

UMONS

21 Actions for a University More Open to Diversity and Gender Equality

Introduction

In line with the priorities of the new European Research Area (2021), the aim of this plan is to promote gender equality within UMONS. This will be achieved by positioning the issue within a set of measures designed to improve consideration of the diversity of profiles likely to contribute to the proper development of the University. The plan therefore aims to break the (re)production of various forms of inequality, by identifying the mechanisms of discrimination and bias and putting in place various initiatives likely to reinforce the measures taken in recent years, such as the 100% Respect campaign, which aims to combat all forms of harassment.

In addition to the various points listed below, UMONS is committed to continuing the fight against all forms of sexism, racism, harassment, violence and discrimination linked to gender or sexual orientation, within the staff and student communities, with particular attention paid to those categories of people who may be subject to several forms of discrimination. The aim is to maintain safe, inclusive working and learning spaces which are conducive to education, well-being and empowerment.

The difficulty of the task lies in the fact that discrimination is based, in particular, on implicit biases that are often unconscious and mechanisms that are invisible or difficult to observe.

More specifically, this plan aims to contribute to:

- continuing and developing initiatives to raise awareness of discrimination issues (particularly with regard to gender);
- removing obstacles to the recruitment, retention and career progression of a diversity of profiles;
- reducing the imbalance between men and women in the various fields of study and improving the attractiveness of scientific careers, particularly in STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) where women are under-represented;
- reducing gender imbalances in decision-making contexts;

- taking account of the gender dimension in the content of research and teaching where this is justified.

By adopting this plan, the University undertakes to put in place as many of the measures listed below as possible within a reasonable timeframe. In addition, consideration will be given to the operational objectives and deadlines that should accompany some of these measures as well as to the monitoring indicators that could be used.

Areas for action

Tackling implicit bias and discrimination is a complex and particularly difficult issue in that these biases are often rooted in education from childhood onwards and in the workings of all the institutions and organisations that structure our society. What any single organisation can do in this area is therefore limited. Nonetheless, if progress is to be made, every organisation - and therefore our university too - has a duty to consider how it can contribute to reducing these biases. This can only be achieved through a change in mentality and the introduction of far-reaching changes in habits in terms of procedures and operating methods. To be effective, such initiatives must be designed for the long term.

Taking up the intentions mentioned in the introduction, UMONS has therefore set itself the goal of achieving changes in five areas.

The continuation and development of awareness-raising initiatives.

1. Continuation of the organisation of an annual scientific day devoted to a theme related to issues of discrimination and implicit bias (entrusted to the think tank Genre.S and MUMONS).
2. Continuation of the organisation of an awareness-raising activity on the occasion of International Women's Rights Day (entrusted to the think tank Genre.S and MUMONS) and other days or events aimed at raising awareness of respect for all forms of diversity, particularly in favour of the LGBTQIA+ community.
3. Continued participation by our university in the inter-university master's degree specialising in gender studies and in the bodies set up in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation to deal with gender issues.
4. Continued production of an annual 'Report on the State of Gender Equality' and making the findings more visible.
5. Maintaining a working group covering gender issues, the aim of which is to provide our university with concrete proposals for projects likely to strengthen our actions in this area and to contribute to a better visibility of the initiatives taken in this field. These initiatives may, of course, be carried out in partnership with other academic or non-academic players where this can contribute to the success of the projects concerned. A single internet page bringing together all the actions carried out by UMONS in the field of gender will have to be set up. AVRE will be responsible for coordinating the monitoring of this page to ensure that it complies with European requirements at all times.
6. Setting up coordination between all the UMONS representatives in the bodies active on gender issues, in particular the 'Gender Contact Persons Network', the "*Femme et Science*"

Committee, the “*Comité consultatif Genre et Développement*” (ARES), and the COGES (Gender Commission in Higher Education - ARES). Mission entrusted to the vice-rectorate responsible for gender issues.

7. Promotion of the use of gender-neutral forms (e.g. ‘scientists’), collective terms (e.g. ‘teaching staff’) and the feminisation of the names of professions, functions, grades or titles in official University documents (in French) and raising awareness of the biases implicit in communication media.

Removing barriers to recruitment, retention and career progression.

8. When recruiting (whether scientific, academic or PATO - administrative, technical and manual) staff, explicit mention of the fact that ‘UMONS aims to be a diverse and inclusive community’.

9. Academic and scientific careers are based on three areas: teaching, research and community service. It is proposed that the University initiates a process of reflection aimed at determining how to better take into account the investments made by each individual, considering the diversity of career paths and the way each individual has been able and willing to invest in these three missions. A similar reflection should be carried out to take better account of the various forms of investment by PATO staff.

10. Introduction of training modules designed to build confidence in taking on responsibilities and leadership roles, with particular attention to ways of taking diversity into account and being inclusive when managing teams and evaluating staff. These modules should be included in the training already offered by the Human Resources Department and should be accessible to all staff (scientific, academic, PATO). This initiative should be combined with systematic awareness-raising when staff are recruited or promoted to a team leader position, whether they are PATO or scientific and/or academic staff.

11. Setting up a mentoring system to support newly recruited staff and/or those who express a need. This could be led by the faculties and the PhD College for scientific and academic staff, and by the HR Department for PATO staff.

12. Setting up a study aimed at limiting the risks of ‘structural imbalances’ in academic promotions (where significant differences are observed). The Academic Affairs Committee and the Research Council should logically be responsible for drawing up a joint proposal.

13. Raising awareness of the problems of discrimination during recruitment processes and systematically informing recruitment, assessment and promotion committees of the implicit biases that may be unfavourable during these processes. The implementation of this objective could be entrusted to the Human Resources Department and relayed by the deans and secretariats of the faculties and schools (for selection processes originating within the faculties and schools).

14. Setting up a discussion process aimed at developing specific measures to support parents when their children are born or adopted, taking into account specific situations (divorce, serious health problems, etc.). The Academic Affairs Committee, the Research Council and the Budget, Personnel, Infrastructure and IT Committee should logically be responsible for producing a joint proposal.

15. Setting up an overall discussion aimed at making proposals for a better work-life balance, with, for example, the adoption of a rule of principle aimed at excluding, as far as possible, the organisation of meetings starting after 5.00 pm.

Reducing the imbalance between men and women in the various fields of study and improving the attractiveness of scientific careers, particularly in STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) where there are too few women.

16. Setting up specific activities aimed at primary and secondary school pupils (and their teachers and parents where possible) to show that STEM careers are just as suitable for girls as for boys and that certain subjects that currently attract mainly girls can be perfectly suitable for boys too. These activities could be carried out as part of our 'Children's University' and 'Lectures for secondary education' programmes, as well as during the 'Printemps des Sciences' in partnership with MUMONS.

17. Highlighting a variety of role models, particularly women, to the University's student and scientific community. This activity could be carried out in partnership with the Professional Integration and Alumni Service, MUMONS, the PhD College, D-COM and the FPMs and FWEG alumni associations.

18. Proposal for activities to promote women's entrepreneurship. These activities could be set up by all of the University's players active in the field of entrepreneurship, in partnership with the Professional Integration and Alumni Service, the Click and the FPMs and FWEG alumni associations.

Reducing gender imbalances in decision-making.

19. Implementing a process of reflection aimed at achieving greater female representation in all the University's governing bodies (strategic orientation committee, board of directors, rector's team, rector's college, faculty and school councils, CRECH, CAA, CPBI, CASE).

20. Establishment of a rule stipulating that, whenever possible, recruitment and promotion committees and juries must aim for a balance between men and women and that, in any event, they cannot be validly held if they are made up solely of people of the same sex. For faculties where the presence of women is currently very limited, any decision taken in this way must be accompanied by an explicit written justification of the reasons why compliance with the above-mentioned rule is impossible. Furthermore, for faculties and schools where compliance with the rule represents an additional workload for women, this additional investment in the service of the community should be taken into account when assessing the careers of the colleagues concerned.

Taking account of the gender dimension in the content of teaching and research where this is justified.

21. Setting up a simple and flexible framework for reflection that makes it possible to question the extent to which research supported by our university or one of its courses is likely to contribute to the reproduction of gender biases and showing how, if this is the case, researchers-teachers intend to take this into account. In the case of research, this initiative should logically

be led by the research institutes and our Research Council, which would determine its content and the way in which it would be implemented operationally. As far as teaching is concerned, a similar reflection could be carried out by the councils of the faculties and schools and by our Academic Affairs Committee.