

# The gender perspective in teaching

## WHAT IS THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE?



Taking a **gender perspective** means organizing, improving, developing and assessing decision-making processes to ensure that gender equality is an underlying value of every policy, regardless of the area, stage or stakeholder it affects.

### GENDER

Gender is a social and cultural construct assigned to men and women based on what are considered feminine and masculine behaviours. This construct is subject to change over time and may vary depending on location and cultural specificities. In many societies, characteristics attributed to men are more highly valued than those attributed to women.



### SEX

Sex, on the other hand, is a binary system that classifies human beings as either male or female depending on their biological traits, such as reproductive organs, and other characteristics related to the body, the human genome and hormones.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO INCLUDE THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN TEACHING?

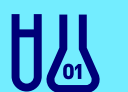
### Why is this important to include the gender perspective at universities?

**Universities are an integral part of society, which means they are not immune to reinforcing gender roles, stereotypes and ideologies within their different areas of activity. Universities perpetuate a number of gender-related issues:**

- Horizontal and vertical segregation with respect to academic and administrative responsibilities.
- Under-representation of women in top academic jobs.
- Undermining of women's leadership and expert potential.
- Disregard for women and their academic contributions.
- Underappreciation of areas of research that are typically relegated to women or address gender matters.
- Overgeneralization of studied phenomena due to a bias towards the male experience (androcentrism) and the consideration of "female" behaviour as a deviation from the masculine ideal.
- Fewer citations of women researchers' published work.
- Less attention given to women by their mentors throughout their research career.
- Prevalence of scientific careers that fail to take maternity or the care of dependent family members into consideration.
- Sexual and gender-based harassment at universities against both academic and administrative staff and students.

### What are the benefits of adopting a gender perspective in teaching?

**Involving the gender perspective in teaching enhances the educational quality and social relevance of the resulting knowledge, technology and innovation. The gender perspective opens up a whole host of opportunities in a number of areas:**



#### ENVIRONMENT

It allows us to deepen our understanding of society by straying away from biased interpretations that consider the male point of view as being universally applicable in all contexts and thus distort any resulting theoretical constructs or empirical analyses.

#### STUDENTS

It sparks critical thought and equips students with new tools for identifying gender stereotypes, norms and roles. Likewise, it encourages them to question the social constructs governing society and to develop competencies to overcome blindspots gender perspective that they can apply in their personal and professional lives.

#### KNOWLEDGE

It does away with androcentrism to highlight the situation women are in and dismantles explanations of gender differences that are tainted by stereotypes that have been seen over and over again. It also helps by increasing the amount of women-led research being cited in teaching guides, thereby highlighting women leaders in academia.

#### CLASSROOM

It sparks insightful questions related to the learning environment, such as classroom interactions (for example, differences in the frequency of interventions made by male and female students), professor-student relationship dynamics and language use.

#### TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND ASSESSMENT

It impels teachers to pay attention to any differences between the learning outcomes of their female and male students and to question whether they may have something to do with their teaching and assessment methodologies, thus opening the door to new, innovative models.

#### PROFESSIONS AND DISCIPLINES

This lets us reflect on the professional and organizational culture of the discipline itself. The number of female and male students and teaching staff on programmes is a sign not only of gender differences in access to the programmes, but also of the discipline's historical construction based on social roles and stereotypes.

#### THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

We would like to underline the fact that the gender perspective is not a feminine perspective. It means encouraging everyone to see the world through a new-coloured lens and thus **reshape our concept of the world and the part we play in it**. Adopting or including the gender perspective requires actions that undermine sexist and androcentric mindsets and build up new ones based on equality.

#### INTERSECTIONALITY

The foundations of gender-sensitive teaching must also rest on intersectional outlooks that encompass not only gender but also the plethora of traits that shape who people are and may be leveraged to perpetuate situations of inequality, such as **sex, class, race, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity**, among many others.

## HOW DO YOU INCLUDE THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN YOUR COURSES?

Assign activities or challenges that address the gender perspective.

Define learning outcomes that encourage students to embrace the gender perspective in their activities.

Establish assessment criteria that take the gender perspective into consideration.

Choose learning resources that have been created or coordinated by both women and men equally.

Use gender-neutral language on all communication channels.

Provide course instructors with resources to help them use gender-neutral language.

Instil in course instructors the importance of upholding the gender perspective in all of their teaching activities, rather than merely touching on the topic here and there.

### COURSE DESIGN

Request learning resources that treat diversity with respect.

Commission new learning resources that draw on the gender perspective.

Use authors' full names when referencing their learning resources.

Employ gender-neutral language.

### TEACHING

Urge course instructors to pay attention to their students' participation in the different classroom areas in order to redress any situations of inequality or discrimination that may arise.

Work alongside the course instructors to specify how the gender perspective will be included in each course. For example, explaining to students how to accomplish their activities from a gender perspective.

#### References

Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (2018). *Marc general per a la incorporació de la perspectiva de gènere en la docència universitària* (p. 15).  
 European Commission (2016). *Guidance on Gender Equality in Horizon 2020* (p. 7).  
 Council of Europe (1998). *Gender mainstreaming: conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices*. Strasbourg.  
 Verge, Tania; Cabruja, Teresa (2017). *La perspectiva de gènere en la docència i recerca a les universitats de la Xarxa Vives* (p. 6).

#### Authors

Equality Unit. Learning Processes, eLearn Center. Faculty of Arts and Humanities. UOC 2020

