
Document Information

1. Document Details

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Important Note: If the 'Status' of this document reads 'Draft', it has not been finalised and should not be relied upon.

2. Revision History

Version Number	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Changes tracked?
1.0	29/08/15	First Draft	None
1.1	18/01/16	Suggested Changes by Access Office accepted by BC	Yes
2.0	18/01/16	Review of impending legislation	No
2.1	31/05/16	Changes pursuant to Council of Unions meeting	Yes
3.0	7/6/16	Final clean version incorporating changes requested by Union	No

3. Relevant Existing/Related Documents

Title	Status	Relevance to this Document
Fitness to Study/Practice Policy	To be drafted	

4. Consultation History

This document has been prepared in consultation with the following bodies:

Name	Date	Details of consultation
Council of Unions	31/5/16	Queries raised by unions addressed and further changes agreed to in light of same.

5. Approvals

This document requires following approvals (in order where applicable):

Name	Date	Details of Approval Required
Governing Body	June 2016	Approval of final version of Policy

Equality & Access Policy/Statement 2016-2021

1. INTRODUCTION

CIT is committed to furthering equality in, and access to, the Institute. CIT recognises that having an inclusive and diverse student body and workforce contributes to a more positive and dynamic life in the Institute.

This policy covers the five year period from June 2016.

2. BACKGROUND

The Institutes of Technology Acts 1992-2006¹

Section 21D of this Act obliges the Governing Body of an Institute of Technology to require its President to prepare a statement of the Institute's policies in respect of:

- Access to education by people who experience economic or social disadvantage, by those who have a disability and by people from sections of society that are under-represented in the student body;
- Equality, including gender equality.

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2008

Like all employers, CIT is prohibited by this Act from discriminating against people on nine unlawful grounds, namely:

- gender;
- marital or family status;
- sexual orientation;
- religious belief;
- age;

¹ Note: The Technological Universities Bill contains equivalent obligations and this policy/statement is designed to meet those also.

- disability;
- race; or
- membership of the Traveller community.

References to the ***'nine unlawful grounds'*** in this Policy address the above.

The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004

This Act prohibits discrimination on the same nine unlawful grounds covered in the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2008. However, this piece of legislation is not limited to the context employment. It prohibits discrimination in relation to education, the disposal of goods, the provision of services, the disposal of property, the provision of accommodation and discrimination by clubs.

The Disability Act 2005

This Act requires public bodies such as CIT to take a number of positive action measures including ensuring that its buildings and services are accessible to persons with disabilities. It also requires public bodies to promote and support the employment of persons with disabilities. CIT will have regard to any relevant codes of practice published by the National Disability Authority in order to help fulfil its obligations under the Act.

CIT is cognisant of the fact the term *"disability"* is defined differently in different pieces of legislation and will have regard to the relevant definition of the term when seeking to fulfil the obligations imposed on it by a specific Act.

National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-19

This plan states that equality of opportunity to higher education is a national priority. The plan sets out goals, objectives and targets for all higher education institutions and institute strategic plans must fully reflect these.

The aim of the plan is *'ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population.'*

3. SCOPE

This Policy is drafted to account for CIT's obligations under legislation and to set out its main principles in relation to equality and access concerning:

- CIT students, alumni and prospective students of the Institute;
- CIT employees, whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time or fixed-term, agency staff and consultants (hereafter referred to as "Staff") and those applying for job vacancies at CIT for which they may be eligible.

The Policy should be construed as a general overall statement of the Institute's position on matters pertaining to equality and access. If there is a particular case where it is considered that CIT itself or a member of its staff or one of students is acting in a way which may violate this Policy, this should in this first instance be brought to the attention of the specific department or function responsible for the relevant area in question. Concerns and complaints can be formally raised pursuant to section 9 of this Policy.

4. OBJECTIVES

- CIT is and will continue to be an equal opportunities educator and employer;
- CIT will strive to ensure there is equality of opportunity and diversity and will promote an equal opportunities and diversity culture which encompass persons from sections of society which may be under-represented;
- CIT will strive to ensure that all applicants for study or employment in the Institute are treated fairly on the basis of their merits, abilities,

qualifications and suitability and that procedures do not discriminate on the basis of criteria which cannot be justified. What is meant by this is that certain differences in treatment may be legal and permissible if that treatment can be 'objectively justified'. There have been a number of European and Irish cases which have established that there is a three stage test for determining whether a particular measure taken is objectively justifiable having regard to the facts of the specific case in question. This test involves considering whether the measure:

- Corresponds to a legitimate objective of the party taking it;
- Is appropriate with a view to achieving the objective pursued; and
- Is necessary and proportionate to that end.

If the answer to all of the above is in the affirmative, then the particular measure may be considered objectively justified and thereby legal and permissible in the specific circumstances.

- CIT will strive to provide additional access routes to full time programmes of study in CIT for students who experience socio-economic disadvantage, mature students and students with disabilities (e.g. DARE Scheme, Cork Colleges Progression Scheme and the CIT Access Linked Schools Progression Scheme).
- CIT will continue to promote concepts of equality of opportunity in terms of recruitment and selection, pay, leave arrangements, conditions, training, work experience and opportunities for study and career progression;
- CIT will make reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations and/or reasonable measures in this context means taking the requisite effective and practical steps unless they would impose a disproportionate burden on the party who would be taking them taking factors such as scale, cost and funding into consideration.

These key objectives are expanded on further below.

5. EDUCATION

Prospective Students

CIT is committed to facilitating access to third level education to as many people as possible, including those who experience economic or social disadvantage, mature students, persons who have a disability and people from sections of society who are significantly under-represented in the student body. CIT will strive to eliminate barriers to equality in order to ensure the fair treatment of students and applicants so that they will be afforded every opportunity possible to fulfil their potential. CIT will continue to provide and develop accessible entry routes for students who are from under-represented sections of society.

CIT seeks to conduct its admissions process in accordance with relevant procedures and in a manner which does not discriminate against people on any of the nine unlawful grounds. All applicants are treated fairly and impartially. CIT's Access Service provides support to prospective students in ways such as the CIT Access Linked Schools Programme, outreach activities which engage with students with disabilities, mature student pre-entry programme, etc. CIT Access Service also assists with the equality of outcome for access students through the provision of targeted supports (group supports as well as one to one supports).

CIT is committed to ensuring that disability does not hinder any person from reaching his/her academic potential. Applicants with disabilities should apply to become a student of CIT in the normal manner through the CAO. Disclosure of disability is entirely discretionary. CIT is part of the national DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) scheme which provides students with disabilities an opportunity to be offered places on full-time programmes of study, on reduced points. Making any disclosures in this regard will in no way adversely affect a person's application.

CIT undertakes to increase the access and participation rates in third level education of people who experience socio-economic disadvantage and others who are from

sections of society that are under-represented in the student body. CIT will strive to meet and exceed national targets as set out by the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-19.

CIT encourages applications from mature students. A mature student is a person aged 23 years or over on 01 January in the year of entry to a third level course. Entry requirements for mature students differ from those of other applicants. Mature applicants may be required to attend in person for interview and some courses may require a written test in addition to interview. Mature entry to courses is dealt with by the Head of Department, facilitated through the Admissions Office and supported by the Access Service.

Further information in relation to application procedures, entry requirements and other admission information relevant to prospective students is available at www.cit.ie/access

Registered Students

Students will not be discriminated against on the basis of the nine unlawful grounds in relation to their access to courses, facilities, benefits, participation in the Institute or in relation to disciplinary matters. CIT will strive to ensure that all students are treated equally.

Through its dedicated Access Service, CIT provides support to registered students through specific induction and orientation programmes, financial assistance, academic and learning support, personal one-to-one supports. Through such programmes, CIT aims to ensure that each student reaches his/her full potential.

In addition to the main national SUSI grant, financial assistance is available for full-time registered students through programmes such as:

- The Student Assistance Fund;
- The Hardship 2 Fund;

- The Fund for Students with Disabilities – which allows the Access Service to put necessary supports in place on the students behalf.

For more information about all available programmes please contact the Access Service.

CIT seeks to ensure that its premises, services and the information it provides are suitable for disabled persons and will monitor and review these matters to ensure that disabled persons are not disadvantaged. Where possible and proportionate, CIT will take steps to improve access for students with disabilities.

6. EMPLOYMENT

It is the right of all persons to be treated in a fair, equal and non-discriminatory manner in relation to access to employment, recruitment, training, promotion, work experience and terms and conditions of employment. This right is irrespective of a person's gender, marital or family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community.

CIT is an equal opportunities employer. CIT encourages all persons, including persons with disabilities, to apply for any job vacancy at the Institute for which they are eligible and qualified. CIT will consider applications on the basis of a person's abilities, qualification, experience and suitability for the particular position. No job applicant will receive less favourable treatment on any of the nine unlawful grounds.

The Institute aims to ensure that:

- Recruitment and selection methods encourage applications from all potential candidates;
- All documentation relating to CIT recruitment processes contain non-discriminatory language;

- Knowledge of vacancies reaches a wide market and, where relevant, groups under-represented in the Institute;
- All interview panel members are familiar with best interview practice including avoiding unlawful discrimination;
- There is a balance on all interview panels in relation to gender;
- All reasonable accommodations are made to meet the requirements of applicants with disabilities at interview;
- All applicants are treated on the basis of their merits and abilities.

CIT will review its recruitment procedures regularly to ensure that it is in compliance with all relevant legislation and that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities and that sufficiently diverse sectors of the community are reached. Where appropriate, CIT may use lawful exemptions to recruit exclusively from certain sections of society such as people with disabilities.

If you are a person with a disability, or acquire a disability in the course of your employment with CIT, you are encouraged to inform CIT. This is to enable CIT to support you as much as possible in your work or during a recruitment process. Staff may also advise their immediate manager or the Human Resources Manager of any reasonable adjustments to working conditions or duties relating to their employment which they consider to be necessary or which would assist in the performance of their duties. In such cases, CIT may wish to consult with Staff's medical advisor(s) about possible reasonable adjustments. CIT will give careful consideration to any proposals in this regard and will seek to accommodate same where they are reasonable, possible and proportionate to the needs of a person's job. However, there may be instances where it will not be reasonable for CIT to accommodate suggested adjustments. In such cases, CIT will provide information as to the basis of the decision.

CIT will not differentiate in relation to terms and conditions of employment unless any such differences in treatment can be objectively justified. CIT will monitor its use

of part-time and fixed-term employees and their conditions of service to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities.

CIT seeks to ensure that its premises, services and the information it provides are suitable for persons with a disability and will monitor and review these matters to ensure that persons with disability are not disadvantaged.

7. DIGNITY & RESPECT

CIT is committed to maintaining an environment that encourages and supports the right to dignity and respect in the Institute. Anyone who studies, works in or deals with CIT is expected to treat every individual in an equal manner with dignity and respect. Any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment is unacceptable and CIT will deal with such issues through its relevant disciplinary procedures.

8. IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

Human Resources is the office responsible in the case of Staff and the Registrar's Office in the case of student related issues. Their role is to:

- Develop, co-ordinate and monitor this Policy;
- Promote awareness of the Policy;
- Be the point of contact for queries and complaints.
- Collect information and conduct research relevant to equality and access issues in the Institute;
- Identify and, through the President, recommend to the Governing Body of the Institute positive actions that will enhance equality and access, including the setting of targets and measures to remedy actual or potential sources of inequality.

9. COMPLIANCE, COMPLAINTS & BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

All Staff and students are responsible for ensuring that they comply with this Policy. Heads of schools, faculties and departments have a particular responsibility for promoting equality and access in the Institute.

Any individual with a concern, grievance or complaint in relation to discrimination and/or a breach of this Policy should bring it to Human Resources, in the case of issues concerning Staff, or the Registrar's Office, in the case of student related issues. The appropriate staff and/or student grievance procedure may then be applied.

CIT may also treat violations of this Policy as a disciplinary matter which will be processed through Staff or student disciplinary procedures as appropriate.

10. TRAINING

CIT recognises that Staff and/or students may require information and training in best practice relating to matters addressed in this Policy such as disability awareness, managing diversity, assistive technology, teaching and learning best practice, etc. CIT will seek to identify these training needs and ensure that appropriate training is received.

11. REVIEWING THIS POLICY

CIT will review the effectiveness of this Policy from time to time to ensure that it is achieving its objectives.

CIT welcomes comments and on this Policy and suggestions for ways in which it might be improved. Please furnish any comments/suggestions to the Human Resources Manager, in the case of issues concerning Staff, or the Registrar, in the case of student related issues.

CIT may amend this Policy from time to time as it sees fit, provided any amendments of a significant material nature are progressed following appropriate consultation. Otherwise, the President shall prepare a revised Policy not earlier than 6 months, and not later than 3 months, before the expiration of the period specified in this Policy.