



### **Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee**

Minutes of Meeting held on 20 December 2021 at 10:00

Zoom Meeting

- Present:** Prof Sir Anton Muscatelli (Convener), Ms Bonnie Dean, Dr David Duncan, Prof Iain McInnes, Prof Jill Morrison, Dr Robert Partridge, Ms Eva Simmons, Ms Lesley Sutherland, Ms Mhairi Taylor, Dr Dania Thomas
- Apologies:** Mrs Christine Barr, Prof Muffy Calder, Prof Moira Fischbacher-Smith, Mrs Emma Gilmartin, Miss Ella McCabe, Dr June Milligan, Prof Roibeard O Maolalagh, Miss Rachel Sandison
- Attending:** Dr Nighet Riaz, Dr Miro Spiro, Mrs Janell Kelly (clerk)

#### **Welcome and apologies**

The Convener reminded members this additional EDSC meeting had been called as extensive discussions at the last meeting meant there were outstanding agenda items to be discussed. He thanked those attending and noted the apologies received. The Convener noted Dr Mia Spiro would join the meeting later to assist discussions in relation to agenda item 7 and Dr N Riaz, from the EDU, was observing the meeting.

#### **1. Minutes of the previous meeting – EDSC/2021115/Minutes1.0**

The minutes were approved.

#### **2. Matters arising – Paper 1**

Members acknowledged most actions had not yet progressed since the November meeting due to the short timeframe. The following update was provided.

##### Action 5 – Religion and Belief Equality Champion

M Taylor advised Prof Iain McInnes had agreed to become the new Champion and had already met with the University Chaplain. M Taylor confirmed a University-wide communication will be issued in the new year. Members welcomed Prof McInnes to his first EDSC.

**ACTION: EDU**

#### **3. Gender Based Violence Update**

##### 3.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy – Appendix I – Paper 2

M Taylor stated the current Equality and Diversity Policy is being reviewed and all Equality Groups have already been consulted on any proposed changes. The full redrafted policy will come back to EDSC, once feedback from those sessions, and other stakeholders, have been incorporated.

M Taylor referred members to Paper 2, which detailed the revised Appendix I which now includes extensive legal definitions of the different forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV) to allow cross-referencing from other University policies. She confirmed Appendix I had been reviewed by both the GBV Working Group and the Gender Equality Steering Group (GESG). M Taylor highlighted the Content Warning had been added following the recent review by the Policy Review Group. She advised, if approved by EDSC, this Appendix would be updated on the Equality and Diversity Unit webpages immediately.

The Convener and members welcomed the changes and approved Appendix I for online publication.

**ACTION: EDU**

### 3.2 QC Led Investigation - Update

The Convener reminded members the University appointed Morag Ross QC to lead an investigation into the handling of GBV related cases at the University. He referred to the recent [message sent by Morag Ross QC to all staff and students](#) setting out her approach to the investigation.

The Convener emphasised he welcomed all potential process and policy improvements which may result from the investigation/review process and also hoped further outcomes would positively impact the cultural across the University.

D Duncan advised M Ross QC has already held met with University staff involved in the staff and student processes, as well as Trades Union and Students' Representative Council representatives. More in-depth meetings will take place as part of the next stage of the investigation.

The Convener clarified anyone involved in a complaint case, even if no longer at the University, whether that case was pursued or not, can contact M Ross QC. Members noted the main part of the review will begin in January 2022. EDSC will be kept informed.

**ACTION: D Duncan/Convener**

## 4. College Engagement Survey – Diversity Results

M Taylor presented on the University's Colleague Engagement Survey, focussing on the Dignity and Diversity related results. Members noted the following:

- The overall response rate was 46%. Within that population, participant levels for colleagues who identified as Disabled (6.3%) and Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (6.7%) were higher than the equivalent University population. 7.9% of participants identified as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) compared to the University population of 9.6%.
- The 'Dignity and Diversity' themed statements received the most positive responses at 77%, while Culture & Values (38%) and Wellbeing & Balance (51%) receiving the lowest positive responses.
- Within the 'Dignity and Diversity' theme, five of the six statements received positive response rates over 70%, with the highest being 'I feel trusted to do my job' at 88%. Only 61% of staff responded positively to the statement relating to feeling able to report bullying/harassment without worrying it would negatively impact them. 12% felt bullied/harassed in the last 12 months.
- In general, BAME staff were more positive in their responses across all of the themes and to the 'Dignity and Diversity' statements. This is consistent with all previous staff survey outcomes but appears more pronounced in these recent results.
- In general, Disabled staff were less positive in their responses across all of the themes and to the 'Dignity and Diversity' statements. This too is consistent with all previous staff survey outcomes. 20% had felt bullied/harassed in the last 12 months.
- Responses from LGB staff showed a mixed picture across the themes. Within 'Dignity and Diversity' questions only 55% of staff would report bullying and harassment and 15% had felt bullied/harassed in the last 12 months.
- Results by College/University Services showed BAME staff in the College of Science and Engineering (CoS&E) were mostly positive, however their Disabled staff were the least positive. This picture is reversed for University Services staff.
- A total of 51 comments mentioned bullying or harassment.

M Taylor noted the CoS&E had the highest percentage of BAME colleagues and lowest proportion of Disabled colleagues and the reverse in University Services. She suggested this may influence the experiences of these cohorts.

Members expressed concern over the low response rate and the relatively high rates of colleagues choosing 'Prefer Not to Say'. M Taylor stated the timing of this survey could have affected the response rate, and noted the next survey, scheduled for during the next semester, should hopefully see a higher response rate. She confirmed work is ongoing to try to build staffs' confidence in declaring their protected characteristics.

M Taylor agreed to further analyse the results by Grade and Job Function to look at those bullying and harassment related responses.

**ACTION: EDU**

M Taylor stated priority work areas from these responses were:

- Development opportunities for Disabled colleagues
- Experiences of bullying and harassment
- Addressing poor behaviours
- Workloads across the organisation

The Convener emphasised the need to give potential 'reporting parties' the confidence to report instances of bullying or harassment. Members also noted it was hoped the QC led investigation would offer solutions for providing feedback to 'reporting parties' to reassure them action is taken.

The Convener thanked M Taylor and asked her to take this work forward with colleagues.

**ACTION: EDU**

## **5. Student Related Items**

### **5.1 Implementation of the Wellbeing Framework for students – Paper 3**

R Partridge presented Paper 3, which had previously been presented at October's Education Policy and Strategy Committee. Members acknowledged the progress reported since the related action plan was agreed, given the significant challenges experienced due to the ongoing pandemic.

R Partridge stated the main outstanding item was the refurbishment of the Fraser Building to create a student wellbeing centre and highlighted the report shows the opportunities to continue to build on the progress.

E Simmons stated the SRC welcomed the progress shown but cautioned much work was still required to realise the full benefits for students. She highlighted the need to ensure advising, teaching and support staff have a good understanding of how to assist their students, particularly in crisis situations. J Morrison agreed better visibility of, and signposting to, the various support services and processes is required.

R Partridge noted the newly introduced Student Support Officer roles will aid communications and signposting for students to relevant sources of support and will be able to assist students navigate University processes but also agreed there remained much to do.

D Duncan paid tribute to the significant work done in Student and Academic Services and those involved

with the Crisis Team during very challenging circumstances.

The Convener thanked R Partridge and asked that EDSC receive a further progress report update at the June 2022 meeting.

**ACTION: R Partridge**

## 6. Staff Related Items

No items were raised.

## 7. IHRA Definition/Jerusalem Declaration Discussion

The Convener welcomed Dr Mia Spiro, Senior Lecturer in Modern Jewish Culture and Holocaust Studies. He reminded members today's discussions are to aid further understanding of the issues and the relationship between the [IHRA definition](#) and the 2020 [Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism](#).

M Spiro took members through the background of the IHRA definition and highlighted the tensions between anti-Semitism, criticism of Israel and how this affects freedom of speech on university campuses. She expressed the view that the IHRA Definition, and the more recent Jerusalem Declaration (JD), are goodwill attempts to draw attention to these issues.

M Spiro highlighted the Equality Act and the University's own Equality and Diversity Policies already incorporate wider definitions of bullying and harassment however both IHRA and JD have attempted to provide and interpret examples of anti-Semitism. Both also help universities understand the lived experience of Jewish staff and students. Members noted the IHRA is more controversial as its examples relate to referencing to and criticism of Israel. These are given because such criticism can camouflage anti-Semitic sentiments.

M Spiro suggested the JD guidelines, which were created by academics, try to make it clearer when references are made to Israel about what is and isn't anti-Semitism. She stressed the JD should be considered in addition to the IHRA, due to the importance of the IHRA to the Jewish community, and is a useful tool when looking at cases in a university context.

Members welcomed M Spiro's guidance and agreed the JD will be extremely helpful, practical tool for the University when considering the complex nature of potential cases of anti-Semitism, while continuing to use our existing Equality legislation and framework, policies and procedures.

The Convener asked D Duncan to continue his dialogue with the student societies and other interested parties in light of today's discussions.

**ACTION: D Duncan**

## 8. Equality Champions Updates

The Convener noted the meeting was nearing its allotted time and asked those Equality Champions in attendance to provide brief updates.

### 8.1 Gender (Sex) Equality Champion

J Morrison provided details on the work of the GBV Working Group.

- First Responders have received further training, will now meet for quarterly and will receive ongoing training.

- A 2hr staff training session provided by Women’s Aid has been piloted. This is still to be fully evaluated prior to any future role out.
- An MS Teams site has been created, with relevant resources added, for the 160 staff who received Rape Crisis led Sexual Harassment Case Investigation training in 2020/21.
- A GBV counsellor has been appointed to work in the SRC Advice Centre.
- Guidance has been created for staff on how to deal with any student related bullying, harassment, GBV or similar traumatic cases reported to them. An amended version has also been shared with the SRC & student unions/bodies on how to deal with such cases reported to them.

J Morrison emphasised the work of the GBV Working Group pre-dates, by a number of years, the current QC Led Investigation. She reported, to indicate the priority of this work, the GBV Working Group will integrate with the main Gender Equality Steering Group. Further consultation work is required to ensure the new group’s focus, membership and communication with the University community are effective.

### 8.2 Mental Health Champion

D Duncan confirmed again the University is continuing to progress both student and staff wellbeing frameworks which will give a firm basis for future work in this area. He advised the University will also be re-tendering for the Employee Assistance Provider which will be an opportunity to evaluate if the current provision continues to be fit for purpose.

### 8.3 Race Equality Champion & PwC Audit - Final Report – Paper 4

M Taylor reminded members the PwC audit had been commissioned only 3 months after the Understanding Racism, Transforming University Cultures (URTUC) Report was published. As such, the University had not had time to implement most for those actions prior to the PwC audit. B Dean noted the final audit recommendations have been built into the URTUC Report and Action Plan, with progress on that reviewed quarterly.

The Convener requested M Taylor circulate a written update for those areas where the Champion was not in attendance.

**ACTION: EDU**

## 9. **Any Other Business**

No further items for discussion were raised.

**Date of Scheduled Next Meeting:** 21 March 2022 at 14:00 – 16:00