



Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee
 Minutes of Meeting held on 14 July 2023 at 10:00
 Zoom Meeting

- Present:** Prof Sir Anton Muscatelli (Convener), Mr Tony Anderson, Mrs Christine Barr, Prof Sara Carter, Dr June Milligan, Ms Hailie Pentleton-Owens, Ms Mhairi Taylor, Ms Jane Weir (vice Dr Robert Partridge)
- Apologies:** Prof Muffy Calder, Dr David Duncan, Dr Robert Partridge, Prof Moira Fischbacher-Smith, Ms Kirsteen Fraser, Mrs Emma Gilmartin, Ms Uzma Khan, Prof Iain McInnes, Miss Rachel Sandison
- Attending:** Mr Clarke Elsby, Mrs Clare Craig, Dr Katie Farrell, Mrs Janell Kelly (clerk)

Welcome and Apologies

The Convener welcomed members to the rescheduled meeting. He welcomed H Pentleton-Owens and T Anderson in their roles as new SRC President and SRC VP Student Support. He also welcomed C Elsby, Estates' Building Surveyor and Accessibility Officer, attending to speak to Agenda Item 2.1 and Jane Weir, Director of Student Support & Wellbeing, attending to speak to Agenda Item 6, as R Partridge has moved to a new role.

The Convener noted C Craig, Head of Student Wellbeing & Inclusion, would also join the meeting later in relation to Agenda Items 4 & 5. Members noted Dr Farrell, the Equality and Diversity Unit's Senior Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Adviser was attending to observe the meeting.

Members noted, although a number of apologies had been received, the meeting was quorate.

1. Minutes of the previous meeting – EDSC/20230312/Minutes 1.0

The minutes were approved.

2. Matters arising – Paper 1

Members noted items marked for Estates would be covered under Agenda 2.1 by C Elsby. M Taylor provided updates on the remaining outstanding items.

Action 3 – Non-academic student misconduct

M Taylor advised an update on the changes to Code of Student Conduct is also provided within the Ross Report update (Paper 3). She clarified non-academic misconduct is now part of Legal and Governance. An update on revising the related processes and procedures, aligning them with the new staff Code of Professional Conduct and the recommendations from the Ross Report, will be sought for the next meeting.

ACTION: EDU

Action 4 – Evidentiary 'grey areas' in relation to disciplinary cases

The Convener agreed to close this action, as K Fraser had been unable to clarify with D Thomas what their original request from June 2022 related to.

Action 8 – SFC’s ‘Persistent Inequalities’ and National Equality Outcomes (NEOs);

M Taylor will follow up with Planning, Insight & Analytics and Gregor Caldwell, Executive Director of Finance, on the potential to include reporting on SFC’s NEOs within the University’s Annual Report.

ACTION: EDU**Action 9 – Unions involvement in future equality related campaigns**

Members noted the item remained outstanding.

ACTION: K Fraser**2.1 Estates Disability/Accessibility – Paper 2**

C Elsby, Estates’ Building Surveyor and Accessibility Officer, provided members with a comprehensive update on the completed, planned, and future works within the Estates Directorate to improve accessibility on campus as shown in Paper 2.

C Elsby confirmed he has been working with relevant Services across the University to both address accessibility needs as they arise and to plan future upgrade/refurbishment projects. Members welcomed the recent approval of a £5m budget for extensive accessibility related upgrade to the Kelvin Building with works due to start in October 2023. Members noted the long planned accessible toilet for the Committee Rooms area and the accompanying lift upgrade for the Gilbert Scott building will be further delayed due to structural and layout concerns. C Elsby agreed to investigate the possibility of prioritising the lift and accessibility works in the Adam Smith Building, due to the volume of teaching delivered in this venue.

ACTION: Estates

The Convener and C Barr thanked C Elsby for his work on all the projects and welcomed the progress made across a broad range of accessibility improvements.

3. Equality Champions Updates**3.1 Disability**

C Barr advised the Disability Service’s case management system had now been implemented. She reported Kirsten Swankie, Head of Admissions, had updated the Disability Equality Group (DEG) on recent system changes, allowing students to declare a disability much earlier in their application and admissions process. As a result, Disability Service are now able to proactively contact those students to discuss their support needs. C Barr welcomed the ongoing commitment to further integrate the Disability Services’ new system with Admissions and MyCampus information.

Members noted DEG also heard the review of the new support model for disabled colleagues had identified areas for enhancement which will improve its effectiveness. Other topics discussed by DEG included the updated Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy, the new Disabled Student Commitment introduced in England and Wales (Paper 7) and a new project aimed at creating an inclusive and supportive environment for colleagues with severe mental illnesses. C Barr confirmed EDSC members would receive an invite to the ‘Hidden Disability’ session on 16 August 2023.

ACTION: EDU

J Weir observed, through her roles as Chair of the University’s Fitness to Study panel, she has become aware many colleagues across the University do not have a good appreciation of the impact of hidden disabilities or how to assist those students; this results in poor learning experiences for some students. With this in mind, she confirmed she would discuss future opportunities to address this lack of understanding with C Barr.

ACTION: J Weir

4. Ross Report Recommendations Updates

4.1 Ross Report SMG Sub-Group Report – Paper 3

S Carter provided members with an overview of the progress made in responding to the recommendations from the Ross Report, as shown in Paper 3.

Members welcomed the main changes to the Student Code of Conduct and noted a consultation is underway on a fuller revision, with implementation planned over the summer, prior to full approval by Senate in October. In response to J Weir's enquiry, S Carter confirmed Prof Marting Hendry, Clerk of Senate, is leading the review.

S Carter highlighted the increased resources allocated to establish the new Safeguarding Team. Members also noted the additional resource allocated to the Gender Based Violence (GBV) Counsellor, while acknowledging the challenges for recruiting such a specialised role to cover 0.2 FTE. S Carter reported EDU has led on co-ordinating an agreed approach to complex cases. Members noted External Relations were leading on improving communications and welcomed the planned 2-stage campaign.

4.2 Ross Report SMG Sub-Group Action Plan – Paper 4

S Carter confirmed a University-wide communication on progress was issued on 26 June 2023 and drew members' attention to the latest updated Ross Report Action Tracker. She stated the University expects to have fully complied with all the Report's recommendations before the start of the new 2023/24 academic year.

C Craig advised progress filling the Safeguarding team posts has been slow, with only one Safeguarding Officer currently in post; the other three posts are being readvertised. M Taylor expressed the view that while development of the University's GBV campaign has continued, there is some nervousness about the possibility of launching it without having these specialist posts in place.

The Convener asked if consideration had been given to utilising appropriate professional services colleagues to reduce the backlog in non-academic misconduct cases. M Taylor advised any cases relating to GBV will only be dealt by those colleagues who have received the relevant sexual harassment investigation training; this group is a mix of academic and professional services colleagues.

5. Inclusive Community – Online Reporting Update - Presentation

M Taylor reminded members previous data on bullying, harassment had been based solely on information provided by members of the Respect Advisers Network and confirmed from 2011/12 to 2018/19 annual case numbers varied from six in 2014/15 to 58 in 2018/19.

Reports relating to bullying, harassment and sexual violence are now predominantly received through the University's student and colleague reporting tools, which utilises the Ivanti system. The following information is based on this data set.

Student Reports:

- 375 reports received since January 2021, increasing each year with 175 in 2022-23 alone.
- 74 recorded with a Status of 'Closed', 84 are 'In Progress', and 217 remain as 'Logged'. 'Logged' denotes a report has been made but no progress has been recorded within Ivanti.

- Where an Outcome was recorded, 35 were referred to Wellbeing Services, 11 were referred to Senate, 7 were referred on to Police Scotland or other external services. 47 reports have an outcome of 'Closed - no further action'.
- 275 cases currently have no Outcome recorded, indicating a lack of consistency using the Ivanti system.
- There may be duplicated entries as First Responders currently have to create a 'report' after having spoken to a Reporting Party in order to provide an update on the case.
- Bullying, discrimination, sexual violence and sexual harassment were the most common report type.
- Gender/Sex and Ethnicity were the most commonly reported targeting factor.

Colleague/Staff Reports:

- 71 reports received since March 2022, with 59 in 2022/23.
- 68 reports have a status of 'Closed', and 3 remain 'In Progress'.
- All 'Closed' reports have an Outcome recorded – colleague reports have a wider variety of options to record Outcomes. These include designations for spam reports (23), closed at the request of the reporting party (1), transfer to POD Case Management (4), and anonymous reports where investigation is not possible (1).
- Bullying, discrimination and victimisation were the most common report types, followed by harassment and sexual harassment and violence.
- Targeting factors echo those of student cases, with the highest number of incidents relating to Gender/Sex and Ethnicity.

Members welcomed the recruitment and training provided to 38 new Respect Advisers and 61 First Responders since 2020. Members noted the 'Together Against Racism' campaign and the Ross Report may have influenced student and staff's awareness of reporting mechanisms and their willingness to report and seek support.

M Taylor highlighted recent improvements to the colleague/staff reporting system include the capacity to refer cases to Respect Advisers; the ability to email Reporting Parties; creation of a 'convert to POD case' option which transfers the case over to local POD colleagues; and an option to transfer a case to the student system where the wrong reporting tool had been used; all from within the Ivanti system improving data security.

C Craig advised the new Safeguarding team will have responsibility for dealing with student reports going forward. This will give a more consistent approach to support and for updating case notes and outcomes. She advised system improvements are also planned for the student reporting system.

M Taylor, H Pentleton-Owens and C Craig all reflected that discussions have shown most Reporting Parties are focussed on accessing support in a timely manner rather than simply reporting incidents, taking forward formal processes, or making onward reports to Police Scotland or Conduct. C Craig advised, as a result, the outward facing student webpages were amended to emphasise the support services/routes available but she acknowledged further development would be welcomed.

C Craig stated the current alternative market-leading tool (Culture Shift's Report + Support) is very agile and can be changed quickly in response to data trends, demands and different categories of reports and, despite planned improvements, the University does not currently have the capacity to be as responsiveness. She suggested further consideration be given to whether to continue to develop the current tool or look at adopting the market-leading tool which is used extensively across the sector.

The Convener and S Carter agreed the Ross Report Implementation Group should receive a presentation from Culture Shift to allow comparison against the current webpages and Ivanti system. M Taylor agreed to seek an opportunity for that through the Principal's Office. S Carter agreed to update EDSC on any decisions made.

ACTION: EDU/S Carter

6. Student Wellbeing Framework Review - West Report – Paper 5

J Weir provided members with the background to the latest review report carried out by Dr Andrew West, noting Dr West's previous review recommendations led to the creation of Student and Academic Services Directorate and the specialised services of Student Support and Wellbeing, Student Engagement and Careers and Global Opportunities within that. Members noted the Student Support Officer role was then introduced in late 2021, as an additional layer of support for students based in Colleges and Schools.

J Weir advised Dr West was engaged to review the wider Student Support framework but also look at the effectiveness of the Student Support Officer role. She highlighted the final report makes nine key recommendations (shown on Page 25 of the Report) which should be addressed within the wider strategic frameworks across the University. As a result, an Implementation Group, with cross university and student membership, will be formed to take these forward. J Weir advised a new Student Support Service Manager, who will provide dedicated leadership, should be in place for the start of the new academic year.

J Weir advised discussions are ongoing on how Student Experience Strategy funded projects can be integrated with the report's findings and hoped to discuss this further at an upcoming Student Experience Strategy Delivery Board meeting. J Weir noted the Implementation Group will begin to map out how and when to tackle each recommendation but expected the operation of the Student Support Officer model will be prioritised, while other potential Service restructuring will be longer term actions.

The Convener asked members to pass any comments on the report's recommendations to direct to J Weir. He also stated EDSC would welcome an update on progress at a future meeting.

ACTION: All/J Weir

7. Staff Related Items

No additional staff issues were raised.

8. Student Related Items

No student related issues were raised.

9. Equality Champions Update continued

9.1 Gender (Sex)

S Carter provided members with an update from the latest meeting of the Gender Equality Group. She reported the Ross Report Recommendations (RRR) continue to be a high priority for the Group. The Group recommended, in order to ensure all the changes resulting from the RRRs are having the desired effect,

that the University implements an impact evaluation process. She also advised that while there are complex reasons for them, the Group felt it needed to have full discussions on the University's decision not to become involved with the Emily Test Charter and not to make the SRC's consent training mandatory for students. The Convener noted SMG had expressed concerns over the political pressure put on universities to join the Emily Test.

M Taylor noted that while charter marks like Athena Swan and the Emily Test can and have galvanised change, these are not always required to bring about cultural and systemic improvements, as seen through the University's own Understanding Racism, Changing University Culture (URTUC) report and action plan. She expressed the view that the Safeguarding team would be best placed to advise on the Emily Test.

H Pendleton-Owens noted EDSC had previously approved making the Consent module mandatory for students and expressed the SRC's concern this had been overturned without consultation with the SRC's or EDSC members. M Taylor confirmed EDSC had approved the mandating of the Consent module in June 2021 however practical and technical difficulties meant it was never implemented. She noted C Craig previously authored a paper on the issues, which had then been discussed extensively outside EDSC. M Taylor suggested both the Gender Equality Group and the Ross Report Implementation Group discuss this further before bringing any additional representations to EDSC.

ACTION: S Carter/SRC/EDU

9.2 Age

M Taylor reported the Student Experience Committee (SEC) and Learning and Teaching Committees received an update to a 2018 report on Mature Student Experience, from the Retention and Success Steering Group. The reports recommendations are expected to be taken forward by SEC. M Taylor noted the one area of the SFCs National Equality Outcomes which is not covered by the University's current PSED Outcomes relates to support for mature students.

9.3 Mental Health

M Taylor reported the Mental Health Group received a presentation from Health Assured who provide both staff and student support through their Crisis Lines. Members noted feedback from service users have been very positive. Members welcomed the Mary Burns exhibition being held in the ARC building as part of the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival.

9.4 LGBT+

M Taylor reported two incidents of homophobic and transphobic related bullying in two separate Schools within the College of Science and Engineering. She confirmed EDU have provided support and advice to both Schools to address this and to support the two students involved. She advised EDU have also provided training on LGBT+ issues to Student Support Officers.

9.5 Race

M Taylor advised the Race Equality Group heard from Dr Collete Mair about her work on Decolonising Mathematics. She noted such work can be prove difficult in some subject areas, but the Group were surprised by the evident resistance to and her motivations for undertaking it, from some of her academic colleagues. M Taylor report the Group also considered the Ethnicity Pay Gap data and been discussion recruitment issues, especially important due to the University's KPI in that area. Additionally, the Group reviewed External Relation's report on the uptake of University scholarships by ethnicity.

Members noted South Asian History month is being marked by the University, with the support of the Global Majority Network, through imagery celebrating our colleagues of South Asian heritage shown across the campus digital screens.

9.6 Religion and Belief

M Taylor reported the newly established Chaplaincy Advisory Group has held its first meeting. Members noted the Student Experience Strategy investment bid to fund a Diversity Chaplain, from a non-Christian background, to support our diverse student community and also support events for those communities in order to build a more inclusive and welcoming University and foster a sense of belonging.

9.7 Sanctuary – Paper 6

Members noted the update provided by R Sandison on the events to mark Refugee Week 2023 and welcomed the planned reconvening of the University's Sanctuary Working Group.

10. Items for Information

10.1 The Disabled Student Commitment – Paper 7

Members noted Paper 7 which was provide for information only.

11. Any Other Business

The Convener noted this was the last EDSC meeting for J Milligan, as her position on Court was coming to an end in September 2023. Members wished her well and thanked her for all her considered contributions to the work on Court and this committee.

Date of Next Meeting: 6 December 2023.