

**Minutes of the Biology Equality and Diversity Group (BioEDG)  
Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2016**

Present: Amanda Barnes (AB), Tim Doheny-Adams (TD-H), Calvin Dytham (CD), Paul Genever (PG), Adrian Harrison (ABH), Erin Haskell (EH), Jane Hill (JKH), Lucy Hudson (LH), Ellie Purser (EP) and Richard Waites (RW)  
Apologies: Philip Brailey (PB), Helen Coombs (HC), Lindsey Dalzell (LD), Antje Kuhrs (AK)  
In Attendance: Andrea Johnson (AJJ)

**16/001 Welcome to new members and introductions to the Group**

JKH welcomed TD-H and LH to the Group. It was noted that TD-H would be attending future meetings as the new postdoc representative (replacing Melanie Smee), and LH would be attending as the professional support staff representative. JKH explained that the reason for the increase in membership was because of the expanded remit of Athena SWAN which now includes professional and support staff.

**16/002 Minutes of the Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

The minutes of 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015 were agreed as an accurate record.

**16/003 Matters arising from the Meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

(i) 15/034 (i) *Engagement of undergraduate students: ideas for summer term activities*

JKH advised that one area in which progress needed to be made was the engagement of undergraduate students. In relation to this it was agreed that it was important to get a second undergraduate representative for the BioEDG group, and RW agreed to follow this up. **RW**

RW thought that it would still be possible to put on an event in the post-exam period later this term, and would welcome event suggestions. It was noted that the publicising of shadow CVs could link to AB's remit of Student Employability Officer, and this would fit in well with the other activities that the students are doing. It could, for example, be done as a workshop during the careers fair in June, and it was noted that the first and second year students attend this.

It was agreed that action should be taken to get a second undergraduate representative in place. Once this had happened JKH will liaise with the undergraduate reps and, linking with AB, will agree a plan and get an event put in place and approved by RW in time for June. **JKH**

(ii) 15/035 *Changes to the Terms of Reference, and discussion regarding the expansion of BioEDG*

It was debated whether there were ethical constraints about access to information/statistics that are presented at BioEDG and subsequently put on the 'R' drive. However, it was acknowledged that the minutes of the group's meetings are on the website and freely available to all (including outside the University) as was the wider BioEDG website. The group will continue to ensure that sensitive data that could potentially identify statistics relating to individuals are anonymised.

The group also debated the increased remit of the committee, and how to keep focussed. This was deemed to be particularly important as the Department will submit for a renewal of their gold award in April 2017 (any award would then last for 4 years). In order to meet this timescale it was acknowledged that responsibility for different areas/aspects of the committee's remit will need to be shared out between the group members.

EP had drafted new Terms of Reference and, as the membership of the group is getting larger, it was recognised that there was a need to think clearly about people's roles on the committee. One change was that Jon Pitchford (JP) will in future be the representative on the group for the Biology Research Committee, and this will be clarified on the web and in the ToR accordingly. It was noted that the ToR were still a work in progress as the group deals with the expanded remit.

A couple of extra additions to the ToR were agreed by the group, namely that under (1) reference should be made to the fact that this included responsibility for writing the submission for Athena awards and striving for gold renewal. Similarly under (8) this should be rephrased to read 'To be aware of any new national **awards** and University initiatives, and to engage as appropriate.' EP agreed to update the ToR accordingly and they would be then added to the website.

**EP/AJJ**

The number of protected characteristics included within the BioEDG remit was discussed. Whilst the focus will remain on Athena Swan and gender equality, AK has taken over the responsibility for disability and will attend relevant University meetings. Other protected characteristics were discussed and in particular what else should be prioritised. It was felt that ECU race charter mark and LGBTI should be prioritised. It was noted that Philip Brailey (one of the postgraduate reps) had attended an LGBTI seminar at Sheffield University and could feedback from that. EH will put EP in contact with PB so that information on this seminar and discussion could be shared with BioEDG.

**EH/PB**

It was also reported that there is a University of York group (the LGBTI Forum) listed under the University's Equality and Diversity Office. The forum has termly meetings, and it would be advantageous if someone from BioEDG could attend those meetings. EP confirmed she will attend the next session in March 2016.

EP further clarified what the various equality charters were (i.e. race equality, the two ticks charter for disability and Stonewall for the LGBT group). It was noted that Stonewall score against a checklist of 10 items in order to provide the best environment for LGBTI students and EP would look at this further to see how the Department could achieve completion of this - or evidence it if the checklist is already being met.

**EP**

We discussed two ticks disability charter that is an initiative run through the Job Centre. This initiative focuses on staff, and guarantees interviews to those who meet minimum criteria. There was discussion about this commitment. It was noted that other Universities have signed up to the charter (e.g. Sheffield) and BioEDG wondered whether any concerns about a potentially large volume of interviews would actually be realised. EP reported Central HR had considered this but had taken the decision not to pursue. It was suggested that AK could investigate what the commitment would have been to interview anyone who was disabled in terms of numbers over the last six months to see if this is the case, and JKH/EP will discuss this with AK about taking this forward accordingly. RW commented that as this affected staff, students would be catered for separately.

**JKH/EP/AK**

The frequency of BioEDG meetings was discussed, and whether it would be advisable to increase the number of these; concern was expressed about current progress against the renewal date of April 2017 and it was agreed that it would be beneficial to meet bi-monthly, so in future there will be 6 BioEDG meetings a year.

It was emphasised that there is now a need to include data on professional and support staff, and to look at the same data as has been analysed for academic and research staff for professional and support staff in the future. As a first move towards this, EP circulated data relating to employee numbers in the Department which showed these staff groups (in addition to academic, research and teaching staff) and the split between full time and part time staff. It was noted that the data showed all support staff in grades 3 to 8 (which included research technicians). It was discussed whether support staff could be further split to show technical staff separate to other support staff. It was acknowledged there may be some data protection issues (i.e. relating to small numbers of some grades), but EP will contact Alex MacFarlane in Central HR to further investigate what is possible, and will bring back any data to the next meeting.

**EP**

*(iii) 15/036 CROS Survey*

At the last meeting, it had been noted that JKH now had data for both the 2015 and 2014 CROS surveys of postdocs. JKH advised that she still had to analyse the data from these surveys and it was agreed that she would discuss this further with TD-A who could help with the analysis and how best to anonymise the results.

**JKH/TD-A**

*(iv) 15/037 (vii) Outreach Data*

The future provision and analysis of outreach data was discussed. It was noted that the data

retrieved in relation to this only show the gender ratio of staff who engage in outreach, and it was agreed that there is a need to capture more information on e.g. number of activities and time commitments of staff. JKH wondered if this would fall into Maggie Smith's area, and advised that she would discuss this further with her accordingly, and the chair of the Outreach committee.

**JKH**

**16/004 Update on Qualtrics (for student feedback)**

JKH reported that under the old system for student feedback there had been no way of capturing the gender of the student giving feedback, but with the introduction of a new system (Qualtrics) it was noted that this is now possible and more detailed analyses are possible. EP had brought an anonymous example of what the data would look like. This will enable the BioEDG group to examine e.g. if male and female students are equally satisfied with the course.

It was felt that analysis relating to the satisfaction of male v female students should be the first priority, and CD will look into this and report back to BioEDG with the findings in due course.

**CD**

**16/005 Feedback from the University Athena Group**

Changes to the University AS Group are still under discussion, to be chaired by PVC-R Professor Debbie Smith.

The University will employ a full time Athena Swan person (a new post). In addition to that, each of the Faculties will have a nominated Athena Swan rep who will attend the University group.

The issues that arose over the University's actions in relation to international men's day were discussed – as well as that no women received honorary degrees at ceremonies in January. This in turn led to a discussion regarding whether the BioEDG group should suggest Honorary Graduands in future, and the mechanism to do this. RW confirmed that the issue concerning degree ceremonies had been discussed at Senate, and it was noted that two female honorary degree recipients had withdrawn at short notice from the January degree ceremonies.

**16/006 Report on Beacon Activities**

JKH reported that the Department would be hosting a visit from UCL in April. A programme is being arranged for the afternoon accordingly.

The BioEDG website was discussed, and it was queried whether positive news stories in relation to women should still be added to the E&D website, particularly as the Department is not doing anything similar in relation to disability/LGTBI, etc. It was felt that news should only be put on the BioEDG website if it was also on the main Biology website. AJJ will check with Belinda Wade in future to ensure that any good news stories are considered for the main Departmental website, and that there is a good gender ratio.

**AJJ**

**16/007 Items to be communicated at Academic/Professional staff meetings**

JKH reported that data relating to seminar speakers were presented at the last meeting. Data that could be presented at the next meeting could include student scores (data from CD) or professional/support staff data (provided by EP). JKH will present one of these sets of data accordingly.

**JKH**

**16/008 Coffee and Careers Sessions**

Under 'Any Other Business' AB advised that approximately 70% of those that attend the 'Coffee and Careers' sessions are female. Apparently the gender ratio of those attending does not change with the gender of the speaker, and AB will put something together for circulating to PDRAs/PhD students/technical staff to advertise these events, and their value to all attendees, and to discuss the gender imbalance. AB reported that the average attendance for each session was about 20 people. The best attended sessions were around scientific writing.

It was agreed that AB continue to collect such useful data, and then, if the cohort that attend is not representative of the group, try to broaden the audience to achieve a better gender ratio. It was felt that these data sets could then be collated and presented to

the Postdoc Society and discussed. AB will take this up accordingly.

**AB****16/009 Publicity around protected characteristics**

EP reported that February was LGBTBI History month, and that posters were available on the university website and members of BioEDG were encouraged to print/display these in their work areas.

JKH advised that the Department would be hosting the Equality and Diversity roadshow in April and that a poster stand would be on display in the atrium.

**16/010 Biology Action Plan**

JKH confirmed that the Action Plan had recently been updated and related the changes that had been made to the group. The contents of the old Action Plan had been converted to an excel format and several different worksheets were now available within the same file. The new model will hopefully make it easier for the group to look back periodically to see what has been finalised, things that have been completed but would need repeating on a regular basis, and ongoing items still to be looked at. It was agreed that it would be useful for a smaller group to go through it, pick out actions and make sure they were achieved.

**16/011 Survey of new staff groups (Departmental Induction)**

Now that the remit of BioEDG had increased, survey questions that had formerly been asked of postdocs could be launched to the Professional/support group of staff. EP agreed to set up a survey using Qualtrics or Google Forms. Although Google Forms was thought to be quicker to set up, people can respond to surveys done in Qualtrics on a mobile phone. A few new questions will be incorporated into the survey, and EP will circulate the questions from last time for information in due course.

**EP****16/012 Writing References**

JKH wondered if running a departmental session about writing references and what can and cannot be said in terms of e.g. disability would be useful. This could be aimed at anyone who writes references (i.e. for students and/or staff). It was noted that people may write things that are very gender inappropriate, and this is not good practice academically. It was agreed that it would be useful to have a lunchtime session for academics/anyone who is likely to write a reference. EP advised that she and Mary Ashbridge could look into this.

EP agreed to add 'Writing References' to the list of bite-size sessions that she is looking at running. Case law examples could be used to highlight the good, the bad and the ugly and RW agreed to help promote the sessions in due course as they become available.

**EP/RW****16/013 Perceptions of the Department**

A focus group could be set up to explore what new members of the Department perceive about their experience from advert to interview to employment, to help improve our employment practices and welcoming new staff. If this was deemed useful EP suggested that the HR team could look at this information. Discussion could be held with newly-appointed people about why they applied for a post here, and the application and interview process. The procedures for providing feedback for those who do not get selected could be considered, for good practice.

The topic could form a bite-size session around the issue of unconscious bias.

**EP****16/014 Date of Next Meeting**

**Proposed date: Wednesday 27 April 2016, 2.00 to 3.30 pm, venue to be confirmed.**