Disability Action Committee

Friday 20 October 2017
10:00 – 12:00
Boardroom, Faculty Building, South Kensington Campus

Minutes

Present:
Mr John Neilson    Chair and College Secretary (JN)
Mr Mark Allen   Careers Consultant (MA)
Mr David Ashton   Academic Registrar (DA)
Mr Hisham Aty Abdel  ICU Disabilities Officer (HA)
Ms Mary Bown  Head of the Disability Advisory Service (MB)
Ms Sally Campbell  Faculty Centre Safety Compliance Manager, Medicine (SC)
Dr Benita Cox  Principal Teaching Fellow, Business School (BC)
Dr Lorraine Craig  Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), Engineering (LC)
Prof Stephen Curry  Assistant Provost (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) (SC)
Ms Ailish Harikae  Secretary (AH)
Mr William Hollyer  Head of Sport (WH)
Mr Mike Horner  ICT Service Line Manager for Education (MH)
Ms Kani Kamara  Acting Head, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (KK)
Ms Louise Lindsay  Director of HR and Organisational Change (LL)
Prof Peter Lindstedt  Senior Consul (PL)
Ms Joanna McGarry  Head of Design and Editorial (JM)
Ms Sara Muir  Head of Building Operations (SM)
Ms Elizabeth Nixon  Internal Communications Manager (EN)
Ms Claire O’Brien  Director of Occupational Health (CO)
Mr Fintan O’Connor  ICU Deputy President (Welfare) (FOC)
Ms Lisa Phillips  Co-Chair of Able@Imperial (LP)
Ms Camille Reltien  Co-Chair of Able@Imperial (CR)
Mr Jon Tucker  Faculty Operating Officer, Business School (JT)

Agenda Item

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

1.1 JN welcomed the Committee to the meeting. A particular welcome was extended to new members.

1.2 Apologies were received from Ms Hannah Bannister, Ms Dawn Beaumont, Ms Janette Beetham, Prof Michael Bearpark, Ms Lindsay Comalie, Ms Wendy Gould, Ms Nazia Hirjee, Mr John-Paul Jones, Mr Richard Martin, Ms Kalpna Mistry, Ms Fran Hyatt, and Mr Roddy Slorach.

2.0 Minutes and Matters Arising

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were deemed to be an accurate record of events.
2.2 There were no matters arising.

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

- *(re: 7 June 2017, minute 3.2)* It was noted that there would be an update on interruptions of studies under agenda item 7.

- *(re: 7 June 2017, minute 4.4)* It was noted that there would be an update on the disability awareness-raising campaign under agenda item 6.

- *(re: 7 June 2017, minute 5.2)* Members were encouraged to download the report by Janette Beetham and Leyla Okhai on Dyslexia Support at the College.

- *(re: 7 June 2017, minute 5.5)* It was noted that appropriate actions on learning and teaching had been included in the Action Plan for 2017-18.

- *(re: 7 June 2017, minute 5.7)* It was noted that the Action Plan had been developed with input from members and would be discussed in detail under agenda item 5.

- *(re: 7 June 2017, minute 6.3)* JN confirmed that two disability-related actions had been put forward for the College-level response to the staff survey. The first action was to review how employees were encouraged to declare disabilities and helped to access support and adjustments in a timely manner. The second was to increase awareness of workplace adjustments for disabled staff through a range of communication activities. LL confirmed that the staff survey action plan would be discussed by Provost's Board on 27 October 2017.

- *(re: 7 June 2017, minute 8.1)* It was noted that the link to Emily-Jane Cramphom's blog on managing her own disability had been circulated.

- *(re: 7 June 2017, minute 10.1)* JN welcomed new member William Hollyer from Sport Imperial to the Committee.

- *(re: 28 February 2017, minute 2.3)* AH told the Committee that the Student Counselling and Mental Health Service had started offering counselling at Charing Cross campus in June 2017 and would be reviewing use at the end of the year. Rosie Summerhayes, Head of the Service, had advised that the room allocated was not ideal, as it was an academic’s office in a staff area, which compromised confidentiality. However, the service had not received any complaints about this. On behalf of the Consuls, PL expressed concerns about the suitability of the room. SM said that Estates had a room available in Reynold’s Building that might be more suitable. It was agreed that AH would put SM in touch with Rosie to explore this further.

**Action: Secretary**
• (re: 28 February 2017, minute 5.4) It was noted that there would be an update on the College’s response to Business Disability Forum’s workplace adjustments survey under agenda item 8.

• (re: 4 November 2015, minute 5.4) It was noted that it would not be possible to add useful contact numbers to College ID cards at present.

3.0 Review of DAC Plan 2016-17

3.1 JN said that it was important to review the work of the past year before agreeing priorities for the year ahead. In relation to the DAC Plan 2016-17, the following points were noted:

3.2 Action 1: Increasing disability declaration rates for staff and students

The student disability declaration rate had increased during the course of 2016-17 and was 8.7% as of May 2017. The staff rate had also increased and was currently 3.98%.

3.3 Action 2: Consulting with disabled staff and students

There was some discussion about annual reviews of estate provision. SM confirmed that a DisabledGo survey was scheduled and would focus on White City, Woodward Buildings and Silwood Park. MB asked whether it would be possible to add the link to DisabledGo to the main College webpage, as it could be difficult to find. JN suggested that the link could be included on the campus maps page. EN said that she would explore this option with Comms.

Action: EN

3.4 Action 3: Training, learning and development

JN noted that the Committee had heard at its meeting in June about the success of last year’s Calibre Programme.

3.5 Action 4: Learning and teaching experience

JN said that there had been less progress made in this area last year and that he was very pleased to have Hannah Bannister’s involvement. There was some discussion about inclusive technologies and MH told the committee about a new product called Software Ally, which rendered all content on a platform into accessible formats. It was agreed that MH would arrange a demonstration for MB and David Mooney (Dyslexia / SpLD Coordinator). MH also mentioned that he had been working with David Mooney to develop a business case for funding to improve the assisted technology facilities available to students in the library. JN said the Committee supported this endeavour and asked AH to add this to the 2017-18 Plan.

Action: MH/MB

Action: Secretary

3.6 BC acknowledged that a lot of work had been done to make learning and teaching spaces more accessible but felt that the College needed to review exam spaces as well. It was agreed that DA would raise this with John Crook, Head of Timetabling.

Action: DA

3.6 Action 5: Improving support and awareness for those with disabilities
There were no points raised in relation to this action.

4.0 DAC Plan 2017-18

4.1 JN explained that this year’s plan would focus on just three areas: raising awareness, removing barriers and improving support. The following points were raised in relation to the plan:

4.2 1. Raising awareness

It was noted that details of a communication campaign (action 1.1) would be shared under agenda item 6. MB advised the Committee that a welcome letter from the Registry had been disseminated to students and seemed to have worked extremely well (action 1.4). She confirmed that just one communication was now being sent out. HA said that ICU was planning a number of events for Disability History Month (action 1.1). It was agreed that he would keep in touch with EDIC so that student and staff events could be coordinated.

Action: HA

4.3 KK told the Committee about the programme of events for Disability History Month (22 November to 22 December 2017), which EDIC had been working on with MB (action 1.1). She hoped there would be two or three events each week, which would include: pop-up stalls, interactive disability bingo, talks for staff and students about the Change100 programme, Calibre taster sessions at South Kensington and Hammersmith, a keynote speech form Janette Beetham (Workplace Dyslexia and SpLD Consultant and DAC member), a talk by DisabledGo, and an inspirational talk about ascending Mount Everest. Events geared at students would take place before 13 December 2017. MB said she hoped that more joint staff and student events and campaigns could be arranged than in the past. JN asked FOC whether events for Disability History Month could be promoted to students through ICU. FOC said that events could be promoted by ICU’s marketing team, provided that sufficient notice was given. It was agreed that KK would share a calendar of events to be circulated to DAC members during the week beginning 6 November 2017.

Action: KK/Secretary

4.4 JT made the point that the Action Plan included a large number of acronyms. He requested that a glossary be added.

Action: Secretary

4.5 MA asked whether a link to the Careers Service’s new pages for disabled students could be included if a comprehensive central webpage was developed detailing support for disabled staff and students (action 1.2).

4.6 2. Removing barriers

Committee members agreed with the actions proposed in this area.

4.7 3. Improving support

JT asked whether action 3.1, concerning the declaration of disabilities and helping staff to access support, could include a reference to safety as well as health and wellbeing.

Action: Secretary
5.0 Update on Interruption of Studies Review

5.1 DA told the Committee that there was not a great deal to report since the last meeting. He acknowledged that there was a lack of clarity around interruptions of studies, particularly for research students, and said that this would be addressed during 2017-18.

5.2 PL emphasised that this was becoming an urgent matter, as it could have severe implications for individuals and the student experience at Imperial. He requested that a sense of urgency be kept in mind in relation to this work.

5.3 FOC said that the issue of interruptions of studies had come up at various committees (e.g. with wardens in relation to safeguarding students). He felt that there was not a great deal of confidence in the current process. He added that in certain cases, when students were unwell, it was not necessarily in their best interests to remain at College and that a lack of robustness in the current procedure might be holding support services back. MB echoed these concerns. DA said that the fitness to study issue was one that would be taken forward now that there was greater support on this from ICU.

5.4 PL made the point that interruptions of studies could be more complicated still for international students, where visa sponsorship was an issue. He wondered whether staff were fully aware of the implications of interruptions for Tier 4 Sponsorship.

5.5 It was agreed that the matter would be taken forward by DA and Hannah Bannister and that an update would be provided at the next meeting.

Action: DA

6.0 Disability Awareness Campaign

6.1 LP told the Committee that, along with representatives from ICU and EDIC, she had met with Comms to discuss the idea of an internal campaign to communicate the services and support available for staff and students with disabilities. The aims of the campaign were twofold: to encourage people to declare disabilities and understand the support and resources available; and to make people supporting those with disabilities (such as managers and personal tutors) aware of where they could find more information about disability in the work and study environment. LP introduced Joanna McGarry, Head of Design and Editorial, who had been working with a freelance designer to develop a proposal.

6.2 JM explained that the freelance designer had suggested two creative routes. The first was photographic and would involve commissioning images of staff and students with disabilities, as well as those who give support. The posters would include short quotes from the people photographed and would also be used to develop more detailed case studies (which Comms hoped to publish on the website later in the year). JM hoped that there would be four or five individuals profiled and that these would appear on posters, flyers and digital screens. EN added that the flyers would contain more detailed information on the College’s support services for disabled staff and students. JM said that the second option was based on an illustration using molecules (which symbolised networking and support). The messaging was the same, but the design was different and potentially more striking. Several colours were available. JM said she would welcome feedback from the Committee on these proposals.

6.3 JT suggested that using digital channels as well as posters would work well. JM said that Comms planned to use the screens around campus. She also said that the large
new screen in the Main Entrance could be made available during Disability History Month, which is when the campaign would launch.

6.4 MB wondered whether the focus should be on inclusivity more generally. It was positive to raise awareness of services for disabled members of the community, but everybody should be responsible for improving accessibility and inclusivity. JM said that she and EN would think about the messaging for this particular campaign and how this could be developed in future to look more broadly at inclusivity.

6.5 SC said that he particularly liked the photographic approach, and this was echoed by other Committee members. He wondered, however, whether people would be willing to step forward to be featured. LL suggested that the stories of Calibre graduates might be a useful starting point. MB said that it was important to feature students as well as staff, if they were willing to be involved. FOC said that ICU could send out a call through social media and other communication channels. However, given the personal nature of the campaign, students might not volunteer.

6.6 LL said that she strongly endorsed the campaign. She made the point that the definition of disability was very broad and that many people did not know it applied to them. Featuring a broad a range of different issues (and support services) in the campaign would be very powerful. KK agreed and added that issues around disability were very fluid and could affect people unexpectedly at different times in their lives. There were also visible and non-visible issues, which people did not necessarily connect or attribute to disability. EN said that she was hoping to develop a series of case studies for the website and that this would provide an opportunity to explore a wide variety of disabilities and experiences.

6.7 JN thanked JM for her work on the campaign and gave the Committee’s strong encouragement for a photographic campaign to be taken forward. It was agreed that JM and EN would work with members of the Committee to identify case studies. It was also agreed that the DAC would be made aware when the campaign launched.  

**Action: JM/EN/All**  
**Action: Secretary**

7.0 **Update on Workplace Adjustments Project**

7.1 In response to the workplace adjustments survey carried out by Business Disability Forum, CO told the Committee that representatives from Occupational Health, EDIC, Able@Imperial and HR had held a meeting to discuss the College’s response. It had been agreed that a robust review of the workplace adjustments process would be carried out and that it would consider the full duration of the employee lifecycle. The first stage of the project would review processes, policies, guidance, training and touchpoints within the remit of OH, HR and EDIC. The second stage would involve working groups of staff, line managers and service providers. The overall aim was to improve consistency, involvement and accountability.

7.2 KK made the point that case studies where adjustments had worked well were very powerful. CO said that she was working with Mental Health Champions to identify and promote success stories where adjustments had had a particularly positive effective.

8.0 **Update from Disability Advisory Service**
8.1 MB said that data was not yet available on the current student declaration rate, but that she would share this at the next meeting. DAS had experienced heavy footfall since mid-August and the wait for appointments was now ten to fourteen days. A number of new members of staff had joined the team in October and were being inducted. Recent awareness-raising activity included: the iConnect event, a stall in Huxley Building during Dyslexia Awareness Week, and a flyer campaign in JCR and other catering areas. DAS had introduced a carousel of ‘how to’ leaflets on different topics (e.g. study skills), which was on level 5 of Sherfield Building and would soon be available online. MB had met recently with the Health Centre to exchange information on services and with CO, to look at putting procedures in place for OH to carry out student ergonomic and safety assessments. Department visits, drop-ins and talks for tutors had been held on dyslexia.

9.0 Update from Imperial College Union

9.1 FOC told the Committee that his predecessor, Emily-Jane Cramphorn, had introduced a Wellbeing Rep Network, which mirrored the Academic Rep Network, but would focus on student wellbeing issues. 85 student volunteers would be in place soon. Their role would be to raise awareness of the support available and to signpost services like DAS. FOC said he was looking forward to working with MB and DAS over the coming year and that he would be using ICU’s marketing channels to help raise awareness of the service within the student community.

10.0 Update from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre

10.1 KK advised the Committee that Calibre would be going ahead this year as planned and that Kalpna Mistry had prepared a succinct brief on the programme for DAC members. It included outcomes, target participants, dates and information for managers. She asked that DAC members circulate this in their areas and forward on to interested parties.

Action: Secretary/All

11.0 Able@Imperial

11.1 JN welcomed the staff network’s new Co-Chairs, Lisa Phillips and Camille Reltien.

11.2 CR said that she and LP had been in post for approximately six weeks and had been developing Able’s goals for the year ahead. A key focus was the disability awareness campaign. The network also wanted to raise awareness and visibility of Able and what it did, as this was not necessarily obvious from the network’s name. Able hoped to help staff and line managers to have positive conversations around adjustments and to encourage disclosure. In partnership with EDIC, they would be involved in events for Disability History Month.

11.3 JN wished the Co-Chairs well in their roles.

10.0 Any Other Business

10.1 JT welcomed Stephen Curry, Assistant Provost (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion), to the Committee and SC thanked the DAC for its invitation to attend. He told the Committee that he would be taking over from Dot Griffiths (Provost’s Envoy for Gender Equality) and that disability issues would be an important area of his work. He said that he had met a number of DAC members since taking on the post in
September and expected to have more interaction with them in the coming weeks as he developed the College's new strategy on diversity and inclusion. He invited Committee members to contact him directly if they wanted to speak to him.

10.2 MB made the Committee aware that a good practice document for supporting disabled students had recently been published by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. She said she would share the link with AH to circulate to members.

   **Action: MB/Secretary**

10.3 MH said that he was keen to understand whether there was an appetite to explore Panopto close captioning of lectures. The cost to use the service was in the region of £5.00-6.00 per hour of lecture, so a significant investment by the College would be necessary to take this forward. MB suggested that the initiative could be piloted in one department initially. She felt that dyslexic, deaf and international students in particular would find this very helpful. JN said that the DAC would be keen to support a pilot, particularly if this would involve students for whom there would be particular value in offering this service. It was agreed that MH and MB would work together to identify a department (or particular course) where captioning could be trialled.

   **Action: MB/MH**

10.4 CO told the Committee that OH had put in place a programme of events for staff for National Stress Awareness Day on 1 November. This included stalls in the main entrance over lunchtime to raise awareness of wellbeing and to promote the staff networks. She said that ICU had their own programme of events for students.

10.5 JN recorded the Committee’s thanks to John-Paul Jones, who would be leaving College on 27 October.

10.6 JN recorded the Committee’s thanks to Dr Alan Swann, who was instrumental in setting up the DAC, and would shortly be retiring from his post in OH.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 19 February 2018, 14:00 – 16:00
Faculty Boardroom, Level 4 Faculty Building