



Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee

10 February 2022, 13:00 pm to 14:30 pm

Meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Present Members

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

Apologies

Arifa Aminy, SU Equity Officer

In Attendance

For Items 4.1-4.3: Dr Fiona Strawbridge, Director of Digital Education

For Items 4.1-4.3: Mr Ben Watson Head of Digital Accessibility

For Items 5.1-5.3: Mr Ash Talwar, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, UCL Human Resources

For Items 7.1-7.3: Dr Manjula Patrick, EDI-WP Strategy Manager

Mr Douglas Bertram (Secretary).

Part I: Preliminary Business

1. Minutes from the Last Meeting

1.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

2.1. No business for this meeting.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

3. Pro-Provost's Report

3.1. The Chair informed the Committee that discussion of whether UCL should re-join the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme and/or enter the 2023 Workplace Equality Index had taken place at Academic Board, and that

Academic Board had voted against both. The University Management Committee (UMC) had subsequently decided to accept the advice of Academic Board. The Chair reported that concerns had been raised about this decision by members of UCL's EDI community. The Committee was informed that the matter would be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of Council to whom a letter had been submitted on the topic from the LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group (LESG).

- 3.2. The Chair noted that follow-up meetings with a number of different groups including, variously, the Provost, the Pro Vice-Provost (Education & Student Experience) Professor Deborah Gill, and herself had been held regarding the Stonewall decision.
- 3.3. The Chair informed the Committee that in response to a decision taken by the UMC to strengthen UCL's work on LGBTQ+ equality and inclusion, Terms of Reference (ToR) had been drafted for the establishment of a LGBTQ+ Equality Implementation Group. This Group would be similar to those that had been established to address matters of race and disability and its ToR were noted to have been discussed at a meeting of the LESG held the previous day. Feedback from that meeting was noted to be forthcoming and would be followed by further consultative work with other groups, including the Student Union, to agree the Implementation Group's purpose and membership.
- 3.4. The Chair informed the Committee of recent work undertaken with Sustainable UCL's Access and Inclusion Manager, Ms Pip Jackson, UCL's architects, and the Student Union, on sports science related facilities at UCL East that included the provision of inclusive gym changing rooms and sports research facilities. This work was noted to have enabled the provision of gender neutral and accessible changing facilities, and male/female/sports team-named sections with open and individual changing areas. It was noted that the process of planning such facilities has provided a model for future new-builds and renovations.
- 3.5. The Chair informed the Committee that from 14 February to 7 March 2022, the UCL Student Centre would host the temporary installation of the House of Commons' 'Hope the Lego Suffragette'. This life-size Lego figure, which would be positioned opposite a model of Jeremy Bentham, had been built to highlight the history of women's suffrage, citizenship, and gender inequalities. A number of events were noted to have been planned in connection with the installation and the topics it had raised.
- 3.6. The Chair noted that Religion and Belief, a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, is an area in which UCL needs to enhance its equality, diversity, and inclusion work. It was noted that Machilu Zimba had recently been appointed to the EDI team and would lead on these matters from the end of February 2022, including by establishing a Religion and Belief Equality

Steering Group. The Chair added that meetings have also been held with Muslim students who had expressed concerns regarding the provision of prayer space, which had been taken up with UCL Estates; also, that ongoing funding had been secured for the provision for free food to be shared by Muslim students during Ramadan for the breaking of the fast.

- 3.7. The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the two papers included in Part 3 of the meeting's Agenda on antisemitism and noted that they had been submitted to the Academic Board for consideration at its meeting that had been held on the previous day. They separately addressed the development of an education action plan for combatting antisemitism and processes of reporting, the latter of which had been co-ordinated by the Acting Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Operations), Vicki Baars, and would be on-going.
- 3.8. The Chair commented that UCL's strategic plan 2022-27 consultation represented a key moment for members of the Committee to contribute to planning for the next five years and that the EDI community would be expected to provide feedback at Faculty and Equality Steering Group levels. It was noted also that one of the proposed themes of the strategic plan is inequality, and this presents important opportunities for EDI work, including research and practical action.
- 3.9. The Chair informed the Committee that the Planning Round for 2023 would be initiated shortly and that it included a question for all Faculties, and central PS concerning EDI, as well as the provision of a more targeted dataset than that which had been circulated last year. Committee members were encouraged to review the dataset and engage with the process of providing EDI-related responses for Faculty and central PS submissions to the Planning Round.
- 3.10. The Chair informed the Committee that she has been working with Professor Becky Francis, formerly of the IOE, and a committee of colleagues from across UCL, on innovative ways to address widening participation, which resulted in the submission of a paper to Council that received strong support. The following three areas were noted to be under review, and the subject of further action: bursaries and scholarships, their effectivity and competition with competitor intuitions; the improvement of learning and study support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, which would be incorporated into the forthcoming Education Strategy paper; and admissions processes, which would include the possible removal of the personal statement. It was also noted that progress had been made on the lowering of contextual offers for 2022 entry.
- 3.11. During the discussion the following key points were made.
 - a. With respect to the UMC's call for the establishment of an LGBTQ+ Equality Implementation Group, a member asked if there would be any

means by which the Committee could learn from its experiences to have pre-empted certain requests and actions. The Chair agreed and suggested that ways of learning would be discussed by the EDI Committee during the current Academic Year.

- b. A member queried the membership of the LGBTQ+ Equality Implementation Group and whether it would be open and how it would be advertised. The Chair observed that there would be no open call for the Group's membership but that it would be composed of representatives from various groups including the LESG, the Trans Network, Human Resources, and Vice Deans of EDI. It was noted also that the Group had been intended to define a practical programme of work and would therefore not be large-scale in nature.

4. Proposal for a UCL Digital Accessibility Policy (Paper 2-02)

4.1. The Director of Digital Education, Dr Fiona Strawbridge, and the Head of Digital Accessibility, Mr Ben Watson, introduced a paper that proposed a new Digital Accessibility Policy for UCL, which had been aimed to ensure that online content, documentation, multimedia, teaching and training content, and digital applications and platforms were accessible to all. During the presentation the following key points were made.

- a. The Digital Accessibility Policy had followed on from three years of work triggered by the publication of the Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulation 2018, which laid down requirements for the accessibility of digital platforms and online content. UCL had undertaken a project to raise awareness of these concerns; however, a shift in emphasis toward individual responsibility for digital content was now sought, with content that would be made accessible from the outset, i.e. by in-house design, or via procurement.
- b. The Policy acknowledged limitations. Existing systems might take time to improve; the market for digital platforms would not be in UCL's control; teaching content might be problematic to render fully accessible
- c. The Policy was noted to have covered the five main areas of concern detailed in the Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulation 2018.
- d. The Committee was informed that the monitoring and reporting of the Policy would be undertaken by the Head of Digital Accessibility. Also, that as the policy would require changes to be made to staff practice, two new support posts would be funded for the use of academics in addition to the funding of 3,000 hours of student time.

4.2. During the discussion the following key points were made.

- a. A member voiced concerns regarding the changes to working practices proposed by the Policy and their impact on academic staff, in addition to time and resource constraints. It was suggested that solutions to these concerns related to useability and would be required to be addressed

before matters pertaining to accessibility. In response, the Head of Digital Accessibility, Ben Watson, observed that the expectation set would be to have seen incremental improvements in the accessibility of digital teaching materials in conjunction with additional support provided by the Support and Wellbeing team regarding the delivery of Summary of Reasonable Adjustments (SoRAs) for students where required.

- b. A member requested that a short guidance document would be produced to have defined a minimum number of accessibility-checks at the point of creation of digital content. It was also requested, following inquiries made by an external provider who had produced content for UCL's website, that a template would be produced with accessibility-checks in-built that could be used for such a purpose.

- 4.3. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee approved the UCL Digital Accessibility Policy.

5. Religion and Belief Guidance relating to Education and Student Experience at UCL

- 5.1. Mr Ash Talwar presented a guidance document that provided information on how needs with respect to Religion and Belief would be to be met by UCL staff and students. During the presentation the following key points were made.
 - a. The Guidance had not been intended to be comprehensive; rather it addressed key issues that may arise within Religion and Belief and should therefore be understood as a guiding framework and a living document.
 - b. The Guidance had been intended to be applied to any religion, religious belief, similar philosophical belief, or lack of belief but did not ordinarily cover political belief.
 - c. The provisions of the Equality Act in relation to Religion or Belief were noted to apply to the student experience.
 - d. Ash Talwar noted since the Guidance document's initial circulation amongst members of the Committee he had received five responses with feedback. Subsequent amendments were made within the remit of the Guidance document.
- 5.2. During the discussion the following key points were made.
 - a. The Chair highlighted the importance of the Guidance document and emphasised its status as that of guidance and not policy, therefore noting that it had defined best practice. The Chair added that in the current absence of a Religion and Belief Equality Steering Group, the Guidance document had amounted to an important piece of groundwork.

- 5.3. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee noted the contents of the Religion and Belief Guidance paper.

6. Extension of the pilot Accelerate to Leadership scheme to Grade 8 Professional Services (PS) Staff

- 6.1. The Director of HR Business Partnering, Ms Donna Dalrymple, presented a paper that outlined the extension of the existing Accelerate to Leadership scheme that would include placement opportunities for Grade 8 roles within PS staff across UCL. During the presentation the following key points were made.

- a. Donna Dalrymple had led on the Accelerate to Leadership scheme since its inception at the end of 2020. Originally, it had been intended as a positive action scheme aimed at grade 9 and 10 PS staff who would have sought secondment into a senior leadership role for 12 months, with support should a development gap be identified in the terms of the placement. Since its introduction, 11 placements had been advertised with an up-take of 5 placements and the remaining 6 placements left vacant.
- b. It was noted that the scheme had highlighted a wider pipeline issue reflected in ethnicity and gender pay gap reports where a disparity in the spread of staff across the grades, with a bottleneck at grade 7 with limitations at grades 9 and 10, had been noted.
- c. That approval had been sought to have extended the Accelerate to Leadership scheme to apply to grade 8 PS staff and to have allowed a future step up into grades 9 and 10 placements over time.

- 6.2. During the discussion the following key points were made.

- a. A member welcomed the proposal to extend the Scheme to grade 8 roles but asked if the scheme would still emphasise grades 9 and 10 roles; if greater fluidity into secondment positions could be provided for grade 6 or 7 staff; and how the advertisement of grade 9 and 10 roles might be affected by the Scheme. In response, Donna Dalrymple, noted that grades 9 and 10 roles would continue to be emphasised but in parallel to those of grade 8. Release of Professional Service staff into secondments was acknowledged to have presented problems. However, the five placements advertised and filled had met with a healthy number of applications and it had been assumed that the remaining 6 vacant positions were either two specialised or lacked the right staff member required. It was also noted that extension of the Scheme would allow for its wider use and provide assurance to both secondees and managers of its effectivity.
- b. A member asked how the Scheme's profile would be raised. In response, Donna Dalrymple noted that the Scheme had recently received additional resources to provide further staffing support; that the Scheme's increased staff complement would be able to attend and address team meetings and

briefing sessions; that targeted communications drives would be made across UCL; and that connections had already been made with HR Business Partners to liaise on upcoming roles.

- 6.3. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee endorsed the Extension of the pilot Accelerate to Leadership scheme to Grade 8 PS Staff.

7. Improving Experiences of Disabled and Neurodivergent students in the Faculty of Engineering Sciences

- 7.1. EDI-WP Strategy Manager, Dr Manjula Patrick, presented a paper that concerned a project undertaken to collect robust data on Disabled and Neurodivergent (D/ND) students' experience in the Faculty of Engineering Sciences (FES), which also outlined strategies to improve outcomes. The paper also sought to co-design a robust approach to the support of D/ND students, with a road map for short and long-term solutions, and implementation of quick fixes during the course of the project. During the presentation the following key points were made.
- a. An awarding gap for Neurodivergent students had been identified in the FES. Disparities in 1st Class degrees varied from 3% to 27% dependent upon the type of disability presented. These gaps were shown to have widened amongst those students with intersectional identities – i.e. students of varying ethnicities with disability or neurodivergence – and were worse than those of their abled counterparts. Black students, both abled and disabled, were shown to have the worst outcomes of all ethnic groups; and figures related to the award of 1st Class degrees showed a disparity of 34% between black disabled students and their white abled counterparts.
 - b. UCL's data analysis and data categories had been understood to be problematic in having masked award gaps and assumed disability to be homogeneous. Certain data categories – i.e. 'unlisted, two or more disabilities' – formed 28% of the dataset on disabled students within the FES. These categories had been linked to external reporting requirements but prohibited meaningful conclusions and/or solutions.
 - c. Uptake of SoRAs amongst disabled students was observed to be low at 10%.
 - d. Stigmatisation attached to disability and neurodivergence was found to have been a barrier to seeking support in addition to concerns related to ethnicity and nationality. Analysis of ethnicity and nationality with respect to stigmatisation and the sharing information had been conducted but ultimately lay beyond the scope of the project.
 - e. SoRAs for postgraduate research students were found to be unfit for purpose. Adjustments related to taught programmes of study only. Similarly processes and systems were found to require improvement with respect, for example, to Portico or means of application for extenuating

circumstances. Feedback on these matters had been provided to Student Support Services.

- f. A Faculty post had been requested to lead on the project's recommendations.
- g. To improve understanding amongst all members of the Faculty, online training has been prepared on D/ND awareness. This was intended to form the first part of a programme of training. It was also intended that case studies would be imbedded within the Integrated Engineering Programme curriculum; and that local Departments would be approached to improve uptake of SoRAs amongst the student body.

7.2. During the discussion the following key points were made.

- a. A member asked what resources were available for D/ND assessment. In response, Dr Manjula Patrick observed that students would be required to approach Student Support and Wellbeing for this purpose; however, it is slow, and many have paid for private diagnosis. It was also noted that a lag between the confirmation of diagnosis and the Department being informed of this had been detected. It was understood that this had led to students feeling isolated therefore the project had called for the appointment of a Faculty lead in order to have ensured the provision of appropriate care for such students.
- b. The Chair informed the Committee that future meeting might receive showcase examples of EDI related work that had been undertaken in various Faculties and that this project had provided an excellent start to that process. Further such contributions were invited.

7.3. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee noted the contents of the paper.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

8. Any Other Business

- 8.1. A member queried the role of the Equality Charters Group (ECG) in monitoring delivery of the institutional Athena Swan action plan, particularly has it had last met a year ago. In response, the Chair noted that the ECG remained within the revised EDI governance structure; however, as no large-scale charters were in currently preparation, the ECG would only be required to meet twice a year and that a meeting therefore required arrangement. The Chair also noted that a new Chair would be needed.

Action – ECG meeting to be convened and nominations sought for its Chair.

- 8.2. A member queried the governance of monitoring action plans for all charters. In response, the Chair suggested that the ECG should perform this task perhaps via a working group whose membership would be determined in the future.
- 8.3. A member queried succession planning for the Committee's Chair. In response, the Chair informed the Committee that the Provost had asked the Vice-Provost (Faculties) to cover her role as Pro-Provost, Equity and Inclusion.
- 8.4. A member queried when the newly appointed Director of EDI would commence the role. In response, the Chair informed the Committee that the post-holder would start on 28 February 2022.
- 8.5. The Executive Director of Operations, UCL Estates, Mr Ian Dancy, requested a future agenda item regarding physical accessibility, with which the Chair agreed.

9. Date of Next Meeting

- 9.1. The date of the next meeting of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee would be 23 March 2022 at 14:00 pm until 15:30 pm.

Mr Douglas Bertram, Secretary
February 2022