



Equality Scheme Summary





Introduction

Ulster University's Equality Scheme is a statement of the University's commitment to and proposals for fulfilling statutory obligations in compliance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998). It explains how the University intends to provide services in a way which will promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

General information

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) requires the University, as a designated body, in carrying out all of its functions, powers and duties relating to Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and,
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to these obligations, the University is also required, in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Arrangements for assessing compliance with Section 75 duties

Internal arrangements have been put in place to ensure that the University's commitment will be effectively and demonstrably carried out, and that progress will continue to be monitored and reviewed. Arrangements include:

- integrating targets and objectives relating to statutory duty within the University's corporate plan;
- the University Secretary overseeing and reviewing the implementation of the scheme;
- implementing a revised screening procedure to assess the impact of all the University's policies with regard to equality of opportunity;
- carrying out open and inclusive consultation;
- conducting a transparent annual review of progress;
- completing a comprehensive five-year review of the Scheme; and,
- addressing any complaints which suggest that the University has not fulfilled its statutory duty and seeking to resolve such complaints bilaterally.

Arrangements for screening

The University will systematically identify and screen (review) each new and revised policy in terms of the nine categories within Section 75. In doing so, the following criteria will be considered:

- the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by the policy;
- opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories;
- the extent to which the policy is likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group; and
- opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Relevant information and data will be gathered to facilitate and inform the screening of each policy.

Equality Impact Assessments

If the screening data indicates that the policy is likely to impact on one or more of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, the policy may be considered for an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). An EQIA will examine how the policy impacts on each of the nine categories of people identified in Section 75 and seek ways to promote equality of opportunity and good relations more effectively.

Alternatively, if the likely equality impact is considered likely to be 'minor', measures that might mitigate the policy impact or a different policy will be considered. If screening concludes that the likely equality impact is 'none', the policy will be screened out.

Consultation

When consulting on any matter to which the Scheme relates, the University will employ a variety of consultation techniques to ensure that the most effective consultation is achieved. The University is committed to removing all barriers to consultation and will make available consultation documents in alternative formats or languages upon request.

Monitoring

Following implementation, the policy will be reviewed after two years in terms of its equality impact on the Section 75 equality categories. The results from this monitoring will be published in the University Annual Section 75 Report.

Publication of assessments and monitoring

The University will make available on its website the outcome of any equality impact assessment once the impact assessment has been completed. Screening Reports will also be published regularly on the University's website. EQIA and policy monitoring information will be published within the University's Section 75 Annual Report.

Training

The University has introduced a training and communication programme for all staff to raise awareness of the provisions of Section 75, and to provide staff involved in screening or EQIAs, consultation processes, complaints in relation to compliance with the University's Equality Scheme, and the implementation and monitoring of the Scheme the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

Public access to information and services

The University strives to ensure that its information and services are accessible, and is aware that some groups will not have the same access to information, and where practicable will seek to address this. It has developed an action within its equality action plan to monitor and ensure that equality of opportunity in accessing information is provided.

Equality action plan

The University has developed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy to complement its equality scheme. This includes an EDI action plan, which has been developed and prioritised on the basis of an audit of equality effectiveness and outlines measures designed to address various equality considerations across the University's functional areas. This action plan will be monitored annually and the results of this published within the University's Section 75 Annual Report.

Complaints

The University will carry out an internal investigation of all complaints by persons who believe that they have been directly affected by a failure of the University to comply with its Scheme. The University will undertake to respond within one month of receiving the complaint, informing the complainant of the procedure for pursuing the complaint further with the Equality Commission. Complaints relating to the failure of the University to comply with its Scheme must be submitted to the Equality Commission within twelve months from the date on which the complainant first knew of the matters alleged.

Copies of the Equality Scheme can be made available in alternative formats upon request and are available at ulster.ac.uk/aboutus/governance/equality-diversity/equality-scheme or by contacting:

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