

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

Trinity College

EQUALITY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 25th February 2010 at 2pm in the Board Room, House 1.

Present: Dr S Ryan (Chair), Ms A FitzGerald, Mr D Treanor, Ms L Power, Ms A Taylor, Ms A Murphy (GSU), Mr C Cashman (SU), Prof E Drew, Dr M Ó Siochrú, Dr O' Doyle, Ms K O'Toole, Ms R Torode, Ms K Campos McCormack (secretary).

Apologies: Vice-Provost, Mr D Quinn, Prof C O'Morain, Ms C Byrne, Ms T Moloney.

Items for Board attention are denoted XXX

Eqal/09-10/13 Minutes The minutes of the previous meeting, 18 November 2009, were approved subject to the following amendments:

(a) Dr Ó Siochrú corrected the spelling of his name as follows: Dr Mícheál Ó Siochrú.

(b) Eqal/09-10/04 the following sentence was deleted: 'Dr O'Siochru suggested that the PMDS rollout training model could be used for interviewer training in College'.

Eqal/09-10/14 Matters arising

Mandatory interview panel training (Eqal/09-10/04) the Chair advised the Committee that this issue had been raised at Board (BD/09-10093). Ms Taylor advised that the Staff Office in conjunction with Faculties and Support areas will explore how this might be effectively implemented within the present resource constraints.

Access and Equality Policy review (Eqal/09-10/06) Ms Campos advised the Committee that an initial outline of the policy was being prepared and consultation was taking place, and that she hoped to submit a draft at the next Committee.

Flexible working arrangements (Eqal/09-10/02) Ms Power advised that representing an accurate profile of part-time and flexible work would require further investigation and noted she would look into this further.

Committee circulation The Committee discussed the need for papers to be circulated sufficiently in advance. It was suggested that the Equality Committee papers be circulated electronically, except where members expressed a preference for a hard-copy circulation.

ACTIONS:

- Ms Campos to circulate papers electronically for future meetings, except where members request paper copies. Papers to the Committee are to be circulated one week in advance as usual practice.
- Ms Campos to submit a draft Access and Equality Policy at next Committee.
- Ms Power to look into to the profile of staff numbers on flexible arrangements.

Section A – Policy issues

Eqal/09-10/15 Dignity and Respect Policy The Committee noted and approved the Dignity and Respect text circulated for inclusion in the College Calendar section H (regulations).

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Ms Power tabled an amendment to the role of Contact Person, specifying their role to support students as well as staff. Ms Power advised that following discussion with the Senior Tutor and Tutors through the Dignity and Respect training programme the role of Tutor had been reviewed and would now have a separate heading recognizing their specific student function. Ms Murphy suggested this section also include the Postgraduate Advisory Service Panel as having a similar function as Tutors for postgraduate students. The Committee also discussed the suggested additional points for inclusion in the Dignity and Respect Booklet section 'Information for complainants', which outline the complainant's responsibilities to facilitate an investigation process. Ms Power advised that similar information was included in the 'information for alleged harassers' section. The Committee agreed to the amendments with the suggested wording discussed.

ACTIONS

- Ms Campos to submit the paragraph to the Enquiries Office for inclusion in the 2010-2011 Calendar.
- Ms Power to amend the Dignity and Respect policy and booklet as discussed.

Section B – Implementation issues

Eqal/09-10/16 Contact Persons Annual Report and Staff Office Dignity and Respect report Ms Torode presented the Report of the Contact Persons 2009, circulated, outlining recent policy, casework and membership developments. Reports on dignity and respect from the Staff Office, Student Counselling Service and Postgraduate Advisory Service were tabled. The Committee noted an increase in the number of cases, which could be due to the increased awareness efforts regarding dignity and respect across College. The Committee noted that the Contact Persons Panel continued to be accessed predominantly by members of staff. Ms Torode advised that Contact Persons do not always hear back from people who contact them, but that where available, feedback on the service was generally positive. Ms Torode advised the Committee that the focus of formal and informal procedures should be to improve the situation for those involved, and suggested that the Contact Persons and other sources of assistance should

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encourage the full exploration of a range of informal routes at different stages.

The Committee discussed the complexities of cases where there were interactions between different College complaints procedures. Ms Murphy advised the Committee of a perception amongst postgraduate students that complaint procedures were not transparent, exacerbated in cases where issues overlapped, which discouraged students from raising complaints. Ms Murphy suggested there was a need for greater clarity around outcomes and time-frames. Ms Power advised the Committee that complainants were now provided with time-scales at the beginning and during an investigation. The Committee discussed these issues and suggested that the information regarding the provision of time-scales be included in the Dignity and Respect policy. The Committee also discussed the need for closure and feedback at the end of a formal investigation, and suggested that the possibility of holding a facilitated discussion with the complainant after the outcome be explored. Ms Power advised that the person who received the complaint report (Dean or Head of School) was the person responsible for implementing the recommendations. The Committee suggested that the means of ensuring that different complaint systems interacted appropriately be explored by Ms Power and Ms Campos liaising with the Senior Lecturer and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

The Committee also discussed the demographics of cases, by gender and staff/student category, heard by the Contact Persons. Ms O'Toole suggested preventative action could focus on the staff areas with greater incidence of complaints.

Staff Office Report The Committee noted the report of dignity and respect cases presenting at the Student Counselling service and Postgraduate Advisory Service. Ms Power advised that there was no further information on the outcomes or referral of the student cases. It was noted that a training session had taken place with Student Counselling and the Equality Officer earlier in the year to inform about the role of Contact Persons and to strengthen liaison with Student Counselling. In relation to the Staff Office report, Ms Power advised that in all cases people were referred to the Contact Persons, resulting in a certain overlap in cases. The Committee discussed the low up-take on mediation; Ms Power noted that while this service was made available externally through the LRC (Labour Relations Court) at no cost, many staff felt it was too formal. Ms Power advised that the Staff Office was considering the possibility of automatic referral to Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) counselling.

Ms Power brought the Committee's attention to the implementation of the training recommendations included in the previous report to the Committee (Eqal/08-09/18&19), including: investigator training provided to managers and Heads of Areas, awareness training being completed in Schools, training of management and supervisory staff, training with health and safety officers and training with Tutors and S2S volunteers. Ms Campos advised that different options for communicating effectively with students, were being considered. Ms Power also noted that a re-print of the booklet would be necessary next year.

Ms O'Toole suggested that a managers' mandatory training suite be prepared to include issues like Dignity and Respect. Ms Power and Ms

Taylor advised of current training plans in place, including a 'Managing People' suite and a human resources training session scheduled for Heads of School.

ACTIONS

- The Staff Office to prepare a section on time-lines and complaint follow-up for the Dignity and Respect policy.
- The Staff Office and Panel of Contact Persons to explore the possibility of providing a facilitated discussion at the end of a formal process.
- Ms Power and Ms Campos to liaise with the Senior Lecturer and Dean of Graduate Studies and report on progress in addressing complex cases.

Eqal/09-10/17 Disability Act 2005 Mr Treanor reported on the implementation of several aspects of the Disability Act 2005 including physical access and accessible information. The Committee noted the decision by the Secretary to require documents to be submitted in accessible formats for circulation to Board and Council. Mr Treanor advised that a series of training sessions had been devised through Staff Development to facilitate implementation, and that further work was being carried out to develop default document templates.

The Committee noted the ongoing developments in physical access, including ramps in Front Square, and was advised that the Front Square pathway works would commence once the Long Room Hub was finalised (in March-April). Ms FitzGerald brought the Committee's attention to the E-Gov award received by the Disability Service and Web Office for web accessibility. In response to Dr Ó Siochrú's query, Mr Treanor advised on the correspondence with the Director of Buildings regarding the new Admissions Office to be installed in Regent's House. The Committee was advised by Mr Treanor and Ms FitzGerald that there would be an accessible entrance straight into the office via Front Square, since it was not possible to render the main entrance via Front Arch accessible.

Eqal/09-10/18 3% Census Ms Campos reported on the reporting of the 3% disability employment target reporting to the Department of Education and Science Monitoring Committee. The Committee noted that the Equality Officer and the Staff Office would be re-issuing the disability status form to those staff who had not reported their disability status in last year's exercise in order to increase the response rate (33% last year) amongst all staff and to encourage disclosure from staff with disabilities. The Committee noted that universities had been granted flexibility in the method for updating their report and that College would be seeking to update its records and capture data on new staff. Mr Treanor drew attention to the difficulty in encouraging staff with disabilities to disclose.

Ms Campos advised that a confidentiality agreement, in compliance with contract confidentiality clauses, had been signed by relevant parties, but there remained a need to examine further confidentiality issues regarding equality data collection, which would be developed in collaboration with the Staff Office and Secretary's Office.

Eqal/09-10/19 02 Ability Awards Ms Campos advised the Committee of the on-site assessment completed as the final stage of participation in the 02 Ability Awards, and expressed gratitude to the parties who had supported the

application. Ms Campos advised that the media partners for the 02 Awards would be contacting selected companies in the coming weeks. The Committee noted that the Awards would be announced in early May.

Eqal/09-10/20 Equality Plan The Committee welcomed the Equality Plan 2010-2014 circulated by Ms Campos, and noted this action plan was to be considered in conjunction with the 2007-2009 implementation report submitted in November and with the Secretary's Office Annual report. Ms Campos advised the Committee that the equality plan actions sought to support College in the achievement of the goals contained in the College Strategic Plan 2009-2014, particularly supporting its values 'the inclusivity of our community which offers equality of access and opportunity to all, seeking out and recognizing talent wherever it exists'. The Committee noted the actions detailed would focus on mainstreaming equality in College practices and would be under the following headings:

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- A Policy Development and Compliance
- B Equality Programmes/developing equality competence
- C Communication and awareness and
- D Other activities

The implementation of these actions will be reported by the Equality Officer as customary in the Equality Committee Annual Report and Secretary's Office Annual Report.

Eqal/09-10/21 IUA Group update Ms Campos advised that NUI Maynooth now held the Chair of the IUA Equality Group. Ms Campos reported on a recent meeting of the group with the Queens Equal Opportunities Unit and advised that the possibility of developing a sectoral online diversity training module modelled on the Queens University module was being explored by the Group.

Section C – Matters for noting

Eqal/09-10/22 Merit Bar survey Ms Campos advised that she was currently completing a further qualitative study amongst eligible candidates to the Merit Bar at the Vice Provost's request, in order to examine the reason for the lower application rate amongst certain groups of staff. Ms Campos advised the report would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Eqal/09-10/23 International Women's Week programme (tabled) Ms Campos invited the Committee's attention to the schedule of events tabled which will be taking place from 8 to 12 March in College to celebrate International Women's Day.

Any Other Business

Eqal/09-10/24 Equality data Ms Torode brought the Committee's attention to the difficulties experienced in collecting information to develop an equality profile of Social Work students that would accurately reflect ethnicity and social background. Ms Torode noted that the relevant departments in College had been very helpful but that the task of gathering accurate data remained daunting given the proliferation of data systems. The Committee suggested that these issues of data consistency should be brought to the attention of the E-Strategy Group, so that these requirements could fit in to the systems specifications, and noted that these issues needed to be addressed internally and externally.

ACTION Ms Campos to liaise with the E-Strategy group to discuss equality data specifications.

Signed

Date