

# Imperial College London

## Disability Action Committee

Wednesday 1 December

14:00 – 16:00

MS Teams Meeting

### Minutes

Present:

Kani Kamara	Head of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre – Co-Chair (KK)
Susan Littleson	Deputy Director of Human Resources – Co-Chair (SL)
David Ashton	Academic Registrar (DA)
Chris Banks	Assistant Provost (Space), Director of Library Services (CB)
Hannah Bannister	Director of Student Services (HB)
Harbhajan Brar	Director of Human Resources (HBR)
Benita Cox	Principal Teaching Fellow, Business School (BC)
Stephen Curry	Assistant Provost (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) (SC)
William Hollyer	Head of Sport, Sport and Leisure Services (WH)
Richard Jardine	Senior Consul (RJ)
Angela Kehoe	Strategic HR Partner (FoNS) (AK)
Kalpna Mistry	Staff Network Coordinator (KM)
Elizabeth Nixon	Interim Head of College Communications (EN)
Claire O'Brien	Director of Occupational Health (COB)
Maureen O'Brien	Head of the Disability Advisory Service (DAS) (MOB)
Lisa Phillips	Co-Chair of Able@Imperial (LP)
Paula Phillips	Institutional Affairs Manager, Medicine (PP)
Nathalie Podder	Deputy President Welfare, Imperial College Union (ICU) (NP)
Liz Scholfield	Communications Lead, ICT (LS)
Awais Seyyad	ICU Disabilities Officer (AS)
Cynthia So	Secretary to the DAC (CS)
Maggie Taylor	Assistant Building Manager (MT)
Jon Tucker	Faculty Operating Officer, Business School (JT)

The following were also present:

Leah Adamson	IMSE Events Officer (LA)
Maria Batson	School of Public Health (MB)
Daniela Bultoc	Senior Organisational Development Consultant (DB)
Radu Rautiu	Head of Research Project Management, Enterprise (RR)
Dammy Shittu	Research Technician, Life Sciences (DS)
Angela Williams	Learning and Development Officer, Estates (AW)

Agenda Item

### 1.0 Welcome and apologies

1.1 SL and KK welcomed the Committee to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies were received from: Mark Allen, Lorraine Craig, Adrian Mannall, Roddy Slorach, and Tim Venables.

## 2.0 Minutes of the last meeting 17 June 2021

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were deemed to be an accurate record of events.

## 3.0 Action tracker

3.1 The action tracker was considered. The following points were noted:

- 1 December 2020, minute 5.5 – Communications piece about workplace adjustments: SL said that KK should take away an action to look at whether there had been an increase of people asking for support as a result of the workplace adjustment reminders. KK said that anecdotally, there had been an uptick of individuals coming for assessments in relation to ADHD. SL said that the number of people asking for support should be noted in the EDIC reports as an ongoing item.

**Action: KK**

- 25 June 2020, minute 4.4 – Digital Accessibility Project: LS said that they were interviewing this week for a Digital Accessibility Officer and that they had been figuring out which team this role should sit with. They had decided that this should sit in Okan Kibaroglu's team (Business Operations) in ICT. LS was attending the DAC in the interim until the Digital Accessibility Officer starts, as they would then take over in representing for ICT. SC said that support for the Digital Accessibility Project on the website had been updated.
- 7 June 2017, minute 3.2 – Financial implications of interruptions of studies for PhD students: DA said that this action should be closed as it referred to all students and did not just pertain to the topic of disability.
- 5 March 2020, minute 3.4 – Mental Health at Work Commitment: COB said that this action should be carried forward and there was the need to take a strategic view in terms of signing up to the Mental Health at Work Commitment.

## 4.0 Concluding the 2020-21 action plan

4.1 SL said that the 2020-21 action plan could be turned into a report for the EDI Strategy Group and a news item for the Staff Briefing. EN said that she was happy to translate the action plan into an update for the Staff Briefing.

**Action: EN**

4.2 Continuing, SL said that the 2020-21 action plan was now being closed and the Committee would think about the action plan for the coming year. SL asked if anybody would like to draw attention to things they or their team had achieved in the action plan that needed reflection or celebration.

4.3 LS added a further update from ICT, reporting on behalf of Adrian Thomas, the Student Lifecycle Lead, that the Teaching and Learning Board were going to put to the Education Committee a request to move forward with a campaign to make the College's learning materials more accessible for all, building on the foundation of Blackboard Ally, and providing the wider support and training required for successful understanding and implementation.

## 5.0 Vision for future success around disability issues

5.1 SL introduced DB, Senior Organisational Development Consultant, who had been invited to the meeting to facilitate a visioning session for the DAC.

5.2 The Committee shared their answers to the following questions using an online tool called Padlet:

- Our contributions to the group: A) What skills, knowledge and experience do you bring to the DAC group? B) What is your interest in the DAC?
- Challenges around disability at the College: What are the challenges around disability at the College?
- Why we exist as a group: Add a few key words that represents the purpose of this group from your perspective
- Our vision is to...: Add a sentence taking into account the previous keywords
- Our priorities: Looking at the challenges, what might be our priorities?
- Our responsibilities as a group: The group will undertake the following responsibilities...

5.3 In discussion, the following points were made:

- A big College committee might not be the best way to drive forward the kind of change people wanted to see. However, although the group was large, it needed to be of such a size to cover both staff and students and different types of disability.
- It might be good to extend the student membership of the committee, to hear more about the student view. What worked for students would tend to work for staff, on the whole. If students felt supported, it would reduce the concern and worry that a lot of staff would have.
- Everyone in the Committee was there from different parts of the College. There should be something in the DAC's vision about how people from different parts of the College were coming together for this purpose and collaborating.
- It would be a good idea to define what the DAC meant by disability, in such a way that could be understood by different audiences and backgrounds.
- The context had changed for the action plan, as there was need to consider the needs of disabled staff and students when it came to hybrid working.
- The Office for Students were talking about widening access. Students with disabilities were a part of that agenda and were often forgotten. There needed to be a big push on student mental health.
- There was an opportunity for a Community of Practice.
- It would be a good idea to evaluate progress and show the group's success in meeting those objectives and goals.

- 5.4 Summing up, SL said that she found it a useful conversation and that the next step would be to discuss with Able representations and the new executive sponsor for Able for input and making sure that the proposed draft of the Terms of Reference and goals of the Committee were hitting the right notes. Once those high levels were in place, the Committee could think about what actions could meet those goals. KK said there was good information to reflect on and that this would hopefully help to give a clear path ahead for the Committee. DB suggested creating a mission statement for the DAC using the answers provided on Padlet. CS would circulate and give the Committee time to reflect and decide on a mission statement that most represented the group.

**Action: Secretary**

## **6.0 BAME mental health project**

- 6.1 AW thanked the group for inviting her to present her BAME mental health project, which had been funded by the College's EDI Seed Fund. She said that the project consisted of five half-day online workshops with 25 places on each workshop. The aim was to raise awareness about mental health in BAME communities. She had originally planned three workshops but she received 160 applications, so she got extra funding to organise two more workshops. 123 people attended the workshops. Of these, 89 responded to the online evaluation form. She also created a "Sick and Tired" video to raise awareness about mental health and produced an article for Black History Month about the project on the Imperial News website, which was shared on LinkedIn and other social media platforms.
- 6.2 Continuing, AW said that the project showed there was need for this training in the College. Her recommendations were to include this training in the EDI Centre's programme of training and incorporate it into the EDI Strategy. The feedback was that people wanted more time for discussions and practical examples, so she would suggest turning it into a one-day course. The priority target groups should be MHFAiders, Staff Supporters, line managers, and frontline staff working with staff and students. People also wanted the course to be tailored for Imperial and offered at different levels for different groups, so there could be separate courses for experienced MHFAiders and senior managers, for example. People also wanted a trainer that belonged to one of the BAME groups, as comments on the evaluation form suggested that this gave them a safe space to bring up certain situations and share their experiences. It would also be useful to "train the trainer" to enable in-house delivery of the course.
- 6.3 Concluding, AW said that she would be helping to set up webpages with the EDI Centre about resources for BAME mental health support organisations, reference materials, etc. The project had created a bit of discussion within the College, and what the workshops helped to do was give people the confidence to have those discussions.
- 6.4 Summing up, SL said that this project was a great example of how the EDI Seed Fund had led to something that would be part of the mainstream of the College and improve experiences of staff. She and KK had been looking at the EDI budget and they had the money to support more sessions. She wondered if it might be useful to do a session specifically for the consuls.

## **7.0 Calibre graduate presentation**

- 7.1 DS presented her Calibre project, which was about assistance dogs. She highlighted the difference between charity- and owner-trained dogs, and pointed out

the accessibility issues and barriers around assistance dogs, as owners face general public harassment, lack of awareness or empathy, housing restrictions, and denial of access and refusal of services. DS wanted to use an assistance dog to support her disability and had sent a letter of request to the building manager as she lived on campus as a staff member, but this had been rejected on the basis that there was a “no pets” policy, and the College only allowed guide dogs. DS said that this was incorrect, as guide dogs were under the umbrella term of assistance dogs. She had spoken with a Disability Advisor in the EDI Centre and after about ten months of going to various people, her request had finally been approved. She proposed some changes for the College: first, to identify who would be responsible at the College and to amend the Animals on Campus policy; second, to create a short but accessible application and records system, which would ensure the standards set by Assistance Dogs International are kept; third, to educate the public about assistance dogs and remove cultural and societal barriers.

- 7.2 DS said that she was seeking more input regarding the policies and that she was starting a network for those who need support. She had received a suggestion to create a Teams channel for the project and would welcome any volunteers who wanted to join.

## **8.0 Written updates – any questions**

- 8.1 There were no questions about the written updates. SL said that it was great news about Simon Hepworth becoming the new executive sponsor for Able@Imperial.

## **9.0 AOB**

- 9.1 COB said that a tender exercise was being undertaken with regards to the Employee Assistance Programme, and that they were beginning some negotiations with Confidential Care to retain their services. They did not receive a huge response to the tender exercise, but when the stakeholder panel looked at the offerings, it was felt that the Confidential Care offering was the strongest.