

EQUALITY STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Equality Steering Group 14 May 2003

[The Equality Steering Group meeting scheduled for 2 April had been cancelled; the meeting scheduled for 7 May had been postponed to this date, 14 May 2003]

Present: Albert Pratt (Chair)
Mary Ainscough (Equality Director)
Ellen Breen
Martin Conry
Victor Fagg
Lisa Looney
Maeve O'Byrne

1. Apologies: Marian Burns
Claire Byrne
Padraig MacNeela
Xiaojun Wang

In attendance: Raphaela Kennedy (recording secretary)

1.1 Welcome: the Chairman and the Group welcomed newly co-opted, *ex officio*, members, Access Officer, Maeve O'Byrne, and Trade Union Representative, Victor Fagg, to the Group.

2. Minutes of the Meeting of 5 March 2003 were approved

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Code of Practice for the Employment of People with Disabilities:

The Equality Director enquired as to the status of the proposed Code which had been sent to Governing Authority for adoption at its meeting in March. It is unclear whether Governing Authority had in fact adopted the Code.

The Chairman suggested that the (Web) Report of the Governing Authority Meeting would indicate what had been agreed, or that the HR Director could provide an update on the status of the Code at the next meeting of the Steering Group.

3.2 Policy to Protect Dignity and Promote Respect at Dublin City University:

The Equality Director informed the Meeting that this Policy had been adopted by Governing Authority at its meeting in March.

3.2 HEA Equality Review:

The Equality Director wished to record thanks to all those who participated in the HEA Equality Review which had taken place on 18 March 2003. The Review had been conducted with very short notice to the University. However, the HEA review group had been very appreciative of the time and commitment devoted to review by DCU. It had been a valuable learning experience for all involved. The outcome of the review will be published by the HEA in the context of a general report on all the Universities reviewed, with recommendations on best practice.

4. Chairman's Business

There were no topics for the Meeting under this item.

5. Policy Review And Development

5.1 DCU Staff Development Policy

The Equality Director requested that the proposed review of this Policy be postponed until the next Meeting. This was agreed.

5.2 DCU Policy to Protect Dignity and Promote Respect

The Equality Director provided an update to the Meeting on the roll-out of the Policy:

- the Policy had been adopted by Governing Authority at its March meeting;
- the *Listeners* group had confirmed its willingness to proceed, subject to some minor changes to the description of the role of the *Listeners* as outlined in the Policy;
- a refresher course is planned for the *Listener* group in June;
- the Policy is now available on the University's website;
- an official launch of the Policy is planned to take place before end-May;
- every member of staff will receive a copy of the policy and each staff member will be asked to confirm receipt of the copy policy by his or her own signature;
- a leaflet summarising the Policy is in design and will be printed and circulated within the University;

The issue of student awareness of the new Policy was discussed. It was agreed that details of the policy be highlighted in the forthcoming Students Handbook, and in the Students Union Handbook.

The Equality Director also informed the Meeting that the Policy is highlighted to students as part of Student Orientation, and to staff as part of their Induction process.

6. Equality Review and Action Plan

The Equality Director provided an update on progress being made with the Equality Review: the equality survey has been completed and analysis of responses has begun; the conduct of focus groups is almost complete; the audit of policies is in train; the review of HR practice and procedures has begun.

The Review is proceeding satisfactorily and according to schedule and it is likely that an Interim Report will be available sometime in June.

Noting the considerable organisation involved in conducting the Review, the Meeting acknowledged the excellent participation by staff in the Review process. A broad representation of staff had participated, with notable commitment from Deans and Heads of Schools and Units. The Meeting also acknowledged the courtesy and co-operation of the Human Resources department in the Review process.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Resignations

The Equality Director asked the Meeting to note, that due to time/work pressures, Sean Marlow had requested that his resignation from the Equality Steering Group be accepted.

It was further noted that the former Registrar, Prof Pat Barker, having been a member of the Group *ex officio* in her role as Registrar, was now no longer a member of the Group.

It was also noted that the SU Welfare Officer had not attended meetings of the Group for some time.

7.2 Composition of the Equality Steering Group

The Equality Director expressed the view that a review of the composition of the Group would be timely due to factors such as resignations, co-options, the Equality Review, and the fact that the Group had now been in existence for just over a year. It would be appropriate to move forward from being a Steering Group to establishing an Equality Committee which could constitute task groups to work effectively to support recommended action steps likely to emerge from the Equality Review.

The Chairman invited contributions from the Group on the topic. How the Group had originally come into existence was outlined: it had been constituted along the lines recommended by a consultant which was to include members of senior staff, and other staff with a demonstrable/stated interest in the area of equality. It was also necessary to get the Group up and running quickly upon the appointment of the Equality Director.

Following discussion it was agreed to review the composition of the Equality Steering Group at a meeting in the near future.

7.3 Reports on Access to DCU

The Access Officer informed the Group of two recently completed evaluation reports. One relates to the DCU Access Service, and the other is a report on a study conducted by DCU Department of Education Studies on minorities at DCU.

It was agreed that the Group would consider these reports at its next meeting.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Equality Steering Group is scheduled for Wednesday, 4 June 2003. Venue to be advised. The meeting will be Chaired by Dr Lisa Looney.