



# Gender Equality Policy and Strategy

## 2017-2022

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**Trinity College Dublin**

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

**RADA**

In association with RADA

International Advisors to The Lir

## Contents

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT .....	3
2. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE.....	4
3. GOVERNANCE .....	5
4. PROGRAMMING (excluding <i>Gradfest*</i> ):.....	5
5. CASTING, TECHNICAL SHOW ROLES AND PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENTS:.....	6
6. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT .....	7
7. STUDENT RECRUITMENT.....	7
8. STAFF RECRUITMENT .....	8
9. FACILITATING NON-BINARY STUDENTS: .....	9
10. HARASSMENT AND BULLYING: .....	10
11. TOOLS AND SUPPORTS .....	10
12. INDUSTRY AND WIDER SECTORAL ISSUES .....	11

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This document outlines The Lir Academy's commitment to maintaining gender equality across the organisation and ensuring the dignity and respect of all staff and students. It articulates The Lir's policy across a whole range of the academy's activities from staff and student recruitment, to production choices and the composition of creative teams, sexual harassment and bullying protocols and the content of individual curricula. The document also outlines the strategies that The Lir will implement in order to ensure improvements are implemented where necessary.

The Lir's Gender Equality Policy and Strategy was instigated following a period of deep learning for the theatre community in Ireland since November 2015 as a result of the *#WakingTheFeminists* movement. It was written in the context of a policy working group which emerged following the year-long *#WakingTheFeminists* campaign whereby a number of leading Irish theatre organisations agreed to work together on the development of individual Gender Equality Policies, unique to their own organisations, but developed through a structured process designed to provide support and a sharing of information to those organisations. It is intended that the individual Gender Equality Policies which emerge from this process will be made public by the end of 2018 with a view to serving as potential templates for other organisations seeking to improve gender equality in their own organisations.

In keeping with the parameters of *#WakingTheFeminists*, and the remit of the working group, this policy currently addresses theatrical productions at The Lir only. This policy will be updated over the 2018/19 academic year to also encapsulate The Lir's film output. It is useful to note, however, that since the advent of *#WakingTheFeminists and Women in Film and Television Ireland*, The Lir has been proactive to ensure gender equality to date in the professional directors leading on the short films produced by The Lir. There is further work to be done, however, on the entirety of opportunities afforded to visiting professionals on Lir film productions.

The Lir's policy and strategy is initially envisaged to run over five years (covering the academic years 2017/18 – 2021/22). During this period The Lir will publish annual statistics against the targets indicated in this document. The entire policy and strategy will be comprehensively reviewed at the end of this five year period.

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

September 2017:	<i>#WTF Gender Counts</i> statistics template completed First draft of policy completed by Director Initial approval from the Board
October - November 2017:	Inputs from all staff members Inputs from members of the working group Facilitated consultation with students
December 2017:	Final policy (including agreed targets and timeline) approved by the Board
February 2018:	Equality and Diversity Committee constituted
July 2018:	Final policy and strategy document made public in consultation with wider Gender Equality Policy Working Group
December 2018:	First annual report (including annual gender equality statistics measured against the targets and timelines in this document) published on line.

### 3. GOVERNANCE

In order to ensure the effective delivery of this strategy The Lir will amend its formal governance structure and procedures as follows:

- The Lir is committed to achieving **gender balance on its Board** from the end of 2017
- Following Board approval of this policy and strategy document, The Lir will **update its Strategic Plan**, Code of Governance and other key documents to specifically reflect the goals outlined in this document
- The Lir will establish a new **Gender and Diversity Committee**, chaired by a member of the Board, which will oversee the delivery of the targets and timelines set out in this document
- The committee will **report formally to the Board on an annual basis**
- The committee will **include independent experts as required**
- The committee will design and implement formal processes to respond to complaints, concerns or wider gender equality issues amongst the student body
- Every three years the Board will complete a review of all pay-rates within the organisations to ensure gender pay parity
- Each year The Lir will **publish gender equality statistics** as part of its Annual Report (commencing in December 2018) measured against the targets and timelines set out in this document

### 4. PROGRAMMING (excluding *Gradfest\**):

To ensure equality of opportunity and representation in terms of its fully produced, public-facing productions The Lir will:

- Continue to achieve gender balance in terms of the directors of graduate productions averaged across the five years of this plan (currently 50% women and men between 2013/14 – 2016/17)
- Continue to achieve gender balance in terms of the plays produced by living writers averaged across the five years of this plan (currently 50% women and men between 2013/14 – 2016/17)
- Work to improve the overall balance of all playwrights including classical works (currently 31% women, 69% men between 2013/14 – 2016/17) by actively researching, reading and producing neglected canonical works written by women
- The Lir commits to producing at least two such works over the course of this plan
- Continue to ensure that female designers are afforded equal opportunities on Lir productions (currently 65% female and 35% male across all designers employed between 2013/14 – 2016/17)
- Work to improve gender imbalances in individual design disciplines (for example Lighting Designers were 62% male and Costume Designers were 88% female between 2013/14 – 2016/17)

- Actively encourage MFA design and directing students to consider gender equality in the choice of plays produced as part of *Gradfest*

*\* MFA students lead on the choice of works produced as part of Gradfest. And the gender of the creative teams is predetermined by the selection of MFA students, which is addressed in Student Recruitment below.*

## **5. CASTING, TECHNICAL SHOW ROLES AND PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENTS:**

To date, by definition, the casting of all Lir productions has provided equal opportunities for male and female students as the student in-take on the Bachelor in Acting (BA) degree was gender balanced every year as a matter of policy. Despite the advantageous of this policy, it failed to accommodate non-binary students or those of other gender identities (the solution to which is outlined in Section 9 below). Over the course of this strategy, The Lir commits to:

- Working hard to continue finding scripts with challenging and interesting parts for women
- Begin finding scripts with challenging and interesting parts for students who identify as non-binary, trans and other gender identities.
- Maximising the exciting artistic possibilities presented by gender blind casting where appropriate
- Continuing its policy of changing the gender of appropriate characters in classical works to provide increased opportunities for female actors whilst simultaneously opening out the texts in new and interesting ways

And the following initiatives will be prioritised in order to ensure a lack of bias and a respectful learning environment for Bachelor in Stage Management and Technical Theatre (SMTT) and MFA students.

- Complete a review of the systems pertaining to the allocation of technical show roles for SMTT students and implement improvements if required
- When considering professional placements (for SMTT and MFA directing and design students) work to deliver appropriate and supported opportunities for all students, particularly female SMTT students wishing to pursue professional placements in areas of the industry that are historically male dominated.

## 6. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the public facing, fully staged productions presented by The Lir, numerous classes, projects, workshops, and rehearsals take place across the six full-time courses each year. These activities often, but not always, result in an internal, private showing of the work. Many of these projects are led by visiting theatre (and film) professionals, others are led by a core team of full-time and part-time permanent teaching staff. Many of these classes and projects use scenes from existing plays, others study existing plays in their entirety. And, despite the vocational nature of the training at The Lir, which results in limited use of text books, all courses have suggested (if not necessarily prescribed) course reading. Attempting to achieve gender balance across all of this course work will be time-consuming and challenging, however, The Lir believes it will be a fulfilling and empowering process which will deliver real benefits for the students and the Academy as a whole. Over the course of this strategy, The Lir proposes to:

- Complete a review of the curriculum and delivery of each of The Lir's six full-time courses by the end of 2019
- Agree outcomes, targets and timeline for implementation of proposed adjustments to course curricula and delivery as a result of this review
- Complete an internally focussed *Gender Counts* analysis of all visiting theatre professionals contracted to deliver creative projects on the BA and Foundation Diploma in Acting and Theatre (FD).
- Expand this analysis to include the authorship of plays used for major projects, including second year acting projects
- Work towards providing equal rehearsal time for all students especially when working on classical texts (including Shakespeare) which give less stage time to female characters
- Work to achieve gender balance in terms of industry professionals leading classes and workshops across the five years of this strategy

## 7. STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The Lir is committed to ensuring that bias on the basis of gender plays no part in the selection of students for all six of its fulltime courses. In order to ensure that this is the case, The Lir is committed to:

- Publishing annual gender statistics for all courses including a breakdown by gender of all applicants and resulting offers.
- Developing its policy of offering places on its BA programme on a gender equal basis to accommodate non-binary students or those of gender identities.
- Achieving gender balance across the Foundation Diploma in Acting and Theatre as soon as application numbers allow
- Consulting with staff and students on the issue of gender balance in terms of the annual intake on the SMTT degree and agree targets and timelines as appropriate
- Ensuring gender balance on selection panels for second-round and final-round auditions for the BA and FD.

Given the nature of first-round auditions for the BA and FD (in terms of volume, available resources most particularly suitably qualified full-time members of staff and scheduling issues) it is not yet possible to achieve gender balance for all first round auditions. Where possible, however, gender balanced panels will be prioritised. And this policy will be reviewed on an on-going basis as circumstances (including available resources and staffing levels) change.

- Ensuring the gender balance on selection panels for SMTT and all MFA programmes does not fall below a 66/33 ratio

## **8. STAFF RECRUITMENT**

The Lir believes it is beneficial to achieve as much diversity as possible amongst its teaching and administrative staff. In the context of gender equality, the academy especially recognises the positive educational and developmental benefits for female students having positive female role models on the teaching staff during their training. This is particularly appropriate in the historically male dominated area of technical theatre. In order to ensure that The Lir retains a healthy balance across its current staff, The Academy is committed to:

- Measuring the gender balance ratio in terms of student/teacher contact hours as part of the review of all six full-time courses outlined above
- Reviewing the processes for selecting all temporary practitioners/teachers for all courses with a view to ensuring gender balance is a central consideration when appointing short-term teaching staff
- Taking other necessary steps to ensure the gender balance ratio in terms of student/teacher contact hours does not fall below 60/40 in any given year, and achieves gender balance when averaged across the five years of this strategy



- Where necessary, take positive steps to encourage female applications for all advertised technical positions

## **9. FACILITATING NON-BINARY STUDENTS:**

The Lir recently changed its application processes to allow students to express their gender in non-binary ways. On the evidence of application numbers alone, it is anticipated that increased places will be offered to non-binary students in the future. In order to support these students through their training, particularly acting students who would ordinarily be expected to play characters with a binary gender on an ongoing basis, The Lir will:

- Adjust student selection processes as required to accommodate applicants of all gender types
- Replace the current system of accepting 'eight men and eight women' on the BA course and replace it with a meritocratic system that acknowledges gender fluidity
- Work with the teaching staff on the BA and FD to identify the distinct challenges and opportunities facing non-binary students studying acting
- Provide appropriate training to staff if deemed necessary
- Devise a learning plan, in consultation with individual students if appropriate, to support non-binary students on our acting programmes
- Encourage the increased use of playtexts in classes and projects which feature non-binary, intersex or transgendered characters
- Introduce a number of all gender toilet facilities throughout the building
- Work to find other building related solutions as required including the provision of all gender dressing rooms as required
- Identify and implement appropriate language to acknowledge and accommodate these changes

## **10. HARASSMENT AND BULLYING:**

The Lir has a comprehensive harassment and bullying policy in place and follows Trinity's Dignity and Respect Policy which provides further protections to staff or students who experience harassment or bullying while working or studying at The Lir. Both policies confirm that harassment or bullying on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, nationality, disability, religion, sexual orientation, age or because a person has undergone or is undergoing gender reassignment is not acceptable.

Under the auspices of the newly established Gender and Diversity Committee, The Lir will review these processes and procedures to ensure that they are fit for purpose and establish how they can be strengthened further in light of best practice in this area. This review will be completed by December 2018 when new policies will be circulated to all staff and students, made available on The Lir's website and referenced in all course books.

## **11. TOOLS AND SUPPORTS**

Following consultation with staff and the Board regarding the supports necessary to achieve this strategy, The Lir will consider the following:

- Embed appropriate classes or workshops in all course curriculums designed to empower all students to be able to identify and call out inequalities and inappropriate behaviours, both during their training and throughout their careers
- Deliver a workshop programme for all employees, examining issues of gender equality in the workplace and/or a school environment
- Provide unconscious bias training
- Explore initiatives to better support staff and students who are parents, including increased access to Trinity's crèche facilities
- Review current policies and supports regarding maternity and paternity leave
- Ensure that systems are in place to protect employees: ensure that all employees, regardless of position or contract type, have knowledge of that which defines bullying/harassment (including sexist behaviour or language), that these are forbidden by law and that The Lir has policy in place to address such issues in keeping with its responsibility to protect employees from such behaviour.

- Identify certain individuals that can be approached by anyone who feels that they are the victim of such behaviour, and explain The Lir's policy in terms of the sequence of actions taken in the event of a person reporting bullying/harassment.
- Use the Equality and Diversity Committee as a forum to address any wider gender related issues and concerns of staff as well as students

## 12. INDUSTRY AND WIDER SECTORAL ISSUES

Given its position as the National Academy of Dramatic Art, and The Lir's desire to maximise the creative opportunities available to all students on graduation, The Lir is interested in working with the wider industry to help achieve gender equality in the theatre sector within the ambitious timeframe of 5 years originally announced by *#WakingTheFeminists* in 2016. Over the course of this plan The Lir will show leadership in the area of gender equality in the following ways:

- By convening an industry-wide reading group whereby freelance theatre directors will be invited to re-read the female canon with a view to championing productions of classical works by women at The Lir or on the stages of participating theatres
- By placing a particular focus on women in technical theatre:
  - We will work with other partner organisations to deliver practical initiatives focussing on the challenges and opportunities facing women working in this area
  - We will support a mentoring initiative for female production managers
- Continue to advocate through various means to improve opportunities for women working in Irish theatre
- Work to instil in all graduates a passion for gender equality and an understanding of their ability to make change a reality in the future
- Advocate on the needs of non-binary actors and others working professionally in the industry