



Trinity  
College  
Dublin

The University of Dublin

# THE TRINITY TAPESTRY

WE WILL BE ONE  
TRINITY COMMUNITY

FINDINGS FROM THE RACE AND  
ETHNICITY FOCUS GROUPS

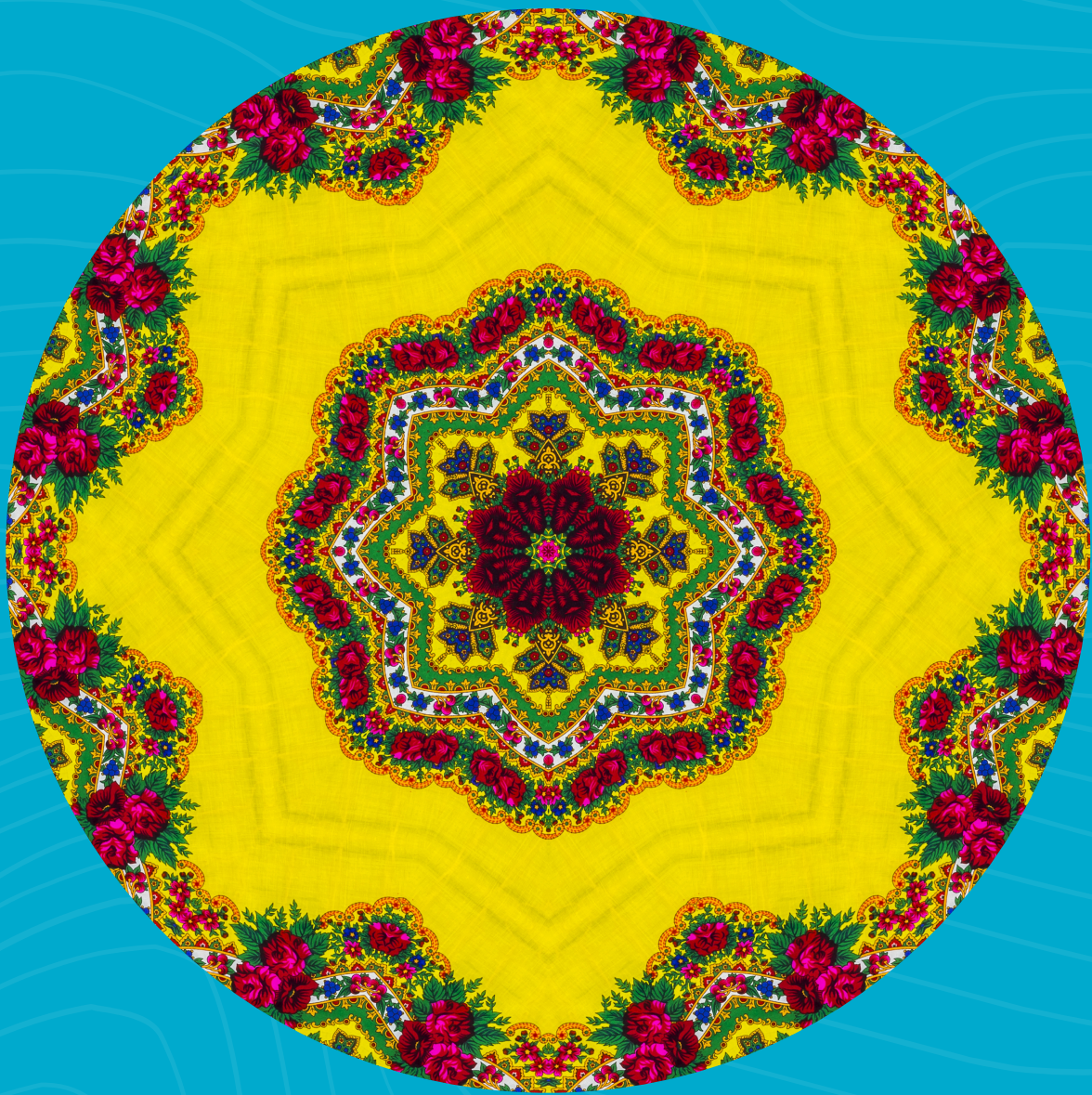
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2021/2022



# THE TRINITY TAPESTRY

This image has been chosen to represent the  
evolving and growing diversity of the Trinity  
College community



# **THE TRINITY TAPESTRY**

***WE WILL BE ONE TRINITY COMMUNITY***

Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group Report 2021/2022

*Supported by the Office of the Associate Vice Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

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## Acronyms

Associate Vice Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	AVPEDI
Higher Education Authority	HEA
Higher Education Institutions	HEIs
Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group	REEWG
Black and minority ethnic	BME
Trinity College Dublin	TCD
Equality, Diversity, Inclusion	EDI

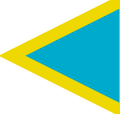


## MISSION STATEMENT AGAINST RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Trinity College Dublin recognises racism as a serious global and local issue that is in direct opposition to our core values. We will speak out firmly against it, no matter where, or at what level it manifests. We stand in solidarity with all our students, staff and alumni whatever their ethnic, racial, cultural or religious backgrounds. We aim to be inclusive and welcoming to all. This is a cornerstone of who we are, and so we commit to putting energy, time and resources into safeguarding a fair and equitable campus and ensuring that it is a welcoming place in which all can belong, and thrive.

We know that more needs to be done to ensure that College is inclusive. We welcome the opportunity to create a safe environment for all with well-considered actions, especially, to bring about real structural change, as we know and understand that racism is structural as well as individual acts of aggression and intimidation.

As a university, we see our role as leading national discussions that inform and underpin our responsibility to create a more equitable society. We commit to continually identifying and challenging historical factors that contribute to inequity, as well as to research and teaching in this area.



## FOREWORD

The Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group (REEWG) was established in early 2021 to provide a framework to oversee the development and implementation of an action plan for Trinity College Dublin on race and ethnicity to ensure a safe and empowering environment for our students and staff. The action plan will augment the College Strategic Plan 2020-25, and address institutional barriers and systemic challenges with respect to racial and minority ethnic diversity and equity.

Following the development of terms of reference for the REEWG (see Appendix 1), we decided that a process of engagement was necessary to elicit the experiences of those who self-identify as part of a 'raced', minority ethnic or racialised religious group, and to determine the understanding of race and ethnicity as potentially deleterious factors on the part of the wider College community. This, it was hoped, would provide significant data to the REEWG, as well as a jumping off point for constructing an effective action plan.

It has become a prerequisite for any large academic institution to be aware of the institutional culture that pervades regarding race and ethnicity, as this impacts directly on both the personal and the professional lives of those who inhabit the same academic space but are perceived differently, something that we have seen referenced in the HEA's report, "Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector" (2021)<sup>1</sup>. This document identified a number of policy recommendations, which, as we shall see, intersect with themes emerging from our local process. The HEA recommendations are included here, drawn from pp 69-72 of the 2021 report.

Themes	Context	Recommendations
<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In order to foster race equality in HEIs it is vital that people in positions of leadership lead by example. Our research suggested that there needs to be a stronger leadership in HEIs. Furthermore, we found that often discrimination, abuse, and harassment comes from staff in leadership roles. In order to counteract this, leaders should actively seek to embed a culture of race equality within their institutions.</li></ul>	<p>In relation to this, we recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Communicating from the highest levels of leadership the need for change and the potential benefits to the entire university of increased equality, diversity and inclusion. Build a narrative that fits the institutional goals in terms of organisational culture and academic outcomes.</li><li>Promoting equality on the personal level, encouraging an open dialogue and debate on these issues</li><li>Highlighting the structural, institutional, and historical dimensions of racism which have informed past and current practice in HEIs and the societies in which they are situated.</li><li>Taking responsibility, accountability and ownership of race equality issues at HEIs.</li><li>Actively acknowledging that race inequality exists in HEIs.</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2021/10/HEA-Race-Equality-in-the-Higher-Education-Sector-Analysis-commissioned-by-the-Higher-Education-Authority-1.pdf>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encouraging staff and students to report abuse, harassment and discrimination.</li> <li>▪ Embedding questions of race equality within the strategic priorities of the organisation with a view to the impact of the HEI on wider society as well as internally.</li> <li>▪ Refuting the assertion of future progressive realisation of equality – Irish HEIs are not keeping pace with wider demographics and assertive action is required to catch up.</li> <li>▪ Acknowledging the power of HEIs to influence Irish society in general.</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 2: Supporting diversity in staffing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is vital that HEIs ensure that steps are taken to ensure that candidates from minority ethnic groups are supported to apply for and be successful in the recruitment processes to jobs in Irish HEIs. HEIs should be aware of differences between institutions, with some much more diverse than others. This is particularly visible in institutions where full-time staff or staff on continuous contracts are still overwhelmingly White Irish and student bodies are much more diverse. There is also a high level of segregation reported between full-time staff or staff on continuous contracts and staff on precarious contracts, the latter being much more likely to be from minority ethnic groups.</li> <li>▪ Measures should be in place to enable a fair and transparent recruitment process. Some foreign qualifications are not recognised by HEIs, and more often, they are devalued during the recruitment process by recruiting personnel. This deters ethnic minorities from applying for posts.</li> <li>▪ Additionally, often ethnic minorities do not have access to the networks via which the posts are advertised.</li> </ul>	<p>In relation to this, we recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Institutional identification and targeted support for underrepresented groups.</li> <li>▪ Reviewing how job specifications are compiled to follow good equality practice, ensuring recruitment criteria are inclusive, and reducing the number of 'desirables' in job adverts.</li> <li>▪ Providing mandatory race equality training for all members of recruitment panels.</li> <li>▪ Providing clear reporting mechanisms for candidates to address bias in recruitment.</li> <li>▪ Targeting advertising towards ethnic minority groups.</li> <li>▪ Providing immigration advice for non-EEA staff to reduce employment difficulties.</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 3: Making race/equality policies transparent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Our research highlights a lack of clarity and understanding of specific policies addressing race equality at HEIs. There is also a general reluctance to engage with large amount of policies in order to access information, which is often embedded within wider regulations, including Dignity at Work policy, Equality policy, and Mutual respect policy.</li> </ul>	<p>In view of this, the guidance places an emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clear signposting to existing policies relating to race equality. Institutions might consider a standalone race equality document for easy access which signposts towards the other relevant policies.</li> <li>▪ Clear definitions of race equality within existing policies. This should make reference to the structural, institutional, and historical dimensions of racism, as well as the more commonly recognised individual racism seen in acts of discrimination and abuse.</li> </ul>

<b>Theme 4: Reporting mechanisms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is also evidence in this survey that racist incidents on campus are under-reported by both students and staff. This is particularly pertinent in cases where the perpetrators hold senior positions within institutions, as there is a general fear of speaking out against those in position of power. Furthermore, lengthy, inefficient bureaucratic processes further deter people from reporting such incidents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear signposting of disciplinary and reporting procedures in relation to race equality on campus</li> <li>Possibility to report issues related to racial harassment, abuse, discrimination, and micro-aggressions online. For example through racism and bias hotline.</li> <li>An option to make reports anonymously to increase the rate of reporting</li> <li>Efficient mechanisms for dealing with complaints be established.</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 5: Awareness and Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our research points at a general lack of understanding what constitutes racism, racial harassment, abuse, discrimination and micro-aggressions within HEIs.</li> </ul>	<p>We recommend increasing both staff and students' understanding of these issues through appropriate training opportunities that would go beyond unconscious bias training.</p> <p>This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandatory antiracism training for staff at all levels with an emphasis on intersectionality. This should include elements such as bystander intervention, unconscious bias, cultural intelligence, equitable practice and racial justice. These should also counter myths about positive discrimination.</li> <li>Tailored race equality training for students.</li> <li>Sustained anti-racist campaigns on campus and on online platforms.</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having an inclusive civic culture on campus where diversity and intercultural dialogue are encouraged is crucial to promoting race equality in HEIs.</li> </ul>	<p>We suggest creating supportive and engaging spaces for conversations around race and ethnicity, where ethnic minority students and staff feel respected and valued. This can be promoted by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organising intercultural activities for both staff and students so people can become more understanding and respectful of other cultures</li> <li>Supporting staff and student-led initiatives to incorporate discussions about diversity and inclusion into campus life, such as university committee on diversity and inclusion.</li> <li>Developing university strategies to engage diverse views, such as decolonising/diversifying curriculum to Euro-centric viewpoints</li> <li>Engaging members of ethnic minorities in outreach activities not just to showcase diversity but to promote inclusivity</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 7: Supporting diversity in student recruitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While the student body in Irish HEIs has been becoming more diverse in recent years, reflecting wider demographic changes in Ireland, it is still relatively homogenous when compared to the UK and other Western countries. With these concerns in mind, we recommend that</li> </ul>	<p>This can be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted support programmes to improve uptake of, and experience of ethnic minority students in regards to applying for scholarship and funding.</li> <li>Targeted support programmes to facilitate ethnic minority students'</li> </ul>



	steps are undertaken to increase prospects of ethnic minorities to undertake study programmes in HEIs. It is also vital to have certain measures in place that would support these students in their studies as well as their future careers. Enrolment of underrepresented groups, who can potentially take up lecturing positions is a first step towards the broader inclusion within the HEIs.	access to placement and training opportunities ▪ Targeted career advice for marginalised groups, and first generation third level students
<b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	▪ There is a need for institutions to be aware of the patterns of diversity in staff and student bodies, and how these compare to diversity in the wider population of Ireland and the communities in which HEIs are based. It is clear that much diversity in permanent academic posts is due to international recruitment. It is less clear how much difference there is between permanent, temporary and precarious employment in Irish HEIs by ethnicity. Qualitative data from this survey suggests that staff are increasingly aware of a divide in this regard.	▪ We recommend the systematic collection of data which will provide the necessary evidence base regarding staff and student representation, access and outcome by ethnicity, and benchmarking of this data against Census data. There are a wide range of considerations in the collection of such data, including voluntary disclosure, work with representative bodies, awareness raising about the role of such data collection, and appropriate resourcing of data collection, retention and security.

**Table 1: Recommendations from the HEA's Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector (2021)**

Given this broader context, we can say that too often, negative attitudes – both implicit and explicit – surrounding race and ethnicity mean that academic institutions can be less than encouraging environments for academics and staff from minority ethnic backgrounds. The ability of academics to succeed and reach their potential may be frustrated where HEIs fail to provide a supportive environment for career development. We are also not immune from these challenges in College.

Thus, we have an obligation to draw attention to gaps that may allow any form of racial or ethnic disparities to infuse the culture of the College and to rigorously and consistently challenge them. In line with the primary duty of the REEWG, which is to “Identify structural barriers that need to be addressed and themes and issues needing action”, it was essential that we interrogate systems, which may be legacies of older, out-of-date beliefs, harmful to the institution and its progress in an era of globalisation so as to inform current best practice, through training and policy change. This interrogation took place through college-wide focus groups in the Summer 2021.

The focus groups set out to be as representative of the College community as possible, with a view to giving voice to the many different religious and minority ethnic groups that populate the College. Over eighty people responded to the invitation to participate in July 2021, which led to a series of nine focus groups which took place across five days on Zoom. While each session was scheduled to last one hour, all ran over due to the high level of engagement. Representation was diverse and reflective of various levels of the College community. However, we are conscious that while the invitation to participate was disseminated through the College's email lists, some colleagues working in College do not have access to institutional email addresses, so their views are missing from these findings.

Focus group participants were also invited to contact the moderator outside of the formal focus group setting, if they had any further follow up concerns or matters they wanted to share privately. Four focus group members requested contact details for the moderator to follow up with further suggestions and matters they wished to deal with more comprehensively, and two others wished to personally thank the moderator as they felt he had managed the groups in both a professional and inclusive manner, and they had gained personally from taking part. Some members of College emailed their contribution rather than attending the focus groups, as they felt their positions within College did not allow them to contribute in an open forum.

As the REEWG strives to promote and nurture a supportive culture which is accessible and relevant for all staff and students, the focus groups were effective instruments highlighting the tremendous commitment of the College community to (re)imagining how we can be if we all work together and move towards equity of opportunity for everyone in our community.

We note that these focus groups took place during a time of transition, here at Trinity. On 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021, a new Provost began her term in office, and from 1<sup>st</sup> September, the role of the Associate Vice Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion became a full-time College Officer role, with a new AVPEDI commencing in the role.

Autumn 2021 also saw the launch of the HEA's report, "Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector" and we are seeing a broadening of focus at sectoral level towards intersectional consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion. This is also mapping to discussions of how we fulfil our Public Sector Duty with respect to human rights and equality, within the university sector. We have seen the launch of the Irish University Association's "EDI in HE" training that all College members of staff, who are sitting on interview or promotion panels must complete, while 2022 brought the launch of the IUA's "Let's Talk about Race in the Higher Education Sector" training for staff and students. We have engaged with the European Commission, learning more about their newly launched EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life, and also fed back to the Higher Education Authority with regard to the recommendations emerging from their Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector report (April 2022).

In late November 2021, the College launched the Trinity, Speak Out tool, which offers an anonymous mechanism for reporting experiences of harassment or bullying or hate crime, assault or sexual misconduct, along with information around relevant supports available.

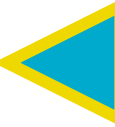
We are committed to College being a place of belonging, a place where all the members of our community can flourish and thrive.

The contributions from the members of the focus groups reported on here, will contribute to this process. As a starting point, they will inform the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and associated action plan (in preparation), and inform our ongoing institutional Athena SWAN work. We are incredibly grateful, to all who took the time to participate to offer an honest appraisal of how we are doing and to point out how we can do better, together. The work reported on in this document is a significant milestone in planning the way forward.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to whole-heartedly thank Dave Walsh for his significant leadership and guidance on this venture, and to our colleague, Professor Clodagh Brook who, with Dr Philomena Mullen, set this work in motion.

We look forward to continuing this important conversation as we embark on this shared journey.

Professor Lorraine Leeson and Dr Philomena Mullen



## 1. RACE AND ETHNICITY FOCUS GROUPS

These notes reflect the contributions to a series of focus groups held for the Trinity College Dublin Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group during August 2021. In total nine focus groups met, each comprising a range of representatives from across the staff and student community. The focus groups were qualitative in nature. Participants are not identified by either name or College role. The suggestions and feedback from all of the groups has been collated and shaped under a range of themes. The feedback is representative of the totality of the comments and feedback from participants. Where necessary, feedback comments and suggestions have been paraphrased to ensure as much anonymity as possible.

The focus groups set out to explore and understand the range of issues considered important by the participants in terms of race, ethnicity, and equality and to understand their individual experiences in Trinity. Because of the nature of the conversations and the specific topic being researched it was not possible to always restrict the conversations to that of purely race and ethnicity and there were occasions when the conversations necessarily expanded to a broader context of the intersections of other dimensions of diversity and equality. The findings of the collated feedback are presented here as issues and opportunities. The issues do not represent the individual views of any one commentator but are presented as collated responses from all of the groups.

A constant theme running through the focus group discussions was participant comments on how they welcomed the opportunity to participate in discussions on race, ethnicity, and equality in Trinity. Several contributors commented on how liberating it was to be able to contribute to shaping and influencing strategies on this area of College life. It was pointed out how discussions like this were not necessarily as accessible or accepted in parts of the world where some of the participants came from. It was emphasised that conversations, within these focus groups provided an opportunity to discuss experiences but also to engage in dialogue around the meanings and perceptions of race and ethnicity that participants may bring to the university:

- *"I'm fascinated to be invited to a focus group like this because of the part of the world that I come from because of our history we can't, or don't talk about race so it's really liberating to be able to come and talk about these issues."*
- *"I think Trinity needs to be aware that when I come here as either an international student or staff member I bring a context with me about my understanding of race and ethnicity and how acceptable it is, or not, to talk about these issues, it can be surprising for some of us to come and discover that we can contribute to conversations here in a way that we can't in our own countries."*
- *"I need to make the point that there are international students who come from America where race has a completely different context to what it has in say places like Germany or Eastern Europe and yet they both meet on the campus that is Trinity."*
- *"I think we need to have more conversations like this one where we can harvest quantitative and qualitative data and get a better picture of what's actually happening. We need to get clarity around the terms and concepts that we're talking about, we can get lost in different meanings."*



As the primary purpose of this project was to focus on race, ethnicity, and equality in Trinity, we began each of the sessions with a discussion as to what the terms meant to participants. The range of participants taking part spanned diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and national backgrounds who brought very different understandings and attitudes about what the terms meant, in regard to College life. A participant commented on how they had grown up in an environment where race, ethnicity and culture seemed to have been ‘blurred’ as they grew up and they described how they had struggled in Ireland to position and locate themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, and equality since they arrived here.

Another participant commented on how they had been motivated to join the focus group discussions because they had grown up in a “mixed race, multidenominational world” and they wanted to share those experiences in Trinity. It was suggested that discourse and conversation on race and ethnicity issues is still relatively new in the Irish context and that people can struggle to conceptualise, relate to, and understand the terms. It was suggested that Trinity should do more to engage with its diverse staff and student bases to better understand exactly how the issues of race and ethnicity and also other dimensions of diversity could be more effectively understood and managed in the university.

## ISSUE 1. CREATING A RACE AND ETHNICITY FRAMEWORK

Over the course of the discussions, the point was made that Trinity has been doing a lot of positive, proactive work on the issues of gender diversity and it was suggested that approaches to gender equality are increasingly monitored in Trinity. A participant commented:

*“I would suggest that we need to be doing the same thing when it comes to race and ethnicity. I think if we did that, we would realise that the representation on committees and other bodies needs to be addressed. I think we need to look at the levels of representation that we have with College officers and senior management. I am hoping that with the new Provost coming on board that we will attract higher levels of diversity in staff and students and that the college will make newer partnerships, particularly with the global south”.*

A point made by participants, was that if it was not for events in the United States (i.e., George Floyd) in the recent past we may not even be holding these focus group and that there was now an increasing awareness of race and ethnic diversity and equality. It was noted that Trinity has a professorship in Black Studies now, which may not have happened but for recent events. It was pointed out that the issues of race and ethnicity have traditionally been ‘way down people's lists’. It was suggested that there is increasing external pressure for a stronger and more consistent approach to race, ethnic and cultural issues. It was also suggested that Trinity should ensure that administration changes that occur over time should not impact on the strategic message of broad diversity and inclusion strategies and that College needs to ensure that issues like race and ethnicity do not end up on the ‘back burner’ depending on the priorities that different administrations might have. It was suggested that Trinity needs ongoing consistency of approach in terms of not just policy, but practice as well. A participant suggested:

*"It's very important to keep the momentum going and agree what priorities we should be focused on in terms of mainstreaming this, just like we have mainstreamed gender monitoring and gender equality in areas of College life".*

Participants in various groups suggested that College needs to, mainstream and model, race and ethnic issues in a similar way to work in progress regarding gender mainstreaming.

Conversations pointed to the fact that in recent times there has been focused attention on the issue of race in both society and workplaces. It was suggested that this is occurring because of international incidents, including the George Floyd murder in the United States, as well as others, which have attracted international media attention. It was stated that the context for exploring, discussing, and understanding race and ethnicity was quite different in the Irish context and that we should not adopt "American solutions to American problems" – instead, it was suggested that the issues around race and ethnicity faced in this country are issues that require approaches and solutions to be developed and adopted in this country. Furthermore, the point was made that those who are best positioned to inform the debates on race, ethnicity and equality have to be heard and their voices have to form part of any strategies that College will develop on these issues. It was asserted that, developing innovative approaches to understanding race and ethnicity in Trinity will require structural change and this is something that College should be prepared to do. A point made during these conversations was that Trinity needed to better understand the issues of race and ethnicity from staff and student perspectives and it needed to look at the typography and the landscape of the university in this regard.

## ISSUE 2. STEREOTYPING

Several of the focus group conversations claimed that people in any society will hold stereotypes and those thought processes influence and shape the experiences that others encounter and that cultural, national, ethnic, or racial stereotypes could have either positive or negative impacts. The point was made that the College campus was probably now much more diverse than at any time in its history, so increased awareness of the impacts of stereotyping is crucial. It was emphasised that TCD is increasingly dependent on attracting international students and staff and that it could not afford to, in any way, tolerate or be ambivalent in relation to adverse stereotyping on the campus. It was suggested that the university ought to be increasingly proactive in terms of protecting its staff and student bases, and that College should be addressing the issue of stereotyping in both policy statements, as well as its actions, embedding this as part of its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy.

Another issue raised under this heading by some participants was that of 'accent privilege' and how this could influence or determine the kinds of engagements that some students or staff had. It was perceived by some that having a US or Canadian accent can influence the degree of acceptance of those who would otherwise.

*"I feel my accent allows me to get a certain privilege in Ireland although I am visibly distinct, I seem to be treated more positively because of my accent".*

Another participant commented that "once their accent is recognised then questioning about their origin seemed to cease". They described this tendency as unsettling and went on to question how a difficult situation might present for those who could not benefit because of accent privilege. Participants suggested that this privilege was an issue in broader society, as well as in Trinity. The point was made that identity could be an issue that was defined, or questioned, in terms of one's accent or name. A participant commented:

*"Identity related questions could appear to be part of friendly interaction; however, it could also be interpreted as a micro-aggression and intrusive".*

It was claimed, that this is an issue that TCD should address as part of its inclusivity strategies and that it should take steps to ensure it was informed and aware of the experiences that students and staff may be having as part of their interactions on campus, as well as in broader society which could impact on identity perceptions in terms of College roles, interactions, and engagements.

### ISSUE 3. LESS FAVOURABLE TREATMENT

Participants referred to how financially dependent Trinity is on attracting international students to the campus to study and that the experience of some international students in terms of their race, ethnicity, culture, and language could vary, not just in the context of attending Trinity but also in the context of day-to-day life in Ireland. Participants reported that the experiences of some individuals are less positive because of their backgrounds and felt that Trinity should be doing more to assist students who may have had adverse or negative experiences. A range of participants described how they felt the issue of support from College - both prior to arriving in Ireland and while living/studying here - was crucial to their wellbeing.

Several participants described having had adverse experiences both inside and outside of College and they went on to describe how these experiences vary: some described positive, supportive experiences and others described less positive, less supportive experiences. A participant outlined how they had read an article in the Irish media which suggested that some in academia are more likely to hide their racist tendencies than people in broader society. The participant went on to say, that based on their individual experience they agreed with this statement.

A participant in one group focused on the types of inclusive actions that the university could take to ensure a stronger experience of feeling included for staff and students:

*"The pandemic has made me much more aware of my own diversity and background. Recently I attended a number of meetings in the College, I was the only one who wasn't Irish, and I was the only one who wasn't either addressed or spoken to. I really felt like I wasn't there."*

The participant went on to describe how they initially tried to ignore the treatment and made excuses but had subsequently decided to speak about their experiences and realised others had encountered similar experiences. The participant went on to say:

*“This type of thing should not be happening here, particularly in a university like Trinity College. We need to become more aware of the people around us and how we interact with them, we need to challenge the assumptions that we might have about colleagues and students, all voices need to be heard and represented”.*

Another participant commented on how their day-to-day lived experience could be described as “racism lite”. They described how this could be frightening and that when they became aware of these focus groups, they felt this would be a good opportunity to raise what concerns they had and to influence how Trinity might deal with these issues into the future. When I asked this participant to describe how “racism lite” might be experienced the following points were raised:

- *Being visibly distinct in Ireland but Irish and having assumptions made about one’s race and ethnicity, being stereotyped;*
- *Being mistaken for an international student a lot until one starts talking;*
- *Being asked where one is from - something that happens not just in Trinity but in day to day living as well;*
- *“When you say that you are Irish then getting comments like you don’t really look Irish or I didn’t think you were Irish.”*

The participant went on to comment that they were not claiming that people set out to interrogate them or that it was intended to cause offence, but noted that this type of identity questioning has a significant impact in terms of self-perception and self-esteem, something that TCD could do more on in terms of prevention and education. This point was echoed by a range of participants in several of the focus groups. Participants suggested that assumptions can be made that if one is visibly distinct then one is more likely to be an international student, rather than Irish.

A participant with a very international background and a lot of experience living in diverse communities spoke of coming to Ireland and being surprised at the levels of racism they encountered in this country, which they found shocking. They described how, in their day-to-day interactions in Ireland, they have become increasingly aware of some of the racialised language and tone that appears to be accepted here and which they felt would never be accepted in other parts of the world. They suggested that this type of communication seems to have become part of the fabric of conversations here.

They also stated that when they occasionally challenged some of these stereotypes, they encountered a degree of pushback and felt like they had become subversive or an ‘outsider’ by even raising the issue:

*“The slurs that I have encountered in day-to-day interactions walking around town, on the Luas, the bus, in shops, the comments that just seemed to be accepted as part of the norm here.”*

Another noted:

*"I have been with groups of friends here just walking down the street and while it's not directed at me, I have heard some of the comments that are directed at my friends, some of it I just find shocking."*

While the participants were not necessarily suggesting that all of these issues are related to Trinity, they are suggesting that this type of experience is part of the day-to-day fabric of life in Ireland and that it is impacting on them. Following on from this, participants noted that if this can happen in society at large, then Trinity cannot assume that it is immune to the possibility of racist incidents occurring on campus and the university needs to lead through inclusive actions, behaviours and responses to this issue.

During this discussion a point was also made in relation to how perceptions and stereotypes can be formed in relation to the backgrounds and antecedents of some international students, with adverse categorisation of some:

*"I can only speak from knowing that we treat some students differently because of their backgrounds. There is a feeling that students from some backgrounds can't be trusted about their qualifications. An example is being in a meeting, the language used by some people when they hear students from particular countries apply to come here. Then if you call people out on it you are told that is just the way things are".*

Participants felt that this type of discrimination could lead to distinct disadvantages for some students and could also be damaging to the reputation of the College unless checked. It was suggested that the university ensure that this issue is dealt with in its equality strategies as well as being monitored in practice.

## **ISSUE 4. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT/STAFF ISSUES**

In the course of conversations, the issue of the Covid pandemic was raised and how it had impacted participation at the College, with one participant noting:

*"The pandemic has helped me to realise that we have much more responsibility to our students and the way we support them, particularly, those who have travelled a long way from home and who are not able to get home in the way that they might have been used to. This has been a really difficult time for them, and I think there is more that we could be doing to make sure that our international students are ok".*

Trinity, it was said, needs to raise awareness of the disparities across the world in terms of the way the pandemic has impacted different countries and access to vaccines. The fact that individual students had very different experiences in terms of concern about families back home was pointed out and it was suggested that Trinity should engage more with international students and staff to understand their challenges and concerns in times of crisis.



Another participant said:

*“This pandemic has helped me to recognise that I can influence and shape the space that colleagues and students occupy in a way that I didn't think about before. I realise I can communicate and empathise in ways that I didn't realise previously. It's helped me understand that I might be the only point of contact that an individual has in a day; that point has become increasingly obvious to me”.*

Trinity, it was suggested, should seek to reimagine itself as a community as well as a university and to realise that it is catering to far more than just academic needs. The pandemic highlighted the opportunities for College to help others who may not have the help they need around them, particularly, international students and staff.

## ISSUE 5. INTERNATIONAL RELOCATIONS

Through the eyes of the participants, Trinity spends a good deal of time preparing international students for academia and academic processes and does not, necessarily, spend a lot of time helping them to deal with the day-to-day issues that they may face when they arrive in Ireland. It was pointed out that culture shock is something that can be faced by anybody who has moved to a new environment and that this can add to the pressure experienced when attending university for the first time. Challenges identified, include the absence of family or friendship support networks and simply not understanding the cultural differences that present themselves in a new cultural context. It was proposed that Trinity should have a full induction programme that seeks to help incoming international students to deal, not just with academic issues, but also issues like visas, day to day living, social support, culture shock, accommodation, opening bank accounts, getting PPS numbers, understanding Irish culture etc. This should be accessible to anyone who may want to avail of it. Mentoring should also be available.

## ISSUE 6. INTERCULTURALISM

During focus group discussions, it was pointed out that the 2017 College Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy set a goal to provide intercultural training for all staff, so as to help them better understand the cultural backgrounds students might bring to lecture rooms, as well as understanding the cultural backgrounds lecturers may bring to the learning environment, which in both cases influenced the learning experience and environment. During conversations, it emerged that very few lecturers have yet to experience a programme designed to help them to understand the cultural or learning styles of students or colleagues from diverse backgrounds. It was suggested that there could be assumptions that a particular teaching or lecturing style would be accepted and understood by all students, and this is not necessarily the case. It was suggested that Trinity could create a more inclusive learning environment by ensuring that all staff and students participated in intercultural training programmes to help them to better understand how culture shapes and defines expectations in the learning environment, both from the point of view of the student, as well

as the lecturer. A participant on one of the programmes described how they had attended a one-hour lunch time program in Trinity aimed at helping students who came from abroad and they went on to contend that it had really opened their eyes to some of the issues that come up, that they had not previously considered.

A number of comments were contributed, in relation to intercultural training:

- *"We have been doing intercultural training ad hoc for a number of years, but not everyone gets it."*
- *"If you look at our equality website, there is a programme on diversity. Staff with management responsibilities are encouraged to take it but that means that a lot don't get to do it because they have a million other things to do".*

Participants noted that while a Trinity Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme was compulsory for anyone who is involved in interviewing, it was felt that unless this was to become mandatory for everyone it would not be effective:

*"If it is only an encouragement that you take it, given that there are a million other things to do it is unlikely to get done. It is a long way down the list for a lot of people".*

## ISSUE 7. PLURALISM IN IRELAND

It was noted that consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion is still relatively new in the Irish context. Discussions referred to the fact that the Irish equality legislative framework has only been developing since the late 1990's/early 2000s (Employment Equality Act and Equal Status Act). The focus groups also referred to the fact that Ireland, as a nation, has undergone massive shifts in the same time period and that significant changes have occurred in Ireland in terms of providing services such as healthcare, policing, social services, education, housing etc. to an increasing culturally, ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse society. It was pointed out that much of this change had been reactive rather than proactive:

*"In Ireland we haven't prepared our systems and in particular our education system for the changes that have happened here over the past twenty years we need to be doing a lot more."*

It was suggested that Trinity is strategically positioned to offer guidance and direction in the Irish context with regard to leadership, policy development, research, and education on inclusion. It was proposed that there is an organisational case to be established for increased focus and commitment to managing diversity and inclusion. Participants felt that Trinity is in a position of influence, not just through its academic and research work but also via internal strategy formations, communications, people practices and decision making processes.

*"We should be developing a model that is specifically Irish and that people can look and say look what we have managed to do in Ireland we shouldn't be depending on other models around the world. We need to rethink".*

In the discussions, it was noted that Irish society has changed dramatically over the recent decades and that these societal changes have influenced Trinity. On the issue of recognition of pluralism in College, a participant said:

*"I've never had an issue in Trinity, but I have been in other countries previously and I had issues there. I encountered a lot of Islamophobia and prejudice about Asians. I am neither and yet I still encountered those types of prejudice. I have to say coming to Ireland for me was an improvement. I have to say I think people here are more tolerant".*

In the same discussion, participants referenced how Trinity needs to make strategic structural and policy changes to ensure that College reflected the pluralism now evident. Comments on this included:

*"I would expect that because we are all intelligent and part of Trinity, that we wouldn't have some of these prejudices, but at the end of the day we are all human and where you have human beings you will always have prejudices. I think it's important that Trinity recognises this fact and ensures that unfavourable treatment is just not acceptable from either staff or students."*

*"I think one of the real challenges for Trinity and for Ireland is that some people are not used to dealing with people who look or act differently and when you put people together who are different you are going to face these challenges. How you deal with them is what's important and that's the leadership we need from Trinity."*

When participants were asked for their suggestions as to what would need to happen or be in place so that people did not feel impacted by adverse treatment the following observations were made:

- Participants said that there seems to be a lack of a values system or if there is one, it needs to be communicated more effectively;
- A participant noted that "What is upsetting me is that inside our own gates we have nowhere to go to deal with this issue";
- Another noted that, "We followed the policies but feel that nothing happened."

This leads to the recommendations that there needs to be confidence in any system that is in place in this regard, and that reporting has to be easy. External oversight is also necessary.

In terms of monitoring of incidents, participants suggested that the College should be more proactive in terms of understanding the origins of incidents and the breakdown of same, in order to be better placed to understand the needs and expectations of individuals and groups on the campus:

*"I know the Trinity doesn't keep data and breakdown of the ethnic or racial backgrounds of the students, they only have numbers for how many international students they have but that kind of data doesn't give useful information."*

During our conversations what became apparent was the amount of experience that some participants have previously gained in universities in other parts of the world working on issues of race, ethnicity, equality, and broader diversity and inclusion issues and how willing they are to share and contribute their knowledge and experiences to Trinity. There is an opportunity for College to begin to tap into that knowledge and experience.

## ISSUE 8. REIMAGINING RACE AND ETHNICITY IN TCD

On the issue of how to approach developing a model for exploring race and ethnicity in Trinity, a range of participants suggested that the recent Irish experience of a more pluralist and an increasingly, visibly diverse society is probably unique. This country has experienced significant societal shifts in the past twenty-five years or so and our experience does not necessarily match those of other nations in term of the drivers of those shifts (colonialism, traditional migration patterns etc.). In this regard it was suggested that the Irish experience of inward migration, pluralism, and cultural hybridity is somewhat unique, and, in that sense, it was suggested that we should not 'adapt an American template here'. Instead, participants advocated for an approach that recognised that experiences of race and ethnicity as well as other dimensions of diversity in Ireland are different to other global models and that we ought to be seeking to understand and negotiate those unique patterns and develop strategies that are designed to meet the Irish context rather than merely adopt models from abroad:

*"Generally, in Europe people are very casual with racism. My experience in Ireland is that it's very often what is not said that's worse than what is said".*  
*"I think we need to look individually at issues and ask is it ignorance or is it outright racism? In my experience sometimes people say things and they don't necessarily intend to offend but that can be the outcome."*

Participants suggested that we need to have ongoing conversations and dialogues on race and ethnicity and that there needs to be increased focus on inclusion for those most impacted by the issues in order to explore and understand their experiences. It was suggested that College needs to create more opportunities for these discussions to occur and that there needs to be a 'whole campus' approach.

Some participants reported feeling that the various schools, faculties, departments and units, in diverse locations, seem very distant (geographically) from the centre. As a result, a sense of disconnection from the main campus and what is occurring in that space can arise. Some participants spoke of feeling like 'outsiders' in the context of being part of a greater whole. On this issue it was said that there are a lot of very useful and good initiatives on inclusion happening in Trinity but that these were not always 'visible' to some, and it was suggested that there could be

more structured, strategic, and coherent communication at the broader College level on equality, diversity and inclusion issues.

## ISSUE 9. PERCEPTIONS OF CONNECTEDNESS TO TCD STRATEGIES ON EQUALITY

Participants were asked if they felt that they could ‘connect’ with Trinity strategies on equality, diversity and inclusion. Participants were asked if they felt any sense of a ‘golden thread’ of connection back to established strategies or actions on diversity and inclusion in general, and race and ethnicity in particular. Overall, the responses to this question were that in general participants did not experience this type of connection. General feedback was that participants are aware that the College has overarching strategies but do not feel that they had been communicated any great sense of responsibility for the achievement of specific actions, behaviours or attitudes that would be expected of them to help achieve the strategic goals set out by the university.

It was suggested that when it came to dealing with issues like plagiarism in College nobody is in any doubt about the College’s stance, expectations, or responsibility on this issue. The point was made that it is clear in policy, practice, and communications just how seriously this issue is viewed in College. It was noted that time is allocated to these issues on every College course and that students share a coherent and consistent understanding of College’s positioning and stance on this issue. This led to participants asking why Trinity could not adopt a similar strategy when it comes to people issues; why can we not create a model similar to that adopted with plagiarism and apply it to people related (diversity, inclusion, equality, race and ethnicity, etc.) issues. It was suggested that adopting this type of approach would help create a more mainstreamed approach to diversity and inclusion in the university. This would also assist with communicating expectations and responsibilities as well as providing guidance, support, and systems for dealing with any people related issues as they arose. It would also support the creation of increased levels of compliance and confidence for the College on people issues, participants suggested.

## ISSUE 10. COMMUNICATIONS AND INTERACTIONS

It was noted that Trinity is a big campus and that some of its locations are quite remote, and as result communication across the broader campus can sometimes be disjointed:

*“If we want to develop a successful diversity and inclusion strategy, it's important that we find ways to ensure that people are better linked, and we are better able to communicate on these issues across the various centres that make up Trinity.”*

During the focus groups conversations, participants commented that they had not previously come together to discuss equality related issues. It was suggested that the expansive nature of the campus made it sometimes challenging for people to engage with each other and to hear other voices - not just physically, but also in terms of areas of focus/interest/study/research. The point



was made that physically navigating the campus can be a challenge for those whose first language is English but that for those who do not have English as a first language it can be even more difficult. It was also suggested that there is a lot of historic vernacular, terms and phrases used in some of the communications from Trinity and it was suggested that this was an issue that could reviewed so as to make navigation and understanding easier.

## ISSUE 11. REPRESENTATION AND VISIBILITY

The issue of visual representation and visibility of those from a variety of communities was raised by a number of participants. It was suggested that there are people of colour in Trinity but when you look for black faces there are not as many.

*"I am person of colour and I remember when I came to Trinity first it was almost three months before I saw another black face. I think when it comes to postgraduates, over 40% of our students are international students and in that sense there's much more visible diversity in that group. But I think when it comes to undergraduates, we do not see anything like the same visible diversity. I think that this is an area we need to focus on, and we need to look at representation in terms of the undergraduate groups".*

It was suggested that Trinity could look more at the demographic makeup of its student and staff base and try to better understand the levels of representation of various groups.

It was also suggested that the staff profiles of Trinity should be more reflective of the people it provides services to and that the university could be monitoring to ensure that its staff profiles reflect the diverse student and societal base it serves.

During one of the focus group conversations, a participant noted that sometimes "We treat people of colour as one homogeneous group and that this was a flawed approach in that we make assumptions and generalise".

Another group suggested that College should be focusing attention on undocumented migrants. One participant noted that there is a project in College that sets out to assist undocumented migrants access third level education and that they "...want to see what Trinity is doing about this, how far is Trinity willing to accept undocumented migrants onto its training programmes."

Traveller community members were also identified as under-represented in the university:

*"I think it needs to be said that the Traveller community does not seem to be very well represented in Trinity. If we are to talk about race and ethnicity, then we need to look at the Traveller community and we need to focus on the barriers that may prevent members of that group becoming students or staff at Trinity. The evidence is there that they can find it difficult to access third level and I really believe this is something that we can do something about as part of this group which is looking at race and ethnicity."*

During conversations participants focused on some of the barriers that they felt could impact on or influence students attending the university. A key challenge identified is that people do not necessarily see themselves reflected in either the student or staff base of the College, rendering it difficult to find an authentic sense of inclusiveness where one did not see oneself represented in the College's demographics. To challenge the status quo, it was suggested that the commitment to race, ethnicity and equality issues must be made strongly each and every year.

## ISSUE 12. STAFF CONTRACTS

An issue referenced during conversations was that of part time contracts for some staff. There were mixed contributions on this issue. Initially, there were questions about whether this was an issue that ought to be included in discussions on race, ethnicity, and equality in Trinity. However, as the conversations progressed, the point was made by several contributors that short term contracts are an ongoing contentious issue. The view is that these types of contracts are more common today, not just in Trinity, but in Ireland, and that an issue of real concern is in understanding whether people from particular backgrounds are more affected when it comes to the operation and impact of short-term contracts. It was pointed out that the terms of short-term contracts are similar for all staff who are bound by them. However, the point was also made that the impact for Irish staff, as opposed to international staff, could be quite different. For example, it was noted that Irish staff may have stronger support mechanisms/networks than international staff who could find themselves without support networks and be more isolated when their contracts come to an end.

Another proposal that arose in this regard was that Trinity should review the backgrounds (including gender, race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, and other dimensions of diversity) of those with short term contracts to establish if any patterns emerged where particular groups may be impacted more by this issue than others. The point was also made that when staff are forced to exist on short term contracts it is more difficult to develop a sense of inclusion or belonging in Trinity:

*"When you have to live short term, you're always in fear that you may lose your job, this fear can make it more difficult to develop longer term relationships with students because in the back of your mind there's always the apprehension that you might only be here for a short time."*

## ISSUE 13. EQUALITY MAINSTREAMING

A contribution was made that claimed that the College is trying to ensure equality is mainstreamed. However, it was also suggested that there are occasions when people perceive that there is a sense of 'window dressing' when it comes to equality initiatives.

*"In my opinion Trinity is only moderately liberal and needs to be more effective in its actions on inclusion."*

A contribution was made that stated that the Associate Vice Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (AVPEDI) position is not a full-time post<sup>2</sup>. Another participant commented that the Equality Officer position was a recent appointment and that the office needed more in terms of financial and leadership support, if equality is to be mainstreamed and is to be seen as part of the fabric of life at Trinity.

Another participant suggested that Trinity is beginning to ‘find its feet’ when it comes to the issue of equality and that as an educational institution it is primarily concerned with education, teaching, and learning. It was suggested that this could mean there is sometimes a strong focus on policy creation - however it was also suggested that:

*“...we need to be looking far more at day-to-day interactions and how these policies are actually implemented and the impact on individuals and groups of this implementation.”*

Another participant stated:

*“What we need to be focused on here are issues that are very much grounded in practice, how we interact with each other, how we develop relationships and how we link back to the values that we believe are important in Trinity.”*

A view that policies are only one small part of the process of mainstreaming equality was raised and the university ought to engage more in self-reflection and critical evaluation of engagements in the equality space. The view that College needs to focus, not just on one or two areas of equality or diversity, but should be considerably more mindful of intersections and be able to understand experiences from an intersectional perspective.

## ISSUE 14. INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

An issue that arose during conversations is the ongoing project to help develop a more inclusive curriculum in Trinity - “Trinity INC”. On several occasions participants referenced the project and warmly welcomed this inclusive curriculum strategy and the possibilities that it could create for students and lecturers on a diverse campus to recognise themselves as more reflected in curricula, reading lists, campus activities, etc. A particular point was made about how students studying Arts, Classics, Theatre Studies or other related disciplines study materials that do not necessarily give them opportunities to rehearse or play parts that allows them to fully represent or reflect their own identities. It was suggested that this is an area where Trinity could show leadership on race, ethnicity and other dimensions of diversity by ensuring that both students and staff engage with texts, materials, readings, scripts, etc., that truly reflect the diversity of any class or group setting. It was felt that there is an opportunity in this space to ensure that literature, reading, texts, and materials written by people of colour and from minority backgrounds are more represented on

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<sup>2</sup> As of September 2021, the AVPEDI role is a full-time College officership.

Trinity curricula. It was further suggested that opportunity should be created for students to explore their own identities through use of a broader representation of materials and readings.

## ISSUE 15. NAVIGATING THE CAMPUS

In the course of the focus groups a point was made that Trinity is an open campus and to which members of the public have almost unrestricted access. It was noted that on a daily basis, thousands of people pass through the campus including staff, students, and members of the public. the point was made that for anybody coming onto the campus from outside it is difficult to see any public or outward facing statements from Trinity around the standards and expectations it has with respect to use of the campus:

*“Trinity is an open historic campus. How is anybody going through it going to know that it is a safe space, it is a pluralist space?... How does Joe public know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable? There's no way even for new students to understand what's expected. We need to get far better at symbiotics and how we send our message. For me, a picture paints a thousand words, and the simplest visuals can help communicate a message around expectations on equality whether that is on creed, race, colour, language, or anything else.”*

The fact that some of the College's facilities are quite remote from the main campus was raised during focus groups. It was suggested that this can cause students and staff to feel disconnected from life and events at campus level and impacts the degree to which they feel they can interact with College. It was accepted that the university might not have a lot of choice in terms of remoteness when it came to teaching centres or other off-campus facilities, but it was also suggested that this remoteness meant College should ensure that robust support mechanisms are in place to assist staff or students who need support across our dispersed campus.

Some participants raised the sense of disconnection that they have felt because of their distance from campus and lack of proximity to support structures, which may compound other issues faced:

*“I'm in a facility that is quite distant from the university, and it feels very lonely. I had issues and I don't feel supported by my supervisor, I wondered was it discrimination the way I was dealt with. I had anxiety because of the way I was being treated.”*

When invited to comment on what would have to be in place to ensure that people would feel more comfortable, contributions included:

- Consistency in the application of rules and policies
- Be sure the support that is supposed to be there is there and that things are followed up on;
- Provide training for all staff on how to deal with bullying and harassment issues and make sure that they are consistent in dealing with complaints
- Systems need to be more transparent
- Look at attainment gaps

- Have a Race Equality Charter

## ISSUE 16. RAISING ISSUES

As part of the continuing discussion on perceptions and experiences related to race, ethnicity and equality, contributors suggested that there are times when people can be apprehensive and fearful about raising issues connected to race and ethnicity. Participants suggested that these apprehensions arise around uncertainty as to how these topics might be received and reacted to. It was suggested that as Trinity seeks to attract more international students and to build international partnerships it is crucial that it is seen to be as responsive as possible to issues that could arise around issues related to race and ethnicity and be proactive instead of reactive in its actions on race and ethnicity. Participants suggested that sometimes conversations around race and ethnicity can be difficult but that these difficult conversations provide opportunities for rich solutions, suggestions, and ideas to develop. For innovative ideas to emerge it was suggested that it is crucial that Trinity to be open to the possibility of challenge and questioning on its approaches to race, ethnicity, and broader equality issues:

*"Sometimes we can hypothesise race and ethnicity to be only about the 'other' and in that sense not everybody might feel that they have an interest in or a contribution to make."*

Participants would like the university to make it clear that issues related to race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, language, and identity are not only about 'the other' but ought to be understood to be inclusive terms which refer to all of us.

*"...there can be a real fear to get involved in these discussions and to raise issues. There can be a sense that no one wants to take on the vulnerability of exposing things."*

It was emphasised that Trinity should work to ensure that these issues are seen and understood to be personal issues, rather than abstract concepts. Another point made in relation to this issue was the importance of having visible representation in both staff and student groups:

*"If we have a lack of visible staff and students in the mix then it's difficult to find somebody who can legitimately start the conversations."*

In the course of focus group conversations, a participant reflected that during a recent workshop on racism on the campus, many contributors had their videos turned off on the Zoom call and participants suggested this made it really difficult to fully contextualize and understand comments made. This raised the question as to why participants on a call of this nature would be apprehensive about disclosing their visible identity.

Participants also suggested that students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level have a significant part to play in the development and implementation of any equality initiatives in the university and that their voices ought to be heard in a structured way:



*“Trinity has done positive work in the area of gender diversity through the Athena SWAN initiative and that might provide a basis and useful framework around which to conceptualise and imagine an effective model regarding racial and ethnic equality and diversity in the College.”*

## ISSUE 17. TRINITY AS A CENTRE OF LEARNING AND EXCELLENCE

*“I work in the medical field and honestly, I can say that I have experienced micro-aggressions and other prejudice from so called enlightened, educated people; it’s a weekly experience. Things like taking the time to pronounce someone’s name properly or other phrases that should not be used, like, “Their English is good”. “Where are you really from?” is another example. These are examples of the types of things that slowly undermine your confidence. ...It’s a huge weight on your shoulders. Some people are very resilient and can carry it well; others are not so resilient.”*

During the focus groups an issue that arose for discussion was that of the profiling and positioning of Trinity in terms of managing issues such as race, ethnicity, culture, and other dimensions of diversity.

*“There is an institutional racism across the education sector in Ireland about who gets to attend third level and the choices that young people have and Trinity has quite an elitist history. We are making efforts [but] they are just not joined up enough.”*

Participants believed that as one of the most prominent higher education institutions in Ireland with global standing and recognition it was incumbent on College to be seen to be as effective as it could be in terms of how it managed diversity and inclusion.

Claims that there may be assumptions made on the basis that as Trinity is a centre of learning, education, critical thinking and research, it is also to the fore on issues of race, ethnicity, equality, diversity and inclusion. It was asserted that these assumptions should not be relied upon as accurate and that, like every other institution where human beings interact, issues around treatment, expectations, and day to day experiences need to be examined on an ongoing basis.

A participant offered the following quotes to help with understanding this issue: *“There is a saying that in the steel workers house everything is wooden”* and *“In the house of a saint, there are no miracles”*. Both of these idioms provide useful reminders for the university to guard against ambivalence or assumptions on how effective it may be in managing race, ethnic, equality and diversity issues.

## ISSUE 18. SUPPORTING AND TRAINING STAFF

The issue of staff supports and training arose in many of the focus groups. Participants commented that the profile of both staff and students has become increasingly diverse in the recent past and noted that more visibly diverse classroom and lecture hall settings have become the norm.

Participants claimed that staff need support to be able to understand and negotiate the challenges that present in teaching and lecturing to diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Participants want College to do more to assist individual lecturers and students to understand and deconstruct some of the barriers faced in the educational environment:

“I think it's important that our staff understand how they are perceived in the classroom by students, and I think we should be helping our staff members to develop skills and competencies so that they can be more inclusive, and more aware of the kind of differences that can present in the classroom.”

*“I think there is an opportunity to create a forum for staff to come together and discuss how increasing diversity could be changing classroom dynamics and the interactions between students and lecturers. I don't think it can be assumed that we all know how to understand and negotiate cultural, religious, racial, and ethnic differences. This is something that people need help with, and the college could do more on this.”*

Other participant contributions on the issue of staff training and support included:

*“We are hiding the problem. We need to talk about what's happening and I think that includes hearing from the people who are the other side of this picture and then thinking about how we better serve our diverse student population with so many different races as well as the Traveller community. But how do we serve each of these communities? We shouldn't fall into the trap of thinking that races are the same, so we need to find a unique solution.”*

A related comment on this issue was:

*“I think if we could put more people from diverse backgrounds in the space [College] so that when you look up at the top of the class you see somebody who might look like you and I think that would be a great way to help people to feel more comfortable and to integrate more effectively.”*

Staff members made a range of contributions across the focus groups with regard to how the university could better help train, educate, and support staff to meet the challenges of working in diverse settings, on diverse teams, and with diverse student groups:

*“We need to teach and train our colleagues to more positively interact with the cultural diversity that they're dealing with. We also need to acknowledge the steps that are being taken by culturally diverse staff to fit in. We should be acknowledging more the emotional investments that people make.”*

*"You walk into the classroom and in most cases, you just pick it up as you go. Sometimes you are going by the list of names. You can recognise the Irish names, then you can recognise the non-Irish names, and I suppose we make assumptions on those names."*

Other contributions on the need for support for staff included:

*"As lecturers, we were given no training and no support on overcoming things like unconscious bias. To think that we might look through a list of names and try and classify what kind of support people need based on their names, that to me is just ridiculous. As a lecturer going into class, I shouldn't have to be blindsided, Trinity should be giving us this support to understand the needs of our students whether that's cultural or learning or whatever. I do think there needs to be a body of work done in this area to help our teaching staff."*

*"We must create a safe learning space for students so that they can say what they want to say without fear. If we create a space for race and ethnicity that is a taboo, then that creates real problems and that people become fearful. We have to create a space where people feel open and safe to have discussions."*

Other contributions on this issue focused on the shifting profiles of students in lecture settings:

*"I notice more and more that there are a lot of non-Irish and maybe first generation Irish in classrooms now and there's a lot of sensitive issues that come up during discussions and conversations. We need to know how to handle those conversations. I want to be as sensitive as I can when I have people in the classroom from many different backgrounds whether that's African heritage, Asian heritage or whatever"*

Other issues raised under this heading included the need for the university to make strategic and cultural adjustments in an environment where the staff base is increasingly diverse. A number of contributions were made regarding the experiences of staff during interactions at the university:

*"I attended a fairly big meeting at one stage that involved a lot of faculty members, and I was there early, and I was sitting waiting for the meeting to start and before it began the person who was hosting the meeting saw me and pointedly asked if there was anybody who had to leave before the staff meeting began. Basically, they said, "This is a teaching session for academic members of staff," while looking specifically at me, so you know that's really the culture"*

*"I was required to undertake a diversity program developed by HR for anybody who is involved in recruiting. This is some years ago, but I have to say it was the worst programme I ever attended. It presupposed that anybody who was taking the programme was white. The videos that we were asked to watch included actresses playing the parts of the interviewers, who were all white. What message does that send? I felt much more offended going through that exercise as a person of colour because it was assumed that I must be white and Irish if I was recruiting."*

*"Honestly, I feel I have been used as a marketing strategy sometimes by Trinity - I have been asked to be involved in so many things because I am from a minority background - not for my knowledge, not for my skills, not for my education but because of who I am. It's superficial tokenism."*

The participant contributions above provide guidance for the university in terms of the type of cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural considerations that could present barriers to the creation of an inclusive environment. These contributions afford Trinity the opportunity to develop equality strategies to ensure that these types of experiences are proactively managed. A related participant contribution on this theme was:

*"What we are doing today is the beginning of a research informed effort to help develop an effective road map in Trinity. We are a research intense university so shouldn't we be doing some intensive research in this area. We need engagement through research."*

## ISSUE 19. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

Participants commented on recent events including the George Floyd murder and how that had been perceived:

*"It takes a lot of mental strength for black students to deal with issues like this when they happen and when you get silence, that's not a good thing. The email that we did get on Black Lives Matter felt like a PR exercise - it didn't have the content that would have made me feel secure."*

*"The support email advised us to reach out if we needed support but it guided us towards the Black and Caribbean Students Association. I wondered why they were pointing people with a problem towards other people with the same problem."*

*"I felt that the university had no resources of its own that they could direct us to. I pay a lot of money to Trinity, and I feel that they could have provided me with some kind of space where I would feel safe, but I didn't feel that."*

The implementation of equality strategies was an issue raised by several of the focus groups. Several contributors made the point that it is important that Trinity not simply develop policies but also ensure that they are implemented effectively. Participants felt that it wasn't enough that policies exist; there need to be levels of accountability attached to the actions in these policies and strategies; and people have to be held accountable:

*"In my experience one of the reasons why equality policies fail is because there is no accountability, and nobody is held responsible. We have the policies, but we don't have the action."*

*"Our current diversity and inclusion policy expired in 2020 so we are dealing with something that's historical. There were a lot of timelines in that last strategy but I'm not sure how much of it was ever actually achieved because I don't think there was ever a managing mechanism."*

*"I think the university needs to understand that it's not enough to just write policies. It's about supervision and monitoring implementation, holding people to account, and leadership."*

*"This university is in the process now of coming up with a new diversity and inclusion policy and I have not heard anything about it and yet I'm one of the people who will be impacted by it. What I'm hearing is that white straight people are sitting down to develop a diversity and inclusion policy for black, coloured, and Asian people without their help or input. Don't just turn out policies. This is not a box ticking exercise."*

A point made during conversations was that the number of persons found in senior positions who are culturally or ethnically diverse is very limited:

*"It's difficult to find not only inspiration but guidance when you don't see yourself reflected in the leadership profile. You feel a bit isolated I suppose when you don't feel the mentorship is there to help you to integrate better. I think sometimes there is a fear of creating problems for others if you raise this type of issue, there is a fear of not being understood and a fear of not being supported, to me it's important that if I explain a problem I have to somebody that they are able to cross the barriers and understand why that is a problem for me, when a leadership group is too homogeneous it's very hard to do that".*

*"There is a certain amount of fear that we have around dealing with race and ethnicity. Am I stepping on eggshells if I raise concerns? I think we have to start having more conversations on these topics and we need to be more open to having these discussions."*

An issue raised by participants during conversations was how complaints are dealt with and the level of confidence felt by students in making complaints. Feedback from participants provides a mixed reaction to this issue with some indicating that their issues had been listened to and dealt with, while others expressed lower levels of confidence in terms of the systems the College has for dealing with complaints and supporting students. The remedy put forward to address this was that in view of the increasingly diverse profile of staff and students this was an issue that the college had to address:

*"I think there is more that we could do to show students that if they do come with complaints that they will be taken seriously and that there's a chain to deal with these complaints. It's not fair if a person of colour happens to be the one that students who were*



*affected by racism happened to go to because they feel that that person is the one who can best understand what's happening to them and that has happened here at Trinity.”*

*“It's sad but sometimes we don't hear about these incidents until the end of the year until the students have left and only feel comfortable to tell us then.”*

## ISSUE 20. CREATING SYSTEMS

An issue that arose often, was that of the importance of adopting a system based, strategic perspective on race and ethnicity and diversity and inclusion in general. It was widely stated that the university needs to focus on developing higher levels of confidence and surety for all participants by ensuring that its approaches to managing, interacting with race and ethnicity, diversity and inclusion are robust and systemic enough to make certain that individuals feel sufficient confidence to engage with, and make use of the systems, when they have adverse experiences. An issue commented on regularly was that the University must ensure that trust in the complaints system is maintained:

*“I think we're talking about work in progress. I think we're talking about something that's evolving. I don't think we're at the beginning - I think we're on the road, but I don't think it's something that's sensed as often as it's described. We will be constantly redefining, and we will be constantly redesigning.”*

The need for action plans, and monitoring of implementation of same was referenced:

*“I think there are a lot of posters, and a lot of campaign promises but I would much prefer to see the action plans to follow the campaign promises. If I see a list of actions, I feel much more motivated to do something at my own level rather than waiting for something to trickle down.”*

On the issue of how engaged participants felt with the College's current Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, participants commented:

*“I don't feel the university holds me responsible for anti-racism but when I think of the things that it does hold me responsible for, including academic rigor, anti-plagiarism and the way that is taught through modules and some of them are pretty persistent with reminders. I think if we spent as much time on equality as we do on academic rigor and plagiarism in the student programmes, I would personally feel then that there were external forces holding me responsible and accountable and I think that is important.”*

Working to ensure observance of policies across the university was another noted concern, with one contributor commenting that the challenge is not due to a lack of policy, but to the issue of compliance. Linked to this, a clear need was seen that would address a dual set of considerations: (i) what College wants to proactively achieve and (ii) sanctions for people who fail to live up to

College's expectations regarding (e.g.) creating an inclusive space or engaging in behaviours or actions that adversely impact certain individuals or the reputation of College:

*"I think it's good psychology to focus on what we want rather than what we don't want but I also think that there have to be sanctions so that when people don't assist the process there is a sanction. I think it's about developing a culture where race is affirmed and where we have open conversations and we're not afraid to say it as it is and make a mistake in language motivation is understood."*

*"It's important that we recognise that we can have rules and policies but they won't change people's attitudes - people just get smarter about hiding their attitudes. I think if you really want to make change then the way to do it is through mingling and meeting people who are different and trying to understand who they are and what motivates them."*

Participants commented on the types of actions they would like to see developed to guarantee an increased sense of inclusivity in TCD, including increased opportunities for in-person interaction, dialogue, and engagement). Working to ensure an environment where it is safe to make mistakes on 'people issues', where the culture is one of learning and support, rather than of sanction, should be our goal, according to those who took part in the groups. This goal does not minimise or excuse intentional acts of commission, omission or ambivalence on the part of College community members, or the University, who must firmly assert this point:

*"I think we need to be aware that people can genuinely make mistakes and we have to make it safe to admit that you made a mistake and not be denounced for doing it."*

## ISSUE 22. ANTI-SEMITISM

Antisemitism, and its impact on members of the College community was raised, as a matter of concern in several focus groups. Participants in a number of focus groups suggested that the issue of antisemitism was a lived experience for some in the Irish context and that the university should be more vigilant in terms of defining antisemitism in College, in recognising it as an issue; and in providing support for stakeholders who are impacted. a participant noted that, currently, "...a lot of the time it seems like nobody really cares, nobody wants to know."

*"I think there is a lack of understanding about the experiences of the Jewish community, so I am not sure that the authentic experiences and voices of the Jewish community are necessarily heard."*

When invited to suggest what they thought the university should be doing to help deal with this issue a number of proposals were put forward, principle amongst them, a call for increased levels of dialogue and discussion that could help situate contemporary experiences:

*"It's all very well to write historical paper about past events but we need to recognise that there's still modern antisemitism and that needs a voice. I want to be involved in the conversation of modern inequality I think that's important."*

*"Antisemitism works differently to other forms of racism in that it's cyclical and it starts to rise at times of societal unrest and then resolves when there is more serenity or cohesion. I have seen people being denied opportunities because of their Jewish identity to me it's crucial that that does not become an issue in Ireland."*



## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Trinity is at a critical moment in its history, as its staff and service user bases become more diverse than probably at any time in its history. The hosting of these particular focus groups at this time and listening to the experiences of those who occupy the College space (in whatever capacity) is to hear the experiences and suggestions of those most able to inform College strategies into the future, not just on race and ethnicity but also on the intersections of other dimensions of diversity that create the fabric of the institution.

The suggestions of participants can be broadly categorised under a number of key headings:

- Organisational cultures (across all levels of the organisation)
- Participation (access and widening participation)
- Curriculum Development (evaluation of how inclusive (or not) the current curricula are)
- Employment (access to, conditions and comparisons)
- The experience of academics and in particular the experiences of BME academics

Another theme that was raised was that of **attainment** (levels of academic attainment and identification of barriers to such), but none of the specific suggestions presented map directly to this theme, so we exclude it from the matrix in Table 2 below but note that this is an item that we must give due attention to as we work towards building a College Race Equality Action Plan.

The feedback from participants provides the basis for further and more detailed explorations and analysis of the experiences of those who participated. It poses important questions and provides revealing insights into the day-to-day experiences and perceptions of racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic inequality in College. The feedback suggestions offer compelling recommendations for further research, culture change and a reimagining of management practices.

As part of the process of engagement with participants there were a number of electronic contributions made to the process and the general thrust of those contributions has been incorporated into this feedback. It is important to note here, that some of the participant contributions to the focus groups questioned why Trinity felt the need to undertake a project such as this in the first instance and a number of contributors questioned whether or not there were any *real* issues that the College needed to address on race, ethnicity, or equality. In some participant contributions there was a sense of doubt as to whether this type of project or type of engagement was, in fact, necessary. There was a number of contributions where participants referred to their historical experiences in College and they commented that *they* had never encountered any adverse attitudes or experiences in their roles or engagements with Trinity on equality issues. Those perceptions were not reflected by the majority of participants to the focus groups but do provide an insight into the fact that the perceptions and views of all who participated in this project are diverse and all of these individual contributions and inputs provide evidence to TCD as an organisation of the kind of challenge it may face in seeking to involve all its stakeholders in its strategy development

or implementation. This feedback also highlights the degree to which individuals may feel a personal responsibility to deal with equality issues or to personally align with College strategies, or thinking, on race, ethnicity, equality, or diversity and inclusion issues. This is, then, an opportunity for the institution to undertake further research in this area and to examine how it engages all staff in promoting inclusivity at the College.

### Build Trust and Confidence in How Complaints are Managed

- Participants in a number of the focus groups expressed varying degrees of lack of confidence and trust in the current processes for reporting and managing complaints made on race, ethnicity, and other equality related issues. There is a sense that it can be a waste of time and also that it is not comfortable raising issues of this nature for fear of either institutional resistance, or the attraction of adverse attention to oneself. **Thus, there is a need to build trust and confidence in how complaints are managed.**

### Go Beyond the Ivory Tower

- The focus group feedback suggests that there can be occasions when Trinity might be perceived to be an educational ‘Ivory tower’, and that assumptions could be made that because it is a centre of excellence on education and learning matters it might somehow ‘be above’ being impacted or influenced by the types of prejudices or biases that shape humanity as a whole. It was feared that Trinity (individuals and systems) might be assumed to be immune to the adverse impact of biased mind-sets or ineffective structures, or systems of support when it comes to the management of race, ethnicity, and other equality issues.
- Feedback suggested that the existing equality framework needs to **refocus on the effective implementation of strategy rather than the mere development of strategy**. Evidence from other jurisdictions and, in particular, the UK third level sector, indicates that the key failures in that sector on race, ethnicity and broader diversity and inclusion work, in general, relates to implementation of strategy and not so much to its development. There is an opportunity for Trinity to ensure that in reimagining its approaches to race and ethnicity, its actions are concrete, visible, coherent, and open to scrutiny.

### Reimagine Trinity

- There is an opportunity for the College to reimagine its approaches to race, ethnicity, diversity and inclusion generally, so that it creates the spaces for stakeholders to engage with each other on issues of equality and ensure that the existence of these spaces to discuss issues such as privilege, racism, prejudice etc. are understood to be priorities. There must be opportunities for these priorities to be recognised, not just as academic issues but as key HR and stakeholder (staff and students) development issues. There is a need to **ensure that the visible and invisible (human and organisational) barriers and**

**resistance to race and ethnicity, as well as other dimensions of diversity and inclusion are better understood.**

## **Recognise and Reward Equality Work**

- There is an opportunity for TCD to ensure that those engaged in equality, diversity and inclusion work generally are provided with higher levels of support, resourcing, and training. In the focus groups it became apparent that often those who become involved in equality, diversity and inclusion work find themselves outside of the mainstream and in some senses marginalised. It was emphasised that equality, diversity and inclusion work can take high levels of mental and emotional energy and that these investments of energy should not be taken for granted.
- It was suggested that **support for individuals in equality, diversity and inclusion related work needed to be prioritised more from an institutional standpoint.** It was suggested that this higher-level prioritising would necessitate strategic and structural change rather than merely creating an image of change by adding diverse face photographs in outward facing College publications, websites, social media etc.

## **Be Aware of Adversity**

- The feedback indicates that minority ethnic individuals can disproportionately experience adverse outcomes in higher education and yet, some institutions fail to understand the experiences of their people (staff and service users), and the need for universities and other third level institutes to ensure that they are not 'blindsided' to the adverse experiences and impacts that some stakeholders may encounter.
- It was deemed necessary for Trinity to **consider how particular individuals and groups might encounter and experience disadvantage and structural inequality in their interactions with College and work actively to dismantle these barriers.** Discussions included focus on the terminology and categorisations that can be used to describe groups in College and in society, in general. It was recognised that some of those categorisations can be useful labels in helping to recognise and understand the demographics and constructions of those who occupy the space, but they can also lead to tendencies to homogenise, standardise, reduce and pathologise, which may lead to the perpetuation of social divisions, categories, and groupings. It was suggested that Trinity needs to guard against the simplistic categorisation of individuals and groups to one, or a small number of aspects of identity and that College should ensure increased recognition of how such constructions can either cause or become entangled in processes of exclusion and unequal power relations.
- A further suggestion was put forward that College needs to **focus on the creation of inclusive, introspective, reflexive and learning oriented frameworks that challenge misperceptions and misrecognitions.**



## Position EDI as a Strategic College Priority

- It was suggested that there **needed to be ongoing and significant pressure maintained on people at all levels to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is understood to be an issue of strategic priority in Trinity.**

## Recognising and Responding to Diversity is a Whole of College Venture

- A suggestion from the focus groups was that those from Black and other minority ethnic backgrounds (staff or students) are not a homogenous group and that the College and its institutions need to **guard against the assumption that it is dealing with a homogenous group.**
- **The ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic profiles of its stakeholders** needs to be **examined and understood in greater detail.** It was emphasised that the College needs to be constantly vigilant to ensure that recognition of Black and other minority ethnic issues do not become problematic because of assumptions of homogeneity.
- It was emphasised that the College needs to focus more on the **development of an organisational culture that recognises and values the diverse skillsets that** Black and other minority ethnic **stakeholders bring while also challenging the culture, mind-sets and practices that can inhibit staff in terms of recruitment, selection, progression, or advancement.** In the course of the focus groups, a point was made that those who are involved in recruitment and interviewing are required to undertake a training programme (“Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education”) as mandatory, in other words, it is taken by those assumed to need it most. This approach can be problematic in that this type of course may then be perceived by others as unnecessary for them and yet, the paradox is that they could be leading, guiding, mentoring, or supervising those selected from the original recruitment process.
- Developing the types of diversity and inclusion consciousness necessary involves **long term strategic commitment.** It was suggested in these focus groups that College needs to move past the idea of the effective management of race, ethnicity, equality, and other dimensions of diversity as being simply the responsibility of HR or other specialist department roles.
- There was a call for a **whole organisation approach** with **increased resourcing** and **higher levels of leadership involvement.**
- It was suggested that the College needs to be far more **proactive and have increased visibility in terms of ongoing commitment to the** development of key (individual and organisational) performance indicators and increased levels of accountability and responsibility allocation.

- It was also suggested that the College needs to **be more active in its recruitment of minority representation to its senior leadership and senior academic positions** in order to reflect the diversity increasingly apparent in both the staff and student profiles of the College.
- It was suggested that the College needs **to review its promotion and advancement systems** so as to better support minority staff to develop the experience and skills they need to compete more effectively in the advancement process.
- It was also suggested that the College could be focusing to a greater extent on its **succession processes**, so as to ensure that staff from minority backgrounds are helped and supported to avail of potential leadership opportunities and also to be able to understand how decisions are reached in terms of the pool of candidates for the roles.
- A related suggestion from the focus groups was that the College strengthen its **mentoring** opportunities for all minority stakeholders (staff and students), so as to support them in their professional development.
- It was also suggested that the College needs to better enable stakeholders to recognise increased **transparency and objectivity in the decision-making processes** particularly as they relate to issues that impact those from minority backgrounds.

## Develop a Race Equality Charter

Participants to the focus groups reported that experiences of racism could be subtle and hidden, very often manifesting through covert and nuanced processes linked to ethnicity, culture, nationality etc. The outcomes can mean differential treatment, stereotyping, bullying, lack of access and experiences of exclusion. Everyday examples included questioning of qualifications, credibility, experience, trust and over scrutinisation.

Another point made by contributors was that a 'critical sequence of ongoing and seemingly minor events can combine over time to create a pattern of micro-aggressions, which can eventually become internalised, and which can contribute to esteem issues, identity questioning and can impact levels of confidence.

- The suggestion was made that College **reflect on the diversity of decision-making bodies**, how members of these are selected/appointed and whether the construction or operation of these bodies may be disadvantaging any potential members (i.e., accessibility, meeting schedules, family commitments, remote workers etc.).
- There is an opportunity for Trinity to consider more **bespoke unconscious bias training** for those in particular roles, such as teaching, research, management, and leadership, and as a colleague, with regard to how the workplace culture is established and maintained. Participants also recommended that **ongoing research be conducted into the causes that**

**may have given rise to complaints in the first instance to help uncover if systemic patterns or failures become apparent.**

- It was suggested that Trinity develop a **Race Equality Charter**<sup>3</sup> and that all stakeholders would be asked to subscribe. In the United Kingdom a range of third level institutions are currently trialling the adaption of the UK Race Equality Charter. It was suggested that the charter could be a useful reference for Trinity.

The UK Race Equality Charter is underpinned by five fundamental guiding principles.

- Racial inequalities are a significant issue within higher education. Racial inequalities are not necessarily overt, isolated incidents. Racism is an everyday facet of UK society and racial inequalities manifest themselves in everyday situations, processes, and behaviours.
- UK higher education cannot reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of the whole population and until individuals from all ethnic backgrounds can benefit equally from the opportunities it affords.
- In developing solutions to racial inequalities, it is important that they are aimed at achieving long-term institutional culture change, avoiding a deficit model where solutions are aimed at changing the individual.
- Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic staff and students are not a homogenous group. People from different ethnic backgrounds have different experiences of and outcomes from/within higher education, and that complexity needs to be considered in analysing data and developing actions.
- All individuals have multiple identities, and the intersection of those different identities should be considered wherever possible.

Source <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter>

## Dialogue and Discussion

- In the course of conversations, it became apparent that the experiences of individuals in the College, based on aspects of their identity (skin colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion etc.) could vary with some experiencing less favourable treatment. In some cases, the treatment could be ignorance or ambivalence, while in other cases it was much more direct and insidious. Either way, it was suggested that the College has a major responsibility to ensure that the campus is perceived as an inclusive space and that it takes proactive steps to manage these types of experience, so as to help **dismantle and deconstruct barriers faced by stakeholders.**
- Some of the key barriers to progression identified by participants included a lack of **dialogue and discussion** to uncover their experiences. A lack of understanding of the

<sup>3</sup> We note that the HEA's Report on Race Equality in HEIs from late 2021 includes a recommendation around the introduction of a Race Equality Charter, which would be led by the HEA and HE stakeholders.

challenges and multiple layers of complexity faced by minority staff due to a lack of personal experience and failures to appreciate otherness (colour blindness).

- Contributors suggested the **development of a campus environment where discussions on race and experiences of black and minority stakeholders are encouraged, including amongst staff and academics.**

## The Importance of Qualitative Approaches

- It was suggested that the College should be **engaging more in qualitative audits rather than audits that are quantitative in nature, which may hide an understanding of real day to day lived experiences.** It was suggested that the narratives from qualitative research ought to be informing future strategy development in TCD. It was also suggested that the College should ensure that its approaches to race, ethnicity and equality are balanced, in that they seek to focus on enhancing, not just the student experience, but also the experience of staff from all backgrounds.

## A tableaux of suggestions

This table incorporates the profiled items listed above, and includes additional recommendations and suggestions from participants, listed here in italics (but in no particular order) under the thematic headings listed earlier.

1	Organisational Cultures (across all levels of the organisation)
1.1	<i>Develop a Race Equality Charter</i>
1.2	<i>Ensure that EDI is understood to be an issue of strategic priority in Trinity.</i>
1.3	<i>Adopt qualitative audits rather than audits which are quantitative in nature, which may hide an understanding of real day to day lived experiences.</i>
1.4	<i>Develop of a campus environment where discussions on race and experiences of black and minority stakeholders are encouraged, including amongst staff and academics.</i>
1.5	<i>Examine the causes that may have given rise to complaints in the first instance to help uncover if systemic patterns or failures become apparent.</i>
1.6	Dismantle and deconstruct barriers faced by stakeholders
1.7	Provide bespoke unconscious bias training for key stakeholder groups
1.8	Reflect on the diversity of College's decision-making bodies, their selection and operating practices.
1.9	Build trust and confidence in how complaints are managed.
1.10	Focus on the effective implementation of strategy rather than the mere development of strategy.
1.11	Ensure support for individuals engaged in EDI related work is prioritised from an institutional standpoint.
1.12	Foster development of an organisational culture that recognises and values the diverse skillsets that BME stakeholders bring while also challenging the culture,

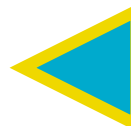
	mind-sets and practices that can inhibit staff in terms of recruitment, selection, progression, or advancement.
1.13	Be more active in the recruitment of minority representation to senior leadership and senior academic positions
1.14	More effective communication of the College's equality, diversity and inclusion strategies with specific responsibilities allocated for the implementation of the goals and strategic statements included in strategies.
1.15	Continuously work to explicitly position TCD as a space that is open and inclusive
1.16	Increase involvement of representative groups and individuals from both staff and student backgrounds to help with the development and creation of equality, diversity and inclusion plans.
1.17	Clearly communicate what exactly the terms diversity, inclusion, equality and equity mean in Trinity's context.
1.18	Examine how strategic messages on diversity and inclusion (broadly) and race and ethnicity (specifically) are communicated down through the leadership pipeline in Trinity. It was suggested that these messages and the practices experienced from the top are crucial.
1.19	Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion plans are time bound and are not subject to change if there is a change of leadership at the College. It was suggested that where plans have been developed and are being implemented, they should not be subject to change, to fluctuating levels of focus or attention in the event of a change in senior leadership or management.
1.20	Ensure ongoing review and monitoring of EDI strategies to ensure effective adherence to specific objectives and identification of any gaps that may be emerging.
1.21	Ensure that the levels of support afforded to staff and students are consistent in their operation and application and that users of this type of support are kept involved in the process and advised of the outcome of any investigations, inquiries, or other types of interventions.
1.22	Reimagine EDI and human dignity processes for staff and students at all levels of the college to ensure consistency of understanding and approach and application to people issues in College.
1.23	Ensure that the core values that we subscribe to are reflected more in the attitudes and behaviours from those in positions of power in Trinity.
1.24	Ensure ongoing monitoring of diverse representation in discrimination, bullying, grievance etc. rates.
1.25	Allocate of specific responsibilities for the implementation of EDI (race and ethnicity) strategies.
1.26	Mainstream EDI related approach into all aspects of HR functions in TCD (recruitment, selection, retention training, short term contracts etc.)
<b>2</b>	<b>Participation (access and widening participation)</b>
2.1	Consider how individuals and groups might encounter and experience disadvantage and structural inequality in their interactions with College and work actively to dismantle these barriers.

2.2	Ensure that that the visible and invisible (human and organisational) barriers and resistance to race and ethnicity, as well as other dimensions of diversity and inclusion are better understood.
2.3	Focus on structural change – go beyond the appearance of broader inclusion.
2.4	Examine and better understand the ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic profiles of our stakeholders.
2.5	Increase levels of support for international students and staff to help with making the relocation adjustments they may encounter.
2.6	Need a stronger focus on monitoring of levels of representation levels in both staff and student bases in the college (race, ethnicity, nationality, skin colour etc.).
2.7	More specific strategies to help with levels of integration between staff and students. (Mentoring, coaching, support etc.).
2.8	Need for more impetus to ensure both bottom-up and top-down flows of information and idea sharing as we work.
<b>3</b>	<b>Curriculum Development (evaluation of how inclusive (or not) the current curricula are)</b>
3.1	Focus on the creation of inclusive, introspective, reflexive and learning oriented frameworks that challenge misperceptions and misrecognitions.
3.2	Add a mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion module to all programmes in the College.
3.3	Work to achieve higher levels of participation and support of the Inclusive Curriculum development initiative.
3.4	Further development of the Inclusive Curriculum programme to help adjust to a less western and Eurocentric approach.
3.5	Increased levels of training and support for lecturing/academic staff to help with understanding the cultural dynamics at play in a diverse educational classroom or lecture theatre environment.
<b>4</b>	<b>Employment (access to, conditions and comparisons)</b>
4.1	Ongoing monitoring of diverse representation at various levels of staff.
4.2	Ongoing monitoring of diverse representation hire rate at various levels of management.
4.3	Ongoing monitoring of diverse representation turnover at various levels.
4.4	Ongoing monitoring of diverse representation promotion rates at various levels.
<b>5</b>	<b>The experience of academics, and in particular the experiences of BME academics</b>
5.1	Strengthening mentoring opportunities for minority staff and students.
5.2	Succession planning is needed to support staff from minority backgrounds are helped and supported to avail of potential leadership opportunities
5.3	Review promotion and advancement systems so as to better support minority staff to develop the experience and skills they need to compete more effectively.
5.4	Contributions to focus groups/other forms of engagement need to be acknowledged and actioned. It was suggested that a lot of focus groups happen but that many may not result in tangible actions.



5.5	Ensure more effective communication of the types of supports available to students and staff who are impacted by adverse (prejudice or discrimination) incidents or attention.
5.6	Review of the specific impact of current staff short term contract process to establish if some individuals/groups are more adversely impacted than others.

**Table 2: Suggestions and Recommendations from the Trinity College Dublin Focus Groups**



### 3. MAPPING OUR FINDINGS TO THE HEA'S RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we provide an initial mapping of the suggestions emerging from our focus groups to the HEA's recommendations, that we shared at the beginning of this document. We note that several actions go beyond the recommendations, and offer scope for further work towards a local Race Equality Action Plan, one of the key objectives for the Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group.

Trinity Themes	Suggested Actions	HEA Themes	Proposed Action could inform work on:
<b>1. Organisational Cultures (across all levels of the organisation)</b>			
1.1	Develop a Race Equality Charter	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b>	<i>Statement/charter for HEIs</i>
1.2	Ensure that EDI is understood to be an issue of strategic priority in Trinity.	<b>Theme 2: Supporting diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Institutional action plan</i>
1.3	Adopt qualitative audits in addition to audits which are quantitative in nature, which may hide an understanding of real day to day lived experiences.	<b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports our annual reporting process for the HEA, and for Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>
1.4	Develop a campus environment where discussions on race and experiences of black and minority stakeholders are encouraged, including amongst staff and academics.	<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports our annual reporting process for the HEA, and for Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>
1.5	Examine the causes that may have given rise to complaints in the first instance to help uncover if systemic patterns or failures become apparent.	<b>Theme 4: Reporting mechanisms</b> <b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.6	Dismantle and deconstruct barriers faced by stakeholders	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.7	Provide bespoke unconscious bias training for key stakeholder groups	<b>Theme 5: Awareness and Training</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.8	Reflect on the diversity of College's decision-making bodies, their selection and operating practices.	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>

1.9	Build trust and confidence in how complaints are managed.	<b>Theme 4: Reporting mechanisms</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.10	Focus on the effective implementation of strategy rather than the mere development of strategy.	<b>Theme 3: Making race/equality policies transparent</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.11	Ensure support for individuals engaged in EDI related work is prioritised from an institutional standpoint.	<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.12	Foster development of an organisational culture that recognises and values the diverse skillsets that BME stakeholders bring while also challenging the culture, mind-sets and practices that can inhibit staff in terms of recruitment, selection, progression, or advancement.	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.13	Be more active in the recruitment of minority representation to senior leadership and senior academic positions	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b>  <b>Theme 2: Supporting diversity in staffing</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports our annual reporting process for the HEA, and for Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>
1.14	More effective communication of the College's EDI strategies with specific responsibilities allocated for the implementation of the goals & strategic statements included in strategies.	<b>Theme 3: Making race/equality policies transparent</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.15	Continuously work to explicitly position TCD as a space that is open & inclusive	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.16	Increase involvement of representative groups and individuals from both staff & student backgrounds to help with the development & creation of EDI plans.	<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.17	Clearly communicate what exactly the terms diversity, inclusion, equality and equity mean in Trinity's context.	<b>Theme 3: Making race/equality policies transparent</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan.</i>

1.18	Examine how strategic messages on diversity and inclusion (broadly) and race and ethnicity (specifically) are communicated down through the leadership pipeline in Trinity. It was suggested that these messages and the practices experienced from the top are crucial.	<b>Theme 3: Making race/equality policies transparent</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.19	Ensure that EDI plans are time bound and are not subject to change if there is a change of leadership at the College. It was suggested that where plans have been developed and are being implemented, they should not be subject to change, to fluctuating levels of focus or attention in the event of a change in senior leadership or management.	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.20	Ensure ongoing review and monitoring of EDI strategies to ensure effective adherence to specific objectives and identification of any gaps that may be emerging.	<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.21	Ensure that the levels of support afforded to staff and students are consistent in their operation and application and that users of this type of support are kept involved in the process and advised of the outcome of any investigations, inquiries, or other types of interventions.	<b>Theme 4: Reporting mechanisms</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.22	Reimagine EDI and human dignity processes for staff and students at all levels of the college to ensure consistency of understanding & approach & application to people issues in College.	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b>  <b>Theme 2: Supporting diversity in staffing</b>  <b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.23	Ensure that the core values that we subscribe to are reflected more in the	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>

	attitudes and behaviours from those in positions of power in Trinity.		
1.24	Ensure ongoing monitoring of diverse representation in discrimination, bullying, grievance etc. rates.	<b>Theme 4: Reporting mechanisms</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
1.25	Allocation of specific responsibilities for the implementation of EDI (race and ethnicity) strategies.	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b> <b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan.</i>
1.26	Mainstream EDI related approach into all aspects of HR functions in TCD (recruitment, selection, retention training, short term contracts etc.)	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b> <b>Theme 2: Supporting diversity in staffing</b> <b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
<b>2. Participation (access &amp; widening participation)</b>			
2.1	Consider how individuals and groups might encounter and experience disadvantage and structural inequality in their interactions with College and work actively to dismantle these barriers.	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b> <b>Theme 4: Reporting mechanisms</b> <b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b> <b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
2.2	Ensure that that the visible and invisible (human & organisational) barriers & resistance to race & ethnicity, as well as other dimensions of diversity & inclusion are better understood.	<b>Theme 5: Awareness and Training</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
2.3	Focus on structural change – go beyond the appearance of broader inclusion.	<b>Theme 1: Leadership</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
2.4	Examine and better understand the ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic profiles of our stakeholders.	<b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
2.5	Increase levels of support for international students and staff to help with making the relocation adjustments they may encounter.	<b>Theme 2: Supporting diversity in staffing</b> <b>Theme 7: Supporting diversity in student recruitment</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>

2.6	Need a stronger focus on monitoring of levels of representation levels in both staff and student bases in the college (race, ethnicity, nationality, skin colour etc.).	<b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
2.7	More specific strategies to help with levels of integration between staff and students. (Mentoring, coaching, support etc.).	<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
2.8	Need for more impetus to ensure both bottom-up and top-down flows of information and idea sharing as we work.	<b>Theme 3: Making race/equality policies transparent</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
<b>3. Curriculum Development (evaluation of how inclusive [or not] the current curricula are)</b>			
3.1	Focus on the creation of inclusive, introspective, reflexive and learning oriented frameworks that challenge misperceptions and misrecognitions.	<b>Theme 5: Awareness and Training</b>  <b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
3.2	Add a mandatory EDI module to all programmes in the College.	<b>Theme 5: Awareness and Training</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan</i>
3.3	Work to achieve higher levels of participation and support of the Inclusive Curriculum development initiative.	<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan work.</i>
3.4	Further development of the Inclusive Curriculum programme to help adjust to a less western and Eurocentric approach.	<b>Theme 5: Awareness and Training</b>  <b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan.</i>
3.5	Increased levels of training and support for lecturing/academic staff to help with understanding the cultural dynamics at play in a diverse educational classroom or lecture theatre environment.	<b>Theme 5: Awareness and Training</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan.</i>
<b>4. Employment (access to, conditions, and comparisons)</b>			



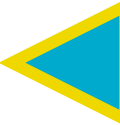
4.1	Ongoing monitoring of diverse representation at various levels of staff.	<b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports our annual reporting process for the HEA, and for Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>
4.2	Ongoing monitoring of diverse representation hire rate at various levels of management.	<b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports our annual reporting process for the HEA, and for Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>
4.3	Ongoing monitoring of diverse representation turnover at various levels.	<b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports our annual reporting process for the HEA, and for Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>
4.4	Ongoing monitoring of diverse representation promotion rates at various levels.	<b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports our annual reporting process for the HEA, and for Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>
<b>5. The experience of academics, and in particular the experiences of BME academics</b>			
5.1	Strengthening mentoring opportunities for minority staff and students.	<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b> <b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>
5.2	Succession planning is needed to support staff from minority backgrounds are helped and supported to avail of potential leadership opportunities	<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b> <b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan</i>
5.3	Review promotion and advancement systems so as to better support minority staff to develop the experience and skills they need to compete more effectively.	<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b> <b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports our Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>
5.4	Contributions to focus groups/other forms of engagement need to be acknowledged and actioned. It was suggested that a lot of focus groups happen but that many may not result in tangible actions.	<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports our Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>
5.5	Ensure more effective communication of the types of supports available to students and staff who are impacted by adverse	<b>Theme 3: Making race/equality policies transparent</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports our annual reporting process for the HEA, and for Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>

	(prejudice or discrimination) incidents or attention.	<b>Theme 4: Reporting mechanisms</b>  <b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>	
5.6	Review of the specific impact of current staff short term contract process to establish if some individuals/groups are more adversely impacted than others.	<b>Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs</b>  <b>Theme 8: Data collection</b>	<i>Part of an institutional action plan and supports our annual reporting process for the HEA, and for Athena SWAN Institutional Action Plan</i>

**Table 3: Mapped Findings from Trinity Focus Groups to HEA Race Equality in HEIs Recommendations**

## 4. NEXT STEPS

The work presented here represents a significant first step in a process of mindful, ongoing dialogue around racial and ethnic equality here in College. This document will serve as a snapshot of the experiences reported by members of the College community, and the recommendations that emerge from same. As we can see, the recommendations map to the HEA's recommendations from late 2021, and together, offer us a robust launching point for the development of a local race equality action plan and helps us in our work in relation to the fulfilment of our Public Sector Duty. Further, this work will inform the EDI strategy and action plan (in preparation), and our institutional Athena SWAN action plan 2023-2026.





## APPENDIX 1

### Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group Terms of Reference

#### **1. Background to the Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group**

Committing to building and maintaining a culture of equality and inclusion for staff and students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds in Trinity is essential to staff and student wellbeing. The end to racial and cultural discrimination, and ensuring rights and privileges are equitably distributed, are essential if we are to play a role as an ethically grounded institution.

Trinity's 2020-2025 Strategy has as its first goal the need to foster an ever more diverse and inclusive student community. It also has goals to enrich and expand our global network, and to be One Trinity Community. The Trinity values expressed in the strategy – inquisitive, pioneering, responsible, inclusive and collaborative – also presuppose a welcoming of, collaboration with, and responsibility towards, racial and ethnic diversity: after all, a university will be neither pioneering nor inquisitive without working across national and racial boundaries. In concrete terms, by 2025, Trinity is looking to welcome 30% international students, and to ensure 40-45% of our undergraduates have an international experience. It also commits to a wider socio-economic and geographic intake of Irish students. While the 2020-25 strategy does not explicitly mention racial and ethnic diversity and to date we have not had the data to systematically track racial and ethnic diversity among all grades of our staff population, national and international indicators tell us that it is extremely low across the higher education sector, and must be addressed. In line with Trinity's strategy, this working group will tackle racial and ethnic equality among students, and all staff.

A commitment to eliminating discrimination in policy and practice is embedded in European and Irish legislation (the Race Equality Directive, 2000 and the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, 2014). The work of this working group will support this.

#### **2. Objectives and Duties**

This Group will:

- i. Identify structural barriers that need to be addressed and themes and issues needing action.

- ii. Prepare a data and research-informed Action Plan to tackle race and ethnicity equity in the University. Data collection will include qualitative (including focus groups/town halls with staff and students) and quantitative. Interrogating data categories and finding ways of dealing with sensitive data will be part of the work of the group.
- iii. Feed into the Trinity EDI Strategy and Action Plan (draft due 12/2021; overseen by the Equality Committee and AVPEDI).
- iv. Advise the EDI unit on questions of racial and ethnic equality as and when required.
- v. Liaise with Trinity's staff and student groups dedicated to working for racial and ethnic inclusion and against discrimination
- vi. Communicate and actively promote the work of the group regularly to the College community

### **3. Proposed Membership of the Working Group**

- Coordinator of the Black Studies Module (Co Chair) – Phil Mullen
- Associate Vice Provost Equality Diversity and Inclusion (Co Chair) – Clodagh Brook
- Equality Officer – Claire Marshall
- Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, or nominee
- Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science, or nominee
- Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences, or nominee
- Representative of TAP
- Senior representative from the central administrative divisions
- Director of HR
- Students' Union Ethnic Minorities Officer
- Louise Staunton, Global Relations Office
- Dr Jude Lal Fernando, School of Religion
- An external member with experience of advancing race equality in a higher education setting
- GSU President
- Academic Staff Representation
- Professional Staff Representation
- Contract Research Staff Representation
- An undergraduate student
- A postgraduate student

3.1. The AVPEDI together with the EDI unit will have responsibility for the implementation of the Action Plan

3.2. The committee, in line with HEA recommendations, will be comprised of key stakeholders including academics, support services, administration, and students' unions, and will ensure due regard to balanced representation, in particular representation of groups at particular risk of experiencing racism or ethnic or racial discrimination.

- 3.3. The committee will work with other groups and initiatives in Trinity including the Widening Participation Group, Trinity Inc., School/Faculty EDI committees.
- 3.4. Liaison and partnership with external specialist agencies is necessary to ensure effective engagement with external structures.
- 3.5. The working group will be supported by the Equality Officer and administratively by the EDI unit, who will be responsible for the preparation and distribution of the agenda, papers, action points, and reports following consultation with the Chairperson of the working group.
- 3.6. Membership of the working group will be reviewed as necessary by the Co-chairs.

#### **4. Meeting arrangements**

The working group will normally hold meetings 4 to 5 times a year. While work is taking place on the Action Plan (18-24 months), meetings of a subgroup may be more frequent. The group notes the need to have adequate time to ensure that in-depth research and reflection can be undertaken, balanced with the need for timely action.

#### **5. Reporting line of the Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group**

The Working Group will report to the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer.

#### **6. Deliverables**

R&EE Action Plan

<b>Approved by Equality Committee</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> May 2021
<b>Approved by the R&amp;EE Working Group</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2021
<b>Approved by Board</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> June 2021

## APPENDIX 2

### TOWARDS A CAMPUS OF APPRECIATION: APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

As part of each of the focus group discussions, participants were asked about appreciative experiences they may have had as part of their engagement with Trinity. **Appreciative Inquiry** is a methodology that seeks to uncover positive experiences in an organisation's day to day activities and interactions with its various stakeholders. Appreciative Inquiry seeks to discover the positive emotional experiences that may occur because of the behaviour, attitudes or approaches of others. Once those experiences have been established the Appreciative Inquiry process sets out to establish how those moments and behaviours can be embedded and reproduced more often in the organisation's behaviours and structures, with a view to creating a more sustainable and living culture of inclusivity. Appreciative Inquiry is a process and while a full Appreciative Inquiry approach was not adopted in relation to the focus groups, we did set out to discover some of the experiences that a more robust Appreciative Inquiry process could identify at Trinity College.

Creating an inclusive culture necessitates understanding the 'what is' position and then seeking to make strategic adjustments to create and influence the types of behaviours, attitudes and thinking most likely to create an inclusive environment. It creates the opportunities for individuals to experience insights and new learning of the types of systems and mindsets required to contribute to TCD as an inclusive experience for all stakeholders. These focus groups set out to explore and identify as many themes as possible, as the types of key focus that participants felt TCD ought to direct its energy.

### APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY DEFINED

"At its heart, Appreciative Inquiry is about the search for the best in people, their organizations, and the strengths-filled, opportunity-rich world around them. AI is not so much a shift in the methods and models of organizational change, but AI is a fundamental shift in the overall perspective taken throughout the entire change process to 'see' the wholeness of the human system and to "inquire" into that system's strengths, possibilities, and successes."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Stavros, Jacqueline, Godwin, Lindsey, & Cooperrider, David. (2015). Appreciative Inquiry: Organization Development and the Strengths Revolution. In *Practicing Organization Development: A guide to leading change and transformation (4th Edition)*, William Rothwell, Roland Sullivan, and Jacqueline Stavros (Eds). Wiley



## APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY PRINCIPLES

Principle	Summary	Details
Constructionist Principle	Words create worlds	Reality, as we know it, is a subjective vs. objective state and is socially created through language and conversations.
Simultaneity Principle	Inquiry creates change	The moment we ask a question, we begin to create a change. “The questions we ask are fateful.”
Poetic Principle	We can choose what we study	Teams and organizations, like open books, are endless sources of study and learning. What we choose to study makes a difference. It describes – even creates – the world as we know it.
Anticipatory Principle	Images inspire action	Human systems move in the direction of their images of the future. The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action.
Positive Principle	Positive questions lead to positive change	Momentum for [small or] large-scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding. This momentum is best generated through positive questions that amplify the positive core

– **Excerpt from:** Stavros, Jacqueline, Godwin, Lindsey, & Cooperrider, David. (2015). *Appreciative Inquiry: Organization Development and the Strengths Revolution*. In *Practicing Organization Development: A guide to leading change and transformation (4th Edition)*, William Rothwell, Roland Sullivan, and Jacqueline Stavros (Eds). Wiley.

The following are a range of the experiences offered by participants when asked about the appreciative moments that they may have encountered in their experiences in and with Trinity College Dublin.

A number of the contributors spoke of how they felt a strong connection to Trinity and that they felt they were able to contribute to the college and its work.

Comments included:

- “I love my university. Trinity, I think we could be doing better, and I think I want to be part of the process of making a more positive environment in my university. What I love is the fact that we have a place that each of us can shape, and influence and I like the way Trinity can support people to create better spaces and to reduce the barriers that some people can face.”
- “I love the way I have been able to interact in the various sports clubs in Trinity and I found that it was a great way to help me to integrate. Maybe we could use sports and our interactions in sports to create greater levels of understanding in a more structured way.”
- “I had a lovely experience when I graduated, the person who was presenting our PhD parchments took the time to go through all of the people who were to be conferred and wrote down the names phonetically, so that when they came to meet them they could pronounce the names perfectly. It was a very simple thing but they got my name right and it really meant a lot, it’s something that should be replicated. It made me feel like somebody cared, somebody saw me, somebody thought about my needs.”
- “I have had a number of experiences where professors have come back to me with comments and feedback when they realised that maybe where I’m from had influenced the way I was going about my work and that really meant a lot to me, that they took the time to do that and acknowledge that there could be something else behind my behaviour.”

During our conversations one of the issues that came up in a lot of the focus groups was how students had to manage and deal with the consequences of the Corona virus pandemic. Some of their experiences during this time were identified as examples of positive experiences in Trinity.

Comments here included:

- “I had a lovely experience last year when I got an email from my students to say that although the whole year had been online, they had really felt part of the group, even though it was virtual. This was an amazing experience for me because I had worked so hard to make the classes right for them and for it to be acknowledged in this way just meant a lot. Simple acknowledgement. It wasn’t just the information; they had an experience.”
- “For me it was a line manager where I work who had taken the time to recognise that there were a lot of people here from international backgrounds who were worried about family back home because of COVID and who just weren’t going to be able to travel back home. They reached out to see what they could do to help people to contact home and to check that they were ok. The manager just didn’t do it themselves but also invited and asked other students and colleagues to reach out as well to see what support we could offer to each other. They realised that there were some students here who had families at home and who may not have access to the Internet and they looked to see what they could do.”

Participants spoke about their perception of the focus groups that they were attending as part of this project and a range of positive comments were received that considered not only that the focus groups were being held but that they were open to as many people as wanted to attend them. It was suggested that gatherings and dialogue like the current focus groups were extremely important to participants and that the college ought to consider formalising this in the future. It was suggested that the focus groups helped to engender and develop a sense of inclusion, being given the opportunity to co-create and to be heard.

Participant comments in this regard included:

- “I think the fact that we are here today and the whole Trinity Inclusive Curriculum project is really good.”
- “I think more effort is being made now to put wheels in motion to make some of these strategies come alive and I'm happy about that. There is a sense of energy and definitely the black lives movement you know is encouraging and influencing us all to do more.”

A participant spoke about how when they arrived first to the college it was quite a lonely experience and that they were away from home, and struggling to find solid ground and settle in here. They went on to describe how a colleague guided them through the first few weeks of their time in Trinity:

- “A colleague who took the time to introduce me to people. She was actively introducing me to people without me even asking and then she began to introduce me to networks of people. She was very instrumental in my first few months in Trinity in terms of changing everything really. I needed to know people in order to get my job done and she perceived my need and went out of her way to help me to meet my need. Her kindness was something I won't forget, and it made a significant difference at what would have been a difficult time for me.”
- “When I came here first, I found it very lonely, there wasn't very many people in my intake but then I met somebody from another department who just took me under their wing. There was a lot of little things happening for me including trying to open bank accounts, trying to find accommodation trying to get my stipend through and I had lots of questions little questions, but I couldn't get answers and then this person just seemed to either give me the answers or put me into a network that gave me the answers. If I hadn't had that kind of support, I would have found it very intimidating here. This support didn't come from the hierarchy it came from within.”
- “Mentoring and buddying - these things are easy to be institutionalised if we really want to. People are willing to help to make change but they need guidance to know what they can do.”

Other comments made by participants in terms of creating a more positive culture through an Appreciative Inquiry focus included:

- “For me it was the support that I got from admin, when I was involved in a campaign around equality, it was the sense that we both had a common cause, and I was supported and that meant a lot to me. It meant the project got to where it really needed to be, and the involvement helped to get over the gap, the targeted gap if you like.”
- “We organised informal meetings to try and help new students to settle in. Sometimes, we just met for coffee, or we might sit in the park because we couldn't do much else in lockdown. but it was great to meet people from different parts of the world and to meet people who are prepared to help here with settling in and understanding life in Trinity.”

Author Stephen Covey has suggested that if organisations want to really engage with their people and want people to engage with each other, then one of the most effective ways to accomplish this is to consider how to make deposits in what Covey describes as the, ‘Emotional Bank Account’. These appreciative inquiry examples are perfect suggestions of how Trinity could, in a more structured way, encourage and help its students and staff to make deposits in the institution’s, ‘emotional bank accounts’ for those with whom they interact in the College space each day.



**Trinity College Dublin**

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

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