



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHÉ  
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Resources Committee Terms of Reference

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University  
ofGalway.ie



Credit: Professor Chaosheng Zhang

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## Part 1: Functions & Duties

### 1. Purpose of Committee

- 1.1 The Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Resources Committee (EDIHRC) is established as a Standing Committee of Údarás na hOllscoile to ensure an appropriate governance structure to guarantee clear, consistent leadership and accountability for equality, diversity, inclusion and human resource matters across the University.
- 1.2 In fulfilling this purpose, Sub-committees of EDIHRC may be established with the approval of Údarás na hOllscoile, which shall have separate Terms of Reference as approved by Údarás na hOllscoile.
- 1.3 The terms Údarás na hOllscoile and Governing Authority shall be used interchangeably throughout this Terms of Reference but shall have the same meaning.

### 2. Authority

- 2.1 The Committee is authorised by Údarás na hOllscoile to:
  - 2.1.1 ensure accountability for delivering on the University's strategic aim of proactively removing barriers to equality and diversity,
  - 2.1.2 oversee the implementation of the strategic framework for equality, diversity and inclusion in service provision and in employment across the University, and
  - 2.1.3 oversee the implementation of key human resources strategies and policies within the University.

### 3. Functions and Responsibilities

- 3.1 The EDIHRC will on behalf of, and under the delegated authority of, Údarás na hOllscoile, undertake the following functions and responsibilities:
  - To ensure that the University promotes equality of opportunity and respect for diversity in all aspects of the University's business. Specifically to aim to eliminate discrimination, advance equal opportunities and foster good relations by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding, thereby ensuring the University avoids the potential for discrimination on grounds of the protected equality strands.
  - To advise Údarás na hOllscoile on the implementation of all aspects of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Equal Opportunities Policy.
  - To consider and oversee the implementation of key human resources policies, practices and initiatives within the University.
- 3.2 In particular, the Committee is charged with the following:
  - To provide regular reports and assurance to Údarás na hOllscoile that the University is

compliant with relevant legislation and progressively addressing and keeping abreast of relevant equality, diversity and inclusion matters. This will include ongoing monitoring to ensure mainstreaming of the recommendations of the University of Galway Gender Equality Task Force and the recommendations from the HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions and the Gender Equality Action Plan 2018 – 2020.

- To support the continued progression and embedding of Athena Swan and gender equality action plans in the University.
- To ensure that consultation on the development of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies and plans has taken place with all relevant internal and external stakeholders, prior to approval, in line with the Universities Act 1997, as updated by the HEA Act 2022.
- To monitor progress in delivery of the University's Gender Equality Action Plan, inclusive of all relevant recommendations from the HEA – e.g. National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions, the Ministerial Gender Action Plan, the Athena Swan Action Plan, the implementation of the National Framework for ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in HEIs (based on the National Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutions); and the Race Equality in Higher Education Implementation Plan.
- To examine and recommend for approval to Údarás na hOllscoile appropriate equality, diversity, inclusion and human resources policies and guidance and to monitor the implementation of such policies, including equality impact assessments.
- To advise Údarás na hOllscoile on progress of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives as outlined in the strategic plan and the EDI Strategy and EDI Strategy Implementation Plan/s.
- To advise Údarás na hOllscoile on progress of human resources strategic objectives, including the University's People Strategy.
- To raise awareness of the importance of Equality Impact Assessments of University policies, procedures and practices with due regard to the protected characteristics under the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015.
- To support events and activities to raise the profile of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the University.
- To monitor, review and determine the impact of changes in equality legislation for the University, to ensure legislative compliance.
- To provide advice to Údarás na hOllscoile on the interpretation of the Equal Opportunities Policy, Disability Policy and Public Sector Duty and other relevant policies that are developed from time to time.
- To recognise, communicate and promote examples of good 'equality of opportunity' practice from both internal and external sources, including bodies such as the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the Equality Challenge Unit.

- To receive regular reports from the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Campus Committee (EDICC) on equality, diversity and inclusion matters.
- To review Terms of Reference and membership of the EDICC annually.
- To be empowered to request specific data reports from units and schools as appropriate to track and report on equality, diversity, inclusion and human resources objectives.

3.3 The EDIHRC shall produce an Annual Work Plan that shall account for the Committee's Functions and Responsibilities and outlines the Committee's work throughout the year.

## 4. Rights

4.1 The EDIHRC may:

- 4.1.1 co-opt expertise to provide specialist skills, knowledge and experience; and
- 4.1.2 investigate any matter falling within its terms of reference, calling on whatever resources (including external professional or legal services) and information it considers necessary to so do. It shall have access to adequate funding to enable it to discharge its duties.

## 5. Information Requirements

- 5.1 The EDIHRC will be provided with all relevant information and documentation in a timely fashion to enable it to discharge its duties and to ensure that decisions are made based on robust data.
- 5.2 Management and in particular the Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the Director of Human Resources shall ensure that matters of material concern that are relevant to EDIHRC responsibilities are brought promptly to the attention of the Committee.



## Part 2: Membership

### 6. Composition

6.1 Membership shall consist of seven (7) people as follows;

- One (1) Chairperson,
- Three (3) members of the Governing Authority, and
- Three (3) members that shall be external to, and independent of, the University.

6.2 The Nominations Committee shall review the membership of EDIHRC and, in consultation with the Chairperson of EDIHRC, make recommendations to the Governing Authority as to any changes in membership required to ensure that the Committee possesses the necessary capabilities to effectively meet its requirements.

6.3 The EDIHRC shall collectively possess an appropriate range of skills, expertise and competencies to perform its functions to the required standard.

6.4 The Committee shall accordingly be comprised of at least 40% women and at least 40% men across the totality of the Committee.

6.5 The Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the Director of Human Resources shall be in attendance at each meeting, except those which exclude members of the Executive.

6.6 All members of the EDIHRC are expected to comply with the University's Code of Conduct for Members of Údarás na hOllscoile. Members will be expected to treat sensitive information, commercial or otherwise, with due confidentiality.

6.7 The membership of the EDIHRC will be published on the University of Galway website.

### 7. Appointment

7.1 The Nominations Committee, having consulted with the Chairperson of the EDIHRC, shall assist the Chairperson of Údarás na hOllscoile in keeping the composition of the EDIHRC under review and leading the appointments process including:

- Conducting an evaluation, prior to any appointment being made, of the balance of skills, knowledge, experience and diversity on, and future needs of the EDIHRC;
- Agreeing the process and criteria for selection as appropriate, including the use of open advertising or the services of external advisers to facilitate the search as appropriate, ensuring that the agreed process pays due regard to the requirements of skills and competencies matrix;
- Considering candidates on merit and against objective criteria, paying due regard to other interests so as to avoid conflicts and to ensure that appointees are able to devote sufficient time to the role;

- Oversee the process of appointment through election, selection or nomination as appropriate.
- Making recommendations to Údarás of hOllscoile on the appointment of members of the EDIHRC.

7.2 The appointment process of members to the EDIHRC shall include those external appointees who are not members of Údarás na hOllscoile.

7.3 The role requirements will be clearly communicated to potential members at the outset including time commitments and an indication of frequency of meetings.

## 8. Term of Office

8.1 The term of office for members of the EDIHRC is co-terminus with the period of office of Údarás na hOllscoile.

## 9. Chairperson

### 9.1 Appointment

9.1.1 The Governing Authority, on the nomination of the Chairperson of Údarás na hOllscoile and in consultation with the Nominations Committee, appoints the Chairperson, who shall be an external member of the Governing Authority.

### 9.2 Responsibilities

9.2.1 The Chairperson of the EDIHRC has particular responsibility for ensuring:

- that the EDIHRC is appropriately resourced;
- that the EDIHRC fulfills its Functions and Responsibilities as outlined in Para 3;
- the reports to the EDIHRC contain relevant information and are provided at the right time in an appropriate format;
- that absent Committee members are briefed on meetings and attendance records are maintained and reviewed annually;
- they report at Governing Authority meetings and submit regular written reports to the Governing Authority containing relevant information;
- matters arising are reported on at each subsequent meeting; and
- they are consulted in the appointment of new Committee members.

9.2.2 The Chairperson should ensure that EDIHRC exercises collective responsibility, that is to say, that decisions are taken corporately by all members acting as a body. The Chairperson shall encourage all members to work together effectively, contributing their skills and expertise as appropriate, and shall seek to build consensus among them.

## 10. Deputy Chairperson

### 10.1 Appointment

10.1.1 The Chairperson shall appoint a deputy-Chairperson from among the members of EDIHRC.

12.1.2 The deputy-Chairperson will hold office until they cease to be a member of the EDIHRC.

### 10.2 Responsibilities

10.2.1 The role of the deputy-Chairperson is to act in the stead of the Chairperson as the occasion arises.

10.2.2 If at any meeting the Chairperson is not present, the deputy-Chairperson if present shall be Chairperson of the meeting. Where the position of deputy-Chairperson is vacant or the appointed person is not present, the EDIHRC members present at the meeting shall choose a member to chair the meeting.

## 11. Committee Secretariat

11.1 The Office of the Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion shall recommend to the Chairperson of EDIHRC an appropriate Secretary.

11.2 The secretariat to the EDIHRC should:

- commission papers as necessary and support the Chairperson in preparing reports;
- circulate documents and keep and circulate minutes of meetings to Committee members and to internal and external audit as necessary in good time for meetings;
- for any agreed actions, document the owner, deadline and any advice given by stakeholders and monitor between meetings;
- keep the Committee abreast of developments in the University that impacts the work of the committee; and
- maintain a record of members' appointments and termination / renewal dates and ensure that appropriate appointment procedures are initiated when necessary.

## 12. Resignation / Removal

12.1 A member of EDIHRC may at any time resign from office as a member by letter addressed to the Chairperson and the resignation shall take effect on the date on which the letter is received.

12.2 A member of the EDIHRC who is absent from all meetings of the EDIHRC for a period of six consecutive months, unless the absence was due to illness, maternity or carers leave, any other family related leave or other unforeseen or exceptional circumstances, shall at the expiration of that period cease to be a member of the EDIHRC. Notification of absence for the above reasons should be notified to the Secretary.

12.3 The Chairperson may, at any time, resign from office as Chairperson by letter addressed to the Governing Authority and the resignation shall take effect on the date on which the letter is received.



12.4 If the Chairperson resigns, they shall cease to be a member of the EDIHRC at the same time.

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## Part 3: Conduct of Business

### 13. Meetings

- 13.1 To facilitate regular engagement with the organisation, the EDIHRC will meet at least four (4) times a year, with the authority to convene additional meetings, as circumstances require.
- 13.2 Meetings shall be in a format (in person or hybrid) as determined by the Chairperson.
- 13.3 The EDIHRC should meet at least twice a year without executive members or management present to discuss any matters deemed relevant.
- 13.4 The Governing Authority may ask the EDIHRC to convene further meetings to discuss particular issues on which it seeks the Committee's advice.
- 13.5 Only members of the EDIHRC and the Secretary to the EDIHRC may attend meetings of EDIHRC.
- 13.6 A representative of the Office of the Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs may attend meetings of EDIHRC in order to ensure that good governance practices are being adhered to.
- 13.7 As necessary, the EDIHRC may invite the following to attend for specific meetings or specific agenda items;
  - Members of UMT as appropriate for the agenda.
  - Members of Údarás na hOllscoile as appropriate for the agenda.
  - Officers and/or employees of the University as appropriate for the Agenda.
  - Student representatives (other than the elected student members of Údarás na hOllscoile)
  - Directors or employees of subsidiary companies of the University.
- 13.8 The EDIHRC may ask any or all of those who attend for specific meetings or specific agenda items but who are not members, to withdraw to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters.

### 14 Agenda

- 14.1 The agenda for meetings of EDIHRC is drawn up by the Secretary in consultation with the Chairperson.
- 14.2 Members wishing to make an input to the agenda should consult with the Secretary at least two (2) weeks before the meeting in question.
- 14.3 Meeting agendas will be prepared and provided five (5) working days in advance to members, along with appropriate briefing material.

### 15 Quorum

- 15.1 The Quorum for a meeting shall be as follows:

- if there is an even number of members on the Committee, the attendance of half the number of members, plus one (1) or
- if there is an odd number of members on the Committee, the attendance of half the numbers of members of the Committee rounded down to the nearest whole number, plus one (1).

15.2 A duly convened meeting of the Committee at which a quorum is present shall be competent to exercise any or all of the authorities, powers and discretions vested in or exercisable by the Committee.

## 16 Decision Making

16.1 Every question at a meeting of the EDIHRC shall be determined by consensus.

16.2 Where consensus is not possible, decisions of the Committee will be determined by a majority vote of the members present.

16.3 In the event of a tie, the Chairperson holds the casting vote.

16.4 Where, in the opinion of the Chairperson, there is urgent business that must be transacted between meetings of the Committee, then the Chairperson may direct a proposal to the Committee by means of a written or electronic procedure.

- For the purposes of this procedure, the text of the proposal shall be circulated electronically or in writing by the Secretary on behalf of the Chairperson to all members, with a reasonable time limit within which members shall make known any reservations they may have or amendments they may wish to make.
- Any member may, before the expiration of the set time limit, require that the proposal be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee, by sending to the Chairperson (with copies to the other members and persons in attendance) a written or electronic notification to that effect.
- A proposal on which no member has made a reservation before the expiration of the set time limit shall stand adopted by the Committee.
- A proposal, or an amended proposal, on which a majority of the members expressly agree at the expiration of the set time limit shall stand adopted by the Committee.
- Proposals adopted in this manner shall be reported at the next meeting of the Committee and recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

## 17 Minutes of Meeting

17.1 The Secretary to the EDIHRC shall minute the proceedings and resolutions of all meetings, including recording the names of those present and in attendance.

17.2 Minutes of meetings should give a concise account of points made in the discussion and a clear record of decisions made, while ensuring that an appropriate level of detail is recorded for the purposes of accuracy and accountability.

- 17.3 Draft minutes of the meetings will be sent to the Chairperson for approval within ten (10) working days of the meeting and circulated to the Committee members for adoption at the following meeting.
- 17.4 Once adopted, minutes of meetings shall constitute the only approved record of the meeting and shall be circulated to all members, other than where specific exclusions apply e.g. Conflict of Interest items.

## 18. Evaluation & Performance

- 18.1 The EDIHRC shall review on an annual basis their terms of reference and recommend any necessary changes.
- 18.2 The EDIHRC shall conduct an annual self-assessment of its own effectiveness.

## 19. Conflicts of Interest

- 19.1 Committee members shall take personal responsibility for the declaration of any potential conflict of interest arising in relation to any items on the Agenda for Committee meetings. To facilitate this, the declaration of any conflicts of interest will be the first Agenda item for each meeting of the Committee.
- 19.2 Where a conflict of interest arises, a Committee member shall bring this to the attention of the Chairperson and where necessary absent themselves from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and shall not take part in any decisions in relation to the matter in question. Similar arrangements apply in relation to relevant meeting documentation where such documentation shall not be made available to the Committee member, once a potential conflict of interest has been declared. Declarations of conflicts of interest shall be noted in the Minutes of the Committee meeting.

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Prof. Peter McHugh  
Interim President

Date:

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Mr. James Murray  
Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Resources  
Committee Chairperson  
Date: