Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee

Minutes of EDSC meeting held on 25 May 2016
Principal’s Meeting Room, Level 4, Gilbert Scott Building

Present: Prof Neal Juster (Convener, vice Principal Anton Muscatelli), Ms Kirstine Adams, Prof Anne Anderson, Mrs Christine Barr, Prof John Briggs, Prof James Conroy, Mrs Christine Lowther, Mrs Margaret-Ann McParland, Mr David Newall, Ms Lesley Sutherland

Apologies: Prof Frank Coton, Miss Una Marie Darragh, Principal Anton Muscatelli, Miss Rachel Sandison, Dr Helen Stoddart, Mr Liam King

Attending: Mrs Janell Kelly (clerk)

1 Welcome and Apologies
Professor Juster advised he had been invited to convene this meeting, as the Principal had been called away on other University business. He noted a number of other apologies had been received.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – EDSC/20160304/Minutes1.0
The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

3 Matters arising from meeting held on 4 March 2016 – Paper 1
Action Point 1 – Disabled Staff Support
The Convener advised members the proposed role to centrally support disabled staff had not been approved, due to the current budget constraints.

Action Point 2 – Staff Equality Monitoring
K Adams advised the work to improve the disclosure rates in Grades 1 and 2 staff will be undertaken with K Morton, Head of Residential and Cleaning Services will be undertaken, and accompanied by a general request to all staff to update their records, over the summer.

ACTION: EDU

Action Point 3 – Staff Equality Monitoring
Members commented on the limitations for recruiters of the UK NARIC website regarding equivalency of international qualifications. Members noted Marketing, Recruitment and International Office (MRIO) had access to information which categories institutions within different countries used when considering collaborations and suggested this is the type of information recruiters should have access to.

C Barr agreed to look at this and report back at the next meeting.

ACTION: C Barr

Action Point 4 – Historic maternity leave and pension contributions
K Adams reported she had been in contact with Jim Ross but was yet to receive any statistics for this item. She agreed to revisit this with him.

ACTION: EDU
**Action Points 5 & 6 – Athena SWAN Bronze Application**
K Adams reported the University’s Bronze award application had been submitted. She advised the outcome would not be known until the end of September.

**Action Point 7 – Changes to personal records for transgender students**
K Adams reported work to finalise this new process is still ongoing while EDU awaited legal opinions from the University’s legal advisors. Once the expected confirmation is received, the process will be in place for the start of the next academic year. She confirmed EDU would report back at the next meeting.

**ACTION: EDU**

**Action Point 8 – Gender representation on Senate and Court**
D Newall reported Court will be revising their Standing Orders for Court and Court Committees to address the needs of the Higher Education Governance Bill (Scotland).

J Briggs reported discussions on the structure of the new Council of Senate will also be held, highlighting some roles where difficulties achieving a gender balance may be experienced.

L Sutherland and A Anderson noted both Court and Senate had already previously agreed the need for change and suggested the Bill now required the University to make fundamental changes in order to address and deliver on gender balance on the University’s governing bodies. A Anderson stated EDSC should recommend both Court and Senate move forward with these steps.

J Briggs and D Newall agreed to report further at the next meeting.

**ACTION: J Briggs/D Newall**

4 **PSED and Equality Outcomes 2017-2021 – Paper 2**
K Adams presented Paper 2 noting the current Equality Outcomes are due to be reviewed and/or revised for publication in April 2017. She reminded members these Equality Outcomes are a legislative requirement of the University under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is monitored by the Equality and Human Rights Commission on behalf of the Scottish and UK Governments.

K Adams suggested whilst all of the current PSED Equality Outcomes remain valid, they could be expanded upon, particularly by building in more engagement work, referring members to pages 5 & 6 which noted the proposed draft Equality Outcomes, and invited members to discuss these.

Members discussed the Scottish Funding Council’s interim report, noted in section 13, which suggested HEIs would be required to ensure no subject has an extreme gender imbalance (75:25)¹ and the need to ensure the University also begins work to address these targets.

Members also noted the need ensure any future Equality and Diversity Strategy and Equality Outcomes align both in aims and language with the University’s other overarching strategies.

The Convener thanked K Adams for the paper and reminded members further in depth consultations will take place over the coming months, following the return from maternity leave of Mhairi Taylor.

**ACTION: EDU**

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¹ See Clerk’s Note at the end of these minutes
Equality Challenge Unit – Race Equality Charter (REC) Update - Paper 3
K Adams noted unlike the Athena SWAN charter, which has institutional and departmental award levels, REC applications are only undertaken at institutional level. Despite this restriction, the REC has a much wider focus than Athena SWAN, as shown in Paper 3.

J Briggs noted the Race Equality Group is very small and as such, would need assistance from other stakeholders across the University and proper resourcing for the considerable work involved. Members acknowledged the resourcing implications required for REC.

Members discussed the implications of the apparent increase in ‘charter mark’ related work required of universities since it is anticipated, as seen with the Athena SWAN charter, some Research Councils may look for a REC award as a requirement of funding in future years.
A Anderson highlighted it was incumbent on the University to communicate effectively the real issues and the need to address these through the charter marks.

J Briggs highlighted the expected timescales and whilst there was no intention to submit an application in the near future, the University needed to begin work on race equality as both Scottish and UK Governments are developing race equality goals for higher education, which may feed into the Public Sector Equality Duties.

Members agreed the proposed next steps as noted on page 6.

ACTION: EDU/J Briggs

Equality and Diversity Essentials Training Statistics – Paper 4
Members noted the updated statistics provided by EDU in Paper 4 and welcomed the increase in completion rates across the University.

Members discussed the issues surrounding the completion of the training by Non Contracted Status and Fractional Contract staff.

The Convener asked EDU to provide up to date completion/non-completion statistics and names, to Heads of School/Directors of Institutes/Heads of Service during the summer to allow them to target individuals over the summer.

ACTION: EDU

Members noted the increased numbers of cases of alleged harassment seen by the Network advisors and commented on the level of monitoring detail provided.

MA McParland suggested a report with a similar level of detail should be produced for formal grievance cases. C Barr advised an annual report on grievance cases is already produced for HR Committee.

Members requested this report and future reports, show the cases as ‘alleged’ harassment as the HVN are not in a position to ‘prove’ cases. Members noted the need for advisors to ensure they only provide information and support and not to advise service users on a course of action.

ACTION: EDU

Members voiced their concern over the small numbers of advisors and the lack of academics within the Network. K Adams advised until recently the Network had three academics however two had since left the University and one was on Research Leave. She noted two other advisors had also left the network for personal reason. K Adams confirmed a recruitment campaign, with
resulting training programme for advisors, will be initiated on the return of M Taylor. The Convener suggested recruitment ‘adverts’ could be linked to the FullStop campaign.

ACTION: EDU

The Convener advised members the FullStop campaign had been shortlisted for a Heist Award under the ‘Best Internal Communications Campaign or Initiative’ category.

8 Equality Champions – Current Developments/Updates

8.1 Disability Equality Group – Paper 6

Members noted the report provided by EDU on behalf of Prof Coton.

8.2 Gender Equality

A Anderson reminded members the University’s institutional Athena SWAN Bronze Award was the major piece of gender related work since the last EDSC. She advised 5 ‘departmental’ applications, one of them joint, were also submitted with results expected in September 2016.

She reported the University is looking at ways to address the gender pay gap and noted future nursery provision had been included in the University’s planning application for the redevelopment of the Western Infirmary site.

8.3 Race Equality Group and Refugee Equality

J Briggs noted the work proposed on the Race Equality Charter (REC), as discussed earlier, would help to address issues raised from a recent SRC led BAME student focus group (FG). Although the numbers who attended the FG were small, items raised by attendees were similar to those seen at other universities who took part in the REC pilot.

Issues highlighted included the lack of diversity in the curriculum and reading lists; the lack of inclusion in the Student Unions, GUU in particular; the social drinking culture and the activities/events organised around this; and the impression that University sports clubs are not welcoming to a diverse range of students.

Members noted J Conroy’s previous efforts try to organise a SRC led international students’ symposium to try to look at ways to address some of these issues and welcomed his intention to pursue this again. Members also noted A Anderson’s comments highlighting QMU’s efforts to reach out to Glasgow International College students.

J Briggs advised members a third CARA Fellow had now arrived from Syria and reported the University will also be welcoming six refugee students in July, adding the School of Modern Language and Cultures would be running a 5-week pre-sessional English course for them.

Members acknowledged J Briggs position as the current Chair of the Scottish HEI Refugee Forum and noted the Refugee Festival Scotland would take place 14 – 26 June 2016.

8.4 Sexual Orientation Equality Group

D Newall advised members the recent focus for the group had been on supporting students who transition while at University, as detailed in previous minutes and actions.

He reported other related work by group members includes working with the School of Medicine to incorporate transgender health into the curriculum and work to try to make sport more inclusive for transgender people.
In light of the earlier discussions regarding BAME students’ comments about University sports clubs and the perceived lack of inclusion, members suggested there was a need for an initiative led by University Sport and GUSA to promote inclusion across all protected characteristics. 

J Briggs agreed to take this forward with F Coton.

**ACTION: J Briggs/ F Coton**

### 8.5 Age Equality

J Conroy noted many Mature Students’ Association (MSA) members are unable to attend social events due to caring responsibilities and reported, after meeting with both the MSA and the Student Unions, QMU’s president had been very receptive to holding more events which could be accessible for mature students.

### 8.6 Religion and Belief Equality Group

The Convener advised members discussions between EDU, Registry and the Chaplaincy had started in order to ensure the University had plans in place to address or mitigate any issues relating to when Ramadan falls during the main summer examination period.

Members noted Ramadan would not fall over the examination period in any major way until 2018 and welcomed this early planning which should ensure the University has the correct processes and support mechanisms in place.

The Convener advised more requests for more on-site prayer spaces had been received and advised of anecdotal reports of international students expressing their disappointment with the current level of provision. He noted such requests needed to be balanced with the level of local off-site facilities and the need to continue with the University’s interfaith chaplaincy and facilities approach.

K Adams suggested providing prayer space could be a way for the two Student Unions to promote inclusion and welcome a more diverse range of students.

### 9 Any Other Business

#### 9.1 – Note of thanks

Although the SRC representatives were not in attendance the Convener wished to note his thanks, on behalf of the all EDSC members, to the outgoing SRC President, L King and SRC VP Student Support, U M Darragh for their contribution to this committee and wished them well in their return to their studies.

The Convener also noted his thanks to K Adams as this would be her last EDSC meeting. Her time as Equality and Diversity Manager would be coming to an end soon since Mhairi Taylor would be returning from maternity leave on 25 July.

### 10 Date of Next Meeting

5 December 2016 at 11:00 – 13:00, Principal’s Meeting Room

**Clerk’s Note**

*Paper 2, Minute Item 4, quoted incorrect information in section 13. Both the SFC Gender Action Plan Interim Report and Final Report (launched 12 August 2016) include the following aims:*

- **By 2030, no subject has an extreme gender balance (75:25)**
- **By 2030, the gap between male and female participation in undergraduate study is reduced from 15.4% gap to 5%.**