

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

Trinity College

EQUALITY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 6 December 2006 at 2.00pm in the Board Room

Present: Vice-Provost, Mr D Treanor, Ms C Hannon*, Ms L Power, Professor E Drew, Ms I Gannon, Professor M O'Moore**, Mr D Quinn, Professor G Whyte, Ms A FitzGerald (secretary)

Apologies: Mr M Gleeson, Ms R Torode, SU Welfare Officer, GSU representative

In attendance: Dr M O'Regan, Ms C Byrne, Ms K Campos McCormack

Present for: * Eql/06-07/05-12
** Eql/06-07/01-07 (pt.)

The Vice-Provost welcomed the recently-appointed Equality Officer, Ms Karen Campos McCormack, to her first meeting of the Committee, and Ms Clodagh Byrne, the Mature Students Officer, who, subject to Board approval, will replace the Assistant Academic Officer/Admissions Officer on the Committee for 2006/2007. The Committee also welcomed Dr Myra O'Regan who was deputising from Ms Torode as a representative of the Contact Persons on Sexual Harassment and Bullying.

Items for Board attention are denoted XXX

Eql/06-07/01 Minutes The minutes of the previous meeting, 26 April 2006, were approved and signed.

Eql/06-07/02 Matters arising A matter arising from the minutes was discussed and has been minuted below.

Eql/06-07/03 Revised policy and procedures for dealing with complaints of bullying or harassment including sexual and racial harassment (see minute Eql/05-06/03 of 26 April 2006) Ms Power advised the meeting that a meeting would be arranged for the Contact Persons to meet with the LRC mediation service.

Eql/06-07/04 Disability Act 2005 Mr Treanor invited the Committee's attention to the progress which the College had made in implementing the following provisions of Disability Act 2005:
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- Access to public buildings (Section 25)
- Appointment of Access Officer (Section 26)
- Access to services (Section 27)

- Access to information (Section 28)
- Appointment of Inquiry Officer (Section 39)
- Public Service Employment (Section 47)

The Committee noted that the Board had approved the appointment of the Disability Services Coordinator as the College Access Officer and that following the review of the Service last year, consideration was now being given to extending the remit of the Student Disability Service to incorporate services and support to staff.

The Board has appointed two Inquiry Officers, Ms G Conroy from the Senior Tutor's Office to handle complaints from students and Ms M Alcock from the Secretary's Office to handle complaints from staff and the general public. Procedures for processing complaints are being developed in conjunction with the Assistant Secretary, with the assistance of the College's Information Compliance Officer. The procedure will be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

A web page will be placed on the Disability Service's website providing information on the Access Officer and the Inquiry Officers and procedures for contacting them.

Mr Treanor advised that the Secretary to the College had written to Heads of administrative and service areas requesting that they review the physical accessibility of their buildings and the accessibility to services which they provide. On receipt of these reviews, building issues will be referred to the Site and Facilities Committee and service issues will be addressed in the relevant fora. The Committee noted Mr Treanor's concerns that the accessibility of curricula and courses to students with disabilities needs to be addressed with Heads of School so that best practice in this regard would be embedded into curriculum design and delivery. It was agreed that the Committee would request a copy of the report arising from the Secretary to the College's review for discussion in due course.

The Committee noted that there is currently a target of employing staff of whom 3% will have disabilities. Ms Power invited the Committee's attention to the difficulties of monitoring the number of people with disabilities who are employed by the College due to the sensitive, personal nature of the required data. She advised that the College is consulting within the sector and with the Equality Authority as to how best to proceed in this regard.

In response to a query, the Committee noted that the College's Web Office has been very pro-active in ensuring that information is presented on the web in an accessible form and that communications strategies would be discussed with the Communications Office in due course.

Actions:

1. Procedures for formally contacting Inquiry Officers to be presented to the next meeting
2. The secretary to request a copy of the report arising from the Secretary to the College's review of accessibility to buildings and services for consideration by the Committee in due course.

XXX the proposed Equality Plan 2007-2009 which had been circulated. She invited Committee members to identify those areas of the work plan to which priority might be given over the next year, noting that setting priorities was particularly important in the context of the half-time nature of the Equality Officer's position.

The Equality Officer invited the Committee's attention to proposals under the following headings:

- 1. Policy development and legal compliance**
 - Equality monitoring data
 - Compilation of base-line statistics
 - Investigation
 - Consultation
- 2. Equality Programmes**
 - Mainstreaming equality training into College's training programmes
 - Equality training for interview committees
 - Training of trainers
 - Specific equality training workshops
 - Development of positive measures
- 3. Dissemination and communication**
 - Awareness campaigns
 - Equality Office website
- 4. Liaison and coordination with the following groups**
 - Student Disability Service
 - Access Programmes
 - Bullying and Harassment Contact Persons
 - Groups promoting work life balance in College
 - Students

The Equality Officer also advised the Committee that an IUA Equality and Diversity Group has been established comprising Equality Officers in other universities, and that this group was having its first meeting in Trinity on Friday 8 December 2006. She noted that the provision of equality training courses would be dependent largely on the availability of resources in the Staff Office.

In the course of a long discussion on the proposals, the difficulties of collecting equality-related data were highlighted. The Committee noted that certain baseline data can be derived from the Personnel database in the Staff Office but that separate data collection mechanisms will have to be put in place to capture data on most of the discrimination grounds defined in the Equal Status Act. The Committee also noted that there are no systems in place to monitor staff progression. Dr Drew invited the Committee's attention to the work which the WISER programme is undertaking in relation to data capture and the Committee recommended that the Equality Officer liaise with WISER in this regard. The Equality Officer advised that she is now a member of the WISER Steering Group.

In response to a query, Mr Treanor advised the Committee that examination performance and progression of non-traditional students is collated as a separate exercise by the relevant offices, noting that there were many advantages to incorporating such data capture into the central College systems.

The Committee noted Ms Gannon's comment that, while gender monitoring *per se* is an important issue, the Committee should not lose sight of the fact that women also comprise 50% of all other groups whose participation in College will be measured.

In discussing a possible programme for collecting equality-related data, Committee members noted that the purpose for collecting the data has to be clear and those collecting the information must have to have the right to do so. It was stated that equality issues can be promoted at the same time as collecting the data and that collecting and analysing data in an appropriate way will require resources. The possibilities offered by a rolling agenda for collecting data were identified, noting that the existing data sources could be mined before new systems were put in place.

The importance of having guidelines for the use of equality-related data was highlighted. It was suggested that practices in the UK and Northern Ireland could be examined to assist the College in developing a data collection programme.

Actions

1. The Equality Officer will present a paper with the profile of student and staff population from available information to the next meeting.
2. A paper outlining the feasibility, purpose and costs of developing a data collection mechanism with a specific focus on gender and race, ethnicity and disability in both the staff and student populations would be presented for discussion at the next meeting. This paper would also include reference to experiences in other universities in Northern Ireland the UK.

Eqal/06-07/06 Reports of sub-groups Ms Power invited the Committee's attention to reports from three Committee sub-groups.

Code of Practice for the employment of people with disabilities (jointly with the Partnership Committee) This sub-group has met and in the course of its work has discussed the development of a staff policy modelled on that currently in place for students. Ms Power advised the Committee that a report would be available for the next meeting.

Career progression of women: Ms Power advised the Committee that the group had been established to progress recommendations from reports prepared by Professor Wright and Professor Drew in relation to the career progression of women academics and that it was envisaged that many of the group's recommendations would link-in with the Equality Officer's work programme and that of the WISER programme. The Committee noted that recommendations in relation to exit interviews for women, administration workloads, monitoring promotions, courses tailored to the needs of women, staff welfare, mentoring and role models were being developed and would be included in the final report to the Committee. Following a brief discussion of the issues raised it was agreed that there would be a full discussion on receipt of the final report.

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Working Party on Work Life Balance (jointly with the Partnership Committee): Ms Power invited the Committee's attention to the Working Party's report which had been circulated. Introducing the topic, Ms Power advised the Committee that the recommendations from the previous Working Group on Work Life Balance had been implemented and it was recognised that there is a relatively broad range of initiatives now available in College. She noted the main conclusions reached by the Working Group, drawing particular attention to:

- (i) The negative associations with staff making flexible working arrangements, particular in academic areas
- (ii) The inconsistent application of schemes from area to area, noting that how leave arrangements are funded and posts replaced impacts on the up-take of schemes in individual areas
- (iii) The fact that not all staff are aware of the schemes available to them indicating a need to improve communications, particularly to staff who do not have direct access to the web or email.

Ms Power invited the Committee's attention to detailed recommendations under the following headings, noting in each case the person or group who would be responsible for their implementation:

- Schemes and policies
- Communications
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Training

In discussing the proposals in detail, the following points were raised by Committee members:

- Many academic staff operate informal teleworking arrangements and are unaware of the requirements of the formal arrangements
- There could be benefit in using the student Mental Health Policy currently being considered by the Student Services Committee as the basis for an equivalent policy for staff
- The new Employment Assistance Programme was a very positive development and thanks were extended to Ms Power for her significant contribution to the operation of the programme and, in particular, its roll-out to all staff. In response to a query, Ms Power outlined the feedback and monitoring mechanisms which have been put in place in relation to the programme.

In response to a query about the extent to which Parental Leave is taken in different areas of College and the form in which the leave is taken, including whether or not staff on Parental Leave are replaced, Ms Power undertook to collate whatever data are available for consideration at the next Committee meeting.

The Vice-Provost advised that the Working Group's report would be considered at the next meeting of the Partnership Committee.

In conclusion, Ms Power advised the Committee that the Working Group had considered its work to be complete and that it did not intend to meet again unless any of its recommendations were proving difficult to implement. She noted that there was likely to be a review of progress after about eighteen months.

Actions

1. Report on the Code of Practice for the employment of people with disabilities to be presented to a future meeting
2. The final report from the Working Group on the career progression of women will be considered at a future meeting
3. Ms Power to discuss the implementation of individual recommendations with the responsible areas
4. A paper outlining all relevant issues associated with extending paternity leave to 10 days will be considered at the next meeting prior to a decision being made as to whether it will be recommended by the Committee

5. The Dean of Students to be invited to the next meeting to discuss the elements of the Student Mental Health Policy
6. Ms Power to collate data on Parental Leave and associated issues for the next meeting

**Eqal/06-07/07
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Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Dr O'Regan invited the Committee's attention to the report of the Contact Persons on Bullying and Harassment which had been circulated and she thanked Ms Power for compiling the report on behalf of the group. She emphasised that the data presented in the report only represent the cases which were presented to the Contact Persons and that they do not take account of incidents of harassment and bullying which were reported to other areas in College.

Dr O'Regan highlighted a number of key issues addressed in the report, in particular:

- (i) The need for additional Contact Persons
- (ii) The services provided by Contact Persons
- (iii) The value of contact person training and of sharing experiences with similar groups in other universities
- (iv) The role which Contact Persons play in providing training for Tutors
- (v) The need to develop a more pro-active communications strategy incorporating an up-dated leaflet and greater circulation of posters around College
- (vi) The positive benefits which the mediation service will offer the Contact Persons once it has become integrated as a method for resolution in the context of the policy for the prevention of bullying and harassment
- (vii) A draft Code of Ethics for the Contact Persons is being drawn up and will be available in Spring 2007

In considering the data on the cases handled by the Contact Persons, it was noted that while detailed comparative data were not available, the pattern of reporting appears to be similar to that in other universities, although it was noted that other institutions can have a more formal approach to addressing harassment and bullying matters. Issues in relation to formal notification of cases and the College's duty of care were also noted. The need for information on the nature of complaints and their impact on staff and students in order to develop policies and procedures to prevent harassment and bullying was emphasised, noting that collecting such data had been included in the Equality Officer's work programme.

The Committee discussed the possibility of mandatory training for Managers on how best to prevent harassment and bullying in their areas and noted that the Staff Office had commenced preventative training in this area but that the extend to which it can be rolled out will be constrained by the resources in the Staff Office.

The Committee, noting the resignation of Anne-Marie Diffley, as a Contact Person, approved the nomination of the following additional members to be approved by Board:

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Ms Orla McCarthy, Senior Lecturer's Area
Mr Michael Slevin, School of Engineering
Mr John Munnely, Buildings Office

Actions

1. The feasibility of developing data collection systems to be investigated by the Equality Officer
2. Nominations for three additional Contact Persons to be presented to Board for approval

Eqal/06-07/08 Anti-Racism Week The Equality Officer invited the Committee's attention to a report which she and Ms Power had prepared on the College's first ever participation in the National Anti-Racism Week. The Committee noted that overall the week had been a success and supported the recommendations proposed in the report which would build on the successes of the Week. It was agreed that International Student Affairs would be invited to become involved in implementing the recommendations.

Action

The Equality Officer and Ms Power to begin the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the report.

Eqal/06-07/09 Student Societies' Posters Under Other Business the Equality Officer advised the Committee that the CSC has begun to develop a policy on societies' posters following complaints about the sexist nature of some posters on display around the College.

Eqal/06-07/10 Irish School of Ecumenics Under Other Business the Equality Officer advised the Committee of an inter-faith resource which the Irish School of Ecumenics (ISE) is developing for the HSE and which may be of value to the College.

Action

The Equality Officer and Ms Power to discuss the initiative with the ISE

Eqal/06-07/11 Dublin University Gender Equality Society Under Other Business the Committee noted that a new student society was being established in College, the Dublin University Gender Equality Society, which would aim to raise awareness of gender-related issues and would organise related cultural and other events. The Equality Officer advised the Committee that members of the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies had been instrumental in establishing the society.

Eqal/06-07/12 Seminar on Fitness to Practice Under Other Business Mr Treanor advised the Committee that the Student Disability Service intended to host a seminar in Hilary Term on fitness to practice which would address, *inter alia*, the conflict between the Disability Act 2005 and the requirements of professional bodies in relation to students with disabilities.

Signed

Date