

**Subject:****CULTURAL DIVERSITY DISSEMINATION****Circular Number:**

FE 02/06

**Date of Issue:**

6 April 2006

**Target Audience:**

- Principals /Directors of FE Colleges
- Chairs of Governing Bodies
- FE College Finance Officers

**Summary of Contents:**

This circular sets out the context and arrangements for the roll out of best practice in relation to the Department's Cultural Diversity Pilots.

**Response:**

Detailed proposals should be submitted to the Department via email to Lisa Morgan ([lisa.morgan@delni.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.morgan@delni.gov.uk)) by Friday 26 May 2006.

**Enquiries:**

Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

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**Status of Contents:**

Information

**Related Documents:**

FE 19/03

**Superseded Documents:**

N/A

**Expiry Date:**

N/A

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## **Background**

1. During 2000, the Department established a Cultural Diversity Working Group, widely representative of the FE sector. This group was asked to produce a good practice guide for FE Colleges, to address and advance cultural diversity issues within the FE sector in Northern Ireland.
2. Following the completion of this work, the Department issued a draft Cultural Diversity Working Document, formulated from the Working Group's report, to all FE Colleges in July 2003. The purpose of this working document was to assist FE Colleges by providing a practical starting point for the promotion of "Good Relations" which is a statutory legal requirement arising from the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
3. In tandem with this working document, the Department provided financial support totalling £150,000 (£50,000 per pilot) for three Cultural Diversity pilot projects, which completed in March 2005. The purpose of supporting three Cultural Diversity pilots was primarily to promote "Good Relations" in the FE sector, by providing opportunities for students and staff from differing identities, backgrounds and traditions to develop and enhance relationships of trust and understanding, and promote mutual respect in every aspect of college life.
4. Following completion of these pilots, the Department engaged the Education & Training Inspectorate (ETI) to undertake an evaluation and to identify best practice. To complement this work, the Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC) also commissioned research to identify chill factors within FE Colleges and to generate practical suggestions on how these may be addressed.

## **Current Position**

5. The Department has now established an Equality Working Group to offer advice and guidance on equal opportunity policy to the FE Sector, and promote best practice in all aspects of diversity and Good Relations. The Working Group will have a permanent role in monitoring the performance of the FE sector in terms of promoting equality of opportunity and encouraging good practice.

## **Purpose**

6. The Department has decided to provide financial support to Colleges to facilitate the dissemination and roll out of Cultural Diversity/Good Relations best practice identified by:
  - the ETI, in their report on the FE Cultural Diversity Pilot Initiatives; and
  - MORI Ireland/ Deloitte, in their “Chill Factor” FE research project (a summary of both reports is attached at **Annex A**).

A total of £300k (£50K per college configuration) has been made available for this purpose for the next 12 months. Further funding may be available in subsequent financial years.

## **Focus of Proposals**

7. The dissemination of the best practice deriving from the Cultural Diversity pilots is open to all 16 Colleges through the submission of collaborative proposals, reflecting the new College configurations which will take effect in September 2007.
8. All proposals should, as a minimum requirement:
  - fulfil the statutory requirements, as defined in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;

- include a plan for the roll out and implementation of the key recommendations of the ETI report;
- demonstrate the way in which the core principles will be adopted, tailoring measures to take into account local conditions/issues;
- display a high degree of user involvement in the design and implementation of the roll out programme;
- incorporate innovative practice to minimise duplication of existing programmes in the FE/schools curriculum;
- demonstrate engagement with ethnic/minority groups in the local community;
- show a strategy for sustainability and the monitoring of progress on an ongoing basis;
- give cognisance of the findings of the Chill Factor research when considering the roll out of Cultural Diversity.

## **Proposals**

9. Proposals should provide information under the following headings:

Rationale - demonstrate how the best practice of the Cultural Diversity pilots and ETI recommendations will be implemented, whilst taking account of local issues.

Delivery Mechanisms –demonstrate user involvement in the design of the roll out, and detail how the proposed dissemination will be managed and by whom.

Targets/Outcomes – provide an indication of the review/needs analysis underpinning the proposal, and clearly identify benchmarks and accompanying targets, inclusive of strategies and mechanisms for evaluating progress and measuring outcomes.

Additionality to/complementarity with existing programmes - demonstrate how the proposal aligns with existing, or past, activities and programmes used to promote and enhance cultural diversity in Colleges. Also detail how the roll out will avoid duplication with and/or build upon existing programmes and curriculum areas in other educational establishments, including Citizenship Studies at Key Stages 3 and 4, and the JEDI youth programme.

Costings - identify all costings associated with the roll out of Cultural Diversity best practice.

Sustainability - demonstrate how the promotion of Cultural Diversity/Good Relations will be continued by the Colleges on an ongoing basis.

Collaboration/ Partnerships – detail partnerships, both within the sector and the broader external community, being developed through the project, particularly with local ethnic groups.

Strategic Links – demonstrate how the programme links to the College(s) Development Plan/strategic direction, in terms of how it will impact across the entire college curriculum.

## **Assessment**

10. Proposals will be assessed by the Department's Equality Working Group, which, in addition to DEL officials, comprises representatives from ETI, the Equality Commission, ANIC, and NUS/USI.

## **Support**

11. Following the Department's assessment and subsequent approval of proposals, the Sector's Equality Officer, based at ANIC, will be available to provide support and facilitate meetings between Colleges. The Department's

Equality Working Group will also provide advice in relation to the roll out of good practice.

### **Procedures for Payment**

12. Claims for approved expenditure should be made quarterly in arrears. Claims should be accompanied by a letter of authorisation as shown at Annex B. This letter should be authorised by the nominated Accounting Officer, for the purposes of the collaborative proposal. The Department will make payments within 2 weeks of the receipt of a satisfactory claim.

13. Where salaries constitute a proportion of funding activities/milestones, adequate documentation must be maintained, to demonstrate time allocation to these specific activities. Such documentation must provide evidence that such costs are separate and distinct from other pro-rata salary costs for the post, which are being met from normal FE block grant, or other funding source, for the particular post.

14. Claims should be accompanied by a quarterly review of the project outlining achievements, areas of concern and any possible deviation from the targets and objectives agreed by the Department.

15. All projects will be subject to departmental audit of expenditure and accountability procedures as set out in the Financial Memorandum and other financial guidelines.

### **Evaluation**

16. Colleges will be expected to formally review the impact of the dissemination of the Cultural Diversity dissemination on students, staff and College policies/practices. A copy of the report must be submitted to the Department within 3 months of completion of the project.

## SUMMARY OF ETI EVALUATION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY PILOTS

A full copy of the ETI report can be accessed by clicking [here](#). A summary of the key points and recommendations is provided below:

### ETI Evaluation

- The pilot projects have made a good start to the development of good relations policies and to the design of procedures and practices to implement them. Much remains to be done, however, to ensure that policies and practices are sufficiently inclusive to take account of the different needs of the groups covered by Section 75 of the relevant legislation. The focus to date has been largely on work with more mature students on higher level programmes, or on curriculum areas in which consideration of issues of prejudice, discrimination and anti-bias practice and their effects on behaviour are critical components. The challenging task of promoting good relations among less mature young people from a variety of backgrounds is one which continues to require considerable exploration.
- The pilot projects have generated a range of exemplars of good practice which, in conjunction with the document 'Cultural Diversity -Good Practice in the Further Education Sector in Northern Ireland', can provide the sector with a useful framework for promoting good relations between people of different ability, race, religious belief, or political opinion. It will, however, be important to review the document to ensure that it addresses wider issues of inclusion and anti-bias practice, including the prejudice and discrimination faced by gay men and lesbian women. Such amendments could be informed effectively by the findings of recent surveys, including the 'Shout' report commissioned by the Department of Education on the needs of young people in Northern Ireland who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT).

- The challenge of promoting good relations in a divided society which has witnessed many years of political and social conflict can not be underestimated and colleges will need to devote considerable resources to this aspect of their work in the future. There is a need for all parties concerned with the funding and provision of FE in Northern Ireland, including those responsible for providing education and training for lecturers, and for curriculum support, to work together to develop coherent approaches, which support the development of education for mutual understanding and prepare young people effectively for life and work in a divided and diverse society.

## **Examples of Best Practice**

### **ARMAGH**

- The development of a comprehensive policy framework, which has to date involved consultation with members of staff, but will involve students and members of the local community.
- The generic induction programmes on citizenship education aimed at equipping young people with the skills necessary for living and working in a culturally diverse society.
- The learning materials on cultural diversity issues, which take particular account of the Northern Ireland situation.

### **BIFHE**

- The codes of good practice for staff and students developed as a result of the programme, devised in collaboration with, and endorsed by, the student union, the Equality Commission, Northern Ireland Council for

Ethnic Minorities, and representatives from the Indian and Chinese communities.

- The collaboration with the student union, to develop the student induction programme and establish the Ethnic Minorities Student Forum.
- The development of a script for a drama production on cultural diversity, which can be used by other colleges.

### **NWIFHE AND UBIFHE**

- The principles and practices which underpinned this project, which enabled staff and students from different cultural backgrounds to work together and learn from each other through a shared programme of activities.
- The examples of good practice in embedding cultural diversity issues across a wide range of programmes in the HND curriculum [building engineering, business, computing and multimedia, graphic design, multimedia, travel and tourism], and Access to Higher Education courses.
- The programme of innovative assignments and projects, such as the Careers Fair, and work on the production of posters.
- The programme of extra- curricular activities, and engagement of guest speakers reflecting the interests and needs of different groups within the community such as migrant workers from Eastern Europe.

## **The Merits of Introducing a Good Relations Module within the Wider FE Curriculum in N Ireland**

- Although students who participated in the good relations module in Armagh college have generally evaluated the module positively, it is noteworthy that these students are from curricular areas where the module is likely to be perceived to have direct relevance to the general discipline under study, such as Religious Education, courses in health and social care, or behavioural and social sciences.
- The evidence from both staff and students interviewed during the survey across a range of curricular areas indicates that, to formalise cultural diversity in terms of a mandatory unit of learning, restricts the issues to a range of generic strands. It also means that cultural diversity becomes viewed as ‘bolt-on’ provision, viewed narrowly and negatively by a significant minority of staff and students.
- Students find it more helpful to be introduced to a college’s policies and practices on good relations during their induction period. There is also considerable support among staff and students for learning models that enable curriculum areas to adapt aspects of their programmes to reflect relevant cultural diversity issues in a vocational context.
- The following conclusions were reached by the Inspectorate.
  - All students should be offered a cultural diversity module to broaden and enhance their studies. This should form part of an enrichment programme, which may consist of a range of options;

- All colleges should embed cultural diversity within the curriculum, through the incorporation of relevant issues in the student induction programme.
- Cultural diversity should permeate every aspect of student services provision and services should be developed to meet the individual needs of the wide and diverse groups of learners engaged in FE;
- Cultural diversity modules should be taught by lecturers who value the principles of acceptance, tolerance and inclusion and provide good role models in their behaviour towards staff and students;
- The emphasis within cultural diversity work should be on the full spectrum of issues, including race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, and on the significant implications of the Special Needs and Disability [SEND] [NI] Order 2005. In addition, community background issues remain important, and there is a continuing need to focus on the development of skills and attitudes for life and work in a divided society;
- Staff development sessions on cultural diversity issues should be provided for all staff in further education colleges, including ancillary staff.

### **Advice on how to Disseminate Best Practice**

- robust systems should be developed to support the collation and analysis of data on potential and actual learners from minority ethnic groups, to inform strategic planning for social inclusion, both regionally and locally;

- the role of the students' union in Colleges, including NUS/USI, to disseminate and support good relations and cultural diversity, should not be under-estimated. All Colleges should ensure that students are engaged effectively in the development of whole-College policies on good relations and should aim to build effective links with the students' union, where one exists;
- all Colleges should have clear codes of good practice for staff and students in relation to cultural diversity. These should be developed in consultation with students, and with representatives from groups reflecting a wide range of cultures and traditions. The codes developed by BIFHE could be helpfully modified and adopted by any College and built into both their student services and support provision;
- staff development in cultural diversity should be implemented by each college for its entire staff. The staff development and awareness- raising sessions that were implemented in BIFHE and Armagh have currency for the whole sector;
- the induction programmes for students, assignments and programme of cultural diversity activities developed by the pilot colleges should be considered by other Colleges;
- the drama production produced by BIFHE will be filmed and used as a promotional tool for both the vocational area of performing arts and awareness-raising for cultural diversity issues. It may be appropriate to make this video available across the sector;
- Colleges should be encouraged to undertake a full curriculum audit to identify where formal cultural diversity activities are integrated effectively into the curriculum, and to incorporate issues of cultural diversity and

equal opportunity into their quality assurance and course review processes;

- the Department should require all Colleges to identify cultural diversity as a strategic priority within their college development plans, and demonstrate that they have planned and resourced it effectively;
- Colleges should be encouraged to review their marketing and promotional materials, including their prospectuses, to ensure that they portray, and are effective in recruiting, a diverse group of students;
- issues around cultural diversity and good relations should be incorporated into the induction programme in the initial professional training of new lecturers in FE;
- the use of the VLE to host an on-line induction package and the codes of good practice is being developed by BIFHE. The sharing of common issues across a joint FE/ANIC web site could be a very useful portal for all issues, procedures and areas of good practice across the FE sector; and
- One of the key findings of the evaluation is that, if FE is to realise fully its potential to provide education and training for all members of our society, the inclusion agenda needs to be identified as a strategic priority within each college development plan, and planned and resourced accordingly. Commitment by the senior management team to the principle of valuing diversity, and to the development and implementation of positive practices to support inclusion, are critical to the successful development of a whole-college culture which supports and promotes the principles of equity and diversity.

- The experience of the pilot projects indicates that quality assurance procedures need to be strengthened in colleges, to ensure that issues of equal opportunity, cultural diversity and inclusion are embedded in self evaluation through student questionnaires, in course reviews, and that evaluations are used effectively to bring about improvements.

## **CHILL FACTOR RESEARCH – SUMMARY OF REPORT**

### **Background**

1. The Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC), on behalf of the Department for Employment and Learning, commissioned a substantial piece of research in order to identify the factors that may make an FE College/Institute more or less attractive to actual or potential students and to generate positive suggestions for future direction. This research, in particular, focused on perceived or actual sectarian 'chill factors'.
  
2. The objectives of the research were to:
  - assess the perceptions of students of FE Colleges within the research parameters;
  - identify factors which influence the creation of those perceptions;
  - determine the effects of those perceptions on participation rates of students within FE Colleges;
  - analyse "best practice" models which highlight achievement and assess the extent of transferability to FE or particular Colleges;
  - examine policy and legislative impacts on this area of work;
  - examine links with other key players/organisations;
  - highlight specific learning issues for all stakeholders;
  - draw conclusions/recommendations/options for future development of the delivery of the project outputs, including how effective practice can be sustained and applied.

MORI Ireland/Deloitte conducted the research and submitted the final report in July 2005.

## **Methodology**

3. The first part of the report addresses the first two of the above objectives. To achieve this, MORI Ireland consulted current students, potential students, employers and College staff, through questionnaires and interview. The second part of the report, carried out by Deloitte, examines policy and practice relevant to the issue of Chill Factors, through reviews of statistics, literature, best practice, and current policy.

## **Part I of the research**

4. The following factors are important for current/potential FE students, in deciding where to study:
  - availability of courses;
  - location and transport;
  - job prospects;
  - quality of teaching;
  - recently renovated buildings (modern facilities and equipment);
  - ambience; and
  - timing and flexibility of courses.
  
5. The main barriers discouraging students and workers from applying to certain FE Colleges are:
  - location of campus;
  - lack of qualifications;
  - poor facilities;
  - poor choice of courses;
  - transport (its availability and cost); and
  - the presence of flags/emblems/sectarian issues.
  
6. College staff provided information on the split between Catholic and Protestant students. One College was predominantly Protestant, 2 Colleges were predominantly Catholic, and 2 were equally divided.

Colleges are taking a wide range of steps to encourage participation from both of the community in their areas. 2 Colleges have recently introduced policies banning students from wearing religiously affiliated sportswear. Further steps include working with local schools (on either side of the community), advertising in local community and voluntary groups, and offering outreach courses in locations where residents are predominantly one religion or another, and have not been previously accessed. Other approaches include co-operation with local political representatives and the introduction of cultural diversity programmes.

7. For students and workers, perceptions of different Colleges are gained largely through word-of-mouth and prospectuses – few are aware of having seen any advertising. Employers gained perceptions through their own experiences, as well as interviewing/talking to graduates. They were also more aware of radio, newspaper and website advertising.

## **Part II of the research**

8. An analysis of the Colleges' enrolment figures indicates that:
  - the age range of students is wide, with 44% under 19, and 42% aged 26 and over;
  - the majority of students are studying part-time courses; and
  - over half of the Colleges show enrolments with more than 30% difference between students of Protestant and Catholic backgrounds.
9. The research's literature review has identified several factors that may contribute to students not attending certain Colleges. Fear of sectarian abuse and the need for a minimum critical mass, stemming from general mindset, segregation and the history of the troubles, is one of several limiting factors in respect of choice of College. Others include:
  - need for access to transport and "safe" routes;

- need for school visits to FE Colleges, or vice versa, to encourage participation in “non-traditional” Colleges;
  - need for general community attitudes to change;
  - need for FE Colleges to be in neutral spaces and accessible to both sides of the community – the literature shows a higher incidence of mixed religion workforces in more neutral areas; and
  - the patterns followed based on what family and friends have done in the past.
10. The research’s consultation revealed that all consultees felt that the chill factor was an issue that needs to be tackled. The main problem identified was perception, and the issue of the mindsets of Northern Irish people, stemming from the history of the troubles, living and going to school in segregated communities, and the intransigence of politics in Northern Ireland. Other issues such as symbolism and transport were also cited, as well as a lack of recognition of the problem.
11. Some Colleges have begun to tackle the issue, although many are uncertain of the effect of their actions, due to the nature of the problem and the fact that any solution will more than likely only be realised in the longer term. Potential solutions offered by consultees included staff and students becoming involved in initiatives to directly address the problem and promote social cohesion, the removal of symbols that reflect just one side of the community, including cultural diversity in the course curriculum, and inclusive recruitment of students.
12. The message from the consultations is that continued and concerted effort is required to address the issue, although there was acknowledgement that this was not an exact science, and that the situation may change in the longer term, rather than the shorter term.

13. The research also concluded that there is a range of policies and legislation in place, or under development, that encourage FE Colleges to address issues relating to good relations and diversity, the most notable of these being Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. Colleges, therefore, have a policy framework within which to address chill factors.
  
14. The research also identified the following example of key initiatives:
  - The Department's Good Practice Guide on Cultural Diversity;
  - The Department's Cultural Diversity pilot initiative;
  - The AGREE programme, to assist the Colleges in ensuring that equity and respect for differences are placed at the heart of the Colleges' structures; and
  - Equality and Good Relations Trainers programmes.
  
15. The research identifies the following examples of good practice:
  - the inclusion of Cultural Diversity as a core issue in a College Development Plan;
  - support from all levels in the College to drive forward the change – this may take the form of a Working Group;
  - the commissioning of research by individual Colleges, to identify certain specific good relations issues on their campuses;
  - the implementation of cultural diversity/good relations policies;
  - ensuring that staff are able to demonstrate a consistent understanding of, and respect for, cultural diversity and the promotion of good relations. This could be ensured through staff evaluations;
  - communicating with local members of different political parties, to help alleviate any problems and also to help with public relations and the image of the College externally;
  - ensuring that staff and students feel comfortable with the College's physical environment, by removing certain symbols (the wearing of sports shirts);

- the development of Good Relations courses and Cultural Diversity curriculum units, as well as building some form of “appreciating diversity” into the College curriculum;
- using the student induction process to highlight the College’s policy on good relations and cultural diversity; and
- documenting and sharing good practice throughout the sector.

## **Conclusions**

- Although sectarianism is the dominant issue in respect of chill factors in Northern Ireland, the research has highlighted that racism and homophobia, among other issues, are also growing problems in our society. This points towards the need for a holistic approach in addressing the issue of diversity and good relations, in terms of changing the mainstream culture of the organisation, rather than just focusing on certain parts;
- The challenge for all Colleges is to go beyond complying with legislation by ensuring organisational commitment to mainstreaming the principles and practices of equity and respect for difference, through a process of organisational change in order to encourage a fuller participation for all communities;
- Different Colleges are at different stages in trying to address equality and good relations issues. While some remain in legislative compliance mode, others have elected to actively pursue good relations issues further, and are engaged in many different activities;
- There is no cure-all remedy, and some activities and recommendations of best practice may prove more successful in tackling the issue than others. However, Colleges seeking to address the good relations element of their statutory duty have a range of good practice upon which they can draw, such as frameworks developed by CRC, DEL and NUS/USI. The research recommends sharing of experience and good practice between Colleges, to facilitate the development of appropriate measures for each institution.

**LETTER OF AUTHORISATION TO ACCOMPANY CLAIM**

**CULTURAL DIVERSITY ROLL OUT – CIRCULAR 02/06**

Please find enclosed a summary claim to the Department indicating spend incurred by ..... on the Cultural Diversity Dissemination project for the period .....

Also included is a detailed monthly breakdown for the same period and a quarterly review of the project, outlining achievements, areas of concern and any possible deviation from the targets and objectives agreed by the Department.

I certify that the conditions which apply to the funding have been duly observed in the expenditure of money received to date and that the amount now requested is necessary to meet approved expenditure on the Cultural Diversity Dissemination project.

As Accounting Officer for the project, I am writing to request payment of .....for the period.....

I appreciate your help in processing this as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

**ACCOUNTING OFFICER**