

University of Iceland Equality Action Plan 2024-2026

Approved by the University Council 11 January 2024

I. Introduction

Core values

Equality is one of the three core values at the University of Iceland, along with professionalism and academic freedom. Diversity is also one of the four main priorities outlined in the [University's Strategy for 2021-2026](#) (UI26). In accordance with our core values, discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, origin, skin colour, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, body shape, age, health, religion, views, residence status, financial means, nationality, or culture is forbidden at the University of Iceland.

Emphasis is placed on equality in a broad sense, as well as an understanding of intersectionality. It is important that equality work at the University of Iceland takes into account changes in Icelandic society. The way the University community approaches diversity influences the development of our democratic society. The University of Iceland must lead the way in this work, for example by striving to attract as diverse a group of staff and students as possible.

Challenges

There are various challenges facing modern university communities. These challenges shape our lives, studies and work. Fiercer competition in academia and for funding affects the way we work, learn and conduct research and has a profound impact on our work-life balance. It is important that the University community strives to achieve a balance between our work, studies and personal lives.

The number of students and staff of foreign origin has also risen in recent years, a trend which will continue in line with the University of Iceland's vision for the future. We need to meet the needs of this group as well as other marginalised groups, for example disabled people and the LGBTQ community at the University of Iceland. This focus aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs are not only relevant to teaching and research. They emphasise that the University community and our campus must accommodate the diverse needs of students and staff, to the benefit of us all. In this context, it is worth mentioning that UI26 states that the principles of universal design should guide the planning of new buildings, renovation of older buildings, and management of the entire University campus.

Legal foundation

The University of Iceland Equality Action Plan 2024-2026 is based on the [Strategy of the University of Iceland 2021-2026](#). The plan is also based on the equality principle of Article 65 of the [Constitution of Iceland no. 33/1944](#), see the [Constitutional Act no. 97/1995](#). The University of Iceland Equality Action Plan builds upon the [Gender Equality Act no. 150/2020](#), the [Act on Equal Treatment of Individuals Regardless of Race and Ethnic Origin no. 85/2018](#) and the [Act on Equal Treatment on the Labour Market no. 86/2018](#). It takes into account provisions from the [Act on Services for Persons with Disabilities with Long-Term Support Needs no. 38/2018](#), the

[UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) and the [Act on Gender Autonomy no. 80/2019](#). The Action Plan was also written in consideration of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), especially Goal 4 (quality education for all) and Goal 5 (gender equality). The University ensures that all staff, regardless of gender, receive the same wages for the same or equivalent work (see Article 6 of Act no. 150/2020 and Article 9 of Act no. 86/2018).

The plan is founded on the integration of the gender and equality dimensions. Gender mainstreaming must be ensured in all policy-making and strategic planning (see Article 30 of Act no. 150/2020) and considerations of equality must be incorporated into all University operations. The University must also ensure that staff and administrators receive regular education on equality matters (see Article 30 of Act no. 150/2020 and Article 7 of Act no. 86/2018). The details are explained further in this Equality Action Plan.

The Equality Action Plan focuses on safeguarding the legal rights of staff and students, as applicable, in accordance with Articles 6-7, 12-15, 28 and 30 of the [Gender Equality Act no. 150/2020](#). The Equality Action Plan is also based on the results of the report [The Status and Development of Equal Opportunities at the University of Iceland 2017-2021](#), which evaluated the status of equality at the University of Iceland and current knowledge in the field of diversity and inclusion.

UI authorities shall ensure that everyone, regardless of gender, has the same opportunities for continuing education, lifelong learning and vocational training and to attend courses designed to enhance professional skills or as preparation for other work, see Article 12 of Act no. 150/2020. As stated in the same article, vacant positions that are open for application shall be equally accessible to women, men and persons whose gender is registered as neutral/non-binary in Registers Iceland, see though Paragraph 2 of Article 16.

UI authorities shall also make the necessary arrangements to enable staff to balance professional and family responsibilities, see Article 13 of Act no. 150/2020, including measures that make it easier for staff to return to work after parental leave or leave taken due to family circumstances. [Strategy for balancing work and family life](#)

Roles

All members of the University of Iceland community are jointly responsible for ensuring equality, but the ultimate responsibility lies with the highest authorities at the University, i.e. the rector and the University Council.

The Equality Action Plan applies to all students and staff, who are jointly responsible for preventing discrimination and striving to create a University community that exemplifies respect, understanding and tolerance.

The Equal Rights Committee shall oversee matters of equality under the authority of the rector and the University Council. The Council for Disability Rights, under the authority of the rector and the University Council, protects the interests of disabled people and students with learning difficulties at the University of Iceland. The equality officer shall, under the auspices of University of Iceland administration, ultimately oversee matters of equality in collaboration with the Equal Rights Committee and the Council for Disability Rights. The equality officer shall follow up the University of Iceland Equality Action Plan, encourage the natural integration of equality work into

all University operations and provide advice to anyone feeling that they have experienced inequality or discrimination.

Each of the five schools, as well as central administration, shall establish their own equality action plan, based on this Equality Action Plan. School deans and the managing director and division heads of central administration are responsible for ensuring that individual provisions of the Equality Action Plan are followed up within the relevant organisational unit.

Particular attention is drawn to the University Professional Council and the rules of procedure on the response to gender-related and sexual harassment and gender-related and sexual violence, as well as bullying and other violence, which can be found on equality.hi.is, including the obligation for people to report offences of which they have knowledge or reasoned suspicion. Anyone receiving a complaint or report of such an offence shall immediately refer the matter to the Professional Council for processing.

History and review

The first University of Iceland equality action plan was approved by the University Council in 2000, with this plan being the eighth.

The Equality Action Plan 2024-2026 was produced by the Equal Rights Committee, led by the Committee chair in collaboration with the equality officer. A policy meeting was held, attended by representatives of all equal rights committees at UI, student representatives, stakeholders and internal experts. This meeting generated proposals that subsequently formed the basis of the Equality Action Plan.

The Equality Action Plan is valid for three years and shall be reviewed at the end of this period, i.e. by the end of 2026. A report on the status and progress of equality matters shall be produced every five years; the next report will address the period 2022–2026 and will be published in 2027.

II Actions

1. Diversity in the University community

No.	Action	Accountability	Year
1.1	Equality training plan, outlining annual training for all permanent staff members at UI in the form of educational videos, discussion sessions and workshops, covering such topics as LGBTQ issues, sexual harassment, multicultural competence, etc.	Equality officer in collaboration with the Division of Human Resources and the Equal Rights Committee	2024 2025 2026
1.2	Explore the possibility of creating the position of LGBTQ ombudsman	The rector in collaboration with the equality officer	2025
1.3	Annual meeting of the chair of the Equal Rights Committee, the equality officer and the rector to review funding and implementation of the Action Plan as part of UI26	UI Equal Rights Committee in collaboration with the rector and equality officer	2024 2025 2026
1.4	Equality Days held annually	Equality officer in collaboration with the Equal Rights Committee, Council for Disability Rights, diversity officer, Division of Marketing and Public Relations, and the Department of Digital Learning and Media	2024 2025 2026
1.5	Ensure student input into equality work at UI through annual consultations with the equality officer, the UI Student Council and student interest groups	Equality officer in collaboration with the Student Council and in consultation with the UI Feminist Organisation and the Queer Students Association	2024 2025 2026
1.6	Propose a mentorship programme for UI students from immigrant backgrounds	Diversity officer in collaboration with the equality officer	2026
1.7	Promote meaningful collaboration on equality between Icelandic universities with a consultation platform for university equality officers (two annual meetings and collaboration on Equality Days events)	Equality officer	2024 2025 2026

1.8	Regular quick facts about equality displayed on screens in UI buildings	Equal Rights Committee	2024 2025 2026
1.9	The Equal Rights Committee will propose 3-6 projects for applied gender studies students, exploring the operations of schools, faculties and central administration	The Equal Rights Committee in collaboration with the coordinator of the gender studies programme and the equality officer	2024 2025 2026
1.10	Create a clear framework for statistical information about immigrants in higher education	Dean of the School of Humanities in collaboration with the equality officer and director of quality management	2024
1.11	Each school equal rights committee will produce an equality action plan to ensure follow up of the UI Equality Action Plan within schools and submit it to the school dean/board for confirmation. School equal rights committees meet at least annually with school boards to explain their work and discuss the need for involvement and support from administrators regarding specific actions	School equal rights committees	2024 2025 2026
1.12	The central administration equal rights committee will produce an equality action plan to ensure follow up of the UI Equality Action Plan within central administration and submit it to the director of central administration. The central administration equal rights committee meets at least annually with the director of central administration to explain their work and discuss the need for involvement and support from administrators regarding specific actions	Central administration equal rights committee	2024 2025 2026

2. A thriving campus

No.	Action	Accountability	Year
2.1	Accessibility on the University campus will be prioritised – for both indoor and outdoor spaces – with improvements made in accordance with accessibility audits. During this period two building accessibility audits will be conducted per year	Division of Operations and Resources	2024 Oddi and VR II 2025 Askja and Eirberg 2026 VR I and the Centre for

			Technical Innovation
2.2	Access to gender-neutral toilets will be ensured, with improvements made in buildings where these facilities are not already available. Gender-neutral toilets are available in most buildings, with the exception of Árnagarður, the University Cinema, Saga, the Centre for Technical Innovation and VR I	Division of Operations and Resources in collaboration with the equality officer and in consultation with the Queer Students Association	2024 Saga 2025 Centre for Technical Innovation and University Cinema 2026 VR I and Árnagarður
2.3	Quiet rooms will be put in place in the University Centre and Saga where disabled people and others who need it can access a calm, quiet space	Council for Disability Rights in collaborative with the Division of Operations and the Resources and Student Counselling Centre	2025
2.4	Annual consultation meetings between the Equal Rights Committee, the Division of Operations and Resources and the Council for Disability Rights to promote a focus on universal design for the UI campus. The first meeting will be an educational meeting	Equal Rights Committee in collaboration with the Division of Operations and Resources and Council for Disability Rights	2024 2025 2026
2.5	Propose a digital navigation system for the University campus, covering both indoor and outdoor spaces	Division of Operations and Resources	2025
2.6	Conduct an audit of outdoor campus spaces that are inaccessible, unsafe or badly lit and deliver findings to the Division of Operations and Resources	Equality officer in collaboration with diversity officer and the Council for Disability Rights and in consultation with student interest groups	2025
2.7	Implement proposed improvements to outdoor campus spaces that are inaccessible, unsafe or badly lit	Division of Operations and Resources	2025
2.8	Update UI campus maps on the website to include information about accessibility	Division of Operations and Resources in collaboration with the equality officer	2025
2.9	Map accessibility issues that exist in the room booking system	Student Counselling Centre in collaboration with the Division of Academic Affairs, the Division of Information Technology, the Division of Operations and Resources	2024

		and school educational managers	
2.10	Tactile pathways installed on the 3rd floor of the University Centre, where support services for students are located	Division of Operations and Resources	2025
2.11	Plan for installation of tactile pathways in other UI buildings	Division of Operations and Resources	2024 Plan complete 2026 Tactile pathways installed in at least 5 buildings

3. Human resources and job satisfaction

No.	Action	Accountability	Year
3.1	Courses every 3 years for managers on how to handle sexual harassment in the workplace. This training will also be incorporated into the induction procedure for new managers	Division of Human Resources	2025
3.2	Free period products for students and staff in UI buildings	Facilities Management in collaboration with the equality officer, the Student Council, the UI Feminist Organisation and the Queer Students Association	2024 first 10 buildings 2025 needs assessment in other buildings and improvements made where necessary
3.3	Education for support service staff on cultural sensitivity, diversity and inclusion	Education team at the Division of Human Resources	2026
3.4	A task force will compile proposals for ensuring more diverse recruitment, both for academic and administrative positions. The task force will comprise the equality officer, as well as representatives from the Division of Human Resources, the Division of Science and Innovation and the human resources managers of two schools	The Division of Human Resources will appoint the task force	2025 proposals delivered

3.5	Ongoing equality education incorporated into the Division of Human Resources educational programme, 1-2 sessions per year	Division of Human Resources	2024 2025 2026
3.6	Icelandic calendar in Ugla for international staff and students showing public holidays with short explanations	Division of Marketing and Public Relations in collaboration with Division of Information Technology	2025
3.7	Follow equal pay policy and maintain equal pay certification. Annual analysis, management review and action plan approved	Division of Human Resources	2024 2025 2026
3.8	Standardise administration of teaching hours between faculties and schools at the University of Iceland	Rector	2026

4. User-centred services

No.	Action	Accountability	Year
4.1	Propose a channel for complaints about microaggressions, racism, ableism and anti-LGBTQ discrimination	Equality officer in consultation with the pro-rector for science and the UI Professional Council	2025
4.2	Normalise the recording of personal pronouns for UI staff by introducing and training staff on their use in Ugla, the staff directory, Canvas, email signatures and business cards	Division of Marketing and Public Relations in collaboration with the Division of Human Resources, Division of Information Technology, equality officers and the Service Centre	2024
4.3	Audit of the UI Service Centre to ensure that it is serving all groups effectively, e.g. considering accessibility needs	Service centre	2025
4.4	Video for international students containing practical information about living in Iceland	Equality officer in collaboration with diversity officers, Student Council and the Department of Digital Learning and Media	2024
4.5	Extra support measures proposed for students from immigrant backgrounds, as part of the <i>Collaboration between HEIs</i> initiative, including	Equality officer in collaboration with diversity officer and the Student Counselling Centre	2026

	development of support resources and an orientation plan for new students		
4.6	Explore the possibility of having all complaints channels in one, convenient place	Service Centre in collaboration with the equality officer and director of quality management	2024

5. Quality of learning prioritised

No.	Action	Accountability	Year
5.1	Mandatory for-credit courses in gender and equality studies at all faculties of the School of Education	Faculty heads at the School of Education	2024 course descriptions approved 2025 courses launched
5.2	Explore ways to incorporate gender and equality studies into programmes at all faculties of the School of Social Sciences, the School of Humanities and the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences.	Equal Rights Committee in collaboration with the equality officer and relevant school equal rights committees	2025 Meetings with school deans and faculty heads
5.3	Online equality education for sessional lecturers	Equality officer in collaboration with the Division of Human Resources	2024
5.4	Explore ways to follow up the report <i>Stereotypes in Higher Education (2023)</i> , e.g. by combating gender stereotypes, promoting flexible learning and developing support for marginalised groups, helping them to access higher education	Equal Rights Committee in collaboration with the equality officer and diversity officers	2025
5.5	Help academic staff access knowledge about equality in teaching with an annual workshop about strategies for incorporating the equality dimension into teaching and creating a learning environment that encourages collaboration in diverse student groups	Centre for Teaching and Learning	2024 2025 2026

5.6	The existing equality checklist for teaching will be updated (in Icelandic and English) and presented to teaching staff and anyone with teaching duties	Equality officer in collaboration with Centre for Teaching and Learning, Equal Rights Committee and Student Counselling Centre	2024
5.7	Propose strategies for improving the teaching evaluation survey, e.g. increase response rates, prevent students using the survey to harass teaching staff	Division of Academic Affairs in collaboration with the equality officer	2025
5.8	Education for teaching staff on accessible teaching methods and universal design	Equality officer in collaboration with the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the disability services team	2025
5.9	Explore whether certain course elements can create barriers to learning due to accessibility issues (e.g. field trips)	School educational managers in collaboration with the Council for Disability Rights	2026

6. High quality graduate studies and excellence in research

No.	Action	Accountability	Year
6.1	Education about sexual harassment and violence in academia for PhD students and supervisors, as well as a course for supervisors of PhD students about the responsibilities of the role. Training of supervisors will cover communication and power dynamics between the supervisor and the PhD student, how the supervisor can create an inclusive environment, where to refer issues (e.g. the ombudsman for PhD students, the Professional Council, the Division of Human Resources, a union, the Graduate School or the Association of PhD students and Postdocs), etc.	Graduate School in collaboration with the Division of Human Resources and the ombudsman for PhD students	2025 2026 Annually thereafter
6.2	Create a forum for collaboration between PhD students and postdoctoral researchers at different schools whose projects relate to equality. Symposium every two years	Association of PhD Students and Postdocs in collaboration with the Equal Rights Committee and equality officer	2024 2026

6.3	Explore the possibility of raising the FTE of the ombudsman for PhD students	Rector in collaboration with the pro-rector for science	2025
6.4	Workshop about research study design that considers the gender dimension	Division of Science and Innovation in collaboration with the equality officer and school research directors	2024