

# PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY

IN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION  
2016-2021

A NATIONAL SUMMARY REPORT

*Centre of Excellence for Equality,  
Diversity and Inclusion, March 2022*

# CONTENTS

List of Acronyms	3
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Institutional Gender Action Plans</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Progress	7
2.2 Good Practice Examples	7
2.3 Key Next Steps	8
<b>3. Athena SWAN Charter in Ireland</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Progress	9
3.3 Key Next Steps	9
<b>4. Recruitment Procedures and Practices</b>	<b>10</b>
4.1 Progress	10
4.2 Good Practice Examples	11
4.3 Key next Steps	12
<b>5. Positive Action Interventions</b>	<b>12</b>
5.1 Progress	13
5.2 Good Practice Examples	14
5.3 Key Next Steps	15
<b>6. Leadership</b>	<b>16</b>
6.1 Progress	16
6.2 Good Practice Examples	17
6.3 Key Next Steps	18
<b>7. Governance and Management</b>	<b>19</b>
7.1 Progress	19
7.2 Good Practice Examples	20
7.3 Key Next Steps	20
<b>8. Flexible and Agile Working</b>	<b>21</b>
8.1 Progress	21
8.2 Good Practice Examples	22
8.3 Key Next Steps	22
<b>9. Developing Gender Awareness among Staff</b>	<b>23</b>
9.1 Progress	23
9.2 Good Practice Examples	24
9.3 Key Next Steps	25

## CONTENTS

10. Teaching & Learning, Research and Quality Assurance	26
10.1 Progress	26
10.2 Good Practice Examples	27
10.3 Key Next Steps	27
11. Workload Allocation Models	28
11.1 Progress	28
11.2 Good Practice Examples	28
11.3 Key Next Steps	29
12. Enabling Data-driven Decision-making	30
12.1 Progress	30
12.2 Good Practice Examples	30
12.3 Key Next Steps	31
13. Conclusion	32

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GB	Gender Balance
GE	Gender Equality
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher education Institution
WAM	Workload Allocation Model

## 01 INTRODUCTION

Higher education legislation requires institutions to promote gender-balance among students and staff, and for the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to promote the attainment of equality of opportunity. While higher education institutions (HEIs) have been engaged in initiatives targeted at addressing gender inequality for a number of years, the report of the expert group established by the HEA in 2016 highlighted a broad range of issues contributing to the ongoing gender imbalance in the sector, particularly at senior levels. The collection of staff data disaggregated by gender showed an astonishing level of under-representation of female staff at the highest decision-making levels in Irish HEIs. While these figures have gradually improved since 2016, the numbers only tell part of the story. The recommendations of the Expert Group and, subsequently, the Gender Equality Taskforce, were intended not only to affect a statistical improvement but also, and more importantly, to bring about a cultural change in Irish higher education (HE) that would lead to a more equal system in which a person's gender was not a barrier to career progression.

Both the *HEA National Review of Gender Equality* and the *Gender Action Plan 2018-2020* placed a responsibility on the HEA to monitor on an annual basis HEI progress on gender equality. Since 2016 the HEA has published annually the Higher Education Staff Profiles by Gender, which collate gender disaggregated data from Irish HEIs and offer a key indicator of progress in relation to the gender balance of academic and professional, management and support staff. Updates on progress against the recommendations of the expert group were collected by the Gender Equality taskforce in 2018 and published as summary sectoral reports in the *Gender Action Plan 2018-2020*. Following the establishment of the Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality in 2019, the HEA now collects annual progress reports from HEIs. This report is a summary of progress on gender equality that was made nationally up to Q1 2021 and relates to the following Irish higher education institutions:

- > Dublin City University (DCU)
- > Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS)
- > Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT)
- > Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT)
- > Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT)
- > Institute of Technology, Carlow (IT Carlow)
- > Institute of Technology, Sligo (IT Sligo)
- > Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT)
- > Mary Immaculate College, Limerick (MIC)
- > Maynooth University (MU)
- > Munster Technological University<sup>1</sup> (MTU)

---

<sup>1</sup> Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and Institute of Technology Tralee (ITT) merged to form the Munster Technological University on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021. Data from before this date refers to CIT and ITT.

- > National College of Art and Design (NCAD)
- > National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway)
- > RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences (RCSI)
- > St. Angela's College, Sligo (STAC)
- > Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin)
- > Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest<sup>2</sup> (TUS:MM)
- > Trinity College Dublin (TCD)
- > University College Cork (UCC)
- > University College Dublin (UCD)
- > University of Limerick (UL)
- > Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)

In addition to an update on progress nationally, some examples of policies and initiatives to advance gender equality in specific HEIs are included in this report to share this good practice across the Irish HE system.

---

<sup>2</sup> Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) merged to form the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021. Data from before this date refers to AIT and LIT.

PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY IN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION 2016-2021

Area	Progress Status	Commentary
<b>Institutional Gender Action Plans</b>	Green	All HEIs have gender action plans in place
<b>Athena SWAN</b>	Green	All HEIs are adhering to Athena SWAN timelines
<b>Recruitment Procedures and Practices</b>	Yellow	Most HEIs have reviewed (and updated) recruitment and promotion policies, implemented equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training and gender balance (GB) on interview panels and boards and advertise commitment to gender equality and EDI.
<b>Positive action interventions</b>	Orange	Targets have been set in most HEIs but few positive action interventions to achieve targets have been introduced.
<b>Leadership</b>	Green	Most of the recommendations in relation to leadership have been implemented - experience of leadership in advancing gender equality (GE) as a specific criterion in role descriptions, integration of GE in all processes and decisions as a responsibility of all staff in leadership positions.
<b>Senior EDI role (Vice-President or equivalent)</b>	Green	Most HEIs have appointed a vice-President (or equivalent)
<b>Governance &amp; Management Structures</b>	Yellow	While good progress has been made on achieving GB on Academic Councils and Executive management, the percentage of HEIs achieving GB on governing bodies remains unchanged
<b>EDI Committee</b>	Green	EDI Committees are in place in almost all HEIs
<b>Flexible and Agile Working</b>	Yellow	Most HEIs have implemented flexible working policies however some detail on how these are applied at local level is missing.
<b>Developing Gender Awareness Among Staff</b>	Yellow	Most HEIs report the implementation or planned implementation of policies that will help to develop gender awareness among all staff.
<b>Teaching &amp; Learning, Research and Quality Assurance</b>	Yellow	All HEIs appear to be implementing policies that embed the gender dimension in Teaching & Learning, and Research though some are at the curriculum review stage and this work does not appear to be coordinated centrally in all HEIs
<b>Workload Allocation Models</b>	Red	The workload allocation model has not been formally adopted in most instances and is managed at local level within specific units.
<b>Enabling data-driven decision-making</b>	Orange	All HEIs report gender-disaggregated data to their senior management (and the HEA) though capacity to expand to the collection of intersectional and discipline-specific data is not clear.

Red	little progress
Orange	some progress

Yellow	good progress
Green	Very good progress

## 02 INSTITUTIONAL GENDER ACTION PLANS

The HEA Expert Group identified the development of institutional gender action plans (GAPs) as an essential element of a HEI's strategic efforts to attain gender equality. Their report also outlined the need for these plans to include goals, actions and targets. With the aim of further progressing gender balance, the Gender Equality Taskforce expanded on this recommendation, calling on HEIs to set ambitious short-, medium- and long-term targets, goals and actions at institutional level. Furthermore, the Taskforce recommended that HEIs set specific targets for the proportion of staff by gender that it aimed to have at senior levels (academic staff and professional, management and support staff) across the institution over periods of 1, 3 and five years. In practice, HEIs have developed a single gender action plan for the purpose of Athena SWAN applications and their reporting requirements to the HEA.

### 2.1 Progress

- > All HEIs now have institutional gender action plans in place, with a number now on their second iteration.
- > Institutions have clear targets set out in their gender action plans. In some cases, targets have proven difficult to implement due to a number of factors. For instance, in the technological HE sector, the permanent nature of employment contracts has meant that targets are difficult to address in the short and medium term.
- > Institutions that have achieved Athena SWAN award status at institutional level have developed or are planning to develop gender action plans at departmental level. This is an important step as it helps to embed the ambitions of the institutional gender action plan at a local level.
- > In many HEIs, gender action plans have been directly linked to institutional strategic plans.
- > In some institutions, reporting and monitoring mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that senior management has oversight of institutional progress on gender equality.

### 2.2 Good Practice Examples

Where targets are difficult to implement due to external factors, HEIs have endeavoured to adapt these to their own context. For instance, the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, which is an institution with limited vacancies and no authority to create posts, has addressed this by setting gender targets with timelines of 3, 5 and 10 years

---

At NUI Galway, institutional one-, three- and five-year targets have been set for the proportion of each gender in academic, professional, management and support roles. Gender equality targets are further embedded at a local level, with targets built into school/unit operational plans.

---

At GMIT, targets have been set for future recruitment to ensure 50% or recruitments will be female to some SL grade levels.

---

LYIT have set targets of 40% minimum of each gender at application & shortlisting stages by 2024.

---

HEIs are moving to embed gender equality in their strategic plans and to make it a high-level priority. For example, in its Strategic Plan 2019-2024, the University of Limerick has set a target of at least 40% representation of men and women at full professorial level by 2024.

### 2.3 Key Next Steps

Further work needs to be carried out to implement and meet targets that have been set out in gender action plans. A key element of this is to create a clear monitoring structure, with progress reporting at regular intervals to senior management.

## 03 ATHENA SWAN CHARTER IN IRELAND

The Expert Group identified Athena SWAN accreditation as a key indicator of progress on gender equality within Irish higher education. In their report, they recommended timelines within which HEIs should attain institutional Athena SWAN awards. Furthermore, they recommended that research funding bodies (EPA, IRC, SFI and HRB) link a HEI's eligibility to apply for research funding to Athena SWAN award status. However, as HEIs engaged with the Athena SWAN application process, it became clear that the original timelines envisioned by the Expert Group may not have been achievable, as acknowledged by the Gender Equality Taskforce in their 2018 Action Plan. In light of this, the HEA issued new timelines in 2019. The main requirement to remain eligible for research funding in the short term was to apply for an institutional Bronze award by 2019, while ultimately eligibility is linked to the eventual attainment of an institutional Silver award. The Athena SWAN Charter and the concomitant implementation of gender action plans has greatly increased the number of targeted actions to address gender inequalities in Irish HEIs. Indeed, since it first began as a pilot in 2014, the charter has become firmly embedded in Irish HE and is a key driver of gender equality across the system. A recent survey of HEI staff conducted by the HEA found that 94% believed that the Athena SWAN Charter helps to raise awareness of gender equality issues in Irish HEIs.

### 3.1 Progress

- The Athena SWAN Charter is now firmly embedded as a key driver of Gender Equality in Irish HEIs. As of September 2021, 8 universities, 8 Institutes of Technology, Mary Immaculate College, the National College of Ireland, Munster Technological University and Technological University Dublin hold institutional Bronze awards (19 awards).
- Overall, 87 bronze awards are now held by Irish institutions and departments (19 institutions and 68 departments). Concomitantly, 87 action plans to progress gender equality (institutional or departmental) are now in place across the system.
- The University of Limerick's Department of Physics achieved the first Silver departmental award in Ireland, an important (and requisite) step for application for an institutional Silver award.

### 3.3 Key Next Steps

The HEA timelines for Athena SWAN accreditation in order to remain eligible to apply for research funding dictate that HEIs shall apply for an institutional Silver award after one successful renewal of an institutional Bronze award (and on every subsequent application) and should retain their Bronze award until such time as they obtain a Silver award. In order to be eligible to apply for an institutional Silver award, the majority of an institution's departments must hold departmental awards and at least one department must hold a Silver award. With this in mind, it is imperative that HEIs holding institutional Bronze awards continue to work towards obtaining departmental awards.

## 04 RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

International research demonstrates that subtle biases against women in promotion and recruitment processes can be a key barrier to career progression for female staff in HEIs. This issue was raised by the Expert Group and Taskforce, and an emphasis was placed by both groups on the need to ensure that all HEI recruitment, selection and promotion procedures and practices were adequately gender-proofed. Specifically, in 2016, the HEA Expert Group recommended that all HEIs review their recruitment, selection and promotion procedures to ensure that they were gender-sensitive. The Gender Equality Taskforce reinforced this recommendation with further actions to be undertaken by HEIs. The Taskforce called on HEIs to ensure that they had concrete actions in their institutional gender action plans to bring their existing policies in line with good practice. Furthermore, the Taskforce recommended a system of internal monitoring, wherein a report on recruitment, selection and promotion procedures and practices be submitted to the HEI EDI sub-committee of governing authority at least once annually. This report was to include statistical analysis of applications, recruitment and progression for all academic and professional, management and support staff. The gender-proofing of recruitment and promotion practice and procedures is a key criterion of the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative assessment process, and the quality of submissions in the first (2019) and second (202/2021) cycles of the initiative attest to the advances made by HEIs in this area.

### 4.1 Progress

- > The sector showed strong performance in relation to a number of recruitment and promotion initiatives:
  - // All new staff have a welcome event or meeting
  - // Mandatory gender balance on interview panels
  - // Feedback from Senior Management Team/Head of Department for staff who unsuccessfully applied for promotion
  - // Workshops on promotion
  - // Leadership training
- > On the other hand, recruitment and promotion initiatives least implemented across the sector included:
  - // Compulsory equality and diversity training (including unconscious bias training) for interview panellists, new staff members and staff conducting performance development reviews
  - // Assigning all new staff a 'buddy' as part of the induction process
  - // Advertising commitment to equality and flexible working policies
  - // Workshops on promotion
  - // Discussion of career development at performance development reviews

- > Since the report of the Taskforce, the sector has made significant progress and there is near 100% compliance with the delivery of equality and diversity training for all staff members acting as interview panellists or conducting performance reviews.
- > All HEIs state commitment to a mandatory minimum of 40% of each gender on interview and selection panels and to advertising their equality and flexible working policies.
- > Similarly, nearly all HEIs have completed reviews of their recruitment and promotion policies and have taken measures to ensure that gender-neutral language is used in all material and resources relating to recruitment and promotion.
- > Several HEIs have developed mechanisms to allow for periods of leave to be taken into account in the promotions process.
- > Nearly all HEIs include statements on the institution's commitment to gender equality and EDI more broadly.
- > Several HEIs provide guidance in the form of workshops or information sessions on preparing applications, interviews and assessment criteria.

## 4.2 Good Practice Examples

In DCU, a process of engagement has been implemented that provides all candidates with a documented description of guidelines, criteria and procedures that will be applied during the process. The hiring unit works in conjunction with HR to deliver information sessions where requirements are teased out, questions are answered and candidates are encouraged to reach out for assistance in preparing their applications and preparing for interview. This approach has had the effect of improving the quality of applications overall and contributed to a greater percentage of competitive female candidates. DCU has also implemented a parallel promotions competition to Associate Professor grade.

---

IADT includes a statement that the institute welcomes applications from diverse backgrounds and under-represented groups including people from black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

---

NUI Galway have a dedicated website providing material to support promotion applicants including exemplar material from previously successful applicants, video interviews, case studies. NUIG has developed an inclusive recruitment toolkit and an algorithm to enable the Promotions Panel to assess output relative to opportunity for any applicant who had taken leave; maternity, adoptive parental, sick, disability-related sick and carer's leave.

---

At MU, the Equality Officer performs EDI 'checks' on various recruitment activities and an annual EDI audit is provided to senior management.

---

AIT have a micro-site on their HR webpage that details the work life balance supports available in the institution.

---

Prior to recruitment in TCD, the gender breakdown within a discipline is established using comparator data for the UK and Ireland. This allows in-situ gender monitoring at application stage. Applicant pools are monitored for conformity to expectations based on market mapping and, where fewer applicants of one gender are received than expected, action is taken, e.g. extending the call, reverting to market, broadening the search and/or employing an external recruitment agency. An in-house Research Support System is now used whereby academics record research outputs throughout their careers and these data are used in the promotions process to ensure the achievements of all candidates are presented to the review committee in the same way.

---

A blind shortlisting process that redacts all information relating to gender, age, nationality and geography from the applications seen by the shortlisting panel has been implemented in NCAD. The details of candidates shortlisted are made available to the panel at the time of the interview.

---

TU Dublin has developed a candidate appeal procedure to allow candidates to appeal after shortlisting or after interview. This ensures any flaws in either policy or procedures are addressed before a final selection decision is made. In addition, the university supports a formal Feedback Mechanism for candidates who seek to better understand their application for developmental reasons.

---

In UCC, all Heads of Unit contact all staff at a promotional grade to encourage application submission (through a standardised but personalised communication).

---

DkIT carry out targeted advertising when recruiting staff in underrepresented areas with suitable media platforms identified by Athena SWAN departmental Champions and Head of School; monitoring reports on the effectiveness of this process are prepared.

---

UL includes EDI experience as desirable criteria on internal job specifications and provides a guide for staff on what training or professional experience can be used as an example of EDI experience.

### 4.3 Key next Steps

Much progress has been made across the sector to implement the recommendations of the Expert Review and the recommended actions of the Gender Equality Taskforce. However, there remain areas that need to be progressed further, including the provision of performance development reviews incorporating discussion on career development, mentor schemes, workshops on promotion and onboarding/induction for new staff members.

## 05 POSITIVE ACTION INTERVENTIONS

Both the Expert Group and Gender Equality Taskforce recommended a number of positive action interventions specifically targeted at driving change. These initiatives were to be aimed at academic staff and professional, management and support staff, while also addressing the acute problem of under-representation of women a full professor level. These were:

- > Aiming for gender balance in the final pool of candidates for all competitions.
- > Implementation of the flexible cascade model as a minimum (not a maximum), for both promotion and recruitment of academic staff and senior grades of professional, management and support staff.
- > Ambitious short, medium and long-term targets (1, 3 and 5 years) for both promotion and recruitment of academic staff and senior grades of professional, management and support staff
- > Submission to the HEA of data disaggregated by gender, contract type and broad discipline area or business unit on the number of applications, recruitment and promotions for all academic grades.
- > A minimum of 40% women and 40% men full professors, at the appropriate pay scale.
- > Concrete actions in institutional gender action plans to address stereotyping of ‘female’ and ‘male’ roles.

### 5.1 Progress

- > Policies in place to encourage gender balance in the final pool of candidates for recruitment competitions
- > Promotion and recruitment targets are in place across a number of HEIs.
- > From 2018, all HEIs submit data disaggregated by gender, contract type and broad discipline area or business unit on the number of applications, recruitment and promotions for all academic grades.
- > HEIs have implemented systems to monitor numbers of applicants and appointments for recruitment and promotions and report these to senior governance committees, e.g. Governing Body/Authority.
- > The flexible cascade model and/or gender quotas have been implemented in some institutions, but its use is not uniform across the system.
- > In order to address gender stereotyping, HEI actions include:
  - // review of job descriptions, person specifications and advertisements to ensure that these do not use gendered language
  - // the review of role titles to minimise bias
  - // unconscious bias training for interview panel members
  - // gender balance in final pool of candidates (insofar as possible)
  - // blind shortlisting of candidates

- // use of technology to remove unconscious bias and non-inclusive language from job descriptions
- // “market mapping” to ensure gender balanced pool of candidates for professorships
- // communications campaigns to combat gender stereotyping

## 5.2 Good Practice Examples

NUI Galway offered targeted support to 15 women to fast track successful academic promotions.

---

UCC’s 2019 call for promotion to Senior Lecturer was overseen by a Promotions Board which had an equal gender balance. This newly revised scheme (2018) incorporated comprehensive briefing sessions for applicants, mentoring for female staff and gender equality training for the Board and academic Heads. The scheme exceeded its own 40% minimum female promotion target by 5%.

---

At TCD, the revised Senior Academic Promotions Policy requires the Provost to have regard to gender targets and the size of the eligible cohort when setting the indicative quota for promotions. Market mapping, using UK HESA data, is conducted for Chair recruitment to ensure the gender breakdown among applicants reflects the relevant discipline pool.

---

UCD operates an Ad Astra Fellowship scheme which provides an opportunity for high-potential early-stage academics to join the University. During shortlisting, higher points are awarded to those where gender and nationality (UCD KPIs) are under-represented in a School.

---

NCAD utilises ‘blind shortlisting’ for all leadership positions including all professional roles attracting a salary greater than €76,000. This process redacts all information relating to gender, age, nationality and geography from the applications seen by the shortlisting panel. The details of candidates shortlisted is made available to the panel on the day of the interview.

---

IT Carlow have performed gender profiling of the institution’s professional, management and support staff with a view to implementing targeted initiatives.

### 5.3 Key Next Steps

The adoption of the flexible cascade model, recommended by both the 2016 Review and 2018 Action Plan, has been uneven across the system. It remains unclear how many HEIs have effectively implemented this model and more direct reporting in this regard will be needed, either to demonstrate how it is being used (with a view to sharing this good practice) or to explain why it has not been adopted.

HEI GAPs signal a commitment to reaching a balance of 40% of each gender at full professor level, although timelines for this vary. Institutions should remain committed to this target and continue to engage in positive action initiatives to redress the balance at the highest academic level.

Much positive work has been carried out to combat gender stereotyping across HEIs and the sharing of good practice in this regard would be beneficial to the system.

## 06 LEADERSHIP

The National Online Survey (conducted as part of the HEA review of Gender Equality in Irish HEIs) identified leadership as a key area of focus for actions aimed at addressing gender inequality in Irish HEIs. Highlighting research that demonstrated the existence of a bias in favour of preserving the status quo, the Expert Group recommended that at the final selection step in the appointment process for new presidents the final pool of candidates comprise an equal number of women and men. Also, when this is not possible, interview panels are tasked with accounting to governing authority as to why. In relation to this last recommendation, the Gender Equality Taskforce recommended that, in turn, the governing authority of a HEI provide a report of presidential recruitment processes to the HEA. Beyond the ongoing issue of a lack of role models in the most senior roles, a need for gender equality to be championed at the highest level was seen as imperative to ensure the success of any attempts to bring about cultural change. With this in mind, the Taskforce expanded on an earlier recommendation of the Expert Group and recommended that applicants for leadership positions (including Head of School) demonstrate experience of leadership in advancing gender equality and that this be a specific criterion in role descriptions. Furthermore, both the 2016 Review and 2018 Action Plan, explicitly called for the integration of gender equality in all processes and decisions, and for this to be the responsibility of all staff in leadership positions. To ensure that this could be implemented successfully, the Taskforce recommended that a framework be created within HEIs to indicate how this would be achieved. Finally, in relation to leadership, it was recommended that HEIs appoint what the Expert Group described as “a specific academic agent of cultural and organizational change” in the form of a Vice-President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) or equivalent. Of central importance to the success of this appointment would be the appointee’s membership of the senior management team.

### 6.1 Progress

- HEI presidential appointments occur on a cyclical basis and HEIs have committed to a gender-balanced process when a competition occurs. The HEA has established a process to request reports on presidential appointments from HEI Governing Authorities.
- In the most recent presidential appointment processes across the system, HEIs have included criteria regarding experience of leadership in advancing gender equality and commitment to the wider equality, diversity and inclusion agenda.
- All HEIs have included demonstrable experience of leadership in advancing gender equality as a criterion for appointment at Vice-President and above, while the majority have included this as a criterion for all leadership appointments (Head of School and above). Several HEIs have assisted candidates by providing examples of the professional experience that demonstrate EDI experience.
- Various strategies have been implemented across HEIs to integrate gender equality in all processes and decisions and for this to be the responsibility of all staff in leadership positions, including: EDI training for managers; inclusion of EDI work in role descriptions, EDI as standing agenda item for all committees.

- 4 universities have appointed Vice-Presidents for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, while others have appointed staff in senior EDI roles. Institutes of Technology have taken the approach to combine the position of Vice-President of EDI with another senior role in the institution. Smaller colleges have adopted a similar approach. TU Dublin has appointed a Director of EDI, while MTU has appointed an EDI Manager.

## 6.2 Good Practice Examples

UCC has recently launched a dedicated in-house training programme for developing leaders. The participants on such programmes provide the pool of academics that will be department or school heads. Full regard is given to gender representation when offering places on these programmes, and the EDI Unit is consulting with programme leaders to integrate gender equality and diversity considerations in the programme content.

---

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) tool was introduced in UCD in 2017 as part of the Policy Management Framework. All policy developers are required to carry out an EIA on any new or revised policies and they are supported by the EDI Unit around this. Policies that have not undergone an EIA will not be approved at University level. The process is now undergoing a review and following this will be expanded beyond policy to processes and other areas.

---

GMIT have implemented mandatory unconscious bias training, Inclusive Leadership, Dignity & Respect, Transgender Awareness training for management staff.

---

Several HEIs have incorporated EDI as part of their institutional, school and departmental quality assurance/review processes.

---

A number of HEIs provide examples to candidates of how they can utilize their professional experience to demonstrate their experience in GE/EDI for appointment.

---

MU have developed a guidance framework on how GE can be integrated into processes and decisions to assist senior leaders.

---

DCU have developed training and policy toolkits to assist those in leadership roles in their responsibility to promote a culture of equality.

### 6.3 Key Next Steps

While HEIs have moved to embed EDI as part of the functions of staff in leadership positions, only a few have created a specific framework to indicate how this would be implemented. The development and implementation of policies and processes relating to this are often included in institutional Gender Action Plans and are incorporated into broader career development policies. The development of specific frameworks to outline how staff in leadership roles will integrate gender equality in decision making processes is critical both in terms of transparency and demonstrating an institutional commitment to gender mainstreaming.

The recommended appointment of a VP/Director EDI has been implemented by the majority of HEIs, though some are not at the level of executive management. In order to advance gender equality at an institutional level, it is imperative that “a specific academic agent of cultural and organizational change” (as described by the Expert Group) is appointed in each HEI. Further, if this person is not a member of an institution’s executive management team there is a risk that, both in practical and optical terms, the need to address gender inequality is not a strategic priority for a HEI.

## 07 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

In addition to female under-representation at the most senior academic levels, historically, membership of key-decision making groups within Irish HEIs (e.g. governing authority, academic council, executive management team) has not been gender balanced. As highlighted in the Report of the Expert Group, research indicates that gender diverse boards (or equivalent) are better for decision-making. To address the lack of female staff involved in high-level decision-making (particularly regarding resource allocation, appointments and promotions), it was recommended that all key decision-making bodies consist of at least 40% of each gender and that, across an institution, 40% of chairs of such bodies should be of each gender in any given year. Further, HEIs must submit a gender breakdown of governing authority/body, academic council and executive management annually to the HEA. The Expert Group highlighted a need for a permanent sub-committee of governing authority/body for gender equality with responsibility for the strategic oversight of the gender-proofing of institutional process, policies and strategy in relation to gender equality. As well as this gender equality sub-committee, HEIs must also establish an academically led gender equality forum. This forum should bring together senior academic and professional staff from across various areas/functions of an institution. This forum, chaired by the vice-president for equality, diversity and inclusion, should act as a driver of true cultural and organizational change.

### 7.1 Progress

- HEIs report to the HEA on an annual basis data on the gender balance of governance and management structures, namely Governing Body/Authority, Academic Council and Executive Management. The table below shows data on governance and management structures (collected in December 2020) in the form of the percentage of gender balance in these fora across the 21 HEIs that submit data to the HEA (2016 data is included to show progress).

Forum	2016	2020
Governing Body/Authority	67%	65%
Academic Council	42%	91%
Executive Management	21%	61%

- Many institutions have established sub-committees of governing authority/body with a gender equality remit. Given the evolving nature of this area, most of these committees take the form of EDI or Equality committees. While all HEIs have some form of cross-institutional equality committee in place, as of the Q1 2021, 18 of 22<sup>3</sup> HEIs have such a committee which is clearly a sub-committee of GA/GB. It should be noted that in the case of smaller HEIs it is not always feasible to establish a further sub-committee of relatively small GAs/GBs.

<sup>3</sup> The number of HEIs in Q1 2021 was 22 as the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest was not formed until 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

- 22 HEIs report having established an academically-led gender equality forum. Most of these are led by the institutional leader or Vice-President with responsibility for EDI/gender equality and this can vary by size and type of institution.

## 7.2 Good Practice Examples

The TCD Athena SWAN GAP commits to ensuring Chairs of all university committees undergo unconscious bias training.

---

DCU are currently conducting a review of the ratio of female to male chairs to support achievement of gender balance in all key decision-making fora.

---

NUI Galway has exceeded the 40% target for female representation as Chairs of Committees.

## 7.3 Key Next Steps

Since 2016, there has been little progress in achieving gender balance on HEI governing bodies / authorities though large improvements in the percentage of HEIs who have achieved gender balance on their academic councils and executive management have been observed. While HEIs report to the HEA on an annual basis the gender balance of governance and management structures, the recommendation of the Expert Group was not specifically limited to gender balance of Governing Body/Authority, Academic Council and Executive Management. In the future, it will be important that HEIs demonstrate data and institutional structures that ensure that gender balance is being achieved across all key decision-making bodies.

A majority of HEIs have established a Governing Body/Authority sub-committee and academically led forum per the recommendations of the Expert Group. However, clearer articulation of how these committees strategically oversee the gender-proofing of institutional processes, policies and strategy in relation to gender equality and act as a driver of true cultural and organizational change would help ensure external confidence that HEIs are indeed meeting these recommendations.

## 08 LEXIBLE AND AGILE WORKING

In 2016, the National Online Survey run by the HEA highlighted a need for better work/life balance in Irish HEIs. In response to this, the Expert Group placed a specific focus on family leave, recommending the establishment of a cross-institutional working group to develop a funded structure of family leave and develop mandatory guidelines to underpin this. However, after consultation with stakeholders, the Gender Equality taskforce recommended that the focus of such initiatives should not be limited to family leave. Rather, HEIs should address work-life balance issues through the use of technology and the adoption of more flexible working models, to the benefit of all staff members, including those with caring responsibilities. Areas to be addressed include: maternity, paternity, parental, adoptive and carers' leave; core working hours; remote working; and career breaks. The HEA Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality was tasked with monitoring the progress on the development of guidelines and disseminating good practice among HEIs.

### 8.1 Progress

- > All HEIs have or plan to implement (through institutional gender equality action plans) flexible working policies, which include various types of leave, such as:
  - // Unpaid Leave
  - // Compassionate Leave
  - // Adoptive/Maternity Leave
  - // Paternity Leave
  - // Parental Leave
  - // Force Majeure Leave
  - // Carers' Leave
  - // Extended and Flexible Parental Leave
  - // Career Breaks
- > A number of HEIs report the introduction of core working hours (usually 10am-4pm).
- > HEIs have adopted policies that encourage flexible and agile working including:
  - // 'Keep in Touch' days for staff on maternity/paternity/parental leave
  - // Return to work policies
  - // Maternity/paternity buddy scheme,
  - // Teaching buy-out schemes post maternity/other leave
  - // Job sharing
  - // Part and flexi time working
  - // Remote working
  - // Parents and Carers Networks for staff

## 8.2 Good Practice Examples

The DCU academic promotions process accounts for periods of maternity or other leave by reviewing outputs on a “pro-rata basis”.

---

MU offers a protected 3-month teaching-free period to staff after a period of maternity/adoption leave.

---

At NUI Galway a Research Grant for Returning Academic Carers is available to re-establish or maintain independent research careers. Also at NUI Galway an Athena SWAN Mid-career Lecturer Research Capacity Building Grant has been introduced to build/boost independent research careers.

---

WIT has established a dedicated carer’s network.

---

LYIT provides funds to support the re-engagement of staff with caring responsibilities with research following a career break.

---

GMIT have enhanced communications to staff on leave entitlements and developed a handbook and training on flexible working and leave entitlements for line managers.

---

DkIT have established a Professional Development Committee to oversee issues of career development including formal meetings between staff and managers, the incentivisation of outreach activities and committee membership and a review of current structured leave.

## 8.3 Key Next Steps

Much work has been done by HEIs in developing policies and initiatives to encourage flexible and agile working. However, based on progress updates received to date, it is unclear how many HEIs have developed specific guidelines around flexible and agile working. Such guidelines should be developed as a matter of urgency and the HEA should follow up accordingly with HEIs, disseminating best practice as it arises.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, HEIs rapidly pivoted to remote working to ensure provision of teaching and administrative services and most carried out some form of survey / questionnaire on working from home. While several HEIs appear to have / are developing remote working policies, it is not clear how these are applied at local level nor which cohorts of staff may be eligible. While policies clearly exist at an institutional level, it remains essential that HEIs ensure that these are implemented in a fair and equitable way at a local level.

## 09 DEVELOPING GENDER AWARENESS AMONG STAFF

While institutional policies, procedures and initiatives aimed at tackling gender inequality are critical, it is essential that all staff have an awareness of gender equality issues. Both the 2016 Review and 2018 Action Plan recommended measures that would actively develop gender awareness among all staff, with the latter recommending that such measures be clearly outlined in the institutional gender action plan. HEIs were advised to look to best practice examples from the private sector, where much work is already ongoing in this area. Specific initiatives highlighted included:

- > The provision of face-to-face unconscious bias and gender equality awareness training measures for all staff, complemented by a plan to continually review and update the training when appropriate
- > The requirement for each senior manager to sponsor the career development of two of the under-represented gender
- > Responsibility placed on managers for the active promotion of achievements by both women and men
- > The incorporation of evidence of advancing gender equality into staff members' performance reviews
- > The provision of a gender-aware leadership induction programme for staff moving into leadership positions, which should constitute a minimum 40% of both genders as participants
- > Establishment of a HeforShe/MARC initiative, the goal of which is to engage men as agents for change, for the achievement of gender equality

### 9.1 Progress

- > HEIs report the implementation or planned implementation of policies that will help to develop gender awareness among all staff. These include:
  - // Provision of gender equality related training to all staff including unconscious bias training, cultural awareness training and transgender awareness training
  - // Review of language used in advertisements and job descriptions to remove any gendered language or unconscious bias
  - // Gender Identity and Expression Policies
  - // Policies requiring senior staff to actively promote gender equality
  - // Staff induction/orientation including specific unconscious bias training and/or EDI briefing
  - // Gender equality included as a stated goal in HEI strategic plan
  - // Unconscious bias training for interviewers before participation on interview panels

- // Gender equality awareness and track record as a stated requirement for all academic and leadership promotions
- // Profiling and showcasing researchers of all genders in the public sphere
- // Gender awareness communications plans celebrating the achievements of staff of all genders
- // Development of an equality fund for staff and student projects

## 9.2 Good Practice Examples

At DCU hiring managers are provided with a diversity and inclusion checklist to prompt consideration of gender equality and unconscious bias throughout the process.

---

The RCSI Athena SWAN Action Plan included an Athena SWAN Communications plan. This included raising awareness of the Athena SWAN Principles. Awareness of Athena SWAN, understanding of the principles, and perceptions of if the principles are embedded into institutional and departmental culture and are tracked in an annual EDI Staff Survey.

---

DkIT plans to initiate a publicity campaign highlighting senior academic staff who have availed of flexible working arrangements during their career.

---

At AIT, leaders/managers must actively promote GE and report to EMT.

---

Unconscious bias training, Transgender and Cultural Awareness is available to all staff and is mandatory for all management staff at GMIT.

---

IT Carlow have developed a Gender Identity, Expression & Diversity Training programme with funding awarded under the HEA Gender Equality Enhancement Fund 2020.

---

DCU provide an EDI briefing for new Heads of School/department as well as guidelines on gender awareness in policy writing and event management.

---

At TCD, an online course on incorporating the gender dimension into research curricula is available and a staff/student partnership project termed the *Inclusive Curriculum Project* is underway.

---

Several HEIs have embedded the gender dimension into their quality review/assurance processes.

### 9.3 Key Next Steps

All HEIs have implemented policies and initiatives aimed at developing gender awareness among staff. The majority focus on training initiatives such as unconscious bias training or broader internal communications plans which promote gender equality. However, there is little evidence to suggest that some of the more specific and potentially more impactful initiatives recommended by the taskforce, such as senior managers sponsoring the career development of two staff members of the under-represented gender or the incorporation of evidence of advancing gender equality into staff members' performance reviews, have been implemented in any systematic way. It is important that HEIs move beyond a focus on training and mentorship and begin to look at how staff from an under-represented gender can be formally sponsored by senior staff to support their career advancement, while at the same time developing their own awareness of gender equality issues.

## 10 TEACHING & LEARNING, RESEARCH AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The symbolic links between gender and certain disciplines, (e.g., masculinity and science and technology; femininity and education, nursing, etc.) are well documented and this gendering of subject areas often begins before students enter higher education. However, there remains an onus on HEIs to address these societal perceptions of gendered professions and these can be challenged by integrating the gender dimension into teaching and learning, research, and quality assurance. The Expert Group and Taskforce highlighted the need for graduates to be gender aware, but in particular those who would be teaching future generations of citizens. With this in mind, it was strongly recommended that face-to-face unconscious bias training be fully integrated into teacher education. Furthermore, institutional gender action plans should include actions that help embed gender equality in teaching and learning, and research – in conjunction with these actions, staff should be offered training and support to realise these actions. A crucial action is to integrate the gender dimension into undergraduate and postgraduate curricula. By considering gender equality as part of quality reviews and ensuring that the gender dimension is considered as part of the annual institutional quality assurance report, HEIs can further embed gender in its quality assurance activities.

### 10.1 Progress

- > HEIs report the implementation or planned implementation of policies that will help to integrate the gender dimension into teaching & learning, research and quality assurance, these include:
  - // Delivery of unconscious bias training to all staff and student leaders
  - // Establishment of student-led societies for female students
  - // Consideration of the gender dimension in the institutional quality assurance report
  - // Review composition of all panels
  - // Review of gender-related content in undergraduate and postgraduate curricula
  - // Provision of training on integration of gender dimension into research for project lead applicants and all research staff
  - // Embedding of gender dimension in modules which form part of the structured element of all PhD and Research Masters programmes
  - // Research Officers work with academic and researchers to ensure that the gender dimension is integrated into research proposals where relevant

- // Inclusion in one HEI of explicit criteria on EDI in the institutional Policy and Procedure on the Design, Development and Validation of New programmes at Levels 6-10 of the NFQ in programme documentation and reporting, curricula and learning outcomes

## 10.2 Good Practice Examples

All universities partner in LEAD, The IUA Equality Network - LEAD (Living Equality & Diversity) eLearning Programme which is available for all staff.

---

UCD operates a seed funding programme which provides practical ‘seed’ support for projects and ideas that are challenging and ambitious, as well as those that lead to new knowledge and capabilities. One of the aims of this scheme is to enhance UCD’s research in the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion.

---

In GMIT, a toolkit and other resources have been issued to academic staff to support consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion.

---

IT Sligo has Workshops on Universal Design for Learning which detail structured and inclusive approaches to the design of learning.

---

IADT have launched a Master of Business in EDI – the first in Ireland or Europe.

## 10.3 Key Next Steps

Unconscious bias training is being delivered, at least to newly recruited staff and, in some cases to student leaders however this is uneven across the system. All HEIs appear to be implementing policies that embed the gender dimension in Teaching & Learning, and Research though some are at the curriculum review stage and this work is not coordinated centrally in all HEIs (which would ensure compliance with this recommendation).

Teaching students in gender-conscious ways, delivery of content relating to gender equality issues and the inclusion of diversity into the curriculum (i.e. referencing the work of female academics or experts or citing gender-specific data) are 3 distinct mechanisms to embed the gender dimension into Teaching & Learning. In relation to teacher education, there appears to be good compliance with all 3 of these, however the integration of these into all curricula across HEIs is at various stages with implementation not begun in some cases.

Most HEIs appear to offer guidance on embedding the gender dimension into research proposals and support is available from the local research office on request. Additionally, this content is delivered during induction of new research students. This progress is important, and consideration should be given to rolling out this delivery on a mandatory basis to all research staff and students.

## 11 WORKLOAD ALLOCATION MODELS

In 2016, the Expert Group noted that “the distribution of work can be gendered with women (in both academic and non-academic roles) being tasked with more administrative, support and day-to-day tasks, while men may be allocated tasks deemed more valuable in terms of preparation for promotion.” For instance, given the need for gender balance on internal committees (as recommended by the 2016 Review and the 2018 Action Plan), female staff can become overburdened with the responsibility of sitting on multiple committees, which is counterproductive in terms of advancing gender equality. The introduction of workload allocation models (WAMs) is of benefit to all staff, not just those in an under-represented gender. These were recommended by the Expert Group, who highlighted the need for such models to be transparent and monitored on an annual basis. The Taskforce recommended that workload allocations be discussed annually as part of staff performance and development reviews. To ensure that discussion around workload were taking place for all staff, the Expert Group called on HEIs to seek evidence of this as part of performance development reviews of managers/supervisors responsible for setting staff workloads.

### 11.1 Progress

- Progress on implementation of workload allocation models varies across the sector. Formal performance management and development system (PMDS) processes are not in place and therefore monitoring of workload allocation models for gender bias is not implemented. One HEI reports that there is no evidence of gender bias in workload allocation across the 3 primary categories teaching, research and administration however this has not been addressed sector wide.

### 11.2 Good Practice Examples

The Vice-President for Equality & Diversity, in consultation with the Deans and the Registrar and Deputy-President, drafted a set of principles to underpin the WAMs in NUI Galway. Currently school-based WAMs are being mapped against these principles and adjusted where necessary.

---

UCC monitors staff perceptions of workload by equal status ground as part of its new bi-annual Staff Equality Survey.

---

A detailed tariff framework for workload allocation has been developed on a pilot basis within the Education and Health Science faculty of UL.

---

Training will be provided to Heads of Department in LIT to ensure consideration of the equality aspect of workload allocation.

---

TCD has committed to a dedicated workload allocation for Athena SWAN-related work.

### 11.3 Key Next Steps

The workload allocation model has not been formally adopted in most instances and is managed at local level within specific units. Few HEIs mention monitoring WAM for gender bias and none mention whether implementation of WAM is considered in the performance review of managers/supervisors. However, some HEIs mention the provision of training for managers to ensure gender equality is considered when workload is allocated. While many HEIs state that monitoring of workloads adheres to the standard sectoral model, non-teaching activities, which are often critical for promotion, are not necessarily taken into account.

## 12 ENABLING DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING

The availability of gender-disaggregated higher education staff data is critical to effectively monitoring local and national progress on gender equality, in order to identify areas of success and areas where there is a need for further improvement. Beyond monitoring progress, disaggregated data is essential so that data-driven decisions can be made, which respond to real rather than perceived barriers to gender equality and diversity. Expanding on the Expert Group’s broad recommendation that “a comprehensive gender-disaggregated data collection system will be in place in every HEI”, the Taskforce recommended a number of specific actions in relation to data:

- HR systems shall record gender disaggregated data and relevant data should be included in the institutional gender action plans.
- All data will be made available to decision-making bodies as necessary, subject to legal requirements.
- New developments in gender reporting should be incorporated into the data collection process.
- Teacher Professional Learning The development of a staff database should be progressed as a matter of priority by the HEA.

### 12.1 Progress

- All HEIs report that HR systems are in place to record gender disaggregated data, though with varying degrees of functionality for reporting and some require a high degree of manual intervention to supply data for support of Athena SWAN applications. Some HEIs have indicated their intention to centralise and digitalise gender and intersectionality data across staffing levels, recruitment and promotion, committees, boards and outreach activities.

### 12.2 Good Practice Examples

In DCU, data dashboards are currently provided to Faculty Deans to enable data-driven decision-making, and these will eventually be enhanced through automation.

---

MU have centralized all applications to ensure provision of gender & intersectionality statistics.

---

At NUI Galway, gender disaggregated data for staff and students is available to Heads of School & decision-making bodies via a newly developed business intelligence tool (DANte) to support reporting & decision-making e.g. for reporting to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee, Governing Authority, and Athena Swan applications.

---

UCC's University Athena SWAN Steering Committee established a Data Subgroup in 2018 composed of EDI, HR, IT and Academic Systems (student) stakeholders in order to ensure smooth delivery of gender-disaggregated data to Schools making Athena SWAN applications, support of the 2019 institutional Athena SWAN gender equality self-assessment process, and map and build towards a fit-for-purpose equality data infrastructure for all staff and students inclusive of, but not limited to the gender equality ground.

---

A culture and engagement survey is carried out every two years in UCD and participants are asked to identify their characteristics across the 9 equality grounds, including ethnicity, which enables the data collected to be disaggregated on this basis.

### 12.3 Key Next Steps

It is unclear how easily new developments in gender reporting could be incorporated into data collection processes across the sector and capacity in relation to this needs to be addressed. For instance, reporting of data disaggregated by gender is likely to expand to collection of data under the 9 characteristics protected under Irish social legislation. Additionally, thought must be given to the collection of intersectional data and of discipline-specific data to enable comparison at an international level.

## 13 CONCLUSION

Much progress has been made to advance gender equality in Irish higher education since the publication of the HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions in 2016. This has been achieved through the excellent work being undertaken at institutional level and supported by a strong national policy framework (including the Report of the Expert Group and the Gender Equality Taskforce's Action Plan). However, despite the positive impact of the policies and initiatives to promote gender-equality in higher education, there remain areas where more consistent implementation of the recommendations and recommended actions of the Expert Group and the Taskforce are required. While policies clearly exist at an institutional level, it remains essential that HEIs ensure that these are implemented in a fair and equitable way at a local level.

There is a statutory requirement for Irish higher education institutions to promote gender balance among staff and students, and for the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to promote the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education. Within this legislative context, the two aforementioned policy documents were developed to inform the implementation of a gender equality framework in Irish higher education. Between them, the Report of the Expert Group and the Taskforce Action Plan, combine over 60 recommendations and recommended actions for Irish HEIs. The implementation and monitoring plan included in the report set out a requirement for a review on progress 3 years after its publication. Subsequently, the Taskforce recommended that a full review be conducted at the end of their action plan (2018-2020). With this in mind, the HEA has appointed an expert group to review both the report and action plan in 2022 and combine all recommendations into one policy document. It is intended that this review of the recommendations and recommended actions will identify high-level recommendations for the sector in order to ensure consistent and impactful progress in key areas.

