

CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE HELD AT 4PM ON WEDNESDAY 19 OCTOBER 2005 IN THE BOARD ROOM AT THE CANTERBURY CAMPUS

Present: Professor M Andrews (Chair), Vice Chancellor, Professor J Burns, Mr G Haworth, Mrs M Scott, Mr J Slater, Mrs M Standing, Ms P Stevens, Mrs Y Stewart, Mr S Wright, Mr P Fairweather, Ms S Kendall-Seater, Ms R Rubin, Dr K Shepherdson, Dr C Franson, Mr P Bogle (Observer)

In Attendance: Mrs S Puckey (Committee Officer)

32. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Mrs S Cray, Dr D Edgar-Nevill, Professor W Lemmer, Mr J Hallam, Mrs D Teasdale, Mrs R Budden and Miss G Watts.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

34. CHAIR'S REMARKS

34.1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and for the benefit of new members requested that each person introduce themselves.

The Chair extended the welcome to Mr Paul Bogle, the University Solicitor and Clerk to the Governing Body. Mr Bogle, who despite attending the meeting in the capacity of Observer, was invited by the Chair to participate in discussion should he so wish.

NOTED

34.2 Appointment of Equality and Diversity Manager

Members of the Committee were informed that the process of appointing a new Equality and Diversity Manager had reached the final stages. It was expected that the individual would take up the post in February after having served a notice period with their current employer.

NOTED

34.3 Committee Structure

The Chair informed the Committee that Human Resources Officer, Mr Simon Wright, had commenced the work on creating a diagrammatic representation of

the Committee Structure for equality and diversity and would present this to members of the Committee at the next meeting.

NOTED

35. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MEMBERSHIP LIST 2005/2006 [Paper W11]

Members of the Committee received Paper W11, the Equal Opportunities Membership List 2005/2006, and were informed that this list had been included with the papers to be a point of reference for all Committee members for the coming year.

NOTED

That Paper W11 be received

36. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2005

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2005 were agreed and signed as a true record.

37. MATTERS ARISING NOT APPEARING ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

37.1 Race Equality Group: Revised Terms of Reference [Minute 74 refers] [Paper W12]

Members of the Committee received Paper W12, the Race Equality Group Revised Terms of Reference. The Disability and Equal Opportunities Adviser for Students explained to the Committee that the recent name change of the Group had required a refreshing of the Membership.

NOTED

37.2 Report on Undergraduate Student Attainment 2003-04: Research Project [Minute 75 refers]

The Chair reminded the Committee of the agreement made at the last meeting to consider how to undertake analysis of the poor attainment figures of males in the third class bracket. The Director of Student Services endorsed the view of research in this area, but he questioned how this work would be commissioned. He stressed that in order to gain a wider perspective on the subject it would be beneficial to include case studies as well as statistics, as there could be any number of factors which could mean that a student gains a Third Class Degree. Mrs Mooi Standing said that it would be better to achieve an overall picture rather than in parts, however the Chair directed members to the initial intention which is pertaining to male students. The Disability and Equal Opportunities Adviser for Students asked if a comparison had been made to National Statistics and was informed that although this was not the case, it was agreed that this would be useful. Ms Penny Stevens said that this project would be relatively easy to carry out at the Broadstairs Campus due to the low headcount. The Chair agreed to discuss this with the Assistant Academic Registrar, Mr Paul Kusel.

NOTED

37.3 Dignity at Work Update [Minute 70.2]

In response to a request for an update on Dignity at Work Policy from Dr Karen Shepherdson, the Chair explained that the Policy had been launched but that there had been a disappointing lack of volunteers to undertake the role of adviser. The reason for this may lay in the actual perceptions people have of the role of adviser. In addition, there had been some concern from NATFHE that the advisers should all be Union members. The Chair explained that NATFHE had initially agreed to the Policy in its entirety but that given the current concern, the need for and role of advisers was under review. Mrs Mooi Standing, the member of academic staff nominated by NATFHE, said that the Union had concerns over the legal position of the Adviser, in particular if they had been blamed for giving poor advice.

NOTED

37.4 Staff and Staff Development Report [Minute 71]

Mrs Mooi Standing enquired whether Human Resources had managed to provide a summary of reasons why staff leave employment at Canterbury Christ Church University, and was informed that the Human Resources Officer was currently working on collating data and that the department would make it available at future Committee meetings. The Director of Student Services asked whether Equalities E-learning Package might eventually be rolled out to Students and for this reason suggested it remained an agenda item at this Committee. The Chair encouraged all Members of the Committee to access this programme and similarly to encourage colleagues to do so. The Disability and Equal Opportunities Adviser for Students explained that the password access feature of the programme may in fact dissuade people from using it, as could the actual length of the programme as it takes around 40 minutes to complete.

NOTED

38. THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES REPORT TO THE GOVERNING BODY [PAPER W13]

Members of the Committee received Paper W13, the Equal Opportunities Report to the Governing Body and were reminded that summary reports of this Paper would be submitted to the next Finance and General Purposes Committee on 10 November. The Disability Adviser explained that the aim of the report was to create a précis of the highlights but that copies of the full report would be available to Governors at their next meeting in December. She stressed that each year it was a difficult task to collate reports and asked people to help make the task easier by endeavouring to submit their contributions on time. She added that in future years the format and presentation of the report may change. She thanked the Director of Admissions and Recruitment and the Director of Student Services for both of their reports and invited each to present their papers to the Committee.

NOTED

38.1 Admission and Recruitment [Paper W13 (ii)]

Introducing his paper, the Director of Admissions and Recruitment, Mr John Slater, informed Committee Members how the student intake figures for the academic year 2004/05 had been the highest recorded at Christ Church. The report was

broken down into four sections covering students by age, gender, ethnicity and disability; however Mr Slater said he would welcome guidance and suggestions from the Committee on further areas of study to be covered in future reports. Mr Slater highlighted key statistics from all four areas and the Committee was informed that there continued to be an increase of enrolled students aged under 21 and the University now mirrors the national picture with accepted mature student numbers down by almost 10% compared to five years ago. The recruitment cycle for 2004 saw an increase in applications to the University in the region of 16% and both Primary Education and the Health and Social Care Faculty. Ms Penny Stevens said that there were more males recorded at that site due to the Policing courses; the ratio was currently 4:1 males to females; however the statistic changes when the number of females from the Nursing courses is factored in.

Mr Slater explained how the number of non-white students had continued to increase and the percentage of students where ethnicity is unknown had reduced. It was reported that the numbers of students with a disability had increased. This increase was testimony to the hard work invested in the active recruitment of students with disabilities. The same is true of the other groups, as the University is committed in its involvement to recruit more students from ethnic minorities, and to take on more male students into Health and Education. In order to maintain and increase the current levels, it would be necessary for all Staff involved in Widening Participation to continue to drive this. The Chair stressed the importance of the dissemination of this information through the Faculty boards.

Mrs Mooi Standing expressed her concern that there was an apparent gap in terms of diversity and that a strategic plan was needed to address this issue. Mrs Standing also enquired if there were any statistics for the International Students. Mr Slater said that it was important to look at data that could be used meaningfully. The Chair reminded Members of the Committee that Mr Slater would welcome further suggestions and guidance regarding priorities in data gathering. It was agreed that there should be an agenda item at the next meeting to discuss the shaping of data.

NOTED

38.2 Annual Report from the Student Support Services

38.2.1 Student Study Support Services

Members of the Committee received Paper W13 (iii), the Annual Report from the Student Support Services. The Director of Student Services reported that the Student Study Support Unit (SSSU) had had a successful year in terms of numbers, and in particular noted an increase in the youngest and oldest age brackets.

Members were informed that the SSSU works along side the Disability and Equal Opportunities Adviser for Students, to provide support for students with learning disabilities, for example dyslexia. Although this year had seen a slight decrease in the numbers of students actually screened for dyslexia, there had been an increase in the number of referrals for full assessment. The Committee was also advised that there had been more males than females who had contacted the Disability Adviser; a marked contrast to the Counselling figures where the opposite was true.

In regard to Ethnicity, the data recorded suggested that the SSSU has attracted students from differing ethnic backgrounds and this was in proportion to their numbers at the institution.

The Committee discussed the poor uptake of support services by students of Chinese origin. Given the different cultural experiences of seeking support, it may be very difficult to encourage people from this group to take up these services. Mrs Mooi Standing suggested setting up a Buddy System for each international student. The Director of Student Support Services explained that this system already existed at the University. The Global Connections Programme matches International Students via a volunteer friendship programme, intended to give support as they adjust to their new environment, practice their English and learn about English & European Cultures.

NOTED

38.2.2 The Opportunity Bursary

Dr Karen Shephardson queried the apparent disparity in the amount of bursary awarded to those students at the Canterbury Campus in comparison to those who were based at Broadstairs. The Director of Student Support Services explained that the £60,000 awarded to Canterbury students should not be interpreted as a mean calculation, as the money had been staggered across several years.

NOTED

38.2.3 Counselling

The Committee was made aware of the increasing demands on the Counselling Service and that the Director of Student Services had continued to seek additional resources to help lighten the load. A case to employ another counsellor had been submitted to the Staff Annual Review but had not been supported. Dr Karen Shephardson expressed her disappointment at this outcome. Mrs Rona Rubin said that the heavy demand on counselling personnel had resulted in a lack of available appointments for some students; consequently extensions to assignments have had to be given. The Director of Student Support Services admitted that the Support Unit had become a victim of its own success; however he assured Mrs Rubin that no student had ever been turned away.

The Chair outlined some of the budget constraints regarding additional staffing and suggested that if a case was to be made it should be based on sound evidence and presented via the appropriate SMT member.

In the meantime however, the Counselling service would continue its support of students via email and telephone in addition to the more traditional 'in person' approach.

NOTED

38.3 Human Resources [Paper W13 (vi)]

Members of the Committee received Paper W13 (vi), the Human Resources Report on the Annual Statistical Data. The Human Resources Officer explained to the Committee how the report endeavoured to offer data in a trend format. The Committee was informed how a core standard of data would be reported on annually, whereas there would be an actions update at each meeting of the Committee.

NOTED

39. HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY [PAPER W14]

Members received Paper W14, the Human Resources Strategy and were informed that it had been written in accordance with Hefce requirements. The Committee was invited to consider the Strategy's thematic approach and agreed that it was clear, accurate and appropriate. In general the key themes identified did represent the right themes; however the Disability and Equal Opportunities Adviser for Students questioned the lack of focus on diversity in the workforce and suggested that this should be rectified. Mrs Yvonne Stewart said that equity needed to be articulated throughout; not presumed. Members of the Committee were advised to contact the Human Resource Officer if there were any other specific issues they think should be included.

NOTED

40. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES NETWORK

The Disability and Equal Opportunities Adviser for Students reported that despite the success of the Equal Opportunities Network meeting at the Broadstairs Campus, there had been a disappointingly low attendance at the meeting held in Chatham. The next one would be held in Canterbury in a couple of week's time and there was already some interest in that forthcoming session. The Chair asked if the Network meeting would be taken to Salomons at any point and it was suggested that Mrs Stewart liaise with Professor Burns to ascertain future dates.

NOTED

MINUTES OF THE DISABILITY WORKING GROUP HELD IN JUNE 2005[PAPER W15]

Members of the Committee received Paper W15, the Minutes of the Disability Working Group held in June 2005.

NOTED

That Paper W15 be received.

41. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- i) The Chair suggested that the Equal Opportunities Committee seek a name change to the Equality and Diversity Committee in line with current trends. The Vice Chancellor had been approached informally and was supportive of the change if this were to be recommended by the Equal

Opportunities Committee. The Chair suggested the title 'Equality and Diversity', but welcomed further suggestions. It was agreed that the matter would become an agenda item at the next meeting, following which any change would be recommended to Governors via the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

- ii) Mr Paul Bogle suggested that the Committee should consider addressing the issue of age of staff, particularly in light of age discrimination provisions coming into effect next October.
- iii) The Human Resource Officer announced that he would be attending a UCA Day Seminar on Friday and he would report on this to the Committee at the next meeting.

NOTED

42. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 8 February 2006 at 2.15pm

The meeting closed at 6.05pm

Signed..... Dated.....