Disability Action Committee

6 November 2013
13.00 – 15.00
3.19 Faculty Building
South Kensington Campus

Minutes

Present:
Mr John Neilson  Chair of the Disability Action Committee
Ms Dawn Beaumont  Faculty IT Support Manager
Ms Mary Bown  Head of the Disability Advisory Service
Mr Kevin Cope  Head of Building Operations
Ms Kim Everitt  Deputy Director HR
Ms Wendy Gould  Programme Director & Deputy Faculty Operations Officer
Ms Louise Lindsay  Director of HR
Mr Richard Martin  Faculty Operating Officer, Engineering
Ms Claire O’Brien  Director, Occupational Health
Ms Sarah Shemilt  Chair, Able @ Imperial
Mr Jon Tucker  Faculty Operating Officer, Business School
Professor Denis Wright  Director of Student Support
Ms Hailey Smith (notes)  Secretary to the DAC

In Attendance:  Ms David Mooney  Specialist Dyslexia Tutor

Agenda Item

ITEM 1 – Apologies and Matters Arising

1.1  Apologies had been received from Professor Peter Cheung, Ms Benita Cox, Ms Caroline Davis, Professor Dot Griffiths, Professor Jenny Higham, Ms Marissa Lewis, Mr Tom Miller, Ms Leyla Okhai (Ms Everitt nominated to attend in Ms Okhai’s absence) and Professor Steven Rose.

1.2  Ms Shemilt was welcomed to the committee and introductions were made.

1.2  The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the previous meeting, with the amendment raised by Ms Lindsay, that HR would recharge departments for dyslexia assessments carried out for members of staff.

1.3  **Imperial College Mobile App (re. minute 1.5)**
Mr Cope reported that he had placed an order to develop the Disabled Go information for smartphones. He asked if Ms Beaumont and a representative from Communications would work with him to develop this further.
1.4 **DAS and Felix (re. minute 1.6)**

The publication of an article in *Felix* about the DAS was still outstanding. Ms Bown would work with Ms Lewis to arrange for an article to be written.

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**Ms Bown and Ms Lewis**

1.5 **Review of Data (re. minute 1.8)**

The Chair reported that he had met with Ms Okhai, Ms Bown, Ms Smith and Ms Lorna Richardson (Registry) to discuss the reporting and sharing of data relating to disability.

1.6 The Chair reported that DAS data was now fed back to HESA separately from the data from the student record system. This allowed accurate reporting of student data while also allowing students to declare a disability without it being attached to their student record. Ms Bown added that no information was fed from the DAS to HESA if a student has asked for their information not to be disclosed.

1.7 It was confirmed that an up-to-date record of all departmental data on students in receipt of special examination conditions is available to the DAS from Registry.

1.8 The ‘not known’ category had recently been removed from the Student Self Service ethnicity declaration function. This had been done in order to improve the quality of reporting, which could then be cross referenced with disability information. Ms Bown noted that the data supplied to the College by UCAS on student ethnicity was not fed through to the DAS. She said that the DAS used fee status information in their data analysis instead.

1.9 Regarding a prompt to College staff asking them to declare their disability status, Ms Everitt said that Ms Shemilt and Able @ Imperial had been asked to give consideration to the wording of the email. The prompt would then be circulated to staff in Ms Lindsay's name. Ms Shemilt said that she has also spoken to Communications and Public Affairs about raising awareness of the benefits of declaration rates more widely.

*Post-meeting note: This action has been delayed due to a systems upgrade. An oral update is to be provided at the meeting.*

**Ms Okhai**

1.10 The Chair noted that disability declaration had dropped from 3.2% to 2.4% and he asked what might have caused this. Ms Lindsay said that some disabled staff had left the College; she noted that the employee relations case records had been checked and there had not been any correlation with disability. Ms Kamara noted that the overall number of staff had also increased and this could cause the declaration statistic to fall.

1.11 Ms Lindsay said that new staff would now be automatically contacted by the Staff Disability Adviser on joining the College, unless they chose to opt out.

1.12 Regarding the collection of more thorough sickness absence data, it was reported that Ms Okhai had fed into a review of the College’s sickness absence policy. Ms Shemilt noted that Able @ Imperial has also been consulted on the new policy.
1.13 **Assistive Technology Steering Group (re. minute 1.11)**
Ms Beaumont reported that she had received agreement from all Faculties, and Mindview software was now available in all teaching clusters.

1.14 **Student Focus Group (re. minute 1.12)**
Professor Wright said that a focus group had been identified during the Student Experience Survey and the group would meet for the first time in the spring.

1.15 **Suppliers (re. minute 4.15)**
Ms Bown reported that a list of preferred suppliers for assistive technologies has been created.

1.16 **Impact Assessment (re. minute 5.5)**
Ms Bown said that all policies are to be impact assessed in line with the disabilities equalities legislation.

**ITEM 3 – Able @ Imperial – Staff Network and**
**ITEM 4 – Disability History Month**
*(Item 2 was deferred until the end of meeting)*

3.1 Ms Shemilt said that, in the spring of 2013, Ms Okhai had asked College staff who had declared a disability if they would be interested in setting up a network. Sessions were held to establish what members would want from such a network, and Able @ Imperial was formed. The Terms of Reference for the network would be circulated to the committee.

3.2 Ms Shemilt said that Able @ Imperial had officially launched in November 2013, during Disability History Month. A number of events had been arranged to mark the month, including a lecture, a poetry slam and a further course of mental health first aid training. Other activity included a tea and cake fundraiser on World Mental Health Day, which had also encouraged conversation about mental health.

3.3 Ms Shemilt said that the network had been engaged with policy development, such as the Sickness Absence policy. Ms Shemilt said that she was now discussing with members in order to choose their focus for the next 12 months.

3.4 Ms Shemilt said that she has recently had her role as chair of Able @ Imperial recognised as part of her job description.

3.5 Ms Shemilt said that she had attended a Stonewall event aimed at helping diversity networks share good practice. The main recommendations were that significant time and effort should be dedicated to the running of networks, senior engagement was very important and networks needed to have a clear agenda.

3.6 The Chair said, when applying these suggestions to the DAC, he thought that the committee operated with a clear, action-led agenda but the more concrete ideas that were suggested the better. Ms Shemilt thought that more could be done to support and engage managers; while training was offered, she felt this was not publicised enough.
Ms Shemilt said that she felt there were a lot of misconceptions around disability and suggested that the College engage more with charities, such as the National Autism Society, to develop new training courses.

Mr Cope noted that Ms Okhai had recently carried out a training course relating to disability for his team. He said that the training had been tailored to his team’s needs and had received very good feedback. He said that Ms Okhai had done a very good job. Ms Shemilt also noted that the Equalities Unit was an excellent resource for staff and managers and departments should make better use of it.

Ways to engage with the College community to raise the disability disclosure rate were discussed. The Chair suggested that the College drew on the ‘human side’ of disability, as suggested by Communications and Public Affairs. Ms Shemilt suggested an article documenting how someone’s work life had improved as the result of declaring a disability.

ITEM 5 – Reporting Groups

Mental Heath Strategy Group
5.1 Ms O’Brien said that the Stress Management tool had been launched on National Stress Awareness Day (6th November 2013) and she had just attended a Confidential Care seminar at the Hammersmith Campus, which had been well attended. Ms O’Brien said that the Group had been developing links with the Chaplaincy, Counselling and the Imperial College Union.

5.2 The Chair asked what would be the Group’s focus following their work on stress. Ms O’Brien said that Ms Okhai needed to recruit a further Mental Health First Aid trainer in order to give people improved skills to manage any mental health matters that they may come into contact with, especially for those staff in a student facing role. She said that the Group would also focus on relevant awareness days.

Assistive Technology Steering Group
5.3 Ms Beaumont said that the appointment of a new member of staff responsible for ICT communications meant that the work of the group, and the availability of assistive technology software, would now be more widely publicised.

5.4 Ms Beaumont said that the Assistive Technology Suite was to be relocated to the Library in December, but there was uncertainty over who would own the machines and provide on-going support and funding for software; she said discussions were ongoing.

5.5 Ms Gould asked what provisions were available at other campuses. Ms Beaumont said that the software licence was multi-campus and each library had at least one designated PC for disabled students.

ITEM 6 - Website Redesign
6.1 Mr Mooney said that Ms Olivia Davenport had been appointed to oversee the redesign of the College’s website. Students had been canvassed for their views about the old website and they had
noted that the website was not easily accessible when using a
screen reader.

6.2 It was noted that there was no mention of accessibility in the
redesign’s guiding concept, but since its publication a dialogue has
been opened up with the redesign project team to address
accessibility issues and compliance.

6.3 Ms Shemilt said that she was engaged with the project, both as a
content uploader and from a disability angle. She said that she has
fed back directly to Domain 7 and Terminal 4, the companies
engaged to carry out the redesign, on disability related issues.

6.4 Mr Mooney said a meeting had been held between the project
team and the DAS, Professor Denis Wright, Ms Leyla Okhai and
Dr Ossie Stuart (external consultant). Action points from the
meeting included:

- The automatic flagging of web accessibility issues as a
desired function.
- The opinions of College staff and students are to be
utilised
- Further consideration is to be given to embedding
accessibility tools.
- The homepage is to link to user guides on how to modify
the website for improved accessibility.
- A feedback system for accessibility issues would be set up;
issues flagged through this system could then be followed
up and also addressed in training new content managers.
- The redesign team is committed to WCAG level 2
compliance
- A representative of disabled staff is to be included in the
process of choosing the ‘Wire Frame’

6.5 The Chair noted that a lot of hard work had gone into addressing
accessibility issues in the website redesign. Ms Bown noted that
ownership for accessibility should be held by the web team or a
group with similar web management responsibilities. She said it
should not been seen as a something for the DAS to police.

ITEM 2 – Disability Action Plan Update

2.1 Ms Smith thanked the committee for updating her on activity
against the Action Plan.

2.2 (re. objective 1) Professor Wright said that a number of forums
had been set up throughout the year to allow DDOs and DLOs to
discuss issues and disseminate good practice. These meetings
replaced a termly lunch.

2.3 (re. objective 2) It was noted that e-learning was planned as part
of future disability training provisions.

2.4 A review of progress following the one year anniversary of the
Staff Disability Equality Survey is to be discussed at the next meeting. Ms Lindsay said that the College’s staff survey is set to run in February 2014. Although results would not be available for the next meeting of the DAC, the final questions would be known.

2.5 Having reviewed the progress as detailed in the Action Plan the Chair noted that a lot of good progress had occurred and thanked all those involved.

ITEM 7 – AOB
7.1 The Chair asked the committee for suggestions of future agenda items. Mr Cope suggested that the committee consider the experience of staff and students on other campuses, as there was a focus of activity on the South Kensington Campus. The Chair suggested a note should be prepared for discussion at the next meeting.

7.2 Mr Tucker said that he had arranged for a group of staff on the Meridian talent development programme to seek out external funding opportunities for technology. He suggested that the Assistive Technology Steering Group collaborate with the project.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING
12 March 2014
14.00 – 16.00
Boardroom, Faculty Building
South Kensington Campus