

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Statement

Introduction

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, also known as the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, hereafter “the Duty”, places a statutory obligation on public bodies to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of its members, those to whom they provide services and staff when carrying out their daily work.

S42.2 (a) and (b) of the Act establish the steps that public bodies should follow in regard to implementing the Duty. The Duty is an ongoing obligation placed on public bodies, which must be incorporated as part of an organisation’s overall strategic planning cycle. Public bodies are also asked to account for their actions to address the human rights and equality impact of their work as it relates to members of the public, people who use their services, and their staff, in their annual report.

Obligations

Section 42 (1)

Section 42 (1) is a duty of process and an ongoing functional duty. It is the overarching statutory obligation under section 42 of the Act, which the University must comply with on an ongoing basis. It is not a one-off activity and is not separate from the performance of the University’s functions. Business processes and practises must give due consideration to equality and human rights issues and take steps to address them as part of day-to-day activity.

The Duty impacts on the University functions in many different ways. The core functions identified, but not limited to, are as follows:

- Teaching and learning
- Human Resources
- Corporate governance (including procurement)
- Promoting and conducting research
- Innovation
- Community outreach (for example, through access programmes and events)
- Support for student wellbeing
- Provision of student accommodation
- Recreational and visitor services (e.g. public cultural spaces, sports facilities, etc.)

Section 42(2)

Section 42(2) is a strategic duty. It requires the University to include human rights and equality in the University’s overall strategy, planning and reporting cycles and to publish specific documents. This involves a three-step approach, which requires the University, having regard to its functions, purpose, size and resources available to it, to:

- 1. Assess** - set out in its strategic plan an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to the functions and purpose of the body;
- 2. Address** - set out in its strategic plan the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues;
- 3. Report** - report on developments and achievements in its annual report. The obligation to integrate the Duty in a public body’s strategic plan and annual report means that assessing

and addressing equality and human rights issues is an ongoing process that should be reviewed and developed in accordance with strategic planning cycles.

Values and Statement of Outcome

Trinity College Dublin is a values-driven institution. The University's Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025 is underpinned by the following values:

- Inquisitive
- Pioneering
- Responsible
- Inclusive
- Collaborative

At an organisational level, values are central to our culture, which in turn impacts on the priorities, processes, and practices of an organisation. A values-led approach to the Duty, can assist in embedding a focus on equality and human rights within the culture of an organisation and to mobilise that culture behind implementation of the Duty.

The University's Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025 sets out the University's statement of outcome and includes:

Embed a culture of equality, inclusion, respect and dignity across all aspects of our operations to provide a foundation for the flourishing of all our students regardless of their background through instituting a robust Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy.

Statement of Commitment

The Equality Policy sets out a statement of commitment for the University:

Trinity College Dublin is committed to promoting equality in all aspects of its activity: employment, education and service provision.

Trinity is committed to non-discrimination for students, staff and service users in relation to all of the nine grounds specified in equality legislation...

Trinity will seek to identify any barriers to full participation in University life as a student, staff member or service user, and take action to redress these as appropriate.

Trinity will take positive action measures (see appendix 1 of the policy, Definitions) to support particular groups who may be disadvantaged or under-represented in accessing education, employment or career progression where appropriate. Trinity strives to be inclusive of all in the University community and will seek to accommodate diversity in service provision where practicable.

These commitments can apply to groups outside the nine grounds of equality legislation.

Equality Infrastructure and Services

When implementing the University's obligations under the Duty, the University is supported by an equality infrastructure and services, including:

Dedicated Resources

Trinity has a dedicated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Office led by the Associate Vice Provost for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (AVP-EDI) (full-time). EDI Office has an Equality Officer (full-time), an EDI Data Analyst and Athena Swan Project Officer (full-time), a Head of EDI (full-time) and a dedicated Executive Officer (part-time). In addition to Trinity units such as DisAbility Services for students, Trinity Access Programmes to support student access to higher education via a range of schemes, staff networks and other related resources.

Policy

There are a range of policies and Codes of Practice relevant to Equality some of which can be described as preventative in approach with the aim of supporting the elimination of discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and treatment, and protecting human rights. The Equality Policy details implementation of the University's responsibilities in relation to equality, monitoring and review, and signposts to relevant policies, charters and Codes of Practice.

Link to Equality Policy:

<https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/EqualityPolicyRevised2016.pdf>

Link to Policies Hub: <https://www.tcd.ie/about/policies/>

Governance

People and Culture Committee, a Principal Committee of the Board, advises the Board on the University's obligations under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee is a Sub-Committee of Trinity College's People and Culture Committee, with responsibility for advising the People and Culture Committee, on all EDI-related matters.

However, it should be noted that, given that the Public Sector Duty has an impact on all functions, there is no single Committee responsible for implementation of the Duty. It is a responsibility of every individual and function to embed implementation of the Duty into their work practices.

Data collection and monitoring:

- Data is collected for Higher Education Authority and Athena Swan Annual reporting and monitoring from Human Resources and Academic Registry and via staff surveys at institutional and School level in addition to specific consultations on a range of equality areas.
- Qualitative data is collected to inform EDI work across all equality grounds and in relation to Athena Swan action progress.
- The Annual Equality Monitoring Report contains information and data from Trinity. This report format is currently being revised and updated to incorporate updates regarding the implementation of the Duty.

Action Planning and Monitoring

The University Athena Swan Committee, Chaired by the AVPEI, monitors actions and progress on the Gender Action Plan. The 2023 TCD Athena Swan (AS) Gender Action Plan (GAP) is available here: [Action-Plan-2023_2027-TCD_Redacted.pdf](#). College will launch its

first Race Equality Action Plan 2023-2028 in early 2025. Embedded within these action plans are actions relating to implementation of the Duty.

Training

The EDI office has several online trainings, as well as in person training on specific EDI areas and inclusive teaching and learning. The EDI Office collaborates with HR Learning and Organisation Development to offer workshops throughout the academic year for staff in relation to EDI areas of interest. Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project (Trinity-INC) offers workshops to all staff involved in teaching and learning to assist in embedding inclusive approaches and offer a Professional Learning Module in Inclusive Practices to staff. Participants who complete the Module receive the Digital Badge in Universal Design from the National Forum for Teaching and Learning. There are a range of training and supports provided relevant to the Duty provided by the EDI Office to staff and students. Link to details on training: <https://www.tcd.ie/equality/resources/training/student-training/>

Staff Networks and Champions

There are two Staff Networks LGBT+ and Disabled Staff and Postgraduate Students Forum. Trinity has Athena Swan Champions in each School and many Schools have EDI Directors who act as these Champions. The Trinity Athena Swan Champions Network meets regularly during term time to build capacity and support equality work in schools and units. Trinity-INC Staff Partners work at School-level in 22 Schools and support their academic colleagues implement the principles of inclusive pedagogy and universal design for learning.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Fund

The Trinity Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Fund is designed to facilitate innovative and creative equality projects by staff and students across the university which enable and promote a diverse and inclusive community. The Fund accepts applications from student and staff and encourages project proposals to align with Public Sector Duty requirements. Link to information on the EDI Fund: <https://www.tcd.ie/equality/activities/edi-fund/>

Reporting

The Annual Equality Monitoring Report contains information and data from Trinity, this report format is currently being revised and updated.

Relevant Links:

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission information on the Duty:
<https://www.ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/>

Approved by People and Culture Committee, 13 February 2025.