

**Minutes of the Biology Equality and Diversity Group (BioEDG)
Tuesday, 13th December 2016**

Present: Nia Bryant (NB), Calvin Dytham (CD), Paul Genever (PG), Antje Kuhrs (AK) and Ellie Purser (EP)
Apologies: Amanda Barnes (AB), Philip Bailey (PB), Eran Cohen (EC), Helen Coombs (HC), Tim Doheny-Adams, (TD-A), Lindsey Dalzell (LD), Pierre-Alain van Griethuysen (P-AVG) Adrian Harrison (ABH), Jane Hill (JKH), Lucy Hudson (LH), Jon Pitchford (JP), Richard Waites (RW)
In Attendance: Andrea Johnson (AJJ)

16/030 Minutes of the Meeting 5th October 2016

The minutes of 5th October 2016 were agreed as an accurate record.

16/031 Matters arising from the Meeting of 5th October 2016

(i) 16/025 (ii) Changes to the Terms of Reference and discussion regarding the expansion of BioEDG

EP confirmed that she and PB would be attending the LGBTI event in Sheffield scheduled for the 13th January 2017.

In relation to the Stonewall scoring system, EP reported that this was still being looked at a University level as part of a fuller assessment of charter marks and what we want to be involved in. EP will report back on this in due course. **EP**

It was noted that a Departmental baking competition had taken place within the Stonewall season, and £180 had been raised from Biology contributions. This has been supported by both students and staff, and it had been both visible and positive. It was felt that it had been good to see staff and students coming together in this way as often LGTBI and/or Disability activities are targeted at either staff groups or student groups separately. It was acknowledged that it would be good to have more activities where there is 'buy in' from the students as it was felt that BioEDG definitely needs to get students involved in activities.

In relation to the two ticks charter, EP had intended to get a copy of the paper that demonstrated that engaging with the two ticks charter has low impact, and may not have the desired effect. However, it was noted that the two ticks charter will be looked at as part of the fuller assessment of charter marks carried out at institutional level, so this may not be something that the Department has any say in. It was noted that Pete Quinn (Director of Student Support Services and member of the Include Forum) who had informed EP about the paper has now left and is not being replaced. It was queried whether there would be a replacement for Pete Quinn at the Include Forum and CD agreed to raise this with Kate Dodd, Academic Registrar, to see if this would be part of her portfolio now. **CD**

(ii) 16/025 (iii) CROS Survey

EP advised that she had not had any feedback yet from JKH/TD-A about slides that TD-A had produced, and the slides and accompanying commentary was still awaited. **JKH/TD-A**

(iii) 16/025 (iv) Outreach Data

EP reported that she and JKH were doing an analysis of data retrieved from the census, and would feedback in due course. **EP/JKH**

(iv) 16/025 (v) Update on Qualtrics (for student feedback)

CD had revised what he circulated at the last meeting and this has now been placed on the website accordingly

NB commented that it was commonly the case that females in positions of authority tended to be harsher on junior females and CD reported that it was known from other institutions that female students tended to be harder on female staff. However, the data that CD had analysed actually indicated that in Biology at York the reverse was actually true, so we are almost breaking the cycle in York, and perhaps this should be highlighted.

It was noted that the data that had been analysed only related to a small subset of individuals, and it was suggested that this should be widened up in future, and analysed on a regular basis.

It was agreed that CD will therefore carry out further a further analysis in due course.

CD

(v)16/025 (vii) Survey of new staff groups and 'Career Trees'

EP reported that she had not yet received any update from JKH regarding the 'Career Trees' but would talk to her about this separately. It was noted that Phil from Graphics is still in the building at present so it is still possible to ask him for help.

EP/JKH

(vi)16/025 (viii) Writing references

It was noted that the reference session detailed in the last minutes had now taken place. RW had started the session, and then JKH had gone on talk about gender and language in writing references. EP had concluded the session with information about legal implications. It was noted that the words used in references for males and females were definitely different and the use of 'word clouds' would make a good visual in the Gold submission and should be used.

Leading on from this NB queried if there was any way in which BioEDG could ask people to submit references they have done over a given period and then anonymise them to make a Biology 'word cloud'. BioEDG could also express its concern about the references we are receiving as well as those that are written in the Department for our staff/students. EP agreed to do a sense check of the numbers involved and advised that she could look at incoming staff over a given period (and references received in relation to those individuals). PG and AK also offered to pull references that have been provided for different student groups for analysis.

EP/PG/AK

It was noted that the student side could also be considered by looking at UCAS. Also, in relation to incoming students, it might also be possible to look at personal statements to see how people describe themselves.

It was acknowledged that the issue of references could be an aim to build on for the next 3 years in the Gold submission document.

(vii)16/025 (x) Unconscious bias

At the last meeting CD had given a verbal report of his role of unconscious bias observer for the BMS Lectureship. Since then he had written up a summary of the process, and this was circulated at the meeting.

It was noted that there had been 163 applications for three lectureships (102 from males and 61 from females [37%]). All members of the shortlisting panel were professors in Biology, two males and two female. Twenty eight candidates were discussed in detail at the shortlisting meeting (19 males and 9 females [32%]). Four of the candidates were reported to have directly contacted panel members, including 2 of the final appointees, and all were male. The length of time each candidate was discussed showed no bias.

Candidates had been discussed alphabetically, and by the end of the shortlisting some of the panel members had been feeling jaded and this could possibly disadvantage those with surnames beginning later in the alphabet. Although candidate gender wasn't mentioned at this stage, three of the first 10 candidates considered were female and five of the last ten. The frustration on this point was essentially around what some panel members felt was the inflexibility of e-Recruiter, and it may be good if some of the panel members had been able to start mid-way through the alphabet.

During the meeting there were no clear instances of unconscious bias against the candidates, but on two occasions there was an assumption that the PI of the group were the candidate

worked was male when that PI was known by one of the panel to be female. Towards the end of the meeting the size of the shortlist was discussed but not initially the gender mix until one panel member asked.

The document tabled by CD gave full details on the process, and included recommendations for BioEDG to carry forward, namely:

1. There should be recording an analysis of the number of F/M candidates, how many are discussed, shortlisted, interviewed etc.
2. Panel chairs should be reminder to consider the gender mix of candidates at all stages of the process.
3. All panel members should be reminded:
 - a. of the potential for unconscious bias from themselves, other panel members and from people providing references for candidates.
 - b. that even if not directed against any of the candidates, that judgements should not be made based on gender or any other protected characteristic.

In relation to this and point 1 above, it was noted that some information can be pulled from tableau, but to do this locally is difficult (there were 95 pieces of recruitment this year to date) and the gender mix of applicants is particularly difficult to catch. It was queried whether this should be analysed for a subsection across all staff groups, although EP emphasised that this would take a lot of resource and there are implications for workloads.

PG noted that it would be fairly easy to record and analyse the data in relation to graduate students; and it was agreed that he and EP would get together separately to think about the practicalities of this.

PG

For undergraduate students it was noted that there was no subjectivity and a different set of rules apply.

In relation to points 2 and 3 above, JKH and CD had discussed whether a laminated sheet could be prepared which was handed to chairs of panels, and listed things to bear in mind regarding unconscious bias in the recruitment process. There could then be a 5 minute period at the start of the panel meeting around this, and a debriefing afterwards to consider whether any unconscious bias had been shown by any of the panel members and to demonstrate that it had been actively discussed.

It was noted that this was a difficult message to get across to staff who may feel it is positive discrimination. This will need to be addressed in the submission, and how to get the message across is not clear. Ultimately if there were 100 candidates for a post and the top 6 were male, then only males would be shortlisted. However, it was acknowledged that people do not necessarily hear this and 'put up a wall'. As the problem is around messaging, it was queried if more regular 'Athena' updates could be given in the future to overcome that mind-set. The message needs to be that equality and diversity benefits us all and it was queried if putting on an open session in the Department would be of benefit.

EP reported that Paul Walton is booked to do an unconscious bias session for Biology on the 15th March 2017. It was acknowledged that this would be a very good session for people who are not 'signed up' to Athena Swan to come along to, and EP will circulate details of the session to all staff in the new year.

EP

(viii) 16/025 (xi) Contact details on adverts

At the last meeting EP had agreed to circulate some draft wording that could be used in adverts so that candidates not wishing to approach a specific gender had an alternative contact. She has subsequently done that with the proposed wording 'For an alternative contact for this post, please contact biol-personnel@york.ac.uk'. Some discussion took place of the issue, and it was noted that candidates need to be comfortable of working with either gender regardless of whether they were male or female. However, making a cold call to a specific gender at the outset might be daunting (it was pointed out that only 4 people had called a panel member following the advertising of the BMS Lectureships, and all of those 4 had been male). Having a

generic email address would essentially give candidates another option and may not discourage female applicants for seeking further information. It was emphasised that we do not want to put up any potential barriers, and was agreed that having a main academic contact for the role and then have the lighter touch of giving an alternative contact was the best option. EP will ensure that this is put in place accordingly.

EP

(ix) 16/028 Labelling of departmental toilets

EP had raised this again with the central Equality and Diversity team, as she had been asked about this by a student. Apparently gender neutral toilets needs to be in addition to separate ones for both males and female and disabled toilets. It was noted that LH would be able to provide an update on signage in due course.

LH

16/032 Athena submission update

We are now 3 months away from the Gold submission date. The centre had advised that a full data collection needs to be done by the end of November, although EP had fed back that this would not be possible in Biology as our collection date is 1st December. EP is interacting with Anna Reader (the University's Athena Swan Coordinator) about this accordingly. It was hoped that a draft of the submission document would be in place by the end of January 2017, and there is currently a draft in progress within Biology.

EP reported that the next step was to divvy up the draft submission into several chunks and get different people/groups to read through and sense-check them. The relevant sections would first be looked at by academic members of BioEDG – e.g. CD, NB, RW, JKH and PG (for the postgraduate perspective). EP hoped to circulate it to those people this week. Once the sections have been reviewed she proposed that a data day be put in place in January whereby people can come as a group to look at the different sections (eg academic and research in the morning, and then support staff in the afternoon). It was hoped that CD would be available all day (along with EP) and it would be good to get LH and Natalie Armstrong along in the afternoon. EP will get a suitable date organised accordingly.

EP

It was noted that Nina Pirozek had offered to have an oversight of the document as a 'critical friend'. EP advised that she would discuss this with Anna Reader in the first instance as there is now a structure in the University for critical friends.

EP

EP queried if there was anyone within the Department who had experience of generating graphs as the ones historically used are becoming a little unwieldy and it would be good to have some help. NB suggested that JP would be a good person to ask, and CD also offers to be involved. EP will progress accordingly.

EP/JP/CD

16/033 Feedback from University Athena Group

JKH had not provided any feedback in advance to EP, and this can instead be reported at the next meeting.

16/034 Report on Beacon Activities

EP reported that JKH had sent her a list of beacon activities that she has done over the last year, and this will be included in the submission as evidence of what has been done.

BioEDG noted that in the main this only related to activity undertaken by JKH (although others had been involved in visits that other organisations made to the Department).

EP reported that the submission document would also include areas in the Department where positive changes have been made to processes across the Department and can be evidenced. One example of this is performance review. We can demonstrate that changes (i.e that receipt of completed forms is done electronically) mean the process is consistent and visible, and text can also go in the submission to the effect that updating various departmental processes is an ongoing initiative. Other departmental initiatives can be selected as 'impact areas' in this way.

16/035 News for the website

CD reported that this item forms part of the regular Agenda, but thinking has changed about what should be placed on the BioEDG website in future. Historically, 'good news' stories

relating to awards and achievements had been placed on the website. However, as anything that is good departmental news already goes on the main Biology website having a separate site for such events could be seen as saying that celebrating equality and diversity is secondary to the main departmental site, whereas it is actually forms part of everything that is done in the department (i.e. if one is celebrating diversity one is celebrating everyone and not just protected groups). It was also felt that displaying 'good news' for protected groups on a separate departmental website, could be seen as being patronising.

It was acknowledged that there should still be a BioEDG website as this shows the visibility of the committee and gives a 'home' for analyses that have been done and work in progress (eg work around word clouds, references, etc could go on there). However it was felt that the BioEDG website was not the right place to put more general information about staff getting awards etc as this was better suited to the main Biology website.

It was noted that the BioEDG website would be useful aid to getting people to start thinking about changes that they themselves need to make, and it was therefore agreed that only things that have been done by BioEDG members should in future be placed on the site; everything else should be captured on the main web site.

It was agreed that one thing that should be put on the website was links to Paul Walton's unconscious bias seminar once he has given this in January. EP will progress this in due course as per (vii) 16/025.

16/036 Items for Discussion at Staff Meetings

EP suggested that it a good thing to raise at academic/departmental staff meetings would be a briefing by CD to update staff on his unconscious bias observer role for the BMS Lectureships. An alternative would be for CD to do a next round of analyses of student feedback and do a briefing on that at the next staff meetings; this would avoid any overlap with the unconscious bias talk/seminar that Paul Walton is coming in to the department to do. CD will progress accordingly

CD

16/037 Other Business

(i) Equality and Diversity Champions Meeting

EP reported that she went to this and a new Equality and Diversity strategy is being developed. Anything that arises out of this can be fed back for discussion at BioEDG.

(ii) Science Council

It was noted that Science Council have a professional body that recognises technicians. LH had already run a session on this in 2016 for Technical staff to attend but EP wanted the group to be aware.

(iii) Institute of Physics

EP reported that she had received an IoP document which discussed having maternity mentors for people in each area. The idea was that people could come and speak to a local expert. Such an initiative would be quick and easy to implement in Biology, and it would then be the mentor's responsibility to ensure that a communications plan is in place between the Line Manager and person on maternity leave. Other issues could be addressed as part of this process (i.e when a PI leaves during the course of someone's maternity leave). It was discussed and agreed that the department has this in the form of the People Resources team and so no further action was necessary.

(iv) Disability signposting

EP and AK discussed disability signposting for staff. It was noted that staff need to know who they should contact about any issues they have. EP confirmed that she would ensure that this is covered at the next staff meeting. Essentially it would be the Line Manager in the first instance, then EP. It was agreed that, once the contact route has been established, it could go on the BioEDG website.

(v) Disability signposting

EP had recently attended an Include session which had spotlighted a law firm who had had organised their efforts around supporting those with disabilities. The effort that had been made by the company was impressive, and EP will circulate details of the slides that were presented to BioEDG members in due course.

EP

16/038 Date of Next Meeting

January 2017: Date, time and venue to be confirmed.