



Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI)

Call for applications 2020

Promoting gender balance at senior academic levels in the higher education sector

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Call for proposals

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are invited to submit applications for funding under the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI) Call 2020, in line with the requirements set out in this document.

This Call is managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). Following a competitive process based on an annual Call for applications from HEIs, the HEA will approve a defined number of new and additional senior academic leadership posts to successful HEIs. It is envisaged that 45 senior academic leadership posts will be awarded to HEIs over three years to assist in accelerating gender balance at senior levels. As part of cycle 1 of the initiative, 20 posts were [awarded](#) in January 2020.

Timeframe:

- Call for applications issues to HEIs – **9th October 2020**
- Deadline for applications - **12:00, 29th January 2021**
- Announcement of outcome – **Q2 2021**

1.2 Background

Diversity is a key strength of Irish higher education (HE). In recent decades our universities, institutes of technology, and colleges have been transformed, from predominantly national institutions catering primarily for school-leavers, to internationally-oriented institutions engaged with an increasingly diverse student body, of all ages, backgrounds and gender identities.

Higher education legislation requires institutions to promote gender-balance among students and staff, and for the HEA to promote the attainment of equality of opportunity.

The [HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions \(2016\)](#) was an important first step in highlighting the gender inequality that existed at senior academic levels in our HEIs. The HEA Expert Group report outlined a number of recommendations for the HEIs, HEA, research funding agencies and other key stakeholders. However, since the publication of the HEA Expert Group report, progress has remained slow.

The HEA [Higher Education Institutional Staff by Gender](#) report (2020) highlighted that in 2019 only 26% of Professor posts in the Irish Universities Association (IUA) institutions were held by women as compared to 52% women Lecturers, an entry level for academic posts in the university sector. This indicated systemic imbalance in female representation at professorial level in universities. Data analysis conducted by the Gender Equality Taskforce on the estimated rate of change for the future suggested that the adoption of a Flexible Cascade Model¹ approach alone (as recommended by the HEA Expert Group), could take some 20 years to achieve gender balance at professor level (i.e. minimum 40% female professors).

This rate of change does not address in a sufficiently timely way the structural imbalance in female representation at top level in universities.

Furthermore, in the Technological HE sector, while 46% of Lecturers are female, only 32% of females are at the Senior Lecturer 3 (SL3) level. Analysis by the taskforce suggests that it could take up to seven years to achieve 40% gender balance at this level.

It is not tenable from a public policy perspective that this situation could be allowed to potentially persist for that length of time. It was, therefore, proposed that targeted and proportionate positive action should be taken to accelerate the achievement of gender equality objectives.

Such an approach is consistent with a range of Government strategies and policies including, for example:

- [National Strategy for Women and Girls](#)
- [Equality Budgeting Initiative](#)

1.3 Gender Equality Taskforce

The Minister for Higher Education established the Gender Equality Taskforce to identify significant measures, drawing on the work of the HEA Expert Group, that could accelerate progress in achieving gender equality in the Irish HEIs. Their Action Plan, which was launched on 12th November 2018, encompasses a suite of initiatives to bring about sustainable organisational change and to empower a culture of gender equality in the HEIs for all staff, academic and professional, as well as management and support staff at all levels. In particular:

¹ Where the proportion of women and men to be recruited or promoted to a certain level is based on the proportion of each at the career level directly below.

- The establishment of a *Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality* in the HEA will be a key enabler of this and in particular will ensure sustainable change by providing centralised support for the institutions, sharing of good practice, and funding for innovative organisational and cultural change initiatives nationally.
- Ambitious targets for the proportion of academic and professional, management and support staff of each gender to be in senior positions in 1, 3 and 5 years will be agreed with the HEA and monitored annually through the Strategic Dialogue process. Each HEI will be held accountable for achieving their targets and performance will be incentivised through funding incentives or consequences as appropriate, to ensure progress is constant and considerable.
- Attainment of [Athena SWAN](#) certification is an important part of this Action Plan. Engaging with the Athena SWAN process has been transformative for HEIs, according to stakeholder feedback to the Gender Equality Taskforce. All seven universities have now achieved institutional bronze awards, as well as the Dublin Institute of Technology. The other IoTs are also starting the process of applying and the sector has issued a [Gender & Diversity Statement](#). It is a key aim of government to ensure that Irish HEIs have the necessary support to engage fully with Athena SWAN and be ambitious so that they can work towards obtaining a Silver, and eventually a Gold, level award.

The HEA Expert Group and Gender Equality Taskforce both recognised that in addition to the organisational and cultural change initiatives needed, a significant targeted positive action initiative was required in order to effect change within a reasonable timeframe at the highest academic level in both sectors. Analysis of recruitment trends by the Gender Equality Taskforce highlighted that the rate of change, over the period 2013 – 2017, at the most senior grades is slower than at other grades.

International evidence is that the establishment of new and additional gender-specific posts would be a proportionate and effective means to achieve rapid and sustainable change, and on that basis has the potential to be transformative for the higher education (HE) sector in terms of securing gender equality goals.

As part of the launch of the Gender Taskforce report, it was also announced that a new Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI) would be established.

Section 2: Objective of the Initiative

The SALI aims to help achieve equality of outcome in the HE sector. New and additional senior academic leadership posts will be funded in areas where:

- there is clear evidence of significant gender under-representation;

- the appointment will have significant impact within the HEI and the relevant faculty / department / functional unit;
- the appointment will be a proportionate and effective means to achieve accelerated and sustainable change within an institution.

There will be a total of 45 such posts provided over a period of three years. These posts will be new and additional to the sector, i.e. they are in addition to the existing Employment Control Framework (ECF), and they will be funded through new and additional funding provided specifically to help progress gender balance among academic staff at senior levels.

Only applicants who are suitably qualified will be appointed. If applicants do not meet the normal competition rules for appointment at Professorship level in the IUA institutions / SL3 level in the technological HE sector, then appointment will not be made.

The key objective of this initiative is principally to attract outstanding female applicants both from within the sector currently and internationally. The initiative will also assist in increasing the number of women involved in the decision-making processes in institutions, as advocated in the *EU Commission Strategy on Promoting Equality in Decision Making*.

A key requirement from HEIs aiming to secure these posts would be demonstration of their commitment to gender equality, through the provision of their Gender Action Plans and evidence that they are progressing their stated objectives and targets to achieve organisational and cultural change. The institution must also demonstrate plans for future developments in this area and outline the organisational and cultural initiatives in place to support the newly appointed staff.

Research has shown that a perceived lack of confidence in one's chance of success, which results in women not putting themselves forward for roles, is often not due to a lack of confidence in themselves, but rather a lack of confidence in the environment to judge them fairly.²

Pre-existing subtle biases have been shown to affect the assessment of applications with a female name and the procedures for appointments³. The HEA Expert Group and the Gender Equality Taskforce have highlighted particular key areas for focus to help address this. The implementation of these by the HEIs will be taken into consideration as part of the assessment process, thereby helping to embed the gender-proofing of appointment procedures and practices.

While this initiative gives priority to highly qualified female candidates within the boundaries of what is legally permissible, in order to address their under-representation; preferential consideration of female candidates is excluded if other reasons worthy of legal protection, prevail. In exceptional circumstances, candidates who are in a minority or protected under Irish social legislation, or who also belong to an under-represented minority in academic posts may be

² McKinsey and Co. (2010) *Women Matter* 2010, p11.

³ C.A. Moss-Racusin et al. (2012). Science faculty's subtle gender biases favour male students. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 109(41)16474-79 2012; van den Brink et al. (2010) Transparency in academic recruitment: a problematic tool for gender equality? *Organisation Studies* 31(11)1459-83; Nielsen, M.W. 2015 'Limits to meritocracy?'

approved if the institution can clearly articulate reasons worthy of legal protection as to why they should be considered.

Section 3: Call criteria and application guidelines

3.1 HEI eligibility

Eligible institutions under this initiative are those that are provided with a dedicated pay budget by the DFHERIS / HEA and are encompassed by the ECF. A list of eligible institutions is included in Appendix 1.

All HEIs who apply must have an institutional gender action plan. The latest gender action plan that has been approved by the Governing Authority / Body, must be submitted with the application.

3.2 Application procedure

In submitting an application, the HEI will be deemed to have accepted the conditions outlined in this and any subsequent clarifications from the HEA regarding this initiative and to have agreed to be bound by them. Furthermore, signing of the application by the head of institution (e.g. President, Provost etc.) reflects acceptance of the award and a commitment to provide the necessary support for the posts. All applications must be signed by the head of the institution.

HEIs are required to submit documentation as detailed in the Call Application form.

Applications should be submitted to sali@hea.ie by **12:00, 29th January 2021**.

3.3 Assessment process and guidelines

3.3.1 Assessment Panel

The HEA will establish an international Assessment Panel to evaluate the HEI applications received. The Assessment Panel will comprise members with gender equality expertise, as well as broad disciplinary and strategic level expertise. In establishing the Assessment Panel, due regard shall be given to gender balance.

3.3.2 Assessment guidelines

The Assessment Panel will consider the extent to which the applications meet the criteria of the 2020 Call as outlined in this document. The Assessment Panel will need to be satisfied that the applications are consistent with the strategies of the HEI.

All applications will be assessed solely on the basis of the material provided to the HEA at the time of submission.

In their submission to the HEA, HEIs will need to:

- provide evidence on how the HEI is progressing their stated gender objectives and targets to achieve organisational and cultural change, including an assessment of the progress made on the recommendations outlined in the HEA Expert Group Report (2016) and the Gender Equality Taskforce Action Plan 2018-2020, in particular in relation to gender-proofing of appointment procedures and practices;
- demonstrate plans for future developments in this area and outline the organisational and cultural initiatives in place to support the newly appointed staff;
- provide a critical analysis of significant gender under-representation in up to two faculty / department / functional units being put forward for new posts;
- demonstrate clearly how the new appointment(s) will have significant impact within the faculty / department / functional unit and the HEI.

Institutions should seek to benchmark and use international best practice to inform their applications.

3.3.3 Assessment Criteria

In accordance with the objective of this initiative as outlined above, each application will be evaluated based on the following criteria (max. 100 marks):

For the HEI:

- Demonstrate how it has progressed the stated gender objectives and targets to achieve organisational and cultural change (max 20 marks);
- Demonstrate how it has gender-proofed its appointment procedures and practices⁴ (max 20 marks);

For each post:

- Comprehensive critical analysis of significant gender under-representation in the faculty / department / functional unit being put forward for new post (max 30 marks);
- Clear indication of the significant impact of the new post on the department / functional unit and fit with the strategies of the HEI plan (max 30 marks).

Each application for a new post will be treated as a separate application from the HEI, however HEIs will only submit HEI level information once and they will be scored on this only once. The HEI score will be added to the individual scores for each post to calculate the overall score for that application.

For example: if an HEI puts in 2 applications they will be assessed on the HEI level criteria once to receive a HEI score (e.g. HEI = 30/40 marks) and then each post will be scored individually (e.g. Post 1

⁴ Please refer to the HEA Expert Group Report, page 67 and Gender Taskforce Action Plan page 26-27 for more information.

= 50/60 marks; Post 2 = 55/60 marks) and added to the HEI score to calculate the overall application score (e.g. Application 1: 30+ 50 = 80/100; Application 2: 30+ 55 = 85/100).

3.3.4 Assessment process

Applications will be first reviewed by the HEA for eligibility.

Applications will then be sent for remote evaluation to the Assessment Panel members. Each application will be assessed remotely by three members of the Assessment Panel. The Assessment Panel members will allocate scores as per the evaluation criteria detailed above. HEIs are advised to familiarise themselves fully with the evaluation criteria, assessment guidelines and initiative objectives prior to making an application.

Each Assessment Panel member will submit their independent evaluation prior to coming together to discuss the ranked list of applications. The Assessment Panel will then arrive at an overall judgement of standard and make final recommendations to the HEA. An independent audit processor will be present at the Assessment Panel meeting.

Only applications that meet a minimum threshold of quality will be deemed fundable (65 of 100 marks) and minimum 50% threshold in each category.

In addition to the quality assessment of the applications, posts will be awarded with consideration to institutional, faculty / department / functional unit, and geographical spread.

The HEA's decision on whether to award a SALI post under this initiative is final.

Section 4: Funding & Duration

There will be a total of 45 senior academic leadership initiative posts provided across sectors (e.g. university and institute of technology) over three cycles of awards. These posts will be new and additional to the sector, i.e. they are in addition to the existing Employment Control Framework (ECF), and they will be funded through new and additional funding provided specifically to help address the significant gender imbalance among academic staff at senior levels.

Each HEI can put forward up to two areas (at faculty / department / functional unit level as appropriate) per application to be considered for new posts under this initiative.

Posts will be awarded at the most senior level on the current academic career framework for each HEI.

Funding will be provided at the appropriate level for each post, for a period of 10 years after which time the HEI must incorporate them into the HEI pay budget.

Funding for these posts is wholly subject to the continued receipt of funding by the HEA from the DFHERIS. In the event of such funding being reduced or discontinued, neither the DFHERIS, nor the

HEA will be under any liability to provide funding or to compensate a HEI for any reduction or cessation of such funding.

The successful candidates will be permanent employees of the HEI, under its normal terms and conditions.

Section 5: Institutional Assessment Process to appoint candidates

The assessment process to determine who will take up the new posts awarded to the HEI under this initiative, will be undertaken by the HEI themselves utilising their own recruitment and appointment processes so that these posts are subject to the same high standards of any HEI appointment at this level in the institution. Only suitably qualified candidates shall be appointed. HEIs should include the text provided in Appendix 2 as part of their recruitment advertisement.

These appointments will be made through open competition for which both internal and external candidates will be eligible.

Section 6: Reporting and Monitoring

HEIs will submit a report to the HEA outlining the outcome of their recruitment and appointment processes and indicate when the post(s) will be filled. This report will include a note on the process undertaken by the HEI to recruit the individual(s), including numbers of applications, shortlisting etc.

This initiative gives priority to highly qualified female candidates, but preferential consideration of female candidates is excluded if other reasons worthy of legal protection prevail. In exceptional circumstances, candidates who are in a minority or protected under Irish social legislation, or who also belong to an under-represented minority in academic posts may be approved if the institution can clearly articulate reasons worthy of legal protection as to why they should be considered.

Where an institution has completed its assessment process to recruit the candidate(s), and an exceptional circumstance has arisen from the recruitment process, the HEI must include in its report to the HEA, a clear articulation of how the candidate meets the exceptional circumstances outlined for this Call.

The HEA, as appropriate, may reconvene the Assessment Panel in the event it needs further input.

In the event that exceptional circumstances are deemed to have not been met, the HEA retains the right to withdraw SALI funding for the Post, and the appointee becomes part of the normal employment control framework staff cohort.

An evaluation of the initiative will be conducted before the commencement of each cycle to examine its effectiveness. This evaluation will be conducted at the institutional, sectoral and national levels.

Appendix 1 – Eligible HEIs

Athlone Institute of Technology
Cork Institute of Technology
Dublin City University
Dublin Dental Hospital
Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
Dundalk Institute of Technology
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
Institute of Technology, Carlow
Institute of Technology, Sligo
Institute of Technology, Tralee
Letterkenny Institute of Technology
Limerick Institute of Technology
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
Maynooth University, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
National College of Art and Design
National University of Ireland, Galway
St. Angela's College, Sligo
Technological University Dublin
Trinity College Dublin
University College Cork
University College Dublin
University of Limerick
Waterford Institute of Technology

Eligible institutions under this initiative are those that are provided with a dedicated pay budget by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science / HEA and are encompassed by the Employment Control Framework.

Appendix 2 – Text for inclusion in the higher education institution recruitment process

N.B. The following text must be included in all advertisements for the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative posts

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Call for applications

Applications are invited from suitable qualified candidates for a new post in XXXXX under the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI) Call 2020, in line with the requirements set out in the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Call document [WEBLINK].

This SALI Programme is managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). Following a competitive process based on an annual Call for Applications from higher education institutions (HEIs), the HEA approved X new and additional senior academic leadership posts for our institution in the area(s) of X (and X) to assist in accelerating gender balance at senior levels.

1.2 Background

Diversity is a key strength of Irish higher education (HE). In recent decades our universities, institutes of technology, and colleges have been transformed, from predominantly national institutions catering primarily for school-leavers, to internationally-oriented institutions engaged with an increasingly diverse student body, of all ages, backgrounds and gender identities.

HE legislation requires institutions to promote gender-balance among students and staff, and for the HEA to promote the attainment of equality of opportunity.

The [HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions \(2016\)](#) was an important first step in highlighting the gender inequality that existed at senior academic levels in our HEIs. The HEA Expert Group report outlined a number of recommendations for the HEIs, HEA, research funding agencies and other key stakeholders. However, since the publication of the HEA Expert Group report, progress has remained exceptionally slow.

The DFHERIS proposed that a targeted and proportionate positive action should be taken to accelerate the achievement of gender equality objectives. Such an approach is consistent with a range of Government strategies and policies including, for example:

- [National Strategy for Women and Girls](#)
- [Equality Budgeting Initiative](#)

The Gender Equality Taskforce identified significant measures that could accelerate progress in achieving gender equality in the Irish HEIs. Their Action Plan 2018-2020 encompasses a suite of

initiatives to bring about sustainable organisational change and to empower a culture of gender equality in the HEIs for all staff, academic and professional, as well as management and support staff at all levels. Ambitious targets for the proportion of academic and professional, management and support staff of each gender to be in senior positions in 1, 3 and 5 years will be agreed with the HEA and monitored annually through the Strategic Dialogue process. Their report is available here - <http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2018/11/Gender-Equality-Taskforce-Action-Plan-2018-2020.pdf>

The HEA Expert Group and Gender Equality Taskforce both recognised that in addition to the organisational and cultural change initiatives needed, a significant targeted positive action initiative was required in order to effect change within a reasonable timeframe at the highest academic level in both sectors. Analysis of recruitment trends by the Gender Equality Taskforce highlighted that the rate of change, over the period 2013 – 2017, at the most senior grades is slower than at other grades.

International evidence is that the establishment of new and additional gender-specific posts would be a proportionate and effective means to achieve rapid and sustainable change, and on that basis has the potential to be transformative for the higher education sector in terms of securing gender equality goals.

As part of the launch of the Gender Equality Taskforce Action Plan, it was also announced that a new Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI) would be established.

Section 2: Objective of the Initiative

The SALI aims to help achieve equality of outcome in the HE sector. New and additional senior academic leadership posts have been funded in areas where:

- there is clear evidence of significant gender under-representation;
- the appointment will have significant impact within the faculty / department / functional unit and the HEI;
- the appointment will be a proportionate and effective means to achieve accelerated and sustainable change within an institution.

These posts are new and additional to the sector, i.e. they are in addition to the existing Employment Control Framework (ECF), and they will be funded through new and additional funding provided specifically to help progress gender balance among academic staff at senior levels.

The key objective of this initiative is principally to attract outstanding female applicants both from within the sectors currently and internationally. The initiative will also assist in increasing the number of women involved in the decision-making processes in the institutions, as advocated in the *EU Commission Strategy on Promoting Equality in Decision Making*.

In securing X post under this initiative, our institution has demonstrated our commitment to gender equality. Our institution has also demonstrated plans for future developments in this area and has outlined the organisational and cultural initiatives in place to support the newly appointed staff.

While this initiative gives priority to highly qualified female candidates within the boundaries of what is legally permissible, in order to address their under-representation; preferential consideration of female candidates is excluded if other reasons worthy of legal protection prevail. In exceptional circumstances, candidates who are in a minority or protected under Irish social legislation, or who also belong to an under-represented minority in academic posts may be considered if the institution can clearly articulate reasons worthy of legal protection as to why they should be considered.

Section 3: Call criteria and application guidelines

3.1 Applicant eligibility

X SALI posts have been approved to our institution in the area(s) of by the HEA, and the applicant can only be appointed within this specific area(s).

Only applicants who are suitably qualified will be appointed. If applicants do not meet the normal competition rules for appointment at Professorship level in the IUA institutions / SL3 level in the technological HE sector, then appointment will not be made.

This is a dedicated Call under the SALI and is an open competition for which both internal and external candidates will be eligible.

In line with the objectives of the HEA SALI Call 2020, applications from highly qualified female candidates will be prioritised within the boundary of what is legally permissible, in order to address their under-representation. However preferential consideration of female candidates is excluded if other reasons worthy of legal protection prevail. In exceptional circumstances, applications from candidates who are in a minority or protected under Irish social legislation, or who also belong to an under-represented minority in academic posts may be considered if the institution can clearly articulate reasons worthy of legal protection as to why they should be considered.

3.3 Applicant assessment process and guidelines

Normal (insert HEI name) recruitment procedures apply for appointment at Professorship level in the IUA institutions / SL3 level in the technological HE sector

In line with the HEA Expert Group recommendation 1.16, institutions are required to review the recruitment and assessment procedures currently being used to ensure that such processes are gender-proof. For example, institutions should consider how best to factor in time spent away from an academic career when asking for measurable outputs, e.g. asking applicants to identify their top 3–5 publications / outputs with no time limits would negate periods of time spent away from an

academic career, however asking for the publications / outputs over the last 5 years would disadvantage someone who has spent time away from their academic career

A key objective of the initiative is to strengthen diversity at senior academic leadership level in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) given the benefits that increased diversity would be expected to generate for HEIs as set out in the report of the Gender Equality Taskforce. Consequently, other capabilities and life experiences which have been acquired by applicants outside of the academic environment can be taken into account in assessing candidates, in so far as they are of importance for the suitability, performance and capability of applicants to perform senior academic leadership roles in higher education and to underpin the achievement of increased diversity at that level.

Section 4: Funding & Duration

The successful applicants will be permanent employees of NAME, under our standard terms and conditions.