UCL Gender Equality Steering Group (GESG)

Terms of Reference

The Gender Equality Steering Group (GEG) was set up in 2019 to promote and coordinate good practice in gender equality at UCL. We do this by bringing together a broad range of perspectives through our membership; we work with and challenge senior management and the whole institution to advance and deliver UCL’s gender equality priorities.

# Aims of the group:

* To raise awareness and deepen the knowledge of gender equality issues at UCL.
* To represent the views of staff and students, raise issues around gender, unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and act as a body of expertise on gender equality issues at UCL and beyond.
* To advise senior management on how to realise a truly gender inclusive culture that delivers UCL values and our legal obligations.
* To work with the Equality Charters Group, other Equality Steering Groups, the Pro-Provost (Equity & Inclusion) and the office of the President & Provost (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) to ensure coordinated responses across the institution.
* To take an evidence-based and proactive approach to identify and challenge gender inequality and recommend interventions.
* To act as a critical friend to the institution in its gender equality work, including engagement with the Athena Swan Charter which provides a framework to guidance the institution and departments in their considerations of gender equality; to ensure continuing and appropriate actions, progress, sustained impact, and sharing of good practice, that is eventually recognised at the highest Athena Swan award level.
* To consider issues that intersect with gender, causing multiple disadvantages.
* To identify positive environmental, behavioural, and institutional good practice to be shared, preserved, celebrated, and amplified.
* To provide opportunities for social and professional networking among group members.

# GESG will achieve these aims by:

* Promoting gender equality by providing timely input (e.g., through consultation), to UCL’s plans, strategies, policies, organisational change exercises and guidance.
* Developing practical solutions to address issues of underrepresentation of gender at any staff or student level, and occupational and discipline-based segregation.
* Working on specific tasks, when requested, with key stakeholders, UCL senior management, and the Central EDI Team to eliminate any direct and indirect forms of unlawful discrimination as it relates to gender equality.
* Providing input on UCL employment issues relating to gender equality, with respect to areas concerning recruitment and career progression.
* Supporting the Equality Charters Group with the monitoring and delivery of institutional action plans related to gender equality and Athena Swan engagement at departmental level.
* Ensuring effective provision of institutional support for Athena Swan engagement at faculty and departmental levels and offering support by reviewing applications through UCL’s internal mock panels process.
* Ensuring departmental best practice towards gender equality is shared across the institution.
* Promoting beacon-level activities at UCL that address gender equality within the UK Higher Education sector and beyond.
* Supporting initiatives that will have the greatest impact on gender equality and align with institutional priorities, drawing on allocated resources.
* Working with Envoys and Equality Steering Groups to address equality issues that intersect with gender.
* Provide a channel for communication and consultation between staff and senior management in collaboration with the Central EDI team.
* Learning from and engaging with academic research on gender and equality, especially that taking place at UCL.
* Establishing links with experts in gender and equality work beyond UCL.
* Ensuring oversight of fair disbursement of grants resourced annually by the UCL EDI budget to support gender equality.
* Promoting awareness of and actively connecting with Women’s networks at UCL.

Our activities can be considered to fall within the four categories of governance (including policy)(, Athena Swan (including beaconing), ‘grit’ (including senior champions, knowledge and learning, students, and academic research), funding & networks (including communications and events)

# Meetings

GESG will at minimum meet termly, with exceptional meetings to be held as required. Meetings will primarily be delivered online to accommodate for hybrid and flexible working. Members may, on occasion, form small, short-term working groups to focus on a specific task.

Meetings will be held during core hours (10am-4pm), arranged with as much notice as possible, and will normally not last more than 60 minutes without a break. Agenda items and minutes of the previous meeting will be circulated in advance to allow members to provide comments and updates over email if they are unable to attend.

For quoracy, half of the total membership must be present. Where one or more members of those present at a meeting does not agree with the action recommended by the chair (including a position of no action), the chair should ask members to vote, and the outcome is decided by the majority.

# Membership

GESG is co-chaired by UCL’s Envoy for Gender Equality and another member of either Professional Services or Academic Staff with experience or potential in leadership, ideally gender balanced. Support for GESG meetings and activity is provided by an EDI Manager from the Office of the President and Provost (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion).

Previous experience of advancing equality is considered helpful but not essential. Membership will aim to consist of around 20 members who will serve for a term of 2 years, after which they will need to reaffirm their interest for up to another 2 years.

Members can join by submitting a short expression of interest to the Co-Chairs, outlining their interest, and expected contribution. Any part-time or full-time UCL staff or student is eligible to join, and membership is not restricted by contract status.

The Co-Chairs can approach potential new members with diversity and representation in mind. When identifying group membership, consideration will be given to the overall balance of the group for gender, representation from different disciplines, grades, and areas (research, teaching, technical, professional services, students) and other intersectional diversity considerations. This will include those responsible for key EDI functions at UCL.

# Expectations of Members

* Have a passion for gender equality.
* Be mindful and respectful of all protected characteristics.
* Have an interest in institutional change.
* Be willing to commit to attending meetings (subject to their availability) and assist with the work of the group.
* Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information.
* Actively contribute in some way to the group.
* Advocate the principles of EDI for all protected groups, intersectionality, and broader equity issues.
* Represent the principles of gender equality at UCL.
* Attend meetings regularly.
* Contribute ideas and participate in activities and projects.
* Conduct themselves in keeping with UCL values.
* Understand the position of the group in furthering EDI in UCL.
* Feed learning back into departments/areas.
* Be willing to critically review institutional applications for charter marks.
* Be willing to attend training and workshops where relevant to support GESG in achieving its aims, including UCL internal mock panel training.

# Responsibilities of Co-Chairs

* Act as a first point of contact for staff across the institution on issues of gender equality.
* Work with other co-chair and EDI manager to prepare agendas for GESG meetings.
* Moderate discussions in GESG meetings, ensuring meetings keep to time and that relevant actions are delegated to members.
* Work with other co-chair and EDI manager to ensure GESG budget is spent by planning activity / overseeing callouts and encouraging members to organise activities.
* Act as a soundboard and stakeholder (on an ad-hoc basis) for other teams across UCL seeking advice about gender equality issues.
* Work across UCL on special and time-limited projects requiring leadership or expertise in gender equality.

# Responsibilities of UCL Central EDI Team

* Recording all meeting minutes.
* Booking rooms for meetings and events.
* Moderating emails to the Gender Equality Steering Group mailing list.
* Sharing best practice with the group from the other UCL Equality Steering Groups.
* Providing institutional survey results and data to the group.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team will provide a variety of support to empower the EDI working groups to best represent and lead change for marginalised communities at UCL. The EDI team will maintain links between working groups to support collaboration and consideration of multiple disadvantages experienced.

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