

Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions

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Higher Education Authority

Statutory responsibility for the governance and regulation of the higher education system in Ireland



Centre of Excellence for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



Strategic sector-wide initiatives to support the effectiveness of the policy frameworks

Collects and
reports on
sector-wide
data

Senior
Academic
Leadership
Initiative

Gender
Equality
Enhancemen
t Fund

Race Equality
Implementat
ion Plan

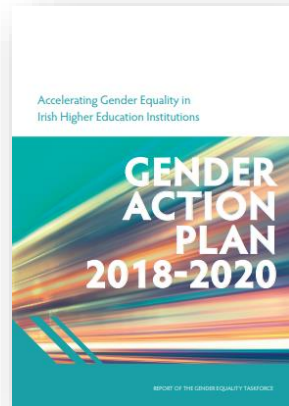
Ending
Sexual
Violence &
Harassment
Framework

National
Reviews &
Action Plans

National Policy Context



2014



2018



2020

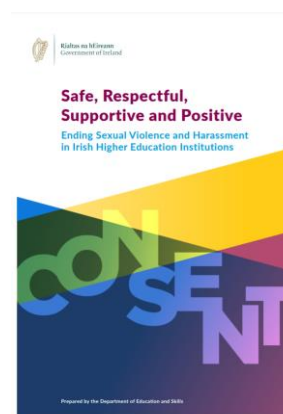


2022

2016



2019



2021



GENDER EQUALITY

Report of the Expert Group:
2nd HEA National Review of Gender Equality in
Irish Higher Education Institutions

November 2022

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
2022-2024

*Addressing the recommendations
emerging from the National Surveys
of Staff and Student Experiences of
Sexual Violence and Harassment in
Irish HEIs, January 2022*

October 2022

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

RACE EQUALITY

IN THE HIGHER
EDUCATION
SECTOR

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
2022-2024

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

Key National Stakeholders

Government



An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta
Department of Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science

National Higher Education Authority



Research Funding Organisations



Higher Education Institutions



Charter body



Policy Discourse on Gender Equality

Centralised support

HEA Centre of Excellence for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Resourcing

Vice Presidents for EDI, EDI units in HEIs

Data

Annual publication of sex/gender-disaggregated data on staff

Monitoring

Annual reporting to the HEA – attainment of Athena Swan awards

Funding

Ireland's equality legislation

Under Ireland's Equal Status Acts, the 9 protected grounds are:

- **Gender***
- Civil status (single, married, separated, divorced, widowed or in a civil partnership)
- Family status (a pregnant person, a parent, an acting parent of a child, or a carer of a person with a disability who requires continued care)
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Religious belief (including religious background and those who have no belief)
- Membership of the Traveller community
- **Race (skin colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)***
- Disability

* HEIs provide data to the HEA in these categories

Structures for advancing gender equality

HEA National EDI Committee

- Vice Presidents/Directors of EDI

Athena Swan Ireland

- Manages the Athena Swan Ireland charter
- Updates on progress to the HEA

Athena Swan National Committee

- Development of charter
- National Practitioner Network
- National Intersectionality Working Group

Types of Funding Intervention at National Level

Indirect funding with incentivisation:

Athena Swan Ireland (systemic)

Positive action interventions:

Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (high profile)

Seed funding for gender equality projects:

Gender Equality Enhancement Fund (operational)

Indirect Funding: Athena Swan Ireland

- Since 2014, offered to Irish HEIs as a shared service, funded by HEA
- All publicly-funded HEIs hold awards (including two Silver)
- Athena Swan embedded firmly in the Irish sector and a key initiative in terms of driving gender equality
- Importantly, part of broader policy context
- Ensures implementation of national policy recommendation that all institutions have a GEP
- Irish HEIs are firmly invested in this process



Driver of Athena Swan Ireland progress



Athena Swan accreditation linked to whole of institution eligibility for access to research funding from main public research funding bodies



How it works

- National reports recommended that **Athena Swan Ireland award attainment be a requirement for research funding eligibility** and the HEA has responsibility for determining the optimal requirements in relation to Athena Swan Ireland certification.
- HEIs stand **to lose access to research funding** if they do not achieve Athena Swan awards within a set timeframe.

HEIs should retain their Bronze award until such time as they obtain a Silver award.

HEA Statement:

- HEIs should **retain** their Bronze award until such time as they obtain a Silver award.
- HEIs shall **apply** for an Institutional Silver award after one successful renewal of an Institutional Bronze Award and on every subsequent application.

How it works

- Collaboration between the Higher Education Authority, RFOs (HRB, IRC & SFI) and Athena Swan Ireland
 - **HEA** sets the timelines
 - **RFOs** enforce eligibility guidelines
 - **Athena Swan Ireland** run the process and make awards
- How does it work? <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/07/HEA-Statement-on-Athena-SWAN-Charter-in-Ireland-.pdf>

Result



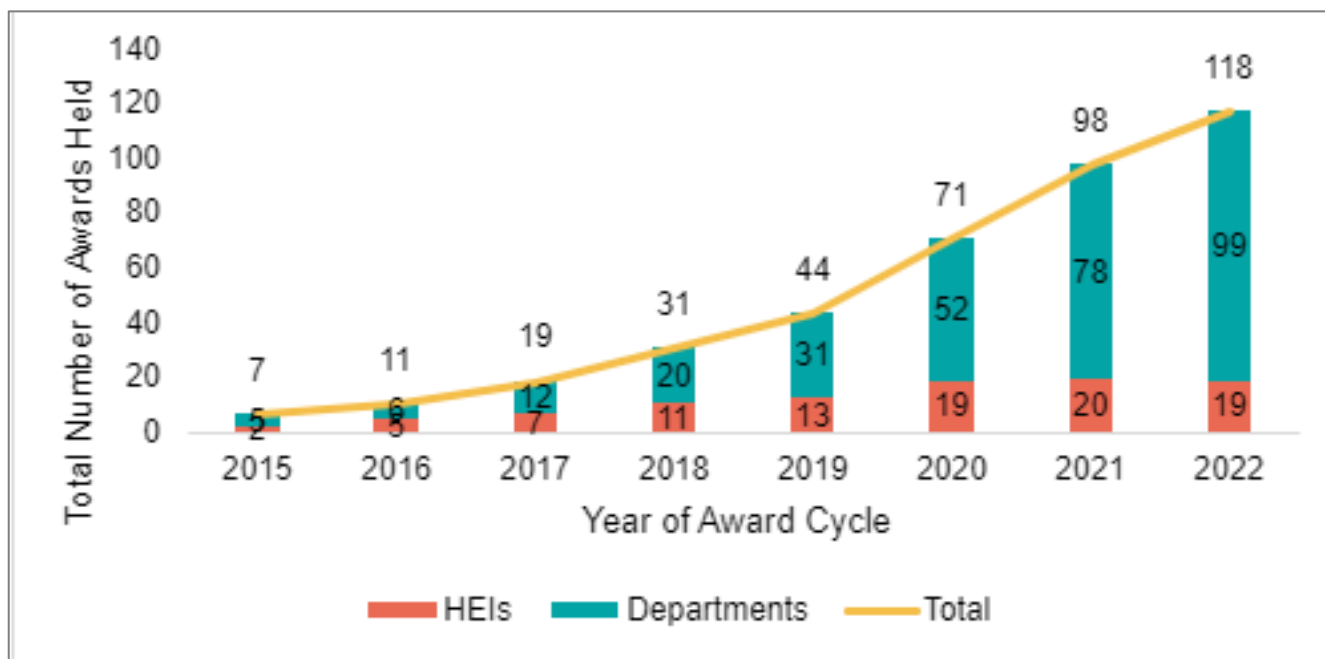
118 award
holders (113
Bronze; 5 Silver)



19 institutions
hold awards,
including 4 legacy
awards



99 sub-units also
hold awards



Athena Swan Ireland Charter 2021

Tailored application

Data requirements aligned to national reporting

Guidance on consultation

Application form questions

Reflective of Irish HEI context

Professional, management and support staff included

EDI priority areas and intersectional approaches

Alignment with requirements for EU funding

Support

Dedicated staff based in Ireland providing hands on support

Athena Swan National Committee & subgroups

Vice Presidents and EDI units in HEIs

Award process

All panellists from Irish HEI sector

Annual award ceremony

Fewer applications for panellists to review

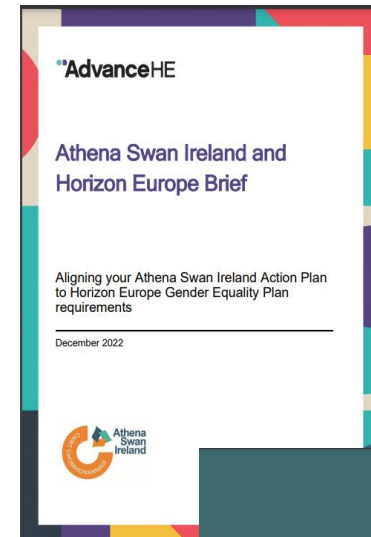
Horizon Europe GEP requirements

Process-related requirements

- ✓ Formal document published on institutional website and signed by management
- ✓ Commitment of resources and expertise to GEP implementation
- ✓ Collect and publish sex/gender disaggregated data and annual reporting
- ✓ Awareness raising/training on gender equality and unconscious gender bias

Content-related recommendations

- ✓ Work-life balance and organisational culture
- ✓ Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
- ✓ Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
- ✓ Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content
- ✓ Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment



Challenges

Comfortable being
uncomfortable

Data

Evidence-based
actions and
outcomes

Full engagement

Resistance

Resources

Maintaining
momentum

Types of Funding Intervention at National Level

Indirect funding with incentivisation:

Athena Swan Ireland (systemic)

Positive action interventions:

Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (high profile)

Seed funding for gender equality projects:

Gender Equality Enhancement Fund (operational)

Positive Action Initiative: SALI

Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI)

- **45 new gender-targeted posts** to be awarded over 3 cycles
- **Complements** wider organisational & cultural initiatives
- Targeted **positive action** initiative
- New senior academic leadership posts funded in areas where:
 - there is clear evidence of **significant gender under-representation**;
 - where this appointment will have **significant impact** within the HEI and the relevant faculty/department/functional unit;
 - where they would be a proportionate and effective means to achieve **accelerated and sustainable change** within an institution.
- **New and additional** to the sector
- Same **high standard** required of applicants as for any other professorial post

Seed Funding: Gender Equality Enhancement Fund

The primary objectives of the Gender Equality Enhancement Fund are:

- to encourage **innovative approaches** to addressing gender inequality across HEIs;
- to facilitate gender equality **initiatives that respond to the recommendations** of the HEA Expert Group and/or Gender Equality Taskforce's recommended actions;
- to encourage **cross-sectoral collaboration** as a means to achieve national transformation.

Funding is awarded in the following areas:

1. **Research** on or advancing gender equality initiatives in Ireland (€100,000)
2. **Training** programmes specifically addressing gender equality (€100,000)
3. **Athena SWAN** capacity-building activities (€50,000)

A maximum of €50,000 is awarded annually to successful applications.

At least 3 HEIs must collaborate on applications.

Seed Funding: GEEF

To date projects have been funded across several areas including:

- Mid-career development programme for women
- Promotion of female role models in pSTEM (physical sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics)
- Development and implementation of gender identity, expression and diversity training for staff in Irish HEIs
- Establishment of **networks to support female participation** in computer science,
- Supports for the academic advancement of mid-career female staff
- Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into the **curriculum, teaching and learning and teacher education**
- Support for the increased visibility and participation of **women economists in public discourse**
- Research into the **impact of menopause** on the careers of women in Irish higher education

Result

All publicly-funded HEIs have **Gender Equality Plans** which are **quality assured** by the Athena Swan process

GEPs are **embedded** across the system at institutional and local (department) level

Discourse around funding has elevated issue of gender inequality

Increased buy-in from senior management and researchers

GEPs fulfil eligibility requirement for **Horizon Europe**

3 Irish HEIs received **EU Gender Equality Champions Awards** in 2022

Change since 2015

		2015	2022**
		26 HEIs	18 HEIs
Female leaders of HEIs		19% (5) 0 in Universities	44% (8) 7 in Universities
Gender balanced HEI governance and management structures (at least 40% men and 40% women members)	Governing Authority is gender balanced	65% of HEIs	83% of HEIs
	Academic Council is gender balanced	42% of HEIs	78% of HEIs
	Executive Management team is gender balanced	27% of HEIs	67% of HEIs
Female Professors		19% WTE*	32% WTE 31% HC
Women at highest pay grades in professional, management and support roles (core funded)		30%	48%

*3 year average 2013-2015

** Percentages have been rounded

2022 National Review



Recommendations made in various categories:

- Leadership
- Organisational Culture
- Teaching and Learning, Research and Quality Assurance
- Intersectionality
- Career Development
- Precarity
- Data Capture, Analysis and Reporting

2022 National Review

National Requirements

At a minimum all Irish Higher Education Institutions should:

- Have an institutional **Gender Equality Action Plan** that is published on the HEI website, signed by the President, actively communicated and progress monitored within the institution;
- Demonstrate a commitment to provide **sufficient resources and expertise** in gender equality, particularly in relation to the implementation of its institutional Gender Equality Action Plan;
- Have a **Vice-President (or equivalent) with responsibility for EDI** who is a member of the HEI Executive/Management Team;
- Collect and analyse **sex/gender-disaggregated data on staff** to inform the institutional strategy for advancement of gender equality;
- **Provide training** towards sustaining the advancement of gender equality for all staff.

Evidence that these requirements have been met should be provided to the HEA through annual reporting.