receive disability equality training.

### **Performance indicators - Were they met?**

The DAP's main objectives were long-term and forward looking; to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and encourage their participation in University/ Public life. Therefore, performance indicators for each action were developed to support these objectives, to enable effective monitoring (i.e. an 'evaluation' of the progress of the actions themselves) and to align with prevailing (and future) University business/work plans.

The 'performance indicators' were reviewed and their success described within the 'outputs' and outcomes' within each Annual S75 Report. However, these reports indicate that almost all performance indicators were ongoing during the life of the DAP. The true success of the DAP's objectives is measured by evaluating changes in attitudes, participation and accessibility at the end of the DAP, using a variety of information sources. These are reviewed in the following sections.

### **Required actions:**

For the purposes of the third DAP:

- Improve the clarity of the performance indicators so that they are outcome focused (where possible) and measurable (quantifiable).

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<sup>2</sup> 48 'on-going' and 6 'uncompleted' Activities from the first DAP were incorporated into/subsumed within the second DAP.

## Attitudes towards disabled people – have they changed?

The University carried out three separate surveys in 2017 to assess attitudes towards disability. These focussed on academic staff, non-academic staff and students, using modified survey questionnaires which were used in 2011 in support of the 2012 Review of Effectiveness of the DAP. This enabled direct comparisons to be made and provided an indicator of changes in attitudes towards disabled people. As in 2011, return rates for the survey remained poor and therefore results provide only a snapshot indicator of attitudes towards disabled people.

Despite the surveys each having a different focus, it was pleasing to note that across the board, the majority of respondents felt that there are positive benefits to having disabled people in the University environment. Benefits ranged from providing a different perspective to providing positive role models. Similarly, the majority of respondents were either very confident or quite confident about interacting with disabled people and significant experience of working with or supporting disabled people exists at the University.

Attitudes towards disabled people varied by respondent type:

- 69.6% of non-academic staff respondents felt there were positive benefits to having disabled people in the working environment. This compares with 59.3% in 2011 and suggests more positive attitudes towards disabled people in the working environment;
- 76% of academic staff respondents felt that there are positive benefits to having disabled students in the learning environment. This compares with 94% in 2011 and suggests less positive attitudes towards having disabled students in the learning environment;
- 56.7% of student respondents felt that there are positive benefits to having disabled students in the learning environment. This compares with 60% in 2011 and suggests less positive attitudes towards having disabled students in the learning environment.

Similar to 2011, the student survey demonstrated that those with mental ill-health were viewed most negatively<sup>3</sup> by respondents. Alternatively, respondents viewed those with specific learning disability (dyslexia/dyspraxia) most positively. Despite this, it was reassuring to note that respondents' greatest concerns were for the health, safety and wellbeing of disabled people. Whilst respondents felt that the support available to staff and students regarding disability is generally good/excellent at the University, some perceive that greater awareness raising is required to reduce the stigma associated with disability. The results of the student survey will also help to inform future disability awareness campaigns carried out in conjunction with the Students' Union.

The full survey reports are available at:

[ulster.ac.uk/hr/employee-benefits/equality-diversity/strategies-and-action-plans](http://ulster.ac.uk/hr/employee-benefits/equality-diversity/strategies-and-action-plans)

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<sup>3</sup> This is similar to the Equality Commission's findings in their Equality Awareness Survey 2008. In this, people with mental ill-health were viewed most negatively. Alternatively, people with a physical disability were viewed most positively.

## **Required actions:**

For the purposes of the third DAP:

- Consider the survey results (key findings) in the development of the University's third DAP;
- Include an action to re-run the staff and student disability surveys in the last year of the third DAP. Aim to improve response rates to each survey so that the results can be considered to be representative of staff/students.

## **Participation of disabled people**

An analysis was carried out to assess whether the participation of disabled people had increased between 2012 and 2018. This included:

- a review of staff and student application and employment/enrolment data (e.g. FETO and UCAS data) to assess whether the University is attracting greater numbers of disabled applicants compared with 2006/07, and whether disabled applicants are more successful than non-disabled applicants;
- a review of disability disclosure rates;
- a review of the membership of Students' Union Clubs/Committees/societies;
- an analysis of disability/equality awareness training data, to assess whether learning objectives have been achieved; and
- a review of complaints of discrimination.

The results of each analysis follow.

### **Review of Staff Applicant Data**

This analysis reviews staff applicant data, as reported in the University's Article 55 Reviews. As with any monitoring information system, the results are totally dependent on disabled people disclosing a disability. The results also reflect recruitment restrictions within the period, due to cost savings and wholesale institutional restructuring.

Disabled applicants and appointees (2012-2018) are described in Table 2. As shown, numbers of disabled applicants peaked in 2017. However, this corresponds with a decrease in the proportion of disabled staff appointed. Whilst the proportion of disabled applicants has fluctuated over the years, it is now 0.9% higher than it was in 2012.

**Table 2 Disabled Applicants and Appointees 2012 -2018**

A55 Review	Applicants			Appointees		
	Disabled (n)	All applicants (n)	Disabled %	Disabled (n)	All appointees (n)	Disabled %
Feb 2012	57	2538	2.3	13	407	3.2
Feb 2013	75	2738	2.7	18	611	3.0
Feb 2014	107	4380	2.4	16	803	2.0
Feb 2015	93	3339	2.8	20	624	3.2
Feb 2016	68	1836	3.7	16	479	3.3
Feb 2017	162	6060	2.7	6	797	0.8
Feb 2018	103	3252	3.2	62	1329	4.7

Note: 'All applicants' includes all posts that an individual applies for during the reporting period. 'All appointees' includes all posts that an individual is appointed to during the reporting period.

Appointee numbers also fluctuated over the period due to staff reductions and restructuring, with the proportion of disabled appointees who were successful peaking in 2018. In effect, the data would suggest that disabled applicants were more successful than non-disabled applicants in being appointed in 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2018 (Table 3).

**Table 3 Application success rates**

A55 Review	Disabled			Non-disabled		
	Applicants (n)	Appointees (n)	% successful	Applicants (n)	Appointees (n)	% successful
Feb 2012	57	13	22.8	2481	394	15.9
Feb 2013	75	18	24.0	2663	593	22.3
Feb 2014	107	16	15.0	4273	787	18.4
Feb 2015	93	20	21.5	3246	604	18.6
Feb 2016	68	16	23.5	1768	463	26.2
Feb 2017	162	6	3.7	5898	797	13.5
Feb 2018	103	62	60.2	3149	1329	42.2

Whilst employee numbers have decreased since 2012, disabled staff numbers have remained more or less constant since 2015. **The proportion of disabled employees is now 1.1% greater than it was in 2012** (Table 4). This compares favourably with Higher Education in the United Kingdom<sup>4</sup>.

**Table 4 Employees 2012-2018**

A55 Review	Employees		
	Disabled (n)	All employees (n)	%
Feb 2012	122	3133	3.9
Feb 2013	148	3015	4.9
Feb 2014	121	2831	4.3
Feb 2015	109	2701	4.0
Feb 2016	110	2391	4.6
Feb 2017	110	2237	4.9
Feb 2018	115	2290	5.0

### Review of Student Applicant Data

This quantitative analysis reviews student applicant data, as reported by UCAS and the University's student monitoring system (Banner). Again, the data are totally dependent on disability disclosure. Table 5 illustrates applicant data for 2011/12 – 2017/18. As shown, both the number and proportion of UCAS applications from disabled applicants have increased since 2011/12.

**Table 5 UCAS Applications 2012/13-2017/18**

Year of entry	Total UCAS applications (n)	Applications from disabled students (n)	% of applications from disabled students
2011/12	31,007	2,135	6.89
2012/13	32,480	2,382	7.33
2013/14	33,121	2,606	7.87
2014/15	30,491	2,550	8.36
2015/16	32,974	2,990	9.07
2016/17	32,602	2,875	8.82
2017/18	31,108	3,151	10.13

This coincides with an increase in the success rate of applications from disabled students since 2011/12 (Table 6). Over the period, application success rates for disabled students remained in line with application success rates for non-disabled students (Tables 7 and 8).

<sup>4</sup> According to the AdvanceHE, 4.7% of staff in H.E. declared a disability in 2016/17.

**Table 6 Successful applications by disability 2011/12-2017/18**

Year of entry	Total successful applications (n)	Successful applications from disabled students (n)	% all successful applications = disabled students
2011/12	20,674	1,398	6.76
2012/13	19,026	1,386	7.28
2013/14	20,657	1,612	7.80
2014/15	22,053	1,798	8.15
2015/16	22,539	2,031	9.01
2016/17	21,756	1,889	8.68
2017/18	21,231	2,125	10.01

**Table 7 Successful disabled student applications 2011/12-2017/18**

Year of entry	Applications from disabled students (n)	Total successful applications from disabled students (n)	% of applications from disabled students which were successful
2011/12	2,135	1,398	65.48
2012/13	2,382	1,386	58.19
2013/14	2,606	1,612	61.86
2014/15	2,550	1,798	70.51
2015/16	2,990	2,031	67.93
2016/17	2,875	1,889	65.70
2017/18	3,151	2,125	67.44

**Table 8 Successful non-disabled student applications 2011/12-2017/18**

Year of entry	Applications from non-disabled students (n)	Total successful applications from non-disabled students (n)	% of applications from non-disabled students which were successful
2011/12	28,872	19,276	66.76
2012/13	30,098	17,640	58.61
2013/14	30,515	19,045	62.41
2014/15	27,941	20,255	72.49
2015/16	29,984	20,508	68.40
2016/17	29,727	19,867	66.83
2017/18	27,957	19,106	68.34

Between 2011/12 and 2017/18, the average application success rate for disabled students was 65.3%, compared with 66.3% for non-disabled students. This is positive, considering that applicant numbers for both disabled and non-disabled students have fluctuated since 2011/12 (Table 9).

**Table 9 Successful UCAS applications 2011/12-2017/18**

<b>Year of entry</b>	<b>Total UCAS applications (n)</b>	<b>Total successful UCAS applications (n)</b>	<b>% applications successful</b>
<b>2011/12</b>	31,007	20,674	66.68
<b>2012/13</b>	32,480	19,026	58.58
<b>2013/14</b>	33,121	20,657	62.37
<b>2014/15</b>	30,491	22,053	72.33
<b>2015/16</b>	32,974	22,539	68.35
<b>2016/17</b>	32,602	21,756	66.73
<b>2017/18</b>	31,108	21,231	68.25

Student entrants for 2011/12 -2017/18 are illustrated in Table 10. This highlights a general increase in the proportion of disabled undergraduate entrants over the period, compared with more or less static proportions of postgraduate entrants.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the University's Disability Services. This is to ensure that the appropriate support is put in place for each disabled student, to ensure full participation. Since 2010/11, the numbers of disabled students registered with Disability Services has increased by 20%, from 1394 students in 2010/11 to 1672 students in 2016/17.

**Table 10 - Historical Analysis of Disabilities Declared by New Entrants\* by Level (as at 08 October 2018)**

	2011/12			2012/13			2013/14			2014/15			2015/16			2016/17			2017/18		
	Disability Declared	All Entrants	%	Disability Declared	All Entrants	%	Disability Declared	All Entrants	%	Disability Declared	All Entrants	%	Disability Declared	All Entrants	%	Disability Declared	All Entrants	%	Disability Declared	All Entrants	%
UG	562	7,621	7.4	620	7,3011	8.5	706	7,504	9.4	711	7,964	8.9	596	6,207	9.6	737	6,349	11.6	709	6,358	11.1
PG	134	2,378	5.6	108	2,223	4.9	150	2,376	6.3	133	2,095	6.3	145	1,913	7.6	111	1,994	5.6	143	2,291	6.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>9,999</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>9,534</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>9,880</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>10,059</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>8,120</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>8,343</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>852</b>	<b>8,649</b>	<b>9.8</b>

Figures reflect all new entrants including Early Leavers and those on Leave-of-Absence. They do not include students who are eligible to enrol (i.e. their application/s has/have been successful) but do not actually do so.

## **Review of disability disclosure rates**

Various guidance documents exist at the University to encourage staff and students to disclose a disability. These include the Disclosure Guidelines for Academic and Faculty Support Staff (Students), Disability Disclosure Guidelines for all Line Managers, the Staff Protocol for Making Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Staff, and staff and student disclosure forms.

### *Staff*

Staff disclose disability to the University in a variety of ways. For example, they may complete an Equal Opportunities form or update their personal Equal Opportunities record to indicate that they are disabled. Alternatively, they may complete a disclosure form, or they may participate in a triennial Staff Disability Survey. These more formal methods of disability disclosure enable the University to monitor disability for planning purposes. However, many staff may choose a less formal method of disclosure, for example if they require a reasonable adjustment. In these instances, they may only tell their line manager that they are disabled, and/or may request that information about their disability is not passed on to anyone else. Therefore, these staff may not be included in the general monitoring data.

Increasing proportions of disabled staff disclosed a disability during the University's triennial Staff Disability Surveys within this period. In 2013, 1.2% of staff returned a questionnaire indicating that they are disabled and in 2016, 1.4% staff returned a questionnaire indicating that they are disabled. This represents a significant increase in response rate since 2007 and 2010 (0.6% and 0.5% respectively). 27 staff, who were previously not known to be disabled, returned questionnaires during the 2013 and 2016 surveys. The next triennial Staff Disability Survey is scheduled for 2019.

Equal Opportunities data suggest that there has been an incremental increase in staff disclosing a disability at the University. For example, Table 4 illustrates that whilst disabled staff numbers have remained more or less constant since 2012, employee numbers have declined over the same period. Thus, at 5%, the proportion of disabled employees is now 1.1% higher than it was in 2012 and compares favourably with a higher education percentage of 4.7% of those whose disability status is known in 2016/17<sup>5</sup>. However, to be representative of the local population we would expect this percentage to be nearer 20%. Work is ongoing to encourage staff to disclose disability, within the Equal Pay Action Plan.

### **Required actions:**

For the purposes of the third DAP:

- Encourage disability disclosure through the 8<sup>th</sup> triennial Staff Disability Survey in 2019; and

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<sup>5</sup> Source: AdvanceHE, Equality in Higher Education Statistical Report, 2018

- Review the language used to encourage staff to disclose (Ref: Equal Pay Action Plan).

### *Students*

Students disclose in a variety of ways. For example, they may indicate on their UCAS form that they are disabled (i.e. before they arrive at the University), they may indicate at online registration that they are disabled (when they arrive at the University), they may register with Disability Services or they may tell a member of staff that they are disabled (i.e. informally, during their course).

As such, it is almost impossible to get an accurate picture of disclosure rates for students the University. Equal Opportunities data suggest that there has been an incremental increase in students disclosing a disability at the University. In 2017/18, 10.4% of students declared a disability; this compares with 8.4% in 2011/12.

As described above (Table 8), the student record system describes percentages of disabled entrants increasing by approximately 3% since 2011/12. Since 2010/11, the numbers of disabled students registered with Disability Services has increased by 20%, from 1394 students in 2010/11 to 1672 students in 2016/17 (Table 11).

Work is ongoing to encourage students to disclose disability, to ensure that all disabled students receive appropriate support at the University.

### **Required actions:**

For the purposes of the third DAP:

- Encourage disability disclosure by new students/entrants through awareness campaigns.

### **Review of the membership of Clubs/Committees/Societies/Networks.**

As outlined in the DAP, the range of public life positions over which the University has responsibility for is as follows:

- University Council;
- University Senate;
- Convocation;
- University Committees, working groups and consultative groups;
- Students' and Students' Union clubs, societies and sabbatical officers;
- Students' Union Board of Trustees;
- Students Union Council; and the
- University Staff Disability Network.

Whilst disabled staff and students are encouraged to apply to participate in the main University Committees (i.e. Council, Senate and Convocation) general University committees, working groups and consultative groups are constituted according to area of expertise, interest and relevance (i.e. staff are invited to participate). All committees and working groups are expected to align with the University's equality statement:

*'In reaching its decisions, the Group will support and promote the values contained in the University's Equality Scheme and associated policies. It will ensure that wherever possible it is proactive in promoting equality of opportunity and good relations among persons of different religious belief; political opinion; racial group; age; marital status; sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; between persons with dependants and persons without, and that its actions do not adversely impact on any of these groups.'*

A review of membership for each main University Committee<sup>6</sup> indicates that, contrary to the previous reporting period, no disabled people (i.e. those who have disclosed a disability) are currently participating on the University's Governing bodies/main Committees.

#### **Required actions:**

For the purposes of the third DAP:

- Consider more effective ways of encouraging disabled people to put themselves forward for positions on the University's main committees.

Data is not available for representation on Students' Union Council and Trustee Board. With regard to Students' Sports Union membership, 9.5% of members at Jordanstown and Belfast campuses have declared a disability, 9.7% of members at Coleraine campus have declared a disability and 16.8% of members at Magee campuses have declared a disability. This demonstrates an increase of 3% at Jordanstown and Belfast, 4.8% at Coleraine and 9.8% at Magee campuses since 2012.

#### **Required actions:**

For the purposes of the third DAP:

- Develop two new dedicated positions for disabled student representatives on SU Council; and
- Consider different ways of encouraging participation of disabled students in the Sports Union.

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<sup>6</sup> The University's main committees include Council, Convocation, and a number of sub-committees of Senate (i.e. Academic Development and Enhancement, Global Engagement, Learning and Teaching, Research and Impact). Numbers of disabled members on each committee are not reported in order to protect anonymity.

The University's Staff Disability Network (formerly the Staff Disability Discussion Forum) was re-established in 2011 and currently consists of 16 members of staff, who meet annually to discuss disability issues. The main aims of the Network are to:

- help formulate, advise and feedback on, and where appropriate participate in, University initiatives to encourage greater participation of disabled people in all walks of University life;
- contribute to and monitor the formulation, implementation, and effectiveness of University policies, action plans and strategies that might impact upon disabled persons; and
- provide an opportunity for disabled staff to seek and provide mutual support, in confidence, where appropriate.

Members of this network have informed the actions within the third DAP.

The University also responds to requests from outside bodies for representation on various committees/boards. In the past, this has included:

- Health Trusts;
- Local Councils;
- Professional Bodies;
- Government Committees/Working Groups (e.g. DEL/DFE);
- Boards of Governors; and
- Editorial Boards.

On these occasions, staff either nominate themselves for membership, or are nominated because of their expertise, and a record is kept of staff who declare membership. In 2010/11, three staff who have disclosed a disability were recorded as participating on external bodies<sup>7</sup>. In 2017/18, this number had increased to eight<sup>8</sup>.

### **Disability awareness training**

Online disability awareness training was introduced in March 2011, to provide immediate, accessible information about Disability Legislation, Rights and Responsibilities under this legislation, Disability etiquette etc. Either the Equality and Legal Manager or Disability Services Staff provided face-to-face training on request.

In order to complete the on-line training successfully, staff must complete a series of quizzes and achieve a pass mark of at least 60% for each quiz. This allows Equality staff to ensure that the learning objectives of each unit within the training have been achieved. On completion, staff are also invited to provide feedback on the training.

New staff are required to complete the training during induction, and regular reminders are sent out to all staff encouraging them to complete the training.

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<sup>7</sup> 172 members of staff registered membership on external bodies in 2010/11.

<sup>8</sup> 150 members of staff registered membership on external bodies in 2017/18.

In 2017/18, 45% of currently employed staff successfully completed the training, either online, or face-to-face (Table 11). This percentage varies each year due to staff turnover.

**Table 11 Completion rates – staff currently employed**

<b>Training type</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>
Online disability awareness training	39%	42.5%	48.6%	54.7%	57%	45.4%

One third of staff (654) who completed the training between March 2011 and August 2018 provided feedback. This indicated that staff felt that:

- The material was well written (90% agreed);
- The material was well presented (88% agreed);
- The material was well organised (89% agreed);
- The material was easy to navigate (81% agreed);
- The activities were engaging and motivating (75% agreed);
- The assessment quizzes were appropriate (89% agreed);
- The content was necessary and comprehensive (87% agreed);
- Overall the session was valuable (88% agreed);
- They would recommend this session to others (81% agreed); and
- They enjoyed the online experience (67% agreed, 12% disagreed).

Whilst most of the comments provided were very positive, some issues were identified by staff. These focus on the time taken to complete the course, the lack of interactivity and the platform used (i.e. prefer face-to-face training), difficulty completing the training in a shared space and expired/broken links. These issues (particularly the navigational issues) appear to have been exacerbated by restructuring and ongoing updates to BlackBoard Learn.

Examples of positive feedback include:

*‘This was a very useful course, and challenging as well, which came as a bit of a surprise. The self-assessment tests were most useful and presented at an appropriate level - some questions required quite a bit of thought and I was surprised to get one or two wrong.’*

*‘I thought that the section dealing with ‘etiquette’ was particularly salient. The use of examples was also very helpful.’*

*‘Extremely informative and INTERESTING. Hoping to eradicate the mistakes I now know have done in past and adopt these new SENSIBLE practices.’*

*'Made me think. Encourages you to see things from a different angle.'*

*'I found this training to be insightful and very helpful.'*

*'Training was very good because you can go in and out as often as you need to and also you can see what mistakes you made on the quizzes.'*

*'It's good that this training is compulsory; everyone needs to be aware of equality and diversity matters.'*

More specialised training was provided within a general disability awareness programme of face-to-face training, for example, Autism awareness, Mindfulness, Deaf Awareness, Dyslexia Awareness, Mental Health and Suicide Awareness training. Over the years, the programme evolved to accommodate staff and student requirements. For example:

- the 'Mind your Mood' project provided significant awareness raising of mental health issues throughout the University;
- the 'AHEAD' project aimed to inspire deaf young people into higher education;
- the SportABILITY programme (10-week theory and practical based disability awareness sessions to promote integration and inclusion within primary school children) provided opportunities for all Ulster Sports academy students to work with young people with disabilities in sport;
- our EAP provider (Carecall/Inspire) delivered first aid mental health training to Residential Services and Student Support staff;
- AccessAbility open evenings/days were introduced to encourage applications from prospective students with autism or Asperger's Syndrome;
- two placement students piloted 'Assistive technology' workshops on the Magee campus;
- an interactive, online version of our DSA Roadmap to Student Support was created for our website to facilitate prospective students' understanding and application for DSA funding and additional study; and
- a new module: 'Coping with University Life using Mindfulness and Sensory strategies' was implemented in conjunction with AutismNI.

Further information about the impact of this awareness training is provided within the Section 75 Annual Progress Reports.

An overview of the training provided/facilitated over the 6 years is included in Table 12. This outlines training activity reported within the Section 75 Annual Progress Reports.

**Table 12 Face-to-face disability awareness training 2012-2018**

Training type	Training Sessions (n)					
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Disability awareness training	9	3	3	2	1	0
Accessibility open evenings	2	1	2			
Mental health		1				
Mental health for line managers					2	
Emotional Wellbeing and resilience				2	2	2
Mental health first aid		1				
Applied Suicide Intervention Skills	1	1				
PIPS Life Saver Course	1	1				
Suicide awareness					2	
Equality and autism	1	1				
Autism/ Asperger's syndrome	2	1	1	1	2	1
Induction days for students with Autism	2	1			3	3
Dyslexia			1	1	1	
Deaf awareness					1	1

### Face-to-face training evaluation

Evaluation sheets from the various training provided over the period indicate that each training session has been well-received, and useful to staff. In the main, feedback has been very positive. For example, feedback from the 'Mental Health Awareness for Line Managers' training indicates that staff found this to be very enlightening. When asked what they found the most useful, staff responded as follows:

*'onus on line managers to try to identify mental health issues and to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate a colleague's needs. - that no precedent is established by making adjustments ie this is specific to the individual - ideas for how to conduct a meeting on this subject and the advisability of a follow-up review meeting - existence of a stress questionnaire*

*'The range of mental health problems, the case studies, the videos, and how to arrange appropriate responses. In general, a greater appreciation of the benefits of a work place in which empathy and support are part of everyday practice.*

*'The criteria used for determining if someone is suffering from mental health, the characteristics of mental health disorders, how to spot signs and build up resilience etc'*

All feedback received for in-house training has been used to improve the training and/or develop the on-line training.

## **Disability Equality Training**

Whilst all training provided aims to increase awareness of disability legislation and disability issues, it takes cognisance of the Disability Duties in that it also aims to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life.

No specific 'disability equality' training or training on the Disability Duties was provided over the period. The effectiveness of this 'general' approach is demonstrated within the results of the academic staff 'attitudes towards disability' survey 2017. Compared with the 2011 survey, the results indicate that whilst awareness of the Disability Duties has increased (from 42.6% to 49%), many respondents were unfamiliar with the Disability Duties<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, information about the University's DAP is not reaching some staff, with demand for advice on the implications of the Disability Duties up 20% compared with 2011 (from 31.4% of staff to 51% of staff).

### **Required actions:**

For the purposes of the third DAP:

- Increase uptake of the mandatory disability awareness training;
- Provide specific training on the disability duties/DAP to increase awareness<sup>10</sup>;
- Deliver disability equality training for staff;
- Develop a programme of disability awareness training for staff. Consider the disability survey results (key findings) in regard to training requirements and awareness raising.

### **Review of complaints of disability discrimination**

Six tribunal cases were lodged against the University between 2012 and 2018. Of these:

- 1 case was struck out by the Tribunal;

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<sup>9</sup> Only 49% of respondents indicated that they had heard previously of the Disability Duties.

<sup>10</sup> The ECNI is introducing this type of training in 2019.

- 2 cases were withdrawn; and
- 3 cases were resolved and dismissed by the Tribunal.

This compares with two tribunal cases lodged against the University between 2007 and 2012, both of which were withdrawn by the claimants without any liability being accepted.

## **What remains to be done?**

The University's second DAP achieved a variety of tangible outcomes for disabled people (described above); work is ongoing to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life within the University's third DAP. However, the majority of actions were legacy 'ongoing' actions carried forward from the first DAP and only 29% (16) of the actions were scheduled to complete during the life of the DAP. These must now be considered to be mainstreamed, in order to develop a third DAP which consists of actions that are unique, new and relate specifically to the two disability duties. Where possible, quantifiable performance indicators and timescales will be implemented. This will improve the relevance and clarity of the third DAP.

Improved management of the third DAP is essential. The second DAP was extended for a year, because of wholesale institutional restructuring and staff absence/resource issues. The new 'People and Culture Directorate' will establish a dedicated, well-resourced 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit', to ensure that the third DAP is delivered on schedule.

The reinstatement of the Disability Duties Review Group (or similar) will increase engagement of staff and students with the DAP. It will also provide a better internal monitoring mechanism to ensure that:

- there is no/minimal slippage of actions (timescales are realistic and are met);
- the DAP is refreshed each year (it is a live, flexible document); and
- the disability duties are embedded within the University's civic contribution activities.

No specific training on the Disability Duties and the DAP (particularly for University governors, office holders and academic staff) and disability equality was provided during the second DAP. The results of the staff/student 'attitudes to disability' surveys demonstrate that specific awareness raising initiatives and training is required to dispel some of the myths and fears surrounding the abilities of disabled people and improve attitudes towards disabled people, especially in relation to mental health difficulties. A well-managed programme of training is required within the third DAP.

## How to build on success

Continued high-level commitment and good communication/publicity are central to building on the success of the second DAP. In order to celebrate and build on this success, the University will:

- identify, exhibit and celebrate positive disability practice throughout the University:
  - publicise the success of the second DAP via Insight, email and on our web page;
  - disseminate the results of the Effectiveness Review to all staff and students;
  - regularly include disability-related articles within the University's Insight webpage and via internal email;
  - improve/increase communication and engagement with Faculty Boards, Departments and the Students' Union;
- develop the third DAP so that:
  - we continue doing what we do well. 'Ongoing' actions contained within the second DAP are assumed to be mainstreamed within respective functions;
  - all actions are unique, new and relate specifically to the two disability duties;
  - the staff and student 'attitudes to disability' surveys' results (key findings) are considered;
  - the clarity of the performance indicators is improved so that they are outcome focused (where possible) and measurable (quantifiable).
  - where possible, quantifiable timescales are implemented (to avoid further 'ongoing' actions);
  - functional leads and disabled people are involved from the outset;
  - it includes an action to re-run the 'staff and student attitudes to disability' surveys within its final year (so that we can monitor changes in attitudes towards disabled people);
  - it includes supporting actions to encourage/enhance disability disclosure;
  - it considers more effective ways of encouraging disabled people to put themselves forward for positions on the University's main committees;
  - two new dedicated positions for disabled student representatives on SU Council are developed; and
  - it considers different ways of encouraging participation of disabled students in the Sports Union;
- introduce more effective internal reporting structures to ensure that the third DAP is effectively implemented, monitored, reviewed and developed, and regains its prominence throughout the University (i.e. on Faculty boards, on Departmental agendas and throughout the Students' Union);
  - reinstate the Disability Duties Review Group (or similar); and
  - establish the most effective committee reporting framework to ensure that regular DAP updates are received by University Council;
- continue to mainstream the disability duties within its policies (i.e. include 'Disability Duties' questions within its policy screening pro-forma);
- continue to work with the Students' Union to promote disability equality;

- ensure disability equality and awareness training is provided to office holders, staff and students;
  - increase uptake of the mandatory disability awareness training;
  - provide specific training on the disability duties/DAP to increase awareness;
  - deliver disability equality training for staff; and
  - develop a programme of disability awareness training for staff, which is informed by the disability survey results (key findings in regard to training requirements and awareness raising);
- continue to encourage disabled people to apply to work/study at the University; and
- disseminate the third DAP to all staff and students and upload it to the University's webpages.

## How to meet the challenges identified

In order to meet the challenges identified, the University will:

- re-state its commitment to implementing effectively the disability duties and **ensure that positive practice is maintained, celebrated and communicated** through the third DAP, **regardless of economic changes**;
- reinstate its Disability Duties Review Group (or similar cross-departmental working group) to lead, monitor, review and report annual progress on the DAP (i.e. co-ordinate the Plan) and to ensure there is no significant slippage of timescales. Annual reviews of the terms of reference and membership of this Group should ensure it remains focussed and dynamic;
- adopt a more collaborative approach by consulting and engaging more widely with disabled people to ensure that the University's third DAP is agile, user friendly and fit for purpose;
- ensure adequate data are collected to monitor the effectiveness of the measures (i.e. in terms of changes in attitudes and participation), and where necessary, mitigate any new challenges; and
- ensure that disability equality is embedded within all functional areas and reporting structures.

## Conclusion

The review of the University's DAP indicates that it has been effective in a variety of ways. For example, it has led to improvements in the way in which disability issues are monitored, managed, evaluated and reviewed at the University. This, in turn, has resulted in increased disclosure rates, enabling the University to assess changes in the participation of disabled people at the University. It has also resulted in increased access to education and services, as staff become more confident in interacting with disabled people.

However, the review also indicates that there is still much work to be done to build on previous successes and meet the challenges identified. To this end the University remains committed to implementing effectively the disability duties, through its third DAP.

**If you require this document in an alternative format/language please contact the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit by any of the following methods:**

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