Equality objectives 2012 – 2016

We are creating an inclusive university community and a society-

where people are treated with dignity and respect,

where inequalities are challenged, and

where we anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances,

so that everyone can achieve their potential.

Version 1.0
Published: April 2012
To obtain a copy of our current equality scheme or for further information about equality and diversity at The Open University, visit our website at www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity.

Comments or questions about this report should be sent for the attention of the Head of Equality and Diversity.

Equality, Diversity and Information Rights Team
University Secretary’s Office
The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA
Tel 01908 652566 / 652867
Minicom 01908 653074
Email strategy-equality@open.ac.uk
Web www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity

If you would like to receive the information in this report in an alternative format to meet your needs, please contact the Equality, Diversity and Information Rights Team.
Contents

Equality and Diversity at The Open University ................................................................. 4

Questions about The Open University equality objectives .............................................. 5

Objective 1: Maintain the proportion of new disabled undergraduates .............................. 7
Objective 2: Increase the satisfaction of disabled students .............................................. 8
Objective 3: Reduce the ethnicity attainment gap ............................................................ 9
Objective 4: Increase the proportion of younger academic staff ....................................... 10
Objective 5: Increase the satisfaction of ethnic minority staff ......................................... 11
Objective 6: Increase the satisfaction of disabled staff .................................................... 12
Objective 7: Reduce the gender pay gap ........................................................................ 13
Objective 8: Improve equality monitoring information .................................................... 14
Objective 9: Improve equality policy and guidance for staff and students ....................... 15

Annex A: Responsibilities in furthering the objectives ..................................................... 16
Annex B: Our equality objectives and equality law .......................................................... 17

Use of abbreviation

The abbreviation ‘OU’ is used for ‘The Open University’ in the description of all the objectives on pages 7 to 15.
Equality and Diversity at The Open University

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

For more than 40 years, The Open University has been promoting social justice and equality of opportunity. This is core to our mission and as important today as it was when we were founded.

Much has changed in the higher education environment in recent years and The Open University, like all universities, is affected by changes to student funding and a greater emphasis on market demand. In adapting to the new environment, the University has made changes to its fees and is restructuring student learning journeys to ensure that students are enabled to achieve their study goals. For our staff, the pace of change has been significant, requiring individuals to adapt systems, develop new competencies and increase their agility.

Alongside these changes, we are unwavering in our commitment to our vision of an inclusive university community and society where people are treated with dignity and respect, where inequalities are challenged, and where we anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances, so that everyone can achieve their potential.

Our equality and diversity principles continue to guide us:

1. We value diversity and we recognise that different people bring different perspectives, ideas, knowledge and culture, and that this difference brings great strength.

2. We believe that discrimination or exclusion based on individual characteristics and experiences, such as age; disability; caring or dependency responsibilities; gender or gender identity; marriage and civil partnership status; political opinion; pregnancy and maternity; race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sexual orientation; socio-economic background; trade union membership status or other distinctions, represents a waste of talent and a denial of opportunity for self-fulfilment.

3. We recognise that patterns of under-representation and differences in outcomes at The Open University can be challenged through positive action programmes.

4. We respect the rights of individuals, including the right to hold different views and beliefs. We will not allow these differences to be manifested in a way that is hostile or degrading to others.

5. We expect commitment and involvement from all our staff, students, partners and providers of goods and services in working towards the achievement of our vision.

We remain committed to maintaining and enhancing our position as a leader in advancing equality of opportunity.

Fraser Woodburn Will Swann
University Secretary Director, Students
Questions about The Open University equality objectives

Q.1. Why are you publishing equality objectives now?

Our current equality scheme ends in 2012 and we have reviewed our priorities in order to establish new objectives between 2012 and 2016. We have always aimed to be transparent with respect to our equality priorities and we have published our objectives, action plans, an annual report and a wide range of additional equality information for many years. Equality legislation now requires that all public authorities publish equality objectives and other equality information. Publication of this report therefore also ensures we meet our statutory equality duties. Further information about our legal duties with respect to equality objectives is set out in Annex B.

Q.2. How did you arrive at these objectives?

The Equality and Diversity Team carried out an audit of inequalities between April and June 2011, involving an extensive analysis of quantitative and qualitative information across a wide range of indicators for our students and staff. The equality and diversity Annual Development Meeting in June 2011 was used to identify and agree priorities based on the findings of the audit. Much of the data used in the audit is published as supplementary monitoring reports as part of our 2011 equality and diversity annual report, available on our website at www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity. The objectives were shaped further by an advisory group which included representatives from staff and student groups covering a wide range of individual characteristics. A public consultation was held between December 2011 and February 2012, with communications sent to students and alumni, staff, partner organisations, representative organisations and equality organisations. The feedback was used to finalise the objectives prior to approval.

Q.3. Do the nine equality objectives include all aspects of equality?

The objectives from 1 through to 7 include the characteristics of age, disability, ethnicity and gender. The University has robust monitoring systems in place for these characteristics and is able to identify inequalities in these areas more easily. Under objective 8, we have set out our plans to improve monitoring for the characteristics of caring responsibilities, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation and community background in Northern Ireland. Under objective 9, we have set out our plans to improve policy and guidance for staff and students in the areas of gender identity, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and caring responsibilities. Therefore, all of the individual characteristics within the scope of our public sector equality duties across the UK are included in our equality objectives. In addition, it is our view that socio-economic circumstance is one of the greatest determinants of life chances and the University’s Widening Participation strategy addresses this aspect of inequality.

Q.4. Who is responsible for delivering the objectives?

The objectives are institution-wide and as such, a number of different functions and departments will contribute to their achievement. However, we have identified a Senior Accountable Executive for each objective. That person will provide strategic ownership and leadership for the delivery of the objective, supported by the Equality and Diversity Management Group and the Equality and Diversity Team. Further information about the structure of accountability is provided in Annex A.
Q.5. How did you arrive at the key performance indicators?
We have set out specific and measurable, outcome-focused, objectives. The Equality and Diversity Management Group proposed the key performance indicators and the Senior Accountable Executives agreed them. The University is currently undergoing a period of significant transition in relation to student finance and fees, and moving to a model with a greater emphasis on qualification-based registration and support. As a result, the University is reviewing its key performance indicators across the board and we plan to review our equality performance indicators, especially for student-related equality objectives, in light of this. We expect this review to be carried out and any changes made within a period of 2 years of the publication of these objectives.

Q.6. What action will you take to achieve the objectives?
A workshop was held in January 2012 to identify and agree the approaches that are most likely to help achieve each of the objectives. These approaches are summarised under each objective and they establish the direction of travel we plan to take. We will review these approaches annually. Underneath the approaches will sit the actions necessary to further the objectives. Every department of the University is asked to review its equality action plan annually and revised action plans will be aligned with the published objectives and approaches. As in previous years, we expect many departments to plan actions which are additional to the objectives set out here, in order to address priorities identified that are specific to that department.

Q.7. How will progress towards the objectives be measured?
The SAE for each objective will provide an annual report of progress to the equality objective Champion and to the Equality and Diversity Management Group. The management group will provide advice and guidance in addressing barriers and challenges. Progress towards the objectives will be summarised in the University’s equality and diversity annual report.

Q.8. Is the University planning to publish an equality scheme?
Yes. The University currently has an equality scheme for Great Britain and a separate equality scheme for Northern Ireland. We are developing a revised equality scheme which will set out details of all our arrangements for the strategic management of our equality work. The UK-wide scheme will cover all of our functions and be inclusive of a wide range of individual characteristics, needs and circumstances, and go well beyond statutory requirements. The objectives published in this report will form an important element of our revised scheme.
### Objective 1: Maintain the proportion of new disabled undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key performance indicator(s)</th>
<th>Maintain a three year average of 3.4% new disabled undergraduates each year from 2012/13 to 2015/16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Champion</strong></td>
<td>Director, Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senior Accountable Executive</strong></td>
<td>Director of Marketing and Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rationale</strong></td>
<td>There was a small decline in the proportion of new disabled undergraduates between 2006/07 and 2009/10. In 2009/10, 3.4%¹ of new OU undergraduates and 6.5% of all OU undergraduates declared a disability. Maintaining the current proportion is likely to be difficult because of the effect of changes to funding and fees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sector performance</strong></td>
<td>In 2009/10, 9.7% of part-time first degree undergraduates and 6% of part-time other undergraduates declared a disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recent progress</strong></td>
<td>A number of initiatives to attract disabled students, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Online banners and advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Refreshing the Services for Disabled Students website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Articles in disability publications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges</strong></td>
<td>• Students with more complex impairments are increasingly able to study at campus-based universities – this is a positive development but it means we are in a more competitive environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Changes to Government funding and resulting fee changes mean that disabled students previously not paying full fees if they have equivalent or lower qualifications will no longer be exempt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students perceive risks associated with declaring a disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Disabled students are part of a number of different market segments which can make targeting difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Our approach</strong></td>
<td>• Agree numerical targets and budget allocation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify attraction campaigns, including creation of assets and routes to market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conduct engagement and conversion activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enhance media relations activity to highlight the positive experience of disabled students at the OU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enhance Government relations activity to protect funding for disabled students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enhance the online support experience for disabled students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ In the University’s 2011 equality and diversity annual report, this figure is reported as 3.3%. The increase reflects revised data as a result of student declarations since the report was published.
## Objective 2: Increase the satisfaction of disabled students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key performance indicator(s)</th>
<th>Increase the satisfaction of disabled students from 82% in 2010/11² to 84% in 2014/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Champion</td>
<td>Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Accountable Executive</td>
<td>Director, Institute of Educational Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>Disabled students are three times more likely to raise a complaint or appeal, in comparison to non-disabled students. The OU end of module surveys show that disabled students are less satisfied with their overall study experience. Similarly the OU’s data from the National Student Survey 2011 indicate that disabled students were less satisfied across most scales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector performance</td>
<td>The National Student Survey 2011 sector results indicate that disabled students were significantly less satisfied than the global scores in all question categories. Overall satisfaction for disabled respondents between 2006 and 2011 was consistently lower than the global score.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent progress</td>
<td>A number of changes under the OU’s Securing Greater Accessibility plan, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Appointment of Accessibility Specialists in each academic unit, who will act as first point of contact for module development teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Establishment of an Accessibility Referrals Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Establishment of an Accessibility Practitioners’ Group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of a range of new alternative formats as standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation of DAISY (digital talking books).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Automation of comb-bound alternative format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>• The need to condense the academic year and reduce the number of start dates will reduce flexibility of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Technical and financial challenges in making all aspects of the Virtual Learning Environment accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Balancing the need to deliver at scale and the response to individual student needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our approach</td>
<td>• Conduct analysis to develop a better understanding of the source and the nature of student dissatisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conduct qualitative research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improve accessibility standards and quality assurance during module development and prior to production of assets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Expand staff learning and development resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enhance the online study experience for disabled students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² Measured by a composite of the results of the Autumn 2010 and Summer 2011 end of module surveys
### Objective 3: Reduce the ethnicity attainment gap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key performance indicator(s)</th>
<th>Reduce the difference between the proportion of White students and Black students obtaining a ‘good pass’[^3] on modules at levels 2 and 3 from 28.8% in 2009/10 to 25.8% by 2014/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Champion</td>
<td>Director, Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Accountable Executive</td>
<td>Director, Teaching and Learner Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rationale**
Attainment at levels 2 and 3 determine overall degree classification. The overall ethnicity attainment gap at levels 2 and 3 has narrowed at the OU in the past two years, but is still very significant. 20% of Black students achieved a good pass in 2009/10, compared to nearly 50% of White students.

**Sector performance**
The attainment gap is highest between White and Black students, where the difference was 29% in 2008/09 and 30% in 2009/10.

**Recent progress**
Participation in a sector-wide summit programme to address the gap by sharing knowledge and expertise with 14 other higher education institutions.

Implementation of a 2 year ethnicity and attainment action plan, including:

- New ‘English for OU study’ website and online diagnostic for enquirers
- Development of language resources for tutors to enable better feedback to students
- Embedding of academic language development in the curriculum
- Completion of a number of research projects, including work to identify factors that lead to success for Black students.

**Challenges**
- Communicating the attainment gap may reinforce negative expectations.
- Initiatives that may have a high impact, such as mentoring, are costly to fund.

**Our approach**
- Continue to develop and promote resources to address student academic language development.
- Conduct further action research on factors that lead to student success.
- Conduct action research to assess possible bias in tutor marking.
- Develop staff learning resources to address the effect of expectations of lower performance.
- Develop and embed resources for students at different points in the student journey to address barriers to student success.

[^3]: A ‘good pass’ at the OU is defined as achievement of a first or upper second at module level
Objective 4: Increase the proportion of younger academic staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key performance indicator(s)</th>
<th>Increase the proportion of internal academic staff aged 35 and under from 12% at December 2010 to 14% by December 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Champion**
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Curriculum and Qualifications

**Senior Accountable Executive**
Director, Curriculum and Qualifications

**Rationale**
12% of OU academics are aged 35 and under. Analysis based on 5 years of recruitment data shows that a high proportion of academic job applicants fall within the 26 to 35 aged band, but there is a significantly lower than average shortlisting rate. When younger applicants are shortlisted, and get through to interview, they are as likely as older applicants to be appointed.

**Sector performance**
Around 28% of academic staff were aged 35 and under in 2009/10.

**Recent progress**
The proportion of academic staff aged 35 and under has increased recently, possibly as a result of the retirement of some older staff.

**Challenges**
- Low level of external recruitment.
- Removal of the default retirement age may reduce turnover.
- Younger academics are more likely to be on time-limited research contracts.
- Unconscious bias by selection panel members.
- Reduction in staffing levels in Faculties.
- Professional and vocational curriculum requires significant experience.
- Higher emphasis at the OU on teaching experience compared to other higher education institutions.

**Our approach**
- Review recruitment arrangements, guidance and training to identify and address age bias.
- Review structure of job roles to create opportunities for younger academics.
- Promote positive attitudes towards younger academics.
- Develop clearer career paths for younger academics.
Objective 5: Increase the satisfaction of ethnic minority staff

| Key performance indicator(s) | Reduce the difference in intention to leave between White and ethnic minority staff from 14% in 2010 to 10% in the next staff survey following December 2014  
Reduce the difference in overall job satisfaction between White and ethnic minority staff from 9% in 2010 to 6% in the next staff survey following December 2014 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Champion</td>
<td>Vice-Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Accountable Executive</td>
<td>Director of Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>The findings of the three staff surveys between 2008 and 2010 show significant differences in overall satisfaction and satisfaction with promotion opportunities. Ethnic minority staff reported a higher intention to leave. Qualitative research at the OU identified that ethnic minority staff are often outside of informal but influential networks of decision makers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector performance</td>
<td>The Equality Challenge Unit report entitled ‘the experience of black and minority ethnic staff in higher education in England’ (2011) reported concern expressed by ethnic minority staff about unequal access to and control of resources, position, decision-making and power. Ethnic minority staff were less likely to be in leadership and management positions felt that senior staff could exercise a high degree of personal discretion affecting their likelihood or not of being understood, supported and advanced in their career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent progress</td>
<td>The BME staff network was re-launched at the end of 2010. A leadership mentoring programme for ethnic minority staff, Aspire, was introduced in 2011.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Challenges | • Few visible role models in leadership positions.  
• Fewer promotion opportunities likely in the next few years.  
• Unconscious bias may lead to exclusion from informal networks of influence.  
• Experience of being in a minority can be isolating for some people. |
| Our approach | • Sponsor leadership mentoring for ethnic minority staff.  
• Proactively engage and support the BME staff network.  
• Conduct qualitative research to assess progress since previous research.  
• Enhance and promote cultural diversity staff learning and development. |
### Objective 6: Increase the satisfaction of disabled staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key performance indicator(s)</th>
<th>Reduce the difference in overall job satisfaction between disabled and non-disabled staff from 6% in 2010 to 4% in the next staff survey following December 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduce the difference in perceived ‘respect, recognition and status’ between disabled and non-disabled Associate Lecturer staff from 7% in 2010 to 5% in the next staff survey following December 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champion</th>
<th>University Secretary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Accountable Executive</td>
<td>Director of Human Resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Rationale
The findings of the three staff surveys between 2008 and 2010 show significant differences in overall satisfaction, satisfaction with promotion opportunities, unit management, job security, work-related stress, and assessment of the supportive nature of the management environment. The Associate Lecturer staff survey in 2010 showed a significant difference on the ‘respect, recognition and status’ scale.

#### Sector performance
The Equality Challenge Unit report entitled ‘enabling equality: furthering disability equality for staff in higher education’ (2011) reported that there was broad institutional focus on making reasonable adjustments for disabled staff, but significantly less attention paid to broader policy areas, such as recruitment, continuing professional development and progression. Only 4% of questionnaire respondents reported that they had received positive support, provisions or adjustments in career development and promotion.

#### Recent progress
A disabled staff network was launched in 2010.

#### Challenges
- Fewer promotion opportunities likely in the next few years.
- Limited information to date about reasons for lower levels of satisfaction.
- Distribution of responsibility to make reasonable adjustments can lead to inconsistent responses.

#### Our approach
- Sponsor leadership mentoring for disabled staff.
- Proactively engage and support the disabled staff network.
- Conduct qualitative research to identify and address barriers to staff satisfaction.
- Enhance and promote existing resources for managers in supporting disabled staff and making reasonable adjustments.
**Objective 7: Reduce the gender pay gap**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key performance indicator(s)</th>
<th>Reduce the gender pay gap for internal academic/research staff from 8.5% in December 2010 to 6.5% by December 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Champion</td>
<td>Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Curriculum and Qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Accountable Executive</td>
<td>Deputy Director of Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>For most job types and roles, there is no pay gap. For the highest grade job roles, men earn more than women and for the lowest grade job roles, women earn more than men. These differences are largely explained by the higher numbers of men and women in those grades respectively. However there is a significant pay gap between male and female academic staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector performance</td>
<td>The median gender pay gap across the sector for academic staff was 13.5% in 2009/10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent progress</td>
<td>This is a new objective identified as a result of a pay analysis carried out in 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further analysis shows that the most significant pay gap exists at the professorial level, and is explained by the higher proportion of male professors. There are no significant differences across faculties. A paper was considered on this subject by the Staff Strategy Committee in February 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A further analysis has identified six key barriers to the progression of women to senior roles at the OU:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. The mechanisms used to make appointments to senior roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Lack of clarity of career paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Lack of clarity and transparency of skills and competencies required at senior levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Inadequate promotion of flexible working and work/life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Lack of visible role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Lack of confidence amongst some women arising from effects of indirect discrimination and subtle forms of exclusion and stereotyping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>• Salary costs cannot escalate in the current financial climate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fewer promotion opportunities in the next few years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our approach</td>
<td>• Understand best practice in addressing the gender pay gap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Respond to the identified barriers to progression of women to senior roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consider changes to procedures and guidelines in relation to recruitment and selection, promotions, discretionary increments, career breaks and maternity leave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increase pay transparency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Objective 8: Improve equality monitoring information

| Key performance indicator(s) | Ability to identify and count students with caring responsibilities in advance of the 2014/15 academic year  
Accurate data on staff returning from maternity leave by the reporting period ending December 2014  
Achieve at least 65% for religion or belief and sexual orientation staff declaration by the end of 2015  
Achieve at least 50% for religion or belief and sexual orientation new student declaration by 2014/15 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### Champions
- University Secretary and Director, Students

### Senior Accountable Executive
- Head of Equality and Diversity

### Rationale
It is currently not possible to measure the experience of staff and students across all of the characteristics included in the University's equality scheme.4

### Sector performance
The Higher Education Statistics Agency is introducing new reporting classifications that will enable institutions to report staff and student religion or belief and sexual orientation. Benchmarking will be possible in the future. A considerable number of higher education institutions have already introduced this monitoring for staff, and some have done so or are in the process of doing so for students. The Equality and Human Rights Commission recommends monitoring the proportion of staff returning from maternity leave as an important equality indicator.

### Recent progress
- New monitoring questions have been agreed for religion or belief, sexual orientation and for community background in Northern Ireland.
- A new website resource is being developed to encourage increased staff declaration.

### Challenges
- Major changes to all OU systems are being planned that may affect timescales.
- Staff and students perceive risks associated with declaring information.

### Our approach
- Define specifications, ensuring alignment of classifications with sector to enable reporting and comparison.
- Raise awareness of the benefits of declaring equality data and of how data is protected.
- Embed revised questions at point of student registration and staff recruitment.
- Ensure students and staff are encouraged and enabled to update information regularly.

---

4 It is not our intention to introduce monitoring for gender identity. We have a legal duty to protect the privacy of individuals who have fully transitioned and we will not retain any records relating to gender change. Our approach to understanding and addressing transgender equality is to rely on qualitative information derived from engagement and research.
Objective 9: Improve equality policy and guidance for staff and students

| Key performance indicator(s) | Improved policy and guidance for transgender staff and students, by June 2012
|                            | Improved policy and guidance for students during pregnancy and maternity, by December 2012
|                            | Improved policy and guidance for students religion or belief, by June 2013
|                            | Improved policy and guidance for staff and students with caring responsibilities, by December 2013 |

**Champions**
- University Secretary and Director, Students

**Senior Accountable Executive**
- Head of Equality and Diversity

**Rationale**
We have several policies, guidance documents and operational procedures to provide support for staff and students in relation to the characteristics of gender identity, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and caring responsibilities, however these are distributed and sometimes not as transparent as they could be. Information provided directly to staff and students with respect to particular needs and circumstances could be improved.

**Sector performance**
There is significant variation in performance and arrangements across the sector. The Equality Challenge Unit has published good practice guides for each of these characteristics.

**Recent progress**
- An action plan for students as carers has been developed.
- Guidance has been improved so as to provide more consistent support for students during pregnancy and maternity while at Residential Schools.
- Revised policy and guidance for transgender staff and students is being developed.

**Challenges**
- Staff and students may become overwhelmed if they are provided with more information than they need.
- Researching and developing detailed guidance that covers all situations and possibilities that might arise is time-intensive.
- Existence of policy and guidance is not a guarantee that it will be used or observed in practice.

**Our approach**
- Involve people with relevant characteristics and representative groups and networks in the development of policy and guidance.
- Test policy and guidance prior to implementation.
- Ensure policy and guidance is easily accessible.
- Evaluate to ensure effective implementation.
Annex A: Responsibilities in furthering the objectives

Champions (members of the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive)

The champion acts as the main sponsor for the objective. The champion is accountable for ensuring the objective is aligned to the University’s strategy and that it supports the University’s vision of a fair and just society.

The University’s published vision of a fair and just society is as follows:

“We are creating an inclusive university community and a society where people are treated with dignity and respect, where inequalities are challenged, and where we anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances, so that everyone can achieve their potential.”

Specifically, the Champion will:
- Demonstrate leadership, passion and enthusiasm for the objective
- Create a receptive environment for the change
- Make organisational priority judgements in order to make resources available
- Resolve issues that cannot be resolved by the Senior Accountable Executive

Senior Accountable Executives

The Senior Accountable Executive (SAE) will provide strategic ownership and leadership for the delivery of the objective, supported by the Equality and Diversity Team.

Specifically, the SAE will:
- Agree the strategic approach to be taken to address the objective
- Assess the adequacy of actions put in place to achieve the objective
- Provide an annual progress report to the Champion and to the Equality and Diversity Management Group
- Identify remedial action and resource to address barriers and challenges

Equality and Diversity Team

The Equality and Diversity Team will work closely with the SAE to support the advancement of the objective.

Specifically, the E&D Team will:
- Keep records of the University’s knowledge and past approaches in relation to the objective and share this with the SAE and others
- Collate and report progress by different units in relation to the objectives through the annual equality reporting and planning process
- Monitor and report progress against the institutional key performance indicators
- Provide administrative support for any project or review meetings instigated by the SAE
Annex B: Our equality objectives and equality law

The Open University, as a public authority, is required to comply with the public sector equality duty as specified by Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act;
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
3. 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
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

In addition to the above ‘general duty’, public authorities must carry out ‘specific duties’, which are intended to help to meet the general duty and ensure transparency. There are different specific duties in England, Scotland and Wales. The Open University is required to meet the legal duties in England only, however as a UK-wide public authority, we have agreed the following principles:

a) Recognising our role in supporting the different Governments of the UK to address equality priorities determined through the democratic process in each country, we will comply with all of the duties in each country, regardless of whether or not we are legally bound by them. We will deviate from this position only where such an approach would be disproportionate.

b) Recognising the need to develop procedural arrangements that can be easily understood and implemented by the majority of OU staff, we will adopt a universal approach wherever possible. We will deviate from this position only where there is a significant difference between the duties in different nations, or where applying a universal principle would be disproportionate.

The specific duties set out a number of requirements. This report addresses only the duties that relate to the development, publication and review of equality objectives.
The relevant specific duties for **England** are:

- To prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable objective(s)
- By no later than 6 April 2012, and
- Subsequently at intervals of no greater than 4 years.

The relevant specific duties for **Scotland** are:

- To publish a set of equality outcomes
- By no later than 30 April 2013, and
- Subsequently at intervals of not more than 4 years.
- In preparing the equality outcomes, to take reasonable steps to involve persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and any person which appears to represent the interests of those persons, and consider relevant evidence relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic.
- If a set of equality outcomes does not include every relevant protected characteristic, to publish the reasons for proceeding in this way.

The relevant specific duties for **Wales** are:

- To publish a strategic equality plan, which includes a statement setting out equality objectives, including the steps the authority has taken or intends to take to achieve each objective, the timeframe for achieving each objective and how the authority intends to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the steps
- By no later than 2 April 2012, and
- Subsequently at intervals of at least every 4 years.
- To specifically consider the need to have equality objectives that address the causes of any pay difference.
- When making, remaking and revising the strategic equality plan, engage with people and have due regard to relevant information.
- If there is no objective in respect of one or more protected characteristics, to provide an explanation of that decision.

The equality duty in **Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland has a different regulatory framework and the University is required by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to produce an equality scheme, which must be approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. While the objectives set out here are intended to be UK-wide, the Commission will only approve the University’s revised equality scheme as it relates to functions delivered in Northern Ireland. It does not have powers to approve specific equality objectives or action plans. The University will continue to work closely with the Commission to ensure that our UK-wide scheme meets the requirements of the equality duty in Northern Ireland.
This page is intentionally left blank