

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

**Minutes of the Biology Equality and Diversity Group (BioEDG)**

**Wednesday, 27th April 2016**

Present: Amanda Barnes (AB), Philip Brailey (PB), Helen Coombs (HC), Tim Doheny-Adams (TD-A), Calvin Dytham (CD), Paul Genever (PG), Adrian Harrison (ABH), Erin Haskell (EH), Lucy Hudson (LH), Antje Kuhrs (AK), Jon Pitchford (JP), Ellie Purser (EP) and Richard Waites (RW)

Apologies: Jane Hill (JKH), Lindsey Dalzell (LD)

In Attendance: Andrea Johnson (AJJ)

**16/015 Minutes of the Meeting 3rd February 2016**

The minutes of 3rd February 2016 were agreed as an accurate record.

**16/016 Matters arising from the Meeting of 3rd February 2016**

1. *16/003 (i) Engagement of undergraduate students: ideas for summer term activities*

At the last meeting it has been agreed that a second undergraduate representative was needed, and RW had agreed to follow this up.

Following the meeting RW had tried hard to get a second representative from the current undergraduates, but despite his and JHK’s best efforts, a second representative had not been found. RW and JKH will continue to chase this and EP suggested that if any members of the group were in a position to encourage undergraduate interest in becoming a BioEDG representative, that they please do so. **RW/JKH**

(*ii)* *16/003 (ii) Changes to the Terms of Reference, and discussion regarding the expansion of BioEDG*

It was noted that the final updated Terms of Reference were now available on the Biology website.

PB updated BioEDG on the LGBTI seminar that he had attended at Sheffield University. At the event people from a range of STEM subjects spoke about what they did, and showed the variety of work undertaken by people in the LGBTI community. The event had involved both staff and students, and HC reported that quite a few people from the Chemistry department who had attended had also found it to be useful. It was queried whether there would be any benefit of doing something similar in the department, and it was thought that if so, something jointly could be run between Biology and Chemistry. PB agreed to send details of next year’s event to EP to aid consideration/debate on what could be done at York. **PB**

At the previous meeting, EP had agreed to look at Stonewall’s scoring system (whereby they score against a checklist of 10 items in order to provide the best environment for LGBTI students), to see how the Department could achieve completion of this, or evidence if the checklist is already being met. Following on from this, EP advised that Stonewall were currently reviewing all their criteria and a list was not currently available. However EP will keep an eye on the website so that when this changes it can be picked up again. **EP**

EP reported that she had attended the University of York’s ‘LGTBI Matters’ forum, and hoped this might be something that PB could also engage with on behalf of BioEDG in future. EP will pass on details of the next meeting so that PB could attend this with her in due course. It was noted that the University had recognised that there was a need for such a forum at York, and had launched it in response accordingly.

Discussion had taken place previously about the two ticks disability charter and whether the department should engage with this. Essentially, the initiative focuses on staff, and guarantees interviews to those with disabilities who meet a minimum criteria. Following on from discussions at the last meeting, EP thought that it would not be possible to engage with the two ticks disability charter as a ‘stand alone’ department. HC also reported that she had got the message that it should be done at an institutional level.

**Action**

It was proposed that before any recommendation is made that the University engages with the two ticks charter, more in-depth consideration should be given as to whether it would be in the University’s/Department’s best interest, as it may actually create a bias and/or affect unconscious bias at interview stage. EP and AK will continue to follow this up. **EP/AK**

There is now a need to include date 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. In relation to this EP reported that she had pulled raw data from tableau and this would be circulated in due course for comments. **EP**

1. *16/003 (iii) CROS Survey*

It was noted that data from the 2015 and 2014 CROS surveys of postdocs is still to be analysed, and JKH and TD-A will be meeting to discuss this data the week beginning 2nd May.

**JKH/TD-A**

1. *16/003 (iv) Outreach Data*

Arising from the last meeting, JKH had been going to discuss outreach with Maggie Smith and the Chair of the Outreach Committee. JKH to report back on the outcome of this at the next meeting of BioEDG. **JKH**

1. *16/004 Update on Qualtrics (for student feedback)*

In relation to the introduction of Qualtrics for recording and analysing student feedback, BioEDG had felt that an analysis relating to the satisfaction of male v female students should be the first priority, and CD had agreed to look into this and report back to BioEDG with the findings in due course. CD updated the group that he was intending to do the analysis based on males and females at the end of this round (when the modules have finished in a few weeks) and that it should be easy to do. It was further noted that it would be rolled out to Stage 2 students next year. CD will report back when the first analysis has been undertaken. **CD**

HC reported that Chemistry still used an on-line system for feedback, so do not use Qualtrics at present. Further discussion took place about how data was derived (eg through data warehouse), and it was noted that this could be looked at again if it were deemed to be of value.

1. *16/006 Report on Beacon Activities*

EP reported that the department had hosted the visit from UCL last week. The UCL visitors had found this to be extremely useful, and we too had some good ideas from them (discussed later in the minutes).

1. *16/007 Items to be communicated at Academic/Professional staff meetings*

JKH had been going to present one of two data sets to the next academic/professional staff meeting (student scores or professional/support staff data), and will report back on this at the next meeting. **JKH**

1. *16/008 Coffee and Careers sessions*

BioEDG had previously been informed that approximately 70% of those that attend the ‘Coffee and Careers’ sessions are females. AB presented some data/graphs to BioEDG in relation to this which showed attendees by gender and speakers by gender. AB agreed to share the data more widely. Leading on from this it was noted that there would be a re-launch of the aims of the ‘Coffee and Careers’ sessions and this data can be presented there. **AB**

It was queried if the current format of the sessions works, and whilst it was acknowledged that this seemed to be the case, it was noted there is an obvious gender imbalance as more females attend than do males. It was also apparent that the gender imbalance appears to be specifically related to the monthly events as the Careers Day had a more equal split of gender (approximately 50/50).

It was further queried whether the sessions needed to be more informal and it was debated whether a questionnaire should be given to attendees to get their feedback and to identify why males do not take up the opportunity.

AB will email the data she presented to the BioEDG group. **AB**

**Action**

1. *16/011 Survey of new staff groups (Departmental induction)*

This minute related to the culture surveys, and EP advised that she had just circulated drafts of these. There was one for Academic/Research staff, and another for Professional Support Staff. The draft survey for professional support staff included basically the same questions that were asked of academic/research staff so that some comparisons could be drawn, plus additional questions. EP asked the Group to look at both of these and let her have any comments accordingly. Following a query from JP, it was agreed that the questions could be shared with the Maths Department as they are doing something similar at the moment. EP reported she still had the student survey to update. **EP**

EP reported that she was also hoping to continue the work previously done on reviewing the departmental induction process. The idea will be to engage with new starters and perform checks at various points to see how things were progressing (i.e. after the new starter had been here for a given period of time). This will roll forward for EP to progress accordingly. **EP**

1. *16/012 Writing references*

It had been previously debated if bite-sized sessions on writing references could be given (with the sessions aimed at academics and anyone else who will write references). EP reported that this was still ongoing. It was noted that HR will offer central training around this if there is enough demand so it would be useful check within the Faculty if there is enough demand for this topic. Reference writing is a big area of employment law, so it was acknowledged that staff need to get it right. EP will follow this up with RW regarding what to offer with this. **EP/RW**

**16/017 Professional and Support Staff Data**

EP advised that professional and support staff data had been run and once the raw data was made presentable it will be circulated.

**16/018 Feedback from the University Athena Group**

There was no feedback from the University Group - JKH will update the Group as and when there is anything to report.

It was noted that things were evolving centrally. Within the Equality and Diversity (E&D) Office, staff that have recently left are being replaced full time. There will also be a new Head of the E&D Office in post shortly. It was further noted that additional resources have been committed at University level with a new Athena role. The person appointed to this post will be able to provide increased support to Departments, and it was hoped that the department could tap into this.

**16/019 Report on Beacon Activities**

JKH had visited various places recently, and would be able to give further information on these visits at the next meeting.

One interesting thing that had arisen from the visit by UCL on the 20th April was that at UCL they have a mothers/fathers/parent/carers support network. This included speakers being invited from their centre/HR offices to talk about the various policies and services available to help support that group of people, and was essentially a departmental initiative. It was queried whether this should be adopted at York, and it was acknowledged that whilst there used to be something similar a while ago, unfortunately it no longer exists. EP advised that she would look into what is being offered at University level. **EP**

**16/020 News for the website**

EH reported that a PhD student had recently won a poster prize and that she would be able to send details on to AJJ for inclusion on the website. **EH/AJJ**

**16/021 Items to be communicated to Academic staff meeting**

EP asked for suggestions of things that could be raised at these meetings, and whether it would be a good to promote the activity of Athena Swan and the expanded remit (either for interest, or asking for involvement). It was felt that it would be good to emphasise the remit of the group at the next meeting. **EP**

**Action**

**16/022 Unconscious bias**

HC reported that in Chemistry they were looking at their recruitment process from the beginning through to the appointment. As part of that process, when each shortlisting/interview panel is set up, the Chemistry group check to see whether panel members have undergone recruitment and selection training - and also the on-line unconscious bias training. If not, then the group make contact with the panel and advise that the expectation is that the unconscious bias training is undertaken as soon as possible, along with the recruitment and selection training. They also send through the document on unconscious bias which covers things to look out for.

Once the group have established that training has been done, they will then arrange for an ‘unconscious bias’ observer to sit in on the shortlisting meeting. The observer will not take part in the shortlisting but will point out where assumptions are being made, which may be false. The group also have ‘unconscious bias’ observers to sit in on interviews, with the idea being that a pool of information is gained that can then be shared as the observers are able to highlight good practice. It was queried whether the ‘observer’ would feed back, and it was noted that if after the first interview there were any anomalies, the observer could interject at that point, but ideally the panel would get together 10 minutes prior to the beginning of the interviews to clarify what would be asked of the candidates and in what way.

HC reported that Chemistry had found that internal candidates usually get a ‘worse deal’ than external candidates, and this may be because they are not asked the questions in the same way, particularly when they have worked with people on the interview panel in the past. There therefore needs to be recognition a level playing field should be established. HC stressed that this was very much a work in progress in Chemistry. At the moment there has not been enough shortlisting/interviews at which ‘unconscious bias’ observers have been present to see what the consequences are. Feedback from panel meetings is still ongoing. However, reminders given just before shortlisting meetings or interviews are deemed to be really helpful as the panel members will go into the meetings with a different frame of mind, and there will be the consistency of asking all the candidates the same questions in exactly the same way.

EP/JKH will be going to see HC to talk about this in more detail next week. **EP/JKH/HC**

BioEDG also discussed the current on-line unconscious bias training that was available, and it was noted that this took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. However, it would be important to refresh this periodically, as information gained can be forgotten, especially when people are tired or stressed. It was acknowledged that it was essential to get panel members trained and competent, bearing in mind that the cost of making a wrong appointment.

**16/023 Contact details on adverts**

The Biology procedure regarding putting names of staff who could be contacted on adverts is that both a male and a female staff member of staff should be named. However, EP reported that she had received feedback from a male member of academic staff who had been concerned that an advert had gone out which only named a female contact. EP asked if any other members of BioEDG notice similar instances they should flag this to her.

It was noted that it had previously been agreed that best practice would be to give contacts of both gender on adverts/details (for all roles). However, not everyone thought this would be practical and it was further suggested by PB that there might be candidates who do not necessarily align with either male or female gender. EP agreed to discuss the practice further with JKH. ]

**EP/JKH**

**16/023 Date of Next Meeting**

Date of next meeting: to be confirmed.

*AJJ - 18/05/2016*