

Minutes

Chair: Rowena Arshad
Attending: Celeste-Marie Bernier (LLC), Simon Clark (Economics), Andrea English (MHSES), Rhona Feist (Athena SWAN Project Manager), Emma Gieben-Gamal (ECA), Lindsay Jack (Law), David Kaufman (HCA), Rashne Limki (UEBS), Michelle Luciano (PPLS), Corin Taylor-MacArthur (College Office), Becky Marsland (SPS), Rosie Stenhouse (Health), Andy Thompson (SPS).
Visiting: Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley (University lead on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion)
Apologies: Jenny Hoy (COL), Talat Ahmed (HCA), Will Chicken (UEBS).
Minutes: Rhona Feist (Athena SWAN Project Manager)

1. Welcome, apologies and introductions

The Chair welcomed Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley and invited introductions from committee members.

2. University Vision and Priorities

SCB provided an introduction to the new role of 'University lead on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion'; this executive level appointment will act as a bridge between senior management and front-line academic and professional services groups.

SCB noted that all three Colleges now have EDI committees, representing more effective channels to communicate issues at University-level and back down; EDI priorities must derive from these groups. There is a willingness to address fundamental issues at UoE, though a lack of tools inhibits progress.

Athena SWAN (AS): SCB noted that the commitment of medical research funders to AS in 2012 had galvanised the drive towards improving gender equality in HE. UoE is currently reflecting upon the role of AS, pending the outcome of the 2019 'Review of the Athena SWAN Charter'.

SCB acknowledged the considerable amount time taken to complete each application, which may detract from other front-line EDI activity and is resource intensive.

RF noted AS has value in driving forward an EDI agenda. While the process is bureaucratic, AS action plans (linked to School/College plans) clearly define EDI objectives, milestones, and targets within a 4-year timescale, and have sustained momentum in progressing EDI across CAHSS Schools.

RF confirmed Advance HE has launched a streamlined process for renewals at the same award level, from November 2020 onwards. Notably, the revised process halves the requisite word allocation from 12000 to 6000 words, plus past and projected action plans (not included in the word count). Applicants wishing to apply for a higher level award are required to use the standard application process. Further details, including the Process Guide and application form are available at:

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/athena-swan-renewal-process-documents>

RF suggested this streamlined approach represents a less onerous tool by which Schools scheduled to apply in 2020/21 (8) can retain existing AS awards for a further 4-year period, by which time UoE will have a clearer steer on long-term AS objectives. Schools with the demonstrable statistical impact required to progress from Bronze to Silver will be required to apply using the standard process.

The committee agreed that a strong line of communication is required from Senior Executive down, to clarify whether Schools are required to maintain/upgrade existing AS Award status.

Action: SCB to relay request for clarification on AS agenda/targets to Senior Executive.

Sex and Gender: SCB acknowledged tensions across the University and the need to confront how far academic freedom can be stretched. An event to unite individuals who are engaged with the issues is proposed which SCB would host, promoting a strong sense of care and compassion and with a focus upon duty of care.

It will be important not to prioritise one area, focusing instead upon a broad EDI agenda across protected characteristics. SCB confirmed that sub committees will be created to target specific issues i.e. EDMARC, gender, race.

Objectives include: 1) Challenging who has the power to make a difference; and 2) Outlining what can be done to make a difference.

Clear areas for focus include:

- Staff and student experience
- Race; including a response to racial discrimination and papers on race inequality in HE.
- Sex and gender debate
- EDI in financial planning and resource allocation

CB noted the importance of making incremental changes to improve EDI that are real. RL added that, action in one area to the exclusion of other protected characteristics is damaging, and a clear University-wide EDI agenda regarding purpose/goals would be helpful.

3. Chair's Update

The Chair confirmed that the minutes from the previous meeting (October 29th 2019) were approved by the committee; to be published on the EDI website.

The Chair confirmed that Andrew Thomson (CAHSS Business Intelligence Manager) will attend the next EDI meeting in May to introduce the new CAHSS EDI dashboard. Provisional data files will be forwarded to the committee for review, and a working group will meet to interrogate the proposed content and format.

Action: RA to meet with EDI dashboard working group, comprising **SC, RL, and EG-G**.

The Chair asked for suggested improvements to current EDI/committee practice and the following were made:

- Encourage EDI committee members to share details of innovative and best practice, to generate development that can be scaled up across the University (AT).

- Creation of committee sub-groups to increase contact of members beyond three times per year (RA).
- Appropriate allocation of time to EDI roles; recognition comparable to other management roles (RL). Current FTE allocation is inconsistent across CAHSS, and subject to School size and senior management sympathies. Uniform baseline allocation of 0.2FTE is required.

Action: RA to write to Head of College requesting a minimum 0.2FTE WAM allocation for EDI roles, with flexibility to go above and beyond.

Regarding the role of AS, SC noted that the scheme is imperfect, but creates an agenda and framework for EDI work in the absence of an alternative. SC also noted that despite this work, fundamental errors are made, drawing attention to a recent Edinburgh Global photograph depicting an all-male panel.

Action: RA to write to Edinburgh Global in support of SC's initial letter of complaint.

4. Equality and Respect Initiative in CAHSS

The Chair confirmed that Anna Borthwick is unable to attend but had hoped her colleague Selina Knapp would attend this meeting.

The Chair confirmed that Anna has agreed in principle to support the proposed initiative in CAHSS but would like the opportunity to test some ideas with the Committee. AE will lead on this on behalf of the Committee and will discuss with Selina Knapp and Anna Borthwick. AE will report ideas back to the committee via email to ensure this work continues to progress.

Action: AE to liaise with Selina Knapp and Anna Borthwick in taking the 'Respect' campaign forward in CAHSS.

5. Scottish Transgender Alliance Training

RS and LJ confirmed that the Schools of Health and Law, respectively, have commissioned the Scottish Trans Alliance to deliver trans awareness training and that this was a successful in each instance.

CB drew attention to an ongoing dialogue between LLC and the Scottish Trans Alliance to arrange similar training for staff/students in the School. While LLC has allocated funding to this activity, a collaborative College-wide initiative would extend provision across Schools and assist with resourcing.

Details of proposed training are available at: <https://www.scottishtrans.org/our-work/training/>

Regarding the potential for such training to generate criticism associated with the sex /gender debate, CB also highlighted the need to clarify when academic freedom becomes disrespect and line-managers (or training facilitators) have the authority to step-in, empowering staff and students to draw the line.

Having met with Head of College, while Dorothy Miell is supportive, she asked that the CAHSS EDI Committee explicitly discussed the next steps and to agree a College position on the training. A clear statement outlining the College's commitment to this initiative is required to: highlight training objectives/value; demonstrate a consolidated CAHSS-wide approach to delivery; and mitigate against any negative response within individual schools. Such a statement should draw attention to the existing Dignity and Respect Policy.

There were no objections from committee members to running trans awareness training as a College-wide initiative. The Committee sees this as a series of training that the Committee might wish to support e.g. future training could cover developing improved racial literacy or disability rights as examples. AE (on behalf of MHSES) expressed an interest in collaborating with LLC in a pilot.

Action: CB and RF to draft a statement outlining College-wide commitment to trans awareness training. This would be sent to RA for comment and sign off on behalf of the Committee.

6. Report and Support (Harassment and Discrimination)

The Chair provided an update on incidents of racial discrimination experienced by BME PGR students in the local area, noting that these individuals currently consider their School and not EUSA as the body to approach when reporting a negative experience. A School-level mechanism is therefore required to facilitate reporting and provide details of available support. However, EDI Committee members will also be approached to comment on a University-wide guidance (including an online system for reporting) is currently being drawn up by Academic Services through Roshni Hume and Rebecca Shade.

The Chair suggested that, while individual Schools may have more sophisticated mechanisms for managing disclosure, RA's paper provides a template as a starter. This paper has been sent to Prof Stephen Bowd, Dean of PG to share with Graduate School leads in the College.

The Chair asked the committee to consider whether EDI leads in each School should be the named contact for reporting (to be forwarded to Gavin Douglas). The following responses were received:

- Committee members suggested that this decision should be made on a School by School basis.
- Several committee members expressed concerns that this would put an unacceptable burden upon the EDI leads in relation to workload.
- Members queried what EUSA was doing to be more accessible to PG students

Action: RA will send a link of the University level draft guidance for EDI leads to input into. Each School EDI lead should consider what needs done in their School to improve tell, report and support mechanisms for students facing discrimination or harassment in or outwith campus.

SC noted that it would be helpful to know specifically 'who, what, how?' to refer students to the correct staff member/training.

7. EDI Committee Action Plan for 2019-21

Menopause: EG-G enquired whether any Schools had embarked upon initiatives to support staff and line-managers in relation to mitigating menopause symptoms. RF confirmed that a 'Menopause at Work Guidance for Managers' document was drafted in Autumn 2019, though circulation across CAHSS was halted in anticipation of a related drive by central HR.

Action: RF to forward 'Menopause at Work' draft. *not for circulation out with the EDI Committee.
RA will write to Caroline Wallace and Linda Criggie to find out if there has been further progress by central HR.

Accessibility: SC noted that access to buildings/teaching spaces across campus remains a problem for staff/students with restricted mobility i.e. 31 Buccleuch Place (School of Economics). Suggestion made that Estates and Buildings should be made accountable, where allocated spaces are not fit for purpose.

8. Any Other Business

Project Proposal: The Chair introduced a project proposal by a Moray House doctoral student Barbara Becnel called 'Resisting the Language of Oppression: A Symposium'. In association with Black History month, three internationally renowned black women (Angela Davis; Elaine Brown; Maki Mandela) have agreed to make presentations. Committee members agreed to approach respective Schools with costings, to explore collaborative ventures to take this forward.

Action: EDI Directors/Co-ordinators to approach respective Schools, to gauge whether funds might be available to co-sponsor one of the speakers. EDI leads to notify RA who will then explore whether this project is feasible. RA will also approach Sarah Cunningham-Burley.

CAHSS EDI Committee (Resourcing): RF confirmed that minute-taking will be supported by central HR henceforth. To facilitate this, the committee agreed that Session 20/21 meetings will be scheduled to align with Session 19/20 timings, as follows:

Tuesday 27th October 2020 (12-2pm)

Thursday 21st January 2021 (12-2pm)

Wednesday 5th May 2021 (12-2pm)

Action: RF to circulate Outlook appointment requests to committee members, and notify central HR.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 6th May 2020 (12.00-14.00), in room G.01 55 George Square.