



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

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Equality Committee
Minutes

Meeting of 13th December 2021, 10.00am – 12.00pm
Online, via Zoom

Present: Prof F Sheerin (Chair), Associate Vice Provost for Equality Diversity and Inclusion (Prof L Leeson), Prof S Draper, Ms R Gaynor, Dr B Ghosh, Prof A Kahane, Ms S Maguire, Ms S Müller-Owens, Mr C O’Donnell, Ms K O’Toole-Brennan, Prof M Ruffini, Mr D Treanor, and Secretary / Equality Officer (Dr S O’Brien Green).

In Attendance: Ms S Cantwell (notetaker)

Apologies: None

Equal/21-22/023 Opening

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all.

Equal/21-22/024 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Ms O’Toole Brennan requested that the sentence in 21-22/020 Sub-Group Updates, under TAP, should read “National College Awareness campaign is to commence on 22nd November and has been widely embraced by the formal and informal education sectors”

Equal/21-22/025 Matters arising and Action Callover

- Changes to the statutes relating to freshman terminology: There is no further news or updates on this.
- Sanitary products for the TCD community: Action under 21-22/017 re information going to Board – this will go with the Equality Committee minutes.
- The Chair noted that discussions are taking place to see how best the University of Sanctuary, the Scholars at Risk and ASAP committees and working groups might work more closely and in a more aligned manner.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

Equal/21-22/026 Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group

Chair of the Group Dr Phil Mullen and facilitator David Walsh, Open Minds, joined the meeting.

The Group was convened by Prof Clodagh Brook in her time as AVPEDI to address race and ethnicity in College. The aim is to bring about a more inclusive environment.

An audit was planned to give the whole College community a voice and to address and identify issues amongst minority/ethnic groups. A separate action plan will be produced by the Working Group which should feed in and address issues emerging from the focus groups and other consultation.

Dr Mullen introduced David Walsh of Open Minds to present the findings from the Race and Ethnicity focus groups.

See attached circulated slides for information.

Questions from the Committee were invited.

Mr Walsh clarified that approximately 80 people participated over 9 focus groups, and electronic feedback was captured in addition to this data.

Names and roles were not requested from focus group participants, but it was evident that representation was broad from across College. Mr Walsh as facilitator felt that an appropriate mix of participants was achieved. However, a lack of white male participants was noted, which may be due to the belief that the topics being explored and discussed have nothing to do with them, or they may feel they should not take up a space in the groups. Certain roles within college may not have participated such as contract staff (cleaning, security, etc.). It was agreed that there is an opportunity to build on the energy and interest created by these groups.

The AVPEDI thanked Prof Clodagh Brook, Claire Marshall, David Walsh, and Dr Phil Mullen for the work put into the groups and the report. Key issues arising from this document will feed into the action plan.

Mr Walsh advised that diversity is about the individual and making this issue personal is key. It is important to examine what are we doing well and to use this methodology going forward.

The Chair commented that we are increasingly seeing stories of those who feel they may not belong. The Chair thanked Dr Mullen and Mr Walsh and this item was brought to a close.

[Dr Mullen and Mr Walsh left the meeting after this item]

KEY UPDATES

Equal/21-22/027 EDI Office and Athena SWAN

Item 6 on the agenda was presented by the AVPEDI.

EDI Strategy

Progress is ongoing. The landscape for EDI activity is still being mapped out, relationships between groups identified, and discussions are taking place with the VP, Academic Secretary and COO. External factors are influencing changes in the system nationally. The HEA's gender equality unit has now become the EDI unit, showing a broadening out of scope/focus. The IUA is to launch its Race & Ethnicity training programme for Universities. Advance HE have expanded and launched the Athena SWAN framework for Ireland. The new Athena SWAN Charter and framework for GEPs will align with the European Commission guidelines for eligibility for Horizon Europe research funding.

Public Sector Duty

The AVPEDI has met with IUA regarding the Public Sector Duty legislation project and a university specific assessment and implementation template is being created addressing equality and human rights. A GAP analysis is to be done in coming weeks on the grounds covered by the Public Sector Duty. IHREC appears to be moving from a monitoring perspective to having an implementation and enforcement role. Non-alignment with and implementation of the Duty opens up the possibility of judicial review being instigated against public bodies such as Trinity. Some of the key themes emerging in the IUA Duty project are autonomy, dignity, inclusion, and social justice.

Consent Framework

The first annual report on progress with this was made to the HEA in November.

Athena SWAN

New Irish Charter changes are to be incorporated in future applications. Many Athena SWAN schools have created EDI directors with their own terms of reference – there is a need to look at governance to streamline these roles. Three schools will submit in the next Athena SWAN application round in January 2022.

EDI Office

Management of time and resources is being looked at across all the equality groups. It needs to be resourced properly and not done to a minimal threshold level. Request to report on staff data by both gender and ethnicity from the HEA have been received and the HEA recognise that there may need to be clarity on GDPR to enable collection and collation of this data as well as communications on why the data is being requested.

World faiths and religions have been under-focused on in EDI work to date and will be part of the EDI strategy. The Jewish Society held a presentation on the new European Strategy on antisemitism and promotion of Jewish life. Prof Kahane commented that there is strong evidence that the IHRA definition of antisemitism is being leveraged for political purposes and that there is a need for awareness of this problem and to negotiate it carefully. The European Commission has recently published its strategy document (Dr O'Brien Green will circulate).

Scholars at Risk

Prof Roja Fazaeli has been working on supporting a scholar from Afghanistan, Dr Aziz Mohibbi. Funding is being held in an account with the EDI unit in conjunction with Maynooth University - they sourced 75K and TCD has 32K. Maynooth will issue the contract and TCD will nominate him through non-salaried pay. He will leave Afghanistan in the coming week and we hope to welcome him and his family to Ireland and Trinity soon.

The Chair noted that several Schools hope to engage the expertise of this scholar. The AVPEDI informed the Committee that it will be a non-salaried nomination and that Dr Mohibbi will have access to appropriate resources. Natural Sciences hope to offer some space and will support him on campus. Prof Draper will follow up with the Head of School to ensure that Dr Mohibbi will be looked after in terms of his time and workload, and will also link in with the FEMS HR partner. The AVPEDI thanked Rose Gaynor for her help with reviewing agreements being drawn up around Dr Mohibbi's move to Ireland.

The Chair commented that buy-in from College is needed to adequately resource EDI and it should not be provided by Schools.

Equal/21-22/028 Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project Update (Trinity-INC)

Dr Derina Johnson and Dr Rachel Hoare provided an update on the first year of this EDI project. See attached slides for information.

In discussions following this presentation, it was noted that the student partnership agreement is up for renewal and Trinity INC could contact the Dean of Students on this.

HR representation on the Trinity INC committee should be considered. Dr Johnson will organise a meeting with Susan Maguire, HR to discuss.

There may be scope for project champions in centres such as CONNECT and ADAPT. This will be looked at next semester.

Equal/21-22/029 Sub-Group Updates

Staff Disability Sub-Group

The Chair welcomed Dr Na Fu to the meeting to present an update on the Staff Disability Sub-Group. See attached presentation for information.

Dr Fu outlined the financial resources required for three project ideas generated and costed by the Sub-Group and requested any suggestions around potential funding. The Chair commented that College could meet these requirements and should look at providing funding. An action group could be set up. Mr Treanor will discuss where funding may be found with the AVPEDI.

[Mr Treanor and Dr Fu left the meeting after this item.]

Equality Fund Subcommittee

The subcommittee met on 30 November to review the terms of reference and application documents. The next call will launch in early January 2022 with the expectation that projects will run from February to August. Staff/student collaborations will be encouraged, and sustainability built in. Stephen Fagan and Sarah Kelleher from FSD are being consulted on project reimbursements given the challenges experience in the past months. One project will rollover to June 2022 and has been approved funding by the Subcommittee. It was noted that we should be looking at how to connect Public Sector Duty, HEA reporting requirements, and Athena SWAN work with future funded projects.

AMER Subcommittee

A meeting is planned early in 2022 to meet with a range of Board members to review suggestions on the format and presentation of the AMER report and data. It may also be necessary to incorporate and present data relevant to the new Athena SWAN charter and HEA ethnicity data requests via the AMER.

Equal/21-22/030 Items For Noting

Changes to Dignity and Respect policy

Ms Maguire noted that the consultation process on revised policies for dignity and respect and a new sexual misconduct policy is underway. Over 200 people registered for the consultation sessions. Trinity is partnered with IBEC for the consultation process, who are key practitioners within this area. Themes are being collated and further consultation and inputs from students will take place early in the new year.

Equal/21-22/030 Any Other Business

The following item was noted under Any Other Business:

- New charter briefing sessions on Athena SWAN were given by Advance HE, one at school unit level and the other at institutional level. Sarah Fink will hold another briefing session on 15th December to the Athena SWAN Champions Network in Trinity.
- Institutional quality review. The Chair will invite four nominees to meet with an external panel from 7-11 March 2022 as part of the review. The makeup should be balanced with respect to gender and junior/senior status. The Chair invited expressions of interest in taking part from this group, by email.

The Chair thanked all present and concluded the meeting.

END