Equality Scheme for The South West College

Drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Siobhan Gorman

Equality & HR Officer

South West College

2 Mountjoy Road

Omagh

County Tyrone

BT79 7AH Telephone Number 02882250109 Ext

3692

E-mail siobhan.gorman@swc.ac.uk

Approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on **25th January 2012**

Foreword

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act[1].

In our Equality Scheme which was approved in January 2012, we set out how the South West College proposed to fulfil their Section 75 statutory duties.

We will continue to commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that the Equality Scheme is implemented effectively and on time.

We commit to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress.

We will continue to develop and deliver programmes of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff and Governing Body are aware of our Equality Scheme and our obligations.

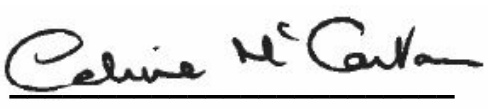
We, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Principle and Chief Executive of South West College, are fully committed to effectively fulfilling our Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions (including service provision, employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of our Equality Scheme.

We realise the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. Our Equality Scheme demonstrates our commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. It also offers the

[1] See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme.

opportunity to people who perceive that we have not complied with our Equality Scheme to raise a complaint.

On behalf of South West College and our staff we are pleased to support and endorse this Equality Scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with Section 75 of and Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and with reference to the Equality Commission guidelines.



Mrs Celine McCartan
Principal and Chief Executive



Dr. Nicholas O'Shiel
Chair of the Governing Body

Date: 24 June 2026

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Chapter 1 - Introduction
Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires The South West College to comply with two statutory duties:

Section 75 (1)

In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland we are required 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.

Section 75 (2)

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

"Functions" include the "powers and duties" of a public authority[2]. This includes our employment and procurement functions. Please see below under "Who we are and what we do" for a detailed explanation of our functions.

How we propose to fulfil the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of South West College

1.2 Schedule 9 4. (1) of the Act requires The South West College as a designated public authority, to set out in an Equality Scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to its relevant functions. This Equality Scheme is intended for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and our plan for their implementation.

1.3 The South West College is committed to the discharge of our Section 75 in all parts of our organisation and we will commit the necessary available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that our Equality Scheme can be implemented effectively.

Who we are and what we do

1.4 The South West College was established on 1 August 2007, under the provision of the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. The South West College comprises the former Colleges of East Tyrone, Fermanagh and Omagh. The College provides a wide range of education and training programmes from Levels 0 – 7 across a wide range of Work Based Learning, Vocational, Further and Higher education.

1.5 The College is an incorporated College of Further and Higher Education, which is governed by a Governing Body, appointed by Department for the Economy (DfE) to serve a term of 4 years. The Governors are drawn from local business, industry or professions, elected staff and student governors, co-optees and the Principle and Chief Executive of the College.

1.6 There are a number of specialist subcommittees of the Governing Body to deal with specific areas such as Education, Staffing, Audit, Finance & General Purposes. Statutory responsibility for the effective implementation of the Equality Scheme and compliance with the duties lies with the Governing Body.

1.7 The Principle and Chief Executive of the College, who is also the Accounting Officer, is responsible for the operational management of the College, while the Governing Body provides governance and the strategic direction for the College.

1.8 The College performs a number of principal roles:

- The College actively engages learners from local schools through the 14–19 Entitlement Framework, offering full-time and part-time vocational education programmes, contracted training, and an expanding portfolio of Further and Higher Education programmes and opportunities.
- We are committed to supporting lifelong learning and skills development, embedding principles of social inclusion and cohesion within our curriculum design and service planning.
- The College delivers a comprehensive range of social inclusion programmes. These are designed to ensure appropriate support mechanisms are in place, including outreach mentors who work within communities to engage participants and facilitate their transition into mainstream College provision.
- The South West College is a recognised leader in technology and innovation support for industry across the region and beyond. Through our pioneering Innovation Centres, we provide research and development (R&D) and technology transfer services to approximately 150 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) annually, in sectors such as engineering, renewable energy, and digital technologies.

1.9 In performance of the above roles The South West College undertakes functions in the following areas:

- **Provision of Facilities:** Acquiring and maintaining of premises and equipment to ensure suitable accommodation and resources for an effective learning experience.
- **Staff Recruitment and Development:** Recruiting appropriately qualified and experienced staff and supporting their on-going professional development to deliver the education and training.
- **Student Recruitment:** Enrolling students onto courses tailored to meet their needs and aspirations.

1.10 To support and implement these functions and services, The South West College operates within policy guidelines established by the Department of Economy (DfE), as well as policies agreed through sectoral negotiation and approved by the College's Governing Body.

Chapter 2 Our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the section 75 duties

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

2.1 Some of our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties are outlined in other relevant parts of this Equality Scheme.

In addition, we have the following arrangements in place for assessing our compliance:

Responsibilities and reporting

2.2 South West College is committed to fulfilment of our obligations under Section 75 of the Norther Ireland Act 1998 across all areas of our work.

2.3 Overall responsibility for the ensuring the effective implementation of our Equality Scheme rests with the Principle and Chief Executive . This role is accountable to the College's Governing Body for the development, implementation, maintenance and review of the Equality Scheme in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as well as any good practice or guidance issued by the Equality Commission. The Principal and Chief Executive is also responsible for the mainstreaming of equality throughout all College functions.

2.4 The Principle and Chief Executive established an Equality Working Group (EWG) comprising staff and student representatives, along with Governing Body officials to oversee the effective implementation of Section 75 within the College and for assessing the College's compliance with the legislation.

2.5 The Principle and Chief Executive will keep the current reporting and management arrangements under review and take action to improve the current arrangements when necessary.

2.6 If you have any questions or comments regarding our Equality Scheme, please contact the College's Equality & HR Officer, who is the main point of contact for equality-related matters.

Siobhan Gorman
Equality & HR Officer
South West College
2 Mountjoy Road
Omagh
County Tyrone
BT79 7AH
Telephone Number 02882250109 Ext: 3692
E-mail siobhan.gorman@swc.ac.uk

2.7 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into our strategic and operational business plans[2].

2.8 Employees' job descriptions will reflect their obligation to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme.

2.9 Lecturing staff will have an opportunity to reflect on and provide evidence of examples of how they promote equality, inclusion and learning in the curriculum through the SEAP (Self-Evaluation and Action Plan)

2.10 The South West College will prepare an annual report on the progress made on implementing the arrangements set out in this Equality Scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 annual progress report).

[2] See Appendix 4 'Timetable for measures proposed' and section 2.11 of this equality scheme.

2.11 The Section 75 annual progress report will be sent to the Equality Commission by 31 August each year and will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission.

2.12 The College's Section 75 annual progress reports is available to view on our website at www.swc.ac.uk or by contacting our Equality & HR Officer (contact details as set out at paragraph 2.6).

2.13 The College will liaise closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our Equality Scheme is maintained.

Action plan/action measures

2.14 The South West College has developed an Equality Improvement Plan **(formerly referred to as an action plan)** to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. This Equality Improvement Plan is set out in Appendix 6 to this Equality Scheme.

2.15 To enable the College to link its Equality Improvement Plan with the Corporate Planning cycle, the Equality Improvement Plan will be reviewed and updated annually in keeping with the College's business planning cycle.

2.16 We have consulted on our Equality Improvement Plan as part of the consultation process for the Equality Scheme.

2.17 We will monitor our progress on the delivery of our action measures annually and update the Equality Improvement Plan as necessary to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to our functions and work. The College will inform the Equality Commission of any changes or amendments to the Equality Improvement Plans through the Annual Progress Report.

2.18 Our Section 75 annual progress report will incorporate information on progress we have made in implementing our Equality Improvement Plans

action measures.

2.19 Our Equality Improvement Plan is available on our website www.swc.ac.uk or by contacting the Equality and HR Officer using the contact details set out at 2.6 above.

Chapter 3 Our arrangements for consulting

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a)) - on matters to which a duty (SECTION 75 (1) or (2)) is likely to be relevant (including details of the persons to be consulted).

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b)) on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by us on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

3.1 We recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our Equality Scheme, equality impact assessments and other matters determined by the College to be relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties.

3.2 We are committed to carrying out consultation in accordance with the principles (as contained in the Equality Commission's guidance *'Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)'*):

3.2.2 Initially all consultees (see Appendix 3), as a matter of course, will be notified (by email or post) of the matter / policy being consulted upon to ensure they are aware of all consultations. Thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of both our and our consultees' resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter / policy being consulted upon and to whom the matter / policy is of particular relevance. This may include for example regional or local consultations, sectoral or thematic consultation etc.

3.2.2 Consultation with stakeholders will begin as early as possible and periodically seek their views on their preferred consultation methods.

Methods of consultation could include:

- 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/opt out of the consultation
- Online discussions or
- Telephone consultations.

This list is not exhaustive, and we may develop other additional methods of consultation more appropriate to key stakeholders and the matter being consulted upon.

3.2.3 We will consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process for all affected groups and individuals.

Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats[3], in a timely manner.

3.2.4 Where necessary training will be provided to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees.

3.2.5 The consultation period normally lasts for a minimum of twelve weeks to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves as part of the process of forming a view. However, in exceptional circumstances when this timescale is not feasible (for example implementing EU Directives or UK wide legislation, meeting Health and Safety requirements, addressing urgent public health matters or complying with Court judgements), we may shorten timescales to eight weeks or less before the policy is implemented. We may continue consultation thereafter and will review the policy as part of our monitoring commitments[4].

3.2.6 Where, under these exceptional circumstances, we must implement a policy immediately, as it is beyond the College's control, we may consult

[3] See Chapter 6 of our equality scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide.

[4] Please see below at 4.27 to 4.31 for details on monitoring.

after implementation of the policy, in order to ensure that any impacts of the policy are considered.

3.2.7 In some circumstances consideration will be given to the extension of the consultation period for example during holiday periods.

3.2.8 We are conscious of the fact that affected individuals and representative groups may have different needs. We will take appropriate measures to ensure full participation in any meetings held. We will consider for example the time of day, the appropriateness of the venue, in particular whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary, and whether the provision of childcare and support for other carers is required.

3.2.9 We make all relevant information available to consultees in appropriate formats to ensure meaningful consultation. This includes detailed information on the policy proposal being consulted upon and any relevant quantitative and qualitative data.

3.2.10 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.

3.2.11 We provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner. A feedback report is prepared which includes information on the policy consulted upon, comments received and our consideration of and responses to these comments. The feedback will be provided in formats suitable to the consultees. (Please see also 6.3).

3.3 A list of our consultees is included in this equality scheme at Appendix 3. It can also be obtained from our website at www.swc.ac.uk/equality or by contacting the Equality & HR Officer as documented in paragraph 2.6.

3.4 Our consultation list is not exhaustive and is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to our functions and policies.

3.5 We welcome enquiries from any person/s or organisations wishing to be added to the list of consultees. Please contact the Equality & HR Officer (contact details at 2.6 above) to provide your contact details and have your areas of interest noted or have your name/details removed or amended. Please also inform us at this stage if you would like information sent to you in a particular format or language.

Chapter 4 Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b); Schedule 9 4. (2) (c); Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1); Schedule 9 9.(2))

Our arrangements for assessing the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (b))

4.1 In the context of Section 75, 'policy' is very broadly defined, and it covers all the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland. In respect of this Equality Scheme, the term policy is used for any (proposed/amended/existing) strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, e.g., 'draft', 'pilot', 'high level' or 'sectoral'.

4.2 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy, as required by Schedule 9, 9 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

4.3 The College uses the tools of screening and equality impact assessment to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. In carrying out these assessments we will relate them to the intended outcomes of the policy in question and will also take cognisance of the Equality Commission guidance:

- The guidance on screening, including the screening template, as detailed in the Commission's guidance *'Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)'* and

- On undertaking an equality impact assessment as detailed in the Commission's guidance *'Practical guidance on equality impact assessment (February 2005)'.*

Screening

4.4 The purpose of screening is to identify those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

4.5 Screening is completed at the earliest opportunity in the policy development/review process. Policies which we propose to adopt will be subject to screening prior to implementation. For more detailed strategies or policies that are to be put in place through a series of stages, we will screen at various stages during implementation.

4.6 The Policy owner has the responsibility for ensuring that the policy is equality screened and must take the lead role in the screening of a policy as they have the authority to make changes to that policy. However, screening should also involve other relevant team members, for example, equality specialists, those who implement the policy.

4.7 The following questions are applied to all our policies as part of the screening process:

- What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?
- To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

4.8 In order to answer the screening questions, we will consider all relevant and available information and data, both qualitative and quantitative. In taking this evidence into account we will consider the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 equality categories.

Any screening decision will be informed by this evidence.

4.9 Completion of screening and taking into account our consideration of the answers to all four screening questions set out in 4.7 above, will lead to one of the following three outcomes:

1. The policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment
2. the policy has been 'screened out' with mitigation[5] or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted
3. the policy has been 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

4.10 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'minor' in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we will consider measures that will mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations. In certain circumstances it may be necessary to proceed with an equality impact assessment rather than mitigate the impacts.

4.11 Where we mitigate we will outline in our screening template the reasons to support this decision together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

4.12 This screening decision will be 'signed off' by those involved in equality screening the policy within the College.

4.13 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'major' in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we will normally subject the policy to an equality impact

[5] Mitigation – Where an assessment (screening in this case) reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity and / or good relations, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories.

assessment if the College still decides to proceed with that policy. This screening decision will be 'signed off' by those involved in equality screening the policy within the College.

4.14 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'none', in respect of all of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, we will give details of the reasons for the decision taken. This screening decision will be 'signed off' by those involved in equality screening the policy within the College.

4.15 Our screening reports will be published quarterly [see below at 4.20 - 4.22 and 4.23 for details].

4.16 If a consultee, including the Equality Commission, raises a concern about a screening decision based on supporting evidence, we will review the screening decision.

Equality impact assessment

4.17 An equality impact assessment (EQIA) is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, whether that policy is formal or informal, and irrespective of the scope of that policy. The primary function of an EQIA is to determine the extent of any impact of a policy upon the Section 75 categories and to determine if the impact is an adverse one. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the likely positive outcomes of a policy and to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

4.18 Once a policy is screened and screening has identified that an equality impact assessment is necessary, we will carry out the EQIA in accordance with Equality Commission guidance if we decide to proceed with this policy.

The equality impact assessment will be carried out as part of the policy development process, before the policy is implemented.

4.19 Any equality impact assessment will be subject to consultation at the appropriate stage(s). (For details see above Chapter 3 “Our Arrangements for Consulting”).

Our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments of the likely impact of policies we have adopted or propose to adopt on the promotion of equality of opportunity
(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1))

4.20 We make publicly available the results of our assessments (screening and EQIA) of the likely impact of our policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

What we publish

4.21 Screening Reports

The College will develop a screening template as a standard for all screening exercises. Once completed this template will be known as the College Screening form for each screening exercise.

The College will publish all equality screening forms following each screening exercise to facilitate the communication of the outcome of this exercise.

These are published once completed. Screening forms detail:

- A statement of the aim(s) of the policy/policies to which the assessment relates;
- Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact;

- Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity;
- Screening decisions, i.e:
  - whether the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment;
  - whether the policy has been 'screened out' with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted;
  - whether the policy has been 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted;
- Where applicable, a timetable for conducting equality impact assessments

4.22 Equality impact assessments

EQIA reports are published once the impact assessment has been completed. These reports include:

- A statement of the aim of the policy assessed
- Information and data collected
- Details of the assessment of impact(s)
- Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
- Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity
- Consultation responses
- The decision taken
- Future monitoring plans.

How we publish the information

4.23 All information published will be accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see 6.3 below.

Where we publish the information

4.24 Screening Forms and the results of equality impact assessments will be available on our website www.swc.ac.uk and by contacting the Equality Officer (contact details as set out at 2.6 above)

4.25 In addition to the above, screening forms (electronic link or hard copy on request if more suitable for recipients) which include all policies screened over a 3-month period will be available to those consultees who wish to receive a copy on a quarterly basis.

Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (c))

4.26 Monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements. Monitoring Section 75 information involves the processing of sensitive personal data (data relating to the racial or ethnic origin of individuals, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc). In order to carry out monitoring in a confidential and effective manner, the College follows guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and takes cognisance of the Equality Commission's monitoring guidance.

4.27 We are committed to monitoring policies with identified adverse impacts and to identifying opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Equality Commission guidance

4.28 The systems we have established to monitor the impact of policies and identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations are:

- The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant primary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories (where possible) on an ongoing basis

- The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
- An audit of existing information systems within one year of approval of this equality scheme to identify the extent of current monitoring and take action to address any gaps in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions
- Undertaking or commissioning new data if necessary.

4.29 If over a two-year period monitoring and evaluation show that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, we will ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups.

4.30 We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis together with other monitoring information.

Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring
(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d))

4.31 Schedule 9 4. (2) (d) requires us to publish the results of the monitoring of adverse impacts of policies we have adopted. However, we are committed to monitoring more broadly and the results of our policy monitoring are published.

4.32 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our Section 75 annual progress report [see 2.7]

4.33 All monitoring information published is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request from the Equality Officer (contact details are set out at 2.6 above). Please see below at 6.3 for details.

Chapter 5 Staff training

(Schedule 9 4.(2) (e))

Commitment to staff training

5.1 The College recognises that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in the effective implementation of our Section 75 duties.

5.2 The Governing Body and Chief Executive Officer wish to positively communicate the College's commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally.

To this end, we have introduced an effective communication and training programme for all staff and will ensure that our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevant publications.

Training objectives

5.3 The College will provide training for its staff, which will aim to achieve the following objectives:

- To raise awareness of the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme
- To provide those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and EQIA) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively;
- To provide those staff who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
- To provide those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- To provide those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the College's equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

Awareness raising and training arrangements

5.4 The following arrangements are in place to ensure all our staff and Governing Body are aware of and understand our equality obligations.

- We will provide access to copies of the full equality scheme for all staff; ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively.
- Staff in the College will receive information on this equality scheme within 6 months after approval of the scheme.
- The Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new staff.
- Focused training is provided for key staff within the College who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our equality scheme commitments (for example those involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation).
- Where appropriate, training will be provided to ensure staff are aware of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups.
- When appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure staff are kept up to date with Section 75 developments.

5.5 Training and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups and relevant staff groups.

5.6 In order to share resources and expertise, the College will, where possible, work closely with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery of training.

Monitoring and evaluation

5.7 Our training programme is subject to the following monitoring and evaluation arrangements:

- We evaluate the extent to which all participants in this training programme have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve each of the above objectives.
- The extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the Section 75 annual progress report, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.

Chapter 6 Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (f))

6.1 The College is committed to ensuring that the information we disseminate and the services we provide, are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that this remains the case.

Access to Information

6.2 We are aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others.

In particular:

- People with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities may require printed information in other formats.
- Members of ethnic minority groups, whose first language is not English, may have difficulties with information provided only in English.
- Children and young people may not be able to fully access or understand information.

6.3 To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

6.4 Alternative formats may include (but are not limited to) Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

6.5 The College liaises with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and takes account of existing and developing good practice.

6.6 We will respond to reasonable requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 10 working days.

6.7 The College will take cognisance of the needs of children and young people, people with learning disabilities and minority ethnic communities when providing information.

6.8 In disseminating information publicly we will seek to advertise in the press where appropriate.

6.9 We seek to ensure that our website is accessible and provides information in an accessible format.

Access to services

6.10 The College is committed to promoting equality for all those who use our services and will take all reasonable steps to make our services as accessible as possible to all service users across the Section 75 categories.

6.11 The College also adheres to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

Assessing public access to information and services

6.12 The College has monitoring arrangements in place across all its functions to monitor service delivery, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

Chapter 7 Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme

(Schedule 9 4. (3) (b))

7.1 Appendix 4 outlines our timetable for all measures proposed within this equality scheme. The measures outlined in this timetable will be incorporated into our business planning cycle.

7.2 This timetable is different from and in addition to our commitment to developing action plans/action measures to specifically address inequalities and further promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We have included in our equality scheme a commitment to develop an action plan. Accordingly, this commitment it is listed in the timetable of measures at Appendix 4. For information on these action measures please see above at 2.11 – 2.1

Chapter 8 Our complaints procedure

(Schedule 9 10.)

8.1 The College is responsive to the views of members of the public and will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us.

8.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the Act refers to complaints. A person can make a complaint to a public authority if the complainant believes he or she may have been directly affected by an alleged failure of the authority to comply with its approved equality scheme.

8.3 If the complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale, the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission.

8.4 A person wishing to make a complaint that the College has failed to comply with its approved equality scheme should contact the Equality contact person named at 2.6 of this document.

8.5 We will in the first instance acknowledge receipt of each complaint within 5 working days of receipt.

8.6 The Equality Officer will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint and will respond substantively to the complainant within one (1) month of the date of receiving the letter of complaint. Under certain circumstances, if the complexity of the matter requires a longer period, the period for response to the complainant may be extended to two (2) months. In those circumstances, the complainant will be advised of the extended period within one month of making the complaint.

8.7 During this process the complainant will be kept fully informed of the progress of the investigation into the complaint and of any outcomes.

8.8 If dissatisfied with the outcome an appeal can be made to the Chief Executive Officer of the College who will review the complaint or nominate a senior manager to review the complaint.

8.9 In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, the College will cooperate fully, providing access in a timely manner to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require.

8.10 Similarly, the College will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-paragraph 11 (1) (b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

8.11 The College will make all efforts to implement promptly and in full any recommendations arising out of any Commission investigation.

Chapter 9 Publication of our equality scheme

(Schedule 9 4. (3) (c))

9.1 The College's Equality Scheme is available on our website at: www.swc.ac.uk/equality

9.2 The following arrangements are in place for the publication in a timely manner of our equality scheme to ensure equality of access:

- We will make every effort to communicate widely the existence of our equality scheme. This may include a press release, advertisement in the press, Staff Hub and Student Hub on Gateway, publications, posters and induction materials, prospectus and information leaflets.
- We will email a link to our approved equality scheme to our consultees on our consultation lists. Other consultees without e-mail will be notified by letter that the scheme is available on request. We will respond to requests for the equality scheme in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 10 working days.
- Our equality scheme is available on request in alternative formats such as Easy Read, Braille, large print, audio formats (CD, mp3, DAISY) and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.

9.3 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix 3 of the equality scheme (available on College website: www.swc.ac.uk).

Chapter 10 Review of our equality scheme

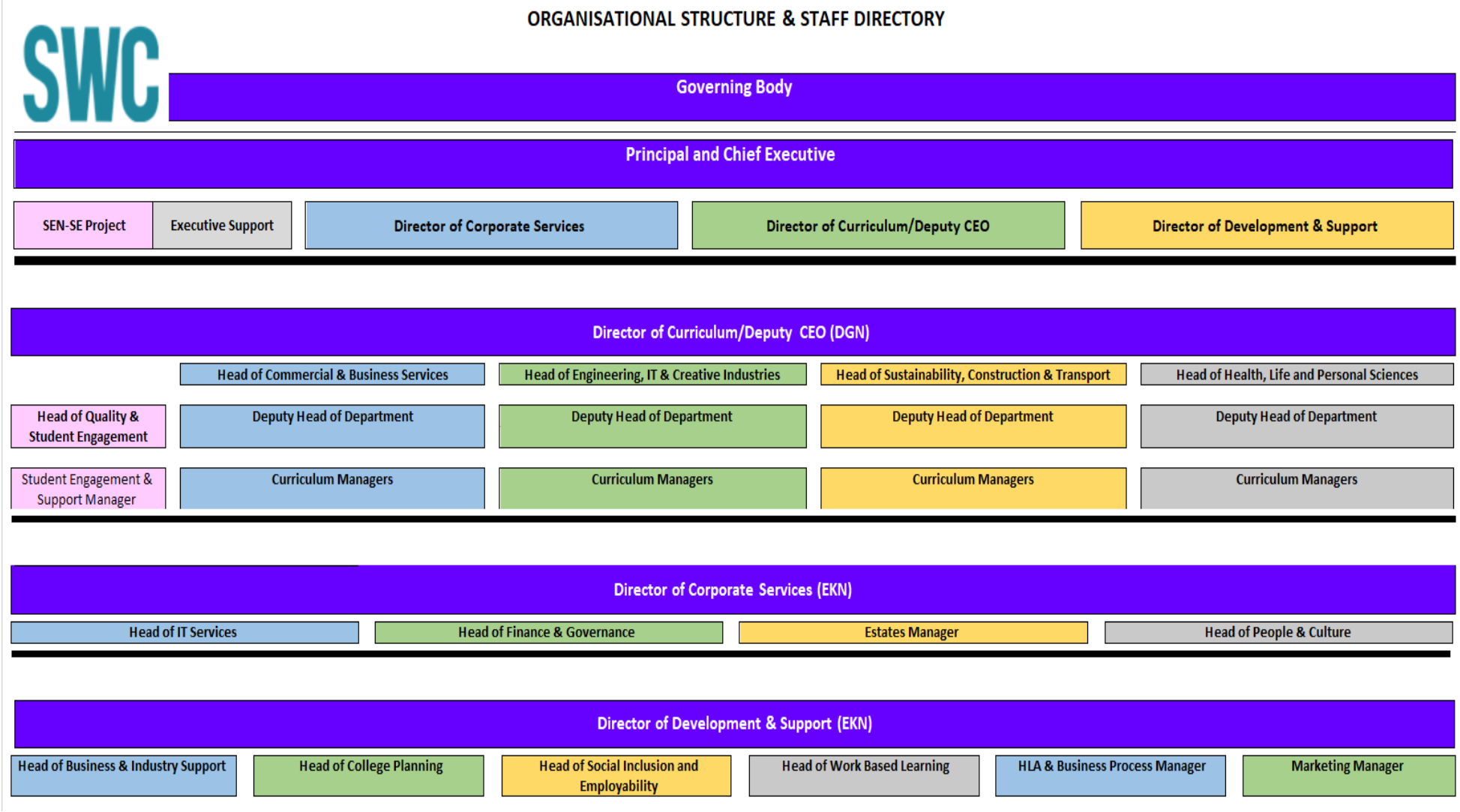
(Schedule 9 8. (3))

10.1 As required by Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 we will conduct a thorough review of this equality scheme. This review will take place either within five years of submission of this equality scheme to the Equality Commission or within a shorter timescale to allow alignment with the review of other planning cycles.

10.2 The review will evaluate the effectiveness of our scheme in relation to the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties relevant to our functions in Northern Ireland.

10.3 In undertaking this review we will take cognisance of the guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public and sent to the Equality Commission.

Appendix 1: Organisational Structure



Appendix 2: Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland purposes

(Please note, this is for illustration purposes only, it is not exhaustive)

Category	Example groups
Religious Belief	Buddhist; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Muslims, people of no religious belief; Protestants; Sikh; other faiths. For the purposes of Section 75, the term "religious belief" is the same definition as that used in the *Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order* [6] . Therefore, "religious belief" also includes any *perceived* religious belief (or perceived lack of belief) and, in employment situations only, it also covers any *"similar philosophical belief".*
Political Opinion	Nationalist generally; Unionists generally; members/supporters of other political parties.
Racial Group	Black people; Chinese; Indians; Pakistanis; people of mixed ethnic background; Polish; Roma; Travellers; White people.
Men & Women Generally	Men (including boys); Trans-gendered people; Transsexual people; women (including girls).
Marital Status	Civil partners or people in civil partnerships; divorced people; married people; separated people; single people; widowed people.
Age	Children and young people; older people.
Persons with a Disability	Persons with disabilities as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

[6] See Section 98 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which states: *"In this Act… "political opinion" and "religious belief" shall be construed in accordance with Article 2(3) and (4) of the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998."*

Persons with dependants	Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person.
Sexual orientation	Bisexual people; heterosexual people; gay or lesbian people.

Appendix 3: List of consultees

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

The following is a list of those public authorities, voluntary, community, trade union and other groups which the South West College considers may have an interest in the work of the College. The College has sought to identify as many groups as possible but recognises that the list is not exhaustive and may be amended in the light of experience. If your group has not been included and you wish to be considered for inclusion please contact the Equality Officer. (Contact details at para 2.6)

Age (older and younger people)

Age NI
Barnardo's
Extra Care
Include Youth
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children & Young People
Youth Link NI

Dependants

Carers NI
Family Support NI
Home Start
Parenting NI

Disability

Action on Hearing Loss
Action Mental Health
Autism NI
Disability Action
Guide Dogs for the Blind
MENCAP
National Deaf Children's Society

NI Dyslexia Society

Inspire

Praxis Care

Royal National Institute for the Blind

The Cedar Foundation

Education

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Education Authority

Libraries NI

Ofqual (NI)

Stranmillis University College

Ulster University

Queens University

Belfast Metropolitan College

Northern Regional College

North West Regional College

Southern Regional College

South Eastern Regional College

South West College

Equality and Human Rights

Committee on the Administration of Justice

Equality Coalition

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Gender

Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network

Women's Resource & Development Agency

Women's Aid

SAIL NI

Transgender NI

Good relations

Co-Operation Ireland

Labour Relations Agency

Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

NI Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)

Political

Alliance Party

Democratic Unionist Party

Social Democratic and Labour Party

Sinn Fein

Ulster Unionist Party

Green Party in Northern Ireland

Traditional Unionist Voice

People Before Profit

Public Authorities

Add own local councils

Add own local HSCT

Department for the Economy

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

Race

African & Caribbean Support Organisation NI

An Munia Tober

Bryson Intercultural

Chinese Welfare Association

Craigavon Traveller Support Committee

Indian Community Centre

NI Community of Refugees & Asylum Seekers Northern Ireland Council

Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association

Omagh Ethnic Support Group

South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP)

Religious belief

Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum

Sexual orientation

Cara-Friend

The Rainbow Project

Gay & Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland

Unions

National Associations of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)

National Education Union (NEU)

National Union of Students (NUS)

Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)

Unison

Unite

University and College Union (UCU)

Appendix 4: Timetable for measures proposed (Schedule 9 4. (3) (b))

Equality Scheme Ref:	Action	Responsible Person
Foreword and 1.3	Continue to commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to comply with Section 75 statutory duties and implement Equality Scheme	Principal and Chief Executive
	Review internal arrangements for ensuring effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing progress	Principal and Chief Executive
	Continue to develop and deliver a programme of communication and training for staff and Governing Body members ensuring that staff and Governing Body members are aware of their obligations	Head of People and Culture
2.7	Integrate objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties into strategic and operational business plans	Principal and Chief Executive
2.8	Continue to modify staff job descriptions to reflect their contribution to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the Equality Scheme	Head of People and Culture
2.9	Lecturing staff will have an opportunity to reflect on and provide evidence of examples of how they promote equality, inclusion and learning in the curriculum through the SEAP (Self-Evaluation and Action Plan)	Head of Quality and Student Engagement

2.10 & 2.11	Draft and submit the annual report on progress to the Equality Commission by 31 August each year and post report on website	Equality & HR Officer
2.15	Review Equality Improvement Plan annually	Equality Working Group
2.17	Establish process to monitor action measures and monitor progress	Equality Working Group
3.1	Consult on EQIAs Equality Schemes	Policy Owners
3.1	Consult on Equality Schemes	Equality & HR Officer in consultation with the Equality Commission
3.2	Take into consideration Equality Scheme commitments and Equality Commission guidance for future consultations	Equality & HR Officer in consultation
3.4	Review consultation lists annually	Equality & HR Officer
4.21	Publish screening forms as per commitments	Equality & HR Officer
4.27	Monitor policies with an adverse impact	Policy Owners
4.28	Identify the monitoring information required by the College and Sector and how this will be considered by management	Equality & HR Officer
4.31	Establish process for publishing monitoring results	Equality & HR Officer
5.3	Take forward training actions as stated in Equality Scheme 5.3 and 5.4	Equality & HR Officer

5.4	Make Equality Scheme available to all staff	Equality & HR Officer
5.7	Establish process for monitoring the effectiveness of equality training	Equality & HR Officer
6.1	Review the accessibility of the information provided by the College	Equality & HR Officer
6.3	Establish / Review process for the provision of information in accessible formats	Equality & HR Officer
6.9	Ensure that the website is accessible and so also is any information posted on the website	Equality & HR Officer
6.13	Review process for monitoring in relation to the access of information and services	Compliance / Equality & HR Officer
Chapter 8	Communicate complaints process and ensure process is accessible	Compliance / Equality & HR Officer
Chapter 9	Publish the Equality Scheme and Equality Improvement Plan in keeping with Scheme commitments	Equality & HR Officer

Appendix 5: Glossary of terms

Action plan

A plan which sets out actions a public authority will take to implement its Section 75 statutory duties. It is a mechanism for the realisation of measures to achieve equality outcomes for the Section 75 equality and good relations categories.

Action measures and outcomes

Specific measures to promote equality and good relations for the relevant Section 75 and good relations categories, linked to achievable outcomes, which should be realistic and timely.

Adverse impact

Where a Section 75 category has been affected differently by a policy and the effect is less favourable, it is known as adverse impact. If a policy has an adverse impact on a Section 75 category, a public authority must consider whether or not the adverse impact is unlawfully discriminatory. In either case a public authority must take measures to redress the adverse impact, by considering mitigating measures and/or alternative ways of delivering the policy.

Affirmative action

In general terms, affirmative action can be defined as being anything consistent with the legislation which is necessary to bring about positive change. It is a phrase used in the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (NI) 1998 to describe lawful action that is aimed at promoting equality of opportunity and fair participation in employment between members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities in Northern Ireland.

Consultation

In the context of Section 75, consultation is the process of asking those affected by a policy (i.e., service users, staff, the general public) for their views on how the policy could be implemented more effectively to promote equality of opportunity across the 9 categories. Different circumstances will call for different types of

consultation. Consultations could, for example, include meetings, focus groups, surveys and questionnaires.

Discrimination

The anti-discrimination laws prohibit the following forms of discrimination:

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect Discrimination
- Disability Discrimination
- Victimisation
- Harassment

Brief descriptions of these above terms follow:

Direct discrimination

This generally occurs where a public authority treats a person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) another person, in the same or similar circumstances, on one or more of the statutory non-discrimination grounds. A decision or action that is directly discriminatory will normally be unlawful unless:

a) in an age discrimination case, the decision can be objectively justified, or
b) in any other case, the public authority can rely on a statutory exception that permits it – such as a genuine occupational requirement exception; or, a positive action exception which permits an employer to use “welcoming statements” or to take other lawful positive action to encourage participation by under-represented or otherwise disadvantaged groups.

Indirect discrimination

The definition of this term varies across some of the anti-discrimination laws, but indirect discrimination generally occurs where a public authority applies to all persons a particular provision, criterion or practice, but which is one that has the effect of placing people who share a particular equality characteristic (e.g. the same sex, or religious belief, or race) at a particular disadvantage compared to

other people. A provision, criterion or practice that is indirectly discriminatory will normally be unlawful unless (a) it can be objectively justified, or (b) the public authority can rely on a statutory exception that permits it.

Disability discrimination

In addition to direct discrimination and victimisation and harassment, discrimination against disabled people may also occur in two other ways: namely,

a) disability-related discrimination, and (b) failure to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments. (a) Disability-related discrimination generally occurs where a public authority, without lawful justification, and for a reason which relates to a disabled person's disability, treats that person less favourably that it treats (or, would treat) other people to whom that reason does not (or, would not) apply.

b) Failure to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments: One of the most notable features of the disability discrimination legislation is that in prescribed circumstances it imposes a duty on employers, service providers and public authorities to take such steps as are reasonable to remove or reduce particular disadvantages experienced by disabled people in those circumstances.

Victimisation

This form of discrimination generally occurs where a public authority treats a person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) another person, in the same or similar circumstances, because the person has previously exercised his/her rights under the anti-discrimination laws, or has assisted another person to do so. Victimisation cannot be justified and is always unlawful.

Harassment

Harassment generally occurs where a person is subjected to unwanted conduct that is related to a non-discrimination ground with the purpose, or which has the

effect, of violating their dignity or of creating for them an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment cannot be justified and is always unlawful.

Equality impact assessment

The mechanism underpinning Section 75, where existing and proposed policies are assessed in order to determine whether they have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for the relevant Section 75 categories. Equality impact assessments require the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Equality of opportunity

The prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between people on grounds of characteristics including sex, marital status, age, disability, religious belief, political opinion, dependants, race and sexual orientation. The promotion of equality of opportunity entails more than the elimination of discrimination. It requires proactive measures to be taken to secure equality of opportunity between the categories identified under Section 75.

Equality scheme

A document which outlines a public authority's arrangements for complying with its Section 75 obligations. An equality scheme must include an outline of the public authority's arrangements for carrying out consultations, screening, equality impact assessments, monitoring, training and arrangements for ensuring access to information and services.

Good relations

Although not defined in the legislation, the Commission has agreed the following working definition of good relations: 'the growth of relations and structures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms'.

Mainstreaming equality

The integration of equal opportunities principles, strategies and practices into the every day work of public authorities from the outset. In other words, mainstreaming is the process of ensuring that equality considerations are built into the policy development process from the beginning, rather than being bolted on at the end. Mainstreaming can help improve methods of working by increasing a public authority's accountability, responsiveness to need and relations with the public. It can bring added value at many levels.

Mitigation of adverse impact

Where an equality impact assessment reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories; this is known as mitigating adverse impact.

Monitoring

Monitoring consists of continuously scrutinising and evaluating a policy to assess its impact on the Section 75 categories. Monitoring must be sensitive to the issues associated with human rights and privacy. Public authorities should seek advice from consultees and Section 75 representative groups when setting up monitoring systems. Monitoring consists of the collection of relevant information and evaluation of policies. It is not solely about the collection of data, it can also take the form of regular meetings and reporting of research undertaken. Monitoring is not an end in itself but provides the data for the next cycle of policy screening.

Northern Ireland Act

The Northern Ireland Act, implementing the Good Friday Agreement, received Royal Assent on 19 November 1998. Section 75 of the Act created the statutory equality duties.

Policy

The formal and informal decisions a public authority makes in relation to carrying out its duties.

Defined in the New Oxford English Dictionary as ‘a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government party, business or individual’. In the context of Section 75, the term policies covers all the ways in which a public authority carries out or proposes to carry out its functions relating to Northern Ireland. Policies include unwritten as well as written policies.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data refers to the experiences of individuals from their perspective, most often with less emphasis on numbers or statistical analysis.

Consultations are more likely to yield qualitative than quantitative data.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data refers to numbers, typically derived from either a population in general or samples of that population. This information is often analysed by either using descriptive statistics, which consider general profiles, distributions and trends in the data, or inferential statistics, which are used to determine ‘significance’ either in relationships or differences in the data.

Screening

The procedure for identifying which policies will be subject to equality impact assessment, and how these equality impact assessments will be prioritised. The purpose of screening is to identify the policies, which are likely to have a minor/major impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to improving these policies. Screening requires a systematic review of existing and proposed policies.

Schedule 9

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 sets out detailed provisions for the enforcement of the Section 75 statutory duties, including an outline of what should be included in an equality scheme.

Section 75

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act provides that each public authority is required, in carrying out its 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 and sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to these obligations, each public authority in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Section 75 investigation

An investigation carried out by the Equality Commission, under Schedule 9 of the NI Act 1998, arising from the failure of a public authority to comply with the commitments set out in its approved equality scheme. There are two types of Commission investigation, these are as follows:

a) An investigation of a complaint by an individual who claims to have been directly affected by the failure of a public authority to comply with its approved equality scheme;

b) An investigation initiated by the Commission, where it believes that a public authority may have failed to comply with its approved equality scheme.

Foreword to Appendix 6

The measures in this action plan have been drawn up in accordance with guidelines to be found in Chapter 8 of the Equality Commission's Guide for Public Authorities. An Equality Improvement Plan was developed by the College to assist in informing the measures included in the plan. Specific measures have been included to promote equality of opportunity and good relations for the relevant equality and good relations categories. Overall, the plan reflects a range of initiatives and training measures which, it is considered, will enable the College, as a public authority, to discharge Section 75 duties more efficiently.

Appendix 6: Action plan/action measures

Action	Timescale	Responsible person / Department	Outcome/ measure	Equality Category
Continue implementation and review of the College Affirmative Action plan	Annually	Head of People and Culture Equality & HR Officer	Increased number of applications for posts within the College; a strengthened awareness of the College's inclusive ethos	All
Further embed equality and diversity into the College and Curriculum through awareness raising and promotion	Annually	Head of Quality & Student Engagement Advanced Practitioner Teaching and Learning Student Engagement & Support Manager	Increase in equality events and awareness raising for all equality categories Positive evaluation feedback from all student surveys Increased reference to equality and diversity in college curriculum	All
To increase the participation of disabled people in College committees and strengthen their contribution to College life	Annually	TBC	Increased representation of people with disabilities at committee level Explore the possibility of creating a Virtual tour of all campus and place this on the College website.	Disability

Action	Timescale	Responsible person / Department	Outcome/ measure	Equality Category
			Reviewing support from AccessAble	
Disability / Equality Awareness	Annually	Head of People & Culture Equality & HR Officer	Improved general equality and disability	All
Monitor, review and update the College's Disability Action Plan	On-Going Every 3 years	Head of People & Culture Equality & HR Officer Sector Equality Working Group	To enhance awareness of disability and improve understanding of the supports available across the College.	Disability
Provide a range of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) training to both Support & Academic Staff	Annually	Head of People and Culture Head of Quality & Student Engagement Advanced Practitioner Teaching and Learning	Range of training provided and evaluations received The College continues to deliver a comprehensive equality, diversity and inclusion training programmes, these are evaluated annually through staff reviews and feedback forms. Curriculum Conferences and and training days are underpinned by well-advanced CPD planning for both support and academic staff.	All

Action	Timescale	Responsible person / Department	Outcome/ measure	Equality Category
The College is aiming to achieve their Autism NI Impact Award	Aim to achieve by April 2026 Review Annually	Head of People and Culture Equality & HR Officer Advanced Practitioner Teaching and Learning	**Staff Training Completed and Embedded:** Staff at all levels have increased understanding of autism and feel confident supporting autistic students, staff, and visitors. Completion rates of CPD-certified autism training. Pre - and post-training evaluation results showing increased knowledge and confidence. **Implementation of a Tailored Autism-Friendly Action Plan** The College environment is more predictable, accessible, and supportive for autistic learners, staff, and visitors. Number of practical adjustments implemented (signage, quiet spaces, user friendly timetables, sensory-friendly practices).	All
Create e-learning modules on: Module 1: Introduction to autism	Annually	Sector Learning and Development Forum	As part of staff develop the Sector Learning and Development Team will develop 4 modules on: understanding of autism and how to support autistic individuals and learners through the completion of annual e-learning	All

Action	Timescale	Responsible person / Department	Outcome/ measure	Equality Category
Module 2: Communication and social interaction in autistic individuals Module 3: Sensory processing, perception and cognition in autistic individuals Module 4: Supporting positive behaviour in autistic individuals			modules. Staff knowledge and confidence will continue to improve: Pre- and post-module evaluation scores show increased understanding of: **Autism fundamentals,** communication and interaction differences, sensory needs and environmental impacts, positive behaviour support approaches. This aligns with Autism NI's emphasis on confidence-building for staff supporting autistic individuals and learners.	

Document History

Issue no. under review	Date of review:	Persons involved in review	Changes made after review? Yes/No	If changes have been made, please provide brief details:	New Issue No.	If changes made was consultation required?	If changes made was Equality Screening required?
	March 2021	D Collins C McCrory	Yes	• updated Equality Contact • updated to new template • rationalised Appendix 4 as per guidance from D Collins, Equality Commission • updated organisational structure (Appendix 1)			
	June 2022	C McCrory E Rushe NICEF (Sector Group)	Yes	• Update consultation list • Update of Equality Action Plan		No	No
V2	February 2026	S Gorman D Collins	TBC	• Updated Equality Contact • Updated to new template • Standardised wording and formatting • Updated organisational structure (Appendix 1) • Update of Equality Action Plan • Managements roles and job titles	V3	TBC	TBC