

University Of Dublin
Trinity College
Equality Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 13th of March 2012 at 2 p.m. in the Secretary's Office Conference Room, College Green.

Present: Dr N Marples (Chair), Dr M Ó Siochrú, Ms A FitzGerald, Ms A Taylor, Ms C Hannon, Mr D Treanor, Ms L Miller (SU), Mr M McAndrew (GSU), Prof M McCarron, Dr O Doyle, Prof E Drew, Ms K Campos McCormack (secretary).

Apologies: Vice-Provost, Ms L Power.

In attendance: Ms Sinead Mac Bride

Items for Board attention are denoted XXX

Apologies The Chair noted the apologies and welcomed Prof Mary McCarron to the Committee in her role as Dean representative. Ms Campos advised Mr David Quinn had stood down from the Committee.

Eqal/11-12/18 Minutes The minutes of the previous meeting, 22 November 2011, were approved and signed.

Matters arising Deferred for discussion at the next meeting.

Section A – Policy issues

Eqal/11-12/19 Equality Committee Self-Evaluation The Chair thanked the Committee members for their contribution to the self-evaluation exercise. The key findings were collated by the Secretary's Office into the report circulated. The Chair outlined an agenda for discussing the self-evaluation under the following headings:

- a. Membership of Committee
- b. Operation of meetings
- c. Equality Fund
- d. Training of new members
- e. Implementation of policy and Future work topics

A Membership of Committee The Committee discussed at length the following issues of

concern regarding the Committee membership:

- Problems achieving quorum and the excessively large size of the Committee.
- Whether Committee membership appropriately reflected the required skill set and was representative of College diversity.

Dr Ó Siochrú and Mr Treanor felt this was a wider issue of the function of the Committee and that membership should follow a review of the Committee's function.

Members of the Committee suggested that the quorum requirement be adjusted so the Committee could continue its business.

Ms Campos advised of the current vacancies: one staff member and a representative of the Contact Persons. Prof Drew noted that she had been a member of the Committee since its inception and would be happy to stand down and contribute in attendance as necessary; the Committee thanked her for her service to the Committee. The Committee also noted that it was not necessary for a member of the Law School to be a Committee member, as their expertise could be called upon in attendance as required. It was agreed that it would be proposed to Board that the number of staff members be reduced to 2 and that in principle there be only one representative from each area (Academic Secretary, HR etc.). The Committee also considered the option of allowing for a nominee when the member could not attend.

The Chair requested members to reflect on the current and required membership skills and contact her with suggestions for further amendments.

Actions:

- Ms C Byrne, Prof E Drew and Dr O Doyle to stand down from the Committee by the end of the academic year.
- Proposals on revised membership to be presented to Board:
 - Terms of Reference membership amended to require only 2 staff members.
 - Terms of Reference to include only one member from each area.
 - Further amendment to the Terms of Reference to be developed by the Chair and Secretary in consultation with members.

B Operation of Meetings The Committee discussed the following areas for improvement in the operation of meetings:

- Need for greater follow-through and feedback on action implementation
- Information that is reported to the Committee: for e.g. Disability Act complaints; access issues; student cases.
- Responsiveness, capacity to address new directions, for e.g. internationalization.
- Consideration given to Committee recommendations at Board and other Committees
- Frequency of meetings
- Subcommittees
- Quorum

The Committee expressed frustration at the difficulty in achieving implementation and compliance. Mr Treanor expressed the view that this was part of a larger difficulty in achieving compliance at College level.

Ms Campos proposed that she could include a call-over of actions with the minutes. Ms Hannon suggested that the Monitoring Report submitted to Board be reformulated to include a greater action focus that the Committee could seek to implement. Dr Ó Siochrú suggested that the Committee should seek to achieve small gains and build on this.

The Chair outlined a proposal for the establishment of Equality Committee sub-committees to work on particular areas of implementation, for example Equality Policy implementation and Monitoring. This approach would allow a more project based mode for Committee members to participate, which was a suggestion from the self-evaluation report. The Chair also noted that the sub-committee format would be a means to include a more diverse range of expertise and skills by co-opting members. The Committee expressed concerns that this would fragment the work of the Committee and constitute a further layer – which would not be helpful to the Committee's efficiency.

The Committee discussed the need to focus on specific areas of action, in particular the need to feed into the internationalization strategy and liaising with Trinity Global. The Committee discussed different options for this which will be explored by the Chair. The Committee noted past examples of successful working group strategies, for example in the development of the Dignity and Respect policy. The Committee discussed how Equality minutes and items were usually discussed by Board under section B and the need for bringing greater attention to the Committee decisions at Board and College level.

Suggestions for improving the Committee's efficacy:

- Clear identification of Committee's function
- More frequent meetings
- Clear annual plan
- Action call-over
- Director of the Disability Service report on compliance with the Disability Act. Similar reports from TAP, WiSER, HR etc.
- Committee members are delegated particular tasks arising from actions
- Ad hoc working groups can be established for particular tasks
- Use of case examples to illustrate broader issues at the Committee
- Specific focus areas are brought to the Board's attention under section A for proper consideration and discussion.

The Committee agreed that the Committee's compliance and implementation focus would be strengthened by having regular reports from the Director of the Disability Service, the Director of WiSER, the Access Officer and HR, which could serve to identify specific actions for Board consideration.

The Committee agreed on the value of establishing ad hoc working groups to develop particular projects – such as a policy or strategy – that would be fluid in their constitution and be established, dissolved and amended as required. Mr Doyle suggested that the working group structure could also be useful for overseeing implementation of specific actions if necessary.

The Committee discussed the quorum requirement and agreed to amend the quorum as suggested by Ms Mac Bride: either the Chair and Equality Officer plus five Committee members OR 50% of members plus either the Chair or the Equality Officer.

Actions:

- Propose to Board the amendment of the Terms of Reference to reflect the new quorum requirement:
The Chair and Equality Officer plus five Committee members
OR
50% of members plus either the Chair or the Equality Officer
- Ms Campos to include an action call-over with the minutes.
- Ms Campos to develop an annual work plan/schedule for the Committee and explore with the Chair the possibility of holding more frequent meetings.
- Ms Campos to liaise with the relevant areas (Disability, TAP, WiSER, HR) and agree a reporting calendar and format.
- The Committee to report to Board on the implementation of the Equality Policy, Equality Monitoring statistics, and the different equality implementation areas identified. The Chair and Ms Campos to review the current report formats accordingly.
- Equality Committee reports on compliance and achievements to be brought to Board under section A.
- The Committee establish ad hoc working groups where appropriate including members from the Committee and other members.

C Equality Fund The Committee discussed the feedback regarding the Equality Fund, with some feedback suggesting the Fund made a great impact and other feedback suggesting the impact could be improved with fewer larger grants. The Chair noted the time investment required for the panel to assess all applications and by the Equality Officer in the ongoing administration of the Fund. Mr Treanor drew the Committee's attention to the huge impact of the Equality Fund with a small investment, particularly in strengthening partnerships and collaboration in different areas across College - for example the mental health project in collaboration with the SU. Mr Treanor also advised that two Equality Fund projects, the Transition me to Trinity and the Asperger Syndrome Resource site, had been nominated for Government Awards – the last project also having a significant positive impact on students who participated in creating the resources. Ms Miller suggested there was potential for more feedback from projects and more long term learning and Ms Campos agreed there was scope for this and to look into this with the Equality Fund Sub-Committee.

The Committee discussed the means for the Fund to increase its profile and welcomed the development of an Equality Fund symbol (tabled) with which to identify supported projects as agreed. Ms Campos advised that information about each project, current and past, was included in the Equality Office website and suggested that the initiative would have greater reach if Communications included a news item on the global homepage.

Prof McCarron suggested that the model used to assess research projects in terms of reach, impact and longevity could be useful in assessing applications. Ms Hannon suggested that while the long term impact of projects was important the Fund should retain its flexibility in valuing one-off events. Mr Treanor noted it was important that the Fund continue to support student projects. It was noted

that students might not always have the expertise in preparing applications. The Committee noted student- staff partnerships were of great value and suggested that guidance could be given to applicants to promote this approach.

Actions:

- Ms Campos to ensure the Equality Fund logo is published on all supported project materials.
- Ms Campos to liaise with Communications about creating a news item about the Equality Fund projects for the Global Homepage.
- The Equality Fund Sub-Committee to explore options for gaining greater feedback from projects.
- The Equality Fund Sub-Committee to emphasize the importance of staff-student partnership and inter-departmental collaboration in its communications.

D Training The Committee discussed the need that had emerged from the self-evaluation for training new Committee members for what was a very specialized Committee. Prof McCarron suggested that ongoing training on specific topics such as internationalization be provided for Committee members throughout the year. Other members suggested that this could take the form of short briefings on different topics at the start of meetings by relevant internal experts in College – for example a briefing from Trinity Global. The Committee agreed that training provided by external and internal organizations could be of value and suggested that the Equality Officer liaise with the Equality Authority for external providers. The Committee suggested that the Equality Officer provide new Committee members with a handbook including terms of reference and past minutes. Dr Doyle advised that he could provide a brief legislation outline for this purpose.

Other issues raised by Committee members included the need to assess the perception of equality on the ground in College, by means of a regular all staff survey for example.

Actions:

- Ms Campos to develop a handbook for new Committee members.
- Mr Doyle to provide a brief equality legislation outline.
- The Chair and Ms Campos to identify topics for briefings/training of Committee members and internal and external providers.

E Policy implementation The Committee discussed the challenges of implementing equality policy at local and School level. Mr Treanor suggested the Academic Liaison Officer role could be useful for liaising with Schools about student issues and noted that this role was being reviewed by the Dean of Students. The Committee discussed the benefits of the Equality Monitoring report providing information broken down by Faculty and School and how this could be used to raise awareness at School level. The Chair suggested that further liaison occur with Schools on foot of the Monitoring Report and Ms Campos suggested that specific Schools or Areas might be prioritized. Mr Treanor expressed that view that for engagement with Schools to be effective there need to be sanctions and a high level strategy and targets set by the Deans, noting that otherwise these efforts would be largely ineffective at a time when Schools were under significant pressure. Prof Drew concurred with the view that targets needed to be set at strategic level. Ms FitzGerald suggested that targets be part of the Committee's Annual Report to Board on Compliance and Achievements. Prof Drew also drew

the Committee's attention to the INTEGER project for gender equality and institutional transformation noting that a survey of all academic staff would be taking place as part of the project. The Chair suggested that this approach could be implemented by the Committee for other groups of staff such as administrative staff who were not within INTEGER's remit.

Actions:

- The Committee to submit an Annual Report on Compliance and Achievements to Board including targets.
- The Equality Committee/Monitoring Advisory Group to identify specific Schools/Areas to prioritize for action following the Equality Monitoring Report. The Equality Officer to liaise with these priority areas.

HR Committee liaison The Committee welcomed Ms FitzGerald's suggestion that a member of the Equality Committee should attend the HR Committee as an Equality champion. Dr Ó Siochrú also suggested that HR should include a date for review of its policies and that the Equality Committee be included in this review process.

Action:

- The Equality Committee recommends that a member of the Equality Committee attends the HR Committee.

Section B – Implementation issues

Section C – Matters for noting

Any Other Business

LEAD Launch Ms Campos drew the Committee's attention to the sectoral launch of the LEAD Living Equality and Diversity eLearning programme next Wednesday 21 March with Minister Ciarán Cannon and invited all members to attend.

Other items deferred until next meeting.

Signed

Date