

# **DISABILITY ACTION PLAN**

**2019-2024**

## **St. Mary's University College**

### **Introduction**

1.1 Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), St. Mary's University College is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life ('the disability duties').

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, St. Mary's University College is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a disability action plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.

1.2 The Principal of St Mary's University College is committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability action plan. St Mary's will ensure that within available resources (in terms of time, people and money) action is taken to implement effectively this plan and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into annual operational plans.

St Mary's will put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this disability action plan effectively implemented. It will ensure the effective communication of the plan to staff and to providing all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the plan.

The College is committed to consulting with disabled people when implementing and reviewing its disability action plan.

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan and the point of contact within St Mary's University College will be:-

Ms Clodagh Hanna  
Human Resources Manager  
St Mary's University College  
191 Falls Road  
Belfast  
BT12 6FE

Tel. 028 9032 7678  
Email [c.hanna@smucb.ac.uk](mailto:c.hanna@smucb.ac.uk)

If you require this plan in an alternative format (such as in large print, in Braille, on audio cassette, easy read or on computer disc) and/or language, please contact the above person to discuss your requirements.

- 1.3 The College is committed to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a five year review of this plan, or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five year review period.

A copy of this plan and the annual progress report to the Equality Commission will be made available on our website  
<http://www.smucb.ac.uk/administration/personnel>

## **2. Functions**

St Mary's is a high-performing and specialist higher education institution which is faith-based in the Catholic tradition. The College enjoys a special relationship of collaborative academic provision with Queen's University Belfast but remains legally and financially autonomous with its own governance arrangements. It provides courses in Initial Teacher Education for both the primary and secondary sectors (BEd and PGCE), In Service courses for serving teachers, (including M-level courses), and a Liberal Arts degree.

St Mary's University College is governed under a Scheme of Management agreed between the College and the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland). Originally established as a college of education as set out in the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, it is an autonomous higher education institution as defined by Article 30(3) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1993. St Mary's was granted the University College title by the Privy Council in 1998. The College is funded by, and accountable to, the Department for the Economy under the terms of a financial memorandum agreed between the College and the Department and according to the provisions of the 1993 Order and the Colleges of Education (Grant Conditions) Regulations (NI) 1994.

The Governing Body of the College consist of a Board of Governors with ultimate authority in all matters. Four governors are ex-officio governors namely the Bishop of Down and Connor (Chairman), one of his Vicars General; Irish Regional Vicar, Cabra Dominicans; and the Principal of the College. Eight governors are appointed by the Trustees in consultation with the Catholic Bishops of the Catholic Dioceses of Armagh, Clogher/Kilmore, Derry and Dromore. Of the eight governors one must be a representative of the academic staff nominated by Academic Board and one must be a student

representative elected by the Students' Union. Six are appointed by the Department of Education in consultation with the Trustees; two are appointed by the Senate of Queen's University Belfast. In addition, one governor can be co-opted by the Governors if they so declare at a duly constituted meeting. Governors, with the exception of student Governor and ex officio governors, serve for a period of three years after which they normally retire. Retiring governors are eligible for re-appointment. Operational management of the College is delegated to the Senior Management Team under the direction of the College Principal.

Core functions of the College are teaching and learning, student support, employment, and procurement. The annual budget of the College is approximately £8 million, comprising grants from the Department for the Economy (DfE) and tuition fees paid by students.

The College has 875 students attending full time courses with 600 enrolled on courses of Initial Teacher Education and the remainder on the Liberal Arts degree programme. There are approximately 150 part-time M-Level students.

### **3. Public Life Positions**

The public life positions over which St Mary's has responsibility are the appointment of eight governors on the Board of Governors. The Trustees appoint governors in consultation with the Catholic Bishops of the Catholic Dioceses of Armagh, Clogher/Kilmore, Derry and Dromore. Of the eight governors one must be a representative of the academic staff nominated by Academic Board and one must be a student representative elected by the Students' Union.

#### **4. Action Measures**

Outlined overleaf are the measures that St Mary's propose to undertake over the period 2019-2024 to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

Performance indicators, targets and allocated responsibility are also listed.

Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicator/ Target	Responsibility
1. Inform all governors of the duties and new measures outlined in the College Disability Action Plan.	By 2020	Circulate a copy to all members at the next meeting of the Board of Governors and in writing to absent members.	Secretary to the Board of Governors
2. Encourage people with disabilities to apply to vacancies on the Board of Governors through the use of Welcoming Statements in public advertisements.	2019-2024	Appoint at least one member with a disability to serve on the Board of Governors.	Chair of the Board of Governors
3. Write and encourage members of the governing body to disclose whether they have a disability for equality monitoring purposes.	2020	100% return rate from governors to a questionnaire on disclosure of disability, which can provide a baseline of information.	Human Resources Manager
4. Continue to provide equality and diversity awareness training to new and existing staff and to new members of the Board of	On-going	All new staff and new members of the Board of Governors will attend an	Human Resources Manager Secretary to Board of Governors

Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicator/ Target	Responsibility
<p>Governors. The training will include information on the disability duties, Section 75 duties, equality policies and employment codes of practice.</p>		<p>equality workshop within the first year of employment. Existing staff and members of the Board of Governors, on a cyclical basis, will participate in refresher equality training every three years.</p>	
<p>5. Continue to provide additional workshops and online material to increase understanding of the barriers faced by people with disabilities, linking in with National Awareness initiatives. positive attitudes towards people with specific disabilities such as dyslexia, autism, hearing loss.</p>	<p>To be phased over a five-year period to ensure staff gain an opportunity to attend.</p>	<p>Evaluate training effectiveness by surveying the staff to ensure it promotes positive attitudes towards disabled staff, students and visitors.</p>	<p>Human Resources Manager with support from the Staff Development Officer</p>
<p>6. Ensure members of staff are made aware of the policy and procedures for promoting equality and for dealing effectively with complaints of disability discrimination.</p>	<p>Staff undertake refresher</p>	<p>Evaluate equality and diversity training effectiveness by surveying the staff following training. All participants</p>	<p>HR Manager</p>

Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicator/ Target	Responsibility
	training every three years	should be aware of the policy and know how to make a complaint.	
7. Provide health and well-being initiatives to support good mental health.	One initiative every academic year	Decrease lost staff time due to mental ill health related absence to less than 15% on an annual basis.	HR Manager
8. Promote the College disability action plan by providing a copy to all members of staff and students; make it available on the College internet; and include it in the employee handbook provided to new staff and the student handbook provided to new students.	On-going with immediate effect	Increased understanding of the disability duties demonstrated through student and staff questionnaires. No complaints regarding the treatment of staff or students due to a person's disability.	Human Resources Manager (Staff) Coordinator of Student Services (Students)
9. Promote employment policies available for staff with caring responsibilities and signpost staff to organisations that may provide further support to carers.	On-going	Greater uptake of the policies available and positive feedback about signposting information.	Human Resources Manager with support from line managers.



Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicator/ Target	Responsibility
<p>10. As part of its outreach work, the St Mary's Outreach Team will directly engage with 20 selected schools/colleges across Northern Ireland in order to raise aspirations towards HE. At each school, they will offer information on HE and course choice, application support and/or interview skills training. Highlighted on these visits is the support available for students with disabilities or additional educational needs. In addition, St Mary's staff will attend specifically selected careers fairs in order to reach more students.</p>	Annually	Aim to have 7% of students with disabilities (defined as those in receipt of Disabled Student Allowance).	Widening Participation Officer
<p>11. Provide orientation visits &amp; meet with potential students who have a disability prior to enrolling to become familiar with the College Campus, to discuss individual needs and to offer information and support in applying for DSA and FSD.</p>	Annually	Maintain high levels of participation (7%) from students with disabilities.	Coordinator of Student Guidance and Support

Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicator/ Target	Responsibility
<p>12. Continue to actively promote the services on offer for students with disabilities through the work of the College dedicated Student Support Officer by providing information sessions to students during Induction Week and circulating a disability support booklet offering specific support details and guidance for students with a disability.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>A target drop-out rate of less than 10% and/or 5 students with a disability.</p>	<p>Coordinator of Student Guidance and Support</p>
<p>13. Seek ways in which to identify and showcase teaching that directly impacts on disability in society.</p>	<p>As and when it occurs during 2019-2024</p>	<p>Social media or press coverage of civic impact</p>	<p>Principal</p>

Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicator/ Target	Responsibility
14. Ensure the smooth running of the Disability Support Programme.	On-going	High uptake by disabled students of the support available in the College. Swift access to support services within the College and assistive technologies, if appropriate. All students believed to be entitled to DSA of FSA in receipt of the benefit.	Coordinator of Student Guidance and Support
15. Ensure matching to appropriate one-to-one support providers within the College when student need is identified.	On-going	Swift matching of students in need to appropriate one-to-one in-house support providers. High levels of attendance by disabled students at the one-to-one sessions.	Coordinator of Student Guidance and Support
16. Positively promote, with agreement, the profiles of staff and/or students with a disability demonstrating the contribution they are making to St Mary's.	Annually when reviewing the prospectus	Positive imagery of students with disabilities on College promotional material.	Principal

Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicator/ Target	Responsibility
17. Monitor and report on the implementation of the College's Disability Action Plan.	By 31 <sup>st</sup> August each year	Report to the Equality and HR Steering Group on the disability action plan and submit a statutory progress report to the Equality Commission	Human Resources Manager
18. Perform a five-year review of the Disability Action Plan.	2024	Completion of a five-year report to inform the next disability action plan.	Human Resources Manager

Signed by:



Principal

Signed by:



Chairperson of the Board of Governors