



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Open Minutes

Of the meeting held on Monday, 10 June 2024 at G5.05, High Wycombe Campus and MS Teams.

Present:

- Professor Damien Page, (Deputy Vice Chancellor, Chair)
- Professor Paul Morgan, (Pro Vice Chancellor, (Education))
- Charlotte Stewart (Inclusion, Diversity and Disability Manager [Deputy Chair])
- Paulette Morris (PSE Representative)
- Jess Bradbury (Students' Union Vice President: Achievement & Belonging)
- Rachael Cornwall (Director of HR)
- Zahara Chowdhury (BP – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)
- Sarah Jackson (Students' Union HR & Development Manager)
- Margaret Rioga (Head of Practice Learning for Health and Social Care)
- Yetunde Dairo (Deputy Head of School - Health & Social Care Professions)
- Ciara Walsh (Committee Officer)

Apologies:

- Carlo Lusuardi (Senior Lecturer)
- Imam Haseeb Jahangir (Inter-Faith Chaplain)
- Louise Harvey (Director, Vice-Chancellor, Communications and Civic Engagement)
- Simon Lee-Price (UCU Representative)

Welcome/Apologies for Absence

24.29 The Chair welcomed Committee Members to the meeting and noted the following apologies:

- Carlo Lusuardi (Senior Lecturer)
- Imam Haseeb Jahangir (Inter-Faith Chaplain)
- Louise Harvey (Director, Vice-Chancellor, Communications and Civic Engagement)
- Simon Lee-Price (UCU Representative)

Declarations of conflicts of interest

24.30 There were no conflicts of interest to declare.

Minutes of the previous meeting

24.31 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Status of actions / Matters Arising

24.32 The Committee noted the status of actions.

Chair's Action

24.33 There were no Chair's Actions to note.

Update on Equality Strategy for 2024

- 24.34 The Committee noted the report which provided an overview of the progress the University was making towards achieving its Equality Strategy objectives. The strategy was launched in April 2023 and included a range of actions and objectives the University wanted to achieve to improve equality, accessibility and equity for staff and students.
- 24.35 The Being You Network Streams will launch later in the year to ensure all members of the University's community feel seen, heard and appreciated. It will be steered by staff to amplify their voices and drive actions needed to create an equitable and inclusive organisation.
- 24.36 The Committee noted the contents of the paper. Its attention was drawn to the centralised budget for external speakers which formed a part of the strategy. The Director HR reminded the Committee this was not new and it had been in place for approximately 2 years. The Committee was advised that if there were Race Equality Networks (REN) or University events that invited external speakers the budget could be used for that. It was advised the SU had recently held interfaith chaplaincy events which have been funded by the budget.
- 24.37 The Chair was pleased with the inclusive recruitment in place through which the University had recruited more diverse recruits. There had been positive feedback from candidates on the University's approach to sending interview questions in advance had received very positive feedback. The Director of HR advised the sector disagreed with the approach and there was a view that answers could be probed. Furthermore, the quality of interviews had improved.

Reasonable Adjustments for Staff Guidance

- 24.38 The Committee noted the paper. Reasonable adjustments were changes made by an organisation to prevent a person's disability putting them at a disadvantage compared with others who are not disabled. The University was committed to improving workplace accessibility for everyone and enabling all staff to Be You. Furthermore, it has a legal and moral duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled staff as defined in the Equality Act 2010.
- 24.39 The new guidance aimed to centralise the process and ensure reasonable adjustments were implemented effectively and aptly for all staff who disclosed a disability using the Equality Monitoring form, Business Connect or conversations with HR and/or their line manager. Regular reasonable adjustments training and workshops would be provided to ensure all managers and staff were aware of their responsibilities in relation to this and it would be added to the all staff induction. It noted there were inconsistent communications regarding budget for reasonable adjustments.
- 24.40 The Committee noted that it sought to streamline and make reasonable adjustments as accessible as possible and streamlined as possible to overcome barriers faced. There was a process in place for students and this process was intended for staff. The guidance outlined in the paper sought to centralise and process for reasonable adjustments and ensure they are implemented effectively and aptly for all staff who disclose a disability using the Equality Monitoring form, Business Connect or conversations with HR or conversations with their line manager. The Operations Manager and the EDI Business Partner would provide regular Reasonable Adjustments training and workshops to ensure managers and staff were aware

of their responsibilities in implementing them. There were plans for a lunch and learn for reasonable adjustments.

Update on Reverse Mentoring Pilot

- 24.41 The Committee noted the update on the reverse mentoring pilot. Traditionally, the pilot paired younger employees with executive team members to mentor them on various topics of strategic and cultural relevance.
- 24.42 As part of the University's Equality Strategy objectives to amplify the student and staff voice, engage with our wider community and ensure it was building a cultural of belonging and inclusion for all staff and students there were plans to pilot a reverse mentoring scheme with UET and 6-8 students. The reverse mentoring supported the Access and Participation Plan as a central intervention strategy to reduce the awarding gap and improve student retention and progression rates, particularly for marginalised and underrepresented students. There were plans to pilot this initiative between students and UET and will look to extend this to staff in 2025.

Students Union Update

- 24.43 The Vice President of Achievement and Belonging presented the update to the Committee and it was noted. The Students Union had held a number of events and impactful collaborations aimed at enhancing student safety and inclusivity. It had launched 'Bucks Students' Union Celebrates', a campaign designed to showcase and celebrate the diversity of our student body. The initiative had been instrumental in highlighting the unique cultural backgrounds, traditions and identities that make our student community so vibrant. The Union had hosted a series of events that honoured various cultural and social identities and were not only educational and gave students the chance to share their culture with others. There were a number of cultural celebrations including:
- Black History Month
 - Diwali
 - Eid
 - Holi
 - Pride Celebrations
 - Bollywood Party
 - Me Encanta
- 24.44 The Union had collaborated with The Safe Place Project which was aimed at enhancing the safety and inclusivity of our campus. Through this initiative, Venue staff had received comprehensive training to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify, prevent and respond to incidents of spiking and sexual violence. The training had been pivotal in ensuring the venue remained a safe and inclusive space for all our members.
- 24.45 There had been an Employee Engagement Survey carried out in January/February 2024 and was completed by 88% of the staff team. the survey was carried out every other year with clear actions agreed and implemented. There had been inclusion initiatives implemented over the last 2 years had been applied to staff and students and this has resulted in an increase of 5% in positive responses from 78% to 83%. This was 8% above the SU sector and 23% above the wider third sector.

24.46 The Union reported record levels of participating in many of its services. Engaging with at least one Students' Union activity (to 30 April 2024, FTUG) are:

- 94% of LGBTQIA+ students
- 86% of mature students
- 95% of Black students
- 92% of students who declared a disability
- 100% of students from IMD quintile 1

24.47 For the next academic year 2024/25 and depending on the resources, the Union planned to utilise more detailed data analysis into the level of engagement for each student group and types of activity being participated in.

Date of next meeting

24.48 The date of the next meeting was to be confirmed.