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Equality Commission investigation report on Ulster University's compliance with its equality scheme

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has published its investigation report, into Ulster University's compliance with its equality scheme, during the restructuring of its Nurse Competence Test Centre. It concluded that the University had complied with its equality scheme commitments although the Commission suggested some improvements that could be made to its practices.

The Investigation followed a complaint by two individuals under Paragraph 10 of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The complaint alleged that the University had failed to comply with its Equality Scheme when it did not equality screen its proposals for this restructuring exercise.

Chief Commissioner Geraldine McGahey said: "While this investigation did not substantiate the complaint made and found that Ulster University gave a good account of applying our guidance on implementing its Equality Scheme, we have made three recommendations to improve the University's practices.

"This investigation has shown the importance of a public authority being able to demonstrate clearly and openly how it has complied with its statutory duties. The Commission's advice is that this should be done using the processes a public authority commits to in its equality scheme – by doing an equality screening at least.

"The University should, in presenting any future restructuring proposals to staff, be clear how it has considered the need to promote equality of opportunity. It should do this by equality screening in the first instance. This would mean that the University would be able to show how its proposals might impact on equality groups and how they proposed to address or manage any impacts.

"In this case, when the complainants raised their complaint originally with the University in terms of the impacts they believed the restructuring would have on women and those from a Roman Catholic background in particular, a screening document could have shown UU's assessment of the equality impacts of the restructuring.