



**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

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**The University of Dublin**

**Equality Committee**

**Minutes**

**Meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021, 10.00am – 12.00pm**

**Online, via Zoom**

**Present:** Prof F Sheerin (Chair), Associate Vice Provost for Equality Diversity and Inclusion (Prof C Brook), Prof S Draper. Ms L Keogh (SU), Ms S Mac Bride, Mr C O'Donnell, Ms K O'Toole-Brennan, Prof M Ruffini, Mr D Treanor, Ms E Schaa (GSU), and Secretary / Equality Officer (Ms C Marshall).

**Apologies:** Prof A Kahane

**In Attendance:** Ms S Cantwell (notetaker)

**Equal/20-21/026      Opening**

The Chair opened the meeting, and wished all present a happy new year.

**Equal/20-21/027      Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 were approved without amendment.

**Equal/20-21/028      Matters arising**

Ms Keogh reported that the issue of emails being sent outside of standard working hours had been raised with the Healthy Trinity Workplace Wellbeing Subgroup, and that the group has agreed to include it as an agenda item at a future meeting.

There were no further matters arising not otherwise covered on the agenda.

**Equal/20-21/029      Action Callover**

The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the Action Callover, which had been circulated. The following further points were noted in relation to actions from previous meetings:

- Equal/20-21/023 – The Age-Friendly Trinity Working Group is currently inactive, following the departure from College of the previous Chair. It was agreed that this item should be brought for discussion at the next meeting.
- Equal/19-20/025 – Ms Marshall reported that a request had been made to the HR Committee for the drafted Email Hours Guidelines to be considered for approval, and a response is awaited. Ms Mc Bride noted the forthcoming legislation on this matter which is anticipated, and that a College response will be required.

<p><b>ACTION:</b> Consideration of the Age-Friendly Trinity Working Group to be added to the agenda of the next meeting of the Committee</p>
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**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION**

**Equal/20-21/030      Gender Categories in Board Elections**

Ms V Butler, Assistant Secretary, attended for this item. The Chair drew members' attention to a memo that had been circulated in advance, and emphasised that the issue of the gender categories used in College processes has wider implications.

Ms Butler provided brief background to the item, informing the Committee that the request to include a third, non-binary gender category was raised during the most recent round of Board elections. A query was put forward concerning whether the existing process was inclusive enough of gender diversity. Ms Butler noted that the process used for Board elections is governed by the Statutes, which set out minimum gender requirements for men and women in each of the elected staff categories. The nomination forms in use ask staff going forward for election to indicate their gender from the two options provided on the form – male and female.

Ms Butler commented on the review of Board which was commissioned last year, the report of which highlighted the need to maintain inclusivity and diversity on Board but did not set out further specifics in this regard. In recognition of the changes at a societal level to gender categories, it may be timely to revisit those in use for Board elections. Should the Committee wish to propose a change, an amendment would be needed to the schedule of Statutes. This would require Board approval and would need to be discussed with the Registrar in the first instance.

The Chair thanked Ms Butler for her briefing, and invited comments. In the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:

- Consideration may need to be given to broader issues of inclusivity and diversity in the context of Board representation.
- It was noted that the particular Board requirements in relation to gender balance arose from a government initiative to increase representation of women in decision-making, rather than in the context of wider diversity and inclusion needs.
- The issue of quotas more broadly was discussed, and it was emphasised that the specific change proposed at this time is put forward in order to ensure individuals are not forced to select with a gender with which they do not identify, and in service of commitments under the College's Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy, and is separate to wider discussion of quotas generally.

- There is a need to ensure that the Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy is applied to all staff and student forms and records systems, so that an individual's gender can be accurately reflected.
- Broader issues of representation in relation to diversity and other protected characteristics might be explored as part of work on developing the new EDI strategy.
- Data protection concerns may arise in relation to collecting this kind of personal data via the nomination forms, and will need to be considered.
- There is now established good practice within the sector concerning the use of gender categories, which can inform wording of any eventual change to the nomination forms.

The Chair thanked Ms Butler for attending, and thanked members for their views.

**ACTION:** Ms Butler will liaise with the Data Protection Officer and will report back with a recommendation at the next meeting of the Committee.

**ACTION:** Ms Marshall will advise on appropriate wording of any subsequent change to the gender categories used on Board nomination forms.

#### **Equal/20-21/031      Staff Disability Working Group**

The Chair invited members to consider and approve the proposed Terms of Reference, which had been circulated in advance. Ms Marshall provided brief background, commenting that the proposal to set up this working group arose as a recommendation from the Staff and PhD Researchers' Disability Forum, and thanked the Forum Chairs and Mr Treanor for their advice and input to the draft Terms of Reference.

The Terms of Reference were approved. Attention then turned to the selection of a Chair for the working group. It was noted that while Equality Committee subgroups tend to be chaired by a member of the Committee, this is not a requirement. The importance of central

involvement of HR in the working group was noted, particularly in the context of the forthcoming 6% quota for staff with disabilities which will take effect in 2024.

An independent individual who might be approached to chair the working group was proposed, and supported by the Committee.

**ACTION:** The Chair will invite the proposed individual to chair the working group.

**ACTION:** The Chair will write to HR in relation to their involvement with the working group, and request a HR representative to attend all meetings of the group. An interim representative from HR will also be sought for Equality Committee while Mr O’Doherty remains on leave.

#### **Equal/20-21/031      Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy**

The AVPEDI provided an overview of plans to develop an EDI Strategy for Trinity, under this Committee, which is a commitment set out in Trinity’s Strategy 2020-25. Accompanying the strategy will be an action plan, which will be monitored on an ongoing basis. The process of development of the strategy will support consideration of the role and relationship of the Equality Committee to the EDI Unit. The Chair invited comments from members.

Ms O’Toole-Brennan welcomed the plans on behalf of Trinity Access, and emphasised the importance of data needs and practices as part of the strategy. Ms Keogh articulated the support of the Students’ Union for an EDI Strategy, and proposed that an intersectional approach be incorporated.

It was noted that a working group will be required to develop and draft the strategy over the coming months.

**ACTION:** The Chair and the AVPEDI will bring a proposal regarding composition and scope of working group to the next meeting of the Committee.

## KEY UPDATES

### Equal/20-21/032 EDI Unit and Athena SWAN - Update

The Associate Vice-Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion provided an update on Athena SWAN and further activities of the EDI Unit, noting the following points:

- Three Schools are due to apply for Athena SWAN awards in the forthcoming round
- An institutional Athena SWAN staff survey has been developed and is awaiting ethics approval before its planned circulation prior to commencement of the new semester. Prof Brook thanked Ms Marshall for her work on this.
- There is concern over the potential impact on staff with caring responsibilities if schools don't reopen on 1<sup>st</sup> February when University teaching term starts. A contingency plan may be needed.
- Two applications for SALI Chair Professorships are under development and will be submitted on behalf of Trinity.
- The Inclusive Curriculum project is underway and champions are being sought to embed it in Schools.
- It has been agreed that implementation of the Consent Framework will be supported administratively by HR, while the AVPEDI will chair the steering committee that is being established. An action plan is due for submission to the HEA by the end of February.
- Work on the establishment of a race equality working group is underway, with set up anticipated in the coming weeks.

The Chair thanked Prof Brook for her update and invited discussion, particularly on the issue of supports for carers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The following points were noted:

- The need for flexibility for staff, particularly those with caring responsibilities, was emphasised, though it was agreed that flexibility in working practices is not enough on its own, and that issues of workload and the implications for overall wellbeing

need to be considered, including via examining ways to reduce workload when and where needed, in light of the current exceptional circumstances.

- There is a need for formalised supports for staff around workload and managing the demands of work and caring responsibilities presently. The urgency of action in this regard was emphasised.

**ACTION:** The Chair will circulate a letter to the Heads of School, copied to the Vice Provost, regarding supports for staff with caring responsibilities during this time.

**ACTION:** Ms Mac Bride will raise the concerns noted in relation to workload and supports for staff with caring responsibilities (including the email guidelines, Eqal/19-20/025) at the HR Committee, and will report back once she has had an opportunity to do so.

### Equal/20-21/033      Sub Group Updates

The Chair invited updates from the Sub Groups, and the following were provided:

- The Public Sector Duty now falls within the remit of the EDI Unit and will be considered under the wider strategy development process. The Sub Group is now considered to be disbanded.
- Equality Fund Subcommittee: The 2020/21 applicants to the Fund have been notified of the outcomes of their applications, and work has commenced on some of the projects. Revised Terms of Reference for the Fund have been drafted and circulated to the Committee for approval (considered under Agenda Item 10).
- Equality Monitoring Advisory Group: The Equality Officer reported that the group has met and work on the report is underway. Some additional data is required from certain areas, and this is expected to be available in February, following which a draft of the report will be brought to the Committee.
- Accessibility Working Group: Mr Treanor reported that the first meeting has taken place, and the group is working on preparing guidelines for accessible information and events in Trinity.

- Equality Trail: Ms O’Toole-Brennan raised the possibility of some of the visual materials prepared for the Equality Trail being publicised online for the time being, via the EDI Unit’s website and social media. The materials should be forwarded to Public Affairs and Communications for review before publication.

**ACTION:** Ms Marshall to forward the Equality Trail images to Public Affairs and Communications for review.

**Equal/20-21/034      Updates from Other Trinity Bodies**

There were no updates received.

**ITEMS FOR NOTING**

**Equal/20-21/035      Equality Fund Terms of Reference**

Consideration of this item was deferred until the following meeting.

**Equal/20-21/036      Minutes of the Equality Fund Subcommittee**

The Committee noted and approved the draft minutes of the meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020.

**Equal/20-21/037      Minutes of the Accessibility Working Group**

The Committee noted and approved the draft minutes of the meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

**Equal/20-21/038      Socio-Economic Profile of Trinity Students 2020**

The Committee noted the press release from the HEA containing key findings of data published on the socio-economic profile of students in Irish higher education, including the finding that Trinity has the highest proportion of affluent students in the country. Ms O’Toole-Brennan commented that there are nuances concerning what, precisely, is measured in this data, and that the summary does not fully reflect the reality of Trinity’s



student population. The full data is available to view on the HEA's website. It was felt that a fuller discussion of this item would be useful.

**ACTION:** An item on this subject will be added to the agenda of a subsequent meeting of the Committee.

**Equal/20-21/039      Any Other Business**

The following items were raised under Any Other Business:

- i. The Chair reported that verbal confirmation of Trinity's approval for University of Sanctuary status has been received, but written notification is awaited. Plans are being developed for a launch event, currently scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> February at 11.00am.

*[Mr Treanor left the meeting during this item]*

- ii. Ms O'Toole-Brennan queried the status of the ASAP Scholarships. It was noted that consideration will be given to awarding the scholarships for postgraduate study as well as undergraduate.

The Chair thanked all present for their time and concluded the meeting.

**END**