**ARTICLE 55 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLAN**

**2023-2025**

**Declaration of Commitment**

The Queen’s University of Belfast (“the University”) is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, good relations and respect for diversity in the workplace and on campus generally.

This involves creating and sustaining an inclusive environment that values and celebrates the diversity of our staff and student body, in pursuance of the principle of equality of opportunity which is enshrined in our Charter of 1908.

The University seeks to be a place where all staff and students feel safe and welcome regardless of their identity or background, and to be a place where diverse perspectives are respected.

The University is committed to ensuring fair participation of both communities in its workforce.

It is the policy of the University to comply with the provision of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 to ensure that all its employment practices conform to the recommendations of the Fair Employment Code of Practice.

The University will continue to conduct reviews of its employment composition and practices under Article 55 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998.

To demonstrate its commitment to ensuring fair participation of both communities in its workforce the University will undertake the following programme of affirmative action.

**ARTICLE 55 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLAN**

**(01 January 2024 – 31 December 2025)**

| **Summary** | **Action** | **Lead / Others** | **Target completion date** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Policies and Procedures** |
| The University will ensure its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (2020) is openly communicated to its workforce, potential applicants and the community and integrated into institutional policy and procedure.  | The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (2020) will be communicated to staff via range of media – email, Queen’s Online, Staff Gateway and social media.  | Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Staff WellbeingHR Business PartnersAll School/Faculty/ Department leads |  |
| A statement to reinforce commitment will be included in all activities organised by the Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing Unit.  | Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing |
| Staff must complete our EDI online training package “Think Difference Act Differently” every 2 years. |
| The University will make it clear that breaches of its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be regarded as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings. | This message will be incorporated into communications, training, Code of Conduct and Disciplinary procedure, Grievance Procedure and Bullying and Harassment Policy. | Vice-President and Chief People Officer Organisational DevelopmentResourcingLegal ServicesHR Business PartnersAll School/Faculty and Department leads |  |
| The University will make it clear that responsibility for ensuring Equality of Opportunity and the practical application of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy rests with all staff. | The HR Business Partners will communicate the content of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to all Faculty and School staff and ensure a good working knowledge of the Policy exists and permeates all recruitment and selection processes within Faculties and Schools.The need for Equality Screening will continue to be communicated at every opportunity. EDI and equality of opportunity will be embedded across all activities. | Vice-President and Chief People Officer Head of HR Business PartneringHR Business Partners |  |
| **The Working Environment** |
| The University will ensure that it safeguards the rights of all workers to work without intimidation or harassment.  | The University will continue to ensure that it promotes a “good and harmonious environment” – one which is free from any unlawful, discriminatory, hateful or intimidatory material or actions. All our employees will be treated with dignity and respect. | Vice-President and Chief People OfficerDirector of EstatesAll School/Faculty and Department leadsStudents Union |  |
| The University will ensure that staff are made aware that there is a zero-tolerance approach to all bullying and harassment, particularly where it arises as a result of any protected characteristic as it is unlawful and will be regarded as an offence of misconduct which may lead to dismissal. | This is reflected in the University’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy but in addition the message will also be incorporated into communications, training, the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy.  | Vice-President and Chief People Officer Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing  |  |
| **Employment Practices** |
| **Summary** | **Action** | **Lead/Others** | **Target Completion Date** |
| The University will ensure that job descriptions, personnel specifications and selection criteria exist for all positions. | Personnel Specifications will not contain any desirable criteria or qualification which may deter applicants from any particular group. We will ensure that written personnel specifications exist for every post which accurately describe the relevant, non-discriminatory and objectively justifiable requirements to be met by the post-holder. | Head of HR Business Partnering | Ongoing |
| The University will ensure that its policies are up to date to ensure that all staff are treated with dignity and respect at work. | We will review and update our Bullying and Harassment policy, Appeals, Grievance and Disciplinary institutional policies and develop training, guidance and toolkits for staff and to support managers once every three years. | Head of HR Business Partnering | April 2024 |
| We will deliver Anti Bullying and Harassment Training for staff to ensure staff are trained in Queen’s policies and procedures; equipped to effectively respond to formal and/or informal allegations of bullying/harassment; to ensure all complaints are dealt with in a professional, effective, and timely manner. | We will deliver three Bullying and Harassment sessions for all staff annually.We will develop and deliver a programme ofActive Bystander Training for all staff. | People and CultureDiversity, Inclusion and Staff WellbeingTrade Union Representatives | Ongoing |
| The University will keep under review its recruitment and promotions practices and procedures to ensure equality compliance. | Through the review process, we will seek to identify issues to recruitment, selection and/or promotion and take appropriate actions to address issues raised.  | Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing Head of HR Business PartneringDiversity and Inclusion Officer (Data) |  |
| We will analyse data to identify patterns, trendsand inequalities in respect of academicprogression including gender, race, disability andcommunity background to ensure equality ofopportunity. | We will conduct annual analysis ofAcademic Progression & Promotion.We will review the process and roles forconducting analysis of data.We will redesign the academic progressiondashboard and conduct analysis of data.We will report progress internally to UniversityManagement Board. | People & Culture Directorate(Reward and Diversity,Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing) |  |
| We will ensure the Recruitment and SelectionTraining for staff reflects new Appointments Procedure, includes specific reference to FairEmployment Code of Practice; relevant case lawand anti- discrimination legislation. | We will review Recruitment and Selection training annually. | ResourcingOrganisational DevelopmentDiversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing |  |
| The University will ensure that jobs are only advertised internally when the workforce/ applicant pool is balanced from an equality perspective unless there are very exceptional circumstances. | The most recent staff data from the Article 55/FE Return will be broken down further into QUB Job Categories and Grades and all 9 protected characteristics to assist with these decisions. | Head of HR Business PartneringResourcingDiversity and Inclusion Officer (Data) |  |
| The University will seek to ensure that shortlisting and interviews for all posts will be conducted by at least two persons who have been trained in selection techniques and/or unconscious bias. |  Panel members will receive recruitment and selection training and/or unconscious bias training (incorporating equality of opportunity in recruitment, selection, and promotion). | Head of HR Business PartneringResourcing |  |
| We will ensure that our mandatory EDI training is kept updated. | Ensure that staff and students understand equality,diversity and inclusion at Queen’s. | Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing |  |
| The University will ensure that records of decisions at each stage of the selection process including all notes and assessment records of interviews will be made and retained for three years in a separate file for each recruitment exercise. | Separate recruitment files are to be retained for three years and destroyed at the end of the three-year period.  | Head of HR Business PartneringResourcing |  |
| The University will ensure that as far as is practicable recruitment panels will be appropriately balanced in regards to gender and community background. Broader Diversity criteria such as including people from Ethnic Minorities and those with Disabilities on recruitment panels should also be encouraged.  | To ensure that recruitment panels are as diverse as possible whilst ensuring that those most technically qualified to make decisions on the suitability of candidates are present.  | Head of HR Business PartneringResourcing |  |
| The University will review complaints of discrimination on a regular basis so that any trends in complaints, settlements and reconciliation related to any protected characteristics or within particular areas can be identified.  | Following the conclusion of any complaint of unlawful discrimination whether pursued internally or externally the Vice-President and Chief People Officer will identify the equality issues raised, any procedural defects of misapplications of the procedures and implement any necessary changes.  | Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Staff WellbeingHead of Legal ServicesEmployee Relations Officer |  |
| The University will regularly review workforce composition and promotions. | The University will carry out further investigations where it appears that the data is not broadly in line with what would be reasonably be expected. | Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Staff WellbeingDiversity and Inclusion Officer (Data) | By 01/01/2025 |
| The University will carry out exit surveys and monitor the reasons for staff leaving the University.  | The University will conduct an analysis of leavers through completed exit surveys on a regular basis and will investigate any trends that may emerge. All leavers can also request an exit interview. | Head of HR Business PartneringHR Business PartnersDiversity and Inclusion Officer (Data) | By 01/10/2024 and ongoing. |
| We will ensure all staff understand the University’s.responsibility to equality screening any new/reviewed policies for potential impact onstudents/staff and other relevant stakeholders. | We will integrate equality screeningguidance, support and assistance forinstitutional policy leads.We will continue to review and update adedicated webpage, library of screened policies, frequently asked questions etc.We will continue to deliver equality screeningtraining (Twice annually). | Diversity, Inclusion and Staff WellbeingRelevant Policy Leads |  |
| We will ensure / develop mechanismfor internal equality screening compliance. | We will embed consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion and/or equality screening in key decision making e.g., Procurement of contracts.We will develop a process to ensure compliance with equality screening requirements for institutional approval of key decisions, policies etc. | Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing |  |
| **Outreach and Engagement**  |
| Develop a Communications, Outreach and Engagement Plan aimed at increasing applications from members of the Protestant community for SOC6 particularly Queens Sport and Childcare as we are under-represented both in applications and Workforce for this SOC.  | Organise further Behind the Scenes at Queen’s event to encourage Protestant applications to this SOC group but also widen this out to other under-represented groups such as BAME, Disabled staff, male Clerical Staff. | Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Staff WellbeingHead of HR Business PartneringResourcingPublic EngagementDiversity and Inclusion Officer (Policy) | 30/05/2024 |
|  |
| Continue with the use of welcoming statements to encourage applications from all under-represented groups in the workforce. | Welcoming statements encouraging applications from ethnic minority groups and people with disabilities, across all SOC groups as well as welcoming those from a Protestant community background for SOC 6 (Childcare and Queen’s Sport). | Head of HR Business PartneringResourcingDiversity and Inclusion Officer (Data) | Ongoing |
| Further develop working relationships with key stakeholders and umbrella organisations. Targeted advertisement / engagement with underrepresented groups. | Consult and engage with various community/voluntary organisations aimed at increasing the number of applicants from under-represented groups in the local community. | Diversity and Inclusion Officer (Policy) |  |
| Continue to raise awareness of Diversity and Inclusion issues through staff training, outreach and engagement activities and celebrating key diversity recognition and awareness days. | The University will continue to raise awareness amongst staff in relation to Diversity and Inclusion issues through the revision of policies, liaison with Trade Unions, public support of Diversity and Inclusion initiatives and the induction of new staff. | Diversity and Inclusion Officer (Policy) |  |
| Work with others and internal departments to ensure that we promote understanding and awareness of EDI. E.g. training, institutional outreach, engagement and celebration of key diversity recognition and awareness days. | Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Staff WellbeingDiversity and Inclusion Officer (Policy) |  |
| Further enhance information databases, reporting systems and internal/external evaluation processes. | This will allow the University to more effectively monitor, track and report on the impact of new interventions and affirmative actions | Diversity and Inclusion Officers  |  |
| The University will benchmark best practice with Russell Group Equality Leads and through the Advance HE Northern Ireland Liaison Group. | The University will seek to further develop links with other Russell Group/ NI Diversity and Inclusion Leads in HE and work in cooperation on areas of mutual interest and develop interventions to address areas of underrepresentation.  | Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Staff WellbeingDiversity and Inclusion Officer (Policy) |  |
|  **Goals and Timetables** |
| The University is committed to reviewing the effectiveness of its affirmative action programme. | The effectiveness of the affirmative action programme will be measured and reported to the University’s Management Board. | Vice-President and Chief People Officer Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Staff Wellbeing |  |
|  **Review of Progress** |
| The progress of the Action Plan will be considered at meetings of the University’s Operating Board and/or Standing Committee as appropriate. | This will set out progress and any appropriate revisions or amendments to the affirmative action programme and/or goals and timetables. | Vice-President and Chief People Officer Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing |  |