

Equality Scheme Action Plan

Introduction

In line with the commitments set out in its equality scheme, Ulster University has developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. The action plan is 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.

This action plan is available from the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) section. It is also available on our [web page](#).

Equality Scheme Action Plan

Promoting equality of opportunity and good relations - compliance with equality legislation					
	Enabling Action	Rationale	Timescale	Accountability	Success Measure
1.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
2.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
3.	Monitor and review progress of the equality scheme	The University is required to submit a variety of statutory equality reports at	Annually	Damian McAlister 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)			
4.	Undertake 5-year effectiveness review of equality Scheme	The University's current Equality Scheme is due for review in 2028.	2028	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
5.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
6.	Undertake a 5-year review of the University's Disability Action Plan 2022-27	The Disability Action Plan will expire in 2027	2027	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
7.	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	Damian McAlister 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)			
8.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met
9.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met Article 55 Affirmative Action Plan implemented and achieved
10.	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	Damian McAlister 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

11.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	The University's 'Addressing Pay Gaps Strategic Framework Plan 2024-26' is published and actions within are monitored
12.	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)	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Equal Pay Review completed, and recommendations endorsed by Senior Leadership Team
13.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met Facilitate and carry out events and celebrations to support the raising awareness of the 'Good Relations' (S75) duty

	support of Irish language and Ulster-Scots activities on our campuses, under the banner of 'Ulster Tongues'	strong tradition of promoting minority languages and culture, particularly Irish and Ulster-Scots, which aligns with the 'New Decade, New Approach Deal'	Ongoing 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	Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan 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 Students' Union (SU) Good Relations Policy	The SU Good Relations Working Group consists of SU Officers, representatives of various SU societies	Annually	Professor Odette Hutchinson Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Quality and	Good Relations is promoted across the Student body Political debate is encouraged through the Ulster University Students' Union (UUSU) political societies and Good

	Review the Terms of Reference for the Good Relations Working Group	and University staff. The main remit of the Group is to support the 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		Student Experience	Relations Working Group, in line with the Students' Union Framework for Political Expression
Policy development and review					
	Enabling Action	Rationale	Timescale	Accountability	Success Measure
18.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Maintain an accurate policy repository
19.	Streamline Trade Union engagement with the screening process and policy	The University recognises the importance of thorough and timely consultation	Ongoing	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Trade Union engagement with the screening process and policy development becomes more streamlined

	development through the joint Trade Unions policy forum	during the development of new and revised policies. Consultation with the Trade Unions is an integral part of our policy screening process			
Equal opportunities monitoring information					
	Enabling Action	Rationale	Timescale	Accountability	Success Measure
20.	Continue to raise awareness of the importance and requirement to collect equal opportunities (EO) data and the purposes for which it is used Complete an EO data re-monitoring exercise	The University recognises that data collection and analysis is essential to the effective implementation of the Equality Scheme 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	June 2025 June 2025	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Improved quality and accuracy of our EO data Insight article to publicise exercise Bi-annual reminders to staff to raise awareness of why we monitor equal opportunities data All staff encouraged to review and update their equal opportunities data using the self-service area

21.	Complete the annual Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) return for staff	The University is required to submit specific equality data to the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) as part of its annual staff record (see action 20)	Annually 26 September	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Statutory requirements met HESA return submitted on time
22.	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	Damian McAlister 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
23.	Increase the variety of key equality data 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	Annually (June)	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Key equality data uploaded to website and disseminated to staff

		extensive and explicit data will assist staff to identify and mitigate equality gaps through respective annual planning processes. It will also highlight and increase awareness of equality issues at Ulster			
Awareness raising and training					
	Enabling Action	Rationale	Timescale	Accountability	Success Measure
24.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Updated mandatory EDI training implemented and monitored
25.	Support understanding and adherence to the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018	The University uses its website as the primary means of disseminating information. The University is required to comply with	2025	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer Professor Odette Hutchinson Pro-Vice Chancellor for Academic Quality	Web content monitored continuously and updated to improve accessibility Extensive guidance on 'accessible content' 'accessibility standards', and 'accessibility' available on UU web pages. Training on 'developing accessible content' rolled out to staff

		the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018		and Student Experience Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan University Provost	Adobe Pro supplied to staff as required for example, when issuing all staff and student information. The content of a published document is available in accessible Word format Agreed institutional approach for rolling out training and guidance on 'content accessibility'
26.	Implement EDI Toolkit for academics	The EDI in the Curriculum Toolkit was developed by the Learning Enhancement Directorate led Inclusive and Accessible Curriculum and Assessment workstream. 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	2025-2027	Professor Odette Hutchinson Pro-Vice Chancellor for Academic Quality and Student Experience Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan University Provost	EDI toolkit pillars introduced and embedded in subject revalidation under quality assurance Community of Practice established in each faculty with action plans developed and implemented

27.	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 understanding of key concepts and principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	2025-2027	Professor Odette Hutchinson Pro-Vice Chancellor for Academic Quality and Student Experience	Programme embedded within Blackboard to ensure integration into learning platforms Independent access through the online Student Success Centre for flexibility and self-directed learning. 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	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. An understanding across the University community of the components of cultural competence and how	2025-2027	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Cultural Competence Framework developed and disseminated across University directorates Introductory sessions of cultural competence delivered to staff and students Agreed institutional approach for rolling out training and guidance based on the Cultural Competence Framework

		these apply to all equality groups can support trust and communication, promote more effective inclusive practices to prevent disparities or discrimination, and will enhance an inclusive working environment			
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Delivering our strategic commitment and focus on EDI

	Enabling Action	Rationale	Timescale	Accountability	Success Measure
29.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Terms of reference for Steering Group agreed to reflect the People, Place and Partnership -Delivering Sustainable Futures for All' strategy Steering Group meets three times per annum to advocate and champion the delivery of EDI activities and related practices across the University. Institutional 'People, Place and Partnership -Delivering Sustainable Futures for All' strategy aligns with Equality Scheme requirements
30.	The EDI Steering Group will report to Council and its appropriate sub-committees and the	An EDI Steering Group provides scrutiny and oversight at senior levels	Ongoing	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Clear committee reporting line established and followed

	Senior Leadership Team as necessary				EDI reports presented to University's Resources and People Committees
Address gender inequalities					
	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	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 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	Ongoing	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Ongoing success of achieving Athena Swan awards across the institution All Schools, Faculties and Departments maintain or improve Award received

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 inequalities and embed inclusive cultures in line with the Athena Swan Charter commitments	2023-28	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Action Plan implemented
33.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Diversity Mark SMART Action Plan implemented Diversity Mark Accreditation renewed
34.	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	2025 to 2026	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Review completed and paper submitted to the Senior Leadership Team

		Childcare Working Group within the University to determine the feasibility and practicability of childcare facilities for students and staff at Ulster. This Group is overseeing a number of current activities which include: • running a staff and student survey this autumn to help scope current internal demand; • exploring options with a number of childcare providers located close to each of our campuses to determine the feasibility of subsidised provision; • considering an in-house provision, although recognising that the current childcare market is beset with some challenges in			
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		relation to workforce; and • exploring with other local employers whether any collaborative arrangements could be enacted to enable more sustained long-term provision			
35.	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	Professor Odette Hutchinson Pro-Vice Chancellor for Academic Quality and Student Experience Damian McAlister Chief People Officer Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan University Provost	Increased number of staff and student attending the Green Dot training from the current number of 1300 up to 4000 in three years. 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
36.	Develop and implement a Transgender framework of good	The Policy on Equality for Transgender Staff and Students was last updated in 2017.	2025-2027	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Transgender Code of Practice and Guidance Framework developed, agreed and implemented across the institution

	practice at UU to support Transgender Staff and Students	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 University plans to develop a framework of good practice and guidance to supporting Transgender staff and students and those transitioning		Professor Odette Hutchinson Pro-Vice Chancellor for Academic Quality and Student Experience	Transgender and non-binary awareness training delivered for students and staff
37.	Identify opportunities for, and support delivery of, development and engagement options for women (such as, Aurora, Wo/men's Network)	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. Aurora is higher education's most renowned leadership development initiative for women. Run as a collaboration between Advance HE in	Ongoing	Damian McAlister 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

		conjunction with higher education institutions and advocates - known as Aurora Champions - it addresses the under-representation of women in leadership positions. Aurora is a leadership ignition journey, inspiring women to aspire and achieve leadership positions within higher education			
38.	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	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Increased by 25% the number of eligible participants of the scheme (currently 44 people awarded in the last 12 months)
39.	Develop Carers' Policy	The development of a Carers' Policy is a fundamental step forward advancing our	2025-2027	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Carers' Working Group established and Terms of Reference agreed

		gender equality commitments			Carers' Policy developed and implemented Ulster University Carers Network established
Advance race equality					
	Enabling Action	Rationale	Timescale	Accountability	Success Measure
40.	Focus on advancing race relations across the University via Advance HE's Race Equality Charter	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 The University is committed to advancing Race Equality	2024 – 2025 for initial REC development Race relations work - ongoing	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Advance HE Race Equality Charter Award(s) achieved

41.	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 organisation for staff and students. The University is committed to advancing Race Equality	2028	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Race equality action plan developed, refined and implemented
Advance age equality					
	Enabling Action	Rationale	Timescale	Accountability	Success Measure
42.	Sustain resourcing to ensure the University's ongoing support for age equality through gaining the Age-Friendly University Global Network Membership (AFUGN)	The Age-Friendly University Global Network Membership promotes age equality by engaging with the ten principles of the age-friendly university The University is committed to age equality	2025	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Become a member of the Age-Friendly University Global Network

43.	Develop and implement an Age Equality Action Plan in line with AFUGN membership Implement the actions within the plan	An Age Equality Action plan will set out actions to promote age equality The University is committed to age equality	2025	Damian McAlister Chief People Officer	Age Equality Action Plan in place and actions implemented
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