

TUS Public Sector Duty Address Report



TUS

Contents

Introduction	2
Strategic Context and Institutional Commitment	2
Governance and Accountability	4
Equality Diversity and Inclusion	7
Training and Awareness	9
Access & Widening Participation	9
Sustainability and Community Engagement	11
Future Actions	12

Introduction

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (often referred to as “The Duty”) places a statutory obligation on public bodies to promote equality, prevent discrimination, and protect human rights in the performance of their functions. Under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, institutions must have regard to these principles when developing policies, delivering services, and engaging with stakeholders. In fulfilling this duty, institutions must consider the nine equality grounds set out in Irish legislation—gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community—ensuring that all actions and policies reflect these commitments.

Public bodies are required to undertake an assessment of the equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups for the Duty that would have a relevance for their functions; identify the steps being taken or proposed to be taken to address the issues as assessed; and report on their progress in addressing these issues and implementing the Duty. This report demonstrates how Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) seeks to address Public Sector Duty obligations through its governance, policies, and practices.

Strategic Context and Institutional Commitment

TUS Strategic Plan

The [TUS Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026](#) states as an overarching value that

“We operate in an agile manner where integrity and excellence underpin all we do. We are honest, fair and ethical in our focus on doing the right thing through our words, actions and beliefs.”

The TUS commitment to operating with integrity and excellence ensures that fairness, honesty, and ethical behaviour are embedded in all aspects of work. By focusing on “doing the right thing” through our words, actions, and beliefs, we actively uphold the Public Sector Duty to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights. These values guide our decision-making and service delivery, ensuring transparency, accountability, and respect for the dignity of every individual.

The TUS overarching value is supported by the following TUS Value Statements relating to specified themes. Table 1 below shows how these value statements relate to the Public Sector Duty:

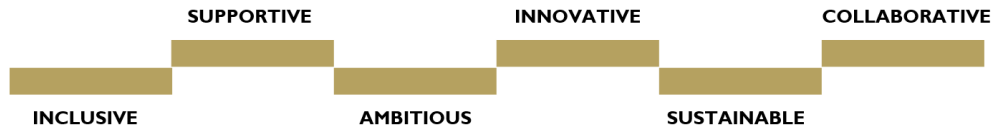


Figure 1 TUS Values

	Value Statements	Linkage to Public Sector Duty
Inclusive	<i>We embrace diversity as a key strength where everyone is included and has an equal opportunity to progress and achieve.</i>	Promotes equality and eliminates discrimination by ensuring all individuals have equal access to opportunities and are treated with dignity and respect.
Supportive	<i>We care about our people and their well-being, and we maintain a student centred ethos in all we do.</i>	Protects human rights by fostering a safe, respectful environment that prioritises well-being.
Ambitious	<i>We set high standards and are courageous in our actions to deliver impact and achieve our potential.</i>	By striving for high standards and impactful outcomes, we ensure that equality and human rights are embedded in our goals and achievements.
Innovative	<i>We are forward-looking and encourage creativity and exploration that fosters unique ideas and inspires transformative change</i>	Embeds equality and human rights considerations into new approaches and solutions, ensuring innovation benefits diverse communities.
Sustainable	<i>We are thought leaders and adopt a whole of institution approach to the challenges of sustainable development.</i>	Promotes human dignity, fairness and justice by addressing social and environmental responsibilities that impact future generations
Collaborative	<i>We are open, connected and engaged in bringing people together to develop, co-create and share knowledge for the benefit of our region and beyond.</i>	Advances equality and inclusion by creating participatory spaces where diverse voices are heard and respected, strengthening human rights through shared knowledge.

Table 1 TUS Value Statements

Several TUS Strategic Priorities are also underpinned by Public Sector Duty commitments including:

Strategic Priority 1, Education, references our commitment to both equity of access through multiple pathways to education and student retention:

Objective 1: *Provide greater access pathways through progression options, apprenticeships, online delivery, flexible learning, international and non-traditional routes to education*

Objective 2: *Enhance student-centred teaching and learning that is research-informed and enables a diverse cohort of learners to achieve successful outcomes*

Strategic Priority 3, People and Organisation, references staff supports and staff participation:

Objective 1: *Provide opportunities and supports that nurture capabilities, promote wellbeing and inspire the growth, development, training and mobility of our people*

Objective 3: *Create an inclusive Technological University that people are proud to be part of and where our diverse population has a voice*

Governance and Accountability

TUS obligations to the Public Sector Duty are supported by strong academic and corporate governance and a commitment to accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement. TUS takes a multi-layered approach to the governance of equality and human rights, with fora such as *Governing Body*, *EDI Steering Committee*, *Academic Council* and their associated *Sub-committees* and *Working Groups*, in addition to the TUS VP/Deans Council and Management structures. These fora and committees play a lead role in reviewing and designing University-wide strategies and processes to support equality and human rights.

An Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Committee was established in 2022 to oversee and provide guidance and direction for the achievement of equality, diversity, and inclusion objectives across TUS and has responsibility for monitoring obligations under the Public Sector Duty. This committee, which is chaired by TUS' President, includes representatives from Faculty, Human Resources, Student Support Services, EDI, Research Development and Innovation and Student's Union. Several sub-committees report to the EDI Steering Committee.

A People, Culture and EDI Sub Committee of Governing Body has also been formed and provides updates to Governing Body on EDI related initiatives underway in TUS. The

committee structure through which the implementation of EDI strategic goals is monitored is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

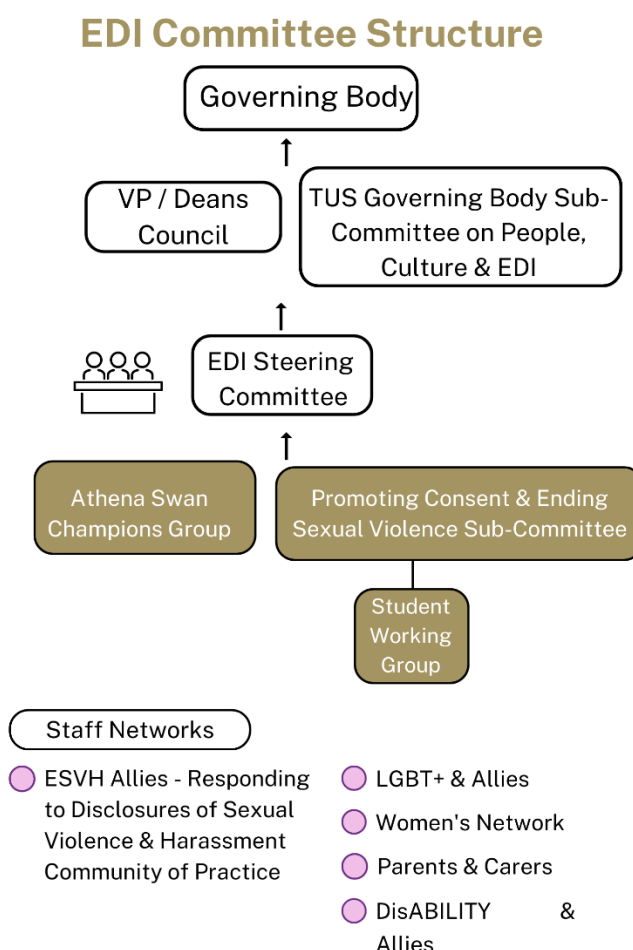


Figure 2 EDI Committee Structure

TUS Academic Council, chaired by the TUS President, also has a pivotal role in supporting the Public Sector Duty by embedding equality and human rights considerations into academic governance. Academic Council sub-committees are outlined in the figure below. Through oversight of curriculum development, policy approval, and quality assurance processes, Academic Council and its related sub committees ensure that teaching, learning, and research reflect inclusive principles aligned with the nine equality grounds. The Sub-Committee for Student Experience and Access and the Sub-Committee for Admissions Transfer and Progression assure the strong representation of inclusive and multi-cultural considerations, policies, procedures, and practices related to its student body in TUS.

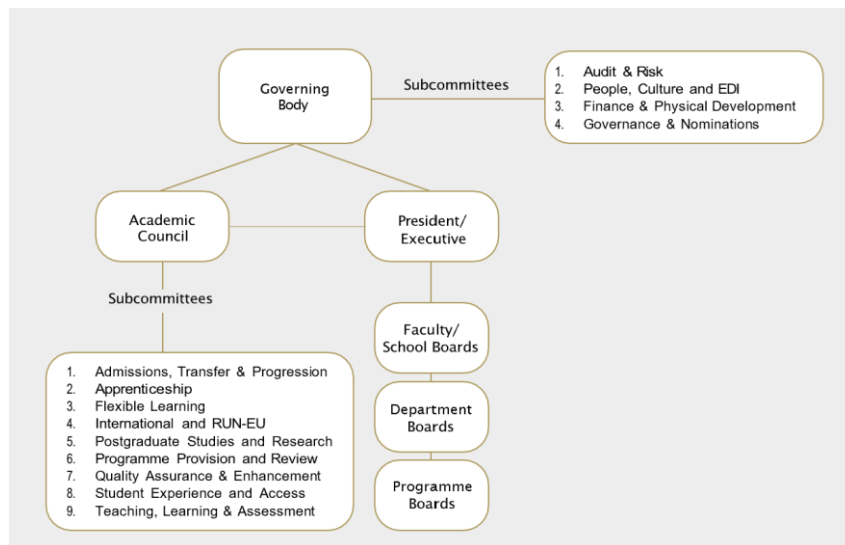


Figure 3 TUS Academic Council Reporting Structure

Students are considered academic partners at TUS. Student representatives are full members of Governing Body, EDI Steering Committee, Academic Council and Subcommittees of these bodies. Their input and counsel are respected and valued to ensure comprehensiveness and equity for learners. The student voice is represented on programme boards with regular feedback provided to enhance the quality of the programme content, and the teaching, learning and assessment of programmes. The class representation system plays an important role in this aspect.

In addition to these governance structures, the Public Sector Duty is supported through TUS Dignity and Respect policies for staff and students ([Dignity and Respect at Work Policy and Procedure](#) and [TUS Student Policy on Dignity and Respect](#)). These policies establish clear standards for behaviour and provide mechanisms for addressing harassment or bullying, aligning with the duty's requirement to consider the nine equality grounds. By doing so, they help ensure that staff and students experience an environment consistent with the values underpinning the Public Sector Duty.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

TUS commitments to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality are outlined in overarching documents and frameworks including the following:

TUS EDI Strategy

The [TUS EDI Strategy \(2023 – 2026\)](#) specifically references the Public Sector Duty and aims to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and treatment and protect the human rights of staff and students in the delivery of services through work framed within six strategic goals. TUS reports annually on this EDI strategy through the [TUS EDI Annual Report](#)

Equality Statement

[The TUS Equality Statement](#), approved by the TUS Governing Body in June 2022, details TUS's commitment to equality in opportunities, student experience and employment, gender equality and intersectionality, equality in curricula and pedagogies, and through policies and procedures. It is available on the TUS EDI webpage.

EDI Policy

The [TUS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) Policy was approved in AY 24/25, and is now accessible on the TUS website. The policy ensures that all services provided by TUS—whether to students, staff, or external stakeholders—are delivered in a manner that promotes equality and protects human rights. Through this policy, TUS commits to equality of access and opportunity for students, embedding inclusive practices in admissions, teaching, assessment, and support services. It also mandates flexibility and reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities, ensuring equitable participation in all aspects of university life.

For staff the policy ensures that employment practices uphold the principles of the Public Sector Duty by promoting equality, preventing discrimination, and protecting human rights in all aspects of work. This includes fair and transparent recruitment and selection processes, equal access to training and career progression, and measures to remove barriers across the nine equality grounds and socio-economic status. The policy also commits to creating a workplace culture of dignity and respect and provides mechanisms for reasonable accommodation for staff with disabilities.

Gender Identity and Expression Policy

The [TUS Gender Identity and Expression policy](#) affirms the university's commitment to creating an environment of dignity, respect, and inclusivity, where staff and students can thrive regardless of gender identity or expression. The policy provides clear guidelines

on confidentiality, name and pronoun changes, and tailored supports for individuals transitioning.

Responding to Sexual Violence and Harassment Policies

The [TUS Policy and Procedure for Responding to Sexual Harassment & Sexual Violence](#) was adopted by the Governing Body in January 2025. TUS is committed to fostering a safe, respectful and supportive campus culture, and through this commitment does not condone any form of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence. TUS encourages staff and students to come forward to seek support and assistance in relation to issues of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence. Trauma informed principles guide responses to disclosures, respecting the right of the reporting party to choose how to take forward the disclosure.

Athena Swan Action Plan

The [TUS Athena Swan Action Plan 2024–2028](#) supports the Public Sector Duty by embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion across TUS functions. Through targeted actions on gender equality, race equality, disability inclusion, and broader EDI priorities, the plan advances the statutory obligations to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect human rights. It incorporates measures such as gender-balanced decision-making, inclusive recruitment practices, enhanced data systems for equality monitoring, preventing and responding to sexual violence and harassment and comprehensive training for staff on diversity and anti-discrimination. By fostering a supportive, inclusive culture and actions relating to developing equality impact assessments for policy review and development, the plan ensures that TUS operates transparently and equitably, aligning institutional leadership and governance with the principles of fairness, dignity, and respect enshrined in the Public Sector Duty.

Race Equality Action Plan

The [TUS Race Equality Action Plan 2025–2027](#) is informed by the HEA Anti-Racism Principles and consultative forums with staff and students which took place in TUS during academic year 2023/2024. The Race Equality Action Plan includes 21 actions including establishing governance structures for race equality, integrating race equality principles into policies and procedures, and enhancing recruitment practices to attract diverse candidates. It prioritises awareness and education through staff and student training, annual anti-racism events, and curriculum development, while ensuring accountability through data-driven monitoring and reporting.

Training and Awareness

Building staff awareness through training is a critical step in enabling the principles of the Public Sector Duty to be applied in everyday practice. TUS provides equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) training for all staff. This includes both self-directed trainings based on the nine equality grounds, and facilitated sessions and non-accredited workshops focused on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and inclusive teaching practices.

EDI related trainings have included sessions for all staff as well as target sessions for different cohorts of staff (e.g. for Managers, for Academic staff, for specific departments) and include more informal communities of practice to support inclusive teaching practices.

These training activities help staff understand their responsibilities under the nine equality grounds and socio-economic status, equipping them to identify and address barriers to participation. By mainstreaming EDI awareness into induction, leadership development, and ongoing professional training, TUS supports staff to actively contribute to promoting equality and protecting human rights in line with statutory obligations.

Finally, through the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development in TUS, accredited academic programmes are provided for TUS staff to assure their inclusive practices, including the provision of an accredited Level 9 award in Inclusive Practice. A wide range of TUS staff, including academics and professional staff, are enrolled and/or have completed this programme. Enrolment targets for these accredited programmes form part of TUS Performance Agreement with the HEA under Pillar 1, Teaching and Learning.

Access & Widening Participation

TUS has a long-standing commitment to access and widening participation. The governance and management of assuring the enrolment of a diverse profile of students is through the oversight of the Office of the Vice President for Student Education and Experience. That office manages a range of pre-entry and post entry initiatives to assure the equitable enrolment of a diverse profile of students in TUS. It manages the associated annual reporting on the achievement of the enrolment targets of under-represented students in higher education to the Higher Education Authority (HEA). This is respectively

completed through the: (i) TUS Performance Agreement 2024-2028 and through the (ii) National Access Plan 2022-2028.

Pillar 3 in the HEA-TUS Performance Agreement 2024-2028 is focused on Access and Participation with the aim of this performance objective being to deliver dynamic, targeted, and inclusive strategies to promote; facilitate entry to, and participation in the academic programmes and student life of the University for students under-represented in Higher Education. Indicators and targets have been set in relation to:

- New entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas
- New entrants with a disability
- New entrants from the Traveller & Roma communities
- New entrants to Access to Apprenticeship Programme
- University of Sanctuary Scholars
- TUS Societies

In addition, in the context of the National Access Plan 2022-2028, TUS reports annually on the achievement of the goals set out therein. The National Access Plan extends its ambitions beyond access to a greater focus on participation and student success.

TUS reports on the achievement of the key objectives of NAP, namely:

- (i) That its student body, at all levels and across all programmes, reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population, and
- (ii) It is inclusive, has universally designed environments, which support student success and outcomes, equity, and diversity.

Student Success

TUS is committed to student engagement through its educational philosophy and inclusive learning experience, with a distinctive focus on active and engaged learning and in wider graduate attributes, to enable all its students to realise their full potential. Students are supported through the student lifecycle by an extensive range of services, and dedicated staff, to help them reach their full potential in a supportive and positive and inclusive environment. These include Access, Disability, Counselling, Health, Learning Support and Pastoral Care.

Policies and practices that demonstrate TUS's commitment to student success, including those for students with diverse learning needs, include: (i) the provision of lecture recording for students with reasonable accommodations; (ii) the development of a Disability Support Needs App; (iii) the provision of quiet spaces and supports for neuro-diverse students. The realisation of a universally designed environment for all in TUS has been equally enabled through the formal commitment to the Altitude Charter.

ALTITUDE Charter

TUS signed the ALTITUDE Charter in 2025 – this is the National Charter for Universal Design (UD) in Tertiary Education. ALTITUDE is a framework to support higher education institutions and Educational Training Boards to make sustainable progress towards systemically embedding a UD approach with human diversity at its core. The Charter proposes collaborative action to work towards goals under four key pillars: learning, teaching and assessment; supports, services and social engagement; the physical environment and the digital environment. This ensures that diverse learners—including those covered by the nine equality grounds—are considered from the outset, reducing barriers rather than relying solely on individual accommodations. An ALTITUDE steering committee in TUS will be established with the aim of progressing the actions and goals outlined within the Charter.

Sustainability and Community Engagement

The TUS [Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#) lists sustainable development as a strategic enabler and aims to ‘*support sustainable development and embed UN SDG integration across all initiatives to generate positive impact*’. Strategic Priority 4 Connecting Communities states that ‘*TUS will build and enhance relationships and partnerships that drive the sustainable development of our region and make an impact nationally and internationally*’.

TUS has adopted the Sustainability Leadership Scorecard (SLS) to measure the sustainability performance of the university and provide a structured framework for continued sustainability effort. The SLS comprises of four priority areas: Leadership & Governance; Partnerships & Engagement; Learning, Teaching & Research; Estates & Operations. The priority area of Leadership and Governance includes a focus on Health & Well-Being and Staff Engagement & Human Resources.

Future Actions

TUS will continue to embed the principles of the Public Sector Duty through its next strategic planning process from 2026, ensuring that equality, human rights, and inclusion are central to institutional priorities and decision-making.

In addition, the following actions from Athena Swan and Race Equality actions will be prioritised:

Athena Swan Priority Areas:

1. Under-representation in decision making structures and committees.

Rationale: Identified through assessment of gender balance on decision making structures such as VP/ Deans Council. While Committees such as Governing Body and Academic Council have strong gender balance, ongoing monitoring of these and associated sub committees is required, with targeted actions if a minimum 40% women, 40% men on these is not achieved/ maintained (**Athena Swan Actions 1.1a, 1.1b, 4.2f**).

2. Faculty/ Departmental/ Functional Area Athena Swan Applications

Rationale: No departmental applications have been submitted to date. These submissions will support addressing student gender imbalances within faculties/ departments through targeted actions and will further embed Athena Swan principles within TUS (**Athena Swan Action 1.1c**).

3. Ensuring Sexual Violence and Harassment Prevention and Response

Rationale: Challenges relating to knowledge of and confidence in reporting systems was highlighted through the 2023 Athena Swan Survey, with gendered differences in responses. Following the approval of the TUS Policy and Procedure for Responding to Sexual Violence and Harassment, ongoing awareness of reporting pathways and trauma informed supports is required (**Athen Swan Action 2.1c**)

4. Supporting Dignity, Respect and Safety

Rationale: Challenges relating to bullying and harassment, knowledge of and confidence in reporting systems was highlighted through the 2023 Athena Swan survey, with gendered differences in responses. Additionally, there were strong gendered differences to feelings of safety on campus during hours of darkness (**Athena Swan Actions 5.3a, 4.1a, 2.1g, 4.4a**).

5. Supporting gender balanced participation in research, including supporting a gender and sex dimension in research

Rationale: The 2023 Athena Swan survey indicated low levels of satisfaction in terms of research support. Trend analysis highlighted the need for ongoing and deeper analysis of

gender profile of research staff and gendered analysis of participation in research related supports and initiatives (**Athena Swan Actions 6.1a, 6.3a, 6.3b, 6.3c**).

6. Establish a feasible Professional Development Plan (PDP) system to be implemented in a coherent manner across TUS

Rationale: The need for a feasible PDP system to be implemented in a coherent manner across TUS came through strongly in the AS Survey. This will further support career development for under-represented groups within Academic, Research and PMSS staff (**Athena Swan Action 2.1a**).

7. Develop, implement and monitor a Health and Wellbeing Framework and Policy

Rationale: “Stressful” came through as one of the top 5 descriptions for some cohorts of staff when describing their immediate work environment. The age profile of staff needs to be considered when developing a health and wellbeing framework (**Athena Swan Action 2.1b**).

8. Enhance equality data systems

Rationale: While data systems to support gender disaggregated data has improved in recent years, challenges remain in ensuring robust data systems for other equality grounds, for both staff and students. It is currently a time-consuming task for all involved and further work is required to integrate data systems across campuses. This action is a foundational one, which will support decision-making and further equality related work including increased awareness of the impact of actions and strategies (**Athena Swan Actions 3.1a, 3.1b, 3.1e**).

9. Enhance access to EDI related training and development opportunities through coordinated staff learning and development processes

Rationale: There are multiple EDI related training opportunities available in TUS, delivered by EDI Office, Human Resources, Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development and the Research Office. In 2025, TUS provided a learning platform for staff, enabling a coordinated approach across multiple functions to plan and disseminate information on these trainings. This platform will be further disseminated to ensure it is widely used and accessed across TUS (**Athena Swan Actions 5.2a, 5.2b**).

Race Equality Priority Areas:

1. Training and Awareness

By equipping staff with the knowledge and skills to understand systemic racism, and the lived experiences of minority ethnic groups, we can ensure that policies and practices actively promote equality and human rights. **(Race Equality Actions 5b, 5c, 5d, 5f, 5g)**

2. Reporting Pathways

Effective reporting mechanisms are essential for upholding the principles of the Public Sector Duty. While policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment provide a framework, they only work if staff and students know how to access support and report incidents confidently. By promoting clear, accessible information on reporting pathways, TUS can ensure transparency, accountability, and timely intervention, reinforcing a culture of dignity and respect. **(Race Equality Actions 2b, 2c)**

HEA-TUS Systems Performance Agreement

Pillar 3 Access and Participation

Achievement of Targets by 2027/28

Indicator	Cumulative 4 Year Target
% new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas	0.8 p.p. increase
% new entrants with a disability	1.8 p.p. increase on 23/24 baseline
Number of new entrants from Traveller & Roma Communities	30 new entrants over 4 years 80% increase
Number of new entrants to Access to Apprenticeship Programme	384 entrants over 4 years 109% increase
Number of University of Sanctuary Scholars (new entrants)	100 new entrants over 4 years 40% increase on baseline
Number of TUS Societies	22% on baseline

Sustainability Leadership Scorecard (SLS)

Active overall score 70% on SLS, an increase of 36 p.p. on baseline.