

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

Trinity College

EQUALITY COMMITTEE

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Minutes of a meeting held on 5 November 2007 at 2 pm in the Board Room, Provost's House.

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Present: Vice-Provost, Ms A FitzGerald, Mr D Treanor, Ms L Power, Mr Oran Doyle, Mr Ronan Hodson (GSU), Ms Úna Faulkner (SU), Mr T McMahon, Ms C Byrne, Ms R Torode, Professor E Drew, Mr D Quinn, Ms K O'Toole, Ms K Campos McCormack.

Apologies:

In attendance: Ms Caroline Roughneen, Director of WiSER

The Committee welcomed new members Ms Úna Faulkner (SU Welfare Officer), Mr Oran Doyle, School of Law, and Mr Tony McMahon, Staff Secretary.

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**Items for Board attention are denoted XXX**

**Eqal/07-08/01 Minutes** The minutes of the previous meeting, 8 May 2007, were approved and signed.

**Eqal/07-08/02 Matters arising** Ms L Power noted that she would provide the breakdown of staff taking parental leave by grade to the Equality Officer (minute EQAL/06-07/27).

**ACTION:** The Equality Officer to circulate statistics provided by Ms L Power to the Committee.

**Section A – Policy issues**

**Eqal/07-08/03 XXX** Ms K Campos presented the Committee with the **Equality Committee Annual Report to Board 2006-2007**. The Equality Officer Annual Report is included as an appendix to this document. This report is to be presented to Board annually and includes the Committee's terms of reference, membership and the key issues the Committee has addressed over the academic year. The Equality Officer's Report outlines the implementation of the Equality Plan 2007-2009 devised in consultation with the Equality Committee and includes a financial statement.

The Committee welcomed the report, which reflected the scope of activities carried out by the Equality Office and Committee in relation to policy review and implementation, dissemination and communication activities. Ms K Campos highlighted key areas of work in 2006-2007 including the development of awareness actions; the examination of data collection procedures and equality monitoring; the examination of parental leave and

other work-life balance issues by a Committee sub-group; the development of a Code of Practice for the Bullying and Harassment Contact Persons; establishing a Dignity and Respect Working Group to develop and promote this policy; the application for the Equality Authority funded Equality Review scheme; the establishment of a modest Equality Fund available to departments; and diverse aspects of the implementation of the Disability Act 2005.

The Equality Officer's report also pointed to some of the priority action areas for 2008. Ms K Campos highlighted the importance of championing equality issues and mainstreaming equality in College activities. The Equality Review and Action Plan is envisaged to be a central action in 2008 which will require significant involvement from the Staff Office and senior management. Other priorities include the implementation of the Disability Act, and developing equality training programmes in collaboration with Staff Development.

The Committee noted that the Annual Report was useful as a summary of activities and reference document, for the Board, Committee members and external parties interested in the Committee's activities.

**ACTION:** Ms K Campos to submit the Equality Committee Annual Report to Board together with the minutes.

**Eqal/07-08/04 XXX** The Committee welcomed the **Code of Practice for the Appointment of Contact Persons** developed by Ms L Power. The Chair highlighted the College's commitment to eradicating bullying and harassment in the workplace, noting that the role the Contact Persons fulfil was particularly important in times of change in an institution. The Committee acknowledged that the appointment of appropriate Contact Persons was a sensitive matter and welcomed the transparency and clarity brought to bear on the procedure by this Code.

#### **Selection of Contact Person**

The Code specifies the Selection Committee responsible for the appointment of Contact Persons comprising: the Personnel Officer, a representative of the Contact Persons, the Equality Officer, the Director of Student Counselling (or nominee) and an external expert. The application procedure involves submitting an expression of interest, participating in an awareness workshop, being short listed and assessed by the Selection Committee, providing adequate references and having the approval of the Head of Area. Contact Person will be required to sign-up to the Code of practice and complete the stipulated training (approx 2.5 days), as well as attend regular meetings throughout the year. The Code outlines some of the qualities of a good Contact Person. Ms A FitzGerald noted that the selection process should be handled sensitively as it was not a case of success or failure. It provides applicants with the opportunity to assess their own suitability for this sensitive role.

The composition of the current panel was discussed. Currently there are 5 Contact Persons, 2 female and 3 male. Ms L Power noted that she would hope to expand the Panel to 12 members, which would also allow for a greater diversity within the group. Ms R Torode drew the Committee's attention to the overlap in some cases of bullying and harassment with job insecurity issues, suggesting that given the broader employment implications some cases would require the involvement of the Staff Office.

**ACTION:** Ms L Power to incorporate the Code for the Appointment of Contact Persons into the current Handbook.

### **Section B – Implementation issues**

**Eqal/07-08/05  
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**Up-date on the implementation of the Disability Act 2005** Mr D Treanor reported to the Committee on the guidelines for Accessible Information and the extended responsibilities of the Equality Officer.

#### **Accessible Information Guidelines**

The Committee was presented with a summarised version of the Accessible Information Guidelines which had been approved by the Provost's Communication Advisory Group. The guidelines highlight key points which need to be implemented in all College activities, including administrative documents and lecture and educational materials. Mr D Treanor highlighted the importance of compliance with new legal requirements, namely the Disability Act 2005 on this matter. The essential guidelines were:

- **Clear Print:** Documents provided in paper formats should be in clear print using a sans-serif font (**Arial, Trebuchet, Verdana or Tahoma**); font size preferred is 12. The Guidelines explain clear print requirements and it is recommended that they are used where ever possible to ensure documents are accessible to all. Where this is not practicable, it should be specified that these documents are available in alternative clear print formats upon request.
- **Electronically accessible documents:** should be formatted in clear print and in an accessible format such as Word, .html, .rtf, .txt or PowerPoint. **PDF is not an accessible format.** Information providers using pdf formats are encouraged to include a note on all information sources '*This information is available in other accessible formats upon request*'.

Mr D Treanor brought the Committee's attention to the challenges in implementing this policy and the need for the Board to approve its principles and ensure its application in all departments.

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#### **Half-time appointment**

Mr D Treanor informed the Committee of the recent extension of the Equality Officer's contract to become a full-time position, with a 50 % dedication to the implementation of the Disability Act regarding staff matters, working in collaboration with the Staff Office and Disability Act Access Officer. This appointment was welcomed as a positive measure which highlights College's commitment to promoting the employment of people with disabilities.

**ACTION:** The Board to approve the key principles of Accessible Information outlined above, and ensure their application.

**Eqal/07-08/06  
XXX** Ms K Campos reported on the recently completed **Report to the HEA on compliance with the 3 % employment target for people with disabilities.**

The Committee welcomed the recent staff survey undertaken to determine the number of staff with disabilities, and noted the College's legal responsibilities with regards to the 3% employment target and annual reporting on this target. The 'Count me in' survey, which was distributed to

all staff employed in 2006, was the first survey of its kind to be carried out in College, and the sector, and achieved a very positive response amongst Trinity staff with a response rate of 19 % (665 responses were received to 3507 questionnaires distributed by post and e-mail).

#### **Survey results**

The survey revealed 7.7% of respondents (51) defined themselves as having a disability, which represents 1.5 % of the overall staff population. The Committee, noting the detailed information contained in this survey, also noted the limitations of the reporting method designed by the NDA, and hoped this would be reviewed in future editions.

#### **Employment of people with disabilities**

The report also examined some of the possible obstacles to achieving the 3 % target, which include factors outside Trinity's direct control, such as perceived low numbers of applicants with a disability at recruitment stage. The particular difficulties around the return of staff with acquired disabilities after being on disability leave (particularly with regard to insurance and job re-training) were also discussed by the Committee.

The Committee noted the need to promote the recruitment, retention and development of staff with disabilities, including the possibility of holding special competitions to recruit staff with disabilities. The report highlighted that in the last year there had been increased collaboration between departments regarding the implementation of the Act, and outlined possible measures that would promote the employment of people with disabilities. The issue of funding for reasonable accommodation of staff was felt to be very important by the Committee, and it was suggested that a costing for a central budget be prepared.

#### **Wheelchair accessibility**

Mr D Treanor informed the Committee of the actions being taken to address the current inaccessibility for wheelchairs of Front Square and many College buildings and facilities. Mr D Quinn raised the issue of poor signage and directions for wheelchair users, which impacts on egressability and safety matters as well as a 'non disability-friendly' appearance. College must comply with a 2015 deadline for building accessibility and currently has a full building accessibility audit going to tender.

#### **ACTION:**

- Mr D Treanor, Ms K Campos and the Staff Office to include an approximate costing for a central disability accommodation fund as part of the Staff Office review relating to the implementation of the Disability Act.
- Mr D Treanor to raise the subject of wheelchair accessibility and signage with the Director of Buildings Office.

**Eqal/07-08/07 Equality Fund** Ms K Campos presented a proposal for the management of the € 10,000 Fund, which was approved by Executive Officers and Board. It is envisaged that the Fund will be managed by a Panel drawn from the Equality Committee, and be awarded, with the approval of the Equality Committee, in two separate instalments in 2008. The first deadline for submissions is to be 31 January 2008, with € 6,000 to be awarded by 29 February 2008.

The Equality Fund will be made available to departments on a competitive basis for a variety of equality projects relating to any of the nine grounds of discrimination. The Fund will be awarded to projects, events, workshops and other initiatives that aim to raise awareness and celebrate College diversity. Submissions will be accepted both individually and collaboratively from academic, administrative and support departments. It was suggested that the possibility of awarding funds to joint staff and student submissions be considered. Several themes were suggested as orientation to applicants for 2008: 1 Celebrating staff diversity; 2 Gender equality; 3 Anti-racism/ the integrated workplace; 4 Dignity and Respect; 5 Work-life Balance.

The Committee approved the proposed 5 person Panel: the Chair of the Equality Committee, the Equality Officer, Ms L Power (Committee member), Ms R Torode (Committee member), a representative from the Treasurer's Office.

- ACTION: Ms K Campos to:
- Develop an application form in line with the Fund management guidelines and publicize the Fund amongst staff.
  - Seek a nominee from the Treasurer's Office and convene the Equality Fund Panel in February.
  - Investigate the possibility of joint staff and student initiatives and report to the Committee.

**Eqal/07-08/08 Parental Leave Report** Ms L Power informed the Committee of the main issues that arose in the parental discussion groups held in June 2007. Three facilitated parental discussion sessions were attended by over 70 staff. A questionnaire was distributed at these meetings and completed by 45 participants. The majority of these were female (40), had children and/or were pregnant, and were from administrative areas (25) and service/technical areas (11).

#### **Parenting and work**

The majority of participants viewed their employment positively, despite the added stress involved in parenting. Feelings of guilt regarding family and/or work were highlighted by the majority, as were time-management pressures. The issue of organizational culture and whether College understood their family commitments divided participants to some extent: about half the participants felt that there was a reasonable understanding and had flexible work arrangements in place; the majority felt this was at the discretion of individual managers. The need for improved communication of staff entitlements, to both managers and staff, was highlighted by participants; as was the need for a more consistent approach across departments in the application of flexible working schemes. A particular item of concern for parents was what to do when their child was sick, but the Committee noted that in the absence of national legislation there was little College could do in this respect. The Committee also noted that it appeared departments were not using the maternity scheme cover money made available by PAC consistently.

The Committee discussed the issue of parental roles and fathers' involvement in parenting, given the absence of statutory paid paternity leave in Ireland highlighted by Professor E Drew. The Committee noted that an earlier suggestion for extended paternity leave was to be considered by the

IUA Personnel group. The Committee also noted that there currently were no existing specific training supports for employees returning from leave, in response to an enquiry by Ms K Campos. Ms R Torode drew the Committee's attention to the absence of a policy for students on maternity leave and to the problems that purely ad hoc procedures may create.

### **Recommendations**

Ms L Power advised the Committee that the Staff Office would be implementing recommendations from the report, including improved information on parenting and staff entitlements on the website, a designated person in the Staff Office for related queries, and the establishment of a 'buddy system' for parents returning from maternity and parental leave.

The Chair suggested a working group be established to work with Ms L Power on progressing some of the recommendations.

#### **ACTION:**

- Ms L Power to progress recommendations with the Staff Office
- Ms L Power to establish a working group with members from Partnership and the Equality Committee.

**Eqal/07-08/09 Equality Review and Action Plan** The Committee discussed the progress of the ERAP application to the Equality Authority, and the envisaged time-frame for its implementation. The Committee approved the establishment of an interview group to select the consultants, which it was envisaged would take place in December. This would comprise, following the Equality Authority's suggestion, a senior manager (the Vice-Provost), a human resources representative (The Staff Secretary), the Equality Officer, a Partnership representative (to be nominated) and a representative from the Equality Authority.

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The Committee also noted the need for an additional meeting of the Committee to appoint an Equality Steering Committee for the ERAP process, which it was suggested would take place in December or early January. The role of the Steering Committee is to oversee the equality review and facilitate the consultants, agree the Action Plan and oversee its implementation. It was envisaged that the ERAP process would take at least 3 months to complete.

#### **ACTION:**

- Ms K Campos to e-mail Committee members detailing the names of Partnership nominees for the interview group and the Steering Committee.
- Ms K Campos to convene an additional Equality Committee meeting as required for the appointment of the ERAP Steering Committee.
- The interview group to convene for the selection of consultants.

**Eqal/07-08/10 Committee membership** The Committee noted that there remained 3 vacancies to be filled on the Equality Committee: an elected Board member (Chair), a Council nominee and a member of staff.

**ACTION:** Ms K Campos to inform the Committee of the names of nominees.

## **Section C – matters for noting**

**Eqal/07-08/11 Contact Persons appointments** Ms L Power reported three resignations

**XXX** from the Panel of Contact Persons: Ms Myra O'Regan, Ms Sheila Maher and Ms Geraldine Ryan; and announced two new appointments to the Panel: Ms Carolyn Forsyth and Mr Brian Foley. The Committee paid tribute to the dedicated work of the outgoing members of the Panel.

**Eqal/07-08/12** Ms K Campos reported on the following **equality events for 2007-2008:**

- **European Year of Equal Opportunity for All** photography competition. The seven universities involved in the IUA equality and diversity group have organized a photo competition for staff and students titled 'Changing Perspectives: equality and diversity in my university'.
- **Anti-Racist Workplace Week 2007 November 5-11.** The Committee welcomed the 'Racism Free Zone' campaign and the on-going work of the anti-racism focus group in College. Anti-Racist Workplace Week is a national annual event co-ordinated by the Equality Authority.
- **25 Anniversary of the Trinity LGBT Society.** Trinity's LGBT society was the first gay student society founded in Ireland. The Committee welcomed the possibility of supporting events marking this anniversary, such as Rainbow Week 2008.
- **International Women's Day 2008.** The Committee was informed that the Equality Officer would continue to support this event annually.

**Any Other Business**

**Eqal/07-08/13** Ms Ruth Torode brought the issue of language support for foreign students to the Committee's attention. The Committee discussed language requirements and the absence of language tuition supports, suggesting this be discussed with the Dean of Students.

**ACTION:** Ms K Campos to bring this matter to the attention of the Dean of Students.

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Signed .....

Date .....