

**University Of Dublin**  
**Trinity College**  
**Equality Committee**

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**Minutes of a meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at 2 p.m. in the Board Room, House 1.**

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**Present:** Dr N Marples (Chair), Ms A FitzGerald, Ms L Power, Dr M Ó Siochrú\*, Mr D Quinn, Ms C Byrne, Ms K Campos McCormack (secretary).

**Apologies:** Vice-Provost, Ms R Torode, Ms C Hannon, Dr O Doyle, Ms S Cameron-Coen (GSU), Ms S Fleming (SU), Ms A Taylor, Prof E Drew.

**In attendance:** Mr Declan Reilly in lieu of Declan Treanor, Mr Joe Richardson\*\* in lieu of Professor Colm O'Morain, Ms Sinead Mac Bride\*\*\*.

\*Present for: Eqa/10-11/13 -Eqa/10-11/24

\*\*Present for: Eqa/10-11/22 -Eqa/10-11/30

\*\*\* Present for: Eqa/10-11/21

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**Items for Board attention are denoted XXX**

**Eqa/10-11/13 Minutes** The minutes of the previous meeting, 18 November 2010, were approved and signed.

**Eqa/10-11/14 Matters arising** were discussed and minuted below.

**Eqa/10-11/15** [Eqa/10-11/03] **Undergraduate maternity policy** Ms Campos advised the Committee that a meeting had been held with the Senior Lecturer regarding the development of an UG maternity policy and where possible the guiding principles in order to facilitate students in completing their studies. Ms Campos advised that a statement regarding maternity policy is to be developed for inclusion in the Calendar following a meeting of the Senior Lecturer and the SU Welfare Officer. The issue of repeat fees for students who do not complete the year due to maternity was being explored and was largely dependant on HEA fee requirements. The Chair suggested that in developing the policy care was taken for it to be inclusive of fathers' caring role and consideration be given to calling the policy a 'primary carer' policy.

**Action:** Ms Campos to report on progress on the development of this policy at the next Committee meeting.

**Eqa/10-11/16** [Eqa/10/11/03] **Criteria for allocation of College accommodation** The Committee discussed the response from the Registrar of Chambers (tabled by Ms Campos) to the Committee's memo suggesting that greater transparency was required in the room allocation criteria and process. The Committee noted that a

range of possible contributions to College life are taken into account in the discretionary room allocation process, and suggested that the Registrar of Chambers explore fully the possibility of developing indicative criteria for the allocation of rooms. The Committee suggested these guidelines could be made available on the website for the information of accommodation applicants regarding what types of contribution to College life and other relevant criteria would be considered in the allocation of rooms.

**Action:** Ms Campos to communicate to the Registrar of Chambers the Committee's suggestion to develop indicative guidelines on room allocation criteria for information purposes.

**Eqal/10-11/17** [Eqal/10-11/06] **Equality Fund** Ms Campos advised that this action would be discussed by the Equality Fund sub-Committee at its next review meeting, scheduled for September 2011.

**Eqal/10-11/18** [Eqal/10-11/07] **Post Graduate Supports** Ms Campos advised the Committee of the meeting that took place with the Dean of Graduate Studies, Ms Thornbury, Ms Power, Ms Arnedillo and the GSU Vice President to discuss the issues raised at the Committee regarding the relative vulnerability of some PG research students in relation to dignity and respect issues. The current supports and systems in place for PG students were discussed at the meeting and felt to be sufficient by the Dean. The Committee welcomed the proposal to provide information about supports and sources of help - such as the Postgraduate Advisory Service and Contact Persons - to PG students at registration and at the Confirmation interview, which takes place within the first 18 months of the PhD programme. Ms Campos noted that the Graduate Studies Office play a key role in addressing any issues that may arise, and facilitating changes in supervisory arrangements where necessary. The Committee noted the Dean will introduce measures to assist students experiencing difficulties in the future. Ms Campos advised that the Dignity and Respect information brochure was to be distributed to all PG students at registration (measure supported jointly by the Graduate Studies Office and the Equality Office). The Committee discussed the benefits of systems in place in some Schools in College and other institutions whereby a Committee was appointed to each PhD student; the Chair noted this had insignificant resource implications and worked efficiently where in place. The Committee suggested that the Chair and Dr Ó Siochrú liaise directly with the Dean on this matter.

**Action:** The Chair and Dr Ó Siochrú to liaise with the Dean of Graduate Studies to discuss the possibility of a co-supervision Committee system being extended across College.

**Eqal/10-11/19** [Eqal/10-11/05] **Dignity and Respect Policy** Ms Power advised the Committee that the policy had been amended accordingly and that these changes had been communicated in writing to the Secretary to the Group of Unions.

**Eqal/10-11/20** [Eqal/10-11/03] **Orientation for international PG students** Ms Campos advised that a memo had been sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Director of the International Office regarding the provision of additional orientation to international PG students. Ms Campos advised that a reply had been received from the Dean of Graduate Studies but a response was awaited from the International Office. The Chair noted that the role of the International Office was being reviewed in the context of strategic commitments to increase the number of international students.

## Section A – Policy issues

**Eqal/10-11/21 Legal advice on the provision of reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities**  
**XXX** Ms Mac Bride advised the Committee that legal advice had been sought on behalf of the Disability Service, the Senior Lecturer's Area and the Accommodation Office to assess the current extent of legal compliance in the provision of reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities (memo circulated). Ms Mac Bride advised the Committee that on foot of the advice received College was largely compliant, noting however that there was very little case-law in relation to the provision of reasonable accommodation in the education sector. Ms Mac Bride recommended that relevant Heads of Area meet to discuss the recommendations.

The legal advice circulated addressed the issue of compliance in the provision of reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities in relation to: student admission to a course, College accommodation, disclosure of disability information to the Disability Service and other relevant services, duty of care, intellectual property, special examination facilities and flexibility in the scheduling of exams. Mr Reilly advised that the primary concern around disclosure of a disability was to facilitate the provision of supports to students with disabilities, noting the provision of reasonable accommodation was dependent on students accepting this disclosure of relevant information. The Committee discussed the advice regarding copyright of lecture materials, noting the issue was one of access to materials for students rather than copyright, and suggested that students who were provided with equipment to record lectures should be requested to sign a form clarifying the purpose of the recording. Mr Reilly advised that there was rarely a problem with the request to record lecture material except in limited circumstances such as small group teaching where this could discourage student participation.

The Committee supported the recommendation that the College facilitate a repeat exam opportunity for students who complete their first exam sitting in the supplemental period for medical or disability reasons and who would otherwise have no repeat opportunity.

**Action:** Mr Treanor to convene a meeting with the relevant Heads of Area to discuss the legal advice recommendations.

**Eqal/10-11/22 Civil Partnership Act 2010**  
**XXX** Ms Campos advised the Committee of the key provisions and implications for College of the *Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010* (memo circulated) that came into force on 1 January 2011. Ms Campos advised that the Act was significant in providing the first legal recognition of same-sex relationships and involved amendments to a great number of other legislative pieces. The Committee noted that the broad effect of the Act is to provide comparable rights to registered same-sex civil partners and opposite-sex married couples. Ms Campos noted the Act had two provisions for two separate schemes, a civil partnership registration scheme and a presumptive cohabitation scheme for same-sex and opposite sex couples.

Ms Campos outlined the key implications for the College in terms of compliance with changes in language and legislation outlined in the Act so as to prevent

direct or indirect discrimination in relation to civil status; and suggested the following actions:

- Amending all policies and procedures to refer to 'spouse or civil partner' and to 'civil status', instead of 'spouse' and 'marital status'.
- Amend all references to equality legislation to refer to civil status.
- Extend all employment spouse benefits (such as the fee remission scheme) to civil partners.
- Extend pension spouse benefits to civil partners (action pending 2<sup>nd</sup> Finance Bill).
- Modification of HR personnel systems to reflect civil status categories.

Ms Campos advised the new Equality Policy had been amended accordingly and that discussion had already taken place with the Staff Office with regards to the implementation of the Act in terms of compliance and good practice actions.

Ms Campos suggested that the Civil Partnership Act would help create a cultural change where staff might be more open about their sexual orientation, and was an opportunity to further good practice and to raise College's profile as an LGB friendly environment. Ms Campos drew the Committee's attention to further recommended actions: to review of policies and communications language to reflect inclusive practice; to explore strengthening inclusive family policies; to strengthen liaison with other LGB staff networks (e.g. UCC and UCD) and to provide diversity training to all relevant staff, noting that some of these would be dependent on resources.

The Chair suggested the need for guidance on the meaning of 'civil status' where this change was implemented, and noted that the changes in language required by the legislation were due to the legislation not providing civil partnerships with the full recognition of civil marriage. The Committee expressed its support of the Staff Office extending its family policies to be more inclusive where practicable, noting this would be a step beyond the legislation which was limited in its recognition of same-sex parents. Ms Campos also advised it was hoped the LEAD (Living Equality and Diversity) programme being piloted would help address the need for providing diversity training to staff.

Actions:

- Ms Campos to ensure equality materials are amended to reflect changes in equality legislation.
- Ms Campos to communicate the required changes for the implementation of the Act to relevant policy creators in College.
- Ms Campos to progress the good practice actions regarding communications, networks and development strategy.
- Staff Office to review its policies and spouse benefit schemes for compliance with the Act.
- Staff Office to explore the possibility of developing more inclusive family policies

## **Section B – Implementation issues**

**Eqal/10-11/23 Equality Committee Annual Report 2009-2010**  
**XXX** The Equality Committee welcomed the Annual Report which includes a report of the activities of the Committee and the Equality Officer. Ms Campos highlighted the key subjects treated by the Committee in 2009-2010 which included setting the Equality Plan strategy for 2010-2014. Ms Campos noted that the area of work identified by the Committee as requiring further action in its review was the provision and

mainstreaming of equality training; and that this was being addressed by means of the LEAD programme pilot (sectoral IUA Equality Network project). The Committee had made a strong recommendation for equality training to be mandatory for all staff participating in interview Boards and this was approved by Board. The Committee had also progressed the review of access and equality policies and development of a new Equality Policy. The Committee progressed a number of amendments relating to the Dignity and Respect Policy to facilitate its implementation and monitored communication and awareness activities, as well as reviewing statistics on the numbers of staff and students accessing Contact Person supports. In relation to the Disability Act the Committee considered matters relating to the accessible information policy and physical access developments.

Ms Campos noted the continued under-representation of women in senior levels of academia in College that had been discussed by the Committee. The Chair noted that although several reports had been completed on this issue there appeared to be little noticeable progress towards gender balance. The Committee discussed the complexity of addressing this issue, and Ms Campos and Ms FitzGerald noted that it was hoped the INTEGER project, led by WiSER, would be a means of developing good practice in promoting gender equality in research at School level.

Ms Power noted that the Parental Group (a sub-Committee of the Equality Committee) had not convened in the last year due to limited staff availability and involvement, and that she would be reviewing the future role of the group.

Ms Campos also outlined the key activities carried out by the Equality Office in 2009-2010. The highlights of the year included Trinity College being selected as an 02 Ability Company in all six categories and finalist in three categories; €20,000 external funding secured for the IUA Equality network pilot project; the development of the new Equality Policy; the gender analysis reports on the Merit Bar completed at the request of the Vice-Provost; and the provision of dignity and respect training to Tutors and S2S mentors.

The report includes an updated action plan with time-lines. Ms Campos noted that the key areas of development for the future were the development and piloting of the LEAD programme, implementation of the Equality Policy and ongoing awareness and implementation activities for the Dignity and Respect Policy. The Committee discussed the possibility of re-applying for the 02 Awards, noting the beneficial impact of participating in the Awards and the resources involved in the review process; it was suggested this could be reconsidered at a future date.

**Actions:**

- Ms Campos to submit the Report to Board together with the minutes.

**Eqal/10-11/24 Equality Policy launch and implementation** Ms Campos outlined to the Committee the steps that would be taken to ensure the communication and implementation of the Equality Policy approved by Board under the following headings (discussion paper circulated):

- XXX**
- Launch and communication of the policy: coordinated internal communications over a 2 week period discussed with the Communications Office. Suggested start date 11 April.
  - Strategy meeting with key stakeholders: to agree time-lines, identify key target groups and mainstreaming strategy;

- Information meetings with relevant areas;
- Mainstreaming strategy;
- Equality evaluation/implementation tool;
- Equality and diversity awareness and training (LEAD programme roll-out).

The Committee welcomed this strategy. The Chair suggested that communications regarding the policy should highlight key changes and developments in a succinct manner in order to get the message to the greatest range of College staff.

**Actions:**

- Ms Campos to proceed with the implementation strategy as discussed. Ms Campos to convene a stakeholder meeting and proceed with the communications outlined.

**Equal/10-11/25 Accessible Information Policy implementation report** Mr Reilly advised the Committee on the progress made in the second year of the implementation of the Accessible Information Policy (report circulated). The report outlines progress in the identified actions in relation to: the review of findings from the Self-accessible Information audit completed in Year 1 (website online tools/print documentation/training and awareness); a summary of Departmental reports; additional development and implementation items and goals for Year 3 of the policy implementation.

Mr Reilly drew the Committee's attention to the progress made in the development of additional easy to follow online resources and the development of a TIC self-evaluation tool for administrative areas. Mr Reilly advised that there had been engagement with ISS regarding the embedding of accessibility in other ISS training programmes, however this would not be implemented at present due to resources and the move to online training. An identified action was to promote staff in moving to Windows 2007 and Adobe PDF 8 to facilitate the creation of accessible information. There had also been progress in the embedding of accessibility in the procurement process and a series of meetings with external service providers had taken place. Ms Campos commented on the utility of the resources available on the TIC website in terms of easy to use self-assessment and guidance on producing accessible documents.

Mr Reilly advised that there had been useful engagement with a number of College service areas (including Staff Office, Sports and Recreation, Careers Service, Vice-Provost office, Treasurer's Office, Secretary's Office, Office of the COO and Student Counselling), with identified actions for these areas. The Committee discussed the need to secure engagement with the remaining areas, suggesting other communication and strategic opportunities, and Mr Reilly advised that efforts for engagement would continue with all areas. The Committee also discussed the benefits of providing specific accessible information training as a means to communicate the accessible information message and commented positively on the training programme implemented this year.

**Equal/10-11/26 IUA Equality Network Diversity Sectoral project update** Ms Campos advised the Committee that the content for the IUA Equality Network e-learning project had been finalised and the programme would be called the LEAD (Living Equality and Diversity) Programme. Ms Campos outlined the next stages including the user acceptance testing with 5 people in each university; and following that the pilot being rolled out to approximately a hundred staff in College, which would

include staff who normally participate in interview panels. Ms Campos advised of the communication strategy to ensure buy-in for the pilot and of the meeting with the Faculty HR advisors, who would liaise with the Deans and help identify the target group for the pilot in each Faculty; for administrative staff this would be raised via the Senior Administration group. The suggestion that Committee members would participate in the pilot was welcomed.

**Section C – Matters for noting**

**Eqal/10-11/27 International Women’s Week** (programme circulated) The Chair drew attention to International Women’s Week 2011 activities. Ms Campos commented that there had been good visibility for the week, with significant student engagement and a range of activities on campus, including the launch of UN Women.

**Any Other Business**

**Eqal/10-11/28 Contact Persons Panel** Ms Power advised that there would be a need to recruit one to two new Contact Persons and that she would initiate the process over the summer.

**Eqal/09-10/29 Committee membership** Ms Campos advised that there would be a nomination for a new Committee member to replace Therese Moloney at the next Committee.

**Eqal/09-10/30 Health Promotion week** Ms Power drew the Committee’s attention to the coming Health Promotion Week running in College 21-25 March which would include a focus on mental and physical health.

**Eqal/09-10/31 Transgender ground** Ms Campos advised the Committee that the Equality Officer and Staff Office would be proofing policies to ensure the inclusion of transgender staff and students. Ms Campos advised that transgender people were protected from discrimination in equality legislation under the gender ground, but that it might be appropriate to make this protection more explicit in College materials.

Signed .....

Date .....