

ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY SUB-COMMITTEE

Minute of the meeting held on 23 November 2020 (1400-1430 hrs).

Present: V Nairn (Convener), E Akerele, F Antoniazzi, K Bullock, Dr D Cockburn, Dr N Emmison, Dr E Gillibrand, L Omoile, Professor S Pedersen, J Strachan, V Strachan and J-A Tait.

Apologies: J Bolger, S Cameron, L Jack and Mr J Meighan.

In Attendance: A Smart (Secretary) and R Stuart.

	Action
<p>1. REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP 2020/21</p> <p>The membership of the Sub-Committee for Session 2020/21 was noted. Following discussion at the Equality and Diversity Forum, two nominations from members of the Forum had been accepted as members on the Sub-Committee and the membership had been updated accordingly, to include one staff and one student champion.</p>	
<p>2. MINUTE</p> <p>The Minute of the Meeting held on 22 September 2020 was approved. The following matters arising, not covered elsewhere on the agenda, were noted:</p>	
<p>2.1 Equalities Data and Institutional Annual Appraisal Report (EDSC/21/1/3)</p> <p>Following the presentation at the last meeting from Alison Watson, Planning Manager, a report from EDSC was considered and agreed at the Institutional Annual Appraisal Meeting on 15 October 2020. In annual appraisal meetings with Heads of School, the Assistant Chief Academic Officer and the Vice-Principal (Academic Development and Student Experience) were actively challenging Heads on equality and diversity metrics, and the priority areas highlighted in the report. In some cases, Schools had been asked to undertake further review.</p>	
<p>2.2 Stand Alone: Supporting Estranged Students (EDSC/21/1/3)</p> <p>At its last meeting, the Sub-Committee endorsed the proposal that the University sign the Stand Alone Pledge and that this go forward to the Executive for approval. The Executive had now approved the proposal and the Pledge had been signed. The Director of Planning and Policy would be taking forward the communication of this, probably in early 2021.</p>	Dr D Cockburn
<p>2.3 Diversity on Board and University Committees (EDSC/21/1/7)</p> <p>It was agreed at the last meeting that monitoring questionnaires submitted to Board members would be extended to other committees as part of annual monitoring. It was likely this would be undertaken as part of the next round of committee evaluations in Spring 2021.</p>	V Strachan
<p>2.4 Athena Swan (EDSC/21/1/10)</p> <p>The Vice Principal (Corporate Operations) would take a paper on this to the meeting of the Executive in December 2020. A progress report would come back to the next meeting.</p>	V Nairn

3. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FORUM**

The Sub-Committee considered the Minute of the Meeting of the Forum held on 4 November 2020. The following issues were discussed:

- The EDF meeting had been lively with a good level of discussion and contribution from members.
- It was requested by one member that the draft minutes be circulated to EDF members for comment prior to final approval. This was agreed, albeit the time available for the production and circulation of these minutes was very limited.
- It was noted that, should the Forum want further input from DELTA, Rachel McGregor, Academic Support Lead, would be an appropriate contact.
- J Strachan, DELTA, expressed an interest in the work being taken forward in respect of the *Signal for Help*, in order to ensure that teaching guidelines were appropriately updated. The Convener reassured that, once an initial meeting between her and Professor Pedersen had taken place, other colleagues would be involved as appropriate.
- DELTA would also be happy to help promote any relevant training for staff in relation to equality and diversity.
- The Director of Student Life appraised members on work being taken forward in relation to the 'Emily Test' and the research being undertaken to create a new Gender-Based Violence Charter for Scottish Universities and Colleges. This had included a consultation event in October, led by Poppy Gerrard Abbott, to enable universities and colleges to contribute, as part of an iterative process, to the development of the Charter. He would keep both the Forum and the Sub-Committee informed on progress.
- [Advance HE](#) offered a range of webinars, many of which related to equality and diversity issues, and likely to be of interest to members.

R Stuart

V Nairn

S Cameron/
J Strachan

F Antoniazzi

All members

4. **EQUALITIES DATA**

The Sub-Committee received an oral update from the Assistant Chief Academic Officer on equality and diversity School and Departmental activity reported in Annual Appraisals, providing reassurance that equality and diversity data was being considered appropriately.

A number of themes had been agreed for further investigation, for example, under-performing male students, articulating students, and other areas of differential performance. Some of the data related to small groups and these would be tracked and discussed with Schools where appropriate. Actions would also be added to School Enhancement Plans as a result, with meetings with at least 2 Schools planned in order to discuss their School Academic Board data sheet and ensure engagement.

There was an identified need to improve the data sets available for the appraisal process, particularly in respect of Services, to enable future monitoring. Further guidance from EDSC/EDF would be welcomed in this respect.

Holding File

5. **DIGNITY AT WORK AND STUDY POLICY**

The Sub-Committee considered the above, which was first approved for publication in 2018. The following issues were discussed:

S Cameron.
F Antoniazzi

- The Policy would be subject to revision to include updates on certain aspects, for example, microaggressions, social media, hate crime, misogyny, sex as a protected characteristic.
- There would be debates around these issues, many of which were controversial in terms of definitions etc.
- It was asked that consideration be given to including guidance for staff who were harassed by students. Although rare, there had been some cases and it had been difficult to know how to handle this, for example, determining whether it was a school or an HR issue. An appropriate flow chart might be helpful.
- It was often unclear who the victim was in some cases. In this respect, careful consideration would be given to section 5.2 of the Policy.
- It would also be helpful to consider introducing guidance on serial complainants and behaviours.

It was noted that the Policy would be reviewed in March 2021, with submission to the appropriate committees and liaison with the unions as required.

Holding File

6. **GENDER ACTION PLAN**

The Director of Student Life gave an update on the Institutional Gender Action Plan (iGAP).

The iGAP had been re-circulated as agreed. It was anticipated that a meeting of the Working Group would be held within the next few weeks in order to take relevant actions forward. However, it was also noted that a number of staff changes meant there might be a delay in progressing this.

7. **ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENTS**

The Convener updated members on progress with the Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobile) Accessibility Regulations 2018 requirements. The following points were highlighted:

- An issue with accessible fonts was highlighted at the last meeting and further clarity had been sought from the Gatehouse.
- In terms of online compliance, the University web pages were almost there and compared to other universities, the current level of compliance by RGU was very good.
- One member indicated they would appreciate some advice around the presentation of visual images online. It was confirmed there were some resources on Campus Moodle which may help and these would be shared accordingly.
- A huge amount of work had gone into supporting academic staff to update online materials.

J Strachan

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for 15 February 2021 at 10:00.

V Nairn, C