



SUSTAINING PROGRESS FOR GENDER  
EQUALITY THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY'S  
FORTHCOMING STRATEGIC PLAN  
2017-2022

PROPOSED LEADING ACTION

*Strengthen* the capacity of the university to effect change for equality including gender equality by *establishing* a multidimensional equality office<sup>1</sup> at the heart of the university led by a vice-president for equality.<sup>2</sup>

RATIONALE IN FIVE REASONS

First, establishing a multidimensional equality structure at the heart of the university is a pivotal conduit for 'effecting deeply felt change for gender equality'.<sup>3</sup>

Second, effecting change for gender equality is fundamentally about fairness, as opined by colleagues in cafés convened to deliberate gender equality,<sup>4</sup> and as express within the statutory public sector duty to promote equality of opportunity and treatment.<sup>5</sup>

Further, as recognised by the European Commission<sup>6</sup> and the Irish Higher Education Authority,<sup>7</sup> strengthening gender diversity at every level of university life is interdependent with deepening the pursuit of research excellence. Unsurprisingly it is increasingly a prerequisite for international<sup>8</sup> and domestic research funding.<sup>9</sup>

Third, there has been significant progress in promoting gender equality in higher education at domestic level, in particular, through the extension of Athena SWAN to Ireland (February 2015),<sup>10</sup> and the convening, by the Higher Education Authority, of an independent expert group on gender equality to conduct a review of Irish higher education institutions (September 2015).<sup>11</sup>

Fourth, this has been paralleled by progress within the university: its commitment to implement GENOVATE's eight point gender equality action plan (September 2015)<sup>12</sup> and retain its Athena SWAN Bronze Award through the implementation of the gender equality action plan contained within its successful application (August 2016).<sup>13</sup> Added to this twenty-two of the recommendations of the independent expert group on gender equality (June 2016), convened by the HEA, are specifically targeted at higher education institutions. These include *inter alia* the establishment of a vice-president for equality, a gender equality committee and academically led forum on gender equality (*see* recommendations 1.5, 1.8, 1.9).<sup>14</sup> Further, the recommendations also expressly link the performance of higher education institutions in promoting excellence through gender equality to the retention of public funding (*see* recommendation 2.1).<sup>15</sup>

Fifth, as envisioned in GENOVATE Action 1b<sup>16</sup> establishing a multidimensional

equality structure at the heart of the university is a pivotal conduit for deepening engagement with equality and gender equality at every level of university life, and therefore central to ensuring the rigorous implementation and monitoring of the university's gender equality actions.

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### PROPOSED STRUCTURE AND STRATEGIC FUNCTION OF THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL EQUALITY OFFICE LED BY A VICE-PRESIDENT FOR EQUALITY<sup>17</sup>

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The vice-president for equality will be an academic member of the university management team, reporting directly to the president. S/he will lead the equality office, comprised of a team of technical and administrative officers, supported by research fellows drawn from equality experts across the university. The function of the office will include:

1. Envisioning the pathway to effective change for equality within the university.
2. Overseeing the promotion of equality across the university, and reporting on the implementation of equality actions to senior management.
3. Providing expert technical direction and guidance to senior and middle university management on the development and implementation of equality actions.
4. Making the university's commitments to, and actions for, equality known within the university and beyond.
5. Sustaining engagement with equality across the university by *inter alia* opening space for colleagues to influence the development and implementation of equality actions.
6. Convening, and connecting, existing and developing structural foci on equality within the university.
7. Interrogating institutional, domestic and international practice (including data collected from institutional equality monitoring processes), to seek new and deepen existing ways of acting for equality.

See GENOVATE Action 1b.

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<sup>1</sup> GENOVATE Briefing Note on Action 1b: Establish a Structural Focal Point for Equality in the University (The GENOVATE Hub, 2016) <http://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/iss21/BriefingNote.ActionNo.1b.ecopy..pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Recommendation 1.5 states: 'Each HEI will, through a publicly advertised competitive process, appoint a vice-president for equality who will be a full academic member of the executive management team and who will report directly to the president.' Note the Expert Group also recommends the establishment of a gender equality sub-committee of the governing authority/body of which the vice-president for equality would be a member (recommendation 1.8), an independent academically led gender equality forum to be chaired by vice-president for equality (recommendation 1.9) and a national level national committee for gender equality comprising the vice-president equality of all HEIs (recommendation 2.6). *Report of the Expert Group: HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* (HEA, June 2016), 7 [hereinafter *HEA Expert Group on Gender Equality Report*], 50, 56 and 81. [http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/hea\\_review\\_of\\_gender\\_equality\\_in\\_irish\\_higher\\_education.pdf](http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/hea_review_of_gender_equality_in_irish_higher_education.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> 'GENOVATE at University College Cork highlights potential positive impact of a central Equality unit' *Press Release* (7 December 2016), <https://www.ucc.ie/en/iss21/genovate/news/fullstory-721098-en.html>. See also *GENOVATE Briefing Note on Action 1b: Establish a Structural Focal Point for Equality in the University* above note 1.

<sup>4</sup> See especially *Third GENOVATE Café Report* (The GENOVATE Hub, April 14, 2015), <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/iss21/CafFeedbackReport3..pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act No. 25 of 2014*, s.42 <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/25/enacted/en/html> See also *Briefing Note on GENOVATE Gender Equality Action No. 1a: Integrating Gender Equality into Strategic Planning Processes, Goals, Targets and Actions* (The GENOVATE Hub, 2015) and *Five Reasons to Integrate Gender Equality into Strategic Planning Infographic* (The GENOVATE Hub, 2015), <https://www.ucc.ie/en/iss21/genovate/resources/actions/>.

<sup>6</sup> In the foreword of a European Commission report on structural change for gender equality in higher education, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn notes: 'We need to address [this] not only for the sake of fairness and equality, but for the sake of science and research itself – we need to build our research capacity in Europe.' The executive summary to the same report states: 'promoting gender equality at all levels contributes to achieving excellence and efficiency.' See *Report of the Expert Group on Structural Change: Structural Change in Research Institutions: Enhancing Excellence, Gender Equality and Efficiency in Research and Innovation* (Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Research & Innovation, 2012), 5-6 [http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document\\_library/pdf\\_06/structural-changes-final-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/structural-changes-final-report_en.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> The HEA Expert Group note: 'Gender equality and diversity are central to the pursuit of excellence.' *HEA Expert Group on Gender Equality Report* above note 2 at 7.

<sup>8</sup> See for example European Commission, Directorate-General for Research & Innovation, *Guidance on Gender Equality in Horizon 2020* (Brussels: 26 April 2016), [http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/hi/gender/h2020-hi-guide-gender\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/gender/h2020-hi-guide-gender_en.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Recommendation 2.1 of the HEA Expert Group on Gender Equality: 'A theme on promoting excellence through gender equality will be integrated into HEI compacts.' In relation to this the report states: 'Funding will therefore be linked to institutions' performance, and will be withheld if they fail to meet the agreed KPIs and targets as set out in their compacts.' Recommendation 3.8 states: 'Within three years research-funding agencies will require HEIs to have attained an Athena SWAN Bronze Institutional award to be eligible for funding.' *HEA Expert Group on Gender Equality Report* above note 2 at 79 and 91. Note the Irish Research Council, Science Foundation Ireland and Health Research Board have all committed to implementing this recommendation: 'Only Colleges Addressing Inequality Will Get Funding in New Move by Irish Agencies' HEA Press Release (December 2016) <http://www.hea.ie/news/only-colleges-addressing-gender-inequality-will-get-funding-new-move-irish-agencies>.

<sup>10</sup> 'Universities Sign Up to Gender Equality Charter' *The Irish Times* (February 5, 2015) <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/universities-sign-up-to-gender-equality-charter-1.2091578>

<sup>11</sup> HEA Expert Group on Gender Equality Report above note 2 at 21 and appendix J.

<sup>12</sup> GENOVATE's Gender Equality Action Plan for UCC <http://www.ucc.ie/en/iss21/genovate/resources/geap/>. Note Academic Council also committed to implementing GENOVATE's actions in relation to strengthening gender balance in strategic decision-making bodies on May 1, 2015, and a Cross-University Working Group on Maternity Leave has been established as proposed by GENOVATE (see respectively GENOVATE Actions No. 6 and 5, *id.*, ).

<sup>13</sup> UCC Athena SWAN Action Plan 2016-2019 <http://www.ucc.ie/en/media/aboutucc/presidentsoffice/athenaswan/ACTIONPLAN.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> HEA Expert Group on Gender Equality Report above note 2.

<sup>15</sup> Recommendation 2.1 of the HEA Expert Group on Gender Equality: 'A theme on promoting excellence through gender equality will be integrated into HEI compacts.' In relation to this the report states: 'Funding will therefore be linked to institutions' performance, and will be withheld if they fail to meet the agreed KPIs and targets as set out in their compacts.' HEA Expert Group on Gender Equality Report above note 2 at 79

<sup>16</sup> GENOVATE Briefing Note on Action 1b: Establish a Structural Focal Point for Equality in the University (The GENOVATE Hub, 2016), <http://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/iss21/BriefingNote.ActionNo.1b.ecopy..pdf>. See also 'GENOVATE at University College Cork highlights potential positive impact of a central Equality unit' Press Release (7 December 2016), <https://www.ucc.ie/en/iss21/genovate/news/fullstory-721098-en.html>.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

## ANNEX 1: RECOMMENDATIONS 1.5, 1.8, 1.9 AND 2.1 OF HEA EXPERT GROUP ON GENDER EQUALITY

OBJECTIVE	RECOMMENDATION	LEAD STAKEHOLDER	TIMELINE/KPIS
<b>1.5</b> To achieve gender equality in each HEI.	Each HEI will, through a publicly advertised competitive process, appoint a vice-president for equality who will be a full academic member of the executive management team and who will report directly to the president.	HEIs	From 2017

OBJECTIVE	RECOMMENDATION	LEAD STAKEHOLDER	TIMELINE/KPIS
<b>1.8</b> To provide strategic oversight of organisational processes and policies in relation to gender equality.	A gender equality sub-committee of the governing authority/body should be established.  The minutes of the sub-committee will be published within the HEI.	HEIs	By 2017

OBJECTIVE	RECOMMENDATION	LEAD STAKEHOLDER	TIMELINE/KPIS
<b>1.9</b> To support the mainstreaming of gender equality across the HEIs.	Each HEI will establish an independent, academically-led gender equality forum, chaired by the vice-president for equality and comprising staff members drawn from across the HEI with sufficient influence and motivation to effect change.	HEIs	By 2017

OBJECTIVE	RECOMMENDATION	LEAD STAKEHOLDER	TIMELINE/KPIS
<b>2.1</b> To enhance the performance management of HEIs' strategic development in addressing gender inequality.	A theme on 'promoting excellence through gender equality' will be integrated into the HEI compacts.  This will encompass two sections, 'organisational culture and structures' and 'supporting and advancing careers', and HEIs will be required to identify measures under both.	HEA (in partnership with HEIs)	To be started in 2016