

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Area Code	COMM
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Head of Function responsible:	EDI Manager
Approving Authority:	Governing body/ Executive.

1. Purpose of Document

The purpose of this policy is to set out IT Sligo's commitment to the principles and promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of institutional activity and to detail how this policy will be implemented.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All applicants for employment, employees and all those who work for the Institute and relates to all decisions in relation to recruitment and selection, promotion, access to training and terms and conditions of employment.
- All students and student applicants and relates to all decisions in respect of the admission of students and the provision of all services to students including teaching and supervision, assessment, progression and award and support services.
- All campus users, visitors, customers, service providers and clients of the Institute and relates to all services provided by the Institute in its diverse activities both internal and external.

3. Reference Documents

Employment Equality Acts 1998-2011(as amended) and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2012 (as amended)

4. Policy Description

4.1 Introduction

The Institute seeks to provide an inclusive environment which promotes equality and values diversity and inclusion. It is committed to maintaining an environment of dignity and respect where all staff and students can develop to their full potential. The concept of equality is central to our ethos of academic, service and business excellence.

The Institute is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the continued development of employment policies, procedures and practices which promote equality and prevent discrimination on the specified statutory grounds of gender, civil status, family status, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or membership of the Travelling community.

This policy sets out the Institute's commitment to providing equal access to and participation by students, staff members or service users.

4.2 Legislative Context

This policy is informed by the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2011(as amended) and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2012 (as amended) which prohibit direct and indirect discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and victimisation in relation to nine specified equality grounds: gender, family status, civil status, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, ethnicity and membership of the Traveller community.

The Employment Equality Acts prohibit discrimination in employment, including recruitment, promotion, pay and other conditions of employment. The Equal Status Acts prohibit discrimination in access to and provision of services, accommodation and educational establishments.

The Institutes of Technology Act 2006 places obligations on Governing Bodies to promote equality, diversity and inclusion among the students and staff of Institutes, specifically with regard to gender balance, and access.

The Disability Act 2005 (as amended) places significant obligations on public bodies in terms of providing integrated access to services and information to people with disabilities, as well as promoting the employment of people with disabilities.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 requires that in the performance of their functions public bodies shall have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and treatment and protect the human rights of staff and service users. This policy reflects the Institute's commitment to honour its obligations under these Acts.

4.3 Consultation

This policy has been developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders across the Institute and with the guidance of the Governing Body EDI Committee. Stakeholder groups consulted included:

Executive & Senior Management Teams, Trade Unions through the Information & Consultation Forum, Students Union and Academic Council.

4.4 Statement of Commitment

IT Sligo:

- Is committed to non-discrimination (direct or indirect) in access and participation in education and employment in relation to any of the nine specified equality grounds of gender, family status, civil status, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, ethnicity and membership of the Traveller community.
- Strives to ensure that the provision of all services shall be free from any discrimination and harassment.
- Supports an inclusive and supportive environment of equality, dignity and respect where all staff and students can develop their full potential.
- Will not tolerate harassment or bullying of staff, students or other members of the community. Failure to comply can result in disciplinary action under the Dignity at Work Policy in the case of employees and the Student Charter in the case of students.
- Is committed to identifying barriers to equality, diversity, inclusion and full participation and any identified imbalances in practice will be redressed.
- Is committed to providing integrated accessible services and information to all users and will seek to ensure that information is produced in accessible information formats.
- Will provide reasonable accommodation to students, staff and service users with disabilities.
- Will support and advocate the employment of staff with disabilities.
- Is committed to widening participation and facilitating access to programmes by students from under-represented groups.

4.5 Mainstreaming:

The Institute is committed to 'mainstream' principles of equality, diversity and inclusion as an integral part of its planning processes so as to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is incorporated into all strategic planning and decision-making activities and policies.

An Equality Impact Assessment template (Appendix 2) will be implemented and applied to all new and amended policies and procedures.

4.6 Other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following IT Sligo policies and procedures:

- Flexible Working & Leave Policies
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Student Charter
- Students Complaint & Appeal Procedure

Note: IT Sligo has a number of specific policies in place to provide for flexible working and leave arrangements including: Maternity Leave Policy, Parental Leave Policy, Adoptive Leave Policy, Paternity Leave Policy, Career Break Policy, Flexible Working Scheme Policy, Job Share Policies, Work Sharing Scheme, Shorter Working Year Scheme

4.7 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Employment.

This section outlines how the Institute's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, non-discrimination, equal access and participation apply to employment practices and procedures. The policy affects all areas of employment practice including recruitment and selection, training and development, progression, pay, employment conditions and retention.

4.7.1 Recruitment and selection

In relation to the recruitment and selection of staff the Institute shall:

- Select candidates on the basis of merit and ensure that candidates with the demonstrable skills, competencies, talent and experience most suited to the advertised post are selected.
- Not discriminate directly or indirectly against any applicant or candidate seeking employment on the basis of any of the nine equality grounds.
- Identify and remove barriers that might impede the application or selection of an eligible candidate, across all nine specified equality grounds.
- Ensure that application processes are open to any eligible candidate who may wish to apply.
- Provide reasonable accommodation to applicants with disabilities throughout the selection process
- Develop inclusive recruitment practices that acknowledge the diversity of applicants and candidates for employment.
- Provide a flexible service and facilitate communication between applicants and recruitment staff in order to facilitate the recruitment process.
- Provide materials in accessible or alternative formats.

- Seek information on the diversity profile of employment applicants to monitor how the success of recruitment campaigns in attracting a diversity of applicants.
- All recruitment staff will receive training in the implementation of this policy.
- Ensure transparency of recruitment procedures.

Definitions are in Appendix 1.

4.7.2 Recruitment Advertising

- Provide job specifications that set out both mandatory, essential, and desirable requirements, skills, knowledge, experience and competencies for each position.
- Ensure that the drafting of job descriptions and advertisements does not directly or indirectly exclude any potential applicant.
- Ensure that the drafting of job descriptions does not include unnecessary requirements that would unfairly exclude or dissuade potential applicants.
- Direct and target recruitment to ensure that advertisements reach a broad and diverse candidate pool.

4.7.3 Selection Boards

- Provide Fair Recruitment training to all Institute members who participate on selection boards.
- Selection boards will consist of a minimum of 40% female and 40% male members. Selection board members should also be sought from other under-represented groups such as minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities and the LGBTQI community.
- Draft shortlisting will be undertaken by one male and one female member of the selection board.
- Commit to standard agreed and objective schemes for rating candidates on the basis of experience, skill, qualifications and matching specified requirements.
- Any medical test required will be assessed in relation to the specific duties of the job. Employees who disclose a disability will be provided with reasonable accommodation as outlined in the Code of Practice.

4.7.4 Training and Development

The Institute will:

- Ensure that every employee has equal access to training and development opportunities.
- Seek to ensure that programmes provided are inclusive and accommodate the diversity of staff.
- Mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion issues in training programmes as appropriate.

4.7.5 Progression

The Institute shall:

- Ensure that all staff enjoy equal access to progression and promotional opportunities.
- Monitor promotional processes in order to ensure equality of opportunity in career progression in the Institute.
- Identify barriers to progression for staff with particular reference to the nine specified grounds and, where appropriate, implement measures to redress imbalances.

4.7.6 Retention and Wellbeing

- Seek to retain and develop the potential and talents of all staff.
- Make every effort to retain employees who may develop a disability or who experience a deterioration of a disability.
- Provide equal access to work life balance policies and benefits as appropriate.
- Provide access to the Employee Assistance Programme as widely as possible.
- Ensure that the Dignity at Work Policy is upheld through training and awareness-raising.
- Give due consideration to the accommodation of diversity throughout all industrial relations matters (grievances, disciplinary matters etc.). All employment practices and procedures shall be reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with current legislation and with this policy and that they address and support equality, diversity, inclusion of access, opportunity and participation.

4.8 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Service Provision

This section outlines how the Institute's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, non-discrimination and to equal access and participation apply to educational and other services.

The Institute shall ensure equality, diversity and inclusion of access and opportunity for students and shall ensure that all admissions process, assessment and other related procedures do not discriminate directly or indirectly against any student in relation to any of the specified nine equality grounds.

The Institute shall seek to provide high quality services in an inclusive, accessible and flexible manner to the diversity of the student and service user population.

4.8.1 Widening Participation

The Institute facilitates access to programmes by students from underrepresented groups. These initiatives are governed by the HEA National Access Strategy and implemented through various recruitment and outreach activities, including a comprehensive Lifelong Learning programme offering alternative progression routes and its policy on Recognition of Prior Learning. The Institute offers a range of student services to support students during their academic progression, and to facilitate them achieve successful outcomes on their programmes.

4.8.2 Inclusive teaching and learning

The Institute seeks to embed inclusiveness within all activities and academic practices. This supports the Institute's overarching mission to enhance and enrich the student experience, and is aligned with the strategic aims of increasing diversity and internationalisation. The Centre for the Enhancement of Learning & Teaching offers a range of guidelines, templates and resources to enable staff to embed inclusive principles within teaching and assessment practices, particularly through the application of the principle of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

4.8.3 Accommodating diversity

The Institute shall accommodate the diversity of students and service users with reference to the nine specified equality grounds by:

- Active identification of and addressing the student and service user needs across the nine grounds. A range of different data, feedback and consultation methods will be used for this purpose.
- Providing reasonable accommodation for the needs of students and service users with disabilities and providing integrated access to services where practicable.
- Identifying and addressing barriers to participation for service users and students.
- Taking positive action measures to promote equality, diversity and inclusion of opportunity for disadvantaged persons where necessary.
- Ensuring flexibility in the operation of systems and services to allow for the diversity within the service user and student base to be accommodated.

4.8.4 Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities

The Institute seeks to ensure that students, staff and service users with a disability have as complete and equitable an access to all services and student experience as can reasonably be provided. The Institute is committed to an active programme of enhancement of physical access to facilities and to providing accessible information.

The Access Office provides a centralised service offering support to students with disabilities.

The Institute endeavours to anticipate the requirements of other service users and visitors to its campuses and to identify and remove any unnecessary barriers to accessing the relevant services. The Institute shall facilitate the provision of accessible information, alternative formats or means of communication and other accommodations where practicable and shall seek to create an environment where service users with disabilities can discuss their needs with staff.

4.9 Student and Service user feedback

Quality enhancement systems incorporate mechanisms to capture feedback from students across academic programmes and services from students. The Institute welcomes and encourages specific feedback from students and service users from across the nine equality grounds. Regular consultation with student and staff representatives occurs via the Academic Council Committee and Faculty Programme Board systems.

4.10 Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Services

The Institute continues to develop systems to collect and analyse a broad range of information relating to equality, diversity and inclusion as it relates to the student, staff and service user body. This process shall identify areas of disadvantage and barriers to participation and it shall also benchmark progress.

From time to time, surveys, focus groups, external review or other means of consultation are deployed as appropriate mechanisms to inform this process. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee has a particular role in overseeing the development and embedding of this monitoring processes. Each area which provides a service (academic, student service or other) has responsibility for ensuring the inclusiveness of the provision of services and for identifying strategies to address any potential barriers to student or service user participation. Service areas shall report on the implementation of this policy in the context of annual reports and the PSS review process.

4.11 Implementation

4.11.1 Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to ensure equality and access. The Governing Body has established an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, which will have responsibility for the development and monitoring of policies and practices in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Each area that provides a service, academic, student service or other type of service, has the responsibility to ensure the service provided observes and upholds the commitments outlined in this policy.

Heads of Faculty, Heads of Department, Heads of Function and others in positions of authority shall ensure that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy is upheld in respect of staff, students, and service users.

All staff, students, campus users and others conducting business with the institute have a duty to act in a manner which promotes equality and diversity and maintains an environment of dignity and respect. All external business contracts shall reflect this requirement.

Specific objectives for the implementation of this policy shall be included in future strategic planning.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is responsible for reviewing the implementation of this policy regularly and for any amendments to the policy.

4.11.2 Communications

Information materials produced by the Institute are provided in a relevant and accessible manner to students, staff and service users.

Information in paper, electronic and web formats is made accessible following best practice guidelines on clear print and alternative formats.

Advertising and marketing strategies are non-discriminatory and communicate the commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Direct contact with students, staff and service users shall be conducted in a courteous and professional manner consistent with an environment of dignity and respect

The Institute shall communicate this policy widely so as to reach all staff, managers, students, service users, Trade Unions and associations, and business contractors via a broad range of channels including (but not limited to): website, e-mail, information materials, provision of in-service and induction training, publication and dissemination.

4.11.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion infrastructure

The Governing Body has established an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee which shall support the implementation of this policy.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager is a member of the Committee and supports the Committee in implementing this policy, liaising with relevant departments and services and providing advice to staff and students on the contents of this policy.

4.11.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training and awareness

The Institute shall implement equality and diversity training and awareness programmes in order to ensure the implementation throughout the Institute of this policy with regard to employment and service delivery. Equality, diversity and inclusion shall be mainstreamed in training programmes relevant to employment, teaching or service provision.

Human Resources and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee have a particular responsibility with regard to these commitments.

4.11.5 Business contractors

The Institute seeks to ensure that other companies from whom it has contracted to receive goods and services are aware that this policy is in place and that such companies are expected to comply with it. Any breach of this policy or the Dignity at Work policy may constitute grounds for suspension or cancellation of such a contract.

4.11.6 Complaints procedures: staff, students, service users

The Institute's complaint procedures do not affect the right of a person to initiate a complaint under the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2010 or the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2010.

Employment Complaints

Complaint procedures for staff members regarding employment matters follow the usual staff grievance procedures procedure.

Student Complaints

Complaint procedures for students follow the Student Charter and Complaints procedure.

Bullying and Harassment Complaints

Dignity and Respect complaints procedures: consult the Dignity at Work Policy detailing formal and informal processes.

4.11.7 Monitoring and review

The Institute shall actively seek feedback on the implementation and review of this policy from staff, students and service users.

The implementation of the policy shall be reviewed at the end of its first year and the subsequently on a regular basis by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the policy shall be updated on foot of this review or other legislative changes.

Each service, administrative and academic area shall include a report addressing the implementation of this policy as part of their review cycle and this will serve to inform the EDI Committee as part of its on-going monitoring of progress on the implementation process.

The EDI Committee shall provide regular progress reports to Governing Body on the implementation and development of policy.

4.11.8 Resources: information, advice and support

- EDI Manager
- Human Resources
- Trade Unions
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Student Counselling Service
- Student Support Services Officer
- Pastoral Care Co-ordinator
- Student Health Services
- Student Union Welfare Officer
- Student Union President
- Access Office

5. Procedures and Records generated by this Policy

See list above

6. Revision History

Revision No	Description of Change	Issue Date	Status
000	New Policy	29/07/2021	Approved by exe on 5/5/2021 and GB on 16/06/2021

Appendix 1 Definitions

About Equality

The principal of equality is enshrined in the Irish Constitution and in many international and EU treaties and declarations.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sees equality as a fundamental principle in terms of a person's human rights – 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights', Art. 1.

Key pieces of equality legislation in Ireland are the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2011 and Equal Status Acts 2000-2012.

Equality grounds

Discrimination is prohibited by legislation on the basis of any of the following grounds:

- gender: a man, a woman, or a transsexual person
- civil status: single, married, separated, divorced, widowed, civil partner, former civil partner.
- family status: pregnant, a parent of a person under 18 years, or the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability;
- age: this only applies to people over 16 except for the provision of car insurance to licensed drivers under this age;
- race and ethnicity: a particular race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin;
- religion: different religious belief, background, outlook or none;
- disability: this is broadly defined including people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions;
- sexual orientation: Gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual;
- membership of the Traveller community: people who are commonly called Travellers, who are identified both by Travellers and others as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, identified historically as a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.

Discrimination

Discrimination is prohibited and has a specific meaning in the Employment Equality Acts and Equal Status Acts. Discrimination is defined as the treatment of a person in a less favourable way than another person is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on any of the nine equality grounds. Discrimination can be direct, indirect, by association or imputation.

Indirect discrimination Indirect discrimination happens when there is less favourable treatment in effect or by impact. It happens when people are, for example, refused employment or training not explicitly on account of a discriminatory reason but because of a provision, practice or requirement

which they find hard to satisfy. If the provision, practice or requirement puts people who belong to one of the grounds covered by the Acts at a particular disadvantage then the employer is deemed to have indirectly discriminated, unless the provision is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

Harassment

Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine discriminatory grounds that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

In both cases the unwanted conduct may include acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material. The emphasis is on the effect of the unwanted conduct on the recipient, not on the intention of the perpetrator.

There are other forms of bullying and harassment which are not included in the Acts but covered by other legislation such as the Employment Equality Acts, the Unfair Dismissals Acts, the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, Civil Law and Criminal Law.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the (re)-organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors typically involved in policy making. (Council of Europe Group of Specialists definition).

The aim of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality in practice. Equality impact assessments and equality proofing are tools to achieving the goal of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming involves an analysis of the effects of policies and practices on women and men respectively, as part of the usual decision-making process.

Positive action

The Equality Acts allow for preferential treatment or the taking of positive measures which are bona fide intended to:

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Cater for the special needs of persons, or a category of persons who because of their circumstances, may require facilities, arrangements, services or assistance

Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities: in service provision.

A person selling goods or providing services, a person providing accommodation, educational institutions and clubs are required to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability.

This involves providing special treatment or facilities in circumstances where without these, it would be impossible or unduly difficult to avail of the goods, services, accommodation etc.

Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities: in employment

Nothing in the Act requires an employer to recruit or promote a person who is not fully competent and fully available and capable of undertaking the duties attached to the position. For the purposes of the Act a person who has a disability is considered fully competent and capable on reasonable accommodation (referred to as appropriate measures) being provided by the person's employer.

An employer is obliged to take appropriate measures to enable a person who has a disability:

- to have access to employment
- to participate or advance in employment
- to undertake training unless the measures would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer.

Appropriate measures are practical measures to adapt the employer's place of business including:

- the adaptation of premises and equipment,
- patterns of working time
- distribution of tasks
- or the provision of training or integration resources
- The employer is not obliged to provide any treatment, facility or item that the person might ordinarily or reasonably provide for himself or herself.

In determining whether the measures would impose a disproportionate burden, account is taken of the financial and other costs entailed, the scale and financial resources of the employer's business, and the possibility of obtaining public funding or other assistance. (Employment equality acts)

Service user:

The policy applies to all service users, visitors, customers and clients of the Institute. The term 'service user' is then used as shorthand for all customers, visitors, clients, guests and service users of the Institute, including students.

Vicarious liability:

Employers are liable for discriminatory acts of an employee in the course of his or her employment, unless they can prove that they took reasonably practicable steps to prevent the conduct.

Appendix 2

IT SLIGO EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM		
Name of Policy:		Is this New? [] Or Existing? []
Assessment conducted by:		Date of Assessment:
Department/Faculty:	Head of Department's signature:	
<p>1. Evidence considered. What data or other information have you used to evaluate if this policy, procedure or practice is likely to have a positive or an adverse impact upon protected groups when implemented?</p>		
<p>2. Consultation. Have you consulted staff representatives including those from protected groups? What were their views?</p>		
<p>3. Promoting equality. Does this policy have a positive impact on equality? What evidence is there to support this? Could it do more?</p>		
<p>4. Identifying the adverse impact of policies Identify any issues in the document which could have an adverse impact on the following protected groups:</p>		
People from different age groups People with disabilities (impact may differ according to physical, cognitive and mental health conditions and impairments) Women and men (including parents and carers)	Members of minority ethnic groups Members of the Travelling Community Those who are pregnant or on maternity leave Religious people or those with strongly held philosophical beliefs	

Transgender people Lesbian gay and bisexual people			People who are married or in a civil partnership		
Issue Assessed <i>E.g. policy section or practice.</i>	Protected Group	Evidence <i>Refer to information gathered (1) and consultation (2) and any relevant research findings</i>	Justification <i>Can the issue be justified for academic or business reasons? Please explain.</i>	Proposed Action/Timeline <i>If the issue cannot be fully justified, identify the action(s) to be taken</i>	Person responsible for action(s)
5. Monitoring How will you monitor the impact of the policy on protected groups?					