Status and Development regarding Equality at the University of Iceland 2008-2011

September 2012

FÉLAGSVÍSINDASTOFNUN
HÁSKÓLA ÍSLANDS

Description of the study

Commissioned by	The University of Iceland´s Equal Rights Committee
Objectives	To determine the status and developments of equality issues at the University of Iceland 2008-2012
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Responsibilities

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MAIN FINDINGS

- This report is based on a questionnaire which was sent to the staff of the University of Iceland as well as to representatives of the University´s students´ associations and on statistics, minutes of meetings, other available documentation as well as 18 interviews with administrators and other people actively involved with equality issues within the University.
- In the last three years, Equality Days have been held successfully every autumn inspiring the debate in this area.
- There is a serious lack of education on equality issues for staff and students. This is considered to be mainly due to the lack of time of both those responsible for this kind of education and also its potential recipients.
- Gender perspectives are not mainstreamed into all policies and programmes at the University of Iceland as stipulated both by the Equal Rights Programme of the University and the *Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men* (No. 10/2008). There is a lack of knowledge among administrators and staffs on what gender mainstreaming actually means.
- Although stipulated by the University´s Equal Rights Programme for 2009-2013, a considerable number of enquiries and research projects have not been carried out. Therefore, important basic aspects for activities in this area are missing.
- Gender mainstreaming in teaching and research is not carried out in any systematic way, instead it depends mainly on the individual teacher´s interest and knowledge.
- The fact that in most schools equality committees have been appointed means that more people are actively involved and interested in the field.
- There is evidence suggesting that an increased pressure following the economic crisis in 2008 has made it more difficult to balance working at the university and family life.
- A lack of interest and initiative regarding the issue among administrators is identified as one of the main obstacles to a positive development in equality issues by most of those actively in this area.

- There have been a considerable number of incidents pointing towards the pornification of student culture at the University of Iceland. No education has been offered on how to combat this among staff and students.
- In general, students with disabilities at the University of Iceland meet positive responses and rarely encounter prejudice. Minor changes in teaching methods, if introduced systematically, might, however, improve the accessibility of study courses for students with disabilities.
- Two thirds of students at the University of Iceland are women. Hardly anything, however, has changed regarding a gender biased choice of study courses in the years covered by this report.
- The percentage of women holding professors´ positions has increased from 7 % in 1996 to 24% in 2011.

SUGGESTIONS FOR AMELIORATIONS

- The University of Iceland´s Equal Rights Programme which came into effect in 2009 stipulates that Equality Committees be appointed in each of the University´s schools. During the time covered by this report, this has been executed to a large degree. Knowledge and interest in equality efforts have, therefore, been increased within the University. It is, however, necessary to ensure continuity for the grassroot activities of these committees in coming years.
- The University of Iceland has taken up an ambitious and professional Equal Rights Programme. This programme includes measures which are considered necessary in order to ensure equal rights within the University. The findings of this report indicate, however, that this programme has to a large degree not been complied with during the past four years. It is, therefore, suggested that administrators actively involved in equality issues as well as other university staff cooperate in order to reach the objectives of the University´s Equal Rights Programme 2009-2013.
- Art. 17 of the Act No. 10/2008 stipulates that gender mainstreaming be integrated into all policies, programmes and decision making processes in public institutions. The documents considered in this report, however, indicate that this is not the case at the University of Iceland. The findings of this report clearly show that there is a lack of knowledge regarding gender mainstreaming among the staff of the University of Iceland. In order to ensure that the University of Iceland can fulfil Art. 17 of the Equality Act it is necessary to make certain that all administrators possess the required knowledge on mainstreaming equality aspects and are willing to apply this knowledge.
- It is essential to reinforce education on equality issues for administrators and other university staff. The findings of this report indicate that a lack of funding and interest among administrators are the main factors preventing more education in this area. Documentation contained in this report indicates that elective lectures and courses have been poorly attended by staff and administrators. In order to work systematically towards achieving equality within the University of Iceland, it is necessary to establish regular education for staff and administrators as well as to introduce measures ensuring the attendance of such meetings.

- The findings of this report indicate that one of the biggest obstacles in the way of equality work within the University of Iceland is the gap which has developed between the University´s administrators on the one hand and those who are actively involved in equality issues on the other hand. It is clear that administrators have not shown extensive initiative in systematically working in this area and both groups exhibit a marked discomfort in their communications. The same impression recurred in the interviews carried out for the *Report on Status and Development regarding Gender Equality 2003-2007* (Auður M. Leiknisdóttir, Ásdís A. Arnalds and Friðrik H. Jónsson, 2009). Again, it is suggested that administrators and all those actively involved in equality issues talk together about future developments of these issues and that the expert knowledge of scholars in this field be utilized. Furthermore, that the suspicion and lack of trust by both sides be alleviated in order for administrative staff and experts in the field to use their collective strength for the good of both the University and society in general.
- It is essential to reinforce research and specific evaluations necessary to provide the basis for equality work. Without data on the situation of men, women and other specific groups, systematic efforts for equal rights are hardly feasible and will always remain unsystematic. The areas with a distinct lack of information which would be necessary to be able to adhere to the University´s Equal Rights Programme include:
    - Allocation of tasks and projects to men and women as well as working conditions: The University of Iceland is resolved to ensure that neither sex be discriminated in the allocation of tasks and projects or the decisions on working conditions. There is, however, only a limited amount of data available on this. No evaluations of salaries by gender, the effects of job evaluations and promotion policies on women and men or on the actual working conditions of men and women have been carried out during the time covered by this report. If this data is not available, however, discrimination in these areas cannot be prevented.
    - Balancing family life and work/studies for the University of Iceland´s staff and students. Systematic collection of data is needed in this field in order to introduce measures aiming at making the University of Iceland family-friendly.

- The majority of students finishing a postgraduate degree are women. Only 27% of those applying for academic positions between 2007 and 2008, however, were women. It is, therefore, essential to research the reasons behind this and how to make the University of Iceland an attractive place of work for both men and women in order to fully utilize human resources in this institution.
- In some faculties, there is a significant majority of one sex among students. There have, however, been no systematic attempts to increase the number of students of that sex which is in a significant minority in these faculties, though some of them have, for example, explored the possibility to differentiate their promotional material e.g. by including pictures of both men and women. Documentation gathered for this report indicates that whatever attempts have been made to this effect, they have not been too successful in faculties such as the Faculty of Social Work, the Faculty of Nursing or the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering. What is needed now is a campaign to increase the ratio of the sex which is represented by a minority through new approaches, since whatever has been attempted so far showed only minor or no results at all.
- It is necessary to ensure that the laws be observed when appointing committees. The findings of this report indicate that not all committees are appointed with a percentage of at least 40% of each sex. More data is needed on appointments and the composition of committees to provide an at least annual overview in order to be able to react both systematically and on an ad-hoc basis.
- Documentation of this report indicates a considerable number of incidents pointing towards the pornification of student culture. The results of surveys carried out among staff and students do not indicate that there are systematic activities to counteract this attitude among students. It is, therefore, suggested that regular and systematic education be organised on how to counteract pornification and sexual harassment. Both staff and students and particularly those representing the students´ associations need to receive education on the subject. Such measures would benefit greatly from the support of the Student Council.
- Minor changes in teaching methods might have a considerable impact for students with disabilities and could actually improve teaching methods in general and thus benefit all students. So far, it depends on the will and knowledge of individual

teachers whether such aspects are adhered to. The findings of this report indicate that students with disabilities would profit considerably from a systematic introduction of improved teaching methods taking their needs into account.

- It is not clear whether and what kind of special assistance during their studies is offered to those students whose mother tongue is not Icelandic, whether they encounter more difficulties due to their origin, their social or economic background and where this group can seek support within the University. The *Policy of the University of Iceland 2011-2016* states that efforts are needed in order to improve the access of students with migrant backgrounds to the University of Iceland (2012a). It is suggested that research be carried out regarding the needs of this group in terms of special measures and their general study environment.

INTRODUCTION

This report is issued by the University Council´s Equal Rights Committee as part of the provisions contained in the Equal Rights Programme of the University of Iceland 2009-2013 which stipulates that an evaluation on equality issues within the University be carried out every four years.

This is an abridged version of the report covering the main issues which are discussed in considerably more detail in the complete version. This is a large-scale project and this report shall not be considered an exhausting account of every aspect of equality work, lectures or other related activities within the University of Iceland between 2008 and 2011. The subjects of this report were chosen in view of the University´s Equal Rights Programme 2009-2013 but also contain a number of issues dominating in the documentation obtained for its purpose.

COMPILATION OF DATA

In spring 2012, interviews were conducted with 18 parties within the University of Iceland. Nine of them are employed as administrators, seven are actively involved in equality issues. Furthermore, an interview was carried out with Halla Tryggvadóttir, Chair of the Equal Rights Committee of the Student Councils in 2010 and Jens Fjalar Skaptason, Chair of the Student Council in 2010-2011. All

quotations presented in italics within this report are direct quotes from the interviews. Filler words were removed without this fact being mentioned explicitly. Other omissions are marked by square brackets […]. Furthermore, information was collected from other parties within the University as needed, including information provided by Hanna Björg Sigurjónsdóttir and Knút Birgisson who offered information on the situation of students with disabilities based on their on-going research.

Two questionnaires were sent out in the course of this research. One of them was sent to all permanent members of staff of the University of Iceland occupying at least 40%-positions. This group consisted of 1162 people and of them, 633 or 54% replied.

Another questionnaire was sent to the list of 60 students´ associations obtained from the Students´ Council. All in all, representatives of 44 students´ associations or 73% responded.

Other documentation considered in this report includes minutes of meetings of the Equal Rights Committee from this period, minutes of meetings from the Disability Commission, memos, Equal Rights Programmes, statistic information derived from the University´s homepage as well as relevant academic publications from this period.

EQUALITY EDUCATION

Equality education for students

Art. 23 of the Act No. 10/2008 *on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men* stipulates that students on all school levels receive education on equality issues.

In the past three years, Equality Days have been held successfully every autumn and have grown both in terms of scope and popularity. Activities were open to all students and staff. There is a risk, however, that only those students and members of staff participate in such events who have already shown an interest and possess some knowledge regarding equality issues.

A qualitative survey carried out by the Social Science Research Institute was commissioned by the Rector´s office during spring term 2012. Students were asked whether their studies had increased their awareness of equality issues. The survey was conducted online and by phone in January and February 2012.

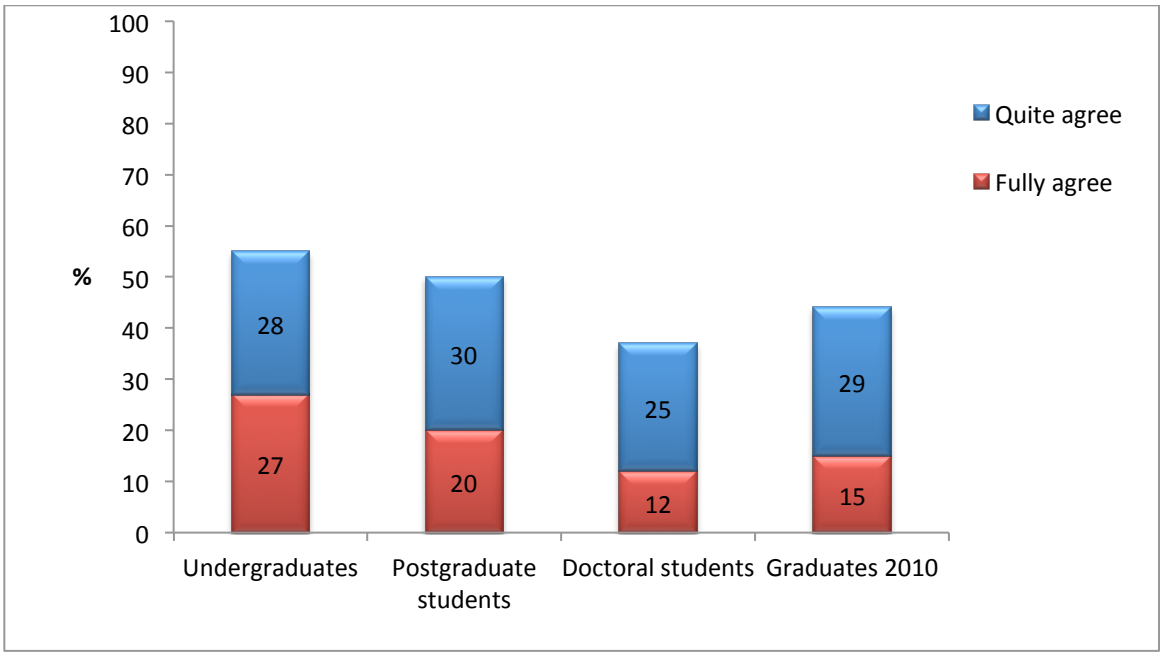


Illustration 1. Studying at the University has made me more aware of equality[1]

Illustration 1 shows that the proportion of those who agree to this statement amounts to 55% at the most and 37% at the least among doctoral students. One of the interviewees said that the fact that no systematic education on equality issues was available for the University´s students was a sign the University did not take its duties as stipulated by the Act on Equality very seriously.

> *The laws stipulate education on equality issues on all school levels. I mean, this should of course be part of every first year student´s schedule, shouldn´t it? That is one thing, for example, I mean this is clearly a duty of this University.*

The results displayed in Illustration 1 refer to general questions of education and the question was put before a broad sample of students. The survey carried out among those representing students´ associations within the University included questions on the familiarity with the University´s Equal Rights Programme, its Policy against Discrimination and the its Policy in the Affairs of Disabled People. Most of the representatives of the University´s students´ associations said they had limited knowledge of the University´s policy regarding equality issues, only 4% said their knowledge of the University´s Equal Rights Programme was extensive or very extensive.

Equality education for members of staff

Around 20% of the staff say that they have extensive or considerable knowledge of the University´s Equal Rights Programme, its Policy against Discrimination and the University´s Policy in the Affairs of Disabled People. This ratio is 11% when asked about the Equal Rights Programme at the school of the interviewee in question (Illustration 2). This might be explained by the fact that not all schools already have an approved Equal Rights Programme. All interviewees, however, were asked about their knowledge of the envisaged policies of their respective school since they are in preparation in all schools and some members of staff have been working on them.

[1] All undergraduate students in the 2nd year were asked and the return ratio was 61%. In the sample of Master´s students the return ratio was 66%. All doctoral students were asked and the return ratio amounted to 67%. All graduates from the year 2010 were asked except those who were registered for further studies at the Unversity of Iceland in Januar 2012 with a return ratio of 66%.

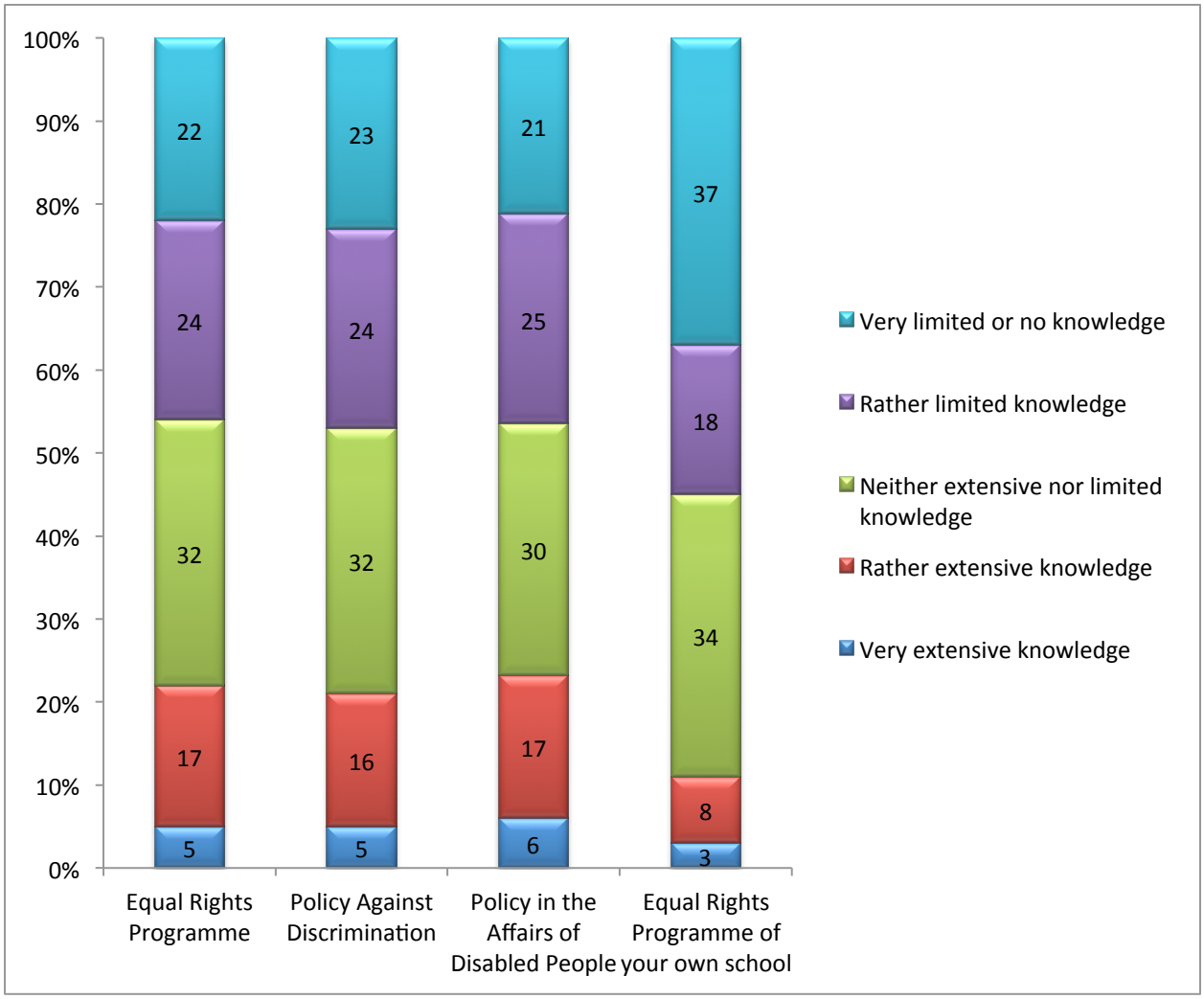


Illustration 2. How much do you know about the University of Iceland´s Equal Rights Programme, its Policy against Discrimination and its Policy in the Affairs of Disabled People as well as the Equal Rights Programme of your own school? – Staff

As shown in Illustration 3, a considerable number of staff is of the opinion that the need for education on equality issues is rather high or very high within their school or working unit. The highest ratio can be found within the school of Education where two out of ten consider the need rather high or very high. Of the five schools, the ratio is lowest in the School of Health Sciences and the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences, though even here it amounts to more than 40%.

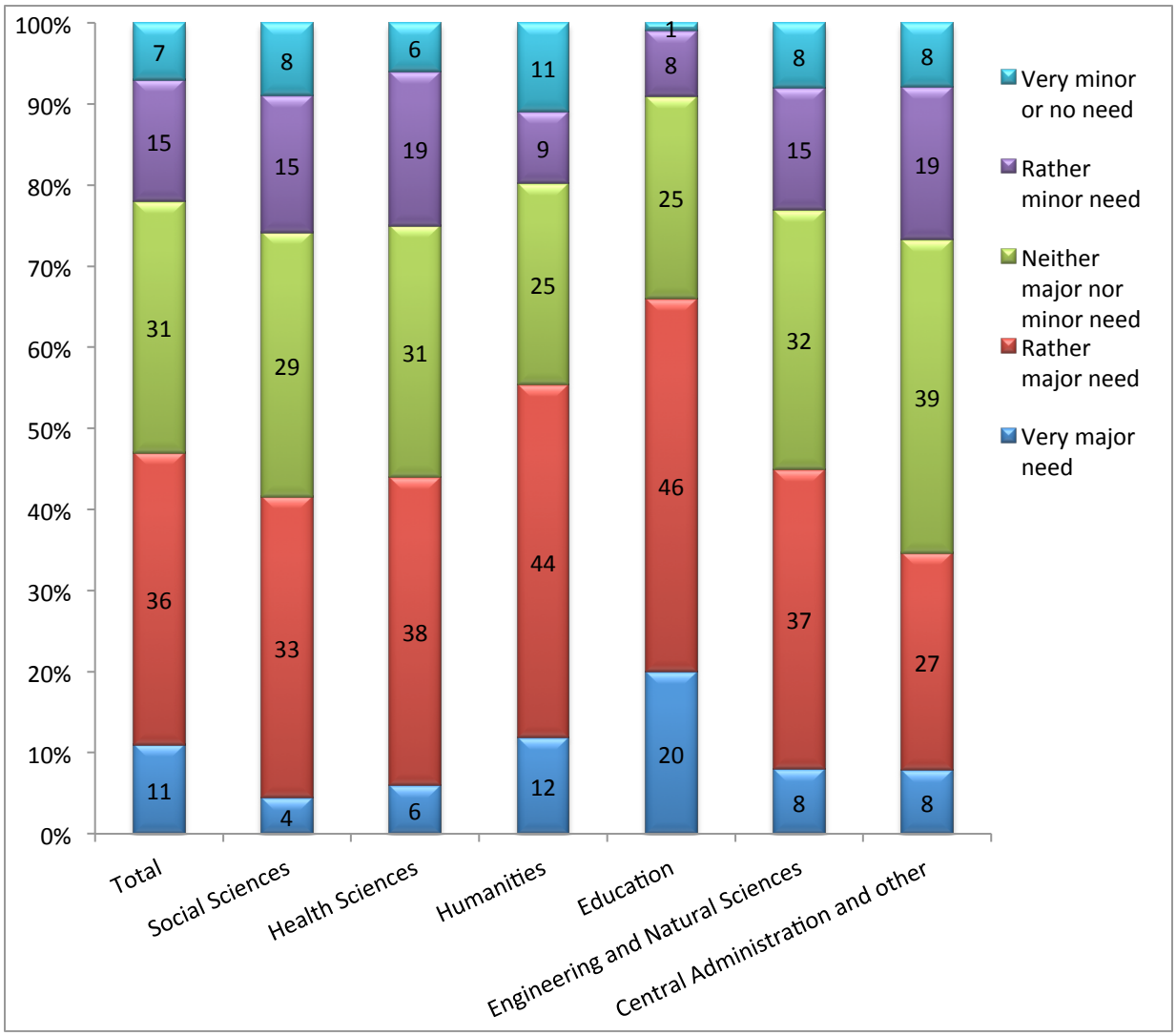


Illustration 3. Do you think there is a major or minor need for more education on equal rights within your school or work unit?

The documentation of this evaluation clearly shows that education on equality issues for members of the staff has been quite limited over recent years. This is indicated both in the interviews with people involved in equality issues and also in the interviews with administrators. Answers from administrators, for example, included the following:

> *I haven´t really noticed any. Not that I remember, at least. Not any kind of formal education, that is.*

> *There is hardly any formal education […] I think, there is not much of it, actually quite little.*

One of the recurring themes in the interviews was different opinions on how much time could realistically be scheduled for education on equality issues. Some administrators maintained that it was hardly realistic to schedule more time for education on equality issues than had been the case:

> *I just have to tell you what it´s really like, because we simply have to be a little more realistic. These years have been awfully difficult and to assume that people can spend a whole day in a course on equality issues would not be welcomed by the administration because there simply is so much time pressure on everyone.- Administrator.*

To spend a whole day on education on equality issues for administrators and/or other members of staff is, according to this administrator, not a realistic option due to the pressure and workload within the institution. According to a number of respondents actively involved in equality issues, this lack of time prevents effective education, for example on mainstreaming: "It is hardly possible to teach mainstreaming in half an hour." According to those actively involved in equality issues, there is only limited interest among university people on receiving education on equality issues. Sigurður Guðmundsson, former Dean of the School of Health Sciences underlines this view by telling about a symposium titled *Women in Sciences* which was held in 2011 where attendance was poor and interest in the subject turned out to be rather limited.

There were also different opinions on whether education on equality issues should be optional or scheduled during meetings already with compulsory attendance (e.g. faculty meetings) or specific meetings with compulsory attendance. Only too frequently, elective courses and lectures are poorly attended. Most administrators, though not all of them, believe that compulsory courses for staff on equality issues were not a realistic option and, therefore, not likely to prove successful.

One person actively involved in equality issues within the University had a certain theory regarding the reason why education on equality for staff was so rare and not carried out more systematically than is the case. This person listed a number of reasons for this. One of them was that the scope of work of the Equal Opportunities Officer was extremely extensive. Numbers of students have been on the rise considerably and at the same time, the Equal Opportunities Officer has to approach equality

issues in a much wider sense than being restricted only to equality between men and women. This of course limits the time dedicated to education. Another reason is the fact that it is difficult for the Equal Opportunities Officer to provide such education without the support of other experts in this field, since it has been difficult to gather information whether there is the will to fund a second expert in the field for providing education alongside the Equal Opportunities Officer. Thirdly, this person said that administrators themselves had exhibited limited initiative for education, though their support would be of great importance in this area.

A number of administrators stated that both subject matter and manner of presentation of this kind of education needed to be of a practical nature.

> *Most people are simply thinking practically. If you want to introduce some new kind of ideology into mainstreaming, it will have to be something simple. […] We don´t really need any kind of ideological depth in this. This is not what people need. People only want to improve equality and equal opportunities in society and do what they can in this respect.*

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

One main aspect of the Equal Rights Programme University of Iceland 2009-2013 is the mainstreaming of gender and equality aspects within all policies and programmes. Art. 2 of Act No. 10/2008 defines Gender Mainstreaming as follows:

> *Organizing, improving, developing and evaluating the policy-making process in such a way that gender equality perspective is incorporated in all spheres in the policy-making and decisions of those who are generally involved in policy-making in society.*

The same Act stipulates that all public institutions apply gender mainstreaming within all policies and programmes. That means the University of Iceland is legally obliged to act accordingly regarding these issues. The University´s Equal Rights Programme lists seven measures for mainstreaming gender and equality aspects. This chapter shall discuss the execution of the said measures and each subchapter shall look into one aspect of mainstreaming as listed in the University´s Equal Rights Programme. This, however, excludes the seventh measure of mainstreaming which contains

the publication of a status report made every four years on the current status and development of equal rights within the University, resulting in this report.

Mainstreaming in policy and decision making processes

> *All schools, institutions and administrative divisions at the University of Iceland are to mainstream gender perspectives into their work practices and operations […] When collecting data and otherwise preparing decision making that affects the position of the genders, the needs and views of both sexes must be considered and the consequences of these decisions shall be analysed in relation to equal rights.* - Equal Rights Programme University of Iceland 2009-2013

In the course of this survey, members of staff were asked whether they considered equality aspects mainstreamed in the policy and decision making processes within their own school. In total, around 30% of staff felt that equality aspects were mainstreamed in the policy and decision making processes within their own school or working unit. This ratio did not show a substantial difference between schools, but it did show a gender difference since 23% of women said that equality aspects were mainstreamed always or often compared to 40% of men. There is a significant discrepancy between these results and other documentation of this evaluation which do not indicate that mainstreaming is integrated in policy and decision making processes within the University of Iceland as will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The fact that around one third of the staff considers this to be the case indicates that this group does not fully understand the scope of this term.

Open answers regarding examples for mainstreaming in policy and decision making processes within schools and working units support this interpretation. Most respondents who considered mainstreaming to appear often or always were asked to list examples for this. The examples which were mentioned, however, rarely indicate actual mainstreaming of equality issues, rather these are aspects, such as an equal gender ratio or equal salaries.

All presidents of the University of Iceland´s individual schools were interviewed. Questions to this group included the question whether they are currently mainstreaming equality within the school´s

scope of work. Their answers indicate that mainstreaming is not carried out and/or they did not know what the term really meant.

Other administrators were also asked whether and if so, how gender mainstreaming was carried out within the school´s scope of work. Some answered that there was no systematic mainstreaming at all. Others believed that things were in progress but when asked in more detail, it turned out that there was no mainstreaming in the sense where the impact of policy finding and decision making on women and men are taken into consideration and the outcome is a policy where equality aspects are integrated on the basis of the results of such evaluation work. This means that obviously some of the University´s administrators do not realize what mainstreaming is about and how such work is conducted. Some respondents actively involved in equality issues mentioned that senior management displayed neither interest nor initiative regarding this area.

> *There is no interest […] this has not really been tackled internally here.*

On the whole, documentation indicates that gender mainstreaming as defined by law is not carried out systematically within the University of Iceland.

Equal Rights Committees and Equal rights plans of individual schools

> *An Equal Rights Committee shall operate within each school and be responsible for the making of the school's Equal Rights Programme; students must be included in the committee.* Equal Rights Programme 2009-2013

This aspect has to some degree been realized. All schools now have an Equal Rights Committees though not all of them are as active as the rest. Each school also has an active contact person who is a member of the Schools´ Equal Rights Committees and at the same time a staff member of the school in question. Progress with the Equal Rights Programme of each individual school, however, is not as far advanced in each of them.

Those respondents actively involved in equality issues said that the appointment of Equal Rights Committees in every school has contributed a lot to increase the number of those working with interest and knowledge in the field of equality.

> *There is now quite a big group of people who have at least some sort of connection with equality issues. The University has grown so much and [it is a good thing to have] such a network of people actively involved in this. Some more than others of course. Like these Equality Committees in the schools and Research Institutes.*

One of the respondents actively involved in equality issues felt that there was hardly any more prejudice towards equality issues within the University of Iceland compared to universities abroad which might be a direct consequence of the grassroot work carried out by the Equal Rights Committees of the individual schools. The interviews also indicated that all the organisational work around the establishment of the Equality Committees of all schools has had a considerable impact on the University´s equality work and has increased the awareness of equality within each school.

Staff statistics based on gender

> *The Managing Director of the Division of Human Resources; in cooperation with the schools' Managing Directors, Directors of institutions and Managing Directors in Central Administration, must ensure that gender disaggregated statistics on employees' rank and wage terms are available on the websites of individual schools, institutions and Divisions in Central Administration. – Equal Rights Programme 2009-2013*

Gender specific data on staff is available in excel tables on the University´s homepage.[2] This includes the number and gender ratio of lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors within each school and also the ratio of staff and annual work load by field and gender. Other data on "position and terms" are not available via the homepage and neither do they seem to be available divided by gender on individual homepages of schools, institutions or administrative units as stipulated by the Equal Rights Programme. It is, however, not perfectly clear what is included in "position and terms".

Education mainstreaming

> *The Equal Rights Committee, in connection with the programme in Gender Studies, will conduct systematic education and counselling on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in all five schools and divisions of the University of Iceland in the form of meetings, courses and educational material. - Equal Rights Programme 2009-2013*

It is quite safe to say that education regarding the term of gender and other mainstreaming has been rather limited in spite of the fact that there was a consultative meeting of all mid-level Equal Rights Committees, also attended by the Equal Rights Committees of the individual schools in June 2011, where the mainstreaming of equality aspects was discussed and presented by Dr. Þorgerður Einarsdóttir. Experts in equality issues have also attended educational meetings for administrators in the same year and given short presentations on mainstreaming. Different opinions prevail regarding the success of this education measures. Most respondents agreed, however, that everything was

[2] Cf. (http://www.hi.is/adalvefur/starfsmenn).

going into the right direction, but that there was a significant lack of knowledge on what mainstreaming actually meant and this was one of the clearest statements recurring throughout interviews.

> *If something is not quite clear, you need to find the reason for this and maybe this is to be found in this term "equality aspects". I mean, what is this actually? - Administrator.*

Respondents who have been actively involved in equality issues within the University agreed that the lack of knowledge prevented adherence to national laws as well as the University´s policy on mainstreaming equality aspects. Another aspect mentioned was the fact that the provision on mainstreaming was used as an apology for not actively engaging in any real equality projects.

Family-friendly policy

The University´s Equal Rights Programme 2009-2013 and its Human Resources Policy state that the University should support both its staff and students in balancing family life and work/studies. Most respondents, however, mentioned that members of staff have been under an increased pressure in recent years which has had a negative impact on people with family, particularly women.

> *You could say that the University´s policy regarding the workload demanded of teachers is not particularly family friendly [...] This policy has not really become worse in itself, it´s just the pressure we feel. [...] As a whole, this is not a particularly family-friendly environment - Administrator*

In spring 2009, the Equal Rights Committee organised a series of lectures titled *Where´s the family? w*ith four lectures on equal rights and family affairs. The Equal Rights Committee has not conducted any research on mainstreaming family and working life as stipulated by the Equal Rights Programme. There is no information on whether and if so, how the University of Iceland has encouraged people to fully use their right to parental leave and to split responsibilities when attending to a sick child at home. Available documentation does not contain any further indication on measures carried out to make the University of Iceland a family-friendlier workplace during the period covered by this report.

Gender mainstreaming in recruitment procedures

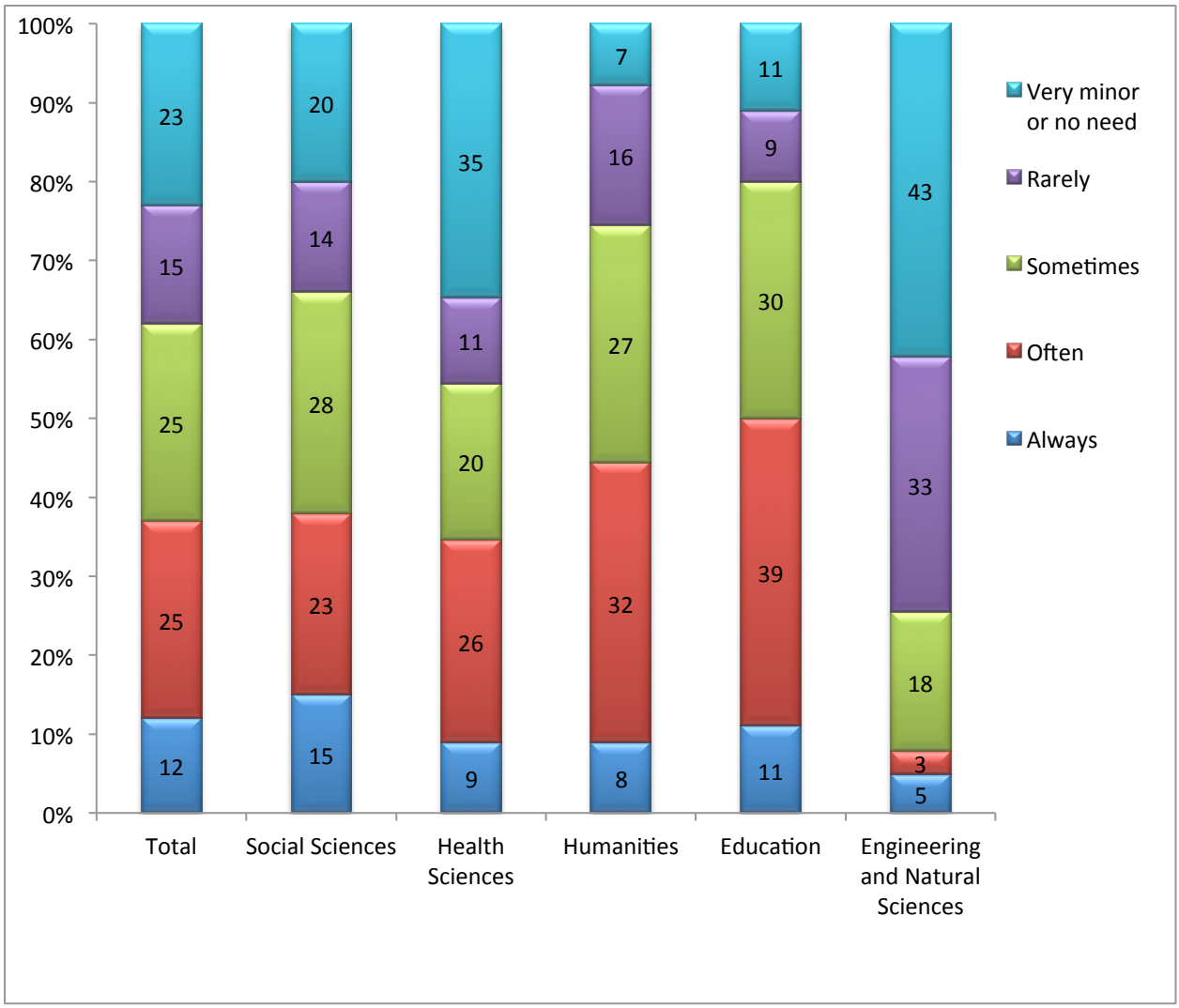
> *The Equal Rights Committee is responsible for ensuring that the hiring process be examined from the point of view of gender mainstreaming – from the formation of job advertisements to the final decision on appointment. - Equal Rights Programme 2009-2013.*

This measure has so far not been executed. All job advertisements, however, contain a reference that the recruitment shall be conducted according to the University´s Equal Rights Programme. One of the interviewees mentioned that, if possible, all efforts are being made to invite applicants of both sexes for interviews.

Implementing Mainstreaming in teaching and research

The introduction to the University´s Equal Rights Programme states that it is the "intention" of the University to mainstream gender and equal perspectives in teaching and research although this does not constitute one of the seven measures listed as an action plan for mainstreaming. The Equal Rights Programmes of the School of Social Sciences and the School of Humanities furthermore state that this shall be done within their schools. One question in a survey among teaching staff at the University referred to whether people mainstreamed equality aspects in teaching.[3] It turned out that around 40% of the staff said they mainstreamed equality aspects often or almost always in their teaching. This proportion is significantly different by schools and is as low as 8% in the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences and up to 50% in the School of Humanities. Women were more likely to say that they mainstreamed equality aspects in teaching and older teachers also were more likely than younger ones (Illustration 4).

[3] Mainstreaming was defined as follows: *Mainstreaming refers to gender being the basic proposition in policy making and decision taking. This means looking at everything from the perspective of how these things touch women on the one hand and men on the other hand. Note that this does not mean that policy making or decision taking is gender-neutral, instead that it takes into consideration different behaviour, expectations and needs of men and women.*



Ilustration 4. How often do you mainstream equality aspects in your teaching?

Respondents were asked to give examples on how equality aspects were mainstreamed in their teaching. A considerable number of respondents gave as an example that they organise their teaching in such a way that it is accommodating the different needs of women and men, such as offering a wider time-frame for tasks, because short-term tasks can be a considerable burden for those who bear the main responsibility for childcare (such as single mothers) who need to schedule their time in rather shorter units each day instead of being able to work long hours some days. Other teachers listed examples on how they mainstreamed equality aspects in their subjects. Many of these answers show an ambitious approach:

> *By choosing certain subjects for debate, by choosing teaching materials, by presentation of visual material, by referring to different perspectives of men and women, by choosing material from both male and female authors, by suggestions of unlike preconditions of men and women when choosing a subject.*

Others, however, gave answers indicating they did not really know what mainstreaming equality aspects meant. Some, for example, thought that not discriminating students by gender directly already meant that equality aspects were mainstreamed.

Members of staff who stated they never or only rarely mainstreamed equality aspects were asked for the reason behind this. A majority of those who are not mainstreaming equality aspects in teaching does not do so, because they do not see a need for it.

These interviews clearly indicate that gender mainstreaming in teaching and research depends on the interest, knowledge and willingness of individual teachers rather than it being part of a holistic approach of all policies. It also emerged that many simply do not really know what mainstreaming equality aspects in teaching and research really means.

> *Yes, people talked about this at the University Forum, you know, this mainstreaming and I guess people didn´t quite know what this is about, it´s a bit unclear, you know, what this means and particularly in teaching and research.*

Another recurring idea regarding mainstreaming equality aspects in teaching and research is that this does not apply to each field in the same way. This was mentioned by a number of administrators:

> *I mean, it may well be that this applies very much to history, philosophy, psychology, but some other fields simply deal with something completely different, such as mathematics which is absolutely abstract and does not exist except in our minds. How do you carry out this mainstreaming there... […] This was and still is not clear.*

One of the interviewees who is actively involved in equality issues within the University said that there seemed to be considerable opposition regarding this clause of the Equal Rights Programme and put it that way:

> *It is really quite a taboo that teaching material should consider the gender aspect or that there should be any mainstreaming in it. […] There is massive opposition, quite a lot; there simply arises so much anger.*

Gender mainstreaming in teaching and research is suffering from a lack of knowledge on how this could be set into practice. There has been no systematic integration of it into all the policies since it is not clear what administrators really want in this matter.

OBSTACLES TO EQUALITY WORK

This chapter will look at the obstacles to equality work encountered in recent years which are not covered in other chapters, based on the views of those actively involved in this field.

A new Equal Rights Committee of the of the University Council was appointed in 2011 and for the first time, both the Committee and other permanent committees were composed of the chairs of the Equal Rights Committees of each individual school. One party actively involved in equality issues considered it strange that the University Council had taken this decision though it was well known and had been pointed out that such a work procedure would make it difficult to adhere to gender quotas in mid-level councils. It then turned out that a considerable majority of the chairs of the Equal Rights Committees of individual schools were women which made this mid-level Equality Rights Committee rather distorted in that respect and turned out to be a breach of Art. 20 of the Equality Act. The Equal Rights Committee did not find this acceptable, since its credibility and lawfulness were at risk. The Equal Rights Committee filed their concern when the Committee was appointed and decided to embark only on the most urgent projects in order to await further developments. Likewise, the Equal Rights Committee in the School of Social Sciences decided not to start working until it became clear whether the chair of the Committee, who now was also represented in the mid-level committee, would be asked to step down due to the distorted gender ratio. People actively involved in equality issues expressed their disappointment that it took such a long time to solve this issue which meant that the Equal Rights Committee in the School of Social Sciences as well as the Equal Rights Committee of the University Council was practically paralyzed during the winter term of 2011-12 and all equality work was more or less suspended. In the spring term 2012 the gender ratio was evened out by appointing a representative from the School of Health Sciences. When asked about this issue, administrators maintained that the Equal Rights Committee could well have carried out their work although the gender ratio had been distorted in this way, while a solution was being found in this situation.

Due to administrative decisions regarding the appointment of the mid-level Equal Rights Committee, Dr. Þorgerður Einarsdóttir now works neither in the Equal Rights Committee in the School of Social Sciences nor the University´s mid-level Equal Rights Committee. This controversy is not subject of this short version of the report and it is not within the scope of this report to offer an opinion, but

there is no doubt that there is considerable dissatisfaction concerning this matter. Dr. Þorgerður Einarsdóttir is the only Professor of Gender Studies in Iceland and has significant experience of equality work both within and outside the University of Iceland. Some people have pointed out that the consequences of this affair are that her manpower, expertise and experience are not utilized for internal work within the University as she would have wished.

In some of the interviews with persons actively involved in equality issues it was mentioned that in recent years, internal disputes had presented an obstacle to a more efficient equality work. As a consequence, some of the top experts in equality issues in Iceland do not work together. These disputes in recent years have had a considerable impact on the working environment of those actively involved in equality issues and in the view of some presented serious obstacles to equality work in general.

One of the points mentioned in the interviews with people actively involved in equality issues within the University of Iceland was that there was limited understanding from senior University management regarding this subject. On the other hand, some administrators clearly stated in the interviews that those working in equality issues appear rather dogmatic which made any debate on the subject rather difficult.

The Report on Status and Development regarding Gender Equality at the University of Iceland 2003-2007 (Auður M. Leiknisdóttir, Ásdís A. Arnalds and Friðrik H. Jónsson, 2009) mentioned the same ideas that had been presented in interviews and included the following suggestions to improve the situation:

> *The findings in this report indicate that a rift of some sort has formed between those who work in the field of equal rights and other employees. The authors propose that these two groups converse in either small or large meetings, or symposia, on a regular basis. This could be a venue for employees who work in the field of equal rights to converse with other employees who are in key positions to influence matters in the direction of equality. During those meetings the groups would endeavour to see each other´s points of view and consequently form a common understanding of the University´s equal rights policy as well as the country's Gender Equality Act.*

The documentation gathered for the current report, four years later, does not indicate that this has indeed been achieved. It is not clear whether there have been attempts to close this rift though available documents indicate that this has at least not been attempted in any formal way. It, therefore, comes as no surprise that those voices saying that there is only a limited understanding and interest in equality issues by senior University management have grown louder in the years that have passed as well as those voices saying that any debate with those actively involved in equality issues is really difficult. As one respondent who is actively involved in equality put it:

> *To be honest, I feel that there is little understanding of this issue. There is limited support by University management and senior management of the institution. I really feel there is quite limited understanding.*

The person in question also said that this lack of understanding and support appeared as "silence and coldness". The same respondent felt that there was an increased interest in equality issues among students and people actively involved in the field and added:

> *I actually think you could say that the more activities and interest we sense, the more we also sense this coldness and indifference.*

When respondents actively involved in equality issues were asked to explain this in more detail, some of them mentioned that there was general goodwill towards the subject but this goodwill did not necessarily imply financial support, initiative or actual measures. There was a willingness to have an Equal Rights Programme and an Equal Opportunities Officer and to have "all formalities in order" but not to work towards "material and realistic equality".

> *I would say there is kind of a general goodwill towards this subject among senior management, but that does not mean they have exhibited the slightest initiative, nothing really. At least, I can´t remember any. But in general, I would say, you do feel there is goodwill […] I mean, they want things to be alright, but they don´t really do anything to make sure it is.*

> *[Equality] gets a lot of lip service but that doesn´t really show on their schedules and that´s really a sad thing. People feel threatened and they don´t understand and they are suspicious and those who are not familiar with the subject, think "Well, there are loads of women in University, doesn´t that mean there is equality? " People don´t go any deeper than this, just what kind of culture do the*

> *women enter into in computer sciences, in philosophy, and there are quite a number of examples of this.*

This recurred in almost all interviews and this had also been mentioned frequently in the Report on Status and Development regarding Gender Equality 2003-2007 (Auður M. Leiknisdóttir, Ásdís A. Arnalds and Friðrik H. Jónsson, 2009). For the current report, therefore, both administrators and people actively involved in equality issues were asked whether something had changed in this respect. In one of the interviews, an administrator was asked about reactions to the views of people actively involved in equality issues as described here above:

> *I don´t remember that anyone has approached me all those years about anything in this respect. […] That´s my answer. […] I don´t know what you mean by a rift [between administrators and those actively involved in equality issues.]*

This statement clearly indicates that the respondent considers it to be role of the Equal Opportunities Officer and others actively involved in equality issues to offer suggestions for actions or projects in the area of equality issues. He also does not believe that there is any rift between the perspectives of those actively involved in equality issues and administrators despite the fact that this was an issue in the previous report. When comparing this statement to statements from those actively involved in equality issues, the communication issues between these two groups becomes eminent. Those actively involved in equality issues consider the lack of initiative and interest an obstacle for equality matters; administrators, on the other hand, think that it is those actively involved in equality issues who should provide suggestions for improvements instead of "waiting for the next survey to describe them". Furthermore, those actively involved in equality issues think that there are "plenty of ideas and suggestions", they just need to be put into action. Another respondent pointed out that a reason for these communication issues between administrators and those actively involved in equality issues could be the fact that might be a certain dualism when people thought of equality issues; that either there was perfect equality or perfect inequality. As a consequence, if anyone pointed out an aspect that might benefit from some improvement, this was then interpreted as an accusation of „everything going the wrong way". This view recurred in a number of interviews with administrators, such as this example here:

> *You have to be careful how you present your case. […] In the beginning, people used to put things somewhat as if […] there was deliberate discriminate, but that*

> *is not the case. People just have to get familiar with how things are. I think the University and its administration are in general very much in favour of equality and they do their very best in this area and are definitely not deliberately against it. I mean, this is just not true, I don't know anyone who thinks like that.*

So, this respondent thinks that people actively involved in equality issues have "presented their case" in a way that made people defensive against accusations of deliberate discrimination. At the same time, those actively involved in equality issues feel their suggestions are often over-interpreted as if they were intentionally drawing an extremely bleak picture of the University. This definitely presents an obvious communication problem. Although respondents agreed senior management at the University was lacking in initiative and interest in this field, some also pointed out that the University was doing rather well in some areas and that there had been quite a number of achievements in recent year:

> *If you look at the University today and the University 20 years ago, there is of course a world of difference in so many things. […] and compared with other things today, other institutions, for example, we are of course quite advanced in a way and there are a number of things going on here you might even call rather radical and a lot of things have been going really well.*

It was also pointed out that having an Equal Rights Programme in the first place was already rather radical and progressive and the fact that an Equal Opportunities Officer is general fully employed here was really good. Also, that funds were allocated to various research institutes in the area of gender equality, such as Edda, a Centre of Excellence emphasizing equality and diversity, and the Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (GEST). In this respect, senior management has shown support and goodwill to this work, both in word and deed.

Administrators were asked about their communication with parties actively involved in equality issues. They felt that this communication was sometimes problematic for a variety of reasons. Most mentioned that there was often such a passionate and extremely serious tone in these debates, that people did not tolerate different views and never allowed any sense of humour into the debate.

> *The nature of this field is such that there is so much more frustration and people often get so passionate about things. […] Opposites become so strong and there is so much heat in the debate.*

Some respondents from within the University´s equality work even agreed to that view and said:

> *Of course we mustn´t reduce our message or cause, but I think we also have to make that demand of those of us working in equality issues that it is not always only the others who must change everything and change their understanding of things and bridge that gap. I mean, we have to do that, too.*

One administrator said to be quite willing to be more actively involved in equality issues but then people would have to look out for new ways to reach other administrators and staff. You would have to find the right approach to prevent people from getting all defensive. This respondent felt that this was what had happened often in recent years. Also, that those actively involved in equality issues demanded rigidly that everyone have the same understanding and the same knowledge of the subject as they do:

> *I myself am on Step No. 10, but maybe you can´t demand that everyone gets there in just one step. We also need to show a certain kind of understanding that to get everyone to that place we maybe need to think about protecting the road to get there. […] If we want to contribute to improving the feasibility or just to improve something, we might have to welcome all ideas. Not just the right ones.*

One party actively involved in equality issues said to be conscious of this to some degree and stated:

> *You try to meet people where they are, which also applies to the institution as a whole. You can´t ask for more than what is possible.*

So this respondent reduced demands on time, funding and understanding in order to meet the institution half-way with regard to equality issues.

PORNOGRAPHY WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

To combat pornography within the University is one of the projects dealt with by the Equal Opportunities Officer and others actively involved in equality issues during the time covered by this report. There were several incidents with reference to pornography among students, for example in the students´ magazine. In her Master´s dissertation, published in January 2011, Hrafnhildur

Snæfríðar- and Gunnarsdóttur reports indications that a considerably gross pornographic sense of humour was common among students. One of the interviewees described this manifestation of a porn culture within the University of Iceland as follows:

> *We see this in students´ magazines, i.e. magazines published by the students themselves; we see it when students advertise open events […] Such as field trips or lectures, things organized by themselves. They seem to be playing around with limits and they use a sexual and condescending tone.*

It is clear that there is considerable controversy between people actively involved in equality issues within the University and administrators on how widespread the problem is and how to react to it. Everyone agreed, however, that such a porn culture should not be tolerated in a University environment. Some administrators had not given this any particular thought, had just heard about isolated examples and though they agreed that this had to be dealt with, they had no knowledge on how widespread this was and whether or if so, what was to be done about it. One respondent said:

> *This is of course something that should not be tolerated. […] This has not been brought to my attention for quite a long time.*

Other administrators thought that those examples which had been brought to their attention were isolated events and some kind of "filth" which should of course not be tolerated. It was interesting, however, that four administrators mentioned that these were isolated incidents though they then referred to events in four different faculties. Furthermore, respondents actively involved in equality issues had even more different examples of porn culture within the school. One administrator put it that way:

> *I have never been aware that this is actually a problem. […] To make this a priority as some particularly urgent cause within the University of Iceland has to my mind been and still is some kind of misunderstanding. […] [Porn] simply is a problem of the society as a whole, not a specific one of the University of Iceland.*

This represented the view of those administrators who had an opinion on the subject and it became clear that there was considerable intolerance towards people actively involved in equality issues who had expressed the strongest opinions in the debate on pornification within the University of Iceland,

particularly in 2010. That year, a debate meeting was held titled *Culture and pornography at the University of Iceland*[4] *on* 24 March 2010. In the debate preceding and following this meeting there was considerable controversy between people actively involved in equality issues and administrators and the interviews showed that individuals from both groups were somewhat annoyed following this. Some administrators felt that those actively involved in equality issues were going too far in saying that there was pornification within the University of Iceland whereas those actively involved in equality issues saw this view expressed by administrators as an attempt of suppression and adversity against an important aspect of equality work.

> *This meeting [on pornography and culture] was not well received by the University´s senior management, to be honest. There was this sense of "hush, hush" as if this group had done something that nobody was supposed to do. You are not supposed to bring this out into the open. This is a problem and there is no way to combat it other than bringing it out into the open and tackle it. I think this was a golden opportunity for the University to take the lead and just say "of course we won´t tolerate this within our walls, this exists here just as elsewhere in society, we are not an island, but we will not tolerate this". But the University allowed this opportunity to pass by.*

There has been no evaluation on the scope of porn culture within the University of Iceland but during the preparation of this report there came up at least six relevant examples. It may be assumed that only a fraction of what is happening among students comes to the attention of administrators. One respondent with expert knowledge on equality issues who has worked within this field pointed out those incidents such as one of those mentioned where extremely rude pornographic verses were sung via the speaker system in a bus full of students during a field trip did not occur in a vacuum:

> *Things like that happen only within a culture where this is allowed […] such verses are not recited in a bus unless there is a certain kind of atmosphere, […] in a group where people find this alright.*

Therefore, it is not right to view these incidents as isolated incidents out of touch with the general culture among students but instead as an indication on what students consider normal and acceptable. In March 2010, the Rector sent a letter to the deans of the different faculties and others where she said:

[4] Information on this meeting, including the slides and recordings can be found on http://www.hi.is/adalvefur/fyrirlestrar_og_vidburdir.

> *It is necessary that it is made clear to those [students] who are guilty of such breaches that sexual harassment, mobbing and other inappropriate and illegal behaviour are not tolerated within the University. In case of such incidents where individual students are guilty of such breaches it is of great importance that decisive steps are taken immediately in accordance with University rules and regulations. – [underlining in the original]*

The letter also mentions that it is necessary to prevent such incidents by discussing this with representatives of students´ associations and seek their support in this. Deans of faculties are, therefore, encouraged to cooperate with the Equality Committee of their individual school to meet the boards of those students´ associations belonging to their faculties and treat these meetings as preventive measures.

The representatives of the 44 students´ associations responding to the survey on equality issues were asked whether the dean of their faculty or someone else from the University of Iceland had talked to them about what students´ association could do to combat pornification and sexual harassment. Two representatives answered affirmatively. Of 16 deans of faculties who responded to the survey sent to members of staff, two stated that they had discussed these issues with representatives of students´ associations within the faculty. This means, that in the winter term 2011-2012, the instructions issued by the rector regarding the communication with representatives of students´ association as preventive measures against porn culture and sexual harassment have not been followed except to a minor degree.

Pornification within students´ associations was a subject of debate in the Student Council in 2010 and there is a reference to that debate in the Annual Report of the Council 2009-2010 (Student Council 2010). Members of the association Röskva were in favour of the Student Council reacting to any torrents within the students´ associations humiliating certain social groups and that they should set a precedent in trying to change this “culture“. Members of Vaka, however, which was in majority at the time, felt that the Student Council was not responsible for defining moral guidelines for students´ associations. This debate resulted in the Student Council not taking any action in this matter.

Two schools, the School of Health Sciences and of Social Sciences have published a policy on the matter of porn culture within the University which gives rise the hope that education on how to combat this will increase in those schools over the coming years.

EQUALITY IN A BROADER SENSE

One of the issues arising in the interviews was the idea that any debate on equality issues should not exclusively be restricted to gender equality. Instead, it should also refer to other groups, such as students and staff with disabilities, LGBT people and people of foreign origin.

Those actively involved in equality issues agreed that equality was needed for all groups, but insisted that this must not be pursued to the disadvantage of gender equality. A broader approach to equality work would have to be accompanied by increased funding and staff with expert knowledge on the issues of these different groups. This had already been discussed in the earlier Report on Status and Development regarding Gender Equality 2003-2007 (Auður M. Leiknisdóttir, Ásdís A. Arnalds and Friðrik H. Jónsson, 2009), so views on this matter have not really changed in this time. The necessity of a broader view on equality was also indicated in the open answers section of the questionnaires sent to members of staff.

LGBT students and staff

Most respondents thought there were little, if any prejudice against LGBT people among students and staff. No research, however, has been carried out regarding their situation at the University of Iceland since 2002. Q, the Queer Student Association is a highly active organisation within the University scheduling a large number of events every year and providing opportunities to homosexual, bisexual and transgendered students to get together. One respondent said that the activities of this organisation were “A Jewel in the Crown of this University“. Another one pointed out that the growing pornification both in society and within the University was in itself prejudicial against the LGBT community and created a hostile environment for them. Such an environment would, for example, take it for granted that we are all heterosexual. Any campaign creating an environment that is open and welcoming to all LGBT people, therefore, goes hand in hand with the fight against

pornification. Pornification will be discussed in more detail in the chapter *Pornography within the University*.

Disabled students and staff

The number of students receiving special assistance during their studies has increased in recent years as seen in Illustration 5.

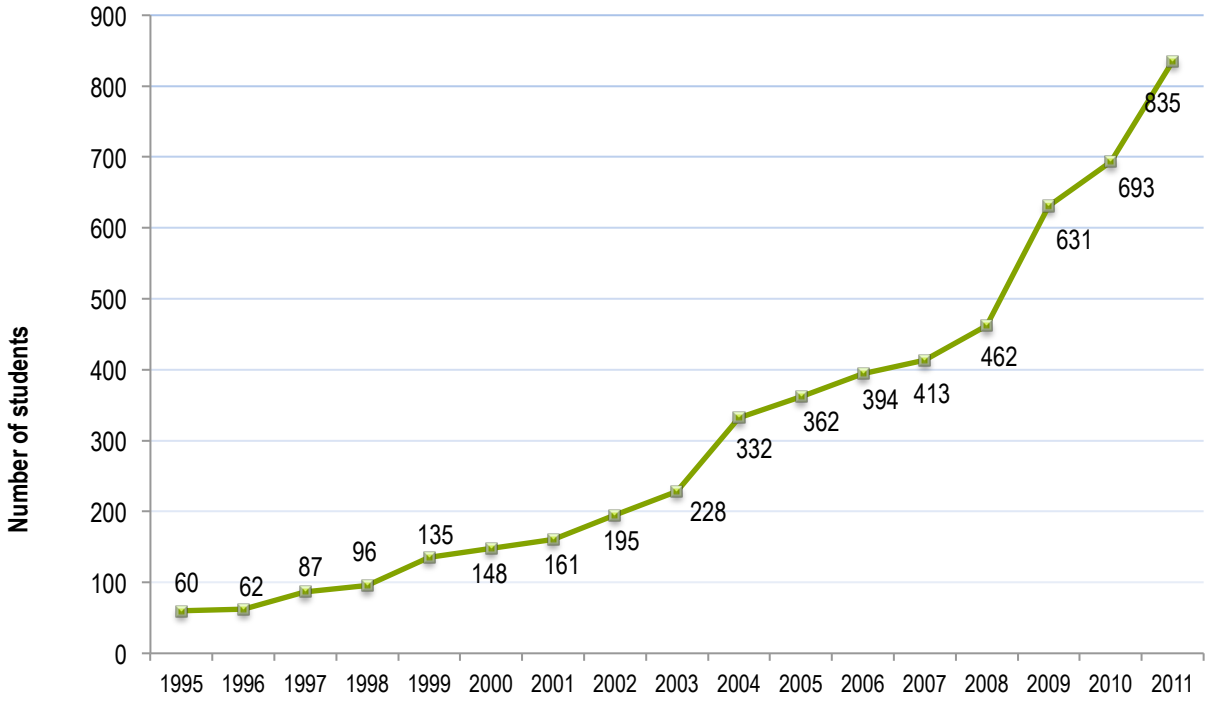


Illustration 5. Number of students receiving special assistance during their studies.[5]

Illustration 6 shows that the majority of those receiving special assistance are those who suffer from distinct learning difficulties. The number of these students has grown proportionally in recent years.

[5] Datea based on information from the University Student and Career Councilling Centre.

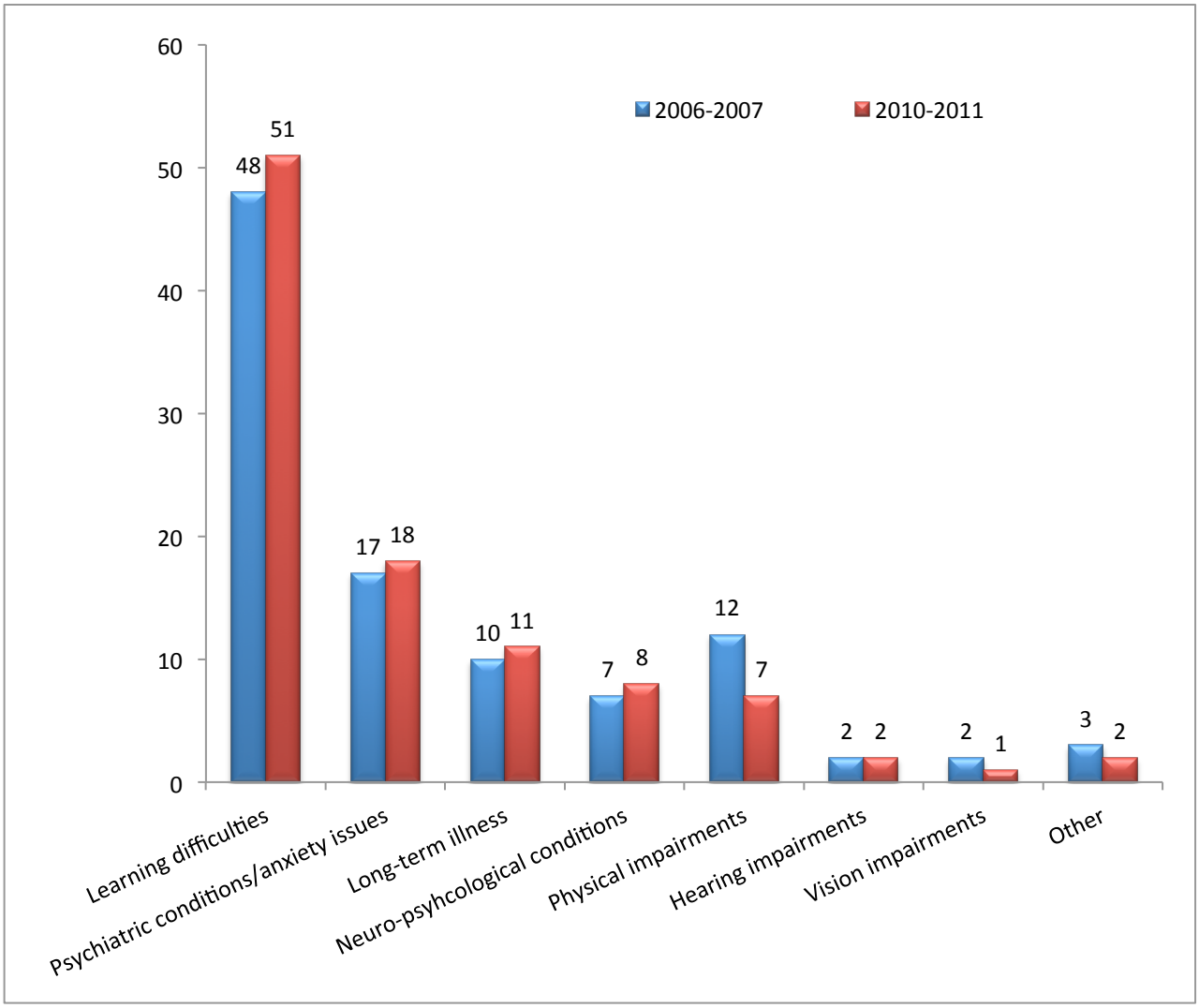


Illustration 6. Number of students receiving special assistance during their studies divided by the level of their impairment.

Knútur Birgisson and Hanna Björg Sigurjónsdóttir currently work on a research project regarding the situation of students with disabilities studying at the University of Iceland and their first findings are to be published before the end of 2012. This research is based on around 20 interviews with students with disabilities at the University of Iceland.

Knútur and Hanna Björg point out that over the past few years there have been substantial positive changes within the University of Iceland making it easier for students with disabilities to study at the

University. The University´s sign language interpreters, for example, have made it easier for deaf students to study and their situation within the University is now considered quite good. Another respondent mentioned that special assistance offered for exams was now no longer restricted to final exams, but also offered for exams conducted by teachers and faculties which was a significant improvement of the rights of students with disabilities.

Their research, however, has also convinced Hanna Björg and Knútur that there is still room for improvement in the situation of students with disabilities, such as the necessity to have reading lists available in a timely fashion so students can, if necessary, scan the teaching material, and also the necessity to have these lists complete. Furthermore, that teachers use slides in electronic form instead of writing on a blackboard, because that can prove difficult for students with dyslexia or impaired vision. They also need to make sure that the sound system and lifts are always functioning and the information flow to caretakers and technicians needs to be improved. For students with disabilities, a continuous schedule without gaps can also be very important, particularly for those with higher levels of impairment. They point out that many of the measures offered for students with disabilities are also highly beneficial for those who do not have the same level of impairment and should in fact rather be subject to the general quality assurance of the University. As the situation is now, such aspects depend very much on individual teachers and students with disabilities can rarely be sure in advance how each a teacher choses to present his or her teaching material.

Hanna Björg and Knútur add that within the University environment there is hardly any prejudice against students with disabilities although there are still occasional examples, such as in practical training units outside of the University. This indicates that the information flow about the availability of special assistance to those providing practical training outside the University is insufficient. They add, however, that students with disabilities receive almost without exception a very warm welcome at University and that teachers are basically always very willing to do their best. Very often, however, they are under a lot of workload and are not always fully aware which aspects of their teaching have the most impact on students with disabilities, so there is definitely still a need for more education in this field.

Some administrators said that making the University more accessible for all students with different levels of impairment was a matter or priority even if this required significant funding. Administrators

also expressed their hope that the government would offer more support in terms of financing these measures.

Finally, particularly the School of Education has been a true pioneer in this area, not least through offering a diploma course for students with developmental disabilities. The school´s homepage states that the objective of this course is to provide students with developmental disabilities with the opportunity to full participation in society. They participate in all courses together with other University students.

There was no documentation available on members of staff with disabilities at the University of Iceland. One of the interviewees pointed out the University´s working environment could be very demanding for able bodied people considering the workload as well as its strong sense of competition. Therefore, the University of Iceland must probably be considered a difficult workplace for people with disabilities and an impaired capacity for work.

Students and Staff of foreign origin

The *University of Iceland´s Policy against Discrimination* bans all discrimination of staff and students on the grounds of origin, colour of skin, ethnicity, cultural background or any ideology based on racist thinking.

Since the year 2002, the amount of students with foreign nationalities has increased considerably (cf. Illustration 7).

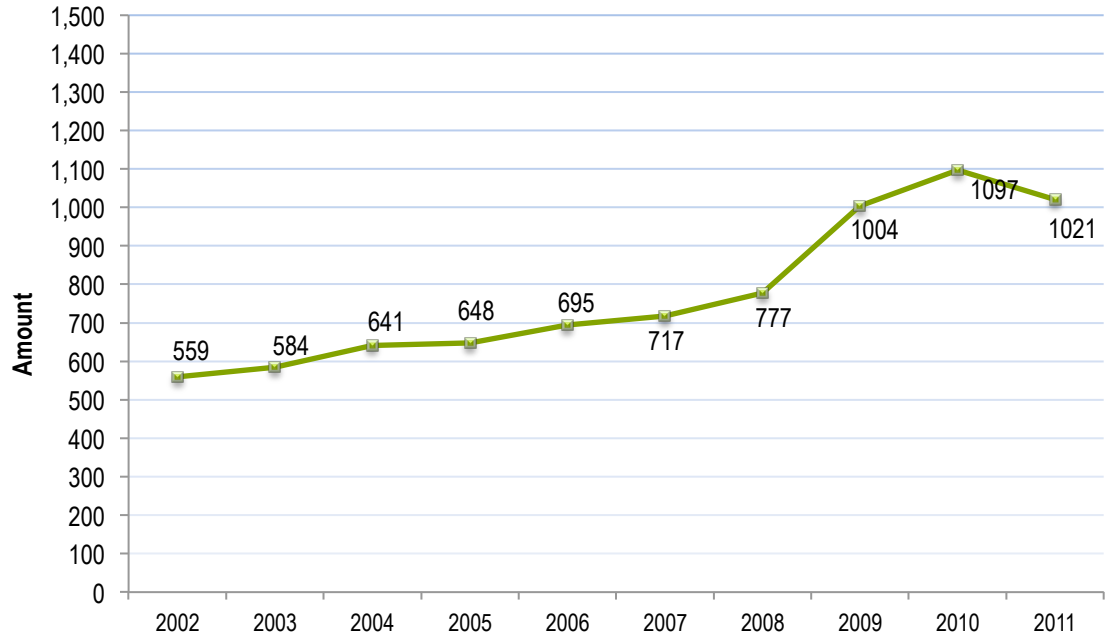


Illustration 7. Number of students with foreign nationality

An increase in the amount of students with foreign nationality only tells half the story of the development that has taken place in recent years since this does not include information more information on their background. Foreign students are a very varied group. Some enter the University of Iceland through partner universities abroad, others come on their own accord. A third group has presumably grown up here in Iceland without, however, having Icelandic as their mother tongue and this is the group respondents said was a cause for concern. They had the impression that only few students with a migrant background were enrolled for a university course and very likely, their needs were not sufficiently taken into account and taken care of and it was not clear who was responsible for this group of students. The International Office is responsible for exchange students at the University, but it is not clear, where other students of foreign origin can apply to for information and support.

The *Policy of the University of Iceland 2011-2016* discusses the situation of migrants in Iceland. There it says that the University should make a systematic effort to increase the accessibility of studies at the University of Iceland (2012a) to migrants. Though there has been no formal campaign

so far, one administrator among the respondents claimed to have been considering ways to improve the University´s accessibility to migrants and had, for example, discussed this with the Polish Consul here in Iceland. According to this respondent, there was a considerable lack of support and a limited choice of courses for students with migrant backgrounds. The fact that only few immigrants enter University has, however, deeper roots in this society. Respondents agreed that there was a need to research the reasons for the high dropout rates at lower school levels among young people of foreign origin as stipulated in the *Policy of the University of Iceland 2011-2016* where it says that the University has to become active in this field.

According to respondents, students moving to Iceland with the purpose of entering University, were in a much better situation, though there was also some room for improvement there. One of the respondents actively involved in equality issues indicated that messages to students and staff should more often be in English, too. Also, some necessary forms were only available in Icelandic. This perspective was also reflected in the answers coming from foreign students who responded to a quality survey carried out by the University of Iceland in spring 2012 and in the open answers section of foreign members of staff responding to the survey among University staff to gather data for this report.

The Student Council´s Annual Report for 2008-2009 (Student Council of the University of Iceland 2010) mentions that in 2008, a representative was appointed as stakeholder for foreign students with good results. This representative has cooperated with the Student Council through translating email messages and other material into English.

Despite the fact that there seems to be still a considerable lack of information accessible in other languages than Icelandic, the increased choice of courses taught in English has improved study opportunities for students from abroad.

Some respondents said they worried about how foreign members of staff managed to integrate in society. There has been no special institution or working group responsible for receiving and welcoming foreign members of staff, so far. The Division of Human Resources has, however, so far been the point of contact for those starting to work for the University and they have, for example, organised monthly get-togethers at the cafeteria.

GENDER RATIO AMONG STUDENTS

This chapter covers the gender ratio among students of the University of Iceland. All documentation is derived from the University of Iceland´s homepage except as noted (The University of Iceland 2012b). The University´s Equal Rights Programme 2009-2013 says that systematic efforts should be made to even out the gender ratio among students in all schools and courses.

Illustration 8 shows that the number of women had increased faster than that of men until 2005 when women had accounted for two thirds of all students. This proportion has remained stable in recent years and today, women constitute 65% of students at the University of Iceland. Available documentation indicates that in spite of an increase in the number of students since 2004, the number of women and men increased equally and proportions have not changed in recent years. During the academic year of 2008-09, the proportion of women rose to 68%, which can, however, be explained by the fact that at this time, the University of Iceland and Teachers´ University of Iceland merged and the School of Education was founded where the proportion of women is rather high. This spike, however, seems to have been evened out by now.

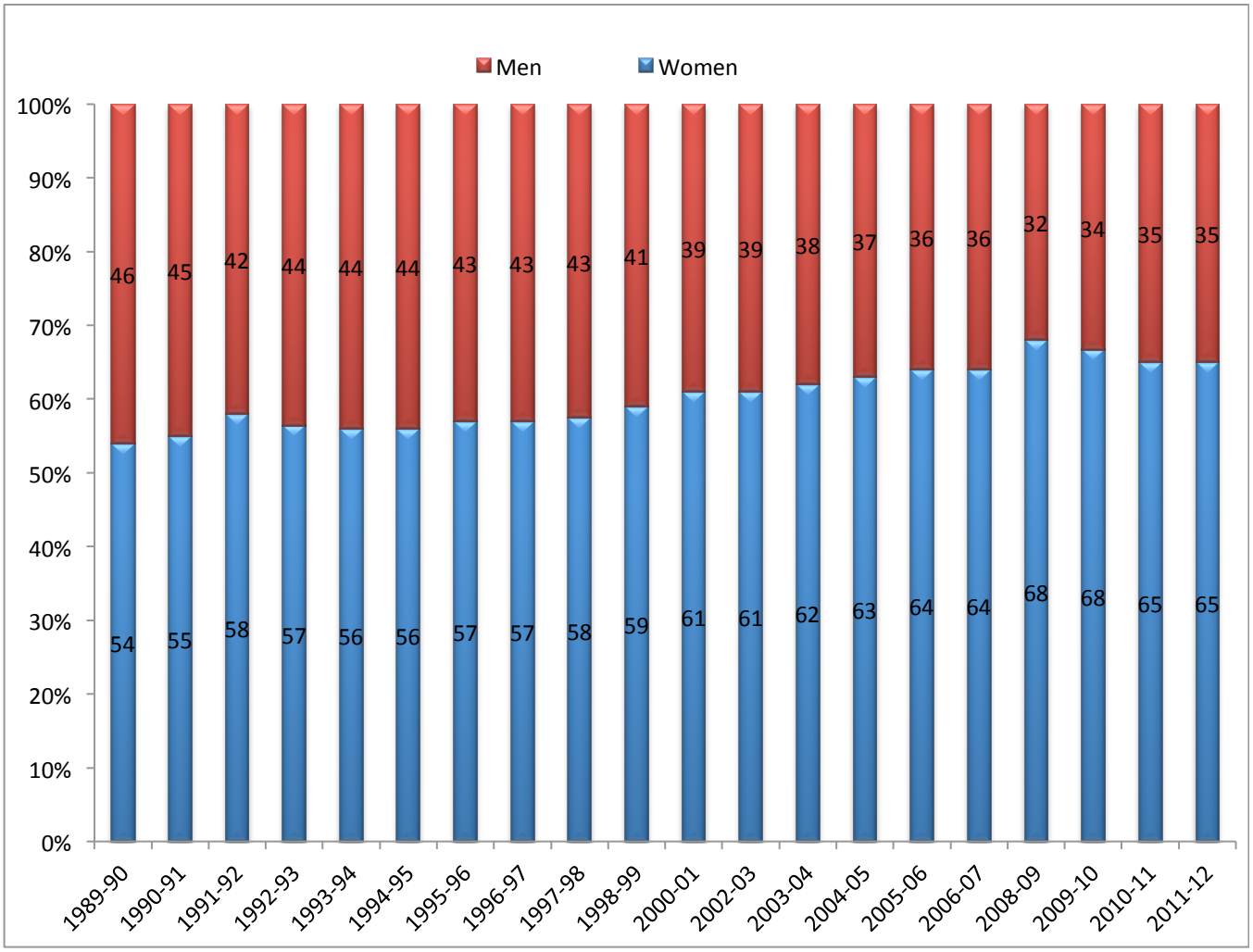


Illustration 8. Students at the University of Iceland. Gender ratio 1989-2012.

Illustrations 9 and 10 show that the number of women is also higher than that of men in Masters´ and doctoral studies.

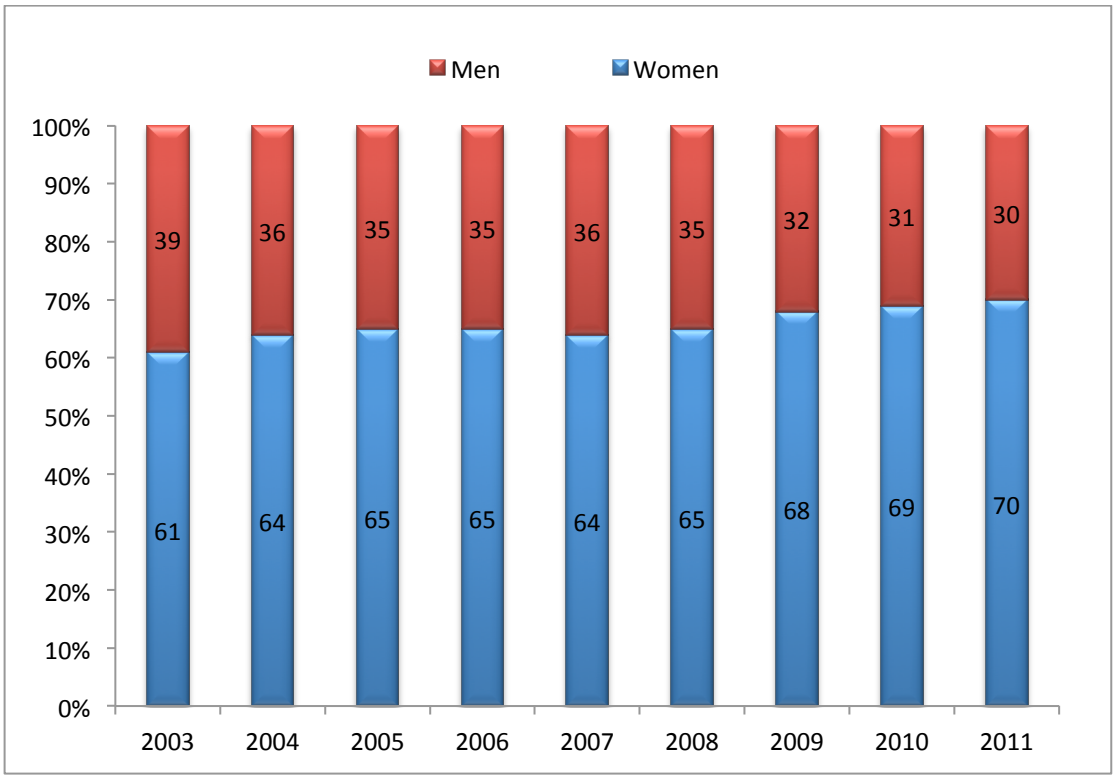


Illustration 9. Master Students at the University of Iceland. Gender ratio 2003-2011.

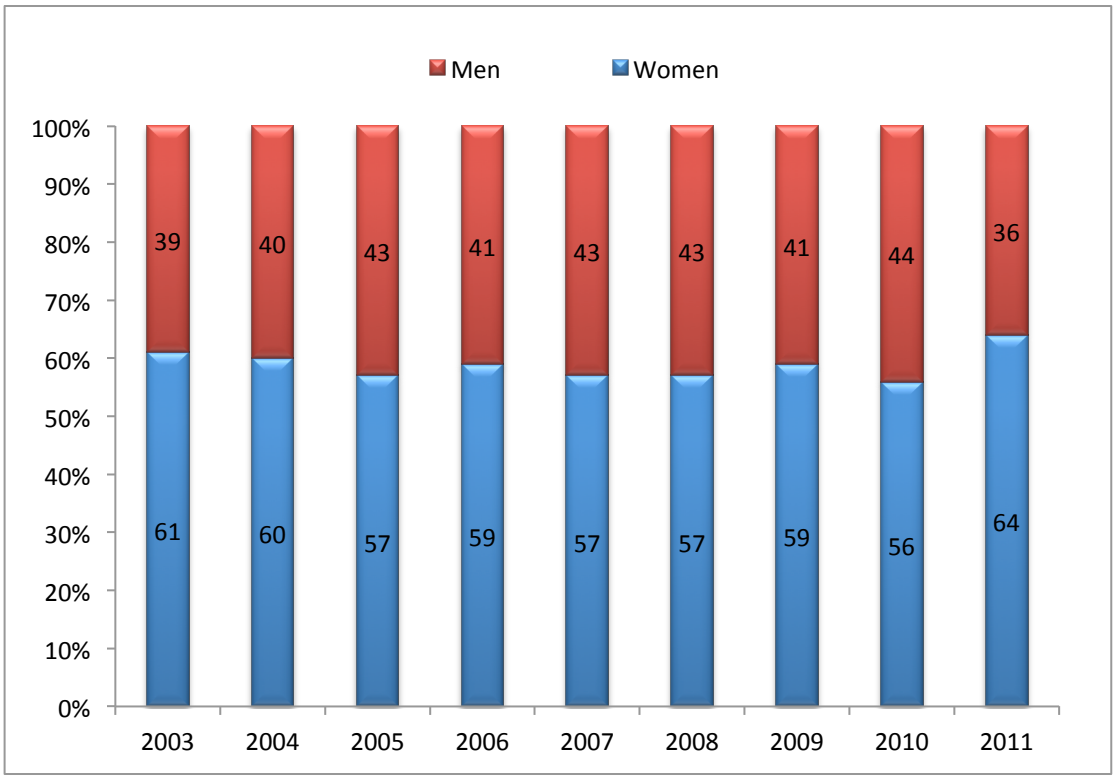


Illustration 10. Doctoral Students at the University of Iceland. Gender ratio 2003-2011.

Illustration 11 shows the gender ratio by age groups. The youngest age group shows a more even ratio of women and men, of the students between 40-69 years of age, however, three of four students are women and these figures are similar to those from the year 2008. This, therefore, indicates that in comparison to men, women start their university education later in life, at a time when they possibly already have some experience in the labour market. It is also possible that women are later in life more interested in looking for opportunities to improve their salaries since women are more often than men in low-paid jobs. Research has shown that education gives men greater returns in the labour market than women and that the gender wage gap decreases only after postgraduate degrees (Master´s and doctoral degrees) (Eva Bjarnadóttir and Eygló Árnadóttir, 2011). Another possibility to explain this could be that women who dedicated their younger years to child-upbringing and had also grown up in a society where women were less likely to have a university education than men have a greater need for education later in life. This, however, only applies to the oldest age groups.

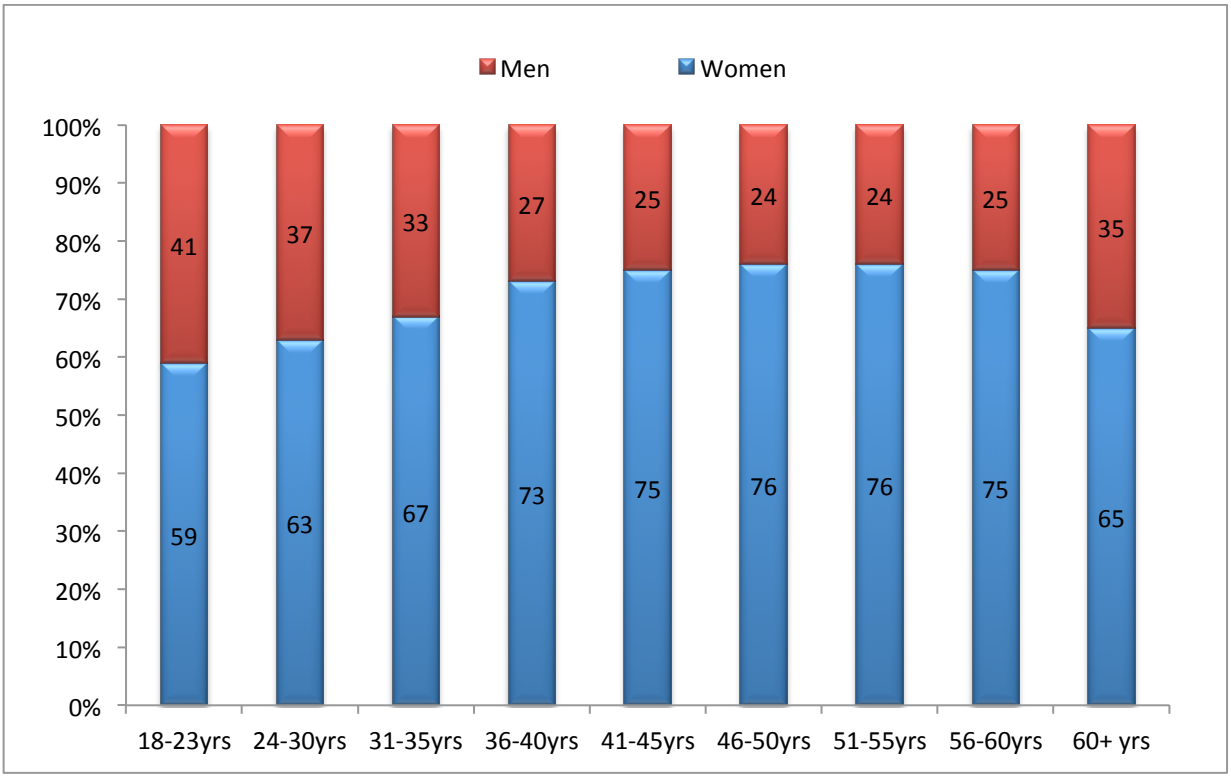


Illustration 11. Gender ratio by age. All active students at the University of Iceland in January 2012.

The ratio of women is higher in all schools in the University of Iceland except the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences where their share is 40%. Compared to 2008, the share of women is slightly lower in all schools except the School of Social Sciences where it has remained more or less unchanged (Illustration 12).

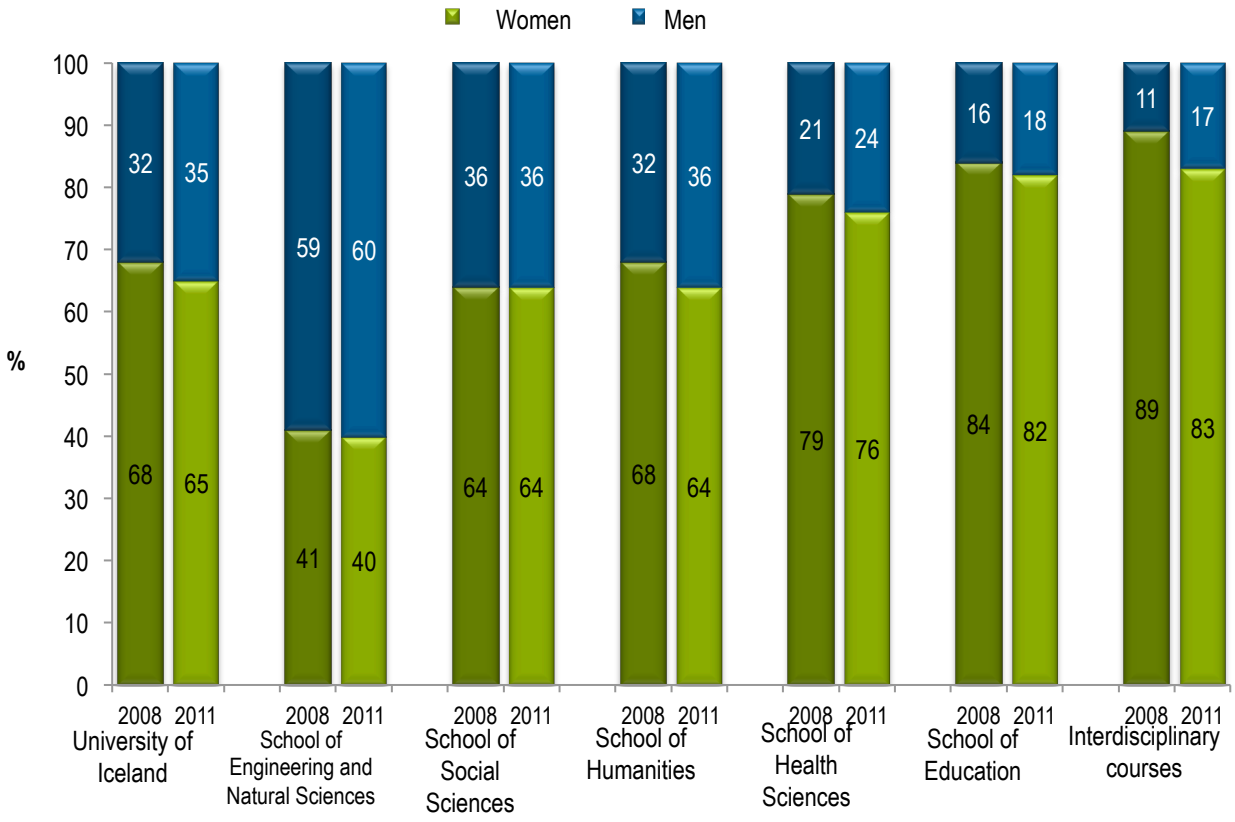


Illustration 12. Ratio of students by gender and school 2008 and 2011.

In the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences, the gender ratio is significantly different between faculties. The lowest share of women or 13% can be found in the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering, the highest in Life and Environmental Engineering or 63%. The share of women has decreased slightly in all of the school´s faculties since 2008 except Civil and Environmental Engineering and Physical Sciences where it has increased (Illustration 13). In 2011, two Master´s dissertations were published on the subject of women in certain courses in the School of

Engineering and Natural Sciences which had received a grant from the Equal Rights Committee. One of them was written by Þuríður Ósk Sigurjónsdóttir (2011), MA in Student and Career Counselling. This paper indicated that women in mathematics, physics, computer sciences as well as electrical and computer engineering do not feel that they receive the same kind of respect, acknowledgment and equal rights as is the case for the male students of the same courses. The other dissertation was written by Hrafnhildur Snæfríðar- og Gunnarsdóttir (2011), MA in gender Studies. This paper stated that in order to become socially accepted, "students would have to adapt to common traditions, even tolerate a rather rude kind of humour" which can be an obstacle for those not willing to accept this domineering masculine identity. Both papers shed an important light on the views of students in these courses regarding gendered issues and can be used to shape the environment of these courses in a more positive way for both sexes. The School of Engineering and Natural Sciences has expressed the school´s intention to look into whether this situation has changed within the students´ associations.

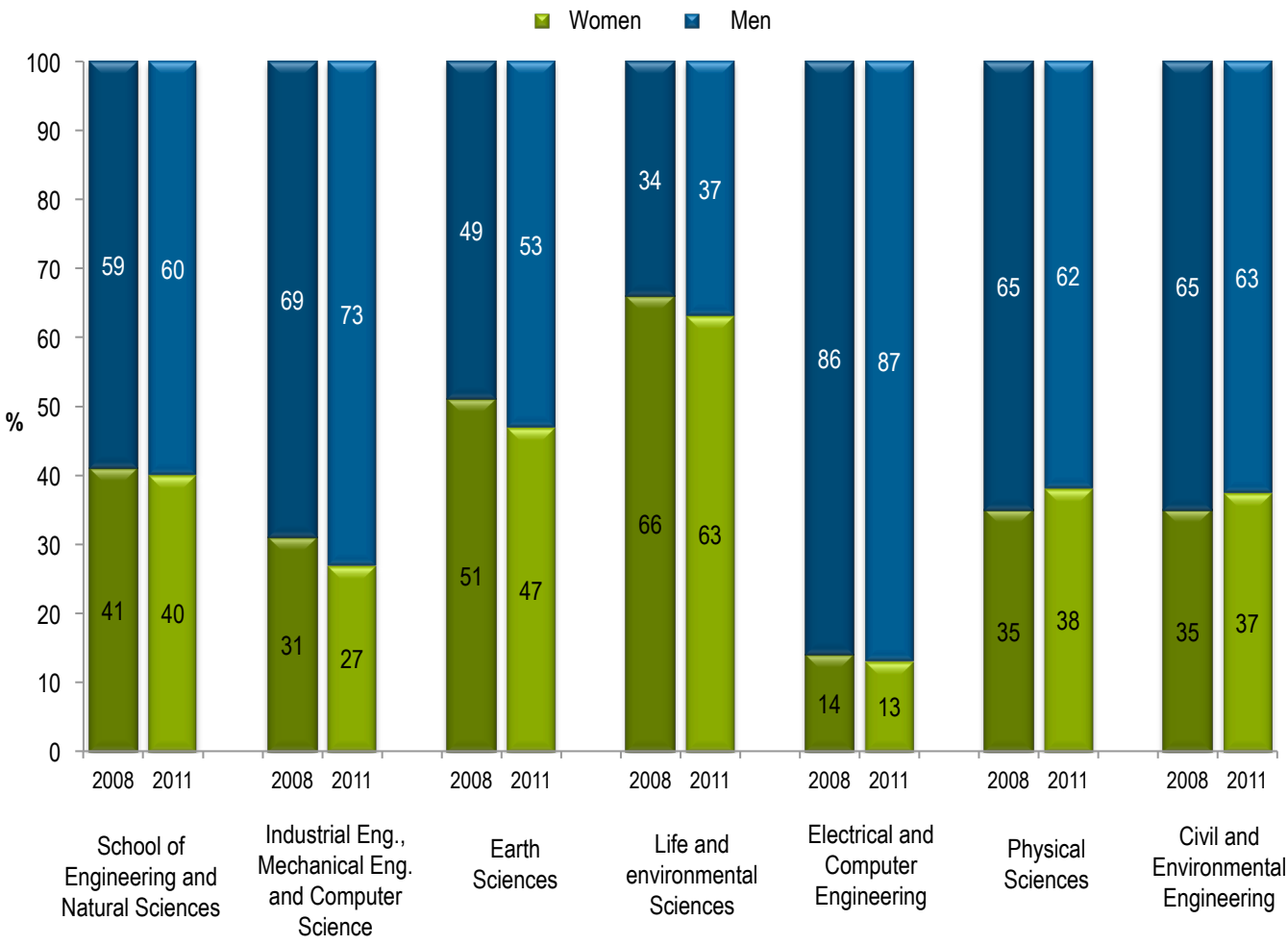


Illustration 13. Ratio of students in the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences by gender and faculty 2011.

Illustration 14 shows that women form a significant majority among students of all faculties in the School of Education. Thes ratios have not changed much since 2008 when 16% of the school´s students were men. The highest share of men amounts to 27% in Sports, Leisure Studies and Social Education.

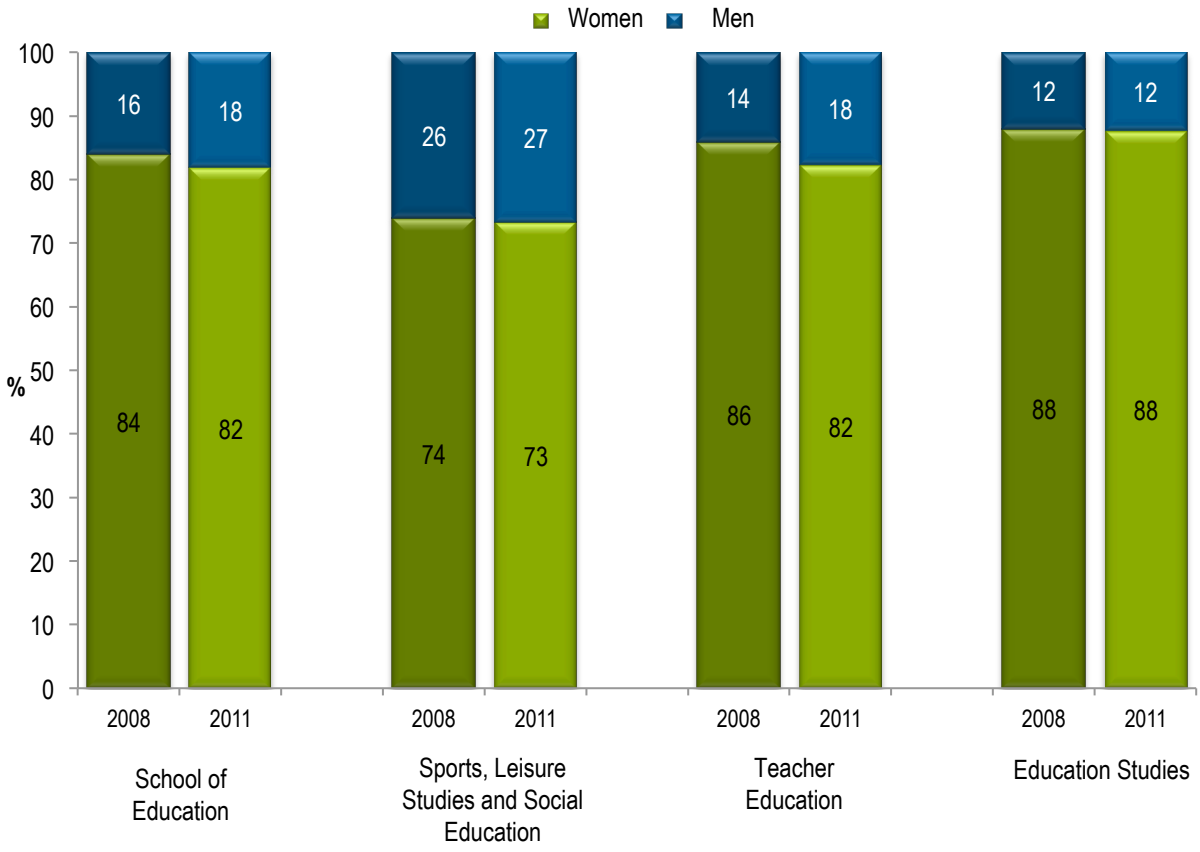


Illustration 14. Ratio of students in the School of Education by gender and faculty 2008 and 2011.

Women form the majority of students in all faculties in the School of Health Sciences as shown in Illustration 15. The share of men within this school had increased from 21% in 2008 to 24% four years later. This development, however, is not the same for all faculties. The share of men, for example in the Faculty of Nursing has decreased from 3% to 1% and in Pharmaceutical Sciences from 27% to 19%. In Psychology, however, their share has increased from 25% to 31%.

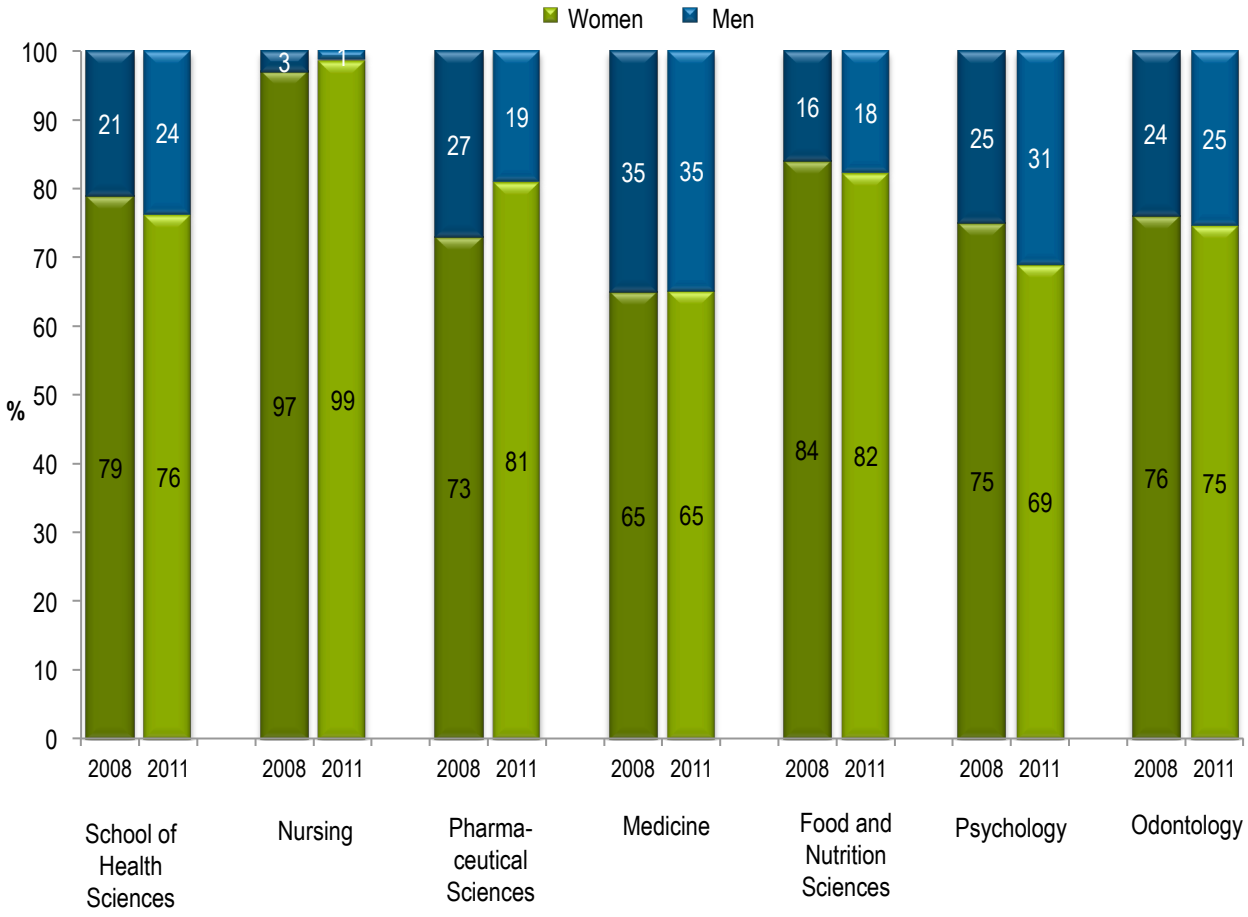


Illustration 15. Ratio of students in the School of Health Sciences by gender and faculty.

The percentage of men has increased in the School of Humanities, looking at the ratio in different faculties shows that there has been an increase in the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Literature and Linguistics as well as in the Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies. Women, however, still form the majority of students in all faculties of the School of Humanities (Illustration 16). The Equal Rights Programme of this school stipulates that there be made an effort to structure both courses and teaching material in a way that appeals to both sexes and that there be regular promotional campaigns in secondary schools systematically counteracting a gendered choice of study courses. Such campaigns have, however, so far not taken place according to the documentation collected for this report.

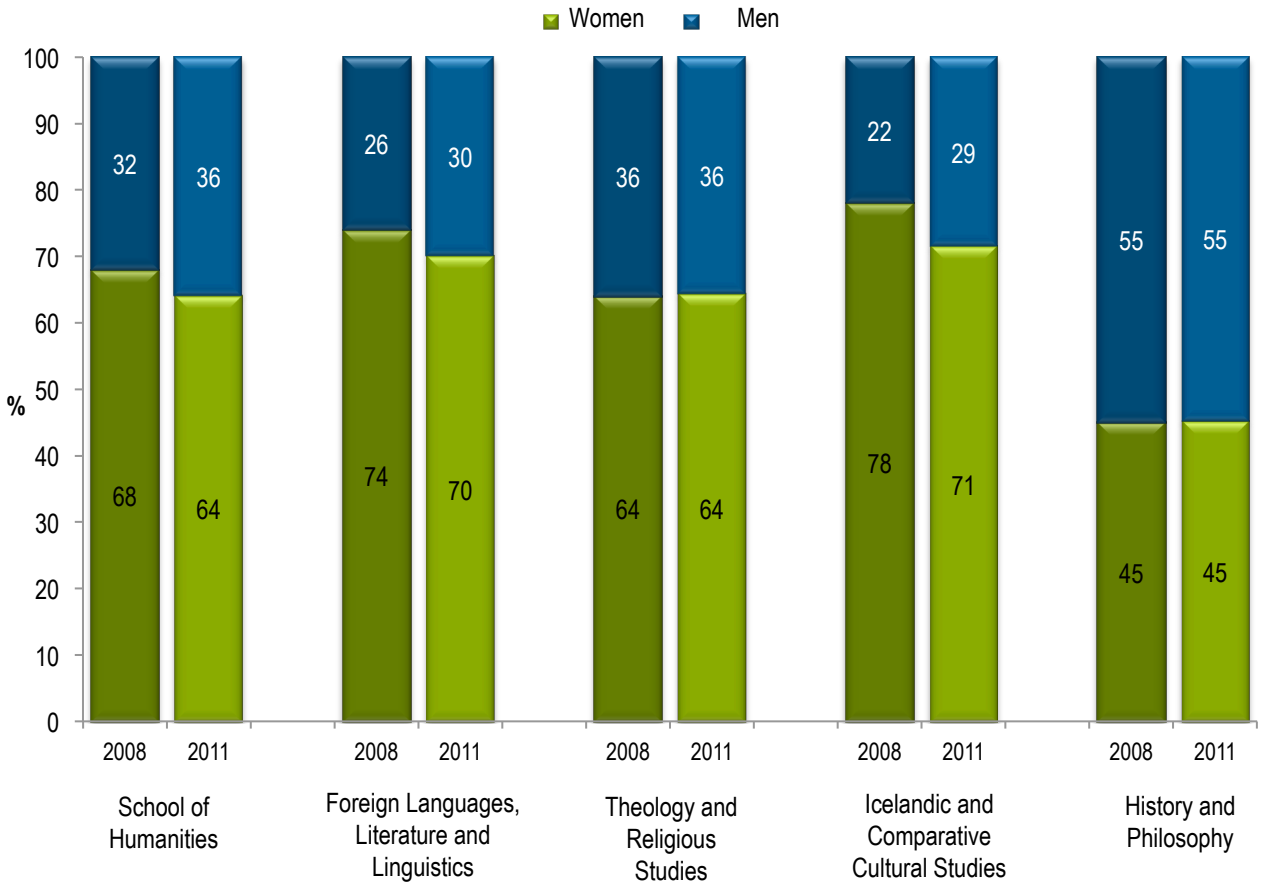


Illustration 16. Ratio of students in the School of Humanities by gender and faculty.

In the School of Social Sciences, the ratio of men and women has remained mostly unchanged since 2008. Men constitute around one third of all students. In two of the faculties, the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences and the Faculty of Business Administration, the number of men has increased (Illustration 17).

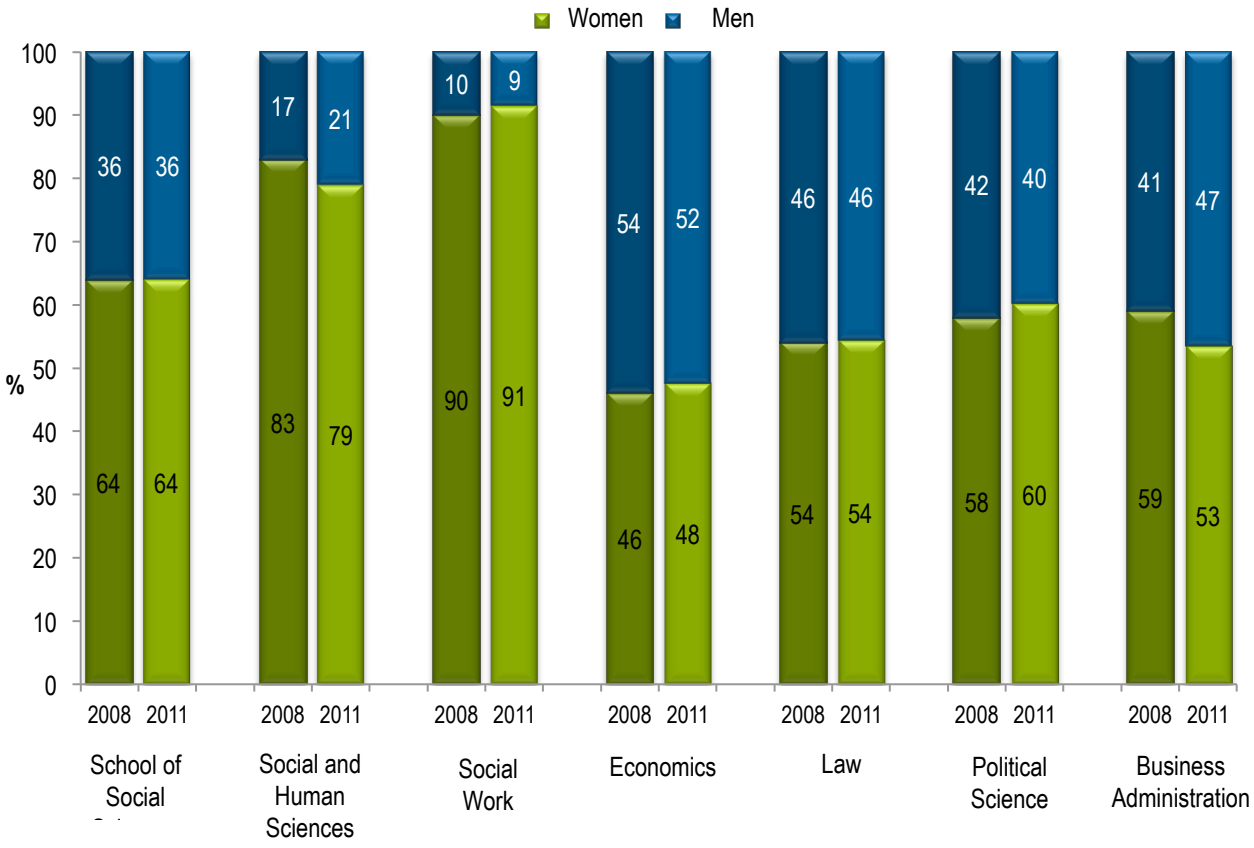


Illustration 17. Ratio of students in the School of Social Sciences by gender and faculty.

Most of the University´s faculties have, therefore, still an uneven gender ratio. Interviews revealed that there have been few systematic measures to balance the gender ratio of students within faculties. People try, however, to be conscious of this imbalance and as a result, teachers of both sexes participate in introductory meetings for students and include pictures of both male and female students in any promotional material.

GENDER RATIO AMONG STAFF

All data for this chapter was derived from the University of Iceland´s homepage except as noted (The University of Iceland 2012c). The ratio of women among the University´s teaching staff has remained comparatively steady and women are now around one fourth of all professors compared to 7% in 1996. There has, however, been little change in this ratio since 2008 (Illustration 18).

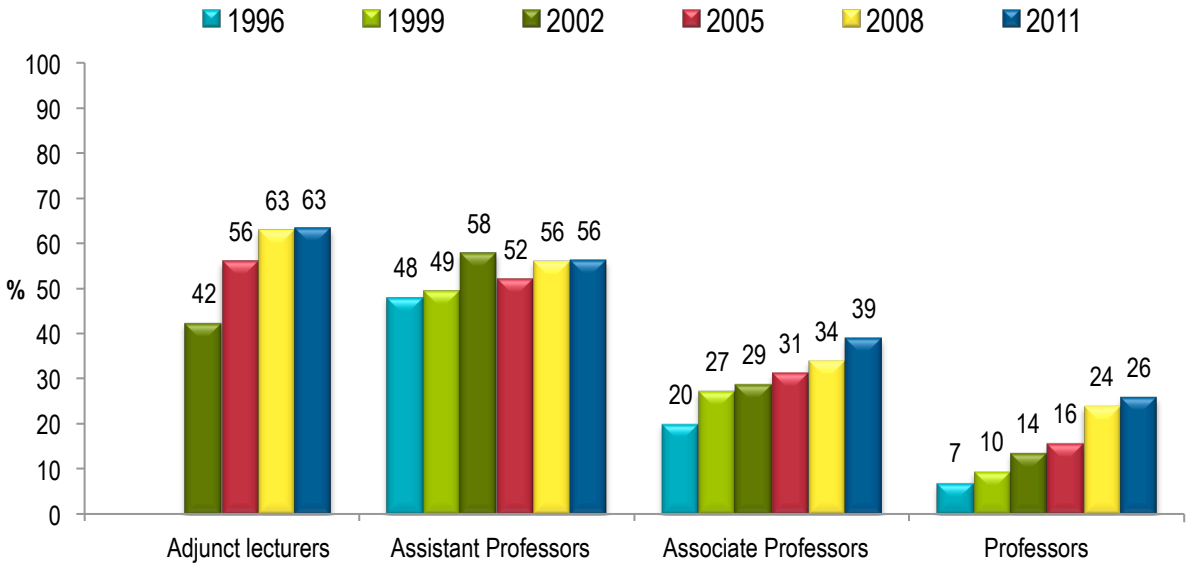


Illustration 18. Ratio of women among Adjunct Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors 1996, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2011.

Illustration 19 shows that in the last four years there has been little change in the ratio of women among permanent teachers in any of the schools with the exception of the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences where the ratio of women has risen by four percent or from 18 to 21. Figures from the years preceding 2008 are not comparable, since there have been considerable organisational changes during that time. It will be interesting to find out in the years to come whether the ratio of women will rise in proportion to comparable ratios among students.

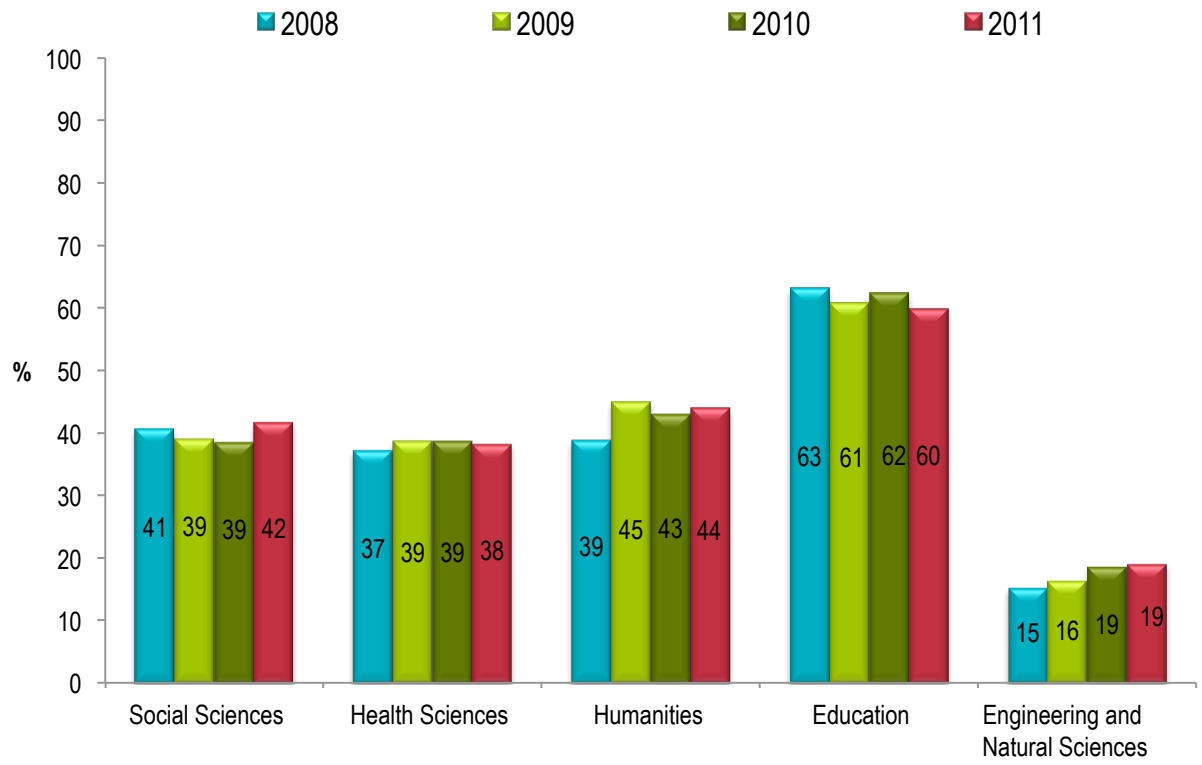


Illustration 19. Ratio of women among permanent teachers divided by Schools 2008-2011 (Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors and Adjunct Lecturers).

Underlying figures suggest that women do not seek academic employment to a degree which is comparable to the gender ratio among postgraduate students, where women have represented the majority since the 1980s. As Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir (2004) discussed in her Report on Status and Development regarding Gender Equality at the University of Iceland 1997-2002, it is the common experience in European scientific environments that women are not proportionally represented in high level academic and scientific positions. The same seems to apply in Iceland. Both in Erla Huldas report as well as the Report on Status and Development regarding Gender Equality at the University of Iceland (Auður M. Leiknisdóttir, Ásdís A. Arnalds and Friðrik H. Jónsson, 2009) this development is visualised with a so-called scissors pattern. Illustration 20 shows the same material depicted with figures from the years 2010/2011 and this shows that the scissors pattern layer has not rescinded.

Women represent the majority among students, then the ratio is more or less balanced among specialists and Assistant Professors. But in positions at the highest level, men represent the majority. All data on the gender ratio of graduates are derived from Statistics Iceland (2010).

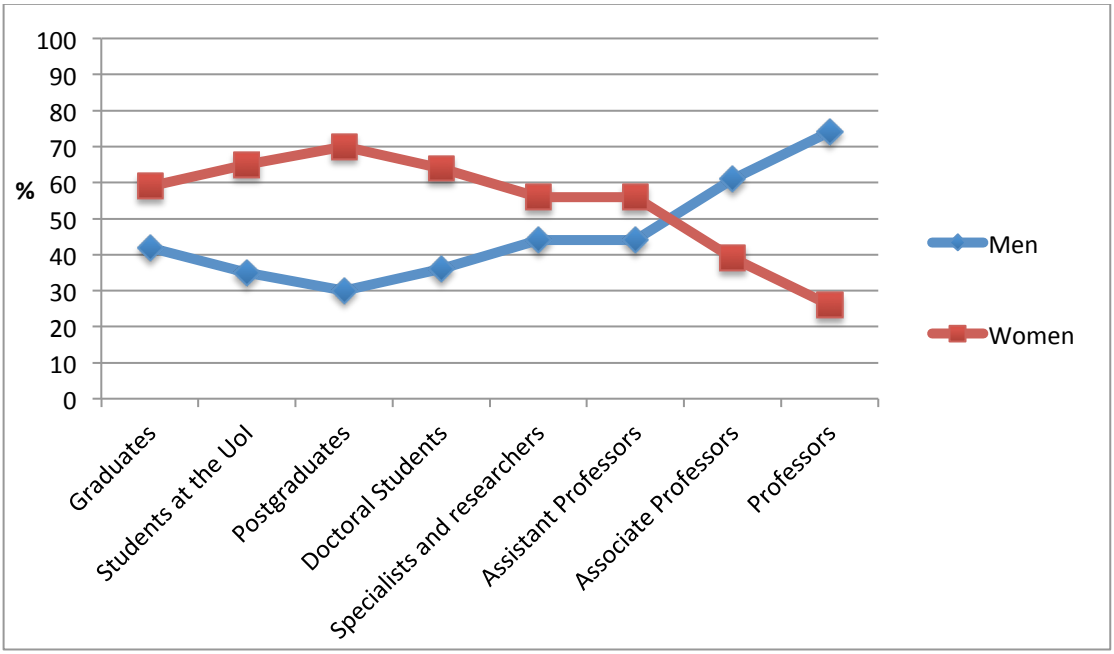


Illustration 20. Women and Men at University of Iceland in 2011.

In accordance with the Equality Act of 2008, the University´s Equal Rights Programme stipulates that "[i]n appointments to committees, boards, councils, working groups and other administrative committees in the University of Iceland and its institutions, efforts shall be made to keep the gender ratio as equal as possible, but not lower than 40% of each sex when more than three candidates are appointed [...]." It furthermore states:

> *The Equal Rights Committee shall each year collect and present data on nominations and gender ratio in committees, councils and boards.*

This has not been executed in any systematic way. The Equal Rights Committee plans, however, to collect data on gender ratios in all committees and boards of the individual schools and publish them before the end of 2012. The University of Iceland´s homepage contains a list of all representatives in the standing committees within the Schools of Education, Social Sciences and Health Sciences. Considering the information that can be found on the homepage of this school it is clear that there is

a significant gender imbalance in most committees and boards of the School of Education where men represent a minority. This is contradictory to the fact that men constitute 44% of permanent teachers within this school as can be seen in Illustration 19. The gender ratio of all committees in the School of Social Sciences is balanced as far as possible. In three of four standing committees in the School of Health Sciences there is a significantly imbalanced gender ratio, in two instances placing men in a minority (the Equal Rights Committee and the Science Committee) and in one instance, women present a minority (Teaching Committee). Further information was obtained from the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences. In one of these school´s committees there was an imbalanced gender ratio (Postgraduate Committee), but in all other committees, the gender ratio was more or less balanced. No information was available on the gender ratio in committees in the School of Humanities.

Illustration 21 shows that that the total ratio of women in University Council Committees is 44%.

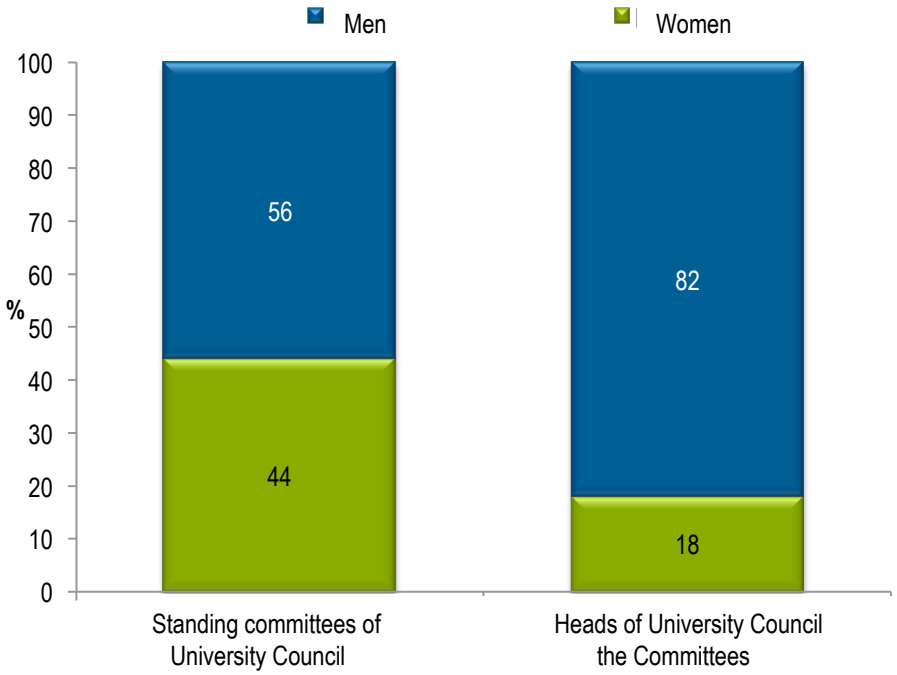


Illustration 21. Gender ratio in University Council Committees and in Chairs of University Committees 2011.

The gender ratio in the Finance Committee does not comply with the Equality Act since the committee consists of one woman and five men. Appointed to the Finance Committee are the deans of the schools as well as the Managing Director of Finances and Administration, a structure which had been decided by the University Council in 2009 in spite of indications that this would make it difficult to adhere to the provisions of the Equality Act and the University´s own Equal Rights Programme which stipulate that each sex be represented by at least 40% in committees with such structures. As a final remark, it may also be added that there are no rules in existence regarding gender equality in committees of the University of Iceland´s Student Council.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that there are significantly differing opinions within the University of Iceland on how the work towards equality should be conducted and what methods should be applied. In a number of ways, equality work within the University is top of the league, particularly considering its ambitious Equal Rights Programme, the work of the Equal Opportunities Officer and the Equality Committees of the individual schools. It is, however, of vital importance not to neglect these main pillars of an otherwise ambitious equality work.

The documentation gathered for this report, however, also shows that many areas are in dire need of stronger dynamics and more efforts are needed in the field. Examples include the fact that though the University´s Equal Rights Programme is such an ambitious endeavour, a number of aspects contained therein have not been executed. Equality education has, for instance, not been offered in any systematic way, neither among students nor staff. Equality aspects are also in general not mainstreamed into all policies and programmes within the University.

We can always do better. The University has a number of opportunities to improve the efforts towards equality for its staff and students. The human resources are immense and if only administrators and those actively involved in equality issues were willing to work together, there would be nothing to prevent that the University of Iceland could take the lead in making this society a better place to live for everyone.

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