

EDC15D010

Title: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY
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Issue: This is a first report from the working group reporting to the Equality Committee established to consider future strategy and focus for Equality and Diversity work at the University

Recommendation: this paper is an interim report on work in progress and recommends the areas for prioritisation of the limited E&D resources in order to focus the next phase of work on resource implications

Recommended areas for prioritisation

- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Sexual Orientation
- Transgender
- Disability
- Religion

Policies, Language and Expression: the Group recommends that a full list of policies linking to equality is established by the central E&D Office, fully reviewed for accurate legal reference, current language usage and expression and subsequently reviewed at regular intervals.

Dignity and Respect: the Group recommends that a new policy is established within the next twelve months and subsequently reviewed for effectiveness at regular intervals.

Awareness Raising/Training: additional training is recommended for staff in front line positions in future years (for example, Hubs, Library, Catering, Estates)

Revision of the membership of the E&D Committee with effect from the 2016/17 academic year.

Resource Implications : resource implications will be fully explored in the final paper once initial direction has been agreed from this paper

Risk Implications: the University is increasingly expected to evidence advances in equality and diversity to support applications for research funding and to comply with legislative requirements. The paper considers a range of work to be agreed by the Committee

Equality and Diversity: Equality and diversity is at the core of the paper.

Timing of decisions: A final paper will come to the Committee in May 2016 and subsequently go to ET.

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Background: the Working Group has been established to assess and recommend priorities from a University perspective and any implications for resource.

Discussion: the attached paper outlines work to date.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY

FIRST REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Background

The Equality Strategy Working Group was established by the Equality and Diversity Committee to identify direction and priorities (which it is recommended be reviewed annually) for work on equality issues.

The full Terms of Reference for the group can be seen at Appendix 1.

2. Recent Focus

Since 2012 the Athena SWAN agenda has gained increasing focus and has expanded to cover Schools in all four Faculties. Due to the detailed nature of the work and links with the allocation of research funding Athena SWAN has gained priority and time allocation over other areas of work of the E&D Office. Liaison with the Business Intelligence Unit to gather statistics disaggregated by protected characteristic is on-going which will help avoid duplication of survey or information gathering exercises and help inform business activity from an equality perspective. Projects have been carried out by the Equality and Diversity Office as far as possible to support other protected characteristics such as disability, sexual orientation and transitioning students and staff, but the amount of time available to devote to protected characteristics other than gender has diminished.

3. Recommended Future Priorities

The Working Group have identified the following areas as key priorities for future focus and direction:

Gender: work will continue via the Athena SWAN framework, but the time and resource allocation on this should not increase from current levels as it dominates the work schedule of the central Equality Office to the extent that, on current resource, gender marginalises all other areas of work on equality. Future plans for Athena SWAN involve three School submissions in each round (in April and November each year) and development of cohesive initiatives across the campus for our next University submission which will aim to take us to Silver award level within the next three years. As the framework requires awards to be renewed every three/four years Athena SWAN represents an on-going commitment.

Race/Ethnicity: to date, there has been no in-depth analysis nor has there been any information gathering exercise from the perspective of race/ethnicity in work and study with either staff or students. Given the increase in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students over the last eight years and, to a lesser extent staff, the working party recommends that the University prioritise more work in this area. Suggested work includes a survey to ascertain baseline data and views (which can be linked with the Athena SWAN annual survey) and establishing a BAME staff network which would complement the Staff Pride (LGBT*) and Access All Areas groups. It is worth noting the increased profile of matters regarding ethnicity and race at national level partly due to the Race Equality Charter Mark launch in January by the ECU and recent commentary on research which suggests there may be

potential negative bias on the part of students' feedback towards minority ethnic staff (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/biased-students-give-bme-academics-lower-nss-scores-says-study>). The initial actions of a UEA survey and network would help inform next steps, one of which will be to assess the Race Equality Charter Mark with a view to UEA potentially gaining an initial Bronze award.

It is recommended that the University counts this area as a priority

Sexual Orientation: the University has successfully relaunched its Staff Pride group after a prolonged period of inactivity. A good working relationship has been maintained with Stonewall and we currently benefit from a very proactive Stonewall contact, providing a wide range of guidance and regular visits. It would help us evidence a good standard of work to engage with and submit to the annual Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (quoted by RCUK as one of the sources of evidence it would look for when assessing funding applications). Initial work has begun on this with a view to submitting the first application in September 2016.

It is recommended that the University counts this area as a priority

Transgender: gender identity forms part of the new Athena SWAN framework and both staff and student Pride groups also welcome trans members (UUEAS also has a Trans and Non Binary Officer and Caucus). Work is taking place in the central E&D Office and in UUEAS on a range of guidance for students and staff who may be transitioning or supporting others who transition, including an updated policy, as part of a medium term project likely to be completed in 2017. It is recognised that this is currently a very dynamic area, quickly becoming more openly discussed and acknowledged than in previous decades. It is also the case that this group can be far more alienated and vulnerable (including a substantially higher risk of suicide) than others and meriting robust institutional understanding and support.

It is recommended that the University counts this area as a priority and following the completion of the guidance documents, and in connection with Athena SWAN activity, gauges what further action may be needed. It is likely that training requests increase as we improve institutional understanding in this respect.

Disability: the recently formed Access All Areas network involves disabled staff and students and is proving a successful forum for improving issues in connection with the built campus.

In addition, the following areas have been identified to form part of the Equality Strategy:

- Clear information and signposting available to both staff and managers about support available to staff with disabilities who need adjustments;
- Changes to funding and practise resulting from the national changes to the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)
- Clear information and signposting available to students, staff, managers and other individuals about the support available for students and staff with mental health problems and for those who are supporting others with mental health problems.
- Commitment to continue with Mental Health First Aid Training to build on the work already established.
- It is recommended that the University counts this area as a priority

Religion & Belief: currently, the University is well served with a Multi Faith Centre and Islamic Prayer rooms. The Faith representatives are managed by the Dean of Students who is also a member of the Equality and Diversity Committee.

It is recommended that the University counts this area as a priority

The one area in need of urgent review is the scheduling of examinations during Ramadan, the timing of which will meet the main examination timetable until 2018:

2016: 6 June – 5 July (n.b. students and staff will be fasting from 2.26 a.m. until 9.13 pm every day during this period)

2017: 27 May – 26 June

2018: 16 May – 14 June

2019: 6 May – 4 June

2020: 24 April - 23 May

4. Secondary priorities

Family Friendly: the University has a range of robust policies to support family friendly working. Although these will remain on the agenda through work on Athena SWAN it is currently felt these will be sufficiently covered under that remit.

Age: age is considered in connection with other characteristics in Equality Impact Assessments, and explicitly in training, both on-line and face to face. Currently, data and feedback do not suggest this is a high priority area although it will be monitored and reconsidered when the strategy is reviewed.

5. Widening Participation

Whilst Widening Participation has a clear framework and agenda with a separate Working Group there is a need to improve understanding of intersection between POLAR* groups and other protected characteristics. It is recommended that future strategy include this monitoring and uses the information to better inform Outreach activity in Faculties and Schools.

**POLAR: A five point scale developed by HEFCE and HESA, to represent the proportion of young people in a particular area who progress to full-time higher education. 1 is lowest participation: <16%; 5 is high participation: > 40% ; 1 and 2 are defined as low participation neighbourhoods. Very broadly speaking, it is expected that working class people (NS-SEC 4 to 7) are predominantly found in areas with a low POLAR statistic (POLAR 1 and 2).*

6. Overarching Areas

In addition to work on specific protected characteristics there are also certain elements of work which underpin/overarch all aspects of fairness.

Policies, Language and Expression: the Group recommends that a full list of policies linking to equality is established by the central E&D Office, fully reviewed for accurate legal reference, current language usage and expression and subsequently reviewed at regular intervals.

Dignity and Respect: the Group recommends that a new policy for staff is established within the next twelve months and subsequently reviewed for effectiveness at regular intervals.

Awareness Raising/Training: the central E&D Office/CSED run a number of training sessions each year on both a general and bespoke basis. In addition, online training on basic equality and diversity awareness is mandatory for all staff (90% completion rate). As the focus of bespoke courses has been towards Schools, additional training is recommended for staff in front line positions in future years (for example, Hubs, Library, Catering, Estates) as this has not taken place for some time and consequently may result in a need to consider additional resource.

7. Equality and Diversity Committee

The Equality and Diversity Committee was established in 2008 and is chaired by a Pro Vice Chancellor. Its membership is currently drawn primarily from senior management groups (Deans and Directors) and one or two members whose roles are directly connected with an equality remit. UUEAS and the three campus Trade Unions are also represented.

It is recognised that this Committee could be more diverse and representative of the groups it is considering and it is recommended that initial careful groundwork is undertaken with a view to revising the membership of the Committee with effect from the 2016/17 academic year.

8. Costs and Benefits to UEA

Performing well on fairness and equality has a clear link to the business case for a sustainable, global University. For UEA to attract and retain the best students and staff from all sections of the population it is important to realise that key competitors (e.g. UCL, Imperial, Sheffield, York, Manchester) also engage heavily in best equality practice. This can manifest as a 'feel' of the campus on a visit, or an underlying awareness pricked by marketing material or behaviour of staff on open days.

The current E&D team comprises two people, the majority of whose time is spent on Athena SWAN or related activities. With current resource levels we can continue to support gender but only support the other priority areas at a cursory level. This will result in limited progress whereas a small increase in resource could enhance wider performance greatly. Although there is a cost to the work outlined above, and to any recommended increase in resource, the benefits are intrinsic to the success of the University and comparatively low in cost in comparison to the maintenance and development of the built campus, for example.

It is desirable for UEA to pursue best practice in equality, not only because legislation requires the institution to be *proactive*, but also because best practice enhances our business case and improves the working and learning environments for all.

Once priorities have been agreed, a separate document will be prepared, determining more precisely any additional costs relating to resource.

Helen Murdoch, February 2016