



MIC Gender Equality Plan for Research

About MIC

MIC was founded in 1898 and is a University-level College of Education and the Liberal Arts, academically linked with the University of Limerick. The student population of MIC currently consists of over 5,000 learners enrolled in undergraduate programmes in Primary and Post-Primary Education, Psychology, Liberal Arts and Early Childhood Care and Education, as well as a range of postgraduate programmes at Diploma, Masters and PhD levels. c. 81% of the student population is female with 19% male.

MIC has two campus locations, one in Limerick City and one in Thurles, County Tipperary. Side by side with mainstream courses, MIC also offers several access programmes, including the Pre-University Programme for Mature Learners, the Certificate in General Learning and Personal Development for those with intellectual disabilities and the Certificate in English Language for Academic Purposes for new communities seeking international protection.

The staff body consists of c. 420 members, of which about 50% are academic staff. Of these, c. 72% are female and 28% are male. The PMS (professional, managerial and support) staff provides support for the teaching Faculties and other institutional functions (Research & Graduate School, Student Academic Services, Human Resources, Finance, ICT etc.). Of the PMS staff, c. 78% are female, and 22% are male. Specialist technical support staff numbers are low (2) and these are included in the PMS staff category.

Mary Immaculate College supports academic research at the highest level in its core fields of Education and Humanities. The Research & Graduate School assists staff and research postgraduate students in conducting original research, engaging in scholarship and creative innovation, and publishing the results of their work, including through Open Research / Open Science publications, and through conference presentations worldwide. The Research & Graduate School, located on the MIC John Henry Newman Campus, provides specialist research supports and professional development training for faculty members and postgraduate researchers. It supports the research community in areas such as applying for research funding, research ethics and ethical decision-making, research integrity training, research engagement, research data management, research impact, and research publication / dissemination.

Equality, Diversity Inclusion and Interculturalism at MIC

MIC provides national and local leadership in its work in Equality, Diversity Inclusion and Interculturalism (EDI), and this has been championed by the President and the Senior Management Team. The [Mary Immaculate College Mission](#) and [Strategy](#), 'A Flourishing Learning Community 2020-2023' (2019)

underpins an institutional commitment to EDII. This commitment respects cultural diversity, strives to promote equity in society and fosters an environment where all have freedom and opportunity to achieve their full potential. The strategy also commits to making ‘a difference in the broader world, bearing in mind a received obligation to galvanise efforts to foster social justice and promote equality for the most marginalised’.

MIC is a signatory to the [Athena Swan Ireland Charter Principles \(2021\)](#). In 2019 MIC was awarded the Athena Swan Bronze Institution Award which represented a key milestone and recognition of a commitment to advancing gender equality in the institution and beyond. In 2023, MIC applied to renew the Athena Swan Bronze Institution Award under the revised Athena Swan Ireland Charter that incorporates new aspects related to intersectionality, with an outcome expected in 2024.

The MIC Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2023-2026 aligns with and evolves from the MIC Athena Swan Bronze Institution renewal application. It is underpinned by MIC’s [Strategic Plan](#) and the [MIC Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism \(EDII\) Strategy \(2022\)](#). As well as incorporating the recommendations from the [2nd HEA Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions](#) the MIC GEP draws on the [2016 HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions](#) and the [Gender Action Plan 2018-2020](#). It also acknowledges a number of national initiatives in relation to gender equality in higher education, including the [Senior Academic Leadership Initiative](#), [Gender Equality Enhancement Fund](#), the [Athena SWAN Charter](#), the annual publication of staff data by gender in the [Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Sex and Gender](#).

Background to the MIC Gender Equality Plan

A new eligibility criterion for research performing organisations (RPOs) and higher education institutions (HEIs) to access to Horizon Europe research funding is to publish its own Gender Equality Plan (GEP) on its institutional website. Under European Commission (EC) regulations, this has been mandatory since 2022. A GEP is considered in a EU context to be a strategic instrument that sets priorities, objectives and defined measures that will be implemented to improve gender equality within organisations (further information is available at [Gender Equality in Academia and Research - GEAR](#)). The GEP is based on a *status quo* assessment, and sets mechanisms for implementation and monitoring progress for success including evaluation. This requires defined responsibility for activities and governance and leadership accountability.

According to GEAR, the overarching purpose of a GEP is to ‘sustainably transform organisational processes, cultures and structures within the field of research and innovation (R & I) to combat and reduce gender imbalances and inequalities. It should be holistic and comprehensive in the way that it addresses the whole organisation, engages all relevant stakeholders and tackles several gender equality issues in your organisation’.

Context

A GEP, therefore, is a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through institutional and cultural change. The GEP includes four compulsory process-related requirements:

1. **Public document:** The GEP must be a formal document published on the institution's website, signed by the top management and actively communicated within the institution. It should demonstrate a commitment to gender equality, set clear goals and detailed actions and measures to achieve them.
2. **Dedicated resources:** a GEP must have dedicated resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan. Organisations should consider what type and volume of resources are required to support an ongoing process of sustainable organisational change.
3. **Data collection and monitoring:** organisations must collect sex/ gender disaggregated data on personnel with annual reporting based on indicators. Organisations should consider how to select the most relevant indicators, how to collect and analyse the data, including resources to do so, and should ensure that data is published and monitored on an annual basis. This data should inform the GEP's objectives and targets, indicators, and ongoing evaluation of progress.
4. **Training:** The GEP must also include awareness-raising and training actions on gender equality. These activities should engage the whole organisation and be an evidence-based, ongoing and long-term process. Activities should cover unconscious gender biases training aimed at staff and decision-makers and can also include communication activities and gender equality training that focuses on specific topics or addresses specific groups.

Scope and Content

It is recommended that a GEP should address five thematic areas as follows:

1. **Work-life balance and organisational culture:** GEPs aim to promote gender equality through the sustainable transformation of organisational culture. Organisations should implement necessary policies to ensure an open and inclusive working environment, the visibility of women and men in the organisation and externally, and that the contribution of women and men is properly and equally valued. Inclusive work-life balance policies and practices can also be considered in a GEP, including parental leave policies, flexible working time arrangements and support for caring responsibilities.
2. **Gender balance in leadership and decision-making:** Increasing the number and share of women in leadership and decision-making positions touches upon all aspects in the GEP. Measures to ensure that women can take on and stay in leadership positions can include providing decision-makers with targeted gender training, adapting processes for selection and appointment of staff on committees, ensuring gender balance through gender quotas, and making committee membership more transparent.
3. **Gender equality in recruitment and career progression:** Critically reviewing selection procedures and remedying any biases can ensure that women and men get equal chances to develop and advance their careers. Establishing recruitment codes of conduct, involving gender equality officers in recruitment and promotion committees, proactively identifying women in underrepresented fields and considering organisation-wide workload planning models can be important measures to consider in a GEP.
4. **Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content:** The GEP should consider how sex and gender analysis will be included in the research or educational outputs

of an organisation. It can set out the organisation’s commitment to incorporating sex and gender in its research priorities, the processes for ensuring that the gender dimension is considered in research and teaching, and the support and capacity provided for researchers to develop methodologies that incorporate sex and gender analysis. Research funding and research performing organisations both have a role to play in ensuring this.

5. **Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment:** Organisations establishing a GEP should consider taking steps to ensure they have clear institutional policies on sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. Policies should establish and codify the expected behaviour of employees, outline how members of the organisation can report instances of gender-based violence and how any such instances will be investigated and sanctions applied. They should also consider how information and support is provided to victims or witnesses and how the whole organisation can be mobilised to establish a culture of zero tolerance toward sexual harassment and violence.

All five thematic areas are addressed by MIC (Table 1) through its Athena SWAN Plan. This was achieved through work involving surveys, focus groups, HR led initiatives, Research & Graduate School contributions, and particularly through the work of the EDII Office. MIC has measures and policies to combat gender-based violence. This is described in more detail later in this document.

The GEP Development Process at MIC

In the process of developing and implementing a GEP at MIC, the following recommended steps were adhered to:

Step 1: familiarisation with the GEP concept and how it fits MIC.

Step 2: analysis of the *status quo* in MIC (sex-disaggregated data was collected and organisational procedures, processes and practices were critically reviewed to detect any gender inequalities and their causes).

Step 3: setting up the GEP, MIC identified objectives, set targets and measures to remedy the identified problems, allocated resources and responsibilities, and agreed timelines.

Step 4: MIC is working on implementation of the planned activities and undertaking outreach efforts to gradually expand the network of stakeholders supporting the GEP.

Step 5: MIC is actively monitoring progress and evaluating the GEP.

Step 6: MIC will develop a new GEP that will build on experience and achievements. This will ensure sustainability of GEP initiatives into the future.

MIC and Mandatory Requirements of a GEP

MIC meets the mandatory GEP requirements as shown in Table 1

MANDATORY PROCESS-RELATED REQUIREMENTS FOR GENDER EQUALITY PLANS	
REQUIREMENT	HOW MIC MEETS THIS REQUIREMENT

<p>1. Publication of a formal document:</p>	<p>The GEP, signed by President Eugene Wall, is available on a publicly accessible website http://www.mic.ul.ie/edii</p> <p>The GEP demonstrates MIC's commitment to gender equality, sets clear goals and detailed actions, along with measures to achieve them.</p>
<p>2. Dedicated resources in Gender Equality:</p>	<p>The Director of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Interculturalism (EDII) is Professor Lorraine McIlrath who is a member of Executive Team and leads the MIC EDII Office Team, which has responsibility for gender equality.</p> <p>The EDII Team comprises the EDII Director, Manager Edel Foster, Sexual Violence and Harassment Prevention and Response Manager Kathleen Maher and a Clerical Officer, along with MIC's Sexual Violence & Harassment (SVH) Prevention Manager. The team is assisted by five EDII Champions (two PMS staff and three academic staff). The EDII Lead in the Faculty of Arts chairs the faculty-level EDII Steering Committee.</p> <p>The EDII Office reports to the MIC Equality Committee which is a sub-committee of An tÚdarás Rialaithe/Governing Authority. The EDII Implementation Committee is a sub-committee of the Equality Committee and oversees the strategic development and mainstreaming of EDII at MIC.</p> <p>EDII has grown and become more visible at MIC since 2020 as evidenced through branding, logo, a central recurrent budget, project awards, annual participation in the Aurora Leadership Development Programme for Women and other professional development opportunities. Over 70 staff undertook the EDII Online Training Programme in 2022/23, and more than 30 women have availed of the Aurora programme (funded by the EDII budget). With an investment of €507,826 since 2019/20, these dedicated resources and mainstreaming of EDII are having a significant and positive impact in MIC.</p> <p>An innovative approach has been undertaken to embed EDII strategy across the College giving as much opportunity to staff and students to carve out their own EDII interests and develop projects that align with their passions. To fully operationalise this approach, in 2022, the EDII Office launched the first <u>EDII Project Awards</u>, which aim to catalyse and embed EDII through new annual collaborative activities. Providing funding of up to €5,000 per project, the awards foster collaboration and partnerships between staff, students and community organisations. Over 24 projects have been awarded to date and details on the 2023 awardee project can be accessed here. These projects have initiated activities which relate to gender equality, race equality, LGBT+ supports, religious and belief diversity, sexual violence and harassment supports through peer mentoring, and engagement with the Traveller community.</p>
<p>3. Data collection and monitoring of gender:</p>	<p>The GEP and its actions are founded on gender disaggregated baseline data collected across all staff categories which informs an evidence base. This data informs the GEP's objectives and targets, indicators, and</p>

	<p>ongoing evaluation of progress. Relevant gender-disaggregated data is collected and monitored through surveys, HR systems and student data systems. Specific data related actions are included in the GEP (Action GE 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6).</p> <p>The EDII Implementation Committee oversees and monitors the progress of the 2023–2027 action plan and this is communicated to the Equality Committee. The EDII Office provides ongoing support and dedicated resources and engages with ET and the other relevant committees.</p>
4.Training and capacity building support:	<p>Actions in the GEP address capacity building in gender equality and raises awareness through workshops and communication activities (Action GE 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.6, 5.1, 5.3, 6.3, 7.2, 7.3).</p> <p>The MIC EDII Office provides dedicated training on equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism (Actions GE 5.5, AEG3.1).</p> <p>Since 2020, HR has provided interviewer and unconscious bias training. Training for interview chairs commenced in June 2022. MIC has committed to a 'licence to recruit' whereby interview panels, including chairs, must have undertaken such training to be included on the panel.</p>
FIVE THEMATIC AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR CONTENT IN GENDER EQUALITY PLANS	
<p>MIC's GEAP has dedicated actions and strategies for advancing Gender Equality across all five thematic areas required by Horizon Europe (1-5 below) within institutional GEPs or through broader institutional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plans.</p> <p>These are referenced below, and can be cross referenced to the MIC Gender Action Plan 2023 - 2027 at the following link: https://www.mic.ul.ie/sites/default/files/uploads/476/AS%20Renewal%20Action%20Plan%2025.1.24.pdf</p>	
1.WORK-LIFE BALANCE ANO ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE	<p>MIC's GEAP contains 10 actions dedicated to institutional culture and organisation (Action GE 3.14, GE 5.1, GE 5.2, GE 5.4, GE 5.5, GE 5.6, GE 5.8, GE 5.9, GE 5.10, GE 5.11, GE 5.12); 11 actions dedicated to incorporating an intersectional approach to gender equality (Action GE 1.1, 1.1, 1.6, AEG 1.1, AEG 2.1, AEG 2.2, AEG 2.3, AEG 3.1, AEG 3.2, AEG 3.3, AEG 3.4,); and 5 actions dedicated to family-friendly policies and procedures (Action GE 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5).</p>
2.GENDER EQUALITY IN RECRUITMENT AND CAREER PROGRESSION	<p>MIC's GEAP contains 8 actions dedicated to recruitment and promotion procedures with associated targets (Action GE 1.4, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.15) . MIC GE Action 1.4 aims to continue to monitor and report on gender representation at application, recruitment, and promotion stages. MIC GE Action 3.2 aims to clearly link EDII activity with the promotion criteria and process. The GEP also contains 10 actions dedicated to career development, including staff mentoring and leadership programmes (Action GE 2.5, 3.3, 3.5, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12, 3.13, 3.14, 4.3).</p>
3.GENDER BALANCE IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING	<p>Since 2020, job specifications cite evidence of leadership in EDII as being desirable. From March 2023, this changed to being an essential</p>

	<p>requirement for senior leadership positions at PL level and above. All interview and shortlisting boards have at least 40% of each gender. Since 2020, the membership of influential institutional committees must consist of at least 40% of female and 40% of male members.</p>
<p>4. MEASURES AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE INCLUDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT</p>	<p>MIC submits annual HEA reports on the progress-related implementation of the Framework for <u>Promoting Consent and Preventing Sexual Violence</u> (Consent Framework). Now known as the Ending Sexual Violence & Harassment (ESVH) Framework, the framework is a standing Equality Committee agenda item. Appointed in September 2023, the EDII SVH Prevention Manager is currently developing a strategy that engages staff and students in SVH prevention activities. MIC GEAP 2023 Action AEG 1 commits MIC to implementing the recommendations and actions for HEIs in the national Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions Implementation Plan. AEG 1.2 aims to actively communicate to staff and students the procedure for reporting inappropriate behaviour and support them to report such behaviour.</p> <p>The MIC SVH Working Group involving key stakeholders has been approved and developed to oversee the implementation of the ESVH Framework at MIC.</p> <p>Policies will be reviewed and developed and procedures put in place around SVH. MIC's Critical Incident Management Plan has been amended to take account of matters around SVH.</p> <p>In addition, MIC plans to develop a domestic violence leave policy to support the statutory domestic violence leave introduced by the government in November 2023.</p> <p>Working with the MIC Students' Union (MISU) and with MIC staff, EDII training, including consent training, is continually being built into the student experience.</p> <p>As an example, the MIC Graduate School Director Dr Julianne Stack who is based in the MIC Research & Graduate School (RGS) has worked with the EDII Office to make consent training available to all Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) in AY2023/24.</p>
<p>5. INTEGRATION OF THE GENDER DIMENSION INTO RESEARCH AND TEACHING CONTENT</p>	<p>MIC is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive atmosphere that fosters academic excellence, personal growth and success for every individual associated with MIC.</p> <p>5A: INTEGRATION OF THE GENDER DIMENSION IN THE AREA OF RESEARCH VIA THE MIC RESEARCH & GRADUATE SCHOOL</p> <p>The Research & Graduate School (RGS) provides support for the integration of gender and intersectional issues into research content. For instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the Research Postgraduate Coordinator will represent PGR interests at the Traveller Education Working Group which meets first on 20/03/2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the MIC <i>Postgraduate Student Engagement Working Group Report</i> to HEA/QQI in March 2023 was underpinned by a gender balance of interviewees <p>The RGS provides mentorship for funding applications to both faculty members and PGRs including the following considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mentorship is made as gender-inclusive as possible by being structured around applicants' personal and professional responsibilities, with meetings being held online or in-person as appropriate ○ Although c. 75% of all MIC PGRs are female, the gender breakdown of applicants for the Irish Research Council Government of Ireland Scholarship 2024 was 50:50 female: male. The RGS will encourage greater female participation in this scheme by contacting suitably qualified students on an individual by individual basis ○ Mentorship and training is provided on the integration of sex/gender analysis in research content to all applicants and all research support schemes. It is planned to develop this training provision further <p>The RGS requires gender balance in the membership of working groups, committees, assessment boards and similar teams within its areas of responsibility in MIC. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Membership of PGR Research Progression Panels (Review/Confirmation/Transfer) ○ Membership of PGR Viva Voce examination panels ○ Panels of invited guest speakers and panel membership of the MIC RGS Research Skills Seminar Series ○ Internal research funding assessment panels ○ Interview boards ○ Research ethics committees (RECs) <p>RGS CPD, skills events and training workshops/seminars are delivered using approached that provide for maximum gender-equal access. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Research skills events in the RGS are delivered as blended learning workshops/seminars, with invitations sent to participants to attend in-person or online ○ Most RGS events are recorded and subsequently made available online to maximise access for all ○ Facilitation of in-person, online and asynchronous attendance ensures that RGS events are as inclusive and accessible as possible for all members of MIC staff and postgraduates <p>Some proposed actions to further embed gender equality in research at MIC may include some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amending MIC Research Funding ToRs and Forms to allow applicants to indicate if their research has a sex/gender
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	<p>dimension. If so, this can be considered when reviewing the applications and used to encourage more research in this area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure gender balance insofar as is feasible in leadership roles in MIC Research Groups • Within the next three years RGS staff will undergo training on Gender Proofing Research. Using this training together with the EC guidance and toolkit on the subject, the RGS will support and advise academics and researchers on the gender dimension in funding applications. This will include perspectives of both human resources (balance in research teams) and research content (analysing and considering gender in the research and innovation content of projects). • Organise training for researchers on integrating gender dimensions into their research. • Provide researchers with advice and training on sex and gender considerations in proposal preparation and through events open to all researchers.
	<p>5B: INTEGRATION OF THE GENDER DIMENSION IN TEACHING & LEARNING CONTENT VIA THE MIC LEARNING ENHANCEMENT AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT CENTRE</p> <p>The MIC Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Centre (LEAD) provides support for the integration of gender and intersectional issues into approaches and practices in teaching. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • programme and module development workshops incorporate the principles of EDII by using UDL as our underpinning structure for the development of new programmes and modules. • e-learning platforms and technologies all include accessibility features and we provide training on how these features can be used within a teaching context. • learning designers at MIC design teaching artefacts and content that is fully accessible and in line with both EDII and UDL principles. • online and blended programmes are supported by LEAD to help ensure that students with a variety of student needs or constraints have an opportunity to access education. • a UDL community of practice that supports staff in their pursuit of creating inclusive teaching spaces is supported by MIC. • members of the MIC academic community are supported to pursue UDL and UD badges. • workshops around inclusion in the classroom and inclusive assessment design are offered by LEAD. • workshops and training sessions facilitate in-person, online and asynchronous attendance to accommodate staff with different working arrangements. All sessions are recorded and include accessibility features. • safe spaces are promoted within all LEAD training and staff are advised on how to promote safe spaces within classrooms.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all correspondence to staff from LEAD follows the principles of EDII and UDL (for example, including alt text on images, ensuring that written communications include plain text versions for those with visual impairments, and creating documents that can be used with a digital reader). • the LEAD team is currently exploring how AI technology can be used to make content more accessible for staff and students, and this is being done with EDII and UDL principles in mind. • similarly, LEAD is exploring the ethics of AI technology and how it might impact on particular, often vulnerable, groups. This will be explored through talks and information sessions for staff.
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Table 1. How MIC meets the mandatory GEP requirements

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Vice President Research

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