



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

Equality Committee Annual Report

2015-2016

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Introduction

This is the Annual Report of the Equality Committee to Board detailing activities during the 2015/16 academic year.

The Equality Committee Terms of Reference (approved by Board in June 2012) are included in Appendix 1. The Equality Committee is a compliance Committee of Board with responsibility for advising Board and Council on all equality-related matters. The duties of the Equality Committee include assisting Board and Council in the development, co-ordination and implementation of equality policies, practices and action plans throughout Trinity.

The Equality Committee operates under delegated authority from the Board, which is ultimately responsible for all matters relating to equality.

Legislation

The Equality Committee advises Board on legal requirements arising from The Universities Act 1997, The Employment Equality Act 1998-2015, The Equal Status Act 2000-2015, Disability Act 2005, The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 and any other relevant legislation.

The key aspects of the legislation for Trinity are:

- Trinity is to promote gender balance and equality of opportunity among students and employees of the university as one of its objectives under The Universities Act 1997.
- The Equal Status and Employment Equality Acts outlaw direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment on the following 10 grounds: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or ethnicity, membership of the Traveller community and a new ground of “housing assistance”.
- These Acts place a responsibility on Trinity as the employer and educational establishment not to discriminate on any of these grounds against staff,

students or service users; and to take reasonably practicable steps to prevent discriminatory conduct by its employees.

- The Equal Status Act and Employment Equality Act allow for preferential treatment or the taking of positive measures which are intended to promote equality of opportunity for disadvantaged persons; or cater for the special needs of persons who may require facilities, arrangements, services or assistance. For example, training for particular groups of staff, or reasonable accommodations required by staff with disabilities.
- The Disability Act 2005 requires all public bodies to fulfil a 3% employment target of staff with disabilities, and to monitor and report on the achievement of this target annually.
- The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 states that public bodies have a positive duty to promote human rights and equality in the performance of their functions.

Policy

Trinity's commitment to promoting equality in all its activities is outlined in the College Equality Policy, the most recent version of which was approved by Board in January 2016.

The Equality Committee is also responsible for the review and implementation of a range of Trinity policies, including but not limited to:

- Dignity and Respect Policy (2016)
- Accessible Information Policy (2011)
- Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy (2014)
- Policy on Supports for Student Parents, Student Carers and Students Experiencing Pregnancy (2013)
- Code of Practice for the Employment of People with Disabilities (2016)

In some cases, the responsibility for review and implementation is shared with other committees / offices such as HR or the Disability Service.

Strategy

Trinity's Strategic Plan 2014-2019 lays out strategic goals for equality as follows:

C8.2 Equality, Diversity and the Irish Language

Commitments to equality and diversity are values on which Trinity's excellence relies. To this end we are committed to creating an inclusive, diverse and pluralist college community and a positive environment in which all can participate, and all are recognized fully for their contributions. We are committed on all equality grounds to protecting staff and students from discrimination and to ensuring that diversity is promoted and celebrated. We are committed to the Irish language as a central aspect of college life and as a valued element of college diversity. We will continue to support the use and promotion of the Irish language, and to improve Irish language services.

We will achieve this objective by:

- embedding the commitment to equality and diversity in all policies and practices and further developing diversity awareness and training programmes
- advancing a structural change process to incorporate gender-balanced representation at all stages and levels, thereby enhancing the quality of Trinity's institutional decision-making
- acting as a national leader to promote the introduction of the Athena SWAN Charter to Ireland and pursuing institutional and school-level Athena SWAN Awards, thereby providing a proven framework through which our position on gender equality can be measured and improved
- promoting the Equality Policy, Dignity and Respect Policy and the Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy
- promoting the employment of people with disabilities, improving their retention and recognizing their contributions
- further developing our supports and training through projects like ConnectAbility
- taking a leading role in sectoral and national initiatives to promote diversity and seeking to raise the university's profile as an inclusive organization"

Meetings

Agendas and minutes of all Equality Committee meetings are publically available at <https://www.tcd.ie/committeepapers/equality/papers/>.

The Committee normally meets four times per year, or as often as may be necessary to complete the business before it. In 2015/16 the Committee met five times:

- 14th October 2015
- 1st December 2015
- 21st January 2016
- 16th March 2016
- 18th May 2016

Membership

The Membership of the Committee in 2015/16 was as follows:

Elected Board Member (Chair)	Prof Catherine McCabe
Vice-Provost	Prof Linda Hogan
Faculty Dean	Prof Mary McCarron
Secretary to the College (nominee)	Ms Sinead MacBride
Academic Secretary (nominee)	Ms Kathleen O'Toole-Brennan
Director of Human Resources (nominee)	Mr Michael McKeown
Director of the Disability Service	Mr Declan Treanor
Representative of the Dignity and Respect Contact Persons	Prof Inmaculada Arnedillo-Sánchez (joined in Hilary term 2016)
Representative of Council	Prof John Walsh
Welfare and Equality Officer of the Students' Union	Mr Conor Clancy
Vice-President and Welfare Officer of the Graduate Students' Union	Ms Gianna Hegarty
Self-nominated member of staff	Prof Martine Cuypers

Self-nominated member of staff	Mr Jim Cumiskey
Self-nominated member of staff	Prof Sabina Brennan (joined in Hilary term 2016)
Equality Officer (secretary)	Ms Aoife Crawford

Equality Officer

An Equality Officer was appointed in 2006 to advise and assist the Equality Committee, and the role was taken up by Ms Aoife Crawford in September 2015. The Equality Officer's role is to promote equality in all areas of university life for both staff and students, covering all 10 grounds of discrimination included in Irish equality legislation. The Equality Officer is secretary to the Equality Committee, and advises the Committee on matters regarding legislation and policy implementation; as well as liaising with the different individuals and groups involved in equality-related matters in Trinity. The Equality Officer is based in the Secretary's Office and reports to the College Solicitor / Information Compliance Officer.

Sub-committees & working groups

The Equality Committee has agreed to found two short-term working groups in 2016/17, on the topics of Deaf Inclusion and the Age-Friendly University. These are additional to the two existing sub-committees of the Equality Committee, described below.

The **Equality Fund Sub-Committee** agrees priority themes for the Equality Fund each year, and evaluates applications for funding. Its 2015/16 membership was:

- The Equality Committee Chair: Prof Catherine McCabe
- A member of the Equality Committee: Mr Michael McKeown (Director of HR's nominee)
- A member of the Equality Committee: Mr Conor Clancy (SU Welfare Officer)
- A nominee from the Treasurer's Office: Ms Claire Keane
- The Equality Officer (secretary): Ms Aoife Crawford

- A student representative from the Equality Committee: Ms Gianna Hegarty (GSU Vice-President)

The Equality Fund sub-committee met on 2nd November 2015 to agree timelines and themes, and on 14th December 2015 to evaluate project applications.

Communication by email was also frequent, dealing with ad hoc issues arising for projects. The Equality Fund Terms of Reference can be found at

<http://www.tcd.ie/equality/assets/pdf/equality-fund/equality-fund-TOR.doc>.

The **Equality Monitoring Advisory Group** assists the Equality Officer in the compilation of data for, and the drafting of, the annual Equality Monitoring Report.

Its members in 2015/16 were as follows:

- Mr Tony McMahon, Director of Diversity and Inclusion
- Ms Paula Kennedy-Hogan, Human Resources
- Prof Andrew Loxley, School of Education
- Ms Clodagh Byrne, Mature Students' Officer, Senior Lecturer's Area
- Ms Caroline Morgan, Disability Service
- Ms Claire Marshall, Programme Manager of WiSER
- Ms Aoife Crawford, Equality Officer (secretary)

The Monitoring Advisory Group met on 16th May 2016 to agree report content and drafting deadlines. The group have also been in regular contact via email between May and September 2016, reviewing the 2015/16 Equality Monitoring Report.

Issues addressed by the Committee in 2015/2016

The Equality Committee had a central role in the revision / development of several policies, strategies and procedures in 2015/16, including the Equality Policy; it provided reports to Board on equality (particularly gender equality); advised on general university activities from an equality perspective; and discussed the transformation of equality policies into action through various initiatives.

Each key area addressed by the Committee in 2015/16 is listed below along with the relevant minute references.

- Tenure Track proposals for new academic staff (Eqal/15-16/005, 017, 024, 049)
- Dignity and Respect Policy Review (Eqal/15-16/006, 029, 039, 050)
- Equality Policy Review (Eqal/15-16/007, 019, 031)
- Equality Policy Implementation Plan (Eqal/15-16/041)
- Implementation of the Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy (Eqal/15-16/008, 021, 035, 036, 043, 050)
- Participation in GLEN Workplace Equality Index (Eqal/15-16/010, 042)
- LGBT Staff Network (Eqal/15-16/042, 050)
- Boardpad (Eqal/15-16/011, 016, 025, 040, 049)
- Equality Fund (Eqal/15-16/012, 016, 032, 056)
- Vacancy for Self-nominated Committee Member (Eqal/15-16/004, 016, 020)
- Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (Eqal/15-16/018, 027, 040, 050, 051)
- Relationship of Equality Committee and Director of Diversity and Inclusion (Eqal /15-16/003, 060)
- Procedures for ISL Provision (Eqal/15-16/026, 040, 053)
- The Age-Friendly University (Eqal/15-16/028, 040, 050)
- Equality Data Monitoring Report 2014/15 (Eqal/15-16/030, 039)
- Equality Champions Awards (Eqal/15-16/034, 046, 055)
- Reports on Gender and Trinity Staff (Eqal/15-16/044, 049)
- Code of Practice Applying to the Employment of People with Disabilities (Eqal/15-16/052)
- Accessible Information Policy Implementation (Eqal/15-16/054)
- Trinity's achievement of a bronze Athena SWAN institutional award (Eqal/15-16/010)
- Awards for Professional Staff (Eqal/15-16/033)
- International Women's Week (Eqal/15-16/045)
- Equality Committee Annual Report (Eqal/15-16/057)
- Membership Review (Eqal/15-16/058)
- Implementation of the Policy on Supports for Student Parents, Student Carers and Students experiencing Pregnancy (Eqal/15-16/009)

Committee Self-Evaluation

Introduction

On 30th May 2016, anonymous self-evaluation questionnaires (on SurveyMonkey) were circulated to all members of the Equality Committee, and 6 responses out of a potential 13 (excluding Chair and Secretary) were received.

Questions in the evaluation were positively worded – for example, “The Committee’s Terms of Reference clearly set out its role”, and respondents were invited to rate their level of agreement (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree).

Members were also invited to make additional free comments at the end of each section of the questionnaire.

Agreement with Positive Statements

Of the 34 positive statements in the questionnaire, no statement received a “strongly disagree”, and 87% (178) of the total (204) answers were “agree” or “strongly agree”.

To the final question, “What is your overall assessment of the performance of the Equality Committee in 2015/16?”, 2 members responded “satisfactory”, 2 members responded “effective” and 2 members responded “very effective”.

Any statements which received 3 or more “Strongly agree” answers, and any statements which received 2 or more “Disagree” answers are noted below, with the relevant number of members shown in (brackets) after each statement. A majority of respondents disagreed with 2 statements, highlighted red.

Strongly Agree (strengths)	Disagree (areas for improvement)
The Committee's Terms of Reference clearly set out its role (3)	Members contribute appropriately to the work of the Committee (2)
Agenda items are relevant to the business of the Committee (3)	There is an appropriate number of Committee meetings within the year (3)
Documentation submitted to the Committee is well-presented, and its purpose is clear (3)	The Committee contributes effectively to implementation of equality policies, practices and action plans throughout the University (2)
Sufficient time is allowed for discussion of agenda items (3)	The Committee contributes effectively to co-ordination across the various bodies involved in the implementation of equality policies throughout the university (4)
Sufficient consideration is given to the views of all Committee members (3)	The Committee contributes effectively to monitoring developments in Irish and EU policies in relation to equality, and advising Board on their implications for Trinity (3)
Minutes honestly reflect the views and decisions of the Committee (3)	There is minimal overlap between the Equality Committee and other Committees (2)
The Committee contributes effectively to assisting Trinity in the development of equality policies, practices and action plans (3)	The Committee liaises effectively with other Committees and bodies in Trinity (4)
The Committee contributes effectively to reviewing Trinity's general practices and policies from an equality perspective, and making recommendations to promote good practice (3)	
The Committee contributes effectively to reporting to Board on equality and diversity in Trinity (3)	
The Equality Fund is awarded to appropriate projects (3)	

According to members' feedback, the Committee has particular strengths in the areas of meeting administration and Chairing, as well as policy development, recommending good practice for Trinity's general activities, and reporting to Board on equality and diversity in Trinity.

Its weaknesses lie in interaction with other related bodies and Committees across Trinity, implementation of policy and recommendations, and advising Board on national and EU developments. Respondents also suggest that improvements could be made in terms of members' contribution to the Committee and in the number of meetings held annually.

Comment themes

The same themes are reflected and developed in the free comments made by members, presented below.

Relationship with other bodies

Several comments relate to the proliferation of separate bodies promoting equality in the university, and to the Committee's interaction and overlap with other committees. Members note challenges of confusion and duplication, as well as opportunities for collaboration:

"The role of the Committee has become somewhat confused in recent times due to the establishment of other stand-alone equality roles and forums."

"This year has presented both challenges/opportunities with the evolution of the role of the Diversity and Inclusion Officer [sic] and the differentiation between the role/scope of that office vis à vis the Equality Committee. It seems as if there is scope for more collaboration so as to maximise potential to achieve a campus community which is characterised as being more diverse, inclusive and offering equal opportunities/outcomes for students, staff and visitors."

"There are many committees with overlapping agendas. The college as a whole needs to consider the TOR [Terms of Reference] for these committees and the way in which information is shared. This is not an Equality Committee failing, but rather a communications issue cross-campus."

"Increasing overlap with some work of HR Committee this year."

Implementation

Other comments highlight the importance of implementing the commitments made in policy documents, and the need for resources to make this a reality. The key role of local areas in implementation is also acknowledged, and training as well as proactive monitoring by the Committee is suggested.

“The Committee struggles with the question of implementation -- both ensuring that the resources and the structures are in place to ensure that some well-considered policies are indeed acted on, in the best interests of all involved. Senior Management in the college need to adequately staff and resource an implementation plan. I feel strongly that this implementation plan should not be centralised, but should offer some localised arrangements for staff awareness/training -- so that every School and Service Area receives equality training on an annual basis -- perhaps even delivered by an able group of trained student ambassadors?”

“Needs to be more proactive in monitoring compliance with Equality policies and ensuring universal implementation of same”

Role of Members

Some members favour a more equal distribution of responsibility between individual members (while noting the pressure on members' time), as well as more diverse representation on the Committee. Attendance is raised as an issue, while guest speakers have been well-received.

“I often feel regretful that I do not provide more support to the Equality Officer/ Chair of the Committee with their work. I think that the establishment of working groups will help, but am also aware that, many of the Committee members (myself included) are spread very thinly and are heavily involved in both policy and practice, leaving very little scope to undertake any additional substantive responsibilities.”

“Should be more representation of staff covered by equality legislation grounds on the panel (notable, open to apply where expressions of interest sought). Consistent absence by certain members of the Committee - often with no apologies - which may mean Committee not as representative and work of committee not equally shared. Recommend Committee includes meetings attended by each Committee Member in its Annual Report to promote attendance.”

“The recent addition of new committee members has been welcomed. Inviting relevant guest speakers to address particular agenda items has also been well-received.”

Agenda Focus

Two members note that the Committee has neglected to examine national and international legal developments in 2015/16, focussing overly on internal policy development.

“We have spent a considerable amount of time revising the College internal policy, and have spent less time considering the national and EU policies, and any updates/changes in this arena of which the Committee may need to be cognizant”

“Has not been much focus/discussion on evolving EU legislation that might be transposed into Irish law”

Meetings

One comment proposes that the frequency of meetings within term-time should be increased.

“Recommend that frequency of meetings increase to two per Semester to keep momentum going on some of the more substantive issues”

Equality Fund

Two comments recommend improvements to the operation of the Equality Fund.

“Perhaps consider a new way for the Equality Fund to be used -- a new format/thematic approach?”

“Explore if any additional monies can be made available to Equality Fund such as is demand for project funding”

Visibility

Three comments made in response to the final question, “What suggestions do you have for improving the effectiveness of the Equality Committee?”, indicate that the work of the Equality Committee should be better publicised.

“Perhaps some means to increase the profile of the Committee or highlight/report on the work done by the Committee among College staff”

“Raise visibility of some of the concrete outcomes which the Equality Committee is driving. Continue to build champions among senior management who continuously emphasise and validate the important work of this committee. Exploit the communications channels across campus, so that the entire College community is made aware of the policies and practices attached to creating a more equal college campus (social media, College webpage, national media, etc.)”

“Update webpage so it has a more modern look (good use made of social media now)”

Suggested Actions

To address the issues raised in the self-assessment survey, the following actions are proposed by the Equality Committee:

- To promote attendance, Section 2.4 of the Equality Committee Terms of Reference (which states that members missing three consecutive meetings without justification deemed sufficient by the Chair should be invited to resign) is to be implemented more strictly – allowing that this action is also agreed by the Secretary’s Office, and the member has been warned of this provision after missing two consecutive meetings.
- Number of Committee meetings to be increased to five in our Terms of Reference (one extra meeting has been needed in 2015/16 and in 2014/15); two meetings to be held during each teaching term, and one in Trinity term
- Membership review to be undertaken with consideration of the variety of equality-promoting bodies in Trinity, and need for diverse representation

- Equality Officer to improve communication of the Committee's work through Equality Office channels as well as substantial engagement with the Communications Office
- Draft agenda to be circulated 2 weeks in advance of meeting; legal and policy developments in Ireland and EU to be included for discussion where relevant
- Equality Fund subcommittee to evaluate impact and consider improvements

Appendix – Equality Committee Terms of Reference

Approved by Equality Committee: 28th of May 2012

Approved by Board: 27th of June 2012

1. Objectives

The Equality Committee is a Committee of Board with responsibility for advising Board and Council on all equality-related matters.

2. Membership of the Committee

2.1 The Committee shall comprise:

- An elected Board member
- Vice-Provost
- Equality Officer
- Secretary to the College (or nominee)
- Academic Secretary (or nominee)
- Director of Human Resources (or nominee)
- Director of the College Disability Service
- Representative of the Dignity and Respect Contact Persons
- Welfare Officer – Students' Union
- Representative of Graduate Students' Union
- 1 Council nominee
- 1 Dean
- 2 members of staff

In determining the composition of the Committee at least 30% of the membership should be of each gender and there should be a broad representation of all staff groups in College.

2.2 The Chairperson of the Committee shall be an Elected Board Member.

2.3 Membership of the Committee shall be reviewed regularly by the Chairperson in consultation with the Registrar and changes as required shall be recommended to the Board at that time.

2.4 Attendance at Committee meetings: a member of the Committee who is absent for three consecutive meetings may be requested to resign membership unless due to illness or if the absence is approved by the Chair.

2.5 Membership of the Committee shall normally be for an initial term of three (3) years, with the possibility of an extension of a further three (3) years. The general aim is to change the membership from time to time to ensure an appropriate balance between continuity and fresh perspectives.

2.6 The Equality Officer shall act as secretary to the Committee and be responsible for the preparation and distribution of the agenda, papers, minutes and reports following consultation with the Chairperson of the Committee.

3. Meetings and Quorum

3.1 The Committee will normally hold meetings once per term or as often as is necessary to complete the business before it or to deal with urgent issue that may arise.

3.2 The quorum for meetings will be:

- The Chair and Equality Officer plus five Committee members

Or

- 50% of members plus either the Chair or the Equality Officer

3.3 The Committee may also invite any or other person to attend any meeting(s) of the Committee, as it may from time to time consider desirable, to assist the Committee in achieving its objectives.

3.4 The draft minutes of the Equality Committee shall be circulated to the Board as soon as possible for noting and/or discussion as necessary. The Chairperson of the Committee shall be available to report orally to the Board on key aspects of the proceedings of the Committee as required.

3.5 In order to aid its operation, the Equality Committee may from time to time arrange for subgroups to consider specialist issues and bring forward recommendations to the Committee.

4. Duties

4.1 Assist Board and Council in the development, co-ordination and implementation of equality policies, practices and action plans throughout College.

4.2 Advise Board and Council on the legislative requirements in relation to equality matters, with particular reference to the Universities Act 1997, the Employment Equality Act 1998-2010, the Equal Status Act 2000-2010 and any other relevant legislation.

4.3 Monitor developments in national and EU policies in relation equality and advise Board and Council on the implications for College.

4.4 Review on an on-going basis the implementation of (a) approved recommendations and actions and (b) equality legislation and report accordingly.

4.5 Review College practices and policies from an equality perspective and where necessary make recommendations on any issues arising in order to promote good practice in these areas.

4.6 Report annually to Board and Council, preferably in Hilary Term, on all equality-related matters and on the results of reviews and monitoring exercises carried out during the year.

5. Authority

5.1 The Committee shall operate under delegated authority from the Board, which is ultimately responsible for all matters relating to equality. The Equality Committee will have devolved authority to decide on behalf of Board to:
Appointment of Contact Persons in relation to Dignity and Respect
Approving procedures and guidelines for the implementation of Equality-related policies.

5.2 The Committee may consider/review any matter falling within its terms of reference, calling on whatever resources and information it considers necessary to do so.

5.3 The Committee is authorised to seek any information it requires from any employee of the College to enable it discharge its responsibilities and shall have made available to it on a timely basis all information requested from any employee in a clear, concise and well organised manner.

5.4 The Equality Committee shall carry out such other functions and take such other decisions as may be delegated to it from time to time by the Board

6. Performance Evaluation

6.1 The Committee shall, at least once a year, review its own performance and its terms of reference and shall report its conclusions and recommend any changes it considers necessary to the Board.