Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee

Minutes of EDSC meeting held on 5 June 2015
Melville Room, Level 4, Gilbert Scott Building

Present: Principal Anton Muscatelli (Convener), Prof Anne Anderson, Prof John Briggs, Prof Frank Coton, Mr Liam King, Mrs Margaret-Ann McParland, Mr David Newall, Miss Rachel Sandison, Miss Breffni O’Connor, Ms Mhairi Taylor

Apologies: Mrs Christine Barr, Prof James Conroy, Prof Neal Juster, Mrs Christine Lowther, Dr Helen Stoddart

Attending: Dr Katie Farrell, Ms Lesley Sutherland, Mrs Janell Kelly (clerk)

1 Welcome and Apologies
The Convener welcomed members and noted the apologies received. The Convener also welcomed both Ms Lesley Sutherland, General Council Member on Court, and Dr Farrell, Gender Equality Officer.

The Convener noted the agenda would be reordered to allow those members who needed to leave for other business meetings to do so.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – EDSC/20150226/Minutes1.1
The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

3 Matters arising from meeting held on 26 February 2015 – Paper 1
Action Point 4 – University Nursery
M Taylor and D Newall advised members the current Nursery provision was not suitable and despite a number of possible options across the main campus and residential sites, none of them fully address the requirements. D Newall asked members if a new nursery provision should be considered as part of the campus redevelopment plans.

A Anderson advised the lack of local nursery provision is discussed as one of main issues for female academic returners at the Gender Equality Steering Group on a regular basis, and as such she supported embedding extra provision within the redevelopment plans.

The Convener confirmed numerous representations had been made about this in the past and agreed the University community would be in support. He stated space should be found within the plans. D Newall agreed to take this forward with Ann Allen, Director of Estates and Buildings.

ACTION: D Newall

Action Point 11 – Court and Senate Committees – gender representation
D Newall advised following the recent commitment by the Committee of Scottish (University) Chairs to having a minimum of 40 per cent men and 40 per cent women on their boards, with the remaining 20 per cent of places open to both genders, he would be proposing Court adopt this 40:40:20 approach for the lay membership of Court and, where appropriate, its sub-committees.

Action: D Newall
He noted however a number of Senate and Court sub-committees have membership which is ex officio or where specific skills are required. L Sutherland acknowledged this but stressed appropriate searches for such skilled appointments should be carried out to ensure as wide a field of candidates, of both sexes, as possible.

**Action Point 12 – Prevent Strategy and Equality and Diversity Policy**

D Newall confirmed the Statutory Guidance published in relation to Prevent will not become effective until July 2015 and following discussions with M Taylor and Gordon Mackenzie, Head of Security, it has been decided the University’s Equality and Diversity Policy should not specifically mention the Government’s Prevent Strategy at this time.

The Convener noted the remaining action points from the previous meeting were still ongoing, had been completed or were on the agenda for discussion.

**4 Disabled Staff Focus Groups Feedback – Paper 7**

F Coton presented Paper 7 which detailed the background to, format of and responses from the three focus groups held with disabled staff.

He drew members’ attention to Section 3 which summarised the main topics which arose from the discussions. He highlighted the perceived lack of commitment from the Senior Management Group on disability issues; lack of ownership of ‘cases’ which results in staff having to pursue the implementation of their own reasonable adjustments; and a lack of line manager competency in being able to deal with disability related issues.

F Coton accepted the University’s Equality and Diversity online training did not equip line managers to deal with the range of issues and conditions which they may face but suggested no training course could do this fully. He accepted however it was right that disabled staff should expect their line managers to have a basic understanding of the issues and their responsibilities.

M Taylor noted a number of attendees had expressed concern that gender issues, such as the Athena SWAN related initiatives, were being prioritised by the University over disability issues.

F Coton asked members to review the Section 4 and asked for comments on the proposed next steps.

M-A McParland suggested a need to re-evaluate what the University considered as ‘reasonable adjustments’ as the range of conditions and the means of coping with these can be very wide and very individual.

A Anderson expressed the view that whilst training of line managers is important and will be required at some point, the needs of disabled staff must be met as a priority.

In response to members’ questions, F Coton confirmed the most common disabilities in the staff population take the form of ‘unseen’ disabilities but acknowledged there can be real challenges with the working environment for those with physical impairments.

The Convener endorsed with view, stating Ann Allen is fully aware of the need to try to address existing campus accessibility issues but acknowledged this would not be an easy task given the current estate.
In response to the Convener’s question regarding timescales for completion of the work detailed in Section 4, M Taylor confirmed the work will be completed before she leaves for her maternity leave on 14\textsuperscript{th} August. She noted follow up discussions will then then be needed with the various University Services involved. The Convener asked F Coton to report back at the next meeting on progress.

**ACTION:** EDU/F Coton

5 **Equality and Diversity Champions – Current Developments**

As previously, indicated the Convener advised members F Coton and D Newall required to leave the meeting early and requested updates on their respective areas at this point in the meeting.

5.1 **Disability Equality Group (DEG)**

F Coton confirmed no other issues discussed by DEG required discussion at EDSC.

5.2 **Sexual Orientation Equality Group (SOEG)**

D Newall advised he had met with members of the LGBT Staff Network to discuss the responses from the Staff Survey; LGB staff had negative responses to some of the selected ‘benchmarking questions’ and those relating to discrimination based on sexual orientation.

D Newall and M Taylor clarified those attending had a relatively positive view of working for the University however a few of their anecdotal experiences showed some were having to tolerate homophobic ‘casual banter’ in their work environment and there appeared to be pockets of this unacceptable behaviour within the University.

M Taylor advised the proposed Dignity at Work and Study campaign which will be discussed later in the meeting, hopes to highlight and address these ‘casual banter’ situations. D Newall stated he hoped the campaign would give staff the self-confidence to challenge this behaviour.

Members suggested the need to highlight the full definition of harassment within the campaign.

D Newall advised members the University would be hosting its first same sex marriage ceremony on 18 July. Members welcomed this.

6 **Dignity at Work and Study**

6.1 **Harassment Volunteer Network (HVN) – Annual Report – Paper 2**

M Taylor presented the 4\textsuperscript{th} annual report on the work of the Volunteer Advisers. She advised the number of advisers has increased following a recruitment drive and the inclusion of the SRC’s Advice Centre staff.

She drew members’ attention to the conclusions from the 4 years of monitoring shown in Section 4.3. She noted that whilst the number of student cases was low these were often of a serious nature.

M Taylor states, as the Staff Survey results had shown 4\% of staff stated they were currently being bullied or harassed, the low numbers of cases being seen by the Network show it is being underutilised. The Staff Survey had also shown 70\% of staff are unaware of the Dignity at Work and Study Policy. To address both these issues the EDU is developing, in collaboration with Communications Office a campaign to raise awareness of both the network and policy.

In response to M A McParland comment relating to the relatively small amount of time spent on cases by the Advisers compared to the time Trades Union representatives spend on harassment
and bullying cases, M Taylor acknowledged this but reminded members the HVN only deal with cases at the informal stage. At this stage cases will normally be resolved quickly or are referred onwards to the formal stages, at which point the adviser is no longer involved.

6.2 Dignity at Work and Study Campaign – Paper 3
M Taylor introduced Paper 3 and highlighted how the campaign was initially developed with input from the SRC, HVN, HR Officers and Communications Office. She noted the design of the campaign had moved on from examples or ‘micro-fictions’ shown at the end Paper 3; these having been provided to show the types of scenarios being addressed by the campaign.

M Taylor confirmed the campaign will be aimed at both staff and students and the intention is to launch the campaign in October. Prior to launch Trades Unions, SMG and HR colleagues will be briefed on the campaign. The poster campaign and social media hashtag will link to an online resource page. She invited members to comment on the current ideas for the campaign.

Members welcomed the ideas shown in the campaign and supported the use of naming the unacceptable behaviours to increase the impact.

J Briggs requested the Equality Groups also be briefed on the use of ‘micro fiction’ approach and be able to provide input. B O’Connor suggested Student Advisers should also be briefed about the campaign.

**ACTION: EDU**

Members requested reference to Dignity at Work and Study is made within the design. Members also suggested including ‘micro-fictions’ to address so called ‘casual banter’, academic snobbery, abuse of power, victimisation and sectarianism issues.

The Convener and D Newall stated the need for University leadership to take the lead on endorsing the campaign and suggested a short video interview with University leadership would underline commitment and highlight it as a university-wide issue.

M Taylor confirmed she would take all the suggestions forward to the designer and core team.

**ACTION: EDU**

B O’Connor drew attention to the intended use of social media and the possibility of individuals being named in connection with the different behaviours. R Sandison concurred, noting the possible negative use of the hashtag.

M Taylor agreed to look at this within the online resource part of the campaign to remind staff and students that online harassment is still harassment and would discuss the social media issues with Emma Gilmartin, Social and Digital Media Manager Communications Office.

**ACTION: EDU**

The Convener emphasised the need to ensure support services across the University are prepared for a possible increase in reporting of harassment and bullying as a result of the campaign.

**ACTION: EDU**

The Convener and members fully endorsed the campaign approach and looked forward to seeing the final results.
7 Athena SWAN: Overview of New Charter - Paper 4

K Farrell reminded members at the last meeting EDSC recommended the University go forward with the Athena SWAN Bronze renewal in April 2016 under the revised Charter. After reviewing the changes, release in April 2015, the Gender Equality Steering Group has now confirmed this approach.

K Farrell referred members to Paper 4 which details the changes, where the University can show work is already underway on these and areas where work will be required.

A Anderson welcomed the expansion of the Athena SWAN Charter to include professional and support staff.

K Farrell highlighted the need for the University to commit to the newly expanded Charter principles. She advised a letter of commitment from the University, a draft version was shown in Appendix B, must be sent before the University or its ‘departments’ can apply for the new award.

The Convener noted A Anderson had led discussions on this at a recent Senior Management Group (SMG) meeting and confirmed SMG is fully committed to the cultural changes and actions required by the expanded principles of the Charter.

He asked members if they wished to comment on the draft letter as shown, they contact K Farrell immediately. The Convener confirmed he would sign the letter of commitment on behalf of the University.

ACTION: All/EDU/Convener

8 Staff Equality Monitoring Report – Ethnicity Recruitment Data – Paper 5

M Taylor presented Paper 5 and reminded members EDSC had previously reviewed the 2014 Staff Equality Monitoring Report. EDSC had requested investigations take place into the data on ethnicity and recruitment statistics which appeared to show BME applicants were less likely to be successful within the Research and Teaching (R&T) job family.

M Taylor advised when HR Recruitment carried out a review of applications for R&T posts this showed 82% of BME applicants are not progressed to shortlisting stage, compared to 66.5% of White applicants and 70% of those within the Not Know/Info Refused/Blank category. Further investigations took place to review the reasons behind the rejections at this stage.

Due to the number of posts the review was carried out by randomly sampling a selection of R&T posts at Grades 8, 9 and 10, looking at the BME applications and identifying the reason behind any of these applications not proceeding to interview. Within this sample group of BME applications, 11% of applicants were taken forward to interview. All the remaining 89% were rejected at the initial application stage because they had not met the essential criteria for the post, with more than half not having the qualifications or experience required as set out in the job advert.

Members noted only 4% of BME applicants were hired compared to over 10% of White applicants. They suggested BME applicants may be more likely to be Non EU applicants and current employment laws requires EU applicants be given priority for positions over those from outside the EU.

Members discussed the statistics shown in Paper 5 and requested HR Recruitment carries out further investigations, looking at both EU and International applicants, into the following:
• After ‘speculative’ applications are accounted for, are BME applicants less likely to be taken forward to interview.
• Comparison between BME and White applicants of the reasons for rejection at both the initial application stage and after the 1st Interview stage.

**ACTION: HR Recruitment**

Race Equality Group should review the results in the first instance.

Members endorsed the need for Unconscious Bias training for recruitment panels. M Taylor confirmed Staff Development Service is in the process of arranging a ‘Trainer the Trainer’ programme in order to deliver Unconscious Bias training in house.

9 **Equality and Diversity Training – Paper 6**

M Taylor referred to Paper 6 which detailed the completion statistics across the University for the Equality and Diversity Essentials course. Whilst completion statistics had increased since last reviewed by EDSC (46% to 52%) progress was still not as required to meet the +90% target set by SMG as part of the Equality Outcomes.

The Convener expressed his concern on the lack engagement with the training despite previous efforts and actions to increase the completion rates. He suggested SMG members be more visible and active in addressing this. This may also assist with previously discussed perceptions that SMG are not committed to equality.

**ACTION: SMG**

M Taylor noted some areas have been very proactive in monitoring completion rates and following up in these regularly, notably the College of Arts and University Services.

M Taylor confirmed EDU had recently contacted all Heads of School/Directors of Research Institutes detailing the exact numbers of their staff who have completed the training and urging them to directly encourage their staff to complete the training and suggesting they include the training within Performance Development Reviews (PDRs). She noted the response has been very positive so far.

The Convener stated if completion statistics do not improve markedly by the next EDSC meeting he would write directly to the areas concerned to request action is taken to address this. EDU to report back on the completion statistics at the next meeting.

**ACTION: EDU**

10 **Equality and Diversity Champions – Current Developments**

10.1 **Age Equality Update**

M Taylor confirmed she is set to meet with the Equality Champion, J Conroy, to discuss a number of issues for staff and students in relation to age.

10.2 **Gender Equality Steering Group (GESG)**

A Anderson reported all four Colleges had now introduced Academic Returners and Research Support Schemes, confirming a number of applications had already been received and approved.

She referred to the disappointing outcomes following the recent Athena SWAN awards announcement and stated there was a need to review the internal support for this work. She confirmed a meeting was scheduled with the Equality Challenge Unit who administer the Charter.

She highlighted a recent report from HR Performance, Pay & Reward which detailed the length of time spent at each grade before being promoted. It was concerning that women typically spend
much longer than men at each grade. A number of actions to try to address this have already been put in place, such as specific promotions discussions are now part of the PDR process.

10.3 Race Equality Update
J Briggs confirmed the reconvened the Race Equality Group met in May. The group discussed the staff recruitment data discussed earlier in this meeting. They had also reviewed the initial student degree attainment report. Work continues on both these matters.

Group members had also been requested to comment on changes to the University’s Equality and Diversity poster.

10.4 Refugee Equality Update
J Briggs advised CARA was holding an evening event on 15 June and Development and Alumni Office was working to fundraise for a new CARA Scholarship.

He reported Libyan students were facing real hardship issues at the moment as payments of their stipends from the Libyan government had been very irregular. He advised some students have been assisted by family members. The University has also been assisting via the Hardship Fund.

R Sandison advised Recruitment and International Office had also been in dialogue with prospective Libyan students to warn of possibility they may face similar issues.

10.5 Religion and Belief Equality Update
M Taylor reported, on behalf of N Juster, EDU are working with Communications Office and Chaplaincy to produce a University Diversity Calendar. She advised the calendar will include the major faith and secular dates and festivals as well as incorporating a wide spectrum of diversity related dates, such as International Women’s Day and LGBT History Month.

11 Any Other Business
11.1 Gender and Pensions
M A McParland suggested women who took two full periods of maternity leave were at a disadvantage in relation to their pensions as they could lose a year of pension contributions.

M Taylor confirmed she would clarify if this was the case with Jim Ross, Head of Pay and Pensions.

ACTION: EDU

11.2 Student Carers
B O’Connor noted awareness needed to be raised about the Student Carers’ Policy as very few students with caring responsibilities know about it. These students can be very isolated as a consequence of their individual situations. To begin to address this, the SRC recently ran a Carers Social Morning. Many students with caring responsibilities are PhD students and they can have very varied and complex situations.

12 Date of Next Meetings
EDU to confirm these prior to the start of the new academic year.