Disability Action Committee

30 May 2014
14.00-16.00
Faculty Building
South Kensington campus

Minutes

Present
Mr John Neilson Chair and College Secretary and Registrar (JN)
Ms Sarah Shemilt Chair of Able@Imperial (SS)
Professor Denis Wright Director of Student Support (DW)
Mrs Mary Bown Head of Disability Advisory Services (MB)
Ms Marissa Lewis ICU Deputy President (Welfare) (ML)
Mrs Louise Lindsay Director of HR (LL)
Ms Claire O’Brien Director of Occupational Health (COB)
Professor Nigel Gooderham Senior College Consul (NG)
Professor Jo Haigh Head of the Department of Physics (JH)
Mr Richard Martin Faculty Operating Officer, Engineering (RM)
Mr Jon Tucker Faculty Operating Officer, Business School (JT)
Ms Leyla Okhai Equality & Diversity Manager (LO)
Ms Hannah Dolby Secretary to the EDC (HD)
Ms Dawn Beaumont Faculty IT Support Manager (DB)
Ms Wendy Gould Programme Director & Deputy Faculty Operations Officer-Medicine (WG)
Ms Trudy Breuss Campus Operations Officer Medicine (TB)
Ms Caroline Davis Head of Communications (CD)

Apologies
Professor Dot Griffiths Provost's Envoy for Gender Equality (DG)
Professor Jenny Higham Vice-Dean Education Medicine (JH)
Dr Benita Cox Principal Teaching Fellow (BC)
Professor Peter Cheung Vice Dean of the Faculty Engineering (PC)
Mr Dean Pateman Academic Registrar (DP)
Mr David Mooney Dyslexia Support Tutor, DAS (DM)
Mr Kevin Cope Head of Building Operations (KC)

Agenda Item

1. Matters Arising

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

(re minute 1.2) It was agreed that student mental health campaigns would be under the ownership of the Student Union.
1.3 (re minute 1.4) to be discussed at October’s meeting  
Mr Cope

1.4 (re minute 3.1.) an update from Registry to be provided at the next meeting  
Mr Pateman

1.5 (re minute 4.2) DW, MB and LO have discussed working with DDO for staff support. It was agreed that DDOs from Support Services departments would be offered light touch training by LO and Able to facilitate signposting to existing College services and support for staff.  
Mr Pateman

1.6 (re minute 7.1) the Time To Change Pledge is displayed in the Occupational Health notice board on level two of the Sherfield foyer. COB and LO are working together with HR to fulfill the criteria of the Mindful Employer Charter.  
Ms O’Brien and Ms Okhai

1.7 (re minute 7.5) LO to inform HR Newsletter team about information relating to any assistive technology information.  
Ms Okhai

2. Meridian Programme: Disability Project Update

2.1 A Meridian project group gave a presentation (attached in Appendix 1). The project aimed to benefit students with disabilities in a way that may not have been considered previously. The Committee agreed there were a number of excellent ideas presented.

2.2 COB said the sensory garden was very achievable, and could be realised. This project would be a unique way of engaging people. DW suggested that the Royal College Art could also be involved in the evolution of this type of garden. Sara Yadav stated there had been a very positive response to the concept of the sensory garden, however the team were not sure it would benefit as many people as possible.

2.3 DW stated the radio tagging cost would be justified as it had many different potential uses and resources. MB agreed as well as highlighting their use to advertise accessible walkways. TB agreed, stating this applies to every campus and other campuses are much worse in terms on accessibility.

2.4 JT felt it was important to focus in on one or two areas that could be implemented. In addition, he felt that all the potential projects are not competing ones. Resources and money could be available through alumni for example for the sensory garden project, for the RFID project from an engineering firm as an example. JT and MB to take forward a number of recommendations for a proposal as the project sponsors.

2.5 JN stated key priorities need to be project planned and could be given more detail for the group to consider.
2.6 LO stated that Calibre alumni and Able would be very happy to support projects and help with taking them forward.

2.7 The Chair thanked both the Meridian Team, MB, and the DAS for supporting the project.

3. Imperial West Campus Update

3.1 Presentation delivered by Francesco Biancelli (FB) (please see Appendix 2), a former MBA student at ICBS. An update on the Imperial West site is available on the Imperial West website. Currently, the plan is for Building C to be dedicated to research, and Building D dedicated to translation. Building D will be rented to companies to develop and exploit IC research to ensure a seamless link from research to translation.

3.2 The project status at the time of the meeting was that the plans for the shell and core/façade are being completed. The fit out of the buildings are in the very early stages of discussion, with the Department of Chemistry.

3.3 In terms of accessibility and disability issues, the current design plans are said to comply with legislation-specific requirements of the Borough and the London Plan 2011. It is clear that this is a complex and challenging project from a variety of aspects; architectural, signage, visual aspects and acoustics.

3.4 MB sits on the facilities management group, where KC and MB have been involved in preliminary discussions of this building and accommodation block. Particular issues emerging within the accommodation blocks are, as an example, fully accessible bathrooms. This issue has been raised through facilities. DW stated that outside spaces needed to be considered as part of the design brief to ensure accessibility.

3.5 JT highlighted, in line with the bigger site plan and improvements to station area, it is paramount the College make sure they communicate with TFL about access in the areas between White City and the site. JN stated that discussions were in progress regarding a subway/tunnel to North Kensington. DW mentioned the link road between the Hammersmith site and Imperial West will need to be considered regarding traffic and accessibility with the local Council.

3.6 LO felt that Able, the staff disability network may need to be involved, to advise on fixtures, fittings, visual plans and acoustics as part of the staff and student teaching experience. LO and SS stated that disabled users would be happy to act as testers for the site.

3.7 The Chair thanked FB for the presentation and asked the group to feedback any ideas to FB directly. The topic of specific consultations on the plans will be revisited in a future meeting.
4. Staff Survey Update

4.1 LL gave an overview of the 2014 Staff Survey in relation to disabled staff. Responses from disabled staff increased for 2014 to 130 responses, compared with 53 responses for 2011, resulting in more meaningful data. Overall there was little change regarding staff who have reported their status on ICIS. It will be interesting to establish whether the revised format on ICIS improves disclosure rates of disabled staff. A third of staff are still not comfortable in being open about having a disability.

4.2 Twenty three per cent of respondents felt their disability had ‘negatively affected their progression at Imperial. Seven out of ten respondents with a disability were satisfied that the College is a caring employer. One in seven, however, is dissatisfied. It is important to note that staff experience is defined locally in a large institution. Initiatives can be put in place College-wide, however, the day-to-day experience is affected on the departmental level. Therefore, the focus may be to improve departmental experience. There appears to be a disconnect regarding fair access to opportunities (e.g. Calibre Leadership programme) and who is eligible for this programmes. Accessibility is also a key issue that must continue to be addressed.

4.3 Given the low percentages recorded in the Staff Survey, it is clear that awareness and visibility of initiatives, staff networks and schemes must be addressed. Staff may know of requirements for the ‘Two Ticks’ scheme, but did not understand why it was called ‘Two Ticks’. LL informed the group the Equality and Diversity Committee will receive a breakdown by all protected characteristics.

4.4 JN asked LO if other HEI’s have similar figures. LO stated that the average for HEIs in UK was 3.4%. DW stated that one of the reasons students do not disclose was fear of the perception of ‘preferential treatment’ and similar patterns could be observed for staff. COB suggested that often staff feel stigmatised by the label of disability and/or do not see themselves as disabled.

4.5 SS felt that the low figure for “confidence in expressing views and opinions” was surprising. MB stated there is often lower self esteem for disabled staff. DW stated the low figures for “knowledge of initiative sand schemes” was worrying. It is clear that this needs to be addressed”. JN highlighted the group’s action, which states that we will keep up communications around the work that we do.

4.6 JN highlighted that there are a number of positive comments regarding disabled access. DW stated it depends on which building you work in. COB reminded the group that working environments are not often under our control and are a bigger issue on other campuses.

4.7 JN suggested that it would be beneficial if we were able to benchmark ourselves in some way. LL said benchmarking is a useful way to ascertain where action for certain equality areas may be required.

Ms Dolby
5. Calibre Programme

5.1 LO provided an overview of the Calibre programme (Appendix 3). There have only been seven Imperial College participants over two cohorts. Pre and post course questionnaire were given to all participants to ascertain the effectiveness of the programme. Significant improvements were noted across a range of skills and confidence levels. In addition there will be ongoing evaluation of the course one-year post completion. Calibre will also be run at the University of Nottingham in June and July 2014. There is also a possibility that Calibre may become a national programme through the Leadership Foundation in Higher Education. Over £16,000 income has been generated and this money has been used to improve disability equality.

5.2 JT stated that the evaluation was extremely impressive and there were clear differences pre and post course. However, it would be advisable to consider how big the total target audience could be and why more staff members are not accessing the course. LO stated one of the barriers was staff feeling that they are ‘not disabled enough’, or ‘not a manager’. To mitigate some of this thinking taster sessions will be run in the Autumn to inform potential participants and line managers. In some cases it may be that disabled staff can be better served by other programmes run by the LDC.

5.3 SS asked where is course is currently listed. LO stated it is listed with other leadership courses on the LDC website and newsletter. LL confirmed that taster sessions would be beneficial and enable staff and managers to understand more about the programme. LO confirmed that a third Calibre programme is likely as there is a waiting list of four people at present.

5.4 The group felt in order to raise the profile of the programme, it would be a good idea to have a news story in The Reporter. Ms Okhai

6. Able@Imperial Action Plan

6.1 SS provided an update on the Able@Imperial twelve month Action Plan (appendix 4) as written by LO and the Able committee. SS asked for any feedback for the general meeting next week. LO, JN and Prof. Debra Humphris will be meeting in July to discuss the action plan in further detail. Ms Shemilt to provide a biannual update on Able’s One Page Plan

6.2 LL addressed one of the points in the barriers and concerns section of the plan, relating to staff needing time to attend Able meetings. LL stated she is willing to speaking to line managers about time to attend meetings, if required.

6.3 JT suggested it would be good idea to think about e-learning modules, in relation to disability training as some areas can be addressed in a ten minute video. LO informed the group online E&D e-learning training has been written and will be launched in 2015, within this there is a bite sized video on disability declaration.
6.4 LO and SS informed the group at the next Able meeting a speaker from the leadership organisation Common Purpose will speak to the group about her journey, Su Nandy from HR in Engineering will speak about my family care and support for staff who care for disabled dependants.

7. Two ticks implementation

7.1 Following on from the Staff Survey and low awareness about the Two Ticks scheme LO will be running 90 minute workshops on Two Ticks in the new academic year. This will support the FAQs and on the Equality and Diversity Unit website.

7.2 LL stated that Two Ticks is now part of recruitment training run by LDC. JT stated the confusion around competency versus requirement to interview. LL highlighted the idea is to prioritise those with a disability who meet the minimum requirement for a role. However, the decentralisation of recruitment often makes it difficult to track how the system is being implemented. With the e-recruitment review, this should be easier to track. Ms Okhai to ensure this is incorporated into current training

8. Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW)

8.1 COB stated that an impressive a range of activities were delivered for MHAW in May 2014. It was an opportunity for staff and student activity to run side-by-side, with the Chaplaincy involved too. MB spoke of the stand for students focusing on perfectionism, where leaflets and information were provided. LO felt there had been good attendance at workshops and events, with over forty people coming to the signing of the Time to Change Pledge.

9. Reporting Groups

9.1 Mental Health Strategy Group
COB informed the group that Chris Allan from the OH team will be training as a mental health first aid instructor. Over the Summer, all OH staff members will be trained at mental health first aiders.

9.2 SS inquired about Mental Health First Aid recruitment and who in HR is trained. LO stated there is high take up in HR with three Senior HR managers being trained. LL confirmed all HR teams have MHFA representatives.

9.3 Assistive Technology Steering Group
DB explained that the ATSG in currently under review. Currently, the group does not have the right mix of people. As a result, the idea is to open up the group to senior learning technologists in the College. Ideally the group needs to be more active than it currently is. The group are looking to disband and re-form. A paper on the proposal will be written for the next meeting. Ms Beaumont
9.4 MB suggested it would be helpful for committee members to provide a steer on the types of projects they may wish to see.

10. AOB

10.1 MB brought the group’s attention to the proposed changes in Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) for the academic year ahead. The changes are likely to result in less Government funding and institutions contributing more financially. Currently there is no more information, however the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) and Universities UK have written to David Willets expressing their concern.

10.2 The group agreed it would be helpful to have a paper and more information about the changes to DSA at the next meeting.

Ms Bown

DATE OF NEXT MEETING
8 October 2014
15:00 – 17:00
Faculty Boardroom, Faculty Building
South Kensington campus