Disability Action Committee

Tuesday 28 February 2017
14:30 – 16:00
Boardroom, Faculty Building, South Kensington campus

Minutes

Present:
Mr John Neilson Chair and College Secretary and Registrar (JN)
Mr Mark Allen Careers Consultant (MA)
Mr David Ashton Academic Registrar (DA)
Ms Dawn Beaumont Faculty IT Support Manager (DB)
Prof Michael Bearpark Professor of Computational Chemistry (MB)
Mr Kevin Cope Head of Building Operations (KC)
Dr Lorraine Craig Academic Tutor and Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching, Earth Science & Engineering (LC)
Ms Ailish Harikae Secretary (AH)
Mr Keith Harris Business Disability Forum (KH)
Mr Stefan Hoyle Head of Health and Safety (FoNS) (SH)
Mr John-Paul Jones Deputy Head of Communications (JJ)
Ms Louise Lindsay Director of HR and Organisational Change (LL)
Ms Angela Matthews Business Disability Forum (AM)
Ms Kalpna Mistry Staff Networks Coordinator (KM)
Ms Claire O’Brien Director of Occupational Health (CO)
Ms Leyla Okhai Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (LO)
Ms Paula Phillips Executive Officer, Faculty of Medicine (PP)
Ms Suzy Rennison Leonard Cheshire Disability (SR)
Ms Sarah Shemilt Chair of Able@Imperial (SS)
Mr Roddy Slorach Joint Trade Unions (RS)
Mr Jon Tucker Faculty Operating Officer, ICBS (JT)

Agenda Item

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

1.1 LL, chairing on behalf of JN, welcomed the committee to the meeting. A particular welcome was extended to external visitors from Business Disability Forum and Leonard Cheshire Disability.

1.2 Apologies were received from Janette Beetham, Mary Bown, Benita Cox, Emily-Jane Cramporn, Wendy Gould, Nazia Hirjee, Richard Martin, Myra McClure, Kate Nash and Denis Wright.
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: 1 December 2016, minute 5.2)* AH reported that discussions were ongoing between the Student Counselling and Mental Health Service and the Faculty of Medicine to identify a GP surgery at Charing Cross that would be suitable for student counselling. LL asked that any updates in advance of the next meeting be circulated to the committee by email.
  
  **Action: AH**

- *(re: 1 December 2016, minute 6.3)* AH confirmed that a link to DisabledGo had been added to the Disability Advisory Service website. KC added that links to DisabledGo across the College website were much clearer now. Pictures of rooms had also been uploaded to the site. A gap analysis was underway of the rooms that had not yet been included.

- *(re: 14 June 2016, minute 7.3)* LL noted that the Business Disability Forum would provide an update on the reasonable adjustments survey under agenda item 4.

3.0 Review of Disability Action Plan 2016-17

3.1 **Action 1: Increasing disability declaration rate for staff and students**
LO confirmed that the declared disability rate for staff was 3.9% as of 1 February 2017 (compared to 3.51% in January 2016). AH reported, on behalf of the Disability Advisory Service, that the declared disability rate for students was 8.6% as of January 2017, compared to 8.2% in May 2016. LC advised the committee that Rosie Summerhayes, Head of Student Counselling and Mental Health Service, had been visiting departments to raise awareness of student counselling and that this had been well-received. RS agreed that these were well-attended and dynamic sessions that had led to some follow-up.

3.2 **Action 2: Consulting with disabled staff and students**
KC reported that a review of College buildings had been carried out by the DisabledGo surveyor and that Estates Facilities were awaiting ‘best practice reports’, which would make recommendations for improvements. KC said that Estates Facilities would report back to the committee after reviewing the recommendations.

  **Action: KC / Estates Facilities**

3.3 **Action 3: Training, Learning and Development**
LO told the committee that 433 staff had now completed the Equality and Diversity e-learning module. LL added that Imperial Essentials had been signed off by Provost's Board and that the Equality and Diversity e-learning module was part of the programme. Moving forward, all new staff would need to complete the training before the end of their probation period, so LL expected there to be a spike in uptake.

3.4 **Action 4: Learning and Teaching Experience**
No updates were recorded.

3.5 **Action 5: Improving support and awareness for those with disabilities**
JJ told the committee that Comms had worked closely with the organisers of Diverse@Imperial week to promote the event. Comms would now be working with EDIC to understand its calendar of events for 2017. LL added that Diverse@Imperial had been a well-received and well-attended series of events. RS mentioned that the Disability Advisory Service were hoping to create video testimonials from disabled students. KC gave a brief update on the three staff he had recruited through the Action on Disability initiative. Two would be staying with the College, but one would be leaving, as he had struggled to adapt to the stores environment.

4.0 **What happens next? Research on the employment and further study of graduates with disabilities**

4.1 MA, attending from the Careers Service, explained that he belonged to the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) Disability Task Group, which produced an annual report on the destinations of disabled graduates. MA co-authored the 2016 report, which focussed on graduates from 2014. The data in the report was based on HESA’s survey of graduates 6 months after leaving university. The report was shared widely, with organisations including the Department for Work and Pensions, Equality Challenge Unit and the Association of Graduate Recruiters.

4.2 The report found that the proportion of graduates disclosing a disability decreased with the level of qualification. It also found that at all levels of qualification, the greatest proportion of disabled graduates had a SpLD. In terms of destinations after study, those who disclosed a disability were more likely to be unemployed and this was true at every level (UG first degree, higher taught degree, higher degree research).

4.3 The report explored how graduates in employment found out about their jobs. At first degree level, the results were similar for disabled and non-disabled graduates. However, following graduation from postgraduate taught degrees, it was interesting that no SpLD graduates became aware of the opportunity through a lecturer. Following graduation from postgraduate research degrees, however, SpLD graduates did hear about opportunities through a lecturer. Time spent as a researcher did seem to be helpful for these graduates in terms of accessing opportunities.

4.4 There was some discussion of the findings. SS wondered whether it was because of a disability that some graduates did not go into further study. LO commented that it would be interesting to look at whether there were different outcomes for students who stayed at the
same institution for their higher degree compared to those who went elsewhere. RS suggested that declining declaration rates at higher levels could be linked to changes in the Disabled Students Allowance and its reducing usefulness as students progressed in their studies. AW mentioned that research with disabled PhD students suggested that the course structure was more flexible and comfortable at that level; taught degrees were less flexible, requiring students to be somewhere at a time.

4.5 MA explained that the report was limited to graduates and gave no data on those who dropped out, which would be useful. It was also a nationwide picture rather than institution-specific. He went on to speak about how the report has been used by the Careers Service at Imperial to improve its provision. Initiatives included: a direct referral system from the DAS; an ‘opportunity update’ email list on JobsLive; ‘Careers Café’ events on finding employers and disclosure; one-to-one talks with organisations such as EmployAbility and Blind in Business; an access to employment event; and information on its website.

4.6 RS made the point that the general unemployment figures for people with disabilities had not changed in 30 years, despite legislation. However, the statistics showed that for certain disabilities there was more discrimination than others (e.g. 80% of blind people were unemployed). He felt that this had an impact on stigma and on willingness to disclose. The stigma associated with learning difficulties had declined over time and disclosure had increased, which showed that things could change and improve.

4.7 LL asked MA whether there were other things on his ‘wish list’ for Imperial. MA said that some universities had targeted careers programmes for groups of disabled students (e.g. a series of workshops for students with Asperger’s). Some also had dedicated disability advisors based in the careers service (e.g. LSE). JT suggested that MA might like to propose an associated action for the next Disability Action Plan.

Action: AH, MA

5.0 Workplace adjustments survey findings

5.1 AM, attending from Business Disability Forum, told the committee that Imperial had participated in a workplace adjustments survey, which was a tool designed to help employers identify barriers in their own processes. She explained that workplace adjustments were not only a legal duty, but improved productivity by helping employees to be the best they could. The term ‘workplace adjustments’ was now seen by many employers as more friendly and inclusive than ‘reasonable adjustments’. Adjustments were also starting to be seen as something that should be available for anybody who needed extra support at work, regardless of whether or not they had a disability.

5.2 AM reported that 22 line managers, 38 members of staff with disabilities and 2 members of staff responsible for making adjustments had participated in the survey. The most common adjustments were disability leave and adjusted hours, which AM described as ‘soft’ or ‘non-physical’ adjustments. Requests for adjustments were mainly made through line managers and the efficiency with which they were handled varied. AM suggested that Imperial line managers might need better clarity on what authority they had to ‘sign off’ on adjustments. None of the respondents had adjustments in place for when they started
employment with the College and waiting time varied widely, from several months to three or four years.

5.3 The survey found that, once adjustments were implemented, they were very effective. AM said that they helped employees stay in the job, improved how they worked with students and other stakeholders, helped managers support employees better and improved how employees worked with colleagues. However, the survey indicated a disconnect between line managers and employees. Managers who responded to the survey said they were confident about managing disabled employees, but employees felt there was not enough communication on the process and type of support available.

5.4 AM made three recommendations: reviewing and clarifying the end-to-end workplace adjustments process and communicating this to the entire workforce; educating line managers and relevant staff about the role of Occupational Health (and Access to Work); equipping line managers with appropriate skills and knowledge (‘soft skills’). She also recommended an organisation-wide approach, strategic messaging and mapping the employee lifecycle from on boarding to promotion.

Action: EDIC / OH

5.5 CO said that it was an enlightening report and that she would welcome more specific feedback on Occupational Health. AM agreed that the data did not go into sufficient detail. She added that, in her experience at other organisations, line managers could sometimes feel ‘left out’ of the communication between the employee and Occupational Health and that delays receiving reports compounded this. She advocated a three-way process, where the line manager joined for the second part of the OH appointment to prevent delays and to allow conversations about adjustments to happen early on. However, AM said there was no indication here that Occupational Health’s processes at Imperial were not working effectively, only that communication around the workplace adjustments process could be better.

5.6 LL thanked AM for attending and for sharing the findings of the survey.

6.0 Introduction to Change100 Programme

6.1 SR, attending from Leonard Cheshire Disability, explained that the Change100 programme was a summer internship programme for students with disabilities. Graduates with disabilities were 15% less likely to be in employment than non-disabled graduates, and where they were in employment, this was 12% less likely to be high skilled employment. SR explained that some of the barriers they faced involved complicated recruitment practices (e.g. online psychometric testing), a lack of understanding and reasonable adjustments, a fear of disclosure, unconscious bias and a lack of role models.

6.2 Launched in 2014, SR said that Change100 was a six month programme, comprising three months of paid work experience and a three month development programme (including CV workshops, interview skills, etc.). Student interns had a range of disabilities and were all on track for at least a 2:1. SR shared a video about the scheme, which introduced previous participants.
6.3 SR said that the programme gave employers access to untapped talent and that the interns helped to build greater diversity and confidence in participating organisations. There was also comprehensive support throughout the programme for the managers involved. The scheme received positive feedback from participants and from host organisations. Currently, Leonard Cheshire Disability was running assessment centres to identify its next cohort of interns, who would start placements in June 2017.

6.4 KC asked whether SR had any data on how well people move on after the programme. SR said that research had found that participants had a 50% better chance of securing employment. She said she would share an Impact Report on the scheme.

**Action: SR, AH**

6.5 JN thanked SR for attending and asked AH to circulate information about the scheme to DAC members.

**Action: AH**

7.0 Apprenticeships for individuals with disabilities

7.1 AH told the committee that Imperial would be required to pay the Apprenticeship Levy, a government initiative to increase the level of investment in skills and training, from April 2017. The College would be able to draw on its Levy to fund training for apprentices, who could be new or existing members of staff. She went on to explain that disabled people were under-represented in the number of people taking up apprentices and that it was important to ensure that the College’s apprenticeship schemes were inclusive and widely advertised. However, there was also an opportunity to develop a more tailored scheme. The government had introduced greater flexibility on the requirement for apprentices to have English and Maths qualifications at GCSE before starting an apprenticeship (which some disabled people found hard to attain, even though they would make excellent apprentices) and there was also financial support available for employers taking on young disabled people with Education, Health and Care Plans.

7.2 KC said that he had spoken to Action on Disability about the possibility of taking on apprentices with disabilities. Having recruited young people with disabilities to work within Estates Facilities at Hammersmith, he felt there was an opportunity to develop an apprenticeship scheme that allowed people to draw on Levy funding to get additional training and support to develop in their job roles. He mentioned that business administration and security were areas that lent themselves well to apprenticeships. He felt the College should set aside a central fund for salaries for apprentices with disabilities and urged committee members to give the idea some consideration.

8.0 Update from Disability Advisory Service

8.1 As Mary Bown was unable to attend, AH said that she would circulate a written update from the Disability Advisory Service to committee members.

**Action: AH**
9.0 Update from Able@Imperial

9.1 SS reported that the next Able@Imperial Committee Meeting was scheduled for the following week. She added that the other staff networks had new committee chairs and that she would be meeting with them in the weeks ahead. She was also planning to attend the upcoming National Association of Disabled Staff Networks conference in Edinburgh.

10.0 Any Other Business

10.1 JN recorded the committee’s thanks to Kevin Cope, who would be retiring in April, and Leyla Okhai, who would be leaving Imperial in April to join the University of Leicester.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 7 June 2017, 15:30 – 17:00
Faculty Boardroom, Level 4 Faculty Building