



TUS

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre, An tIarthar Láir

Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest

TUS Guide to Promoting Inclusive Committees and Meetings

2026 – 2031



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Contents

Introduction to the Guide	4
Principles Underpinning the Guide	5
Part A: TUS Guide to Promoting Diversity in Committee Composition/Membership	
1.0 Purpose of the Guide.....	7
2.0 Definition of a Committee	7
3.0 Scope of the Guide.....	8
4.0 Statutory and HEA Reporting Context.....	8
5.0 Guiding Principles and Considerations	9
6.0 Practices to Support Implementation	10
7.0 Supporting Inclusive Participation and Culture.....	11
8.0 Role of Committee Chair	11
9.0 Reporting.....	12
Appendix 1. List of Main TUS Continuing Committees	13
Part B: TUS Meeting Etiquette Guide	16
1.0 Purpose of the Guide.....	17
2.0 Scope of the Guide.....	17
3.0 General Principles of Meeting Etiquette at TUS	17
4.0 Effective Meeting Practices.....	18
5.0 Specific Considerations for Virtual Meetings- Meeting Netiquette	19
5.0 Role of the Chairperson.....	19
References.....	20

Introduction to the Guide

The Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (hereafter referred to as TUS or the University) values and promotes equity, diversity and inclusion. The TUS Strategic Plan^[1] specifies *Inclusive* as a core Value and identifies a value statement that “*we embrace diversity as a key strength where everyone is included and has an equal opportunity to progress and achieve*”. Accordingly, TUS commits to provide leadership in promoting and advancing equality, diversity and inclusivity and is committed to supporting an environment that is inclusive and accessible to all. The *TUS Dignity & Respect at Work Policy & Procedures*^[2] is a key reference point for TUS staff and state that TUS “*is committed to creating a positive culture which recognises and reflects the dignity of each member of the TU community, through the promotion of good and professional behaviour and attitudes, embracing diversity, encouraging each person to reach their potential, and fostering social inclusion and equality.*” The policy further states that “*all members of the TU community should expect to be able to excel, and to be respected and valued for their unique perspectives, traditions, and contributions.*”

Inclusive representation in decision-making is a core principle of the TUS approach, ensuring that decision-making processes reflect the diverse experiences, needs, and expertise of the wider university community. TUS is committed to fostering an inclusive culture where everyone has equitable opportunities to contribute to and inform decision-making processes. Committees within TUS are most effective when they reflect the diversity of the TUS wider community, including gender, ethnicity, age, disability, socio-economic background, and other underrepresented identities. Ensuring gender balance and broader diversity in committee structures is a continuous process that requires intentional action, transparency, and institutional support. By implementing clear representation guidance, fostering inclusive recruitment practices, and actively supporting diverse participation, TUS can build committee structures and practices that reflect the richness of the TUS community across campuses, roles, and lived experiences, and particularly ensuring that the staff and student voice is heard. These efforts contribute to more equitable, informed, and effective decision-making across the University.

In TUS, the complexity of meetings has increased as new organisational structures and cross-campus committees are embedded as part of university life. In addition, a range of virtual meetings are increasingly standard practice, complementing in-person meetings. As a multi-campus university, spread across a large geographic area it is important that the valuable time that participants contribute to TUS meetings results in

a positive experience and facilitates the most effective meeting outcomes. Consequently, it is essential to promote consistency, professionalism, and inclusivity in how meetings are conducted, ensuring that all participants can engage effectively and contribute to meaningful outcomes.

Accordingly, this Guide is divided into two parts as follows:

- 1) Part A: TUS Guide to Promoting Diversity and Representation in Committee Composition/Membership;
- 2) Part B: Meeting Etiquette Guide.

Part A of the Guide promotes inclusive and balanced committee representation across TUS, ensuring diversity of perspectives and expertise informs effective and equitable decision-making.

Part B of the Guide establishes a framework for respectful, inclusive, and effective meeting practices. It promotes a culture of professionalism and equity in decision-making, ensuring that all voices are heard and that meetings are conducted with clarity, purpose, and mutual respect.

Principles Underpinning the Guide

The overarching principles that underpin this guide include:

- 1) promoting committees and decision-making that reflect the diversity of the TUS community, and ensuring that a range of perspectives inform governance, management, operational considerations and university practice.
- 2) ensuring that committees are established through deliberate, transparent, and inclusive processes that promote balanced representation, recognise diverse skills and experiences, and support the participation of underrepresented groups, where applicable.
- 3) foster a culture of professional practice where all interactions, in committees or meetings, are based on mutual respect, dignity, and recognition of each participant's contributions.

**Part A: TUS Guide to Promoting Diversity in Committee
Composition/Membership**

1.0 Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in the composition and membership of committees within TUS. It provides practical guidance to help ensure committees reflect a balance of expertise, perspectives, and lived experience, fostering informed and inclusive decision-making. The Guide also supports consistency across TUS, while allowing flexibility to accommodate legislative, structural, and contextual factors that influence committee membership.

2.0 Definition of a Committee

For the purpose of this document, a Committee is defined as a formally constituted group, panel, or network established within TUS to consider, advise on, or make decisions in relation to defined areas of university activity. Committees may be *Continuing* and established to handle ongoing matters, or *Temporary* and created for a specific purpose. Committees may be comprised of internal TUS members, including staff and students, or include external members.

All Continuing Committees operate under agreed Terms of Reference (or equivalent), with specified membership, scope, and reporting arrangements, supporting deliberations that are transparent, inclusive, and accountable. A list of the main TUS Continuing Committees is provided in [Appendix 1](#).

It is acknowledged that a wide diversity of Temporary Committees operate in TUS. Indicative examples include Working Groups, Student/Staff Policy Committees, Programme Validation Panels, Programmatic Review Panels, Boards of Appeal/Academic Council Board of Appeal, *inter alia*. The purpose, authority, composition, membership and responsibilities of such committees are typically guided by the relevant underpinning TUS Regulations, Policies and Procedures. Temporary committees discontinue once their work is complete.

The composition of a Continuing or Temporary Committee may be defined in Regulations/Terms of Reference with scope for broad representation or be fixed depending on the given Committee.

A Committee as defined here may also encompass formally recognised Communities of Practice and Staff Networks where relevant, while acknowledging that such networks are often established to represent and advocate for specific communities or identities. As such, expectations around representational diversity may differ in recognition of their purpose and membership base.

3.0 Scope of the Guide

This document provides guidance to promote the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in constituting the composition and membership of committees within TUS. It is intended to guide members of TUS community in shaping committee composition/membership in a meaningful and proactive way, while allowing for flexibility based on context and availability. It supports the development of committees that reflect gender balance and broader diversity, ensuring decisions are informed by the widest possible range of perspectives and expertise.

While recognising that subject matter expertise is essential for the effective functioning of many committees in TUS, this guidance also emphasises the importance of including the voices of those who may be directly impacted by the committee's decisions. Balancing relevant technical expertise with inclusive representation helps ensure that committee deliberations are informed by both specialist knowledge and lived experience.

It is also acknowledged that in some areas, achieving gender balance may present challenges due to existing structural or disciplinary imbalances. In such cases, efforts should still be made to promote inclusive participation and to identify opportunities for broader representation wherever possible. This document provides both overarching principles and practical suggestions to support broader representation.

This Guide is relevant to all committees in TUS, while acknowledging and adhering to the instances where committee composition is pre-determined by set factors such as legislative requirements, constitution or terms of reference of the relevant committee and/or other set factors that determine composition (e.g. Governing Body, Academic Council, Programme Boards, *inter alia*). Such details can be found, as relevant, in the Constitution, Terms of Reference, Standing Orders or equivalent reference points of the relevant fora.

4.0 Statutory and Regulatory Context

This guidance is informed by both statutory requirements and national policy recommendations regarding gender balance and diversity in decision-making structures within higher education.

1) Technological Universities Act 2018

The *Technological Universities Act 2018*^[3] sets out specific requirements for gender balance on the Governing Body of a technological university. Schedule 1 of the Act states:

“The Minister shall, in appointing members to the governing body, have regard to the objective that at least 40 per cent of the members of the governing body shall be women and at least 40 per cent shall be men.”

Furthermore, in relation to constituting the Academic Council of a Technological University, Section 16 (3) (c) of the Act, states:

“the governing body shall have regard to the objective that at least 40 per cent of members of the academic council shall be women and at least 40 per cent shall be men.”

2) HEA Gender Equality Reviews (2016) and (2022)

The Higher Education Authority’s First (2016) and Second (2022) National Reviews of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions^[3, 4] make clear recommendations regarding gender balance in decision-making structures, and TUS is obliged to report on these recommendations annually. This includes the following:

- There is a minimum of 40% men and 40% women on HEI decision making bodies (Governing Body/Authority, Academic Council and Senior Management Team).
- A minimum of 40% men and 40% women is considered in relation to other institutional committees and working groups.

5.0 Guiding Principles and Considerations

Taking account of and reflecting the national statutory and regulatory context, TUS values and strategic objectives, and the considerations outlined in the Scope of the Guide, the following guiding principles support the formation of inclusive and representative committees. They extend beyond minimum compliance to promote a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion across all committees, panels, and networks within TUS.

- 1) **Gender Balance:** Reflecting statutory requirements (detailed in [Section 4.0](#)) for certain committees such as Governing Body and Academic Council, the principle and objective of achieving minimum 40% men and 40% women should guide the composition of all committees, panels, and networks, recognising gender balance as central to inclusive governance and effective decision-making.
- 2) **Broader Diversity:** Be cognisant of the benefits of broader diversity and strive for a collective mix of backgrounds and lived experiences across the committee, including but not limited to ethnicity, disability and socio-economic background.

- 3) **Career Stage and Generational Diversity:** Where appropriate, include members from a range of career stages and age groups to ensure a diversity of perspectives and experiences.
- 4) **Cross-Campus and Staff Category Representation:** Where appropriate, aim to include members from different campuses, staff categories and disciplinary areas (e.g., Academic, Research, Professional Services) to reflect the breadth of the university community.
- 5) **Student representation:** Where committees include student representation, give due consideration to gender balance, broader diversity including disciplinary areas and cross-campus representation, as appropriate. Additionally, give consideration to the programme type such as taught and research programmes, apprenticeships, life-long learning, *inter alia*, as appropriate.

6.0 Practices to Support Implementation

It is recommended that this guidance be thoughtfully considered during committee formation and revisited periodically to help foster ongoing progress in inclusive representation. The following outlines key practices to consider implementing during committee formation/review:

1) Committee Terms of Reference

Consider embedding a commitment to diversity and inclusion in constituting the membership/composition within the committee's terms of reference, where relevant and feasible.

2) Processes for Supporting Expressions of Interest

Consider implementing the following:

- a) using transparent, open calls for expressions of interest can help ensure equal access to committee opportunities;
- b) encouraging self-nomination: inviting self-nomination from individuals across a range of backgrounds, career stages, and lived experiences can broaden participation.

3) Inclusive Messaging and Outreach

Consider implementing the following:

- a) using language in calls for nominations that explicitly welcomes and values diversity;
- b) aiming to avoid jargon or overly formal language that may discourage participation;
- c) sharing opportunities through multiple channels to reach a wider audience;

- d) offering informal information sessions or Q&A opportunities can help demystify committee roles during calls for expressions of interest;
- e) encouraging nominations from underrepresented staff.

4) Enhancing Visibility and Support

Clearly advertising committee opportunities and making them accessible to all staff, not just those already engaged in other committees, can help widen participation. Consider:

- a) providing an overview of the committee role, including Terms of Reference if available, within the Expression of Interest is recommended;
- b) including examples of the benefits of membership may help illustrate the value of participation.

5) Responding to Imbalanced Applications

Despite best efforts, open calls may occasionally result in limited diversity among applicants. In such cases, a proactive and reflective approach is encouraged to support inclusive committee membership. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- a) if applications lack diversity, consider reviewing outreach and messaging for inclusivity and reach;
- b) where possible, extending or reopening the call and engaging directly with underrepresented groups may help broaden the applicant pool;
- c) alternative approaches, such as offering shadowing opportunities, can support readiness and future participation

7.0 Supporting Inclusive Participation and Culture

Creating inclusive committee environments requires both practical supports and a culture that values diverse contributions. Please refer to Part B [TUS Meeting Etiquette Guide](#) on practices to help ensure all members can participate meaningfully and equitably.

8.0 Role of Committee Chair

While all committee members contribute to fostering inclusive meetings, Committee Chairs are well-positioned to support this aim. The following considerations may be helpful:

- 1) Where appropriate, Chairs may wish to refer to this guidance document during the formation of committees;

- 2) Where appropriate, consider how new members may be supported. Examples of approaches may include a mentorship or a buddy system, which can help build confidence and engagement;
- 3) To support diversity in representation, options of a rotational Chair role or co-chairing model may allow for broader participation and leadership development.

9.0 Reporting

The Higher Education Authority requires Higher Education Institutions to submit detailed gender-disaggregated data on Governing Body, Academic Councils and Senior Management. This detail is also provided in TUS EDI Annual Reports. Reporting gender balance in Academic Councils and Governing Bodies is also covered in the governance framework of the Technological Universities Act. There are also a range of reporting requirements on inclusive practice across university functions for both national and institutional reports.

To support analysis of broader diversity in committee composition, TUS staff will be invited to self-report in bespoke questions in TUS all staff surveys. From time to time, the EDI Office may reach out to Committee Chairs to gather learnings on improving representation on Committees to support the development of a repository of best practice.

Appendix 1. List of Main TUS Continuing Committees¹

Name of Committee	Composition	Brief Description
Governing Body	Defined in Law and Regulations	Constituted in accordance with Sections 11 and 12 of the TU Act (2018), has a broad range of statutory functions as well as corporate governance responsibilities, including codified fiduciary obligations.
Subcommittees of Governing Body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People, Culture and EDI • Audit and Risk • Finance & Physical Development • Governance and Nominations 	Defined in Regulations with Scope for Broad Representation	In accordance with the TU Act, TUS Governing Body has established committees to assist its work. Governing Body has approved Terms of Reference of these respective committees, which include details of their purpose, authority, composition, membership and responsibilities.
Academic Council	Defined in Regulations with Scope for Broad Representation	Constituted in accordance with Sections 16 and 17 of the TU Act, 2018, Academic Council is the statutory body charged with establishing and maintaining the academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student experience of the University. TUS Governing Body and Academic Council have approved Academic Council Documentation which specifies the Constitution, Composition, Membership, Standing Orders and Bylaws of Academic Council. The Constitution specifies the General and Particular Functions of Academic Council.
Subcommittees of Academic Council	Defined in Regulations with Scope for Broad Representation	In accordance with the TU Act (2028), TUS Academic Council has established committees to assist its work. Academic Council designates a range of subcommittees designed to support its work delivering on its functions and the key strategic themes of TUS. Academic Council has approved Terms of Reference of these respective subcommittees, which include details of their General Responsibilities, Functions, Membership and Reporting.
Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Fixed	Senior Leadership Team comprised of the President, Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and Chief Operations Officer (COO).
Senior Management Team	Fixed	Senior Management Team comprised of the SLT, Vice Presidents and Deans of Faculty.

¹ It is noted that the configuration/names of some Standing Committees may change as their Terms of Reference are reviewed and revised. Additionally new committees may be formed. This Appendix will be reviewed on annual basis by the Quality and EDI functions and revised accordingly.

Academic Department Leadership Forum (ADLF)	Fixed	Academic Department Leadership Forum comprised of Academic Heads of Department.
Faculty/School Board	Defined in Regulations	Advises the Dean at a strategic level in the academic and resource requirements of all Programmes/Modules within the Faculty/School. <i>Note: TUS Terms of Reference currently in development.</i>
Department Board	Defined in Regulations	Advise the Head of Department at a strategic and operational level regarding the academic and resource requirements of programmes/modules within the Department. <i>Note: TUS Terms of Reference currently in development.</i>
Programme Board	Defined in Regulations	Each programme offered by the University operates under the remit of a Programme Board which has the primary responsibility, under the overall guidance of the Head of Department, for developing and operating the programme. <i>Note: TUS Terms of Reference currently in development.</i>
Faculty Research Committees	Defined in Regulations	Established by each Faculty, the Faculty Research Committee (FRC) oversees graduate research within the Faculty. The FRC provides strategic leadership and oversight in fostering a research culture, ensuring the quality and impact of research, and aligning research activities with the university's mission and strategic goals at the faculty level. In addition, the FRC has an operational remit to manage postgraduate matters for postgraduate students registered in the Faculty.
TUS Ethics Committees	Defined in Regulations	An integral part of the overall TUS research governance ecosystem, the Research Ethics Committees (Midlands and Midwest) is tasked with the maintenance and oversight of the TUS Research Integrity Policy and TUS Ethics Policy. The Committees review all applications from TUS research postgraduate students, TUS staff or external researchers accessing TUS students and/or staff.
EDI Steering Committee	Defined in Terms of Reference with Scope for Broad Representation	Part of a multi-layered EDI governance structure in TUS. It oversees the work in relation to implementation of TUS EDI Strategic Goals and associated action plans including Athena Swan, Race Equality, Preventing and Responding to Sexual

		Violence and Harassment and Healthy Campus.
Sustainable Development Steering Committee	Defined in Terms of Reference with Scope for Broad Representation	Cross-campus committee driving the enhancement of the sustainability agenda across TUS through governance, policy and procedures. Facilitating information sharing, strategic collaboration and reporting.

Part B: TUS Meeting Etiquette Guide

1.0 Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to promote respectful, inclusive, and effective meeting practices across TUS. It outlines general principles and practical guidance to support positive participation, fairness, and professionalism in both in-person and virtual meetings. By fostering courteous communication, adherence to agendas, and awareness of diverse perspectives, the Guide aims to ensure that all meetings contribute productively to the University's decision-making processes.

2.0 Scope of the Guide

For the purposes of this Guide, Meeting Etiquette refers to the expected norms and behaviours that participants are requested to follow during meetings and discussions. The Guide outlines the general principles of meeting etiquette at TUS, references a range of overall effective meeting practices, and also includes specific considerations for virtual meetings.

The operational aspects of meetings do not fall within the scope of this Etiquette Guide. Such details can be found, as relevant, in the Terms of Reference, Standing Orders or equivalent reference points of the relevant fora.

3.0 General Principles of Meeting Etiquette at TUS

A meeting is as successful as the positive contributions of its members. The overall manner, spirit and tone in which a meeting is conducted is critical to achieving meaningful participation and productive outcomes. There are various ways members can contribute to a meeting, such as Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary or through participation with oral contributions, summarising issues or asking questions to clarify issues or points. Formal meetings of the University will invariably have a designated Chairperson.

TUS endeavours to be inclusive and involve the broadest possible representation of interested persons in the relevant meeting fora. TUS Meetings will be characterised by a collegiate approach to decision making and a culture that seeks to include a diverse range of opinions. This approach seeks to reach consensus and agreed outcomes, approaches and solutions, where possible. The following general guiding principles are relevant:

- a) participants should, in general, speak with the approval of the Chairperson and respect each other's contribution;
- b) participants in meetings should at all times adhere to the *TUS Staff and Student Policies on Dignity and Respect*, as applicable;

- c) participants should act in a way that is objective, fair and unbiased;
- d) it is important to maintain a courteous and constructive environment when members address each other;
- e) the meeting environment should enable all members feel comfortable enough to contribute, express differences of opinion and make arguments, counter arguments and proposals as appropriate;
- f) all members have an equal right to participate and contribute. No one person has the right to monopolise the meeting time;
- g) participants should speak to the issues and adhere to the Agenda, direction from the Chair and be cognisant of the purpose of the meeting.

4.0 Effective Meeting Practices

TUS acknowledges that there are diverse and varied categories of meeting that routinely take place as part of the life of the University. Depending on the specific meeting forum, the degree of formality and overall context of the meeting may vary considerably. While taking this diversity into consideration, the following are recommended practices that may support the attainment of effective meeting outcomes:

- a) keeping to the agenda items specified for the meeting to ensure all topics are covered in a timely manner;
- b) signalling the intention to speak to the Chair and waiting to be invited to speak. In general, contributions to the meeting should be addressed via the Chair;
- c) while making contributions or asking questions being succinct and clear, avoiding repetition where possible;
- d) avoiding the interruption of another member while they are speaking and waiting until an opportunity arises to speak again;
- e) limiting the number of questions or contributions in sequence as other members may also have questions or contributions to make;
- f) seeking to achieve consensus and agreed outcomes, approaches and solutions where possible;
- g) presenting alternative views or counter arguments in a professional and courteous way;
- h) avoiding engaging in side conversations during meetings;
- i) placing cell phones on mute during meetings and stepping outside of the

meeting if taking a call is unavoidable.

It is also important to exercise punctuality with respect to meeting attendance and, where possible to provide prior notice if arriving late to a meeting.

5.0 Specific Considerations for Virtual Meetings- Meeting Netiquette

The following are recommended practices that may support the attainment of effective meeting outcomes in the virtual environment:

- a) *the virtual environment can make a large group context less apparent.* It is important to be cognisant that, depending on the meeting context, there may be a large number of participants with equal expectation and right of participation;
- b) using the raise hand function of the relevant meeting software application to indicate that you wish to speak;
- c) participants being aware of their own surroundings and muting the microphone when other people are speaking or presenting;
- d) turning on the camera if possible. It is essential, and warranted for transparency purposes, to turn on camera when addressing the meeting;
- e) while representing TUS, it is recommended to use the TUS-specific virtual background. These can be downloaded and accessed from the following link: <https://tus.ie/about-us/tus-brand/>;
- f) when sharing your screen or desktop during a virtual meeting ensure that only the relevant Documents and Windows are open. This prevents confidential or sensitive material being viewed;
- g) if participants need to leave during a meeting but don't want to interrupt the speaker/presenter, a message may be placed in the chat window so that members are aware;
- h) meetings should not be recorded unless, as the organiser, you have a specific purpose for recording the meeting and participants have been informed.

5.0 Role of the Chairperson

The Chairperson is responsible for managing the meeting and ensuring that meeting times, agenda items and member participation is facilitated to ensure the effectiveness of the meeting. In general, the Chairperson should consider the following objectives:

- a) issuing an Agenda in advance of the meeting;
- b) ensuring meetings are well-organised, follow the agenda, and achieve their

- objectives within the allocated time;
- c) fostering an environment where all members feel encouraged and respected to contribute their views;
 - d) managing discussion and the flow of the meeting and promoting respectful communication among participants;
 - e) helping the meeting reach clear, fair, and transparent outcomes, ensuring all relevant perspectives are considered;
 - f) upholding impartiality, fairness, and adherence to university values, while fostering trust in the meeting process.

References

- 1) [TUS Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026](#)
- 2) [TUS Dignity & Respect at Work Policy & Procedure](#)
- 3) [Technological Universities Act 2018](#)
- 4) [HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions 2016](#)
- 5) [2nd HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions 2022](#)