



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin



NATIONAL EQUALITY CHARTER SYMPOSIUM REPORT

Aiming Higher - Moving Forward Together

19 April 2023



University College Dublin
Ireland's Global University



OILSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



HEA | HIGHER
EDUCATION
AUTHORITY



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Event Report

This report was prepared by Aliyah Sy, Dr Siobán O'Brien Green and Associate Professor Cate Thomas.

Executive Summary

The First National Equality Charter Symposium (*Aiming Higher – Moving Forward Together*) was hosted in Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin (TCD) on 19 April 2023. This dynamic in-person event attracted more than 100 attendees from higher education institutes (HEIs) across Ireland.

The symposium was supported by funding from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) via its competitive Gender Equality Enhancement Fund (GEEF). TCD's Office of the Associate Vice-Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) organised and hosted the event in collaboration with four GEEF project partners: University College Cork, University College Dublin, the University of Galway, and Technological University Dublin.

The symposium provided an opportunity for delegates from the higher-education EDI sector to meet and share experiences from across the sector with inputs from international specialists on gender equality, intersectionality, and chartering processes. The event provided a much-needed occasion to re-energise and network with colleagues across Ireland post-Covid. Offering stimulating presentations from national and international experts, the focus of the event was to (re)connect the EDI sector and explore and discuss Athena Swan Charter award attainment and retention. The programme also included thematic networking opportunities during coffee breaks and inputs from Trinity Sport, such as stretch breaks and mindfulness activities, to relax and recharge delegates.



Left to right: **Prof. Lorraine Leeson**, Associate Vice-Provost for EDI, TCD; **Dr Helen Maher**, Vice-President for EDI, University of Galway; **Prof. Nuala Finnegan**, Chair of UCC Equality Committee; **Prof. Colin Scott**, Vice-President for EDI, UCD and **Dr Jennie Rothwell**, HEA Centre of Excellence for EDI.

Symposium Overview

This report aims to capture key points, themes and findings from the presentations and networking sessions, including attendee feedback. Areas of particular attention in the event-planning and execution stages are summarised herein.

HEA-GEEF Support

Support from the Higher Education Authority (HEA), through the Gender Equality Enhancement Fund (GEEF), provided the financial means to organise and host the symposium. The GEEF aims to advance gender equality initiatives and promote inclusivity within Irish HEIs by providing resources and opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration among EDI professionals. The application to the GEEF, led by TCD's EDI Office in collaboration with its four project partners, was submitted in May 2022 and approved by the HEA in late September 2022.

Collaboration

The cross-HEI partnership was crucial to making the symposium a success. The partners – Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin, the University of Galway, and Technological University Dublin – played a pivotal role in planning and preparation by identifying and prioritising topics to be included in the symposium. In addition, the partners provided exceptional chairs for the three sessions, and networking facilitators for the two thematic networking sessions.

Key Considerations that Underpinned Symposium Planning

There were a number of principles that underpinned the event planning. These included a commitment to ensuring that the event was accessible and inclusive, that the products associated with the day were selected with sustainability in mind, that we ensured the event offered multiple opportunities for engagement and networking, and that wellness, in a field where burn-out can be high, was considered.

Accessibility

When registering, participants were asked if they had any specific accessibility requirements which organisers then endeavoured to meet. Accessibility was key for selecting the venue in TCD. The event date was chosen to align with Athena Swan submission deadlines and not to clash with public and school holidays (for childcare availability) or with exam periods in HEIs. The start and end timing of the symposium was also considered for those travelling to attend. Catering was with vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free foods reflecting any religious or dietary needs. During all presentations Irish Sign Language interpretation occurred. Finally, the symposium was free of charge to attend ensuring that cost was not a barrier to participating.



'Enjoy the day, and I invite you to use the opportunities for networking to ensure we are aiming higher and moving forward together when it comes to equality, diversity and inclusion in our universities and institutions.'

**TCD Provost Dr Linda Doyle's
welcome video**



DR LINDA DOYLE
Provost & President, Trinity College Dublin

Sustainability

Sustainability and environmental-impact considerations were part of planning the symposium and included: banners and lanyards made from recycled polyethylene terephthalate (rPET), or plastic bottles destined for waste; name badges manufactured from 100% biodegradable plastic; banner bases made from 30% recycled plastic; compostable beverage cups; and other event-commissioned items designed/produced locally by small businesses.

Networking Sessions

The symposium offered attendees opportunities to meet, connect, and discuss EDI work, issues and topics. Designated 'Networking hotspots' were provided during coffee breaks. Session leaders facilitated discussions with open-ended questions and prompts, to encourage interactions on two key areas: intersectionality in the morning break and overcoming challenges in the afternoon break. This aspect of the programme received very positive attendee feedback.

Wellness Activities and Relaxation Space

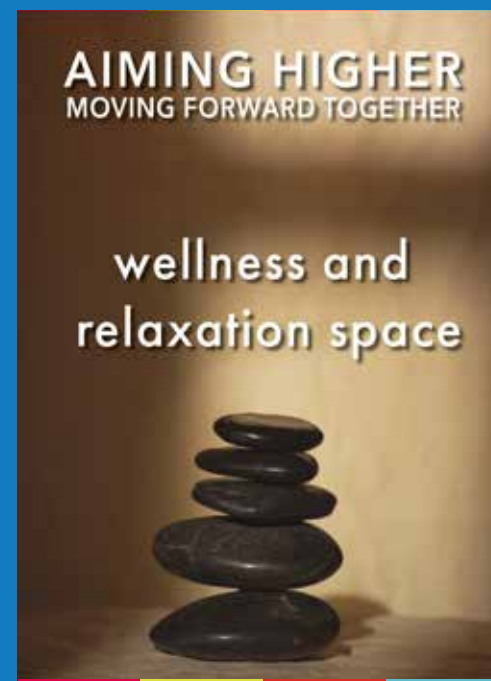
Noting the need to recharge attendees while addressing burnout and sustaining EDI work, a special focus of the event was on nurturing EDI staff, with input from Trinity College Sport, who introduced us to their '**Mind Body Boost**' programme. Daniel Twomey conducted an active break in the morning and a mindfulness activity in the afternoon, engaging attendees in energising exercises and tranquil moments of reflection, respectively. Mark McGauran guided delegates through an active stretch break before the lunch break.

Mind Body Boost: <https://www.tcd.ie/sport/mindbodyboost>

Delegates also enjoyed a tranquil wellness and relaxation space, wherein the emphasis was on relaxation and calm. Close to the main symposium venue, the space was open from 11am to 2pm, with comfy rocking chairs, ambient lighting, sensory fidget toys, aromatherapy, and calming wave music.

Graphic Harvesting

To synthesise the presentations we used graphic harvesting, which is a dynamic process using a live artist to capture the discussions, ideas, and concepts in real-time through the images that we have included in this report. We have created one for each of the three sessions distilling the complex information into a concise, visually appealing, accessible format, and a single large image combining all three. This additional aspect to the conference aims to aid participants in grasping key points, recognising connections, and retaining essential insights. By providing a shared visual reference, graphic harvesting facilitates comprehension, communication, and innovative thinking within group contexts.



Daniel Twomey, Instructor and **Naz Velic**, Sport and Physical Activity Inclusion Officer, Trinity Sport.



Symposium Programme

The programme was carefully crafted, taking into account project partner feedback and leveraging expertise within the event-planning group. Each session consisted of three presentations centred around core EDI topics. The first session, *Setting the EDI in HEI Scene in Ireland: Progress, Reports and Policies*, explored EDI-related advancements in Irish higher-education institutes (HEIs). The second, *Getting to Athena Swan Silver – What does it take? Lessons Learned & Shared when Aiming Higher*, delved into the journey and insights garnered via attaining an Athena Swan silver award. The third session, *Overcoming Challenges and Moving Forward*, provided an overview of HEI sectoral challenges while working on EDI and towards gender equality.

SESSION I

Setting the EDI in HEI Scene in Ireland: Progress, Reports and Policies



Left to right: **Prof. Colin Scott**, Vice-President for EDI, UCD; **Prof. Lorraine Leeson**, Associate Vice-Provost for EDI, TCD; **Sarah Fink**, Head of Athena Swan Ireland; **Prof. Anne Scott**, Member, *Report of the Expert Group: 2nd HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions*; and **Dr Jennie Rothwell**, HEA Centre of Excellence for EDI.

Opening and chairing the session, **Professor Colin Scott** appreciated the significant EDI activity in Irish HEIs to date, but stated that bringing men into gender equality work is a perennial challenge in the sector.



The Campanile, (1853), Trinity College Dublin



'Career training for female academic professionals, resourcing for consent framework and working against sexual harassment are a necessity. [...] Having an intersectional approach to gender equality must be central.'

Professor Anne Scott



Dr Jennie Rothwell drew attention to the Athena Swan Charter's upcoming ten-year anniversary in Ireland (2024) and looked back on the successes of the past decade, noting increased momentum for gender equality programmes, including institutional commitments to gender equality and increased data collection on charter implementation. She noted how knowledge-sharing had created a collaborative EDI sector in Ireland.

The HEA GEEF has seen at least 20 projects funded to date, featuring research on (or advancing) gender equality in Ireland, training programmes specifically addressing gender equality, and Athena Swan capacity-building activities.

Professor Anne Scott, in her presentation, *The road travelled so far and new horizons ahead*, provided national and local examples of gender equality progress in Irish HEIs (which now have gender action plans) and challenges and areas for improvement.

Evidenced progress on the academic career pipeline – e.g. the increased percentage of women in senior academic posts in the University of Galway in 2020, compared to 2016, is encouraging, however, it has not been uniform. Concerns were raised about the narrow view of gender equality, focusing only on the distribution of women in senior positions, marginalising the gendered experiences of precarious and outsourced staff members and ignoring the unequal distribution of care work.

Drawing on her extensive experience at the University of Galway (formerly NUIG), Professor Scott offered key recommendations, including around leadership and investment from the senior management team towards EDI, alongside other challenging but doable actions that must be sustained.

Sarah Fink's presentation, *The new Athena Swan Ireland Charter: Building the evidence and using the data to assess progress*, highlighted Athena Swan's role as a monitoring tool and emphasised that collecting data helps identify key areas of underrepresentation and cultural barriers to gender equality, spotting the strengths and weaknesses in current policy, practice or culture, and determining potential solutions to inequalities. Hence the importance of a comprehensive data collection framework.

The required data collection from Athena Swan must include student population, recruitment, staff benefit actions (e.g. family leave) and qualitative data on staff members and institutional culture. Data collection is challenging, but several actions have led to success, mainly career development support for female professionals, gender balance training for leadership, ensuring leave flexibility, and encouraging advancement after leave. Athena Swan applications require that HEIs identify priority areas for improvement based on data collection and analysis.



SETTING THE SCENE: PROGRESS, REPORTS & POLICIES

LOTS OF PROGRESS

BUT:

THERE ARE STILL

BIG CHALLENGES

MEN ARE MISSING FROM THESE EVENTS AND THAT'S PART OF THE PROBLEM!

LAST 10 YEARS



WHERE ARE ALL THE MEN?

Athena SWAN



COLLECTING DATA IS CENTRAL

WE CAN ADVOCATE for Change WITH DATA!

WE CAN USE DATA TO ANALYSE & MEASURE OUR SITUATIONS

WE WANT CHANGE!

ATHENA SWAN IS BEING MORE DESCRIPTIVE AROUND DATA but WE DON'T WANT TO HOLD UP PROGRESS

SPACE for QUALITATIVE DATA ALSO

CULTURAL CHANGE

IS NEEDED

ALLOWING SPACE for PATERNITY & CARING



BE

AMBITIOUS!

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

SINCE 1980s INDIVIDUAL CALLS & LOCAL WORK more actively ignored



TRIBUNALS and COURT CASES BROUGHT BY STAFF TO HEIs HIGHLIGHTED 'PROBLEMS'

HEA REPORT

PROGRESS HAS HAPPENED BUT IT'S NOT UNIFORM ACROSS INSTITUTIONS



DATA CAPTURE NEEDS TO BE STREAMLINED

DATA COLLECTION BY SEX & GENDER ONLY

INTERSECTIONALITY

OUT-SOURCING of WORK

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

THINGS HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2016! WE NEED TO ADJUST!

HOLD YOUR INSTITUTION TO ACCOUNT

SESSION II

Getting to Athena Swan Silver – What does it take? Lessons Learned & Shared when Aiming Higher



Professor Lorraine Leeson, Associate Vice Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Trinity College Dublin, welcomes delegates to the conference.



Susan Cantwell Executive Officer, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit, Trinity College Dublin.



Left to right: **Prof. Frank Monahan**, Dean of Agriculture, UCD; **Prof. Lorraine Leeson**, Associate Vice-Provost for EDI, TCD; **Kevin Coutinho**, Advance HE Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter Chair; **Dr Siobán O'Brien Green**, Acting Equality Officer, TCD; and **Prof. Yvonne Galligan**, Director of EDI, TUD.

Opening the session, **Professor Nuala Finnegan**, UCC, insisted on the importance of local EDI management as key for success alongside a balance between strategic and bottom-up engagement, to provide structure and a sense of ownership over change.

Our first presenter **Professor Yvonne Galligan**, in *Getting to silver, staying at silver: sharing insights*, highlighted how quickly Athena Swan affected the culture and structure of Irish HEIs. Nine of 22 Irish HEIs hold Athena Swan awards – versus 124 of 160 UK HEIs.

A bronze award recognises initial identification and consideration of gender inequalities and the HEI culture contributing thereto. It requires demonstrated qualitative and quantitative change towards equality, and its renewal requires institutional fluency of gender issues beyond awareness raising.



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BIBLIOTHECA

DA

DALLISERIANA

The Long Room in the Old Library Trinity College Dublin

Moving from bronze to silver (where bronze = foundation-fixing, silver = ambition) requires an analysis of the structural challenges stopping gender equality progression and higher-than-sector-average quantitative change within the HEI. Knowledge-gathering and creative collaborative approaches on top of effective implementation of the bronze level action plan includes critical thinking about gender inequality. Acknowledging complexities and issues in light of privilege and disadvantage requires leadership and understanding of the Athena Swan action plan and data collection, embedding intersectional approaches and assuming responsibility for cultural and structural issues.



'Impact is the basis on which a silver action plan needs to be based. [...] Staying at silver begins with a noticeable culture change and awareness of gender inequality issues. Schools that have earned or are applying for a gold award are acting as examples for other institutions at the community level.'

Professor Yvonne Galligan

Kevin Coutinho, in *Embedding Athena Swan: Building capacity and sustaining momentum*, reiterated the importance of chartering to produce data, identifying cultural issues, informing action plans, and measuring progress and impacts.

Minoritised staff members disproportionately carry the EDI work burden, hence the need to equitably recognise their contributions and engage all staff members in cultural change. Different perspectives inform data and narratives, as different staff members hold different lived experiences (especially those in departments outside academia), constituting active intersectional staff engagement.

Kevin recommended embracing systemic change and embedding it over the medium-to-long term, noting the need to anchor change in an evidence base, enabling proportionate responses to the issues identified. Sharing learning both within institutions and across them will help to innovate and ensure that Ireland is globally competitive, reflecting EDI values in HEIs. Being a catalyst for enabling change is crucial in EDI work in addition to understanding pipeline attrition.

Networking helps to make EDI work sustainable - leadership-modelling and capacity-building for staff members helps make action plans achievable. By providing information on how to meet Athena Swan standards, how to complete award application submissions and running internal mock review panels all provide learning experiences within HEIs and are recommended.



'Long-term sustained change requires evidence of the problem, measurement of problems and impact of changes, on top of action-planning, with baselines and future indicators of change.'

Kevin Coutinho

from leadership in the School, including funding for an EDI manager, progress on senior-staff gender balance, engagement with staff members on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and teaching and learning on EDI issues.

Practical tips included engaging with Athena Swan and student communities/societies for EDI feedback, recording impact as you go, planning surveys in advance, providing time for completion, and facilitating time for the application writers to confer and connect.



'While the focus of the bronze was on gender equality, our focus on wider EDI issues – dignity and respect, UDL, widening participation, teaching across cultures, unconscious bias – was really helpful in engaging colleagues with Athena Swan.'

Professor Frank Monahan



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET TO SILVER?



IRELAND
HAS BEEN
ON A FAST
TRACK

BRONZE

IT'S THE
FIRST
TIME MANY
INSTITUTIONS
BEGIN
CONVERSATIONS
ABOUT
GENDER
EQUALITY

BRONZE

FIX
FOUNDATIONS!

Renewal
of Bronze

Going for
Silver

IDENTIFY
INEQUALITY

CRITICAL
REFLECTION

DEMONSTRATE
ACTION

SILVER
EMBEDDED CHANGE

SILVER

BEING
INTENTIONAL
AND AMBITIOUS!
find CREATIVE
& INNOVATIVE
SOLUTIONS!

RECORD
& MEASURE
IMPACT
of ACTION

RISK!
but we've already
done everything!

ATTITUDE:

Renewal

LOVELY
& SMOOTH ON
THE OUTSIDE

FULL OF
HOLES ON
THE INSIDE

WHY ARE
WE DOING
THIS?

WE NEED A BIT
OF TENSION TO
MOVE FORWARD

BUT IT
feels
unsettling!

UNIVERSITIES
ARE LIKE WISPA
CHOCOLATE BARS



WE MUST UNDERSTAND
THE WHY BEFORE
WE CAN TAKE
ACTION

WE NEED TO
collect &
USE DATA

NETWORKING
IS IMPORTANT

COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS

DATA IS AN ENABLING FRIEND
LOOK BEYOND THE
FEMALE/MALE
BINARY

MR DATA
here to help!

CONSIDER
OUT-SOURCED
STAFF TOO!

CONTINUITY

MORE WOMEN
PROFESSORS

REGULAR
SAT MEETINGS

WIDER EQUALITY
FOCUS (EDI)
- UDL
- DISABILITY ISSUES
- CULTURAL ISSUES

WORKSHOPS
ON DIGNITY &
RESPECT

PLAN
AHEAD

ACTIONS WHICH
genuinely
BENEFIT COLLEAGUES

HOLD
INTERNAL
REVIEWS

ENGAGE
WITH
STUDENTS

Silver
SUCCESS

SESSION III

Overcoming Challenges & Moving Forward



Left to right: **Dr Siobán O'Brien Green**, Acting Equality Officer, TCD; **Dr Marcela Linková**, Head of the Centre for Gender and Science at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences; **Prof. Lorraine Leeson**, Associate Vice-Provost for EDI, TCD; **Associate Prof. Cate Thomas**, Charles Sturt University, Australia; and **Dr Helen Maher**, Vice-President for EDI, University of Galway.

Session chair **Dr Helen Maher** began by acknowledging that events like the symposium constitute an opportunity to network with people and re-energise the work, pushing forward EDI and gender equality goals and offering a platform to develop an analytical basis in Ireland.

*But we are not all
together!*

Challenges and Triumphs of Gender Equity
Strategies in a Dispersed Campus Setting

Associate Professor Cate Thomas

First National Equality Charter Symposium - Aiming Higher, Moving Forward Together

April
19
2023



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

GENDER
EQUALITY

IN THE
HIGHER
EDUCATION
SECTOR

HEA



'Embracing difference benefits us all! Taking a full intersectional approach allows people to bring their true, authentic selves to work and harness their true talent/capability, which, in turn, sustains organisational capacity.'

Associate Professor Cate Thomas

Dr Cate Thomas's *But we are not all together! Challenges and Triumphs of Gender Equity Strategies in a Dispersed Campus Setting* outlined the geographical spread of where she works as Associate Professor in Charles Sturt University, which comprises eight campuses across the south-east of New South Wales, Australia.

Cate discussed 'the tyranny of distance' and related isolation due to distanced/disconnected campuses; gendered pressures for staff who can't move or travel due to family commitments; location as a compounding disadvantage and how intersectionality in Australia includes rurality. Strategy homogenisation needs to be avoided - 'one size does not fit all' across HEIs, as women of colour, queer, and disabled women are often excluded, as inclusion is often envisaged through the lens of white cis women. Having the right voices participating in designing solutions removes barriers and creates opportunities, regardless of geography, and removes the majority/homogenous mindset. Understanding others' lived experience means that strategy is relevant.

She emphasised that EDI work is not about fixing individuals -we need to move away from a deficit model and look at systems/structures instead of quotas alone. Gender equity strategies along with flexible/hybrid work practices lead to greater staff retention, increased feelings of inclusion and belonging, and well-being. Resetting data-capturing parameters assists in understanding people so qualitative data is important, to look at the context behind the figures and numbers. People are unique, with many intersecting identities. Strategy needs an intersectional lens from the beginning, taking into account geographical impacts too.

Dr Marcela Linková delivered a presentation on *Sustaining gender equality work in higher education and research: Building alliances and overcoming barriers*, exploring progress to date and looking at future steps including: embedding EDI into the HEI/research landscape; taking action towards organisational change; moving beyond the recognition of intersectionality towards understanding it and integrating it into practice; and taking a proactive approach towards gender-based violence in research and innovation.

She noted that gender equality plan (GEP) achievements differ across the continent of Europe, with an east – west divide: Eastern Europe shows less progress than its Western counterparts in mandating GEPs in institutions, but Ireland's position is that of 'a policy making trailblazer' in the European Union, as all its HEI institutions have GEPs.

Changes and unintended consequences both feature in complex systems such as HEIs– new policy objectives that push progress further along, she noted. However, non-linearity reminds us that change doesn't occur in a straight line and that sustainability is crucial in gender equality work. Meritocracy, viewing science as a mission, and academic autonomy can be used as tools against gender equality. Challenges include the effects of projectification on EDI work, staff burnout and competing pressures and allegiances within HEIs. Marcela described conditions for success in this area including; leadership commitment to gender equality, participatory processes, and leveraging where national frameworks are in place.



'This work changes us, but this can take an emotional toll. [...] No step, no progress is too small. [...] Celebrate collectivity, solidarity, and build support communities of feminist friends and allies.'

Dr Marcela Linková

Dr Marie Connolly, University of Limerick (UL), explored institutional structures, alignment of action plans at institutional and departmental levels, and the need for data driven impact in *Overcoming challenges – achieving Athena Swan Silver success*.

Marie shared how the Athena Swan Charter framework can be leveraged to establish areas which require attention and where progress is being made within a university. UL Athena Swan action plan priority areas were outlined in addition to initiatives such as the Research Grant for Returning Academic Carers, a comprehensive review of the promotion procedures undertaken, utilising a matched funding model in four Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI) posts in UL, and a 'Stop the tenure clock' scheme available for up to one academic year. Providing demonstrable evidence to show leadership and senior commitment to EDI is important as is showing impact and not just activity, she noted. Finally, she noted that UL draws on the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals in formulating a strategic mission and working towards becoming a truly egalitarian university.



'Our vision is to rebalance social progress within environmental constraints and become the national leader for embedding EDI in our structures and community.'

Dr Marie Connolly

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES & MOVING FORWARD

SHOW
SOLIDARITY



DISTANCE
CAN BE A
PROBLEM!

ONE
SIZE
FITS ALL
DOES NOT
WORK

LIVING
IN A RURAL
PLACE IS PART OF
INTERSECTIONALITY
IN AUSTRALIA



FOCUS ON
INTERSECTIONALITY



WE HAVE
PARENTAL
LEAVE
and
PAY for CARERS
AND CHILDCARE
ENABLE ATTENDING
CONFERENCES

increase in
RETENTION
RATES

CREATING
BELONGING
IS ESSENTIAL

RECOGNISING
THAT
EVERY PERSON
IS AN
INDIVIDUAL

QUALITATIVE
information
gives MEANING
to DATA.

WE NEED A
CHANGE
IN MINDSET!

GENDER DISTRIBUTION

40/40/20
♀ ♂ ♀



CO-DESIGN
IS ESSENTIAL

Gender Equality
IS THE MAIN
VEHICLE for CHANGE
ON THE EU POLICY LEVEL



IN COMPARISON
TO OTHER EU COUNTRIES
IRELAND IS A SHINING
BEACON

ACADEMIC
freedom is
OFTEN USED
AS AN EXCUSE
NOT TO ADDRESS
EQUALITY



INTERSECTIONALITY
IS NOT YET ANCHORED
IN POLICY

SOME EU COUNTRIES
(MAINLY IN THE EAST)
ARE NOT WILLING TO
ENGAGE!

No
STEP
IS TOO
SMALL

THEY HAVE
NO PLAN



Success
IN LIMERICK

Gather
DATA
DATA!
DATA!



A PLAN
HELPS TO
SECURE
RESOURCES

WORKLOAD
ALLOCATION
IS IMPORTANT



good
LEADERSHIP
IS CRUCIAL

SUPPORTING
WOMEN to
APPLY FOR
NEW POSITIONS



and
more

IT'S ABOUT
IMPACT
NOT PROGRESS!

Attendee Feedback

A short survey was emailed to those who registered for the symposium (total: 137 registrants), with over 100 attending in person. The survey included closed and open-ended questions and space for survey participants to add their comments and suggestions. Twenty-five (25) attendees responded to the survey.

Survey Findings

Over 80% of survey participants reported being either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the symposium elements. Some 41% stated that discussion and connection with other colleagues during the networking sessions was the most useful part of the symposium for their work, followed by the excellent presentations (29%).

- *'Panellists were excellent and provided very good insights into some of the key issues, challenges and opportunities.'*
- *'I really enjoyed that the speakers each had a very different view/approach to EDI, but collectively the same goal.'*
- *'Thank you! It was such a great symposium of amazing ideas and good practice.'*

Learning from others' implementation of EDI and from experienced speakers was also appreciated by respondents, in addition to Athena Swan-related guidance:

- *'Hearing from colleagues with experience implementing EDI work in a variety of contexts and at various stages of development...'*
- *'All parts were extremely useful. I especially appreciated the content of the talks: very pragmatic and focused on experiences and best-practice examples.'*

All survey respondents would attend similar events in the future, with the following topics/areas requested: Athena Swan, intersectionality, EDI implementation, and key EDI areas in addition to gender equality, such as race equality, LGBTQIA+ and disabilities.

- *'More practical focus on the realities of working towards equality charters, such as case studies, Q&As and practical presentations. How to work with and manage an SAT? How to deal with resistance? How to engage staff in the process and ensure all voices are heard?'*
- *'I would love to see more emphasis on the intersectional aspects of the new Athena Swan charter!'*
- *'How to sustain EDI implementation – after initial funding/enthusiasm, how do we develop the work in Year 3, Year 5, etc.? How to effectively co-create with students and build cohesive partnership in the EDI space within HEIs.'*

Additional comments, suggestions and feedback included the following.

- *'Thank you for organising this event. I thoroughly enjoyed it and feel more empowered moving forward in my role.'*
- *'The most useful part was being able to discuss issues with other EDI practitioners. I feel that the content of the presentations wasn't necessarily geared towards the practicalities of getting the work done. It would also have been welcome to hear from a broader range of HEIs at differing stages of the journey.'*
- *'A more critical approach would be welcome. The operations and mechanics of Athena Swan were discussed at length, but there was a lot less emphasis on the impact and exactly what cultural change had been achieved by the introduction of the process in Ireland.'*
- *'I really enjoyed the intersectionality discussion during coffee. It helped me to network and socialise as I was there on my own....'*
- *'I loved the coffee break and conversation sessions!'*

Challenges with the venue's sound quality – mainly due to the air filtration systems installed as a result of Covid – were noted by some attendees. Potentially opening future events to students and others outside of academia and HEIs was also proposed in the survey feedback as well as giving greater advance notice of similar events to ensure those who wish to attend can.





Aerial View of Trinity College Dublin

Concluding Comments

Overall, the symposium was reported as a successful and engaging event that provided valuable insights and networking opportunities to participants. Best practices and strategies shared by the presenters, as well as insights gained from longer-term work on Athena Swan, were useful for creating a supportive and inclusive EDI culture. The thematic 'Networking hotspots' and stretching and wellness activities were also very well received.

Hosting a day-long event that was free of charge with a specific focus on EDI in HEIs generated a lot of interest across the sector, and with more lead time and notice, the participant numbers could have been higher. Multiple breaks to allow attendees to meet, network, connect and talk were very popular, and considerations given to accessibility (including a location close to public transport and event timing) were appreciated. Follow-up activities after the symposium included a research seminar and a number of intersectionality walk workshops in TCD and the University of Galway in April 2023.



Acknowledgements and Thanks

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- Irish Sign Language interpreters: Bernadette Ferguson, Gemma Shannon, Aoife Hendricks and Vanessa Kelly.
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- Graphic Harvesting illustrations by Esther Blodau www.estherblodau.com

Symposium Project Partners

University College Cork (UCC): Dr Avril Hutch, Director for EDI (on leave); Anne-Marie Curtin, EDI Officer; Sarah Murtagh, Athena Swan Project Officer (commenced March 2023); and Professor Nuala Finnegan, Equality Committee Chair.

University College Dublin (UCD): Professor Colin Scott, Vice-President for EDI; and Eimear O'Reilly, EDI Project Officer.

University of Galway (UG): Dr Helen Maher, Vice-President for EDI; Aoife Cook, Head of EDI; and Dr Laura Loftus, EDI Programme Manager, Gender Equality.

Technological University Dublin (TUD): Professor Yvonne Galligan, Director of EDI; and Nóirín MacNamara, EDI Data Analyst.

Symposium Programme



Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin

The First National Equality Charter Symposium

AIMING HIGHER - MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 09.00 - 10.00 | REGISTRATION |
| 10.00 - 10.10 | PROVOST, DR LINDA DOYLE - WELCOME VIDEO |
| | PROF LORRAINE LEESON - OPENING ADDRESS |
| | Associate Vice-Provost for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, TCD |

10.10 - 11.30

SESSION I - SETTING THE EDI IN HEI SCENE IN IRELAND: PROGRESS, REPORTS AND POLICIES

CHAIR: PROFESSOR COLIN SCOTT
Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion UCD, GEEF Project Partner

DR JENNIE ROTHWELL
HEA Centre of Excellence for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

PROFESSOR ANNE SCOTT
Member Report of the Expert Group: 2nd HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions
The road travelled so far and new horizons ahead

SARAH FINK
Head of Athena Swan Ireland
The new Athena Swan Ireland Charter: Building the evidence and using the data to assess progress

ACTIVE COFFEE BREAK 11.30 - 12.00
Networking session - Intersectionality
Wellness and relaxation space open

This symposium has been kindly funded under the Gender Equality Enhancement Fund (GEEF)



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TCDEquality

12.00 - 13.15

SESSION II - GETTING TO ATHENA SWAN SILVER- WHAT DOES IT TAKE? LESSONS LEARNED & SHARED WHEN AIMING HIGHER

CHAIR: PROFESSOR NUALA FINNEGAN, *Chair of UCC Equality Committee, GEEF Project Partner*

PROFESSOR YVONNE GALLIGAN, *Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Technological University Dublin*
Getting to silver, staying at silver: sharing insights

KEVIN COUTINHO, *Advance HE Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter Chair*
Embedding Athena Swan: Building capacity and sustaining momentum

PROFESSOR FRANK MONAHAN, *Dean of Agriculture, UCD*
Lessons learned from Athena Swan Silver success

Q&A

LUNCH BREAK 13.15AM - 14.00PM
Stretch break and Lunch break
Wellness and relaxation space open

14.00PM - 15.30PM

SESSION III - OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND MOVING FORWARD

CHAIR: DR HELEN MAHER, *Vice-President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion University of Galway, GEEF Project Partner*

DR CATE THOMAS, *Associate Professor, Charles Stuart University New South Wales*
But we are not all together! Challenges and Triumphs of Gender Equity Strategies in a dispersed campus setting

DR MARCELA LINKOVÁ, *Head of the Centre for Gender and Science, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences*
Sustaining gender equality work in higher education and research: Building alliances and overcoming barriers

DR MARIE CONNOLLY, *Director of Human Rights, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, University of Limerick*
Overcoming challenges- achieving Athena Swan Silver success

Q&A

MINDFULNESS ACTIVITY & BREAK 15.30 - 16.00
Afternoon tea, coffee and treats
Networking session - Challenges

16.00

DR SIOBÁN O'BRIEN GREEN, *Trinity College Dublin*
Symposium close. Graphic harvesting presentation, certificates of attendance collection and farewell

GEEF project partners



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Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh



Front Square, Trinity College Dublin



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin