Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Thursday, 25th May 2023 10:15 am

Council Chamber | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Attendees

Attended
Rajani Naidoo, Chair
Richard Brooks (partial attendance from 10.30 – 12.00)
Alice Ludgate
Lizzi Milligan
Joel Staley
Marion Harney (partial attendance until 10:50)
Liz Simmons
Blake Walker
Mandy Wilson-Garner (remote from 11:00)
Jane White

Apologies
Tim Ibell
Su McNab
Alexander Robinson

In Attendance
Abi Phillips
Andrew Ross (for item 1042 only)
Marie Salter (for item 1045 only)
Lizzie Tilley (for item 1043)
Aiste Zubiniene (Remote)

Secretariat
Caroline Pringle

1037.0 Welcome and Quorum

Purpose - For Information

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that the meeting was quorate. Apologies were noted from Su McNab, Tim Ibell and Alexander Robinson.

1038.0 Declarations of Interest

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle
There were no declarations of interest.

1039.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - Paper EDIC22/23 - 13

Purpose - For Approval

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The minutes of the meeting on 9 February 2023 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

1040.0 Actions and Matters Arising

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Committee noted the action log. Members were reminded to identify their top five priorities from the internal work plan to support the Statement of Equality Objectives and to send these to Abi Phillips and Rajani Naidoo by 2 June.

1041.0 Chair's Business

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Chair gave a verbal update in relation to a number of matters:
- The Statement of Equality Objectives had been published online and a launch event would be taking place on 21 June to showcase the culture and inclusion work across the University.
- The Race Equality Taskforce had been received positively by Senate and Council. Work was now underway to identify quick actions to put in place and the bigger goals.
- A digital accessibility Task and Finish group was being established to progress this work and a consultant would be engaged.
- Colleagues from Student Policy and Safeguarding and Culture and Inclusion were working together to expand the ED&I training offer and develop other delivery methods besides e-learning.
- Films had been produced featuring Phd students talking about their experiences at Bath. These would be used during Research Culture week as a springboard for focus and discussion groups on what could be done to make the Phd experience more inclusive.
- The Gender Identity policy was now in place.
- The University had gained the Disability Confidence level 3 award.
- Bath had also been shortlisted for the University of the Year at the Queer Student Awards.

The Committee noted the update.

1042.0 Access and Participation Plan - EDIC22/23 - 14

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Head of Access and Widening Participation attended to present the draft version of the new Access and Participation Plan (APP) for comment. The Committee considered the APP and the following points were raised in discussion:
- It was noted that there was an inconsistency in the target for increasing the proportion of students entering the University who were eligible for free school meals. It was confirmed that the target was 8% and that this would be corrected in the plan. The target was comparable with the numbers achieved by Bath's comparators, although was still some way off the sector average of 19%.
- The low income threshold had been raised from £25000 to £30000. Consideration had been given to raising the threshold further but it was not possible to meet that financial commitment in the context of a flat home tuition fee and increased costs. DDAR were not currently in a position to commit to increasing philanthropic donations in this area.
- It noted that the APP lacked detail on how students would be supported academically; engaging with the academic community had been a challenge and more work was needed in this area.
- The Committee would benefit from having sight of the University's internal strategy for outreach and attainment.
- The APP was an external facing compliance document, which would be monitored by OfS, and could run in tandem with a more ambitious set of internal targets. The Committee queried whether this separation could lead to a reduced appetite for progress in this area while others thought it could strike a good balance.

The Committee noted the draft version of the new Access and Participation Plan.

1043.0 Framework on Religion - EDIC22/23 - 15

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Student Policy and Safeguarding Policy and Projects Manager attended to present paper EDIC22/23 - 15 which set out the proposed aims, outcomes and scope of a project to create a Religious Inclusion Framework. The following points were raised in discussion:
- A Parliamentary report on Antisemitism in Higher Education had been published recently and should feed into this work;
- The project would utilise the connections of the University Chaplain and Interfaith Group to seek input from the city's faith groups.
- Professor Hart from the Department of Social and Policy Sciences had done a lot of work which may be of benefit to the project.

The Committee considered the paper and agreed the next steps as set out in the paper, namely to progress to further stakeholder engagement with the SU, student faith groups, the Chaplaincy and staff networks.

1044.0 Disabled Students' Policy - EDIC22/23 - 16

Purpose - For Approval

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Deputy Director of Student Support and Safeguarding (Disability and Operations) presented paper EDIC22/23 - 16 which set out a revised version of the Disabled Students Policy.

The following points were raised in discussion:
- There was little substantive difference in the new version of the policy but there was a lack of consistency in how it was applied across academic departments. Involving HoDs and Directors of Studies and highlighting examples of good practice could help to achieve more consistent practice across departments.
- Developing inclusive practices at an institutional level would reduce the need for individual reasonable adjustments which would, in the long term, be less resource intensive. However, this would require more investment up front and would therefore need to be considered as part of a wider strategic decision.

The Committee noted the revised Disabled Students Policy.

1046.0 Returning Parents Support Fund - EDIC22/23 - 17

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Equality Charters Manager presented paper EDIC22/23 - 17 which provided a summary of the Returning Parents Support Fund pilot to support academic staff returning from parental leave to re-establish their research. Members of the Committee asked questions and were answered as follows:
- The pilot was not currently open to postgraduate students due to limited funds, but engagement was taking place with the Doctoral College around the type of support that would benefit PGR students.
- A minimum 3-month absence was required to be eligible to apply to the fund.
- The pilot evaluation would be used to make a case for longer-term funding in the planning round.
- Some academic departments offered similar provision as part of Athena Swan, but this was not consistent across the institution. The regular changes in departmental leadership could also lead to a loss of institutional memory about previous practice.
- It was recognised that women and part-time workers were underrepresented in senior leadership roles. It was possible that the lack of lived experience at this level could affect the way that the transition into and out of parental leave were handled. The maternity leave guidance for managers was currently very procedural; HR would be looking at improving the guidance around the support which should be offered to staff.

The Committee noted the report on the Returning Parents Support Fund pilot.

1047.0 Gender Differences Project - EDIC22/23 - 18

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Equality Charters Manager presented paper EDIC22/23 - 18 which provided a summary of three Task and Finish Group meetings on gender differences in promotable vs non-promotable tasks. The Committee endorsed this work and discussed the practice in some other HEIs of making participation in "good citizenship" tasks an essential criterion for promotion.
The Committee noted the paper.

1045.0 Digital Accessibility - EDIC22/23 - 19

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Head of Technology Enhanced Learning presented paper EDIC22/23 - 19 which proposed continuing investment in the digital tool Accessibility to ensure that digital content in Moodle was accessible and removing Anthology Ally from the start of the next academic year.

The Committee noted the proposal.

1048.0 Equality & Diversity Network - EDIC22/23 - 21

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Committee noted the update from the Equality and Diversity Network.

1049.0 Commemorative Days overview - EDIC22/23 - 20

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Committee noted the overview of commemorative days.

1050.0 Programme of Meetings for 2023/24

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Committee noted the programme of meetings for 2023/24.

1051.0 Any Other Business

Purpose -

Minute by Caroline Pringle

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting for Alexander Robinson, Blake Walker and Tyben Lozane and thanked them on behalf of the Committee for their work and contributions. The Committee also wished Aiste Zubienne well for her maternity leave.