

# Draft Equality Scheme Action Plan

## Introduction

In line with the commitments set out in its equality scheme, Ulster University is currently developing an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. The action plan is being developed and prioritised based on a review of effectiveness of the University's equality scheme (*an audit of inequalities*). This review gathered and analysed information across the Section 75 categories to identify any inequalities that may exist for service users and those affected by University policies.

The action plan will last for **three** years to align with the University's corporate planning cycle. Implementation of the action measures will be incorporated into the University's business planning process.

The Chief People Officer will oversee and review the implementation of the Action Plan. Progress on the delivery of action measures will be monitored annually; where necessary, action measures will be updated to ensure that the action plan remains effective and relevant to the University's functions and activities. The University will inform the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (the Equality Commission) of any changes or amendments to its action plan and will also include this information in its Section 75 annual progress report to the Equality Commission. The University's Section 75 annual progress report will incorporate information on progress the University has made in implementing its action plans and action measures.

Once finalised, this action plan will be available from the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) section. It will also be available on our [web page](#).

# Equality Scheme Action Plan

<b>Promoting equality of opportunity and good relations - compliance with equality legislation</b>					
	<b>Enabling Action</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>
<b>1.</b>	Continue to implement the University's Equality Scheme	The University is required by law to have in place an Equality Scheme, based on a template provided by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland	Ongoing	Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
<b>2.</b>	Develop and implement a refreshed equality scheme action plan, through consultation, to ensure that the institution is addressing equality issues holistically	This is a commitment within the University's equality scheme	May 2025	Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
<b>3.</b>	Monitor and review progress of the equality scheme	The University is required to submit a variety of statutory equality reports at	Annually	Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met

	action plan on an annual basis	specific times. This includes the Section 75 Annual Report (The Northern Ireland Act 1998)			
<b>4.</b>	Undertake 5-year effectiveness review of equality Scheme	The University's current Equality Scheme is due for review in 2028.	2028	Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
<b>5.</b>	Implement the University's Disability Action Plan 2022-27	The University is required by law to have in place a Disability Action Plan, based on a template provided by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland	2022-2027	Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
<b>6.</b>	Undertake a 5-year review of the University's Disability Action Plan 2022-27	The Disability Action Plan will expire in 2027	2027	Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
<b>7.</b>	Complete the Section 75 Annual Report, including the annual report of progress of the Disability and	The University is required to submit a Section 75 Annual Progress Report (under The Northern Ireland Act 1998) including a report on progress of the	Annually 31 August	Chief People Officer	Report submitted on time

	Equality Scheme Action Plan	equality scheme action plan and Disability Action Plan (under Section 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995)			
<b>8.</b>	Complete the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (FETO) Return	The University is required to submit an Annual Fair Employment and Treatment Order (FETO) Return (under the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998)	Annually 6 June	Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
<b>9.</b>	Complete the Triennial Article 55 Review (For period 7 February 2022 – 6 February 2025)	The University is required to submit a Triennial Article 55 Review (the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998)	6 February 2026	Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met  Article 55 Affirmative Action Plan implemented and achieved
<b>10.</b>	Calculate and publish the University's Gender Pay Gap	Under Article 19 of the Employment Act (NI) 2016) (pending), the University will be required to publish a Gender Pay Gap Report	Annually June	Chief People Officer	Resources and protocols in place to ensure statutory requirements of Gender Pay Gap reporting (Article 19 of the Employment Act (NI) 2016) are met

<b>11.</b>	Develop and implement the University's 'Addressing Pay Gaps Strategic Framework Plan 2025-27'	A coherent framework would provide an oversight mechanism to take action and monitor strategies to reduce pay gaps	2025	Chief People Officer	The University's 'Addressing Pay Gaps Strategic Framework Plan 2024-26' is published and actions within are monitored
<b>12.</b>	Carry out a review of equal pay to ensure that we are not undervaluing some types of jobs	This is a commitment within our Equal Pay Policy	2026 (Following national review of HERA scheme)	Chief People Officer	Equal Pay Review completed, and recommendations endorsed by Senior Leadership Team
<b>13.</b>	Raise awareness of the 'Good Relations' (S75) duty	Awareness of Section 75 among staff and students has increased, but there is still work to be done in this area. Updated guidance on the Section 75 duties is available on our dedicated 'Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations' web page, however this requires continuous dissemination and referencing	Ongoing	Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met Facilitate and carry out events and celebrations to support the raising awareness of the 'Good Relations' (S75) duty
<b>14.</b>	Contribute to the development of	The University is actively involved in the	Ongoing	University Provost	Development of a platform for indigenous language and culture – Ulster tongues

	government language and culture strategies, for example, through membership of the Department for Communities' Expert Advisory Panels	discussions around government policy through the participation of a number of our academics in working with Conradh na Gaeilge and other experts in advancing draft language and culture strategies for the Executive's Department for Communities. In January 2021, two members of staff 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)	2025		<p>(develop an intentional and proactive programme) – Ulster Talks sessions</p> <p>Continue to develop and deliver academic studies – Irish Language degree programme, Ulster Scots Scholarships</p> <p>Explore and develop additional range of languages to be taught at degree level</p> <p>Confucius centre – main centre of excellence</p> <p>The Gaelic Languages of Scotland and Ireland – PEACE Plus project</p>
15.	Proactively develop a programme of language and culture activities which reflect the University's commitment to the support of Irish language and	Ulster University is committed to taking proactive stances on EDI; celebrating all people and providing opportunities for all communities. It has a strong tradition of promoting minority	<p>Annually November</p> <p>Annually January</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	University Provost	<p>Ulster Dialect Week</p> <p>Burns Night Event</p>

	Ulster-Scots activities on our campuses, under the banner of 'Ulster Tongues'	languages and culture, particularly Irish and Ulster-Scots, which aligns with the 'New Decade, New Approach Deal'	Ongoing  Annually March  Ongoing		Burns Society activities Work with John Hewitt Society  Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish Language Week)  Membership of The Forum on languages of Scotland and Ulster
16.	Pro-actively develop a framework of anti-racist activity and action on our campuses which reflects and celebrates the racial diversity of our student and staff body	Ulster University is committed to fostering good relations. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice, and promote understanding	October 2025 October 2025  October 2025 Ongoing  Annually March	University Provost	Black History Summit  Inter-campus Sports Tournament  Black Music Festival Northern Ireland Racial Heritage Project  Race Equality Awards
17.	Continue to implement the <a href="#">Students' Union (SU) Good Relations Policy</a>  Review the Terms of Reference for the	The SU Good Relations Working Group consists of SU Officers, representatives of various SU societies and University staff. The main remit of the Group is to support the	Annually	Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Quality and Student Experience	Good Relations is promoted across the Student body  Political debate is encouraged through the Ulster University Students' Union (UUSU) political societies and Good Relations Working Group, in line with the Students' Union <a href="#">Framework for Political Expression</a>

	Good Relations Working Group	implementation of the SU Good Relations Policy and action plan and provide a consultative forum for the SU as and when good relations issues arise			
<b>Policy development and review</b>					
	<b>Enabling Action</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>
<b>18.</b>	Enhance our current process for developing policies Review and update the University's Policy Repository Carry out a review of effectiveness of Policy Clinic	The University has committed to review all new and revised policies (in terms of impact on equality of opportunity and good relations) two years following implementation. The Office of the University Secretary maintains a centralised repository of policies	2025	Chief People Officer	Maintain an accurate policy repository
<b>19.</b>	Streamline Trade Union engagement with the screening process and policy development through the joint	The University recognises the importance of thorough and timely consultation during the development of new and revised policies.	Ongoing	Chief People Officer	Trade Union engagement with the screening process and policy development becomes more streamlined



	Trade Unions policy forum	Consultation with the Trade Unions is an integral part of our policy screening process			
<b>Equal opportunities monitoring information</b>					
	<b>Enabling Action</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>
<b>20.</b>	<p>Continue to raise awareness of the importance and requirement to collect equal opportunities (EO) data and the purposes for which it is used</p> <p>Complete an EO data re-monitoring exercise</p>	<p>The University recognises that data collection and analysis is essential to the effective implementation of the Equality Scheme</p> <p>The University has computerised information systems for both staff data and student data that have been utilised for all policy screening. Recent HESA audit feedback indicates that some data are incomplete</p>	<p>June 2025</p> <p>June 2025</p>	Chief People Officer	<p>Improved quality and accuracy of our EO data</p> <p>Insight article to publicise exercise</p> <p>Bi-annual reminders to staff to raise awareness of why we monitor equal opportunities data</p> <p>All staff encouraged to review and update their equal opportunities data using the self-service area</p>
<b>21.</b>	Complete the annual Higher Education Statistical Agency	The University is required to submit specific equality data to the Higher Education Statistical	Annually 26 September	Chief People Officer	<p>Statutory requirements met</p> <p>HESA return submitted on time</p>

	(HESA) return for staff	Agency (HESA) as part of its annual staff record (see action 20)			
<b>22.</b>	Review the use of the welcome statement in recruitment for all grades	Our institutional equal opportunities data demonstrates persistent vertical and horizontal occupational segregation. A tailored approach to using specific welcoming statements may encourage applicants to apply for posts where currently there is under-representation	2025  Ongoing  Ongoing	Chief People Officer	Suite of updated welcoming statements approved by Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, and implemented  Increase the numbers of local BAME applicants to Grade 2-6 posts  Increase the numbers of local Protestant applicants to roles on the Derry~Londonderry campus
<b>23.</b>	Increase the variety of <a href="#">key equality data</a> available internally and on our website	Key equality data is already available on the EDI Unit's website, to inform policy development (and meet the demands of S75). This provides a general overview of the staff and student equality profiles. The provision of more extensive and explicit data will assist staff to identify and mitigate equality gaps through respective annual	Annually (June)	Chief People Officer	Key equality data uploaded to website and disseminated to staff

		planning processes. It will also highlight and increase awareness of equality issues at Ulster			
<b>Awareness raising and training</b>					
	<b>Enabling Action</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>
<b>24.</b>	Update mandatory EDI training for all staff	The mandatory EDI training for staff is due for review and update in 2025. The University is currently updating its Learning Management System to accommodate tailored online training	2025	Chief People Officer	Updated mandatory EDI training implemented and monitored
<b>25.</b>	Support understanding and adherence to the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018	<p>The University uses its website as the primary means of disseminating information.</p> <p>The University is required to comply with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018</p>	2025	Chief People Officer, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Quality and Student Experience, University Provost	<p>Web content monitored continuously and updated to improve accessibility</p> <p>Extensive guidance on 'accessible content' available on UU web pages</p> <p>Training on 'developing accessible content' rolled out to staff</p> <p><b>Adobe Pro</b> supplied to staff as required for example, when issuing all staff and student information.</p> <p>The content of a published document is available in accessible Word format</p>

					Agreed institutional approach for rolling out training and guidance on 'content accessibility'
<b>26.</b>	Implement EDI Toolkit for academics	<p>The EDI in the Curriculum Toolkit was developed by the Learning Enhancement Directorate led Inclusive and Accessible Curriculum and Assessment workstream.</p> <p>The Toolkit was developed to support Ulster staff, and our Further Education partners to reflect at a modular level to further build on their inclusive practices by considering learning design, teaching, and assessment through an EDI lens</p>	2025-2027	Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Quality, University Provost	<p>EDI toolkit pillars introduced and embedded in subject revalidation under quality assurance</p> <p>Community of Practice established in each faculty with action plans developed and implemented</p>
<b>27.</b>	Implement EDI@UU training for students	The development of the EDI@UU programme for students provides a generic and modular training resources for students to acquire knowledge and	2025-2027	Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Quality and Student Experience	<p>Programme embedded within Blackboard to ensure integration into learning platforms</p> <p>Independent access through the online Student Success Centre for flexibility and self-directed learning.</p>

		understanding of key concepts and principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion			Delivered both face-to-face and online, providing multiple engagement opportunities across all campuses  Total of students accessing the programme during induction 4000 per year
28.	Develop a Cultural Competence Framework	<p>The UU Cultural Competence Framework aims to provide staff and students with self-awareness, knowledge, skills and practical considerations of equality and intersectionality in all areas of teaching, learning, research and professional services.</p> <p>An understanding across the University community of the components of cultural competence and how these apply to all equality groups can support trust and communication, promote more effective inclusive practices to prevent disparities or</p>	2025-2027	Chief People Officer	<p>Cultural Competence Framework developed and disseminated across University directorates</p> <p>Introductory sessions of cultural competence delivered to staff and students</p> <p>Agreed institutional approach for rolling out training and guidance based on the Cultural Competence Framework</p>

		discrimination, and will enhance an inclusive working environment			
<b>Delivering our strategic commitment and focus on EDI</b>					
	Enabling Action	Rationale	Timescale	Accountability	Success Measure
<b>29.</b>	Reconstitute the EDI Steering Group	A dedicated and cohesive team is required to galvanise and ensure the delivery of the strategic commitment and focus on EDI and principles outlined within the institutional 'People, Place and Partnership -Delivering Sustainable Futures for All' strategy	Ongoing	Chief People Officer	<p>Terms of reference for Steering Group agreed to reflect the People, Place and Partnership -Delivering Sustainable Futures for All' strategy</p> <p>Steering Group meets three times per annum to advocate and champion the delivery of EDI activities and related practices across the University.</p> <p>Institutional 'People, Place and Partnership -Delivering Sustainable Futures for All' strategy aligns with Equality Scheme requirements</p>
<b>30.</b>	The EDI Steering Group will report to Council and its appropriate sub-committees and the Senior Leadership Team as necessary	An EDI Steering Group provides scrutiny and oversight at senior levels	Ongoing	Chief People Officer	<p>Clear committee reporting line established and followed</p> <p>EDI reports presented to University's Resources and People Committees</p>
<b>Address gender inequalities</b>					

	Enabling Action	Rationale	Timescale	Accountability	Success Measure
31.	Sustain resourcing to ensure the University's ongoing support for gender equality through the Athena Swan framework	<p>The Athena Swan Charter provides a structured and progressive framework for identifying, reviewing and improving the experiences of female staff (in terms of representation, progression and success), whilst considering intersectionality</p> <p>The University has held an Athena Swan institutional Bronze Award since 2013 and a Silver Award since May 2023. The Silver Award specifically recognises significant commitment and progress towards gender equality</p>	Ongoing	Chief People Officer	<p>Ongoing success of achieving Athena Swan awards across the institution</p> <p>All Schools, Faculties and Departments maintain or improve Award received</p>
32.	Implement the Athena Swan Action Plan	The Athena Swan Action plan is an integral part of our Silver Charter Award. The plan sets out to address gender	2023-28	Chief People Officer	Action Plan implemented

		inequalities and embed inclusive cultures in line with the Athena Swan Charter commitments			
<b>33.</b>	Re-apply for Diversity Mark Award	The University has been a member of Diversity Mark since May 2022. In December 2022, Ulster University was awarded Bronze Diversity Mark accreditation in recognition of its commitment to creating an inclusive and diverse workplace, through a series of planned activities (a SMART action plan)	June 2025	Chief People Officer	Diversity Mark SMART Action Plan implemented  Diversity Mark Accreditation renewed
<b>34.</b>	Review the availability of childcare facilities on or near campuses	Ulster University does not currently offer childcare as an on-site service provision to staff or students. We have convened a Childcare Working Group within the University to determine the feasibility and practicability of childcare facilities for	2025 to 2026	Chief People Officer	Review completed and paper submitted to the Senior Leadership Team



		<p>students and staff at Ulster. This Group is overseeing a number of current activities which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• running a staff and student survey this autumn to help scope current internal demand;</li> <li>• exploring options with a number of childcare providers located close to each of our campuses to determine the feasibility of subsidised provision;</li> <li>• considering an in-house provision, although recognising that the current childcare market is beset with some challenges in relation to workforce; and</li> <li>• exploring with other local employers whether any collaborative arrangements could</li> </ul>			
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		be enacted to enable more sustained long-term provision			
<b>35.</b>	Implement Green Dot Campaign	Green Dot is an active bystander training programme for staff and students to creating a safe and supportive environment for all students and staff. The Green Dot Campaign aims to empowers individuals within our community to address unwanted sexual experiences, gender-based violence, domestic abuse and harassment.	2025-2027	Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Quality and Student Experience, Chief People Officer, University Provost	<p>Increased number of staff and student attending the Green Dot training from the current number of 1300 up to 4000 in three years.</p> <p>Increased number of participants (students and staff) attending the Green Dot Train the Trainer programme from the current number of 50 participants to 150 in three years</p>
<b>36.</b>	Develop and implement a Transgender framework of good practice at UU to support Transgender Staff and Students	The Policy on Equality for Transgender Staff and Students was last updated in 2017. However, as current legislation in Northern Ireland continues to be subject to scrutiny due to the need for an updated and fit for purpose legislation, at this point in time the	2025-2027	Chief People Officer, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Quality and Student Experience	<p>Transgender Code of Practice and Guidance Framework developed, agreed and implemented across the institution</p> <p>Transgender and non-binary awareness training delivered for students and staff</p>

		University plans to develop a framework of good practice and guidance to supporting Transgender staff and students and those transitioning			
37.	Identify opportunities for, and support delivery of, development and engagement options for women (such as, Aurora, Wo/men's Network)	<p>Aurora is a unique leadership development programme for women and is delivered over an 8-month period. It combines 4 interlinked development days; two action learning sets; self-directed learning and in-house mentoring.</p> <p>Aurora is higher education's most renowned leadership development initiative for women. Run as a collaboration between Advance HE in conjunction with higher education institutions and advocates - known as Aurora Champions - it addresses the under-representation of women in leadership</p>	Ongoing	Chief People Officer	8 spaces sponsored each year on Aurora. Provide participants with a positive experience of leadership and inspire them to recognise their talent and capabilities and support them to aspire and achieve leadership positions within higher education

		positions. Aurora is a leadership ignition journey, inspiring women to aspire and achieve leadership positions within higher education			
<b>38.</b>	Continue to implement the Returning Carers' Scheme	The Scheme was set up to supporting staff both academic and professional, technical and operational who are carers returning from their leave with opportunities of their choosing that can potentially advance their career prospects	2025-2027	Chief People Officer	Increased by 25% the number of eligible participants of the scheme (currently 44 people awarded in the last 12 months)
<b>39.</b>	Develop Carers' Policy	The development of a Carers' Policy is a fundamental step forward advancing our gender equality commitments	2025-2027	Chief People Officer	<p>Carers' Working Group established and Terms of Reference agreed</p> <p>Carers' Policy developed and implemented</p> <p>Ulster University Carers Network established</p>

<b>Advance race equality</b>					
	<b>Enabling Action</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>
<b>40.</b>	Focus on advancing race relations across the University via Advance HE's Race Equality Charter	<p>Advance HE's Race Equality Charter helps institutions in their work to identify and address the barriers facing Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and students, while also providing a framework for action and improvement</p> <p>The University is committed to advancing Race Equality</p>	<p>2024 – 2025 for initial REC development</p> <p>Race relations work - ongoing</p>	Chief People Officer	Advance HE Race Equality Charter Award(s) achieved
<b>41.</b>	Develop, refine and implement the University's Advance HE Race Equality Charter Action Plan(s)	The development and implementation of the University's Race Equality Charter Action Plan(s) will set out SMART objectives to proactively advance racial and ethnic equality at the	2028	Chief People Officer	Race equality action plan developed, refined and implemented

		<p>organisation for staff and students.</p> <p>The University is committed to advancing Race Equality</p>			
<b>Advance age equality</b>					
	<b>Enabling Action</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>
<b>42.</b>	Sustain resourcing to ensure the University's ongoing support for age equality through gaining the Age-Friendly University Global Network Membership (AFUGN)	<p>The Age-Friendly University Global Network Membership promotes age equality by engaging with the ten principles of the age-friendly university</p> <p>The University is committed to age equality</p>	2025	Chief People Officer	Become a member of the Age-Friendly University Global Network
<b>43.</b>	Develop and implement an Age Equality Action Plan in line with AFUGN membership Implement the actions within the plan	<p>An Age Equality Action plan will set out actions to promote age equality</p> <p>The University is committed to age equality</p>	2025	Chief People Officer	Age Equality Action Plan in place and actions implemented