Research Papers/Extended Abstracts

Fostering Gender Equality in Higher Education: Integrating Outcome-Based Measures into Review Manuals to Enhance the Quality Assurance in Sri Lankan State Universities

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Abstract

The field of higher education in Sri Lanka is undergoing significant changes to align with global standards and foster inclusive growth. However, a notable gap exists among universities in measuring gender equality and fostering inclusive growth through a quality assurance process. The purpose of this paper is to address the gap in measuring gender equality through quality assurance review manuals published by the University Grants Commission (UGC) for reviewing programmes and institutional performances. The goal is to emphasise the necessity of incorporating gender equality measures into academic evaluation frameworks and to propose strategies for implementing these measures to foster a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. A qualitative study utilised document analysis of manuals to uncover gaps in the quality assurance criteria for gender equality at state universities in Sri Lanka. To gain deeper insights, six focus group discussions were conducted with stakeholders, exploring their perspectives on gender measures in quality assurance. The manuals overlook crucial steps for promoting gender equality in higher education, such as equal facilities, gender-sensitive curriculum, increased women's participation, professional advancement, work-life balance, and anti-harassment policies. Stakeholders emphasised the need for ten essential criteria as themes: policy implementation, representation, access to resources, curriculum inclusivity, support services, grievance mechanisms, career progression, work-life balance, students' experience, and outcome-based measures. Integrating these ideas into institutional processes can foster a truly equitable academic community, improving the educational experience for all students and staff. Greater progress toward gender equality can be made by higher education institutions in Sri Lanka by addressing these gaps and putting the suggested standards into practice. In the end, this will improve academic performance while fostering a society that is more inclusive.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Higher Education, Outcome-based Measures, Quality Assurance, Review Manuals*

Introduction

The equitable treatment, involvement, and access of people of all genders in higher education institutions is referred to as gender equality in higher education This includes providing equal opportunity for enrolment, retention, academic performance, and leadership responsibilities. Universities can play a significant role in advancing gender equality, diversity, and inclusion in society. Universities, however, continue to be gendered and gendering institutions (Rosa & Clavero, 2022). The promotion of social responsibility in higher education institutions can be significantly enhanced by quality assurance, therefore gender equality concerns should not be divorced from high-quality work. As argued in the article, quality assurance includes monitoring programs to make sure students are receiving skills and competencies which are relevant to society while ensuring that higher education institutions are free from prejudice and gender bias. Grünberg, (2011) asserts that several strategies can promote gender equality in higher education including developing gender-sensitive curricula, encouraging gender studies, increasing women's involvement in decision-making, removing obstacles to their professional advancement, ensuring a work-life balance for staff members, and implementing anti-harassment policies.

Globally, there is a growing recognition of the need for gender equality in all sectors, including higher education. Gender equality in higher education is crucial for general efficacy, justice, and quality of academic settings and the larger social milieu. The advancement of justice and fairness, academic excellence, institutional performance, access and participation, professional and academic development, societal inequality, legal and ethical compliance, inclusive learning environments, and global competitiveness are all impacted by gender equality in higher education. which at the very least call for addressing the gender segregation of study fields, creating curricula that are sensitive to gender, encouraging gender studies, increasing women's participation in decision-making and removing barriers to their career advancement, ensuring work-life balance for employees, and enacting anti-harassment policies (Grünberg, 2011).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality), highlight the importance of gender equality for equitable quality higher education. A significant amount of SDG 5 literature is devoted to the topics of gender inequality, discrimination against women, and women's empowerment in the higher education field. According to Xiaoxue et al. (2017), women are still underrepresented in key community, business, and government leadership and decision-making roles. Although significant progress has been made, women still occupy less than 50% of senior and middle management positions worldwide, with less than one-third of these roles held by women (UN Women, 2018). Ineffective hiring procedures, unfavourable

institutional environments, and unconscious bias are significant obstacles preventing women from assuming leadership roles. In the long run, addressing these problems from a management standpoint might facilitate reaching SDG 5 targets.

A study by Miroiu & Mihaela, (2003), has shown that numerous graduate and undergraduate programs ignore, neglect, exclude, or marginalise the relevance of women's experiences, demonstrating a pervasive gender-blindness. Students have the opportunity to opt out of gender-specific classes, such as gender and politics or gender economics since they are elective. Pupils who don't have this deep-rooted comprehension of how events and policies impact men and women differently are not prepared to deal with the range of demands that the population will face in the workplace (Verge & Alonso 2019).

Research indicates that numerous graduate and undergraduate curricula “ignore, overlook, exclude” the relevance of women’s experiences. Female academics typically handle the majority of “institutional housekeeping”, which includes curriculum development, teaching, and student counselling while holding more disadvantaged positions (Virginia, 2004; Winslow, 2010). The specialised bodies within universities tasked with guiding the implementation of these policy instruments, known as equality units, are understaffed, and underfunded, and remain relatively peripheral within the organisational structure. Gender is far from being mainstreamed across higher education institutions' policies (Verge & Cabruja, 2017). Their literature review and cross-country analysis reveal that top-level academic environments in Bangladesh, China, and Finland are predominantly male-dominated, creating a significant barrier to achieving equal academic leadership. This phenomenon is often referred to as the "glass ceiling" in the literature (Blackmore et al., 2015; Husu, 2000; Morley, 2013; Westoby et al., 2021). The underrepresentation of women and the dominance of men in academic leadership are evident (Kohtamäki et al., 2024).

A recent narrative review by Westoby et al. (2021) thoroughly examined the current state of women academics in British higher education, highlighting that women's leadership capacities and skills are crucial (Morley, 2013). Nonetheless, gender bias within academia is a global issue (Aiston & Fo, 2021; Blackmore et al., 2015; Morley, 2013), as discussed from various perspectives in Bangladesh, China, and Finland (Kohtamäki et al., 2024).

Despite the small number of gender-related academic leadership studies in these countries, the significance of gender-neutral academic leadership is recognized in research as an unresolved societal problem. A study identifies two common gender research themes across the three countries: country-specific studies addressing cultural, historical, and structural obstacles and contexts, and practical,

individual-level obstacles to becoming academic leaders. All three countries face similar challenges in these areas (Kohtamäki et al., 2024).

Two other possible explanations come to light: first, reviewers simply do not understand the gender perspective (Riegraf & Weber, 2017), which is often confused with gender balance (European Commission, 2017); second, audit panels do not consider gender equality to be a relevant theme of high-quality work, or they prioritise what they think is most important (Stensaker, 2000) due to time constraints. Gender mainstreaming implementation is contingent upon assumptions of what constitutes legitimate and credible activity. Therefore, by neglecting themes related to gender equality, quality assurance leaves gender disparities unchecked and helps to maintain the gendered micropolitics of academia (Morley, 2001; Whittington & Smith-Doerr, 2008). Higher education institutions are more likely to consider gender equality goals if their evaluation work is gender-sensitive, because the standards being evaluated highlight aspects of institutional performance that are politically valued (Dahler, 2007).

Similarly, gendering quality work should facilitate interactions between quality assurance organisations and pertinent external parties in the field of gender equality policy, perhaps yielding fresh insights that support the ongoing enhancement of quality frameworks. It is also important to remember that the 2030 agenda for SDG for gender-sensitive follow-up and evaluation procedures at all levels. Thus, including gender in quality assurance could increase its influence on society. For instance, the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings began assessing how well 2019 institutional performance met the SDGs, particularly the gender equality SDG number five. In addition to being a fundamental human right, SDG 5 acknowledges that gender equality is also necessary for creating inclusive societies, fostering economic growth, and attaining sustainable development.

They thus offer an ideal environment for investigating how quality assurance might be re-examined from the standpoint of gender equality. To start or continue the gender mainstreaming work within higher education institutions' regulation and governance, core activities (research, teaching, outreach, and cooperation), support and management processes (Peterson, & Jordansson, 2022). These guidelines serve as a reminder to higher education institutions that gender perspectives should be applied to all organisational levels and policies. Additionally, corresponding self-assessment exercises have been developed to assist higher education institutions in identifying strategies for change and bringing gender inequalities to light through statistical and in-depth qualitative analyses of the organisation.

Various strategies that can enhance an organisation's ability to accommodate individuals who have different inequalities have been proposed, tested, and studied. These strategies include staff training on

bias (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018), grievance procedures (Hassan et al., 2021), focused hiring (Leslie, 2019), and action plans for gender equality (Ní Laoire et al., 2021). When determining which gender equality initiatives can be successful, the context is important (Ní Laoire et al., 2021; Tienari et al., 2002). It is essential to review gender equality sections of manuals used to evaluate university program quality assurance to make sure that these offerings are inclusive and equitable.

Sri Lanka has made commitments to gender equality in higher education through various policies and legal frameworks (Pappu, 2021). UGC, Sri Lanka has been considering quality assurance as important in higher education and ensuring the important criteria, for assessing the performance of programmes and institutions as well as in ensuring quality assurance in higher education. Gender equality lowers biases, ensures fair access and opportunities, fosters a varied and inclusive atmosphere, and improves the overall efficacy of educational institutions which have a substantial positive impact on the quality of higher education (UNPA, 2023). Better academic results, more creative research, and a society are the outcomes of gender equality. Even though the importance of gender equality for inclusive higher education is addressed and strategies are implemented, the assessment of that outcome has not been measured through quality assurance review in Sri Lankan state universities. Gender equality is seriously lacking in the quality assurance review guidelines used in Sri Lanka. It may be essential to incorporate outcome indicators related to gender equality in these guides to ensure and advance inclusivity and fairness in a variety of contexts, particularly in the state universities of Sri Lanka.

Manuals for quality assurance (QA) reviews are essential for establishing guidelines and guaranteeing the efficiency of diverse procedures in a range of sectors. There is a clear lack of integration of gender equality measures in these guides, notwithstanding their importance in forming organisational practices. Numerous facets of quality assurance procedures, such as their efficacy and adherence to industry standards, have been examined in recent research. However, there are few studies that particularly address the gender equality metrics in QA review guidelines. Previous studies have focused mostly on the procedural and technical components of quality assurance, giving little attention to how gender equality is either considered or ignored.

Closing this research gap is essential to guaranteeing that QA review guidelines support gender equity in addition to maintaining high levels of quality. Organisations can improve their QA procedures, create a more welcoming workplace, and eventually increase organisational performance and compliance with gender equity criteria by looking into and implementing gender equality initiatives.

Objectives

- To identify the gap in gender equality indicators that are included in the manual to assess the quality assurance of the performance of programmes and institutions.
- To understand the stakeholder's perspectives on the importance of the status of gender equality and the gap in equality indicators identified in the manuals.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology was used to extensively analyse the gaps in evaluating gender equality within quality assurance evaluations and to determine which gender equality criteria should be added to these assessments. To obtain a thorough grasp of current gender equality initiatives and stakeholder perspectives on them, the research design combined document analysis with stakeholder feedback. A comprehensive collection of programme reviews and institutional review manuals for assessing the quality of the state universities in Sri Lanka was enrolled. The four manuals (undergraduate programme review manual, postgraduate programme review manual, institutional review manual and the manual for measuring the quality of open and distance education) were selected, based on their relevance to quality assurance processes and their accessibility.

A total of twenty-three key informants were identified and six focus group discussions were conducted comprising university administrators, authorities involved in gender equality, and faculty members involved in gender initiatives. These people were selected through the use of purposeful sampling. Through these conversations, various staff-student groups were asked to share their qualitative perspectives on gender bias, perceived hurdles, and the efficacy of current activities aimed at promoting gender equality. The study's use of purposive sampling guaranteed a representative sample of participants, enabling insightful discussion led by a qualified moderator. Open discussions on important issues were facilitated by the semi-structured style, which helped participants get a deeper comprehension of the obstacles and requirements of gender equality in the academic setting.

Thematic analysis of the focus group discussions (FGD) data revealed recurrent themes and important insights that supported the quantitative survey results. This comprehensive strategy sheds light on the challenges encountered by students and staff and produces doable suggestions for strengthening gender equality programs in public colleges. To ensure participant safety, ethical factors like informed consent and anonymity were given top priority. In the end, the FGDs allowed students to share their experiences and offer insightful viewpoints that may lead to significant adjustments in Sri Lankan higher education laws and procedures.

Results

Review of the Manuals

The document analysis of criteria, standards and expected best practices from the state universities for ensuring gender equality showed that the weight given to the gender equality aspects in the quality assurance, perspective is only one criterion. The manuals for assessing the quality assurance in state universities expect policy documents, implementation minutes, and the progress of Gender Equity and Equality. It is about one standard among the 107 standards in the institutional manual to assess the quality assurance of institutional review of state universities (UGC, 2023). Program review manuals used to assess the quality assurance in undergraduate study programmes offered by faculties examine only whether the programme adopts appropriate strategies and executes activities to promote Gender Equity and Equality while deterring Sexual and Gender-Based Violence among all categories of staff and students. Gender Equity and Equality is one of the 136 standards used to measure the quality aspects of undergraduate programmes in state universities (UGC, 2015). Postgraduate programme manuals assess the policy documents on Gender Equity & Equality and Sexual & Gender-Based Violence: student handbook; records of complaints; minutes of the meetings of the department /board of study and other relevant committees; and records of action taken on complaints. This is also one of the 136 criteria used to measure the gender equality aspects in higher education (UGC, 2021). Open and Distance Education programme review manuals review whether the open & distance unit or faculty adopts appropriate strategies and executes activities to promote Gender Equity & Equality while deterring Sexual & Gender-Based Violence among all categories of staff and students (UGC, 2019). These expected best practices come under the description not as a review standard. A methodical analysis of these materials reveals that gender equality is not given enough weight in the standards and criteria used in the manuals which are used to evaluate quality assurance in public universities (Table 1).

The checklist includes items such as meeting minutes, policies, and their execution, however these components alone fail to provide sufficient attention to gender equality in the process of quality assurance.

Documentary evidence is required in the manuals for several components, including policy documents on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and gender equality, records of task forces' or coordinating committees' formation, strategies and action plans that have been put into practice, committee minutes, and reports on the advancement of SGBV and gender equality. They also need student handbooks, complaint records, minutes from relevant committees and departmental boards of study, and documentation of the activities taken in response to complaints. These manuals, however,

fail to highlight important steps that are necessary to advance gender equality in higher education, including equal facilities provision, gender-sensitive curriculum development, gender studies promotion, increased women's participation in decision-making, removal of obstacles to their professional advancement, staff work-life balance, and the implementation of anti-harassment policies.

Table 1: Best practices, expected evidence and standards to measure gender Equity in the programmes and institutional performance in state universities.

[The University/HEI has a comprehensive policy, strategies, and action plans drawn up in line with the UGC-prescribed policy and strategies to promote GEE and deter sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). **BP:** The University/HEI strives to promote GEE and deter any form of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) amongst all categories of staff and students by adopting an appropriate policy and strategies drawn up in line with the UGC-prescribed policy and strategy (on GEE and SGBV) It is spearheaded through a task force or a coordinating body with necessary empowerments and resources for effective policy implementation. **EE:** Policy document on GEE and SGBV; Records on the establishment of a task force/coordinating committee; Strategies and Action Plans drawn and implemented; Minutes of the task force/coordination committee; Reports on the progress made in promoting GEE and deterring SGBV] Institutional review manual: Criterion 1 - (Page: 27)1/107
[The Faculty/Institute complies fully with the institutional policy to promote gender equity and equality (GEE) and deter any form of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); it adopts appropriate strategies and executes activities to promote GEE and deter SGBV amongst all categories of staff and students] Programme review manual: Criterion 1 - Programme Management (Page: 21)1/136
[**BP**: policies, strategies and practises relating to Gender Equity & Equality (GEE) and anti-sexual &Gender violence (SGBV) is in place **Standards:** the PGPP has a sound financial management system that complies with national guidelines and enables the PGPU to continue the delivery of the study programme without hindrance. **Examples of sources of evidence**: the policy document on GEE and SGBV: student handbook; records of complaints; minutes of the meetings of the department /board of study and other relevant committees; and records of action taken on complaints.] Postgraduate Programme Review Manual: Criterion 1 - Programme Management (Page: 28)1/136)
[The faculty complies fully with the institutional policy to promote gender equity and equality (GEE) and deter any forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); it adopts appropriate strategies and executes activities to promote GEE and deter SGBV among all categories of staff and students] ODL Programme Review Manual: Criterion 1 - Programme Management (Page: 29) 0/144

Source: UGC (2015;2029,2021;2023), Manuals to review the Programme and Institutes in the state higher education sector.

Stakeholder Feedback

1. *Policy Implementation*

The research shows that gender equality policies are often undermined by inadequate execution, lack of awareness among academics and staff, and the inability to accurately assess the impact of current monitoring and evaluation methods.

> [While gender equality policies exist, their implementation is often ineffective. Many faculty and staff are unaware of the existing policies, highlighting the need for better communication and training. The current monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for these policies are weak, and lack of a mechanism to assess their real impact.]
>
> [Academic Staff Male]

2. *Representation*

Stakeholder responses highlighted the need to address the gender imbalance in faculty composition, highlighting the frequent preference for male candidates in promotions and the absence of female role models in senior positions.

> [To create a more equitable environment, it is imperative to address the imbalance in the faculty composition. There is a significant lack of female role models in senior positions, which discourages younger women from aspiring to those roles]
>
> [Administrative Staff Female]

3. *Access to Resources*

Female students face disadvantages due to a lack of technology access, professional development programs overlooking them, and insufficient networking events. The existing review procedure fails to address gender equality within organizations, limiting their opportunities for mentorship and the highest leadership.

> [Many female students lack access to necessary technology, which puts them at a disadvantage compared to their peers. Networking events are infrequent and not well-promoted, making it difficult for women to connect with industry professionals and mentors]
>
> [Student Female]

4. Curriculum Inclusivity

Stakeholders emphasized the need for gender-sensitive content in curricula, urging for more female author readings and interdisciplinary approaches. Teaching strategies should encourage critical analysis of gender norms and stereotypes to create a more inclusive learning environment.

> [The curriculum often lacks gender-sensitive content, making it difficult for students to engage with important gender issues. gender studies should be integrated into various subjects, not just standalone courses. It's essential for teaching methods to encourage critical analysis of gender roles and stereotypes among students.]
>
> [Academic Staff Male]

5. Support Service

Female students require mentorship programs and counselling services to enhance personal and academic development. However, inadequate access to gender-related services and inadequate support systems highlight gaps in higher education.

> [Female students need mentorship programs, but we also need more organized ways for them to interact with mentors. Access to counselling services that address gender-specific issues is often inadequate and needs improvement.]
>
> [Student Counsellor Male]

6. Grievance Mechanism

Students said that the review manuals lack in measuring clear grievance filing instructions, causing confusion among students. The absence of anonymous reporting and fear of retaliation further discourage reporting, highlighting the need for more accessible grievance procedures.

> [Many students are unaware of the procedure because the manuals do not sufficiently measure these clear instructions on how to file grievances. Without mechanisms for anonymous reporting, many individuals may hesitate to come forward, fearing retaliation]
>
> [Academic Staff Male]

7. Career Progression

The review manuals lack measuring clear promotion criteria, creating uncertainty among female staff and contributing to gender imbalance in leadership roles. Emphasis on women's

professional development opportunities is also lacking, highlighting the need for more defined criteria.

> [The manuals do not measure the clear criteria for promotions, leaving many female staff uncertain about what is required for advancement. There's a noticeable lack of emphasis on professional development opportunities tailored for women.]
>
> [Reviewer Male]

8. Work Like Balance

The institutional framework lacks childcare support, affecting staff and students' ability to balance academic and familial responsibilities. Programs with 'A' grades still lack basic facilities for women, indicating a disconnect between institutional ratings and actual gender equality support.

> [Childcare support is noticeably absent; on-campus facilities or subsidies would make a significant difference for working parents. These are not measured in any review process. The programmes which got 'A' grades don't have basic facilities for women]
>
> [Academic Supportive Staff Female]

9. Student Experience

Female students often feel overlooked in discussions, with male peers dominating topics. Support disparities exist, with male students receiving more assistance. Unspoken gender norms create challenges, underscoring the need for equity and inclusion strategies.

> [I often feel overlooked or interrupted, especially when the topic is dominated by male students. I've noticed that male students often receive more support for projects and funding. Peer relationships can be challenging, as there are often unspoken gender norms that dictate who gets to speak or lead]
>
> [Student Female]

10. Outcome-Based Measures

The review manuals lack a framework for impact assessments, making it challenging to evaluate gender equality initiatives' effectiveness and benchmarking standards, limiting opportunities for improvement and best practices sharing within higher education.

[There's no framework in the manuals for conducting impact assessments, which makes it challenging to determine if our gender equality initiatives are working. we can't compare our gender equality efforts with other institutions, which limits our opportunities for improvement]

[Administrative Staff Male]

Discussion and Conclusion

The manuals reveal a significant gap in requirements for documentary evidence on gender equality and Sexual and Gender Based Violence in higher education institutions, neglecting critical measures like equal facilities and gender-sensitive curricula, despite their importance in creating an inclusive academic environment. The current documentation requirements overlook gender studies, women's participation in decision-making, barriers to professional advancement, and work-life balance policies limiting the potential for meaningful change. The manuals lack robust anti-harassment policies, hindering gender equality efforts. To progress, review processes should incorporate these elements, ensuring gender equality is a fundamental aspect of institutional practice, supporting the advancement of all students and staff, particularly women. Concerns about the applicability of the current guidelines in evaluating gender equality in higher education were voiced by stakeholders. They stressed that to guarantee significant advancements in this field, it is imperative to include ten essential requirements as themes. They are Policy Implementation, Representation, Access to Resources, Curriculum Inclusivity, Support Services, Grievance Mechanisms, Career Progression, Work-Life Balance, Students' experience, Outcome-Based Measures (Table 2).

Table 2: Thematic analysis of FGD's responses of stakeholders

Stakeholders view (codes)	Subcategories	Themes
Regular audits should be conducted to evaluate compliance with these policies "It's crucial to involve more women in the development and review of gender equality policies." "Accountability measures are necessary to hold departments responsible for implementing gender equality initiatives effectively." "We want policies that are not only written but are actionable and genuinely promote gender equality."	Policy and bylaw, implementation mechanism, standards, international norms Accountability measures Actionable policies Responsible units Review of policies	Policy Implementation
"Our hiring practices ought to "The curriculum often overlooks women's	Leadership diversity Faculty composition	Representation

contributions, which perpetuates the idea that their work is less important." "We see a gender imbalance in student leadership positions; more initiatives are needed to encourage female participation." "Cultural attitudes still influence perceptions of women's roles in academia, creating barriers to equal representation."	Promotion practices Visibility role models Decision making participation Recruitment policies Impact of gender bias Gender representation, curriculum Cultural attitude	
"Access to funding opportunities for female students is limited, making it challenging for them to pursue their academic goals." "There are noticeable disparities in facilities; women often find it harder to secure lab space or resources that their male counterparts readily access." "The support services available, like mentorship programs, are not always tailored to address the unique challenges faced by women in academia."	Funding opportunities, facilities access, support services, technology access, professional development, networking opportunities, childcare facilities, health service, accessibility of information, safe spaces	Access to Resources
"Students should have more opportunities to discuss and engage with gender-related topics in class discussions." "Workshops on gender awareness need to be part of the curriculum to foster a more inclusive environment." "Involving women and diverse voices in curriculum development is vital to ensure that all perspectives are represented."	Gender sensitive content, Diverse authors, interdisciplinary approaches, critical gender analysis, student engagement, gender awareness programmes, curriculum development, assessment practise, case studies	Curriculum Inclusivity
"Networking events should be more frequent and inclusive, allowing women to build connections in their fields." "Workshops on gender sensitivity and leadership are crucial, yet many are not widely advertised or accessible." "Having a dedicated resource centre for gender-related concerns would provide much-needed support and information." "Peer support groups can make a significant difference, but there are currently not enough organized opportunities for this." "In order to guarantee that crisis intervention services	Mentorship, counselling service, career development, networking events, workshop and training, resource centres, peer support groups, crisis intervention, awareness campaign, feedback mechanism	Support Services

are more accessible and responsive,		
"The current guidelines fail to address the need for timely responses to grievances, which can discourage reporting." "There's no mention of training for staff on handling gender-related complaints sensitively, which is crucial for fostering trust." "Stakeholders expressed frustration over the absence of tracking mechanisms to evaluate the outcomes of reported grievances." "Awareness campaigns about the grievance process are notably missing, leaving students and staff uninformed." "The guides fail to take into account the cultural nuances that can	Accessibility, Anonymity, response time, transparency, support for complaints, training for staff, outcome stacking, feedback mechanism, awareness campaign, cultural sensitivity	Grievance Mechanisms
"We need formal mentorship programs for female faculty, but the manuals don't address this essential support." "Leadership training initiatives for women are missing from the guidelines, which could help bridge the gap in representation." "The current documents fail to mention networking opportunities, which are crucial for career advancement."	Promotion criteria , professional development, leadership training , performance evaluation retention rates, barriers identification, work life integration, success planning	Career Progression
"Childcare support is noticeably absent; on-campus facilities or subsidies would make a significant difference for working parents." "The manuals do not review wellness programs that could promote mental and physical well-being among staff and students." "There's a lack of resources for time management, which could help individuals balance their various responsibilities."	Childcare support, wellness programe , support for care givers , workload management, feedback mechanisim	Work-Life Balance
"The support systems in place, like counselling, are helpful, but many students are unaware of how to access them." "Having female role models in faculty positions has encouraged me to pursue my academic goals with more confidence."	Discrimination class participation, access to resource, peer relationship, support system, role models, campus climate extra curricula involvement, awareness of policies feedback and reporting	Student experience

""The manuals don't provide any mechanisms for collecting feedback from students and staff, which is crucial for understanding the real impact of our policies." "There's a significant gap in accountability; without defined roles and responsibilities in the manuals, it's unclear who is accountable for advancing gender equality."	Impact assessment, measurable objectives, bench making, stakeholder feedback, accountability mechanism	Outcome-Based Measures

To promote significant progress toward gender equity, the review process must include the following ten fundamental requirements: career advancement, work-life balance, student-life balance, policy implementation, representation, access to resources, curriculum inclusivity, support services, grievance mechanisms, and outcome-based measures. Through the integration of these ideas into institutional processes, academic institutions can guarantee that gender equality is not just a mandate but a core component of their operational philosophy. This all-encompassing strategy will foster a truly equitable academic community by improving not only the educational experience for all students and staff but also the growth of women.

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