

Gender and Wider Equal Opportunities Annual Reporting Template

1. Name of Activity:

No.: ESF 2.4

Third Level Access

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

(a) Ongoing Actions:

The activity co-finance two funding programmes, the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities, which address needs that are experienced by both men and women. For example, categories of assistance under the Student Assistance Fund include rent, childcare costs, books/course materials, and living expenses. Categories of expenditure under the Fund for Students with Disabilities include transport, personal assistance, and equipment.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

The Fund offers support to students who find themselves in financial hardship during their course of study. The fund is targeted equally at male and female students.

The number of students in receipt of funding under the Student Assistance Fund grant in 2008-9 was 7,848 of whom 5,204, or 66%, were female.

FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Fund offers support to students with a serious sensory, physical or learning disabilities in order to participate in and complete their course of study. The Fund is equally targeted to male and female students.

The number of students in receipt of funding under the Fund for Students with Disabilities in 2008-9 was 3,843 of whom 1,849, or 48%, were female.

3. Progress against Indicators (where established):

(This should be presented if possible in the tabular form laid out below)

Indicator	Baseline Position	Latest Position
Number of students benefitting from the Student Assistance Fund	1828 male, 2281 female (2000/2001 figures)	2644 male, 5204 female (2008/2009 figures)
Number of students benefitting from the Fund for Students with Disabilities	250 male, 261 female (2001/2001 figures)	1994 male, 1849 female (2008/2009 figures)

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?

While the fundamental criterion governing the allocation of funds under the third level access sub-priority is one of need/merit rather than being gender-based, the measure contributes to gender mainstreaming, as defined by the European Commission, by helping ensuring that the implementation process takes adequate account of the effects on the respective situations of men and women. This is reflected in the goals and proposed action points in the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013* which was published in 2008. In this context, regard will be had to the impact of the funds in promoting the equality of opportunity and participation of men and women in further and higher education.

In respect of wider equal opportunities, it is a national policy goal that all citizens have equality of access to education to ensure that people from all backgrounds can participate in higher education and enter the labour market with qualifications.

The Student Assistance Fund and Fund for Students with Disabilities contribute to this goal through the provision of essential financial and academic supports to a large number of students who are either socially or economically disadvantaged or who have a disability. A total of 11,691 students were supported by the two programmes in 2008-9 academic year.

Through this support the two funding programmes promote wider equality by allowing students to gain an educational qualification which facilitates their full participation in the economy and in society in general.

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.

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.