

**North West Higher Education Equal Opportunities Network
University of Chester**

Notes of Meeting held on 23rd February 2010

1) Attendance

Present-

Kathryn Fagan	University of Chester (Chair)
Anne Balcerak	Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM)
Clare Ridgley	Staffordshire University
Karen Choudhary	University of Liverpool
Sally Middleton	University of Liverpool
Gary Loke	Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)
Lyn Ashmore	University of Huddersfield
Sabera Patel	University of Bolton
Shirley Silcock	University of Bolton
Kate Noble	Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA)
Laura Gittins	Liverpool Hope University
Theresa Lewin	Liverpool Hope University
Patrick Johnson	University of Manchester
Sabiha Patel	University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)
Mona Patel	Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)
Moni Akinsanya	Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU)
Gemma Dutton	University of Chester

Apologies-

Catherine Nevin	Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU)
Wendy Kenyon	Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)
Alison Hunt	Staffordshire University

2) Notes from previous meeting-

Two amendments were recorded for the previous minutes.

Lynne Noble, should say Lyn Ashmore, University of Huddersfield and Rebecca Hewitson, UCLAN should only be listed under apologies.

3) ECU Update- Gary Loke (Senior Policy Adviser, ECU)

The 2010 Programme of projects is now available- Email Gary for a copy.

Equality Bill- The Bill is currently still in parliament and the Government Equality Office is consulting on what the final Bill will actually say. It is still unclear if institutions will need to produce a Single Equality Scheme. It is thought that the Bill will still require institutions to set objectives even there is no requirement to produce a full scheme.

ECU produced a briefing in November on the Equality Bill and its implications for students' unions which is available on the ECU website.

ECU has appointed a new Chief Executive: David Ruebain will join ECU on 1st June 2010.

At the last meeting Gary distributed copies of the HEIDI Briefing. Members of the group reported that the HEIDI training sessions have been very useful. The next HEIDI Equality training session will take place in London on 26th April 2010.

Statistics- Every year the ECU statistics publication includes more information. Institutions should let Gary know if there are any things which you would like to see included.

Gary also reported that ECU would no longer produce the statistics CD-rom as people didn't really use it.

Kathryn Fagan raised the issue that there were changes in the way the data was recorded each year which made comparisons difficult and ensuring consistency between years would be helpful.

Recent publications-All available on ECU website

- Sensory access in higher education: guidance report 2009
- Developing staff disclosure
- Managing inclusive building design for higher education

Upcoming publications-

- Gender Equality Schemes
- LGBT Issues
- Anticipatory and reasonable adjustments
- Work Placements

ECU Conference- 17th-18th November 2010, London, Accelerating Equality in Higher Education.

Current Projects-

BME Staff-University of Sussex and Open University to carry out an institutional survey in relation to policies and procedures which affect BME staff.

Tender for Religion and Belief project- Does having a religion or belief affect participation? The project will look at experiences of harassment, discrimination, inclusion and flexibility.

York St John are currently carrying research into a religious literacy leadership programme with HEFCE funding.

Any questions on any of these projects should be directed to Gary (gary.loke@ecu.ac.uk)

ECU expectations of Single Equality Schemes-

If the Equality Bill is passed it is likely they there will be no expectation for institutions to produce a scheme; however ECU would recommend that institutions still produce one and it is good practice to do so. Once the Bill is passed ECU will produce guidance for institutions.

Schemes should be objective focused rather than process focussed.
Schemes need to be reviewed every 3 years, and ECU recommend that they should be looked at, at least every year.

Institutional update on Single Equality Schemes (SES)

University of Chester-

- Have set up a small working group to develop a SES, looking at the existing 3 schemes and pulling them all together. Consulting bigger committees such as Disabled Persons Sub-Committee and Diversity and Equality Committee.
- Incorporating good practice.
- Hope to publish in July 2010.

RNCM -

- Have not produced a SES.
- Looking at reviewing the Disability and Gender Schemes.
- Agree that they do need an action plan but waiting for the outcome of the Equality Bill.

Staffordshire University-

- Just about to launch SES
- All departments will produce a local action plan on all equality strands, with details of how they operationalise the objectives within the SES.

University of Liverpool-

- Not produced a SES.
- Have reviewed their 3 separate schemes.

University of Huddersfield-

- Disbanded their Equal Opportunities Committee.
- Responsibility devolved to each department who have to produce an equality report which contains an action plan.

University of Bolton-

- No SES at present.
- Not yet decided if they are going to produce an SES.

LIPA-

- Draft SES.
- Need to get it embedded in the practice with in the organisation.
- The action plan will be key to doing this.

Liverpool Hope-

- Have produced an SES
- Linked action plan and corporate plan.

University of Manchester-

- Produced SES last year.
- Reviewed good practice, consultation with staff and students.

- Worked with Schools to make actions more local and appropriate to them.
- Feeds in to each Faculty's strategic plan.
- Available on their website.

UCLAN-

- SES approved on October 2008.
- Sets out commitment to all 6 strands.
- Each school and service to have an Equality and Diversity Champion.

LJMU-

- Currently has 3 main action plans
- Each plan has a review group made up of key people who meet every 3-4 weeks to review progress on the actions.
- Need to embed Equality Impact Assessments.

MMU-

- Currently have 3 schemes, Race, Gender and Disability.
- Are producing a SES to be published by May 2010
- This will include consultation with various groups
- Would like to introduce local E&D champions.

4) Equality Impact Assessments

Action: As Wendy Kenyon sent her apologies to this meeting, she will now present examples of full impact assessments undertaken at MMU, one for staff and one for students, at the next meeting.

Each member of the group discussed the approach their institution had taken on impact assessments-

University of Chester-

- Developed processes, plans and training
- People see it more of a tick box exercise.
- Feel it is more important to assess practices rather than policies-moving towards this as part of SES.

RNCM-

- More success in support service areas than in academic departments.
- Have had one to one sessions with managers and are flexible with timescales.
- One of the problems is that staff do not fully understand what the process is trying to achieve.
- Provide templates but EQIAs done so far have been superficial.
- Difficult to embed them in to the culture of the institution.
- Policy prioritisation process- Not passing any policy unless it has had an EQIA.

University of Liverpool-

- Using online toolkit-Marshalls, takes 20 mins to do each policy, useful and user friendly.
- Karen Choudhary invited interested group members to visit Liverpool to see the toolkit in use.
- Starting with HR policies.
- Have to realise that you can't impact assess everything.
- Getting other interested parties engaged in the process, trade unions etc.
- Using information already available and prioritised the policies using focus groups.

Staffordshire University-

- HR Director and the Dean of Students on board with the process.
- Identified 80 policies across the whole university which need to be assessed, 10 are high priority.
- Unions are also putting pressure on regarding EQIAs which is useful as managers get pressure from more than one area.
- There are difficulties when policies are interpreted in different ways across the university.

UCLAN-

- Difficult to assess the medium/low priority policies
- Using toolkit
- Making sure key actions are followed up.
- Bank of 200 people who are EQIA trained, started with Senior Management Team, Heads of Service, Heads of Faculty.
- Difficult to get Faculties engaged with the process.
- Moved to School structure, each School had to do an E&D project.
- 4-5 people involved in each EQIA.

University of Bolton –

- Still doing some initial screening
- Due to a restructure there is currently no lead on EQIAs
- Re-presented to Senior Management Team

University of Huddersfield-

- Quite a few EQIAs done already but not in enough detail

LJMU-

- Started with Personnel Policies
- Set up a working group with chairs from the staff network and people with an interest in E&D.
- Very much a discussion based exercise
- Highlighted key areas and wrote a report on each policy, held a meeting with the Director of Personnel to discuss the issues.
- At faculty level trying to embed using E&D to enhance the student experience.
- Working group to develop and action plan.

MMU-

- EQIA project group screened 120 policies and practices.
- 20 needed full impact assessments
- Team of 2 currently carrying these out.
- The difficulty has been to pass the responsibility on to staff in each department.
- Using a checklist.

EQIA Top tips-

- Show tangible outcomes
- Use checklists
- Don't allow policies to be passed without an EQIA
- Policy owners/ managers refusing to do EQIAs should sign to say they are not doing one
- Engage unions and other interested parties
- Consultation - use info already there
 - on specific policies
- Consultation-discussion based exercise
- Identify key policies
- Use focus group- e.g. all HR policies and prioritise
- Follow up actions that come out
- Increase confidence through training- SMT-Deans-Heads of Department-Head of Services
- Form a network to encourage people who are trained can then help each other.
- Policy owners/ managers need to be aware about not saying everything is good, take action to address issues, don't seek to excuse them.
- Be aware it takes time to do properly
- Often policies are well written and legal focussed, need to be focussed on how they will be applied on the ground.
- Set up EQIA working group
- Responsibility-local champions- some hand holding required but necessary to pass on.
- Need to find ways for everyone to think Impact Assessment in everything they do

Action: Wendy Kenyon to share a copy of MMU's checklist at the next meeting.

How will the Equality Impact Assessment process change under the new Equality Bill?

Action: Gary Loke to report back at next meeting.

Mona Patel raised the issue of publishing EQIAs as many institutions are not sure what to report, no clear guidelines.

The feeling was that it was more about the final output rather than how it is done.

For examples contact local NHS or Police as they have already published quite a few.

ECU will produce guidance on key themes/areas to prioritise.

5) Disclosure case studies

Action: Ken Grainger will now cover this item at the next meeting.

6) Date for next meeting

The next meeting will be hosted by the Royal Northern Collage of Music on Monday 17th May at 11am. Parking at RNCM is limited; please contact Anne Balcerak to book a parking space.

The October 2010 meeting will take place at MMU, date tbc.

The February 2011 meeting will take place at the University of Chester as part of the Diversity Festival date tbc.

The May 2011 meeting will take place at LJMU date tbc.

7) Possible speaker for next meeting

Action: Members were asked to think of speakers for the October meeting, to be discussed in May.

8) Institution Update

RNCM-

HR no longer have control of the staff development budget, Directors now have to bid for funding and this has led to a cut in Equality and Diversity training. HR have been doing more in-house briefings.

They have also cut the number of people on the Equality and Diversity Committee and revised the terms of reference.

Staffordshire University-

Budget is also an issue as E&D used to be part of the VC's office, have now moved back to Personnel and have to share the Personnel budget.

Have moved away from having a week or month to celebrate diversity, they now have a diversity event every month or 2 months. Events include religious events, food and drink festival, fashion shows etc.

The Diversity Committee is being disbanded, issues now fed through the management structure.

They are currently developing an e-forum discussion system.

University of Liverpool-

Currently reviewing training as no take up for courses.

Stonewall Workplace equality index-received good feedback.

Two ticks symbol implemented last November.

Are planning to enter Athena SWAN awards.

University of Huddersfield-

Implemented 4 Marshalls toolkits for staff to work through: Recruitment and Selection, EQIAs, Equal Opportunities and Management.

There is also training for students, it was discussed how to make them complete it. Should it be compulsory or recommended and what are the consequences for them if they don't do it?

UCLAN-

Established an E&D lead in every School and Service - who will undergo a 6 day training course to help them fulfil their role.

Rolled out our comprehensive three -year training programme to staff across the University. The courses are tailored to roles - management staff; academic staff; and support staff.

Each School and Service has identified an E&D project/EIAs to carry out in 09-10.

LJMU-

Have been placed number 82 in the Stonewall index.

MMU-

The Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD) Disability Standard – In 2009 the University registered for the assessment for the first time and has achieved Bronze Standard. This was a significant achievement given it was the first assessment and the University was only 2% away from achieving a Silver Standard. MMU was the only HEI to participate and scored higher than both the Benchmark and Public Sector averages.

Investor in People (IiP) – In May 2009 the whole University was recognised as an Investor in People.

8) AOB

None

The meeting closed at 12.00pm and was followed by the 'Sharing Best Practice Conference'.