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1. Introduction

This factsheet aims to provide guidance on preparing equality objectives to comply with [The Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) Regulations 2011](#). It provides a summary of the requirements, along with practical advice on preparing, setting and publishing objectives.

2. Legal requirement

Regulation 3 of The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 requires Colleges to:

- Publish information to demonstrate compliance with the general Equality Duty by no later than 31 January 2012 and at least annually thereafter, and;
- Prepare and publish equality objective(s), by no later than **6 April 2012** and at least every four years thereafter. The objective(s) should focus on what the College believes it should reasonably achieve to further one or more aims of the general Equality Duty and must be specific and measurable.

The information and objective(s) must be published in a way that is accessible to the public, and can include publishing the information within another published document.

Under the general Equality Duty ([section 149](#) of the Equality Act 2010), Colleges have a legal duty to have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation (e.g. remove or reduce disadvantages felt by people from different groups);
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (e.g. meet the needs of people from different groups and encourage involvement in public life or in other activities where participation is low); and

- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (e.g. deal with prejudice and promote understanding between people from different groups).

This applies in relation to all of the College's activities relating to employees, students and service users. These are the broad aims that should be kept in mind when preparing College equality objectives.

3. What is an objective?

An objective is about change. It should be **specific, measurable, achievable, relevant** (realistic) and **time-bound** (SMART) and expressed in terms of people and outcomes, set towards achieving a long-term goal. This means objectives are not just based on processes and policies, but focus on outcomes - real, practical change that can be expressed in terms of improvements in areas such as policy making, employment and service delivery.

4. How many objectives should we have and what should they address?

The duty requires Colleges to have at least one or more published objective(s). It is for each individual College to decide what outcome-focused equality objectives should be set and how many there should be. Colleges should take into consideration the size of the College, the resources available, how relevant equality is in different areas and how good the relations are between employees, students and external groups when determining the number and level of ambition of the objectives. The Government Equalities Office advises that objectives that are 'stretching and focus on the biggest equality challenges' will have the greatest impact on furthering the aims of the Equality Duty. Objectives should be ambitious, well thought through and achievable. There is no legal requirement to set an objective for each protected characteristic.

5. How to identify and set equality objectives

When setting objectives, Colleges should consider to what extent a function or policy affects discrimination, equality of opportunity and good relations and the extent of any disadvantages that need to be addressed or improved. Colleges should gather and review information to assess where there are inequalities and opportunities and establish the key priority areas for action.

Decisions should be based on evidence gathered to ensure that objectives are meaningful and measurable. The evidence, both quantitative (e.g. statistical) and qualitative (e.g. through engagement and staff surveys) would come from equality monitoring and analysis.

There may be short, medium and long-term objectives that are identified. Objectives should focus on important equality issues, based on information gathered through engagement with members of the public, voluntary community organisations, the governing body, employees' networks, trade unions, students and other business partners who can assist with identifying the key priority areas where the need for action is greatest. The College should consult with relevant groups to gain feedback on draft objectives and refine and/or develop them to ensure buy-in from all parties.

As the objectives need to be specific and measurable, Colleges will be required to set out how progress will be measured. This is likely to be crucial in ensuring compliance with the equality duty to assist the public to assess your equality performance.

Below are two working examples of objectives. Remember, objectives should be SMART.

5.1 Example one – under-representation in workforce diversity profile

The College has identified from workforce diversity profile analysis and the 2011 Census that employees from a particular protected characteristic group are under-represented within the College workforce. This currently does not reflect the diverse local community it serves. An objective could be to increase the number of recruits from that particular group by a certain percentage over a specified time, to help advance equality of opportunity between groups that share this protected characteristic and those that do not share it. Therefore, in order to address this, the action plan might include:

- impact assess the recruitment policy and practices to help eliminate any potential discrimination that may currently exist
- identify training initiatives to raise awareness and tackle any potential prejudice for those involved in recruitment and selection to help promote understanding of that protected group and their needs
- review recruitment advertising methods and publications to ensure a diverse range of communities are able to access and view job adverts to advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- consult with existing employees who share the protected characteristic to identify what, if any, challenges or barriers prevent people from applying to work at the College and identify any other measures the College could adopt to engage with that group in the community
- carry out specific training for staff on issues that arise to address matters related to the protected group, e.g. understanding the needs of that group
- engage with relevant community groups to explore the needs of people who share the particular protected characteristic further. Utilise the information gained to organise and hold recruitment fairs to encourage applications from that group to advance equality of opportunity between different groups

5.2 Example two – low levels of employee satisfaction

The College has identified from the last three annual employee satisfaction surveys that those employees from a particular protected characteristic group have been dissatisfied overall during their employment with the College. An objective could be to increase the overall satisfaction of this group by a certain percentage over a specified period of time and to improve employee relations by raising awareness and tackling potential harassment and discrimination. Therefore, in order to seek to address this, the action plan might include:

- review employee satisfaction surveys to see identify key areas where that group of staff felt dissatisfied, e.g. access to training and development or engagement

- review employee satisfaction surveys to assess attitudes towards certain protected characteristics to see whether there is a lack of understanding of the needs of that group. Put in place appropriate measures to help eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to the specific protected characteristic
- review grievances submitted by that group related to bullying, harassment and discrimination to identify any particular common issues faced by that group
- review exit interview questionnaires to assess reasons for leaving by this group
- if applicable, review any sector benchmarking that may exist for this group
- carry out specific training for staff to address matters related the particular protected characteristic to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations between different groups
- organise focus groups with employees who share the protected characteristic to identify the issues and explore these further. Put measures in place to seek to address the issues to help increase satisfaction levels and advance equality of opportunity

Further examples of SMART equality objectives are provided in the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance: [Objectives and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities](#).

Once you have identified what your equality objectives are and published these, if you would like to share these with other member Colleges, please send these to us by [email](#). This will help us to improve our policy library resources available to members.

6. Communication

Following consultation, once the College has decided on its objectives, these should be communicated to all. Employees, including senior managers, the governing body and students should be updated on the progress and achievement of the objectives and if applicable, identifying what their responsibilities will be to help to achieve these. These could be identifiable improvements in policies or in the outcomes for different employees and students.

7. Publication

Objectives must be published in a reasonably accessible format, either as an individual document or as part of other reports for the public to access. Objectives should be clearly labelled and information easy to find and be freely available for the public to use and re-use. This could include the College website and the College Annual Report. The EHRC guide [Objectives and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities](#) states that as a minimum standard, they expect objectives to be published in portable document format (PDF) and accessible Word on your website. There may be people who are unable to access the internet to view your website, therefore consider publishing the objectives in alternative formats and/or languages to allow all sections of the community to access the information. The Equality Act 2010 requires reasonable adjustments to be made for disabled people; this includes publishing equality objectives in accessible formats. Further guidance is available from the [Office for Disability Issues](#).

8. Monitoring and reviewing

Colleges are required to review and monitor equality objectives to ensure they are still relevant and to assist with developing new objectives. The objectives must be reviewed **at least every four years**. A timetable should be drawn up to assist with this, with agreed timescales for actions.

A model action plan template for equality objectives can be downloaded from our [Equality and Diversity mini-site](#).

The [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) is responsible for assessing compliance and enforcing the equality duty.

9. Additional information

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have updated their guidance document: [Objectives and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities](#). This offers further examples of SMART equality objectives.

For further information and advice please contact the AoC Employment Helpline by telephone: 020 7034 9900 or by [email](#).