

The Supportive Legislative Framework Informing Policy and Practice In Ireland

- Equality legislation relating to equal access and participation: Equal Status Acts, Employments Equality Act, Disability Act.
 - **Equal Status Acts 2000-2018: Key features;**
 - A) Service providers (including education institutions) are prohibited from discriminating against any person seeking to access a course, benefit or facility on any one of the nine grounds of discrimination (including disability).
 - B) Educational establishment has a legal responsibility over the conduct of individual teachers, lecturers or other staff members.
 - C) The definition of disability under this act takes into account a wide range of disabilities and even includes temporary disabilities.
 - **Disability Act 2005: Key features;**
 - A) The establishment of a statutory basis for the establishment of a 'Centre for Excellence in Universal Design' (which is a subsidiary of The National Disability Authority)- Defined UD and noted it was 'in relation to electronic systems, any electronic-based process of creating products, services or systems so that they may be used by any person'.
 - B) The provision of needs assessment for people with disabilities and (ii) accessibility of public services and premises.
- **UNCRPD- (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)**
Was ratified in Ireland in 2018 and covers a range of access issues relating to people with disabilities engaging with education. **The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission** has been appointed as the independent monitoring mechanism for CRPD in Ireland with The National Disability Authority. As part of this work they have established a Disability Advisory Committee to be involved in the monitoring process.
- **EU Web Accessibility Directive:** All websites created after 23 September 2018 will have to be accessible by 23 September 2019. Existing websites (including public higher education institutions) will have to comply by 23 September 2020. All mobile applications will have to be accessible by 23 June 2021. [Directive \(EU\) 2016/2102](#)

Higher Education Policy (part of a broader picture)

Structure

| Body | Key Policy responsible to each body and between them |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Department of Education and Skills | Action Plan for Government https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/action-plan-for-education-2019.pdf |
| | Higher Education Institution Performance Framework https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/managing-performance/system-performance-framework/ |
| Higher Education Authority | National Access Plan https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Plan-for-Equity-of-Access-to-Higher-Education-2015-2019.pdf |

Higher Education – Access Policy

The main access policy document focusing on higher education in Ireland is **The National Access Plan (NAP) (2015-2019)**.

- o Key feature of this policy: Principle 8 of The National Access Plan- “viii. Equity of access policies should be mainstreamed into the everyday life of higher education...**this must be done in accordance with the principles of universal design for learning**”.
- o To mainstream the delivery of equity of access in Higher Education Institutions. Incl. Objective 1.1. **“To embed whole-of-HEI approaches to institutional access strategies so that access for under-represented groups is prioritised across all faculties.”**

All underpinned by **The Higher Education Institutions Performance Framework (2018-2020)**

This framework sets out national priorities and key objectives for higher education which Higher Education Institutions have related set targets under this to meet each year (with funding penalties if not met).

Key features

“All HEIs will have a Student Success Strategy in place by 2021 which will embed whole-of HEI approaches to institutional access strategies”

The Teaching and Learning Forum defines Student Success as optimizing “the learning and development opportunities for each student to recognise and fulfil their potential to contribute to, and flourish in, society. To be achieved, this requires a culture in Irish Higher Education that values inclusivity, equity and meaningful engagement between students, staff, their institutions and the wider community”.