Trinity College Dublin

The University of Dublin

Equality Committee

Minutes

Meeting of 30th September 2021, 10.00am – 12.00pm

Online, via Zoom

Present: Prof F Sheerin (Chair), Associate Vice Provost for Equality Diversity and Inclusion (Prof L Leeson), Prof S Draper, Ms R Gaynor, Dr Bidisha Ghosh, Prof A Kahane, Ms S Muller-Owens, Mr C O'Donnell, Ms K O'Toole-Brennan, Prof M Ruffini, Mr D Treanor, and Secretary / Equality Officer (Dr S O'Brien Green).

In Attendance: Ms S Cantwell (notetaker)

Apologies: none received

Equal/21-22/001   Opening

The Chair welcomed the group, particularly new members: Associate Vice Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Lorraine Leeson; Student Union Welfare Officer, Sierra Muller Owens, and Equality Officer, Siobán O'Brien Green who is covering Claire Marshall's maternity leave.

Equal/21-22/002   Minutes of the Previous Meeting

No changes were recommended and the minutes were approved.

Equal/21-22/003   Matters arising

Mr Treanor noted that the revised accessible information policy, approved by this committee at the last meeting, was due to go to Board in June but will now be presented next week. Mr Treanor recommended that Prof Leeson attend with him.

Equal/21-22/004   Action Callover

Secretary to follow up with Vicky Butler on gender categories used on board nomination forms and try to move this forward. The Registrar should be invited to attend this committee and the Chair will link with the new Registrar.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

Equal/21-22/005   EDI Strategy

Prof Leeson outlined the EDI unit's vision for the new EDI strategy. Prof Leeson commended the work done so far by the Equality Committee and also the working groups, whose work will feed into the new strategy. The work of the Race & Ethnicity Working Group, Staff with Disabilities Working Group, Trinity-INC, Trinity Ability Co-op, all highlight common themes around inclusion for consideration.

As part of the new strategy development process we need to reimagine Trinity and the EDI space and consider where we want to be in 2031 and how to move in that direction.

- The high level principle is that we need to reaffirm and invigorate the idea of College as community regardless of what walk of life we come from. EDI must be a fundamental underpinning principle for all the work we do, not a checkbox exercise and move from reactive to proactive approaches.
- A bottom up approach is needed. Draw from the thematic content coming from the workshops, working groups, and projects that have taken place or are in process. We need to start gathering experiences from areas such as the Trinity creche, Walton Club, retired staff, Fellows emeriti, the Trinity community as a whole.

- We must demonstrate and promote the concept that diversity enriches and promotes excellence.

The Chair thanked Prof Leeson for her update and commented on the lack of diversity among staff in his own school in comparison to the student body. A member suggested that certain student groups (Nigerian, Pakistani) may experience more racism and could be targeted for supports.

It was noted that a longer term view of staff diversity is planned and Athena SWAN and the HEA will also require more reporting of race and ethnicity. The Chair commented that it will be interesting to see how diverse schools will become as staff retire and new staff are hired.

Mr Treanor commented that students and staff considering TCD for work or study want to see the data themselves. An inclusivity statement is needed and everyone should be encouraged to sign up to this. All service areas/administration should be part of this conversation. It was noted that UCD have statements like this around their campus.

Equal/21-22/006   Terminology for Students in Trinity

The Chair provided an update on previous Committee work in relation to the terms Fresh/Fresher/Freshmen. Following the recommendation to move away from 'freshman', this has persisted in some College documentation. The Board had approved this change in principle but changes to the College Statutes are needed. To move this forward a recommendation should be made by this Committee. Prof Leeson noted there may be scope to request changes to the Statutes to be considered, but the process is quite lengthy and could take several years. A conversation with the Provost would be important first to ensure support. Ms Gaynor on this group and Eoin O'Dell in School of Law could advise on this.

The Chair agreed that targeted discussions may be the best way to progress this. Ms Gaynor noted that the HEA will soon issue new recommendations and it may be a good time to attempt to make these changes.

ACTION: Chair will follow up with Provost, Registrar, Rose Gaynor, Professor Eoin O'Dell.

KEY UPDATES

Equal/21-22/007   Trinity's mission statement against racism and discrimination

Prof Leeson informed the group that this was due to go to Board before summer but was pushed back due to a full meeting agenda and further delayed by changes in EDI personnel. Some content in the memo and presentation of this would be informed and contextualised better if we wait until we have the final report from the Race & Ethnicity focus groups which took place in August. Prof Leeson recommended holding off on this until the report has been considered.

Equal/21-22/008   EDI Unit and Athena SWAN

The AVPEDI provided the following update on activity in relation to the work of the EDI Unit and Athena SWAN.

- A catch up/adjustment period has been necessary due to staff changes (AVPEDI and Equality Officer) including a one-month gap in filling the Acting Equality Officer role.

- The Unit expects to have physical space soon in the Arts building which will improve visibility and accessibility.

- EDI Unit enquiries are often highly sensitive or urgent and need to be dealt with on a case by case basis. This comprises a significant amount of the Equality Officer's work.

- The Speak Out tool is to be launched in October by the HEA.

- The EDI in HE training module is up and running and it is planned to promote this College-wide in October once HR is satisfied with the reporting system set-up. There is a potential for micro-credentialling around EDI training in the medium to longer-term, which could build on work being done in the School of Social Work and Social Policy, and by Trinity-INC.

- There are ongoing requests for EDI and unconscious bias training, but a gap exists here as Tony McMahon has moved to the IUA and there is no Projects and Outreach officer yet in the EDI Unit who could take on this work.

- EDI strategy scoping and planning work has commenced, as outlined earlier.

Reports

Internal:

- A submission was made to estates on workspace needs of the EDI Unit 2021-2022 and going forward.
- The Annual Equality Monitoring Report (AMER) 2019/20 will be presented to Board on 6th October. Prof Leeson thanked Siobán, Sam Williams EDI Data Analyst and Susan for their work on this.
- A memo on gender of Fellows has been prepared and submitted to Board for 6th October meeting. Prof Leeson thanked Siobán and Sam for their work on this.

External:

- The Review of Institutional Self-Evaluation report (ISER) in relation to work of EDI Unit and Athena SWAN content in terms of accuracy, is up to date and reflective of work within TCD.
- Completed the TCD submission to the Survey for Public Bodies on the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty to IHREC.

Intersectional Work:

- Work with Trinity-INC is ongoing and includes our participation at Trinity-INC Showcase Events. Their work has been impressive and could be showcased in other spaces.
- Going forward we need to find ways to capture the range of academic work underway on EDI matters in College. Some ideas are being progressed, e.g. we will be meeting with the Library, TRISS, TLRH and others to map and collate this work.

Race and Ethnicity:

- Race and Ethnicity research focus groups took place in August with 80+ attending and a report is to follow soon. A feedback workshop scheduled for 31st August was postponed and will be rescheduled as soon as is possible with the facilitator.
- The mission statement against racism and discrimination will not yet be brought to EOG and Board to allow for inclusion of an update from this contemporaneous work to the accompanying memo.

- There has been significant engagement with colleagues working on the ASAP programme, University of Sanctuary, and Scholars at Risk groups.

Gender:

- **Athena SWAN update** – Four more schools have received Bronze School awards and an online awards event is planned for 20th October with Advance HE and Minister Harris. Work is ongoing with an estimated 4 further schools to submit in next round. The Champions Network will re-commence in October. A revised Athena SWAN Charter will be launched at the end of October.

- A "Demystifying Fellowship" workshop took place on 22nd September on invitation from the **Fellows**. Prof Leeson and Dr O'Brien Green co-presented at the online event. The event was well attended, with follow up workshops planned.

- **HEA Gender-Equality-Enhancement-Fund Applications** - TCD is a partner on 3 applications this year. It is important that Trinity is a lead for 2022 and we need to encourage colleagues to apply. We will also ask the RDO lead (Raquel Harper) to disseminate the call through Research committee next year.

- **Gender Equality Plans (GEPs).** The EDI team has met with RDO staff to progress Horizon Europe GEP requirements for research funding and is also actively engaged in TORCH, the sister project to CHARM-EU, on which Prof Leeson is PI for College. Gender and inclusivity are key 'cross-cutting principles' along with Open Science, and Responsible Research and Innovation.

- **Aurora Programme –** the next Aurora programme will commence in November and invitations to apply to the programme will be emailed to all staff. We hope to double the number of participants on the programme this year to meet applicant demand.

Age:
- The EDI Unit has contributed to the submission by Global Brain Health Institute TCD in response to the Department of Health which is compiling Ireland's contribution to assess progress on the United Nations Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (Equality Theme – Age) August 2021.

Socio-Economic:
- Meetings with TAP are due in over the coming weeks.
- Some incidental and preliminary conversations with VP/CAO and Senior Dean around issue of food poverty in College. EDI will engage with the Students' Union and other relevant College officers on the food bank model in UCC.

Disability:
- EDI were delighted to engage with the Ability Co-op team in August/September.
- Engagement with the Disability Officer is ongoing and we are actively looking at how we situate and (continue to) promote disability as an EDI consideration in College – structurally and conceptually.
- Staff with Disability Working Group – Na Fu, Prof Leeson and Nina Shiel have submitted a joint proposal to the Dean of Research's Research Boost call. There is also scope for additional applications to, for example, IRC, however resources remain an issue.

The Chair thanked Prof Leeson and Dr O'Brien Green for these updates. The Chair commented that a pilot micro-credentialling project under the Human Capital Initiative is underway which may be relevant to afore-mentioned micro-credential development.

Equal/21-22/009   Sub-Group Updates

Equality Fund

Fourteen projects were awarded funding from the 2020-2021 Equality Fund call at a budgeted cost of €9,950.

The five project themes selected which projects need to align with were: Equality in the Online University (no projects funded); Inclusive Trinity (8 projects funded); Celebrating Diversity (4 projects funded); Promoting Participation (2 projects funded); and Policy in Our Lives (no projects funded).

There have been some delays in project feedback and one request to postpone, one project did not take place. There have been challenges in terms of staff and student turnover, Covid and EDI staff changes which has impacted on the continuity of reporting and reimbursing

expenses. The EDI unit aim to collate a report by for the Subcommittee by mid-October and to plan an in-person showcase of projects in November. Work should now start on the 2021-22 fund with a call going out in mid-October.

Mr Treanor commented that this funding mechanism was not fit for purpose and needs to be reviewed. Applicants are unrealistic about the costs of their projects and better support and investment is needed.

Dr O'Brien Green noted that the scheduling of the Fund currently does not permit activities for Black History Month for example.

The Chair invited comment on changing timelines for the Equality Fund. Suggestions included creating a smaller working group, reviewing the form, and recommending/encouraging staff/student collaborations.

ACTION: Equality Office to circulate the Fund information and guidelines for review to two or three members of the Committee and issue a holding message online re, the fund while a decision on next steps is made.

Staff Disability Group

The Staff Disability Group held their first meeting in April and a workshop with external facilitator in June. The TCD forum for staff with a disability hosted an ableism in academia seminar in August.

Equality Monitoring Advisory Group

The 2019-2020 Report will be presented to Board on 6th October.

Updates from Other Trinity Bodies

ASAP working group - Ms O'Toole Brennan informed the group that they have welcomed five new students into the programme and supports are being put in place to help them to transition into the college environment. There is a need to promote these scholarships and supports to the people that need and deserve them.

Dr Ghosh informed the group that a Women in Engineering festival was held which is an outreach activity required for Athena SWAN. The Provost opened the event, and it was attended by others from industry.

Students' Union – The first ever Transition Fund application has commenced. Up to 20 transgender/non binary students will be selected and will each receive €200 for transitioning costs.

ITEMS FOR NOTING

There were no items for noting.

Equal/21-22/011   Any Other Business

The following items were noted under Any Other Business:

- The Chair will follow up with HR to have a representative on the Equality Committee following the retirement of the previous member Mr Ken Doherty.

- The Chair noted that some directors of EDI have highlighted the lack of childcare support and creche space across College, particularly in new building projects. It was noted that there is a need for EDI to be central to all such developments.

- Comment by Prof Kahane that NDAs have sometimes been used to silence victims of discrimination or abuse. It would be good to invite comment on the issue of NDAs and whether in Trinity we are acting in accordance with our principles in relation to them. An additional issue is that in virtual teaching settings students are encouraged to turn on cameras, some have expressed concern or are uncomfortable with this, can we suggest camera use is optional. The Chair agreed that there should be an option for this.

- Dr Ghosh stated that the unconscious bias training there is currently a charge for certificate of completion of the course when it should be free. Dr O'Brien Green will review this as this training is a priority area for the EDI Unit.

- A discussion in terms of School officer roles and that the roles are not popular in some faculties due to lack of clarity on how people will be compensated. The Chair commented that there is no remuneration or other benefit for these roles other than them being recognised as a contribution to college/discipline.

The Chair thanked all present and concluded the meeting.