

# Gender equality policy

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**Decision-making body:** Board of Governors of the University of Luxembourg

*"Nothing in life is to be feared; it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less."*

*Marie Curie Skłodowska*

## Table of Contents

<b>Preamble</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Purpose</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Scope and application</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Policy Areas</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Awareness .....	4
Staff composition .....	4
Work-Life Balance .....	4
Workplace Climate.....	4
Communication .....	4
Teaching and Research.....	4
<b>Implementation and measurement of success</b> .....	<b>5</b>

## Preamble

The University of Luxembourg gathers highly motivated scholars who contribute to various scientific research areas and teach passionately to a growing body of excellent domestic and international students. Inclusion, diversity and gender equality are central for us.<sup>1</sup> We aim to create a caring working environment that includes everyone and where gender equality is a matter of fairness and central to supporting scientific excellence.

This gender equality policy is the outcome of a two-year-long study and comprehensive consultations with all university stakeholders. We undertook a rigorous, research-driven analysis to identify unconscious biases and actions to achieve sustainable gender equality through a systemic change. More specifically, the study started with a pilot gender equality audit at the Faculty of Law, Economics and Finance in March 2019 that received a 62% participation rate. The pilot audit assessed how we effectively institutionalised gender equality in policies, structures, decision-making processes, and corresponding budgets at the Faculty. On September 14th 2019, during the Retreat of the Board of Governors, we presented and extensively discussed the results of the pilot audit. We examined the areas that showed the major issues and proposed ways to extend the pilot gender audit to the entire University. In addition, the discussion included various aspirational and challenging benchmarks for the future gender policy.

In September-December 2019, [the Gender Equality Committee](#) examined, reviewed, and extended the pilot gender audit analysis to the university-wide setting. Accordingly, from January 2019 to April 2020, the Rector commissioned the committee with the first university-wide Gender Audit organisation to gauge gender issues. A significant number of staff members participated actively in the Audit (30% of UL staff members). The Audit included research to understand how the University compares with similar universities in terms of the gender composition of staff members, along with research into staff members' own perceptions and experiences of gender equality. Staff members were asked about seven main areas related to gender equality in the institution: perceptions of the university and work-life; bullying and harassment; unconscious bias and discrimination in recruitment and promotions; career pathways; time spent on activities; training; and caring responsibilities. The results were presented and discussed at board meetings in every Faculty and Interdisciplinary Centre of the University, at the University Council, at the rectorate and Board of Governors meetings, from July 2020 to April 2021. Finally, the gender audit results and their thorough discussions served as the basis for the present policy.

## Purpose

The policy's primary purpose is to establish a clear vision of gender equality and guide the advancement towards it at the University. The present document outlines the scope and application of the gender equality policy and its key policy areas. The policy is coherent with the University's regulations and policies (e.g., ROI, Code of Conduct). However, it highlights the goal of gender equality and equal opportunities.

## Scope and application

The policy shall enter into force on May 2021. As such, a budget envelope is dedicated to its implementation as of this date. The Gender Equality Committee will analyse the policy every three years. Its review requires the approval and the validation of the Rector and the Board of Governors.

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<sup>1</sup> Gender equality is also one of our central values in the long-term strategy of the University.

## Policy Areas

### Awareness

Raising awareness aims at promoting and encouraging a general understanding of gender-related challenges at the University and beyond. Implicit biases that cause gender inequalities are built into our practices and procedures and in our minds. Acknowledging that implicit biases may persist, despite the best intentions, is the critical step towards achieving gender equality and removing barriers to inclusion.<sup>2</sup> To raise awareness and generate a better understanding of gender issues and biases, the University provides tools and training for staff. Furthermore, the University raises awareness by producing and publishing yearly gender-disaggregated statistics.

### Staff composition

Gender equality promotes the optimal use of talents allowing the University of Luxembourg to remain innovative. We are committed to removing any discriminatory barrier in recruitment, retention, and career opportunities.<sup>3</sup> Promoting gender equality involves gender-proofing recruitment, retention, and promotion procedures to improve the gender balance of our staff. Job application writing is de-biased and linguistically formulated in a gender-sensitive way; furthermore, quantifiable indicators of curricula consider parental and family-related leave periods. We address gender imbalances in decision-making processes.

### Work-Life Balance

The University supports parenthood and families. We promote a working environment where staff members can have a successful career and achieve a work-life balance. For this, the University aims to improve the balance between work and caring responsibilities. We ensure that staff members, with no distinction of gender or marital status, with parenting or other primary caring responsibilities, are not disadvantaged in their daily working life and career development.

### Workplace Climate

We have a strong commitment to zero tolerance of harassment, mobbing, or any form of discrimination in any of our activities. The University fosters a professional environment defined by equal opportunity and fair treatment for all staff members and students. We provide the needed infrastructure, procedures, and network of conciliators to solve any episode of conflict. All aspects of the code of conduct apply.

### Communication

We promote diversity and inclusivity in interpersonal communication among staff members and students. Gender-inclusive communication avoids discriminatory and gendered words and expressions, gendered role titles and avoids stereotypes. One of the most potent ways implicit bias can act is through language. Language not only reflects and defines culture but also shapes cultural norms. Consequently, gender-inclusive communication and language matter because they promote social change and help achieve gender equality.<sup>4</sup>

### Teaching and Research

The development and the transmission of knowledge related to gender can increase awareness of inequalities and their multidimensional adverse effects. Thus, research and teaching about gender are essential for creating a more egalitarian and fairer University and society. By teaching gender-related

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<sup>2</sup> Prior research in psychology has shown that even the most egalitarian individuals often hold subtle gender biases, and relevantly are exhibited by both men and women (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Experimental research shows that universities need interventions to address faculty gender-biased perceptions to be able to advance the goal of gender equality in science (see Moss-Racusina, et al, 2012, at <https://www.pnas.org/content/109/41/16474>)

<sup>4</sup> Countries where the population speaks a gendered language score much lower on the Global Gender Gap index (see Prewitt-Freilino et al. 2012 at <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2012-03243-013>)

issues and producing research related to gender, social transformation can happen and take a lasting place in the mind of future generations. Therefore, we conduct gender as a research topic. Furthermore, we are committed to offering teaching that has gender as a critical component.

## Implementation and measurement of success

A set of policy measures accompanies this policy, as detailed in the document "*Provisional implementation measures*". These policy measures shall be considered adaptable to gender equality and the available resources at the University. The planning and the prioritising of measures are developed in the aforementioned document.

From the validation of the policy, the Gender Equality Committee is in charge of running a regular gender audit to monitor the progress of gender (in)equality at the University. In addition, the Gender Equality Committee reports yearly to the Rector and the Board of Governors on the implementation. The policy is successful if two conditions are met: (i) the measures are implemented according to the calendar defined in the document "*Provisional implementation measures*", and (ii) a consequent improvement is recorded in the following gender audit results. The Rector is responsible for the success of the policy.