

**Disability Action Committee**

Tuesday 12 November 2019

14:00 – 16:00

Boardroom, Faculty Building, South Kensington Campus

**Minutes**

Present:

Mr John Neilson	College Secretary and Registrar – Chair (JN)
Mr Mark Allen	Careers Consultant, Careers Service (MA)
Ms Mary Bown	Head of the Disability Advisory Service (MB)
Dr Benita Cox	Principal Teaching Fellow, Business School (BC)
Dr Lorraine Craig	Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), Engineering (LC)
Ms Ailish Harikae	Secretary to DAC (AH)
Mr Mark Horner	ICT Service Line Manager for Education (MH)
Ms Kani Kamara	Acting Head of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (KK)
Ms Angela Kehoe	Strategic HR Partner (FoNS) (AK)
Mr Okan Kibaroglu	Head of Governance, ICT (OK)
Ms Susan Littleson	Deputy Director– Organisational Development & Inclusion (SL)
Ms Kalpna Mistry	Staff Network Coordinator (KM)
Ms Elizabeth Nixon	Internal Communications Manager (EN)
Ms Claire O'Brien	Director of Occupational Health (CO)
Ms Lisa Phillips	Co-Chair of Able@Imperial (LP)
Ms Paula Phillips	Institutional Affairs Manager, Medicine (PP)
Mr Shervin Sabeghi	ICU Deputy President (Welfare) (SS)
Ms Vickie Sheriff	Director of Communications (VS)
Ms Maggie Taylor	Assistant Buildings Manager (MT)
Mr Hilliam Tung	ICU Disabilities Officer (HT)
Mr Jon Tucker	Faculty Operating Officer, Business School (JT)
Ms Catherine Williams	Head of User Services, Library (CW)

Agenda Item

**1.0 Welcome and Apologies**

- 1.1 JN welcomed the Committee to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from: Mr David Ashton, Ms Hannah Bannister, Mrs Chris Banks, Professor Michael Bearpark, Ms Janette Beetham, Professor Stephen Curry, Mr William Hollyer, Ms Fran Hyatt, Ms Louise Lindsay, Professor Peter Openshaw, Mr Adrian Mannall, Mr Richard Martin, Mr Roddy Slorach.

**2.0 Minutes and Matters Arising**

- 2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were deemed to be an accurate record of events.
- 2.2 There were no matters arising from the last meeting.
- 2.3 The action tracker was considered. The following points were noted:

- *21 June 2019, Minute 3.2:* KK reported that a College-wide invitation to declare was not made in 2018-19, but that a rolling programme of activities to promote declaration ran throughout the year, supported by posters and flyers.
- *13 March 2019, Minute 5.4:* MB reiterated that event planners were responsible for checking on accessibility issues before booking venues. Most College venues were accessible, but 170 Queen's Gate and 58 Prince's Gate were not and a solution had not been identified to make them so.
- *28 February 2017, Minute 2.3:* AH provided an update on behalf of Hannah Bannister's team. She advised that the student counselling room at Hammersmith was still out of service, but that an alternative room had been identified and was expected to be ready for use in January 2020. Additional counselling space had been opened at Bernard Sunley Hall for students based at South Kensington.

### **3.0 2018-19 Action Plan & 2019-20 Plan**

3.1 The 2018-19 Action Plan was considered, and the following updates were noted:

#### **3.2 Raising awareness:**

- KK told the Committee that the 2019-20 declaration campaign would coincide with Disability History Month (November-December 2019). A template email had been created and shared with HR Business Partners; this would be sent out to staff by Heads of Department. EN added that Comms would be supporting this campaign with an email to Comms contacts, so that it could be included in local communications.
- KK noted that levels of declaration in professional and support services were above the data benchmark. However, there was a trend of under-reporting within the Faculties and that was where EDIC's efforts would be focussed for the upcoming campaign.
- JN recommended that an approach be made to departments to check that Heads of Department had sent the communication. He also requested that data on completion rates from different areas be shared with the Committee.

**Action: KK**

#### **3.3 Removing barriers:**

- JN told the Committee that Chris Banks had raised two points related to accessibility at South Kensington campus. Firstly, study areas in Central Library required the use of doors without push pads, rendering them inaccessible to a number of users. Secondly, the accessible door into Dalby Court from the Main Entrance to College was only operable with a College ID card, which made it impossible for visitors to use this route.
- MB seconded these concerns. She said that the approach College took was to make adjustments retrospectively, as new students and staff arrived, rather than taking a holistic approach.
- MT said that the next AccessAble survey was planned for January and that it would include a number of new buildings. She said she would arrange for the library to be included.

**Action: MT**

- On the topic of adjustments to student assessment, MB suggested that David Ashton should be invited to provide an update at the next meeting.

**Action: David Ashton**

- MH reported that ICT would be using Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees as a channel to promote the use of Blackboard Ally and to engage people with its functionality.

3.3 Improving support

- KK reported that EDIC had put in place a system for recording requests for support for disability. 21 members of staff had contacted EDIC for support so far this academic year (including three line managers). A managers' guidance document had been made available on the website and there was now a comprehensive range of resources. EDIC were liaising with the Learning and Development Centre and the Imperial Essentials programme to ensure disability support was clearly signposted. A project on flexible working had been undertaken and EDIC's webpages would now make a distinction between flexible working for all (which would link to HR guidance) and adjustments linked to disability (which would link to EDIC).
- CO advised that more than 500 staff had now completed the two-day mental health first aid course. The target would now be reviewed. MHFA England had introduced a refresher course, as well as an employer mental health commitment, which College would be exploring.
- MB reported that £150,000 had been spent in 2018-19 from the Suggested Reasonable Adjustment Fund (SRAF). This included funding for taxis and an accommodation subsidy. There was greater clarity around what could be funded from SRAF and what could not (e.g. support linked to personal care and living) and what should be funded instead from the Disabled Students' Allowance (e.g. laptops).

3.4 The Chair confirmed that the Secretary would contact Committee members to invite actions for inclusion in the 2019-20 plan.

**Action: AH**

**4.0 College Digital Accessibility Framework Project**

4.1 OK gave a presentation to the Committee on the new digital accessibility regulations introduced in September 2018, which required organisations to make their websites and mobile applications more accessible by making them 'perceivable, operable, understandable, robust'. The regulations were applicable to any new websites published after 23 September 2018 and from September 2020 for any pre-existing websites. Mobile applications would need to comply by 23 June 2021.

4.2 OK reported that College had established a project group to help build its Digital Accessibility Framework and that membership included the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre, the Disability Advisory Service, Comms and ICT. Work was underway on the development of an accessibility statement, accessibility checks for new and pre-existing websites, accessibility service checks and the development of a toolkit/guidance pack. Further down the line, the group would be developing an accessibility roadmap and responsibilities, as well as agreeing an approach to dealing with mobile applications.

4.3 OK said that accessibility of College websites was good and that an accessibility statement and accessibility advice already existed; the Comms team was working to

ensure these met the new requirements. The Business School website was the College's first significant new website and accessibility of this site was good. Furthermore, accessibility had always been a criterion for ICT service acceptance. On the other hand, there were some challenges. The scope of the obligations was not yet clear and there had been no test of the exact meaning of public accessibility. It was also difficult to identify all websites affiliated with the College. In addition, service providers were pushing back and there were limited resources for improving accessibility (where required).

4.4 OK suggested that the Committee could support the project by: leading on the delivery of a clear statement of intent to the College about digital accessibility obligations; agreeing and enforcing the governance to check that site owners took action to make improvements; owning the preparation and introduction of the College's disability accessibility strategy and roadmap.

4.5 In the discussion that followed, JT shared some insights from the Business School's experience. He suggested that agreeing accessibility requirements with suppliers should happen upfront, as retrofitting was far harder; if suppliers were not willing to commit, we should not partner with them. In terms of governance, he suggested that it should be possible to identify every webpage owner and that they should be responsible for making any necessary adjustments to their own pages.

4.6 SL was interested to understand the amount of work that would be required for users to update their pages. OK said that this would become clearer as the project progressed but that he expected 80% of the improvements required would take 20% of the time. SL suggested that it might be helpful for people to understand the benefits of greater accessibility (and the Government's 'vision' in introducing these regulations), as well as the consequences of non-compliance; this would help build buy-in. MB said that greater accessibility was beneficial to all website users, not just those with disabilities. There was some discussion around how enforcement of the regulations could be organised, where the responsibility would lie and what the consequences would be of non-compliance. JN made the point that many areas of College life required enforcement and that there were various ways to manage this. LC suggested that Faculty Operations Officers should be involved, as they could help make things happen in their areas. OK said that the project team would have a clearer picture by the end of the year of where the areas of greatest risk were. He said he did not anticipate major issues and that Imperial was in a good place compared to some other organisations.

4.7 JN said that the Committee would be pleased to offer support to the project as appropriate. He asked that OK return later in the year to provide an update.

**Action: Secretary, OK**

## **5.0 *What happens next? 2019 Report***

5.1 MA told the Committee that he chaired the Disability Task Group for the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) and that, each year, he co-authored a report on the first destinations of disabled graduate students across the UK. Awareness of the report, now in its seventeenth edition, was growing and had been referenced by Lord Shinkwin, Disability rights campaigner.

5.2 These were the key trends in the most recent AGCAS report:

- Disclosure of disabilities continued to increase year on year.
- The undergraduate disclosure rate was at 15.5%, but this decreased at higher degree levels.
- The greatest proportion of graduates disclosing a disability (at all levels) had a Specific Learning Disability (SpLD).
- In terms of their reasons for selecting a job, graduates with a social communication or autistic spectrum disorder were the least likely to have done so to fit a chosen career plan and the most likely to have done so to earn a living or pay off debts.

5.3 MA said that Imperial's Careers Service was making greater use of data and planned to run a similar study of Imperial's graduates. In terms of practical interventions to support students, he said that the Service ran a number of targeted careers sessions for students with disabilities, which were advertised through the Disability Advisory Service and were well-attended, as well as training sessions and engagement with Disability Confident employers. He said that it was difficult to reach everyone, although the Service had a growing mailing list of students with disabilities.

## **6.0 Update on plans for Disability History Month**

6.1 EN told the Committee that Disability History Month would run from 22 November to Christmas, but that Imperial would focus on the period to 13 December, when term ended. Meetings had been held between Comms and Able@Imperial, EDIC and ICU to coordinate plans. This year's campaign would focus on invisible disabilities, with staff and student case studies being hosted on the new 'Imperial Stories' platform. As usual, central Comms would be promoting ICU and EDIC events.

6.2 KK told the Committee that a number of events were planned, including a talk by Elizabeth Takyi, Founder and CEO of A2i Dyslexia, about her journey as a Dyslexic, covering Dyslexia awareness, strengths of Dyslexia, Dyslexia in education/workplace, assisted technology and equity & equality. ICU had planned a comedy night in support of mental health charity Scope, which would feature comedians with disabilities, as well as an Inclusivity in Sports Day. A film screening of Defiant Lives, the story of the rise and fight of the disability rights movement in the United States, Britain and Australia, would also be taking place.

## **7.0 Update from Imperial College Union**

7.1 SS told the Committee that Hilliam Tung was now in post as Disabilities Officer; SS was pleased that they had both been able to attend today's DAC. SS said that he would be working hard this year to establish the Student Liberation Networks better, including a better support network for disabled students at College. He was also involved in a project on student assessment with the Disability Advisory Service. The projects coordinator was leading on plans for Disability History Month and that it was an engaging programme of activities.

## **8.0 Update from Disability Advisory Service**

8.1 MB reported that it had been a busy period for the Service, with a number of staff away due to ill health. The DAS had received 371 requests since September and had the

longest waiting list it had ever recorded. There were currently 83 students still waiting to be seen and MB hoped that this would be possible by Christmas, thanks to the hard work of the team. There were currently 2.5 advisers rather than 3.5, so they were working on a 'just enough' basis. Office space remained a concern and the Safeguarding Committee had acknowledged that the current space was not appropriate.

- 8.2 MB said she was pleased with the new lecture theatres in Royal School of Mines and Blackett, which were inclusive by design. She reported that the DAS planned to launch its new website in January, which would be more transparent. Activities for Dyslexia Awareness Week, led by David Mooney, had been well-received. MB was also working on a project on College loop systems.

## **9.0 Update from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre**

- 9.1 KK reported that disability awareness training was planned for 28 November and that she would be grateful if this could be disseminated by Committee members. Feedback from the last training session had been positive and had informed the content. The Calibre Development programme was due to start on 24 January and ten (of the twelve) places had been filled already, which was very encouraging.

## **10.0 Update from Able@Imperial**

- 10.1 LP reported that she and her co-chair, Adrian Mannall, were working to improve the network and had launched an Office 365 Team to engage more staff and improve communication. This tool was allowing conversations to happen in real-time and had been a useful platform for promoting the reverse mentoring scheme.

## **11.0 AOB**

- 11.1 JN recorded his thanks to Committee member Mary Bown, who would be retiring from College in February 2020, for her invaluable contribution to the Committee and support of disabled students at the College.