

**Minutes of the SBCS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Meeting
22 April 2021, 11:00-13:00, Microsoft Teams**

1. Attendance and Apologies for absence

Attendance:

Anna Pachol - Co-Chair (AP)
Richard Pickersgill – Co-Chair (RWP)
(for part of the meeting)
Giulia De Falco (GDF)
Angelika Stollewerk (AS)
Janelle Jones (JJ)
Frances Healy (FH)
Christina Kousseff (CA)
Isabel Palacios (IP)
Christian Nielsen (CN)
Marina Resmini (MR)
Ellie Marshall (EM)
Susanne Steck (SS)
Nathan Emery (NE)
(for part of the meeting)

Apologies:

Catherine Murray (CM)
Petra Ungerer (PU)
Henry Oamen (HO)
Elisabetta Versace (EV)

- AP welcome everyone to the meeting and noted apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

- The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Update on actions

- Stephanie Marshall and Sheila Gupta agreed that JJ can proceed with the module evaluation pilot, which will take place in semester A. JJ will start thinking about how best to proceed. AP noted that this is a great initiative as the issue was raised by staff in SBCS and the Committee has taken action to address it.
- GDF, with the help of Sam Court, has now managed to set up all the pictures showcasing our diversity around the building. AP encouraged members to go and have a look if they haven't already. GDF wanted to note her thanks to Sam for helping to make this happen.
- The meeting with the Alumni office to discuss EDI funding took place. The Alumni Office seemed engaged with the idea and came back with a list of good suggestions. IP noted that the WG plan to ask the School if they have any research projects with low/middle income countries as there might be existing projects that some of the philanthropists identify with more than just a generic school project.

4. News

- Tippu got funding from the QMUL Access Fund for the internships he wanted the EDIC to fund. It was noted that the Chemistry department have been active in applying – they have applied both to RSC Inclusion Fund and the QMUL Access Fund.
- AP, RWP, GDF and JJ attended a meeting with ReachOut, the mentoring charity, to discuss the School signing up to their mentoring scheme. JJ noted that ReachOut already have a lot of participation from Psychology, so if they decide to go ahead, they would need to think about how to engage the other departments. The Committee felt it would be useful to have co-ordinators from each department to help organise (HoDs could help identify). JJ suggested that this could be tied to the remit of people with responsibility for employability within each department (if the other departments have a similar role). IP felt that some members of the intersectionality WG could also help, depending on workload.

ACTION: IP to send AP a list of people she thinks would like to be included; AP to follow up with HoDs; JJ to send AP details of the person responsible for employability in Psychology.

The Committee agreed the scheme was a good idea and that the School should be involved.

- The Report & Support annual report was shared in the QMUL e-bulletin and also in the SBCS EDI newsletter. AP noted that S&E seems to be standing out in number of incidents. MR suggested this could be due to the fact that the period covered lockdown and S&E were one of the only Faculties who were physically on campus, which could have been a trigger for some of these incidents. AP encouraged the committee to read the report and suggested revisiting at a future meeting.

5. Issues raised

• Internships

- AP thanked MR, EM and FH for their work co-ordinating the internships.
- The Faculty is also offering some money for BAME UG research internships (two per School for a period of 8 weeks). IBM has awarded QM £37,000 to develop an enrichment and training programme for the BAME interns.
- The WG wanted to align the School internships with the dates the Faculty has given (14th June – 6th August) and to advertise all the internships together.
- Due to the fact that we have to pay the London living wage, the cost of one internship to us for a period of 6 weeks (working approximately 30 hours a week) is £2221, which means the total cost is about £6662. MR believes Richard has agreed to £6000.
ACTION: AP to confirm amount agreed with RWP
- Chemistry has some money left from part of a grant given by the Royal Society of Chemistry to cope with the pandemic, which they believe will be enough to fund an additional internship for chemistry.
- It is hoped that the School will be able to offer a total of 4 internships, plus the two from the Faculty.
- Part of the funding for the Faculty internships will come from the EPSRC. FH confirmed that the pay students get is EPSRC funded so projects have to be 50% in the EPSRC remit and then the IBN funding is for the extra training (salary EPSRC, rest IBN). AP has already received comments to say it is unfair for those departments which are not so closely related to the EPSRC. It was felt that the SBCS internships could make a difference here.
- MR noted that it is clear Chemistry have an advantage in terms of EPSRC so if we wanted to have a fairer system (they already have one funded by the RSC), the chemists could 'give up' the school one, as chemistry have their own and access to the EPSRC. JJ noted that this is something that psychology struggle with as a lot of the bids coming out of S&E have this EPSRC stipulation on them. MR noted her view is to offer a balanced equal opportunity to UGs simply based on numbers. Biochemists could apply for EPSRC without a problem. Biology and Psychology equates to a large number of students so this seems fair and she is supportive of this. Others agreed it would be helpful for the other areas who might not be as competitive for EPSRC funding. Further discussions on how this might work are needed. AS added that the School could always open them to everyone initially and fair distribution could be addressed when the School panel discuss applications.

• Special leave policy

- AP noted that the draft document was on teams and comments had already been received and added from CM and SS.
- AP highlighted some of the general comments, which included the fact that carers are treated differently from employees; there was a general feeling of mistrust in employees; and that the policy feels too prescriptive.

Other points raised/discussed in the meeting were:

- A discomfort with using 'line manager's discretion'. It was noted that some people have better relationships with their line managers than others.
- Having a better, more flexible and supportive policy which would allow colleagues to take a short time off when needed which would be much less detrimental to the University than people taking periods of sick leave
- There should be some flexibility in the policy to deal with pre-arranged medical appointments for carers, depending on individual circumstances
- It was felt the number of days for carers leave should be higher, 5 days at a minimum. It was agreed that individual circumstances should be taken into account. A comment was also noted that part-time employees may be negatively impacted. MR noted that in Italy, if you are caring for someone with a serious illness you can apply for 2 days a month for this. SS suggested that the university could go even further and not state the number of days and really base this on individual need, particularly if the ambition is to be the most inclusive, but it was recognised that this may be difficult to implement and a step too far at this stage.
- It was not clear why carers leave couldn't be used for non-emergency medical appointments
- Concerns were raised about putting these decisions on line managers, as this impacts on fairness and transparency
- Policy doesn't align with QMUL's ambitions to be the most inclusive university of its kind.
- It was felt some guidelines for managers to support the policy would be helpful. The Committee could suggest that.
- The policy is very focused on QMUL as an institution and not its employees. AS noted that the last paragraph in the introduction in particular gives this feeling and it was felt this should be changed.
- It was noted it is difficult to provide evidence if you are caring for someone who is unwell, but doesn't need to see a doctor.
- It was felt it was unfair to force someone to take half a day's leave if their medical appointment ran over the two hours that the policy said was permitted. It was also felt that if we start counting hours it will only lead to more difficulties
- It was felt that we should aim to be as flexible as possible with requests and that the onus should be on line managers to work out what they can do to accommodate requests (it would be helpful if there was guidance). As employees have successfully worked from home for months, it would be very difficult for QM to turn these requests down. The School should be trying to build resilience. The line manager / employee could find someone to cover when they have an appointment and then you could return the favour by helping someone else. It was also noted that most people can be covered online.
- Limit of 2 hours seems unreasonable if you are going to an NHS appointment – if you include travel and waiting time (unless you live nearby, which is a tiny subset of people)
- The University needs a culture change to move away from prescribing, distrusting and monitoring to move towards trusting (and empowering people). Employees would probably be more willing to help without getting to management level.

AP informed the Committee that she would write up all the comments and send the response directly to HR.

ACTION: If you have any further comments on the special leave policy, send to AP so they can be included in the response.

- **SWARM allocations**

- The DoE gave a presentation at the last meeting. Revision of the workload model is currently taking place, being carried out by DoE, HoDs and HoS. There won't be enough time to have an impact in this AS survey but hopefully we will see an impact in the next survey.
- AP summarised the issues/questions discussed in the last meeting in a document on teams.
- AP suggested that from an EDI perspective, the focus should be on how to ensure transparency and fairness and what suggestions we can make to ensure this (focusing on teaching allocation)
- GDF noted that SWARM is not suitable for Nanchang staff and they are still waiting to hear how they can calculate their workload so there might be additional types of platforms for calculating workload allocations. It makes it difficult for Nanchang staff to comment on SWARM. AP suggested that the Committee should think about the transparency and fairness of workload allocation and should not be focused on a particular model. It is hoped that in the 2023 AS survey staff recognise that the workload allocation is fair and transparent.
- AS suggested that all MOs should have input into how the number of hours allocated is calculated and that it should be their responsibility to collect information from their modules.
- MR's view is that the workload allocation model should ensure that the load is spread across the staff within a department in an equitable way and that differences across departments need to be captured. It will be difficult to achieve this within a school because subjects are completely different. Others agreed that the workload model should only be compared within departments.
- With regards to transparency, MR felt that the teaching allocation and admin allocation should be circulated to all staff across the department. This is something that is done in Chemistry. There is a clear understanding within the department that no one should challenge the allocation in an open meeting, due to the fact individual circumstances have been taken into account and need to remain confidential. If someone has a query, they can contact the HoD directly. Not only does this increase transparency but it also gives colleagues information about who is doing what admin roles and what admin roles are available. MR strongly advises implementing this across the School. JJ noted that every year in psychology, the HoD puts out a list of people's admin tasks. AP suggested that we recommend this is done in some form across the school.
- AP suggested revisiting SWARM at a future meeting.

- **School culture and introvert vs extrovert employees**

- One issue raised with AP is that carrying out meetings online has been more beneficial to introverts. Online discussions are a bit more ordered, people can raise their hands, use chat etc. which allows everyone an opportunity to contribute.
- AP asked the Committee if they felt we should be making some sort of recommendation on this
- AS agreed that she liked this online format, and having the chat so people can also comment on there and agrees we should keep this. She noted that some of the teaching groups plan to keep this. Also because people are in different places it makes life easier.
- AP noted an increase in attendance in the EDI committee at meetings since we have gone online

- GDF noted that some people like to have an extra push to go and meet people on campus and meet people face to face.
- AP suggested revisiting and thinking about whether the Committee could issue some kind of awareness statement on introverts and extroverts in all kinds of situations, with some recommendations for the new academic year.
- **Working group updates**
 - Communication WG on job adverts – EM has confirmed that all jobs will now be posted on LinkedIn and Twitter. In terms of broadening our channels, AP asked members to email EM suggestions of where else we could advertise our jobs. Although the School received some recommendations from EDISG, these were for all types of websites and not necessarily suitable for academic posts
 - Work-life balance and Culture WGs on mental health recommendations – update was postponed as GDF was unable to attend the WLB WG meeting
 - Culture WG – results of AS and culture survey might be available for the June meeting. AP thanked JJ and GDF for setting it up.
 - Governance WG – the WG have been preparing a presentation on what the School has been doing in terms of EDI and its plans, which RWP and AP will present to the EDI Steering Group on Monday. The WG is meeting tomorrow afternoon to run through the presentation

ACTION: if anyone has any comments on the presentation (which is on Teams), please let AP know before the meeting.

6. Next meeting

- The date of the next meeting is 24th June 2021.