Summary of the main findings of the University's 5-year review of its equality scheme

How the scheme's implementation has benefitted individuals within the Section 75 groups

Mainstreaming equality: The equality screening process is central to all policy development in the University. This means that the experiences, needs and requirements of each group are considered during policy development. Similarly, the views of staff, students, representative Trade Unions and consultees are taken into consideration where difficult strategic decisions have to be made, such as the decision to relocate the School of Health Sciences, so that effective mitigating measures are put in place.

The scheme provides an effective complaints mechanism, to allow complaints to be investigated within a set timescale. ECNI involvement in the complaints procedure provides added credibility and acts as an incentive to comply with Section 75 (S75) and avoid discriminating against the various groups.

The equality action plans implemented in 2017 and 2021 also provided a structured methodology for tackling equality issues affecting S75 groups and individuals. The outputs and outcomes observed over the equality scheme period are contained in **Appendix 1**.

How leaders within the authority are engaged in the scheme's implementation

Statutory responsibility for the effective implementation of the Scheme lies with the Council of the University. Whilst the Vice-Chancellor is accountable to Council for the development, maintenance and review of the equality scheme, responsibility for monitoring equality lies with Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee and the Resources Committee (both are sub-committees of Council). However, all Senior Officers are involved in ensuring that the University complies with the equality scheme. Both the Vice-Chancellor and the Chair of Council have demonstrated commitment to the scheme's implementation by endorsing the University's equality scheme. Further to this, Council has signed up to the Higher Education Code of Governance, which commits governing bodies of all UK Higher Education Institutes to promote equality of opportunity and diversity, and in its 'Statement of Primary Responsibilities' Council commits to ensuring the University

has non-discriminatory systems in place to provide diversity and equality of opportunity for staff, students and applicants.

The Chief People Officer has overall responsibility for equality at senior leadership level. The Deputy Director for People and Culture (Employee Experience) reports to the Chief People Officer and oversees the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Unit. All staff within the EDI Unit are expected to support a broad range of activity, including equality initiatives, as required.

All Senior Officers are involved in ensuring that the University complies with the equality scheme. As policy owners, they are required to complete policy-screening templates relating to their areas. They are also responsible for making sure that staff complete equality and diversity awareness training.

The University also utilises its business planning processes to ensure a performance related approach to the promotion of equality and diversity, with annual reviews to ensure effective implementation. This is evidenced in its annual business and corporate plans.

S75 objectives are incorporated within the People and Culture Strategy, the EDI Strategy and action plan, the EDI Unit's action plan and the People and Culture Directorate's risk register and annual planning process. Regular equality updates are provided to the Senior Leadership Team, Governance, Nominations and Remuneration and Resources committees.

The University's People and Culture Strategy (2019-2022) seeks to place equality of opportunity and enhanced participation at the heart of the University's culture and operational activities. This is underpinned by the University's EDI Strategy (2019-2022) which was launched on 18 June 2019 by the Director of People and Culture. This sets out the University's strategic ambitions to encourage and engage the most diverse perspectives; deliver fair access, equality of opportunity and enhance participation; and nurture/cultivate an enriched environment where any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued.

In June 2020, the University implemented an EDI Steering Group, to provide leadership, insight and perspective in relation to all aspects of the institution's EDI Strategy, statutory returns to the Equality Commission and the wider EDI environment within Northern Ireland (NI).

Challenges and how they have been overcome

The main challenge relates to the limited resources allocated specifically to equality/the implementation of S75.

In the reporting period, the University underwent significant change and transformation - affecting amongst other things campus infrastructure / locations, organisational structures and digital and technology innovation. In November 2017, responsibility for supporting the implementation of the University's statutory equality and good relations duties and equality scheme moved from the 'Office of the University Secretary' to the 'Human Resources' Directorate. In 2018, a new 'People and Culture' Directorate was created within the Chief Operating Officer's portfolio, bringing together colleagues from linked, but previously separate teams including EDI, Athena Swan (AS) (bringing all equality work into one functional area - EDI), Staff Development, Heath Safety and Wellbeing and Human Resources. There are four full-time and one part-time staff employed in the EDI Unit. Three of these staff are assigned full-time to ensuring that the statutory duties are complied with.

A lack of a general equality training budget meant that training provided by external organisations was funded generally out of the EDI Unit's training budget.

Other challenges include:

- **Improving consultee engagement:** The University continues to build meaningful relationships with key internal and external stakeholders during the development of new and revised policies and procedures. However, consultees appear to have disengaged from the consultation process, only consulting on matters that relate directly to them. This appears to be a trend throughout the public sector.

- **Streamlining Trade Union engagement with the screening process/policy development:** The University recognises the importance of thorough and timely consultation during the development of new and revised policies. Consultation with the Trade Unions is an integral part of our policy screening process. However, consultation with the Trade Unions has increased significantly the time taken to screen and develop policy and has created a 'bottleneck' in policy development/review and delays to their inclusion in a public policy screening consultation exercise.

- **Maintaining an accurate policy repository:** Due to institutional restructuring and the Covid-19 Pandemic, it has been difficult to encourage staff to review policies and update the repository 'on schedule'. Resourcing issues have meant that certain information is still missing from the repository.

- **Improving accessibility of equality data available on webpage:** EDI plans to redevelop its 'Key Equality Data' webpage during 2022, to enhance content accessibility. This will align with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

- **Aligning the equality scheme requirements with the 'People, Place and Partnerships – Delivering Sustainable Futures for All' strategy:** The

Senior Leadership Team is currently developing a new 'People, Place and Partnerships – Delivering Sustainable Futures For All' strategy to replace the University's '5&50 Strategy'. In creating and implementing this strategy, we need to ensure that the S75 duties are not disregarded or denigrated. We will need to be consistent in our messaging to staff so that they continue to mainstream equality, whilst also attempting to address key inequalities, respect diversity and be inclusive.

- **Delivering or reconsidering the enduring goals outlined in the EDI action plan:** The University's EDI Strategy expires in 2022. In implementing the 'People, Place and Partnerships - Sustainable Futures For All' strategy, we need to consider whether a new EDI Strategy and action plan is required.

- **Going beyond compliance:** The University has engaged in additional equality initiatives to ensure that various specific equality challenges relating to higher education are addressed. These initiatives include the AS and the Race Equality Charters and the Disability Positive Accreditation scheme. Each requires substantial equal opportunities (EO) data and analysis, and input from equality staff.

Lessons learned

The key lessons over the past five years in terms of effectively implementing the scheme are as follows:

- Consideration of S75 duties must continue to be mainstreamed into all policy development and review processes. Without our supporting Policy Framework (our procedure for developing and revising policies) and monthly Policy Clinics, it is unlikely that policy screening would take place instinctively. It is essential that information about the Policy Clinics is circulated more frequently to staff.

- Individual support provided to policy owners by staff within the EDI Unit is critical throughout the policy screening process and leads to improved policy development.

- Staff respond more positively to focused, face-to-face training. The online equality and diversity training introduces broad equality issues effectively, but requires updating so that it is more interactive and relevant. The implementation of a learning management system in 2022 will provide a more effective platform for hosting and monitoring completion of this mandatory training. External training providers have been received well by participants and are key to our equality training program.

- Awareness of S75 among staff and students has increased, but there is still work to be done in this area. Not all staff are aware that 'equality' does not mean treating everyone in the same way or that 'equality' and 'equity' are

different concepts. Not all students are aware that 'equality' and 'good relations' are interdependent, yet separate concepts. Updated guidance on the S75 duties is available on our dedicated 'Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations' web page, however this requires continuous dissemination and referencing.

- The Single Equality Act in Great Britain / Public Sector Equality Duty continues to provide good practice examples for developing the equality agenda in NI.

Good practice

Equality web pages: The EDI Unit has developed individual web pages to facilitate its equality scheme and equality work. These are accessible via the EDI web page.

Our dedicated Equality of opportunity and good relations web page provides links to our equality scheme, S75 annual reports, consultation exercises and equality impact assessments (EQIAs).

Further to the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018, web content has been monitored continuously and updated to improve accessibility. In 2019, a dedicated web page was developed to host the University's Accessibility Statements.

Policy development: The University has in place a 'Framework for Policy Review' (hereafter referred to as the 'Policy Framework'). The Policy Framework establishes a standard and principles as guidance for all staff involved in policy development, approval, implementation and review across the University. It also provides greater clarity on equality screening and how to consult with the representative Trade Unions during policy development.

Policy clinics are held each month to support staff when they are developing or reviewing policies. They receive advice on the Policy Framework, policy governance, equality screening and mainstreaming, staff and stakeholder engagement and trade union consultation. Both initiatives aim to ensure that University policies are developed, established, implemented and reviewed in an appropriate, consistent and timely manner, and in compliance with the University's Statutory requirements including its equality scheme.

Developing organisation memory: The University's online policy repository enables visitors to identify which polices have been equality screened and when they require a review. The Office of the University Secretary manages the content and the policy review process.

Monitoring data: The upgrade from 'CoreHR' to 'AccessXD' in 2020 enabled us to update database functionality to include applicant monitoring data previously captured in the WCN Recruitment database, and review and improve the accuracy of the staff EO data held. AccessXD gives staff the opportunity to update their own EO record instantly, using a 'self-service' facility. Whilst EO data are updated annually, a staff remonitoring exercise is scheduled to take place in November 2022, to encourage staff to check and update their EO records. Staff are also able to manage attendance at online equality and diversity and disability awareness sessions training sessions through AccessXD.

Online training: The migration of the mandatory equality and S75 training to the Learning Management System in 2022 will enable us to enhance and monitor successful completion of this training. Staff training on equality issues has developed with the introduction of 'Diversity' and 'Inclusion' hours. These involve individual staff and post graduate students leading a discussion on barriers to EO based on people's ethnicity or culture, sexual orientation, disability and religious belief. Generally provided gratis by subject experts or people with lived experience, these are available to all staff and PhD students, and are optional.

Disability practice: Our consistently good disability practice is demonstrated through our 'Disability Positive AAA*' accreditation from Employers for Disability. The University is one of only three organisations within NI to receive this accreditation.

Good relations: The Students' Union Good Relations Policy Working Group continues to support the implementation of the Student Good Relations Policy and action plan and to provide an advisory forum for the Students' Union as and when good relations issues arise. Since 2018, the Group has provided an advisory forum in regard to implementing the Student Council Mandate for Bilingual Signage.

In 2021, the EDI Unit developed a 'Short Guide to Good Relations'.

Impacts and outcomes over the past five years and further steps to be taken

Below are examples of how outcomes were delivered for the nine equality categories.

Religious Belief

- The Tenth Article 55 Review (7 February 2016 – 6 February 2019) demonstrated a [3.1%] growth in the Catholic share of the monitored workforce since 2016, and progress in achieving the targets set for each campus within the University's affirmative action programme.

- The main Christian churches are represented by chaplains. Full details of chaplaincy activities and services are provided for students at the time of registration and on chaplaincy notice boards.

- The University has prayer rooms on campus for staff and students who practice other faiths.

Further steps:

- Implement affirmative actions described in Article 55 Review.

- Ensure the enhanced Belfast Campus links with community places of worship.

Political Opinion

- Ulster University has a strong tradition of promoting Irish language and culture. However, it recognises that the public use and promotion of **Irish** in NI continues to be highly politicised. In 2019, the Students Union Good Relations Working group in conjunction with the University, 'screened in' for EQIA the Students' Union Student Council for Bilingual Signage. An EQIA Working Group was established and completed a draft consultation document. This work will continue in the next reporting period.

- The University is actively involved in the discussions around national policy through the participation of a number of our academics in working with Conradh na Gaeilge and other experts in advancing draft language strategies for the Executive's Department for Communities. In January 2021, two members of EQIA working group were appointed to the Department for Communities' Expert Advisory Panels tasked with developing the language strategies (as set out in the New Decade, New Approach Deal).

Appendix 1

Further steps:

- Encourage political debate through the Ulster University Students' Union (UUSU) political societies and Good Relations Working Group.

- Contribute to the development of national language strategies through membership of the Department for Communities' Expert Advisory Panels.

Racial Group

- The University implemented its EDI Strategy Action Plan ('Equality Action Plan') in February 2021. The action plan sets out how the institution intends to deliver the priorities set out within its EDI Strategy: one of these being 'Advance race equality at Ulster and build intercultural awareness'. A sub-group of the EDI Steering Group has been established to support the delivery of this priority.

- The only Confucius Insititute in the region was based at the University in 2012. This has provided a range of activities over the period, to develop academic, cultural and social ties between NI and China.

- The EDI Unit offers 'Diversity' and 'Inclusion' hours. These involve individual staff members and post-graduate students leading a discussion on various barriers to EO based on people's ethnicity; sexual orientation; disability and / or religious belief. The conversational virtual gatherings led by people with lived experiences are very powerful and provide participants with the opportunity to explore issues further.

- One of Ulster University's key priorities is to be globally engaged and globally relevant. The University implemented its 'Global Engagement Strategy' in 2018. This sets out to achieve holistic and sustainable 'Internationalisation'.

- The University is a member of Advance Higher Education's Race Equality Charter (REC) and regularly attends information sessions on the updated REC.

- In 2018-19, our second Gender Pay Gap analysis included analyses by race, disability and community background by pay grade.

- In November 2020, the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) + Network for staff and students held their online launch, with 65 staff and students in attendance. A Network Board and six Working Groups were established to support the goals and objectives. The Network is open to staff, students, friends and allies of BAME individuals and groups as well as alumni of the University.

Appendix 1

Further steps:

- Deliver or reconsider the race priority outlined in the EDI action plan.

- Complete and submit an application for a Bronze REC.

- Facilitate race equality training.

- Continue to implement the University's Global Engagement Strategy.

Age

- The University commenced a reivew of its Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy and Procedures in 2022.

- In May 2019, Ulster University was recognised as NI's first age-friendly university by endorsing the ten principles of the international Age-Friendly University Initiative.

- The Platforms for Ageing Community Engagement – Exchange and Enterprise (PLACE-EE) project, led by Ulster University is a major international research project with a focus on improving the lives of older people in remote and rural areas through improved access to technology and social connectedness. This international project aims to develop and implement locally derived sustainable solutions to encourage internet use and person-centred e-health.

- Staff engage with Business in the Community NI's Age at Work programme, which includes a series of themed learning opportunities pertinent to multiple issues and areas of interest as regards age.

- The 'Fresh Start Through Sport programme', funded by NI Executive, aims to use the universal appeal of sport as a means to engage young people who are potentially at risk from becoming involved in criminality. In 2022, Schools Outreach co-designed a Schools Outreach Academy course with four sporting bodies, IFA, GAA, Ulster Rugby and the Belfast Giants. This programme was complemented by the online delivery of the 'Embracing Talent' courses.

Further steps:

- Implement the revised Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy and Procedures.

- Develop monitoring data in regard age and intersectionality, differences in experience, recruitment planning, promotion and attrition/exit.

Marital Status

- The University continues to offer residential accommodation for both single and married students.

Further steps:

- None identified.

Sexual Orientation

- The University implemented its EDI Strategy Action Plan ('Equality Action Plan') in February 2021. The action plan sets out how the institution intends to deliver the priorities set out within its EDI Strategy: one of these being 'Become a lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT+) inclusive employer'. A sub-group of the EDI Steering Group has been established to support the delivery of this priority.

- In February 2021, the University's inaugural LGBT+ Staff Network had their formal launch online with over 50 people in attendance. This followed a Staff Survey, 'Supporting an inclusive workplace for LGBT+ staff', that was conducted online from September – November 2020 to gauge workplace experiences and to ascertain whether there existed a desire for the development of an LGBT+ Staff Network. 69% of those who responded believed there was value in establishing a Network.

- In 2020, the University amended its question relating to staff sexual orientation to improve accuracy. In 2022, sexual orientation data (collected at the recruitment stage) and gender identity data were reviewed with the University's LGBT+ Staff Network Lead. Following this, and having considered the data to be reliable, the University now includes sexual orientation data within its annual Key Equality Data, for equality screening. Student sexual orientation data will be collected from the academic year commencing in 2022.

- Since 2018, University staff have joined members of the LGBT+ Staff Network and the UUSU at Pride marches across NI.

- The Rainbow Project provided lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) awareness training to staff.

- Students established LGB societies on a number of campuses.

Further steps:

- Deliver or reconsider the LGB priority outlined in the EDI action plan.

- Facilitate further LGB awareness training for staff.

- Support the LGB societies and the UUSU Equality Officer in their work to promote LGB equality and to raise awareness of LGB issues.

Gender

- The University implemented its EDI Strategy Action Plan ('Equality Action Plan') in February 2021. The action plan sets out how the institution intends to deliver the priorities set out within its EDI Strategy: i.e. 'Address gender role segregation within the institution' and 'Become an LGBT+ inclusive employer'. Sub-groups of the EDI Steering Group have been established to support the delivery of each of these priorities.

- The University's Wo/men's Network launched on 18 January 2019 at the Coleraine campus. 120 staff attended. Following on from the launch, steering groups were established on all four campuses to lead Wo/Men's Network events. Book clubs were formed on each campus as a mechanism for connecting staff from different professional areas and disciplines. The Networks are open to all genders and programmes of events are developed across all campuses.

- EDI staff supported the Student Admissions team to develop formal and informal 'Change of name forms' for students. The EDI Unit also produced a guidance document for staff on Pronouns, which was launched on International Day of Pronouns through an internal news channel and disseminated to all staff in October 2020.

- The Policy on Equality for Transgender Staff and Students was last updated in 2017, to include guidance from FOCUS The Identity Trust. The policy includes a checklist of aspects to consider when supporting a transgender person through their transition. In 2019/2020, EDI staff engaged with Stonewall, FOCUS The Identity Trust and Transgender NI for feedback on the Transgender Policy, however the review of this policy has been delayed due to Covid-19.

- The University is developing a menopause policy and a domestic violence policy for staff.

- The University's Equal Pay Working Group completed an Equal Pay Review in 2017. Consistent with previous reviews, the Equal Pay Review found no

significant issues regarding equal pay. However, pay gaps persist, mainly due to job segregation.

- In preparation for the anticipated Gender Pay Gap Reporting Regulations in NI, the University carries out annual analyses of its gender pay gap, based on the ACAS guidance for GB. In 2018, we presented at three of the Equality Commission's 'Gender Pay Gap Reporting' training sessions. The presentation outlined the work we have been doing to prepare for gender pay gap reporting in NI. Using provisional data provided by Universities and Colleges Employers Association for 2020-2021, our median pay gap of 13.7% was 2.5% narrower than that for UK Higher Education (16.2%). This reflects our organisational structure. Our mean (average gender pay gap) was 14%.

- The University provides transgender and non-binary awareness training.

- The University funds a five-year participatory action research in partnership with the School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences, which is committed to impacting policy, pedagogy and practice in supporting educational outcomes and HE participation rate of young males from socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods – 'Taking Boys Seriously 2'. In 2021, the University held a 'Taking Boys Seriously' conference.

- The AS Charter is a framework which is used across the globe to support and transform gender equality within higher education and research. The Charter also recognises work undertaken to address gender equality more broadly and not just barriers to progression that affect women. The University has been a signatory since 2012**.** All eleven of the University's STEMM Schools hold AS awards, and each has an action plan in place to promote gender equality within its School. The University will be applying for an Institutional Silver AS award in 2023.

Further steps:

- Deliver or reconsider the gender priorities outlined in the EDI action plan.

- Review and update the University's Transgender policy.

- Implement a menopause policy and a domestic violence policy for staff.

- Continue to provide transgender and non-binary awareness training.

- Support the Institutional and individual School AS applications – and look for opportunities to diverge into Professional Services areas (reflecting the widening of the AS process to same).

- Calculate and disseminate annually information the University's gender pay gap.

- Work with representative trade unions on a project to consider and address equal and gender pay.

- Continue to inform the development of ECNI guidance on gender pay gap reporting in NI.

Disability

- The University implemented its EDI Strategy Action Plan ('Equality Action Plan') in February 2021. The action plan sets out how the institution intends to deliver the priorities set out within its EDI Strategy: one of these being 'Advance disability equality at Ulster'. A sub-group of the EDI Steering Group has been established to support the delivery of this priority.

- The University implemented its third Disability Action Plan in 2019.

- In 2022, 'Attitudes to Disability' surveys were carried out across the staff body. These informed the review of effectiveness of the third Disability Action Plan and identified areas of focus to include within the University's fourth Disability Action Plan.

- The University continued to implement and provide information sessions on its reasonable adjustment protocol for disabled staff. This protocol provides clear guidelines for staff on how to obtain reasonable adjustments at the University. By encouraging regular dialogue between line managers and disabled staff, this assists to ensure maximum participation of disabled staff in University and public life and promote positive attitudes towards disability.

- In 2021, the University was one of the first three organisations to achieve 'Disability Positive AAA*' accreditation from Employers for Disability, in recognition of the work the University has undertaken in implementing a wide array of practical measures to attract and retain employees and service users with disabilities. The audit completed during this exercise provided valuable feedback on a small number of areas where action is needed.

- The Staff dis/Ability Network continued to enable disabled staff to discuss and share disability issues in confidence in a neutral environment and report any accessiblity issues to the Section Lead for EDI. Members are invited to provide feedback on disability issues during the development of University policies, action plans and strategies.

- To support understanding and adherence to the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018, colleagues from multiple departments across the University have developed extensive guidance on 'accessible content.' The intention is that once completed this guidance will be available on UU webpages, with a training programme rolled out to staff.

- The policy for Physical Access and Egress at Ulster continued to ensure that the University estate is universally accessible. This was last reviewed in 2016.

- The Staff Experience Project Team (Belfast campus) met with members of the Staff Disability Network to consider accessibility issues and develop guidance in relation to the enhanced Belfast campus.

- The eighth Staff Disability Survey was completed and led to the provision of further reasonable adjustments for disabled staff. This encouraged staff not previously known to be disabled to disclose. A number of staff were provided with personal emergency evaluation plans as a result of this survey.

- A student-led Neurodiverse Group was established in April 2021. The Neurodiverse Group (named by the students) met every two months to discuss themes such as CV and interview advice; stress reduction techniques and relationships and sexuality. Meetings were facilitated by two AccessAbility Advisers.

- The University continues to be a sector leader in widening access to and participation in higher education and through its Widening Access and Participation Strategy. Through this, it proactively identifies and targets groups where there is underrepresentation. This includes disabled people.

Further steps:

- Deliver or reconsider the disability priority outlined in the EDI action plan.

- Complete a review of the third Disability Action Plan, develop and implement the fourth Disability Action Plan.

- Continue to carry out the triennial staff disability surveys.

- Reapply for the EFDNI's 'Disability Positive' accreditation.

- Review the staff protocol for making reasonable adjustments for disabled staff.

- Roll out training on the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

- Establish an accessibility forum, to consider and address accessibility issues at the enhanced Belfast campus.

- Collaborate with the National Association of Disabled Staff Networks, to develop the work of the Staff Disability Network.

Appendix 1

Dependants

- Information continues to be collected from students and staff on the type of dependants i.e. children, disabled dependants or elderly dependants.

- The University offers residential accommodation for students with children.

- The University updated its work-life balance policies, to offer professional support staff more flexible ways of working.

- The University's Returning Carers' Scheme is open to male and female academic and research staff who have returned from a break in their career for caring responsibilities in the last three years, or who have been working part-time or reduced hours because of caring responsibilities. This provides funding to 'buy out' teaching and administrative duties for a module, attend conferences, research/technical support or assistance in grant writing.

Further steps:

- Consider developing a Carers' Network, to support staff who care for elderly/disabled family members, staff returning from maternity leave, as well as young children (the 'sandwich generation').

- Amend the Flexible Working Policy to offer staff 'day 1 rights' to flexible working.

- Continue to implement the Returning Carers' Scheme for Academic and Research Staff.

Good relations:

- The Good Relations Working Group has as its Chair the UUSU President and consists of senior staff from the UUSU and University, nominated UUSU Officers and representatives from student societies and the Chaplaincy. Since 2016, the main remit of the Group has been to support the implementation of the Student Good Relations Policy and action plan and to provide an advisory forum for the Students' Union as and when good relations issues arise. Since 2018, the Group has provided an advisory forum in regard to implementing the Student Council Mandate for Bilingual Signage.

- In 2021/22, A focus group consisting of members of the Students' Union Good Relations Working Group (a joint working group between the Students' Union and Ulster University) met twice to review the Terms of Reference and consider how to ensure the future of this work/group. Members agreed that it is imperative to retain a good relations advisory panel/board to support students. A training session took place with UUSU Officers on 1 September

2021 to provide an 'Introduction to Good Relations Working Group and the EDI Agenda'.

- In 2021, the EDI Unit developed a '[Short Guide to Good Relations'](#).

- The University has appointed a Director of Community Engagement, to encourage positive relationships and enduring parterships with the community around the enhanced Belfast campus, to 'raise the quality of life for all'.

- The University's [International Conflict Research Institute](#) (INCORE) is deeply embedded in the community relations sector in NI making a direct contribution to community relations issues. This contribution is evident in its teaching work and in its practice and research work. INCORE has pursued a range of teaching and research projects linked to equality and diversity issues:
    - MSc in Applied Peace and Conflict Studies
    - [CAIN](#) (Conflict Archive on the Inernet) - Accounts of the Conflict project
    - [ARK](#) (Access Research Knowledge) - Ageing programme, the NILT (Northern Ireland Life and Times), YLT (Young Life and Times), Kids' Life and Times. These surveys provide a benchmark in NI in terms of equality issues, diversity and community relations attitudes.

- [The UNESCO Centre](#) is a recognised research centre within the University, conducting resech and development work in education for pluralsim, human rights and democracy. On the island of Ireland, its work focuses on improving educational practice and policy, integrated education and academic selection. In the international sphere, the Centre has partnered with major internations institutions to deliver porjects examining the role of education in peacebuilding, international development and conflict.

Further steps:

- Promote the Good Relations duty better.

- Reform the UUSU Good Relations Working Group as a good relations advisory panel/board to support students.

- Develop the range of engagement opportunities with the local community, especially in Belfast (GBD).

Examples of benefits to all S75 categories:

- The University's Widening Access and Participation Plan, which includes an account of expenditures, projects and future plans to widen access and participation to groups that are under-represented in Higher Education (HE). The following are current target groups:
    - students with backgrounds of social and economic need

- students declaring a disability and those with disability support allowance
- young males from the most disadvantaged communities
- students with a care-leaver background
- students of ethnicity other than white UK/Irish
- equitable balance in cross-community participation
- carers (new).

The University achieves this through the following:
- direct financial support to eligible students
- retention and success initiatives to support students
- targeted educational outreach to schools and communities
- flexible education pathways for under-represented groups
- sponsoring active research into educational attainment
- research and impact.

Updates on these initiatives are included in each S75 Annual Progress Reports.

- The University set up a Technology Fund at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020/21) to provide laptops to those who would be least likely to be able to provide the technology required for home and online learning themselves (i.e. undergraduate students eligible for a widening access bursary, and students with a background of care). This Fund was continued in 2021/22.

- The University's Schools outreach programme offers a wide range of aspiring and attainment-raising activities for pupils of all abilities, in schools where the proportion of pupils with Free School Meals Entitlement is over 40%.

- Through the Ulster University Science Shop, the Community Engagement team continues to engage with disability and equality-focused issues with voluntary sector partners across NI. This long-standing initiative encourages both Ulster University staff and students to undertake real world connected learning projects with the community and voluntary sector organisations.

- A Research Inclusion & Diversity Team was established in January 2022 which will operate for a period of 6 months to holistically consider and examine the issues surrounding inequality, under-representation, and inaccessibility within the research profession. The team will develop recommendations to action change, encourage diversity and promote inclusion. Recommendations from the Research Inclusion & Diversity team will help shape and focus the new Ulster University Research Strategy.

- The University's Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) identified that finances remained the most significant barrier for those young people from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds, to progress to a higher education. Ulster University Community Scholarships were established to support school/college leavers with potential and who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- o In receipt of free school meals (FSM) and/or Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)
  - o The main carer for a family member or dependant
  - o Care experienced
  - o In receipt of disability living allowance or personal independence payments
  - o Permanently reside in an area of high deprivation/low participation.

- Inclusion and equality are central to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The aim of Ulster's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project is improve the learning experiences, skills and success of students and graduates, by progressing the institution-wide adoption and explicit embedding of effective ESD, across all curricula, in alignment with and in support of the UN SDG framework.

- In 2019, the University's procedure for developing policies was updated and renamed the Framework for Policy Review (hereafter referred to as the 'Policy Framework'). The Policy Framework establishes a standard and principles as guidance for all staff involved in policy development, approval, implementation and review across the University. The Policy Framework also provides greater clarity on equality screening and how to consult with the representative Trade Unions during policy development, to support the mainstreaming of equality of opportunity and good relations throughout all University policy.

- In 2021, the University implemented monthly Policy Clinics for policy owners. These provide a 'one-stop shop' for policy development, bringing policy owners together with colleagues from Employee Relations, Governance and EDI. Both initiatives aim to ensure that University policies are developed, established, implemented and reviewed in an appropriate, consistent and timely manner, and in compliance with the University's Statutory requirements including its equality scheme.

- The University holds monthly 'Network of Networks' meetings, to enable Network leads to share experiences and plan intersectional, collaborative events.

- Ongoing; Monitoring academic promotion at the University – to ensure equality of opportunity within the process, and that women and BME staff are being encouraged to apply.

- Staff are able to update their own EO record instantly, using a 'self-service' facility, improving the accuracy of monitoring data. A staff remonitoring exercise is scheduled to take place in November 2022, to encourage staff to check and update their EO records.