Opening a dialogue on gender equality, diversity and inclusion at European universities

This document is the result of a discussion amongst The Guild's Gender and Diversity working group members on the key terms for achieving more diversity, equity, and inclusion at our universities. These terms are offered as a basis for reaching a common understanding within and between The Guild's universities regarding how we think about Gender and Diversity in our institutions.

The words selected below may be understood as strategic and agenda-building terms, used to improve innovation and excellence at universities. They may be enablers for social change and wellbeing, and serve to uphold human rights, academic freedom, and critical thinking in our university communities. They are interdependent, in the sense that they should ideally be articulated together to achieve real progress.

It is important to note that national laws may sometimes constrain or encourage the use of specific words, while cultural and linguistic contexts may inform the way the reader will receive and interpret the language used below. As an example, the word 'race' is commonly used in English, while the use of its equivalent in some other European languages may be derogatory and banned from official documents. The definitions presented may and should therefore be discussed, adapted, and translated to consider the specific legal, historical, cultural, and linguistic environment where universities operate.

When developed and expanded into policies, it is also crucial to ground these words onto bodies of scientific research, in order to ensure evidence-based policymaking.

Bias

Bias is a preconceived idea in favour of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another. Biases may be held by any individual, group, or institution and can have negative or positive consequences. There are two types of biases: conscious bias (also known as explicit bias) and unconscious bias (also known as implicit bias).

It is important to note that biases, conscious and unconscious, are not limited to racialisation. Though racist bias and discrimination are well documented, biases may exist toward any social group. One's gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, religion/spirituality, age, (dis)ability and many other characteristics are subject to bias.

Diversity

Diversity refers to all aspects of social commonalities and differences, for instance race,[1] ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, religion/spirituality, age, (dis)ability.

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[1] The word 'race' is used in English here and throughout the document following its use in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Equity

Student Focus. The creation of environments based on fairness and justice which tackle the existence of discrimination and allow everyone to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion.

Employee Focus. The creation of environments based on fairness and justice which tackle the existence of discrimination and allow every employee (faculty and staff) to have equal access to professional growth opportunities and resource networks that are capable of closing the demographic disparities in leadership roles in all spheres of institutional functioning.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to achieve equality between women and men. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures, and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination.

Diversity mainstreaming

Diversity mainstreaming is a strategy to achieve equality. It involves the integration of a diversity (see definition above) perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures, and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality and combating discrimination.

Inclusion

Inclusion refers to a university community where all members are and feel respected, have a sense of identity and belonging, and are able to participate and achieve to their potential.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how social identification and categorisation— including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, religion/spirituality, age, (dis)ability—are interlinked with one another and with systems of power that privilege and discriminate people at the university and in the broader community.

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