

# GENDER EQUALITY



**Report of the Expert Group:  
2<sup>nd</sup> HEA National Review of Gender Equality in  
Irish Higher Education Institutions**

*November 2022*

# CONTENTS

<b>1. Foreword by CEO</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Preface by Expert Group Chair</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Executive Summary</b>	<b>7</b>
Overview	8
Key Recommendations	8
Next Steps	11
<b>4. Background</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 <i>HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions (2016)</i>	13
4.2 Gender Action Plan	13
4.3 HEA Centre of Excellence	14
4.4 <i>2<sup>nd</sup> HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions (2022)</i>	14
<b>5. Review Methodology</b>	<b>15</b>
5.1 Expert Group	16
5.2 Online Consultation	16
5.3 Written Submissions	16
5.4 Stakeholder Consultations	16
5.5 Expert Group Meetings	19
5.6 Terms of Reference	19
<b>6. Developments since the First Review</b>	<b>20</b>
6.1 Intersectionality	21
6.2 Precarity	22
6.3 Changed HE environment since 2016	23
<b>7. Progress to Date</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>8. Expert Group Analysis and Recommendations</b>	<b>28</b>
8.1 Overview	29
8.2 Leadership	30
8.3 Organisational Culture	32
8.4 Teaching and Learning, Research and Quality Assurance	37
8.5 Intersectionality	39
8.6 Career Development	41
8.7 Precarity	45
8.8 Data Capture, Analysis and Reporting	47
<b>9. Concluding Remarks</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Expert Group</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Best Practice Recommendations</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>58</b>

# 1 FOREWORD BY CEO



Much has been achieved across the higher education system since 2016, when the first *HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* highlighted a dearth of senior female staff throughout the system. The HEA believes that it is timely, particularly as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, that we build on these gains. Reflecting the HEA's statutory responsibility to advance equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in higher education, we commissioned this second review. While the strong focus on addressing the underrepresentation of women at senior leadership level has borne fruit, it is now clear that we must complement this work with a focus on promoting equality for all staff at each stage of the career lifecycle.

This review has benefitted from the input of staff who have experience of embedding national policy recommendations at institutional level. We believe that this expertise has helped shape a suite of recommendations and targets that are both ambitious and achievable. Also, the level of stakeholder engagement with the Expert Group throughout the review has been impressive and demonstrates the ongoing importance of addressing gender inequality in higher education.

The HEA's work on equality, diversity and inclusion has taken a collaborative approach since 2016, with the Centre of Excellence for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion pivotal in bringing stakeholders together and driving best practice across the sector. The shared vision for a diverse and inclusive higher education system must continue in order to achieve equality of opportunity for all staff.

The achievement of gender equality in higher education is primarily a task for the institutions themselves. The recommendations in this report encourage institutions to continue to implement gender equality action plans but also challenge them to advance this work through further innovations. The HEA will continue to monitor and support progress on gender equality nationally by using its new legislative powers to support equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education.

**Dr Alan Wall**

*Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority*

# 2 PREFACE BY EXPERT GROUP CHAIR



The contribution of Higher Education in Ireland is immense not only in terms of opening minds to new ideas, informing and educating for the future, but also in building and reinforcing the values that shape civic society. The importance of higher education institutions as exemplars of the type of society we seek to build cannot be understated. In this context, the argument for gender equality no longer must be made or defended – it should simply be an accepted feature of a society where there is equality of access and opportunity for all.

There has been significant progress in relation to gender equality on several levels since the HEA review of 2016 and the Gender Equality Taskforce action plan of 2018. This progress is owed to engagement by many of the stakeholders, investment by the Government and by individual institutions, and huge work by many individuals throughout the system. Yet, despite this there is much more work to be done.

The Expert Group brought together expertise from home and abroad and its work was informed by a deep understanding of both the issues and frustrations that exist in higher education institutions in Ireland. The Group engaged extensively with stakeholders across the higher education sector, state agencies, trade unions, and various interest groups. The time taken by so many to engage with the group illustrated the interest and enthusiasm for real and sustained progress in this area – and we were both inspired and grateful for that.

I would like to thank all the members of the Expert Group for their engagement and work throughout this review. It has truly been a participative effort by all involved and I am honoured to have had the opportunity to Chair the process.

I would also like to thank Dr Ross Woods, Laura Austin and Dr Aedin Minogue at the HEA Centre for Excellence for EDI for their unstinting support of our work.

Finally, the Group recognises that there is a real opportunity in Ireland for higher education institutions to make gender equality a reality thereby creating a ripple effect through all society. The progress already made gives us real confidence that there is an appetite and a willingness to embrace this agenda. We hope that our recommendations help pave the way to this new reality and look forward to seeing real impact within a short time.

**Niamh O’Donoghue**

*Chair of the Expert Group*

# 3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Overview

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 (HE). Within this legislative context, two policy documents have been developed in recent years that inform the implementation of a gender equality framework in Irish higher education. In 2016, the ***HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions***, produced a set of recommendations to ensure the achievement of gender equality in Irish higher education (HE).

In 2017, the Minister of State 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 Irish higher education institutions (HEIs). Their ***Gender Action Plan*** endorsed the recommendations of the HEA Expert Group and developed some additional actions to advance gender equality across the sector. To ensure sustainable progress towards gender equality, both the HEA Expert Group and the Gender Equality Taskforce recommended reviews of progress at the end of the lifespan of their recommendations. In line with these timelines, the HEA has undertaken a Second National Review of Gender Equality in Irish HEIs.

From the evidence collected during this review, and the issues raised during the extensive consultation process, it was clear to the Expert Group that many of the recommendations made in the 2016 Review and in the 2018 Gender Action Plan remained valid. It is recognised that there has been some significant progress made on a number of key indicators in a number of institutions. There has been engagement and investment in the area and this is evident in the progress report below. However, experience has neither been uniform in relation to all indicators, nor across the entire HEI landscape which is varied in size and scope. Accordingly, the Expert Group considers it important to state that, notwithstanding the specific recommendations in this review, it endorses the approach set out in the earlier reports and considers that work should continue on the implementation of recommendations contained therein.

## Key Recommendations

Through the consultation process with key stakeholders, and the feedback from an online consultation and written submissions, the Expert Group has identified a number of overarching thematic areas in relation to the advancement of gender equality for all staff in Irish higher education, both academic and professional, management and support staff. Of particular significance in the context of this review is that, since the first *HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* in 2016, two issues have emerged as key to the advancement of gender equality in higher education: the need to take an intersectional approach when addressing gender inequality; and the impact of precarious employment on career development.

The Expert Group has made the following key recommendations:

## 1 National Requirements

At a minimum all Irish Higher Education Institutions should:

- > have an institutional Gender Equality Action Plan that is published on the HEI website, signed by the President, actively communicated and progress monitored within the institution;
- > demonstrate a commitment to provide sufficient resources and expertise in gender equality, particularly in relation to the implementation of its institutional Gender Equality Action Plan;
- > have a Vice-President (or equivalent) with responsibility for EDI who is a member of the HEI Executive/Management Team;
- > collect and analyse sex/gender-disaggregated data on staff to inform the institutional strategy for advancement of gender equality; and
- > provide training towards sustaining the advancement of gender equality for all staff.

Evidence that these requirements have been met should be provided to the HEA through annual reporting.

## 2 Leadership

Governing Authorities/Bodies and the President (or equivalent) are responsible and accountable for taking the lead in progressing Gender Equality within HEIs. This should be monitored through statutory reporting mechanisms.

## 3 Organisational Culture

HEIs must build on actions already taken to continue to effect culture change in relation to gender equality issues. This should be done through resourcing and incentivising of:

- > appropriate and quality assured training and other change initiatives in relation to gender equality;
- > the support and engagement of men in the process of change;
- > the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of gender action plans;
- > the eradication of sexual harassment and gender-based violence; and
- > appropriate supports and mitigations for the burden of caring on those staff with caring responsibilities, as brought into sharp focus during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 4 Teaching and Learning, Research and Quality Assurance

Building on the substantive progress of the Athena Swan Charter Ireland accreditation framework in advancing gender equality, it is recommended that gender equality/EDI be embedded in other quality marks/processes, including institutional quality enhancement processes. Institution-specific interventions and progress reporting should be substantive parts of Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports in any internal programmatic review, in Statutory QQI Institutional Quality Reviews and in research funder review processes.

QQI, the National Forum for the Enhancement Teaching and Learning and all national research funding agencies must collaborate with HEIs to advance engagement with equality in HE curricula and/or research design, and embed self-evaluation and progress reporting on quality enhancement.

## 5 Intersectionality

The advancement of gender equality is dependent on progress on a range of factors including race equality, precarious employment, and family status and disability equalities. Accordingly, HEIs should develop EDI strategies and action plans that seek to effect change in a way that centralises an intersectional approach to equality issues, within a 3-4 year timeframe.

## 6 Career Development

HEIs must take action and account for progress in addressing the continued gender inequality at different levels of the staffing structure in both academic and professional streams. Measures to be addressed include job design, workload allocation, career progression, reward and recognition, performance management and recruitment and promotion.

## 7 Precarity

In recognition of the fact that precarity is a key driver of gender inequality, whilst also acknowledging the need for control of public spending, it is recommended that a strategy be developed under the aegis of “Funding the Future” to stabilise the funding of HEIs and eliminate reliance on precarious forms of employment within HEIs.

## 8 Data Capture, Analysis and Reporting

In order to measure progress in relation to the effectiveness of measures put in place, there needs to be an appropriate systematic approach to the capture, analysis and reporting of data in relation to the nine grounds specified under the Equality legislation. Specifically, data in relation to the interaction of the individual grounds and gender should be captured in relation to:

- (i) recruitment and promotion across grades and staff categories;
- (ii) gaining of other rewards and recognition (internal grants, roles of responsibility, leadership, awards, etc.); and

(iii) status of employment (hourly paid, short-term contract, permanent appointment, etc.).

The requirement to capture and analyse such data in a consistent manner potentially will require further development of the centralised systems used by HEIs and accordingly, appropriate investment should be made in systems development to facilitate this.

## Next Steps

It is recognised that HEIs have, to varying extent, invested in the advancement of gender equality in the period since the last review. Despite this, there is a need for concerted institutional action and additional resourcing in order to ensure that progress can continue. Positive action initiatives that have been undertaken at national and local level are welcome, but these need to be embedded more deeply to ensure sustained progress on gender equality.

The recommendations in this report build on those of previous national policy documents and add further nuance to the understanding of gender inequality in Irish higher education. It is clear that a prerequisite to ensure achievement of equality is to ensure the transparency of all HEI processes, including but not limited to, recruitment, promotions, workload allocation, recognition and rewards. The proactive input of stakeholders at all levels of HEIs has signaled that it is now necessary to move to a different phase of the work to tackle gender inequality by centralizing intersectionality and acknowledging and addressing precarious employment as a barrier to career progression. The thread running through all the recommendations in this report is that the higher education sector needs to protect the staff pipeline and support all staff (academic and professional, management, support) all the way through the career cycle.

Each of the Expert Group's high-level recommendations to HEIs are accompanied by a set of indicators. The HEA should monitor progress against these on an annual basis, which should be accompanied by the publication of an annual progress report. Areas where progress is deemed to be slow should be supported centrally by the HEA and with targeted funding through the Gender Equality Enhancement Fund. Finally, the Expert Group recommends that national progress be subject to periodic review every 5 years.

The Expert Group commends the efforts within the sector to advance gender equality, and recognises the very strong message coming from the sector that the agenda needs to be broadened and deepened to incorporate a focus on intersecting equality issues, and to ensure security, equality, dignity and recognition at work for all throughout the career lifecycle. The Group firmly believes that through strong leadership across HEIs, research funders, the HEA and government, working in solidarity with all academic and professional, managerial and support staff (PMSS), Ireland has the potential to be an international leader in addressing fundamental equality issues and creating a step-change for future generations of graduates, academic and PMSS colleagues.

# 4 BACKGROUND



---

#### 4.1 *HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions (2016)*

In 2015, 81% of professorial positions in Irish universities were held by men and, while women represented 62% of professional, management and specialist (PMS) staff, 72% of the highest paid PMS staff were men. In this context, the Higher Education Authority commissioned an expert group to undertake a national review of gender equality in Irish higher education institutions. This ground-breaking review involved a combination of policy context research, collection of gender disaggregated staff data, consultation with a broad group of stakeholders and a national online survey.

The report of this Expert Group, the *HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* was published in 2016 and detailed a suite of recommendations to advance gender equality which were targeted at HEIs and other key stakeholder groups in higher education including the HEA, the Department of Education and Skills and research funding agencies. The 2016 review was an important first milestone in developing a strategic approach to tackling gender inequality in Irish higher education. Since this review, at the recommendation of the 2016 Expert Group, the Athena Swan gender equality charter has become embedded in the Irish higher education system, with HEIs at the risk of losing access to research funding if they do not advance gender equality. Following the initial publication of gender disaggregated data on all staff in Irish HEIs, the *HEA Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Gender* have become an annual publication and an important benchmark of progress across the system.

#### 4.2 **Gender Action Plan**

In 2017, the Minister of State for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D., established the Gender Equality Taskforce to identify significant measures, drawing on the work of the HEA Expert Group, which could accelerate progress in achieving gender equality in Irish HEIs. The Gender Equality Taskforce formally began their work in November 2017. The Gender Equality Taskforce complemented the work of the HEA Expert Group by reviewing recruitment and promotion policies and practices in HEIs, analysing academic staff recruitment and promotion by gender and considering progress reports from HEIs on the HEA Expert Group Report recommendations.

In 2018, the Taskforce developed the *Gender Action Plan 2018–2020* which built on the report of the Expert Group and recommended a number of initiatives to progress organisational and cultural change. This Action Plan outlined a strategic approach to help embed the recommendations of the Expert Group, to bring about sustainable organisational change and to empower a culture of gender equality in HEIs. A key recommendation of the Action Plan was for the establishment of a Centre for Excellence in Gender Equality in the HEA.

### 4.3 HEA Centre of Excellence

In 2019, the Centre for Excellence in Gender Equality was established in the HEA. The Centre's objective was to ensure sustainable acceleration towards gender equality through centralised support for HEIs, dissemination of good practice and funding innovative organisational and cultural change initiatives nationally. In 2020, the Centre evolved into the HEA Centre of Excellence for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), to acknowledge its broader remit and work on race equality and ending sexual violence and harassment in HEIs. In addition to the broad area of EDI, a key focus of the Centre's work remains the advancement of gender equality in higher education.

### 4.4 *2<sup>nd</sup> HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions (2022)*

From the evidence collected during this review, and the issues raised during the extensive consultation process, it was clear to the Expert Group that many of the recommendations made in the 2016 Review and in the 2018 Gender Action Plan remained valid. It is recognised that there has been some significant progress made on a number of key indicators in many institutions. There has been engagement and investment in the area and this is evident in the progress report below. It is also evident that a number of initiatives that flowed from these reports, including the Athena Swan (Ireland) linkage with research funding and the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI) have had a positive impact (albeit this has been more evident in relation to the latter in the University sector). However, experience has neither been uniform in relation to all indicators, nor across the entire HEI landscape which is varied in size and scope. Accordingly, the Expert Group considers it important to state that, notwithstanding the specific recommendations in this review, it endorses the approach set out in the earlier reports and considers that work should continue on the implementation of recommendations contained therein.

# 5 REVIEW METHODOLOGY



## 5.1 Expert Group

The Second HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions was launched on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The HEA appointed an Expert Group with broad experience in gender equality to carry out the review as follows:

- > **Niamh O'Donoghue**, Chair (former Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection)
- > **Dr Allison Kenneally** (Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, South East Technological University)
- > **Professor Anne Scott** (former Vice-President for Equality and Diversity, University of Galway)
- > **Dr Karl Kitching** (Reader in Education Policy and Director of Research at the School of Education, University of Birmingham)
- > **Dr Marcela Linkova** (Head of the Centre for Gender and Science, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences)
- > **Dr Philip Owende** (Assistant Head of Academic Affairs, Technological University Dublin)

The analysis and recommendations of the Expert Group found in this report have been informed by an extensive consultation process. The review was undertaken in consultation with key stakeholders from the HE sector and relevant civil society organisations, as outlined below.

## 5.2 Online Consultation

As part of the consultation process, the Expert Group prepared an online consultation of higher education staff in relation to gender equality in HEIs, in line with the survey which ran in 2015. The consultation was open from 30<sup>th</sup> March until 29<sup>th</sup> April 2022 and was circulated to all staff in Irish HEIs. There were a total of 2,025 full responses.

An external survey analyst collated and analysed the data collected through the online consultation and provided this information in a report to the HEA Expert Group. The report of the collated responses, prepared by the survey analyst, can be viewed [\*\*here\*\*](#).

## 5.3 Written Submissions

Along with the online consultation, written submissions were also requested by the HEA Centre of Excellence for EDI. A template with questions was provided on the HEA website to facilitate submissions and a link to the same was circulated to HEIs with the online consultation. Over the course of the consultation period, 17 written submissions were received and provided to the Expert Group.

## 5.4 Stakeholder Consultations

Over the course of June, July and September the Expert Group met with several stakeholder groups to discuss progress made towards advancing gender equality since the first review in 2016 and what high level items this follow-up review should focus on. The stakeholder consultations were attended by a sub-

---

group of the Expert Group consisting of 2 or 3 members. A member of the HEA Centre of Excellence for EDI attended each meeting as well. Attendees were provided with information on the background of the review, the review process and potential questions which the Expert Group may ask in advance of the meetings. Each stakeholder group was also given the opportunity to provide any further information to the Expert Group following the meeting via written submission.

The Expert Group invited representatives from the following stakeholders to attend consultations (those who attended consultation meetings are highlighted):

- > 2016 HEA Expert Group (Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, Chair)
- > Ableism in Academia
- > **Advance HE Ireland**
- > African Scholars Association of Ireland
- > Association for Higher Education Access & Disability
- > **Athena Swan National Committee**
- > Better Balance for Business
- > Connect Trade Union
- > **Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science**
- > Education in Ireland
- > **Enterprise Ireland**
- > Environmental Protection Agency
- > **Fórsa**
- > **Higher Education Institution Governing Body Chairs**
- > **Higher Education Institution Presidents**
- > **Higher Education Institution Senior Equality Diversity and Inclusion Representatives**
- > **Higher Education Institution Senior Human Resources Representatives**
- > **Higher Education Authority Board**
- > **Health Research Board**
- > Irish Business and Employer's Confederation
- > Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- > **Irish Federation of University Teachers**
- > **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission**
- > **Irish Research Council**
- > Irish Network Against Racism

- > **Irish Precarity Network**
- > **Irish Universities Association**
- > **Knowledge Transfer Ireland**
- > LGBT Ireland
- > **Marine Institute**
- > Men's Development Network
- > National Women's Council of Ireland
- > **National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning**
- > **Non-EEA PHD Students**
- > **Pavee Point**
- > Postgraduate Workers Alliance of Ireland
- > **Quality and Qualifications Ireland**
- > **Rape Crisis Centre**
- > **Rape Crisis Network Ireland**
- > **Research groups on care work in education**
- > **Royal Irish Academy**
- > **Senior Academic Leadership Initiative postholders**
- > **Science Foundation Ireland**
- > Shout Out
- > Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union
- > **SOLAS**
- > Teagasc
- > **The 30% Club**
- > **Technological Higher Education Association**
- > **Transgender Equality Network Ireland**
- > **Teachers' Union of Ireland**
- > **Unite the Union**
- > **Union of Students in Ireland**
- > **Women in Research**
- > **Women in Technology and Science**
- > Women's Aid

## 5.5 Expert Group Meetings

The Expert Group met monthly from March – October 2022 to discuss the review process, national progress reports and other relevant documentation, stakeholder meetings and the drafting of the final report and recommendations.

## 5.6 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions 2022 were as follows:

**The Expert Group will undertake a review of gender equality in HEIs having regard to:**

- > The relevant statutory obligations placed on higher education institutions including:
  - Employment Equality Acts, 1998–2015;
  - Equal Status Acts, 2000–2018;
  - Equality Act, 2004; and
  - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014.
- > The obligations placed on HEIs to prepare and implement equality policies which encompass gender-equality.
- > Annual updates provided by HEIs on progress against the recommendations and recommended actions in the Report of the Expert Group and the Gender Equality Taskforce Action plan.
- > National Online Consultation on Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education.
- > Other submissions and inputs received.
- > Meetings with stakeholders.

**The Expert Group will report to the HEA on its conclusions and, specifically, will:**

- > report on the advancement of gender equality through the preparation and implementation of higher education institutions' equality policies, having regard to national and international 'best practice' in this area;
- > make 5 to 10 high-level recommendations as to how, in the view of the team, higher education institutions might enhance their equality policies and their implementation to support gender-equality; and
- > make recommendations on how the HEA, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), and other relevant state or non-state bodies might optimally support higher education institutions to enhance gender-equality.

# 6 DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE FIRST REVIEW



Since the first *HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* in 2016, there have been significant developments across the higher education landscape, including important advances in the broad area of equality, diversity and inclusion. Two issues that have emerged as key to the advancement of gender equality in higher education are the need to take an intersectional approach when addressing gender inequality and the impact of precarious employment on career development. Both intersectionality and precarity were topics raised repeatedly in stakeholder consultation and are discussed separately below, before a more general consideration of developments in the past six years.

## 6.1 Intersectionality

Intersectionality has become a popularised concept in higher education discourse in Europe and Ireland in the past decade. Its premise – one which has been predominantly put forward by feminists of colour globally for generations – is broadly that (a) women’s experiences differ; (b) feminist initiatives in the West have typically benefitted White Western and middle-class women most; (c) experiences of privilege and inequality inseparably structure each other; (d) such experiences appear differently across space and time; (e) representation of a given identity group in decision-making fora will not necessarily advance that group, and thus; (f) practices and structures that work to include and exclude people in multiple interacting ways should be the main policy focus.<sup>1</sup> A key concern raised by research on European HE equality policy is how the concept of intersectionality has often become contradictorily made an ‘add-on’ to gender equality initiatives, in a way that indirectly prioritises comparatively advantaged women.<sup>2</sup> ‘Intersectionality’ by definition should not be used in policy discourse as a catch-all term for addressing race inequality, precarity, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, religion/belief intolerance, and/or ageism after ‘gender equality’ has been considered. In other words, gender equality initiatives should start from the principle of meaningfully addressing the dynamic and interacting experiences of advantage and inequality of different women in different contexts.

---

“Intersectionality is an area that is highly pertinent to gender equality. It was not fully considered in previous reviews of gender equality in HE, but, where possible, should be taken into account in this review.” **Stakeholder comment**

As part of the consultation process for this review, the theme of intersectionality was highlighted as a key issue by many stakeholders. Notably, in the online consultation for this review, the notion of ‘awareness-raising of other inequalities experienced by women (e.g., racism, ableism)’ was among the mid-range responses (2%) to the question of, “What should be the main priority in the organisational culture and structure to advance gender equality?”. At a similar mid-range, 17% of men and 10% of women felt they experienced good practice in this area. While difficult to draw conclusions, these figures are not inconsistent with a sectoral culture of prioritising ‘gender first’ initiatives while also extolling an ultimately secondary ‘EDI’ focus. It is pertinent here to also note findings from another HEA survey on race equality which noted the overrepresentation of minority ethnic groups on precarious contracts; over a third of minority ethnic staff reported experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination at work, and 49% of minority ethnic staff experienced negativity from colleagues when raising race-related issues at work.<sup>3</sup>

This survey also noted a concern amongst staff about class and disability discrimination.

Written submissions to the Expert Group were uneven on the intersectionality question. One stakeholder saw it as a positive that 'gender was no longer viewed in isolation'; another noted that substantial changes on gender and race have not been observed yet. The HEA race equality survey findings that ethnic minority groups are routinely denied equality and paid less than peers were noted, as were the gender and racial inequalities created by a reliance on precarious labour. The challenge of reflecting multiple categories including socio-economic status and their intersections with gender equity was noted. One stakeholder saw Athena Swan as enabling an intersectional community of practice, while another warned against the dangers of focusing on the challenges experienced by some women when the safety of others is threatened. Intersectionality was regarded as needing a greater profile with effective progress monitoring; and it was claimed the introduction of permanent part-time positions would support intersections of gender with disability, aging and care responsibilities. A participatory approach to development of institution policies and data collection from diverse and underrepresented groups was recommended, which would take into account the varying impact of particular forces on different women.

The topic of intersectionality arose in a number of stakeholder consultation meetings. The need for an intersectional approach to gender equality generally, and to moving beyond a binary, men vs. women approach to data collection was noted by Athena Swan stakeholders. A lack of gender equality data disaggregated by ethnicity to give an account of 'which women are progressing' was also noted by the NGO group. In addition, the implementation of legislative changes for transgender people were noted since the commencement of the 2016 review, encouraging new approaches to name and gender change processes in HEIs. Alignment with the Public Sector Duty was viewed as a useful way of addressing intersectionality and leaving 'no woman behind' in the public bodies group, as was a need for a focus on social class inequalities.

Race inequality was noted as an urgent issue in the research funders group, partly in terms of the marked differences between staff and the changing student demographic. It was noted amongst senior EDI leaders in HEIs that the pipelines for minority ethnic groups and disabled people need to be examined, and the Athena Swan framework will not necessarily provide solutions in this respect. It was also noted here the need to broaden the perspective to include the most vulnerable of staff, including Traveller, transgender, and refugee staff. It was also noted by the senior EDI leaders that Athena Swan needs to adapt further to engage intersectionality. A concern to avoid creating 'competing inequalities' was articulated here also. Student groups regarded supports for students as more important than a solely representational approach to diversity. Racism was noted as contributor to the lack of transition of international (non-EU) students to staff positions, and in HEI curricula, and barriers to obtaining spousal visas were noted as an issue for international PhD students. Intersectionality was also viewed by the underrepresented stakeholder group as a priority concern, not least in terms of obtaining a disaggregated data set on multiple equality issues and addressing socioeconomic issues such as the exclusion of professional support staff on low pay and temporary contracts from equality initiatives.

## 6.2 Precarity

Ireland has one of the lowest rates of permanent employment in Europe.<sup>4</sup> Precarious contracts are a significant and overlooked gender equality issue in the Irish HE system. The term 'precarity' is used here to refer to the negative consequences of the inappropriate use of fixed-term, insecure contracts to fulfil

core HE functions. The issue affects a wide range of HE staff including postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers, lecturers, and professional, support and administrative staff. O’Keefe and Courtois outline the women HE workers in Ireland they surveyed were more likely than men “to perform the most exploited and tenuous forms of precarious work, work that is essential but not valued, paid lower, often comes without benefits or legal protections and in effect blocks chances of accessing secure positions”.<sup>5</sup> Research indicates precarious employment makes women more vulnerable to workplace harassment, lack of salary progression, career disruption and stagnation, mental health difficulties, unemployment, in-work poverty, financial dependency on others, and penalties for having caring responsibilities.<sup>6</sup> Precarious contracts demand huge flexibility from HE workers in terms of their daily work, and their mobility between HE institutions. But this ‘flexibility’ is not always a choice. As such, requests for flexible and part-time working arrangements (while themselves at times reflective of gender inequalities) – should not be conflated with the systemic problem of precarity.

Contract precarity and its relationship to gender inequality is becoming a more visible element of Irish HE policy discourse, in large part due to the organisation of Irish HE workers. The Cush report recommendation for a reduction in the threshold for entitlement to a contract of indefinite duration (CIDs) from three to two years was adopted.<sup>7</sup> But this has been found to have exacerbated precarity, as HEIs carefully word contracts to avoid CID entitlements and contest them in the courts.<sup>8</sup> The Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (FHERIS) has recently expressed the aim to end precarious work.<sup>9</sup> In May 2022, the government announced plans for a more sustainable HE funding model to “drive high quality outcomes and greater access to education”.<sup>10</sup> One goal is to bring academic staff-student ratios in line with OECD and EU norms partly to “support the sector in moving away from the scale of use of more precarious forms of employment”.<sup>11</sup> *Impact 2030: Ireland’s Research and Innovation Strategy* also published in May 2022 regards ‘talent’ as being at the heart of the research and innovation ecosystem and aspires to “a diversity of attractive career paths” to address researcher career precarity and maximise researchers’ impact on various organisations.<sup>12</sup> Researcher precarity is framed here within an effort to “promote researcher mobility across sectors” and internationally.<sup>13</sup> However, the policy emphasis on researcher mobility has been found to favour young men academics who are less likely to have caring responsibilities.<sup>14</sup>

### 6.3 Changed HE environment since 2016

The external legislative environment has changed the statutory obligations placed on HEIs in recent years. Along with reporting requirements to public bodies under the aegis of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, such as the HEA and QQI, HEIs are now required to report on the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights duty to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, as well as to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in relation to the Gender Pay Gap. The Citizen’s Assembly on Gender Equality has produced a number of recommendations for the Higher Education sector.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions have had a significant impact on gender equality and have the potential to have further implications in the future. During the pandemic, many staff with caring responsibilities were forced to care for dependents in the home and were still being asked to work remotely to a normal schedule (with additional demands). As is well documented, caring responsibilities predominantly fall on women staff, and this situation may have detrimental effects both in the short to medium term (on a person’s health and well-being) and in the longer term (lack of

research productivity hampering career progression). The situation is exacerbated for single parents (mostly mothers) and also includes those who have the responsibility of caring for adults. Unfortunately, gains made in recent years could be eroded as an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the research time lost due to the necessity to move to a fully online mode of teaching and learning delivery combined with the increased burden of caring responsibilities (which disproportionately fall on women staff) has the potential to further delay career progression for women academic staff. For instance, evidence has emerged internationally that, during the COVID-19 restrictions, women researchers submitted fewer academic papers than men or, in instances where women's submission rates remained the same compared to the previous year (2019), men's increased, especially with regard to sole-authored papers.<sup>15</sup>

In this context, and as a proactive response to the risk to gender equality that may only become apparent when it is too late, the recommendations in this report take on increased significance and their timely implementation even more of an imperative.

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 envisaged a new type of institution, Technological Universities (TU), that would provide industry and profession-oriented programmes in the areas of science and technology at all awarding levels.<sup>16</sup> The Strategy states that *'a technological university will be distinguished from existing universities by a mission and ethos that are faithful to and safeguard the current ethos and mission focus of the institutes of technology.'* The Technological Universities Act (2018) allows for the merging of institutes of technology and, subsequently, their designation as Technological Universities. The establishment of the TUs is the single most important development in the HE landscape over the last number of years. There is now an opportunity for these nascent institutions to ensure that gender equality is central to their mission as they develop new structures and policies.

A criticism that emerged during the stakeholder consultation was that the 2016 review's recommendations were more appropriate for the traditional University sector and that a number were simply unworkable in the Technological higher education sector. Despite the emergence of TUs, some of the barriers to the implementation of some recommendations remain. However, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science's commitment to developing restructured career paths for the staff in the new TUs has the potential to address some of these issues in the medium to longer term.

The passing of the Higher Education Authority Bill 2022 is another key milestone in the evolution of Irish higher education. HEA functions such as staff data collection and the System Performance framework have now been placed on a statutory footing and a number of the Expert Group's recommendations look to leverage these new powers to advance gender equality across the system.

A number of initiatives since the 2016 review have helped to raise the profile of gender equality as a national issue in higher education and to further advance work in this area. The Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI), aimed at increasing representation of women at senior leadership levels, was launched in 2019. To date funding for 30 posts has been awarded under this initiative.

In 2020, the HEA launched the annual Gender Equality Enhancement Fund to encourage innovative approaches to addressing gender inequality across HEIs, to facilitate gender equality initiatives that respond to the recommendations of the HEA Expert Group and/or Gender Equality Taskforce's recommended actions, and to encourage cross-sectoral collaboration as a means to achieve national transformation. To date projects have been funded across a number of areas including: the promotion of

female role models in the physical sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (pSTEM); development and implementation of gender identity, expression and diversity training for staff in Irish HEIs; establishment of networks to support female participation in computer science; resources to support the academic advancement of mid-career female staff; provision of gender equality-based leadership training to future leaders; embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into the curriculum, teaching and learning and teacher education; research into the impact of menopause on the careers of women in Irish higher education; addressing the Gender Pay Gap; engaging men in building gender equality.

The Athena Swan Gender Equality Charter is now firmly embedded in Irish higher education, with over 100 awards now held by institutions and departments. Much work has been done in recent years to adapt the charter to the Irish context and the new Charter Principles published in 2021 reflect the broadening scope of EDI work in HEIs, as well as new reporting requirements from the HEA. A key driver of the success of the Irish Charter has been the HEA's linking of Athena Swan attainment to research funding eligibility from the Environmental Protection Agency, Health Research Board, the Irish Research Council and Science Foundation Ireland, which came into effect in January 2020.

A further initiative recommended by the 2016 Review was the use of the flexible cascade model as an affirmative action intervention in both promotions and recruitment for senior academic posts across the HE sector. This model requires that the proportion of women and men to be promoted/recruited is based on the proportion of each gender at the grade immediately below. There has been patchy implementation of this recommendation, at best, across the sector. Implementation, where it has happened, has largely focused on internal academic promotions and the flexible cascade model has largely been used as a monitoring tool only. Given that progress in increasing the numbers of women in senior leadership posts, both academic and professional, management and support services, continued to be very slow it is imperative that greater attention is given to the use of the flexible cascade model in both promotions and recruitment of senior posts in all HEIs across the sector.

---

“In some respects, we could describe much of our progress to date as being first order progress, i.e., a focus on processes, initiatives, and project teams, but yet to significantly achieve sustained cultural change. Embedding of cultural change remains a key challenge.” **Stakeholder comment**

# 7 PROGRESS TO DATE



Area	Progress Status	Current Status
Institutional Gender Action Plans	Green	All HEIs have gender action plans in place.
Athena Swan	Green	All HEIs are adhering to Athena Swan timelines.
Recruitment Procedures and Practices	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.
Positive action interventions	Orange	Targets have been set in most HEIs but few positive action interventions to achieve targets have been introduced.
Leadership	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.
Senior EDI role (Vice-President or equivalent)	Green	Most HEIs have appointed a Vice-President (or equivalent). <sup>17</sup>
Governance & Management Structures	Yellow	Good progress has been made on achieving GB on Academic Councils, and Governing Bodies, although less so on Executive Management teams.
EDI Committee	Green	EDI Committees are in place in almost all HEIs.
Flexible and Agile Working	Orange	Most HEIs have implemented flexible working policies however some detail on how these are applied at local level is missing.
Developing Gender Awareness Among Staff	Orange	Most HEIs report the implementation or planned implementation of policies that will help to develop gender awareness among all staff.
Teaching & Learning, Research and Quality Assurance	Orange	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.
Workload Allocation Models	Red	The workload allocation model has not been formally adopted in most instances and where a model is in place, it is managed at local level within specific units.
Enabling data-driven decision-making	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

# 8 EXPERT GROUP ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



## 8.1 Overview

Through the consultation process with key stakeholders, and the feedback from the online consultation and written submissions, the Expert Group has identified a number of overarching thematic areas in relation to the advancement of gender equality for all staff in Irish higher education, both academic and professional, managerial and support staff. These areas are as follows:

- > Leadership
- > Organisational Culture
- > Teaching and Learning, Research and Quality Assurance
- > Intersectionality
- > Career Development
- > Precarity
- > Data Capture, Analysis and Reporting

The following section presents the Expert Group's analysis of the present situation and makes recommendations under each of the thematic areas that have been identified. The Expert Group has identified high-level, overarching recommendations, which highlight the priority actions needed in each area. These overarching recommendations are followed by more specific indicators of progress, which it is envisioned will be included in the HEA monitoring framework in relation to gender equality.

Recommendations to the HEA and other stakeholders are also outlined under each heading.

The Expert Group would like to recognize that as part of the consultation process, it was noted on a number of occasions that the previous review and subsequent initiatives were firmly focused on academic staff. In this context, it is important to note that the below recommendations are intended to be inclusive of all staff in the higher education sector.

---

### KEY RECOMMENDATION 1

---

**At a minimum all Irish Higher Education Institutions should:**

- > have an institutional Gender Equality Action Plan that is published on the HEI website, signed by the President, actively communicated and progress monitored within the institution;
- > demonstrate a commitment to provide sufficient resources and expertise in gender equality, particularly in relation to the implementation of its institutional Gender Equality Action Plan;
- > have a Vice-President (or equivalent) with responsibility for EDI who is a member of the HEI Executive/Management Team;
- > collect and analyse sex/gender-disaggregated data on staff to inform the institutional strategy for advancement of gender equality; and
- > provide training towards sustaining the advancement of gender equality for all staff.

Evidence that these requirements have been met should be provided to the HEA through annual reporting.

## 8.2 Leadership

---

“As we are now into sustained improvements it would seem to me that University Presidents must be held accountable for their institution's performance on gender equity metrics.”

### Stakeholder comment

The statement of the 2016 Expert group that “the achievement of gender equality needs to be led from the top, with the ultimate responsibility for its achievement sitting with the HEI president, or equivalent”, remains pertinent six years on. A recurrent theme in the consultation process was the insistence on making explicit the responsibility and accountability of both the President and the Governing Authority for overseeing the promotion of gender equality within HEIs and monitoring its advancement in the institution.

Furthermore, two issues have emerged from the recommendation that a senior level post (at Vice-President level) with responsibility for driving the equality agenda be created:

- > There has been considerable inconsistency in how responsibility for the Gender Equality agenda has been assigned in different institutions. In some cases, the person responsible is not a member of the executive team and therefore does not have the appropriate status or authority within the organisation. In others, the gender equality advancement brief has been coupled with other responsibilities which means inevitably that focus on advancement in this area is diluted.
- > The Presidents (or equivalent) do not hold personal accountability for progress in the area. Responsibility should clearly lie with the President (or equivalent) and they should be responsible to the Governing Authority in that regard.

---

“Greater involvement and buy in from male leaders [is needed] – leading SAT’s, being effective allies, changing culture and role modeling best practice leadership and support for female colleagues.” **Stakeholder comment**

Mechanisms should be put in place in individual HEIs and nominating bodies to Governing Authorities/Bodies, to ensure that there is an appropriate pool of candidates to ensure balanced gender representation on all decision-making committees and working groups across HEIs.<sup>18</sup> An annual audit of these committees and working groups should be carried out within each institution and a report on the analysis of the audit should form part of the reporting requirements to both the institutional governing authority/body and to the HEA.

---

### KEY RECOMMENDATION 2

**Governing Authorities/Bodies and the President (or equivalent) are responsible and accountable for taking the lead in progressing Gender Equality within HEIs. This should be monitored through statutory reporting mechanisms.**

<b>Indicators</b>	
<b>1</b>	<p>The President to ensure the progress of gender equality through direction, oversight and monitoring of a range of actions including the following:</p> <p>1.1 There is a minimum of 40% men and 40% women on all HEI decision making bodies, committees and working groups. Overall, these groups should also have gender balance among chairs.</p> <p>1.2 All appointees to leadership roles to be required to demonstrate tangible evidence of leadership in the advancement of equality as part of the assessment of suitability for the role.</p> <p>1.3 Leadership bodies to ensure that they have individuals with intersectional gender equality expertise and individuals skilled in organisational change among their numbers.</p> <p>1.4 HEIs to have a member of their senior management team with responsibility for EDI. The Vice-President (or equivalent) with responsibility for EDI should be a member of the HEI Executive/Management Team, ideally in the role of Vice-President for EDI.</p> <p>1.5 In line with Public Sector Duty requirements, institutional policy development and review processes, as part of standard practice, to include the incorporation of equality impact assessment and the development/adoption of a tool to facilitate same across the institution.</p> <p>1.6 HEIs to ensure that adequate human, financial and physical resources are put in place to allow for the advancement of gender equality within their institution. HEIs should report annually to the HEA on the resources dedicated to this task.</p> <p>1.7 There is performance review, promotion assessment schemes and selection processes for all staff and these should take account of EDI activity and advancement.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>All external and internal nominating bodies to key decision-making committees such as governing authority/body or academic council, to put forward an equal number of men and women candidates to provide the institution with an appropriate pool of nominees from which to appoint to the Governing Authority or equivalent and/or to the Academic Council.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>HEIs to appoint Associate Deans/Leads for EDI or equivalent in each Academic/ Professional Unit (regardless of size) to help develop gender equality awareness and to act as an agent for change.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>Institutional EDI audits to be carried out by all HEIs. A report on the analysis of this annual audit should be presented to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; the institutional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee/working group;</li> <li>&gt; the institutional management team (i.e. UMT/SMT/Executive or equivalent);</li> <li>&gt; the President of the institution; and</li> <li>&gt; the Governing Body via the relevant EDI committee of that governing body.</li> </ul> <p>A report on the analysis to be published on the institutional website. (It is recommended that these should be developed in a manner to allow for multi-purpose use e.g. in Public Sector Duty reporting, Gender Pay Reporting and for public reporting on Athena Swan action plan progress.)</p>
<b>5</b>	<p>All senior managers to be required to sponsor the career development of two staff members of the under-represented gender in their area, and with particular attention paid to those who may be experiencing intersectional inequalities.</p>

<b>Recommendations to the HEA</b>	
<b>1</b>	The responsibilities of the Governing Authorities/Bodies for oversight of progress and the President/equivalent for driving Gender Equality and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within HEIs should be monitored through statutory reporting mechanisms.
<b>2</b>	The HEA should develop a Code of Practice (in partnership with the HEIs) relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and other such related matters. The Governing Authorities/Board of HEIs should be accountable for oversight of the implementation of and adherence to this Code. The Presidents/equivalent should be responsible for driving progress through directing, resourcing and oversight of the implementation of the necessary actions to comply with the provisions of the Code. This Code of Practice should align with all legislative requirements placed on HEIs in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.
<b>3</b>	Indicators of equality, diversity and inclusion, drawn primarily from the recommendations of this review should be incorporated into a cross-cutting theme within the System Performance Framework, Institutional Performance Agreement process and annual Strategic Dialogue reporting.
<b>4</b>	The Annual Governance Statements should include a statement from the Governing Authority confirming its oversight of the progression of Gender Equality in the institution.
<b>5</b>	The HEA should require HEIs to create and publish equalities impact assessments for all new and revised institutional policies, with consideration of how all Equality Status grounds and socio-economic status may be impacted and may interact.
<b>6</b>	The HEA should confirm commitment to continued (ring-fenced) funding for EDI/Athena Swan.

### 8.3 Organisational Culture

---

“HEIs need to provide safe spaces to learn about EDI issues. There remains a fear about saying the wrong things, which results in a lack of discussion and awareness of critical EDI issues. We need to mainstream EDI language and encourage staff and students to raise issues, ask questions and get clarification on matters that they are facing.”

**Stakeholder comment**

---

“A lot of the work is still being put on women and other underrepresented groups to drive the change.”

**Stakeholder comment**

### Embedding Gender Equality Systematically and Sustainably

All HEIs have implemented policies and initiatives aimed at developing gender equality among staff. However, significant work is still required to embed this in a systematic manner to ensure real and sustainable change, and this work requires investment. As our understanding of gender and its impact on organisational culture, career development and promotion, and link to precarity of employment develops over time, so too should training provision, policies and procedures across the sector. Additionally, most gender equality work in Irish HEIs is still championed and undertaken by women, and this needs to change if we are to create real and sustainable gender equality in our HEIs. More work is needed to move beyond understanding and acceptance of the structural nature of gender inequality in order to effect real, sustainable change.

---

“Regular, good quality training in EDI topics tailored to the HE sector, with opportunities for follow-up and to embed the learnings into organisational culture, is a hugely important aspect of EDI work.” **Stakeholder comment**

### Institutional Gender Action Plans

It is evident that there is a much greater recognition of gender equality issues, to which the adoption of institutional Gender Action Plans (GAPs) has significantly contributed. All HEIs have GAPs in place, reaching full compliance with the 2016 review action. The GAPs are tied to Athena Swan applications and in many instances are part of HEI’s strategic plans and compacts with the HEA. GAPs are also in place or being developed at the local level of department and unit (again, often as part of Athena Swan applications), to embed the change processes more fully in the organisation. Despite the significant progress made, the review has identified new areas for action: greater attention to intersectionality and vulnerable groups, proper resourcing and improved accountability including monitoring and evaluation of GAP implementation.

---

“The Athena Swan Ireland charter has provided institutions and academic departments a framework to progress gender equality. In 2016, 11 institutions and departments held awards. As of April 2022, 98 institutions and departments hold awards – meaning, at least the same number of gender equality action plans are currently underway across the sector.”  
**Stakeholder comment**

### Athena Swan

While there is widespread concern and acknowledgement regarding the significant administrative and resource burden required to achieve and maintain both institutional and departmental awards, there is also widespread recognition that Athena Swan has acted as a “game-changer” in terms of awareness of gender inequality across Irish HEIs.

---

“Core grant funding links and reporting requirements from the HEA and that funding agencies require Athena Swan certification have solidified EDI and GE in Ireland which has not happened in other countries. Ireland has turned Athena Swan into something unique. Athena Swan in the UK still has a ‘fix the women’ approach whereas Athena Swan Ireland has a ‘fix the institution/structure’ approach which has allowed HEIs to look at themselves with a gendered lens and build a culture of EDI.” **Stakeholder comment**

There is further concern that the greater proportion of the burden of the work in terms of achieving and maintaining both institutional and departmental Athena Swan awards rests on the shoulders of women. There is a clear perception that Athena Swan could continue to make a real difference in terms of staff/faculty experience, by focusing on issues such as precarity, working conditions and intersectionality. However, there is also concern regarding the depth of understanding of the Athena Swan principles/process beyond the university management cadre, and anxiety regarding appropriate resourcing and “Athena Swan fatigue”, particularly at reapplication/renewal stage.

Better communication is needed from Advance HE Ireland, HEIs and the HEA to assist in ensuring that staff across the sector are aware of the Athena Swan principles and the broad commitments that institutions are making under the auspices of Athena Swan. This may also encourage staff to seek out their own institutional action plan and scrutinise progress at institutional level.

---

“Lots of staff members don’t understand Athena Swan or the process and what it is meant to achieve – there is a failing at institutional management level to communicate this down.” **Stakeholder comment**

---

### Sexual Violence and Harassment as a barrier to progression

In the online consultation conducted as part of this review, half of the respondents who identified as women saw gender-based violence as an issue, compared to only 35% of those who identified as men. In the review period an ambitious policy to address gender-based violence in higher education has been put in place with recommendations to all key stakeholders. This policy is one of the most comprehensive (if not the most comprehensive) policies in place in Europe. Despite this positive development, issues remain with implementation, often tied to the wider issue of changing institutional culture, and the lack of dedicated resources at the institutional level, to fully implement the framework. This is also tied to the continued under-recognition of the issue among those identifying as men who also continue to dominate in leadership positions. As is true of other areas addressed in this review, issues of intersectional inequality and the vulnerability of specific groups (precarious staff; minorities) has come more strongly to the fore in relation to gender-based violence and needs to be properly addressed.

---

“Experience has shown that EDI practitioners cannot be solely responsible for EDI in institutions - we need to move to a situation whereby EDI is embedded in all aspects of an institution.” **Stakeholder comment**

---

### KEY RECOMMENDATION 3

HEIs must build on actions already taken to continue to effect culture change in relation to gender equality issues. This should be done through resourcing and incentivising of:

- > appropriate and quality assured training and other change initiatives in relation to gender equality;
- > the support and engagement of men in the process of change;
- > the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of gender action plans;
- > the eradication of sexual harassment and gender-based violence; and
- > appropriate supports and mitigations for the burden of caring on those staff with caring responsibilities, as brought into sharp focus during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<b>Indicators</b>	
1	All HEIs to develop a strategy to roll out gender equality training for staff in a systematic manner, reporting annually to the HEA on the percentage of its staff (academic, PMSS and management) who have completed such training. (This training should have a focus on inclusive gender equality, gender-based violence, addressing organisational and structural barriers to equality and should consider gender equality awareness in its widest possible sense.)
2	All HEIs to continue to develop, implement and monitor the impact of institutional Gender Equality Action Plans, which are public documents updated and published annually, and easily accessible on individual institutional websites.
3	All HEIs to continue to implement the framework outlined in <i>Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions</i> and to implement the actions identified in institutional action plans and the <i>HEA Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions Implementation Plan 2022–2024</i> .
4	HEIs to provide resources specifically dedicated to Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment (ESVH) to implement the Framework for ESVH and actions related to ESVH, including responsible staff.
5	HEIs to provide appropriate supports and mitigations for the burden of caring on those staff with caring responsibilities, as brought into sharp focus during the COVID-19 pandemic.
6	HEIs to communicate frequently and throughout all staff groups in the institution regarding Athena Swan, the Athena Swan principles and process, and provide updates on progress in implementing the institutional Athena Swan action plan. Staff to be made aware and regularly updated on new policies and initiatives which the institution has committed to under the particular Athena Swan award and action plan that is currently in place in the particular institution.
7	HEIs to continue to comply with the HEA timelines for Athena Swan accreditation.
8	HEIs to provide evidence to HEA from AY 2022–2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; that all Athena Swan self-assessment teams (SATs), at both institutional and departmental levels, have a minimum of 40% men and 40% women on the SAT and key working groups associated with institutional and departmental SATS / action plan implementation groups;</li> <li>&gt; chairing / co-chairing of a SAT, and any associated working groups, is formally acknowledged and the individual contribution calculated as part of departmental and institutional workload allocation models. This contribution should contribute to promotional opportunities; and</li> <li>&gt; membership of a SAT, and all key associated working groups, is formally acknowledged and the individual contribution calculated as part of departmental and institutional workload allocation models. This contribution should contribute to promotional opportunities.</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendations to the HEA</b>	
1	The HEA should develop initiatives to support and encourage men in the sector to be agents for advancement of gender equality.
2	The HEA should use its enhanced powers including the ability to withhold funding from institutions who fail to demonstrate substantive evidence of progress on the gender equality agenda, including the award and successful renewal of Athena Swan bronze institutional awards as a minimum.
3	The HEA should continue to fund and review Athena Swan Ireland.
4	The HEA should support further opportunities for inter-institutional mutual learning and exchange (e.g. through supporting the national Athena Swan Practitioner Network).
5	The HEA and HEIs should communicate widely on the Athena Swan principles and the awards process in Ireland.

<b>Recommendations to Other Stakeholders</b>		<b>Lead</b>
1	Advance HE Ireland should continue to review regularly and streamline the Athena Swan Ireland Awards process, and training support provisions.	Advance HE Ireland
2	The Athena Swan Ireland team should provide regular and consistent communications to staff across the sector to help overcome some of the challenges outlined above.	
3	Research funding bodies should continue to require HEIs to comply with the HEA timelines for Athena Swan accreditation in order to remain eligible for access to research funding.	Research Funding Bodies
4	Research funding bodies should open a dialogue on the role of research funders in promoting safe working environments free from harassment and violence.	

## 8.4 Teaching and Learning, Research and Quality Assurance

From the actions reported for this review by individual HEIs, there is obvious agreement that approaching gender equality actions from a quality perspective has significant potential to achieve immediate impacts particularly given that quality reporting is a statutory obligation and quality reviews are ubiquitous and continuous processes within HEIs. Also, since Quality Assurance-Quality Enhancement (QA-QE) processes follow standardised thematic reporting, it provides a natural means of monitoring progress once the type of data required is formally agreed. From this review, there is a case for promoting “gender-sensitive QA-QE”, i.e., engraining a gender equality framework to provide an opportunity for adopting good practices through innovation and quality enhancement rather than simply through quality assurance. The progress reported under this heading and the declared actions broadly highlighted specific requirements for gender analysis in academic quality reviews at school/unit and institutional level (including reporting). As part of these requirements, post-quality review Quality Enhancement Plans outline actions that will be monitored to measure progress and impact. Implementation of such monitoring will require staff with gender equality expertise.

Acknowledging the success achieved by the Athena Swan quality charter/framework and accreditation scheme in advancing gender equality, it is reasonable to assume that the embedding of EDI efforts in a quality mark, including institutional quality assurance processes can help to achieve progress and the desired impacts. For HEIs, the mainstreaming of EDI within external quality and proficiency standards such as programme/institutional reviews and professional accreditation body reviews can serve as a means to further accelerate the advancement of progress on gender equality.

In recognition of the impact of gender and racial stereotypes and biases on educational choices at levels preceding tertiary education, systemic interventions are needed to address the under-representation of women and men in fields stereotyped as feminine and masculine.

**KEY RECOMMENDATION 4**

**Building on the substantive progress of the Athena Swan Charter Ireland accreditation framework in advancing gender equality, it is recommended that gender equality/EDI be embedded in other quality marks/processes, including institutional quality enhancement processes. Institution-specific interventions and progress reporting should be substantive parts of Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports in any internal programmatic review, in Statutory QQI Institutional Quality Reviews and in research funder review processes.**

**QQI, the National Forum for the Enhancement Teaching and Learning and all national research funding agencies must collaborate with HEIs to advance engagement with equality in HE curricula and/or research design, and embed self-evaluation and progress reporting on quality enhancement.**

<b>Indicators</b>	
<b>1</b>	Institution-specific gender equality/EDI interventions and progress reporting to be a substantive part of Self-Evaluation Report in the internal programmatic reviews and statutory QQI Institutional Quality Reviews.
<b>2</b>	Gender equality and equality more broadly to be incorporated into curriculum development, review and delivery processes, as well as staff Teaching & Learning Continuous Professional Development and postgraduate courses. <sup>19</sup>
<b>3</b>	EDI and Teaching & Learning Teams to develop strategies together here.
<b>4</b>	HEIs to engage with external stakeholders to work on de-stereotyping study programmes and put in place actions to ensure recruitment and retention of members of the under-represented gender and underrepresented minorities in the career track.

Recommendations to Other Stakeholders		Lead
1	External accreditation and quality review processes should take EDI into account in their assessment.	QQI, Professional Bodies
2	The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning should prioritise the funding of impactful cross-disciplinary initiatives for embedding EDI into the curricula of HEIs at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.	NFETL
3	Research funding bodies should explicitly and transparently mitigate the impact of the gendered conceptions of excellence and merit which has been traditionally in use in research assessment processes, including standard use of blinded peer review processes and clearly defined assessment criteria and protocols.	Research Funding Bodies
4	Research funding bodies should invest in research into gender equality (e.g. for evaluation of impact of action plan implementation).	
5	Research funding bodies to develop transparent processes for applicants in relation to entitlements regarding statutory leave and extensions, as well as similar entitlements for research students both funded and unfunded.	
6	Reporting requirements for research funding bodies in relation to gender disaggregated data should be considered as part of the process to establish a new national Research Funding Agency.	Government

## 8.5 Intersectionality

---

“It is positive that gender is no longer viewed in isolation and that equality is now viewed with a broader and more inclusive intersectional lens, this allows institutional action plans to compliment and inform each other in addressing broader EDI issues.” **Stakeholder comment**

Significant concerns about the material impact of race inequalities, precarity, family status/care inequalities, and the invisibility of disability on job security and career progression have been raised through this review process, and in existing research on HE in Ireland. It is not tenable to assume that these issues can be ‘accommodated’ meaningfully in the Athena Swan processes or other gender-led initiatives. It is problematic for the HEA or HEIs to ‘roll out’ initiatives on one equality ground after another in respect of HEI staff job security and career progression.

It is critical that the sector develops the capacity to objectively assess or interrogate the latent impacts of the interactions of multiple potential areas for gender inequality, e.g., in the lack of advancement of HE job security and careers, and that accountability for intersectional engagement on job security and career progression becomes a cornerstone of HEI equality initiatives. Ireland has the opportunity to be a world leader in embedding intersectional policy and practice in HE equality initiatives.

The transition to an intersectional focus requires significant expertise in EDI Units. Such units should be resourced with senior professional services and relevant research capacity specifically to provide advice and guidance on enacting intersectionality-focused measures, e.g. in relation to recruitment, promotion, organisational culture. Efforts to create intersectional interventions should involve broad-based coalitions of staff and students who are duly recognised and compensated for their work.

**KEY RECOMMENDATION 5**

**The advancement of gender equality is dependent on progress on a range of factors including race equality, precarious employment, and family status and disability equalities. Accordingly, HEIs should develop EDI strategies and action plans that seek to effect change in a way that centralises an intersectional approach to equality issues, within a 3-4 year timeframe.**

**Indicators**

<b>1</b>	Adopt or continue to implement a report and support online tool for anonymously reporting harassment, bullying and violence which impacts any of the nine Equal Status Grounds and socio-economic status.
<b>2</b>	EDI Units to be resourced with senior professional services and access to relevant research capacity specifically to provide advice and guidance on enacting intersectionality-focused measures.
<b>3</b>	Associate Deans/Leads for EDI in each academic or professional services unit to be trained in intersectional interventions in each institution to work with and support EDI, Access, and Teaching and Learning Units.

**Recommendations to the HEA**

<b>1</b>	The HEA should continue to develop a national framework for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education which would seek to effect change in a way that centralises an intersectional approach to equality issues and that HEIs will report against annually.
<b>2</b>	The HEA should Implement the actions set out in the HEA Race Equality Implementation Plan 2022–2024 and review progress at the end of the plan.
<b>3</b>	Future HEA-led reviews of this nature should adopt an equalities design which examines the degree to which the interaction of all Equality Employment Act grounds are engaged and responded to in sectoral and institutional policy and initiatives.
<b>4</b>	The HEA should develop a roadmap with Advance HE for an Irish Charter award that is equalities focused, requires institutional applications to review HR institutional data on the impact of gender, ethnicity, family status, and disability on job security and career progression, and to review organisational culture with respect to all Employment Equality grounds. This should move beyond ‘accommodating’ intersectionality to centralising intersectionality.

<b>Recommendations to Other Stakeholders</b>		<b>Lead</b>
<b>1</b>	Research funding bodies should move beyond requiring a 'gender only' dimension to research funding proposals and require applicants to identify how projects will (a) support, include and impact diverse women and (b) how it will impact people from any equal status grounds beyond gender. Provide training and guiding examples to applicants and assessors for this task.	Research funding bodies
<b>2</b>	Research funding bodies should create a cross-agency funding stream for projects that are both interdisciplinary and focused on addressing intersections of more than one equality issue.	
<b>3</b>	Convene a high-level advisory group comprising representatives of the HEA, IHREC, Advance HE Ireland, the National Disability Authority, ICTU, USI, the Migrant Rights Centre and such other bodies or experts as is appropriate to advise on policy to address the impact of gender, race, migrant status, precarity, disability, and family status on HEI staff job security and career progression.	DFHERIS

## 8.6 Career Development

### Recruitment and Promotion

The issues that continue to be raised in support of multiple pathways towards gender equality in HE are the need for:

- > more active encouragement of career development (to enable women feel more confident about applying for roles/promotion/experiential opportunities as they arise) and greater structural support as required (allowance for breaks for maternity leave, caring responsibilities etc);
- > greater support for those with caring responsibilities;
- > greater thought and clarity regarding the criteria to be assessed in recruitment/promotion processes to ensure that the processes support drive for gender equality;
- > greater thought regarding job design with a view to providing greater flexibility and support arrangements as required (particularly when the post holder has caring responsibilities);
- > greater thought in relation to job titles (with historic gender association) in order to ensure that the underrepresented gender is encouraged to apply for and make careers in single-gender dominated roles<sup>20</sup>;
- > progress on the work allocation model to try to ensure a balance approach is taken;
- > the adoption of the flexible cascade model, as recommended in the 2016 review, which has been uneven across the system;
- > gender balance at all stages of the assessment process;
- > appropriate training for assessors in the areas of gender equality and specifically gender bias; and
- > audit and review of processes to be in place.

### Flexible and Agile Working

In the online consultation carried out as part of this review, 35% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, *'I have been encouraged to apply for promotion or jobs at a higher grade'*. This figure rose to 39% when solely examining respondents who identified as men and dropped to 33% for respondents who identified as women. This crystallises a perception that gender inequality within organisations is a matter of visibility, i.e., there are both intentional and unintentional differentials in the degree of awareness of inherent inequalities.<sup>21</sup>

The premise of a Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) is to provide an opportunity to create and deliver upon a shared vision between institutions and staff, and also enable review of staff achievements against previously agreed goals and objectives. Responses to the online consultation suggest not only a sub-optimal utility of the PMDS process currently, but also that it is an area with latent performance enhancement potential where, if proactively exploited, substantive progress could be achieved in the context of addressing gender equality.

Furthermore, the outcome of the online consultation suggests that, rather than focus on staff performance alone, PMDS is an area that still needs attention, specifically in establishing pathways for implementation of proactive and visible handling of career development and mentorships in support of all staff members, particularly those with caring responsibilities.

### Workload Allocation Models

---

“EDI activities are not generally formally considered as part of our workloads, despite the huge amount of work required in implementation.... .. The staff we are trying to support are often those that are typically recruited to work on EDI activities or on Athena Swan teams. A lack of recognition of this work therefore has a double negative impact – it takes their time away from their research etc. and does not reward them or recognise this work.” **Stakeholder comment**

Unfortunately, there were flawed assumptions underlying the 2016 Review recommendation that HEIs ‘Ensure HEI workload allocation models (WAMs) are transparent and monitored for gender bias on an annual basis’. Specifically, these were:

- > That WAMs already exist and/or were in widespread use throughout HEIs.
- > That managers/supervisors underwent regular performance development reviews.
- > That there exists a robust systemic oversight arrangement for continuous enhancement of staff performance, well-being, and retention, under the principles of Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).

Interestingly workload allocation did not come up very often in the stakeholder consultations meetings. Experience suggests that most staff feel significantly over-worked and over stretched, and there are particular issues for those with caring responsibilities as highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of a transparent WAMs helps mitigate such a view and enables greater perception of fairness.

### Positive Action Initiatives

While positive leadership action interventions such as the SALI were aimed at accelerating gender equality goals and objectives in higher education institutions (HEIs) as a whole, the model seems to favour the traditional university sector. There is a need to consider the contextual/sectoral relevance of the implementation of positive action initiatives such as SALI.

Having taken the sectoral differences into account, additionally, there is need for a more inclusive approach to all cadres of human resources by encouraging subscription to other concurrent schemes such as the Aurora programme. The **Aurora** programme's vision is particularly attractive as it is designed for leadership roles and responsibility for women, up to senior lecturer level or the professional services equivalent, which could underpin the cross-cutting impact of the flexible cascade model.

### KEY RECOMMENDATION 6

**HEIs must take action and account for progress in addressing the continued gender inequality at different levels of the staffing structure in both academic and professional streams. Measures to be addressed include job design, workload allocation, career progression, reward and recognition, performance management and recruitment and promotion.**

Indicators	
1	HEIs to incorporate evidence of advancing gender equality into all staff members' performance reviews.
2	Where practicable, HEIs to adopt flexible working as the default position for both academic and professional services roles and to monitor the uptake of remote/flexible working by gender. (This is practicable within the EDI framework available in all HEIs.)
3	HEIs to develop and ensure more inclusive application of the PMDS process primarily to simultaneously encourage, support and advance staff careers, with focus on the contribution towards enhancement of gender equality specific to the prevailing circumstances in each HEI.
4	HEIs to, at a minimum, develop a set of principles and guidelines that underpin the development and implementation of WAMs at institutional /local level.
5	HEIs to have clear, explicit, published mechanisms in place for taking account of the impact of long-term carer leave (e.g. maternity, adoptive, caring of family member), long term illness leave, and evidenced impact of COVID on career outputs/trajectory. (Such mechanisms should be used as part of recruitment and promotion processes and are relevant across academic, research or PMS staff categories.)
6	HEIs to continue to support leadership development training such as Aurora or equivalent, in the interest of promoting equality at different career levels.
7	The flexible cascade model to be used as a monitoring and, where necessary, as an intervention tool for both recruitment and promotion, particularly for senior level posts (posts with salary in excess of €75,000) in both academic and professional services.

<b>Indicators</b>	
8	For posts at senior levels within the HEI sector, institutions to proactively ensure that representation at all senior levels progresses towards a target of 50/50 gender balance. The merit-based approach of ‘best person for the job’ should continue to apply. However, where candidates who compete for senior positions are of equal merit, then priority to be given to the under-represented gender at that level within the institution and having regard to pertinent intersectionality considerations. <sup>22</sup>
9	HEIs to provide particular supports for those with caring responsibilities; for example, breastfeeding/parenting support networks, creche facilities, childcare support/voucher schemes, ongoing access to library services for postgraduate students on maternity/adoptive leave.

<b>Recommendations to the HEA</b>	
1	Discussion on progress on implementation of institutional Workload Allocation Models should form part of the annual performance agreement monitoring and review between individual HEIs and the HEA.

<b>Recommendations to Other Stakeholders</b>		<b>Lead</b>
1	Establish a Recruitment and Promotion Forum comprised of HR professionals and academics from the HEI sector. Task this forum to among other things develop a HEI Appointment Code taking account of best practice approaches to the various stages of recruitment and promotion processes, having regard to scale of operation, the structural differences between the University and Technological Institutions, progress already made within individual institutions and the work already carried out under the Athena Swan initiative.	HEI Representative Bodies (IUA, THEA)
2	A national collaborative HR research agenda to be developed for HEIs to overcome the latent barriers to fostering empathy-based management of staff.	
3	In the context of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science’s commitment to developing restructured career paths for staff in the TU sector due consideration should be given to the opportunity that this presents for the increased use of positive action initiatives like the SALI.	DFHERIS

## 8.7 Precarity

---

“An issue that’s emerging in the Athena Swan process is the gender dimension of precarious employment. The focus of the last review/report was on more senior level posts – there is a cohort of people at the entry level that are employed in precarious contracts – their employment conditions do not match those of their peers, therefore it is difficult for them to progress their careers.” **Stakeholder comment**

There is considerable concern amongst stakeholders about a two-tier system of permanent, promotable vs. precarious, exploited HE staff, a situation that disproportionately affects, and damages the careers and lives of primarily women and minority ethnic staff. Precariously employed women and ethnic minorities are at the front-line of absorbing the funding risks, instabilities and strictures that characterise the higher education system. Foregrounding an ethic of care for all staff, not least those precariously employed, was raised as a key issue of the sector. Policy measures that are focused on addressing precarity more generally will be of greater benefit to these groups.

It is recognised that the requirement to control public spending gave rise to the use of certain instruments including the Employment Control Framework (ECF) which restricted the number of staff that could be appointed to permanent positions in HEIs. This was used in parallel to the use of budgetary controls and undoubtedly resulted in greater numbers control. There is equally no doubt, however, that these restrictions also gave rise to a number of unintended consequences including the use of forms of precarious employment to meet existing and emerging requirements within tightening budget pressures within institutions.

It would be incorrect, however, to assume that precarious employment is entirely a result of the ECF system. This approach was increasingly adopted by HEIs even before the ECF was imposed. The use of short-term contracts, particularly when there is no objective rationale for same, is a powerful option for those who make employment decisions as it maximises flexibility in terms of who gets employed, creates dependencies and minimises the economic consequences of employment.

The limited policy measures attempted to this point have appeared to at best not achieved the desired impact, and at worst, exacerbated the problem of precarity. In drafting policy recommendations, it is notable that the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science recommended in July 2022 that staffing and precarious employment need to be “reviewed urgently or by the end of 2022 at the latest” by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, with particular focus on hourly paid academic contracts, researchers, postgraduate workers and outsourcing of support staff roles.<sup>23</sup> The Committee also called for the abolishment of the Employment Control Framework and ring-fenced funding to be provided through the HEA for independent research, including doctoral and postdoctoral research, to “avoid a reliance” on short term commercial research project funding . It is notable also that doctoral students in Sweden and Denmark are considered employees and paid accordingly.

**KEY RECOMMENDATION 7**

In recognition of the fact that precarity is a key driver of gender inequality, whilst also acknowledging the need for control of public spending, it is recommended that a strategy be developed under the aegis of “Funding the Future” to stabilise the funding of HEIs and eliminate reliance on precarious forms of employment within HEIs.

<b>Indicators</b>	
1	HEIs to provide transparent mechanisms for managing sick leave, pension and family leave entitlements for hourly paid staff.
2	HEIs to provide all hourly paid staff performing core and non-core funded teaching, research, or professional services work a role assessment which accounts for all aspects of their work, including work performed ‘out of contract’, necessary meetings and CPD, and employ and pay them accordingly.
3	HEIs to ensure that the process through which tenure is awarded is gender proofed in accordance with best practice.
4	HEIs to remove the designation of postdoctoral researchers as trainees where such practices exist, thereby affording them the full protections of labour law.
5	Temporary academic roles to cover maternity and sabbatical leave to cover the role in its entirety, not simply teaching.
6	HEIs to develop an Ethical Hiring Code to mirror good practice in the area.

<b>Recommendations to Other Stakeholders</b>		<b>Lead</b>
1	Research funding bodies to work with government, the HEA and HEIs to increase the number of permanent research positions in the system.	Research funding bodies
2	Research funding bodies to make institutional and departmental action on eliminating precarious work a mandatory requirement of research funding eligibility, to be demonstrated in Athena Swan applications/awards.	
3	Research funding bodies to create a cross-agency fellowship stream with a funded application process targeted at women academics precariously employed for more than a year whose limited-focus contracts have not enabled them to apply for research funding.	Government
4	Replace the Employment Control Framework with appropriate budgetary/numbers control mechanisms that serve their intended purpose and take account of developing needs within institutions.	
5	Make hourly paid contracts the exception rather than the norm: Based on data supplied to the HEA by HEIs, establish institutional and disciplinary targets for the progressive elimination of inappropriate hourly paid contracts for core and non-core funded teaching, research, and professional services roles in all HEIs.	

<b>Recommendations to Other Stakeholders</b>		<b>Lead</b>
<b>6</b>	As part of the Impact 2030 framework, ringfence funds for a Researcher Career pathway (amongst others) which increase the numbers of permanent research careers not reliant on competitively won funding.	Government
<b>7</b>	The National Review of State supports for PhD researchers should work to ensure a living wage as a minimum standard for postgraduate research student support. The provision of a living wage, as part of doctoral studies, does not undermine the fact that post graduate research students deserve a quality education, that should be recognised, monitored, and evaluated through established institutional processes, and for which institutions and supervisors should be held accountable.	
<b>8</b>	Monitor the impact of these measures on an ongoing basis to ensure that the flexibility being afforded is being used to address precarity of employment.	

## 8.8 Data Capture, Analysis and Reporting

The design and implementation of gender equality policies is inefficient without a proper accompanying data collection system to monitor defined indicators and carrying out an evaluation of the measures taken. Some of the sources in the gender equality fatigue may lie precisely in the fact that policies are implemented without being properly based on data and research evidence and in the fact that once launched, the actions are not monitored and/or evaluated, or that the evaluation results are not reflected in the subsequent policy cycle.

The review noted some progress on putting structures in place for monitoring and the requirement to report data has been identified as making a real difference. It has also been observed that a focus on developing intersectional gender equality aspects is needed across equality grounds and different career stages. A related challenge is the need to build specific expertise and skills for collection, collation and cleaning of EDI and gender equality data for monitoring and benchmarking, and this skill development must be supported at the EDI Units in HEIs.

Stakeholder consultations further revealed that data collection and standardisation is a key challenge. Data collection is carried out, but it is less clear how that data informs issue definition and development of actions plans and trackable indicators, with some noting that there has been no follow-up on monitoring done. In relation to this, a caution was raised about binary (man/woman only) data collection. Several issues were identified including the need to develop a new categorisation of gender data: the disaggregation in terms of ethnicity, precarity, disability and staff with caring responsibilities. The issue has also been raised that data collection systems need to be streamlined to allow using the data for a variety of ways for the analyses needed. Finally, it has also been suggested that gender-disaggregated data should be published on HEI websites.

**KEY RECOMMENDATION 8**

In order to measure progress in relation to the effectiveness of measures put in place, there needs to be an appropriate systematic approach to the capture, analysis and reporting of data in relation to the nine grounds specified under the Equality legislation. Specifically, data in relation to the interaction of the individual grounds and gender should be captured in relation to:

- (i) recruitment and promotion across grades and staff categories;
- (ii) gaining of other rewards and recognition (internal grants, roles of responsibility, leadership, awards, etc.); and
- (iii) status of employment (hourly paid, short-term contract, permanent appointment, etc.).

The requirement to capture and analyse such data in a consistent manner potentially will require further development of the centralised systems used by HEIs and accordingly, appropriate investment should be made in systems development to facilitate this.

**Indicators**

1	HEIs to provide annual reports on hourly paid data for all staff categories including gender, ethnicity, average and mean pay rates. Reporting must be defined in numbers of people employed in each grade (headcounts) as opposed to using FTEs/WTEs as a measure.
2	HEIs to develop an efficient and accessible equality data capture infrastructure through participation between relevant parties including HR, IT services, EDI units, Student Services and Finance.
3	HEI equality data capture systems to be developed in a manner to allow for multi-purpose use e.g. in Public Sector Duty reporting, Gender Pay Reporting and for public reporting on Athena Swan action plan progress.
4	HEIs to work with the HEA to improve equality monitoring data collection among HEI staff, maximising the potential of existing infrastructure (e.g. Core HR) in the first instance.

**Recommendations to the HEA**

1	The HEA should produce an annual staff and student equalities report based on HEI staff and student returns, which demonstrates patterns of interaction between staff gender, ethnicity, contract (as an indicator of precarity) status, family status and disability. This report should identify which members of different groups are progressing (e.g., which women, which disabled people, etc.).
2	The HEA should develop a monitoring and evaluation system to assess the impact of the GAPs in the Irish higher education sector.
3	The HEA should convene a national working group of key stakeholders to develop a standardised approach to identifying, collecting and mining equality data to support all HEI reporting requirements in relation to equality issues.

# 9 CONCLUDING REMARKS



It is recognised that HEIs have, to varying extent, invested in the advancement of gender equality in the period since the last review. In addition, it is recognised that the Government has supported progress in this area through the provision of specific funding including the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative and the annual Gender Equality Enhancement Fund. The Expert Group commends the HEA for the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for EDI, which both recognises and coordinates efforts at a national level through a partnership approach. There is a continued strategic need for a Centre of Excellence for EDI as a central initiative and pillar that ensures visibility, connectedness and sectoral efficacy in addressing EDI matters including Gender Equality.

Despite this, there is a need for concerted institutional action and additional resourcing in order to ensure that progress can continue. With the mainstreaming of EDI through national initiatives, a portion of such funding should come from core funding of HEIs. In addition, there is a need for Government to support further measures through the provision of additional targeted and ring-fenced funding.

Positive action initiatives that have been undertaken at national and local level are welcome, but these need to be embedded more deeply to ensure sustained progress on gender equality. Rather than prescribe specific actions that should be taken in the higher education sector to advance gender equality, the Expert Group believes that it would be more appropriate to suggest a framework for such actions not only to enable contextual institutional innovations but also with a view to these being developed collaboratively by HEIs and the HEA.

For positive action initiatives at a national level, it is imperative that these actions have a consistent impact across all HEIs to ensure national progress. The expert group is of a view that such initiatives should be funded on a non-competitive basis, with a recognition that the type of intervention needed will differ across HEIs. Therefore, a tiered approach may be required. In general, the Expert Group recommends the development of initiatives to support early- and mid-career staff (both academic and professional), which complement those already in place that focus on senior leadership positions. Given the urgent need for work in the areas of Leadership and Precarity, positive actions to address these issues could be prioritised in the short term. Arising from review and the focus on precarity and career development issues, there are two impactful positive action initiatives that can be implemented immediately in relation to both recruitment and promotion: the introduction of the flexible cascade model; and the recognition of career gaps that may have had skewed impacts by gender (e.g. due to Covid, caring responsibilities).

Where some progress is evident at an individual institutional level, the HEA should investigate mechanisms to introduce additional funding to reward HEI performance related to effective implementation of the Expert Group's recommendations. While a major issue in the sector is the need for capacity building in broader areas of EDI (e.g. Race Equality, Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment), there remains a need for such capacity building in relation to gender equality expertise and knowledge among HEI staff. The Expert Group identifies a need for ring-fenced funding for 3-5 years to enable such capacity building in a meaningful and sustainable way.

The recommendations in this report build on those of previous national policy documents and add further nuance to the understanding of gender inequality in Irish higher education. It is clear that a prerequisite to ensure achievement of equality is to ensure the transparency of all HEI processes, including but not limited to, recruitment, promotions, workload allocation, recognition and rewards. The proactive input of stakeholders at all levels of HEIs has signaled that it is now necessary to move to a different phase of the work to tackle gender inequality by centralizing intersectionality and acknowledging and addressing precarious employment as a barrier to career progression. The thread running through all the recommendations in this report is that the higher education sector needs to protect the staff pipeline and support all staff (academic and professional, management, support) all the way through the career cycle.

The implementation of the recommendations in this report is perhaps more important than ever as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. There is potential for the pandemic to set back achievements in the advancement of gender equality and it is still unclear what its full impact will be. While there have been benefits (e.g. improved flexible working arrangements) challenges remain and the situation should be monitored carefully in the context of this review.

Each of the Expert Group's high-level recommendations to HEIs are accompanied by a set of indicators. The HEA should monitor progress against these on an annual basis, which should be accompanied by the publication of an annual progress report. Areas where progress is deemed to be slow should be supported centrally by the HEA and with targeted funding through the Gender Equality Enhancement Fund. Finally, the Expert Group recommends that national progress be subject to periodic review every 5 years.

The Expert Group commends the efforts within the sector to advance gender equality, and recognises the very strong message coming from the sector that the agenda needs to be broadened and deepened to incorporate a focus on intersecting equality issues, and to ensure security, equality, dignity and recognition at work for all throughout the career lifecycle. The Group firmly believes that through strong leadership across HEIs, research funders, the HEA and government, working in solidarity with all academic and PMS staff, Ireland has the potential to be an international leader in addressing fundamental equality issues and creating a step-change for future generations of graduates, academic and PMSS colleagues.

# APPENDIX 1



EXPERT GROUP

### **Chair: Ms Niamh O'Donoghue**

Ms Niamh O'Donoghue served as Secretary-General of the Department of Social Protection from July 2010 to July 2017. She had previously served in a number of Departments and offices including the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health, the Office of the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commissioners (now the Public Appointments Service) and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. She has a primary degree in Public Administration from the IPA, and also holds an MA (Industrial Relations) from the University of Keele and an MSc (Mgmt) from TCD. She has a keen interest in People Management, HR/IR and Organisation Change. She has acted as Non-Executive Director of a number of organizations including the IPA, Common Purpose, the FAI and PAS. She is currently a Director of Rethink Ireland and is Chair of the Advisory Board of the National Shared Services Office.

### **Dr Allison Kenneally**

Dr. Allison Kenneally is the Vice President for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at the South East Technological University. Prior to taking up her role in SETU, Allison was the Director of the Office of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at the Institute of Technology Carlow, where she also previously held posts as Head of Department of Humanities and Senior Lecturer in Law. Allison holds a Doctorate in Higher Education Management from the University of Bath, along with undergraduate and postgraduate Degrees in Law from UCD. Her research focuses on Mergers, Organisational Culture, Change Management and System Reconfiguration in Higher Education, and particularly in the Irish Institute of Technology sector. She is the author of the widely used textbook, 'An Introduction to the Irish Legal System'.

### **Prof Anne Scott**

Professor Anne Scott is an RGN and holds a BA in Philosophy and Psychology from Trinity College, Dublin and a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Glasgow. Over her career she has held a variety of leadership roles in universities including Head of School, Executive Dean, Deputy President and Registrar in both Irish and English university sectors. Most recently, she was the Vice President for Equality and Diversity in NUI Galway. She has worked as a practitioner and academic in Kenya, Scotland, England and Ireland. Anne's research interests include the philosophy and ethics of health care, judgement and decision-making in clinical practice and health services research – focusing on the health work-force. During her career Prof Scott has served on a number of public sector boards including the Board of the HRB, the Board of the HSE, founding member of the Irish Council for Bio-ethics, Council of Governors Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust, the Board of Directors, Liverpool Health Partners, Board of Governors, Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospital Trust. In July 2018 she was appointed Chairperson of the HEAnet Group Board of Directors. Professor Scott is the Chair of the HEAnet Remuneration Committee and is a member of the HEAnet Group Finance Sub-committee. She is also a director on the EduCampus Board. In October 2020 Professor Scott was appointed as Independent Chair of the CervicalCheck Steering Committee by the Minister of Health Stephen Donnelly.

## Dr Karl Kitching

Dr Karl Kitching is Professor of Public Education and Director of Research at the School of Education, University of Birmingham. Previously he was a Senior Lecturer in Education, and Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at University College Cork, Ireland. His research and teaching focuses on challenging multiple inequalities in education, in childhood, and in young people's lives. His most recent publications include the book *Childhood, Religion and School Injustice* (Cork University Press, 2020). He has published a range of internationally peer-reviewed articles on young people's experiences of racism in school, race theory in education, children's multiple identities at school and in society, teacher motivation, and critical theory and pedagogy. Karl's first book was titled *The Politics of Compulsive Education: Racism and Learner-Citizenship* (Routledge 2014). This book explores how racism, education and resistance have been entangled in Ireland from the colonial to the global age, and offers new ways of thinking about anti-racism in education as a form of learner-citizenship. He was PI on a recent Irish cross-institutional project focused on teaching for social justice in HE called Disciplines Inquiring into Societal Challenges (DISCs).

## Dr Marcela Linková

Dr Marcela Linková is a researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences where she heads the Centre for Gender and Science. Her research focuses on sociology of gendered organizations, research careers, governance of research and research assessment from a gender perspective. Marcela also examines the material-discursive practices through which gender equality policies and initiatives are adopted and implemented at the European and Czech country levels. Marcela has been involved in several EU funded projects; most recently, she has been the coordinator of Horizon 2020 GENDERACTION (2017–2021) and participates in GE Academy, Gender-SMART, CASPER, UniSAFE and RESISTIRE. She has served on expert and advisory bodies of the European Commission and in the Czech Republic. She is active in developing policy solutions for gender equality in research at the Czech and EU levels. With Mary Frank Fox and Kjersten Bunker Whittington she contributed to the 4th edition of the Handbook of Science and Technology Studies (2018) and with Lut Mergaert to the Routledge Handbook of Gender and EU Politics (2021). She is an alumna of the International Visitor Leadership Programme "Women in STEM".

## Dr Philip Owende

Dr Philip Owende is Assistant Head of Academic Affairs in TU Dublin, and formally Campus Registrar TU Dublin, Blanchardstown Campus. He is a Chartered Engineer, Fellow of the Institution of Engineers of Ireland (FIEI), and previously a member of Engineers Ireland Accreditation Board. He holds position of Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Biosystems Engineering, University College Dublin (UCD). He has participated in and/or chaired international verification reviews of undergraduate engineering programmes on behalf of the International Engineering Alliance for mutual recognition of awards supporting engineering graduates' mobility in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia. He has been Principal Researcher in funded research and higher education projects worth over €4.5 million, has supervised 10 PhD and 11 Masters projects to completion, published 6 book chapters and over 45 refereed publications, with 8,000 citations. Currently he is Co-Chair of TU Dublin' EDI Working Group on Interculturalism, assigned to providing direction for a 5-year strategic plan with initial focus on race equity. He is also a member of the HEA Athena Swan National *Intersectionality* Working Group on Race and Ethnicity.

# APPENDIX 2



## BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the recommendations and indicators included in the main report, the Expert Group have identified further best practice recommendations in relation to three specific areas:

1. Gender Action Plans
2. Workload Allocation Models
3. Ethical Hiring Practices

---

## 1 Recommendations to improve and advance **Gender Action Plans**:

---

- > 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 (e.g. quarterly to SMT and annually to governing boards). Such reporting should include relevant sub-groups.
- > Embed more prominently intersectional approaches and actions focused on specific vulnerable groups (in particular those in precarious employment positions) in the GAPs.
- > Integrate into institutional GAPs actions to implement the consent framework and zero tolerance of sexual violence and harassment.
- > Develop and implement internal monitoring and evaluation systems with indicators (with a focus on outcome and impact indicators).
- > Embed in GAPs capacity building to enhance expertise in gender equality and organisational change among the staff responsible for GAPs implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- > Ensure proper resourcing and workload allocation among the staff responsible for GAPs implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

---

## 2 Recommendations to improve and advance implementation of **Workload Allocation Models**:

---

- > The WAMs should be transparent<sup>24</sup>, be published locally, and monitored on an annual basis to address potential gender bias. The WAM should take into account impacts of class size and marking load and should go beyond a simplistic use of teaching hours as stated in certain contracts.
- > The workload model should be calibrated in output measures (e.g. student credit hours for

teaching, research outputs), and based upon a framework agreed nationally. That framework may be similar to the common international benchmark of institution-wide teaching and research allocations each representing approximately 40% of total workload. Within that national framework, presidents, faculty leaders, and heads of department would be authorised to take decisions that reflect faculty and department roles, and individual needs.

- > Each HEI should ensure that workload allocation is also linked to promotion criteria in a transparent manner.
- > The workload model should be calibrated in output measures (e.g. student credit hours for teaching, research outputs), and based upon a framework agreed nationally. That framework may be similar to the common international benchmark of institution-wide teaching and research allocations each representing approximately 40% of total workload. Within that national framework, presidents, faculty leaders, and heads of department would be authorised to take decisions that reflect faculty and department roles, and individual needs.

---

### 3 Recommendations in relation to the **Ethical Hiring Practices:**

---

- > Each institution creates an Ethical Hiring Code in relation to hourly paid staff:
  - Hourly paid work to be the institutional exception rather than the norm.
  - Dependency on hourly paid contracts for core functions (undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and professional services) and eliminated.
  - Process identified to transition hourly paid staff currently routinely performing core functions to stable employment. Individual staff members should not be normally dependent on hourly pay for their main income.
  - Use of hourly payment for specialist expertise to be carefully monitored to ensure compliance with the ethical principles of the code.
  - Hourly paid staff payment categories reflect professional services operations (i.e. not just teaching categories).
  - Dedicated quick guide provided to hourly paid staff regarding (a) hourly pay rates and how they are applied; (b) hourly paid staff CID entitlements and process; (c) statutory leave entitlements (sick leave, maternity/adoptive leave) and pension entitlements; (d) access to facilities and services including office space and email accounts; (e) access to career, mentoring and professional development opportunities and compensation available to attend; (f) access to wellbeing supports and; (h) expectations of presence at meetings and student support and compensation offered for same.
  - Hourly paid staff provided with opportunities to meet with their Head of Unit and/or HR advisor to ensure they are compensated fairly and accessing development opportunities.
  - Local data on hourly paid staff headcount and contracts collected centrally on an annual basis and monitored at Faculty/Service level to prevent inconsistent or excessive use of hourly paid contracts.

- 1 Brah, A., and Phoenix, A. (2004) Ain't I a Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality. *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5(3). <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol5/iss3/8/>. Bhopal, K. and Preston, J. (2012) Introduction: Intersectionality and 'Race' In Education: Theorising Difference. In Bhopal, K. and Preston, J. (eds.) *Intersectionality and 'Race' In Education*. London: Routledge.
- 2 Bhopal, K. and Henderson, H. (2022) Competing Inequalities: Gender Versus Race in Higher Education Institutions in the UK. *Educational Review* 73(2): 153–169. Christofferson, A. (2022) Developments in the Appropriation of Intersectionality by White Feminism in European Policy. *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 5(2): 267–269.
- 3 Kempny, M. and Michael, L. (2022) *Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector: Analysis Commissioned by the Higher Education Authority*. HEA. <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2021/10/HEA-Race-Equality-in-the-Higher-Education-Sector-Analysis-commissioned-by-the-Higher-Education-Authority-1.pdf>.
- 4 Nugent, M. Pembroke, S., and Taft, M. (2019) Precarious work in the Republic of Ireland. NERI Working Paper 2019/No 64. [https://www.neri-institute.net/sites/default/files/research/2019/precarius\\_work\\_in\\_the\\_republic\\_of\\_ireland\\_july\\_19\\_final.pdf](https://www.neri-institute.net/sites/default/files/research/2019/precarius_work_in_the_republic_of_ireland_july_19_final.pdf).
- 5 O'Keefe, T., and Courtois, A. (2019) 'Not One of the Family': Gender and Precarious Work in the Neoliberal University. *Gender, Work and Organization* 26(4): 463–479.
- 6 Ivancheva, M., Lynch, K., and Keating, K. (2019) Precarity, Gender and Care in the Neoliberal Academy. *Gender, Work and Organization* 26(4): 448–462. Nugent et al. (2019). O'Keefe et al. (2019).
- 7 Cush, M. (2016) *Report to the Minister for Education and Skills of the Chairperson of the Expert Group on Fixed-Term and Part-Time Employment in Lecturing in Third Level Education in Ireland*.
- 8 Ivancheva, M., and O'Flynn, M. (2016). Between career progression and career stagnation: Casualisation, tenure, and the contract of indefinite duration in Ireland. In S. Gupta, J. Habjan, & H. Tutek (eds.), *Academic labour, unemployment and global higher education neoliberal policies of funding and management* (pp. 167–184). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 9 Harris, S. (2022) May 14. Available at <https://twitter.com/SimonHarrisTD/status/1525488070316933121>.
- 10 Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS 2022a) *Funding the Future: Investing in Knowledge and Skills: Ireland's Competitive Advantage*. DFHERIS: 9. <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/49e56-future-funding-in-higher-education/>.
- 11 DFHERIS 2022a: 11.
- 12 Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS 2022b) *Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy*. DFHERIS: 41. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/27c78-impact-2030-irelands-new-research-and-innovation-strategy/>.
- 13 DFHERIS 2022b: 41.
- 14 Ivancheva et al. 2019.
- 15 <https://insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/21/early-journal-submission-data-suggest-covid-19-tanking-womens-research-productivity#.XqClyP1kLnI.email>. <https://www.thelily.com/women-academics-seem-to-be-submitting-fewer-papers-during-coronavirus-never-seen-anything-like-it-says-one-editor/>.
- 16 <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf>.
- 17 In reporting to the HEA, all HEIs note that a member of senior management has overall responsibility for EDI in the institution, hence the green progress indicator. However, the Expert Group notes that in practice the actual day to day responsibility for EDI in some HEIs does not sit with a staff member who is at VP level or is a member of the senior management team.
- 18 Balanced gender representation refers to the expectation that a minimum of 40% of women and 40% of men will be represented on key institutional committees, selection/review panels, and ultimately, across all academic and professional staff grades. This definition encourages and supports the representation of gender non-binary staff.
- 19 It is recommended that, where objectives cannot be met via credit bearing curricula, institutions develop and promote additional personal development and active citizenship curricula offerings, where achievement of competencies are recognised through alternative initiatives, e.g., digital badging schemes.)
- 20 In particular, greater thought also needs to go into job titles – particularly in Admin and Support grades in order to attract more men (Admin roles – junior and mid-level) or more women (technical posts) in what are currently single-gender dominated roles in the sector.
- 21 Acker J. 2006. Inequality regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations. *Gender & Society*, 20(4): 441–464.
- 22 This approach would mirror the approach taken within the Civil Service to increase the number of women at both Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General level within Government Departments and Offices.
- 23 Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (2022) *The Future Funding of Higher Education*. Houses of the Oireachtas: 96. [https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_education\\_further\\_and\\_higher\\_education\\_research\\_innovation\\_and\\_science/reports/2022/2022-07-06\\_the-future-funding-of-higher-education\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_education_further_and_higher_education_research_innovation_and_science/reports/2022/2022-07-06_the-future-funding-of-higher-education_en.pdf).
- 24 Transparent in this context means that the WAM should be based on explicit, agreed principles, weightings, formulae and so forth.



