

ESF 1.4 Undergraduate Skills

Gender and Wider Equal Opportunities Horizontal Principle Annual Reporting Template

For the period January to December 2011

1. Name of Activity:

No.: ESF 1.4

2. What actions have taken place over the last year to incorporate the principle of gender and wider equal opportunities into the Activity?

By nature of application, all courses included under the skills programme are subject to similar individual choice as applies to all courses through the Central Applications Office (CAO).

(a) Ongoing Actions:

All undergraduate skills programmes are open to both male and female applicants.

The courses provided under this measure include ICT, engineering and other sciences. Traditionally more males than females choose engineering and ICT related courses over other science courses. The gender balance on other science courses in the technological sector would normally be equally balanced. The Institutes of Technology, through their Steps Programme, continues to encourage more females onto their engineering courses.

Most institutes also offer Taster Programmes and Summer Courses on an ongoing basis in the area of technology. These courses are geared towards attracting both males and females at an early stage and continued to operate in 2011.

In universities the number of additional places on the courses provided under this measure in 2011 was 3,623 – 2,524 male and 1,099 female. This indicates 70% male and 30% female participation. In institutes of technology the number of additional places on the courses provided under this measure in 2011 was 1,961 – 1,620 male and 340 female. This indicates 83% male and 17% female participation. The difference between the sectors reflects different gender intake as a whole.

Women in Science and Technology (WITS), an organisation founded, among other things, to promote the participation of young women in science and technology, has a “role model” project aimed at female second level students.

Institutions are also aware of the need to properly “brand” programmes to attract female participants. DCU, for example, renamed the BEng in “Telecommunications Engineering” to “Information and Communications Engineering”. NUI Maynooth, recently introduced BA Music Technology and BA/BSc Multimedia programmes and

UL also introduced BSc in Music Media and Performance Technology and BSc in Digital Media and Design programmes.

In 2011 the HEA continued to support the Vacation Computing Camps and expects that the number of participating institutions will increase in 2012. 1085 students enrolled on these courses in 2011 of which 336 were females i.e. 31%.

This year a number of additional 3rd Level Institutions will run vacation computing camps and the HEA is offering support funding of €5,000 to each participating institution provided their plans fulfil certain criteria. These camps are open to both male and female participants.

(b) New Actions:

Attracting more students to ICT

In early 2011, a range of high-level ICT skills recruitment difficulties were raised through the work of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. In May 2011 the HEA hosted an ICT Skills Summit bringing together representatives from higher education institutions to consider the analysis undertaken by the EGFSN. During 2011, proposals for the development of a coherent plan of action with cross government and industry collaboration and a multi level approach across the education system received strong support. The ICT Action Plan now identifies the following in relation to participation by females on **ICT** specific courses:

While recent increases in enrolments on undergraduate ICT related programmes are encouraging, it is estimated a further annual increase of 10% on the current rate of acceptances onto these programmes over the next 4 years, allied to improved retention rates, will be required if a target domestic output of 2,000 graduates is to be achieved by 2018. Participation by female students, in particular, needs to be increased and a target of increasing female acceptances onto ICT related programmes from 15% to 25% is being established

(It should be noted that the ESF funded undergraduate skills programme encompasses other skills courses wider than the strict definition of ICT and therefore demonstrates a greater female participation, as reported above, than ICT specific courses).

Wider Equal Opportunities

The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education (National Access Office) was established in the Higher Education Authority in late 2003 to facilitate educational access and opportunity for groups who are disadvantaged socially, economically and culturally, mature students and students with a disability.

The National Access Office has four principal functions; to develop and implement a national action plan to achieve equity of access to higher education; to provide advice on national policy; to manage a range of funding programmes; and to monitor and report on progress in implementing the plan and achieving set targets and outcomes. The office works with all higher education institutions and is supported in its work by an advisory group representing students, parents, the education sector and social partners.

In July 2008 the National Access Office published the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013*. The plan was drawn up by the National Access Office in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills and in close consultation with access practitioners in higher-education institutions and other stakeholders. The plan provides an evaluation of progress, identifies challenges, outlines policy objectives and sets challenging, but realistic targets which are consistent with the timeframe and objectives of the current National Development Plan.

The HEA completed a mid-term review of the National Access Plan in 2011. The review provides a comprehensive overview of progress since 2008 by the range of partners working on access to higher education. It also includes new information, including progress on 2010 participation targets. A copy of the report can be accessed here

http://www.heai.ie/files/files/HEA%20MidTerm%20Review%20National%20Plan%20of%20Equity%20Access%202008-2013_0.pdf

The Third Level Access programmes support the participation in third level education of people who are traditionally under-represented at this level. Under Third Level Access, funding is administered by further and higher education institutions (through the Student Assistance Fund and Fund for Students with Disabilities) to support the retention of certain target groups, namely students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, mature students, students with disabilities and those from ethnic minorities. It is managed on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills by the National Access Office and is a major contributor to the achievement of the high level goals for Education and Training.

The latest data on participation of the target groups in higher education can be found in the following report

http://www.heai.ie/files/HEA%20Key%20Facts%20%26%20Figures%2010.11%20Final_0.pdf

Appendix 1 gives details of the Equal Access Data contained in this report.

Example: Irish Traveller Community

Levels of transition to higher education by members of the Irish Traveller community can be estimated based on the 'Equal Access' survey of the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of entrants to higher education in 2010/11. This occurs on a voluntary and confidential basis as part of the annual, student registration process of twenty-eight higher education institutions. The survey includes a question on ethnic/cultural background based on that presented in the 2006 census.

Of the undergraduate new entrants who responded to this question at registration in 2010/11, 31 (or 0.1% of respondents) indicated that they were from an Irish Traveller background. These students entered fifteen institutions (NUI Galway, NUI Maynooth, UCC, UCD, TCD, UL and MIC, CIT, DIT, LKITE, IT Carlow, IADT, IT Tralee, GMIT and ITB). 35% of Irish Traveller respondents were female and 65% were male. While the majority (58%) were aged 17-19, a higher than average proportion (29%) were mature students (aged 23 or older).

Consistent with previous surveys participation by Travellers and it is estimated that approximately 3% of young Travellers aged 17-19 years of age participate in higher education, compared to 53% among the wider population of young people in this specific age group (estimates published elsewhere of 60% plus participation include other age groups).

The National Access Plan 2008-2013 does not set targets for increased participation by Travellers due to this data not being available at the time of the plan's finalisation. It notes that many Traveller children do not complete and that work by third level institutions and other stakeholders, with schools and the wider community, is essential to relationship building and raising expectations of progression. A mid-term review of the plan in 2010 reviews current targets and target groups and recommends that the next phase of work (for 2011-13) include work towards setting a new national target for participation by students from the Traveller community.

3. Progress against Indicators (where established):

Indicator	Baseline Position			Latest Position		
		Male	Female		Male	Female
Number of additional students enrolled on key courses (Universities)	BMW S&E	438 747	117 198	BMW S&E	476 2,048	200 899
Number of additional students enrolled on key courses (IOTs)	BMW S&E	322 380	85 101	BMW S&E	527 1,094	52 288

In universities the number of additional students participating on the courses provided under this measure in 2011 was 3,623, of which 2,524 were male and 1,099 female. This indicates 70% male and 30% female participation. In Institutes of Technology there were 1,961 students, of whom 1,621 were male and 340 female. This indicates 83% male and 17% female participation. The difference between the sectors reflects different gender intake as a whole.

4. Taking account of the material presented under 2 and 3 above, what contribution is the measure making to the promotion of gender and wider equal opportunities?

The cohort of students participating on these programmes arrives following a process of personal selection of courses through the CAO system having achieved the required entry standard. Greater male participation reflects subject choices made at school level and the fact that Science and Technology subjects are traditionally more attractive to male students than female students.

HEA funding for access has underpinned baseline infrastructure and programmes of action which support equity of access for under-represented groups to all undergraduate programmes. Funding is not course specific but it has allowed for providing core services to students.

Many HEA institutions have developed links and outreach programmes with schools as well as with the adult community education sector through organising pre-entry activities which can encourage students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, mature students, students with disabilities and those from ethnic minorities participate in higher education. This work involves a range of activities including guidance, familiarisation and learning support which can contribute to increased enrolments in engineering and ICT along with other disciplines in higher education. Many access offices of higher education institutions also coordinate post-entry supports for students which would include supporting students on designated courses under the undergraduate skills programme.

5. Identify any issues arising that need to be drawn to the attention of the Managing Authority, the Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Representatives or other Departments.¹

None

6. Please feel free to attach any relevant additional material to this reporting template.

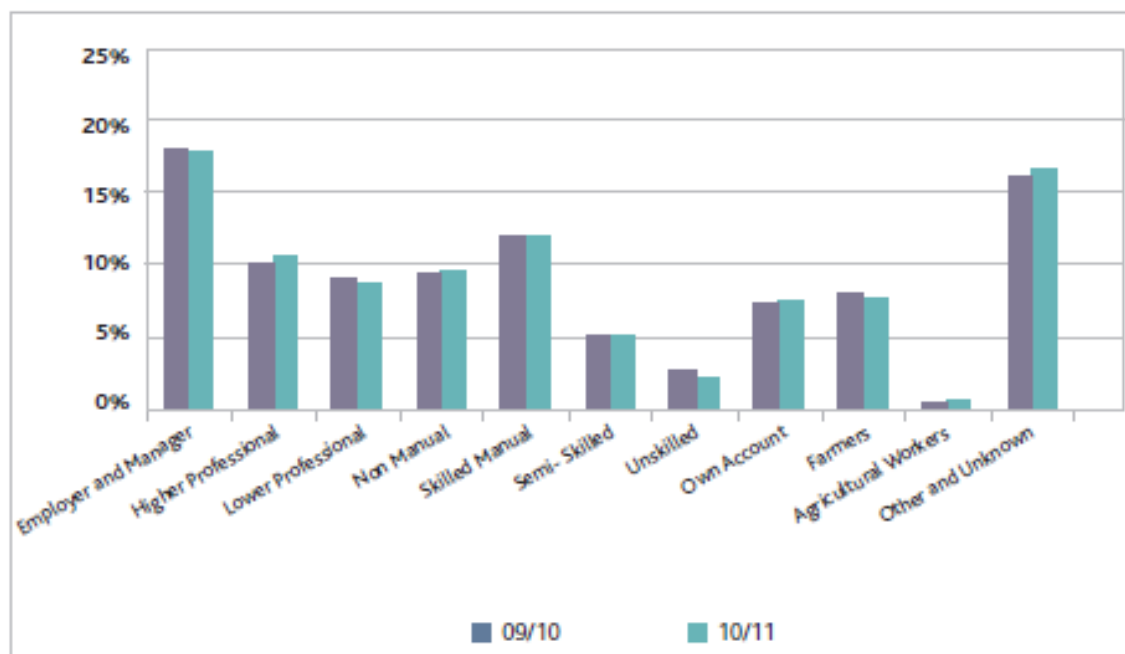
See Appendix 1

¹ The issues could relate to specific implementation concerns e.g. collection of data, or could relate to more general findings concerning the principle in question e.g. a particular policy in another department is obstructing your Activity from promoting the principle.

Appendix 1

Equal Access Data for the Universities and Institutes of Technology

The socio-economic background of full-time undergraduate new entrants for 2010/11 and 2009/10 is given in the chart below:



The socio-economic profile of respondents for whom a classification was assigned for 2010/11 and 2009/10 for the **universities** and **institutes of technology** is given in the table below:

Socio Economic Group	Socio Economic Profile of University Respondents		Socio Economic Profile of IoTs Respondents	
	2010/2011	2009/2010	2010/2010	2009/2010
Employer and Manager	20.0%	20.2%	15.3%	15.6%
Higher Professional	14.9%	14.1%	5.7%	5.6%
Lower Professional	10.7%	11.2%	6.5%	6.9%
Non Manual	9.6%	9.6%	9.8%	9.6%
Skilled Manual	9.4%	9.7%	15.3%	15.2%
Semi- Skilled	4.6%	4.4%	6.1%	6.2%
Unskilled	1.7%	1.7%	3.3%	4.2%
Own Account	7.2%	7.2%	8.1%	7.8%
Farmers	8.2%	8.9%	7.4%	7.4%
Agricultural Workers	0.7%	0.5%	0.9%	0.6%
Other and Unknown	12.9%	12.5%	21.5%	20.9%

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New entrants indicating a disability are given in the table below:

	Access Survey	
Total Indicating a Disability	2,544	
Category of Disability	% of above total	% Entrants
Blindness, deafness, severe vision or hearing impairment	7.5%	0.5%
Physical Condition	9.1%	0.6%
Specific Learning Difficulty	54.2%	3.5%
Psych/Emotional Condition	16.4%	1.1%
Other, incl Chronic Illness	21.3%	1.4%
% of all entrants /undergrads		6.4%
% of all respondents		7.4%
% indicating support required	43.3%	2.8%

The ethnic/cultural background of new entrants is given in the table below:

	University Sector %	Institute of Technology Sector %	National Profile %
Irish	91.3%	89.6%	93.0%
Irish Traveller	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Any Other White Background	5.0%	6.0%	3.9%
African	0.6%	2.2%	1.2%
Any Other Black Background	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Chinese	0.7%	0.3%	0.3%
Any Other Asian Background	1.1%	0.6%	0.6%
Other	1.2%	1.2%	0.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

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The percentage of entrants from ethnic/cultural minorities for 2010/11 and 2009/10 is given in the chart below:

