

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy

12 September 2023

Version 1.1

<b>Document Details</b>	
Document Title:	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Version:	1.1
Approved By:	Governing Body
Date Approved:	12 September 2023
Effective Date:	12 September 2023
Next Review Date:	6 September 2026
Policy Owner:	Vice President for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

<b>Revision History</b>			
Previous Version No.	Summary of Amendments	Approval date	Version No.
n/a	Approved by Governing Body	24 May 2022	1.0
1.0	<b>6 September 2023 - reviewed by the Policy Review Group:</b> Recommended to extend for 3 years and submit to the Governing Body for approval	–	1.1
1.1	Approved by Governing Body	12 September 2023	1.1

<b>Consultation Details</b>		
Name:		
Date:		
Details of Consultation:		

<b>Publication Details</b>	
Where	Date
SETU Website	Version 1.1 (12 September 2023)
Drive/Public/HR/Policies	
All Staff Email	

<b>Feedback</b> or issues arising on implementation of this policy should be communicated to the policy author.	
Policy Author	Vice President for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

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## SECTION A– INTRODUCTION & COMMITMENTS

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to set out the South-East Technological University's (SETU) commitment to the principles and promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of institutional activity and to detail how this policy will be implemented.

SETU seeks to provide an inclusive environment which promotes equality and values diversity and inclusion. It is committed to maintaining an environment of dignity and respect where all staff and learners can develop to their full potential. The concept of equality is central to our ethos of academic and service excellence.

SETU is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the continued development of employment policies, procedures and practices which prevent discrimination on the specified statutory grounds of gender, civil status, family status, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or membership of the Travelling community along with socio economic status.

This policy also outlines procedures to identify and remove any additional barriers to accessing and participation of SETU's relevant services by learners, staff members or service users.

#### 1.1 Legal Framework

The principal of equality is enshrined in the Irish Constitution and in many international and EU treaties and declarations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sees equality as a fundamental principle in terms of a person's human rights – 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights', Art. 1.

This policy is informed by the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 (as amended) and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 (as amended) which prohibit direct and indirect discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and victimisation in relation to nine specified equality grounds: gender, family status, civil status, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, ethnicity and membership of the Traveller community. The Employment Equality Acts prohibit discrimination in employment, including recruitment, promotion, pay and other conditions of employment. The Equal Status Acts prohibit discrimination in access to and provision of services, accommodation and educational establishments.

S.19 of the Technological Universities Act 2018 requires Technological Universities to

prepare, publish and implement an Equality Statement setting out (a) the policy of the Technological University for enabling access to it, and the education it provides, by economically or socially disadvantaged persons, by persons who have a disability and by persons from sections of society significantly under-represented in the student body, and (b) the policy of the Technological University relating to equality, including gender equality, in all activities of the Technological University.

The Disability Act 2005 (as amended) places significant obligations on public bodies in terms of providing integrated access to services and information to people with disabilities, as well as promoting the employment of people with disabilities.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 s. 42, requires that in the performance of their functions public bodies shall have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and treatment and protect the human rights of staff and service users. This policy reflects the Institute's commitment to honour its obligations under these Acts.

## 1.2 Scope of Policy

This policy applies to:

- All applicants for employment, employees and all those who work for the University and relates to all decisions in relation to recruitment and selection, promotion, access to training and terms and conditions of employment.
- All learners and learner applicants and relates to all decisions in respect of the admission of learners and the provision of all services to learners including teaching, supervision, assessment, progression, award and support services.
- All visitors, customers, service users, service providers and clients of the University and relates to all services provided by the University in its diverse activities both internal and external.

Note: 'service user' will be used throughout this document to denote customers, members of the public, visitors and clients.

## 1.3 Consultation

This policy has been developed in consultation with collective Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committees and other stakeholder groups, including: Executive Boards and Staff and Student Representative Bodies.

## 2. Statement of Commitment

### 2.1 Commitments

- Non-discrimination (direct or indirect) in access and participation in education and employment in relation to the grounds of gender, family status, civil status, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, ethnicity, membership of the Traveller community along with socio-economic status.
- The provision of all services free from any discrimination and harassment.
- An inclusive and supportive environment of dignity and respect where all staff and learners can develop their full potential.
- Zero tolerance of harassment or bullying of staff, learners or other members of the community.
- Identifying barriers to equality, diversity, inclusion and full participation. Any identified imbalances in practice will be redressed.
- Providing integrated accessible services and information to all users and ensuring that information is produced in accessible information formats.
- Providing reasonable accommodation to learners, staff and service users with disabilities.
- Supporting the employment of staff with disabilities.
- Widening participation and facilitating access to programmes by learners from under-represented groups.
- Taking positive action, where appropriate and necessary, to address disproportionate underrepresentation.

## 2.2 Mainstreaming

The University is committed to mainstreaming principles of equality, diversity and inclusion as an integral part of its planning processes so as to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is incorporated into all strategic planning and decision-making activities and policies.

## 2.3 Other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with additional relevant SETU policies and procedures.

## 3. Definitions

Applicable definitions are set out in Appendix 1.

## **SECTION B– EQUALITY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION & EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

### 4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Employment

This section outlines how the University's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, non-discrimination, equal access and participation apply to employment practices and procedures. The policy affects all areas of employment practice including recruitment and selection, training and development, progression, pay, employment conditions and retention.

#### 4.1 Recruitment and Selection

In relation to the recruitment and selection of staff the University shall:

- Adhere to the TU's approved Recruitment and Selection Policy & Procedures
- Not discriminate directly or indirectly against any applicant or candidate seeking employment on the basis of any of the nine equality grounds, along with socio economic status
- Select candidates on the basis of merit and ensure that candidates with the demonstrable skills, competencies, talent and experience most suited to the advertised post are selected.
- Identify and remove barriers that might impede the application or selection of an eligible candidate across all equality grounds.
- Ensure that application processes are open and accessible to any eligible candidate who may wish to apply.
- Provide reasonable accommodation to all applicants throughout the selection process
- Develop inclusive recruitment practices that acknowledge the diversity of applicants and candidates for employment.
- Provide a flexible service and facilitate communication between applicants and recruitment staff.
- Provide information in accessible or alternative formats.
- Collect information on the diversity profile of employment applicants to monitor

the success of recruitment campaigns in attracting a diversity of applicants. Seek feedback from and consult with applicants or other interest groups to ensure quality of service.

All recruitment staff and hiring managers will receive training in the implementation of this policy.

#### *4.1.1 Recruitment Advertising*

In relation to recruitment advertising, the University shall:

- Provide job descriptions and person specifications that set out mandatory, essential, and desirable requirements, skills, knowledge, experience and competencies for each position.
- Ensure that the drafting of job descriptions and advertisements does not directly or indirectly exclude or favour any potential applicant.
- Ensure that the drafting of job descriptions does not include unnecessary requirements that would unfairly exclude or dissuade potential applicants.
- Direct and target recruitment to ensure that advertisements reach a broad and diverse candidate pool.

#### *4.1.2 Shortlisting*

The University will ensure that the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) commitments detailed in this policy are adhered to in all aspects of the shortlisting process, including:

- Provide EDI/unconscious bias training (in addition to recruitment, shortlisting and interviewing skills) to all who will participate in shortlisting.
- Ensure that the criteria used for shortlisting are transparent and unbiased and are applied equally to all candidates.

#### *4.1.3 Interview Panels*

In relation to interview panels, the University shall:

- Provide EDI/unconscious bias training (in addition to recruitment, shortlisting and interviewing skills) to all who will participate on selection panels.
- Provide candidates with the names of the interview panel one day before interview.



- Ensure standard agreed and objective schemes for rating candidates on the basis of experience, skill, qualifications and matching specified requirements.
- Ensure that interview boards are of mixed gender and will be made fully aware of their responsibilities.

Specific and particular responsibility for the implementation of these actions lies with Human Resources.

#### 4.2 Training and Development

In relation to training and development, the University shall:

- Ensure that every employee has equal access to training and development opportunities.
- Ensure that all staff will be afforded equal access to roles, experience or opportunities.
- Ensure that programmes provided are inclusive and accommodate the diversity of staff.
- Mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion in training and development programmes.

#### 4.3 Progression

In relation to progression, the University shall:

- Ensure that all staff enjoy equal access to progression and promotional opportunities.
- Communicate promotional posts to all staff and provide training and support on the process including applications.
- Monitor promotional processes in order to ensure equality of opportunity in career progression within the University.
- Identify barriers to progression for staff with particular reference to the nine specified grounds and, where appropriate, implement measures to redress imbalances.

All employment practices and procedures shall be reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with current legislation and with this policy and that they address and support equality, diversity, inclusion of access, opportunity and participation.

Specific and particular responsibility for the implementation of the actions in Section B above lies with Human Resources.

## **SECTION C – EQUALITY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN SERVICE PROVISION**

### 5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Service Provision

This section outlines how the University's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, non-discrimination and to equal access and participation apply to educational and other services.

The University shall ensure equality, diversity and inclusion of access and opportunity for learners and shall ensure that all admissions process, assessment and other related procedures do not discriminate directly or indirectly against any learner in relation to any of the specified nine equality grounds.

The University shall provide high quality services in an inclusive, accessible and flexible manner to the diversity of the learner and service user population.

#### 5.1 Widening Participation

The University facilitates access to programmes by learners from under-represented groups. These initiatives are governed by the National Access Plan 2022-2026, currently under consultation and the Policy on Access and Widening Participation. It will be implemented through various recruitment and outreach activities, including a comprehensive Life Long Learning programme offering alternative progression routes and its policy on Recognition of Prior Learning. The University offers a range of learner services to support learners during their academic progression, and to facilitate them to achieve successful outcomes on their programmes.

#### 5.2 Inclusive Teaching and Learning

The University seeks to embed inclusiveness within all activities and academic practices including teaching, assessment and research. This supports the University's overarching mission to enhance and enrich the learner experience, and is aligned with the strategic aims of increasing diversity and internationalisation. The University will provide academics with a range of guidelines, templates and resources to enable staff to embed inclusive principles within teaching and assessment practices and to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into

their research. Approaches such as Universal Design for Learning<sup>1</sup> may be instructive in this regard.

### 5.3 Accommodating Diversity

The University shall accommodate the diversity of learners and service users with reference to the nine specified equality grounds by:

- Identifying and addressing the learner and service user needs across the equality grounds, using active feedback and consultation methods.
- Providing reasonable accommodation for the needs of learners and service users with disabilities and providing integrated access to services.
- Identifying and addressing barriers to participation for service users and learners.
- Taking positive action measures to promote equality, diversity and inclusion of opportunity for disadvantaged persons where necessary.
- Ensuring flexibility in the operation of systems and services to allow for the diversity within the learner and service user base to be accommodated.

#### 5.3.1 *Reasonable Accommodation of People with Disabilities*

The University will ensure that learners, staff and service users with a disability have as complete and equitable access to all services and learner experience as can reasonably be provided. The University is committed to an active programme of enhancement of physical access to facilities and to providing accessible information.

The Student Handbook sets out the range of supports and services available together with a summary of the rights and responsibilities of learners, including learners with disabilities. The Access Office provides a centralised service offering support to learners with disabilities.

The University endeavours to anticipate the requirements of other service users and visitors to its campuses and to identify and remove any unnecessary barriers to accessing the relevant services. The University shall facilitate the provision of accessible information, alternative formats or means of communication and other accommodations where practicable. The University shall create an environment where service users with disabilities can discuss their needs with staff.

### 5.4 Learner and Service User Feedback

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ahead.ie/udl-framework>

Quality enhancement systems incorporate mechanisms to capture feedback from learners across academic programmes and services from learners. The University welcomes and encourages specific feedback from learners and service users from across the equality grounds. Regular consultation with learner and staff representatives will occur.

#### 5.5 Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Services

The University continues to develop systems to collect and analyse a broad range of information relating to equality, diversity and inclusion as it relates to the learner, staff and service user body. This process shall identify areas of disadvantage and barriers to participation and it shall also benchmark progress.

From time to time, surveys, focus groups, external review or other means of consultation are deployed as appropriate mechanisms to inform this process. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee has a particular role in overseeing the development and embedding of this monitoring processes.

Each area that provides a service (academic, learner service or other) has responsibility for ensuring the inclusiveness of the provision of services and for identifying strategies to address any potential barriers to learner or service user participation. Service areas shall report on the implementation of this policy in their reporting and review processes.

## **SECTION D – IMPLEMENTATION**

### 6 Implementation

#### 6.1 Responsibilities

The University Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to ensure equality and access and will work with the President and University Leadership Team to ensure this statutory responsibility is discharged.

The University President will establish an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee<sup>2</sup>, which will advise on developing, monitoring and implementing strategies, policies and practices in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Each area in the University has the responsibility to ensure the service they provide observes

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<sup>2</sup> The EDI committee will be established within the first 6 months of designation of the TU. Its composition and brief will be informed by National Policy and Strategy. It will be chaired by a member of the University Leadership Team and will include diverse representation from across the University, including the Staff Trade Unions and Students Unions

and upholds the EDI commitments outlined in this policy.

All staff play a role in implementing this policy. The University Leadership Team has a particular role to play in ensuring that the principles and commitments made in this policy are adhered to and embedded within the strategies, policies, procedures and practices of the University.

All learners, service users and others conducting business with the university shall cooperate with the implementation of this policy. All external business contracts shall reflect this requirement.

Specific objectives for the implementation of this policy shall be included in future strategic planning by the University.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is responsible for reviewing the implementation of this policy regularly and for any amendments to the policy.

## 6.2 Communications

Information materials produced by the University shall be provided in a relevant and accessible manner to learners, staff and service users.

Information in paper, electronic and web formats shall be made accessible following best practice guidelines on clear print and alternative formats.

Advertising and marketing strategies shall be non-discriminatory and communicate the University's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Direct contact with learners, staff and service users shall be conducted in a courteous and professional manner consistent with an environment of dignity and respect.

The University shall communicate this policy widely so as to reach all staff, managers, learners, service users, Trade Unions and associations, and business contractors via a broad range of channels.

## 6.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Infrastructure

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee shall support the implementation of this policy. The Office of the Vice President/Director for Equality Diversity & Inclusion along with Human Resources, shall be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this policy, and shall report to the University Leadership Team and President on its effectiveness.

## 6.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Awareness

The University shall implement equality and diversity training awareness programmes and campaigns in order to ensure the implementation throughout the University of this policy with regard to employment and service delivery. Equality, diversity and inclusion shall be mainstreamed in training programmes relevant to employment, teaching or service provision.

The Office of the Vice President/Director for Equality Diversity & Inclusion and Human Resources have a particular responsibility with regard to these commitments. Equality Diversity and Inclusion training will be provided to existing Designated Contact Persons as per the Dignity and Respect Policy.

#### 6.5 Business Contractors

The University seeks to ensure that other companies from whom it has contracted to receive goods and services are aware that this policy is in place. All contractors are expected to familiarise themselves with the EDI policy and the commitment of SETU in this regard.

#### 6.6 Complaints Procedures: Staff, Learners & Service users

The relevant complaint procedure to be utilised will depend upon the nature of the complaint. The Office of the Vice President/Director for EDI will provide information on the framework for handling EDI complaints across all areas of the University's activities in line with agreed University policies and procedures. This information will be collated and published by the Office of the Vice President/Director for EDI and will be communicated widely to staff and students.

The University's complaint procedures do not affect the right of a person to initiate a complaint under the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2018 as amended or the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2015 as amended.

Some of the categories of complaints which may be raised under this policy are detailed below. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Further information may be obtained from the Office for the Vice President/Director of EDI for further details.

##### 6.6.1 *Employment Complaints*

Complaint procedures for staff members regarding employment matters follow the usual staff grievance procedures through line-management structures. External complaints in relation to access to employment and equal opportunities can be made directly by applicants to the Office of the Vice President/Director for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion who will investigate the complaint under this Policy.

### *6.6.2 Academic Complaints*

Complaint procedures for academic matters (learners) follow University academic complaint procedures, as detailed in the University's Student Handbook.

### *6.6.3 Bullying and Harassment Complaints*

Dignity and Respect complaints procedures as detailed in the University Dignity and Respect Policy detailing formal and informal processes.

### *6.6.4 Monitoring and Review*

The University shall actively seek feedback on the implementation and review of this policy from staff, learners and service users.

The implementation of the policy shall be reviewed on a regular basis by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDI) and the policy shall be updated on foot of these reviews or other legislative changes.

Each service, administrative and academic area shall include a report addressing the implementation of this policy as part of their review cycle and this will serve to inform the EDI Committee as part of its on-going monitoring of progress on the implementation process.

The EDI Committee shall provide annual progress reports to Governing Body and University Leadership Team on the implementation and development of this policy.

## **6.7 Resources; Information, Advice and Support:**

- The Office of the Vice President/Director for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- Human Resources
- Trade Unions
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Student Counselling Service
- Student Union Welfare & Equality Officer
- Student Union President
- Access Office
- Disability Officer
- Designated Contact Persons

## **7 Review of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed in advance of the review date i.e. 6 September 2026, and/or as soon as possible following new or updated legislation, national or sectoral policy.



## **Appendix 1: Definitions**

### **Discrimination:**

Discrimination is prohibited and has a specific meaning in the Employment Equality Acts and Equal Status Acts. Discrimination is defined as the treatment of a person in a less favourable way than another person is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on any of the nine equality grounds. Discrimination can be direct, indirect, by association or imputation.

### **Equality grounds:**

Discrimination is prohibited by legislation on the basis of any of the following grounds:

- Gender: a man, a woman, or a transsexual person
- Civil status: single, married, separated, divorced, widowed, civil partner, former civil partner.
- Family status: pregnant, a parent of a person under 18 years, or the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability;
- Age: this only applies to people over 16 except for the provision of car insurance to licensed drivers under this age;
- Race and ethnicity: a particular race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin;
- Religion: different religious belief, background, outlook or none;
- Disability: this is broadly defined including people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions;
- Sexual orientation: Gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual;
- Membership of the Traveller community: people who are commonly called Travellers, who are identified both by Travellers and others as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, identified historically as a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.
- Socio-economic status: SETU policy goes further than considering the nine grounds under the Employment Equality Act by also taking into consideration socio-economic-status, which is defined as a combined economic and sociological measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation.

### **Gender Mainstreaming:**

Gender Mainstreaming is the (re)-organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors typically involved in policy making. (Council of Europe Group of Specialists definition).

The aim of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality in practice. Equality impact assessments and equality proofing are tools to achieving the goal of gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming involves an analysis of the effects of policies and practices on women and men respectively, as part of the usual decision-making process.

### **Harassment:**

Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine discriminatory grounds that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

In both cases the unwanted conduct may include acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

The emphasis is on the effect of the unwanted conduct on the recipient, not on the intention of the perpetrator.

There are other forms of bullying and harassment which are not included in the Acts but covered by other legislation such as the Employment Equality Acts, the Unfair Dismissals Acts, the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (as amended), Civil Law and Criminal Law.

### **Indirect discrimination:**

Indirect discrimination happens when there is less favourable treatment in effect or by impact. It happens when people are, for example, refused employment or training not explicitly on account of a discriminatory reason but because of a provision, practice or requirement which they find hard to satisfy. If the provision, practice or requirement puts people who belong to one of the grounds covered by the Acts at a particular disadvantage then the employer is deemed to have indirectly discriminated, unless the provision is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

### **Positive Action**

The Equality Acts allow for preferential treatment or the taking of positive measures which are bona fide intended to:

- Promote equality of opportunity

- Cater for the special needs of persons, or a category of persons who because of their circumstances, may require facilities, arrangements, services or assistance

**Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities; In employment:**

Nothing in the Act requires an employer to recruit or promote a person who is not fully competent and fully available and capable of undertaking the duties attached to the position. For the purposes of the Act a person who has a disability is considered fully competent and capable on reasonable accommodation (referred to as appropriate measures) being provided by the person's employer.

An employer is obliged to take appropriate measures to enable a person who has a disability:

- to have access to employment
- to participate or advance in employment
- to undertake training

unless the measures would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer.

Appropriate measures are practical measures to adapt the employer's place of business including:

- the adaptation of premises and equipment,
- patterns of working time
- distribution of tasks
- or the provision of training or integration resources
- The employer is not obliged to provide any treatment, facility or item that the person might ordinarily or reasonably provide for themselves.

In determining whether the measures would impose a disproportionate burden, account is taken of the financial and other costs entailed, the scale and financial resources of the employer's business, and the possibility of obtaining public funding or other assistance. (Employment Equality Acts)

**Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities; In service provision:**

A person selling goods or providing services, a person providing accommodation, educational institutions and clubs are required to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability.

This involves providing special treatment or facilities in circumstances where without these, it would be impossible or unduly difficult to avail of the goods, services, accommodation etc.

However, they are not obliged to provide special facilities or treatment when to do so will cost more than what is called a nominal cost. What amounts to nominal cost will depend on the circumstances such as the size and resources of the body involved. (Equal Status Acts).

**Service user:**

The policy applies to all service users, visitors, customers and clients of the University. The term 'service user' is then used as shorthand for all customers, visitors, clients, guests and service users of the University, including learners.

**Vicarious liability:**

Employers are liable for discriminatory acts of an employee in the course of their employment, unless they can prove that they took reasonably practicable steps to prevent the conduct.