

1. Action Plan

CARLOW COLLEGE ATHENA SWAN ACTION PLAN 2026-2030

Name	Rationale	No.	Objective / Action	Time	Roles Responsible	Success Measure
Theme 1: Implementation						
Action Plan	Broadening awareness and understanding of EDI activity at Carlow College, through greater visibility and reporting. The College provides financial support for local EDI initiatives, however due to overall College financial constraints (not core funded), there are no financial resources for dedicated EDI staff. Therefore, SAT and EDI Team members manage EDI activities around their existing workload.	1.1	Institutional Action Plan to be signed by the President and published on the Carlow College website	Q3 2026	Executive PA - President's Office Head of Digital Communications & Marketing	Action Plan published on website
EDI webpage	Staff Survey 2024: 76% agreed that College Management is committed to EDI (74% M 77% F) 73% agreed that staff are treated equally in CCSP regardless of gender (75% M 72% F)	1.2	Expand and develop EDI page on College website with more visible updates of progress with the implementation of the action plan and personnel involved.	Q1 2027	EDI Team Chair Head of Digital Communications & Marketing Office	Quarterly updates on the EDI website.
		1.3	Publish an annual EDI audit of actions.	Annually	EDI Team Chair Head of HR & EDI	Annual audits presented to Management Board and published on website.

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Student Engagement	The CCSU is represented on a range of College Boards and Committees including; Governing Body, Academic Council, Management Board, and the EDI Team, among others.	1.4	Maintain SU representation on key College Boards and Committees and ensure SU representation on key sub-groups or working groups, where appropriate.	Ongoing	Head of Student Services & Learner Supports	SU representative on all appropriate committees.
	Training for CCSU and Class Reps are currently managed by CCSU separately to staff training, however there is potential overlap and opportunity for inclusion of CCSU reps on key training initiatives to support them in providing EDI leadership to the student body.	1.5	Collaborate with CCSU on all EDI events and actions, where appropriate to encourage student awareness and engagement with EDI initiatives	Ongoing	Chair, EDI Team Secretary, EDI Team CCSU President	CCSU representatives involved in all appropriate EDI events CCSU reps participating in all relevant EDI training.
		1.6	Invite CCSU representatives to all appropriate EDI training, such as Dignity & Respect training, as developed and delivered.	Ongoing	Head of HR & EDI CCSU President	
Race Equality Priority Action	Carlow College signed up to the Anti-Racism Principles for Irish Higher Education Institutions in 2023. A subgroup has been formed, however further work needs to be done to advance race equality with the College. Staff Survey 2024: 82% of respondents identified as White Irish 18% of respondents indicated they had witnessed discrimination and/or unfair treatment – of those, 20% indicated it was based on ethnicity. Interestingly, of	1.7	Develop an anti-racism action plan for Carlow College, inclusive of the following areas: - Anti-racism training for all staff and students - Supports for students from migrant backgrounds and minority ethnic communities	Q1 2027	Chair - Anti-Racism Subgroup Head of HR & EDI	Action plan developed and launched 60% of staff completed Anti-Racism training

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	the 12% of respondents who indicated they had experienced discrimination and/or unfair treatment, none indicated it was based on ethnicity. It is not possible to accurately clarify the reason for this discrepancy.					
Theme 2: Resourcing						
Interview panels	Important that all interview panels are of mixed gender to ensure balanced representation and experience and fairness for all interviewees.	2.1	The College will ensure mixed gender interview panels are standard practice.	Ongoing	Head of HR & EDI	95% interview panels are mixed gender.
Staff Diversity	Issue that staff body does not reflect the diversity of the student body This was highlighted and discussed during the staff focus group.	2.2	Encourage diversity in roles in the recruitment process through job descriptions and role specifications.	Q4 2026	Head of Digital Communications & Marketing Head of HR & EDI	Increased applications and successful candidates from underrepresented areas (minimum 5% increase).
Theme 3: Training and awareness						
Staff training plan	As a small institution with limited financial resources, it is important that we maximise investment in staff training, whilst also ensuring staff are supported in upskilling for career development and the next phase of the strategic plan for the College. The College will maximise training provided by existing academic staff whose expertise relates to EDI matters.	3.1	Develop annual training plan for staff and management informed by analysis of annual Performance Management and Development Plans, staff feedback, and mandatory training requirements. Annual training plans prepared and approved by Management Board.	Annually	Head of HR & EDI	50% positive staff responses for those who agree they are encouraged to take up training opportunities for their career development.

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	Qualitative data in relation to staff members' preferred EDI training included additional training in the areas of racism, dignity and respect, College processes regarding indicated (preferred) name etc. Further requests for training on EDI topics were collected during a Staff Gathering in May 2025. These will be considered both by Human Resources and the EDI Team when planning training and other staff events. Staff Survey 2024: 42% (F 46% M 54%) of respondents agreed they are encouraged to take up training opportunities for their career development. Note - 28% (F 34% M 23%) of respondents gave neutral response possibly indicating an element of apathy towards training/career development.					
Induction	Whilst there have been significant improvements overall in relation to the induction process, there were gaps identified in relation to training in College systems and short courses. In addition to this, there have been a number of changes in line management since the last application.	3.2	Develop and deliver refresher training for Line Managers on formalised induction procedures for new staff and to new Line Managers on appointment. Orientation to Induction section on the Staff Portal provided to all Line Managers.	Q4 2026	Head of HR & EDI	80% of Line Managers completed Induction refresher training Induction section on staff portal updated to include additional induction videos, including Dignity and Respect training video by January 2027.

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	To ensure a streamlined process and ensure that all staff receive a consistent induction experience, relevant actions have been identified. Staff Survey 2024: 54% (60% M 53% F) of new starters since 2020 reported receiving training on College systems. 46% (60% M 42% F) of new starters reported induction included short training courses.	3.3	Develop series of short asynchronous videos for use during induction outlining staff entitlements, benefits, and baseline EDI training. Induction section on Staff Portal updated with full series of essential induction videos.	Q3 2026	Head of HR & EDI Head of Digital Communications & Marketing Data Protection Officer IT Manager	75% of new starters report: - receiving training on College systems and: -induction included short training courses.
		3.4	Develop asynchronous training to facilitate early training of New Starters in College values and Dignity and Respect policies.	Q3 2026	Head of HR & EDI	
CPD Priority Action	In general, uptake of internal training and CPD opportunities is relatively low and precise data on staff uptake is limited. Attendance at the most recent Staff CPD days in August 2025 was 42% (23% Academic 39% PSS) so further engagement with staff is required in this area, particularly as the College enters a period of significant transition.	3.5	All line managers responsible for encouraging engagement with internal CPD opportunities amongst Academic and PMS staff by ensuring staff are allocated necessary time to attend training during CPD bi-annual training days.	Q2 2028	Head of HR & EDI	Staff portal updated with asynchronous videos for staff CPD. 50% staff attendance at bi-annual CPD training in 2026 and increasing to 60% in 2027 where 60% staff survey responses agree that internal training opportunities are relevant to their role.

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	A more formalised bi-annual CPD programme for academic staff has been implemented since 2024 and more recently an annual CPD day for PMS staff has been implemented in 2025. Despite new CPD arrangements being put in place, 2024 survey data still indicates that this area requires further attention. Staff Survey 2024: 55% (46% M 59% F) agreed that training sessions are scheduled to maximise staff ability to attend. 48% (46% M 50% F) agreed that internal training opportunities are relevant to their role. 47% (54% M 47% F) agreed they received sufficient IT training. Staff Gathering Feedback 2025 - Training needs to be provided in both synchronous and asynchronous formats to allow for flexibility in participation - Staff reported workload, meeting clashes, and relevance as barriers to participation to CPD opportunities. - Retention of information was also highlighted as an issue.	3.6	Attendance for mandatory training sessions to be tracked to ensure staff engagement.	Annually	Head of HR & EDI	95% participation rate in mandatory training Annual summary of mandatory training attendance rates to be included in annual HR & EDI Report to Management Board.
		3.7	Collate asynchronous training videos for key areas identified through staff feedback to allow staff complete training according to their own schedule and as often as needed. Publish Staff Training Resources on Staff Portal. Information session delivered during annual CPD days to inform and update staff on asynchronous training resources available.	Q3 2026	Head of HR & EDI Head of Digital Communications & Marketing	70% of staff survey responses agree that they receive sufficient IT training.
		3.8	Feedback process to be introduced for all internal	Q3 2026	Head of HR & EDI	Annual staff training report, including feedback analysis,

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			training. Feedback gathered to include areas such as: • if training met expectations • how training could be improved • additional staff suggestions. This will also be used as a baseline to measure future training needs.			presented to Management Board.
	External CPD remains a challenge for the College both in terms of financial resourcing and staff engagement. The College does collaborate with SETU in the delivery of their annual CPD workshops, whereby Carlow College staff are invited, and have availed of, relevant CPD sessions, which provides avenues for staff to access a more varied range of CPD sessions. In addition, the staff survey showed a high level of neutral responses in relation to external CPD - 47% (F48% / M 46%) <i>represents neutral responses for satisfaction levels for financial supports for external CPD.</i> It is difficult to identify the exact reasons for these neutral responses, possible factors could be: • a general apathy amongst staff to identify and engage in suitable CPD	3.9	Awareness campaign promoting cost-effective and relevant external CPD opportunities to staff on a regular basis. Continued collaboration with SETU to promote opportunities for staff to join SETU CPD sessions, where relevant. Provision of outplacement services for staff during the redundancy process to support them in their next career move.	Q2 2028	Head of HR & EDI VP Academic Affairs /Registrar	Quarterly updates on external CPD opportunities promoted to staff. 65% of staff respondents agree that useful external CPD has been made available to them

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	opportunities particularly given the College's current strategic position; - possibly related to the current staff demographic - 25% staff are aged 55 and over – which could impact the level of importance of career progression for some staff. There is also a perceived low uptake of external CPD amongst staff, however there is also an issue with the recording of external CPD for monitoring purposes. Staff Survey 2024: 48% (F 46% M 62%) agreed that they were encouraged to take up further training opportunities for their career development. 42% (F 41% M 46%) satisfied with the financial support for external CPD 58% (F 61% M 54%) agreed that useful external CPD opportunities have been made available to them.					
Theme 4: Data Capture, Analysis & Reporting						
Data capture and management Priority Action	Whilst undertaking the review process for this application, it became evident that there were critical gaps in our data capture processes, which have impacted analysis of our progress. This has resulted in an over-reliance on survey data in some cases. To	4.1	Undertake a review of the data capture process across the College for Athena Swan and HEA reporting and design and implement system for	Q2 2027	Head of HR & EDI Data Protection Officer Admissions Officer	Framework for data capture developed with appropriate systems in place for ongoing recording, monitoring, and reporting.

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	facilitate better measurement of the effectiveness of identified key actions, there is a need to develop a systematic approach to data capture, analysis and reporting, particularly in relation to equality data, including the demographic profile of students and staff in Carlow College. Key gaps in data identified include: - Equality data such as gender, ethnicity and disability for staff and students - CPD uptake - Training effectiveness		capturing and reporting. Tasks: - Establish a data collection working group and develop terms of reference - Examine institutional data requirements - Consult with relevant departments for review of policies and systems		Director of Student Services & Learner Supports	Relevant policies and/or privacy notices updated/developed to support required data capture.
		4.2	Review data capture within Bright HR to ensure maximum data capture which would inform future AS applications. To support this, an awareness campaign to be undertaken to encourage staff to update their details within Bright HR, advising on reasons why data is being collected and how it will be used to inform policy and practice for the benefit of all staff.	Q2 2027	Head of HR & EDI	Maximum data captured for all staff within Bright HR.
		4.3	Review existing system for tracking engagement with internal and external CPD events.	Q2 2028	Head of HR & EDI	Fully complete records for staff engagement with CPD. Annual summary of staff CPD engagement provided to Management Board.

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Gender Pay Gap	The gender pay gap analysis and reporting is required by the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021, implemented in 2022, which sets our employers' obligations in relation to gender pay gap reporting. The College meets the threshold for annual reporting requirements.	4.4	Gender pay reports will be developed annually as required. Report will be disseminated to staff through the Staff Portal and publicly on the College website.	June of each year	Head of HR & EDI Senior Accounts Specialist	Annual gender pay gap report uploaded to Government portal and published on the website
Staff Survey	Staff surveys undertaken in 2020 and 2024. The SAT recognises the need and benefit of undertaking biennial surveys to ensure changes in staff experiences are identified in a timely fashion. Qualitative feedback in relation to the survey itself is that the survey is too long and time consuming. Needs to be more user friendly.	4.5	SAT Survey Subgroup to review current process to identify alternative survey process to maximise staff engagement e.g. - Condensing the existing survey - Undertaking a number of shorter surveys in relation specific themes.	Q2 2028	SAT Chair SAT Members	Increase in proportion of staff responding to staff surveys to 80% (Baseline from 2024: 74%)
Theme 5: Positive Culture						
Managing Bullying, Discrimination and Unfair Behaviour Priority Action	The 2024 staff survey identified the need for regular Dignity & Respect training to support EDI. While 84% of respondents (19% increase) agreed that the College promotes clear values and behavioural expectations, staff	5.1	Face to face Dignity & Respect biennial staff training to be supported by asynchronous annual training which will be mandatory for all staff.	Annually	Head of HR & EDI	75% of staff completing biennial Dignity & Respect training 30% reduction in number of respondents who have experienced discrimination / unfair behaviour.

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	confidence in complaints being managed appropriately is a concern. Staff Survey 2024: 13% of respondents / 7 staff members (F 14% M 8%) reported <i>experiencing</i> discrimination / unfair treatment. 18% of respondents (F 19% M 17%) reported <i>witnessing</i> discrimination / unfair treatment of another person. The nature of the discrimination/unfair treatment is broken down as follows: Gender - 20% (F 25% M 0%) Sexual Orientation (33% (F 33% M 33%) Age/Civil Status/Ethnicity all at 13% (2 staff members). Disability/Religious beliefs/Family status all at 7% (1 staff member). 59% of respondents (F 59% M 58%) are confident that discrimination complaints would be handled appropriately. 52% of respondents (F 53% M 50%) are confident that bullying complaints would be handled appropriately.	5.2	Biennial training for Line Managers on managing complaints to be put in place.			80% of Line Managers complete training in respect of management bullying & discrimination complaints. 60% of staff respondents are confident that discrimination / bullying complaints would be handled appropriately.
Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment Priority Action	An ESVH Working Group has been established in the College to develop and progress a number of procedures and supports aligned with the <i>Framework for Consent in Higher Education</i> .	5.3	Liaise with and support the actions of the ESVH Working Group in achieving the actions set out in the ESVH Action Plan.	Ongoing	Chair ESVH Working Group	75% of staff surveyed agree they are comfortable reporting SVH incidents and are confident complaints would be appropriately managed during next staff survey.

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	While data in relation to managing ESVH complaints are marginally better than those quoted above, this area will continue to receive focus through the ESVH Action Plan: 69% (F 70% M 67%) of respondents agreed that they would be comfortable reporting SVH 67% (F 67% M 64%) agreed that they are confident complaints would be appropriately managed.		Training provided to staff and students on the ESVH complaints process.			
Entitlements Refresher	To build on the improvement in awareness of leave options as evidenced in the Staff Survey 2024, further communication campaigns to be put in place. In many cases, staff become aware of specific leave and entitlements once it becomes relevant to their circumstances. Staff Survey 2024: - Varying levels of awareness for leave entitlements were reported - Force Majeure 22% unaware - Carers Leave 20% unaware, - Parental Leave / Maternity / Adoptive / Paternity 4% unaware	5.4	Refresher training to be provided at annual Staff CPD events on leave and entitlements	Annually	Head of HR & EDI	Increase in awareness levels of leave and entitlements by 20%.
		5.5	Develop a series of short explanatory videos outlining the individual leave and entitlements available to staff for publication on the Staff Portal.	Q3 2026	Head of HR & EDI Head of Digital Communications & Marketing	Increase in awareness levels of leave and entitlements by 20%.
Staff Morale and Wellbeing Priority Action	In recent years, there have been a number of key policy changes aimed at improving staff wellbeing and work-life balance. This has resulted in a positive improvement in staff	5.6	Host in-house wellbeing and wellness events for staff that can also be used as opportunities to promote EAP supports.	Annually	Head of HR & EDI EDI Team Chair	Increase satisfaction levels with work-life balance to 75% of staff.

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	wellbeing, as evidenced in the Staff Survey 2024.		Participate in third-party related events, such as National Workplace Wellbeing Day, coordinated annually by IBEC.			
	Now with the formal policy structure in place, the next phase is to further build a positive workplace culture through staff-focused events and initiatives. The College has experienced low absentee rates for the 2024-2025 academic year was 0.54% for all employees: • 0.29% form PMS staff • 0.09% for academic staff This rate is low compared with cso.ie data for Q1 2024 of 13.4% average. Staff Survey 2024: • 69% (68% F 75% M) of staff satisfied with their work-life balance • 51% (49% F 62% M) of staff reported that they are required to work outside contracted hours	5.7	Promote the College's <i>Right to Disconnect Policy</i> to staff and line managers to ensure a culture of positive work-life balance.	Annually	Head of HR and EDI	Minimum decrease of 10% in staff reporting they are required to work outside contracted hours.
Neurodivergent Friendly Campus Priority Action	Approximately 18% of students disclose a disability to the College each year. This figure has remained fairly consistent over the past 5 years however, what has changed is the types of conditions that are registered.	5.8	Establish a consultation group comprising of staff and students to review the neurodivergent student experience and inform initiatives aimed at supporting students' transition through	Q4 2026	Head of Student Services and Learner Supports Learner Information & Retention Officer	Action plan developed to enhance neurodivergent student and staff experiences. Rolling survey to evaluate services to neurodivergent students showing a positive

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	In 2025 – 2026, as of 1st March 2026, 79% of students who disclosed a disability identified their primary condition as neurodivergent, including Autism, ADHD, Developmental Coordination Disorder and Dyslexia. Whilst this is a notable increase from 70% in 2020-2021, the data shows the figures for specific conditions have changed quite dramatically over this period with a 300% increase in students registering with Autism Spectrum Disorder, 400% increase in students disclosing ADHD, 133% increase in students disclosing Developmental Coordination Disorder and a 28% decrease in students disclosing Dyslexia. And these figures only consider the primary condition disclosed. On average, 50% of students who disclose a disability will disclose multiple conditions. Staff Survey 2024: 20.83% (11% M 27% F) staff indicated they have a disability, impairment, chronic health condition or learning difference. - Of those, 20% (0% M 100% F) indicated they were neurodivergent.		third level education and staff experiences in the workplace.		CCSU President Head of HR & EDI	increase from existing 80% to 85%.
		5.9	Review Disability Supports Moodle page and webpage in consultation with students to develop a dedicated area for neurodivergent supports and information.	Q1 2027	Head of Student Services and Learner Supports Head of Digital Communications & Marketing	Moodle page updated with relevant resources by January 2027
		5.10	Host annual ADHD Awareness Month and Autism Celebration Week events to raise awareness within the College community	Annually	Head of Student Services and Learner Supports EDI Team Chair CCSU President	Annual events celebrated and promoted on College website and social media
LGBTQIA+	The College approved a new <i>Gender Identity & Expression Policy</i> in January 2025. Whilst all relevant departments are aware of the policy and staff have been notified, there has been little in the way of wider awareness and communications.	5.11	Continue work to promote awareness of LGBTQIA+ issues and foster an inclusive environment for staff and students through awareness campaigns including:	Annually	EDI Team Chair CCSU President	Visible indicators on campus of Carlow College's commitment to ensuring the College is a LGBTQIA+ inclusive campus.

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	Staff Survey 2024: 11% (6% F 27% M) of respondents reported a sexual orientation other than heterosexual/straight with a further 6% (6% F 0% M) preferring not to say. - Of those respondents who did not identify as heterosexual/straight, 100% agreed that staff are treated equally in terms of protected characteristics, including sexual orientation. 18% of respondents (F 19% M 17%) reported witnessing discrimination / unfair treatment of another person. Of these 50% (F 50% M 50%) were on the basis on sexual orientation.		- Visual LGBTQIA+ posters and displays across campus - Mark and celebrate days of significance, including Trans Day of Visibility on March 31st, International Trans Day of Remembrance on November 20th and World Aids Day on December 1st			
		5.12	Continue to collaborate with Carlow Pride Festival to facilitate the starting point for the Carlow Pride Parade.	July Annually	EDI Team Chair Head of Facilities	
		5.13	Information sessions to be provided to staff and SU reps on processes and procedures relating to the <i>Gender Identity & Expression Policy</i> . Key roles required to attend sessions include Admissions, Academic Administration, Line Managers, Programme Directors, Academic Advisors and CCSU Reps	Q2 2026	Head of HR & EDI	60% of staff and students in line management / student facing roles attend information session on <i>Gender Identity & Expression Policy</i>

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Theme 6: Workload						
Workload Priority Action	40% of academic staff (F 33% M 50%) reported that the College has a clear and transparent way of allocating workload. This level of satisfaction is notably lower amongst female academics with (F 25% M 75%) reporting their workload is reasonable. It is noted that: - First round of the revised workload allocation process was completed before the 2024 staff survey - The process has since been further developed for the 2025 workload allocations and - Further policy review took place in May 2025 to ensure better equity of workload. Close monitoring is required in this area to ensure that changes made are having a positive impact on female academic workload and full review will be undertaken again in two years.	6.1	Close Careful management is required to ensure that changes over the next two years do not have a further negative impact on workload, monitoring to ensure that changes made are having a positive impact, particularly on female academic workload.	Q1 2027	Head of HR & EDI VP Academic Affairs/Registrar	Staff survey results showing 50% of academic staff agree that the College has a clear and transparent way of allocating workload. Staff Survey results show minimum of 40% of female academic staff reporting their workload is reasonable.