

Meeting: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Thursday 11 February 2021 at 2.15pm

Venue: Via MS Teams

Present:	Alex Butler	Executive Chair
	Leda Blackwood	Staff representative (Education and Research)
	Richard Brooks	Director of Human Resources
	Meg Crossman	Elected student representative
	Marion Harney	Athena SWAN leader (from minute no. 911)
	Freya Jackson	Community Officer, Students' Union (SU)
	Francesco Masala	President, Students' Union
	Lizzi Milligan	Co-Chair, Equality and Diversity (E&D) Network
	Aurelien Mondon	Co-Chair, E&D Network (EDN)
	Rajani Naidoo	Head of the Race Equality Task Force
	Mike Nicholson	Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach
	Ben Palmer	Member appointed by the Students' Union
	Anuradha Patibandla	Elected student representative
	Rachel Willis	Staff Representative (Management, Specialist & Admin)
	Ania Zalewska	Member appointed by Senate
In attendance:	Georgina Brown	Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)
	Andrew Eagleton	Student Engagement Co-ordinator (for minute no. 910)
	Caroline Harris	Secretary
	Aiste Senulyte	E&D Officer
	Shaun Stephenson-McGall	Student Engagement Manager (for minute no. 910)
Apologies:	Anthony Payne	Director of Student Services
	Cassie Reis	Staff Representative (Technical and Experimental)

ACTION

904. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting; particularly Rajani Naidoo, Head of the Race Equality Task Force, to her first meeting.

905. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair invited any declarations of interest. There were none.

906. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2020, were APPROVED as a correct record and would be signed later by the Chair (Paper EDIC20/21-014).

907. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair explained that this would be a standing item on the agenda to give her the opportunity to mention current issues.

1. IHRA statement

The Chair reported that Senate had voted to recommend to Council that it should adopt 'the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition on anti-Semitism as a reference point in the development of our staff and student processes', with a clarification to protect freedom of speech. She stated that it was a complex area and the Government had asked all universities to consider if they wanted to adopt the definition for work around anti-Semitism.

Concern was expressed that external expertise should have been sought before the decision was made; however, it was noted that internal expert advice had been taken. The Director of Human Resources pointed out that if issues emerged under a Dignity and Respect allegation operational practice was to seek expert advice when necessary; the Dignity and Respect Policy would not be amended; the Policy supporting documentation and training covered the issue.

Senate paper to be circulated.

SEC

2. EDI Resources

The Chair talked of the vast amount of work that was already happening and that was needed. The Director of Human Resources was developing a business case to secure support for an extra member of staff in Human Resources to develop policies and support projects. The Head of the Race Equality Task Force had resources allocated. There remained a lack of administrative support.

908. RACE EQUALITY TASK FORCE AND CHARTER

The Head of the Race Equality Task Force introduced herself to the Committee. Her role started in December 2020, was 0.3FTE and reported to the Vice-Chancellor, with whom she met regularly. She had spoken with many staff members and students to gain insight of experiences, examined structure, strategy and polices and been involved with complaints.

She was now in a strong position to establish the Task Force and a self-assessment team to submit for the AdvanceHE Race Equality Charter bronze award. Members would need a track record of working against racism in any area of the University, covert or overt racism, systemic or individual racism and would need to commit time. A wider advisory group would also be formed to broaden the knowledge base, including engaging with Bath & North East Somerset Council. Analysis would be undertaken of all parts of University life and processes with staff surveys, focus groups and interviews. She acknowledged the breadth of work already being undertaken by staff, the SU and in research.

At the end of the year a comprehensive report and three-year action plan would be delivered, with submission for the Charter award in 2022. More information to be provided for the next meeting.

HoRETF

During discussion the following points were made:

- The Task Force would have members from all parts of the University: academic staff, professional services staff and students; it was noted that it could be hard for Professional Services staff to have their time acknowledged;

- It was emotional labour for black staff and students to be asked many times to be experts;
- It was suggested that the focus should be on those from ethnic minority groups rather than only on black staff and students;
- Both the award and the Task Force would focus on all members of the community, hence a staggered implementation with short, medium and long-term goals.

The Chair thanked the Head of the Race Equality Task Force.

909. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION VISION 2021

The Committee noted Paper EDC20/21-015, on the University of Bath EDI vision. The Head of EDI gave a presentation (attached) on plans for an EDI Strategy Workshop, a half-day session for the EDI community and key stakeholders. She emphasised running the workshop as a team to get everyone involved in drafting the new Strategy. The Committee were very supportive of the proposal. A request for assistance to be circulated with the presentation.

SEC

It was noted that the EDI team was under resourced and time spent by Professional Services staff may not be recognised, and that staff across all areas were very stretched.

The Chair thanked the Head of EDI.

910. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) 2020

The Student Engagement Manager and the Student Engagement Co-ordinator attended for this item to present Paper EDC202/1-016. The Student Engagement Co-ordinator stated that the response rate of 75% and more than 3000 students was good. There were no more statistically significant differences than previous years and no firm trends evident over the years. He explained that sector research indicated that the greatest indicators were the discipline and the department. He pointed out that it was important not to take the NSS results alone but to consider all student data and surveys to understand the issues.

During questions the follow points were made:

- Bespoke reports for departments were offered every year with some departments requesting them; the minimum threshold was 10 students, but data could be aggregated, for example over years, to meet the minimum;
- Concern was raised that there may be some duplication between the NSS and departmental student surveys; the student data wiki was noted as a good resource;
- The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on outcomes, given students different learning styles was queried; a bid had been made for extra resource to study the free text comments in the Online Unit Evaluations (OUE) and all surveys;
- The SU President stated that it would be beneficial to know what was being done to address the lower satisfaction of students with disabilities;
- The intersection between committees and their responsibility was felt to be a concern; one suggestion was for department and service action plans to be required to engage with the data;
- Concern was expressed that OUE were considered to have issues below an 'unofficial' level of 3.5, but this was a low level of satisfaction for these degree building blocks.

The Chair thanked them for the presentation and suggested a further meeting between herself, the Head of EDI, the Vice-President (Student Engagement), the Student Engagement Manager and the Student Engagement Co-ordinator.

CHAIR

The report was NOTED.

911. DEGREE OUTCOMES 2019/20 AND THE DEGREE OUTCOMES GROUP: UPDATE

Unfortunately, no members of the Degree Outcomes Group were available to present Paper EDC20/21-017.

During discussion the following points were made:

- Concern was expressed about the impact of virtual teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic for those with poor internet or financial hardship; most students were doing well but some were not;
- The SU President advised that the SU had asked for an analysis of degree outcomes after semester 1 assessments, as the SU felt that the no-detriment policy was insufficient for a certain demographic of students, who were more impacted by the pandemic;
- The SU President commented that in 2020/21 the attainment gap appeared to have narrowed due to the no-detriment policy, but he remained concerned that analysis was undertaken to ensure fair mitigation in Semester 2 this year;
- It was noted that in paragraph 4(d) of the paper the indication was that the attainment gap had widened, in conflict with what had been said previously.

AGREED that the Chair open conversation with the Degree Outcomes Group about the points raised above including asking to receive the Semester 1 outcomes in writing and inviting a representative to the next meeting.

CHAIR

The paper was NOTED.

912. REF 2021: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Committee received Paper EDC20/21-018, the final REF 2021 Equality Impact Assessment. The Head of EDI stated that two things were difficult to assess (a) how people were disproportionately affected and (b) asking people coping with very difficult situations to put a timeframe on them. These points had been given as feedback to Research England.

The paper was NOTED.

913. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY NETWORK

The Chair commented that attending a meeting of the Network had been a highlight and that understanding the real experiences of staff and students was invaluable. The Network Co-Chair gave a brief resume of the two meetings of the Network held since the previous Committee meeting.

914. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY NETWORK

The Committee NOTED summaries of the meetings of the Equality and Diversity Network held on 17 November 2020 and 21 January 2021 (Papers EDC20/21-019(a) and (b)).

915. HARASSMENT PREVENTION WORKING GROUP

The Committee NOTED minutes of the meetings of the working group held on 27 October, 23 November and 17 December 2020 (Papers EDC20/21-020(a), (b) and (c)).

916. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The SU President raised the issue of toilet provision, which, he stated, the SU and key groups had been struggling with for years. He pointed out that the Government was engaged with a consultation on toilet provision for men and women with a closing date of 26 February. He was concerned that the number of gender-neutral facilities would decrease as many women were less happy to use mixed sex facilities. However, 48% of trans people, and non-binary people were not comfortable using public toilets with a sex-based division.

The SU and the University were working on a Transgender Policy, and he believed that they were aligned on providing gender-neutral facilities. The SU would respond to the consultation but he was very concerned that the consultation would feed into the culture war against transgender people. He commented that if the University were to publicly speak against the consultation it would be a political decision but very positive signalling.

During discussion the following points were made:

- The Co-Chair would advise the Equality and Diversity Network of the issues to ask for its support;
- There was no reason why the Committee could not support a strong statement to the University.

AGREED with the following statement: "The Committee was strongly supportive of the SU position and made a robust commitment to the SU points, which linked with Stonewall aspirations".

917. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS

The remainder of the programme of meetings for 2020/21 was NOTED (both meetings on Thursdays at 2.15pm):

- 22 April 2021
- 10 June 2021

The meeting concluded at 4.15pm

Chair: