

EQUALITY STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Equality Steering Group 4 June 2003

Present: Albert Pratt (Chair)
Mary Ainscough (Equality Director)
Ellen Breen
Claire Byrne
Victor Fagg
Padraig MacNeela
Maeve O'Byrne

1. Apologies: Marian Burns
Martin Conry
Lisa Looney
Xiaojun Wang

2. Minutes of the Meeting of 14 May 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 Code. From enquiries already made, it appears that there is an issue to be addressed in relation to the Code, although exactly what, is unclear.

The Chairman suggested that Governing Authority member, Dr Padraig Walsh, could be in a position to provide an update on the status of the Code.

The Equality Director undertook to enquire from Dr Padraig Walsh and report back to the Group.

4. Chairman's Business

There were no topics for the Meeting under this item.

5. Policy Review And Development

The Equality Director dealt with this item under 6.4 below

6. Equality Review and Action Plan

6.1 Progress on the Equality Review:

The Equality Director provided an update on the status of the Review.

The Interim Report is on schedule and will be available at end June/first week July. Recommendations will not form part of the Interim Report. The full Report and Action Plan will be presented in early September 2003.

6.2 Request from DCU Gay and Lesbian Community

The Equality Director circulated to the Group a request received from members of DCU's gay and lesbian community:

1. that DCU would fly the rainbow flag(s) of welcome in a prominent position on the campus (a) during the forthcoming international gay choir festival to be hosted at

DCU (DCU could also welcome the choirs officially) and (b) during Gay Pride Week (which is the first week of July 2003);

2. that DCU would fly rainbow flags during Freshers' Week, as a particular welcome for young gay students and as a stimulus to others to consider the presence of gay/lesbian Fresher students who especially suffer terribly from fear and isolation.

3. It was further suggested that DCU consider flying the rainbow flag(s) on a continuous basis on campus as a symbol of the University's embrace of diversity and support for minorities.

Following discussion, the Group agreed that the flags be flown during the periods mentioned above: this would be a positive initiative in relation to equality and promoting acceptance of diversity.

It was agreed that the Equality Director would contact the University Secretary in this regard.

6.3 Display of Posters and Graffiti on DCU Campus

The Equality Director informed the Group that

(a) there were posters pinned in the display cabinets in the Henry Grattan building showing symbols which would be regarded as inciting discrimination and prejudice against minorities.

While it may be unintentional to provoke such a response, under the University's Equality policy, the Group agreed that such symbols ought not to be displayed.

It was agreed that the Equality Director would contact the Director of Student Affairs, and the DCU Societies Manager in this regard.

(b) a complaint had been made to the Equality Director in relation to *graffiti* in the DCU men's toilets. The *graffiti* was described as being "particularly virulently homophobic".

It was agreed that the Equality Director, along with the Disability Officer, would contact the DCU Buildings Office, (which has responsibility for the upkeep of facilities), to explore ways of preventing doors, etc., being defaced by *graffiti*.

6.4 DCU Policy to Promote Respect and Protect Dignity:

Because of the imminent launch of this policy, the equality auditors had conducted a quick review of the policy and provided comment.

Due to issues raised, the Chairman decided to refer the policy back to the University's legal advisors. A quick response is expected from the latter. Meanwhile, due to the time delay involved in clarifying the auditors' comments, and finding mutually suitable dates for those officiating at the launch, the Equality Director informed the Group that the launch date would be postponed, probably until September.

7. Evaluation: DCU Access Service

DCU Access Officer, Maeve O'Byrne, provided an update on two reports:

1. Research Evaluation: North Dublin Access Programme (1996-2002) **(Maeve O'Byrne, DCU Access Office, 2002)**

This report represents a review of 6 years of the NDA Access Programme. While many recommendations are made in relation to primary schools, there are recommendations in relation to 3rd level education and alternative routes to higher education from the Leaving Certificate.

Issues of language, attitude and identity are raised in the Report. Support from academic staff for, and awareness of, the Access programme were further areas highlighted.

The Group agreed that

- (a) An Executive Summary of the Report should be drawn up. This should appear on agendas of Schools Meetings, and as an agenda item for a Heads Meeting. It should also be on the agenda for Academic Council's meeting in September/October 2003.
- (b) It should be possible for the ESG to work on some projects emerging from the Report. The Equality Director would liaise with the Access Officer on the latter, and bring proposals to the Group at a future meeting.

2. An Evaluation of Ethnic Minority: Access and Participation at DCU **(Gerry McNamara, Carmel Mulcahy, Peter McKenna, School of Education Studies, DCU, April 2003)**

This Report has been funded by the HEA. It is planned to launch the Report in September 2003, in the context of a conference where the recommendations contained in the Report will be shared with the other 3rd level institutions.

It was agreed that given DCU's stated objective to be "a beacon for diversity", the recommendations in the Report should inform DCU policy in the future.

8. Any Other Business

None

8. Date of Next Meeting

The Equality Director and the Chairman will liaise with the Group by email on the date for the next meeting.