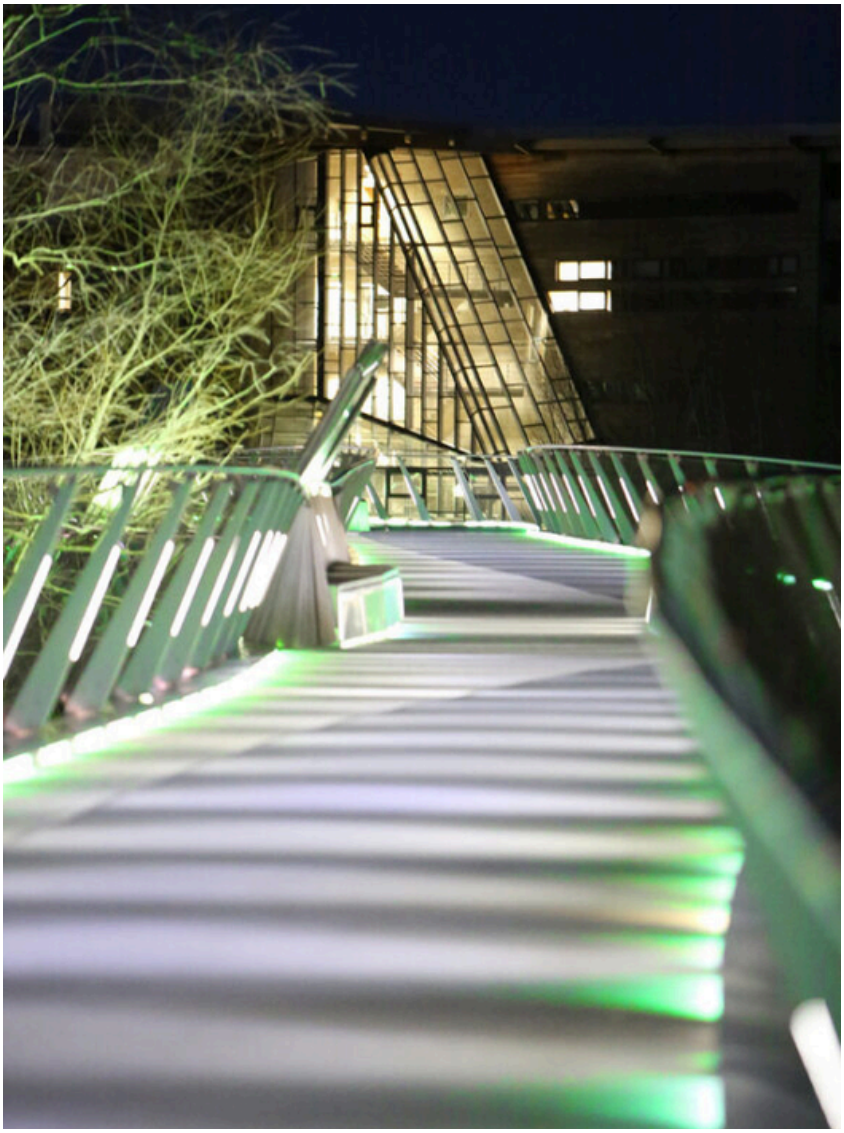
# EHS EDI BULLETIN

UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH | Education and Health Sciences

ISSUE 9 | MAY 2026



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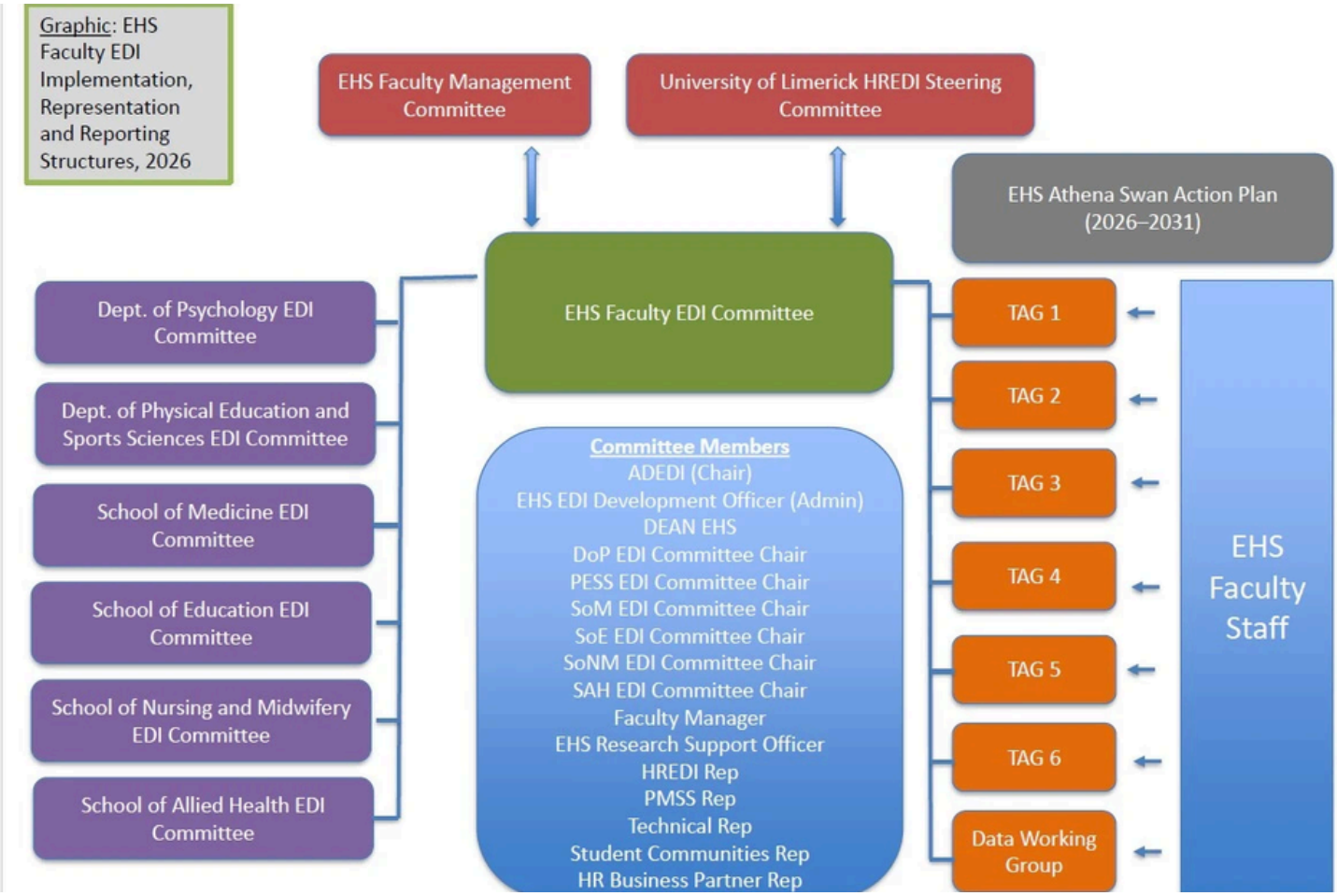
EDI News 7


Click on images and logos throughout for more info

Click images /logos below for links!

# EDI Faculty Update

The Faculty Athena Swan five-year action plan is now underway. Staff from across the Faculty responded to the call issued in April to join the Task Area Groups (TAGs). These informal working groups are focusing on implementing a bundle of actions within their chosen area, supported by the Faculty EDI Team. We now have over twenty EHS colleagues involved, and we appreciate everyone sharing their time and expertise. More details on TAGs and actions can be found here. A visual outline of the Faculty EDI organisation and reporting structure is shown below.




The six School and Department EDI Committees are now working on finalising their own EDI action plans shaped around the needs and priorities of their own Schools and Departments. This involves identifying EDI issues they want to address, working within the Faculty framework.

Athena Swan Ireland Equality Charter

## Chairs of EDI Committees

**Department of Psychology**: Siobhan Griffin & Sandra O'Brien
**Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences**: Ian Sherwin
**School of Medicine:** Lucie Pollard & Emmeline Searson-Power
**School of Allied Health**: Aine Kearns
**School of Education**: Paddy Johnson
**School of Nursing and Midwifery**: Jill Murphy & Steven Byrne

To track progress on all the actions in our plan, we have put in place a tracking system hosted on our EDI sharepoint site that is user friendly and accessible to all EHS staff. Click on the tile below to view.

AS Activity Tracker

Click images /logos below for links!

# EDI Survey

This issue of the EDI Bulletin looks at how EHS staff responded to the career progression and promotion questions in the March 2025 EDI survey. More detailed information is available to view in the EHS Athena Swan silver application.

There were 152 applications for promotion across all academic grades (excluding Professor to Full Professor) between 2020 and 2024 (61%F in line with academic staff gender ratio).
Of these, 87 were successful with no distinct gender pattern over the past five years – the average success rate across the five years was 55% for females and 61% for males.

Just 37% of respondents overall said they had a clear progression pathway in UL with no significant gender difference in the responses.

**Fig 1: EHS Academic Staff Perceptions of the Promotion Process**

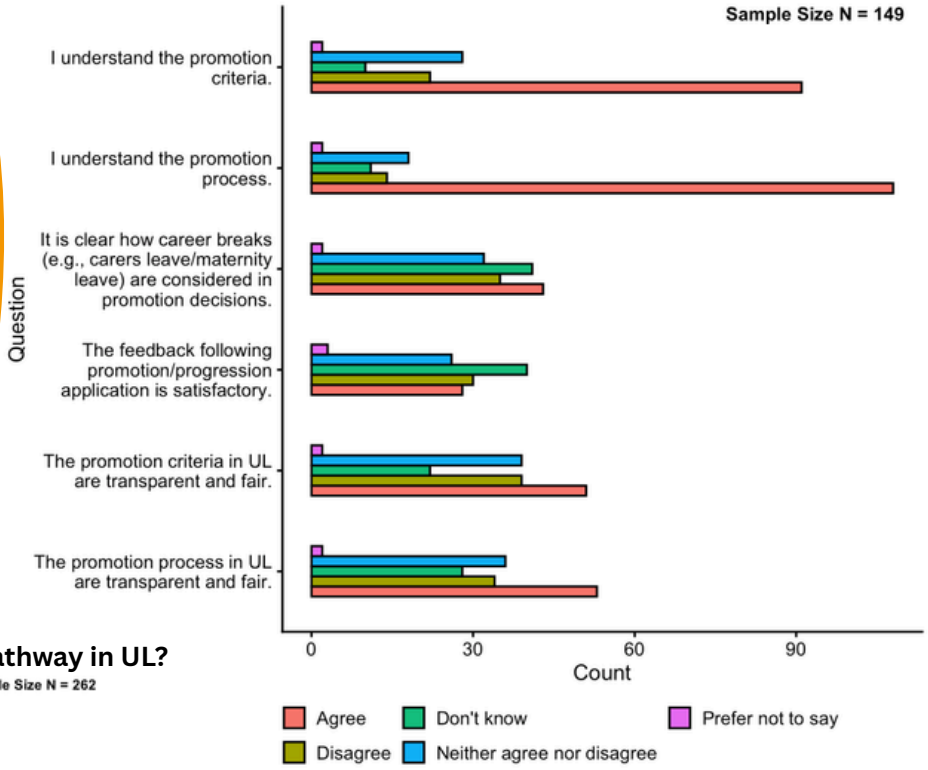
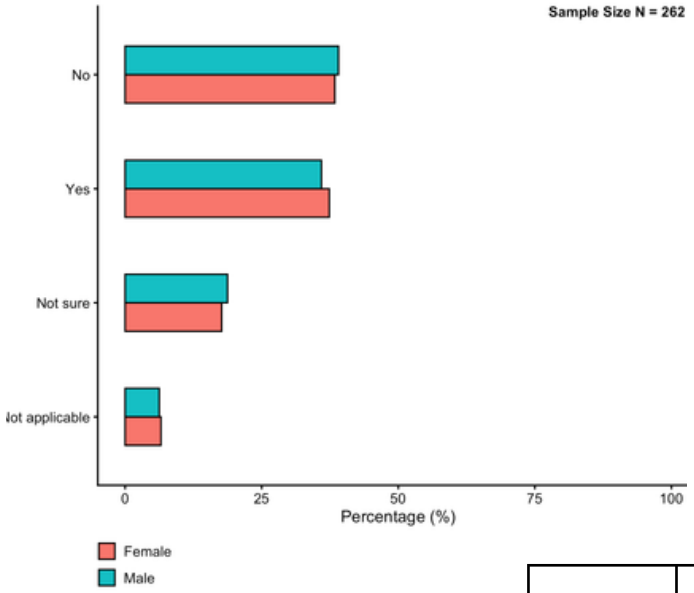



**Fig 2: Q. Do you have clear career progression pathway in UL?**




While there is a good understanding of the promotion process (70% of respondents) and criteria (60%) among academic staff, just a third of respondents (33%) feel that the promotion process is fair and transparent (down from 40% in 2022) and a similar proportion (36%) feel that the promotion criteria are fair and transparent. Just 28% of respondents said they were clear about how career breaks are factored into the promotion process.

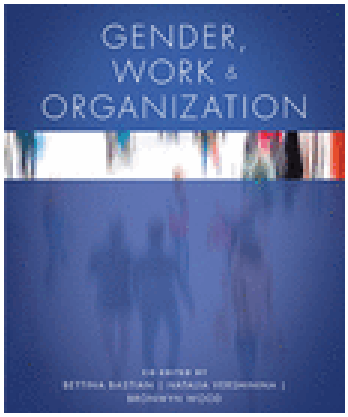
There are stark differences when the responses to the same question are analysed by role. 63% of academics said they had a clear progression pathway but this dropped sharply to 25% for support staff (PMSS) respondents and 16% for research respondents. It fell even further for clinical, teaching and technical respondents where none of them feel they have a progression pathway.

| | Academic (n=127) | Research (n=25) | PMSS (n=65) | Clinical (n=21) | Teaching (n=18) | Technical (n=15) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 63% | 16% | 25% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| No | 22% | 28% | 45% | 81% | 78% | 62% |
| Not Sure | 11% | 44% | 22% | 14% | 17% | 23% |
| NA | 4% | 12% | 9% | 5% | 6% | 15% |

# EDI Spotlight Publication

## Athena SWAN Silver Applications and Gender Equality Action Plans: A Driving Force in Irish Higher Education or Genderwashing?

*Gender Work and Organisation Vol 32, Issue 6*




**Author: Professor Pat O'Connor, University of Limerick and Geary Institute, UCD**

An interesting and thought provoking paper by Professor Pat O'Connor which challenges institutions to move beyond the 'easy wins' and lip-service to address the structural issues that contribute and perpetuate gender inequality in HEI's. It was also featured in the Irish Times on the 9th February, 2026.

**ABSTRACT**

Athena SWAN is seen as key in tackling gender inequality in Irish higher education institutions, with bronze, silver, and gold awards. It aims at changing their structure and culture. The research question asked whether the content of successful Silver Athena SWAN award-winning applications suggested that it was a driving force for gender equality or constituted genderwashing. Specifically (a) did the content suggest a willingness to recognize gender inequality? (b) Did the HEI see itself as creating or maintaining that inequality? Based on the trends emerging from a content analysis of two of these successful Athena SWAN Silver applications, six types of institutional resistance were identified: first a failure to see gender inequality as an issue; second, a failure to recognize the experience and source of gender inequality; third, ignoring their own data in the application in framing Action Plans; fourth, a focus on individual rather than organizational solutions; fifth, a focus on organizationally "convenient" explanations; sixth a lack of specificity and ambition in the Action Plans. Abductively, these trends suggested institutional resistance by HEIs, reflected in genderwashing, that is, focusing on superficial change while ignoring structural and power imbalances perpetuating gender inequality. The sources and implications of this are discussed.

*"... the content of these successful Silver award-winning applications indicated an unwillingness to challenge power, with Action Plans suggesting genderwashing. Big issues such as those involving the precariousness of researchers and the absence of career pathways for professional/administrative staff (PMS/PMSS) are put on the long finger; the under-representation of women in senior academic positions is seen as reflecting their failure to apply, while the under-representation of women as research fellows is effectively ignored.."*

**Click images /logos below for links!**

# EDI at Work

Intellectual Disability nursing students in the **School of Nursing and Midwifery** have been exploring how to improve inclusivity, accessibility, and person-centred care within the simulation lab. As part of this, the 3rd year students are working on a health passport for 'Annie', a simulated patient used in clinical education. The project recognises that students often encounter diverse patient needs in practice yet may not always feel equipped to provide equitable care.

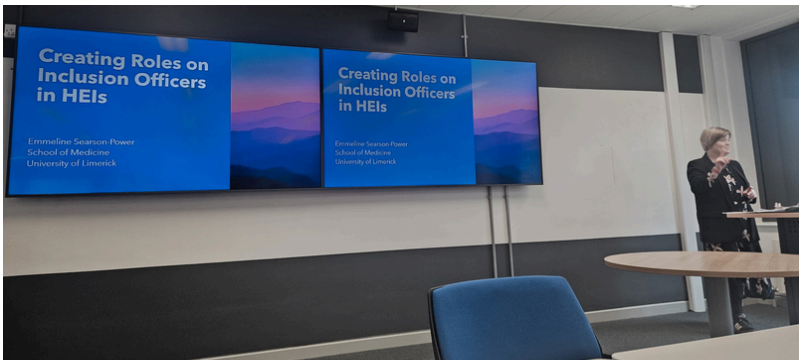
The health passport is a document that communicates 'Annie's' individual needs, preferences, communication styles, and any relevant health conditions or accommodations. It represents a patient with additional needs—such as a learning disability, chronic condition, or neurodivergence—helping students engage with real-world diversity in a safe learning environment. This student-led project helps learners to take ownership of EDI principles and actively contribute to curriculum enhancement. It prepares students to deliver compassionate, equitable care in real clinical settings.



**L to R**: Marina Kakar, Laura Kennedy Martin, Caitriona Ryan, Caoimhe McCarthy, Tomas Clifford.

**L to R (below)**: Tomas Clifford, Aoife Anderson, Norah Breslin, Roisin Dempsey, Lauryn Grimes, Meabh Kieran McDonagh, Eabha Cullen, Amy McCarthy and Katie Falahee






**Emmeline Searson-Power from the School of Medicine presents her EDI project as part of the micro-credential EDI in Higher Education programme.**

*"I've found this module really valuable in terms of how I see my role within [my School]. It's given me a much deeper understanding of EDI in practice, not just in theory, and has made me more aware of how systems, communication, and everyday interactions impact people's experiences at work. The idea of relational equity really stood out for me, especially in how academic and professional staff work together. It's something I'm genuinely interested in developing further" (programme participant).*

The **EDI in Higher Education micro credential** is a collaboration between three Irish Higher Education institutions with funding from the Higher Education Authority. Dr. Eileen Hogan from UCC led the development of the micro credential with colleagues from University of Limerick and University of Galway. The programme aims to develop awareness and understanding of EDI in Irish higher education, drawing on evidence to explore how inequalities are experienced in university and social life. As part of the programme, the 35 participants were asked to design an EDI policy or propose a practice/intervention that could address an inequality facing staff or students. The programme concluded with presentations of these proposals to peers on April 15th in UL. These will be shared to an 'ideas bank' at the end of the programme, which will be housed on the participating institutions websites.

# EDI at Work




**L to R: Dr Irene Cassidy; Prof. Amanda Clifford; Dr Orfhlaith Ní Bhriain**

To mark International Dance Day, a **'Building Connections and Capacity for Facilitating Movement to Music for People with Parkinson's'** event on April 28th brought together people living with Parkinson's, their families, facilitators, students and UL faculty. Led by Professor Amanda Clifford (**School of Allied Health**), Dr Orfhlaith Ni Bhriain (**Irish World Academy of Dance**) and Dr Irene Cassidy (**School of Nursing and Midwifery**), the morning encouraged creativity, shared learning and connection, showing how movement and music can support health and wellbeing. Accessibility and inclusivity was central, welcoming people with different backgrounds, abilities and dance experience.

Interactive sessions were held with Mr Pat O'Dea and visiting PhD candidate Raquel Arigony, supported by the Institutional Sandwich Doctorate Program Abroad from CAPES, Brazil. Pat encouraged rhythm, confidence and group involvement while Raquel's Brazilian dance session created space for joy, cultural exchange and free movement. Participants described the experience as fun, energising and uplifting, noting a sense of freedom and new movement possibilities.

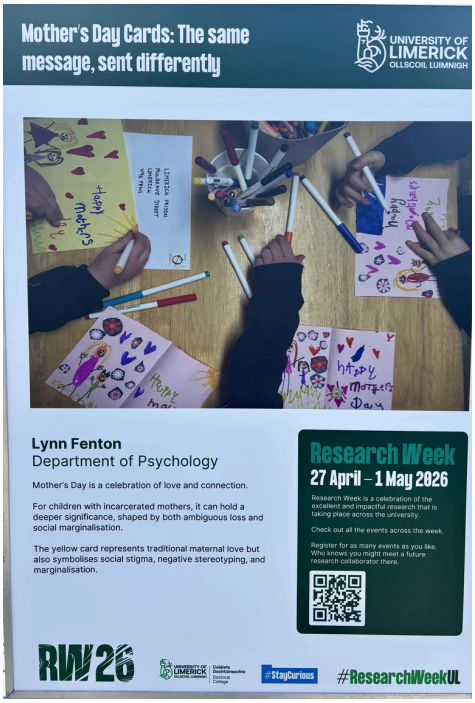
The day also marked the launch of PD-Life, an all-island initiative creating a multidisciplinary Parkinson's research hub focused on improving quality of life. Funded by the North South Research Programme and the Government of Ireland's Shared Island Fund, the project is led by Professor Suzanne Timmons, with Amanda, Orfhlaith and Irene as the UL partners.

Luke Slattery, **Department of Psychology** PhD Student and EDI Committee Member, won first place in the EHS faculty heat of the Doctoral College's 3-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition last March (where PhD students explain their research in under three minutes). His talk, *'Merging from the margins: Exploring LGBTQ+ students' experiences of school amalgamation'* shared insights into how LGBTQ+ students experience school mergers. Luke later presented in the grand final during Research Week 2026, highlighting both the challenges these young people face and the strength they draw from one another.




**L to R**: Lynn Fenton (PhD Student), Dr. Daragh Bradshaw (Supervisor, DoP) and Luke Slattery (PhD Student)

Another PhD student from the **Department of Psychology**, Lynn Fenton, was awarded second place in the Doctoral College research dissemination competition, 'Picture This' with her picture entry titled: '*Mothers Day Cards: The Same Message Sent Differently*'.




*"Mother's Day is a celebration of love and connection. For children with incarcerated mothers, it can hold a deeper significance, shaped by both ambiguous loss and social marginalisation. The yellow card represents traditional maternal love but also symbolises social stigma, negative stereotyping, and marginalisation".*

Click images /logos below for links!

# EDI News




International Conference being held in UL on the 28th/29th May. Further information available here

Funding is available from the EHS Faculty to support the hosting of EDI related events throughout the year. It is a rolling call and projects will be assessed on (a) fit with an EDI theme aligned with the EHS EDI Action Plan or the UL Human Rights and EDI Strategy (b) value for money (c) potential impact (d) projects that benefit or are targeted Faculty wide (rather than individual department or schools).
Click on the image to apply.







The HEI Carers Network was established in 2024 to bring together colleagues across Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in the Republic of Ireland who are working to support staff and students with caregiving responsibilities*. The Network provides a collaborative forum for colleagues working in research, policy and practice to share expertise, examine current approaches across institutions, and contribute to the development of coordinated, evidence-informed supports for family carers in higher education.

**A 'family carer' is someone who provides care to a child or adult with additional needs, physical or intellectual disabilities, frail older people, those with palliative care needs or those living with chronic illnesses or mental health challenges (Family Carers Ireland, 2024)*

The UL Human Rights and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion office (HREDI) have put out an EOI call inviting expressions of interest from staff who would like to join working groups to help prepare for the 2027 Institution Athena Swan application.

- Institutional Athena Swan - PMSS Working Group
- Institutional Athena Swan - Academic Working
- Institutional Athena Swan – Survey Working Group

Click on the group above if interested and fill out the form by Wednesday, 3rd June.

If you have created a resource or if you have come across useful resources or information relevant to EDI in EHS, please e-mail us at ADEDI.ehs@ul.ie or hilary.curley@ul.ie