

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2022-23

Contact:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme	Name: Carly Heggarty Telephone: 02827660416 Email: carly.heggarty@nrc.ac.uk
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	As above <input type="checkbox"/> (double click to open) Name: Telephone: Email:

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

<https://www.nrc.ac.uk/corporate/equality/>

Signature:

Miana McDowell

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.

Autism Friendly College

As part of our ongoing commitment to making our campuses inclusive, and maintaining our Autism Friendly status, the Education Support department:

- Hosted a series of ASD Awareness workshops to 230 students across 18 class groups.
- Arranged for Jude Morrow an Autism Advocate to deliver an interactive training workshop in June 2023 – 77 attended including staff, school SENCOs and educational psychologists.
- Developed a lunchtime learning training video on Autism for staff to view.
- Continued to offer transition visits to help ease the move from school to college.
- Trialled the use of a quiet room on the Newtownabbey campus.

Careers Advice and Support

Throughout 22/23 academic year, the Careers Team have engaged in a range of activities including events hosted by DfE, community organisations such as BCRC and local schools to provide information, guidance and support for at risk groups including Syrian and Ukranian refugees, school age mothers, NEETs and individuals with disability/ learning difficulty.

The Careers Team provided face to face guidance on campus and in outreach centres to help individuals navigate barriers to learning. Practical examples included producing documentation showing qualification equivalents, helping individuals' complete applications, advocacy, visa and fees information, and organising pre-entry initial English language assessments.

In addition, the Careers Team have collaborated with the Education Support Team to develop an in-house programme supporting Autistic students consider their options and prepare for HE or employment.

Northern Plus

As reported last year, in response to low retention, achievement and success rates, the College developed a pilot student focused strategy “Northern Plus”.

Due to the success of the pilot the service, which runs to ensure timely support for students below acceptable levels of attendance and punctuality, has continued during 22/23. It also exists to help non-achieving students to refocus, and co-ordinate support other than academic for students who are struggling with various debilitating factors.

During 22/23 1087 students across the six campuses used the service.

Onward referrals were also made as follows:

- Careers – 51
- Inspire Counselling – 69
- Education Support – 76
- Student Finance – 46
- Other external services – 31
- Sexual Health Clinic – 1

Average attendance at the initial point of contact was 61, after intervention by Northern Plus average attendance rose to 76%.

The service has improved students’ confidence, ability to manage time and course requirements, attendance, wellbeing, chances of success in the academic year, relationship with lecturers, chance of achieving long-term goals and chances of progression to a higher-level course.

Students’ Union

The elections for the 2023/24 Students’ Union President have just taken place and the newly elected president is in his first year studying Level 5 Music Production at the Coleraine Campus. During the 2022/23 academic year Tom was a Mental Health Officer for the Coleraine Campus and an active class rep. Tom has endeavoured to raise awareness of Mental Health issues and was involved in the development of the health and wellbeing fairs which took place on each campus.

The NUS-USI conference took place over two days in the Ormeau Baths in Belfast. Two student officers and two members of Northern Regional College staff were in attendance of the event. The NUS-USI Conference was an exciting opportunity for our students to come together to build high-impact campaigns that lead to real change. The conference allowed a space for students to shape, grow and develop campaigning priorities for our movement in the future. Students were involved in the discussion and debate of the following policies created by students.

1. The Cost of Survival: tackling the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on students in NI.
2. Apprentices - how long before you can start?
3. A New Vision for Post-16 Education in Northern Ireland

The three main campaigns which the Students' Union ran this year were 'Anti-bullying', 'Mental Health Awareness' and 'Road and Fire safety'. These were three main issues which were brought up by Class Reps and they were very keen that we would run campaigns raising awareness about these complex areas.

We also had several external organisations in to speak to students including Start 360, Action Mental Health, Aware, Nexus and CyberPal.

Cost of Living Initiatives

All Further Education Colleges across Northern Ireland received a hardship payment fund to support students with the cost-of-living crisis from the Department for Economy. After discussions with staff and students it was decided to offer a free breakfast for students to avail of. This initiative ran each morning from 8:30am-10am which gave students the opportunity get their breakfast before commencing their studies for the day. From the initiative the college provided 20,7000 breakfasts to our students. The initiative was greatly received and feedback from staff and students was very positive.

The college was also provided with winter packs and hygiene packs to distribute out to students. The winter packs included items such as coats, hats, gloves, and snoods to ensure students were warm enough when at home and travelling to/from college. The college received 800 hygiene packs which included items such as shampoo, razors, and laundry pods. Students were advised of the initiative running via student emails, social media and lecturing staff. Students then completed a form of the items which they required, and student services packed items up as required. Items were distributed further to students during the health and wellbeing roadshows.

Wellbeing roadshows

To highlight Mental Health Awareness week, the student services team designed a wellbeing roadshow to recognise the importance of looking after your wellbeing. The mental health student officers met to discuss the types of activities they would find beneficial to support the wellbeing of the students. From this discussion the student services team hosted a wide range of activities for students and staff to get involved in. These activities included:

- Craft Rainbow – Mindful colouring which was available in our library and canteen spaces.
- Health Fairs (1 per campus) – External wellbeing services showcasing the support which is available to students.
- FREE Self-Care treatments – Hair and Beauty salons within the college provided manicures, blow dries and massages.
- Charity Spinathon (Raised £130 for Aware)
- Resilience Workshops
- Online workshops on coping with exam stress and looking after yourselves as students.
- Sound Bath - Sensory Sound Experience

Digital Accessibility

We are committed to improving the accessibility and usability of our website to benefit all users. We continue to work closely with our IT department to identify and resolve any accessibility issues outlined through the Web Accessibility Evaluation tool (WAVE) to make the website accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Our accessibility statement which is available at <https://www.nrc.ac.uk/accessibility> outlines the activities we undertake to increase accessibility as well as our continuing efforts to create an inclusive user experience.

Our Digital Learning Team now include Accessibility Awareness in all their training sessions with staff and continue to use tools to ensure all learning materials on Canvas are accessible.

Employee Mental Health Charter

The College have continued to partner with the Chest, Heart and Stroke 'Well Team at Work' initiative by implementing a targeted health and well-being action plan. Various activities, campaigns and awareness raising initiatives have taken place during 22/23 to help improve employee mental health, such as:

- Managing money in uncertain times session from Money Helper
- Self-Care in 10mins webinar
- World Mental Health Day – signposting and highlighting the resources and mental health champions at the college as well as Inspire
- Personal Health and Resilience session from Action Mental Health
- Fatigue and Burnout session from HSENI
- Changing Perspective, mindset and neuropathy to help reduce Christmas stress from Wellbeing NI
- 'R' Wellbeing – Reflection, recognition, restoring balance and relaxation from The Wellbeing Pathway
- Highlighting Brew Monday instead of focusing on Blue Monday-encouraging staff to connect over a cuppa – initiative from Samaritans
- Bereavement E learning Course from Legal Island
- Meditation session from Wellbeing NI – On coping with the 'January Blues'
- Time to Talk Day – highlighting and asking staff to connect in person or virtually with a cuppa to open the conversation on mental health
- Walk and Talk Wednesday's – encouraging staff to get outside and connect with colleagues while encouraging movement throughout the month of February and March
- Breathwork and Visualisation session from Wellbeing NI
- Fatigue and Burnout Session from HSE

- Inspire Wellbeing session – a reintroduction from Inspire and to talk about their new wellbeing Hub
- Mental Health Awareness week – signposting and highlighting what the college has to offer
- Introduction to Meditation session from Blue mind
- Charity Spinathon for Aware Charity raising £130
- Sound baths for wellbeing roadshow for staff and students
- Loneliness Awareness week – Highlighting and signposting for support

Skill Up

The College continues to deliver the DfE funded Skill-Up programme of online courses. Originally intended as a means for providing NI residents with free upskilling courses during Covid-19, the flexible delivery and ease of access has proven popular particularly with women who may be constrained attending college due to family commitments.

Manufacturing Academies

The College delivered Manufacturing Academies in Newtownabbey and Ballymena aimed at getting those furthest from the workforce the skills and confidence to secure employment. In its second year, this programme is supported by the Gallaher Trust and Mid and East Antrim Council has been offered at its second campus and extended for a further year.

Labour Market Partnerships

Work has been ongoing throughout the year with Council Labour Market Partnerships. Funded by the Department for the Communities, each Council has implemented a diverse range of programmes aimed at upskilling residents and providing support for employment.

Schools and Community Engagement

The Entitlement Framework programme provides the opportunity for school pupils to participate in vocational subjects they would not have the opportunity to do at school, while also providing pupils with an alternative learning experience within an FE environment. During 2022/23 the College engaged with 18 schools with a curriculum offer from Level 1/2 Occupational Studies to Level 3 A Level, in a range of vocational areas e.g. Beauty, Business, Construction, Engineering and Psychology. The strong partnership with post-primary schools is very much valued by the college.

We also work within our local communities to provide a range of education. 25 classes ran in the community this year with those within the Neighbourhood renewal areas proving the most successful. A range of new taster courses were held in Motor Vehicle Maintenance, cooking on a budget and an OCN award in Beauty Therapy with some of these learners moving into further education courses within the college. We look forward in the year 23/24 to the new college initiative with the Women Returners programme that aims to bring women back into education and the workplace.

International Language Day

The Essential Skills and ESOL department encouraged all course teams to celebrate the linguistic and cultural diversity of the students on their courses. Students had the opportunity to learn new words in other languages, listen to students speak in their mother language and some students shared food, produce and instruments with their peers.

Annual Equality Update to SMT

Annually the Equality Manager writes to the Senior Management Team to refresh knowledge and advise of any updates. In September 2022 SMT were presented with the revised scheme and the new Equality Action Plan for 2022-2027. In May 2023 the Equality Manager requested all SMT complete the ECNI training video on equality screening and advised of the two recent ECNI S75 investigation reports into NIO and DfE.

Sector Committee

The College is a member of the FE Equality Coordinators' Forum which consists of Belfast Metropolitan College, South Eastern Regional College, Southern Regional College, South West College and North West Regional College. This forum meets five times per year to develop and promote a best practice and consistent approach to the implementation of Section 75 within FE in Northern Ireland.

During 22/23 the forum considered gender pay review, black FE leaders group, learning and development resources, census data and AccessAble renewal.

- 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*).

Please see Appendix A for progress on 5 Year Equality Improvement Plan 2022 - 2027

- 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:

NA

- 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:

NA

- 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*):

Feedback from political representatives

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:

This requirement was fulfilled in year 1 of the Equality Scheme. All new job descriptions for internal and external posts include the reference “All staff have an obligation to comply with the statutory duties relating to section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and will be required to contribute to the implementation of the College’s Equality Scheme drawn up in accordance with this legislation.”

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:

A question regarding equality duties was included in the Self Evaluation Reviews during year 1 of the Equality Scheme.

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)*

- 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:

Equality is referenced in the College Development Plan and is embedded throughout the College's strategic aims, vision and values. Specific targets in relation to Section 75 are integrated into the annual HR/CPD operational plan.

Equality action plans/measures

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

Actions completed:	0	Actions ongoing:	8	Actions to commence:	0
--------------------	---	------------------	---	----------------------	---

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

Please see Equality Improvement Plan at Appendix A

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)*:

NA

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:

- The College continues to ensure all policies which may have an impact on equality of opportunity are subject to relevant consultation and that consultations are timely, open, inclusive and meaningful. During 2022-23 there was regular internal consultation with staff and trade unions with regards the review of policies and procedures.
- The College continues to progress the implementation of its Estates Strategy and is working with internal and external stakeholders to achieve this aim. Including survey of staff and students on opinions of existing campus buildings prior to decanting to alternative buildings, in advance of new buildings progressing.
- Curriculum teams have developed and progressed a model of staff/ student Consultative meetings. These meetings offer a platform for the student voice and promote an ethos of mutual respect.
- A consultation guidance document is available to all managers. It aims to provide clear assistance to managers who are consulting on new policies, strategies, plans or codes of practice.
- Various surveys have taken place with students and staff as detailed in Q.23 of this report.
- The College has a joint Lecturing Support Staff Consultative Forum. These groups are made up of Union and Management representatives and meet regularly throughout the year. Topics consulted upon included academic planner, implementation agreement, OD review, recruitment, new builds, hybrid working, classroom observation, responsibility allowances and estates strategy.
- The College's Student Union continues to develop and is consulted on a regular basis. Campus class rep meetings allows students the opportunity to discuss issues specific to their campus. In 2022-23 class reps were asked

to give their feedback on the cost of living crisis, smoke free campuses, catering provision and campus facilities.

- All staff who leave the College are requested to complete a Staff Exit Questionnaire.
- The College has good engagement with a variety of statutory, private, community and voluntary groups. Examples of groups that the College engage with are, DfE, ECNI, local schools, local councils, businesses/employers, neighbourhood renewal partnerships, community organisations, NHSCT, PSNI, and Autism NI.
- The College's Business Development function and Senior Management Team continue to be members of various external committees including local council, economic development and funding groups, local business education partnerships, health trust groups, workforce development forum and various business and community networks and forums.

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)*:

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

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)

Quarterly screening reports are published on our website as can be viewed at <http://www.nrc.ac.uk/nrc/equality/>

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

1

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

0	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:

All policies screened during 2022-23 were screened out and listed on our website as part of the College’s commitment to publish a quarterly screening report. Policies are developed by a policy team and when appropriate feedback is sought internally from other staff and students. Where relevant policies are consulted upon with external stakeholders and the Equality Commission.

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:

NA

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:

- The College integrates the use and reporting of Student Equality Data into the Self Evaluation Review (SER) process, an integral element of the College planning process. To progress further use of student monitoring data for planning purposes various meetings have been held with the College's Management Information System department.
- The promotion of equality is monitored through the College's Self-Evaluation Review (SER) process. Curriculum teams are asked to report on how well the course team promote equality, diversity and good relations with their learners. Support teams are also required to explain and evaluate how well they promoted equality, diversity and good relationships with each other, with other staff, with learners and with external stakeholders. These responses are monitored by the Equality Officer on an annual basis.
- As a result of monitoring sickness absence statistics and carrying out the H&WB staff survey the College has developed a Health and Well Being action plan.
- The College carries out annual Induction and Mid/End of year surveys with its students. These surveys capture information about learning support, access to information, policies, student services, respect in the College, quality of teaching, facilities, accessibility and much more. In the 2022-23 Mid-Year Survey 95% of respondents agreed that *'I have been treated fairly and with respect since I started the College'*.
- Various evaluation data has also been gathered during 2022-23 such as training exit interviews, careers guidance feedback, workshop feedback, staff development surveys, graduation surveys, employer open days, digital insights survey, business development feedback, class rep feedback and staff meetings with students.
- The College regularly reviews its complaints procedure to ensure it is user friendly. This procedure is for anyone who is unhappy about the service or facilities provided by the College. This could be a learner/trainee or potential learner/trainee, service provider, supplier, employer, member of the public or other external stakeholders.
- The College continues to implement its customer comments/ suggestions/ questions form to allow us to make improvements and therefore reduce complaints. This form has also been made available electronically on the staff and student intranets.
- The College continuously monitors the uptake of all its courses and monitors retention, achievement and success of all students.
- Student and Staff monitoring data is reported on yearly. The information is then analysed for screening policies.
- Staff exit questionnaires are monitored. These include an assessment of equality and leaver's experiences and seek to establish the reasons why staff have decided to leave.
- Applicants for jobs continue to be monitored and reported on through completion of annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return.
- Grievance and harassment complaints made by staff are processed through the appropriate policy and monitoring data collected.

- Monitoring of any complaints received through the Section 75 non-compliance policy.

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.

One of the key elements of the work of the College's Equality Unit is to ensure the College is an organisation that recognises and respects diversity. Training has been developed to provide information on the College's legal duties and what this means in practice. Training ensures that staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge and expertise to work effectively with each other and all those who need services.

In 2022-23 111 staff completed the Equality and Diversity online module.

Throughout the year awareness raising of various equality related issues takes place through the staff and student intranets, emails, staff newsletters and social media.

Information on the College's equality scheme and annual progress reports are available on the College's website and the staff intranet.

An equality update is sent to the Senior Management Team annually and an SMT briefing was delivered in September 2022 on the revised equality scheme and new 5-year action plan. All SMT completed the new ECNI training video on equality 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:

Staff across the College have been offered the opportunity to engage in a range of training and development activities to enhance and develop their knowledge and skills in respect of supporting an inclusive College environment. Staff have attended the following equality related training during 2022-23:

Title	Number of Participants
Autism	25
Makaton	20

Teir 2 and 3 Domestic Abuse	17
-----------------------------	----

Education support staff have attended various bespoke external training courses throughout the year such as:

- Understanding Neurodiversity – Jude Morow event hosted by NRC.
- Exams Masterclass: Using technology for access arrangements.
- LGBTQIA+ - Carafriend
- Traffic Light Training/C-Card scheme - Common Youth/PHA

The Equality Manager takes part in a broad range of events organised by the Equality Commission, Labour Relations Agency, Section 75 groups, or organisations working on their behalf. Some of the events/training attended during 2022-23 were:

- Inclusion Training – Building Communities Resource Centre.
- Race at work, Tackling race inequality in the workplace – BITC
- Understanding and Managing the Menopause
- Learning Disability Awareness training with MENCAP – Money Guiders

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**:

Reasonable adjustments for staff

The College continues to monitor and implement reasonable adjustments for staff, requirements for these are highlighted through recruitment/induction processes, Occupational health or welfare meetings. Examples of adjustments made in 2022-23 were phased return to work after absence, specialist IT equipment, restricted/lighter duties and limited travel.

Learning support

The College continues to monitor students with disabilities, these students have opportunities to advise the College of their support needs at interview, enrolment and throughout their course. The College offers support, advice and information for students with disabilities and/or Specific Learning Difficulties such as dyslexia or dyspraxia, in order to ensure that students are enabled to participate as fully as possible in the academic and social life of the College. The student intranet has been updated and various leaflets have been produced to make students aware of the support and services available to them.

During this period 650 students were supported by the Education Support Department. 144 of these were referred to an educational psychologist for assessment.

The following is a breakdown of the student's main disability/need:

- 48% learning difficulty (dyslexia/dyscalculia/dyspraxia/MLD, GLD)
- 25% Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- 10% mental ill health

- 4% medical conditions
- 5% ADHD /ADD
- 2% sensory impairments
- 2% mobility problems/physical conditions
- 4% Other

These students received extra support either on a one-to-one basis, as part of a small group or classroom support or with a variety of adjustments in the classroom.

18 students obtained Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).

Learning Support Equipment

During 2022-23, there were significant laptops purchased to help students with additional needs. Various other pieces of equipment and software were provided to improve students accessibility such as: receivers for student hearing aids, roger pens, audio shoes, digital voice recorders, dragon software, JAWS software update, Read and Write Gold, Video Spark, Trello, Dolphin SaySo software, livescribe pens, fidget toys, desk clamps, laptops, coloured reading rulers, coloured overlays, specialist chair, footrest, supernova software, ace software, adjustable tables, large keyboards, earphones, rollerball mice, scribe pens, portable magnifiers, laptop stand, PC headsets, FM hearing systems, PHONAK sound system, reading slopes and writing slopes.

Examination Support

The College has provided examination support to 392 students during 2022-23. This support includes extra time, separate rooms, rest breaks, use of laptops, coloured overlay/glasses, word processing facility, use of scribes, readers and prompters, enlarged papers and electronic papers.

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:

NA

Section 3: Looking Forward

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

The Equality Scheme was reviewed in 2022 therefore a review will be due again in 2027.

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)*

- Roll out of Equality Improvement Plan 2022-2027
- Disability Confident Employer Level 2
- Disability and SENDO Awareness Training for staff
- Dignity at Work Training for staff
- Review and utilise Equality Monitoring Data
- Development of new Disability Action Plan

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2022-23) 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):

APPENDIX A

5 Year Equality Improvement Plan 2022 - 2027

The Equality Commission recommended that the college take a systematic approach to examining our functions and how these relate to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. As a result of this process the College has drawn up this Equality Improvement Plan which identifies a range of actions/ action measures which will enable the college to address inequalities identified through internal and external research. The College will monitor progress on the delivery of this Equality Improvement Plan in conjunction with our Equality Scheme.

Action	Timescale	Responsible person/ Department	Outcome/ Measure	Equality Category	Progress as at March 2023
Monitor, review and utilise annual workforce and student data to inform policy development and marketing.	Annually by June	Head of HR and OD Head of Head of Performance and Planning	Improve identification of underrepresented groups. FEMR Article 55 CDR Return Learner Surveys Screening of policies	All	This plan was presented to the Colleges Senior Management Team in September 2022. Roll out will commence and be reported on in 2023/24.
Further embed equality and diversity into the College and Curriculum through awareness raising and promotion.	Ongoing	Head of HR and OD Head of Teaching and Learning Excellence Head of Student Experience	Clear objectives and targets within curriculum QIPs. Self-Evaluation Reviews Exit Surveys Compliments & Complaints Student Surveys/ Focus groups Quality Improvement Plans	All	

Recruit a Diverse student population.	Ongoing	Curriculum Heads of Department Head of Marketing and Communication Head of Student Experience Head of HR and OD	Have a diverse student population, impacting positively on everyone's learning and development. Social Inclusion Programmes (College Connect) Training for Success/Traineeship/Apprenticeship NI/ High Level Apprenticeship WAPP WSTEM	All	
Further develop student support mechanisms to reduce barriers to education and learning.	Ongoing	Head of Student Experience Head of HR and OD	Increase access to education and learning whilst promoting an environment which accepts and understands diversity. Education Support Northern Plus LGBTQIA+ Support Mental Health support Student Union Officers Digital Accessibility Carers support Student Finance	All	

Monitor, Review and Update of Disability Action Plan.	Annually	Head of HR and OD Head of Student Experience	Improve college services, facilities, and buildings for disabled people Autism Friendly College Accessibility Audit Disability Confident Employer JAM Mental Health Charter Health & Wellbeing programmes Student involvement in internal Working Groups/Committees AccessAble Guides	All	
Provide a range of Equality and Diversity training to all staff and students.	Ongoing	Head of HR and OD Head of Student Experience	Increase awareness of Equality and Diversity and compliance with policies. Induction for staff and students Tutorial programme Staff modules on - Disability Awareness/ SENDO Equality & Diversity Dignity at Work	All	
Grow and enhance relations with local community groups	Annually	Head of Marketing and Communication Head of Student Experience Head of HR and OD	Increase and build upon community partnerships Community Education Schools Partnerships Good for Me Good for FE project Black FE Leadership	All	

			LGBT Groups Disability Groups Carers Groups Volunteering Student Union		
Monitor, Evaluate and Review Equality Improvement Plan	Annually	Head of HR and OD	Update and review of action plan as necessary. Annual Progress Report Equality Action Plan Disability Action plan	All	

APPENDIX B

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

Disability Action Plan 2019 - 2024 as at March 2023

1. Public Life Measures

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Progress as at March 2023
The Colleges will endeavour to influence the Department for the Economy to ensure participation of disabled people on the Governing Body of the Colleges.	When vacancies exist and on an on-going basis.	Governing Body will include members with disabilities.	Difficulty with achievement of this measure due to appointments being made externally. Sector Equality group have written to Department for Economy.
Continue to encourage the participation of disabled people on committees, student representatives on the Governing Body and groups across the Colleges.	Reviewed annually Year 1 – Year 5.	Membership of committees / groups to demonstrate participation of those with disabilities.	There has been an increase of Level 1 students represented on the Students' Union. Students' Union Disability Officers elected annually across College campus sites. Efforts have been made to establish a student disability forum however there was no uptake.

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Progress as at March 2023
Encourage students with a disability to participate more fully in College life.	Annually as part of induction and ongoing throughout the year. Year 1 – Year 5.	Increased participation in student focus groups, student surveys, Students' Union Membership and where applicable non-curricular activities such as student's union and sporting activities etc.	<p>Various student focus groups have taken place over the year. Students with disabilities are encouraged to attend these.</p> <p>Students with disabilities have been elected to Students' Union.</p> <p>Equality Manager meets with Students' Union to help ensure any activities planned are accessible to all.</p> <p>Student Services provide differentiated information across the College ensuring accessibility.</p> <p>To ease transition to College our Education Support staff have arranged events for school SENCOs. Students are also offered transition visits and orientation videos have been produced.</p>
Increase awareness of specific barriers faced by people with a disability	Ongoing.	Increased awareness and understanding of barriers	We have participated in various awareness raising campaigns throughout the year including Autism

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Progress as at March 2023
<p>including through linking in with National Awareness days or weeks.</p>		<p>faced by people with a disability.</p>	<p>Awareness Day, Down Syndrome Socks Day, World Mental Health Day, Cancer Awareness, Deaf Awareness Week and HIV awareness day.</p> <p>This year we highlighted Learning Disabilities Week to staff and provided short training videos on each difficulty.</p> <p>The College continues to be an active member of the Northern Adult Autism Advice Service where multidisciplinary advice is offered to those either seeking employment or attending a course at the College.</p> <p>Head of Student Services is a member of the NHSCT Autism Forum which navigates the Trusts activities to those on the Autistic Spectrum.</p> <p>College has achieved Autism NI's Autism Impact Award.</p>

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Progress as at March 2023
			Education support department delivered ASD awareness workshops to 230 students.
Promote the use of AccessAble website to encourage participation of prospective students.	Annually and on-going Year 1 – Year 5.	Benchmark usage of AccessAble webpage.	<p>The guides are promoted to both staff and students via a link to the AccessAble website on the front page of College’s website.</p> <p>Literature has been placed at campus receptions.</p> <p>AccessAble were invited to meet with key College staff to discuss further promotion of the guides.</p> <p>A College student has become Northern Ireland’s AccessAble champion, a social media campaign has been produced to promote this.</p>

1.2 Positive Attitudes

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Progress as at March 2023
<p>Create an open an inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those with mental ill health</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Positive engagement, increased provision of information and monitoring.</p>	<p>The College have trained a cohort of staff in Mental Health First Aid to support both staff and students in crisis.</p> <p>We have developed 'Mindful Manager' and 'Mindful Colleague' training designed to practically support staff in positive mental wellbeing.</p> <p>A number of staff have attended Suicide Awareness/ASSIST training.</p> <p>The College has committed to the promotion of mental wellbeing by signing the ECNI Mental Health Charter.</p> <p>The College is registered as a Safe Place for those experiencing domestic violence and the trauma that follows.</p> <p>Safeguarding staff have completed Drug and Alcohol Responders</p>

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Progress as at March 2023
			<p>Training allowing for brief intervention with those struggling with addiction and the negative impact on their wellbeing.</p> <p>Annually staff are asked to complete the Zero suicide alliance online training.</p> <p>A Health and Wellbeing programme for staff continues annually.</p>
<p>Explore the scope of offering meaningful placements, work shadowing and volunteering for people with a disability</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Develop capacity of people with a disability to find employment.</p>	<p>We have investigated avenues of partnership working with external organisations to provide work shadowing opportunities.</p> <p>Students with a disability are supported by the Education Support team, curriculum staff and Training Support Officers into meaningful work placements and monitored to ensure safety and positive learning experiences.</p>

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Progress as at March 2023
			Further exploration with the Careers team and Inclusive Learning team to take place in 2023-24.
Introduce training for front line staff on disability etiquette and relevant legislation dealing with disability and the provision of goods, facilities and services.	Ongoing	Increased use of services and facilities of those people with a disability.	<p>SENDO and Equality are part of the staff Induction programme.</p> <p>Various disability related training is delivered to staff throughout the year.</p> <p>Individual teaching staff are given specific training depending on student needs. 25 completed Autism training and 20 completed Makaton training in 2022/23.</p> <p>9 Autism Champions completed Level 2 Understanding Autism.</p>
Consider development of a (Sectoral) Disability Advisory Group that could involve staff and students.	Three meetings per year	Contribute to the development of communications, consultation, screening of relevant policies, monitoring etc.	Group have considered and will review again in 2023-24.

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Progress as at March 2023
Through Widening Access and Participation scheme increase number of students with a disability entering the College	Annually	Raise educational awareness, aspirations and educational attainment amongst the target group.	<p>The College continues to support a variety of students, including those with disabilities from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to participate in college life via Higher Education study.</p> <p>The Gallaher Trust is working in partnership with the College to provide a bursary for a designated student and this will cover their HE fees.</p>
Monitor and review the progress of the Disability Action Plan.	Annually August Year 1 – Year 5	Provision of update contained within Progress Report.	This plan is reviewed on an annual basis in March and amended accordingly.

