

Notes of ECU Scottish HEI Liaison Group Meeting on 4 October 2017, at the University of Edinburgh.

Attendance

David Malcolm (Chair)	ECU
Anne Ireson	ECU
Kay Steven	ECU
David Bass	ECU
Ajit Trivedi	University of Dundee
Emily Whitters	Robert Gordon University
Zoe Tupling	University of Glasgow
Jill Hammond	Glasgow School of Art
Kate Signorini	Open University
Mhairi Taylor	University of Glasgow
Roz Caplan	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
Eilidh Fraser	Abertay University
Edna Docherty	Stirling University
Christine Watson	SRUC
Pauline Hanesworth	HEA
Denise Boyle	University of Edinburgh
Kathleen Connor	UHI
Adrian Lui	Glasgow Caledonian University
Muriel Masson	QMU

1. Welcome and apologies

- = David M (ECU) welcomed members to the meeting.
- = Apologies were received from: Fiona Burns, SFC; Fiona Forrest-Anderson, Edinburgh Napier; Nair Dar and Claire Ennis, University of the West of Scotland; Robert McCallum,

SRUC, Sharan Virdee, Heriot Watt; Graeme Duff, University of Stirling; Kerry Johnson, Abertay.

2. Notes of the last meeting on Wednesday 24 May 2017.

- = An action point had been noted relating to the Bell Review. DM (ECU) confirmed that he had addressed the concerns raised at the meeting regarding Scottish representation. David confirmed that Jane Norman from the University of Edinburgh is on the 'shadow board' as ECU's nomination.
- = There was an action point linked to discussion on institutional policies for student and staff relationships. Adrian (GCU) had intended to share GCU's policy but this has currently been put on hold – he will be happy to share this at a later date.
- = A query was raised about any work being undertaken by ECU on student and staff relationships. Discussion took place about related work being undertaken by a UUK task force; funding is being provided for individual projects which will be evaluated on completion. DM also referred to work being undertaken by HEFCE which is aiming to create a community of practice. DM confirmed that any ECU work on this subject would link to related work being conducted by other organisations.
- = A question was raised about PSED reporting and whether there has been any feedback on sector performance. DB confirmed that the EHRC was undertaking two separate reviews; a) a compliance focused analysis and b) a public sector overview. DB also confirmed that certain strand specific organisations were also undertaking their own analysis. There was a question about how this information might be used – whether internally by organisations as their own internal drivers, or externally by the Government as well. DB suggested he may ask the group for further feedback and comments in due course.
- = A further question was raised about any ECU plans for 'Bystander' training. DM confirmed this is not currently on the ECU training plan but may be considered for 2018.
- = Muriel (QMU) advised that her apologies for earlier meetings, including the meeting on 24 May, should have been passed on and noted.

3. Discussion on Gender Action Plans and SFC consultation on future action for enhancing career progression.

- = DB (ECU) provided an update on a recent SFC GAP consultation and gave an overview of an SFC Equality Outcome linked to GAP activities and staff progression. DB confirmed that the Scottish Athena SWAN network was used as a consultation mechanism to focus discussion on this issue and to gather views on any potential recommendations relating to enhancing staff career progression within GAPs.
- = DB confirmed there were a number of ideas and suggestions arising from the consultation but these were generally not new or innovative, suggesting that the sector may already be aware of, or seeking to address many of the key issues.
- = Recommendations from this consultation have been made for; SFC, institutions and ECU (Athena SWAN). Key themes included; caring responsibilities, unconscious bias, workplace structures, promotion opportunities, flexible working policies and practices.

- = Discussion took place on this matter and the following related concerns were identified:
 - The nature of reporting tools, including GAP reporting.
 - Concerns about flexible working and job design.
 - How to move away from ‘presenteeism’, to effectiveness based on role outputs.
 - Concerns about how this agenda links to and influences other key institutional functions eg recruitment, academic development etc. There was a comment that there needs to be a wider sphere of influence to help change practice.
 - Different reporting requirements and the need for additional layers of reporting creates perceived unnecessary time pressures, duplication of activities and overlaps. This may detract from reporting that is effective.
 - DB confirmed his view of the reporting challenges and how to meet requirements without duplication. He confirmed that the Athena SWAN consultation was also about helping to address this in the sector and help reporting to become more focused, streamlined and joined up. DB also confirmed that the forthcoming EHRC review of the PSED would be important in this respect. However, it is recognised there are still challenges, for example in relation to some of the information on PCs being ‘lost’ within reporting.
 - In relation to gender and staff progression issues, it was noted that interventions and actions are required at an earlier stage of the pipeline and well in advance of attending HE, when gender stereotypes may already have developed.
 - Further discussion took place on a range of linked issues including: the longer term perspective on how GAPs and Athena SWAN link together; how the ‘Tapping our talent’ report by the Royal Society might be used or updated to help answer some key questions; consideration of what key stats suggest about female under-representation compared with underachievement; consideration of other specific intersectional issues such as the impact for female BME staff.
- = **Action – DB offered to send further information to the SLG on the SFC consultation findings and welcomed further thoughts and ideas.**

4. Consultation and discussion of draft proposals - ECU Scotland’s future SFC funded work for 2018 onwards.

- = DB (ECU) gave an overview of the current status of the ECU Scotland work programme and the process to bid for a new and updated programme for summer 2018.
- = DB confirmed that the programme bid for the three year period 2018 to 2021 needs to be submitted to SFC by December; today provides an opportunity to consult with and seek views from SLG members on what the programme priorities and focus should be.
- = DB clarified that the draft proposals are set in the context of ECU Scotland’s vision and longer term aims but within the framework of partnership involving institutions, SFC,

Scottish government etc. DB spoke about the focus for key outcomes relating to staff, students and governing bodies in relation to other current sector priorities and aims.

- = A structured ‘world café’ style exercise followed initial group discussions on the draft proposals and based around the core themes of the current ECU work plan. A further feedback and summing up discussion then took place.
- = Note: A separate document includes summarised key points of the ‘world café’ discussions.
- = There were a number of key points highlighted as part of the discussions including the following:
 - Concerns around the BME attainment gap and how this is perceived and addressed in the sector and by other sector organisations. There was also a comment about the confusion that sometimes occurs in HE between the issues of race and internationalism, and what we are looking for or measuring in this respect.
 - There were comments about the importance of diversity on boards, the intended legislative changes being too narrow, not taking effect quickly enough to have sufficient impact and being realistic in terms of long term timescales and targets.
 - There was discussion about having specific measures within the draft proposals as well as outcomes to provide the ‘why’ reasoning to underpin proposals and decisions.
 - There was discussion about the focus on gender and how this may detract from work on other PCs. There was also discussion about adopting more intersectional approaches to this work.
 - There was discussion about the benefits of collaborative approaches and a focus on supporting the sector to enhance and improve E & D, within the context of funding available and the identification of priorities that will help to effect real change.
 - There was discussion on the role and institutional approach to Outcome Agreements, their primary focus on Scottish domiciled students and concerns about duplication of reporting and perceived lack of alignment between different reporting requirements.
 - There was discussion about the role of the REF and TEF linked to E & D priorities and supporting HEIs to be ready for TEF.
 - There was also discussion about ECU’s proposed project on Equality Impact Assessment and how this might provide an opportunity to examine different approaches to streamlining and better alignment within reporting.
- = DB summarised some of the key points and specific suggestions for programme proposals as follows:
 - A project around streamlining of reporting.
 - Ongoing ECU support to institutions for the next statutory reporting periods and requirements.

- A race specific project.
- A project relating to violence against women.
- = DB confirmed the next steps:
 - There will be a similar consultation with colleges to seek views on their priorities.
 - Further specific thoughts and suggestions from group members will be welcomed.
 - Once the proposals have been updated to take account of the sector consultation, negotiations and discussions with SFC will commence.
 - The proposals will be formally considered by SFC’s funding committee before being approved and finalised.

5. ECU Briefing paper – programme updates and upcoming opportunities.

- = Kay (ECU) gave an update on the OEPS project and the intention to pilot the resources. Kay confirmed that she will be contacting institutions that offer teacher training courses and sharing further information about the project and resources.
- = DB (ECU) provided further information about a series of planned governance events for institutions.
- = DM (ECU) gave an update on the position relating to the Bell Review and proposed merger of ECU with the HEA and the LF. DM confirmed that Alison Johns had been appointed as CEO Designate of the new agency and Jane Norman from the University of Edinburgh has joined the shadow board. DM gave an overview of the current status and progress of the merger discussions and stressed that the need for Scotland specific considerations would continue to be raised in ongoing dialogue.

6. Member & institution updates

Members gave brief updates on any key development or issues within their HEIs to include the following highlights:

- = HEA – the project on ‘Embedding E & D in the Curriculum’ came to an end in summer 2017 but work is ongoing to update all relevant information and resources on the website. E & D work will continue to be supported by HEA but as part of HEI subscriptions. ‘Diversity Dash’ work is also being undertaken and will provide a training tool to be used for learning and teaching purposes.
- = Abertay – referred to a new diversity project ‘Lead Voices’ using staff and student representatives to support each of the protected characteristics.
- = OU – a 50 year review is taking place. Implications for a future ‘digital by default’ approach.

Action – DM (ECU) said he would see if any additional information could be found on the ‘digital by default’ agenda.

Note: David subsequently highlighted information that links to the ‘digital by default’ agenda in public services, where it is recognised there are EDI implications. David referenced the Student Loans Company (SLC’s) work on equality. A link to their strategy (which references a digital approach as part of their vision and objectives) can be found here: <https://www.slc.co.uk/about-us/equality-diversity-and-inclusion.aspx>

- = RCS – reported they have a new AP starting in January and are about to launch an E & D ‘Creative Fund’.
- = Glasgow – Working on the introduction of new policies and initiatives to include: Disability Confident, Level 2, as well as undertaking a disabled staff review. They have also appointed a Mental Health Champion as well as other PC Champions.
- = GCU – work and activities ongoing linked to their Equality Outcomes with a focus on communications and also on the development of tools for use at local level to support future reporting.
- = Dundee – Consultation ongoing about future involvement in REC. A number of other initiatives and activities around a mental health strategy, setting up of a BSL working group, Stonewall work and BME activities linked to Black History month.
- = Edinburgh – The University has recently submitted for Stonewall. Work is ongoing relating to dignity and respect and an on-line toolkit has been developed to support transitioning staff.
- = QMU - Work is ongoing relating to mental health awareness week including training on Mental Health First Aid.

7. Dates for future meetings

- = Wed 21 February 2018 (University of Glasgow? – changed to Glasgow Caledonian University)
- = Wed 9 May 2018 (Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen)
- = Wed 10 October 2018 (TBC)

Action: ECU to coordinate meeting venue for October 2018 meeting.

8. AOB

- = The subject of the BSL Act and implementation was raised. Group members referred to workshop sessions delivered by Deaf Action and suggested it would be helpful for there to be something specific delivered to the SLG. A question was raised about ensuring the focus meets the needs of the group and is about the preparation of plans, rather than deaf awareness training.

Action: ECU to consider and take forward the provision of a related BSL workshop for early 2018.

- = A call for funding bids by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) was highlighted. The EPSRC is offering significant funding for a number of equality

diversity and inclusion projects. They are seeking joint institutional proposals; the timescale for submissions is short with the deadline set for 7 November 2017.

Action: ECU agreed to circulate information to HEIs and act as a point of coordination where HEIs are looking for potential partners to bid with.