

Minutes of the SBCS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Meeting 2 April 2020, 10.00-12.00, Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance and Apologies for absence

Attendance:

Apologies:

Anna Pachol - Co-Chair (AP)
Richard Pickersgill – Co-Chair (RWP)
Daisy Crowfoot (DC)
Marina Resmini (MR)
Giulia De Falco (GDF)
Christoph Engl (CE)
Kristin Hadfield (KH)
Frances Healy (FH)
Angelika Stollewerk (AS)
Dunja Aksentijevic (DA)
Joanna Szular (JS)
Janelle Jones (JJ)
Peter Heathcote (PH)
Henry Oamen (HO)
Ellie Marshall (EM)
Susanne Steck (SS)

Christian Nielsen (CN)
Petra Ungerer (PU)
Christina Kousseff (CA)

Catherine Murray - *notes* (CM)

AP welcomed Ellie Marshall to the Committee. Ellie will replace Mitsy Powell and will cover Marketing and Communications.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. News

3.1 Staff Photos (CE)

The staff photos that were taken to be displayed around the building, have been uploaded to Microsoft Teams. The Committee agreed there were some really nice photos. RWP suggested that EM could also make use of them on the website.

RWP asked whether it was possible to manipulate the background of the group photo/some of the photos, as he was a bit concerned about the setting.

ACTION: CE to see if we can manipulate the background of some of the photos

4. Issues arising

4.1 Work-life Balance vs working from home (DA)

Until recently staff were not given any links, support or advice about how to manage work-life balance. It was felt the earlier messages sent by QM from the Principal were unacceptable, particularly an email which asked staff to take annual leave to deal with childcare issues. It was reported that this message had also been shared on social media and was damaging to QMUL's reputation.

DA shared a document comparing these earlier messages with those sent by Kings and Oxford. It was felt that the tone and content of messages sent by Kings and Oxford were much more understanding and supportive of staff. The Committee acknowledged that recent communications from QMUL were more understanding.

DC gave an update on the work she was doing with the EDI team to support people with caring responsibilities. She thanked the Committee for their feedback, and reported that it was feedback that had been received across the university and that the EDI team were very disappointed with the message. The team had written some feedback on what staff had said about support and communications, as well as feedback on tone of the current guidance (which wasn't empathetic/supportive). They have also written some recommendations as to what they feel QMUL should be doing at this time with regards to caring responsibilities specifically. Feedback on these from the Executive team have been positive so far, but have yet to be formally approved.

ACTION: DC to update AP on this when she receives confirmation of whether the University will approve and take forward the recommendations.

The Committee discussed whether to make an official response. It was suggested that a response could also include a recommendation for change, as there has been a lack of emphasis on staff. This could be an opportunity to change culture.

ACTION: Raise with the Senior Executive tomorrow (RWP); copy DC into any response

4.2 Recommend a Change - Cafe Culture workshop, shaped by Wellcome Trust, organised by Prof. Viji Draviam (AP)



Paper 1 - SBCS
International

The School held the 'Café Culture Workshop' event, organised by Viji. Viji produced a summary of the event (attached) which the Committee can read. There was a comment about the number of women on senior committees. RWP noted he is pushing to include an action in the Queen Mary's EDI strategy which looks at gender balance across committees.

AS suggested a first step would be for women in SBCS to take on some leading roles in committees. RWP noted that the School is doing reasonably well with this. The current Director of Research's five years are up shortly, so there will be an opportunity here.

4.3 Turning Point UK

Chris Duffy highlighted an article about a far-right student organisation that lists academics with left wing views and tries to encourage people to hound them.

5. New Starter Survey results (SBCS AS action plan AP.1.4c) (GDF)

- 5.1 GDF thanked KH for her help with the survey. Despite sending weekly reminders, she was concerned about the response rate.
- 5.2 GDF reported that not everyone was happy with mentoring or the match between their mentors and themselves so perhaps we need to be a bit more careful when assigning mentors. Many respondents stated that they didn't have enough information about School and University policies.

When it comes to probation, it was felt that the School should find a way of letting people know it is ok to change mentor, although some people might feel uncomfortable doing so. It was suggested that some general guidance on the role of a mentor might help and might encourage mentors to take the role seriously, although there is a balance with not being too prescriptive. Mentees are also free to find a new mentor if they feel their mentor is not fulfilling the role. It was noted that the HoS has a role to play in encouraging mentors to take the role seriously, as there are a limited number of staff and changing mentor cannot always be the answer.

AS noted that the University used to run a workshop and have produced written guidance on mentoring.

ACTION: AS to share the guidance material

KH noted that most people seem to be happy and there is an improvement from the last survey so we probably don't need to make a big change.

6. Increasing proportion of female Research Only staff (PDRAs) in the view of the new recruitment policy

- 6.1 Agenda item carried forward to the next meeting as CN was not at the meeting.

7. SBCS EDIC Terms of Reference and Facilitating smooth transition of EDIC roles (SBCS AS action plan AP.1.2). (AP, All)

- 7.1 Comments received so far have been included in the document on Teams– people can review this version.

8. AOB

- 8.1 Newsletter – EM helping to put together a newsletter template for Anna's regular EDI email for staff to allow us to gather analytics.

9. Date of next meeting – TBC

ACTION: Find a date in June/July (CM)