Trinity College Dublin

The University of Dublin

Equality Committee

Minutes

Meeting of 17th May 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 R Gaynor, Prof A Kahane, Ms L Keogh, Mr C O'Donnell, Ms K O'Toole-Brennan, Prof M Ruffini, Ms E Schaa, Mr D Treanor, and Secretary / Equality Officer (Ms C Marshall).

In Attendance: Ms S Cantwell (notetaker)

Equal/20-21/053   Opening

The Chair welcomed Ms Rose Gaynor, Deputy College Solicitor, who will be replacing Ms S Mac Bride for the duration of her maternity leave.

Equal/20-21/054   Minutes of the Previous Meeting

A correction should be made to the minutes of the meeting of 3rd March 2021 under minute Equal/20-21/047. Ms O'Toole-Brennan has forwarded clarifying text regarding her presentation under this item to Ms Marshall for incorporation. Updated minutes will be circulated via email following this meeting.

Equal/20-21/055   Matters arising

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

Equal/20-21/056   Action Callover

The Action Callover was taken as read. A further verbal update was provided in relation to item Eqal/20-21/043 regarding support for staff with caring responsibilities during the pandemic, under which it was noted that many Heads of Admin Areas and Heads of School are working to actively provide additional supports for affected staff.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

Equal/20-21/057   Revised Accessible Information Policy

Mr D Treanor presented this item for discussion and approval. Mr Treanor is Chair of the Accessibility Working Group convened under Equality Committee at the start of this academic year and which was tasked with reviewing the Accessible Information Policy. The group has met three times and is comprised of key stakeholders from across the University. Particular issues concerning accessibility in relation to provision of e-learning, hybrid teaching and captioning have been a focus for the group since the move to online teaching and learning this year.

Mr Treanor outlined the main updates and revisions to the policy, which include:

- the updating of information regarding e-learning accessibility in response to technological developments in the intervening period;
- the strengthening of the statement on accessible procurement (section 5);
- clearer integration with the Procedures and Guidelines in Relation to the Provision of ISL / English Interpretation, as well as the articulation of guidance and responsibilities with respect to the provision of Irish Sign Language Interpretation;
- the addition of a new section covering accessible social media (section 7);
- amendments to the policy implementation and monitoring statement;
- the updating of all sections.

The legal basis for the provisions under the policy is as per the Disability Act 2005 (Access to information, Section 28).

The Chair thanked Mr Treanor for his presentation and invited members to comment. In the discussion that followed it was noted that improvements have been made with regard to accessible technology for e-learning, but challenges remaining in certain areas, notably teaching of languages.

The revised policy was approved by the Committee.
[Mr O'Donnell left the meeting at the end of this item]

Equal/20-21/058   Supporting Transgender Students

The Chair welcomed O Fitzpatrick, A Quigley and A Claffey to attend for this item and present along with Ms L Keogh. Ms Keogh introduced the item and provided background to work underway between the Students' Union and the Disability Service on the subject of supports for transgender students following a number of issues which have been raised by the student population. She invited O Fitzpatrick and A Quigley to present on the subject of the student experience of transitioning while at university. It was noted that some students may experiences challenges in navigating the established processes for changing their name on student records, and that trans students may be at greater risk of withdrawal from university on mental health grounds. A number of recommendations were proposed, including:

- the identification of a trained individual such as an occupational therapist as a dedicated support for trans students;
- a consultation exercise to determine the support needs of, and key challenges faced by, trans students;
- delivery of targeted equality training for student-facing staff.

The Chair thanked the presenters, emphasised the importance of increasing awareness of the issues involved for students undergoing the transition process, and invited further comments from those present. In the discussion that followed, it was noted that supports

for trans individuals in Trinity come within the remit of the EDI Unit and will form part of the forthcoming EDI Strategy. It was further noted that gender identity training for front-facing staff has been delivered in previous years and that an additional programme of training is planned for later this year.

Equal/20-21/059   Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

The Chair introduced this item, and provided background to the ongoing work that is taking place collaboratively between the Chair, the Associate Vice-Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and the Equality Officer. A review of approaches to strategy development has been undertaken, and it is proposed to hold a facilitated workshop with key internal stakeholders to identify priorities for the new strategy. Work will continue during the summer leading to a wider consultation process which will commence in September. It is currently envisaged that the new strategy be launched in December. The Chair invited comments on the proposed approach. A discussion took place, and the importance of costing and resourcing an associated action plan in order to support implementation was emphasised.

> **ACTION:** The Chair, AVPEDI and Equality Officer will proceed to organise a facilitated workshop to identify key priorities for the strategy.

Equal/20-21/060   Annual Equality Monitoring Report 2019/20

Ms C Marshall presented key findings of the Annual Equality Monitoring Report 2019/20, highlighting the following points:

- Trinity has met the statutory 3% target for the employment of staff with disabilities, but that this target will increase to 6% by 2024, requiring a doubling of the current proportion by that time.
- The national target for students with disabilities is not currently being met.
- The proportion of women among Chair Professors has risen to 32% and is currently the largest of any Irish university.

- The proportion of women among Fellows has increased from 21% in 2009/10 to 35% in 2019/20, and the senior and decision-making bodies of Board, Council and Executive Officers' Group were all gender balanced for the year in question.

- Applicants to Senior Academic Promotions were gender balanced, as were those successfully promoted. Success rates correspond to application rates for both men and women at each senior promotion grade.

- In 2019/20, White Irish applicants had a higher success rate in recruitment competitions than all other applicants, although this is based on completion of the voluntary monitoring form and data are incomplete.

The Chair welcomed the report and invited comments. It was noted that inclusion of data on socioeconomic status of staff would be welcomed, but that this data is not currently available. A further proposal was made to generate a local snapshot of equality grounds at School level and represent this graphically in subsequent reports. It was noted that small numbers of those belonging to certain protected characteristics may raise data protection concerns if this breakdown was to be published at School-level, but that a review of the available data could be conducted to ascertain feasibility of this proposal.

The report was approved for forwarding to Board.

KEY UPDATES

Equal/20-21/061   Equality Committee Self Evaluation
C Marshall informed that group that they would receive a link, via email in the next week, to a survey inviting members to evaluate the performance of the committee over the present academic year. All members are invited to complete the survey, which is anonymous.

Equal/20-21/062   EDI Unit and Athena SWAN Update
The AVPEDI provided the following update on activity in relation to the work of the EDI Unit overall, and Athena SWAN specifically:

- **Athena SWAN** – Ten Schools now hold Athena SWAN Bronze awards, and a total of thirteen are required for the University to become eligible to apply for a Silver award. Further applications will be submitted in the upcoming June application round. A working group on family and caring responsibilities is being established by HR and will support the fulfilment of commitments under the institutional Athena SWAN gender action plan.

- **Consent Framework** – An action plan for the University has been submitted to the HEA and will be published internally online following Board approval. An anonymous reporting tool for incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence will be launched in September.

- **Inclusive Curriculum** – The project has secured funding for the 2021/22 academic year. Prof Brook thanked the Disability Service and Trinity Access for their support and collaboration in this project. A Trinity micro-credential for School Inclusive Curriculum Champions has been developed and is being delivered for the first time at present.

- **Racial and Ethnic Equality Group** – The group has been established and its first meeting has taken place. Draft Terms of Reference will be considered by the Committee for approval under agenda item 12.

- **EDI Unit** – Prof Brook shared an overview of the current structure of the EDI Unit, noting that a request has been submitted for an additional role to join the Unit as was foreseen at the time of its establishment in 2019/20. She informed the Committee that the Equality Officer is due to go on maternity leave in July and that recruitment is currently underway for a temporary replacement.

The Chair thanked Prof Brook for these updates.

Equal/20-21/063   Sub-Group Updates

The Chair invited updates from the Sub Groups. Mr Treanor reported that the Staff Disability Working Group, chaired by Prof Na Fu, has had its first meeting. A workshop is planned for June of this year, with a focus on identifying and agreeing priorities for the coming year.

Equal/20-21/064   Updates from Other Trinity Bodies

There were no updates received.

ITEMS FOR NOTING

Equal/20-21/065   Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group Terms of Reference

The Chair invited comments on the Terms of Reference for the Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group, newly established by the AVPEDI, which had been circulated. The Terms of Reference were approved.

Equal/20-21/066   Any Other Business

The following items were noted under Any Other Business:

- An application has been submitted via the Students' Union for a prayer/reflection room in the Arts Building.
- Trinity Access has received funding of €14,000 to support progression and retention of members of the Travelling community at Trinity.
- The Students' Union are lobbying for reduced price accommodation for students with disabilities, though previous attempts in this regard have been unsuccessful and funding support is required.

The Chair thanked all present for their work on the Committee throughout the year, and concluded the meeting.