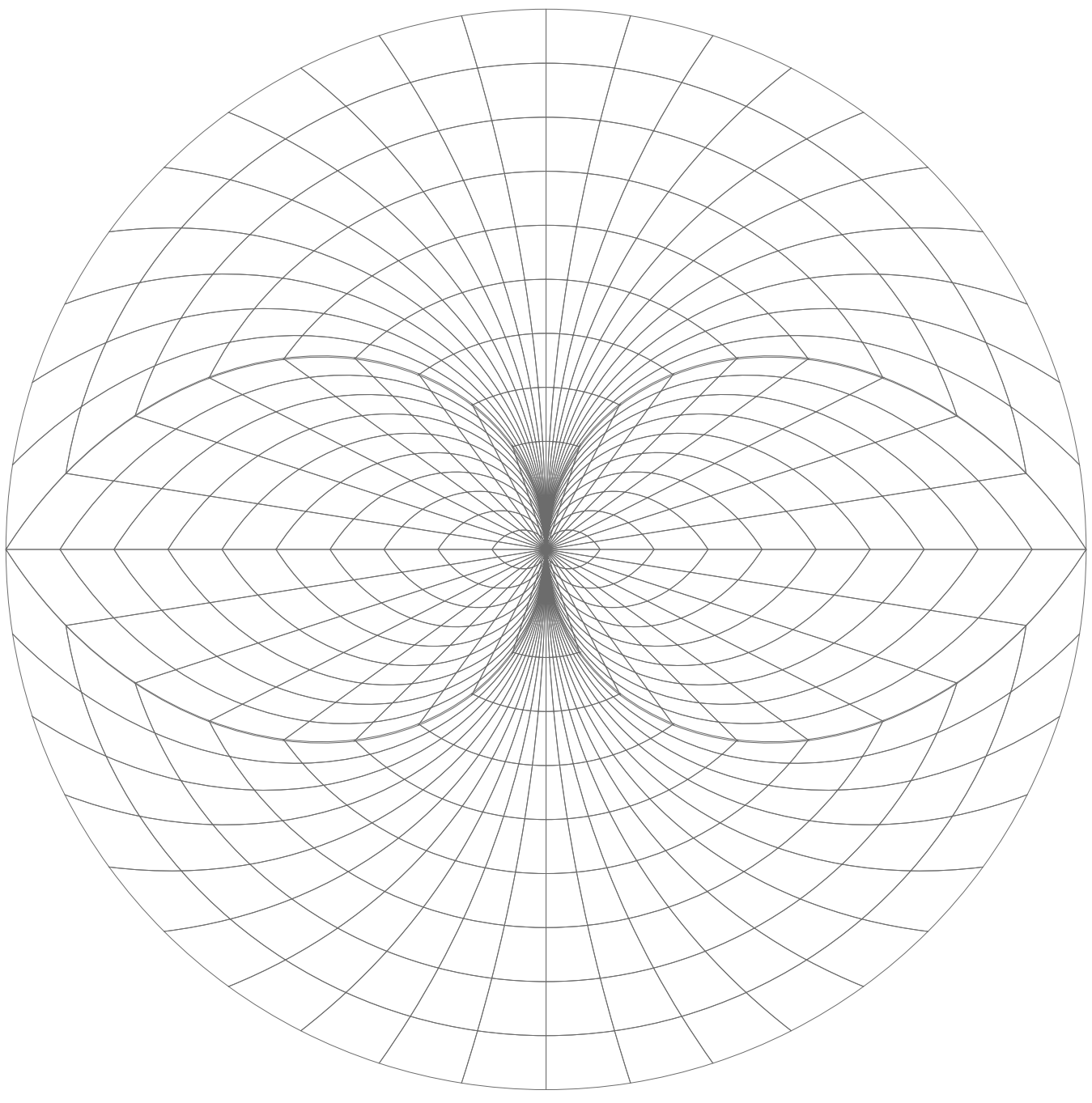
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Guide in

GENDER EQUALITY, INCLUSIVENESS AND INTERSECTIONALITY



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INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed under the OpenEU Alliance of work package 3 by Daugavpils University (Latvia), which aims to widen participation of under-represented groups in higher education and lifelong learning. This work focuses on promoting a more inclusive and equal higher education system. It responds to the specific needs of groups that are traditionally underrepresented in higher education, including women in STEAM fields, migrants and refugees, people with disabilities, and individuals living in rural areas.

This guide has been develop based on the results of previously conducted internal institutional surveys and the EDI Assessment under the OpenEU Alliance of WP3 by partner institutions. The surveys aimed to identify the necessary competences that academic and administrative staff should develop in order to be able to deliver inclusive gender-sensitive education and related services.

This guide aims to support academic staff and administrative staff of higher education institutions to identify the necessary competences that academic and administrative staff should develop in order to be able to deliver inclusive gender sensitive education and related services. Principles of equity and fairness, non-discrimination and accessibility are a vital part of institutional policies and strategic frameworks.

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WHAT CAN YOU FIND IN THIS GUIDE?

The guide provides definitions of gender equality, inclusion, and intersectionality, establishing a shared conceptual foundation for higher education institutions. It further outlines the key competences required for both administrative and academic staff to be able to deliver gender-sensitive education and services. In addition, the guide recommends procedures and steps to be followed in order to implement competences in the daily work of academic and administrative staff in higher education institutions.

By integrating conceptual clarity, competence development, and procedural guidance, the document supports a coherent and strategic approach to advancing equality and inclusion across teaching, research, and administration. Therefore, this guide is a valuable starting point in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes within gender equality, inclusiveness and intersectionality that are necessary working in higher education.



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WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY?

Gender equality means equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities for women and men and girls and boys, and people of all genders in all areas of life. It is a fundamental human right and a precondition for democratic societies [1].

In higher education, gender equality is about ensuring that students, researchers, academic and administrative staff of all genders have equal access, participation, and progression opportunities.

In practice, it focuses on issues such as reducing gender gaps in STEAM fields, where women are often underrepresented; ensuring fair recruitment, promotion, and leadership opportunities in academia; supporting work–life balance, especially for caregivers; preventing gender-based discrimination, bias, and harassment; and improving representation in decision-making bodies. It also concerns how the gender perspective is integrated into the core missions and structures of higher education institutions, including teaching, research, governance and institutional culture. This includes, for example, incorporating gender perspectives into research content and methods, using gender-sensitive and inclusive pedagogies, ensuring diversity in authors and references included in course materials, reviewing examples used in teaching, addressing classroom dynamics and assessment practices, and promoting inclusive decision-making processes. In this sense, higher education institutions can act as drivers of societal change through research, teaching and outreach.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION?

Diversity and inclusion refer to the recognition, presence, and valuing of differences among individuals—such as gender, age, ethnic origin, culture, abilities, beliefs, and experiences—while ensuring that all people are respected, supported, and given equal opportunities to participate and contribute fully in society and organisations. In terms of higher education, inclusion refers to the extent to which education and training systems are designed and implemented to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their personal, social, cultural, or economic background, have equal opportunities to access, participate in, and benefit from learning, while actively removing barriers to participation and supporting the needs of diverse student groups[2]. Moreover, it involves addressing structural barriers in areas of higher education such as admissions, teaching methods and curricula, while promoting accessible, student-centered learning and supportive services.

[1] Council of Europe. (2023). Gender equality strategy 2024–2029.
[2] European Commission. (2020). Achieving the European Education Area by 2025.

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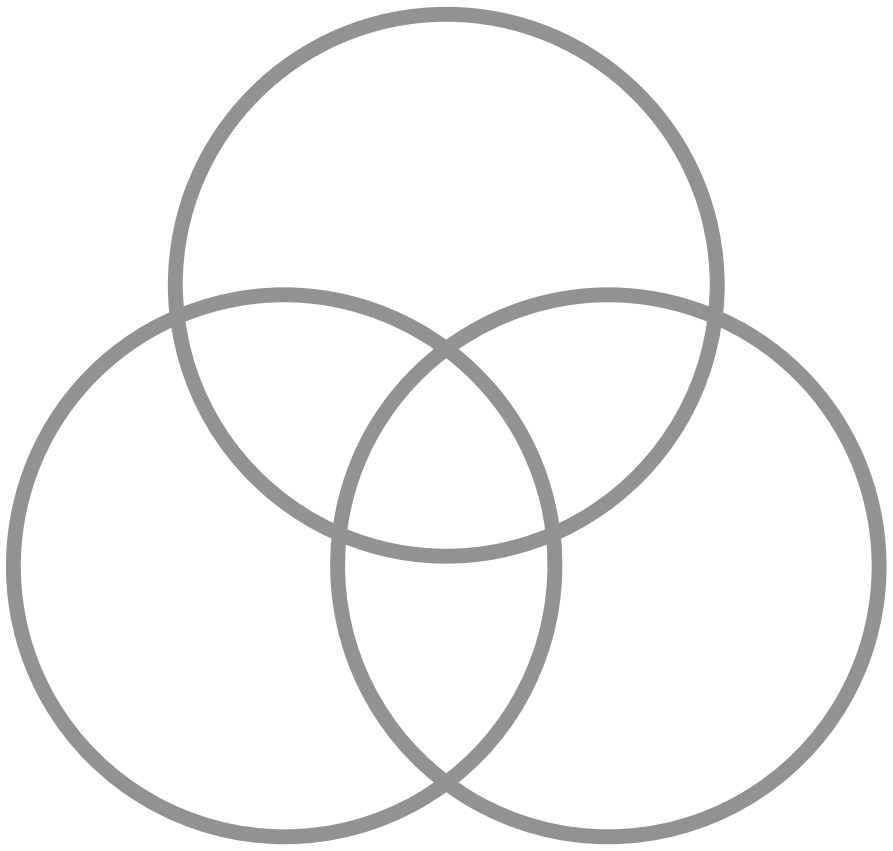
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WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

Intersectionality refers to an analytical approach, rooted in Black feminist thought [3] that examines how different social categories such as gender, race or ethnicity, disability, age, socioeconomic status and migration background interact and overlap to create unique experiences of advantage or disadvantage, shaping individuals' access to rights, opportunities and participation in society[4].

Intersectionality takes a different approach from viewing any single social category as inherently negative or fixed. Instead, it examines how multiple dimensions of identity — such as ethnicity, gender, social class, sexuality, age, disability, migration status, religion and geographic location — interact with each other within broader systems of power. This helps make visible how systems of oppression, such as racism and sexism, cannot always be understood separately.

These overlapping identities shape how people experience both disadvantage and privilege in interconnected ways. As a result, individuals may face compounded forms of inequality or, conversely, combined advantages that are more complex than those arising from a single factor alone.



[3] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum 1989.
[4] European Institute for Gender Equality. (2023). Intersectionality.

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WHAT ARE THE NECESSARY COMPETENCES TO BE ABLE TO DELIVER INCLUSIVE GENDER SENSITIVE EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

Inclusive and gender-sensitive education is a fundamental requirement for equal learning environments in higher education institutions. In order to achieve this goal, academic staff must demonstrate specific competences that promote gender equality, acknowledge diversity, stop discrimination and make sure that learning opportunities are equal for all staff and students.



Competence area: Inclusive Gender Sensitive and Intersectional Pedagogy and Learning Design

Knowledge

- Knowledge of the application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure equal access, participation, and success for all students
- Knowledge of facilities, classroom and online environments (physical and digital) that encourage equal participation from all students of all genders and backgrounds
- Knowledge of the application of principles of equity, fairness, inclusion, and social justice in teaching and their implications for teaching practice, reflecting on the differential impact on students from underrepresented groups
- Knowledge of asynchronous assessment methods and their use
- Knowledge of diverse epistemologies, including recognition of multiple ways of knowing, knowledge production, and knowledge validation across cultures, communities, and academic traditions
- Knowledge of intersectionality and how overlapping dimensions of identity and inequality (gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, disability, age, language, religion, sexual orientation, and migration status) influence students' learning experiences, participation, and outcomes
- Knowledge of gender-sensitive pedagogy and its application in teaching, learning, assessment, and student support.

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Skills

- Designs and delivers learning activities that foster inclusive, gender-sensitive, and intersectional learning experiences
- Adapts teaching methods, learning materials, technologies, and support strategies to address students' diverse backgrounds, identities, abilities, and learning needs
- Uses fair, equal, and non-discriminatory approaches to problem-solving, decision-making, and classroom management
- Designs assessment tasks that do not systematically disadvantage students from underrepresented groups, for example, avoiding time-pressured formats as the only option
- Integrates diverse epistemologies, perspectives, and knowledge traditions into teaching content and learning activities
- Applies transparent grading practices
- Identifies and addresses barriers to learning arising from structural inequalities, discrimination, exclusion, or unequal access to resources

Attitudes

- Values maintaining a respectful, safe, equal, and inclusive learning environment for all students
- Values balanced representation in curricula, bibliographies, examples, visual resources, teaching materials (e.g., non-stereotyped images)
- Values and respects diverse epistemologies, experiences, identities, and perspectives as sources of learning and knowledge creation
- Demonstrates commitment to gender equality, diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice in teaching and learning

Competence area description:

Inclusive Gender Sensitive and Intersectional Pedagogy and Learning Design refers to the ability of academic staff members to design, deliver, and evaluate teaching in ways that ensure all students, regardless of gender, backgrounds such as socioeconomic status, migrant or refugee trajectories, racialisation, religion, sexual orientation, etc., or ability, can access, participate in, and succeed in their learning journey. Inclusive gender sensitive learning and teaching in higher education are a way in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all.

It embraces a view of the individual and individual difference as the source of diversity that can enrich the lives and learning of others[5]. This competence area is important given that teaching is one of the primary points where inequality in higher education can be reduced. In practice, academic staff members plan and deliver teaching with diversity in mind from the start, rather than adapting only when issues arise.

Academic staff should design inclusive courses using flexible methods (e.g., UDL), adapt teaching to diverse needs, ensure equal participation and respectful environments, use non-biased materials, and apply fair, transparent assessment and grading practices grounded in equity and social justice. To be an inclusive instructor is to critique and challenge traditions, systems, and structures that were constructed to exclude and to marginalise[6].

[5]Addy, T. M., Dube, D., Mitchell, K. A., & SoRelle, M. (2021). What Inclusive Instructors Do: Principles and Practices for Excellence in College Teaching.
[6] Hockings, C. (2010). Inclusive Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: a synthesis of research.

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Competence area: Inclusive Gender Sensitive Communication and Learning Environment

Knowledge

- Understands the principles of inclusive communication, including appropriate use of pronouns, gender-neutral phrasing, and accessible terminology across institutional forms, syllabi, and digital learning platforms
- Understands how language, examples, images, and narratives used in teaching may reproduce stereotypes, deficit-based representations, or discriminatory assumptions about LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities, racialised communities, migrants, religious or cultural minorities, and other social groups
- Understands the pedagogical value of respectful, accurate, and non-stigmatising representation in fostering equal learning environments.

Skills

- Communicates clearly and actively adapts written and verbal language to be culturally sensitive, accessible, and inclusive of diverse student profiles
- Is able to review, audit, and adapt syllabi, teaching materials, learning platform content, emails, examples, and case studies and classroom interactions to ensure respectful, accurate and non-stigmatising communication
- Promotes and maintains respectful, non-stigmatising interactions during classroom discussions and institutional communications

Attitudes

- Values safe, open, and equal interaction norms that actively recognise and respect diverse identities, lived experiences, and cultural backgrounds
- Shows a commitment to using communication practices that recognise diversity, avoid stigmatisation and promote respectful representation of different social groups, identities and experiences

Competence area description:

Inclusive Gender Sensitive Communication and Learning Environment refers to the ability of academic staff members to communicate and shape learning spaces in ways that ensure all students feel respected, represented, safe, and able to participate fully. It combines inclusive language, respectful interaction, and the creation of supportive learning environments.

This competence area is important given that communication and online/offline classroom climate are key factors influencing student belonging, engagement, and success. In practice, academic staff need to communicate intentionally and manage online/offline classroom environments to ensure inclusion and respect for all students.

Academic staff should use inclusive and respectful language, communicate clearly and sensitively, create safe and open learning environments, ensure all students are heard, and represent diversity through inclusive materials and communication practices. Moreover, it is important that teaching communication avoids reproducing stereotypes, deficit-based narratives or discriminatory references to LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities, racialised communities, migrants, religious or cultural minorities, and other groups, regardless of whether students study in person or online. Therefore, inclusive communication is also about promoting respectful, accurate and non-stigmatising representations across teaching content, examples, institutional narratives and classroom interactions.

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Competence area: Inclusion, Diversity, Gender and Intersectionality

Knowledge

- Knowledge of the key concepts, principles, and terminology related to inclusion, diversity, equity, gender equality, and intersectionality, and understanding of the distinctions and relationships between these concepts
- Knowledge of how institutional structures, policies, cultures, and practices may create barriers or opportunities for different student groups
- Knowledge of intersectionality as a framework for analysing how systems of power, privilege, discrimination, and structural inequality interact and affect educational opportunities and outcomes
- Understanding of how gender intersects with identity factors (ethnicity, disability, race, socioeconomic status, age, migration background, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) shape the students' experiences
- Identification and critical examination of how societal biases, stereotypes, norms, and discriminatory practices influence participation, achievement, sense of belonging, and access to learning
- Knowledge of the ways in which curricula, pedagogical approaches, assessment practices, and learning resources may unintentionally reproduce inequalities or exclude certain perspectives and groups

Skills

- Applies gender-sensitive, inclusive, and intersectional perspectives to the design, delivery, and evaluation of learning activities
- Demonstrates equal, respectful, and non-discriminatory treatment of all students and colleagues across teaching, assessment, supervision, and professional interactions, reflecting on personal assumptions and adjusting responses when needed
- Uses diversity as a pedagogical resource by encouraging critical reflection, multiple perspectives, and inclusive dialogue while actively challenging deficit-based assumptions and narratives
- Identifies and critically examines how structural inequalities, power relations, stereotypes, and biases may affect student participation, engagement, and achievement
- Adapts teaching methods, communication approaches, learning materials, and support strategies to accommodate diverse student backgrounds, experiences, identities, and needs
- Integrates diverse perspectives, experiences, knowledge traditions, and scholarly voices into curricula, learning activities, and discussions
- Creates learning environments in which students from different backgrounds feel respected, represented, and able to participate meaningfully

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Attitudes

- Shows empathy, cultural humility, compassion, and respect when engaging with issues related to identity, inequality, discrimination, and inclusion
- Values inclusion, diversity, gender equality, equity, and social justice as fundamental principles of higher education
- Values diversity of experiences, perspectives, identities, and knowledge systems as assets that enrich learning and knowledge creation
- Reflects critically on personal assumptions, privileges, and unconscious biases and seeks continuous improvement on inclusive, gender-sensitive, and intersectional practice
- Recognises the importance of addressing structural and systemic barriers that affect students' educational experiences and opportunities

Competence area description:

Inclusion, Diversity, Gender and Intersectionality refers to the ability of academic staff to understand and value diversity, recognise how different identity factors interact, such as intersectionality, and respond to students with fairness, respect, and cultural sensitivity. It combines knowledge - concepts like gender and intersectionality, awareness - biases and societal norms, and attitudes - respect, openness, empathy.

This competence is valuable due to the diversity of higher education environments, and students' experiences are shaped by multiple, overlapping identity factors. In practice, academic staff should approach all students and colleagues with awareness, respect, and sensitivity to their diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Academic staff should understand diversity and intersectionality, treat all individuals without prejudice, remain open-minded and respectful, show empathy and cultural sensitivity, reflect on their own biases, and respond to students' and colleagues' diverse needs with awareness and care.



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Competence area: Policy, Governance and Institutional Responsibility

Knowledge

- Understands curriculum requirements related to inclusion and gender equality
- Knows relevant reporting routes for bias, harassment, and discrimination, and is able to refer students or colleagues to the appropriate internal services when a situation requires a specialised intervention or mediation
- Knowledge of national, institutional, and EU gender equality policies and regulatory frameworks in daily teaching and decision-making practice
- Knowledge of anti-discrimination work, including anti-racism, disability inclusion, LGBTIQ+ inclusion and other equality dimensions

Skills

- Supports the implementation of institutional transversal gender and inclusion policies
- Promotes inclusive gender equality (IGE) in classes, projects, committees, panels, and leadership roles if applicable to their role
- Contributes to inclusive institutional imagery and narratives through administrative communication, documentation, service delivery and institutional interactions, where relevant to their role

Attitudes

- Values the importance of implementing and upholding gender equality and inclusion policies within institutional practice
- Values institutional responsibility in promoting fairness, accountability, and inclusive governance in teaching and academic roles
- Values openness to self-reflection and continuous learning to recognise personal biases and assumptions

Competence area description:

Policy, Governance and Institutional Responsibility refers to the ability of academic staff to understand, apply, and contribute to the policies, legal frameworks, and institutional processes that support gender equality and inclusion in higher education. It connects everyday teaching and decision-making with formal rules, responsibilities, and accountability structures.

This competence is significant given that inclusive and gender-equal education is not only based on individual attitudes - it is also regulated through policies, laws, and institutional frameworks. In practice, academic staff work in line with institutional rules and actively support the implementation of gender equality and inclusion policies.

Academic staff should understand and follow relevant policies and laws, apply reporting and mediation procedures, integrate inclusion into curricula and institutional activities, and actively promote gender equality in academic roles and decision-making contexts.

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Competence area: Critical Awareness, Ethics and Bias Management

Knowledge

- Knows how to recognise potential situations of gender-based or intersectional discrimination, harassment, or bias
- Understands the internal procedures for documentation, reporting, and referral to appropriate institutional services, recognising that management or investigation of such cases falls outside standard academic duties unless explicitly designate

Skills

- Integrates the value of diversity into teaching and institutional practice, actively challenging deficit narratives and reframing difference as an educational resource
- Applies principles of fairness, equity, and social justice daily within the academic environment
- Monitors student participation patterns to assess whether students from underrepresented groups are engaging equitably, utilizing these findings to proactively adjust teaching approaches

Attitudes

- Demonstrates consistent self-awareness and active reflection on personal and systemic biases
- Maintains respectful and ethical professional behaviour, upholding institutional values of safety, equity, and mutual respect in all interactions

Competence area description:

Critical Awareness, Ethics and Bias Management refers to the ability of academic staff to recognise, reflect on, and respond to bias, harassment, discrimination, and inequality ethically and responsibly, while using evidence, e.g., data, to improve inclusion. It combines critical thinking, ethical judgement, self-awareness, and practical action.

This competence is important due to the fact that inclusion cannot rely only on good intentions - staff must be able to identify and actively address unequal outcomes. In practice it means that academic staff critically evaluate situations, reflect on their own behaviour, and take appropriate action when inequality occurs.

Academic staff should identify and address bias, harassment and discrimination, reflect on their own assumptions, act ethically and fairly, use data to monitor inclusion and participation, and take responsibility for improving equal outcomes in their teaching and practice.

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Competence area: Professional Development and Collaboration

Knowledge

- Knowledge of institutional guidelines, policies, and manuals related to Inclusive Gender Equality (IGE) that support equal, inclusive, and non-discriminatory practices in the academic environments
- Knowledge of roles and referral pathways of specialised internal bodies, such as equality units, student services, and diversity officers

Skills

- Actively engages in continuous professional development specifically focused on inclusive pedagogy, intersectionality, structural anti-discrimination, digital inclusion, and the responsible, accessible use of learning technologies
- Collaborates effectively with academic colleagues, administrative staff, specialised equality units, and student representatives to co-create and embed inclusive gender equality into teaching and departmental practices
- Implements workload and stress management strategies to maintain personal well-being, ensuring a sustained, long-term commitment to demanding equity and inclusion work if applicable within professional practice
- Contributes to identifying inclusion gaps by utilising ethically sourced, local course feedback and student performance data, while collaborating with institutional units responsible for formal equality data analysis

Attitudes

- Demonstrates patience, empathy, and flexibility when navigating the institutional shifts, diverse perspectives, and systemic changes required to advance inclusive gender equality
- Values a collaborative approach to institutional change, recognising that embedding equity is a shared responsibility across academic, administrative, and student bodies

Competence area description:

Professional Development and Collaboration refers to the ability of academic staff to continuously improve their knowledge and skills while working with others to strengthen inclusive and gender-sensitive practices in higher education. It combines lifelong learning, adaptability, and collaboration as key drivers of sustainable inclusion.

This competence is valuable because inclusive and gender-sensitive education evolves with new research, policies, technologies, and student needs. In practice academic staff actively seek learning opportunities and work collaboratively to improve inclusive education.

Academic staff should continuously develop their skills, stay informed through training and resources, collaborate with others to improve inclusion, and remain flexible and adaptable in their teaching and professional practice.

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WHAT ARE THE NECESSARY COMPETENCES TO BE ABLE TO DELIVER INCLUSIVE GENDER SENSITIVE SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

Inclusive and gender-sensitive services are a fundamental requirement for equal service environments in higher education institutions. In order to achieve this goal, administrative staff must demonstrate specific competences that promote gender equality, acknowledge diversity, stop discrimination and make sure that provided services are equal for all staff and students.



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Competence area: Inclusive Gender Sensitive Communication and Language

Knowledge

- Knowledge of principles of inclusive and non-discriminatory communication in administrative and institutional contexts, including learning platforms, emails, pronouns, forms and other communication channels
- Knowledge of how stereotypes, exclusionary language and discriminatory references in administrative interactions and institutional communications can affect LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities, racialised communities, migrants, religious or cultural minorities, and other groups in higher education communities
- Knowledge of institutional guidelines and practices that support accessible, respectful, and inclusive communication for students, staff, visitors, and external partners

Skills

- Uses clear, respectful, and inclusive communication, adapting language and communication practices to diverse cultural, linguistic, and social contexts
- Prepares, adapts, and contributes to administrative and institutional communications that promote respectful, accurate, and non-stigmatising representations across administrative and institutional documentation, for example, institutional narratives and service interactions
- Applies communication practices that avoid reproducing stereotypes, bias and discriminatory references in administrative interactions, institutional communications, and service delivery

Attitudes

- Demonstrates consistent self-awareness and active reflection on personal and systemic biases
- Maintains respectful and ethical professional behaviour, upholding institutional values of safety, equity, and mutual respect in all interactions

Competence area description:

Inclusive Gender Sensitive Communication and Language refers to the ability of an administrative staff member to communicate in ways that ensure all individuals feel respected, represented and included, regardless of gender, identity, culture, ability, or background. It is about how language, tone, imagery, and communication systems include people in higher education environments.

Communication is one of the main places where inclusion occurs in practice; this competence ensures that inclusion is a lived experience in everyday interactions. It is a foundational competence, given that it affects all staff members of higher education institutions and it shapes student belonging and trust. In practice, it means that staff members actively design and deliver communication in a way that does not exclude or marginalise anyone; it is also a daily operational skill. This competence requires staff to use inclusive, respectful, and clear communication in all interactions and materials.

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Competence area: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Intersectionality

Knowledge

- Knowledge and application of core concepts, terminology, and principles related to gender equality, inclusion, diversity, and intersectionality in higher education and professional practice
- Understands how gender intersects with other identity factors, such as ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, migration background, and socioeconomic status, and how these intersections shape experiences within the institutional context
- Knowledge of how societal biases, stereotypes, discrimination, and unequal power relations can affect individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds, and awareness of the implications for administrative practice and service delivery

Skills

- Demonstrates respectful, inclusive, and non-discriminatory behaviour in interactions with students, colleagues, visitors, external partners, and other members of the higher education community
- Reflects on personal assumptions, biases, and perspectives, and adjusts communication and responses to support fair and respectful interactions
- Integrates diversity as an administrative resource, actively challenging institutional narratives and service interactions
- Actively listens and responds to individual needs, and engages with diverse cultural backgrounds
- Applies an intersectional lens in administrative practice and service delivery, recognising that individuals may experience multiple and overlapping forms of advantage or disadvantage

Attitudes

- Shows empathy, cultural humility, compassion, and respect when engaging with issues related to identity, inequality, discrimination, and inclusion
- Values inclusion, diversity, gender equality, equity, and social justice as fundamental principles of higher education
- Values diversity of experiences, perspectives, identities, and knowledge systems as assets that enrich learning and knowledge creation
- Reflects critically on personal assumptions, privileges, and unconscious biases and seeks continuous improvement on inclusive, gender-sensitive, and intersectional practice
- Recognises the importance of addressing structural and systemic barriers that affect students' educational experiences and opportunities

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Competence area description:

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Intersectionality refers to the ability of staff members to understand, value, and actively support the diverse identities and experiences of students and colleagues, while ensuring fairness and equal opportunity for all. It focuses on recognising that people are different and that these differences (such as gender, ethnicity, disability, or socioeconomic background) can overlap and shape their experiences in education.

Inclusion in higher education cannot be achieved through communication alone; it also requires a deep understanding of diversity and structural inequality. It ensures that staff understand how inequality operates and how it can be addressed in practice. In practice, it means that staff can consistently recognise diversity, challenge bias and promote fairness in everyday work.

Staff need to treat colleagues and students fairly without prejudice, value diversity and apply equity in their work. Staying open-minded and culturally aware, recognising how different identities and social factors intersect, and critically reflecting on biases and stereotypes in decisions and interactions.



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Competence area: Critical Awareness, Ethics and Bias Management

Knowledge

- Knowledge of institutional policies, procedures, and support mechanisms related to gender-based violence, harassment, discrimination, and intersectional discrimination, including reporting, documentation, referral, and confidentiality requirements
- Knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of administrative staff in responding appropriately to disclosures and concerns while respecting professional boundaries
- Knowledge of how administrative procedures, forms, communication practices, access routes, and decision-making processes may create or reduce barriers for individuals from different backgrounds and with different identities and needs

Skills

- Listens actively and responds respectfully and without assumptions or stereotyping when students disclose personal circumstances, identity-related concerns, or experiences of discrimination, directing them to appropriate institutional support when necessary
- Integrates the value of diversity into administrative work and institutional practice, actively challenging institutional narratives and reframing difference as an educational resource
- Applies principles of fairness, equity, and social justice daily within the administrative environment
- Applies institutional procedures appropriately when handling concerns related to discrimination, harassment, or unequal treatment, including documentation, referral, and reporting processes within their role and responsibilities.
- Applies an intersectional perspective in administrative decision-making and service provision, recognising that individuals may experience multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage or exclusion

Attitudes

- Values self-awareness and ongoing reflection on personal assumptions, biases, and their potential impact on professional practice
- Values gender-related issues with empathy, compassion, and cultural sensitivity
- Values respect, openness, accountability, and cultural sensitivity in professional interactions
- Shows willingness to adapt administrative practices and approaches to reduce barriers, promote inclusion, and avoid discriminatory effects.
- Values fairness, equity, and dignity in service delivery and institutional processes

Competence area description:

Critical Awareness, Ethics and Bias Management refers to the ability of administrative staff members to recognise, reflect on, and appropriately respond to gender-based, intersectional bias, harassment, discrimination, and inequality in their daily work. It combines critical thinking, self-awareness, and responsible action when dealing with gender-sensitive or unequal situations.

Staff need the ability not only to notice these situations but also to respond appropriately and fairly. In practice, it means that staff should recognise gender-based, intersectional bias, harassment, or discrimination, reflect on their own assumptions, respond with empathy and active listening, and take appropriate action when incidents occur.

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Competence area: Inclusive Practice, Service Design and Implementation

Knowledge

- Understand within the scope of their role, knowledge of what successful participation and inclusion outcomes look like, and how to use this awareness to spot local inequalities
- Knowledge of how standard institutional processes such as admission, enrolment, and accommodation allocation can systematically or inadvertently disadvantage students from underrepresented groups
- Knowledge of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and institutional privacy policies specifically regarding the sensitive handling of gender identity, disability status, and personal data

Skills

- Adapts services to diverse needs and abilities
- Applies inclusive and non-discriminatory practices within the scope of their role, when processing applications, enrolment and student records, including handling gender identity information respectfully and in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Ensures that students with disabilities or personal circumstances receive equal access to administrative procedures, safely directing them to appropriate specialised institutional support

Attitudes

- Values patience, flexibility, and a proactive, problem-solving approach when navigating administrative hurdles with students
- Values equity in student participation opportunities, and outcomes, recognising that administrative staff play a vital role in upholding institutional accountability

Competence area description:

Inclusive Practice, Service Design and Implementation refers to the ability of administrative staff to actively design, deliver, and adjust services, and institutional processes in a way that ensures equal access, participation, and outcomes for all students. It focuses on turning inclusion from a principle into practical, everyday actions within services and institutional structures.

Inclusion must be reflected in how services and opportunities are actually designed and delivered. It ensures that inclusion can be measured, practical and embedded in institutional processes. If it aligns with the administrative staff's professional profile and daily duties, they should focus on the proactive, upfront planning of services and institutional processes, and ensuring that structures promote fairness and remove systematic barriers before providing a service.

Administrative staff should adapt their provided services to different needs, apply fair and non-discriminatory practices, ensure equal participation and opportunities, monitor inclusion outcomes if necessary and remain flexible in their daily work. Administrative staff members should adapt their work to ensure fairness and equal access for all individuals by tailoring and modifying existing workflows and communication styles to accommodate specific, individual needs.

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Competence area: Policy, Governance and Institutional Responsibility

Knowledge

- Explains and applies basic gender terminology and inclusive gender equality concepts
- Knowledge of national, institutional, and EU gender equality policies and regulatory frameworks in daily professional work and decision-making practice
- Knows relevant reporting routes for bias, harassment, and discrimination, and is able to refer students or colleagues to the appropriate internal services when a situation requires a specialised intervention or mediation
- Knowledge of anti-discrimination work, including anti-racism, disability inclusion, LGBTIQ+ inclusion and other equality dimensions

Skills

- Processes personal data, including gender, disability, and diversity-related information, in full compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and institutional data protection policies
- Supports the implementation of institutional transversal gender and inclusion policies
- Implements institutional reporting procedures for bias, harassment, and discrimination
- Contributes to inclusive institutional imagery and narratives through administrative communication, documentation, service delivery and institutional interactions, where relevant to their role

Attitudes

- Values openness to self-reflection and continuous learning to recognise personal biases and assumptions
- Values important of implementing and upholding gender equality and inclusion policies within institutional practice
- Values institutional responsibility in promoting fairness, accountability, and inclusive governance in administrative roles

Competence area description:

Policy, Governance and Institutional Responsibility refers to the ability of administrative staff members to understand, apply, and support formal rules, policies, and procedures that promote gender equality, inclusion, and safe institutional environments in higher education. It connects everyday practice with legal, institutional, and governance frameworks. Inclusion and equality are not only individual practices, but they are also regulated and structured through policies and laws.

This competence area is important since it ensures that inclusion is systematic and institutionally embedded. In practice, administrative staff members understand and correctly apply institutional regulations and procedures related to gender equality and inclusion; it is also about working confidently within formal systems of responsibility and accountability.

Administrative Staff should understand and apply relevant policies and laws, follow reporting and mediation procedures, implement institutional inclusion measures, and act in line with formal governance frameworks for gender equality and inclusion.

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Competence area: Professional Development and Collaboration

Knowledge

- Knowledge of institutional guidelines, policies, and manuals related to Inclusive Gender Equality (IGE) that support equal, inclusive, and non-discriminatory practices in the administrative environments
- Knowledge of roles and referral pathways of specialised internal bodies, such as equality units, student services, and diversity officers

Skills

- Actively engages in continuous professional development specifically focused on inclusive service delivery, intersectionality, structural anti-discrimination and digital inclusion
- Collaborates effectively with administrative colleagues, academic staff, specialised equality units, and student representatives to co-create and embed inclusive gender equality into administrative documentation and departmental practices
- Implements workload and stress management strategies to maintain personal well-being, ensuring a sustained, long-term commitment to demanding equity and inclusion work if applicable within professional practice
- Contributes to identifying inclusion gaps by utilising ethically sourced, local course feedback and student performance data, while collaborating with institutional units responsible for formal equality data analysis

Attitudes

- Demonstrates patience, empathy, and flexibility when navigating the institutional shifts, diverse perspectives, and systemic changes required to advance inclusive gender equality
- Values a collaborative approach to institutional change, recognising that embedding equity is a shared responsibility across academic, administrative, and student bodies

Competence area description:

Professional Development and Collaboration refers to the ability of administrative staff to continuously improve their knowledge, skills, and attitudes while working collaboratively with others to strengthen inclusive and gender-sensitive practices in higher education. It combines lifelong learning, teamwork, and shared responsibility for inclusion.

This competence evolves with new research, policies, technologies, and societal changes. It ensures that inclusion is sustained, improved, and embedded over time. In practice, administrative staff actively engage in learning and working together with others to improve inclusive practices across their institution.

Staff should continuously develop their skills, attend training, follow guidelines, improve digital and well-being competencies and collaborate with colleagues and students to promote inclusive and gender-sensitive practices in their institutions.

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PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE GENDER SENSITIVE EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Implementing inclusive, gender-sensitive education in higher education requires a systemic shift that moves beyond mere enrollment numbers toward a culture of belonging and equity.

Recommendations for implementing these practices:

Inclusive Gender Sensitive and Intersectional Pedagogy and Learning Design

- Design and deliver learning activities that ensure gender-sensitive learning experiences to students. Plan activities where roles rotate, for example, note-taker, leader, presenter. Do not assign roles based on stereotypes, for example, men as leaders. Ensure that each student has the opportunity to present to make sure equal visibility.
- Apply Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure access for all students. Provide materials in various designs – video, text, audio. Present lecture slides, videos, transcript in order for students with diverse needs can access content.
- Adapt teaching methods, materials, curriculum, syllabus to support students' diverse backgrounds, needs and abilities. Offer flexible deadlines and additional consultation hours if it is necessary.
- Use fair and non-discriminatory problem-solving approaches, address conflicts neutrally without an assumption that could be based on gender.
- Maintain respectful and equal learning environments for all students, get involved when bias occurs.
- Balance representation in the syllabus, use visuals showing diverse genders in varied roles, avoid reinforcing stereotypes, for example, only showing male scientists. Include materials with women leaders, non-binary perspectives, diverse professionals.
- Run inclusive assessments and follow fair assessment strategies. Use varied assessment types, if possible, avoid formats that disadvantage underrepresented student groups.
- Consider equity, fairness and social justice in teaching. Acknowledge structural inequalities in subject content and encourage critical discussion.

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Inclusive Gender Sensitive Communication and Learning Environment

Academic staff should ensure that all communication practices actively promote inclusion and respect within their institution.

- Use inclusive, non-discriminatory language in all communication channels, including emails, learning platforms, official documents and forms. Use gender-neutral language, for example, “they”, “students” and allow pronoun sharing.
- Ensure that all written and verbal communication is clear, culturally sensitive, respectful, and accessible to diverse students. Avoid jargon and idioms when possible since international students may not always understand the meaning.
- Establish communication practices that ensure a safe and inclusive environment (whether you are an online or offline institution), where all individuals are encouraged to express themselves and are actively listened to. Moderate discussion actively.
- Review and manage institutional communication materials, for example: websites, posters, social media posts, etc., to ensure inclusive representation of gender, LGBTIQ+ students, students with disabilities, students who reside in the rural area, women in STEM and international students. Avoid tokenism.
- Ensure that all interactions with students are conducted in a manner that guarantees respect, dignity, and equal treatment, regardless of identity or background.

Inclusion, Diversity, Gender and Intersectionality

Academic staff shall apply principles of diversity, equity, intersectionality and inclusion in all education delivery processes.

- Learn and understand key terms such as inclusive gender equality, inclusion, intersectionality, diversity. Use them correctly and update materials regularly. Include a short glossary in course materials, if relevant.
- Treat all individuals with acceptance, respect, and without prejudice, ensuring non-discriminatory practice in every interaction. Demonstrate tolerance, openness, and cultural sensitivity in communication and decision-making.
- Recognise and value diversity as an institutional strength, integrating it into everyday education delivery.
- Consider intersectionality, understanding how gender interacts with disability, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, and other identity factors.
- Maintain awareness of societal biases, stereotypes, and norms, and actively mitigate their influence on education delivery.
- Demonstrate ongoing curiosity and openness toward different cultural and social backgrounds when engaging with students.

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Policy, Governance, and Institutional Responsibility Procedures

Academic staff should ensure compliance with gender equality frameworks and institutional regulations.

- Apply a working understanding of gender equality concepts and terminology in daily tasks.
- Follow and be aware of relevant national, institutional, and European Union gender equality policies and legal frameworks. If relevant, include them in your course description.
- Support institutional Inclusive Gender Equality (IGE) policies.
- Maintain knowledge of and follow established procedures for reporting bias, handling discrimination and harassment cases, escalation pathways.
- Apply mediation procedures where appropriate and in accordance with institutional guidelines. Stay neutral and focus on the resolution of the situation.

Critical Awareness, Ethics, and Bias Management

Academic staff should actively identify and appropriately respond to discrimination and bias.

- Monitor interactions and academic processes for identifying potential gender-based or intersectional discrimination, exclusion, or harassment.
- Apply critical thinking and reflection to identify bias in decision-making and communication.
- Maintain self-awareness and regularly reflect on personal assumptions and unconscious biases.
- Respond to sensitive situations with empathy, compassion, and cultural sensitivity, ensuring respectful engagement with all individuals.
- Practice active listening, ensuring that concerns are fully understood before responding. Follow institutional procedures for documenting incidents, reporting discrimination or harassment, refer cases to appropriate institutional bodies. Ensure that all sensitive information is handled with confidentiality and professionalism.
- Reflect after each course or academic semester to demonstrate self-awareness.

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Professional Development and Collaboration

- Participate in ongoing professional development activities, including training, seminars, workshops, and digital skills development.
- Engage in learning related to well-being, stress management, and emerging technologies relevant to administrative work.
- Regularly review and study institutional policies, guidelines, manuals, and teaching/support materials.
- Collaborate actively with: colleagues and student representatives
- If applicable, share knowledge and good practices to strengthen institutional capacity for inclusion.

SUMMARY

These procedures ensure that academic staff consistently deliver education that is:

- inclusive in pedagogy
- inclusive in communication
- equal in practice
- responsive to diverse and intersectional needs
- compliant with policy and legal frameworks
- continuously improved through collaboration and professional development

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NEXT STEPS

As part of the WP3 deliverables, an online IGE self-assessment tool (T3.3.2) is being developed and will allow academic and administrative staff members to self-evaluate the current level of knowledge against the identified competences, helping individuals recognise strengths and identify areas for further development. Complementing this, structured OpenEU IGE training (T3.3.3) for academic and administrative staff is being developed to support development in each competence area.

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PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE GENDER SENSITIVE SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Inclusive gender-sensitive services focus on the administrative, social, and support systems that facilitate a student's life on campus or online. This ensures that the "hidden curriculum" is as equal as the teaching itself.

Recommendations forimplementing gender-sensitive services in higher education:

Inclusive Gender Sensitive Communication

- Ensure all communication is respectful, accessible, and non-discriminatory. Use inclusive language in all written and verbal communication such as emails, forms, learning platforms, notices. Always address individuals using their stated name and pronouns, if provided.
- Before sending communication, check that it is clear and easy to understand, free from stereotypes or biased wording, culturally respectful and neutral.
- Use gender-neutral terms where appropriate, for example, “students”, “staff”, “they/them” when gender is unknown or irrelevant.
- Ensure official documents and templates include inclusive options such as gender identity fields beyond binary categories where applicable.
- Review institutional materials - websites, posters, presentations, to ensure diverse representation of underrepresented student groups.
- In face-to-face or online interactions, maintain a tone that ensures equal attention, patience, and respect for all individuals.

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Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Intersectionality

- Ensure fair and unbiased service delivery to all individuals. Treat every student and colleague without assumptions or stereotypes.
- When providing services, actively check personal bias before making decisions or judgments.
- Recognise that individuals may experience multiple overlapping identities such as gender, disability, socioeconomic background, and adjust support accordingly.
- Offer equal access to services, and if barriers exist, adapt processes to remove them.
- When interacting with diverse groups, demonstrate respect, openness, and cultural sensitivity. Consider diversity as a normal and valuable part of institutional life, not an exception.
- In unclear situations, ask respectful clarifying questions instead of making assumptions.

Bias, Ethics, and Incident Response

- Identify and respond appropriately to discrimination or harassment. Monitor interactions for signs of bias, exclusion, discrimination, or harassment.
- If a concern arises listen actively without interruption, remain neutral and non-judgmental, show empathy and take the issue seriously, do not attempt to resolve serious cases informally if they require escalation.
- Follow institutional policies - document the incident objectively, report it through official channels, refer to responsible units within your institution such as human resources, equality officer, student services, etc.
- Reflect regularly on your own communication and decisions to identify possible unconscious bias.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times when handling sensitive cases.

Inclusive Service Delivery

- Ensure fairness and accessibility in all administrative processes. When designing or delivering services, ask yourself “Does this work for all students equally?” and based on the answer act accordingly.
- Adapt procedures when needed for example, deadlines, access methods, communication formats.
- Ensure all students have equal opportunity to access services, participate, and benefit.
- Provide flexible solutions when underrepresented student groups face barriers, such as disability, language, personal circumstances.
- Track participation patterns (where applicable) to identify gaps in inclusion.
- Ensure students are informed about available options in a clear and accessible way.
- Promote equal access to roles such as student committees, meetings, leadership opportunities, etc.

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Policy Compliance and Governance

- Ensure all actions align with institutional and legal requirements. Familiarise yourself with institutional gender equality policies, national legislation, the European Union equality frameworks and apply these frameworks within your daily administrative work.
- Ensure all actions comply with reporting obligations for discrimination or harassment cases.
- When unsure, consult official policies or designated institutional officers.
- Apply mediation procedures only when formally required and according to institutional guidelines.
- Ensure all personal data is handled in compliance with data protection rules of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which is connected to gender, diversity and inclusion data.

Professional Development and Collaboration

- Maintain and improve competence in inclusive service delivery. Participate regularly in training sessions, workshops, and seminars on inclusion, gender equality, and communication.
- Update knowledge by reviewing institutional policies and guidelines.
- Engage in self-learning on diversity and inclusion, unconscious bias, digital communication tools, stress and conflict management, etc.
- Share good practices with colleagues during meetings or informal discussions, if applicable.
- Collaborate with colleagues and student representatives.
- Contribute to improving institutional practices by suggesting inclusive improvements to procedures and services.

SUMMARY

These procedures ensure that gender-sensitive service delivery is not theoretical but embedded in daily administrative practice through:

- consistent inclusive communication
- fair and flexible service design
- structured response to discrimination
- compliance with equality and legal frameworks
- continuous learning and collaboration

NEXT STEPS

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