BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY
EST. 1891

EDI COMMITTEE

Open Minutes

Of the meeting held on Wednesday, 24 November 2021 on MS Teams.

1. Welcome / Apologies for Absence

Present:	**Professor Nick Braisby**, Chair and Vice-Chancellor (NB)
	Professor Rachel Cragg, UET representative and Race Equality Charter Self Assessment Team Chair (RC)
	Ellie Smith, UET representative (ES)
	Rachael Cornwall, HR Director (RCo)
	Karla Inniss, Secretary and HRBP - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (KI)
	Dr Carlo Lusuardi, UCU Representative (CL)
	Hilary Mullen, UCU Representative (HM)
	Louise Harvey, Head of Communications (LH)
	Oliver Facey, TU representative (OF)
	Dr Simon Lee-Price, UCU Equality Representative (SLP)
	Sarah Jackson, SU HR & Development Manager (SJ)
	Tom Featherstone, SU Vice President Student Involvement (TF)
	Pia Carnegie, Academic Representative (PC)
	Danie Woodbridge, Deputy Chair and Inclusion, Diversity and Disability Manager (DW)
	Paulette Morris, PSE Representative (PM)
	Katie Collins, PSE Representative (KC)
Apologies:	**Associate Professor Margaret Rioga**, BAME Steering Group Chair
	Anthony Murphy, Council representative

2. Declaration of conflicts of interest
    2.1   NB gave an outline history and aims for the EDI committee

3. Chair's report
    3.1   NB outlined the University's work on antisemitism has been well received and has been used twice a case study (Universities UK and the Office for Students). Work on Islamophobia, homophobia, Romaphobia and many others were explicitly mentioned during the debate and staff particularly asked we turn our attention to adopting definitions of Islamophobia, Homophobia and Romaphobia and other issues. **ACTION – Committee to add adopting definitions of Islamophobia, Homophobia and Romaphobia to the agenda and how these definitions are being practically used within our policies.**

3.2 **ACTION – RCo and KI to circulate terms of reference to the group for review.**

4. EDI statistics of BNU community

4.1 RCo shared with the committee the breakdown of student and staff community and highlights that 9% of staff have disclosed a disability (19% of UK adult population have a disability)
Action – All to share ideas on how we increase disability disclosure rates at the next committee meeting.

4.2 RCo discussed that the University has slightly higher percentage of LGBTQ+ staff and a high proportion Muslim student so the University stand out slightly. RCo discussed that over 55s participation in work has declined due to factors such as ill health and early retirement.

4.3 ES discussed a steer that this committee could give is looking at the diversity of our student body and how reflective do we want the staff and the governing body to reflect that.

4.4 The committee discussed some of the issues around declaring disabilities and safe spaces and discussed personal experience PC had with previous managers when they asked for support with a hidden disability.

Q – (NB) What would you like to have been done with this information?
A – (PC) Identifying what a reasonable adjustment is. It's just what provisions could be in place to help assist me to do that.

4.5 KI comments on the need for this group to be thinking more on a strategic level than the operational level. Should there be suggested initiatives these should first be addressed at and to the EDI working group for comments and suggestions. **Action: KI to incorporate suggested initiatives into EDI working group agenda.**

4.6 NB discussed if there is other data the university should be collecting and other forms of disclosure the university should be reporting on. NB suggests class to the committee.

5. Proposed EDI priorities, objectives and approach

5.1 KI gave a summary of the paper to the committee, setting out what some of the work that has already happened in some of those more operational groups. KI discussed refreshing the University's priorities, so they more closely aligned with what the University are trying to achieve as an organisation.

5.2 KI informed the committee on the approaches the University are hoping to take:
- Temperature check how people consider the approach to inclusion.
- Understanding if people can relate to the proposed priorities.
- Gathering insights into actions should be prioritised. Making it evidence based.

5.3 The committee members were asked to comment and approve the proposed priorities, objectives and approach.

5.4 SJ commented on how they would like a clear definition between staff and students. Clarity around what is already in place might be helpful for when people are responding. **Action – KI/SJ to take points away about how the University can tailor the response to students and looking at the uniqueness at what the University need to do differently.**

5.5 DW commented on inclusion and linking this to idea 'being you at BNU' stressing that EDI cannot be separated from welfare. KI discussed how EDI focuses on disparity around protected groups. Wellbeing is more of an overarching encompassing piece of work whereas EDI is more about equity and fairness of those with a protected characteristic

5.6 NB supports for the approach and had a few comments:
- Objective D paragraph 16.

KI explained it is important to ensure there are better PDR objectives,

from individual, departmental and corporation level when thinking about inclusion. RCo stressed to the committee that EDI is not to be seen as the job of only the EDI committee but as organisation wide.

- Objective C paragraph 17 – introduce equality monitoring areas of potential disparity. NB asked for clarity on what this means. KI explained that the University are more likely to capture equality monitoring in areas that we have needed to for statutory or funding purposes. If we are curious and expand this we can more clearly identify and uncover inequalities and address them, e.g. complaints, speakers etc.

5.7   ES discussed getting the message about equality and diversity out to University's partners and embedding it in the way they are working and the way they are engaging with our students. KI agreed that having partners onboard and adopting our agreed approach will be vital once we have an agreed trajectory.

5.8   **The committee supports and approves the proposed EDI priorities, objectives and approach.**

6. EDI events

6.1   KI gave a summary of the paper including the different events that have been carried out over the year and invited the committee to comment.

6.2   LH suggested that everyone should play their part in suggesting events and organising events and for colleagues to speak up if they were disappointed that the University did not host event about X or Y.

6.3   NB commented on how Pride is not on the events calendar to celebrate LGBTQ+ communities and if we do enough about different religious celebrations. NB questioned how do the events get onto the calendar and if the organiser of these events needs a bit more strategic support? SJ commented that the Students Union organises trips to London for the main Pride event and are also involved and have a presence in the High Wycombe pride event that happens in summer when there aren't as many students around. LGBTQ+ officer, has built a big network already and they've got a program of events scheduled for the year. **ACTION – LH to ensure students union events are on the events calendar as well.**

6.4   NB discusses that if an event is being covered by the SU it needs to be meeting the universities objectives. KI confirmed that there is an EDI calendar being built but it is not yet finalised. **ACTION – KI/LH/SU Coordinate the event calendar with the Universities cooperate events calendar so the committee are ensured it's being properly resourced.**

7. Equality impact assessment template

7.1   KI gave a summary of the paper about an equality impact assessment form to capture decisions that the University are making and trying to understand how they relate to different groups in different ways and how the University can mitigate any adverse impacts on those groups.

7.2   KI discussed the need to look at equality impact assessments and the previous length of the process having an impact on colleagues completing the assessment. Changes to the equality impact assessments template are included in the appendix. The changes are to encourage the assessments being easier to complete and hopefully being completed more frequently.

7.3   RCo asked the committee to use the equality impact assessment for any policy or procedure and let them know how it works.

7.4   HM discussed the need for equality assessments to be used in restructures and asks to pick this up with RCo. **ACTION – HM and RCO to discuss equality impact assessments being used in restructures.**

7.5 The committee discussed that all change requires an equality impact assessment and the need for improving the University's culture as an organisation and empowering colleagues to use the template.

7.6 The committee discussed that the next steps are to launch the new equality impact assessment template for all colleagues to use.

7.7 NB commented on the need to be clear about the level of change which will trigger an equality impact assessment. **Action: KI/LH to review the communication around the equality impact assessment.**

7.8 **NB Q to ES** if there is a need to add a section which includes a policy cannot be approved until an equality impact assessment has happened on the template for our policies. ES told the committee that is already on there but is not being done, as its more of an afterthought rather than a starting point. **Action: ES to Look at the equality impact assessment on policies and look at building this into the process again.**

7.9 **Committee approves changes to the equality impact assessment.**

8. Proposed change to Student Bullying and Harassment Policy.

8.1 RCo gave a summary of the paper and highlights a small amendment to the wording of the Student Bullying and Harassment Policy to ensure we are fulfilling Ofsted requirements. RCo asked the group to approve that change but highlighted the need to have a separate conversation about how polices are being approved

8.2 SJ highlighted the review date being May 21 and a lot of misinformation such as the old values from 5 years ago and department misnamed. RCo picked this up with Student Success and they are in the process of reviewing it.

8.3 SJ highlight a part in the policy where reporting a situation is suggested that students should go to someone that they feel comfortable with and questioned what training is put in place for colleagues or peers on how to deal with informal complaints of bullying and harassment. **Action: RCo to pick up the reporting section of the policy with colleagues in student success and involve SJ in the discussion.**

8.4 RC suggested that policies come to the EDI committee for commentary rather than approval or approving on one perspective, not the whole policy.

8.5 **Action: EB to Change paragraph 27 reference to Senior Management Team to University Executive Team and University Management Group and Change the name of the university from Bucks to its full name Buckinghamshire New University or BNU (apart from when there is Bucks Students' Union.)**

8.6 ES suggested that policies should go to UMG and return back to the EDI committee first with an equality impact assessment completed for it, then propose it to UMG for sign off.

8.7 **The committee believed there is still a lot of change to be made and did not believe this policy CAN NOT BE APPROVED as the committee hasn't seen the final version.** NB stressed the need for speed in getting this change made for Ofsted and highlighted that the change required for Ofsted is very minor. ES informs the committee that the minor approvals can be done through chairs action in the EDI committee.

8.8 NB Questioned – Are there two approvals? An approval for Ofsted purposes now, which is done by this committee recognizing all the challenge, is still in the policy.

8.9 NB asks the committee for endorsement to approve this policy change for Ofsted purposes recognizing that there are various other things which need to be changed quite quickly by their wording, the values, because they are out of date. to come back to UMG as a fuller policy. NB suggested January for the policy to come back to approve the other changes.

8.10 RC from an Ofsted perspective – If they see the wrong name of groups, they will say that the policy isn't up to date, but it has been updated recently with changes. So, suggests that the committee need to make sure we are referring to the right names

of groups in it so we can approve initially on that. NB discusses that the committee cannot approve it. NB takes chairs action.

8.11 **Action: EB to make superficial changes of values and nomenclature mentioned previously and for the policy to be in a position for the committee to approve it.**

9. Proposed inclusion network

9.1 KI gave a presentation regarding the ideas for a proposed inclusion network. KI asked the committee how the University might be able to improve its approach to an inclusion network and any other ideas that the committee might have to be able to make this a better piece of work.

9.2 The committee discussed that the inclusion group is not to replace the BAME network as there is a separate part of what the University needs to do when it comes to race equality at BNU.

9.3 NB stressed the need for clarity around the proposal. DW raised questions about how this fit in with other existing groups and points about clarity on functions of some of the groups.

9.4 NB mentioned surprise about not having an LGBTQ+ network. NB discussed the reason these networks succeed is because it is demonstrably a safe space. RCo discussed her experience of belonging to a range of networks and highlighted how there tends to be a lot of repetition in these networks.

9.5 The committee discussed self-organisation of networks and the need to be clear around the purposes of the committee **Action: KI to clarify the reporting links for the network.**

9.6 The committee raised concerns around how it can allow staff to participate in these in these networks in a meaningful way without becoming overwhelmed. KI discussed the hope to launch an inclusion network and to be able to see the interest that is received and to be able to let the membership themselves establish some of those of ground rules around what it should look like.

9.7 NB asks committee to approve subject to comments. **ACTION KI to have a standing report of feedback on how well the inclusion network is going, and that the committee are continuously reviewing it.**

9.8 **The committee APPROVED the creation of the inclusion network.**

10. GTRSB into HE Pledge update

10.1 KI summarised the paper and discussed what has happened since the launch of the pledge in January 2021. Since the launch there have been several events that the University have either hosted or been too at other organisations. Growing number of signatories and interest in not just taking the pledge, but how this can be adapted to their own context.

10.2 The committee discussed the need to not lose the University's ownership of the pledge and looking at the resourcing and encouraging more colleagues to sign up. **ACTION NB, KI and RCo to work on how the University take forward the work on the University's pledge.**

11. Tackling Racism

11.1 KI discussed the paper on tackling racism and how the University pledged their commitment to the Race Equality Charter (REC) in October 2019. The university UK report on tackling racial harassment in higher education, sets out 12 recommendations, this is woven into the REC approach.

11.2 KI informed the committee that the University had had 300 staff responses, 350 student responses, 1300 comments which resulted in lots of quantitative and qualitative information that is helping to develop the University's action plans in our approach to the race equality charter.

11.3 KI discusses the 2 key themes coming out of the race equality charter which are race related incidents and the other, engagement.

11.4 The committee discussed the University's position to submit for REC for bronze in 2023.

12. Upcoming meetings

12.1 Committee noted that the next EDI committee dates are 11th March and 21st June.

12.2 The committee discusses some thoughts around agenda items for the next meeting. RCo asked the committee to contribute to the agenda if they have a paper they would like to present.

12.3 The committee notes an idea to present to the governing body to give them more knowledge of what's going on and assurances that the university is on top of EDI.

12.4 RC suggested an update on staff training development and how to raise awareness and focus on the international student experience.

13. ACTIONS

	Assigned to	Action	Deadline
3.1	**Committee**	to add adopting definitions of Islamophobia, Homophobia and Romaphobia to the agenda and how these definitions are being practically used within our policies.	11th March 2022
4.1	**All**	to share ideas on how we increase disability disclosure rates at the next committee meeting.	11th March 2022
4.5	**KI**	to add suggested initiatives to rolling EDI working group agenda.	11th March 2022
5.4	**KI/SJ**	to take points away about how the University can tailor the response to students and looking at the uniqueness at what the University need to do differently.	11th March 2022
6.3	**LH**	to ensure students union events are on the events calendar as well.	11th March 2022
6.4	**KI/LH/SU**	Coordinate the event calendar with the Universities cooperate events calendar so the committee are ensured it's being properly resourced.	11th March 2022
7.4	**HM/RCO**	to discuss equality impact assessments being used in restructures.	11th March 2022
7.7	**KI/LH**	to review the communication around the equality impact assessment.	11th March 2022
7.8	**ES**	to Look at the equality impact assessment on policies and look at building this into the process again.	11th March 2022
8.3	**RCo**	to pick up the reporting section of the policy with colleagues in student success and involve SJ in the discussion.	11th March 2022
8.5	**EB**	Change paragraph 27 reference to Senior Management Team to University Executive Team and University Management Group and Change the name of the university from Bucks to its full name	11th March 2022

		Buckinghamshire New University or BNU (apart from when there is Bucks Students' Union.)	
8.11	**EB**	to make superficial changes of values and nomenclature mentioned previously and for the policy to be in a position for the committee to approve it.	11th March 2022
9.5	**KI**	to clarify the reporting links for the inclusion network.	11th March 2022
9.7	**KI**	to have a standing report of feedback on how well the inclusion network is going, and that the committee are continuously reviewing it.	11th March 2022
10.2	**NB/KI/ RCo**	to work on how the University take forward the work on the University's pledge.	11th March 2022