

SCBE EDI Newsletter: Diversity

February 2023



DIVERSITY

Cultural and Religious Economic
Age and Gender Sexual Orientation
Racial Ability and Neurodiversity

What to Look Out For

DISCRIMINATION IN ACTION OR SPEECH

Difficult to interact with some of your peers? Is there a way you could be more accepting of their diversity? Reflect on your biases and see if these emerge in your speech or actions.

What Can Be Done

CONVERSE WITH FRIENDS

Discuss anecdotes on diversity with friends and family—you never know what you may learn.

CANCEL CANCEL CULTURE

Does someone have a biased or unpopular notion of people from a specific background? Don't hate, educate!



Do you know what this symbol is? If not, find out!

EDI Theme Focus: Diversity

What is diversity and how many types are there?

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in a workplace culture ensures that everyone is treated fairly and provided with equal opportunities regardless of individual differences. Recognising, respecting and celebrating these differences is the essence of the term 'Diversity'. To most people, diversity always implies differences in race, ethnicity or sexual orientation. However, there are several types of diversity such as—

- Cultural and Religious: This refers to a person's ethnicity, values and beliefs and can vary based on the place (and society) where the person is from.
- Racial: Racial diversity implies diversity based on a person's physical traits or appearance. Even though it is scientifically believed that race is a social construct and holds no biological meaning, celebrating racial diversity creates an inclusive workplace.

- Age and Gender: A diverse environment includes people from all age groups and various gender identities.
- Sexual Orientation: This type of diversity includes people of all sexual orientations (LGBTQ+ community) and acknowledges that sexuality is a spectrum and labels don't necessarily encompass everyone.
- Economic: Economic diversity acknowledges that people may have different socio-economic backgrounds and related privileges (or lack of privileges). Learning from this diversity, we can cater conversation and activities to be more mindful of everyone's economic situation.
- Ability: This includes people that are differently abled and pushes to recognise every individual's unique talents and abilities regardless of what may be seen outwardly.
- Neurodiversity: This type of diversity acknowledges the differences in people's cognitive and mental abilities. It considers that each person has a different way of thinking, learning and behaving, and undergo different experiences and interactions. It also encourages the concept that neurodevelopmental conditions (ex. ADHD, autism, learning disabilities etc) are normal and must be embraced.

Ireland is now increasingly diverse, on all fronts. Approximately 17% of the population are of different ethnicities and cultures. Around 43% of the people in Ireland are aged between 25 and 54 years and form the working population. [Studies](#) have shown that creating a management system that focuses on diversity and equality has led to increased innovation and performance in the Irish labour market. Diversity and inclusion are interdependent and developing an inclusive workplace can thus result in socioeconomic progress.

What are some things to look out for in a diverse environment?

Promoting diversity in the workplace revolves around identifying and mitigating discriminatory actions or speech. Is the difficulty in interacting with some of our peers their fault or is it a manifestation of our internal biases? By reflecting on our actions and speech, we can help foster a friendlier environment for all.

An example of this is to be mindful of the language used in the classroom. "Everyday" phrases may be easily hiding assumptions that exclude certain individuals. "Good morning, guys" is a familiar sound in a classroom, but this is often considered exclusionary. It would be better to opt for "Good morning, everyone" instead, as this acknowledges and respects every individual's background.

Similarly, while planning a night out with your coworkers or classmates, we can be mindful that not everyone may have the same spending habits or lifestyle. Thus, by choosing a place

and time that can cater to people of all income levels, age groups and religious backgrounds, we are expanding our social circles to be more diverse and accepting.

Diversity in Academia

The total number of students enrolled in higher education is growing rapidly as there is an increasing demand for higher education. It is expected that there will be [262 million](#) university students by 2025, 8 million of those will leave their home countries to study abroad. This value is three times higher than the current one. The [benefits](#) of having a diverse student cohort are well known. [Studies](#) have shown that students who learn in a diverse environment thrive. They can feel a sense of belonging when they learn with people that they can relate to. It gives them the opportunity to develop many life and professional skills during the period of their studies which they can later use in their diverse workplaces. They are exposed to diverse thoughts, opinions, and cultural backgrounds, enhancing their creative and critical thinking as well as their problem solving skills.

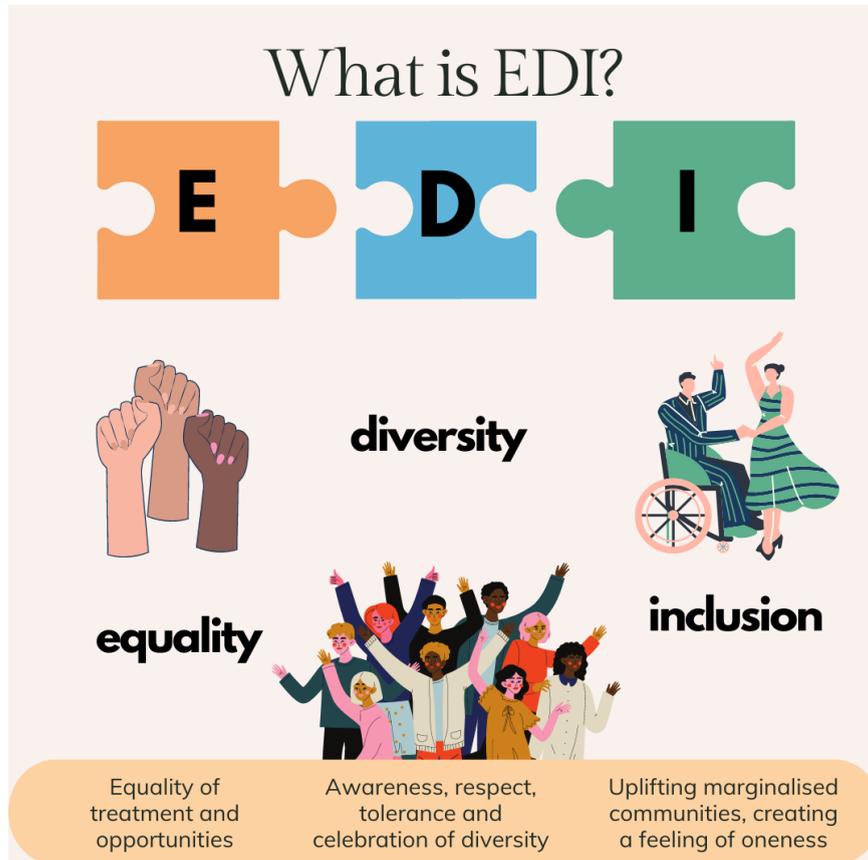
How can we support diversity in a student cohort?

The focus of a modern classroom should not only be on delivering educational content but to do so by reflecting on key EDI principles. Lecturers need to identify and recognise their students' diversity and try to come up with actions that would make the classroom a safe environment for everyone. It is imperative to keep in mind that small things do have a major impact on student psychology, for example, learning to pronounce everyone's name correctly has been [proven](#) to build more teacher-student interactions. It is also beneficial to get to know everyone on a deeper level by organising group and individual meetings outside the classroom. This can help create trust between peers and mentors and lead to more effective learning. In conclusion, it is obvious that academia has a crucial role to play, not only with introducing young people to diversity but also spreading awareness around major social issues of today's society. By actively advocating for a more inclusive classroom, we can build a stronger educational system that is built around celebrating diversity.

What small steps can we take to promote diversity in our own community?

In our push to be more accepting of diversities, we often tend to alienate or "cancel" those who don't hold modern opinions or beliefs on people from various backgrounds. We all have that friend or family member or even celebrity role model who makes statements about others without having a nuanced understanding about their experiences or histories. Instead of isolating ourselves from such individuals, it is extremely important to share anecdotes about our experiences of interacting with diverse people and thus educate the misinformed. While some may understand better than others, it is important to constantly correct and educate even the most rigid people instead of ostracising them.

What was the symbol in the infographic at the beginning of this newsletter? If you identified it as the symbol for neurodivergence, well done! You can learn more about neurodivergence and the symbol [here](#).



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 Representative: Adesola Ojomo-Amaka, Lauren Callaghan.

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