

Terms of Reference
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
Approved by Údarás na hOllscoile on 24 June 2021

1. Purpose

1.1 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is established as a Standing Committee of Údarás na hOllscoile on the basis of a recommendation from the Task Force on Gender Equality and in light of the Public Sector Duty (Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014). The role of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is to ensure an appropriate governance structure to guarantee clear, consistent leadership and accountability for equality, diversity and inclusion across the University.

1.2 In fulfilling the purpose set out above, sub-committees of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee may be established with the approval of Údarás na hOllscoile, which shall have separate Terms of Reference as approved by Údarás na hOllscoile.

2. Membership

2.1 The membership of the Committee shall be appointed by Údarás na hOllscoile on the recommendation of the Nominations Committee. Consideration will be given to the available skills, expertise and the competencies required to fulfil the Committee's terms of reference. Any gaps in terms of skills required for the Committee may be filled by utilising section 18(4) of the Universities Act 1997 which permits members external to the University and to Údarás na hOllscoile to be appointed by Údarás na hOllscoile.

2.2 The President as Chief Officer will serve *ex-officio* as a member of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

2.3 Gender balance is a key aspect of membership composition. The Committee shall accordingly be comprised of at least 40% women and at least 40% men across the totality of the Committee.

2.4 Members are required to attend all meetings of the Committee. In the event a member does not attend 3 consecutive meetings, they may be replaced.

3. Conflicts of Interest

3.1 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.

3.2 Where a conflict of interest arises, a Committee member shall bring this to the attention of the Chair 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. This shall be noted in the minutes of the Committee meeting.

4. Functions and responsibilities

4.1 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee 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.

In particular, the Committee is charged with the following:

1. 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 NUI 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.
2. To support the continued progression and embedding of the Athena SWAN programme in the University.

3 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 Consent Framework Action Plan (based on the National Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutions): Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions.

4. To examine and recommend for approval to Údarás na hOllscoile appropriate equality, diversity and inclusion policies and guidance and to monitor the implementation of such policies, including equality impact assessments.

5. 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.

6. 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.
7. To support events and activities to raise the profile of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the University.
8. To monitor, review and determine the impact of changes in equality legislation for the University, to ensure legislative compliance.
9. 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.
10. 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.
10. To receive regular reports from the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Campus Committee (EDICC) on equality, diversity and inclusion matters.
11. To review Terms of Reference and membership of the EDICC annually.
12. To be empowered to request specific data reports from units and schools as appropriate to track and report on equality, diversity and inclusion objectives.

4.2 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee's annual work programme shall be communicated to Údarás na hOllscoile for consideration at the start of the new academic year.

5. Conduct of Business

- 5.1 Meetings shall be held not less than 3 times a year.
- 5.2 The quorum for a meeting of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee shall be as follows: (i) if there is an even number of members on the Committee, the attendance of half the number of members, plus one, or (ii) 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.
- 5.3 The Committee shall make decisions in line with the provisions of section 12 of the Third Schedule of the Universities Act 1997 which provides for Governing Authority decision-making. Every question at a meeting of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee shall be determined by consensus, but where in the opinion of the chairperson, or other person presiding, consensus is not possible, the question shall be decided by a majority of the votes of members present and voting on the question and, in the case of an equal division of votes, the chairperson or other person presiding shall have a second or casting vote.
- 5.4 The provisions of any Standing Orders approved by Údarás na hOllscoile will apply to the conduct of business of the Committee, including those set out for handling Motions and Resolutions.
- 5.5 Private sessions, i.e. meeting time without executives present, should be scheduled on the Committee's work programme to be a standing item at the start or the end of the agenda of two meetings per annum.

- 5.6 Consideration may be given to an annual joint meeting with other relevant Committees of Údarás na hOllscoile.
- 5.7 Only members of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee have the right to attend Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee meetings. Other individuals from the university and external advisers, may be invited to attend for all or part of any meeting, as and when appropriate and necessary.
- 5.8 In particular, the following may be required to attend as requested in relation to matters pertaining to their roles and responsibilities:
- officers, employees of the University,
 - student representatives (other than the elected student members of Údarás na hOllscoile)
 - directors or employees of subsidiary companies of the University
- 5.9 Administrative support for the Committee's work is provided by the Office of the Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. In order to discharge the responsibilities of the Secretary for Governance and Academic Affairs under the Code of Governance for Irish Universities 2019 as regards ensuring appropriate and timely information flows within the Governing Authority and its Committees, a representative of the Office of the Secretary for Governance and Academic Affairs is in attendance at meetings of the Committee.
- 5.10 Members will be expected to treat sensitive information, commercial or otherwise, with due confidentiality.

6. Information Requirements

6.1 On a regular basis, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee will be provided, in accordance with Údarás na hOllscoile standing order provisions, with all documentation necessary for its work.

6.2 The Vice President for Equality and Diversity and the Head of Equal Opportunities shall also ensure that matters of material concern that are relevant to the Committee's responsibilities are brought promptly to the attention of the Committee.

6.3 In addition to the above, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee will be provided with any other information that may be pertinent to the functioning of the Committee.

7. Authority

The Committee is authorised by Údarás na hOllscoile to:

- ensure accountability for delivering on the University's strategic aim of proactively removing barriers to equality and diversity
- oversee the implementation of the strategic framework for equality, diversity and inclusion in service provision and in employment across the University.

8. Minutes

Copies of the minutes of the Committee will be circulated to all Údarás na hOllscoile members for approval by the Údarás.

9. Reporting

9.1 The Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee will make a report to each meeting of Údarás na hOllscoile outlining:

- Recommendations for decisions to be approved by Údaras, on matters considered by the Committee since the previous meeting of Údarás na hOllscoile and the basis for such recommended decisions
- Any other issues of importance arising from discussions at the Committee which should be brought to the attention of Údarás na Ollscoile

9.2 The Committee shall periodically review its own effectiveness as a Committee and report results of that review to the Governing Authority. The Committee will also review these terms of reference at least annually and will make recommendations on updating or amending them to Údarás na hOllscoile as appropriate.

10. Rights

The Committee may:

- a. co-opt expertise to provide specialist skills, knowledge and experience; and
- b. procure specialist ad-hoc advice at the reasonable expense of the University, subject to budgets agreed by the Governing Authority.

11. Term of Office

The term of office of the Committee is co-terminous with the period of office of Údarás na hOllscoile.