



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Minutes of a meeting of the Equality Committee

Thursday 14 May 2015, 2pm, School of Nursing and Midwifery Seminar Room 0.54

Present: Dr C McCabe (Chair), Ms K O'Toole-Brennan, Mr M McKeown, Prof E McCabe, Prof M Cuypers, Ms S MacBride, Mr J Cumiskey, Mr L Field (secretary).

Apologies: The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (Prof L Hogan), Prof J Walsh, Mr A Hanna (GSU), Dr E Curtis, Mr I Mooney (SU).

Absent: Prof M McCarron (Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences).

In Attendance: Mr A Costello, College Disability Service (Eqal/14-15/41).

Eqal/14-15/37 Minutes

The Minutes of the Equality Committee meetings on 18 March 2015 were approved.

Eqal/14-15/38 Matters Arising

- Mr McKeown raised Eqal/14-15/28 and asked if the leads of the Equality Fund project requesting additional time had agreed to the Equality Committee's conditions for same. Mr Field confirmed that they had agreed to the conditions.

Eqal/14-15/39 Action Call-over

- **Equality Checklist:** The Equality Checklist has not yet been circulated to the Committee.
- **Reminder of Survey:** The Equality Officer issued a reminder email to all staff and students regarding the completion of the survey and the closing date.
- **Equality Policy Review Working Party Recommendations:** A set of recommendations were submitted to the Committee for discussion at this meeting.
- **Communication of the Equality Committee Statement on Marriage Equality:** Completed.

- **Policy on Supports for Student Parents, Student Carers and Students Experiencing Pregnancy:** The Implementation Plan was circulated to the Equality Committee.
- **Equality Fund Project Extension Request:** The conditions set by the Equality Committee were communicated to the project leads and agreed.
- **Updates on Equality Fund Projects:** These were circulated to the Equality Committee.
- **Reminder of Attendance Obligations:** The Chair has not yet sent this reminder to all Committee members.

Section A – Policy issues

Equal/14-15/40 Recommendations of the Equality Policy Review Working Party

The Chair drew the attention of the meeting to the report from the Equality Policy Review Working Party. The Chair emphasised that the document did not constitute a full recommended draft of the Equality Policy to be sent to Board, but outlined an interim series of recommendations for discussion by the Equality Committee.

Uncertainty regarding the Diversity Strategy, currently being developed by the Director of Diversity & Inclusion, was identified as a major barrier to producing a full draft for recommendation at this meeting of the Equality Committee. Members of the Working Party raised concerns that developing the Diversity Strategy and revising the Equality Policy in isolation from each other may be counter-productive, and could potentially even work at cross purposes. Ambiguity regarding the relationship between the Equality Committee and Director of Diversity & Inclusion, as it is a new role, exacerbated this difficulty. The Chair agreed to raise clarification of this relationship as an Agenda Item at the next Board meeting, in order to try and resolve these issues so that the review can proceed further.

It was noted that the recommendations of the Working Party presented to the Committee were relatively limited. This reflected the feedback received in the consultation process, where the policy itself received little criticism and the main focus was on implementation issues. Accordingly, the recommendations related primarily to communication and implementation.

It was recommended that, as part of communicating the policy, a short summary of the policy with a link to the full document would be provided in hard copy to all new members of the Trinity community. This could take the form of a leaflet, possibly combined with a general introduction to equality in Trinity message, included with

contract packs and registration packs. It was noted that this suggestion runs counter to the current push for soft copy distribution in Trinity.

The recommendation of establishing a Faculty-level Equality and Diversity Officer was considered unrealistic, as it was considered unlikely that academics would be willing to take on liaison duties in addition to their existing workload. It was also observed that the proposal to establish Faculty officers would exclude Administrative Areas from the liaison and data-gathering streams. It was suggested that establishing part-time posts – possibly 0.5 FTE – should be considered for the liaison roles.

It was agreed by the Equality Committee that implementation of the policy was the key area in need of reform and strengthening. It was suggested that a fixed dataset used for equality monitoring may assist with this. Noting the large data-gathering exercise performed for the Athena SWAN application, it suggested that the dataset be linked to this.

The need for clarity from Board regarding areas of confusion, particularly regarding the relationship between the Equality Committee and the Director of Diversity & Inclusion, was strongly emphasised. From an implementation perspective, it was noted as important to determine what role, if any, the Diversity Strategy should have in implementing the Equality Policy.

The issue of resourcing for implementation was also raised. It was suggested that headline implementation issues should be summarised and have costs estimated, in order to request appropriate resourcing.

Action:

- The Chair to raise clarification of the relationship between the Equality Committee and the Director of Diversity & Inclusion as an Agenda Item at the next meeting of Board.

Section B – Implementation Issues

Equal/14-15/41 Accessible Information Policy Implementation Report

Mr Costello from the Disability Service was welcomed into the meeting to comment on the Accessible Information Policy Implementation Report. This is the 6th year that the report has been run.

Mr Costello drew attention to the fact that Trinity launched its first online course in September 2014, a postgraduate Diploma in Applied Social Studies from the School of Social Work and Social Policy. Online courses offer unique opportunities in terms of accessibility, and the Disability Service, in consultation with the School of Social Work and Social Policy, audited the course to ensure that it was as accessible as possible. Feedback from three student users with visual impairments was largely positive. Details of the audit and of the identified actions for improvement are available in the report text.

The report details work done to ensure compliance with the Accessible Information Policy in terms of Procurement and Requests for Tender. The Trinity Procurement Officer has advised that all tendering processes, aside from capital expenditure, shall be transferred away from Trinity to a centralised Government procurement office. The Procurement Office is to advise on how this new system will ensure compliance with the Accessible Information Policy.

It was noted that there is still very low uptake in the Accessible Information training courses offered by the Disability Service. It was suggested that it should be further embedded into training practices to increase uptake, possibly as part of corporate induction.

Mr Costello commented on recent work with Global Relations to ensure Accessible Information compliance, and said that it is positive to see a universal compliance emphasis adopted. Follow-ups with the Project Management Office and the Examinations and Assessment Office to address the same issue are to take place.

Section C – Matters for Noting

Equal/14-15/42 Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Application

Mr Field confirmed that the Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Application for Trinity was completed and submitted in advance of the 30 April deadline. Mr Field

applauded the work of Prof Jane Grimson, Prof Eileen Drew, and the Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team in assembling a comprehensive review of gender data for the last three years. Mr Field also noted that three School Applications were submitted, two Silver Awards (School of Physics and School of Natural Sciences) and a Bronze Award (School of Chemistry). The outcome of the applications should be known by August. Results of the School-level applications are contingent upon a successful Bronze Institutional Application.

Equal/14-15/43 Athena SWAN Physics Silver Award Application

Prof McCabe, the lead author of the School of Physics' Athena SWAN Silver Award Application, confirmed that the application was submitted in advance of the 30 April deadline. Noting the scale of the task, Prof McCabe commented that the Silver application demands six years' worth of data, rather than three as in the Bronze application. Prof McCabe commented that, as a learning outcome from the process, greater complicity is needed in gathering quantitative data. The Committee applauded Prof McCabe on her achievement.

Any Other Business

Equal/14-15/44 Disability Service Activities

Mr Treanor brought two successful Disability Service activities to the attention of the Committee. The first was that Career Pathways, a joint project between the Disability Service and the Careers Advisory Service, has been awarded the Association of Higher Education Careers Services Employability Award in the Large Services category at the Annual gradireland Graduate Recruitment Awards. The Equality Committee congratulated both services on receiving the award.

The second matter to note was that the Disability Service has received a grant from the Confederation of Student Services in Ireland to organise a Conference on Diversity in the Workplace. The Conference shall take place during the Autumn reading week. The Equality Committee congratulated the Disability Service on receiving the grant and wished the Conference organisers well.

Eqal/14-15/45 Public Forum on Marriage Equality Referendum

The Chair reminded the Committee that the postponed Public Forum on the Marriage Equality Referendum will now take place on Tuesday 19 May 2015.

Eqal/14-15/46 Post-Referendum Counselling Services

Mr Treanor informed the Committee that Student Counselling Services are to be made available in the event of a No vote in the Marriage Equality Referendum, to any students affected by the outcome. Mr Treanor noted that no such provision for staff has been discussed.

Eqal/14-15/47 GLEN Workplace Equality Index

Mr McKeown advised the Committee that the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) is to hold its inaugural annual Workplace Equality Index Awards luncheon on 22 September 2015. Deadline for submissions to the GLEN Workplace Equality Index is 30 June 2015.

Signed:

Date: