



TU Dublin's Strategy for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:
'Creating a Better World Together'

TU Dublin Plan of Change for Race Equity

2021-2026

Introduction

This case for implementing change to deliver an intercultural university culture and environment begins with a reminder of the commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in *TU Dublin Strategic Intent 2030*, as follows

By 2030	We will be recognised as an exemplar in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) where people are proud to be part of a connected community and their talents, aptitude and agility will create real impact on the global stage
By 2023	Achievement of staff and student profiles in line with our EDI ambition, including attainment of the Athena Swan award and 20% international staff cohort; and implementation of a staff charter that supports the passion & commitment of our people

The delivery of an intercultural university with race equity as a cornerstone is underpinned by the theory that through research-based, evidence-informed, education we will equip students and staff to understand the causes and manifestations of racism. With this understanding we can all implement structural and individual level changes that adequately combat racism. The core change principle ‘think impact, not intent’ is supported by two other principles – data collection and adoption of best practice approaches.

This Plan for Race Equity identifies **five institutional priorities** to deliver foundational progress. These are as follows:

- *Research and innovation:*
 1. Research best practice approaches to report and supports (including transformative justice resolution mechanisms);
- *Education and Awareness-raising:*
 2. Existing equality modules for staff will be reviewed, updated and integrated so that they take account of the four dimensions of racism/discrimination as relevant;
 3. TU Dublin will achieve University of Sanctuary status by January 2023.
- *Embedding a race equity mindset:*
 4. All Schools will have adopted an agreed [Framework for Diversifying the Curriculum](#) by September 2023.
 5. Adopt best practice approaches that do not only rely on natural justice i.e. also take a transformative justice approach

Definition of Racism

TU Dublin has adopted the [Irish Network Against Racism](#) (INAR) definition of racism. We understand racism as:

Any action, practice, policy, law, speech, or incident which has the effect (whether intentional or not) of undermining anyone's enjoyment of their human rights, based on their actual or perceived ethnic or national origin or background, where that background is that of a marginalised or historically subordinated group. Racism carries connotations of violence because the dehumanisation of ethnic groups has been historically enforced through violence.

We include xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism as forms of racism (as do INAR) because racism involves the ongoing social construction of a historically subordinated group, as a well-defined group, to which dehumanizing stereotypes are attributed.

TU Dublin Vision and Commitment

We will build an intercultural university that is anti-racist and facilitates a true sense of belonging and empowerment for all members of the university community. We will do this through researched evidence, education, awareness-raising, understanding and active engagement with one another, with the historical, structural, institutional and individual dimensions of racism, and with the needs of our local and global communities.

Being an exemplar in EDI

The ambition to be an exemplar in EDI requires further unpacking to make the goal both meaningful and manageable. This goal incorporates the University's core values of Excellence, Inclusion and Impact in a tangible manner. The three pillars through which being an exemplar is enacted are research and innovation, understanding discrimination and harm (education), and the operational embedding of an equality mindset.

Research and Innovation

Led by RINCE and working in collaboration with researchers across TU Dublin and EUT+, we are developing best practice approaches to tackling discrimination and harm and enabling equitable organizational cultures. This includes a research focus on taking a transformational justice approach to enabling cultural change in organisations.

Understanding the harm in discrimination

We are committed to enabling widespread understanding of the four dimensions of discrimination (historical, structural, institutional and individual) across the TU Dublin community and actively countering myths about positive discrimination. Fluency in the dimensions of discrimination enables staff and students to understand why creating equitable cultures is of benefit to us all, and will motivate constructive and sustainable organizational change.

Embedding an equality mindset

We will embed the highest standards of equality and inclusion practices into every way we work including how we are structured, how we make and resource decisions, our policies and procedures, how we teach and learn, our curriculum, the built and digital environments, and our suppliers and partners.

Case for Institutional Reflection and Change

Overall, research indicates that experiences of collegiality in Irish HEIs are generally positive across all ethnic groups for staff (Kempney and Michael, 2021; TU Dublin E&I Survey). However, the Higher Education Authority carried out a national survey on race equality last year, within which a majority of staff in Irish HEIs across all ethnic groups agreed with the statement that “race inequality exists in Irish higher education” (Kempney and Michael, 2021). Respondents identified senior leadership as the group most able and most critical to improving race equality in HEIs. A large number of respondents also noted the critical role that higher education institutions play in wider society and the importance of them taking an evidence-informed leadership role in this area.

The Black Lives Matter movement that regained prominence across the globe in 2020 prompted a number of students to report their experiences of racism in the classroom and among their peer groups in TU Dublin. Issues raised included racist comments from lecturers following student presentations; racist comments from classmates that were not challenged by the lecturer; exclusion and bullying by classmates during group work activities; the Eurocentric focus of the curriculum; and a poor understanding among all staff and students of each of the dimensions of racism – historical, structural, institutional and individual (EDI Directorate, Case Notes). These experiences were also key findings of an earlier more comprehensive study on Blanchardstown campus which found that repeated microaggressions; the over-reliance on Eurocentric curricula, teaching and assessment methods; and a lack of understanding of the multi-dimensional character of racism by staff impeded the development of a sense of belonging on campus (Darby, 2020). Research carried out with students going on placement as part of one programme (Community Development and Youth Work) found that while some students had witnessed racism on placement they did not challenge it as they felt ill-equipped to do so (Poole, 2020). Anecdotal evidence from the staff reading groups suggests that some students experience and/or witness racism on placement across a range of programmes in TU Dublin; they do not feel equipped to address it; and their supervisors and academic advisors are also unsure of how best to support them.

In the Athena SWAN focus group with women of colour in TU Dublin (2021), many participants noted that, while their peers were well meaning in general, it was tiring to experience repeated microaggressions. Microaggressions are subtle, they can be thought of as common verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, which can be intentional or unintentional, and which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative assumptions or opinions of the target person or group e.g. mispronunciation or misspelling of one’s name, being seen as the representative of a group rather than themselves, and not being recognised as a member of staff. The need for supports for international postgraduates and early career researchers; and culturally competent interview panels were also noted as areas for improvement. Across the focus groups staff noted that, while the student cohort in TU Dublin is increasingly diverse the staff cohort is considerably less diverse.

Although the evidence base in TU Dublin does not enable us to identify distinct experiences specific to Traveller, Roma, Black or other Minority Ethnic communities, the broader literature indicates that racism in the Irish context takes many forms, the most prevalent being anti-Black racism, anti-

Traveller racism, anti-Muslim racism, anti-Roma racism, anti-migrant racism (xenophobia) and anti-Jewish racism (or antisemitism) ([INAR 2020](#), p.13).

Racism is not reducible to individual acts of discrimination, harm or prejudice. Racism has four dimensions – historical, structural, institutional, and individual – and is a system of disadvantage which has been historically built into our norms, laws and institutions ([INAR, 2020](#), [Joyce, 2018](#)). To understand this, we need only look at unequal outcomes in areas such as health, education, employment rates, arrest rates and life expectancy. For example, a 2018 report found that just 1% of Traveller children progress to third level compared to over 50% of the wider population.

Processes of racialization are an outcome of our histories of settlement, colonization, enslavement, and segregation. They attribute racial stereotypes to groups of people and our structures, behaviours and decisions are based on those stereotypes, norms, and assumptions. In Ireland today Black, Brown and some White people, such as Irish Travellers or Eastern European migrants, are subject to distinct but overlapping processes of racialisation that result in their marginalization. Unfortunately, people still believe in the stereotypes and norms which underpin processes of racialisation. A 2018 study found that ‘just under half of adults born in Ireland believe some cultures to be superior to others while 45 per cent believe some races are born harder working than others’ ([McGinnity et al 2018](#)).

The HEA found that ‘more than a third (35%) of staff from minority ethnic groups have been subject to racial and/or ethnic discrimination on campus or online in the course of their work, compared to 16% of White Other respondents and 3% of White Irish respondents’ ([Kempney and Michael, 2021](#), p33). Asked if they were treated equally by students irrespective of their ethnic background – ‘White Irish respondents agreed most with the statement (42%), as compared to 37% of White Other, and 28% of staff from minority ethnic groups. Only 1% of White Irish strongly disagreed with the statement, compared to 6% of staff from minority ethnic groups and 2% of White Other staff’ ([Kempney and Michael, 2021](#), p30). Respondents across all groups noted that ethnic minority staff may feel excluded and isolated. This mirrors broader research which found that Black academics are seen as out of place in higher education ([Rollock, 2019](#), [Mirza 2009](#), [Wright, Thompson and Channer 2007](#)). Cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds were factors that affected people’s sense of belonging ([Kempney and Michael, 2021](#), p30).

Intersectionality

Data from the HEA survey also indicates that respondents are aware of the intersectional nature of marginalization.

Both gender and class are frequently raised across the survey as areas of discrimination and exclusion, and while some respondents argued for these to be considered more important than race equality, more respondents felt that these were points where solidarity and intersectional work could usefully be located ([Kempney and Michael, 2021](#), p64).

In TU Dublin we are taking an intersectional approach through

- Linked actions across Athena Swan (including Gender Expression and Gender Identity), Race Equity and ESVH action plans.
- Promoting events at which all staff and/or student groups are represented and explore the complexities of addressing discrimination and facilitating inclusion and belonging (Ability network, LGBTQI+ staff network; Traveller Roma Black and Minority Ethnic staff network)

- Developing internal staff and student training programmes that equip participants with an understanding of the dimensions of discrimination, the ability to take an intersectional approach and think critically about how inequalities are reproduced drawing on best practice and adapted to the Irish context.

Unfortunately, much research on gender inequality has been done with majority White women and overlooked the intersection of gender and race. However, more recent research has demonstrated that the kinds of penalties and social disapproval women face in the workplace differs according to particular racialised stereotypes. A US study, which is useful to illustrate the issue, conducted to examine people's perceptions of women in the workplace concluded that Black women are perceived as being dominant/loud but not competent. Asian American women are perceived as being competent but passive. White women are perceived as primarily communal without being seen as particularly dominant or excessively competent (Rosette et al, 2016: 440). A 2019 UK study on the career experiences and strategies of UK Black female professors highlighted the need to increase awareness of 'racial microaggressions and implement initiatives to eliminate these behaviours at each stage of the career trajectory' (Rollock, 2019).

A limitation of both the HEA study and the TU Dublin survey and focus groups (2021) was the low number of respondents from ethnic minority communities. This is in part due to the demographic profile of staff which is majority White Irish. However, it was reported that some staff chose not to take part in the anonymized Athena Swan focus groups in TU Dublin because they feared negative repercussions. There is a need for better data on Traveller, Roma, Black, and Minority Ethnic staff experiences in TU Dublin.

Our Core Change Principles

1. Think Impact, Not Intent

If we unintentionally say or do something that is discriminatory or offensive, our intentions do not lessen the impact on the person experiencing it. We need to *think impact, not intent*.

For example, if we accidentally spill coffee on someone, we are not usually surprised or offended if that person is upset. We don't generally say 'why are you so upset when it wasn't my intention to pour a hot drink on you?' Usually we acknowledge our mistake, apologise, and move more carefully in the future (Anderson et al, 2020).

Yet when someone says that we have done or said something exclusionary or offensive, it is common for us to be offended and to make the interaction about our intentions and feelings, rather than the impact our actions on the persons affected. We may feel like we are being accused of being a 'bad' person. However, it is important we move away from this idea that racism or any other form of discrimination is reproduced by 'bad' people. Part of being committed to producing real change is a willingness to take a step back, reflect on what we sometimes take to be common sense, and understand why, in the context of wider histories and structures, our actions may reinforce barriers or negative stereotypes which ultimately lead to marginalisation.

We all make mistakes. If we do or say something exclusionary or offensive, often unintentionally, the most helpful course of action can be to

- acknowledge our mistake;

- apologise and move on;
- and then further deepen our understanding of wider histories and contexts and take corrective action if necessary e.g. revisit a policy or process (it is not the job of a person from a marginalised community to help us with this).

2. *Data Collection*

Quantitative and qualitative EDI data collection and data analysis capacity requires resources. Issues to resolve include

- EDI module on CORE needs to be upgraded
- Integrated payroll data needs to be standardized
- Qualitative data needed on Traveller, Roma, Black and Minority Ethnic staff and student experiences

3. *Adopt Best Practice Approaches*

As a new university we have an excellent opportunity to develop and embed the highest standards of equality and inclusion practices into curricula, policies, procedures, and the digital and built environment. This four year plan is built around the three pillars through which being an exemplar is enacted – research and innovation, understanding discrimination (education), and the operational embedding of an equality mindset as follows:

- Research and innovation - investigating and further developing best practice approaches to diversifying and decolonizing the curriculum, awareness and training, recruitment, reporting, resolution mechanisms, and trauma informed services and supports;
- Understanding discrimination and harm - Awareness-raising and education through creating spaces for reflective discussion and learning on the historical, institutional, systemic and individual aspects of racism; practical training on anti-racist pedagogies and practices, and information-sharing on evidence and arguments supportive of race equity;
- Embedding an equality mindset – operationally developing TU Dublin policies and practices based on best practice approaches informed by the evidence base generated through research and innovation.

Institutional Goals and Objectives

Following on from the national survey on race equality in Irish HEIs the HEA has made recommendations across eight thematic areas plus data collection. We have aligned our goals and objectives with these as we anticipate having to report on progress under these themes. Five institutional priority objectives are identified from the collection below to focus attention on delivering foundational progress. These are as follows:

Research and innovation:

1. Research best practice approaches to report and supports (including transformative justice resolution mechanisms);

Education and Awareness-raising:

2. Existing equality modules for staff will be reviewed, updated and integrated so that they take account of the four dimensions of racism/discrimination as relevant;
3. TU Dublin will achieve University of Sanctuary status by January 2023.

Embedding a race equity mindset:

4. All Schools will have adopted an agreed [Framework for Diversifying the Curriculum](#) by September 2023.¹
5. Adopt best practice approaches that do not only rely on natural justice i.e. also take a transformative justice approach

In detail, the institutional goals and objectives are set out below, according to the HEA themes and accompanying headline recommendation:

1. Leadership: HEA – Leaders should actively seek to embed a culture of race equality within their institutions

TU Dublin Goals

- University leaders actively embed a culture of equity across the university
- Student leaders actively embed a culture of equity across the university

Race Equity Objectives

- University leaders have a good understanding of the four dimensions of racism
- University leaders have good knowledge of the goals and objectives re race equity and actively promote these goals.
- Set up a Traveller, Roma, Black, and Minority Ethnic staff network in TU Dublin and facilitate engagement and conversation on intersectionality with similar staff networks (i.e. the Ability network and LGBTQ+ network)
- University leaders and project teams engage with the Institutional Working Group on an Intercultural University/Roma, Traveller, Black and Minority Ethnic staff network during relevant decision making processes
- Goals and objectives of the race equity action plans are embedded in university charters and contracts
- Student leaders have good knowledge of the goals and objectives re race equity and actively promote them
- Student Union to continue to actively participate in the implementation and revision of this Strategy and Action Plan.
- TU Dublin Student Societies to be asked to sign up to an anti-racism charter (e.g. as developed by students on the CDYW programme) as part of the application process for funding. To investigate feasibility further with staff who support clubs and societies. Emphasis on awareness raising and consensus building.
- The governance arrangements for implementation of this strategy and action plan will be clear and substantively assign responsibility to all areas of the university

2. Supporting diversity in staffing: HEA- HEIs to implement measures to enable a fair and transparent recruitment process, including recognition of qualifications acquired outside of Ireland

TU Dublin Goals

- At least 20% will be international staff

¹ This framework was developed in the context of the **Building Multistories** project carried out by TU Dublin librarians and academics between 2020-2022. It consists of four parts – Plan, Develop, Assess and Sustain.

- By 2024 we will understand the demographic profile of staff by Function and School (quantitative and qualitative) and will have agreed targets in place to address underrepresentation, particularly at decision making levels.

Race Equity Objectives

- Internal interview panelists will all undertake online race equality training (available March 2022)
- Benchmark how other institutions have developed positive action regarding staff recruitment and retention
- Identify and agree steps to improve the number of Traveller, Roma, Black and Minority Ethnic staff in academic and PMSS roles by September 2024.
- Award of honorary positions will take due account of diversity regarding race and ethnicity.

3. Making race/equality policies transparent: HEA – Clear definitions of race equality in existing policies and clear signposting to policies relating to race equality

TU Dublin Goals

- All policies will have undergone an Equality and Sustainability Impact Assessment (ESIA) and action taken/underway to mitigate negative impacts on any cohort of staff students and/or the environment.

Race Equity Objectives

- Review policies and procedures and assess their capacity to address racism. Include race equity in the ESIA template.
- Develop and implement ESIA template and process
- Assess effectiveness of the ESIA process

4. Reporting mechanisms: HEA – Clear signposting of disciplinary and reporting procedures re race equality, and effective reporting and complaints mechanisms

TU Dublin Goals

- Appropriate report and support processes are in place that adequately address instances of discrimination and harm; take a transformative justice approach when appropriate; uphold human rights; and are consistent with international and national best practice.

Race Equity Objectives

- **PRIORITY Research best practice approaches to report and supports**
- **PRIORITY Adopt best practice approaches that do not only rely on natural justice i.e. also take a transformative justice approach**
- Provide training on report and support tools
- Conduct awareness raising on report and support tools

5. Awareness and Training: HEA – increase staff and student understanding of what constitutes racism through appropriate training opportunities beyond unconscious bias training

TU Dublin Goals

- Staff will have a good understanding of the four dimensions of discrimination and taking an intersectional approach to addressing harm
- Students will have a good understanding of the four dimensions of discrimination and taking an intersectional approach to addressing harm

Race Equity Objectives

- **PRIORITY Existing equality modules for staff will be reviewed, updated and integrated so that they take account of the four dimensions of racism/discrimination as relevant**
- Equality modules for students will be reviewed, updated and integrated so that they take account of the four dimensions of racism/discrimination as relevant
- Run an integrated information campaign - It Starts with You. This will highlight TU Dublin values across all protected characteristics and develop an awareness of intersectionality including dynamics of privilege and marginalisation. Delivered via multiple channels (e.g. social media/posters etc)
- Awareness raising events and materials will provide staff and students with an understanding of the four dimensions of racism

6. **Fostering Diversity in HEIs: HEA- HEIs to create supportive and engaging spaces for conversations around race and ethnicity where ethnic minority students and staff feel respected and valued**

TU Dublin Goals

- TU Dublin will have an inclusive civic culture where reflection, learning and respectful dialogue is encouraged. Supportive and engaging spaces for conversations will be created that take the four dimensions of discrimination into full account.

Race Equity Objectives

- **PRIORITY All Schools will have adopted an agreed [Framework for Diversifying the Curriculum](#) by September 2023.**
- Incorporate a culturally sustaining pedagogy and curriculum into the QA system. Comprehensive curriculum review and development will be integrated as part of the School Review process.
- Staff and students will be better informed on and have spaces to further discuss EDI calendar of events; dimensions of racism
- Develop good practice guidance on embedding anti-racist and wider equality, diversity and inclusion principles into research, research grant applications, research culture and support, research events and publications/authorship collaborations
- Research projects will take the four dimensions of racism and advancing race equity into full consideration while developing research proposals
- **PRIORITY TU Dublin will achieve University of Sanctuary status by January 2023.**

7. **Supporting diversity in student recruitment: HEA – HEIs to take steps to increase the prospects of ethnic minorities to undertake study programmes.**

TU Dublin Goals

- TU Dublin will have a student cohort that reflects the diversity targets in alignment with national strategy

Race Equity Objectives

- Through TU Dublin Widening Participation and Engagement strategies, work with primary and secondary level schools re the retention of Roma and Traveller students and their progression to third level
- Benchmark how other Universities recruit and support students from Roma, Traveller, Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds (including but not limited to mental health support services)
- Training to be made available for staff currently working within the Counselling Service and Chaplaincy to further ensure services are culturally sensitive, appropriate, and more aware of how micro-aggressions and everyday racism occurs and experienced by staff and students.
- In the mid-term, recruitment of a counsellor from a Roma, Traveller, Black or Minority Ethnic background who has the knowledge and skill set to specifically counsel those who have experienced racism and micro-aggressions.

8. Data collection: HEA – HEIs to engage in systematic data collection to provide the evidence base regarding staff and student representation, access and outcome by ethnicity, benchmarked against Census data

TU Dublin Goals

- TU Dublin will collect accurate EDI data, address areas for improvement and report on progress to the UET and Governing Body

Race Equity Objectives

- TU Dublin will have sufficient resources and IS capacity to collect accurate EDI data
- Update CORE EDI module
- Update student data collection processes prioritizing a focus on systematic monitoring of retention, progression and degree outcome data for all students and, if appropriate, recommend interventions where there are clear and consistent patterns of divergence aligned with ethnicity
- Conduct information campaign on why EDI data collection matters
- Monitor and report on progress

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