

RACE EQUALITY

**IN THE HIGHER
EDUCATION
SECTOR**

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
2022-2024**

Background

The HEA conducted a national online survey on race equality in Irish higher education institutions during December 2020 and January 2021. All staff working in publicly funded HEIs were invited to participate and the results of this survey were included in a report commissioned by the HEA, Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector (the Race Equality Report hereafter). The report, which was authored by independent experts, Dr Marta Kempny and Dr Lucy Michael, captures the lived experience of staff in relation to race equality in higher education institutions in Ireland. Their findings were published in October 2021 and were accompanied by 32 recommendations across 8 thematic areas.

“Race inequality exists in Irish higher education.”

In the 2021 survey, 48% of respondents agreed with the statement that race inequality exists in Irish higher education.

Sectoral Feedback

In March 2022, the HEA prepared a discussion paper proposing a number of actions to implement the recommendations in the report. The discussion paper was issued for feedback to the Athena SWAN Ireland Intersectionality Working Group, Higher Education Institutions and the HEA National Committee for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This feedback has been incorporated into the implementation plan below.

There were a number of submissions received, which can be summarised as follows:

- All submissions demonstrated support for the proposed actions and included statements that the actions would support meaningful implementation of the recommendations.
- There was a shared sentiment across submissions that including race equality under the Athena SWAN Ireland Charter would be an efficient way to implement a number of the recommendations.
- The sector would like to see more community outreach and external collaborations and noted that these could be connected with the national awareness raising campaign.

- It was suggested that sectoral recommendations be aligned to institutional actions, that specific reference be made to establishing sectoral targets as part of the national conference, and that consideration be given to the intersectional elements that impact women within higher education.
- HEIs offered examples of work which is ongoing in the sector which are aligned with or could be aligned with the proposed actions.

In summary, the submissions showed support for the implementation of the report recommendations and endorsed the proposed actions.

“A large number of respondents raised the critical role of HEIs in relation to racial inequalities in wider society. There is an opportunity for real evidence-informed leadership in this area by HEIs.”

Definition of Racism

As work begins to implement the recommendations of the Race Equality Report, the Athena SWAN Intersectionality Working Group recommends that “racism” be defined as delineated by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth’s Anti-Racism Committee in their Interim Report to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on 30th November 2020:

“We understand racism to mean the power dynamics present in those structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on their identity, as outlined in Article 1 of the International Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which provides: ‘...the term “racial discrimination” shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”

“Senior leadership in HEIs were most commonly identified as the group both most able and most critical to the process of improving race equality in higher education.”

Implementation Plan

Theme	Report Recommendations	Action	Lead Stakeholder	Timeline
<i>Leadership</i>	Highlighting the structural, institutional, and historical dimensions of racism which have informed past and current practice in HEIs and the societies in which they are situated	National conference (with HEI leaders)	HEA	Q4 2022 Annual
<i>Leadership</i>	<p>Taking responsibility, accountability and ownership of race equality issues at HEIs</p> <hr/> <p>Actively acknowledging that race inequality exists in HEIs</p> <hr/> <p>Refuting the assertion of future progressive realisation of equality – Irish HEIs are not keeping pace with wider demographics and assertive action is required to catch up</p> <hr/> <p>Acknowledging the power of HEIs to influence Irish society in general</p>	Statement/charter for HEIs	Intersectionality WG	Q4 2022
<p><i>Supporting diversity in staffing</i></p> <p><i>Fostering diversity in HEIs</i></p> <p><i>Supporting diversity in student recruitment</i></p>	<p>Institutional identification and targeted support for underrepresented groups</p> <hr/> <p>Reviewing how job specifications are compiled to follow good equality practice, ensuring recruitment criteria are inclusive, and reducing the number of ‘desirables’ in job adverts</p> <hr/> <p>Organising intercultural activities for both staff and students so people can become more understanding and respectful of other cultures</p> <hr/> <p>Developing university strategies to engage diverse views, such as decolonising/diversifying curriculum to Euro-centric viewpoints</p> <hr/> <p>Targeted support programmes to improve up take of, and experience of ethnic minority students in regards to applying for scholarship and funding</p> <hr/> <p>Targeted support programmes to facilitate ethnic minority students’ access to placement and training opportunities</p> <hr/> <p>Targeted career advice for marginalised groups, and first generation third level students</p>	Institutional action plan	HEIs	Q4 2023

Theme	Report Recommendations	Action	Lead Stakeholder	Timeline
<p><i>Supporting diversity in staffing</i></p> <p><i>Awareness and training</i></p>	<p>Providing mandatory race equality training for all members of recruitment panels</p> <hr/> <p>Mandatory antiracism training for staff at all levels with an emphasis on intersectionality. This should include elements such as bystander intervention, unconscious bias, cultural intelligence, equitable practice and racial justice. These should also counter myths about positive discrimination</p>	Developing integrated race equality training	HEIs	By 2024
<p><i>Making race/equality policies transparent</i></p> <p><i>Reporting mechanisms</i></p>	<p>Clear signposting to existing policies relating to race equality</p> <hr/> <p>Clear signposting of disciplinary and reporting procedures in relation to race equality on campus</p>	Standalone race equality document for easy access which signposts towards the other relevant policies	HEIs	2023
<i>Awareness and training</i>	Sustained anti-racist campaigns on campus and on online platforms	National awareness raising campaign	HEA	2022
<i>Supporting diversity in staffing</i>	Targeting advertising towards ethnic minority groups	Guidance on recruitment/promotion/progression practices	Intersectionality WG	By 2024
<i>Supporting diversity in staffing</i>	Providing immigration advice for non-EEA staff to reduce employment difficulties	Awareness raising among HEI staff around recognition of foreign qualifications	HEIs	By 2024
<i>Data collection</i>	Systematic collection of data which will provide the necessary evidence base regarding staff and student representation, access and outcome by ethnicity, and benchmarking of this data against Census data	Voluntary Disclosure Campaign	HEA/HEI representative bodies	Q4 2022

The actions in the above implementation plan can be divided between national actions and institutional actions as follows:

National Actions

A **National Conference** with all HEI Presidents and VPs for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to raise awareness of the “structural, institutional, and historical dimensions of racism which have informed past and current practice in HEIs and the societies in which they are situated”.

The introduction of a national **Race Equality Statement or Charter**, which will recognise the definition of racism as delineated by the National Anti-Racism Committee and contain principles which will ensure institution leaders take responsibility, accountability and ownership of race equality issues within their institution. Institutions will be requested to sign up to the Charter, with principles ensuring active acknowledgment that race inequality exists in the Irish HE sector, acknowledging that assertive action is needed by HEIs to keep pace with wider demographics to catch up with global counterparts. The principles will also recognise the power that the HEIs have to influence Irish society more broadly.

A **National Anti-Racism Campaign** across the Irish HE sector, with the HEA working with HEI representative bodies to develop a campaign across campuses and on online platforms.

Guidance on recruitment/promotion/progression practices across the Irish HE sector – particularly relating to targeted advertising towards ethnic minority groups – which will be developed by the Athena SWAN Intersectionality Working Group.

Voluntary Disclosure Campaign focussed on highlighting the importance of equality monitoring data. This campaign will be developed collaboratively between the HEA, HEI representative bodies and the HEIs.

Institutional Actions

The creation of **Race Equality Action Plans** by each institution, operating in line with ongoing EDI work, would support diversity in institutions, both at staff and student level. These plans would aid in the identification and support for underrepresented groups. They would impact on recruitment, specifically job specifications to ensure inclusive criteria are adhered to. The action plans would aid institutions to foster diversity and would impact recommendations across Theme 2 “Supporting Diversity in Staffing”, Theme 6 “Fostering Diversity in HEIs” and Theme 7 “Supporting diversity in student recruitment”. Where appropriate, actions on Race Equality could be incorporated into broader EDI Action Plans.

Development of integrated **Race Equality Training** for all members of recruitment panels and additionally for staff at all levels.

HEIs to publicise in one document or one online location (i) **policies** which relate to race equality or anti-racism, and (ii) disciplinary and reporting **procedures** concerning race equality on campus. These policies and procedures should be clearly signposted and be easily accessible to all.

Awareness raising among HEI staff and recruitment panel members around the **recognition of foreign qualifications**.

