

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education 2025-2026

## Call for Applications

### Introduction

To advance the national actions outlined in the *HEA Race Equality Implementation Plan* and the recommendations of the *Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector* Report, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) is seeking to support two sectoral campaigns in the Academic Year 2025-2026.

- **Theme A: National Anti-Racism Awareness Raising Campaign** across the Irish higher education sector, across campuses and on online platforms.
- **Theme B: Voluntary Disclosure Campaign** focused on highlighting the importance of equality monitoring data.

The purpose of this Call is to support innovative and evidence-based awareness campaigns to be implemented collaboratively by HEIs. It is also envisioned that the campaigns will support the commitments made by HEIs under the *Anti-Racism Principles for Irish Higher Education Institutions*.

### Timeframe

- Call for applications issues to HEIs – 19th of September 2025
- Deadline for applications – 12:00pm, 31st of October 2025
- Announcement of outcome – Q4 2025

### Requirements

Applicants should consider the points a - e below and address these in the application form:

#### a. Evidence-informed rationale

The campaign objectives and methodology should be informed by the latest evidence and research, including lessons from similar campaigns.

#### b. Clearly defined target groups and tailored strategies

Each campaign's target audience should be clearly defined and align with the articulated objectives. Each campaign should target staff (or specific cohorts of staff) as a primary audience, but applicants are encouraged to consider incorporating students (or specific

cohorts of students) as a target audience where possible. Strategies, messaging, and channels of communication should be tailored to suit the specific dynamics of the target audiences.

Consideration should be given to ensuring that the campaign messaging does not inadvertently reinforce unhelpful myths or stereotypes. An inclusive, positive, and creative approach is recommended.

Consultation with the intended target audiences on the design of the campaign, in addition to pre-testing of campaign messaging, is strongly encouraged to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

### c. Clearly defined, specific, and feasible campaign objectives/outcomes

Anticipated **campaign outcomes should be clearly articulated**, SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timebound), and supported by a clear rationale founded in evidence.

**Outcomes** are the intended changes/impacts to be achieved as a result of the delivery of the campaign, i.e. what difference did it make to the target group(s)?

Applicants must clearly describe the mechanisms to monitor and track the achievement of the proposed outcomes. Monitoring mechanisms may be quantitative or qualitative and include pre- and post-training surveys, anonymous reporting statistics, formal or informal disclosure rates, feedback gathered via focus groups, etc.

Both campaigns are expected to contribute to achieving, at a national level, the relevant recommendations set out in the Race Equality Report.

### Theme A: National Anti-Racism Awareness Raising Campaign

The Race Equality Report notes “[o]ur research points at a general lack of understanding what constitutes racism, racial harassment, abuse, discrimination and microaggressions within HEIs. We recommend increasing both staff and students’ understanding of these issues through appropriate training opportunities that would go beyond unconscious bias training.”

Applications for **Theme A** are expected to contribute to achieving, at a national level, the recommendation for *sustained anti-racist campaigns on campus and on online platforms*.

Under **Theme A**, applicants can determine the campaign outcomes, which could range from improving knowledge and understanding of racism among specific target audiences; improving awareness and accessibility of specific policies and reporting mechanisms; to challenging unhelpful social norms and attitudes that contribute towards the perpetuation of race inequality in higher education.

### Theme B: Voluntary Disclosure Campaign

Applications for **Theme B** are expected to contribute to achieving, at a national level, the recommendation for “*systematic collection of data which will provide the necessary evidence base regarding staff and student representation, access and outcome by ethnicity, and benchmarking of this data against Census data.*”

Under **Theme B**, applicants can determine the campaign outcomes, which could range from improving knowledge, understanding and trust in HEI equality data collection to improving awareness of data collection purposes under specific equality grounds. It is expected under **Theme B** that, consideration is given to assisting HEIs in improving data collection capacity across all equality grounds, with a particular focus on ethnicity as an area where the HEA currently requests data from HEIs.

#### d. Evaluation of the Outcomes of the Campaign

It is expected that plans to evaluate the success of the campaign and to gather useful learning and feedback are built into the campaign design from the outset. When defining and refining objectives, due consideration should be given to the expected outcomes of the campaign, the indicators of success and how they will be measured. This should include a consideration of associated monitoring and evaluation costs which can be incorporated into the budget as necessary. It is anticipated that the progress and learning generated by the campaign will support the effectiveness of future campaigns.

Participating in a sectoral campaign does not negate the need for HEIs to carry out (and invest in) continuous ongoing awareness raising specifically in relation to its own specific policies, procedures, and practices. It is acknowledged that campaigns may have an effect on the numbers of people seeking support from their HEI. Applicants (under Theme A in particular) should articulate in their application how they have considered the issues this campaign will raise for staff and students who experience racism and the appropriate support that may be required.

It is also acknowledged that awareness raising campaigns are not sufficient as a standalone measure to tackle racism and race inequality or to promote the collection of equality related data. Participating institutions should consider how campaigns are complemented with training, skills building, and supports available at both national and/or HEI level. Applicants should also articulate the expected long-term impacts and benefits of the proposed campaign to addressing racism in HEIs, beyond the funding period.

#### e. Benefit to Stakeholders Nationally

HEI commitment to the Anti-Racism Principles across the sector presents an excellent opportunity to design effective and engaging campaigns that are evidence-informed, responsive to the needs of the sector, and that maximise potential efficiencies and impact.

Applicants are encouraged to include as many HEI partners as is practicable, **with the minimum requirement being five HEI partners**. It is anticipated that HEI internal resources will be leveraged to support the campaign, such as communications, marketing, and research expertise. Partnerships with relevant external stakeholders are also encouraged.

It is intended that resulting assets from the sectoral campaigns can be adapted for future use. It is intended that insights from these sectoral campaigns will provide a basis for further collaboration and learning that can be applied at HEI level.

## Application Procedure

Applications should be submitted using the application template by email to [EDI@hea.ie](mailto:EDI@hea.ie) by 12:00pm, 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2025.

Applicants **must clearly indicate which campaign theme (A or B)** they are applying for on the application form.

In submitting an application, all partner HEIs will be deemed to have accepted the conditions outlined in this and any subsequent clarifications from the HEA regarding this initiative and to have agreed to be bound by them. Furthermore, signing of the application by the Vice President/Director of EDI (or heads of institution) reflects acceptance of the award and a commitment to provide the necessary support for the programme of activity. All applications must be signed by the **Vice-Presidents/Directors of EDI** of the collaborating institutions or their authorised nominee.

## HEI Eligibility

1. Eligible higher education institutions under this initiative are those listed in Appendix 1.
2. Proposals must be collaborative and involve at least **five** eligible higher education institutions. Wider participation of HEIs is encouraged, but applications must demonstrate the commitment and contribution of all institutions participating in the project. Collaboration with students or student representative bodies is permitted.
3. All proposals must nominate a lead institution for administrative and financial purposes.
4. As per Appendix 1, eligible institutions can act as lead or partner in proposals. Relevant non-HEI organisations may be included in proposals as partners in addition to the five eligible HEIs.
5. HEIs from outside of Ireland may be included in proposals as advisory partners in addition to the five eligible HEIs.
6. Applications are welcomed from all staff members (academic, research, professional, management and support staff) of the relevant higher education institution. Staff intending to submit applications should contact the office of the Vice-President/Director of EDI in their institution. All applications must be signed by the Vice-President/Director of EDI in each participant institution. Undergraduate or

postgraduate students may participate in projects under the supervision of the project lead.

## Budget

The total funding available is **€95,000 for Theme A: National Awareness Raising Campaign** and **€95,000 for Theme B: Voluntary Disclosure Campaign**.

The HEA reserves the right to allocate more than one award and to allocate more or less than the total funding envelope as is deemed appropriate. In the event where the funding envelope in one call priority area is not fully allocated, the HEA reserves the right to reallocate funding to another priority area if there are highly ranked proposals.

Applications may include a **maximum funding request of €95,000 from the HEA**. Project budgets may incorporate in-kind contributions/ co-funding.

Funding for the successful applicants will be provided in 2 stages: 80% of the budget will be provided at the outset of projects, with the remaining 20% provided upon receipt of a satisfactory interim activity and expenditure report.

Projects must be completed within 18 months of HEIs receiving initial funding. Award holders may request no-cost extensions to this timeframe in exceptional circumstances. Requests for changes or no-cost extensions must be submitted to the HEA in advance, and these will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## Eligible Costs

- Costs may include buy-out costs for staff already employed in the institutions hosting the project. No further funding will be made available during the course of a project to cover increases in salary costs.
- Salary costs may be sought for staff recruited onto a project. The staff employment and/or buy-out costs should be in accordance with institutional norms.<sup>1</sup>
- Consumables and travel costs.
- Costs may include fees, consumables, travel and maintenance grants/stipends for graduate students and post-doctoral salaries which facilitate participation in the project. As the projects are of a maximum of 18 months duration, applicants must document the confirmed source of funding beyond the project lifetime for graduate student fees and stipends/maintenance.
- Postdoctoral and Research Assistant salaries must begin no lower than at the first point on the Irish Universities' Association salary scale or an equivalent.
- Inter-institutional visiting researcher's costs may also be included once clearly justified.
- Costs may be sought for third parties or consultants whose skills are crucial to the completion of the project (e.g., communications expert, public engagement

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<sup>1</sup> HEIs should take into account the findings and recommendations of the *Second Review of Gender Equality* in relation to precarity.

practitioner, etc.). The necessity of these skillsets for the delivery of the project must be demonstrated in the application and steps should be taken to capture and share learnings with the HEI project partners.

- Requests for costs for community participants should align with institutional norms.
- Costs for small equipment (e.g. laptops) may be included but justification must be provided illustrating that the equipment is absolutely necessary to carry out the project and that such a facility is not available through other means project. All costs for equipment must clearly pertain to the proposal submitted to the Call. Costs for equipment that are not fundamental to an approved project will not be permitted.
- Modest institutional overheads may be included up to a maximum of 25% of pay costs (full-time personnel or full-time equivalency basis). Where a staff member is not working full-time on the project, overheads may be calculated on a pro rata basis. Research student stipends and equipment should not be included as pay for the purpose of overhead calculation. Institutions may submit a flat rate for overheads at the time of application, provided this does not exceed 25% of pay costs requested from the HEA budget, and is within the maximum overall funding request per campaign of €95,000.
- Other costs required must be specifically identified and justified, e.g., fieldwork, data collection, archives, open access publication, access to national infrastructures, etc.
- Costs to fund estates, room rental, or office space within or outside of an institution are not allowable expenses.
- Costs cannot be sought for seed funding to support further funding calls or sub-projects.
- No additional funding over and above agreed allocations to successful projects will be made available by the HEA.

## Assessment Panel

The HEA will establish an Assessment Panel to evaluate the applications received. The Assessment Panel will comprise members with relevant expertise. In establishing the Assessment Panel, due regard shall be given to gender balance.

The Assessment Panel will consider the extent to which the applications meet the criteria of the Call as outlined in this document.

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

The HEA's decision on the award of funding under this call is final.

## Assessment Criteria

In accordance with the objective of this Call and the requirements described above, the following criteria will be used to assess proposals. A minimum threshold will apply in respect of

each of the assessment criteria. Only proposals which score 500 marks (50%) or above will be considered for funding. Meeting the minimum threshold is not a guarantee of funding.

Assessment Criterion	Details of Assessment Criterion	Maximum Score	Minium Qualifying Threshold
1. Rationale	<p>A strong rationale supported by the latest data and evidence, including reference to survey data, HEI and national data collection, reporting data, research etc where relevant.</p> <p>Alignment with relevant recommendations of the Race Equality Report, the relevant actions under the Race Equality Implementation Plan and HEI commitments under the Anti-Racism Principles.</p> <p>Learning from practice and research has been considered and integrated into the design of the campaign.</p>	250 marks	125 marks
2. Project Design and Description	<p>Clear description and timeline of activities, deliverables, outputs.</p> <p>Clear description of how the project will be managed and the role of each institution in the project.</p> <p>Carefully considered methodologies and target group selection, supported by evidence.</p> <p>An inclusive, positive, and creative approach to campaign messaging.</p> <p>Risks are carefully considered and appropriate mitigation strategies put in place.</p> <p>Overall quality of the campaign design.</p>	250 marks	125 marks

3. Outcomes, Monitoring and Evaluation	<p>Articulation of anticipated SMART outcomes (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound).</p> <p>Incorporation of measures to track and measure outcomes and capture learning.</p>	150 marks	75 marks
4. Benefit to HEI Stakeholders nationally	<p>Strategic partnerships and collaboration.</p> <p>Collaboration/co-creation of campaign messaging with staff and students that experience racism or other types of discrimination.</p> <p>Plans to disseminate and embed learning in future initiatives.</p> <p>Potential for replicability and wider sectoral impact.</p> <p>Innovative or pilot approaches and potential for learning.</p>	250 marks	125 marks
5. Value for money and impact of programme	<p>Value for money and impact of the campaign.</p> <p>Costs are appropriately justified and aligned with the expected outcomes of the project.</p> <p>A feasible and achievable initiative within the proposed budget and timeframe.</p>	100 marks	50 marks

## Reporting and Monitoring

It is expected that a robust monitoring system will be developed and resourced, and that the project outcomes and expenditure will be appropriately tracked.

The successful applicants will be required to present an overview of campaign plans to relevant HEA national level advisory and stakeholder groups, to be specified by the HEA.

Institutions with successful proposals will be required to submit an interim report to the HEA on progress and expenditure after 12 months and a final report one month after the end of the



project. Funding balances will not be allocated unless an interim report is submitted within the agreed timelines and accepted by the HEA.

Should an institution be successful for funding under this Call, institutions will be required, as per S38(2) of the HEAA 2022:

- a) to provide financial and other information to the HEA CEO;
- b) to use the funding in a cost effective and beneficial manner;
- c) to operate according to standards of good governance;
- d) to comply with the guidelines, codes and policies issued by the HEA under S143 of the HEAA 2022;
- e) to comply on a continuous basis with the funding framework;
- f) to comply with financial requirements;
- g) to comply with the HEAA 2022 and regulations made thereunder; and
- h) to comply with such other conditions as may be determined, with the approval of the HEA Board, by the HEA CEO.

The HEA reserves the right to terminate funding in circumstances such as, but not limited to, the following:

- a) if progress is unsatisfactory,
- b) if funds have not been used for the activities/research approved,
- c) if work has stopped on the research project,
- d) if reporting requirements are not adhered to,
- e) if the project team or project contravenes institutional and/or national policies, or
- f) if ethical approval is not granted where it is required.

## Appendix 1: Eligible HEIs

Higher education institutions that are eligible to apply as a **lead institution or partner institution** under this initiative are included below:

- Atlantic Technological University
- Dublin City University
- Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Mary Immaculate College
- Maynooth University
- Munster Technological University
- National College of Art and Design
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, University of Medicine and Health Sciences
- South East Technological University
- Technological University Dublin
- Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College Cork
- University College Dublin
- University of Galway
- University of Limerick

Higher education institutions and representative bodies that are eligible to apply as a **partner institution only** under this initiative are included below:

- Carlow College
- Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies
- National College of Ireland
- Irish Universities Association
- Technological Universities Association