



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

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Equality Committee
Minutes

Meeting of 17th May 2022, 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, Dr B Ghosh, Ms S Maguire, Ms K O'Toole-Brennan, Ms R Gaynor, Dr S O'Brien Green (Secretary), Prof A Kahane, Ms S Müller-Owens, Mr C O'Donnell, Ms G Scanlon.

In Attendance: Ms S Cantwell (notetaker)

Apologies: Mr D Treanor, Prof M Ruffini.

Equal/21-22/049 Opening

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all.

Equal/21-22/050 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 30th March 2022 were approved without amendment.

Equal/21-22/051 Matters arising and Action Callover

Gender expression policy: The scope and implications for implementation of this policy are being looked at as it links into many areas, e.g. College Health, Sports, Counselling, etc. Its complexity needs to be understood and resourced properly. The Core HR system and other College IT systems are not flexible and analysis needs to be done from an IT perspective which will give us a clear idea of what needs to be done in order to identify the costing, and to obtain a commitment from College to resource this. A meeting was held in April between AR key staff, Head of HR, AVPEDI and Chair of Equality Committee to progress this work. Subsequently EDI Office staff are working with HR staff to look at how other universities are managing the functioning/data collection categories of their core portals. Work will continue on the project over the summer with the aim of implementing improvements by michaelmas term.

Equality Fund: Consideration is being given to how the Equality Fund can be aligned with ongoing work on EDI policy and strategy. This will be progressed during the summer and a proposal brought from the Fund Subcommittee to the Equality Committee in michaelmas term.

Equality Policy: The review and update of the equality policy will be progressed during the summer.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

Equal/21-22/052 Religion and Faith Diversity in Trinity

Trinity staff and student representatives were invited to give a series of short presentations to the Committee. Prof Kahane provided an introduction, commenting on the need to ensure that we have an open, courteous and collegial platform for listening to each other around religious and faith diversity, for expressing differences of opinion and respecting these differences in an effort to be more responsive and attentive to these complex issues.

Dr O'Brien Green provided some additional context in terms of the IHREC Public Sector Duty legislation with a human rights focus as well as current Irish equality legislation. How we respond to different faiths and how Trinity supports them as a place to study or work, or to visit, and how we uphold and protect human rights of different faith groups is timely and important to consider.

Prof David Shepherd, School of Religion

The Chair welcome Prof Shepherd to the meeting.

Prof Shepherd felt it was positive to be invited to share his experience, as religion may currently be low on the agenda. The University exists in a wider societal context which has an evolving relationship with religion. Historically Ireland has not been religiously diverse beyond Christianity, which may contribute to an assumption that religion does not need to be talked about. Things have developed significantly and Trinity is now a microcosm of religious diversity - profoundly international, very diverse, and more religiously diverse than the wider population of Ireland. While those experiencing discrimination or exclusion have been listened to, there has been less focus on voices relating to religion. We should be aware of this religious dimension as it intersects with other grounds of discrimination or exclusion. The Christian voice still needs to be listened to as there has been a strong pivot against Christian views. Christians may now feel excluded as their views can seem out of keeping with a wider diversity of societal views.

The Chair acknowledged the importance of looking at the intersection of the different groups and thanked Dr Shepherd for an interesting perspective and a lens to start to examine these issues.

Dr Shepherd left the meeting.

Rev Dr Julian Hamilton, College Chaplain

The Chair welcomed Rev Dr Hamilton to the meeting, and commented that the process of listening to different perspectives on faith and diversity in Trinity is at a starting point and not an end point.

Rev Hamilton outlined the data on religious diversity in Trinity which shows that agnostic is the second biggest identifying group in college after Roman Catholic. It is important to look at how these people's

voices can be heard. Many students and staff would not consider themselves religious but can get benefit and comfort from chaplaincy, traditional liturgy and faith in moments of crisis.

A plan has been submitted to the Secretary's Office by the College Chaplains to engage members of the College community in a community chaplaincy role for staff and students of all faiths. Faith representatives who connect through the Chaplaincy could use this proposed network. Trinity's chaplains are Board appointed but are denominationally supported and are not paid by Trinity unlike all other universities in Ireland. To have a more multi-faith chaplaincy Trinity would need to engage other faiths and connect with and utilise the Dublin City Interfaith Forum.

The Chair noted that there is potential for an informal chaplaincy. In discussion it was noted that those identifying as atheist feel they are not considered a valid group and should be acknowledged too.

If College has a wide and embracing culture it will feed into discussions. Chaplaincy is a service and place for people of all faiths and none and is used by all. Physical space for chaplaincy work is important as is ensuring the visibility of chaplains in College, especially at student and potentially staff orientation, is important.

The Chair thanked Rev Hamilton, his time and work in College was also noted and appreciated as he will be leaving Trinity soon. Rev Hamilton left the meeting.

Ms Jodi Mejury and Ms Emma Bishel, Trinity Jewish Society

The Chair welcomed Ms Jodi Mejury, outgoing chair of the Jewish Society, and incoming chair Ms Emma Bishel. Ms Bishel outlined the work that the Jewish Society does and some of the challenges that they face.

The Society aims to foster a safe space on campus for students practice their Jewish faith and to promote Jewish culture and life. As the only Jewish society in Ireland, they are open to all staff and students across all Irish Universities. Events are also open to young Jewish professionals living in Dublin. Events are mostly related to Jewish holidays and provide a place for students to connect with their faith and for other students to experience Jewish culture in a friendly and open way. Links with outside organisations are fostered, for example with KAHAL, a Jewish study abroad organisation that connects students outside of Trinity. The Society is also supported by UJS (Union of Jewish Students) in the UK and Ireland. The Trinity Chaplaincy has granted a room for holding Shabbat ceremonies each week.

Ms Bishel described a number of discriminatory experiences faced by its members on a regular basis including harassment, comments, stalking, inappropriate jokes, frequently within campus. As a result of harassment, members of the Jewish Society do not feel safe posting their names or photos online. The Society has been working to get an explicit definition of antisemitism named in the SU's dignity and respect policy, however a decision has not yet been reached and the campaign has been forwarded to next September.

It is felt that support is conditional and inconsistent in Trinity for members of the Jewish community. Many members are apprehensive about disclosing their faith on campus and Trinity College seems to tolerate rather than embrace/support Jewish faith and culture. Initially the Society hopes to establish an antisemitism awareness week to help identify and combat discrimination, and for antisemitism training to be incorporated into the regular antiracism training for staff and student union members in the future.

The Chair expressed his regret and upset over the experiences disclosed to the Committee and assured the Society representatives of its commitment to listen to and address these issues.

Dr O'Brien Green noted that EDI has been aware of space issues and particularly in relation to faith spaces on campus. Ms Bishel commented that while organisations on campus are limited in their ability to openly demonstrate faith, an inter-faith room where people could go to pray or spend quiet time would be good. Using the chaplaincy spaces for Shabbat can be uncomfortable due to other religious images being present.

It was noted that different levels of observation within a faith can also cause challenges. Traditions such as the shiva mourning process or Yom Kippur could be better acknowledged by the University.

The Chair thanked Ms Mejury and Ms Bishel and they left the meeting.

Ms Fadilah Salawu, Trinity Muslim Students' Association (MSA)

The Chair welcomed Ms Salawu, outgoing chair of the Muslim Students' Association.

Ms Salawu outlined the goals of the MSA which are to contribute to the cultural enrichment of the college community, establish relations with other Islamic societies, promote friendly relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, conduct social and cultural activities within the traditions of Islam, promote unity and provide support for Muslim students, and participate in dialogue and discussions with other TCD societies.

The MSA is aware that cultural and social differences make the college experience quite different for Muslim students and it aims to create a spiritual balance for these students. Challenges faced include a lack of recognition of and accommodation for religious practice. As part of Trinity-INC project student partners they were able to share posters and raise awareness about Ramadan and Eid, but many students had to sit exams at this time which was challenging. Misunderstandings occur due to lack of information about what Muslims do or what Islam is about. Some students have experienced islamophobic sentiments in their teaching and experience and there is frequently a lack of sensitivity among lecturers. The intersection of being an ethnic minority and Muslim also needs to be considered. A standardized response to global issues such as Ukraine highlighted for many Muslim students a lack of proportionate response to crises in their own countries.

College could take a more prominent role in educating the wider community where it has been left to Muslim students to explain themselves and educate others. It can be hard to find a space in the chaplaincy as it is rooted in the Christian faith - something is needed between counselling and the chaplaincy that is more accommodating of people from different religious backgrounds.

In discussion it was noted that a calendar of religious holidays is a useful first step in raising awareness in College - this has been developed by Trinity INC and can be accessed on the equality website. It was noted that religious diversity training is available in some universities and should be available in Trinity also. The Muslim prayer rooms are hidden away and quite inaccessible, and empty rooms around campus which are unused after office hours could be considered for faith activities. The Chair acknowledged the importance of parity of esteem and suggested that a working group may be needed for this area.

The AVPEDI commented on the usefulness of these conversations and noted that parallel themes are emerging around College spaces. EDI will look at bringing these issues forward to the Space Planning Group. The Chair thanked all for their work in bringing this conversation about and brought this item to a close.

KEY UPDATES

Equal/21-22/053 EDI Office and Athena SWAN

EDI Landscape Review of Governance: Four EDI leads (from Utrecht, Manchester, KU Leuven and TU Dublin) met with a variety of groups across College. We are now awaiting their report and follow on discussions will then take place with the VP/CAO and the Provost.

IHREC Public Sector Duty Toolkit for Universities: Work is ongoing. The AVPEDI thanked Dr Derina Johnson of Trinity-INC who organized a validation session around the public sector duty assessment framework. EDI met with Values Lab, the IUA and UCD last Friday and a final version of the toolkit will be forthcoming. This will help in evaluating the work we do, identifying gaps, and then planning to address gaps. There is an increased emphasis on monitoring and enforcement by IHREC and annual reporting by Trinity will be required to meet this Duty,

Surveys: A HEA survey on gender equality in HEIs went live in March. It was hoped that this would not affect the response rate to our current EDI and Athena SWAN institutional survey, which is still live. The AVPEDI thanked Dr O'Brien Green, Ms Sam Williams, and colleagues in the Consent Framework Implementation Working Group for their input to a HEA submissions on gender equality via the IUA VP EDI Group and a separate submission from Trinity.

Racial and Ethnic Equality Working Group (REEWG): A report from the focus groups last summer is currently being finalised and it is planned it will go to Board this academic year. The AVPEDI thanked Dr Phil Mullen and colleagues in the REEWG for their help in preparing a Trinity response to the HEA's call for submissions on recommendations for race equality in HEIs in Ireland.

Gender Equality Enhancement Funding: We are partnering in several applications and leading one application for GEEF funding – the deadline is 27th May 2022 which has changed from the deadline in 2021 which was September.

National Disability Authority: Dr O'Brien Green has led work on preparing a response on numbers of disabled members of staff. This links to our obligations under Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 which on statutory reporting on employment of people with disabilities in the public sector.

The AVPEDI commented that there are increasing requests for data on EDI work annually and this has been raised by the IUA.

Athena SWAN applications: The AVPEDI congratulated the School of Medicine who received a bronze award in March. Following changes to the Athena SWAN review process, an estimated 40% of applicants are now asked to revise and resubmit their applications. The EDI office is looking at this in terms of submission timelines and school/EDI Office workload. Two more schools (Pharmacy and Education) are preparing first time applications for the next Athena SWAN award submission round.

Athena SWAN institutional application: Work is ongoing. EDI are engaging with working groups and with EDI reviewers to consider where this committee should sit in relation to the Equality Committee. The timeline for final submission is April-June 2023. The EDI Athena SWAN Trinity institutional survey is live and all are encouraged to complete it as this data is vital for the institutional silver award application.

ASAP scholarship and Scholars at Risk fund: EDI are working with TAP to see how to streamline the process for supporting this work.

Equal/21-22/054 Sub-Group Updates

Subgroup updates were brought forward in advance of the guest speakers.

AEMR Subcommittee

Dr O'Brien Green shared the following updates. Dataset access with HR has been established and ongoing work to harmonise data collection points with CSO Census and HEA survey categories to provide more coherent and comparable data reporting is in train. Progressing dataset access with AR by EDI Data Analyst is ongoing. Increasing staff completion of Core HR portal data is crucial for up to date and robust data. EDI Office have added links to do this on our website, survey, presentations, etc, but we are not seeing a substantial increase in Portal data use and completion by staff. The EDI Office is looking forward to collaborating with the new Trinity DAiSi unit in terms of developing more robust data reporting routes. Members of the Trinity EDI Data Working Group has been contacted by the EDI Data Analyst who is trying to secure a meeting date. The EDI Office is exploring with Dr Na Fu and HR colleagues how recent Trinity all-staff surveys can support the existing data used in the AEMR and provide a more coherent and comprehensive outline of staff experiences with and EDI lens.

Staff Disability Working Group

Dr O'Brien Green shared an update from the Group's Chair Dr Fu. Meetings are scheduled up to end of November. Work is ongoing on three projects, details of these were shared at the last Equality Committee meeting. Work has been done on the staff disability data submission which was sent to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). This Trinity submission highlighted challenges of using methodology and forms not suited to a dynamic university staff context and have requested meetings with DFHERIS EDI Unit staff and the National Disability Authority as part of the forthcoming stakeholder consultation on this process to improve these data collection methods. The need for national and institutional communications with staff on why data sharing is important was also outlined.

Equality Fund

Nine projects were offered funding, clarifications from some projects were requested, eight letters accepting Fund terms and conditions countersigned and returned, many projects have commenced and a number of queries are received to the Equality Officer weekly on payments and project promotion. Projects 'Finding Sanctuary in Trinity's Nature & Heritage'; 'Stand up, Speak Out! A racial justice convening for minoritised ethnic healthcare students' and 'UNPrivileged' start this week. The Equality website will be updated with details of new projects after the site has migrated to the new content management system.

Equal/21-22/055 Items for Noting

Ms Gaynor presented a brief overview of the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021. Employers will be required to report annually on the difference in remuneration between male and female employees. Data gathered will be used to identify how to reduce the gap and reported on within six months of the snapshot date in June 2022.

It was noted that HR will be leading out on reporting this on behalf of Trinity. The AVPEDI informed the group that the EDI office has been invited to participate in an application on this subject as part of the HEA Gender Equality Enhancement Fund call.

Equal/21-22/056 Any Other Business

The Chair thanked Dr O'Brien Green for her contribution to the Equality Committee. Claire Marshall is due to return from leave before the new academic year commences. The Chair thanked all for their contribution during this academic year and closed the meeting.

END