

SCBE EDI Newsletter: Inclusion

May 2023



Inclusion

Belonging	Community
Friendship	Compassion
Understanding	Support

Inclusion means that every member of our community, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, or any other characteristic, is welcome and valued. It's about creating a safe and supportive environment where everyone can thrive, both academically and personally.

EDI Theme Focus: Inclusion

What is inclusivity and what is the impact of promoting it?

Inclusion refers to the practice of ensuring that all members of a community, regardless of their background, are welcomed and valued. This includes individuals of different races, ethnicities, religions, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, and socioeconomic statuses, among others. Inclusion will look different for people in each of these groups –

- **Race/ethnicity:** Promoting the wider inclusion of people from different races and ethnicities can create a vibrant and dynamic community, where different perspectives, experiences, and cultures are valued.
- **Religion:** Working to be more inclusive of differing religions can create a more tolerant and compassionate community, where everyone is respected for their beliefs and values.
- **LGBTQIA+:** Embracing LGBTQIA+ individuals can create a welcoming and supportive environment, where everyone can feel safe and empowered to be themselves.
- **Socioeconomic status:** The inclusion of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds can create a more equitable and just community, helping to ensure that everyone has access to the same opportunities and resources.

Inclusion in these ways can have a profoundly positive impact on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. This can lead to greater empathy, understanding, and connection across different groups, as well as a sense of belonging and community. By providing people with the support, resources and opportunities, they can thrive both personally and professionally. This can lead to higher levels of innovation, productivity and success, as well as a more vibrant and dynamic society that benefits everyone.

Inclusivity in Academia

In higher education, inclusion is the ongoing process of improving the education systems to meet the needs of everyone, particularly those in marginalised groups. Modern day Irish society is becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse due to increased immigration, in turn the landscape of academia is also becoming more diverse. This trend is seen worldwide to increased globalisation. Efforts from universities and publishing companies to promote inclusivity such as targeted faculty hiring have often been [mischaracterized as politicising science](#). Real issues are clearly apparent in the current landscape which requires promotion of inclusion within academia. For example, in academic research there has been evidence of publishing bias where it was shown that more papers are rejected by members of under-represented groups. These [decisions](#) can impact career progression for these individuals, particularly women, people from low-income countries and those of a different race. Realising a bias in publishing, the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) has created a [policy](#) of minimum standards for inclusion and diversity for scholarly publishing, this has also been adopted by a number of other publishing [organisations](#). There are many benefits to promoting the inclusion of under-represented individuals in academia to help facilitate the career growth of these individuals. For example, the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University ensured that 50% of all researchers were not natives and saw an [increase in academic ranking by research output](#). In academic hiring there also exists a bias where many of the metrics used to define excellence such as hiring from prestigious universities are inherently biased, creating more barriers for [women](#) and [people of colour](#) to obtain faculty positions. The promotion of inclusion within academia is of great importance but often challenged through the lens of cancel culture. Researchers in universities have an obligation to consider how hiring faculty, training students and publishing are impacted by societal issues and require steps towards progress for the inclusion of all its members.

Inclusion from Students' Perspectives

Being appreciated and accepted for who we are as a student, regardless of our origin, identity, or ability, is inclusion. Every student wants an equal opportunity to engage in learning and participation in all facets of school life without experiencing bias, exclusion, or discrimination.

From the viewpoint of a student, inclusion can be felt in a variety of ways:

- 1) **Classrooms and curriculum that are inclusive:** UCD SCBE includes students from different backgrounds and abilities. A good example is the one year Masters course which is open to professionals from all fields with relevant experience. The SCBE faculty promote group work, which helps students recognise and embrace individual differences, also encourages a sense of community and belonging, hence supporting learning and growth.
- 2) **Extracurricular activities that are inclusive:** UCD as a whole is a hub for inclusive extracurricular activities. With 54 [Sports Clubs](#) and over 80 active [Societies](#), students from various backgrounds are able to find many safe and welcoming spaces on campus among people with similar interests.
- 3) **University policies and practices that are inclusive:** Inclusive policies and practices aim to guarantee that all students have equal access to opportunities and resources. The online portal of [UCD IT Services](#), [SISWeb](#) and [Brightspace](#) provide students with equal access to a wide range of resources such as lecture content, [Online Library](#), [Microsoft Office 365](#), [study spaces](#), and [sports and fitness facilities](#). This promotes fairness and equity.
- 4) **Student Supports:** UCD provides students with a variety of support systems including the [UCD Careers Network](#), [Student Advisors](#), [UCD Chaplaincy](#), the [Access & Lifelong Learning Centre](#), etc. for any personal (including mental-health related) or professional queries that they might have.

What are some steps we can take to be more inclusive?

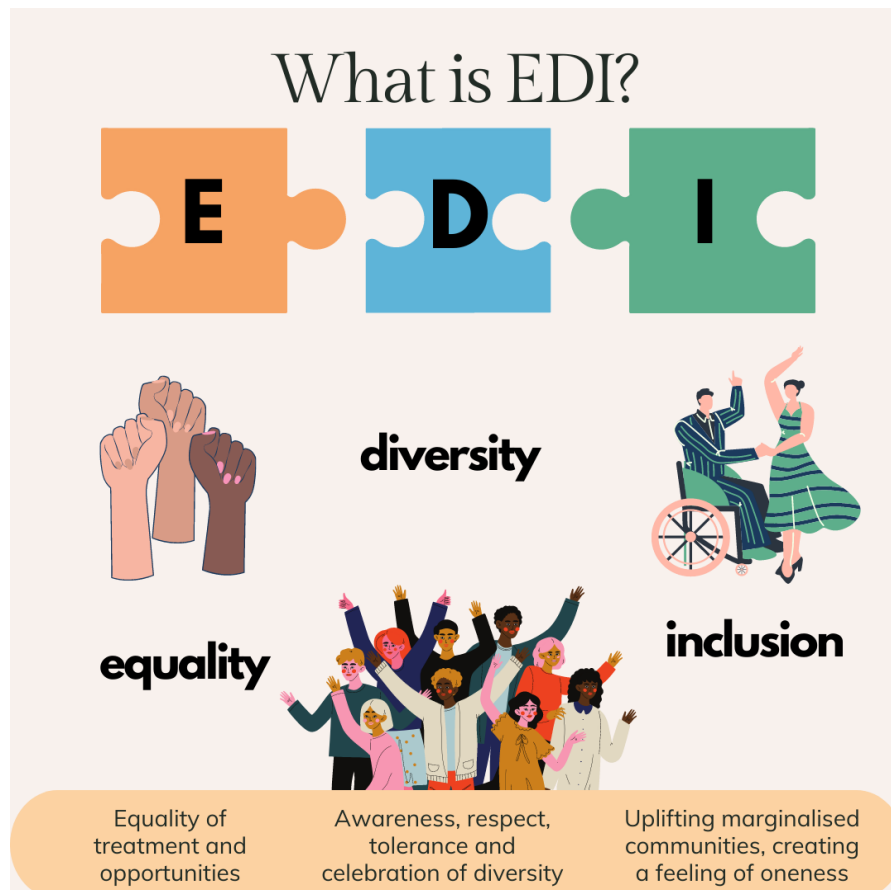
While it is very necessary and encouraging that the resources and supports available in UCD are inclusive to all, it is also important that we take action to be more inclusive and to promote inclusivity on campus.

As discussed in our first EDI newsletter, our unconscious biases can often lead to others feeling alienated and may have a negative impact on diversity within groups in UCD. By acknowledging these unintentional biases and by challenging stereotypes and preconceived assumptions, we can avoid being exclusive or unfair in our speech and actions. Once we recognise our own privileges—or lack thereof—and aim to educate ourselves on other people's experiences, we can help create an environment where people feel included and comfortable.

In our everyday lives, there are many ways we can be more inclusive. For example, we can use inclusive and appropriate language — try to avoid using gender-specific words or phrases such as “ladies” or “dudes” when addressing a group to prevent possibly misgendering someone. Phrases such as “handicapped”, “special needs”, or “wheelchair-bound” can be problematic and demeaning to people with disabilities. Instead, use people-first language (where possible) to emphasise the person rather than the disability, e.g. “students with dyslexia”, “person who has Down syndrome”, etc. If you're

comfortable with doing so, include your pronouns in your email signature! Highlight and participate in holidays and traditions with friends and colleagues from different backgrounds and cultures. Diversity and Inclusion go hand-in-hand — our differences should be celebrated!

More specific to the SCBE, you can join and/or support the EDI committee. The current committee is dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment on campus and we work together to make the School more of a community!



What is the SCBE EDI Committee?

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee for the School of Chemical and Bioprocess Engineering (SCBE) consists of a mix of undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, academic, and administrative staff. The committee strives towards promoting EDI across all levels by continuously engaging with students and staff on these topics. We seek to promote social interactions and create an environment that bolsters confidence in all to discuss personal and professional issues related to EDI.

Undergraduate Representatives: Adesola Ojomo-Amaka and Lauren Callaghan.

Graduate Representatives: Nethraa Kannan, Apostolos Tsopanoglou, Cristina Abascaul-Ruiz, Aswathy Balakrishnan, Ronan Kelly, and Manan Manan.

Postdoctoral Representatives: We are looking forward to welcoming postdoctoral representatives. Please reach out if you are interested in joining the EDI committee.

Staff Representatives: Dr. Veronica Sofianos (Chair), Dr. Ioscani Jimenez del Val, and Ms. Henna Kinsella.