Disability Action Committee

19 March 2013
9.00-11.00
SACL 9, Sherfield
South Kensington campus

Minutes

Present:  
Mr John Neilson  Chair of the Disability Action Committee
Ms Dawn Beaumont  Faculty IT Support Manager (Medicine)
Ms Mary Bown  Head of the Disability Advisory Service
Mr Kevin Cope  Head of Building Operations
Dr Benita Cox  Principal Teaching Fellow
Ms Caroline Davis  Head of Communications
Ms Becky Lane  Deputy President Welfare, Imperial College Union
Ms Claire O’Brien  Director of Occupational Health
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
Mr Nigel Wheatley  Academic Registrar
Professor Denis Wright  Director of Students Affairs
Ms Hailey Smith  HR Administrator, Secretary to the DAC

Agenda Item

ITEM 1 – Apologies and Matters Arising

1.1 Apologies had been received from Ms Louise Lindsay, Professor Dot Griffiths, Professor Jenny Higham, Professor Peter Cheung, Mr Richard Martin, Ms Wendy Gould and Mr Tom Miller.

1.2 The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the previous meeting.

1.3 (re. minute 1.6) Disabled Go
Mr Cope reported that the College’s signage had recently been reviewed. It was thought that the signage around the College campuses was very good but students struggled to find meeting rooms within buildings. Mr Cope said that there were plans to create meeting room maps that would be useful all staff and students.

1.4 Mr Cope said that Hammersmith and Silwood Park campuses were now featured on the Disabled Go webpages, and it was intended that other campuses would also be audited and added to the website.

1.5 Mr Cope said that there was the possibility of converting Disabled Go’s information into a mobile app but this would incur a cost of £4,000. Mr Cope said that he would need the support of the Committee in order to take this development forward.
1.6 Mr Neilson suggested that more information on the usage of the Disabled Go pages be collected before deciding on the development of an app. Mr Cope said that the Disabled Go webpages had a very specific user group, but that he understood from Disabled Go that the Imperial pages received reasonable usage.

1.7 Ms Bown said that the Disabled Go pages had been publicised to students and feedback sought. It was reported that students weren’t currently thinking to look to the web for such information. Professor Wright said that the more information that was available through the web, the more opportunity there would be to publicise helpful information generally.

1.8 Ms Beaumont suggested that the Disabled Go information be integrated with the current Imperial College app. It was discussed that the accessibility information available through Disabled Go would also be of use to visitors on open days and during conferences. Ms Davis suggested that any development be linked in with digital communications team, to avoid any duplication.

1.9 (re. minute 1.10) The Disability Advisory Service in Felix
Ms Bown reported that a Felix article about the DAS was planned for the new academic year.

1.10 (re. minute 2.4) Streamlining of Reporting Methods
The need to streamline the reporting of DAS data to Registry, to prevent underreporting to HESA, was discussed. Mr Wheatley said that students were wary about the confidentiality of passing on their data. A solution might be to pass the DAS data directly to HESA without updating the Registry system. Ms Bown noted that their data would not be passed if students did not wish it to be.

1.11 (re. minute 2.7) Communication of Disability Disclosure to Potential Students and their Families
Ms Davis said that the disability disclosure process was available to prospective students via the website and the Student Guide. Ms Bown added that there was also a page in departmental handbooks but more could be done to make information about disclosure more prominent.

1.12 (re. minute 3.60) Student Experience Survey
Ms Lane said that a Student Experience Survey Action Plan would be submitted to the summer meeting of the DAC.

1.13 (re. minute 6.0) Calibre Leadership Programme
Ms Okhai reported that on 29th April 2013, the Calibre Leadership Programme would be opening its final session up to colleagues and friends to join the participants and learn about their progress and successes on the programme. Ms Okhai said that one academic participant of the programme had been invited to appear on Radio 4.

1.14 (re. minute 10.1) Review of Data
Ms Smith submitted an updated version of the ‘Review of Data’ which had been submitted to the October 2012 DAC meeting; the updated version contained a list of data that the committee would like to obtain. The Chair said that he would establish a group to consider the review of data.
ITEM 2 – Disability Equality Survey

2.1 Ms Okhai presented the results of the Disability Equality Survey to the committee. Mr Tucker asked how the results compared with any historical and peer data available. Ms Okhai said that the College fared well amongst its Russell Group peers and was better resourced than many, but that the Post ‘92 universities tended to achieve better results in such surveys. She noted that the College was the only university with a development programme specifically for disabled staff. It was agreed that the survey findings would act as a good benchmark for future data comparison.

2.2 The committee discussed mandatory disability training which had been the strongest recommendation from survey respondents. Combining disability training into the initial training received on joining Imperial, such as the Health and Safety training was discussed. Mr Tucker suggested a one page signposting document for disability awareness training (such as the Day One Safety Training document). Mr Tucker also suggested that disability training make specific reference to Imperial Expectations.

2.3 Ms Bown suggested that training would also be very useful to supervisors of students.

2.4 Mr Tucker suggested that the Learning and Development Centre be approached to conduct a training needs analysis. Ms Okhai is to speak to the Learning and Development Centre and report to the committee.

2.5 Ms Okhai said that this report had been compiled for the DAC and a version would also go on the website. Ms Davis said that a link to the full report could be placed in the Staff Briefing. It was agreed that the survey should be publicised with an emphasis on what the College is doing in response to the findings. Mr Tucker suggested a ‘You Said, We Did’ approach to the survey findings, as is used in response to student surveys. Ms Davis and Ms Okhai will discuss the most appropriate approach to communicating the survey findings.

2.6 The Chair thanked Ms Okhai for her work on the survey.

ITEM 3 – Communicating the Disability Equality Agenda

3.1 Ms Davis spoke to the committee about communicating the disability agenda.

3.2 She presented two communications objectives in relation to disability:

1. Support a change in attitudes and perceptions to ensure that those with disabilities:
   a. are treated as equal members of the College community
   b. are recognised for their contributions to Imperial
   c. receive appropriate support

2. Ensure that staff with disabilities are aware of the support available to them.

3.3 She asked the committee to consider whether these objectives were appropriate; the committee agreed that they were. Mr Tucker added that more could be done to promote the College’s research relating to
disability. Ms Bown suggested that the objectives reflect that disabilities are often not visible.

3.4 Ms Davis suggested that case studies be used to promote the disability agenda. She noted that these needed to be sensitively handled but it was thought that a focus on the achievements of disabled staff and students would effectively address the first communication objective. It was suggested that the Calibre programme might be a source of case study participants.

3.5 College wide events with a disability angle would also be a source of positive publicity for the disability agenda, such as Welfare Day and Education Day. National disability events such as Disability History Month and Dyslexia Awareness Week would also be covered. Other communication opportunities included the publicity of the Disability Equality Survey and the Student Experience Survey.

3.6 Ms Okhai noted that she would welcome advice about communicating with the wider press, for example in the publicity of Calibre. Ms Davis suggested that Mr John-Paul Jones could offer assistance on this matter.

ITEM 4 – Reporting Groups

Mental Health Strategy Group

4.1 Ms O’Brien gave an update from the group. Ms Okhai would be attending a Mental Health First Aid Course, which meant that in-house support could be provided to staff.

4.2 Stress had been identified as a big issue for College staff and in response, LDC staff would be providing ‘Stress Management Competencies for Managers’ training, which would allow managers to learn to manage their own stress and that of their teams.

Assistive Technology Steering Group

4.3 The Steering Group reported that there was a distinct lack of Assistive Technology Software available to staff and students. Although there was a specialist suite of technology available and further provision in the Central Library, assistive software was still in demand.

4.4 The Steering Group would like to install Text to Speech and Mind Mapping software College wide; this would involve the purchase of a site licence at a cost of £3,900 and £3,500 per annum respectively, and would make the software available to both staff and students both with and without disabilities. Mr Tucker suggested that this purchase be incorporated into the ICT planning round.

4.5 The Chair said that the number of people who would benefit from the software should be established. He asked the Group to provide this information for the next meeting of the DAC.

ITEM 5 – Dyslexia Assessment for Staff

5.1 Ms Okhai presented a flowchart that would demonstrate the support available and process for arranging dyslexia assessments for staff. She explained that, until July, funding for assessments could be supplied by the Equalities Unit, but that the budget could not sustain this in the longer term.
The flowchart was welcomed by the committee. The Chair suggested the addition of wording that encourages departments to fund assessments locally.

**ITEM 6 – Disability Action Plan**

6.1 Ms Okhai and Ms Lane are to meet to discuss the establishment of a student focus group. **Ms Okhai and Ms Lane**

6.2 Mr Tucker suggested that the Action Plan be updated with a traffic light system of action taken (green being completed actions, yellow ongoing and red, those to be completed). **Ms Smith**

**ITEM 7 – Disability History Month (November 2012)**

7.1 Ms Okhai noted that Disability History Month events had been well attended considering it was in its first year, the theme for next year was to be announced but Ms Okhai would update the committee at the next meeting. **Ms Okhai**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

14 June 2013
15:00 – 17:00
3.19 Faculty Building
South Kensington campus