



The Open
University

Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Open University Equality Scheme 2022-2026

Through the power of learning we aim to transform lives and communities, opening a world of possibilities for everyone.

Greater diversity at all levels, and inclusion in every aspect of how we work and what we achieve.

Published September 2022



The scheme, or sections of it, can be requested in plain text, in large print, in Braille, comb-bound or audio format. If you would like to request the scheme in a different format to meet your needs, please contact the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team.

It is intended that the scheme, including the appendices will be reviewed and updated after 4 years. Information that will be reviewed and updated more frequently is published in separate Appendices. Appendix 1 and 2, the equality objectives, are particularly important to the effective implementation of this equality scheme.

The following abbreviations are often used throughout this document:

- 'The OU' is for 'The Open University'
- 'KPIs' is for 'Key Performance Indicators'

The following definitions are considered in this document: -

- Equality- is the principle that all people should be protected from discrimination and unlawful behaviour. This is not about treating all people the same. In fact, the law acknowledges that positive actions are required in to order to promote fair outcomes for different needs.
- Equity- is the principle of creating fair access, opportunity, and advancement for all people who are protected by law due to evidence showing significant discrimination in employment and access to services such as education. Equity is often described as the action of creating a level playing field.
- Justice- is the principle of a proper application of the law in relation to a fair and equitable treatment of all individuals under the law.

Further information about equality and diversity at The Open University is available on our website at <http://open.ac.uk/equality-diversity>.

Comments or questions about this equality scheme should be sent for the attention of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Senior Manager.

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Foreword

The Open University is open to people, places, methods, and ideas. We promote educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential.

The Open University is innovative, responsive, and inclusive. We deliver world-class, flexible education to people across the four nations of the UK and worldwide. We make a significant contribution to employability and productivity, strengthening the UK economy.

Since 1969, we have promoted educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality education to all those who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. More than 2 million people have experienced this life-changing learning through their study with us. We are committed to developing an inclusive university community and contributing to an inclusive and just society. This commitment is expressed in the vision and principles set out in this scheme.

Discrimination arising from individual characteristics and circumstances is not only unlawful, but a waste of talent and a denial of opportunity, preventing individuals, organisations, and societies from achieving their growth potential.

Our mission is to be open to people, places, methods and ideas and this means that a commitment to equality is embedded in all that we do. We celebrate diversity and the strengths that it brings, we challenge under-representation and differences in outcomes, and we commit resources to specific positive action programmes.

As a public body, we also have several statutory duties. The Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires us to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations between groups of people.



Professor Marcia Wilson
Dean of Equality, Diversity and
Inclusion



Professor Tim Blackman
Vice-Chancellor

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires us to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations across a range of characteristics.

We will commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that we comply with our statutory duties and that our equality scheme is implemented effectively, and on time.

We commit to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our compliance with the statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress. We will develop and deliver a programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff and governors are made fully aware of our equality scheme and understand the commitments and obligations within it.

We, the Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the Vice-Chancellor of The Open University, are fully committed to ensuring that the University fulfils its statutory equality duties effectively across all functions, including education and related services, employment, partnerships and procurement. Furthermore, we realise the important role that our students and the public have to play to ensure our statutory duties are effectively implemented. Our equality scheme demonstrates how determined we are to ensure there is active engagement, so that people affected by our work can influence and shape our organisation.

On behalf of The Open University and our staff we are pleased to support and endorse this equality scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, and Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and guidelines provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

We expect commitment and involvement from all our staff, students, partners and providers of goods and services in ensuring compliance with our statutory duties and working towards the achievement of our equality vision and objectives.

Marcia Wilson,
Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Tim Blackman,
Vice Chancellor



The Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

People with caring responsibilities are also protected from discrimination by virtue of their association with people with protected characteristics.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires The Open University, in carrying out our functions 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
- Men and women generally
- Persons with a disability and persons without
- Persons with dependants and persons without

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland, we must have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

1. Our vision, principles, scheme aims and responsibilities

1.1. Our vision for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the OU

Our vision is to have a fair and inclusive organisational culture that effectively achieves the 'Learn and Live' strategy based on consistently ambitious standards and our EDI values. The OU will be sector leading for equitable and inclusive practice and policy. Our staff will be diverse by way of lived experience, thought and knowledge at all levels of the institution. Our students will have an equitable journey that will enable the university experience to be a transformative one enabling all to flourish and reach their potential.

We will seek to nurture a sense of belonging for those we employ and encourage an environment where people feel comfortable and confident being themselves, free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010. We want everyone coming into contact with us, off and online and regardless of reason to be treated with dignity and respect and to experience our stated commitment to our EDI values and regard bullying, harassment or discrimination as unacceptable behaviour. We want alignment between what we say and what we do. We will work energetically towards this vision through a mainstreaming approach, by embedding EDI into our plans, policies, processes, and behaviours. We will achieve our vision through strong senior leadership and ownership of this Vision, and accountability for it at all levels.

1.2. Our equality and diversity principles

1) Commitment to an evidence-led process.

The process of change must be evidence-led by reliable and accurate data and implementing effective interventions by design that generate the desired outcomes. We will regularly monitor and evaluate progress against our institutional KPIs.

2) Communication to staff and students

We will keep lines of communication open and in all directions. We will listen to understand and value the importance of lived experience of diverse groups of people.

3) Accountability for our actions

We will ensure that objectives are clear, consistent, and achievable. Accountability for specific objectives will be embedded in our professional practice.

1.3. Scheme aims

The aims of our equality scheme are aligned to the Public Sector Equality Duty in Great Britain and the Section 75 duty in Northern Ireland. (Please see the foreword for a description of the duties as they apply to The Open University. Also, see Appendix 3, The Equality Act 2010, for a summary of equality law.)

1) To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation involves:

- Ensuring people are not treated less favourably because of a personal characteristic (see page 7)
- Ensuring no factors give rise to discrimination

2) To promote and advance equality of opportunity.

Promoting and advancing equality of opportunity involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantage suffered by people
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people that are different to the needs of other people
- Encouraging people to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low

3) To promote and foster good relations between people.

Promoting and fostering good relations involves:

- Tackling prejudice
- Promoting understanding between people

4) To align strategies within the University.

Aligning strategies involves:

- Adopting The Open University's strategy 'Equity pillar' aims
- Adopting the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan priorities
- Setting the KPIs for students in alignment with the Access, Participation and Success Plan
- Setting the KPIs for staff in alignment with the People Services Plan

1.4. Responsibilities

Everyone who is part of our University community has responsibilities under this equality scheme. Responsibilities for different groups of people are set out below.

Section 3.2 of this scheme provides information about the equality and diversity learning and development programme that supports staff in meeting these responsibilities.

As a student

- Treat all members of our University community with dignity and respect for their rights and beliefs
- Challenge or report incidents of discrimination and bullying
- Respond positively and inclusively to individual differences

As a staff member, consultant or agent

- Treat all members of our University community with dignity and respect for their rights and beliefs
- Challenge or report incidents of discrimination and bullying
- Respond positively and inclusively to individual differences
- Anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances of members of our University community
- Apply equality and diversity principles through everyday activities
- Keep knowledge of University equality and diversity policy up to date
- Undertake the Online Equality Training on joining the University and revisit once every 24 months, thereafter (employees only)

As a member of academic staff in teaching or research

- Treat all members of our University community with dignity and respect for their rights and beliefs
- Challenge or report incidents of discrimination and bullying
- Respond positively and inclusively to individual differences
- Anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances of members of our University community
- Apply equality and diversity principles through everyday activities
- Keep knowledge of University equality and diversity policy up to date
- Undertake the Online Equality Training on joining the University and thereafter as required (employees only)

- Develop materials and student support systems with the audience in mind, recognising the full diversity of the student body and post graduate students. This includes materials that are anti-racist, anti-discriminatory and accessible.
- Ensure that your research activity adheres to equality and diversity principles and ethical research standards
- Ensure that *equality analysis* is carried out for all new research and new stakeholder activity in accordance with the University's arrangements

As a line manager or manager of consultants or agents

- Treat all members of our University community with dignity and respect for their rights and beliefs
- Challenge or report incidents of discrimination and bullying
- Respond positively and inclusively to individual differences
- Anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances of members of our University community
- Apply equality and diversity principles through everyday activities
- Keep knowledge of University equality and diversity policy up to date
- Undertake the Online Equality Training on joining the University and thereafter as required (employees only)
- Develop materials with your audience in mind, recognising the full diversity of the student body
- Ensure that your research activity adheres to equality and diversity principles and ethical research standards
- Ensure that equality analysis is carried out for all new research activity in accordance with the University's arrangements
- Ensure the University's equality vision and scheme are communicated to potential employees and new staff through the recruitment and induction processes
- Disseminate accessible information to ensure employees, consultants and agents are aware of their responsibilities
- Identify and respond to equality and diversity staff development needs
- Support individual needs and circumstances of staff so they can perform effectively
- Set appropriate equality related objectives for your staff

As a Head of Unit

- Treat all members of our University community with dignity and respect for their rights and beliefs
- Challenge or report incidents of discrimination and bullying
- Respond positively and inclusively to individual differences
- Anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances of members of our University community
- Apply equality and diversity principles through everyday activities
- Keep knowledge of University equality and diversity policy up to date
- Undertake the Online Equality Training on joining the University and thereafter as required (employees only)
- Develop materials with your audience in mind, recognising the full diversity of the student body
- Ensure that your research activity adheres to equality and diversity principles and ethical research standards
- Ensure that equality analysis is carried out for all new research activity in accordance with the University's arrangements.
- Ensure the University's equality vision and scheme are communicated to potential employees and new staff through the recruitment and induction processes
- Disseminate accessible information to ensure employees, consultants and agents are aware of their responsibilities
- Identify and respond to equality and diversity staff development needs
- Support individual needs and circumstances of staff so they can perform effectively
- Set appropriate equality related objectives for your staff
- Where relevant, include equality and diversity development actions in the unit's business plan. Ensure that *equality analysis* is carried out for changes to strategy, policy, procedure, and practice
- Assess and report progress against agreed equality action plans

As a VCE member

- Champion, sponsor and promote Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

2. Context of our scheme

2.1 Equality Scheme 2022-2026

Approved by Council on July 2022, the scheme conveys a clear direction for the coming four years and sets out how we will build on more than fifty years of success to reach more students with life-changing learning. It confirms our commitment to do what we do best - promote educational opportunity and social justice, improve lives and enrich communities across the four nations of the UK, Ireland and around the world.

2.2 About the OU

The OU in facts and figures

- Since the OU's launch in 1969, almost 2.2 million people worldwide have achieved their learning goals by studying with us.
- The OU is the biggest university in the UK with 205,420 Students in 2020/2021.
- We are the largest provider of higher education for disabled people - over 36,400 studied with us in 20/21
- Around 1202 OU students studied in prison or a secure unit in 2020/2021.
- Around 11% of our UK students are from ethnic minorities.
- The ratio of undergraduate students recorded as male and female in OU systems is 37:63 (M:F) and for postgraduate students is 45:55 (M:F). We acknowledge that our systems do not currently allow for the recording of non-binary genders.
- We have students taking OU modules alongside A levels, and we have students in their 90s - the average age is 28 for undergraduate students and more than 23% of students are aged 24 or under.

OU mission, vision, and core values

Through the power of learning we aim to transform lives and communities, opening a world of possibilities for everyone.

OUR MISSION: Open to people, places, methods and ideas.

OUR VISION: Life-changing learning that enriches society.

THE VALUES WE LIVE: Inclusive, innovative, responsive.

Open entry

We have no minimum entry requirements for admission to most undergraduate qualifications. We teach primarily at a distance through a system of supported open learning, which includes the provision of high-quality print and multimedia teaching materials, together with personalised tuition, learning feedback and support. Personalised tuition takes the form of online and face-to-face tutorials, online forums, telephone and email tuition, and residential and day schools, depending on the module and qualification being studied.

Informal Learning

OpenLearn is the home of free learning from the OU, a trailblazer for the provision of high quality open educational resources at scale and breadth and accessible by all. This supports informal learners and OU students alike and gives people opportunities to study that they would not otherwise have had. Since its launch in 2006, OpenLearn has become an integrated part of The Open University, with the site attracting over 100 million visitors. Many of these visitors go on to make an enquiry about becoming a formal student, strengthening the journey between informal and formal learning.

Four nations of the UK and internationally

The Open University is the only UK-wide University with centres in all four nations of the UK: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Through economies of scale, we can deliver a breadth of programmes and curriculum to each of the four nations. Higher education is increasingly distinctive and devolved – what is required in one country may not be appropriate in another. Our curriculum, learning and teaching and research strategies, and our student support services must be increasingly mindful of different needs, and we must continue to guard against Anglo-centric policy and decision-making. Particular attention is given to meeting the

principle in our Welsh Language Standards, to treat the English and Welsh languages based on equality in the conduct of all our public business in Wales.

2.3 The University Strategy

The OU's Strategy 'Learn and Live' for 2022-2027 is available online and a Welsh language version is also available. Our strategic approach is to offer learning, which is accessible, flexible, high quality, engaging and relevant. We need to work on dismantling barriers our students and potential students face, whether discrimination, wrong turns, disability or hardship. We want to partner with organisations that share our mission and values and make the case to governments and employers for policies and funding that help achieve this mission.

To ensure every student achieves the success that they work for, we will build on our outstanding quality of course design, teaching and support to students. Our scholarship will be critical to helping students learn with ever better methods and technologies, and our research will take our students, research users and the wider public to the frontiers of human knowledge in the search to resolve some of our greatest societal challenges.



The strategy is built on five goals and seven enablers, showing how we will achieve our mission over the next five years.

Our five goals

- 1) **Greater reach**, offering unrivalled choice, quality and flexibility to more people from all parts of society through a range of channels and learning opportunities, with the University's core offer of qualifications and accredited learning at its centre.
- 2) **Success for our students**, supporting them to achieve their goals, wherever and wherever they are, with outcomes that are equitable and open up new opportunities in life and work.
- 3) **Societal impact**, locally and globally through research, enterprise and skills development that shape the future.
- 4) **Equity**, greater diversity at all levels, and inclusion in every aspect of how we work and what we achieve.
- 5) Environmental and social **sustainability**.

The seven enablers to reach our goals

- 1) **Living our values**, being inclusive, innovative, and responsive in all we do.
- 2) **Supporting each other** to do our best work.
- 3) **Continuously improving** how we work and manage change.
- 4) **Employing secure and effective technologies** with the best possible user experience.
- 5) **Using data and evidence** in all our decision-making.
- 6) **Building on our uniqueness** as a university for England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.
- 7) **Stewarding our finances** so that we can invest in our goals.

3. Arrangements for managing and embedding equality

3.1 Leadership and governance

Leadership and Governance at the OU is comprised of the Council and its Committees, the Vice Chancellor's Executive, Senate and all line managers. Strong, visible equality, diversity and inclusion leadership is an essential component of this equality scheme. Leaders have the power to ensure an unwavering commitment to the EDI agenda across the institution. This means that leaders can create a climate where staff and students have an equitable experience. They have the authority to drive diversity initiatives and create an inclusive institution.

It is the aim of the OU to have a leadership team that is diverse across protected characteristics because this will provide opportunity for a greater ability to relate to all of the OU community.

EDI Structure across the OU

The EDI Committee is part of the University governance structure and has delegated authority from Senate. EDI representation across the OU should be established in all four faculties, all schools, and professional services units. There should be a named EDI representative in each of the areas who is responsible for driving the EDI agenda in their unit and working with the management team so that communication flows in all directions. There will be flexibility within each Faculty for organising EDI representation. However, each Faculty must have an EDI representative who will be a member of the University EDI committee and hold accountability along with Faculty management for advancing the OU's KPIs within their remit.

Each of the nations will have an EDI representative that is appointed by the Nation Director and that individual will attend the Nation Senior Management team meetings. The representative will also ensure that EDI is a standing item on the meeting agenda. Each of the representatives will also be members of the University EDI Committee.

Areas of inequality managed through the annual unit business planning cycle

Unit business planning is the framework and process through which the University's Learn and Live strategy, and any underpinning institutional plans and strategies, are translated into activities, objectives, and targets at unit level. It is a continuous and on-going process. Unit business plans play a key role in the delivery of the Equality Scheme and EDI Plan. Through the planning process, units should consider:

- When and why an Equality Impact Assessment may be required.
- Evidence-based approaches to areas of inequality at unit level and any positive action as appropriate.
- Institutional equality KPIs and how these objectives cascade to unit level.
- EDI plan and Access, Participation and Success (APS) strategy priorities and how the unit can contribute to these.

Allyship programme

The Allyship programme is a community of practice where people will learn how to effectively use their privilege to advocate for others, especially those that experience discrimination and daily micro aggressive incivilities.

The Allyship programme will be open to all staff and students. Open conversations focusing on the fundamentals of allyship will be established with workshops addressing various areas such as concrete actions on how to be an upstander and using allyship language.

3.2 Staff learning and development

As an educational institution, the OU has a strong commitment to providing learning and development opportunities for staff to enable them to be effective in their roles and to fulfil their potential.

Everyone working at the OU needs to take responsibility for their own education about equality and diversity matters. Staff working directly with students need to be able to respond to a wide range of needs and circumstances. Staff who develop learning materials need to know how to create inclusive and accessible resources. Managers need to know how to manage a diverse workforce effectively. Some staff need more specialist equality knowledge, such as those involved in advising others.

All staff need to understand their responsibilities and accountabilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (Great Britain) and the Section 75 duty (Northern Ireland). Our core equality training for all staff provides full details of institutional and individual responsibility. It introduces staff to equality and diversity at the Open University and promotes the impact and benefits that can be achieved from positive and fair behaviours.

Courses are available on My Learning Centre.

Accessible information and services

We are committed to ensuring that our services are fully accessible to everyone who is eligible or has a legitimate interest in accessing them. For disabled students or students with health conditions that affect their ability to study, to attend residential school, or to take examinations, we have our own access centre to assess student needs. (For further information, see the Services for Disabled Services website at: <http://www.open.ac.uk/disability/>)

We provide a wide range of alternative formats, services, and reasonable adjustments for our disabled staff to enable individuals to perform effectively in their roles.

Using computers and the internet to enhance study is an essential part of learning at higher education level. Students need regular and reliable access to a computer and the internet to take full advantage of our online services, including module learning materials, forums, and the library.

The OU's student Accessibility Policy sets out our commitment to supporting all our students in ways that effectively meet their needs and aligns with the Student Charter and the OU's overall strategies.

3.3 Equality impact assessments

Equality impact assessment (EIA) is the method used by the OU to meet our legal duty to give due regard to equality when developing or revising any strategy, policy, project, procedure, or practice that may have an impact on people. This includes screening of policies. EIA is a way of considering different needs and circumstances that may result in unintended consequences. The requirement for an EIA should be assessed on a continual basis, ensuring its potential need is considered as part of

ongoing business planning. Equality assessments help us to make better quality decisions and reduce cost by not having to revisit policy that is not fit for purpose.

The aims of equality impact assessment are to identify potential discrimination and remove or reduce this as far as possible; and to consider how policy might support the promotion and advancement of equality of opportunity.

For all the characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, the analysis will show whether the impact is major or minor, or whether there is no impact. It will also give details of any measures that would be taken to mitigate any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity. In 2022, a refreshed guidance has been introduced to offer a template to support staff in carrying out equality assessments. This includes: -

- Examples of adverse impacts and mitigating actions.
- Example EIAs published on the EDI Intranet site.
- Two-hour training session that will be available on My Learning Centre. Staff will be able to self-enrol for a training date that is convenient for them.

3.4 Monitoring and reporting

We will annually monitor progress against the Key Performance Indicators agreed for the objectives in the equality scheme. We will analyse a wide range of equality monitoring data and act on it, revising our objectives where appropriate.

The characteristics protected by the Public Sector Equality Duty in Great Britain and the Section 75 duty in Northern Ireland are included in the scope of our monitoring strategy (except for political opinions). Ethnicity data should be presented and analysed in 3 main groups: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups.

Equally, when possible, it is important to consider intersectional data when monitoring and reporting access and progression. This is required to truly grasp how accumulative identities (historically subject to prejudice) can experience barriers more harshly. In these cases, positive action must be considered as a key enabler. Only removing barriers tend to be insufficient to promote a level playing field.

The information below sets out the indicators we monitor every year (except for equal pay reviews which happen bi-annually). All monitoring should be presented using the classifications of the protected characteristics.

A paper-based monitoring of community background for our staff in Northern Ireland.

Students

The Data and Student Analytics (DSA) team and the Access and Participation Strategy (APS) team are responsible for providing and analysing the data. The EDI committee, EDI team and PVC (students) have specific responsibilities for actioning the data. Data will be collected and analysed based on the APS data framework and scope for calculation.

- Undergraduate and postgraduate students: participation, completion, academic attainment and withdrawal
- Students' complaints and appeals
- Student survey data

Staff and governing bodies

People Services and the EDI team have specific remits for providing and analysing the data. The EDI committee and EDI team are responsible for taking evidence-based action in collaboration with People Services. The OU recognises that recruitment data is critical to identifying barriers to employment and career progression for underrepresented groups and therefore is committed to improve our Professional Services system to enable further recruitment monitoring (i.e., application and screening stages). A new system is now under review and an updated status will be given as part of this scheme's annual review. Northern Ireland will continue to monitor recruitment manually.

With our current systems we can focus on:

- Proportion of shortlisted and appointed candidates
- Workforce composition
 - All permanent staff
 - All associate lecturers
 - Senate and Council governing bodies
 - Committees
 - Senior leaders (SS and PB grades)
- Promotion (vertical move within grades)
- Leavers

- Pay gap (gender and ethnicity). We acknowledge that our systems do not currently allow for the recording of non-binary genders and consideration at unit level must be taken to ensure that trans colleagues are not marginalised.
- Equal Pay Review- declared disabilities, gender, ethnicity and age (bi-annually)

3.5 Publishing

As a public authority, the OU is required to publish information about its employees and other persons affected by its policies. All information is published on our website <http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity>.

We publish our equality scheme; our institutional equality objectives, plans and reports; and a significant range of data on our employees, students, and governance bodies annually.

It is our intention to continue to publish the following:

- Our current equality scheme and institutional equality objectives (available in a variety of formats within 10 days of receiving a request)
- Our Welsh language standards
- Our gender and ethnicity pay gap reports for staff (annually)
- An annual report showing progress against our institutional equality objectives for staff and students (annually)
- Public equality monitoring reports (annually)
- Public sector equality duties in respective nations (annually)
- Report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (annually)

3.6 Charters

The University has been aiming towards attaining equality charter awards. Our participation in these awards places the OU in good stead to demonstrate its ability to be held to external scrutiny in relation to equality, diversity, and inclusion. Committing to plans of action for treating existing gaps/unequal representation is a part of the Charter process, which is expected to change culture and attitudes across the OU.

We have identified the following areas of focus:

Athena SWAN: The Open University has been a member of the Athena SWAN Charter since 2012 and received its first institutional Bronze award in 2013. Since then, the charter has been expanded from an initial remit to advance the careers of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics to cover Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences as well as gender equality more broadly, looking at where men are underrepresented and asking institutions to detail their support for trans and non-binary people. To drive our mission for all departments to have applied for awards by November 2023, we have launched an Athena SWAN SharePoint site, developed a comprehensive data pack and run data analysis workshops.

Race Equality Charter: We are in the process of developing an action plan for a submission in 2024. The OU has an active and thriving Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff network as well as a Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic Ally Group.

University of Sanctuary: The OU will be applying for the University of Sanctuary status. This is an award conferred by Cities of Sanctuary UK. This network of over 90 cities and a growing number of universities, colleges, schools and museums share the vision that our nations and institutions will be welcoming places of safety, offering sanctuary for those forced to flee persecution and violence. The award is granted to institutions which take measures to put this vision into practice and provide resources to enable best practice in meeting the needs of forced migrants.

Disability Confident: In 2020, the OU achieved Disability Confident Level 1 status as a Disability 'Committed' employer. Prior to obtaining the Disability Confident award, the University was a member of the Business Disability Forum and held a Disability Standard award. The OU has an active network for disabled staff, called Enabling Staff@OU, and another network for Neurodiverse staff.

Stonewall: The OU has two active LGBTQIA+ staff networks, one covering all LGBTQIA+ identities, and the other for transgender and non-binary staff. LGBTQIA+ events and initiatives, such as Pride and LGBTQIA+ History Month are marked at the OU by the networks, Marketing and Communications, and the EDI team through internal and external channels. We are also members of Stonewall's UK Diversity Champions Programme.

3.7 Staff networks

Working collaboratively Staff Networks bring people together and help to build a more inclusive organisational culture which enables us to deliver on our mission. Our staff networks provide an invaluable service to its members and the wider OU community by creating safe spaces for staff to raise awareness of issues faced and effect change. Staff Networks help to create a strong sense of connection and belonging in the workplace.

Our OU staff networks include the following:

BME Staff Network

The BME network was formed with the purpose of providing networking opportunities for all Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff, and promoting peer support, confidence building and greater inclusivity.

Care and Caring Network @ OU

The Care and Caring Network@OU focuses on knowledge exchange around care and caring; the promotion of carers' rights within the OU; and advice and guidance in carer-related development.

Enabling Staff @ OU

The EnablingStaff@OU Network promotes the integration of disabled staff in the workforce, by supporting both disabled staff and their colleagues.

International Communities Support Network

The International Communities Support Network is a staff diversity network for migrants at the OU, which is open to all EU nationals, non-UK nationals and UK nationals. It aims to support staff and students who may feel vulnerable in view of the results of the EU Referendum, and to lobby and defend the rights of those affected.

Proud

The Proud staff network aims to respond to social needs and give voice to LGBTQIA+ staff and post graduate students, enabling issues of concern or interest to be shared and raised.

Women @ OU

Women@OU is an all-inclusive group that works to promote gender equality and raise the profile of women at The Open University.

Neurodiversity

The Neurodiversity Network aims to provide a safe space to support all members with different neurological conditions across the four nations.

Trans Staff Network

The Trans Staff network aims to provide a safe space for self-identifying trans and gender-diverse colleagues to build community and share experiences.

OU Staff can find out more information about these networks on the staff EDI intranet page.

4. Discrimination and complaints

4.1 Dealing with discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation

We will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment. Examples include unwanted physical contact, personal insults or name-calling, sexual innuendo, coercion, constant unfounded criticism, unwanted intrusion, persistent patronising or exclusion, and derogatory comments. This is not an exhaustive list and further examples are included in the two bullying and harassment codes of practice, one for students and the other for staff. These provide guidance on dealing with bullying and harassment, and information on the informal and formal options available to staff and students to tackle occurrences. Staff and students are encouraged to address issues immediately so that these can be resolved informally wherever possible and are not allowed to escalate.

Discrimination, harassment, or victimisation, whether direct, indirect, by association or perception, (see Appendix 4 for definitions) based on any of the individual characteristics or circumstances covered by this equality scheme are included within the scope of the bullying and harassment codes. All staff and students have a right to raise a concern in relation to decisions that they believe have been made based on their individual characteristics and which result in negative consequences or differential treatment. We will give added weight to the seriousness of such cases. Malicious allegations made under the bullying and harassment codes will be treated as serious disciplinary offences. The dignity and respect policy for students and the bullying and harassment policy for staff advise who should be contacted to report any accusations of discrimination or unfair treatment.

For staff, the Employee Assistance Programme is a support and counselling service that covers a wide range of issues, including responding effectively to bullying and harassment. Serious cases can be raised through the grievance or disciplinary procedures and, where proven, may be treated as acts of gross misconduct, which could lead to dismissal. Serious student cases are dealt with under the Code of Practice for Student Discipline and, where proven, could result in temporary or permanent exclusion from the University.

4.2 Complaints

We welcome any questions, feedback, or complaints you may have regarding our equality scheme. These should be addressed to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

(EDI) Senior Manager. Contact details are provided on the inside front cover of this document; we would recommend that these are presented in writing.

Complaints in relation to the provision of a programme of study or related to academic or administrative services or appeals in relation to a decision taken by an individual or academic body charged with making decisions on students' progression, assessment and awards should not be sent to the Equality and Diversity Team.

You can make a complaint if you believe that you have been directly affected by our alleged failure to comply with our equality scheme or if you believe we have discriminated unlawfully against you. All complains should be made in writing and brought to the attention of the Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Appendix 1 Institutional equality objectives

Student KPIs

The student KPIs are set in alignment with the Access and Participation Strategy (APS) targets for 2024/2025, therefore: -

- Metrics and targets could be different in the next APS strategy; therefore, this Scheme will need updating in 2024/25 – for example we may have a metric around a different student characteristic.
- Metrics are based upon different student groups, i.e., new students, outcome of registered students and graduates.
- Data sources are taken from Office for Students dashboards or from the results of the graduate outcomes survey.

These institutional targets were identified from past performance in the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey (DLHE) which has since been replaced with the Graduate Outcomes survey. We anticipate that these targets will be revised once there is sufficient data from the Graduate outcomes survey.

These targets have also been set based on the needs across most units at the OU, strategic priorities set by the EDI plan and the OU strategy. However, each business unit is expected to undertake local evaluation of their specific needs and set their own targets as well as cascading the institutional objectives. This includes target for post-graduates and the institutional targets focuses on undergraduates only.

Ethnicity and disability have been prioritised. Other protected characteristics will be addressed at unit level and via the charter unit plans. In year 3 of this scheme (2024/2025), the new APS targets for 2025/2026 will be added to this scheme and published accordingly.

Student KPIs	Base calculation (as at 31st March 2022-2020/2021 performance)	Targets (2024/2025 academic year)
Ethnicity targets		
Increase the proportion of Black students registered with the University	3.1%	5.80%
Increase the proportion of Asian students registered with the University	3.6%	6.10%
Reduce the gap in the award of good module passes between Black and White students	28.5%pts	11.1%pts
Reduce the gap in the award of good module passes between Asian and White students	13.5%pts	6.6%pts
Reduce the progression gap between Black graduates and White graduates	7.5%pts	4.7%pts
IMD targets (Index of Multiple Deprivation)		
Reduce the gap in the award of good module passes between students in the lowest and highest IMD (Index of multiple deprivation) category	13.6%pts	4%pts
Reduce the progression gap between graduates in the lowest and highest IMD (Index of multiple deprivation) category	5.3%pts	4.2%pts
Disability targets		
Reduce the gap in the award of module passes between disabled and non-disabled students	11%pts	5.5%pts
Reduce the progression gap between graduates with a declared mental health illness and no disability	18.2%pts	8.2%pts
* Progression rate gap data for 20/21 reflects the outcomes of 18/19 graduates.		

Staff KPIs

These targets have been set based on the needs across most units at the OU, strategic priorities set by the EDI plan and the OU strategy. However, each business unit is expected to undertake local evaluation of their specific needs and set their own targets as well as cascading the institutional objectives.

Ethnicity and disability have been prioritised. Other protected characteristics will be addressed at unit level and via the charters and unit plans.

Staff KPIs	Base calculation (as at 31 st March 2022- last 12 months performance)	Targets by April 2026
Improve the representation of disabled, Black, Asian, minority ethnic and female staff in senior roles.		
Maintain an overall female staff representation in senior roles	47.7%	Minimum of 45% female representation
An increased proportion of staff with declared disability(ies) in senior roles	4.2%	7.2%
An increased proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff in senior roles	Asian: 5.6% Black: 1.7% Mixed: 2.1% Other: 1.7%	Asian: 6.0% Black: 2.7% Mixed: 2.5% Other: 2.1%
Improve pay equity across gender, declared disability(ies) and Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff		
Gender Pay Gap	Median: 13.3	Median: less than +/- 5%
Ethnicity Pay Gap	Median: 20.1	Median: less than +/-5%
Improve the selection prospects of candidates across protected characteristics		
An increased proportion of shortlisted candidates with declared disability(ies)	7.6%	10.8%
An increased proportion of shortlisted candidates from Black,	Asian: 8.8% Black:5.6%	Asian: 9.2% Black: 6.4%

Asian and minority ethnic candidates		
An increased proportion of appointed candidates from Black, Asian and minority ethnic candidates	Asian: 4.9% Black: 2.8%	Asian: 5.1% Black: 3.2%

Appendix 2 Legislative framework in the Nations

England, Scotland and Wales

The Equality Act 2010, outlined in the Public Sector Equality Duty section- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/11> covers the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Scotland additional legal frameworks:

- Public Sector Equality Duty, specific reporting duties for Scotland.

<https://www.open.ac.uk/scotland/sites/www.open.ac.uk.scotland/files/files/The%20Open%20University%20in%20Scotland%20Public%20Sector%20Duty%20Report%202021-2025.pdf>

- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (part 9) which places statutory 'corporate parenting' (supporting care experienced students) responsibilities on all post-16 education bodies.

https://www.open.ac.uk/scotland/sites/www.open.ac.uk.scotland/files/files/Corporate%20Parenting%20Scotland%20Plan%202020-21_Sept.pdf

- British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 for all public bodies, including colleges and universities - requirement to publish institutional BSL plans

<https://www.open.ac.uk/scotland/sites/www.open.ac.uk.scotland/files/files/The%20Open%20University%20British%20Sign%20Language%20Action%20Plan%202018-2024.pdf>

Wales additional legal frameworks:

- Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, which sets out five ways of working needed for public bodies to achieve seven wellbeing goals. The five ways of working are: long-term, integration, involvement, collaboration, and prevention.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>)

- Welsh Language Act 1993, which expects certain public bodies to follow the principles that Welsh and English languages should be treated equally in the conduct of public business.

[Welsh Language Act 1993 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/30)

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is covered by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/section/75>). In summary, a public authority shall, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, 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.
- Men and women generally.
- Persons with a disability and persons without.
- Persons with dependants and persons without.

Additional legislation in Northern Ireland, underpinned by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

- Age

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2006/261/contents/made>
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2011/168/contents/made>

- Disability

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2004/55/contents/made>

- Gender (including transgender)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1976/1042/contents>
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/apni/1970/32/contents>
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/1999/311/contents/made>

- Race

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1997/869/contents/made>

- Religious belief/political opinion

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1998/3162/contents/made>

- Sexual orientation

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2003/497/regulation/2/made>

Appendix 3 Definition of prohibited conducts

People are not allowed to discriminate, harass, or victimise another person because they have any of the protected characteristics.

- Direct discrimination means treating one person worse than another because of a protected characteristic. Direct discrimination is always unlawful, except for age, which can be objectively justified in rare circumstances.
- Indirect discrimination means putting in place a rule or policy or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one, when this cannot be objectively justified.
- Harassment includes unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or which creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone with a protected characteristic.
- Discrimination by association means treating a person less favourably because of their association with a person who has a protected characteristic. For example, not agreeing to a reasonable adjustment such as slightly varying working patterns for a person who needs to care for their disabled husband.
- Discrimination by perception means treating a person less favourably because you think they have a protected characteristic.
- Victimisation is treating someone unfavourably because they have taken (or might be taking) action to claim their entitlements or legal rights or supporting somebody who is doing so.

Appendix 4 Timetable for measures and consultation list for functions in Northern Ireland

Updated: May 2022

As specified by guidance from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, equality schemes must contain a timetable for measures proposed in the scheme and a list of consultees. As we aim to update these annually, they are contained in this separate Appendix.

A) Timetable for measures proposed in the Equality Scheme

- Communicate the equality scheme: Senior Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager – October 2022
- Review and revise action plans: Director, Ireland and Equality and Diversity Committee – January to March annually
- Review monitoring information: Senior Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager and Assistant Director, The Open University (Ireland) – April to June annually
- Review timetable for measures and list of consultees: Assistant Director, The Open University (Ireland) – April annually
- Review progress towards equality objectives: University Secretary and the Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- Section 75 progress report: Assistant Director, The Open University (Ireland) – August annually
- Evaluate implementation and effectiveness of training: Head of Talent and Development – September annually
- Publish report on progress against objectives: Senior Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager – December annually
- Assess compliance and promote best practice: EDI Committee – ongoing, as completed
- Publish equality analysis templates (where policy is relevant to functions in Northern Ireland): Senior Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager
- Review appropriateness of equality objectives: EDI Committee – May 2022
- Review of full equality scheme: Project Team appointed by EDI Committee – completed by September 2022.

B) List of consultees for functions relevant to Northern Ireland

This list is not exhaustive. We welcome enquiries from any person or organisation wishing to be added to this list.

Organisations that we have formal or informal partnership arrangements with

- Aontú
- ASDA
- Ballybeen Women's Centre
- CAFRE (College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise)
- Coiste
- Communication Workers Union (CWU)
- Condition Management Programme
- EPIC (NI)
- Falls Women's Centre
- Forum for Adult Learners Northern Ireland (NICVA)
- Four Seasons Health Care
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Northern Ireland Committee
- Libraries NI
- NIACRO
- NIPSA
- Northern Regional College
- North West Regional College
- Public and Commercial Services Union
- Sainsbury's
- Salvation Army, NI
- Shankhill Women's Centre
- Southern Regional College
- South Eastern Regional College
- South West College
- Tar Anall
- Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW)
- UNISON

Other organisations that have a specific interest in equality of opportunity and good relations

- Age NI
- Alliance
- Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium (BCRC)
- British Deaf Association (BDA)
- Belfast Metropolitan College
- Cara Friend
- Carers Northern Ireland
- Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO)
- Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)
- Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland
- Democratic Unionist Party
- Department for the Economy (Director of Further Education)
- Disability Action Northern Ireland
- East Belfast Community Development Agency
- Embrace NI
- Equality Coalition
- Equality Commission for NI
- Equality Unit, Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister
- HERe NI
- Information Commissioner's Office Northern Ireland
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Labour Relations Agency
- MENCAP
- Bryson Intercultural (formerly Multi-Cultural Resource Centre)
- Department for the Economy Higher Education Branch
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
- Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
- Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum
- Rainbow Project
- Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)
- Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
- Rural Community Network

- Sinn Féin
- Social Democratic and Labour Party
- Stonewall NI
- The Green Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- Transgender NI
- UK Independence Party
- Ulster Unionist Party
- Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland
- Women's Forum Northern Ireland
- Women's Resource and Development Agency

Appendix 5 A quick start guide to the Equality Act 2010 (GB)

What is the Equality Act?

The Equality Act is applicable in England, Scotland, and Wales. The main provisions of the Act were implemented in two phases:

The first phase became law on 1 October 2010. In broad terms, it harmonises, updates and amends previous anti-discrimination legislation, providing greater protection for all individuals across a wide range of 'protected characteristics'. The second phase became law on 5 April 2011. This enacts a new 'public sector equality duty', which amends and expands the existing duty to cover a wider range of characteristics.

What University functions are covered by the Act?

The Act covers all our functions including education; employment; services and other public functions (e.g. broadcasting); associations; contracting and partnerships.

What are the 'protected characteristics'?

Nine characteristics are explicitly protected, as follows: age; disability; gender reassignment (transgender); marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race/ethnicity; religion or belief; sex, and sexual orientation. Care/dependency is also indirectly covered.

What is 'prohibited conduct' under the Act?

Direct discrimination and indirect discrimination continue to be prohibited, but are now extended across all the characteristics, except for pregnancy and maternity. Pregnancy and maternity have specific protection for the duration of pregnancy and up to 26 weeks after birth. Students are explicitly protected from less favourable treatment if breastfeeding.

Protection from harassment is extended to all characteristics with the exceptions of pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership.

Individuals are protected from victimisation, where a person makes an allegation or brings proceedings under the Act and suffers a detriment as a result.

Discrimination by association is extended to cover all the characteristics, except for pregnancy and maternity. For example, carers are protected because of their association with someone with a protected characteristic, such as a disabled person or an older person.

Similarly, discrimination because of perception is extended to the same characteristics. This means that individuals who are treated less favourably because

they are perceived to have a characteristic, are protected, even though they don't have that characteristic.

It continues to be unlawful not to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person. A disabled person does not have to show that their impairment affects a capacity, such as mobility or manual dexterity. It continues to be lawful to treat a disabled person more favourably than other people.

It is now unlawful to ask disability or health-related questions during a selection process, with some exceptions. People Services has provided detailed guidance to managers on this provision.

A new protection, discrimination arising from disability, has been introduced. It means that unfavourable treatment because of something connected with a person's disability is unlawful, for example, refusing to allow a student to use a recording device in a tutorial. In practice, providing those reasonable adjustments are made, discrimination should not arise from disability.

What are the positive action provisions?

The positive action provisions in the Equality Act replicate those in previous equality legislation. Where we reasonably think that people who share a protected characteristic suffer a disadvantage, have different needs, or have disproportionately low rates of participation in an activity, we may take action to overcome or minimise this, provided any action taken is proportionate. This provision applies to all functions, including employment and education - we will continue to use these provisions, where appropriate. However, the provisions are complex, and you should seek advice from the Equality and Diversity Team if you are considering using them.

What is the 'public sector equality duty'?

The University, in the exercise of its functions, is required to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct.
- Advance equality of opportunity, which involves removing or minimising disadvantage, taking steps to meet needs, and encouraging participation.
- Foster good relations, which involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

How does the duty apply to me?

In carrying out your work, in making decisions, in developing, approving or implementing policy and procedures, you must give due regard to the three aims of

the equality duty, outlined above. Due regard means that the weight you give to equality needs to be proportionate to its relevance and some roles and functions have greater equality relevance than others. This means being vigilant to anything that you may do that may lead to unlawful discrimination, or anything you could do that would help to prevent the 'prohibited conducts' described earlier. It also means being proactive in identifying ways of advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations through the work that you normally do.

Are some provisions of the Act not being implemented?

Plans to introduce a public sector duty regarding socio-economic inequalities were shelved prior to the first phase implementation. However, The Open University aims to reduce socio-economic inequalities and it is an included characteristic in this equality scheme and in our Widening Participation strategy.

Plans to introduce protection from combined discrimination (dual characteristics) were shelved in the budget announcement in March 2011. Additionally, we have taken the decision not to implement the voluntary positive action provision in recruitment and promotions, which allows employers to consider underrepresentation or disadvantage when faced with making a choice between two or more candidates who are of equal merit. People Services has issued specific guidance to managers on this subject. In practice, we have decided that this provision can easily be misunderstood and any small gains to be made are far outweighed by the risks.

Can I be held personally liable?

Yes, an employee or agent is personally responsible for their own acts of discrimination, harassment or victimisation carried out during their employment. The University will not be liable where it can show that it has taken all reasonable steps to prevent employees from discriminating, harassing or victimising someone

Appendix 6 A quick start guide to the Northern Ireland Equality Legislation

What is the Northern Ireland Act 1998?

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 was intended to be transformative in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement. Its aim was to change the practices of government and public authorities so that equality of opportunity and good relations were central to policy making, policy implementation, policy review and service delivery.

The Section 75 statutory duties require designated public authorities, including The Open University, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity in relation to the nine equality categories¹ and to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief; political opinion; and racial group. A public authority's equality scheme sets out how it will comply with both duties, its action measures and how it will measure performance. Equality Schemes must be consulted on with stakeholders and then sent to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland for approval and must be reviewed every five years. The University must also submit an annual Fair Employment return, which gives a snapshot of the local workforce in terms of occupational group by gender and community background (i.e., Protestant, Roman Catholic, other).

An equality scheme outlines the public authority's arrangements for:

- assessing its compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties.
- assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity.
- monitoring any adverse impact of policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity.
- publishing the results of such assessments.
- training staff.
- ensuring and assessing public access to information and services provided by the public authority.

¹Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.

What is the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (“DDA”)

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (“DDA”) Section 49A requires designated public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons, and to the need to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life. This duty is supported by an obligation to have a disability action plan and the OU plan for Northern Ireland is published here [Northern Ireland Reports | The Open University Equality and Diversity](#).

Public authorities should report to the Equality Commission annually on the implementation of their equality scheme, including progress on delivery of actions they have identified to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. Public Authorities are expected to consult regularly on new policies and to screen policies for their impact on the duty to promote good relations and to conduct equality impact assessments. The Commission is empowered to investigate complaints and may refer a public authority’s draft Equality Scheme to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if it sees fit.

The Open University Equality Scheme sets out to meet the requirements of legislation in all four nations of the United Kingdom and was one of the first schemes of this type to be approved by the Equality Commission in 2012.