



## **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee**

15 September 2022, 13:30 pm to 15:30 pm

Meeting held via Microsoft Teams

### **Minutes**

#### **Present Members**

Professor Anthony Smith (Chair); Ms Arifa Aminy; Professor Rob de Bruin; Dr Suzy Buckley; Dr Rebecca Caygill; Dr Sian Christina; Professor Anna Cox; Professor Vanessa Diaz; Mr Alan Harper; Mr Paul Ho; Professor Jennifer Hudson; Ms Denise Long; Ms Chloe Milano; Dr Lucinda Miller; Professor Sara Mole; Dr Helene Neveu Kringelbach; Professor Martin Oliver; Ms Aloma Onyemah; Dr Jennifer Rode; Dr Sara Shafiei; Ms Abigail Smith; Dr Michael Sulu; Ms Rebecca Whitham; Ms Teresa Williams

#### **Apologies**

Ms Sarah Cowls; Ms Donna Dalrymple; Mr Ian Dancy; Ms Bella Malins; Dr Nephtali Marina-Gonzalez.

#### **In Attendance**

For Item 5.1-5.3: Ms Lizzy Allman, EDI Manager and Disability Equity Lead  
For Items 7.1-7.2: Mrs Alex Potts, Data Protection Officer, UCL Data Protection Office

Mr Douglas Bertram (Secretary)

### **Part I: Preliminary Business**

#### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed Professor Nick Achilleos, of the Department of Physics and Astronomy, as a new member of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC), replacing Professor Alexandra Olaya-Castro.

#### **2. Minutes from the Last Meeting (Paper 3-01)**

- 2.1. The EDIC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2022.

### **3. Matters Arising**

- 3.1. A member informed the EDIC that the LGBTQ+ Equality Implementation Group (LEIG) had been established and would hold its second meeting in October 2022.
- 3.2. A member had queried the means testing of partners for UCL's childcare support scheme. It was agreed that the Head of Award, Mr Mark Rice, would be approached for further information to be included in the minutes of the previous meeting as an amendment.

***Action – the Secretary***

### **Part II: Matters for Discussion**

#### **4. Director of EDI Report (Oral Presentation)**

- 4.1. The Director of Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Ms Aloma Onyemah, provided an oral report to have updated the EDIC on recent EDI developments. The following key points were made during the presentation.
  - a. The Committee was informed that in order to have achieved compliance with Public Sector Equality Duty, UCL had been required to have published an Equality Information Report annually, on 31 March, that would have listed staff and student outcomes by protected characteristics. For four years UCL had not performed this task.
  - b. To mitigate this oversight, after discussion with UCL Legal Services, it had been determined that a retrospective report for the four-year period would be produced. For the purposes of scrutiny, the report would require circulation amongst Committee members outside its official schedule of meetings. This process would be used to have established the timelines required for the production of future reports and their submission to key committees within UCL's governance structure.
  - c. It was noted that information regarding UCL staff and student data would be published at differing points in the year, i.e. October and April respectively, and that an understanding of this would be embedded in the reporting process required.
  - d. It was observed that the publication date for the report aligned that of UCL's gender pay-gap reporting.
  - e. It was noted that the retrospective report would describe what information had been determined to have been reportable, what information would be expected to have become reportable, and how the publication of the data concerned would adhere to data protection law.

- f. Equality Information Reports would be required to be accessible in a variety of forms and, online, at a minimum of three clicks away from UCL's main webpage.
  - g. The Committee was informed that Equality Information Reports were considered a matter of public interest. During discussion with UCL's Legal Services it had been noted that once published the information that Equality Information Reports contain might have reduced the number of Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) made.
- 4.2. During the discussion the following key points were made.
- a. A member queried the quality of data that would be included within the Equality report and linked it to a potential for a UCL-wide drive to encourage staff to edit personal information contained in their MyHR profiles that could be accessed for reporting purposes. It was suggested that this might improve UCL's reporting on staff data.
  - b. A member indicated that engagement with those members of staff involved with the production of Athena Swan (AS) and Race Equality Charter (REC) applications in the process of producing future Equality Information Reports might be of mutual benefit. The Director of Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Ms Aloma Onyemah, responded by indicating that whilst there may be areas of commonality between the two processes, and that they could be aligned, the scope of Equality Information Reports would be broader and particularly with respect to protected characteristics outcomes reporting.
  - c. The Chair reflected on the scope of the data sets needed, i.e. those of staff and students, to have produced the reporting required to satisfy UCL's Public Sector Equality duty and observed the considerable amount of work that would be needed to have achieved their collation.
- 4.3. The EDIC noted the EDI Director Report.

## **5. Disability Equity at UCL**

- 5.1. The EDI Manager and Disability Equity Lead, Ms Lizzy Allman, presented a report that identified an inconsistent picture of Disabled and Neurodivergent staff and student experiences at UCL. The following key points were raised in the presentation.
- a. The EDIC was informed that considerable work would be required to have addressed increasing evidence of uneven staff and student experiences with regard to Disabled and Neurodivergent persons and that consistency of approach to the assessment and implementation of Reasonable Adjustments (RAs) would be a starting point and basis for future improvement.

- b. Areas of ongoing work and future plans were highlighted to the EDIC and these included: an advice line for managers, HR, and Disabled and Neurodivergent staff members on complex cases of RAs; expansion of Workplace Needs Assessments to cover all Neurodivergent staff members; further investigation into negative responses from Disabled staff in the staff survey via focus groups, particularly around the lowest scoring areas, i.e. health and wellbeing; and implementation of RA training for line managers at UCL.
- c. It was noted that, after a pause over the summer period, the Disability Equality Implementation Group (DEIG) would meet early in Term 1, chaired by Dr Jennifer Rode, Disability Envoy and Disability Equality Steering Group (DESC) Co-Chair. Its purpose would be to have developed a set of recommendations that would be published at the conclusion of the DEIG's scheduled meetings.<sup>1</sup>

5.2. During the discussion the following key points were raised.

- a. A member queried the understanding of RAs across UCL's staff and students in terms of access and management and suggested that circulation of guidance on the topic might have raised awareness. In response, the EDI Manager and Disability Equity Lead, Ms Lizzy Allman, indicated that such concerns had posed a challenge and were being addressed to have achieved a more consistent approach across UCL. Despite this, it was noted that Student Support and Wellbeing (SSW) had managed RAs well but had done so with increased resource when compared to other areas of UCL.
- b. A member queried when Faculties and Departments would be able to feed into work to be undertaken regarding RAs. Whilst the EDI Manager and Disability Equity Lead, Ms Lizzy Allman, indicated that both the DEIG and DESG would meet shortly and that she could approach each Chair with key items, the Director of Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Ms Aloma Onyemah, added that UCL's EDI Vice-Deans could act a resource to have promoted a wider community of practice.
- c. It was noted that Legal Services and SSW would review UCL's support of students through the Summary of Reasonable Adjustments (SORA) process in the light of recent developments at the University of Bristol, which had been related to student mental health. The EDI Manager and Disability Equity Lead, Ms Lizzy Allman, added that the upcoming student Welcome Week would provide an opportunity to disseminate information related to mental health awareness and to have reduced potential stigmatisation.

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<sup>1</sup> Chair's Note: Subsequent to the EDIC meeting held on 15 September 2022, Dr Jennifer Rode had resigned as Chair of the DEIG and Co-Chair of the DESC effective from 7 October 2022.

- d. A member noted that SORAs had increasingly been identified through pre-arrival student information and the Student Advisor scheme. It was suggested that this would clarify decisions to be made on the uptake of RAs. The EDI Manager and Disability Equity Lead, Ms Lizzy Allman, added that this increase had also been reflected in staff data.
- e. The Chair requested feedback on how Student and Registry Services (SRS) have conducted assessments at the Committee's next meeting.

**Action – Secretary**

5.3. The EDIC noted the report.

## **6. Update from Equality Charters Group (ECG) (Oral Presentation)**

- 6.1. Professor Sara Mole and Dr Michael Sulu provided an oral presentation that updated the Committee on recent developments concerning the Equality Charters Group (ECG), AS Award and REC submissions. During the presentation the following key points were made.
  - a. Dr Michael Sulu provided an overview of the ECG's membership and it was noted that it had included representatives from each Equality Steering Group. The Group's Terms of Reference were also presented. The Committee was informed that the Group would meet on a termly basis, though these dates had yet to be confirmed, and that its working groups would meet as and when required.
  - b. A RAG-rated 'live' action plan tracker would be made available to all steering groups, to be updated by them, and the EDIC.
  - c. It was noted that EDI Envoys required job descriptions.
  - d. Professor Sara Mole highlighted concerns related to the AS Charter that included the upkeep of UCL's high success rate despite the recent loss of a key member of staff associated with its delivery and its possible impact on the way in which departments and faculties worked with UCL's AS team.
  - e. The budget for each submission, i.e. AS and REC, was noted to have required agreement and the need to undertake preparations for both were underlined as the AS submission would be due in two years and the REC in 2023.
  - f. It was noted that were UCL to apply for the AS Gold Award, a planned Gender Advancement through Transforming Institutions (GATI) scheme visit to India to meet partnered institutions to have assisted with the planning of their submissions would require urgent arrangement.
  - g. Concerns had been raised regarding a potential loss of momentum regarding UCL's Culture Change work, due to loss of key members of staff within the EDI Team.

- h. It was noted that the Gender Equality Steering Group (GESG) would await the outcomes of decisions regarding UCL's AS submission in order to determine where its efforts would then be focussed.
- i. Dr Michael Sulu informed the Committee that there was a lack of clarity regarding the REC action plan, which had superseded an interim plan that had addressed staff only. It was noted that the interim plan required completion.
- j. It was noted that REC surveys had identified that BAME staff and students were 2.5% more likely to report racial harassment than white peers (in line with the EHRC report "Universities Challenged"). This result however was considered to have been reflective of UCL's recent expansion of its prevention of misconduct at work initiative beyond that of sexual misconduct and the ECG urged that this work continue to maintain staff confidence.

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

- a. A member welcomed the update provided and queried how the ECG and steering groups might be aligned in order to have ensured that their work would have fed into departmental strategic planning and that feedback would be provided in both directions. Professor Sara Mole responded by noting that the tracking of actions would be key to ensured delivery. The Chair added that EDI Vice-Deans had been appointed to drive these concerns at Faculty level, with which Professor Sara Mole agreed and noted that both Athena Swan and REC activities were conducted at that level.
- b. Regarding Culture Change, the Director of Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Ms Aloma Onyemah, observed that the EDI Team wished to examine the full range of drivers behind staff and student behaviours to have addressed recurrent problems. It was noted that that this work would need to align approaches and include a staff education element.
- c. Regarding REC action plans, the Director of Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Ms Aloma Onyemah informed the Committee that there were three plans in existence and that they required reconciliation in order to avoid the duplication of tasks. It was suggested that the REC should be used as a means of moving towards co-ordinating UCL's commitments more broadly with specific thematic areas.
- d. A member asked if a structure had been determined as to how EDI initiatives would be communicated across UCL. It was suggested that this might identify areas of work that had not previously been addressed. The Director of Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Ms Aloma Onyemah, confirmed that this would be addressed via a KPMG audit report that would be delivered in October 2022. From this, an overall strategy would be defined and would shape UCL's EDI central function and a wider community of practice. It was noted

that this process would be incremental. A member asked if updates on the process could be provided to the Committee in order to assist with committee and working group planning.

- e. The Chair expressed concern regarding the REC 2023 submission and suggested that consideration would need to be made regarding how the submission would be conducted at short notice, i.e. 2023, and how undelivered commitments would be explained. The Director of Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Ms Aloma Onyemah, noted that a request for a deferment could be made as increased lead-in time would be required.<sup>2</sup>
- f. Professor Sara Mole asked if she could draft an EDI Envoy job description, with which the Chair agreed. A member queried the history of the role. It was noted that initially the role did not have a job description however as the number of Envoys grew one was written but it had not included duties related to “beaconing and sharing”.
- g. Dr Michael Sulu suggested that ECG representation at meetings of the University Management Committee (UMC) be made. The Chair advised that a wide variety of EDI roles and functions were being considered by the Provost’s Office with respect to future planning of UCL’s EDI activity.
- h. A member voiced concern regarding the financial resourcing for EDI at UCL over the next three to five years and the ability for EDI strategic aims and projects to have been delivered. The Chair advised that future prioritisation of activity would be key but that the Committee should continue to advocate the rights of minority groups within UCL.

6.3. The EDIC noted the update.

## **7. Data Protection Update (Oral Update)**

7.1. The Data Protection Manager, Alexandra Potts, informed the Committee that a reportable data breach had occurred in one of the EDI staff equality networks groups, and that this had been reported to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO). No action had been taken by the ICO but a review of governance of staff groups had been required and it was noted that this would be conducted on an ongoing basis.

7.2. The EDIC noted the update.

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<sup>2</sup> Secretary’s Note: It was later confirmed by Advance HE that an extension had been given to UCL’s original submission which was due to end in 2023. The extension would be up to 2025 due to the term of all awards having been changed from 3 years to 5 years. The matter had therefore been resolved.

### **Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information**

#### **8. Transformed Athena Swan Agenda**

- 8.1. Professor Sara Mole introduced a paper that detailed changes made to the AS Charter that would enhance the systems and processes that underpin it, to have ensured it would be fit for the future of Higher Education (HE) and Research sectors. The transition to the new Charter has been overseen by the AS Governance Committee and was launched in 2021 (rebranded as 'Athena Swan'). During the discussion the following point was made.
  - a. The Chair advised that the paper should be endorsed for approval by the UMC and the People and Culture Committee.
- 8.2. The EDIC noted the Transformed Athena Swan Agenda paper and endorsed it for approval by the UMC and the People and Culture Committee.

#### **9. Call for EDI Caucus – A Strategic Research Opportunity for UCL**

- 9.1. Professor Sara Mole introduced a paper the purpose of which was to have alerted the Committee to a strategic opportunity for UCL to connect its EDI research with policy and practice, and to raise its profile in these areas. The following key points were made in the presentation.
  - a. The UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Council had issued a call supported by five UKRI funders and the British Academy at £4,562,500 to set up an EDI Caucus.
  - b. UCL's application had been submitted earlier on 15 September 2022. Professor Anna Cox had been listed as the lead Primary Investigator (PI) and headed of a group of PIs drawn from across UCL.
  - c. The outcome of the application would be known in November 2022. If successful, the project would begin in January 2023.
- 9.2. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee noted the contents of the paper.

#### **10. Minister of State for Higher and Further Education – Letter to Universities**

- 10.1. Professor Sara Mole introduced a paper the purpose of which was to inform the EDIC of a ministerial letter linking concerns over freedom of speech with external assurance and benchmarking schemes, i.e. the Race Equality Charter Mark. During the discussion the following key points were made:
  - a. The Chair advised the Committee that the government and its priorities had changed radically since the letter had been written;



however it was suggested that the opinions expressed within it may resurface.

- b. A member requested that the Committee would be informed of any further communications made by UCL on the matter should they be issued.

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

## **11. Any Other Business**

11.1. A member brought the potential nomination of UCL for the EU Award for Gender Equality Champions to the attention of the EDIC. UCL would be eligible for the € 100,000 award however it was noted that support from the EDI team would be required to submit an application. The Chair advised that if this could be carried quickly then UCL should apply for the award.

11.2. Members queried the appointment of an LEIG Manager and timelines attached to that process; the position of EDI Champions could be discussed; and the availability of an EDI organogram. The Chair advised that the Provost's Office and the Director of EDI are engaged with a broad range of priorities regarding UCL's EDI function and aims and that the results of the recent KPMG audit would provide feedback on potential gaps and areas for future improvement that may then address or affect the queries raised.

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**

12.1. The date of the next meeting of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee would be 12 December 2022 at 14:00-16:00.

Mr Douglas Bertram, Secretary  
September 2022