

4. EDI Race Equality Action Plan *Staff Recruitment, Management and Development*

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Introduction

RCSI set out its commitment to EDI through its inclusion as a foundational pillar of the RCSI Strategic Plan 2018–2022. In January 2021, the RCSI Race Equality Forum was convened as part of RCSI's commitment to advance race equality within the University. This action supports RCSI to embed race equality across the institution.

Initiative

A Race Equality Forum was established comprising a multidisciplinary and diverse group of students and staff, with the support and sponsorship of the SMT. In recognition of the importance of external expertise, valued external advisors joined this forum, including those from Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, and Race Equality Charter Award Holders in the UK.

The Forum was tasked with developing RCSI's first three-year Race Equality Action Plan. In early 2021, a consultation process was undertaken to ensure that staff and student experiences were central to the process. As part of this process, 42 staff and student forum members attended dedicated working group sessions to discuss priority issues affecting the RCSI community and ways to tackle these relating to seven key objectives including data collection, recruitment, culture, education and research, training and awareness raising, policy, and reporting. To embed this important priority within RCSI's governance system, the Race Equality Forum reports to the EDI Committee three times per year; it provides updates on the progress of the action plan and relevant activities. The EDI Committee is chaired by a member of the SMT, and members include forum chairs, EDI staff, SU leaders, student reps, senior staff members, and representatives from key units such as HR, and student academic and regulatory affairs.

RCSI staff also participated in the HEA's research on race equality in the higher education sector. This was the first report of its kind and highlighted key issues including high levels of discrimination witnessed and reported. This report and its findings further informed the development of the RCSI Race Equality Action Plan. RCSI announced its commitment to advancing racial equality by releasing a race equality statement the core message of which stated:



“We acknowledge that racism, systemic inequality, and discrimination exists in our society. We reject racial discrimination in all its forms as wrong and fundamentally inconsistent with our mission and values.”

Outcome

RCSI was proud to **become the first HEI in Ireland to launch a three-year Race Equality Action Plan** marking a commitment to advancing race equality for staff, students, and the wider community. The action plan covers seven key objectives which aligns with the HEA recommendations for race equality in higher education. It calls on all to act now to support its implementation and advancement. Targeted initiatives around data collection, recruitment, culture, education, research, training, awareness raising, policy and reporting are included. The action plan reflects several key recommendations highlighted in the HEA Report on Race Equality. This includes the introduction of the Speak Out Tool which allows both staff and students to report incidence of racism, harassment, or discrimination of any kind, through a new national online system, and signposts to areas of support. Other actions identified in the three-year plan include a review of the healthcare curriculum to ensure greater representation of people of colour in teaching materials. This involves developing imagery of illnesses which can present differently, according to skin tone, and ensuring greater diversity in the simulated patients that healthcare students experience.

Since publication, RCSI was invited to present at the 2022 launch of the HEA Race Equality Implementation Plan, sharing progress and best practice with the higher education community. In November 2022, RCSI held an anniversary event highlighting four important student-staff partnerships on race equality initiatives including a project to introduce surgical hijabs, and education and curriculum-based initiatives such as increasing diversity in clinical cases and images, and anti-racism reading groups. The event also detailed the progress made on the action plan one year on, and future opportunities. Data remains an essential aspect of advancing race equality at RCSI and improving ethnicity data collection of staff and students is a priority action and is already underway. A review of the RCSI career website is also underway to ensure use of inclusive imagery. A “Let's Talk About Race” training module is now available for all staff, and has been provided to 120 staff and students.