



Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on 14 January 2025 at 14:00

Zoom Meeting

Present: Prof Sir Anton Muscatelli (Convener), Mrs Christine Barr, Mrs Tracy Bryant-Shaw, Prof Sara Carter, Ms Iris Duane, Dr David Duncan, Prof Jo Gill, Dr Katie Farrell, Prof Moira Fischbacher-Smith, Mrs E Gilmartin, Ms Uzma Khan, Prof Lubna Nasir, Ms Rachel Sandison, Ms Andrea Strachan (vice for Dr Neil Bowering), Miss Sophie Watson (vice for Ms Kirsteen Fraser), Miss Angelica Wilson (vice for Mr Pablo Morán Ruiz)

Apologies: Prof Dame Muffy Calder, Prof Margaret Lucas, Prof Iain McInnes, Mr Pablo Morán Ruiz

Attending: Mrs Janell Kelly (clerk), Dr Nighet Riaz

Welcome and Apologies

The Convener welcomed new members T Bryant-Shaw, J Gill, L Nasir attending their first EDSC, as representatives from their respective College EDI Committees. The Convener also noted the apologies received and welcomed A Strachan, S Watson and A Wilson, who were attending in place of their colleagues.

1. Minutes of the previous meeting – EDSC/20240730/Minutes 1.0

The minutes were approved, subject to the removal, at Minute Item 7.2, of the sentence relating to a trail of a new Disability Service Business Partner role within the College of Arts and Humanities (Page 5) as this did not proceed.

2. Matters arising – Paper 1

K Farrell provided relevant information and updates on the following items:

23/24 Action 6A - Domestic Violence & Abuse (DV&A) Guidance

K Farrell reported People and Organisational Development (P&OD) colleagues were developing the new guidance on DV&A, however this has been slightly delayed due to the work involved in addressing the requirements of the new duty to prevent sexual harassment. K Farrell noted the DV&A guidance document should be available for the last EDSC meeting of this session, currently scheduled for June 2025.

23/24 Action 8 – Together Against GBV Campaign – Reporting and Resources

K Farrell noted EDSC will receive reporting and case management timescales as part of the annual report at the June 2025 meeting. A Strachan confirmed the Safeguarding Team had reallocated resource to provide a temporary increase in resourcing, with a business case for permanent investment included in the Strategic Planning Review.

23/24 Action 10 – ED&I Governance – EDSC Membership

K Farrell reported discussions will be held with D Duncan shortly on whether a representative would be sought from the two current specific groups involved in EDI work within University Services (US) or whether current US based EDSC members should fulfil this role.

23/24 Action 16 – Online Reporting Update

K Farrell confirmed EDSC will receive information on how many anonymous reports ‘flagged’ to P&OD colleagues lead to formal processes, as part of the annual report at the June 2025 meeting. She further advised that additional functionality is being sought to allow EDU to build a picture of reporting trends across the University.

23/24 Action 17 – Age Equality Champion

K Farrell confirmed that, as M Calder has now demitted her role as Head of College of Science and Engineering, she will no longer hold the position of Age Equality Champion. The Principal advised discussions are underway to identify a new Champion from the membership of the Senior Management Group.

3. EDSC Terms of Reference and Membership Review – Paper 2

Members noted the amendments to the Terms of Reference (ToR) which reflect the change of cadence of EDSC meetings to two regular meetings per year and the addition of new College representatives, introduced as part of the previous EDI Governance Review. K Farrell confirmed again that discussions will be held with D Duncan on whether a specific University Services representative is required. Members agreed the post of Executive Director of Student and Academic Services should be specified in the membership list. Members agreed the ToR, subject to this update to the membership list.

ACTION: EDU

4. Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) – SFC’s National Equality Outcomes Guidance – Paper 3

K Farrell reminded members of the [‘Tackling Persistent Inequalities Together report’](#), published jointly by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in January 2023. This set out National Equality Outcomes (NEOs) to which all HE/FE must respond as part of their PSED reporting requirements. She further noted Paper 3 represents the first substantive step that the SFC have taken in providing any guidance to the sector since the original report.

K Farrell advised this Report and subsequent Guidance mark a shift in the way universities are expected to undertake their regulatory reporting, in that it now directly involves the SFC. She advised 12 of the 16 NEOs overlap with our existing Equality Outcomes. These are expected to continue in at least the medium-term across those key areas. The NEOs that are not explicitly covered - Age, Gender Reassignment, Male experience of Mental Health, Religion & Belief and Sexual Orientation - will now be covered in some form when responding to this next PSED reporting round.

K Farrell further noted that the National Measurement Framework, referenced in the Guidance, will not be made available to the sector in advance of our April 2025 reporting deadline. Instead, this reporting round will be used by the SFC and EHRC to inform the development of that Framework. She also highlighted that the Thematic Review, detailed in paragraph 13 of the guidance document (Paper 3), will also not be made available prior to the reporting deadline.

K Farrell reassured members that the University has extensive internal data sources which will be utilised to inform our reporting, and that work with Planning, Insights and Analytics colleagues is already

underway. She confirmed the next EDSC meeting in March will be an extraordinary meeting to review and hopefully approve all the remaining reports required by the PSED. **ACTION: EDU**

M Fischbacher-Smith advised members of a new review group looking at data on student progression, continuation and outcomes through an ED&I perspective; not just to report on the data but to identify actions to address any concerns. She noted EDU will be part of the new review group and suggested that this should help coordinate the narrative across all the different forms of reporting required of the University. Members welcomed this new group.

5. Equality Champions Updates

5.1 Race

U Khan advised members that the Race Equality Group (REG), following discussions at their last meeting, had agreed not to re-run the 'Understanding Racism and Transforming University Cultures' (URTUC) survey as recommended in the KPMG Audit. Members noted REG had agreed the University had sufficient qualitative and quantitative data already available to inform and benchmark the URTUC Action Plan. U Khan reminded SMG members they will be required to either renew or revise their [URTUC related Commitments](#).

Members noted an event planned for 27 March 2025 will mark the 4th anniversary of the publication of the original URTUC report.

5.2 Sanctuary – Paper 7

R Sandison referred members to Paper 7 and gave brief updates on the activities. She highlighted the collaborative work of the new Humanitarian Response Working Group and reminded members the University hosted its first Racial Justice Lecture (RJI) in October 2024, with Professor Patricia Hill Collins delivering an extremely well received lecture. Members noted the Reconstructing Gaza: The Post Conflict Reconstruction of Higher Education in Gaza Conference in December 2024 was very well attended and positively received. R Sandison noted, following the Conference, that an Action Plan is being drafted and, once agreed by the attendees themselves, will be shared with EDSC for information.

ACTION: R Sandison

Members welcomed the extensive sector-leading work in this area and the Convener conveyed his thanks to all involved in both major events.

In answer to a question from I Duane's, R Sandison reported there were no current plans to extend the Dima Alhaj Scholarship to more than one student at a time, though this may be reviewed once this Scholarship has been running for a few cycles.

5.3 Age

K Farrell reported work is underway within P&OD to analyse the Colleague Engagement Results for the Early Career Development Programme (ECDP) cohort.

C Barr also highlighted that new life assurance provision (also known as 'Death in Service') has now been agreed for University colleagues who contribute to the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) pension scheme, marking an important addition to the University's benefits package.

5.4 Disability

C Barr took members through the considerable disability-related activities, noting the Disability Equality Group meeting:

- Reviewed and agreed new Terms of Reference and Membership, which now includes College representatives.
- Received updates from Peter Haggerty, Executive Director of Estates, on the work of the newly established Estates Accessibility Working Group (EAWG), a sub-group of DEG formed to address access issues in a timely manner.
- Discussed taking action to explore alternative solutions for supporting mobility-impaired individuals to navigate the main Gilbert Scott campus.
- Reviewed the results of the improved flow of applicant data to the (Student) Disability Service. This was achieved through collaboration with Admissions and the MSDI team and allowed early engagement with those applicants who declared a disability. The Service were then better able to manage the peak Autumn registration period, which saw over 1700 newly registered students disclosing a disability. The total number of students (new and continuing) accessing support is expected to grow to approximately 4500, following the January intake. The rising number of students with learning differences, mental health difficulties, and autism generates increasing demands on the (Student) Disability Service.
- Received an update on the Disability Service Review's Action Plan. DEG members agreed the need for a consistent experience across School's and supported a review Disability Co-ordinators role.
- Approved a colleague-focussed Disability Action Plan, with actions across 4 key themes:
 - Induction & Onboarding
 - Awareness Raising & Capacity Building
 - Delivering Effective Colleague Disability Support Services
 - Building an Inclusive UofG community & Engendering an Anti-Ableist Culture

J Gill emphasised the need for the previously proposed Disability Service Business Partner role and supported any move to professionalise this across the Colleges. D Duncan and C Barr confirmed the Disability Coordinator based model is currently being reviewed, with results and proposals being made available on conclusion of that process.

C Barr also reported an 'Experts by Experience' poster campaign was launched, building on the initiative originally developed by the School of Health and Wellbeing and expanded within College of Science and Engineering. Posters have been circulated to Schools and Services this week, to align with International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

C Barr further noted the EDU team have been strengthening connections with the Centre for Disability Research through Drs Nicola Burns and Philippa Wiseman. Plans are being scoped for a future disability-related education and awareness raising campaign, with hopes that the Centre would serve as a critical friend. Early discussions have also begun with the Centre on a potential future event on how 'ableism' and 'disablism' manifest themselves in a workplace context. It is anticipated such an event will align with our disability awareness raising campaign, in accordance with the earlier mentioned colleague-focussed Disability Action Plan. In addition, the EDU are supporting the Centre to host a film screening event on Monday 9 December, as part of Disability History Month.

Members acknowledged the breadth of ongoing work being undertaken. Members also noted the SRC's recent accessibility related campaign.

5.5 Gender (Sex) – Paper 5

S Carter referred members to the paper which set out actions and discussions that had taken place since the last EDSC meeting. Members welcomed the continuing focus on Gender Based Violence (GBV), along with the continued work to progress the Morag Ross KC Action Plan.

Members noted the joint University and SRC 'Together Against GBV' campaign was reprised for the start of the new academic year, with 5000 campaign postcards included in students' Welcome Packs. Members also welcomed SRC's additional campaign work, participation on the 'Fight for the Night' march in November and a vigil for GBV victims in December.

I Duane thanked SMG/EDSC members for attending the events held during the 16 Days of Activism, noting the increased engagement of the student population, prompted by the Campaign.

S Carter reported a recent meeting with Fiona Drouet, founder of the Emily Test Charter, and her subsequent attendance at the annual Emily Test Charter Conference along with members of the University's Safeguarding Team. S Carter advised SMG will receive a discussion paper on whether the University should join the Charter once the current priority UKVI Audit work has concluded.

5.6 Mental Health

D Duncan noted that the Mental Health Group met in October 2024, and confirmed the Group would shortly be meeting again. He highlighted discussions at the October meeting, which included:

- Student mental health
- The role Sport could play in supporting students' and colleagues' mental health
- The ways in which Security and Safeguarding Teams work together to respond to those experiencing mental ill health
- The University's own Mental Health Action Plan and how this relates to the [Scottish Government's Student Mental Health Plan](#)
- Visibility and utilisation of the University's Mental Health First Aiders Network
- Counselling Service and Student Support services issues
- The 24hr support provided by Health Assured to students
- International crises and the ways these are impacting on some students' mental health and wellbeing.

D Duncan noted that while waiting times for the Counselling Service had increased, the triage and onward referral to NHS services, via the jointly funded NHS nurse, was working extremely well.

5.7 LGBT+

M Fischbacher-Smith reported the LGBT+ Equality Group met in November. She noted topics discussed included:

- The learning from discussions held with the LGBTQ+ Staff Network to explore reasons for the results seen in the 2023 Colleagues Engagement Survey.

- Clarification required on circumstances relating to types of surgery which would be considered under the Good Cause Policy – the FAQs have now been updated to reflect the concerns raised.
- Discussions around risk assessments and safety for LGBTQ+ staff and students when undertaking University-related travel, prompted by the University of Reading's new tool relating to International Travel Policies.
- Event planning to celebrate February's LGBT History Month.

L Nasir highlighted existing travel guidance developed in the College of MVLS which may help inform any future work around travel risk assessments. R Sandison also highlighted the extensive resources already provided via the Safety and Environment Protection Service, as well as some previous sectoral guidance. M Fischbacher-Smith welcomed these noting the need for an overview of all the local and central guidance, to ensure staff and students could quickly and easily access the correct guidance. She confirmed she would be contacting Selina Woolcott, Director of Health, Safety & Wellbeing, to discuss this in due course.

5.8 Religion and Belief – Paper 6

Members noted due to his absence today, I McInnes had provided a written update.

D Duncan also confirmed discussions are at an advanced stage with the Glasgow University Muslim Student Association (GUMSA) having identified a site, adjacent to the main campus, to house a prayer room facility. He confirmed a specialist architect has been commissioned to develop designs. He noted, should this proceed, it is likely to follow the same funding model used when the University Chapel and Turnbull Hall were built, with funding partly being sought from the local community. D Duncan agreed to keep EDSC informed of any progress.

ACTION: D Duncan

6. **Student Related Items**

I Duane confirmed all student-related items had already been raised through the relevant Equality Groups.

7. **Staff Related Items**

7.1 Annual Staff Equality Monitoring Report 2023-2024 – Paper 4

K Farrell prefaced the discussion on Paper 4 by reminding members that while the Monitoring Report does on occasion indicate areas for further investigation, the PSED requirement for staff data is to simply to publish the data. She reassured members that where data indicates areas for investigation, it will be used to inform our action planning within other parts of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

K Farrell highlighted the figures relating to the University's three diversity related KPI targets have all increased. She referred members to the Executive Summary for other important changes. Members noted the reductions in 'unknown' figures across most areas.

K Farrell highlighted the increase in Grievances raised by colleagues who are either Disabled or from a Minority Ethnic background. She clarified this does not mean the grievances related to those protected characteristics; the increase may be linked to the fact that the equality information available on those individuals has improved.

M Fischbacher-Smith noted the high numbers of 'Unknowns' in the Clinical Job Family for Disability. She advised feedback from the last Period Subject Review of Medicine showed students' reluctance to raise

issues around disability and mental health. She reflected that if colleagues themselves are reluctant to disclose this may indicate the culture is not conducive to supporting those students or staff.

Members approved the Report for publication.

ACTION: EDU

In response to S Watson's query, K Farrell agreed to investigate if it was possible to share the underlying numbers, by Sex, for the Regarding statistics.

ACTION: EDU

7.2 Colleague Engagement Survey 2024

K Farrell outlined actions since the previous survey; much of which focussed on understanding and addressing the pattern of poor experiences of Disabled colleagues. She noted the strong engagement with the qualitative sessions held with those colleagues resulted in the newly approved Colleague Disability Action Plan.

K Farrell then presented results from the 2024 survey. Members noted the Dignity and Diversity themed questions continue to attract the highest percentage of favourable responses (76%, up 1%), with Wellbeing and Balance at 58% (+ 3%), while Culture and Values remain the lowest in terms of favourable responses, at 41% (down 1% from 2023). She noted that the responses to the main EDI-related questions in these 3 themes either remained static or improved.

K Farrell outlined the overall and College/University Service level results by specific protected characteristics (race/ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation) and provided a summary of comments where bullying, harassment and equality were referenced. She noted the work undertaken this year to engage with the different communities should help to improve the experiences of those colleagues. K Farrell summarised the next steps designed to further address the areas of concern within the survey results.

The Convener suggested the EDSC meeting in March could be used to hear any initial thoughts on the results from the Equality Groups, should EDU consult electronically with this Groups.

8. **Any Other Business**

8.1 Cadence of 2025/26 EDSC Meetings

The Convener suggested, with Professor Andy Schofield joining the University in September, either delaying the final 2024/25 EDSC meeting until then or bringing the first 2025/26 meeting forward. He noted this would allow both himself and Professor Schofield to attend together. He acknowledged the operational difficulties this may cause and was open to discussions on this.

ACTION: Convener/EDU/C Barr

8.2 UofG Gaelic Committee

J Gill advised members that the UofG Gaelic Committee is to be reconstituted to implement the statutory Gaelic Plan and could provide a brief update at a future EDSC meeting.

ACTION: J Gill

No other items of business were raised.

Current Dates of Next Meetings:

12 March 2025 at 14:00 – 16:00 and 11 June 2025 at 10:00-12:00