EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Open Minutes

Of the meeting held on Monday, 13 March 2023 on MS Teams.

Present:
- Professor Nick Braisby (Vice Chancellor [Chair])
- Charlotte Stewart (Inclusion, Diversity and Disability Manager [Deputy Chair])
- Paulette Morris (PSE Representative)
- Jess Bradbury (Students' Union Vice President: Student Involvement)
- Simon Lee-Price (UCU Representative)
- Emma Binnie (Dean of Students)
- Rachael Cornwall (Director of HR)
- Karla Inniss (HRBP – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)
- Sarah Jackson (Students' Union HR & Development Manager)
- Louise Harvey (Director, Vice-Chancellor, Communications and Civic Engagement)

Apologies:
- Margaret Rioga (Head of Practice Learning for Health and Social Care)
- Hillary Mullen (Senior Lecturer)
- Carlo Lusuardi (Senior Lecturer)

Welcome/Apologies for Absence

23.01   The Chair welcomed Committee Members to the meeting and noted the following apologies:
- Margaret Rioga (Head of Practice Learning for Health and Social Care)
- Hillary Mullen (Senior Lecturer)
- Carlo Lusuardi (Senior Lecturer)

Declaration of conflicts of interest

23.02   No conflicts of interest were declared.

Minutes of the previous meeting

23.03   The minutes of the previous meeting were <u>approved</u> as an accurate record.

Matters Arising/Status Actions

23.04   The Chair advised that there were some actions outstanding from the previous meeting.

23.05   The Chair noted that he had to write to Committee members about the importance of attending the meetings.

Buckinghamshire New University

23.06   The Chair noted that the Pay Gap data update and the Race Equality Charter update was on the agenda today.

23.07   Out of hours service update – the Inclusion, Diversity and Disability Manager advised that a well being consultant would be brought in to progress the matter. A formal report would be given at the next meeting.

23.08   Gender discrimination definition update – The Committee noted an update from HRBP – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in which they advised that a panel event had been held on BEN with an expert speaker.

23.09   White Ribbon Accreditation update - the Director of HR advised they were close to signing.

Chair's Actions/Report

23.10   The Chair did not have any actions to report.

23.11   It was noted the University were carefully monitoring the developments on the Office for Students (OfS) consultation on a possible new condition of registration relating to Sexual Harassment and Misconduct.

Membership

23.12   The Committee noted the contents of the paper which outlined the proposed dates for notifying staff of the vacancy, the election dates and deadlines. The Committee agreed it would be beneficial to have more diversity within the group. Following a short discussion, the Committee agreed that the Chair, Director of HR and HRBP – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion would work together to write a message encouraging applications.

Action: Chair, Director of HR and HRBP – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Annual Report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

23.13   The Committee's attention was drawn to the pay gaps. The Gender Pay Gap showed the difference between the mean and median hourly rate of pay for male and female colleagues. It was noted that the mean gender pay gap had increased between 2021 and 2022 as new starters on lower pay were more likely to be female in this period. The median gender pay gap stayed the same between 2021 and 2022 and in this period, female staff made up 50% of the University's workforce.

23.14   It was noted that the mean and median ethnicity pay gap decreased between 2021 and 2022 and during this period 'Ethnic Minority' staff made up 23% of the University's workforce.

23.15   The Committee's attention was drawn to the difference between the mean and median hourly rate of pay for disabled colleagues and colleagues with no known disability. The mean and median disability pay gap increased between 2021 and 2022. During this period, disabled staff made up 10% of the workforce.

23.16   The Director of HR advised the Committee that the University needed to consider its equality strategy to reduce the pay gaps gradually. The in-depth reporting by the University gives another layer of transparency.

23.17   The Aurora Programme sponsors approximately 8 people per year and was viewed as a positive step. The Committee agreed that the programme was positive in the longer term and that the gender pay gap was positively influenced by it. The Committee agreed that it should look at how apply this for people.

Action: Director of HR & HRBP – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

23.18   The Committee agreed that it would be interesting to see some intersectionality in the data. They were of the view that other data may show success that is not currently available and gives an opportunity to give other areas urgent attention where necessary.

23.19   The HRBP - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion advised that to get different sets of data it requires a different methodology. They advised they would note the Committee's comments and hoped to report on the data quickly.

23.20   The Committee queried why the ethnicity pay gap had reduced and were advised that the university's proximity to London meant that there was more diversity. The University employs more black academics than the sector in the last 3 years as a result of its concerted effort on race initiative.

23.21   The disability pay gap showed the data was concerning and queried what action needed to be taken to tackle this. The Committee were advised that the University needed to concentrate on ways to be more inclusive and for people to share this information. There had been changes to the recruitment processes and HR had sent interview questions in advance to reduce discomfort. The Committee were pleased to see there had been positive progress.

Race Equality Network Update

23.22   The Committee's attention was drawn to the update in which it advised that BNU was committed to the five principles of the Advance HE Race Equality Charter (REC). The charter provides a tailored framework that aims to improve representation, progression and the success of Ethnic Minority staff and students within higher education. There are ten key stages of the REC framework ranging from: institution and local context, staff profile, student pipeline, teaching and learning and finally action plans. It was noted that the self-assessment team meets each month to make progress towards the University's 14,000 word submission.

23.23   The Committee first considered the key headlines for students. The data provided showed that the BNU community was diverse however it was noted that ethnic diversity varied significantly across Schools and Directorates. Data specific to each school was shared with them and (needs a pronoun here to state how created the action plan) subsequently created an action plan. The Committee was advised that the schools were responsive to the data they had been shown and about their equality strategy. Directors of Educations are self-assessing against the recommendations from the 'Closing the gap; Three Years on report' with the University's REC submission planned for later this year.

23.24   Furthermore, Heads of School will be reporting to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team to advise how they are closing the gaps, this approach gives governance and the confidence to tackle issues.

23.25   The Committee expressed its view that the disparity for reporting race related incidents was high. They were advised that the Resolutions Team were looking into this including the policy, processes and anonymous reporting. The Dean of Students would provide a report at the next meeting.

23.26   It was noted with concern that among UK students there had been a slight decline in Asian and Black student admissions. The non-UK Asian student admissions have significantly increased. The Committee directed that Director of Marketing & Student Recruitment be made aware of this statistic.

Action: UCU Representative

23.27   The Committee gave consideration to the information for staff. It was noted that the University's workforce was more ethnically diverse than sector benchmarks however ethnically diverse colleagues are less likely to get promoted with around 10% of promotions in 2020/21 being awarded to ethnically diverse colleagues. Furthermore, despite ethnically diverse candidates representing around 40% of job applications there is an interview offer disparity of 4.5% in favour of white applicants, with a much wider and persistent gap at job offer stage. The disparity was greater for Asian candidates.

23.28   The Committee noted with concern the data regarding promotions. It was queried whether candidates were afraid to put themselves forward or unsure how to progress as the reason for the low figure. It was generally agreed that the data are affected by the problem of small numbers. The Committee noted that the figures for interviews and job offers are significant and more balanced.

23.29   The Committee noted an update on Decolonisation. The UCU Representative advised the Committee of the importance of approaching the topic in positive terms and to learn rather than to fear. The Committee were advised that there was positive movement across the sector.

23.30   It was queried whether there should be a dedicated module for all to have access to raise awareness and a chance for staff to go somewhere for advice and guidance. It was hoped for staff to be able to become an ally and for them to exchange ideas across the institution. The module would be brought to the Committee for its consideration before taking it forward.

Action: UCU Representative

23.31   The Committee were of the view that an optional module was not sufficient as there are other areas that are mandated to complete CPD.

23.32   The UCU Representative would work with the Committee Officer regarding the learning module.

Action: UCU Representative & Committee Officer

23.33   The Committee received an update on the Islamaphobia definition. Since the definition had launched, the UCU Representative had been to the University of Hull to speak about it and shared the story on BEN. A student had applied it to their experience and it will be included in future staff inductions and be present in staff policies. There have been positive reactions from the local community and other institutions had reached out and subsequently adopted BNU's practice.

Proposed OfS Condition on sexual harassment

23.34   The Dean of Students advised the Committee that the 'Statement of expectations for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in higher education' was published by the Office for Students (OfS) in April 2021.

23.35   The proposed new condition which would be a condition for registration. It would require universities and colleges to publish a single document explaining what the steps it has and will take to protect students from harassment and sexual misconduct.

23.36   The Committee noted with concern that the training for staff and students would be mandatory, queried how this would be enforced and what the ramifications of this for students would be. The Committee queried whether it would be online or in person training. The Dean of Students advised there would be a meeting in April.

23.37   It was raised that there was not a dedicated role for sexual harassment and misconduct within the University and if there would be a need to resource this. Furthermore, where there are instances of sexual misconduct or harassment, students in some instances only want a senior figure to be aware and do not wish to make a formal complaint.

23.38   A concern was raised regarding Freedom of Information and the data collected around this process. It was queried whether the definition for sexual harassment and sexual misconduct was consistent across the sector.

23.39   It was noted that OfS proposed that the University would have responsibility for an incident or student at its own institution and partner colleges. It was therefore important for the partner colleges to be updated in relation to this proposed condition and for protocols to be agreed whereby partner colleges would provide assurance that they would operate in such a way to ensure BNU met any new regulatory obligations.

23.40   The Dean of Students advised they were still going through the document in great detail and noted that it was a complex and sensitive area.

Communication Plan of all BNU/SU Activities; future plans

23.41   The Committee was requested to consider and approve the proposed calendar of EDI activities from the University and Bucks Students' Union. The Committee noted the paper which listed a varied and inclusive range of activities hosted by the Students' Union.

23.42   The Director, Vice-Chancellor, Communications and Civic Engagement advised they would shortly be planning the academic year beginning in September 2023. There will be a comprehensive calendar with dates to establish priorities within the team. The team planning the events were looking to the Exeter University model and working backwards to allocate accountability and responsibility.

23.43   It was queried how to encourage staff to be more involved with the events at the Students' Union and the HR Representatives advised that there was £10,000 of a budget allocated to EDI events for staff. However, the Committee was of the view that the events would only be successful if they were led by passionate people and an inclusive network.

23.44   The PSE Representative noted there was an event on 22 June and queried whether there would be students on campus. The Director, Vice-Chancellor, Communications and Civic Engagement agreed to re-consider the date.

23.45   The Head of Communications advised that they wanted students following a related academic subject to become more involved and it would be a great idea for them to take the lead.

HR Update

23.46   The Committee noted the contents of the report on the Human Resources update in which it confirmed the EDI breakdown mainly in the gender space and they were advised to take the numbers with caution.

23.47   The Committee's attention was drawn to the training opportunities offered in the EDI space and noted the low numbers that had taken part.

23.48   The Director of HR advised that staff were feeling safe and confident to report incidents and managers have approached their department and requested training that is already available on BEN. The Committee was requested to consider how they could encourage more staff

Buckinghamshire New University

to take part in training. A suggestion was given that the training could be made more visible when someone uploads a relevant document and there could be better signposting on BEN.

23.49   The Director of HR was congratulated on a comprehensive report.

Students' Union Update

23.50   The Committee noted the contents of the update from the Students' Union. The Committee's attention was drawn to the detail on the SU awareness/EDI catering to everyone.

23.51   The Committee noted that the elections in the Students' Union had just taken place and the Students' Union Vice President: Student Involvement had been re-elected and would be continuing to work with the executive officers.

23.52   The Students' Union HR & Development Manager advised the Committee there had been a significant amount of work done around the language used for the elections to make it more diverse.

23.53   The Committee noted that the first Asian Vice President of Education had been elected. The overall participation rates in this years' election were favourable and encouraging.

Rainbow Lanyard

23.54   The Committee noted the contents of the report and the HRBP – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion advised them that it was a good opportunity for staff to reflect on what the lanyards meant to them. It was planned to record a video to capture pledges to show what it means to be a part of BNU. There were also plans to include the video on the external website.

Items for the next meeting

23.55   Committee members were requested to email their ideas to the Chair or to the Secretary.

Date of next meeting

23.71   The date of the next meeting was 13th June 2023.