



## Single Equality Scheme

### Introduction

The College holds the values of commitment, learning, partnership, respect, standards and trust are central to its mission in placing the student experience at the heart of all College policies and procedures. Accordingly this places great emphasis on access to education and aims to remove barriers in order to create a culture of inclusiveness that is committed to challenging discrimination in all aspects of its work.

The College is determined to create an ethos where the diversity of staff and students is both promoted and valued. It sees diversity as being key to widening participation in education and enriching the College experience for all. Hence it seeks to promote positive practice with all external agencies such as government bodies, employers, contractors etc

### The Scheme

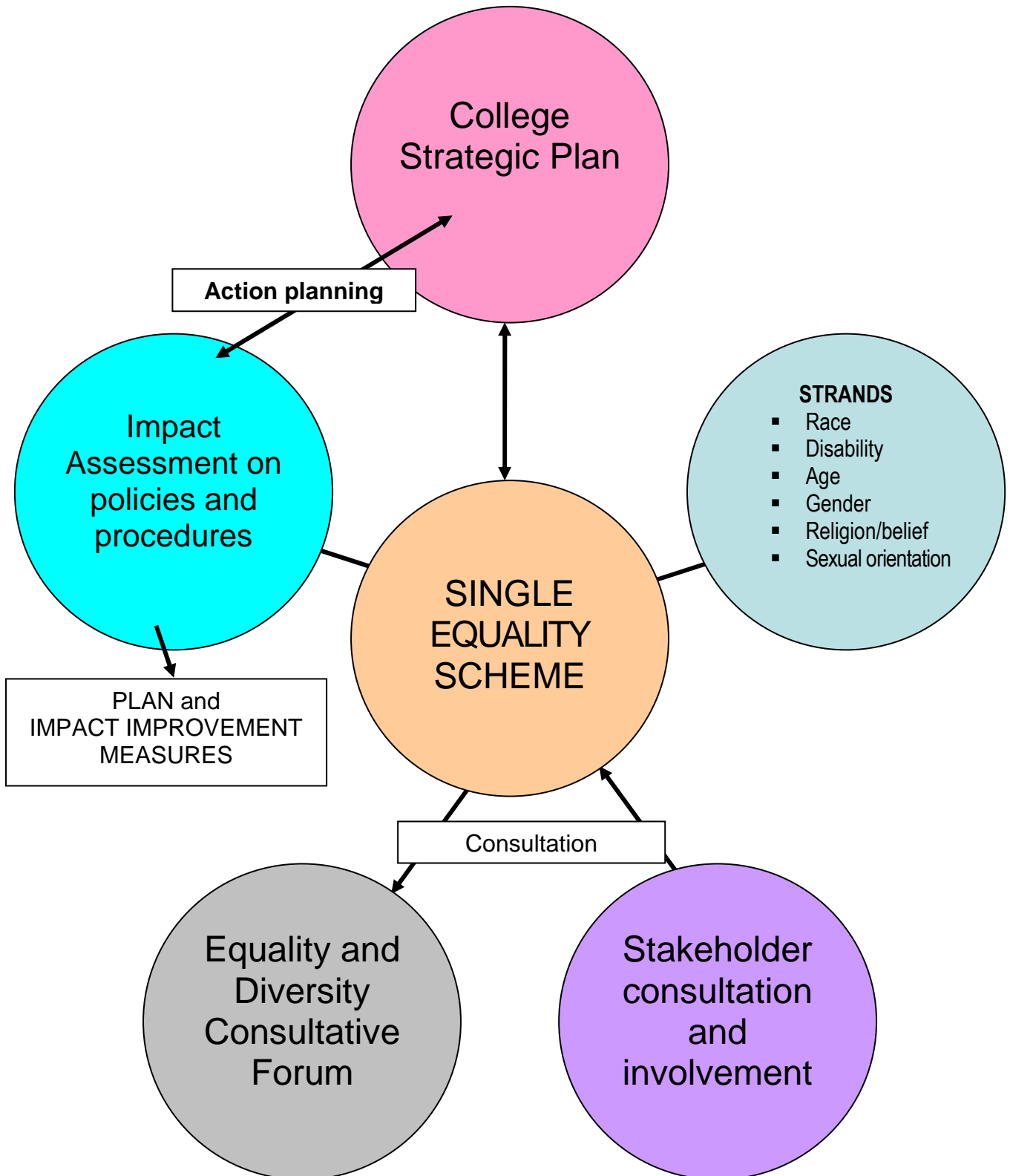
The Single Equality Scheme is based on six strands. These are:

- Gender
- Ethnicity or Race
- Disability
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Religion or belief

This is in line with the Equality and Human Rights Act 2006 and the establishment of the Equality and Human Right Commission formed in October 2007 (replacing the CRO, CRE and DRC). Furthermore it underlines the aim of the College to operate fairly in relation to differences between groups and individuals in its community.

The Scheme underpins the Equality and Diversity Strategy of the College. It draws together the aspects of equality and diversity into one coherent whole and is designed to involve individuals and groups as well as the formal groups and committees of the College such as the Equality and Diversity Consultative Forum, Staff Council, Boards of Study, staff forums and student forums. The underpinning duty is to eliminate discrimination and promote equality.

The overarching approach is shown below



## **Equality and Diversity Strategy**

The Single Equality Scheme underpins the overarching strategy of the College in promoting opportunity for all. The Equality and Diversity Functional Plan identifies national and local priorities, linking these to the overall strategic aims of the College. These aims are translated into activities to which the College commits over a period of time. Managers' responsibilities are identified and outcomes monitored against target dates for achievement.

The Functional Plan is reviewed annually and is an evolving document. Updating is after consultation with stakeholders to continuously adapt to new developments, legislation and reflect the demands of the current circumstances. Review will lead to changes in actions and their priorities.

The College Strategy is designed to reflect the College mission and values. It will:

- Use demographic information to analyse its actions
- Aim to eliminate or minimise negative impacts for users
- Monitor the effects of its actions in respect of equality of opportunity
- Take positive action where appropriate to promote full engagement with under-represented groups

It is the aim of the College to promote equality of opportunity for staff, students, partners and the community its serves. The College is committed not simply to the letter of the law but its spirit. Equality of opportunity and inclusivity is, and will continue to be, at the heart of the college ethos. The College will seek to involve and consult with its community and make consultation accessible as far as is practicable.

The Principal is responsible for the implementation of the Strategy. The development will be informed by the Equality and Diversity Consultative Forum. With equality embedded within the operations of the college each area will be responsible for monitoring and action planning in relation to the Functional Plan with outcomes reported to the Principal.

### **The Single Equality Scheme**

The Single Equality Scheme is published on the College web site and incorporated into the Staff Handbook. Hard copies or alternative format are available on request to the Personnel and Quality Director. These may, in specific circumstances have to be specifically produced (as in the case of Braille).

The Scheme brings together the commitment of the College to its users so as to promote equality of opportunity as well as to fulfil legislative requirements. The actions in the Scheme are informed through the Equality and Diversity Functional Plan.

## **Current strengths of the College can be seen in that we:**

1. Market the courses to a wide range of schools across a wide geographic area to enable access to the facilities and courses
2. Provide subsidised College buses to enable access for students. Where subsidy is not a financial option, bus routes are negotiated with providers to facilitate easier access for students
3. Actively and positively encourage staff and students to declare disability or learning difficulty to enable us to identify support during application and whilst at the College
4. Have a dedicated team of Learning Support staff to provide support to students whilst at College
5. Have screening and diagnostic testing of students at the start of their course to identify any additional learning support needs they may have to be successful in their studies
6. Have a Personal Skills Development team who provide learning support to students to allow them to succeed
7. Have a system to identify students who may, for a variety of reasons, be at risk of withdrawing from their studies so that support is targeted at their needs.
8. Collect student and staff information in relation to gender, race, disability and age to facilitate analysis of uptake and for use in informing curriculum development and that it does not disadvantage particular groups.
9. Have a tutorial system which places students 'at the heart of the college' (OfSTED) so they are supported through action planning to maximise their potential.
10. Have conducted a Disability Audit of the College campuses and have a planned building programme over 5 years to ensure that College facilities are accessible.
11. Have introduced Impact Assessment for College policies and procedures. It is the aim to review all policies and procedures over a twelve month cycle. Management training has taken place in carrying out the process
12. Monitor the age, ethnicity, gender and disability of staff and students using Dudley census information as comparative data.
13. Monitor recruitment of students by widening participation codes
14. Have an Equality and Diversity Consultative forum which presents issues for discussion to gain feedback from staff as well as consider self generated agenda items
15. Conduct student forums to gain feedback from students
16. Conduct surveys of staff and students which allow for analysis, through self declaration, by gender, age, disability, learning difficulty and ethnicity. The outcomes from these surveys are used in self assessment. An overall report is also presented to the College Executive.
17. Hold the Double Ticks Award as positive about disability
18. Have a Learner Support Fund policy that allows for positive action on assistance for transport for those with disabilities or learning difficulties
19. Have specialist support through a Connexions Personal Adviser for students with particular personal difficulties
20. Have two trained Counsellors accessible confidentially for students and staff
21. Provide an Employee Assistance Programme using outside external confidential counselling for staff

22. Hold an Equality and Diversity Week with central materials available to tutors to promote equality of opportunity awareness amongst students
23. Carry out staff training and development which covers equality and diversity issues
24. Provide a 'One World' booklet to students in tutorials which explains different faiths and beliefs to promote understanding
25. Offer programmes of study from pre Entry level to level 4
26. Provide a Careers advisory department which holds materials applicable to all levels and which challenges stereotypical images. It holds the Black Country Careers Education and Guidance Award
27. Are an Investors in People organisation
28. Make special arrangements for students for examinations and can, in particular circumstances, facilitate the assessment of students in accessing special consideration
29. Link with local support agencies such as Connexions, PCT, Learning Care Team
30. Offer specialist equipment to support needs – laptops, Textread, scanner facilities, minicom, adjustable tables/chairs/ hearing loop
31. Locate Learning Resource Centres in each building for specialist help and support
32. Have close monitoring of student and staff statistics showing a greater ethnic mix, in both and staff and students than the immediate catchment area.

### **Developments planned in 2007-2008**

1. Further development of a forum site on the College Intranet to gain feedback on Equality and Diversity Week and involvement from College users on equality and diversity issues
2. To develop curriculum in relation to workforce training; in particular develop the Train to Gain aspect of the College in furthering access to training and education
3. To ensure all policies reviewed in 2008-2009 are Impact assessed
4. To continually update on the Intranet information sheets relating to the more common disabilities and learning difficulties so that staff are supported in identifying symptoms and provided with strategies for supporting students through their teaching approaches.

### **Management of the Scheme**

The Single Equality Scheme has the commitment of the College Corporation and the Principal over and above the need to meet the College's legal duties. They will take the Scheme into account in the development of the Strategic Plan and use management data alongside the annual Equality and Diversity Report to monitor progress against targets.

There is an Equality and Diversity Consultative Forum chaired by the Director of Student Services made up of managers, staff and union representatives who provide advice and feedback to ensure that effective management of equality is achieved with reference to outside organisations and support as they feel is necessary. The Forum reports to the Principal.

The College reviews policies on a twelve month cycle which includes assessing the impact of the policies on staff and students. The purpose behind this is to identify and implement actions that are proactive rather than reactive. Each area of the College will prioritise its response so that it will identify areas which have the greatest impact for the majority of service users.

Risk assessment will include disability within its remit to enable a quantifiable base against which impact can be assessed. It is anticipated that actions taken by the College will reduce risk over a period of time.

## **Impact Assessment**

The College has introduced a procedure for assessing the impact of its policies and procedures on users of its services. This will be progressively applied across reviews of all policies and procedures.

The procedure for impact assessment will be through an initial screening of the policy or procedure. Should this identify a negative impact indicating wider consultation is required the Full Impact Assessment procedure will be followed.

## **Race Equality**

### **Introduction**

The College welcomes staff and students from all ethnic backgrounds and sees diversity amongst its users as a positive experience which encourages contributions from all groups. It recognises the diversity of the community it serves and aims to treat everyone as an individual.

The Scheme seeks to make sure that students and staff are supported whilst at the College and share the values in its mission statement. To do so it seeks to monitor key indicators to ensure that action is taken to remove barriers based on race or ethnic origin.

The College seeks to promote opportunity for staff and students regardless of race or ethnic origin. To this end it has:

- a range of courses at different levels
- a subsidised bus service to facilitate attendance at College across a wide catchment area
- reporting systems that identify different ethnic groups
- links with external organisations is the promotion of opportunity and treatment of different groups

For staff it involves working with the Network for Black Professionals in exploring opportunities for black staff. It is also keen to develop a Black Staff Forum in liaison with College staff.

The College recognises that equal treatment is demonstrated in many ways. It reviews its materials, both promotional and curricular, to promote inclusivity. It also reviews its policies and procedures on an annual basis and, as part of the process, carries out impact assessment on them and any proposed changes to them.

## **Disability Equality**

### **Introduction**

Halesowen College welcomes students with disabilities and aims to provide support which allows them to achieve their potential. The student experience is at the heart of all College policies and procedures. It places great emphasis on access to education and has a history of removing barriers in order to create a culture where disability is not a disadvantage.

The College supports the social model of disability and supports the view of inclusion and supporting ways of incorporating staff and students into its community by facilitating access. All reasonable adjustments are made to ensure staff and students with disabilities are not treated less favourably as a result of impairment. The College accepts the broad definition of disability embracing conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, cancer, HIV, ME, multiple sclerosis and mental health issues. It will facilitate assessment of individual need and provide, where possible and appropriate, a response as to how any barriers can be removed.

Halesowen College's mission is to strive for excellence in education and training in Halesowen and its surrounding area. Implicit in this is the involvement of the whole community in the life of the College as an inclusive environment where diversity is celebrated and where access to and participation in education is promoted. The values underpin the work of the College where difference is respected, staff and students are treated fairly in an environment that they can trust where there is a partnership and mutual commitment to achieve goals so that all can benefit from learning.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) established legal rights for disabled students in pre- and post-16 education. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Disability Equality Duty (DED) Code of Practice requires all Public Authorities including FE and Tertiary Colleges to adhere to anti-discriminatory duties and to prepare a Disability Equality Scheme. The Act gives people the right not to be discriminated against on the grounds of their disability. This means the College must have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled students and staff and other students and staff.
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Eliminate disability related harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled students and staff and disabled people in general
- Encourage participation by disabled students and staff in College life
- Take account of disabled people's disabilities even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than others.

Disclosure is not considered in the application process other than to accommodate and assess support that may be required by the individual during the process. Information is used for statistical reporting. The information is held for no other reason and reporting in a public forum is not individual or recognisable. In cases where disability occurs during a person's involvement with the College they are encouraged to disclose this so support needs can be assessed accurately.

Particular support is offered by the College to students to enable access:

- Courses offered for students with learning difficulties and disabilities
- Comprehensive declaration processes to encourage assessment and placement
- Specialist advice and guidance during the application, interview and enrolment processes
- Schools Liaison Team to enable transition
- Learning Support team to provide in class and out of class support
- Resource assistants to facilitate access to support
- Assessment of needs in literacy and numeracy

- A Personal Skills Development team to assist learning
- One to one support
- Arrangements for examination concessions and special considerations
- Connexions Personal Advisers
- In-house Counselling services linking to appropriate external organisations
- Links with local support agencies
- Specialist equipment to support needs – laptops, Textread, scanner facilities, minicom, adjustable tables/chairs/ hearing loop

The College plans for support that may be required such as dyslexia, Aspergers syndrome, hearing or visual impairment or mobility difficulties. Where impairment or disability is specific or complex the College aims to react quickly to the particular needs and assess the ways it could reasonably adjust to and accommodate those needs including Health and Safety risk assessments.

## **Gender Equality**

### **Introduction**

The College is committed to working to eliminate gender inequality and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity for all regardless of gender. It recognises its duty to promote gender equality arises from the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended by the Equality Act 2006) as well as its duties under the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Equal Pay Directive (75/117).

The College has demonstrated a firm commitment to the equal treatment of staff and students in relation to gender and has in place systems to ensure that both are treated equally. The Action Plan for gender equality is contained within the Single Equality Scheme. This Action Plan is taken to the Equality and Diversity Consultative Forum and is reviewed annually.

The College will gather information from a variety of College reporting mechanisms to identify actions necessary to address any areas of inequality or adverse impact and will then prioritise the actions identified.

The ongoing development of the scheme and of the action plan will be the responsibility of the Director of Student Services and the Personnel and Quality Director in conjunction with the members of the Equality and Diversity Consultation Forum.

### **Staff issues**

The College seeks to treat staff equally regardless of gender and will adopt policies and procedures which aim to break down barriers relating to gender, occupational areas and stereotyping. These include issues of harassment. It will respond to issues relating to job evaluation, maternity and paternity, pay or promotion equally and investigate fully its practices should they be the subject of enquiry. It will also adopt systems that allow for career development of staff.

The College seeks to eliminate barriers to equal pay. It adopts an evaluation scheme on work practices that bases judgement of financial worth on the work carried out as against the gender of the person carrying out the function. It has developed a single salary spine for academic and support staff to support this.

The College has a number of schemes and policies designed to facilitate, within reason, the demands placed on staff by their work and family commitments. This is in recognition of the demands sometimes placed on a particular gender within the family environment.

### **Sexual Orientation**

The College welcomes applications from staff and students irrespective of their sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, bi-sexual or other), re-assignment of gender (through surgery and recognised in law as a new gender not registered at birth) or gender preference (individuals choosing to live under a gender different than that biologically recognised). Everyone is regarded as an individual and the College recognises the contributions an individual makes.

The College aims to:

- review its publicity materials to ensure there are no negative images and reference to sexual orientation.
- remove barriers that might prevent application due to sexual orientations.
- include sexual orientation in its Impact Assessment procedures.
- consider sexual orientation in the review practices of Course Review.

By operating an inclusive culture and providing opportunities for individuals to contribute to the whole College, it is envisaged that positive perceptions will be encouraged, and the diversity and breadth of the College community celebrated.

### **Age Equality**

The College will not discriminate against any individual on the basis of age. Criteria relating to suitability will be based on appropriate skills to undertake a course or particular employment. The College will negotiate an appropriate time for retirement for individuals within an overall nominal retirement age framework.

Entry to courses will be based on academic ability or the equivalent experiential learning prior to entry irrespective of age. The College recognises that certain abilities are necessary for study and will take these into account when discussing suitability of applicants.

The College will consider the ability of applicants for staffing roles in terms of their ability to fulfil the job role. Person specifications will seek to quantify the ability of staff and avoid the use of direct experience as a criterion for assessing suitability if in doing so it is likely to exclude applicants who have not had the time to gain such experience.

The College recognises however that outside agencies may apply funding or support based on age. Where this is the case, and the College is obliged to use such criteria, it will seek to quantify any effects such banding may have on its users and make this information available in its reports.

### **Religion and Belief Equality**

The College welcomes applications from student and staff regardless of their religion of belief. Everyone is regarded as an individual and the College recognises the contribution that they bring to the diversity of its staff and student body. The College will not give preferential treatment to any particular faith group but will seek to provide reasonable support to staff and students in carrying out their religious practices such as in the provision

of a quiet room for reflection and/or prayer and the recognition of the main religious festivals that directly affect the individual.

The College aims to create an environment where all beliefs or none are recognised and awareness promoted through the tutorial systems as well as in its communication functions. By creating an inclusive culture and providing opportunities to contribute to the College as a whole it is envisaged that positive perceptions will be encouraged and the diversity and breadth of the community the College serves celebrated.

The College has a freedom of speech policy which provides security of expression whilst protecting the College and its users from extremes of opinion from outside organisations or individuals. It also holds an Equality and Diversity Week. Related to this is a One World booklet available to explain and develop understanding of a variety of beliefs.

### **Monitoring, Reporting on and Development of Schemes**

The College operates Central Information Services (CIS). This service enables the College to report from its central administrative databases. To allow monitoring of race, gender, age and disability equality it will seek to provide information relating to each aspect wherever this is feasible.

The College will seek to report, with comparative data, on :

<b>Students</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Other users</b>
Cohort mix on equality aspects	Staff cohort mix on equality aspects	Complaints
Recruitment, application and selection	Recruitment, application and selection	
Opinion survey data analysis	Opinion survey data analysis	
Disciplinary action	Disciplinary action	
Success rates	Successful completion of probation	
Progression rates	Promotion	
Retention of students	Leavers	
Uptake of Learning Support against those assessed for need	Working from home	
Uptake of Personal Skills Development	Grievances/Harassment	
Uptake of Personal Skills Development against those assessed for need		
Distribution of Learner Support Funds Completion rates		

The purpose of these reports is to establish the performance of the College in promoting opportunity against LSC and external benchmarks. It is also to identify areas where action should be taken where adverse trends are detected. Managers will produce action plans with timescales and responsibilities aimed at correcting issues identified. These will form part of the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan.

There will be Impact Assessment within the established policy review cycle.

In addition to overall monitoring the College has a student review and guidance programme where students meet with their Personal Coach on a one to one basis which is identified in the pastoral calendar. This is part of ongoing development in line with the Individual Learning Plan. At these meetings student progress, attendance, punctuality and targets are discussed. At these times any support required by the student is assessed and referral to Learning Support or Personal Skills Development may be recommended. Action Plans are agreed with the students and targets set.. Issues that arise from meetings (as appropriate) are raised at Course Review meetings where additional support may also be advised.

Data is based on self declaration by staff and students. Every effort will be made to reduce the category of 'not known/not provided' to increase the validity and analysis of data. However the College respects the right of an individual not to declare.

The College will monitor curriculum resources so that they celebrate diversity and promote equality in a balanced way. It will encourage and support students and staff in challenging prejudice, stereotyping and intolerance and will seek to manage its environment in a way that maintains the rights and dignity of the individual.

### **Reporting and Development**

All Schemes have the commitment of the Corporation and College Executive over and above the need to meet the College's legal duties. They will take into account the Scheme in the development of the Strategic Plan and use management data alongside the annual Equality and Diversity Report to monitor progress against targets.

Reports prepared will identify an equality dimension in their presentation where information is appropriate and available. Each College Director will present their reports to the College Executive. These will be taken to Committees of the Corporation as appropriate.

Over a twelve month cycle the College will review policies and assess their impact.. The purpose behind this is to identify action that is proactive rather than reactive. Each area of the College will prioritise its response so that it will identify areas which have the greatest impact for the majority of service users. Action Planning is seen as part of the continuous process of promoting equality and diversity.

The College has an Equality and Diversity Consultative Forum involving staff which meets three times per year. It has representation from College management as well as support, teaching and union representation. The Forum's advice and opinion will be sought on all issues of equality of opportunity.

Student Forums are held with representatives from each curriculum area of the College twice annually. During these forums students will be invited to raise issues and there will be specific questioning relating to equality of opportunity. The outcomes of the forums will be reported to managers and responses published. Actions, where required, will form part of the report back.

The College is developing an electronic communications system to allow for the raising of issues amongst staff and students. The purpose of this is to allow access to all to express their concerns and also to discuss and resolve issues in forums.

The actions relating to individual Equality Schemes will be incorporated into the plan for the Single Equality Scheme which will be approved by the College Executive.

The College will encourage and support students and staff in challenging prejudice, stereotyping and intolerance and will seek to manage its environment in a way that maintains the rights and dignities of individuals.