



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

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EQUALITY COMMITTEE

Minutes

Meeting of 12th October 2020 2:00-4:00pm

Online, via Zoom

Present: Prof F Sheerin (Chair), Associate Vice Provost for Equality Diversity and Inclusion (Prof C Brook), Prof A Kahane, Ms L Keogh (SU), Ms S Mac Bride, Mr C O'Donnell, Ms K O'Toole-Brennan, Prof M Ruffini, Mr D Treanor, Ms G Scanlon (GSU), and Secretary / Equality Officer (Ms C Marshall).

Apologies: Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Sciences (Prof S Draper), Mr T McMahon

Equal/20-21/001 Opening

The Chair opened the meeting, took apologies and welcomed new members and all present to the first committee meeting of the new academic year. All members introduced themselves by name and role.

Ms Scanlon noted that the GSU will be represented on the Committee by its new Equality & Diversity Officer, once elected.

Equal/20-21/002 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 27th April 2020 were approved without amendment.

Equal/20-21/003 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

Equal/20-21/004 Action Callover

The Chair invited the Equality Officer to report on the Action Callover which had been circulated. It was noted that two actions from the meeting of 27th May 2020 (Eqal/19-20/023(a), Eqal/19-20/023(b)) were to be discussed under Item 7 on today's agenda. The following updates were provided in relation to the remaining actions:

- Eqal/19-20/023(c) – Mr Mc Mahon provided a written update as he was unable to attend today's meeting. The Project Management Office has adapted the project management process to facilitate Equality Impact Assessments by:
 - (i) adding the approved Equality Impact Assessment form into the PMO templates library
 - (ii) adding the task "Equality Impact Assessment" to the standard project schedules that are used for IT and Change projects in the e-PPM system. This prompts project owners to address EDI issues in planning their projects.
 - (iii) adding an EDI prompt question in their Project Ideation form

Further follow-up is needed in relation to the specifics of what is included in the prompts, to ensure the necessary considerations are included.

- Equal/19-20/025 – A memo was sent by the previous Chair to the Vice Provost, who requested that the EDI Unit lead this. A set of guidelines on email use in the context of work-life balance have been drafted and sent to HR for review. Brief discussion took place, and the University's potential legal responsibility regarding out-of-hours email use was noted. Ms C Marshall will forward the draft guidelines to the Chair for review and further consideration.

Equal/20-21/005 Revised ISL Procedure

Mr Kevan O'Rourke, Disability Service Administrator, attended for this item. Mr O'Rourke presented an update to the 2017 Procedures and Guidelines in Relation to the Provision of ISL / English Interpretation, which he and the Equality Officer had prepared, and which had been circulated to members in advance. The following updates were noted:

- Rates for the provision of ISL interpretation have increased
- Standard cancellation notice required is now five working days (previously 48 hours)
- Accessibility guidelines for online meetings have been added
- Change to the payment procedure to simplify the booking process. Under the revised procedure, all bookings from Trinity staff and students will be made through the Disability Service via an online form. The Disability Service will then organise reimbursement, where relevant for staff-organised events, from HR.

An updated infographic detailed the revised procedure was also presented for discussion and approval. The Chair invited further comment, and in the discussion that followed it was agreed that the procedure should be widely publicised, to ensure that all event organisers are aware of their responsibilities. The Chair noted that the timeliness of this update, and thanked Mr O'Rourke for his presentation. The new procedure was approved.

[The Associate Vice-Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion joined the meeting during this item.]

ACTION: The Chair and Equality Officer to liaise regarding promotion of the new procedures.

Equal/20-21/006 Inclusive Curriculum

The Associate Vice-Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion reported that a new project on inclusive curriculum, Trinity-INC, has been launched this month by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit. The project is funded via the HEA Access Allocation. Due to run initially for one year but with possible continuation beyond that point, the project will focus on issues of accessibility and inclusivity across the protected grounds. The Project Directors are Prof Kumlesh Dev and Prof Rachel Hoare, and the work will be supported by a project officer, a short-term communications officer, and through collaboration with CAPSL. There will be a strong student focus, and students will be involved as partners throughout its development. An Advisory Board is being established, to include staff and students. The project will support the integration of inclusive practices in teaching and assessment within the university.

The Chair thanked Prof Brook for her presentation, and emphasised the importance of this project before inviting comments. Discussion took place, and the relevance of unconscious bias training was noted, as well as the general importance of training for staff to support the implementation of inclusive practices. Ms Keogh reported that the Students' Union are working with the Director of Diversity and Inclusion on a student/staff partnership approach to EDI training for students.

The Chair noted that the Committee will look forward to following the progress of the project with interest.

Equal/20-21/007 Establishment of Subgroups

The Chair invited Ms Marshall to speak to a memo that had been circulated in advance.

(i) Accessible Information and Events Subgroup

Agreement to establish a subgroup to produce guidelines on Accessible Information and Accessible Events was secured at the Equality Committee meeting of 4th April 2018. A revised membership for the subgroup was proposed and approved.

(ii) Staff Disability Working Group

The committee was invited to consider the proposal to establish this subgroup, arising out of the presentation made to the Equality Committee meeting of 27th May 2020. The Chair noted the need for Trinity to meet the target for employment of people with disabilities, due to rise to 6% by 2024, and raised the issue of disclosure. The discussion that took place included the following points:

- Significant proportions of students report experiencing mental health difficulties, and research conducted under the Healthy Trinity scheme indicates that levels among staff are higher than the current disclosure rate of disability among staff members would suggest;
- The Disability Forum, convened by Mr Vivian Rath and Dr Patricia McCarthy, has held a number of consultations as well as monthly virtual coffee mornings. Its work in this area is ongoing;
- The GSU are to appoint a disability officer this year, to support postgraduate students with disabilities.

It was agreed that a subgroup be established, and that consideration is needed regarding its membership and a suitable chair.

ACTION: The Chair will consult the coordinators of the Disability Forum regarding bringing this forward, and will bring a proposal in relation to membership and scope of a subgroup back to the Committee at its next meeting.

The Chair opened discussion of this item, noting the items already discussed which will be priorities, and invited open discussion on further priorities for the Committee for the coming year. It was noted that, as the role of Equality Officer was vacant for much of last year, the focus was largely on continuation of core work such as the Equality Fund and ensuring compliance with statutory obligations.

Members were invited to put forward items for consideration, and the following were raised:

- Inclusion in clubs and societies, particularly while students are largely off-campus due to the pandemic;
- Plans to advance work on equality in relation to race and ethnicity in Trinity are underway as a matter of priority for the EDI Unit. There is overlap between this work and that underway as part of the application for University of Sanctuary status. The SU and GSU have also had reports of a rise in numbers of students experiencing racial discrimination since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- There are a number of different areas, projects and actors engaged in important equality-related work across campus, and their efforts might be strengthened if a mapping exercise was undertaken to ensure clarity and support connections being made between them. The Equality Committee might have a role in mapping the various elements and reporting lines.
- Consideration of how to extend the reach and impact of the Equality Fund, to ensure its relevance and a broad uptake. It was suggested that the Fund Subcommittee should review the themes used over the last five years, and use these to inform a focus for the coming year. It was noted that the call for applications is due to go out shortly, so this consideration would need to take place quickly.

The Chair noted the importance of each of these items, and proposed that an initial task for the Committee could be to map current EDI-related activities in the University. Further consideration should be given to the other priorities raised, and proposal brought to the next meeting.

ACTION: Ms Marshall to compile Equality Fund themes from the past five years and circulate to Fund Subgroup members.

ACTION: The Chair will conduct an initial mapping exercise of EDI activity in the University, and bring a proposal for priority areas of focus to a future meeting.

Equal/20-21/009 Athena SWAN

The Associate Vice-Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion provided an update on Athena SWAN activity. Five Trinity Schools received Bronze awards in the most recent application round, representing a 100% success rate. Prof Brook outlined the steps needed for the University to meet its requirement for eligibility for a Silver application in April 2022. The EDI Unit and HR are working together on a number of key issues including staff appraisal and supports for contract research staff. Significant progress has been made, notably the increase in the proportion of women at Grade A Professor level which now stands at 31%, up from 17% at the time of our first Athena SWAN application in 2015.

The Chair congratulated all involved in achieving the recent Bronze awards, and thanked Prof Brook for the update.

Equal/20-21/010 Subgroup Updates

There were no updates from subgroups.

Equal/20-21/011 Other Trinity Bodies

Ms Keogh provided an update from the Students' Union, reporting that the campaign weeks have been agreed and details have been sent to the Equality Officer for circulation.

Upcoming campaigns will include Disability Awareness Week, Mental Health Week, and Rainbow Week; followed next semester by International Women’s Week. Proposals for collaboration will be welcomed.

Ms Keogh further reported that the Students’ Union has signed up to the Vampire Cup, an inter-varsity competition set up by a group of medical students whereby an award is given to the university that donates the most blood.

The Chair thanked Ms Keogh for this update and the important work involved.

ITEMS FOR NOTING

Equal/20-21/012 Reported experiences of students of colour on clinical placement

The letter circulated was taken as read.

Equal/20-21/013 INVITED Project

Ms O’Toole Brennan responded to the report that had been circulated, noting the plaudits for Ireland contained in its findings, and highlighting the issue of under-representation of male students in some areas of study. She reported efforts underway by TAP to target young men as this cohort is at higher risk of early-school leaving.

Equal/20-21/014 Any Other Business

Mr Treanor informed the Committee that a five-part documentary focusing on access and inclusion issues in higher education, “My Uni Life” was due to be broadcast in early November on RTE, and would feature a Trinity student discussing her experience of attending university as a student with a disability.

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

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