Trinity College Dublin

The University of Dublin

EQUALITY COMMITTEE

Minutes

Meeting 29 January 2018, 2.00pm – 4.00pm

West Theatre Meeting Room

Present: Acting Chair (Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer, Prof C Morash), Dean of Health Sciences (Prof M McCarron), Prof Inmaculada Arnedillo-Sánchez, Mr Madhav Bhargav (GSU), Dr S Brennan, Prof M Cuypers, Ms S MacBride, Mr D McClean (SU), Mr K O'Doherty, Ms K O'Toole-Brennan, Mr C Rashleigh, Mr D Treanor, Secretary / Equality Officer (Ms A Crawford)

In attendance: Prof E Drew, Mr T McMahon

Apologies: Dr Subhash Chandra

Eqal/17-18/019   **Opening**   **Chair**

The Chair noted to the Committee that Ms Sheila Dunphy has resigned from her position on Board and that he will act as Chair of Equality Committee until the end of the 2017/18 academic year; also that the GSU representative, Ms Haleigh York has stepped down from Equality Committee. He expressed best wishes and thanks to Ms Dunphy and Ms York on behalf of the Committee.

Eqal/17-18/020   **Minutes**   **Chair**

The minutes of the meeting of 30 November 2017 were approved without amendment.

Matters Arising

The Chair informed the Committee that the first Gender Action Plan progress report was approved by Board on 13 December 2017. The report on Part-time Work, Flexibility and Family Leave was also discussed at the December meeting and its recommended action was approved, i.e. that the HR working group on family leave would be informed by the report's findings in its work.

Action Call-over

All actions were completed, and the Secretary noted in connection with action Eqal/16-17/067(b) that work is ongoing to identify suitable options for breastfeeding spaces on the main campus, with Estates and Facilities and the Director of Diversity and Inclusion.

Eqal/17-18/021   **Dignity and Respect Contact Persons**   **Ms S MacBride**

[**Prof E Drew and Prof M McCarron joined the meeting during this item**]

Ms MacBride took her report "Review of Supports for the Role of Dignity and Respect Contact Persons" as read, explaining that she had met with three experienced Contact

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Persons (CPs) to discuss their role, experience and supports and circulated a draft report to all CPs. She noted the value of the CP service to the university and their willingness to provide feedback for the report. The Chair drew members' attention to the recommendations on p3 of the report, which have been made to improve supports and training for the panel of CPs.

The following key points were raised in members' discussion of this item:

- Psychological supervision for CPs was proposed but CPs felt that this need was already met through their own group
- Support from the Employee Relations Manager (Mr K O'Doherty) for the CPs is valuable for the CPs and for the university. There could be a potential conflict if the Employee Relations Manager were to advise the CPs on a case that then went on to a legal process; but his is an appropriate role to provide general support to CPs
- An anonymous reporting system for bullying and/or harassment is not favoured as it may not accord with principles of natural justice
- "Dignity and Respect" should be more easily found on the Trinity website by those searching the terms "bullying" and "harassment"
- To ensure that certain CPs are not overloaded with Dignity and Respect cases, it is recommended that CPs refer cases on to other panel members when busy
- Dignity and Respect is an essential component of training for managers, who can have a significant influence on the resolution or escalation of a local complaint

Action: The Equality Committee is to appoint a number of new Dignity and Respect Contact Persons, following a recruitment process to be led by the Employee Relations Manager (Mr K O'Doherty). The process will co-ordinate with an information campaign to increase awareness of the Dignity and Respect Policy and Contact Persons

Eqal/17-18/022   Access Update   K O'Toole-Brennan

Ms O'Toole-Brennan provided an update on key Access matters of interest to the Committee, covering the evolution of the Trinity Access Programmes (TAP), the alignment of TAP, Mature Students' Office (MSO) and Disability Service (DS) with the National Access Plan goals, the Higher Education Systems Performance Framework, and the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM). She highlighted the importance of a whole-college approach to Access in which the Equality Committee would have a role. She described opportunities and challenges in relation to national funding and noted that Trinity is on track to meet its increased target numbers for students entering from Further Education.

In discussing this item, members noted the importance of defined roles for the Widening Participation group and Equality Committee, and good co-operation between them; the intersection of many equality groups with socio-economic disadvantage (TAP are now to have a representative on the institutional Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team); and the connection between these matters and wider issues such as admissions strategy and review of the HEA funding Pillars.

Eqal/17-18/023   Accessibility of Trinity Website   Dean of Health Sciences

The Dean presented a memorandum on People with Intellectual Disability and Accessible Websites to the Committee, which states that "[c]urrent implementation of web design practices and costs in the College may have the unintended effect of being a barrier to equal access" to people with intellectual disability (ID) and may therefore contravene Trinity Accessible Information Policy and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She explained that an ID-accessible website would have a limited number of simple icons, ideally with voiceover, and that the Digital and Web office estimate the cost of making an area's website ID-accessible at €2,000 - €3,000.

The Chair informed the Committee that a working group is currently outlining the probable scale of a large-scale project to bring greater consistency and ease-of-use to the whole Trinity website. Members proposed that the website should be reviewed for Plain English

and other accessibility matters (i.e. ensuring that the existing Accessible Information Policy is being implemented throughout the website). It was noted that separate websites for separate groups would not be a legally acceptable solution to the ID-accessibility issue.

Action: D Treanor to liaise with the Digital and Web office on ID and other accessibility matters related to the Trinity website, considering short- and long-term actions, and report back to the Equality Committee meeting of 5 April 2018

Action: D Treanor and Secretary to discuss a review of the Accessible Information Policy and report back to the Equality Committee meeting of 5 April 2018

Eqal/17-18/024   Reports from Other Bodies   Chair

Board

The Chair summarised key points of the 13 December 2017 Board discussion of the Gender Action Plan progress report, in which the importance of progress with Athena SWAN and the *HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* ("HEA Review") was highlighted.

Council

D Treanor informed the Committee that the Reasonable Accommodation Policy for Students with Disabilities was approved by Council on 17 January 2018. This is the first such policy in an Irish university. A key feature of the policy is that Schools must justify any refusal to provide a reasonable accommodation in writing, and this must be reviewed by the Senior Lecturer / Dean of Graduate Studies (as relevant).

HR Committee

S MacBride noted that the HR Committee have passed a policy on paternity leave, bringing the university into line with the Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016. Members noted that

the new policy should be communicated widely (not just through email) and that data on uptake will be monitored for Athena SWAN applications among other purposes.

Action: Chair and Secretary to include an item on communications in the 5 April 2018 Equality Committee agenda

Students' Union

[Update provided during AOB] D McClean informed the Committee of equality-related initiatives being undertaken by the SU (e.g. a survey of gender-neutral bathrooms and an information guide for LGBT students) and equality-related issues that are currently affecting students (e.g. the need to train and support staff who may have sexual harassment or assault disclosed to them).

Graduate Students' Union

M Bhargav noted that the GSU have recently held LGBT awareness sessions with QSoc (the student LGBT+ society) and have included international festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year in their online calendar.

Eqal/17-18/025   Subgroup Minutes / Updates   Chair

Gender Equality Implementation Subcommittee

This subcommittee didn't meet between 30 November 2017 and 29 January 2018.

Equality Fund Subcommittee

The Secretary presented a memorandum on the 2017/18 Equality Fund selection process and funded projects to the Committee. She noted that 14 of 33 applications were funded and that gender was the most popular theme among applications. Changes to the Equality Fund Terms of Reference have been proposed by the subcommittee members arising from the 2017/18 selection process.

Members suggested that applications on under-represented themes (e.g. age, sexual orientation, religion) should be encouraged in the 2018/19 call for applications. In relation to the "24hr Wheelchair Challenge" project, members' concerns about the risks of disability simulation were noted.

Action: Secretary to meet with organiser of "24hr Wheelchair Challenge" project to agree approach to mitigate risks of disability simulation

Action: Secretary to present proposed changes to the Equality Fund Terms of Reference at Committee meeting of 5 April 2018

Age-Friendly Trinity Working Group

This working group didn't meet between 30 November 2017 and 29 January 2018.

Equality Monitoring Advisory Group

This advisory group didn't meet between 30 November 2017 and 29 January 2018.

Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy Review Working Group

The Chair of the working group (T McMahon) informed the Committee that it has agreed a workplan and held its first meeting (18 January 2018) to discuss relevant legal developments, policy implementation and the findings of an external review ("TCD Trans and Gender-Diverse Students' Experiences") by a researcher from the University of Strathclyde.

Establishment of other subgroups

The Secretary noted that members have been invited to join the Public Sector Duty Subcommittee and that the Equality Trail working group has yet to be established.

Eqal/17-18/026   Legal and Policy Update   Secretary

The Secretary informed the Committee that a Gender Equality Taskforce has been established by the Minister of State for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell-O'Connor TD, to review promotions and recruitment policies / practices in the sector and highlight good practice and areas for improvement. Trinity has submitted recruitment and promotion statistics, a report on progress with the HEA Review recommendations, and a completed "HEI self-audit tool" to the Taskforce to date.

The Chair noted that the Taskforce has been discussed at meetings of the nascent network of senior equality / diversity leads, and suggested that a sectoral approach will be beneficial in various areas (e.g. review of the LEAD online training programme). The Director of Diversity and Inclusion (T McMahon) reported on the Consultation Day held by the Taskforce (22 January 2018), at which he shared concerns with Taskforce representatives that a further gender action plan (in addition to those arising from internal strategy, Athena SWAN and the HEA Review) may make matters excessively complex and detract from the resources available for implementation of existing plans.

The Secretary also shared relevant findings from a recent report of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, *Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland?* (2017), for the Committee's information. She suggested these findings may be particularly useful in guiding the work of the Public Sector Duty subcommittee; and highlighted the particularly high rates of discrimination reported by members of the Traveller community in seeking work.

Eqal/17-18/027   Matters for Noting

The Reasonable Accommodation Policy and memorandum from the Chair of the Cultural Diversity Working Group were noted. The revised Equality Fund Terms of Reference were postponed to the meeting of 5 April 2018.

Eqal/17-18/028   Any Other Business

The Secretary informed the Committee that Trinity will participate in the Ending Sexual Harassment and Violence in Third-Level Education (ESHTE) project (ref: Eqal/16-17/043), taking an open approach which acknowledges sexual harassment and violence against all students (including men and transgender persons) as advised by the Student Life Committee.

The Director of the Trinity Centre for Gender Equality and Leadership (TCGEL), Prof E Drew provided the Committee with information leaflets about its Systemic Action for Gender Equality (SAGE) project. The project will, among other outcomes, develop guidance for embedding the gender dimension into curriculum and research.

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