

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Cardiff University Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee held on Tuesday 11 August 2020 via Zoom

Present: Professor Karen Holford (Chair), Michelle Aldridge-Waddon, Michelle Alexis, Venice Cowper, Kathryn Davies, Georgie East, Dr Sam Hibbitts, Professor Tim Phillips, Helen Obee Reardon and Cadi Thomas.

In attendance: Julie Bugden, Jane Chukwu, Karen Harvey-Cooke, Susan Cousins, Elaine Howells (for Matthew Williamson), Gareth Hughes, Rashi Jain, Michelle Jones, Catrin Morgan, Helen Mullens [to minute 726.4], Charlotte Shand, Gail Thomas and Geoff Turnbull.

Apologies for absence were received from Professor Rudolf Allemann, Professor Gary Baxter, Professor Kim Graham, Claire Morgan, Jude Pickett, Claire Sanders, Professor Damian Walford Davies and Matthew Williamson.

722 Welcome

Noted

- .1 that the Chair opened the meeting and welcomed new members to the Committee;
- .2 that this Special Meeting of the Committee had been arranged following the final meeting of the previous session to consider the Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan and the impact of COVID-19 and the new way of working may impact on activity;
- .3 that minutes of this Special Meeting and the ordinary meeting of 12 May 2020 would both be considered at the Committee meeting of 7 October 2020.

723 Membership

Received paper 20/02, 'ED&I Committee Membership'.

Resolved

to co-opt the VP Postgraduate, Students' Union to the Committee for a period of one year.

724 Measures of Impact of COVID-19 on working environment for staff

Received paper 20/03, 'Measures of impact of COVID-19 on Working Environment for staff' and a presentation from Helen Obee Reardon, Chair of the Gender Equality Steering Group.

Noted

- 724.1 that initial discussions undertaken around the impact of COVID-19 in relation to gender highlighted that there were variations in experiences and that there was potential for inequalities to be amplified;
- 724.2 that a project to explore the impact on staff, taking account of intersectionality and looking at how they could be supported has been developed. 'Our Stories, a Listening Project: equalities impacts of COVID-19' will initially call for staff to share their stories, to listen and analyse their experiences to help develop outcomes and ways in which staff can be supported;
- 724.3 that the project will be launched on 21 September. The current plan is for the information to be used to develop toolkits and enhance processes and procedures although it is acknowledged that other activities may be introduced as analysis is undertaken;
- 724.4 that the project was welcomed by the committee. A discussion took place on the need for this work to be fully supported by other groups, such as the COVID-19 Taskforce and Infrastructure Operations Group and outcomes embedded within the University;
- 724.5 that other points raised were:
- this project was not intended to replace any grievance or complaint to the University but that consideration needed to be given to how serious concerns were followed up
 - that consideration needed to be given to how outcomes would be monitored
 - that the request needed to reach out to staff at all levels and with all experiences (working from home, furloughed, operational staff on campus) and offers of help were received
 - that it was proposed HR Business Partners work with the Chair of the Gender Equality Steering Group;
- 724.6 that the Chair of the Gender Equality Steering Group agreed to discuss this project with the Students' Union offers to inform any decision to progress a similar project by the SU.

725 **Update on Taskforce Equality Impact Assessments**

Received an oral update from Catrin Morgan, University Secretary's Office Head of Compliance and Risk.

Noted

- 725.1 that a shorter Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) template had been developed to streamline the process in light of the volume of EIAs required to be undertaken by COVID-19 Taskforce groups;

- 725.2 that to date approximately 20 EIAs had been undertaken as part of this process and the key points which had arisen included:
- those with caring duties had been widely impacted
 - accessibility both physical and digital was a recurring consideration
 - within research there had been a marked difference on the impact in relation to gender (publication and citation of female academics had gone down)
 - an intention to provide for flexibility of application based on specific need within EIAs hadn't always been specifically referenced in the policy. This resulted in lack of clarity around the flexibility that could be expected or how this could be carried out in practice
 - there was sometimes a reticence to detail any potential impact that remained challenging or could not be fully mitigated. It was noted that even where the University was unable to fully mitigate an impact, acknowledging an impact existed was important;
- 725.3 that there had been positive feedback from the groups that EIAs had helped to identify matters which would not have been addressed through other means and that having diversity of thought within such groups was of significant benefit;
- 725.4 a discussion took place on emerging impacts of the COVID-19 situation on different groups including socio-economic status, individuals' domestic arrangements (such as household situations and digital poverty) and international students;
- 725.5 that finalised EIAs were being published on the intranet and a link to this page would be circulated.
- 726 **Update on Student Support and Wellbeing**
- Received an oral update from Gareth Hughes, Head of Health and Wellbeing.
- Noted
- 726.1 that progress on the SEP actions had been impacted by the need to focus on moving the services provided by Student Support and Wellbeing to an online/remote provision;
- 726.2 that the demand for support in relation to mental health issues was lower than had been seen for a similar period in previous years however the support sought was for more severe issues;
- 726.3 that new priorities, opportunities and activities had emerged in response to the situation and the change in demand for the different services offered, including:

- working closely with community partners in mental health and the GP cluster
- producing an online orientation platform for new students with a variety of relevant sections including EDI, widening participations and guidance for International students

- 726.4 that the majority of sessions/appointments will be held virtually, with face to face appointments occurring when necessary subject to social distancing and risk assessments;
- 726.5 that the Residence Life and peer mentor programmes would be on a digital platform. A discussion was held on the importance of ensuring that all students were reached and that care needed to be given in relation to any gaps in the service. The SU advised that discussions had taken place as to how peers may be able to provide support in these circumstances;
- 726.6 that there had been an initial wave of International students accessing support prior to the 'no detriment policy' but there had been no discernible increase in BAME students seeking support in light of the Black Lives Matter movement. Student Support and Wellbeing would report the breakdown of data to the Committee at its next meeting;
- 726.7 that student demand continues to outstrip resource through the year. Recently funding has been made available for front line staff; 1.5 FTE in the counselling team, 1.4 FTE in the wellbeing team and 0.6 FTE for the Disclosure Response Team. The priority is to appoint appropriately qualified and experienced staff given demand;
- 726.8 that there was a clear message of reassurance to students that support would be readily available.

727 **Review priorities for Strategic Equality Plan**

Received an oral update from Catrin Morgan: University Secretary's Office Head of Compliance and Risk, Karen Harvey-Cooke: Organisational Staff Development Manager, Dr Sam Hibbitts: Dean of EDI, Julie Bugden: EDI Officer and Geoff Turnbull, Deputy Director of Estates (Operations).

Noted

727.1 **Objective 1**

- .1 that there had been little progress on the actions relating to Inclusive Curriculum due to key staff being involved in arrangements for responding to the impact of COVID 19, however work had been carried out around digital accessibility and there are examples of pockets of good practice at school level e.g.

School of Earth and Ocean Sciences had taken action on this topic;

- .2 that there was still a need to consider further what fell within the meaning of 'Inclusive Curriculum' and to align this work with current groups (e.g. BAME Awarding Gap working group) and the activity in Registry and Widening Participation;
- .3 that preliminary work had been undertaken on the student EDI module and skeleton content has been prepared for consultation with stakeholders around the University;
- .4 that work on the contextual admissions policy had not been progressed as other work had been prioritised; however Widening Participation have made significant strides including:
 - The Discovery project has moved online as a result of COVID19. A summer programme was delivered through Minecraft and will be producing an evaluation report in September 2020
 - Widening Participation Strategy and Evaluation Manager recruited, working with Admissions to produce data to establish programmes with gender imbalances
 - A mini team has been created to focus specifically on Transition for vulnerable groups, including Mature Students. A Mature Students welcome event will be delivered virtually in September 2020
 - Community Outreach activities are under review following the pandemic
 - University's Live Local: Learn Local programme is being reviewed with a view to moving to a digital platform;
- .5 That the BAME Awarding Gap Group are combining the evidence from the #closingthegap report, aligning with the qualitative Cardiff University data and outputs from the senior staff conference to develop the action plan to be available in 20/21. The action plan will feed into the University's Race Equality Steering Group, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and Academic Standards and Quality Committee for coordination and monitoring against the agreed outcome measures.
- .6 The Committee received an update on Student Support actions as part of the update from Gareth Hughes (above)

727.2 Objective 2

- .1 that analysis of the data for applications had been progressed and the Chair of the Race Equality Steering Group had collaborated on the process of anonymising applications;
- .2 that the mandatory Understanding Unconscious Bias training had a 57% completion rate and that timescales may need to be reviewed on research recruitment, particularly following the University signing up to DORA;
- .3 that the Equal Pay Audit had been prepared and would now be considered by the Equality in Reward Group;
- .4 that a Diversity in Leadership Group had been established and six participants from the Academic Promotions Development Group for women and/or BAME staff had been promoted and plans were underway for the second cohort and for looking to establish a hybrid for professional services and academic staff;
- .5 that the Wellbeing Strategy will be launched in September and that the Employee Assistance Programme was working well and the Care First series of webinars throughout the period of remote working had been well received.

727.3 Objective 3

- .1 that a key component of this objective relied on the services of an external provider. A lot of their activity was based on face to face delivery and how they were able to provide their services within the current situation was outside the control of the University;
- .2 that consideration would need to be given as to what needed to be prioritised as part of this objective, and the financial implications;
- .3 REF has been delayed until 2021 and EIAs have been carried out on the process.

727.4 Objective 4

- .1 that whilst little progress had been made on the action around the physical environment an enormous amount of work had been undertaken in relation to students and staff returning to campus following lockdown, and work would continue to be done on this through the coming academic year;
- .2 that in light of the current situation resources were being reviewed and tasks allocated internally where possible;

- .3 that collaborative work was being undertaken with the Academic Registrar in relation to orientation and virtual and physical tours of the campus;
- .4 that work had progressed on digital accessibility, in particular a mobile friendly design had been delivered;
- .5 that the University was now a member of the Business Disability Forum and work would be taken forward with them to review the University's processes and practices;
- .6 that a suggestion was made to invite a member of IT with digital accessibility expertise to participate in EDI Committee and this would be considered ahead of the next meeting.

727.5 Objective 5

- .1 that the University Secretary (interim) was progressing this action in line with the recommendation of the Welsh Secretaries and Clerks Group and that current calls for nominations included inclusive wording to encourage nominations from all groups;
- .2 that a new EIA template and guidance was being developed and would be rolled out with accompanying training.

727.6 that action owners would be responsible for reviewing actions ahead of the final annual report on action to be considered by the Committee in January and to make any necessary adjustments for the new action plan;

727.7 that action owners also were responsible for informing budget holders of any financial implications and submitting requests through the usual channels.

728 **Date of next meeting**

Noted the date for the next meeting: 7 October 2020 at 10:00.