

Equality and Diversity Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2011

Present:

Professor Aneez Esmail – Chair and AVP (Equality and Diversity)
Professor Rod Coombs - Deputy President and Deputy VC
Albert McMenemy – Registrar and Secretary
Patrick Johnson - Head of Equality and Diversity
Catherine Prescott – Equality and Diversity Advisor
Patricia Ross – UCU Equal Opportunities Rep
Linda Mingay– Unite Equal Opportunities Rep
Elaine Shillcock – Head of Disability Support Office
Dr Vishal Aggarwal – Chair, BME Staff Network
Dr Hamied Haroon – Chair, Disabled Staff Network
Stephen Johnston – LGB Staff Network
Revd Dr Terry Biddington – Interfaith Chaplaincy Forum
Dr Pat Sponder – Head of Student Support and Services
Karen Heaton – Director of Human Resources
Diana Hampson – Director of Estates

Apologies:

Mike Shore-Nye – Director of STARS

1. Matters arising from previous minutes

Point 2 – Following discussions with Russell Ashworth and Elaine Shillcock, Patrick has written a proposal to create a fully centralised fund to cover the cost of reasonable adjustments for disabled staff.

Action: Aneez will present the proposal at the next HR Sub Committee meeting.

2. Stakeholder Updates

Received: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Staff Network Update

- The re-launch of the Network has gone well with approximately 140 members of staff signed up to an anonymous email network.
- A number of activities have taken place including events to celebrate LGBT history month and other social activities
- The Network are currently working towards the Stonewall Equality Workplace Index 2012
- No issues to raise at this time

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Interfaith Chaplaincy Update

- Work is progressing well with all groups
- No issues to raise at this time

BME Staff Network Update

- Currently undertaking a member survey
- A number of events were organised to celebrate Black History Month in October
- Looking to work collaboratively with other staff networks
- Keen to engage with social responsibility and work with the local community
- The need to engage with staff from lower grades, that may not have access to computers, was raised.
- Diana Hampson mentioned that in Estates they were looking at career development opportunities for BME staff in lower grades, as stated in the University's Single Equality Scheme.

Action: Diana Hampson and Mike Shore-Nye to suggest a representative from Estates and STARS to make links with the BME Network.

UCU Questions / Update

A number of points were raised including:

Equality Impact Assessments Progress Update

Update: An update was provided by Patrick Johnson

Eight new assessments have been completed recently. These include:

- Staff Sickness Absence
- Staff Grievance Procedure
- Staff Disciplinary and Dismissal
- Staff Academic Promotions
- Student Mitigating Circumstances
- Student Conduct and Discipline
- Student Complaints Procedure
- Student Feedback Policy

Action: All recommendations from the eight policies to be published and made available

Dignity at Work and Study Policy Review

A number of points were raised concerning the policy, whether an equality impact assessment had been carried out, the policy's usage and the experience of some members of staff prior to the launch of the policy 18 months ago.

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Update: An equality impact assessment had been completed as part of the original policy development and included in the review of the policy.

Action: The issues identified to be followed up and included in the policy review

Paternity Leave

How is the University responding to the new paternity leave rights due to come into force in April 2011, which will allow the mother to transfer up to six months of her leave to her partner?

Retirement Age

How is the University responding to the removal of the default retirement age?

Action: Director of HR is presenting a report to the HR Sub Committee. Information will be available prior to April 2011.

Disabled Staff Network Update

- Access to Work, employer contribution - the Network sent a letter to the Department for Work and Pensions outlining key issues and requesting an equality impact assessment. Hamied received a reply which stated that an assessment has been completed and no impact has been envisaged. This issue is still ongoing for the Network.
- Sickness Absence - inconsistencies around how disability related sickness absence was being recorded was raised as an issue, in particular mental health.

Action: Karen Heaton to meet with Hamied to discuss.

- International Day of Persons with Disabilities - the event was very positive, the Network wished to thank Mike Shore-Nye for his support organising this event. The Network is looking at the next event and is hoping to invite a high profile guest speaker who has links with Manchester.

3. Terms of Reference – Equality and Diversity Forum

Discussed: Hamied noted that the President and Vice Chancellor would not be attending the Forum. It was felt that having the Deputy President, Registrar and Secretary, Associate Vice-President and Director of HR on the Forum that any issues of concern raised would be well supported to PRC through the HR Sub Committee. Aneez, if necessary, will raise issues directly with the President.

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4. Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Duties)

Received: A verbal update from the Head of Equality and Diversity

The new Public Sector Duties come into effect on April 6th with the aim of embedding equality considerations into the day to day work of public authorities.

The general duty states that public authorities need to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups; and foster good relations between people from different groups.

Discussions are still taking place regarding exactly what public authorities need to do to comply with the Duties. Once this is clear a briefing paper will be prepared.

Action: A briefing paper on the new Public Duties will be sent to Forum members

5. Single Equality Scheme annual review

Received: Report on University's progress from the Head of Equality and Diversity

We have a legal obligation to publish an annual review of our equality schemes. With the changes in the Public Duties we will no longer be required to produce an equality scheme only equality objectives. We will review this in December 2012 when the current equality scheme comes to an end.

Highlighted progress made against last year's actions:

- Launch of Dignity at work and study policy
- Development of our Diversity Calendar which promotes and celebrates diversity at the University. There is a theme each month with debates, presentations and events taking place.
- New training – online course for staff and students; cultural awareness training; managing disabled staff training; and diversity related training as part of our leadership courses.
- Manchester Museum have organised a number of Positive Action placements for disabled people
- Well established disabled staff service with over 300 members of staff being supported.

Equality Data

- A year of stability with no real changes in the staff profile.

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6. Feedback on disabled staff and student surveys

Received: Feedback from online surveys from Elaine Shillcock, Head of DSO

Noted: Mental Health was an issue that was mentioned several times.

Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) currently undertaking a review of the Disabled Staff Servicem

Action: Following the completion of the review by ECU, Elaine Shillcock to provide a summary report to the Forum in November 2011

7. Dignity at work and study policy review

Received: Verbal report on 12 month review of policy from Cath Prescott, Equality and Diversity Advisor

The review includes:

- **Data Monitoring:** This will include the number, nature and outcome of all formal staff grievances by gender, disability and ethnicity; the number of formal student complaints by gender (including Trans), nationality and ethnicity. The number of inquiries to Harassment Advisors; the number of referrals to mediation; and the Registrar's annual report to Senate on student complaints.
- **Legislation:** How the Equality Act (2010) impacts on the policy and the updates that are required.
- **Involvement and Consultation:** A number of key stakeholders have been consulted including, Human Resources; Staff Unions, Students Union, Heads of Academic Services, the Harassment Advisor Network and the Mediation Network.
- **Equality Impact Assessment:** An assessment of the actions that were identified as part of the original assessment.

Key Points

- **Data Monitoring:** There were no apparent trends in terms of equality in relation to formal cases. We should consider expanding the data we collect to include all protected characteristics.
- **The staff survey** produced very positive results around Dignity at Work with 73% of respondents believing that staff are treated fairly irrespective of their background, and 70% felt their line managers were supportive.
- **Opening up the Mediation Service:** to all cases, not necessarily labelled as harassment, discrimination or bullying.
- **Promoting the Harassment Advisor and Mediation Service** (no student cases referred to Mediation): paying particular attention to staff who do not have access to a computer and all students including those in residences.
- **How the Policy interacts with other University policies,** the staff grievance policy and the student's complaints policy.
- **Respondents:** How we support respondents of complaints

Action: The full report to be available for comments by 18th February.

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8. Unconscious bias and Degree attainment Projects update

Received: Verbal update on two on-going projects for Head of Equality and Diversity

Unconscious bias

- The Equality and Diversity team started working with Professor Geoff Beattie almost a year ago on a project looking at unconscious bias in recruitment and promotions. First stage of research has been concluded which involved over 100 staff and students at the University undertaking an implicit association test, which measures a person's implicit or unconscious attitudes.
- This was then followed up with eye gaze technology where staff were given two jobs at the University one academic and one administrative identical CVs a part from names and pictures of BME/white candidates. The technology studied where the recruiter looked and could pick up a fixation point every 40ms so 1500 fixations in a minute. Showed that they looked at picture to confirm their thoughts, so good points for white candidates and bad points for non-white candidates.
- Next stage working with the Equality Challenge Unit to produce some guidance for the whole HE sector on unconscious bias and how we can deal with it. Due out in the summer 2011.

Degree attainment

- A significant difference in the attainment of UK students based on their ethnicity. A national issue that is replicated in this University.
- A working group was set up following Aneez's presentation to Senate and T&L group, chaired by T&L, with reps from across the University. This group developed a proposal that went to T&L group and Aneez and Patrick are now following this up. Patrick has met with Tim Westlake and shortly with Clive Agnew to get their support with this.
- The proposal to trial some of these activities to see if they make a difference. This is a long term project because of the multi-faceted nature of problem.
- May look to work with just one Faculty.

Noted: Professor Rod Coombs said it was important to look at assessment and anonymous marking as part of follow-up work.

9. Any other Business

Creation of a Multi-Faith Space

Terry Biddington asked the Forum to consider his proposal to create a pilot Multi-faith space in the Precinct Centre (proposal attached).

Action: This was supported by the Forum.

Date of next meeting will be November 2011. Venue and exact date to be confirmed.