

ESE Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Culture Committee

Minutes

25 January 2023

12:00 – 1:30 pm

Location: RSM 1.47 and MS Teams

In attendance: Becky Bell, Sophia Quazi, Katharina Kreissig, Anita Murphy, Diego Mesa Pena, Rebecca Smith, Dylan Rood, Rob Lowther, Bethany Crenol, Sneha Saunders, Adriana Paluszny Rodriguez, Ellya Kanimova

1. Welcome and matters arising from the last meeting

Becky Bell has now taken over from Jo Morgan as EDI Chair. Thanks to Jo for all her hard work, and to all committee members for their continued efforts.

Becky Bell approached Mark Sutton with personal concerns about rearranging teaching when unwell. Mark agreed that this is a developing issue, following Covid, and came up with a seven-step guideline for what to do in this scenario. It has been circulated with staff and will be added to the module handbook.

Sophia Quazi and Becky Bell have been invited to go to Hull to accept Athena Swan award.

Action: Becky Bell to send email to staff and postdocs about B&H initiative.

2. General update

a. FoE Diversity Impact Programme progress

Two out of six eligible students (Widening Participation) attended the informal sessions but provided great feedback. The other phase of the programme is peer mentorship. Only one of our students has signed up to become a peer mentor so far, Sophia Quazi will provide training. The legacy of this project could be to have consistent training for peer mentorship.

b. Bullying and Harassment sessions update

The bullying & harassment initiative with Melanie Lee was launched at the all-staff departmental meeting on 12th January. The initiative will involve both 1-1 meetings with Melanie, and conversation spaces. The conversation spaces will allow people to talk about B&H in a group setting. Melanie will record key thoughts and feedback to the EDIC for use in our strategy.

Dylan Rood expressed concerns about confidentiality and the design of the questions to be asked by Melanie. Dylan shared a presentation, which discussed placing the focus on the different types of B&H experienced, and the subsequent effect on victims. Dylan also suggested including a question which asked whether the incident(s) were reported and if so, whether this had a positive effect.

The committee discussed the fact that there are currently no B&H specific training courses for managers. It was proposed that the EDI committee pushes for ESE Managers to take a training course on B&H – this would include all line managers, DUGS, DPGS, PhD supervisors etc. It was noted that the MHAT have made mental health first aid training mandatory for those running field trips, this shows that training can be made mandatory.

3. Events

a. International Day of Women and Girls in Science – 11th Feb

Activities for International Day of Women and Girls in Science took place on Friday 10th February. There was a lunch, open to all staff and students, and Zainab Titus spoke about her outreach activity with girls in Nigeria.

The outreach fund can be run again this year. Last year it was launched on 11th Feb, and only received one application by Zainab Titus. It is important to market it a bit more this year to increase applications. The committee will need to help with promotion as there is currently no Communications Manager in post. A panel will be required for assessment of applications.

b. Lists of event suggestions from Athena SWAN Working Group

There is a blank sheet on the EDIC Teams Channel for committee members to add ideas for events celebrating EDI-related days/events. A link to the EDI calendar has also been added to the Teams Channel. Suggestions can be small-scale or large-scale, the EDI budget can be spent on these activities.

4. Support for neurodiverse/neurodivergent (ND) students

The Department is aware of students with existing diagnoses, as when they join the College they are automatically signposted to DAS. DAS looks at the evidence and reassesses whether it is relevant to their studies at Imperial. If so, they create a reasonable adjustments document which is tailor made to the student's individual needs. If a student has already started at Imperial and presents with a possible neurodiversity, commonly ADHD, they are put forward to DAS for screening providing they do not already have an existing diagnosis. If the screening shows that the student is neurodiverse, then adjustments will be made. These can be temporary, while more evidence is received. Details of students' neurodiversity can only be shared with staff with permission from the student.

5. Student survey

The staff Culture Survey was run as part of the Athena Swan Action Plan. Sophia Quazi would like to run a similar survey for students.

Sophia suggested front loading the survey to tackle survey fatigue. These early questions would include those about B&H and sexual violence. If the answer to any of the questions is yes, then the survey will lead to further questions to explore more in depth.

The committee questioned whether 'microaggressions' is a widely understood term. Students have been given training materials on this subject, and an online course is available.

Once survey data collected, a clear document will need to be drafted showing who is responsible for the information and how will it be used.

Action: Committee members to look at survey and provide comments on the document in Teams.

6. AOB

Sophia Quazi encouraged committee members to watch Natasha Dowey's talk on YouTube.

Students are struggling as a result of the renting crisis in London. The committee discussed signposting them towards renters' unions (Acorn, London Renters Union), Student Union Advice Manager, Central Accommodation Office.