Disability Action Committee

14 June 2013
15.00-17.00
SALC 5, Sherfield Building
South Kensington Campus

Minutes

Present:
Mr John Neilson Chair, College Secretary and Registrar
Ms Dawn Beaumont Faculty IT Support Manager
Ms Mary Bown Head of the Disability Advisory Service
Mr Kevin Cope Head of Building Operations
Ms Caroline Davis Head of Communications
Ms Wendy Gould Deputy Faculty Operating Officer, FoM
Ms Becky Lane Welfare Officer, Imperial College Union
Professor Jenny Higham Deputy Principal of the Faculty of Medicine
Ms Louise Lindsay Director of HR
Ms Leyla Okhai Staff Disabilities Officer
Professor Steven Rose Deputy Principal of the Faculty of Natural Sciences
Mr Jon Tucker Faculty Operating Officer, Business School
Professor Denis Wright Director of Student Support
Ms Hailey Smith (notes) HR Administrator, Secretary to the DAC

Agenda Item

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Mr Richard Martin, Mr Jon Tucker, Dr Benita Cox and Mr Tom Miller.

Minutes of the Last Meeting (appendix 1: Minutes – 10 October 2012)
The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the previous meeting with the following additions.

Disabled Go (re. minute 1.3)
Mr Cope clarified that the meeting room mapping had been carried out in conjunction with the timetabling project.

Dyslexia Assessment for Staff (re. minute 5.1)
Ms Lindsay clarified that HR may pick up the funding for a dyslexia assessment, should the member of staff not want to involve their department initially.

ITEM 1 – Matters Arising
(appendix 1: Minutes – March 2013)

1.1 Disabled Go (re. minute 1.6)
Mr Cope reported that the Disabled Go website had achieved 1360 hits from, 180 individual users. He said that this level of usage was comparable with other institutions of Imperial’s size. He said that he
1.2 thought the usage would rise if Disabled Go was more prominently linked on the College website, as the current hits were coming directly from the Disabled Go site, rather than Imperial's own. Ms Bown added that she thought Disabled Go should be reachable from the front page of the website.

1.3 Ms Davis noted that Disabled Go was linked to from a top level page and from the campus map. Ms Davis also said that a review of the website was underway and the placement of this link and other support information would be considered as part of this.

1.4 It was also said that the accessibility of the website would be addressed as part of the redesign, with consideration to the size of text amongst other enhancements.

1.5 Imperial College Mobile App (re: minute 1.8) Mr Cope said that he would be happy to work with ICT towards integrating the Disabled Go information into the Imperial College mobile app. Ms Cope and Ms Beaumont

1.6 DAS and Felix (re. minute 1.9) Ms Lane confirmed that an article about the DAS would be arranged to appear Felix in the new academic year. Ms Lane is to liaise with the new editor of the paper. DP Welfare

1.7 Streamlining of Reporting Methods (re: minute 1.10) It was reported that a solution to the feedback of DAS data had been found. Ms Bown would send this information through directly, but she said that it would be better if this could be done automatically. Chair

1.8 Review of Data (re. minute 1.14) The Chair would follow up the action to set up a sub-group of the committee to further consider the 'wish list' of data that the committee had drawn up. Chair

1.9 Disability Equality Survey (re: minute 2.4) Ms Okhai said that she had spoken to the Learning and Development Centre and Ms Louise Lindsay about embedding the recommendations from the Disability Equality Survey findings. She said that steps were being taken to embed the recommendations and that she would also be feeding into the College's Institute of Leadership and Management diploma syllabus. Ms Okhai reported that Communications and Public Affairs had given the survey publicity in the staff briefing. Ms Okhai, Ms Lewis

1.11 Assistive Technology Steering Group (re. minute 4.4) Ms Beaumont reported that she had received an agreement from ICT to fund Mindview software in the Assistive Technology Suite. She said that she would pursue the rolling out of this software to other parts of the College. Ms Beaumont

1.12 Student Focus Group (re. minute 6.1) Ms Okhai is to meet with Ms Lane’s successor, Ms Marissa Lewis, to discuss the reestablishment of a student focus group. This matter would be discussed at the next meeting. Ms Okhai, Ms Lewis

1.13 Disability Action Plan (re. minute 6.2) The Action Plan had been updated with a colour code to demonstrate in which areas action was currently being undertaken.
1.14 **Disability History Month** *(re. minute 7.1)*
Ms Okhai reported that the Disabled Staff Forum would be involved in organising this year’s Disability History Month. It was planned that a ‘wall of images’ was to be created to celebrate the Month.

**ITEM 2 – Student Experience Survey – Action Plan**
*(appendix 3 – Student Experience Survey)*

2.1 Ms Lane said that a full response to the Student Experience Survey was available online on the Imperial College Union website. She said that she would share with the committee the data and recommendations specifically related to disability.

2.2 Ms Lane said that the survey has received a really good return rate of 76%, showing that the data collected had been meaningful.

2.3 **Recommendations Relating to Disability**

- Ms Lane noted that it was an aim for the Union and College to increase awareness of the definition of ‘disability’ as well as increase promotion of the Disability Advisory Service.

- Ms Lane said that she would like the College to ensure that it had well defined, well publicised procedures regarding the disclosure of disabilities and the sharing of this information.

- The Imperial College Union should work with the DAS and International Student Support to raise awareness of disability services among international students. Professor Wright said that a new the Dyslexia/SpLD Tutor (International) would join the College in mid-September.

- Ms Lane said that it was expressed in the free text comments that personal tutors should allocate time in their meetings with students to pass on information about the DAS.

2.4 The Chair asked whose responsibility is it to ensure that disclosure and sharing information procedures were well defined and publicised. Professor Wright said that this information was available on the College website. Ms Bown said that new leaflets on ‘how to disclose’ were being created, and a sheet with this information would be handed out to staff attending the Disability Awareness training session. Publicity regarding the procedure would also form a key part of the Welfare Pack that is given to new students.

2.5 The Chair asked how the survey findings compared to those of last year. Ms Lane said that there had been no real difference between them.

2.6 Professor Wright noted that disclosure had increased slightly this year (up to 6.65%) but it was expected for this number to plateau. He said that Cambridge had an 8% disclosure rate. However, he added that the wider variety of subjects taught at Cambridge meant that they were not a direct comparator. It was thought that SET disclosure was about 1% below that of arts subjects.
2.6 The Chair asked if the same questions would be asked in next year’s survey. Ms Lane said that some would be cut as they did not produce data of any statistical significance and this would allow the survey to be more concise.

2.7 The Chair asked that the survey findings be brought to the committee next year by Ms Lane’s successor and for the findings to be compared to the 2013 results.

**ITEM 3 – Action Plan from Disability Equality Survey**

*(appendix 4: Action Plan from the Disability Equality Survey)*

3.1 Ms Okhai discussed the recommendations of the Disability Action Plan. She said that she wanted to improve the disability disclosure rate for staff. She and the Faculty of Engineering had initiated a pilot in which the definition of disability was circulated to staff and the HR team would monitor any change in the disclosure rate to see if the email prompted an increase. Professor Rose said that this could possibly be replicated in FoNS.

3.2 Ms Okhai said that the Disabled Staff Forum was keen to run a poster campaign on ‘What is Disability’. She said that the possibility of equality representatives in each department was being explored and being weighed up against the benefits of having a specific representative for disability, gender etc. Ms Lindsay noted that it was important for any representative to be actively engaged and that someone who is happy to represent disability may not be happy to represent all protected characteristics. She suggested that local groups and equalities networks be consulted for their opinion on the matter.

3.3 Ms Okhai suggested that an ‘anything else’ box be added to the PRDP, to allow staff to raise ‘anything else’ they would like to discuss with their line manager.

3.4 Ms Okhai suggested Faculty newsletters be used to increase communication about disability issues and other equality news.

3.5 A mental health first aid training pilot had been launched and both of the first two sessions had been fully booked.

3.6 Ms Okhai thanked Communications for their involvement in agreeing the Action Plan and communicating the findings of the survey. She also thanked them for reviewing the communications of the staff networks. The Chair said that he though the Calibre programme had received good coverage.

3.7 Ms Davis said that she was happy to work with the Staff Disability Forum. She said that the College had launched a new News website and would be using a ‘Disability Support’ tag to collate all stories relating to Disability.

3.8 The Chair thanked all those who had contributed to the Action Plan and he asked that a further update be made at the next meeting.

**ITEM 4 – Mental Health Strategy**

*(Tabled: Recommendations from the Mental Health Strategy Group to the DAC)*

4.1 Ms O’Brien presented the recommendations from the Mental Health
Ms O'Brien reported that the Ms Okhai and the Learning and Development Centre were working closely to roll out stress management competence training, which will be available as a stand-alone training or as an option on the Imperial Leadership and Management Development Programme.

The Occupational Health Service, in conjunction with HR teams and LDC, are developing a web based Workplace Stress Discussion Tool to assist staff to prepare to discuss their concerns about work-related stress with their line manager.

Ms O'Brien said that HR is incorporating reference to stress management in the Management Guidance on Organisational Change. It reminds managers that change is stressful and by anticipating the impact of change on mental wellbeing and communicating appropriately some of the impact may be negated.

As part of the review of the Sickness Absence Policy, Occupational Health referrals are recommended for staff experiencing difficulty in managing Mental Health issues and this can also be extended for Post Graduate students. The Occupational Health Service can support appropriate rehabilitation for staff and liaise with external agencies such as Remploy which is funded by the DWP Access to Work Scheme.

Awareness of mental health issues should be raised. It was suggested that an awareness event could be held, to which external speakers could be invited. The event could be used to inform senior staff of how they can influence attitudes and behaviours towards mental health in their departments.

Mindfulness sessions for staff and students should be facilitated. Ms O'Brien said that Mindfulness sessions have been well received and they would like to improve provision to staff and students. Professor Rose commented that he thought these sessions were extremely good, having attended one recently.

Moving forward, Ms O'Brien said that now was an excellent opportunity to create a wellbeing working group to promote a more sustainable work culture amongst staff and students. She said that a lot of good practice is undertaken in College, and this would be a way to draw such things together and celebrate what is being done.

Mental Health Awareness week is to be celebrated with themed events and the Group would like to work with Communications and Public Affairs to promote these events through the College calendar.

Ms O'Brien suggested that the College sign up to the Mindful Employers Charter to demonstrate the organisation’s commitment to good mental health. She said that it would act as a good banner for all the good practice taking place in the College. The Chair said that he was very impressed with the range of work undertaken and reported on by the Strategy Group. Ms Lindsay noted that there were elements of the Charter that the College could not yet claim to be doing. She

http://oxfordmindfulness.org/
said that while HR and Occupational Health policies could be enhanced and adapted, they needed to gain traction at a local level.

4.11 The Chair noted that the group’s report was not specific in noting the owner of each action. Ms Lindsay said that most of the actions belonged to the Occupational Health Service or HR, but that these divisions would only be able to take the actions so far without wider support. The Chair asked if the group sought a College response or whether HR and Occupational Health wished to work further on the report. Ms O’Brien said that the group would continue to work on the report, noting that a lot of action was already underway but that a dialogue would need to be initiated in order to gain commitment from senior staff. The Chair suggested that a quarter of an hour slot be sought at a HoD’s meeting for the report to be presented.

ITEM 4 cont. – Assistive Technology Steering Group
(appendix: Assistive Technology Steering Group – tabled)

4.12 Ms Beaumont reported that work was being done to make subtitles available on the videos featured on College website.

4.13 Ms Beaumont said that the University of Southampton published a useful blog detailing Assistive Technology software, and the DAS would link to this blog from their own webpages.

4.14 The Group reported that assistive technology was available in two locations at the South Kensington campus, in the Assistive Technology Suite (Level 5, Sherfield Building) and in the main Library. These two locations received 1023 logons from 86 individual users in the period of May 2012 to May 2013 from a possible 500 users registered with the DAS. Professor Wright described this as a low but significant usage.

4.15 Ms Okhai had been working with Purchasing to draw up a list of preferred suppliers for assistive technology. She said that she had collaborated with Access to Work in order to draw up the list. There had been a few issues in that some suppliers had not proven solvent enough for the College’s supplier agreement but the list currently consisted of 6 or 7 preferred suppliers. Ms Bown offered to share names of further suppliers with Ms Okhai. Ms Okhai asked any other committee members with suggestions of suppliers to contact her.

4.16 The location of the Assistive Technology Suite was discussed. Professor Wright suggested that the Suite might be better located in the Library but that student opinion was split on the matter. Ms Bown noted that having the Suite located on level 5 prevented the DAS from expanding.

4.17 The Steering Group was asked to provide a further update at the next meeting.

ITEM 5 – Disability Action Plan

5.1 The committee members provided updates on the Disability Action Plan.

5.2 (re. objective 1) Professor Wright said that in an effort to shorten the SOLE questionnaire the two disability related questions might be
instead be captured by the wording ‘do you think the way you are taught is suitable?’

5.3 Professor Wright requested that his title be updated throughout the plan to Director of Student Support. Ms Smith

5.4 (re. objective 2) The 2013 Welfare Seminar (29 May 2013) was described as the best yet. Both Ms Bown and Ms Nadia Drews had spoken at the seminar to represent disability support at the College. Chair, Professor Wright

5.5 (re. objective 3) Ms Lindsay reported that the disclosure guidance was routinely reviewed in HR. Ms Bown asked whether the student policy was routinely impact assessed. The Chair and Professor Wright would discuss this following the meeting. Ms Bown

5.6 (re. objective 4) Ms Bown said that some students found the procedure for special exam arrangements hard to understand and that she was aware of problems that the DAS could assist with, but only if they are involved in the arrangements by departments. Professor Wright and Ms Bown are to discuss this matter following the meeting. Ms Bown

5.7 (re. objective 6) Mr Cope said that work would be done to review the Technical Policy Statement. Ms Bown

5.8 (re. objective 7) Ms Bown reported that all publicity information on disability services was reviewed on a rolling basis. She added that a discussion board for students had recently been set up. Ms Davis, Ms Okhai

5.9 Ms Okhai reported that two meetings of the disabled staff focus group had been held. The group had devised their Terms of Reference and shared these with the committee. Ms Davis suggested that details of the focus group could be included in a Staff Briefing. Ms Davis, Ms Okhai

ITEM 7 - AOB

There were no further items of business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING
6 November 2013
13.00 – 15.00
3.19 Faculty Building
South Kensington Campus