



Equalities and Diversity Committee

Wednesday 21st October 2020

Present:

Adil Rahoo (VP GSBS) (Chair)
Robert Gallacher [Care Experienced Officer (CEO)]
River Gowans (LGBT+ Officer)
Amanda Kerr [Disable Students Officer (DSO)]
Laiba Tareen (International Officer);
Linda Sherry (Mature and Part Time Officer)
Serena Piotta (EDN Officer)
William Penrith (Sports E&D Champion)
Zoe Nicholson (VP SCEBE)

Apologies:

Vincent Waters (Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer); Natalie Elliot (E&D Society Champion); Susan Docherty (Student President); Tabitha Nyariki (VP SHLS); Adrian Lui (GCU Equality and Diversity Lead)

Present:

Sara MacLean, Student Voice Team Leader (Clerk)

1. Apologies

As noted above

2. Minutes

Minutes of 11/03/20 was approved

3. Action Points

All Action Points from 11/03/20 have be resolved

4 Liberation – Representation Officer Review

Chair introduced the paper on a thematic review of the liberation/representation groups. This is the first stage and E&D are asked to discuss and feedback on the outline of the review.

LGBT+ Officer noted that the purpose of lib/rep groups should be about more than just campaigning, that community building and creating a sense of belonging within the university are equally important.

International Officer stated that the groups should also be about building bridges with other groups. International Students are often experiencing indirect discrimination in seminar activities or lectures with International students not being asked to join study groups or social activities

LGBT+ Officer and EDN Officer agreed that the groups should recognise intersectionality and build bridges with others.

DSO identified that tackling discrimination should also be at the heart of the groups.

Members noted that GCU London should be more integrated into the groups.

5. Digital accessibility- DSO spoke about increasing digital accessibility. They had been working on their own microsite within the website but also noticed that there are areas that could be improved for the whole website. The SA website is difficult to navigate as it is without using a screen reader. DSO will share a video on the accessibility features that members can use in their own microsite on the WhatsApp group and asked Officers to ensure that their micro-site was accessible. Chair spoke about new legislation that requires the university website to be accessible for all. This is immensely important this year as we are online.

6. Covid, Digital Learning and Mental Health Provisions –VP SCEBE spoke on behalf of the MHW Officer. The online situation we find ourselves in this year is not ideal for many people's mental health, so we need to ensure that students' mental health is a priority this year. The Partnership Agreement on Mental Health will be running events focusing on mental health as well as campaigns. We want to make sure everyone has a support system at university.

LGBT+ Officer would like to see campaigns about the effects of social media on mental health. Many are turning to social media but it can be damaging to mental health.

CEO noted that he has gotten in touch with the outdoor activity group but they are not taking memberships just now because of the covid restriction. VP SCEBE will look into this and confirmed that sports clubs can be open to new members and host online activities. Further, soon the outdoor sports will start. **(Action: VP SCEBE)**

DSO noted that the Arc had been turned into a test and trace centre. This was concerning for two reasons. Some students are fearful of coming onto campus with the centre so close and people coming for testing getting lost. VP SCEBE noted that the centre was well signposted and care was taken to ensure that co-mingling of the test centre and the rest of the university was minimised. DSO noted this but students are also concerned about the shared travel links into the university/centre. DSO also was concerned about the provisions for sporting activity being reduced due to this change. VP SCEBE stated that it is the priority to get outdoor sports started and these don't rely on the Arc. DSO asked about the outdoor gym. VP SCEBE stated that it is currently closed because there is no way to clean every time it is used.

7. Tackling racism – Chair introduced the university working group on tackling racism that started last year. Chair and VP SHLS have both sat on it and helped to develop recommendations that were presented to the University Executive Board. Chair noted that there was some pushed back by university for more evidence however calling for more evidence is not the optional solution as it will delay action and does not recognise the lived experience that group members had in drawing up the recommendations. The chair noted that after this initial pushback, the recommendation has been recognised by the University Executive Board.

Chair asked group to consider, discuss and then work with the university on addressing systematic inequalities within the university and tackling inequality in the curriculum.

LGBT+ spoke about how international students often experience a massive culture shock. More needs to be done to articulate unwritten rules so international students can better adapt.

EDN Officer stated that in terms of the curriculum – EDN students don't feel comfortable speaking about what is happening in the classroom and we shouldn't solely rely on them to do so. Further, A university-led group makes it even harder because the backlash possible. If it is for and by students it would be easier. Things only being taught/led from a UK or western point of view. Some lecturers are starting to address this and recognising that it is from their viewpoint.

CEO asked if the Class Reps could be utilised for this? How can we empower Class Reps to raise these concerns? At the moment, Class Reps would not all be equipped to understand or raise it.

The Chair spoke about the importance of evidencing and asked members to be proactive in this.

8. Trans Day of Remembrance and Trans Friendly Changing Areas – Trans Day of Remembrance will be on Nov 20th where we remember people who have been murdered the last year. So far this year 33 people have been murdered for being trans. Intersectionality is important as many of these people are from EDN background. EDN Officer stated they would be happy to join in with Trans Remembrances Day.

36% of students in UK have been harassed because they are trans. The gender recognition clinics in Scotland currently have a waitlist of about 2.5 years. There are practical things we can do to support trans people more. The bathrooms and changing areas on campus, especially for nursing students to get changed in scrubs as well as in the ARC, should become trans friendly.

LGBT+ group has hosted a candlelight vigil for Trans Day of Remembrance in previous years but they will be working on adapting their activity to be online. Chair suggested facts be broadcasted. SVTL talked about a social media takeover for that day and will talk to SA comms (**Action: SVTL**). SVTL will also highlight the need for Trans toilets and changing facilities with the FTO who meets with facilities (**Action: SVTL**)

9. Living Room Conversations- SVTL will send more information about these and will start coordinating a date (**Action: SVTL**).

10. Officer/Champion Update

EDN – Have been leading on Black History Month activities – talks, Show Racism the Red Card campaign. Looking at movies watch party for after BHM. On 24 October, EDN is working with ACS to host a wellbeing coach speaking about EDN wellbeing.

DGO – Made a video introducing and promoting the group to get more members. Working on getting the site more accessible. Working on getting in contact with the group and working with a student in London who has been having issues.

LGBT+ - Hosting regular meet-up for members. Today's meeting is about international pronouns as it is International Pronouns Awareness day soon.

International Officer- Currently developing a committee. International students have talked about the issue of not getting enough access to funds for digital poverty funds and working with university to address this.

Mature and Part-Time Students Officer – Just started this week but looking forward to working together.

CEO – just came on board as well and had a meeting with SVTL and VP SCEBE. Currently looking to talk to last year's officer as well as working with us all.

Sports Council E&D Champion –Sports groups contributed to the Show Racism the Red Card campaign and clubs have been looking at plans for inclusivity around EDN and LGBTQ+ – Hockey for example have been working with their league sports body on being more inclusive.

VP SCEBE – Worked on Show the Racism the Red Card with sports groups as well as publicising the message through social media and blog posts.

VP GSBS- Working on introducing a Caledonian Court Officer. Getting SAGE and E&D active and well run. Contributed to the Athena Swan accreditation and brought up the issue of international students not being included in funding for digital poverty with MPs.

14. **Date of Next Meeting** - Sports usually have training/games on Wednesday so will be hard to make the meetings. Other members noted childcare issue with the next planned date. SVTL to run a poll to decide best time (**Action: SVTL**).