



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

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EQUALITY COMMITTEE

Minutes

Meeting of 9th April 2020 10:00-11:20am

Online, via Zoom

Present: Prof R Moss (Chair), Prof A Kahane, Ms A Leen (SU), Mr C Rashleigh, Mr C O'Donnell, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Sciences (Prof S Draper), Mr D Treanor, Ms G Scanlon (GSU), Ms S MacBride, Mr T McMahon, Ms K O'Toole-Brennan, Associate Vice Provost for Equality Diversity and Inclusion (Prof C Brook) and Secretary / Equality Officer (Ms C Marshall).

Apologies: Dr Fintan Sheerin

Equal/19-20/010 Opening

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the new Equality Officer and Secretary to the Equality Committee, Ms C Marshall, who was appointed to the role since the last meeting of the Committee. The Chair also welcome Ms S MacBride, who has returned from maternity leave.

Equal/19-20/011 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 21st January 2020 should be amended such that Professor A Kahane is recorded as "Prof" and not "Mr" in the attendance list, and a correction made to point 4) – Equality Trail Working Group, under minute Equal/19-20/005 (Sub-committee/

Sub-group Review) to correct an error where the word “philanthropic” should have been used. The relevant sentence should read “This working group, which was established to create a trail representing landmark moments on Trinity’s journey towards Equality, was stalled last year when its launch conflicted with the philanthropic campaign.”

Equal/19-20/012 Matters arising

The AVPEDI provided an update in relation to Athena SWAN. Three School applications have been submitted for internal review. Up to eight applications in total are expected during this application round, the deadline for which has been postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis. A request has been made for a similar, rolling deadline to be introduced for the November 2020 round also. The AVPEDI reported that the application from the School of Histories and Humanities, submitted last November, was unsuccessful. It is the last application to have been submitted before the new internal review process and additional supports were introduced. At the institutional level, progress is being made in the implementation of Trinity’s Gender Action Plan. It was agreed that Athena SWAN would be included as a standing item on the agenda of future meetings, and that the AVPEDI would make a short presentation on the subject at the next meeting.

The Dean of FEMS asked what the process for giving feedback to applicant Schools would be, and was informed that the Equality Officer has sent written feedback from the internal reviewers to the three Schools who submitted for internal review, and has offered to hold follow-up feedback sessions with each one.

Equal/19-20/013 Equality and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The AVPEDI informed the Committee in relation to equality-related issues and activities underway during the current COVID-19 pandemic. She noted that while equality matters could become side-lined during a crisis such as this, that has not been the case, largely due to the work of many members of this Committee. She informed the group that the Equality

Unit is keeping a diary of good practice during this time, and is leveraging the School Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Teams to gather information about experiences of staff and students in the Schools. The main issue identified thus far is the challenge faced by staff with caring responsibilities. The AVPEDI invited members to contact her with any issues that should be raised with the COVID-19 Response Group.

The Chair invited comment on the item, and a number of points were raised. Ms O'Toole Brennan reported that TAP students have largely been relieved by the decisions that have been made regarding assessment and teaching, which were perceived as flexible and accommodating.

It was noted by several members that an extra burden has been placed on line managers and those responsible for staff in the form of collecting weekly absence data, and that concerns have been raised regarding confidentiality and the administrative burden associated with this task.

Discussion took place regarding the challenges of balancing the flexibility in working practices necessary to facilitate those with caring responsibilities, and the need to maintain core hours for general business. It was noted that email communications being sent and received outside of normal working hours can create added stress, and pressure to respond. Policies around email etiquette and timing have been introduced in other universities, and might be usefully considered here.

ACTION: The Equality Officer to bring a proposal for consideration by the Committee to the next meeting regarding an email hours protocol for the University.

Equal/19-20/014 Equality Trail

Ms K O'Toole Brennan updated the Committee regarding the work of the Equality Trail Working Group, and thanked all its current and former members for their contributions. She noted that the goal was not to capture the full depth and breadth of equality-based

initiatives in Trinity historically, but rather to present a snapshot of a point in time, and to make some of the important achievements and activities tangible. The set of visual materials produced was presented and Ms O'Toole Brennan invited feedback from the group. Once finalised, the images will be printed and installed in agreed locations around the campus, uploaded to the Equality website, and formally launched as part of the launch of the new Equality Unit in the new academic year.

In the discussion that followed, the Committee congratulated Ms O'Toole Brennan on what has been achieved with such a small budget. The Chair noted that there is money remaining in the Equality Fund which could be used to produce longer-lasting versions of the graphics.

Mr Treanor queried whether the images produced would be included in the new undergraduate prospectus. Ms O'Toole Brennan reported that TAP have been invited to contribute a two-page spread to the new prospectus under the banner of widening participation, and that some of the Equality Trail images will be included, along with student testimonials, photos, and information about entry routes and admission requirements.

The Chair thanked Ms O'Toole Brennan for her work on the Equality Trail project.

ACTION: Ms O'Toole Brennan to provide the Chair with revised costings for production.

Equal/19-20/015 Inclusive Remote Working

Mr D Treanor presented on this item and raised equality issues regarding remote working during the current COVID-19 crisis. He emphasised the need for Trinity to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of its broad community. He noted that many staff members are now being asked to work in situations in which they were never intended to, and may not have the requisite technology or quiet space available. While there may be positives in terms of new approaches to flexible working, there can be differential impacts on different groups, and these need to be considered to ensure that better working practices can be implemented for all staff.

Discussion took place following the presentation, and several members of the Committee reported being aware of colleagues feeling under additional pressure at the moment. Ms S MacBride suggested that Mr Treanor should attend the HR Committee to speak about this topic. She also noted, in response to a query from Prof A Kahane, that guidance had been sought and received from law firms on the subject of guidelines and best practice for employment under the current circumstances.

The Chair thanked Mr Treanor for raising this issue, and asked how the Committee might help. It was agreed that these concerns would be raised with the COVID-19 Response Committee via the AVPEDI, who is a member. The AVPEDI noted that HR are working on revised guidance around home working which will be circulated to all staff. She added that it has been agreed that the Equality Officer will join the HR Committee, which will establish an additional connection between the work of both areas. Ms Marshall mentioned that good practice exists from the UK university sector regarding support for staff to balance the benefits of flexibility regarding working hours with the need to ensure staff have protected time off without the expectation to always be available and responsive.

Equal/19-20/016 Disability Service Identity Project

Mr D Treanor presented plans for the redesign and rehousing of the Disability Service, and the associated Identity Project which was conducted with extensive student engagement. It is nearing its final stages, and will next go to Executive Officers' Group. Much consideration went into the new name for the unit, following which "disAbility Hub" was chosen. The new physical space will be student-centred and a naming project has been initiated for the meeting rooms, which will be called after disabled student and graduate leaders. Mr Treanor is exploring the possibility of hosting rotating art installations emphasising diversity in the outside space, and has been in contact with NCAD about student involvement in developing work for the space.

The Chair asked whether or not he has been in contact with the College Curator about the idea for a diversity-themed art installation. Other established links between Trinity and

NCAD were mentioned, which could be explored as additional means to pursue this initiative. The Chair and Mr Treanor will follow up directly with one another in relation to this item. The Chair thanked Mr Treanor for his presentation.

[Mr C Rashleigh left the meeting during this item.]

Equal/19-20/017 Sub-Group Updates

The Chair invited Sub-Group Chairs to report any relevant updates. Ms S MacBride has recently returned from maternity leave and plans to reconvene the Public Sector Duty Subcommittee. She noted that much good work has been done by the group already, and it could be brought to completion without significant additional work.

The Chair reported that she would follow up in relation to the Equality Fund, and that the potential need for revised terms of reference would be considered.

Equal/19-20/018 Other Trinity Bodies

There were no updates from other Trinity bodies.

Equal/19-20/019 Any Other Business

The Chair proposed having an additional meeting before the end of statutory term, subject to there being sufficient business for discussion. It was agreed that the Equality Officer would circulate the Committee with a call for agenda items, and the meeting would only be called if enough items were received.

The Chair then thanked all present for their time, and concluded the meeting.

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