



St Mary's
University College
Belfast
A College of Queen's University

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report

Contact:

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

[http://www.smucb.ac.uk/equalityofopportunity \(smucb.ac.uk\)](http://www.smucb.ac.uk/equalityofopportunity (smucb.ac.uk))

Signature:

This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2022 and March 2023

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

- 1 In 2022-23, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

St Mary's University College is fully committed to widening access and participation in higher education. The fundamental principle underpinning this Widening Access and Participation Plan is that it should, first and foremost, reflect our distinctive mission and contribute to social justice in our society. Creating inclusive opportunities for the development of the whole person through access to higher education is central to our mission and informs our selection, recruitment, and retention of students. The plan is therefore aligned with a [10X Economy](#).

St Mary's '...believes in the power of education to transform lives, overcome disadvantage, and contribute positively to humanity.'

(page 5, Strategy 21: Agenda for Sustainability - An Institutional Plan for St Mary's University College 2020-23)

The strategic aim of St Mary's for widening access continued to ensure high levels of participation on College courses from two target groups in particular, students from the lowest socio-economic brackets, and students with a disability. Financial and other assistance was provided to students from lower income families using additional funds generated from variable fees.

The College provided outreach programmes focusing on raising aspiration and attainment in under-represented groups. The Widening Access and Participation (WAP) Officer reverted to the delivery of in person WAP activities through on-campus careers fairs and school/college visits across Northern Ireland to provide advice and information following one year of virtual events due to Covid-19 social distancing measures in 2021-22. Catholic schools and non-Catholic schools were invited to attend St Mary's Open Days. As a College of Queen's University Belfast, St Mary's staff were available to inform and advise students attending Queen's Open Days. Students were informed about courses available in St Mary's, subjects, grades, student finance, student support and given access to further information. An Open Day for mature

students was also held. The Entry Guidelines, the College Undergraduate Prospectus, subject leaflets were all available online and could be downloaded as required. One-to-one personalised tours of the campus were also provided for applicants and their parents and/or guardians.

In addition to on-campus tours, links to virtual tours remained online for prospective students who preferred this method.

St Mary's attainment raising activities in 2022-23 included:

The Creating Young News Readers Literacy Project

The Creating Young News Readers project is a collaboration between St Mary's University College, The Irish News and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). The project provided a literacy-based programme to teach essential critical literacy skills to pupils which included, code breaking, meaning making, text using, and text analysing. The teaching resource is for teachers of pupils in Key Stages Two (Upper Primary) and Three (Years 8 & 9 Post-Primary). Now in its fifth year, the project has had over 6000 students participate from schools across Northern Ireland and it has helped teachers empower students to access, understand, analyse, and participate in the news. This included a significant number of primary and post-primary schools in areas of high social deprivation.

Easter School

St Mary's continued its collaboration with the West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB) to provide an Easter School in April 2022. Around 100 pupils, divided into eleven class groups from seven schools, including an Irish-medium school were involved. There were eleven fully qualified teachers and eighteen classroom assistants working with the pupils. Seventeen of the classroom assistants were student teachers at St Mary's who were completing a degree programme specialising in either Mathematics, English or Irish Medium.

Schools involved included St Dominic's, St Louise's, All Saints, St Genevieve's, De La Salle, St Mary's, Christian Brothers Grammar School, and Colaiste Feirste. Pupils wore casual clothes instead of school uniforms, and the atmosphere generally was more informal than in the normal school environment. Pupils attended classes in the College each day from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. A thirty-minute lunch break included a hot meal and a soft drink. The classes mixed genders and combined schools, dividing students into classes by the topic or theme taught. Some pictures of the event are available [In The Picture \(stmarys-belfast.ac.uk\)](https://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk).

Learning and Teaching

A Shared Education Working Group meets at the College which is chaired by the BEd programme team leader, Professor Martin Hagan. A joint programme is agreed annually by both St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University Colleges and submitted to DfE for funding.

Opportunities for student teachers from both colleges of Initial Teacher Education (St Mary's and Stranmillis) to come together recommenced in September 2022. Through the Stepping Stones programme, St Mary's first year student teachers were introduced to the concepts underpinning identify and diversity for mutual understanding. Students were involved in exploring professional learning in a changing society through a series of workshops. All workshops were facilitated by experienced associate facilitators and were mandatory. Following school placement, students had an opportunity to reflect upon aspects of diversity within the school setting.

The focus for students in the second year of the BEd programme was inclusion. Students from both colleges participated in a series of familiarisation workshops facilitated by the Belfast Activity Centre. Then, working with the Saphara charity, student teachers in the second year of the programme participated in a series of workshops which focused on supporting pupils for whom English is an Additional Language.

Final year students participated in a one-day conference on 'Leading Shared Education: Key Issues, Opportunities and Challenges'. Third and fourth year students were also invited to attend seminars on the themes of ethos and leadership which were led by school principals. BEd 3 students also availed of an 'extra-territorial' learning experience located in India; working with pupils in schools in the most deprived communities. The PGCE students at the University Colleges also come together to share perspectives on a range of education issues.

Student Support Services

In addition to implementing reasonable adjustments and support for enrolled students, the following was introduced in the reporting period:

- The Students' Union organised a Student Wellbeing Project, in conjunction with the College counsellor. Information on a variety of relevant themes has been shared with students on Monday of each week.
- Posts were shared with students highlighting external sources of support including contact details for Mental Health charities.

- The Students' Union made leaflets available containing information on how to contact relevant sources of support external to the College.

Officers within the Students' Union continue to promote services available to support students during their time at St Mary's using social media platforms and encouraging face-to-face contact with the SU Officers or Student Guidance staff in their respective offices. Students' Union Officers are visible on campus and involved during Student Induction Week. St Mary's is satisfied that students are well informed of the support which is available to them. There is on-going daily contact between the Student Guidance and Support staff and the Students' Union and there continues to be an exchange of information between the College and Students' Union where appropriate.

Employment

The Right to Request Flexible Working was amended to provide Day 1 rights for all staff. Several staff have requested flexible working arrangements in the reporting period and these were approved. Annual leave entitlement was increased to 25 days as a Day 1 entitlement, having been previously 20 days, rising to 25 with length of service. Policies continue to be screened for impact on the promotion of equality and/or good relations. Workshops and online seminars to promote equality and diversity have continued in the reporting period with face to face workshops resuming following the removal of all social distancing restrictions. The HR team continue to advise and support best practice in the management of the recruitment and selection of staff. Attracting talented applicants while promoting diversity and ensuring fairness in our selection methods remains an objective of the College's HR Strategy.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2022-23 *(or append the plan with progress/examples identified)*.

Implementation of the Widening Access and Participation Plan in the reporting period impacted on the diversity of the student body as follows:

- 10% of enrolled undergraduate students had a disability against a target set of 7%.
- 6.5% of students with a disability were in receipt of Disability Student Allowance which is a reduction on previous years.
- 12.5% of all enrolled undergraduates were mature learners (21 years or older).

Key workforce statistics at the end of the reporting period following implementation of equality action plans and measures are as follows:

- Equal proportions of men and women were employed but significantly more females worked part-time (62%) than men which has been the trend for many years and not exclusive to St Mary's.
- More men (62%) than women held higher graded positions deemed Grade 11 and above. However, there are now equal numbers of male and female academics holding Principal Lecturer positions.
- The College fell short of reaching its objective to employ 10% from the Protestant community (8%).
- The College did not reach its target of 25% of all applicants coming from a Protestant community background, with only 19%. 8% of all appointments were from the Protestant community but this fell short of the target of 15%.
- 11% of the workforce declared a disability which is higher than the Sector average of 6%.
- 1% of the workforce was from a minority ethnic background which represented no change from the previous year with 84% describing themselves as white Irish, 12% describe themselves as white British and 3% describe themselves as being from another white background.
- More than half of the staff were aged 55 and over. Only 1% of the workforce was under the age of 25.

PART A

3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No (go to Q.4) Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

3a With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

3b What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

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

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

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

Other *(please specify and give details):*

Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Job descriptions created and reviewed in the period reference the promotion of equality, and if appropriate additional Section 75 requirements.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

St Mary's reports annually on Section 75 duties to the governing body on performance against targets set out in the Human Resources Strategy. It reported against targets and outcomes set in its Widening Access and Participation Plan and its Student Guidance and Support Strategy. The Human Resources and Equality Steering Group met three times in the reporting year to take reports on progress against performance plans and agree further actions. Its equality action plan was reviewed, updated and agreed in the reporting period.

6 In the 2022-23 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

PART A

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- Yes, in some departments/jobs
- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2022-23 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

In the 2021-22 reporting period, a review of the Institutional Plan and core strategies were undertaken. Within those strategies, objectives and performance measures were set that relate to the promotion of equality duties.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2022-23 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

Actions ongoing:

Actions to commence:

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2022-23 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

The equality action plan was reviewed in the reporting period and updated with additional measures and targets set which will be challenging for an organisation with a small complement of staff to achieve alongside delivery of its core business but St Mary's is committed to widening access to higher education and promoting equality in employment.

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2022-23 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

- Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities

Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: *(tick one box only)*

All the time Sometimes Never

11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2022-23 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

12 In the 2022-23 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other *(please specify)*:

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No Not applicable

PART A

Please provide any details and examples:

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes No Not applicable – no commitment to review

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

[Equality of Opportunity \(smucb.ac.uk\)](http://smucb.ac.uk)

15 Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

4

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2022-23:

4	Policy consultations conducted with screening assessment presented.
0	Policy consultations conducted with an equality impact assessment (EQIA) presented.
0	Consultations for an EQIA alone.

17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

Two policies promoting equality that applied to staff and students were consulted upon by emailing the three recognised trade unions and the Students' Union Executive to seek feedback / commentary and followed up at consultative meetings upon request.

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

Yes No concerns were raised No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

19 Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

20 From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No, already taken place
 No, scheduled to take place at a later date Not applicable

Please provide any details:

21 In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

22 Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2022-23 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

23 Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2022-23, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

81% of newly appointed staff have attended equality awareness workshop training in the reporting period. 13% have undertaken online training because of the nature of their employment and a remaining 6% have yet to participate, which is being followed up. Staff continue to be invited to undertake online or in person courses to remind them of their responsibility to promote equality of opportunity in the provision of goods, services and employment.

Meetings occur to provide advice and direction on S75 duties to include how to equality screen policies in the reporting period. Due to our small staff numbers it is often more effective to meet managers one-to-one to work through guidance and examples of screening.

- 25** Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

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

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2022-23, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

- 27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2022-23?

Insert number here:

0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

2023

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

None specifically.

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

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

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

12

Fully achieved

3

Partially achieved

1

Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Measure	Achieved/Partially Achieved/Not Achieved	Outcome/Impact/Reason
Inform all governors of the duties and new measures outlined in the College Disability Action Plan.	Achieved	An awareness and understanding of the disability duties by governors and their obligations in terms of governance arrangements.
Write and encourage members of the governing body to disclose whether they have a disability for equality monitoring purposes.	Achieved	New members joined in the reporting year and information was gathered for monitoring purposes.

PART B

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

Measure	Achieved/Partially Achieved/Not Achieved	Outcome/Impact/Reason
Continue to provide equality and diversity awareness training to new and existing staff. The training will include information on the disability duties, Section 75 duties, equality policies and employment codes of practice.	Achieved.	New staff are aware of their obligations under the college equality policies and their attention is brought to the Equality Scheme Action Plan and Disability Action Plan. Existing staff continue to be invited to undertake equality and diversity workshops or e-learning as a refresher, and learning is embedded through a short test.
Ensure members of staff are made aware of the policy and procedures for promoting equality and for dealing effectively with complaints of disability discrimination.	Achieved	Staff receive a handbook on commencement that contains case studies and policies/procedures relating to the promotion of equality to help them understand their rights and obligations as an employee. Staff invited to attend refresher workshops an/or online seminars are also informed of the equality scheme and action plans and where to find them online.
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.	Achieved	New staff receive a booklet at an induction workshop that contains case studies and policies/procedures relating to equality and diversity to help them understand their rights and obligations as an employee. Staff invited to attend refresher workshops or online seminars are also informed of the equality scheme and action plans and where to find them online

PART B

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
As part of its outreach work, the Outreach Team will directly engage with 20 selected schools/colleges across Northern Ireland to raise the aspirations of pupils to study for a degree in St Mary's. 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 careers events where they may reach more students from lower socio-economic families, students with disabilities, and young males.	Achieved	10% of newly enrolled students disclosed they had a disability in 2022-23. 6.5% of students had registered for Disability Student Allowance in 2022-23.
Provide orientation visits & 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.	Achieved	6.5% of students were in receipt of Disability Student's Allowance against a target of 7%.
Promote the DAP by providing a copy to members of staff and students, make it available on the intranet for staff and students, and include it in the employee handbook provided to new staff.	Achieved	This is an ongoing measure. It has been promoted in the reporting period to new staff and to new students through the intranet.
Monitor and report on the implementation of the College's Disability Action Plan.	Achieved	Annually to the Finance Committee of the Board of Governors and regularly at the HR and Equality Steering Group.

PART B

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘encourage others’ to promote the two duties:

Encourage others Action Measure	Outputs	Outcome/Impact
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.	Achieved	A drop-out rate of 4% was recorded against a target set of less than 6%
Seek ways in which to identify and showcase research or teaching that directly impacts on disability in society.	One piece of research currently being undertaken is titled “Exploring knowledge and awareness of reasonable accommodations/adjustments for ITE students with disabilities in ROI and NI”, in collaboration with University College Cork.	The SCoTENS funded project will investigate and raise awareness about reasonable accommodations or adjustments for students with disabilities in initial teacher education programmes. Promoted internally
Ensure the smooth running of the Disability Support Programme.	Achieved	6.5% of students registered for Disabled Student’s Allowance which is a process managed and promoted by Student Support Staff at St Mary’s.
Ensure matching to appropriate one-to-one support providers within the College when student need is identified.	Achieved	Student Support Services ensure students are supported and have measures in place to help identify students ‘at risk’ of dropping out. Dropout rate in the reporting period was 4% NSS student satisfaction overall was 76% which is considered good but below the target of 90%.

PART B

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1			

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

Action Measures partly achieved	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
Build on the disability awareness training already provided by EFDNI to staff by providing additional disability training to increase positive attitudes towards people with specific disabilities such as dyslexia, autism, hearing loss.	Commenced in 2020 but further workshops will be held in 2023-24	This will be carried forward to 2023-24.
Provide health and well-being initiatives to support good mental health.	Stress awareness workshops were provided in 2020-21 but further follow up health and well-being initiatives have not been rolled out.	This has been carried forward to 2023-24
Positively promote, with agreement, the profiles of staff and/or students with a disability demonstrating the contribution they are making to St Mary's.	Images have been used sensitively to positively represent people with disabilities and their contribution to learning and teaching.	The Marketing and Communications Manager has included positive imagery where possible in the reporting year. Not all disabilities are seen therefore it must be done sensitively.

PART B

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Five year review of the Disability Action Plan	Due in 2024

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

No new monitoring tools have been implemented in addition to what is currently used.

(b) Quantitative

No new monitoring tools in addition to what is already used.

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

Please select

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			

PART B

2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

On review of our Disability Action Plan in 2024, changes may occur.