

Confirmed Minutes

Meeting:	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC)
Date:	31 August 2023
Time:	2 pm to 4 pm
Venue:	Bedford Square: Ballroom

In attendance	Designation
Maria Jackson [Chair]	Head of Governance and Company Secretary
Antony Charles	People, Talent and Culture Manager
Rebecca Collins	Disability and Wellbeing Advisor
Nadia Michail	Disability and Wellbeing Manager
Andreea Turculet	Academic Administration and Assessment Executive
Arif Zaman	Enterprise Outreach Manager and Senior Lecturer Business
Dominic Bailey [Secretary]	Quality Executive

1.0	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members and noted there were no apologies.</p>
2.0	<p>Meeting of 26 April 2023</p> <p><u>2.1 Unconfirmed Minutes</u> (for approval)</p> <p>The committee reviewed the minutes of the meeting of 26 April 2023 and it was agreed that the minutes were a true record of the previous meeting.</p> <p><u>2.2 Action Tracker/Matters Arising</u></p> <p><u>2.2.1 Minutes of July 2022</u></p> <p><u>2.2.1.1 Item 8 refers</u></p> <p>A Zaman to review the UNESCO Gender Equality: How global universities are performing report Part 1 and 2 and submit a summary report to M Jackson for consideration for inclusion on the agenda for the next EDIC meeting.</p> <p>Completed. This will be presented at this meeting. See Agenda Item 8.</p> <p><u>2.2.2 Minutes of December 2022</u></p> <p><u>2.2.2.1 Item 4 refers</u></p> <p>A Charles and N Michail to work together on a disability policy or guidance document that covers staff members/job applicants with a disability.</p>

	<p>Completed. This will be presented at this meeting for recommended approval to the SMT. See Agenda Item 5.</p> <p><u>2.2.2.2 Item 8 refers</u></p> <p>M Jackson to discuss with the Head of Quality whether we need to have the same student representatives at each meeting or whether they can vary from meeting to meeting.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p><u>2.2.3 Minutes of February 2023</u></p> <p><u>2.2.3.1 Item 6 refers</u></p> <p>R. Collins to share with the Committee (via M Jackson) a link to the resources available from Lean In.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p><u>2.2.3.2 Item 7 refers</u></p> <p>N Michail to research the requirements for signing up to the University Mental Health Charter and report back to the Committee.</p> <p>Completed. Only providers with Taught Degree Awarding Powers are eligible to sign up to the University Mental Health Charter.</p> <p><u>2.2.4 Minutes of April 2023</u></p> <p><u>2.2.4.1 Item 3a refers</u></p> <p>N Michail to consult with S Karim and seek advice on a suitable replacement for the Academic Registrar in reference to the Pregnancy, Maternity, and Parenting Guide: Support Plan.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p><u>2.2.4.2 Item 3b refers</u></p> <p>N Michail to secure approval from the Compliance Manager on the sections highlighted within the document.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p><u>2.2.4.3 Item 3c refers</u></p> <p>N Michail to submit the amended Pregnancy, Maternity and Parenting Guide to M Jackson for final sign-off.</p> <p>Completed.</p>
	For Approval
3.0	<p>Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy</p> <p>The Chair presented the policy and explained that all proposed changes were minor not for discussion and asked if there were any queries or comments around the proposed amendments to the policy.</p>

	<p>An issue was raised around the link for the Self-help and Online Resources with N Michail reporting that these resources are no longer accessible from our website following the revamp of the website. She explained that she would be transferring the resources to another platform (probably Canvas for students and SharePoint for staff) prior to the start of the new academic year and agreed to provide the Chair with updated hyperlinks once available.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to approve the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy subject to the minor amendment discussed.</p>
4.0	<p>Student Guide to Mental Health and Wellbeing</p> <p>The Chair presented the Student Guide to Mental Health and Wellbeing explaining that the changes made reflect those made to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy. She added that the link to the Self-help and Online Resources would need to be updated following the transfer of resources discussed earlier.</p> <p>There were no further comments regarding the minor changes proposed to the policy and the Committee members agreed to approve the Student Guide to Mental Health and Wellbeing subject to the minor amendment discussed.</p>
5.0	<p>Staff Disability Policy</p> <p>A. Charles presented the Staff Disability Policy and noted that there was some discussion during the development stage of the policy as to whether it should be a guidance document or a policy and that it was agreed by A. Charles and the Quality team that it would be more suitable to make it a policy for recommended approval to the SMT.</p> <p>A. Charles went on to give a brief overview of the definitions set out in the policy as set out in the Equality Act (2010) and outlined the approach, scope, aims, and responsibilities this policy mandates for Bloomsbury Institute staff at all levels. He then invited any comments or questions from Committee members.</p> <p>The Chair said she had some textual and minor amendments (not for discussion) that she would share with A. Charles outside of the meeting. In addition, she:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reminded A. Charles of the Institute's agreed terminology around disability, and it was agreed that some amendments would be necessary in this respect. noted the focus on the built environment under the section on the working environment, but recommended that consideration be given to covering also the psychological environment given the importance of the latter for mental wellbeing. A. Charles agreed to formulate some wording around this particular point and submit this to The Chair and he agreed to review the other suggestions. questioned whether the considerations for redeployment should not extend beyond safety ones alone. <p>The Staff Disability Policy was approved subject to the amendments referenced above.</p> <p>The Chair took the opportunity to thank A. Charles for having developed this new policy document.</p>
6.0	<p>Mental Health Checklist</p> <p>The Chair presented the Mental Health Checklist reminding Committee members that the SMT had tasked her with developing a Mental Health Checklist for completion by the EDIC in order to inform the SMT's response to Lord Haflon's letter of 5 June in which he asked all HE providers for "the strongest possible commitment" to the mental health of their students. The Chair added that she had drawn on on the DfE Research Report on HE Providers' Policies and Practices to Support</p>

	<p>Student Mental Health, the University Mental Health Charter, the Mentally Healthy Universities Framework and the Suicide-Safer Universities Framework when drafting the Checklist.</p> <p>The Chair noted that there was consensus on the majority of questions but invited discussion on the following in order to present an agreed response to the SMT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 3 • Question 20 • Question 23 • Question 37 • Question 60 • Question 69 • Question 70 • Question 71 • Question 104 • Question 190 <p>Several members of the Committee shared their comments with the Chair for each of the questions and the Chair agreed to amend the Checklist accordingly.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M Jackson to amend the Mental Health Checklist to reflect advice given in response to the above questions prior to submission to the SMT.
	<p>For consideration or consideration and action</p>
7.0	<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report [For consideration and action]</p> <p>7.1 <u>May 2023 Update Report for SMT</u></p> <p>The Chair flagged the following key highlights from the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A New Framework for Inclusive Higher Education which has been developed by a number of providers as part of one of the Collaborative Enhancement Projects sponsored by the QAA. The Framework covers five core areas of activity, namely Structures and Processes; Curriculum Design and Delivery; Assessment and Feedback; Community and Belonging and Pathways to Success. • Key points from the OIA's Annual Report 2022 from an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective. These include an over-representation of international students, especially non-EU students in the complaints the OIA receives; a small increase in complaints relating to harassment and sexual misconduct; opportunities the OIA sought during the year to highlight the challenges facing many disabled students, and the need for higher education providers to resource support services appropriately; a casework note published in July 2022 on complaints relating to pregnancy, parenthood and childcare, together with some case summaries; and four new judicial review claims (compared to eight in 2021). • Publication of a revised edition of QAA guidance on how best to support and enhance the experience of international students. <p>7.2 <u>June 2023 Update Report for SMT</u></p> <p>The Chair highlighted the following key points from the report:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The renewal of our Mindful Employer Charter status. This has involved us having to submit a reflection on how we are promoting our commitment to better mental health at work, providing details on good practice (where appropriate) that is in place, and reflecting on and providing details of areas for improvement; including actions taken to address these. The creation of a Disability Inclusion Institutional Framework (DIIF) by Carol Evans (honorary visiting professor at Cardiff University) and Xiaotong Zhu (University of Lincoln). Although, the focus is on disability, the authors of the framework have flagged its considerable potential as a universal inclusion framework because its recommendations align closely with those identified for other disadvantaged groups in higher education. <p><u>7.3 July 2023 Update Report for SMT</u></p> <p>The Chair flagged the following key entries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An update on the OfS Consultation on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct. Key points of a CGHE webinar on international student engagement and support. An update on the latest London Higher EDI Network at which the Head of Governance and Company spoke on EDI governance structures.
8.0	<p>UNESCO Gender Equality Report</p> <p>A. Zaman presented the report explaining that it focuses on the efficacy of HEI on a Global Scale in their movement towards Gender Equality and flagged the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female students outnumber male students globally. African universities are the most equal when it comes to differentiation of sex population across subjects. Globally, universities are focusing more attention on measuring women's access to higher education. Women are less represented in senior academic positions and published research papers. There are increasingly developing initiatives, policies and mechanisms that universities can and are undertaking to increase and promote gender equality in their institutions. <p>He went on to share the recommendations developed as a result of these key findings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Involve entire university community to identify gender bias and devise solutions thus embedding the goal into the culture. 2. Introduce more initiatives focusing on the progress and success of women. 3. Ensure that policies and services are widely communicated and implemented. 4. Regularly collect and analyse gender-disaggregated data. 5. Engage with gender equality experts in other sectors outside higher education. <p>A discussion ensued regarding what the Institute can do and is doing locally to promote gender equality and conversations around these topics.</p>
	<p>For information</p>
9.0	<p>Mindful Employer</p> <p><u>9.1 Feedback on renewal of Signatory status</u></p> <p>The Chair reminded the committee that the Institute's membership was initiated 2 years ago and so we have made only one renewal application to date.</p> <p>The Chair shared the following positive feedback on our renewal application:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was helpful to see the range of training that has been available to staff in the two years since becoming a Charter signatory. It was particularly reassuring to read that you provide training specifically for Managers. Line managers are usually the initial point of contact for staff so have a crucial role to play in staff's experience of being supported by the organisation. Managers who are confident in having conversations with staff about their wellbeing and know how to respond appropriately can help to reduce distress and levels of absenteeism and presenteeism. Supporting employee mental wellbeing: It was great to read about the good practice you already have in place. This included a Wellbeing Policy, an EAP, Togetherall and MHFAiders, to name but a few. Your review showed a variety of support available to employees. Mindful Employer recommends staff are routinely reminded of the resources available. Research has shown that numbers of staff accessing support, particularly EAPs, reduces over time. However, where employers take the time to regularly remind staff of the scope of the support available, numbers remain more constant. Too often we visit organisations where HR and the Executive Staff have taken the time to provide a variety of support, but staff remain unaware of the full range. <p>One of the recommendations to the Institute was in relation to feedback – what is working well in terms of support around mental wellbeing.</p> <p>The Chair went on to thank A. Charles and N. Michail for their support and input in the renewal application process.</p>
10.0	<p>Update from Disability and Wellbeing Manager</p> <p>There were no updates from the Disability and Wellbeing Manager.</p>
11.0	<p>Challenging Racisms in Higher Education and Beyond</p> <p>A. Zaman presented the document and noted that the conference had centred around exploring and challenging various forms of racism within academia and society more broadly and commented that senior management of the Institute were engaging throughout the day which was encouraging.</p> <p>He went on to provide members with some key takeaways from the conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of community mobilisation with students, student leaders and journalists. Lived experience of casteism, class and other types of discrimination. Discourse and narrative around care must be looked at to avoid detrimental effects of Islamophobia and Antisemitism. <p>He went on to share several upcoming and ongoing opportunities, forums, and organisations that providers can engage in to be made more aware and support these causes within their own institutes.</p> <p>The Chair thanked A. Zaman for his update and expressed an interest in the problem faced by providers to attract interest in particular network groups and the benefits of coming together as a network of providers within those individual network groups.</p>
	Any Other Business
12.0	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>A. Zaman informed members of the newly introduced Bloomsbury Radio Spotify channel to tap into a larger community to branch out the issues discussed within this committee and how this can be translated in liaison with Bloomsbury radio.</p>

	Date and venue of next meeting
13.0	To be Confirmed