

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

Trinity College

EQUALITY COMMITTEE

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Minutes of a meeting held on 8 May 2007 at 2 pm in Conference Room, Top Floor, 1 College Green

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Present: Vice-Provost, Mr D Treanor, Ms L Power, Professor G Whyte, Ms A FitzGerald, Ms Ruth Palileo (GSU), Ms Denise Keogh (SU), Ms I Gannon, Ms C Byrne, Ms K Campos McCormack.

Apologies: Mr M Gleeson, Ms R Torode, Professor E Drew, Ms C Hannon, Mr D Quinn.

In attendance: Ms Caroline Roughneen, WISER Director\*, Mr B Misstear, Dean of Students\*\*.

Present for: \*Equal/06/07/23-27  
\*\*Equal/06/0723-28

The Vice-Provost welcomed the Dean of Students, Mr Bruce Misstear and the Director of WISER, Ms Caroline Roughneen.

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**Items for Board attention are denoted XXX**

**Eqal/06-07/23 Minutes** The minutes of the previous meeting, 8 March 2007, were approved and signed.

**Eqal/06-07/24 Matters arising** Matters arising from the minutes were discussed and have been minuted below.

**Eqal/06-07/25 Equality initiatives** Ms Power reported on the progress in the implementation of several of the action points proposed at previous meetings:

Dignity and Respect review group

Ms L Power informed the Committee that the Dignity and Respect Policy Review Group (EQAL/06-07/21) had been set up and would be meeting regularly in the coming months to achieve the following:

- Review College policies from a Dignity and Respect perspective
- Review the current Bullying and Harassment policy

- Look at the possibility of developing a Dignity and Respect policy and booklet

#### Work-life balance

The recommendation arising from the Work-Life Balance working group to extend Paternity leave to 5 days paid leave was being studied. Ms Power informed the Committee that this matter was to be discussed with the IUA Personnel group before being further developed, given the sectoral implications of the initiative.

#### Maternity returners group

The Committee noted that a support group for staff returning from maternity and parental leave was being set-up by the Staff Office, due to commence in the month of June. Ms Power reported that the Equality Authority had expressed interest in this ground-breaking initiative. The Committee noted that the support group was a response to requests made by staff mainly returning from maternity leave. It was also noted that there were little data on male staff with small children other than that arising from paternity leave requests.

#### Recruitment policy for Contact persons

Ms Power reported on research carried out regarding guidelines for the appointment of Contact persons (EQAL/06-07/18). The Committee understood the complexity of the issue, and that further consideration of the matter would be necessary, including the possibility of contracting the selection process externally.

**Eqal/06-07/26 XXX Equality Fund** Ms FitzGerald reported on the progress of the proposal for College to establish a central competitive fund to finance equality projects (EQAL/06-07/15.3), such as English language training, in different departments. The Committee welcomed the information that the Executive Officers had approved a modest fund for this purpose for the coming academic year. The Committee also noted that it would be necessary to develop procedures for distributing the funds.

**Eqal/06-07/27 Parental Leave** Further to the Parental Leave report (EQAL/06-07/19) Ms Gannon requested more detailed figures regarding the take up of parental leave amongst staff in different grades.

ACTION: Ms Power to provide a breakdown of staff parental leave uptake by grade.

**Eqal/06-07/28 WiSER programme** The Committee welcomed Ms Roughneen's report on the activities of the Centre for Women in Science and Engineering. The document circulated outlined the scope of the WiSER project to promote women's full participation in Science and Engineering, and the role of the SFI Institute Development Award in its funding.

The WiSER project is designed to target the current under-representation of women in science and engineering and to advance and promote the careers of women in these fields in TCD, at all academic and research levels. Ms Roughneen also clarified that, in accordance with the terms of SFI funding, WiSER focussed on the 'retain' aspect women in science and engineering, and thus work on pre-entry issues was not carried out at present.

Ms Roughneen highlighted that WiSER activities and services fell principally under two headings:

- Tailoring: working with women in the current environment to facilitate adaptation to the current situation. This included a personal development programme (Springboard) and a variety of 1 day workshops to promote skills based on the self-assessment exercise carried out.
- Transforming: working to transform the system so that women and men can work equally. This includes developing a gender-indicator database to capture data on men and women in science and engineering (location, research funding, etc); mainstreaming a gender perspective by means of a College policy and procedures review; developing a gender awareness programme for people in decision-making positions, so as to raise awareness on the barriers faced by men and women.

The Committee welcomed the programme as a positive initiative that might serve as a pilot for College-wide actions. In particular the actions aiming to transform institutional culture were deemed very relevant to the promotion of gender equality throughout College, and the possibilities for collaboration on the development of a gender indicator database to cover all disciplines were discussed.

**Eqal/06-07/29 Student Mental Health Policy** The Committee welcomed Mr Misstear's report on the development of the new Student Mental Health Policy. Mr Misstear advised the Committee that mental health issues had been a concern in different areas in College, and it was felt that a College policy was necessary to address the impact of mental health issues on fellow students, staff and College services. A sub-group had been set-up to work on policy and guidelines. The policy currently being developed focuses mainly on providing general guidelines in a positive user-friendly manner for students and staff who might find themselves dealing with these issues.

Section 1 of the policy sets out the mission statement, Section 2 provides definitions and legislation, section 3 provides general academic and administrative procedures, and Section 4 was brought to the attention of the Committee as the key section providing advice on how to deal with mental health issues on a practical level for both staff and students (assessing urgency, procedures during office hours and out-of office hours etc.).

In response to a query Mr Misstear clarified that confidentiality provisions would apply in the operation of the policy.

The possibility of a joint student and staff mental health policy was discussed, but it was felt that the College's responsibilities and the issues at stake were very different with regards to both groups and that it would be best to develop a separate staff mental health policy. Ms Power added that this was a Staff Office project for the coming year.

The Committee expressed interest in the training programme associated with the Student Mental Health policy, and the possibilities of extending it to other staff and students as well as tutors were discussed. Ms Keogh and Mr Treanor reminded the Committee of the activities already carried out by the Students' Union during Mental Health week. Ms Power also suggested that mental health awareness could be incorporated to the new Employee Assistance Programme lunch-time seminars.

The Committee agreed the development of this policy was very timely in view of the new Mental Health Act, and noted positively that the College policy was the first in the sector.

**Eqal/06-07/30 XXX** **Equality Monitoring Plan** Ms Campos McCormack reported on the progress of the equality staff monitoring plan (EQAL/06-07/17), with particular regard to the methodology, time-frame, resources and cost implications.

Equality Monitoring Plan

Ms Campos highlighted the need for a phased approach in implementing the monitoring plan, given the limited experience of similar initiatives in the Irish context, and the novelty of the scheme in Trinity. The implementation of a monitoring scheme would involve the following stages:

In 2007:

- a. Developing the monitoring form (The Equality Officer and Equality Committee in consultation with stakeholders and other institutions).
- b. Development of a Diversity Database (Staff Office and IS Services in collaboration with the Equality Officer).
- c. Introduction of monitoring at recruitment (Equality Officer in collaboration with Staff Office).
- d. Collection of data on staff with disabilities, in compliance with the 3% quota and NDA requirements (implementation awaiting clarification).

In 2008:

- e. Staff diversity survey, gathering data on all 9 equality grounds, as defined in the legislation.

Long-term:

- f. Achieve an integrated monitoring system, for recruitment and current staff, with a unique code identifier system in place and data stored confidentially in a Diversity database.

Ms Campos provided approximate resource estimates, indicating that phase (a) and (b) were expected to incur little additional cost, while phase (c) would have human resources and IT cost implications, depending on the paper or online methodology adopted. Further details were needed for an estimate of stages (d), (e) and (f).

Ms Campos reported to the Committee on behalf of Ms K Roantree, that the Staff Office feels that an online monitoring form, if approved, would be easier to manage at the recruitment stage, given that acknowledgement letters were now being phased-out in preference for acknowledgement e-mails. It was suggested that the e-mail could contain a link to the online monitoring form and this would save on postage and data inputting costs. The estimated cost for the development of an online monitoring form was of €15,000, with an annual maintenance fee of c. € 1,000. The need for an Executive Officer to maintain the database was discussed, and the Committee agreed that this not be included in the proposal until there was greater clarity on the volume of work involved.

The Committee was supportive of the online monitoring proposal, and also hoped that the online format would encourage a greater response rate. After discussing the options, it was agreed that while an online format would be promoted, applicants would also be given the option of a paper form.

Ms Campos informed the Committee of current monitoring response rates in Ireland and the UK, and suggested initial targets of 40-50% response at recruitment would be positive in the Trinity context.

### Monitoring Form

A draft monitoring form was circulated to the Committee, and the different categories were discussed in some detail. Ms Campos reported on the suggestions made by the College chaplains regarding the religion, sexual orientation and ethnicity categories included in the form, and also noted the suggestions made by the Committee regarding these categories.

The Committee discussed the requirement of including a candidate number and competition number in the monitoring form. The Committee noted that the use of a confidential identifier code was general practice in UK university monitoring systems, but highlighted the need for clarifying the purpose of the data to candidates. In particular the Vice-Provost suggested further consideration be given to the implications of using this data for monitoring current staff composition, as opposed to focussing exclusively on recruitment.

The Vice-Provost recommended consultation with the Department of Statistics to ensure that the monitoring form would be appropriate for the envisaged monitoring purposes. It was also noted that the monitoring proposal would need to be checked by the Information Compliance Committee to ensure compliance with College regulations and information policy, and also with the Personnel and Appointments Committee.

### Gender Statistics Analysis

The proposed details of the annual gender statistic reports to be provided by Staff Office were circulated and discussed. The need to gather base-line staff gender statistics with particular regard to promotional issues had been raised in previous Committee reports (EQAL06/07/19.3), and the report format developed by Ms Campos was to be included in the annual monitoring report. The Committee agreed generally with the proposal, and the breakdown of statistic data, with the following amendments:

- The report on Scholars be included in the Student monitoring report, rather than the staff monitoring report.
  
- Ms Power suggested that data on leavers should be monitored, in particular the gender and age profile of leavers.
  
- Regarding the promotions reports, the Committee suggested it would be most useful to report data detailing the grade of the position, as well as including all promotional review committees. And that the 'above bar' category be included.

### ACTIONS:

- 30.1 The Equality Officer to continue developing the monitoring proposal in consultation with the Staff Office, in particular investigating the development of an online monitoring form.
- 30.2 The Equality Officer to revise the draft monitoring form incorporating the suggestions of the Committee.
- 30.3 The Equality Officer to consult with the Department of Statistics on the monitoring proposal and form.
- 30.4 The Committee to refer the monitoring plan for consultation to the Information Compliance Committee and the Personnel and Appointments Committee.
- 30.5 The Staff Office to develop the gender statistics reporting system, incorporating the Committee's amendments.

**Eqal/06-07/31 Up-date on the implementation of the Disability Act 2005** Mr Treanor reported to the Committee on the developments regarding accessible information and building accessibility.

Accessible information

Mr Treanor informed the Committee that following a recommendation of the Communication Advisory Group, chaired by the Provost, the Communications Officer had written to all Heads of School regarding accessible communications and information guidelines; he advised that this would need to be followed-up with training.

Physical access

Mr Treanor reported that the Bursar and Buildings Office were making strategic services accessible (cobblestone reduction, Front Square services etc.).

The Committee noted the need for a sectoral response to the Disability Act requirements. Mr Treanor advised that this would be addressed at the meeting with the HEA, particularly the need for additional resources for the sector to address its legal requirements.

Mr Treanor reported that a draft proposal on accessibility was to be forwarded to Board, including a proposal for a full accessibility audit to take place.

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Disability Quota

Mr Treanor and Ms FitzGerald advised the Committee that the sector was still waiting for a response from the HEA to clarify the reporting procedure for the 3% disability quota and the National Disability Authority survey. In particular the issue of duplication regarding the reporting of data to a monitoring committee in the Department of Education and to the HEA needed to be clarified. The Committee was informed of the 31 March deadline for the survey proposed by the NDA, and that the NDA would be reporting at the end of June.

The Committee noted that legally College is only required to provide general data on an annual basis, therefore carrying out the long survey proposed by the NDA would probably be optional.

**Eqal/06-07/32  
XXX**

**Equality Audit** the Committee welcomed the proposal to carry out an Equality Review and Action Plan in collaboration with the Equality Authority. Ms Campos informed the Committee that following conversations with the Equality Authority it appeared funding may now be available for carrying out an equality audit in the near future. It was noted that the Committee had expressed great interest in this scheme in 2003 but at the time insufficient funds had been available (Minutes 30 April 2003 and 14 April 2004).

Ms Campos outlined the scope of the Equality Review which would cover all 9 grounds of discrimination but have a particular focus on gender issues. A sample review would include:

- A comprehensive policy and procedure review
- A monitoring survey in relation to the 9 grounds
- An attitude survey (of a staff sample)
- Focus groups and interviews with senior management
- Examination of work-life balance issues
- Disability issues review

Ms Campos noted that the exact scope of the review and expected outcomes would be decided in conjunction with the Equality Authority based on the particular circumstances of the institution.

The Committee was advised that participation in this scheme would require College commitment to facilitate the process and implement the recommendations. The audit would be carried out in collaboration with a review steering committee selected by the College, and would be likely to involve significant additional work for several areas in College.

The expected benefits of participating would include:

- Valuable advice on policy best practice and compliance.
- Increased knowledge about the College workplace, including staff composition and attitudes.
- Identification of priority action areas and an Action Plan.
- Cost-efficient research and data collection process.
- Complementarity with the current Equality Plan, in particular regarding policy review and equality monitoring.

ACTIONS:

- 31.1 The Equality Authority to be invited to discuss the proposal in detail with a sub-set of the Equality Committee.
- 31.2 The Executive Officer Group be informed of the proposal.

**Eqal/06-07/33 Any Other Business**

Equality Committee Annual Report The Vice-Provost suggested the Committee consider preparing an annual Equality Report for Board, in a similar fashion to the annual reports provided by other Committees and areas in College.

Signed .....

Date .....