Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Wednesday 19 July 2023, 9.00am

Meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Present Members Dr Michael Spence, President and Provost (Chair)

Professor Nick Achilleos, Dr Simona Aimar, Indie Beedie, Dr Suzy Buckley, Georgina Cade, Noël Caliste, Anna Cox, Donna Dalrymple, Ian Dancy, Professor Rob de Bruin, Rebecca Edwards, Dr Michele Farmer, Marie Gallagher, Sasha Green, Alan Harper, Lesley Houfe, Dr Rebecca Jennings, Denise Long, Angel Ma, Dr Nephtali Marina-Gonzalez, Bella Malins, Dr Lucinda Miller, Professor Sara Mole, Dr Martin Oliver, Dr Sara Shafiei, Manon Simmons, Dr Michael Sulu, Harper Taylor-Hanson, Becky Whitham, Professor Ifat Yasin, Callie Yoo

Apologies: Sarah Cowls, Seyi Osi

In Attendance: Dr Lizzy Allman, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager (Disability Equity Lead) (Item 5), Megan Gerrie, Director, Projects & Planning, Louise Grimmett, Student Support and Wellbeing Manager (Disability and Specific Learning Differences) (Item 9), Anthony Orkin, Antisemitism Programme Manager (Item 7), Chilima Siyanyeuka, Student Support and Wellbeing Manager (Mental Health and Wellbeing) (Item 9)

Secretary: Douglas Bertram

Part I: Preliminary Business

31. **Welcome and Introductions**

    31.1. The President and Provost (Chair), Dr Michael Spence, informed the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) that the Executive Director of Student. Services and Registrar, Sara Cowls, would be represented by the Director of Operations, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences, Marie Gallagher, in the immediate future.

32. **Minutes of the Last Meeting (Paper 4-01)**

    32.1. EDIC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2023.

33. **Matters Arising**

33.1. None.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

34. **Director of EDI Report (Paper 4-02)**

34.1. The Interim Director of EDI, Lesley Houfe, presented a report that detailed progress made on a variety of projects undertaken by the EDI Team and in particular highlighted a "Report + Support" Review Project Summary Report and an EDI Team Work Plan. During the presentation the following key points were made:

a. The Report had sought to have provided the Committee with a general update on project completion within the context of an EDI Team staffing restructure, therefore its account of activity would be understood as incomplete despite the input of papers to have been discussed elsewhere within the meeting.
b. The LBTQI+ Action Plan, discussed at the Committee's last meeting, had been agreed and as a result a detailed, staged, communications plan had been devised for future delivery.
c. A celebratory event had been held regarding the success of UCL's Mentoring Scheme which, in the People Committee's discussion of it at its last meeting, had been confirmed as a standing item in future meeting agendas.
d. Training of the EDI Team, in order to have broadened its offer of support to UCL Faculties and Departments concerning particular EDI specialisms, was noted – e.g., regarding matters surrounding Antisemitism, etc.
e. The "Report + Support" Review Project Summary Report was produced in conjunction with UCL HR and indicated that improvements to the project could be made. Also, that the Report highlighted a need for the EDI Team to engage with a broad spectrum of stakeholders in order to have gained further feedback. The Report was observed to have referenced the Annual EDI Report, which had been presented to Council at its last meeting, and it was indicated that both reports would be aligned in terms of delivery in the future.
f. EDI Team Work Plan was noted to have provided a detailed overview of the Team's activities, a number of which had been completed since it was compiled.
g. A new Head of Behaviour and Cultural Change had been appointed and was anticipated to join UCL at the beginning of August 2023.

34.2. In the course of discussion, the following points were raised:

a. It was observed that the "Report + Support" Review Project Summary Report had not listed Vice Deans and Faculties as

stakeholders also that the data previously issued by the EDI Team had not been easy to act upon. In response, the Interim Director of EDI, Lesley Houfe, indicated that these matters would be addressed by the incoming Head of Behaviour and Cultural Change. The Chair added that within the context of the "Report + Support" project, UCL would soon undertake a review of how it handles serious allegations in having to have sought to streamline internal processes.

b. It was noted that the EDI Team Work Plan had indicated that surveys of disabled staff would be undertaken and that these had previously been carried out by Faculties. The Interim Director of EDI, Lesley Houfe, commented that she would reflect on the need for this work to be centralised within the EDI Team and welcomed the offer made by one member to forward various survey results to her for further information.
c. A member suggested that a written summary could be provided to staff members after having undertaken any given piece of training that would be used to refresh their memory when updating future training.

34.3. EDIC received the contents of the Report.

35. **Update on the Equality Charters Group and Progress from the REC and Athena Swan Action Plans (Paper 4-03)**

35.1. Dr Mike Sulu and Professor Sara Mole presented a paper that detailed recent and planned changes to the Equality Charters Group's (ECG) ways of working and the progress of the actions in the institutional Race Equality Charter (REC) and Athena Swan Action Plans. During the presentation the following key points were made:

a. The ECG had been identified as having not worked to its full potential in terms of engagement with the monitoring of actions required by its sub-groups in relation to changes that had been made to charters.
b. To remedy this, in conjunction with the EDI Team, a more thematic approach to the structure of its meetings had been adopted. Therefore, it was observed that not all members of the ECG would be required to attend all meetings. It was envisaged that this would increase engagement and scrutiny.

35.2. In the course of discussion, the following points were made:

a. A member observed that the ECG had sought to remove barriers to engagement with its work and queried if these barriers had been identified. Professor Sara Mole observed that whilst barriers remained unclear, attendance by senior figures had proven challenging and particularly when those sent to deputise for a given group member had lacked knowledge in required areas. Dr Mike Sulu added that confusion over deadlines for delivery on differing

projects had hindered progress. The new way of working was considered to have reduced such difficulties.

b. The Chair commented that where senior figures have not attended ECG meetings on a regular basis the matter would have to be resolved. Particularly with regard to any potential signalling within UCL related to the importance of the work that would be carried out.
c. A member queried the representation of disabled staff on the ECG. The Interim Director of EDI, Lesley Houfe, responded by noting that a Disability Action Plan would be written and suggested that as the ECG was in the process of revision it would be sensible to have presented the Action Plan to the Group and to have disability representation within its membership.
d. Members welcomed the revisions made to the ECG and the thematic structure of its meetings.

35.3. EDIC received the contents of the Update.

36. **Religion and Belief Equality Advisory Group – Proposal (Paper 4-04)**

36.1. The Interim Director of EDI, Lesley Houfe, presented a paper that outlined the establishment and commissions of a Working Group to have begun a process to have identified practical barriers, and to have initiated wide consultation on actions that would improve religion and belief equality, diversity and inclusion for staff and students at UCL. During the presentation the following key points were made:

a. It was noted that the main purpose of the Advisory Group would be to have prioritised practical actions to remove barriers to the practice of religion and belief and that in particular, initially, this would address matters such as timetabling and the provision of space for prayer.
b. That consultations across UCL on any proposed actions would be undertaken before being presented to the EDIC for sign-off.
c. That the paper had requested approval of the Advisory Group's Terms of Reference, Constitution, and proposed work – i.e., Appendices A and B.
d. Volunteers had been sought in the previous year with 22 expressions of interest and correspondence with these individuals had been undertaken. However, movement on this project had been paused. It was noted therefore that once the Advisory Group had been established communication with the 22 volunteers would be reengaged.

36.2. During the course of discussion, the following points were made:

a. It was observed that the Advisory Group's constitution had included two Vice Deans however Faculty Leads for religion and belief were already operational in this area. Whilst it was therefore suggested that the Faculty Leads replace the Vice Deans, the Chair responded

by observing that they should be added to the Advisory Group's constitution to create an overall membership of 16. This was agreed.

b. It was observed that the structure of the Working Group had differed from similar Groups operating with UCL's EDI provision which included those with lived experience. The Chair responded by noting the Working Group membership as proposed included those whose roles would allow them to help influence and progress practical actions. The consultation process to develop an action plan would allow those with lived experience to contribute by seeking their views and suggestions about improvements. This was a deliberate approach in terms of attempting to have concerns addressed and actions formulated in a new way. Members suggested that this approach might be included in communications regarding the Working Group's nature and purpose.

36.3. EDIC received the Proposal and provided feedback on Appendices A and B.

37. **Antisemitism Programme Manager (APM) Up-date (Paper 4-05)**

37.1. The Antisemitism Programme Manager, Anthony Orkin, presented a paper and slides that summarised work progress upon which the Committee was invited to provide feedback. In particular, the Committee was asked to approve the re-establishment of the Antisemitism Education Action Plan Committee (Appendix B). During the presentation the following key points were made

a. Clashes between UCL's academic timetable, UCL Welcome Week, and the Jewish calendar had been identified. As a result, all stakeholders and senior academic and professional services leaders had been contacted informing them of these challenges and the feedback had been positive. Forward planning and acknowledgement of Jewish festivals and days of observance had been welcomed and it was noted that such an approach could be applied to other religions represented at UCL in both staff and student groups.

b. It was noted that both the festivals of Hanukkah and Shavuot would have a series of events attached to them and further details would be identified to the EDIC in the future. It was also noted that Holocaust Memorial Day had been mark with positive feedback.

c. Messaging advice focusing on the pros and cons of certain approaches was detailed and it was noted that best practice guidance would be made available across UCL. This has been and would be provided at high level meetings – Town Halls, HR meetings, etc. Mentimeter results confirmed the success of guidance provided.

d. Regarding education and outreach, a recent example of the handling of a student who had submitted an essay that exhibited use of

antisemitic tropes, subsequently brought to the Antisemitism Programme Manager's, Anthony Orkin, attention was provided. The student was met, and education and advice were provided. This had been received positively and it was suggested that the student had been provided with tool to be able to avoid such thinking and influence peers.

e. The re-establishment of the Antisemitism Education Action Plan Committee was noted to be underway and required approval by the Committee.

37.2. During the course of discussion, the following points were made:

a. The Antisemitism Programme Manager, Anthony Orkin, informed the Committee that stakeholder engagement would continue and identified UCL as unique in its field as having provided a service of this nature to both staff and students.

b. A member advised that EDI Envois should be engaged with for the purposes of the work proposed.

c. A member queried the origin of the Antisemitic tropes identified within the essay highlighted by the Antisemitism Programme Manager, Anthony Orkin. After discussion, it was determined that these had been both ultimately limited and resolved.

37.3. EDIC approved the re-establishment of the Antisemitism Education Action Plan Committee (Appendix B).

38. **Overview of Disability Equality Work and Reasonable Adjustments at UCL (Paper 4-06)**

38.1. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager (Disability Equity Lead), Dr Lizzy Allman, presented a paper and slides that provided an overview and update on the key challenges facing Disabled and Neurodivergent (ND) staff at UCL, an outline of ongoing and planned work to address these issues, the key priorities identified by DESG, as well as risk identification for progress moving forward. During the presentation the following key points were made:

a. Key issues for Disabled/ND staff and students were identified as having included pipeline drop off for Disabled/ND staff at UCL after Grade 6; staff survey responses for Disabled/ND staff where they scored negatively when compared to non-Disabled staff in all survey question areas; survey results of Disabled/ND staff that demonstrated concerns regarding the implementation of reasonable adjustments for staff; a Disabled Students' Network Report and the Student Union (SU) report on Disabled/ND PhD students that had highlighted a range of issues including the implementation of implement reasonable adjustments, discrimination and ableism.

b. An overview of current and ongoing work was provided that identified initiatives supporting staff reasonable adjustments; improved training

around disability/ND; an Inclusive Environments action plan; and the formulation of a new Digital Accessibility Policy in collaboration with the Head of Digital Accessibility, Ben Watson.

c. Plans for future Disability Equality work were detailed and included the reformation of the Disability Equality Implementation Group (DEIG) that would be co-chaired by the Disability Champion, Professor Stella Bruzzi, and Disability Envoy, Indie Beedie, and would include key stakeholders from across UCL. Also the development of a detailed and comprehensive institution level action plan that would address key priorities for disability, as identified by the DESG. It was noted that these plans would be communicated over the next academic year.
d. Risk identification was described to the Committee and included a need to have ensured that key stakeholders with decision making power from across UCL would have engaged with the reformed DEIG; an expansion of disability awareness training and neurodiversity (ND) training, which was suggested to have required additional funding to have procure a specialist training provider; in the context of limited funding, consideration of how UCL would best fulfil its legal obligations in a fair and equitable way; and an acknowledgment of that the DEIG did not have a budget allocation to have enabled activities.

38.2. During the course of discussion, the following points were made:

a. A member asked if the reformed DEIG would include representation from UCL's autism research groups. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager (Disability Equity Lead), Dr Lizzy Allman, responded by noting that UCL employs a wealth of specialist researchers and that the potential for their inclusion might make the DEIG too large. It was suggested that a remedy to this problem might be found in the formulation of the DEIG's Terms of Reference. The Chair underlined the opportunity presented by the DEIG's work, however, in matching leading research conducted across UCL with leading EDI practice.
b. Complexities surrounding disability disclosure were highlighted, particularly regarding members of staff who might not have realised they could be categorised as disabled. Increased transparency in this area was therefore called for. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager (Disability Equity Lead), Dr Lizzy Allman, agreed and observed that greater clarity within surveys on disability categorisation would assist with however data collection and reporting issues within UCL had presented challenges. It was noted that once these difficulties had been overcome, a communications exercise would be conducted, with the assistance of the DEIG, in order reassure staff and students on the safety of disability disclosure.

c. A member reported the positive contributions made by the Head of Digital Accessibility, Ben Watson, in preparation of teaching materials for the forthcoming academic year. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager (Disability Equity Lead), Dr Lizzy Allman, echoed these sentiments and encouraged Committee members to make use of the Digital Education Team's services.
A member highlighted challenges faced by both staff and ND students in the delivery of group work in connection with the drafting of Summary of Reasonable Adjustments (SORAs). Whilst the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager (Disability Equity Lead), Dr Lizzy Allman, noted that Student Support and Wellbeing (SSW) and the DEIG would need to link in order to provide support in this area, a member highlighted the value of a training programme provided by the Faculty of Engineering Sciences (https://extendstore.ucl.ac.uk/product?catalog=UCLXInclusionDN) and it was suggested that this might provide a model for other training programmes across UCL.

38.3. EDIC noted the contents of the paper and endorsed the work proposed.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

39. **Student Support and Wellbeing (SSW) Approach to Summary of Reasonable Adjustments (SoRAs) (Paper 4-07)**

39.1. Chilima Siyanyeuka, Student Support and Wellbeing Manager (Mental Health and Wellbeing) and Louise Grimmett, Student Support and Wellbeing Manager (Disability and Specific Learning Differences) presented a summary of the process for conducting SORA assessments as requested by the Committee at its previous meeting. During the presentation the following key points were made:

a. Year on year increases in student registration for Reasonable Adjustments had been noted within the highest categories of physical disability and specific learning differences. During the academic year 2021/22 1500 SORAs had been created and until May 2023 this number had increased by a further 3000.
b. Non-Medical Help (NMH) referrals were noted to have increased, and which could have related to study skills tuition to BSL support. It was also observed that the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) would only provide NMH in bands 3 and 4, and it remained UCL's responsibility to have provided NMH support to disabled students where they would require it to have fallen within into bands 1 and 2 – relating to manual notetakers, practical support assistants, etc.
c. Staff concern related reports regarding student welfare were also noted to have increased. During the academic year 2021/22 1500 reports had been received and until May 2023 a further 2000 reports had been received.

d. Support for these matters were noted to have been addressed in conjunction with the Head of Digital Accessibility, Ben Watson, via an “Towards Inclusivity” document that met with a positive reception from the Department of Law, the Institute of Education, and courses based at UCL East. Baseline principals of reasonable adjustments were defined with respect to mental health and learning differences. This was aimed to supply Departments with the planning of SORAs and module planning, etc.
e. Success with the Student Success Fund bid was reported and resulted in funding for engagement with the Disability Rights UK to have provided three different rounds of training across UCL regarding Reasonable Adjustments.
f. An increase in the hours required for note takers had been observed. The ND community had expressed particular appreciation of this as the quality of recording equipment across UCLs campus had been noted to have been varied. Resource recommendations for this purpose had been included by Head of Digital Accessibility, Ben Watson, within the “Towards Inclusivity” document.
g. Postgraduate research student support was noted to have been reinforced to have met the requirements of a growing community and expressed in terms of increased referrals and funding applications. Recruitment for a Postgraduate Research Student Advisor was noted to have been initiated.

39.2. During the course of discussion, the following points were made:
a. The Director of Student Support and Wellbeing, Denise Long, noted that concerns had been raised regarding the increase of SORAs and that further inquiries into the reasons for them was being conducted. This would be aimed at those programmes of study where they had reached 50-80%. The data associated with this would be presented to the EDIC in the future. This was welcomed by the Chair in order to have promoted inclusivity of student educational experience.
b. A member queried the follow-up of students who had withdrawn from programmes of study. In response, Louise Grimmett, Student Support and Wellbeing Manager (Disability and Specific Learning Differences) informed the Committee that in extreme circumstances a student may apply for an interruption to study that could be extended via support from a given Department under consideration by its relevant Faculty. Return for Study processes were also noted to ensure regular communication with students and preparation of SORAs.

39.3. EDIC received the contents of the paper.

40. **Equality Monitoring Report (Paper 4-08)**

40.1. EDIC received the contents of the Report.

41. **Any Other Business**

41.1. No business for this meeting.

42. **Date of Next Meeting**

42.1. The date of the next meeting would yet be confirmed.

Douglas Bertram
July 2023