UCL Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee
6 December 2021
10.00 am – 11.30 am

Minutes

Present Members (28):
Sasha Roseneil (Chair), Vanessa Diaz, Rebecca Caygill, Sara Mole, Suzy Buckley, Michael Sulu, Teresa Williams, Jennifer Hudson, Prince Saprai, Noel Caliste, Rebecca Whitham, Abigail Smith, Alexandra Olaya-Castro, Paul Ho, Nephtali Marina-Gonzalez, Chloe Milano, Helene Neveu Kringelbach, Sian Christina, Donna Dalrymple, Anna Cox, Arifa Aminy, Jennifer Rode, Denise Long, Alan Harper, Ian Dancy, Martin Oliver, Sara Shafiei.

Apologies (2):
Bella Malins, Rob de Bruin.

In attendance (5):
Megan Gerrie, Fiona Naughton, Ash Talwar, Fiona Strawbridge, Katy Redfern.

Officer(s):
Clément Leroy

Part I: Preliminary Business

1.   The EDI Committee received and approved the minutes of the last meeting.

2.   The EDI Committee received and approved the revised membership with the additional co-opted members. (Paper 1-01)

Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

3.   Overview of EDI at UCL (PowerPoint presentation)

3.1.   Acting Director of EDI, Teresa Williams, finished presenting the slides on the remit of the EDI team and current streams of work.

4.   Stonewall Membership (Paper 1-02)

4.1.   The Chair, Sasha Roseneil, presented the paper, which she had authored, and informing the Committee that the LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group, the EDI Team; UCU and Unison were all supportive of re-joining the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme (DCP) and continuing to participate in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI). The Chair highlighted the history of UCL's relationship with Stonewall and outlined the main arguments in favour of and against re-joining the Diversity Champions Programme and participating in the WEI. The EDI Committee was asked to consider the issues raised in the paper in order to make a recommendation to UMC as to whether UCL should:

• Re-join the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme and the Stonewall Global Diversity Champions Programme.
• Submit to the 2023 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (in 2022).

4.2.   Arguments in favour of working with Stonewall emphasized the value of charter marks as internal and external signalling of UCL's commitment to LGBTQ+ equality. Members expressed belief in the value of UCL being nourished by external views on equality issues, without having to condone all those views.

4.3.   Arguments against working with Stonewall, and concerns about working with Stonewall, focused on the impact this might have on UCL's ability to uphold academic freedom or freedom of expression, notably concerns with UCL aligning itself with or working with an organisation that promotes a particular approach on self-identification and in relation to the sex / gender distinction that are outside (and sometimes in conflict with) of the legal definitions in the Equality Act 2010.

The views expressed at EDI Committee included the following:

Support for continuing with the WEI, on the basis it gives a framework to progress LGBTQ+ equality.

There was a call to separate the issue of academic freedom from delivering LGBTQ+ equality, as it was seen they had been inappropriately conflated. Several members felt that there has been an over emphasis on academic freedom, without clear evidence that it had been impacted.

A few members felt that maintaining membership of Stonewall should proceed along with lobbying them on the issues that concern UCL.

Views were expressed that all charter marks are descriptive not prescriptive - they do not force UCL to do anything. Members expressed concerns that the issue

would spill over to other charter marks and raise questions about participation in them.

A suggestion was made that doing the WEI without re-joining the DCP would send a positive message to the UCL community, but not over commit to Stonewall, and that any decision made could be reviewed at some point in the future.

A response indicated a belief that there is a credible threat to academic freedom and advised other members to read the Reindorf Review, and further suggested it was incumbent on Stonewall to acknowledge they have made mistakes and revise their advice. This member expressed the belief that UCL should not work with an organisation that has mis-represented the law.

4.4   22 members expressed their support for UCL re-joining the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme, and 21 members expressed their support for UCL submitting to the 2023 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (in 2022). This represents a significant majority of the Committee: 80 % of the attending members with voting rights.

Action:
a.   Sasha Roseneil to report on the discussion and the views expressed by the EDI Committee to UMC.

5.   **Religion and Belief Guidance relating to Education and Student Experience at UCL (paper 1-03)**

5.1.   Teresa Williams presented the paper, reminding the Committee that guidance on the topic had not been reviewed for some time. Since then, there has been an increased representation of religious views at UCL and concern about, and action to tackle, faith-based discrimination (for instance work on antisemitism and to support Muslim students). In this context the new version of this document seeks to respond to newly articulated issues and concerns that are not perceived to have been adequately addressed, and to incorporate new language.

5.2.   Stakeholders were consulted and the paper went to the EDI Committee for endorsement. However, it seemed that members Committee would have liked to discuss the paper further and propose amendments. The general sense was that further feedback was needed.

5.3   The Committee decided that endorsement was not possible yet, pending further consultation and discussion within the EDI Committee membership and with faculties.

Action:

a.   EDI team to lead a review of the document with further consultation with the different stakeholders, with view to submit a new version at the next EDI Committee meeting.

6.   Proposal for a UCL Digital Accessibility Policy

6.1   The Committee did not have time to discuss the paper.

Action:

a.   Secretary to put the paper to the agenda of the next Committee's meeting.

7.   AOB

7.1   No other business.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

N/A

Summary of actions arising from the Minutes

Minute 4.4.a.: Report on the discussion and the views expressed on Stonewall membership and WEI participation by the EDI Committee to UMC.
Sasha Roseneil – at relevant UMC meeting.

Minute 5.3.a: Review the guidance on religion following more consultation with Committee members and faculties.
Ash Talwar and Teresa Williams - by next Committee meeting

Minute 6.1.a: Put the paper on Digital Accessibility to the agenda of the next Committee's meeting.
Clément Leroy – by next Committee meeting

Clement Leroy
December 2021