Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Draft report template for piloting

Public Authority Statutory Equality Duties

Annual Progress Report 2013-14

Name of public authority:
The Open University

Contact:

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<tr>
<th>Section 75</th>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>John Addy</th>
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<td>Telephone:</td>
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<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:john.addy@open.ac.uk">john.addy@open.ac.uk</a></td>
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Signature:
Explanatory Note

This is the Commission’s recommended template and guidance to assist you to:

- fulfil commitments in your Equality Scheme; including that you must have arrangements for assessing your compliance with Section 75 statutory duties;
- provide a report for your stakeholders of your progress on the duties;
- provide information for the Commission in anticipation of ongoing engagement with you;
- provide information to enable the Commission to collate and present summary monitoring information, and inform the Commission of your progress to assist us in fulfilling our role to keep under review the effectiveness of the duties imposed by Section 75; and
- provide the opportunity to identify good practice that you and the Commission can share with other public authorities.

In completing this template it is essential to focus on the application of Section 75 and Section 49. This involves progressing the commitments in your Equality Scheme or Disability Action Plan which should lead to outcomes and impacts in terms of measurable improvement for individuals from the equality and good relations categories. Such outcomes and impacts may include changes in public policy, in service provision and/or in any of the areas within your functional remit.

For public authorities that have Equality Schemes and Disability Action Plans this report template is an opportunity to report progress annually on fulfilling the duties set out in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006.

The draft report template is a universal template to be utilised by all public authorities, given that the duties are common to all, across functions. Subsequently, the Equality Schemes based on the Model Equality Scheme are common to all.

Progress can be reported which reflects the size of your public authority, the complexity of functions, and the different degree of relevance the duties will have for different functions. The template varies between standardised questions and the option to include explanatory text.

This report template includes a number of self assessment questions regarding implementation of Equality Scheme commitments in Part A and a number of questions regarding implementation of Disability Action Plans in Part B.

The reporting period is 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014.

Please complete the report and submit it to the Commission in line with the commitment in your Equality Scheme, i.e. by 31 August 2014.
Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes and good practice

1. What were the key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations, and what outcomes were achieved? Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality duties where appropriate.

The Open University published an interim Equality Scheme in July 2012 bringing together for the first time into a single document the scheme for both Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Following the receipt of feedback from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, amendments were made to the scheme and the Commission formally approved the finalised Open University Equality Scheme on 26 June 2013.

2013/14 was a very significant year for The Open University in Northern Ireland because this was the year that teaching funding for activities within Northern Ireland transferred from the Higher Education Funding Council for England to the Department of Employment and Learning. In effect The Open University has become the third university in Northern Ireland.

The Open University seeks to embed the duties of promoting equality of opportunity and promoting good relations in all its educational endeavours and would cite as a major achievement the launch of FutureLearn in September 2013. This wholly owned subsidiary company works in partnership with more than 40 organisations, including Queens University, Belfast, Trinity College, Dublin, many other universities, professional and academic bodies, in the UK and Ireland, and across the world. FutureLearn offers a range of massive online open courses (MOOCS) and seeks to offer free, high quality courses to the wider population, possibly as a first engagement with higher education, possibly leading to further study and qualifications or possibly for others to contribute to their lifelong learning. More than 1,000,000 have registered in the first year of operation, many within Northern Ireland.

The University's nine Equality Objectives were agreed in 2012 and a brief update on progress is given in section 2) below. Several of the projects under our equality objectives have been recognised by the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC), including the Aspire mentoring and leadership programme for ethnic minority and disabled staff, the work under Securing Greater Accessibility (SeGA) and the Great Expectations project which addresses the student ethnicity attainment gap. Case studies on some of these projects have been developed and will feature on the EHRC website soon.

During the reporting period for this report, the Open University has established a Policy and Public Affairs function to enable the organisation to be able to engage with the Northern Ireland Executive in general and the Department for Employment and Learning in particular, with ministers and other members of the NI Assembly of all political parties, with civil servants, other public bodies, and of course the media. The aim is of course to develop good relations with stakeholders and also to enable the University to influence decision making and advance the cause of part time higher education and the benefits this brings to society. The OU attends meetings of the Assembly and the Employment and Learning Committee. The Director is in regular contact with the DEL minister and his officials and is constantly engaged with all political parties; the OU is in attendance at six of the largest party conferences/ardfheises. A programme of public engagement is also undertaken and this includes the sponsorship of cultural events like Culture Night and art exhibitions and these seek to foster good
relations between the University and community across Northern Ireland.

The Open University's revised Students Charter was launched by the Martin Bean, the Vice Chancellor in April 2013. It sets out how members of the OU Community, both staff and students, should work together, so everyone can benefit from a shared set of values. The Student Charter, made up of four sets of OU Community Members' responsibilities, has been developed jointly by University staff and the OU Students Association, with input from more than 500 people. The first of four principles in the Charter is that we treat each other with dignity and respect, which is fully aligned to the principles in the University's Equality Scheme.

http://www.open.ac.uk/students/essential-documents/our-statements-of-service

Thinking about your work in 2013-14, please give examples of the impact of your Equality Action plan/measures on the intended groups and inequalities (or append your plan with progress/examples identified):

The Open University’s Equality Objectives for the period 2012-2016 are set out in the Open University's public website. The nine objectives are monitored regularly and some changes have been made during 2013/14. The objectives are available here:

http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives

Examples of equality measures of particular relevance to Northern Ireland are listed below;

Objective 1. Maintain the proportion of new disabled undergraduates (originally 3.4%)
Through marketing and interventions, measures to encourage disclosure by students and developing support and advice, the level of recruitment has exceed the target and is 11.3% overall, 14.5% in Northern Ireland. The OU definition of disability extends to characteristics such as dyslexia or mental health conditions, which might not be the perception in the country at large. This objective has been replaced by a new objective to improve the perception of ethnic minorities towards the OU (to close the gap in consideration preference for ethnic minority students and white students from 6% to 4%).

Objective 2: The gap between the overall satisfaction rates for disabled students and non disabled students has narrowed from 3% to 25

Objective 3. Reduce Ethnicity Attainment Gap (Currently the difference between the proportion of white and black students obtaining a “good pass” on level 2 and 3 modules is 28.8%, with a target of 25.8% by 2015). Sadly there is little measurable improvement in this measure, which remains about 28%. A joint project with the Higher Education Authority entitled "Great Expectations" was launched during 2013/14 with seven other universities, with the aim of developing effective interventions, not least around increasing the expectations of students as they commence their studies. In the OU, the role of tutor is of vital importance and workshops have been held with 100 tutors to foster skills in encouraging high expectations. The project will also look at the issue of unconscious bias.

Objective 8. Improve equality monitoring information (to include caring responsibilities, improve accuracy for maternity, improve declaration for religious belief and sexual orientation and community
back in Northern Ireland, for both staff and for students. Major progress has been made in implementing the collection of information for both staff and students. See 3) below.

Objective 9.- Improved guidance for transgender staff and students by 2012: Separate policies and guidance for both staff and students were approved in July 2013. The new procedures have been established to ensure clear, effective and confidential support that meets the individual requirements of Transgender staff and students. The policies and guidance are widely communicated to staff, tutors and students by their respective intranet sites.

3 Has the application of your organisation’s Equality Scheme commitments resulted in any changes to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2013-14 reporting period? (tick one box only)

☒ Yes ☐ No (go to Q.6) ☐ Not applicable (go to Q.6)

Please describe or provide examples:

The Equality Objectives in 2) above have resulted to a number of changes to policy and practice including:

Objective 8. To improve Equality Monitoring Information.

a) From June 2013 all students are asked to record their religious belief, sexual orientation, caring responsibility and in Northern Ireland community background (religious affiliation). This is captured by the student entering his or her data on registration. The equivalent information for staff is captured by the Equal Opportunity Monitoring form on applications or by existing staff on our self service intranet site (and update it as required).

b) Objective 9. A policy for Transgender Staff and Students has been agreed and will be fully implemented in the current year.

4 With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what difference was made, or will be made, for the affected S75 groups? (please provide/describe examples)

We shall being to analyse student information in Northern Ireland but we anticipate that the level of response to certain questions (e.g. community background) may be low. Students have to supply an answer to all questions to be able to complete their registration and exit the form, but questions will have the option of "prefer not to say" to questions such as on sexual orientation or community background.
5. What aspect of your organisation’s equality scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? (tick all that apply)

☐ As a result of the organisation’s screening or a policy (please give details):

☐ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise (please give details):

☐ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact (please give details):

   As detailed in 2)

☒ As a result of changes to access to information and services (please specify and give details):

☐ Other (please specify and give details):

The University undertakes a regular refresh of equality objectives and refreshes and replaces objectives as new issues and priorities emerge. These can arise from monitoring staff and student data; for instance an objective about recruiting younger academic staff reflects the age profile of our academic staff, which is clearly very different to the population as a whole. Other measures arise from the requirements of our stakeholders. For instance many of the changes to student information arise from new requirements from the Higher Education Statistics Agency and are also in response to funding body requirements in the four nations of the UK. In Northern Ireland the OU seeks to respond to the requirements of the Department of Employment and Learning, which took over responsibility for the University's teaching funding in 2013.

Section 2: Equality Scheme Commitments

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

6. Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within your organisation’s job descriptions during the 2013-14 reporting period? (tick one box only)

☐ Yes, organisation wide

☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
Part A: Section 75 Annual Progress Report for April 2013 - March 2014

☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
☐ No, this is scheduled for later in our Equality Scheme, or has already been done
☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

7 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within your organisation’s performance plans during the 2013-14 reporting period? (tick one box only)
☐ Yes, organisation wide
☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
☐ No, this is scheduled for later in our Equality Scheme, or has already been done
☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The OU seeks to mainstream equality and diversity objectives and embed equality through core processes and functions. Primarily this is achieved through the annual planning process, whereby each unit within the OU, including the OU in Northern Ireland, sets plans for the year ahead, including equality and diversity plans. The Equality and Diversity objectives are published on the internet: http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives

8 In the 2013-14 reporting period did your organisation take any action to integrate objectives and targets relating to the Section 75 statutory duties into strategic and operational business plans? (tick one box only)
☐ Yes, organisation wide
☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
☐ No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation’s corporate plan
☐ No, this action had already been taken in previous years
Part A: Section 75 Annual Progress Report for April 2013 - March 2014

☐ No, the organisation’s planning cycle does not coincide with this 2013-14 report
☐ Not applicable

Please provide details:

The Open University has embedded Equality Analysis into Business Plans, and all units of the University, including the OU in Northern Ireland must consider if a particular objective requires an Equality Analysis.

Each unit also contributes equality and diversity and widening participation (ESWAS) objectives to an organisation-wide plan and there is a formal review process on the outgoing year’s equality objectives. The EDWAS planning and review documents are published on the OU’s public intranet:
http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives

Equality Action Plan (all approved schemes contain commitments to develop action plans/measures, with associated provision in the timetable for measures proposed)

9 Within the 2013-14 reporting period (noting: this does not form part of your organisation’s scheme commitments), please indicate the number of:

Actions completed 4
Actions ongoing
Actions to commence

10 Please, either outline any significant examples of progress in relation to the Equality Action Plan for 2013-14 or append your plan with progress noted:

Please refer to attached Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2013 for the Open University:

11 Please give details of changes or amendments made to your organisation’s Equality Action Plan during the 2013-14 reporting period (if not already appended):

As stated in 2) Objective 1 (maintaining the proportion of disabled students) was greatly exceeded and the objective was replaced with a new objective relating to improving the perception of the OU by ethnic minority students.

On other objectives, some changes to KPS are reflected.
Part A: Section 75 Annual Progress Report for April 2013 - March 2014

12. Do the changes or amendments made to the Equality Action Plan during the 2013-14 reporting period: *(tick all that apply)*

- [ ] Provide for next stage actions to address the known inequality?
- [x] Close off/complete the focus on the prioritised inequality (job done, moving to another priority)?
- [ ] Reflect corporate planning/target changes?
- [x] Introduce action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities

**Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)**

13. Please list your **main consultation** exercises during 2013-14 which have related to the implementation of your Equality Scheme.

None were held in the period of this report within Northern Ireland. As a small part of a larger UK body, with most policy matters lead centrally in our Milton Keynes, it is comparatively rare for the Open University in Northern Ireland to need to undertake consultations.

The Open University in Northern Ireland has established a new public website, and this will be a principle medium for consulting stakeholders:


14. Following the initial notification of consultations, did your organisation then take a targeted approach and consult with those to whom the subject of the consultation was of particular relevance? *(tick one box only)*

- [ ] All the time
- [x] Sometimes
- [ ] Never

15. Please describe any examples of good practice in consultation on a policy relevant to promoting equality of opportunity or good relations.

N/A
Thinking about those with whom you consult (and given those who do not generally engage and those likely to be directly affected by proposals), please tell us which consultation methods offered were most frequently used by consultees: (tick all that apply)

- [ ] Face to face meetings
- [ ] Focus groups
- [ ] Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- [ ] Questionnaires
- [ ] Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- [x] Internet discussions
- [ ] Telephone consultations
- [x] Other (please specify): It is our intention to use the new Northern Ireland website as the principal means of consultation in the future. In reviewing and updating our list of consultees we shall make contact and establish email addresses. Consultees can then be alerted by email the latest consultation.

Please provide details of the uptake of these in relation to the consultees’ membership of particular Section 75 groups, or trends in consultation practice.

N/A

Did your organisation undertake any awareness-raising for consultees on the commitments in its approved Equality Scheme during the 2013-14 reporting period? (tick one box only)

- [ ] Yes
- [x] No (go to Q.20)
- [ ] Not applicable (go to Q.20)

Please provide examples of the awareness-raising that was undertaken:
Part A: Section 75 Annual Progress Report for April 2013 - March 2014

20 Has your organisation reviewed its consultation list during the 2013-14 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable – no commitment to review

Arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

21 Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes
- No concerns were raised *(go to Q.23)*
- No *(go to Q.23)*
- Not applicable *(go to Q.23)*

22 Please provide details:

23 Following decisions on a policy, did you publish the results of any EQIAs during the 2013-14 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Please provide details:

24 In the context of your organisation’s monitoring arrangements, did your organisation audit its existing information systems during the 2013-14 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes
- No, already taken place
Part A: Section 75 Annual Progress Report for April 2013 - March 2014

☒ No, scheduled to take place at a later date  ☐ Not applicable

Please provide details:

25 In analysing your monitoring information gathered, did you take any action to change/review any of your organisation’s policies? (tick one box only)

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☒ Not applicable

Please provide details:
Not within Northern Ireland, but the University Priority on maintaining the proportion of disabled students was replaced with an objective around the satisfaction of disabled students.

26 From your monitoring arrangements, for 2013-14 please provide any examples where your monitoring of policies has shown:

- Differential impacts previously identified which have increased or reduced  N/A

- Adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased  N/A

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

27 Please report on the activities from your organisation’s training plan/programme (section 5.4 of Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2013-14, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in your Equality Scheme.

All members of staff are required to undertake an annual Career Development and Appraisal.

A range of training is available to staff on issues related to Equality and Diversity. New tutors are required to complete an online diversity training module.

For other staff, a self directed diversity training website is available, covering the following:
- Introduction to equality and diversity at The Open University
Creating an inclusive environment
-Legislation overview
-Types of discrimination
-Protected characteristics
-Developing self-awareness

Please provide any examples of training which your organisation’s evaluation of training has shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

Mental health and disability training is especially valued by OU staff, especially those working in advisory roles to students

Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)

Please list any examples of where your organisation’s monitoring, across all functions, in relation to access to information and services has resulted in action and improvement during 2013-14:

A new internet site for the Open University in Northern Ireland

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

How many complaints in relation to the Equality Scheme have been received during 2013-14?

Insert number here: 0

Please provide any details:

Section 3 Looking Forward

Please indicate when your scheme is due for review:
2016. The University’s Equality and Diversity Management Group has already commenced the process for reviewing and updating the scheme, under the Guidance of the University Secretary and in terms of the emerging legal and higher education policy environment and internal monitoring of student and staff data.

32 Are there areas of your organisation’s Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

This is unclear at this juncture.

33 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what equality and good relations priorities are anticipated over the next (2014-15) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions
- Nothing specific, more of the same
- Other (please state):