



D10.5: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR ALL ARQUS COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Work Group 10 “Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub”

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Table of contents

A Roadmap for Arqus Communities Of Practice	3
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion at the Core	4
Model and Framework of the Professional Development Plan	5
Key principles of PDPs	5
How to use it? - Mapping out Priorities in the CoP	7
Integration into Arqus CoP Staff Development Programme	9
Topics from the EDI Framework	9

D10.5: Professional Development Plan for all Arqus Communities Of Practice

A ROADMAP FOR ARQUS COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The **Arqus European University Alliance** brings together the universities of Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon1, Maynooth, Minho, Padua, Vilnius and Wroclaw. The principal driving ambition of the Arqus Alliance is the design, testing and gradual implementation of an innovative model for deep inter-university cooperation, which will serve as the basis for a truly European campus fulfilling all the missions of a university for the twenty-first century.

The **mission of Arqus** is to transform European higher education, research and innovation through deep cooperation and progressive integration, in pursuit of an equitable and sustainable future. Amongst others, one vision is to ensure and promote the core European values of democracy, the rule of law, respect for diversity and human rights, solidarity and the pursuit of peace and justice in Europe and the world (Arqus Mission Statement 2022-2032, p. 5-6) (ARQUS "Common Charters on Gender Equality, Inclusion and Sustainable Development Goals")

The Alliance is dedicated to jointly promoting and widening access for diverse student and staff populations, facilitating inclusive admission and recruitment policies, and actively attracting talent from less represented groups. Arqus is especially committed to ensuring universal accessibility of its resources and activities (Arqus Mission Statement 2022-2032, p. 8).

Communities of Practice (CoPs) act as dynamic learning communities that engage both inside and outside the community (Lotter et al., 2014). The [Arqus Communities of Practice](#) are communities of professionals that come together for bench- and peer-learning in all areas of institutional activity, as well as to offer staff development opportunities across all partner institutions.

In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, **professional development** is essential for fostering growth, innovation, and excellence within academic communities. Domain-based joint staff development is a crucial tool for the long-term growth and sustainability of the Alliance. CoPs serve as ideal environments for peer learning to flourish and extend its benefits beyond the immediate members. Each CoP should develop and continuously implement a staff development program for its specific domain. **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)** is a transversal topic that cuts across all domains and should be an integral part of staff development initiatives. Comprehensive implementation of professional development on EDI is crucial across all levels of the Alliance, encompassing students, researchers, teachers, administrative staff, and management. Awareness-raising and training efforts should be tailored to address the unique dynamics and challenges within academic environments, ensuring that everyone, from undergraduate students to senior faculty members, understands the principles and practices of EDI. Against this background, **Arqus CoPs play a crucial role in contributing to the effective integration of the principles of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) across the Alliance.**

The **WG10 "Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub"** functions as an important support structure to increase the awareness, knowledge and practice of EDI throughout the Alliance. To facilitate engagement and knowledge building around EDI in the Alliance, WG10 has devised a comprehensive Professional Development Plan (PDP) tailored to the specific needs of Arqus CoPs. The plan is designed to support the continuous improvement and development of CoPs by focusing on a structured, topic-driven approach.

Recognizing the diverse and autonomous nature of CoPs, the **PDP centers on a transversal topic like EDI**, ensuring that the topic is relevant and applicable across different domains. The PDP is designed to adapt to the diverse and autonomous structures of CoPs, making it **flexible** to the unique structure and domain of each CoP. WG10 supports CoPs in embedding EDI principles into relevant aspects of their staff development programmes, ensuring that CoPs are equipped to foster inclusive and equitable environments.

This Professional Development Plan for Communities of Practice is available on the Arqus website as a [downloadable pdf](#).

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION AT THE CORE

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is a transversal topic. It serves as the cornerstone of the professional development framework. By honing in on EDI, this plan makes every effort to equip all CoPs with the knowledge and tools to implement inclusive, equitable, and accessible processes into proposals, activities, discussions, and staff development to ensure every individual, regardless of their background, has access to the same opportunities for growth, advancement, and success. This focus not only enriches the community but also aligns with broader institutional goals of creating inclusive cultures and equitable learning and work spaces within the academic community.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is a framework and practice aimed at ensuring that **every individual in an organisation or community is treated fairly and respectfully, has equal access to opportunities and resources, and can fully contribute to and participate in all aspects of work and life** (e.g., [Wolbring & Nguyen, 2023](#)). It embodies the commitment of Arqus (see Arqus Values and Goals) to uphold the fundamental European values of democracy, the rule of law, respect for diversity and human rights within the framework of higher education. Other projects provide key evidence about EDI as key concerns and success factors for European universities (see f.x. the [INVITED project report](#), supported by the European University Association).

- **Equality** refers to the fair treatment and provision of equal opportunities for all, regardless of individual characteristics such as race, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or age.
- **Diversity** involves recognizing, valuing, and leveraging the differences and unique attributes that each individual brings to a group or organisation, fostering a rich and varied environment.
- **Inclusion** is the practice of creating an environment where all individuals feel welcomed, respected, and valued, enabling them to fully participate and contribute to the community or organisation.

What benefits does EDI bring?

- **For Society.** Reducing inequality, fostering social cohesion, and ensuring that all individuals have the opportunity to succeed.
- **For Organisations.** Diverse teams often bring different perspectives, which can lead to better solutions, improved decision-making, innovation, employee satisfaction, and productivity.
- **For Individuals:** Enhances personal development, provides equal access to opportunities, and promotes mental and emotional well-being.
- **For Everyone:** It is morally and ethically sound to treat others fairly, with respect and dignity.

How does the integration of EDI enhance the academic environment?

- **Teaching and learning.** Inclusive teaching practices help all students feel valued and supported, to reach their potential. This leads to higher levels of engagement and participation as well as lower levels of retention. Diverse classrooms expose students to a range of perspectives, fostering a wide spectrum of different skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, empathy, cultural awareness, and other. The curricula that reflect diverse perspectives, histories, and contributions, provide a more comprehensive education.

- **Research.** Diverse research teams bring varied perspectives and ideas, leading to more innovative approaches and solutions to complex problems. Inclusive research practices ensure that studies consider the needs and contexts of different populations, making findings more applicable and impactful across diverse groups. EDI encourages researchers to consider ethical implications more deeply, ensuring that research is conducted with respect for all communities involved.
- **Staff development.** EDI fosters leadership that is more empathetic, culturally aware, and effective, which can enhance the overall working environment for everyone. An inclusive environment where all staff feel respected and valued leads to higher job satisfaction, reducing turnover and fostering long-term commitment.
- **Institutional reputation and competitiveness.** Institutions known for their commitment to EDI are often seen as leaders in the academic world, attracting top talent in both students and faculty globally. Institutions are better positioned to establish and maintain international partnerships, fostering cross-cultural exchanges and global research initiatives.

MODEL AND FRAMEWORK OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Professional Development Plan (PDP) is a flexible document designed to encourage and help all members of the CoPs in the Arqus Alliance to think about and work through the challenges and opportunities of EDI, using the problem-solving skills they already possess. The initiative aims to re-center EDI conversations to focus on EDI practice instead of ideologies or beliefs, by facilitating exercises in which participants explicitly determine how EDI might be approached from their roles, units, or departments, and by the Arqus organisation. Through this model, members of the CoPs generate ideas and prioritise solutions and actions to address EDI in context at the local organisational level by collectively reflecting on EDI values, EDI definitions, existing practices and gaps to generate ideas that can shape the design of **staff development programmes** in the CoP's relevant areas.

WG10 functions as a facilitator to EDI conversations, discussions and the design of PDP. To enable systematic change, it is critical for CoP members to agree upon a common definition, organisational focus areas, and accompanying training. This plan assists the organisation to reflect and evaluate knowledge to inform the development of a collective EDI strategy within staff development programmes. PDP requires careful consideration, self-awareness, and an analysis of personal skills, knowledge, and goals, as well as identifying the stages or steps needed to advance.

For dissemination purposes, **Arqus CoPs receive a leaflet** presenting the main steps of the PDP to encourage active participation and self-reflection within the EDI framework.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF PDPs

- ★ **Problem-solving approach.** The use of the PDP seeks to approach EDI challenges like any other work problem, using ideation, planning, follow-through, and assessment.
- ★ **Tailored design.** The PDP should be customised to reflect the unique characteristics of each CoP, including their specific areas of interest, goals, social context, and organisational environment. This ensures that the plan is relevant and effectively addresses the needs of each group.
- ★ **Actionable solutions.** The goal is to shift the conversation on EDI in the CoP from challenges to actionable solutions and determine priorities (*see [example link](#)*).
- ★ **Iterative adaptation.** EDI work and development in this area is iterative action. It is important to remain open to change and adapt PDPs as needed based on new insights, feedback, and evolving EDI challenges.

- ★ **Collaborative engagement.** The success of the professional development plan hinges on the active participation and collaboration of all CoP members. Open communication and empowerment of all members is key in developing a successful PDP.
- ★ **Diverse thinking.** EDI gaps are best addressed by diverse individuals working together. Any perspective originating from an isolated/homogenous group can fall victim to groupthink, which may lead to blind spots and inequitable or fragmented decision making, assumptions and poor implementation.
- ★ **Encouraging EDI allies.** The plan is to be designed to meet CoPs where they are and encourage their growth as EDI allies through repeated practice and education, encouraging CoP members to become active proponents of EDI. WG10 will give attention to comments, questions, and voices of dissent of CoPs. They are asked to reflect on day-to-day behaviours, interactions or default patterns of thinking that may inhibit EDI advancement.

HOW TO USE IT? - MAPPING OUT PRIORITIES IN THE CoP

The PDP includes **key steps to identify priorities**, allocate contributions, and outline specific actions to streamline this process, thus enhancing the overall effectiveness of professional development within the CoP. The step descriptions and key questions are detailed to better illustrate the PDP mapping process; however, the CoP members should **view them as guidelines** rather than feeling obligated to answer all the questions.

Step	Description	Key Questions
<p>Self-Reflection and Needs Assessment</p>	<p>Members self reflect the EDI within their CoP and consider their CoP outcomes and outputs. The primary goal of self-reflection is to challenge and broaden our perceptions and understanding. Through self-reflection, CoP members can identify existing biases, recognize areas for improvement, and become aware of unintentional exclusionary practices that might exist within the CoP or area of its work. By reflecting on their current understanding of EDI, each CoP member can pinpoint specific areas for personal growth and learning. Insights gained from individual self-assessment and group discussions can lead to actionable steps that integrate EDI principles into the daily functioning and culture of the CoP.</p>	<p><i>INSIDE CoP:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does it mean to you personally to have an inclusive, equitable, and diverse CoP? ● How would someone of a different race, gender, ability, or cultural background feel in your CoP? What barriers might they face? Think about different activities your CoP is involved in. ● What personal assumptions do you hold that might affect how you interact with others? (some biases might be relevant to your cultural background, gender, ability, etc.); f.ex., do you interact differently with others who are of similar or different gender? ● How can you actively contribute to an inclusive environment? ● What specific actions will ensure that everyone feels respected and valued? ● How can different perspectives strengthen your CoP? <p><i>OUTSIDE CoP:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What aspects of EDI could be relevant considering the area of interest and scope of your CoP? ● How can our CoP's goals and activities be better aligned with EDI principles? ● How can CoP outcomes and outputs be improved to benefit diverse groups equally, considering race, gender, ability, cultural background, etc.? ● What steps can you take together to ensure that your CoP actively promotes EDI in everything you do? ● How could your CoP benefit from including more diverse perspectives and experiences? ● How is EDI reflected in the objectives for the staff development programme of the CoP? What indicators align with or make reference to the principles of EDI?

<p>Priority Setting</p>	<p>In the priority-setting phase, CoPs collaboratively identify and rank the most critical EDI issues that need to be addressed considering the CoP itself and its goals, outcomes, and outputs. The process should be inclusive and participatory, taking into account the diverse perspectives of all members to ensure that the selected priorities genuinely reflect the needs and aspirations of the entire group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the most pressing EDI challenges currently facing your CoP? ● Which EDI issues require immediate attention, and which can be addressed in the longer term? ● What topic within the EDI framework could be systematically integrated into the staff development programme's objectives, expected results, and indicators? ● How do your EDI goals align with your CoP's overall mission and values? ● What activities or training is needed to make a positive impact towards EDI goal?
<p>Resource Allocation</p>	<p>Members identify their strengths and contributions, determining who can best support various aspects of the development plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the strengths and gaps in resources for supporting/addressing the EDI? ● What existing skills and expertise do your CoP members have that can be used to support EDI initiatives? ● How can you best leverage external resources or partnerships to enhance your ability to drive EDI forward? ● Which members are best suited to lead specific EDI projects or initiatives, based on their expertise and interests? ● How can you foster collaboration among members to share resources and knowledge related to EDI?
<p>Development and Implementation</p>	<p>Members focus on designing, launching, and executing specific EDI goals within the CoP. This involves creating detailed plans and integrating them into Staff development programmes. Also setting timelines, assigning responsibilities, and establishing mechanisms for collaboration and feedback should be considered, and ongoing collaboration and support from all members should be ensured.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Given the EDI topic you have chosen, which objectives can be set? ● What are the expected results? ● What are the necessary steps and who will be responsible for each task? ● What learning resources can you use or develop? ● How can you set realistic timelines that match your CoP's capacity and resources? ● What communication strategies are needed to keep all members informed and engaged throughout the implementation process?
<p>Monitoring and Tracking Progress</p>	<p>Progress is continuously tracked, and upon completion of the initial steps, the group reflects on areas for deeper exploration and further development. This process requires establishing clear metrics and indicators for success, collecting data regularly, and maintaining transparency in reporting findings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What specific metrics and indicators will you use to measure the success of our EDI progress (for example, using surveys to measure satisfaction with process, changes in proportion of elements in PD programmes that include EDI-related content, number of members who attended EDI-related workshops or completed online learning modules etc.) ● What progress have you made so far, and how

		can you track even minor but meaningful changes along the way, recognizing that this is an ongoing process?
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INTEGRATION INTO ARQUS CoP STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Professional Development Plan (PDP) presents main topics that are critical to advancing the understanding and implementation of the EDI framework. To address the specific CoP needs, the subjects chosen are partially based on the EDI’s discussion with the CoP’s members in a WG03 meeting that was held in February 2024 at Wroclaw University.

TOPICS FROM THE EDI FRAMEWORK

Below is an overview of proposed topics that can feed into the Staff Development Program to be prepared by the CoPs. However, this overview is not exhaustive; it merely serves as a **source of inspiration**:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY	IMPLICIT BIAS (in education)	MULTICULTURALISM
Principle of treating all individuals fairly and in the same way, without discriminating against them based on race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, disability, etc.	Prejudiced thoughts, feelings or behaviours that unfairly favour or discriminate against a student or group of students in an educational context.	Coexistence of diverse groups and cultures in a society, based on acceptance and respect for differences in norms, beliefs, traditions, customs, and values.
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT	GENDER INCLUSION	INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
Awareness and providing support to maintain emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing.	Practice of creating an environment that acknowledges and respects the diversity of identities and expressions, and promotes equal access and opportunities for all individuals.	Communication style that reflects diversity and avoids the use of expressions or words that can exclude or discriminate against particular groups of people.
INTERSECTIONALITY	DIGITAL ACESIBILITY	INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP
Complex and cumulative way in which different forms of discrimination like racism, sexism and classism interrelate and overlap.	Design of technological environments, including websites, mobile apps and digital documents, which ensures usability for everyone, including people with disabilities.	Management style that embraces diversity and ensures that everyone in an organisation feels valued and that their contributions matter.
	(...)	

Definitions taken from the [Argus English glossary on inclusion and accessibility in higher education](#).

CoP members are encouraged to research, select, and reflect on additional EDI topics, principles, or values that align with their specific Objectives and Actions Lines, and to embed them into their personalised Staff Development Plans. This approach facilitates the translation of EDI principles into specific objectives, outcomes, and indicators, ensuring that EDI is systematically integrated into and operationalized within the Staff Development Programs of Arqus CoPs.

TEMPLATES

To further streamline the process, the PDP provides templates of how EDI topics can be seamlessly integrated into the COP's Staff Development Programs. This comprehensive strategy offers guidance and practical application, making the integration straightforward and impactful.

Please note that further learning opportunities on other topics can be accessed on the [Argus WG10 webpage](#). The templates offer only a selection of potential learning opportunities.

Implicit (unconscious) bias	
Objectives	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to deepen the knowledge of what implicit bias is and what problems it causes - to identify and discuss some implicit biases held by CoP members - to find and employ the measures to battle implicit bias in Cops' line of work
Expected results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased awareness and competence on EDI and Implicit Bias - developed and implemented practices that can be used in CoP group/line of work to diminish the implicit bias occurrence (inside or outside CoP)
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CoP members attended at least one workshop on implicit bias over the next year/read materials - CoP members completed a certain number of Implicit association tests and the results were discussed during one of the meetings - CoP members agreed on and implemented a practice that battles implicit bias in their group/line of work (inside or outside CoP)
Learning opportunities	
Information on Implicit bias in short descriptions , videos , articles , etc. IAT test completion to discover personal implicit biases Discussions among CoP members on information obtained and personal biases discovered	

(Digital) Accessibility	
Objectives	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to create or transform digital materials, content and other documents (PDFs, PowerPoint, websites...) in accessible formats - to allow users/people with a wide range of capabilities to take part in staff development activities or to access information disseminated/created by CoP (websites, materials etc.)
Expected results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dissemination processes among CoPs, to Arqus community or public audience use documents, websites or other digital contents that are accessible

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased usability of products, activities in staff development etc. by people with a wide range of capabilities
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - created materials by CoP are readable to various groups, for instance including those with visual impairments - created contents/material follow design guidelines for accessibility
Learning opportunities	
<p>Staff Training Week on Inclusion & Diversity Materials of seminars regarding accessible and inclusive learning from University of Padua Tips and Tricks for creating accessible digital contents</p>	

Cultural differences	
Objectives	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to recognize, understand, and celebrate cultural diversity within the CoP - to understand the cultural diversity of the end users of the CoP outputs (e.g. cultural diversity of prospective and current students, administrative employees, professors, etc.) - to create materials and content that are culturally sensitive and inclusive, ensuring that all cultural backgrounds are respected and represented
Expected results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enhanced engagement and participation of staff from diverse cultural backgrounds in the CoP - CoP outputs are beneficial and relatable to people from a range of cultural backgrounds
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feedback from participants regarding the cultural inclusiveness of the materials and activities - a diverse range of cultural perspectives represented in CoP outputs
Learning opportunities	
<p>Learning more about cultural differences and working together, for example here Cross-cultural training sessions to increase awareness and understanding of different cultural norms and values Collaborations with cultural organisations to provide educational materials and experiences Resources or guides on culturally responsive practices in digital content creation</p>	

CONCLUSION

The Professional Development Plan for Arqus CoPs (access also as [downloadable pdf](#) on the Arqus website) is not a one-time initiative but a continuous journey of growth and learning. By focusing on EDI as an overarching theme, we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable academic community.

Through structured reflection, priority setting, and collaborative action, we aim to empower each CoP to achieve their full potential and drive positive change within the Arqus Alliance.

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