

The Armagh Observatory & Planetarium has a strong commitment to equality and diversity, which is currently encapsulated by our ED&I strategy and action plan, our Juno and Diversity Mark awards. We align with the Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan (GEP) requirements as follows.

Mandatory GEP Requirements

- *Public Document. The GEP must be a formal document published on the institutions' website, signed by the top management and actively communicated within the institution. It should demonstrate a commitment to gender equality, set clear goals and detailed actions and measures to achieve them.*

AOP has an overall ED&I strategy and action plan that was approved by its Management Committee, which demonstrates also our commitment to gender equality. AOP also hold the Institute of Physics (IoP) Juno Practitioner status and Diversity Mark NI Bronze Award accreditation. Furthermore, AOP is now a signatory of the new IoP Physics Inclusion Award, which includes addressing gender equality in physics and extending it to other areas to ensure full inclusivity.

- *Dedicated Resources. A GEP must have dedicated resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan. Organisations should consider what type and volume of resources are required to support an ongoing process of sustainable organisational change.*

AOP's ED&I Committee includes members of the three work sections - research, education and corporate - as well as senior management team representatives. This group is responsible for promoting and monitoring ED&I issues at AOP, has led to AOP's Juno and Diversity Mark awards and is currently following through the AOP ED&I strategy and action plan as well as pursuing AOP's path along the new IoP Physics Inclusion Award.

- *Data Collection and Monitoring. Organisations must collect sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students) with annual reporting based on indicators. Organisations should consider how to select the most relevant indicators, how to collect and analyse the data, including resources to do so, and should ensure that data is published and monitored on an annual basis. This data should inform the GEP's objectives and targets, indicators, and ongoing evaluation of progress.*

AOP collects gender disaggregated data during all recruitment exercises across the entire organisation, which have been used on our Juno Award applications, published online as part of our Diversity Mark award and will continue to be collected as part of our ED&I strategy and action plan.

- *Training. The GEP must also include awareness-raising and training actions on gender equality. These activities should engage the whole organization and be an evidence-based training aimed at staff and decision makers and can also include*

communication activities and gender equality training that focuses on specific topics or addresses specific groups.

Staff awareness on ED&I issues has already been promoted by our previous efforts within the Juno project as well as staff, student and Management Committee training on Unconscious Bias and gender equality, and further training actions on gender equality are included in AOP's ED&I strategy and action plan. AOP staff and students can also avail of ongoing training in equality and specifically on gender equality through their access to online courses delivered by the Northern Ireland Equality Commission and use of the Northern Ireland Civil Service online training courses. All recruitment panel members receive full recruitment and selection training prior to them sitting on panel.

GEP Recommended thematic areas:

- *Work-life balance and organisational culture. GEPs aim to promote gender equality through the sustainable transformation of organisational culture. Organisations should implement necessary policies to ensure an open and inclusive working environment, the visibility of women in the organisation and externally, and that the contribution of women is properly valued. Inclusive work-life balance policies and practices can also be considered in a GEP, including parental leave policies, flexible working time arrangements and support for caring responsibilities.*

AOP has Flexible Working and Hybrid Working policies to help with the work-life balance of AOP staff while considering the nature of their role within the organisation. Furthermore, the Code of Conduct for Staff and Students and our policy on Academic Integrity in Research set out the core values and expectations of behaviour at AOP.

- *Gender balance in leadership and decision-making. Increasing the number and share of women in leadership and decision-making positions touches upon all aspects in the GEP. Measures to ensure that women can take on and stay in leadership positions can include providing decision-makers with targeted gender training, adapting processes for selection and appointment of staff on committees, ensuring gender balance through gender quotas, and making committee membership more transparent.*

There is a good gender balance both in AOP senior management team and its management committee. SMT is fully involved in our ED&I working group with both a male and female representative. All recruitment at AOP is made on merit in line with Northern Ireland Fair Employment legislation, including measures to deal with unconscious bias with appropriate training for panel members and all panels are gender balanced.

- *Gender equality in recruitment and career progression. Critically reviewing selection procedures and remedying any biases can ensure that women and men get equal chances to develop and advance their careers. Establishing recruitment codes of conduct, involving gender equality officers in recruitment*

and promotion committees, proactively identifying women in underrepresented fields and considering organisation-wide workload planning models can be important measures to consider in a GEP.

AOP has various policies underscoring its statutory obligations to deliver equal opportunities in recruitment and career progression, we regularly monitor diversity through staff and student recruitment, ensure gender balance on all recruitment panels with ED&I training for panel members, whilst actively encouraging applications from females and other underrepresented groups. Where recruitment has been more frequent, e.g., for research students and assistants as well as planetarium staff, these measures have contributed to achieve an excellent gender balance at AOP.

- *Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content. The GEP should consider how sex and gender analysis will be included in the research or educational outputs of an organisation. It can set out the organisation's commitment to incorporating sex and gender in its research priorities, the processes for ensuring that the gender dimension is considered in research and teaching, and the support and capacity provided for researchers to develop methodologies that incorporate sex and gender analysis. Research funding and research performing organisations both have a role to play in ensuring this.*

AOP integrates a gender dimension into its research by actively striving towards gender equality in research recruitments, in the delivery research seminars and in speakers at research conferences and workshop organised at AOP. In terms of education, although the Armagh Observatory & Planetarium is not a degree awarding institution, it nonetheless offers PhD training, research internships and schools work experience programs while actively promoting and monitoring participation from all ethnic background, religions, sex and gender in these education activities. Finally, AOP research staff, fellows and PhD students also play an integral part in the Planetarium extensive research-informed outreach and public engagement activities, where the diversity of AOP's research personnel achieved thanks to our ED&I recruitment actions allows AOP to champion gender-balance in STEM education and research.

- *Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment. Organisations establishing a GEP should consider taking steps to ensure they have clear institutional policies on sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. Policies should establish and codify the expected behaviour of employees, outline how members of the organisation can report instances of gender-based violence and how any such instances will be investigated and sanctions applied. They should also consider how information and support is provided to victims or witnesses and how the whole organisation can be mobilised to establish a culture of zero tolerance toward sexual harassment and violence.*

AOP has put in place robust measures against gender-based violence through several corporate policies that apply to all members or staff and students. These include the following:

- Dignity At Work
- Grievance
- Code of Conduct for Staff & Students
- Lone Working
- Whistleblowing
- Safeguarding



Professor Michael Burton
Director, Armagh Observatory and Planetarium