University of BRISTOL

MINUTES OF THE EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STEERING GROUP

4 November 2016

In attendance:	Nishan Canagarajah (Chair) (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research & Enterprise), Rashi Jain (Senior University Lawyer), Jonathan Sandy (Dean of Health Sciences), Mark Ames (Director of Student Services), Guy Gregory (HR Director), Tracy Brunnock (Equality & Diversity Manager), Lucy Collins (Head of UK Student Recruitment), Esther Dermott (Faculty Research Director), Alvin Birdi (Academic Director of Undergraduate Studies), Vikki Layton (Secretary to Group).
Apologies:	Samantha Budd (Chief Executive, Bristol SU), Paula Coonerty (Academic Registrar), Christina Harris (Secretary to Group), Susan Harrow (Head of School for Modern Languages).

1.   Apologies
NOTED.

2.   Chair's Report
2.1   The Chair provided context and background to the introduction of the EDI Steering Group with a particular reference to the relevant objectives around diversity and inclusivity in our University Strategy. The Chair was keen for the Group to build on achievements to date and to deliver on key mission critical activity that would influence the broader culture of the organisation.   Members were encouraged to be creative in their thinking, bold in their recommendations and to challenge the organisation in order to effect visible change across our staff and student communities.

2.2   NOTED: It was noted that there had been a somewhat fragmented approach to EDI to date with various groups addressing specific agendas and the legal imperative also influencing activity, but this group provided the opportunity to develop a more cohesive approach, working across all staff and student groups.

2.3   NOTED: The Group acknowledged that it was crucial to identify areas that were mission critical and where we can sustain organisational engagement, linking to our broader strategic aims around staff and student diversity where possible.

2.4   It was suggested that the Group should review the SPI dashboard prior to the next meeting in order to ensure that our objectives are in alignment.
Action: Secretary to Group to circulate SPI Indicators

2.5   AGREED: It was agreed that the Group should identify several key priority actions that can be delivered over the coming academic year. In order to share ownership, it was agreed that Chairs of University committees should be asked to report on the equality and diversity implications of any forthcoming business to enable the EDI Steering Group to maintain oversight and identify any gaps. It was recommended that a similar approach should be agreed with the Deans to facilitate communication between the Steering Group and each Faculty EDI Committee. It was also agreed that Chairs should be reminded of the legal requirement to consider any equality-related impact of policy, decision or practice that may be developed or reviewed as part of their usual business.
Action: Chair to write to Committee Chairs and Deans

3. Steering Group Membership and Terms of Reference

3.1   RECIEVED: paper reference EDI/16-17/01.

3.2   AGREED: The Group agreed the membership and terms of reference. It was recognised that task and finish groups may be required to progress identified activity between meetings and the role of the Group in terms of celebrating and sharing good practice across the University was emphasised.

4. Key challenges – staff diversity

4.1   RECIEVED: paper reference EDI/16-17/02.

4.2   The Equality and Diversity Manager highlighted key challenges in terms of improving the diversity of our staff body, referring to the Equality Monitoring Report for 2015/16 for context as noted below.

4.3   NOTED:
- Leadership was critical to the success of any diversity initiatives and the VC should visibly champion this area of activity wherever possible.
- Consideration should be given to how effective our current structures and processes were to support a more diverse staff community.
- As well as women in the senior academic grades, future Reports should include data on the gender profile of staff in senior Professional Services roles.
- There was discussion on the University's experiences of Athena SWAN and the way in which the process had become significantly more complex and resource intensive since the Equality Challenge Unit had taken ownership of the initiative. It was acknowledged that our internal resources could perhaps be better directed at activity on the ground rather than on completing the extensive paperwork that was necessary to make a submission for an award.
- It was noted that each Faculty has an EDI Committee and suggested that a committee could be established across divisions to ensure a consistent approach.
- Line managers had a critical role to play in developing a more inclusive culture.
- It was noted that BME applicants were less likely to be appointed in comparison to White applicants and agreed that this should be more closely monitored in future years. There was discussion on the perception held by some local communities of the University as an employer and a recognition that this needed to be addressed in order to attract more diversity in applications, particularly to roles in Professional Services.
- The significance of visible signs that we are an inclusive institution should not be under-estimated; the rainbow lanyards that were developed through our involvement with Bristol Pride were given as a positive example of demonstrating that we value diversity.
- There was a recognition that unconscious bias can adversely impact on the effectiveness of any new process designed to support diversity. Different ways of raising awareness of the impact and ways in which it might be mitigated were being rolled out to staff, including a workshop for members of UPARC that would also incorporate inclusive leadership.
- Bristol City Council had launched the BME 2020 initiative looking to increase representation of BME people across local employers. A more detailed paper outlining our potential involvement in this would be brought to the next meeting.

Action: Equality & Diversity Manager

5. Key challenges – student diversity

5.1   RECEIVED: paper reference EDI/16-17/03.

5.2   The Head of UK Student Recruitment highlighted key challenges in terms of improving the diversity of our student body as noted below.

5.3   NOTED:
- There were many cultural challenges that needed to be addressed to support new ways of improving diversity in outreach, admissions, pedagogy, curricula, residences, student's union and alumni.
- Any targets set required ownership at Faculty and school level with clear accountability built in.
- It was noted that the populations in some of our Halls of Residence were not particularly inclusive or welcoming of students from diverse backgrounds and concern was expressed at how this influences the student experience.

5.4   Discussion took place on the culture of the institution and how minority groups might experience Open Days as prospective applicants, particularly when the majority of our home students were drawn from the white, middle class demographic. There were also equality-related issues around the scheduling of Open Days, particularly for staff with caring responsibilities. It was suggested that good practice guidelines for Heads of School could be drafted to encourage ways in which the organisation of Open Days might be more inclusive.
                    Action: Head of UK Student Recruitment/Equality & Diversity Manager

5.5   The attainment gap for BME students was identified as a priority area for action and consideration would be given to ways in which this might be addressed for discussion at the next meeting.
                    Action: Head of UK Student Recruitment/Equality & Diversity Manager

6.   Improving the diversity of our staff through our recruitment processes
6.1   RECEIVED: Paper reference: EDI/16-17/04.

6.2   The Group discussed various recommendations on how we might increase diversity within our staff population as noted below.

6.3   NOTED:
- We should use an over-arching positive action statement for all vacancies to indicate that we value diversity. Schools should be encouraged to use more specific statements where the need for positive action could be evidenced at specific levels.
- It was acknowledged that the way in which job descriptions are written can influence the diversity of applicants; it was critical that job descriptions were inclusive and not stereotyped in any way.
- It was agreed that schools needed to broaden their search to attract more diversity in applicants and the focus should be on how the job advertisement is written and where it is promoted. This would remove the requirement for both genders to be shortlisted separately.
- There was a lot of support for encouraging the use of the current 'exceptional talent' process to broaden the diversity of staff in senior roles. It was suggested that rather than develop a separate process for this, the current process could be revised to provide for this. It was also recommended that the process be renamed – perhaps as 'strategic appointments' rather than exceptional talent.
- It was acknowledged that advertising senior academic roles externally emphasised the need for our job descriptions and our general 'offering; to be more attractive to a diverse range of candidates to ensure that we attract the best possible talent to these roles.

6.4   Key staff in HR would consider how to take these recommendations forward and report on progress to the next meeting.
                    Action: HR Director

7. Any Other Business, including future items for discussion
7.1   NOTED: How we recruit to senior leadership positions for discussion at next meeting.

7.2   NOTED: A paper on BME 2020 outlining our potential involvement to be brought to the next meeting.

7.3   NOTED: BME attainment gap for discussion at next meeting.

8. Communications and consultation
8.1   There were no communications and consultation issues not already discussed.

9. Matters to bring to the attention of UPARC
9.1   NOTED: A short report outlining the business of the first meeting of the EDI Steering Group would be taken to UPARC.
                                                                            Action: Chair

10. Date of next meeting
10.1   Wednesday 18 January 2017, 11:00-13:00
       Chancellors Room in the Hawthorns