Equality and Diversity Scheme Consultation Feedback

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK FROM STAFF
Consultation Period – From 18th March 2014 to 15th April 2014

The scheme is split into two parts; students and staff. The main purpose for the consultation is to review and establish whether the proposed equality objectives are supported and whether the actions set out will enable the objective to be delivered. The first part of this document summarises the main themes from feedback received both from focus group interviews and include specific views/comments submitted by staff using the consultation form or directly by emails where not already reflected in the main themes.

1. Equality Objective 1: Promoting Diversity in the College’s senior leaders

1.1 The view is that diversity cannot be built at the senior level if it is not encouraged at a junior level. Diversity needs to be promoted at the lower levels to encourage diversity to progress to the senior levels.

- We agree with this and will be developing a Talent Management strategy which will take into account ways to address this. However, currently we are sponsoring staff to participate in the Aurora programme which targets emerging talents. This group of staff will also be eligible to participate in an internal Leadership programme and we will be ensuring that there will be a gender balance amongst participants.

1.2 Although female representation has increased at a senior level over the recent years, as part of the strategy to improve the gender balance, we also need to monitor whether senior roles with large portfolios such as finance and research are equally available to women as their male counterparts.

- In addition to encouraging all HoDs to advertise all senior roles in the departments, we will also review job descriptions and person specifications to monitor for potential bias that may discourage women to apply for senior roles with large portfolios.

1.3 Women are not well represented as HoDs in the Senior Management Team, with a 2:18 female to male ratio.

- The College’s initiative, Women Enabling Programme (WEP) to prepare women to apply for promotion to professor level, has resulted in a number of the cohort enquiring about applying for Heads of Department positions. This alongside better recognition for women in departments, as outlined in 1.2, will aid greater diversity in the SMT. The WEP will be run for a BME cohort this year as well.

1.4 When parents and applicants visit for College Open Days and graduation ceremonies, diversity within staffing is not obvious. This makes an impact and may influence decisions made by applicants with protected characteristics if they perceive they do not have access to role models nor may not have the relevant support network.

- We are aware that diversity of staff is not representative of the diverse student body and are trying to address this. The College is also supporting the
development of diversity networks and encouraging awareness raising events and activities to foster an inclusive environment.

1.5 One of the comments made is ‘as far as I can tell there is no action plan to change the composition of senior leadership in the college’.

- We have put in place and also developing a raft of initiatives, processes and procedures to enable the College to eventually achieve a more balanced and diverse composition of senior leadership in the College e.g. fair recruitment and selection process, performance appraisal systems, unconscious bias training, Stellar HE Different Leaders programme, as well as the gender programmes noted above.

2 Equality Objective 2: Improve the percentage of staff disclosure of equality data

2.1 There is a concern about what is done with the data captured during the recruitment process in terms of protected characteristics, and who has access to that data. There needs to be some clarity on what the merits are of staff disclosing their status. The impression is that the main purpose for asking staff to declare their status is to boost the statistics associated with Equality and Diversity at Royal Holloway. What is Royal Holloway going to do to make staff want to disclose this personal information?

Quotes from the feedback form:

'Wider communication needed, not just MyView (one colleague didn’t look at it for the past 2 years since starting here)'

'I find this objective incredibly repulsive and an invasion of student and staff privacy. Students and staff should be treated equally regardless of what they choose to disclose. To pressure individuals for disclosing deeply personal information for the sake of statistics and public appearance is utterly disturbing. Please reconsider this objective.'

- As referred to in the focus group, the data captured during the recruitment process is kept only within Human Resources and used to analyse any trends that may occur from unconscious bias and monitor any changes in the equality and diversity gap. Paragraph 3.1.3 and 3.2.3 in the draft Equality & Diversity Scheme explained that the equality objectives are developed after analysis of the available data and one of the issues is the lack of data which will not only help us identify gaps but also to prioritise actions needed to address any inequalities.

In order to persuade staff to disclose equality information, as indicated in the action plan, we aim to carry out a campaign to explain the following:

- We have a legal obligation to monitor that we comply with the Equality Act which means we have to collect the data
- The data is only used for analysis and for planning purposes
- The data cannot be accessed by colleagues or line managers and processes are in place to protect staff’s confidentiality.
- There is an option, ‘do not wish to disclose’ for staff who still do not wish to disclose any part of their personal information
- How to access MyView to ensure your data is accurate
3 Equality Objective 3: Increase the representation and success in the careers of disabled staff

3.1 Flexible working and the speed of response for the staff who are disabled is of concern. Is enough being done for disabled staff that need immediate assistance in getting around campus etc?

Quotes from the feedback form:
‘Part of the campus is very unfriendly and inaccessible’.

- Part of the objective is dependent on the disclosure of staff who are not obviously disabled.
- Working group forums are held usually on a monthly basis whereby the needs of staff and students are put forward for consideration. The Estates Department is responsible for making physical improvements (eg. ramps, lifts automatic doors etc.) and holds a small budget for essential minor alterations to be carried out in the short term. More complex and expensive issues are considered on their merits and, if determined to be a necessity, are put forward to the Major Projects Board for funding approval.
- There is a continuous programme to improve the environment and accessibility around the College. A full Access Audit of the College’s Estate was carried out in 2013 whereby all necessary improvements were identified and scheduled on a priority basis. Each year a certain amount of funding is allocated to carry out improvements according to priority.

4 Equality Objective 4: Increase the representation of staff who declare as BME particularly at senior academic and professional service level

4.1 The College Strategy video aired to employees did not showcase much diversity – the only black person shown was a cook. This suggests BME stereotyping influences.

- This comment about the Strategy video had been made prior to this consultation and has been taken on board by the Communications team.

4.2 There was a concern expressed that the perspective of BME staff is not taken into account and as a consequence BME staff were not confident that their concerns or grievances were treated seriously. The view was that further work was required to build the confidence of BME staff to come forward with concerns about the way they are managed or impacted by decisions within the College.

- The work to set up a formal College BME Network is supported at senior level. As with other formal diversity networks facilitated by the College, the aim is to establish a forum which can be a platform for two way dialogues between staff and the College executive team. With ongoing engagement we hope to build the trust and confidence of BME staff.

Support was given for the Stellar HE Programme which was recently piloted. The programme works with academics and professionals from BME backgrounds in developing their leadership skills if they are already in a senior role, or helping them establish how their own uniqueness can benefit them in their career progression. This is a way of building a critical number of BME leaders able to
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present different perspectives and engage with the College Executive to address issues of concern.

As announced on the 30th May 2014, the College has been accepted on the ECU’s trial Race Equality Charter Mark initiative. The work as part of the Charter Mark will require the College to analyse, identify and put in place actions to address inequality. As part of the process to achieve and maintain the Charter mark the College would be open to external scrutiny demonstrating its commitment to equality and diversity.

5 Equality Objective 5: Improve the gender balance across all staff groups and the representation of female academics and research staff particularly at senior level

5.1 Royal Holloway is currently running some good initiatives, such as Athena Swan for women in Science, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education. The gender balance needs to be improved from a junior level up. Female academics and professionals should have more support in terms of flexible working, childcare and maternity.

- We agree that gender balance needs to be improved from a junior level up. The College already has Flexible Working and Family Friendly policies of e.g. maternity and paternity leave in place to support staff, which can be accessed at https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/humanresources/policiesproceduresandforms.aspx
  For more information or advice please contact your line manager or the relevant Human Resources Manager.

5.2 Many female academics do collaborations on research papers rather than solo papers, sometimes working in a team. Collaboration papers are now being recognised for credit in a promotion application. Post-doctoral female researchers on 3 year fixed term contracts team up on research papers. However, as they are not solo publications they are often not recognised for their contribution. Also, as a fixed term employee, these researchers are not subject to the terms and conditions and benefits of a permanent post. Further work is required at this level to support the career development of early career researchers and post-doctoral researchers.

- For all staff on a College contract, fixed term or permanent, all relevant terms and conditions should apply for the duration of their contract at the College.

Early career researchers and post-doctoral researchers have access to the On-track programme and mentoring/probation advice. Additional support such as relevant workshops for PDRAs will be provided as and when required in order for them to gain knowledge and confidence in building their careers.

Quotes from the feedback form:

5.3 ‘Certain programmes (e.g. MBA) are predominantly taught by male staff. This needs to be looked at, also who takes up admin roles amongst academics’.

- The process involved in developing and reviewing courses now requires that equality impact analyses are carried out to ensure that diversity issues are taken into consideration. Departments are encouraged to develop their own workload
management models and to implement them equitably. We will be more explicit on these two points in the action plan.

5.4 ‘50% of the objective (2 out of 4) focus on obtaining awards, rather than addressing the problem per se. This sounds like the plan is to try to get recognition (merited or not) for how much equality we’ve achieved and to write that on our flag, rather than to genuinely improve equality moving forward. The one objective which seems well placed for achieving more equality is the Women promotion project. I hope that this will prove effective once it has been launched’.

- It may appear that the focus of the action plan is centred on obtaining awards. However, working to achieve these awards is indicative of the College’s commitment to equality and diversity. The action plans behind these awards are all about moving the equality agenda forward. An independent evaluation into the impact and effectiveness of ECU’s Athena SWAN Charter has confirmed that the awards scheme advances gender equality and changes the working culture and attitudes within participating departments and universities. More details can be obtained from: Advancing women’s careers in STEMM: evaluating the effectiveness and impact of Athena SWAN

The Women Enabling Programme has been launched and we will be evaluating it.

6 Equality Objective 6: Improve the representation and career progression of staff who declare their LGBT status

6.1 There is concern that there is not enough of an understanding across the college of what the acronym stands for. Perhaps there should be more training of what the acronym means and where the acronym is present on the website, there should be a link to the definition.

- We are working on the website and will ensure that the acronym is explained. This will be included in the action plan.

6.2 A balance between the progression and promotion of LGBT staff and non-LGBT staff needs to be met, without reducing the statistics for non-LGBT staff. The issue with this objective is that being LGBT is usually not obvious, and there is not enough understanding of the implications of being openly LGBT. It is suggested that perhaps there could be a Diversity/LGBT champion in each Department/School, as this would send a good message to other staff and students that there is a safe person for them to speak to. An idea would be to distribute a postcard or leaflet to staff with information regarding RHUL’s support of equality and diversity. It is very important to show support and a sense of understanding to students who are perhaps struggling with their sexuality. It would also send a message to those who do discriminate that it is not acceptable and that Royal Holloway does not support that view.

- The idea of having a Diversity/LGBT champion in each Department/School will be considered. There is now an information leaflet on Diversity Networks/Forums in the College that is given out at Induction. We will work with the RHUL Staff LGBT Network and the Student Union:
  - To develop a postcard or leaflet to staff with information on the College’s commitment to equality and diversity.
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- To hold an event to highlight the issues related to ‘coming out’.

7 Equality Objective 7: To progress the Action Plan from the Equal Pay Audit 2012 and conduct the second Equal Pay Audit in 2014

Quote from feedback:
‘Regarding objective 7 (equal pay), the action plan specifies ‘action taken to close or explain the gap’. I have two thoughts about this. Firstly, ‘action taken’ is not terribly specific, and I am still wondering what is being done? Secondly, it appears that a satisfactory outcome according to the objectives would be to merely ‘explain’, rather than actually ‘close’, the gap. This seems to me to be somewhat of a cop-out. Given that the gender pay gap is significantly higher at RHUL compared to the sector, it seems highly unlikely that it can be explained away as a reasonable state of affairs. Therefore, I believe it is insufficient to just aim to ‘explain’ the gap. I believe a more appropriate objective would be to close the gap and to be specific about the steps undertaken toward this end’.

- Following the last Equal Pay Audit 2012, the actions detailed in the attached action plans have been in the main addressed. However, we are now planning to conduct our next Equality Pay Audit in Autumn 2014. Following the Audit, a new action plan with targets will be developed.

8 Equality Objective 8: Remove and minimise the disadvantages experienced by staff due to their protected characteristics in relation to the way they are managed

8.1 In order to raise awareness of what the protected characteristics are, perhaps a condition of attending compulsory equal opportunity training courses should be written into the employment contract.

- Equality and diversity training will be compulsory. We are finalising plans to launch an e-learning training programme that can be accessed by all staff and uptake of the course can be monitored. However, we recognise that equality and diversity training does not always take place in isolation e.g. as part of recruitment and selection training or CAPITAL which is for newly appointed academic staff. And, the depth of knowledge of equality and diversity will also depend on the job roles staff are in. Therefore, we are also developing an equality and diversity development framework which will take into consideration the needs of different staff groups.

8.2 On pp 21-2, Objective 8 of the document does mention removing or minimising the disadvantages of staff due to their protected characteristics in the way they are managed, and that action will be taken to ensure a supportive environment where policies such as flexible working are translated into practice. The protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity are not addressed regularly and consistently especially it is an issue in women’s career development. One of the main reasons why women have not reached the higher levels of employment at Royal Holloway is the problem of managing children and work.

- Flexible Working and Family Friendly policies already exist and are in operation so perhaps it is more about publicising them and showcasing how they are being translated into practice. This can certainly be a key action point in the Action Plan. We accept that Pregnancy and Maternity did not feature in the Objectives and will be included in Objective 6 as the actions to improve gender balance and women’s career development e.g. Flexible Working are also fundamental to mitigate against
the disadvantages of Pregnancy and Maternity. The academic promotions system now has a procedure in which special circumstances and time lost can be taken into account. These procedures are similar to those developed for REF.

Quotes from Feedback:
8.3 ‘Much clearer Guidance on the role of appraisals is required, are they for internal use? Will they be seen by HR? What will they be used for?’

- The guidance and paperwork associated with the current appraisal scheme has already been reviewed and consulted on. Work to develop a new scheme is already underway.

9 General Comments

9.1 A view was expressed that Royal Holloway is not a good employer as staff often feel undervalued and have no sense of belonging. This leads to disengagement and staff feel that no changes would be made even if they raised their concerns. Poor support from HR in the past has played a part in this. Now the culture needs to change, and this is not going to happen overnight. People’s own experiences of the changes expressed in the Equality and Diversity scheme will change the culture over time.

- A key objective in the RHUL Strategic Plan is ‘Our People and Culture’ which seeks to develop a high-quality, diverse and professional workforce. Page 16 of ‘Our future: The Royal Holloway Strategic Plan 2013-2020’ listed the actions required to achieve our goals. For the past year the College’s Human Resources Directorate has been working with the College Executive team and campus unions reviewing key policies and procedures and developing new organisational processes fundamental to develop and change the culture of the College. We have appointed Capita to conduct a Staff Engagement Survey. The information from the survey will help us identify issues that need to be addressed in order to promote an inclusive working environment where equality and diversity is promoted and differences are valued.

9.2 It was also felt that there was at times short sightedness in decision making and their impact at a Senior Management level with regards to finances within the department. There seems to be more emphasis in obtaining a “much needed” new member of staff, than supporting employees already in post. When handling personal cases management need to deal with the situation in a more sensitive manner.

- As part of the work in the development of a new Human Resources Strategy, we will be developing an Inclusive Talent Management Scheme, a large part of it will be about how we develop and retain our staff already in post.

9.3 More support is requested for the different equality and diversity networks. It would be prudent to have a set amount of money set aside for events, as currently there is no dedicated budget for the networks to use as they see fit. With the current process of applying for funding for an event the College can refuse to fund events without understanding the impact on the network and affected staff across College.

- The Equality & Diversity officer is working with the Diversity Networks to plan a schedule of events which should form the basis for making the case for Diversity Networks to be allocated budgets.
9.4 In the past there was a Senior Faculty Administrator network group in place, with sub-groups by Faculties. This gave some structure and support for ideas and issues, and was very much a peer support network. Perhaps this could be set up again. There is also an informal departmental group: School of Management Women’s Group which meets termly and would like some institutional support - on an informal level the VP Education has been very supportive. There is a reminder that just because the situation is worst in terms of gender imbalance in the Sciences it should not be considered that everything is fine in the other parts of the College.

- The Senior Faculty Administrators for the Science Faculty still meets on a regular basis and the wider group can be initiated again to be a Network that can benefit all administrators. There is a new informal School of Management Women’s group. However, the College will be launching a Women’s Forum which should be open to all women in the College.

9.5 It is often very difficult to prove discrimination. It was commented that some staff felt that if they took out a grievance regarding discrimination, this could actually cause more discrimination as they would be perceived as difficult or hostile.

- We will be consulting with the Unions on a new Dignity at Work Policy that will state clearly that discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated. There will be guidance provided on how to report discrimination or harassment.

9.6 There is a general comment that there is no clear plan to improve the representation and career trajectories of ethnic minority/disabled/LGBT staff members in the college.

- The Inclusive Talent Management Scheme being developed will be about developing the talent of staff regardless of their protected characteristics and supporting staff to progress their career.

9.7 There were comments that it feels a bit as though the only focus on staff is those who lecture and not much relating to all of the admin, business, clerical support staff, even facilities or cleaners etc. Another referred to the difference in career progression between academic and professional services staff. To quote, ‘It is difficult to measure what challenges staff in professional services face with regards to career progression, as staff are not able to advance unless a position becomes vacant. This is unlike academics who are able to apply for promotion without having to wait for a vacancy’.

- We accept that there are differences in the career progression pathways for academic and non-academic staff. However, the training and developmental opportunities are often for all staff groups e.g. the Strategic Leadership Development programme that has just been launched are open to all middle managers from all staff groups.

9.8 There was a view that the document at 45 pages long is not clear for the average reader and which parts are the strategy and which are background, and would be even less accessible to a diverse audience. Most of the so-called ‘objectives’ are aspirations, not specific, measurable objectives.

- Although the Equality & Diversity Scheme appeared long, the background information demonstrates how the Scheme was developed not in isolation but aligned with the strategic and legal context that the College is operating within. The equality objectives were also set following the analysis of data and intelligence gathered through surveys, focus groups and the feedback such as following this
consultation. The actions to achieve the objectives are often in line with initiatives required to develop the College as an organisation that will attract high quality staff and students, thus supporting the aspirations and goals of the College. We will revisit the action plan again to ensure that the outcomes are specific and measurable where possible. We will also produce a leaflet of a summarised version of the scheme.

9.9 There is a view that the document does not tackle the issue of opening up senior roles to part-time and job-share. When this was raised it was generally considered not possible because it hasn't been done before - especially job share. This is seen as such an outdated attitude, and investigating senior job-share opportunities and encouraging part-time and job-share applicants would be a real signal.

- All job roles are different however they will be reviewed on a case by case basis for its suitability for job sharing or part time working, regardless of the seniority of the role.

9.10 One thing that needs more attention is the composition of recruitment panels. It makes a world of difference for the candidate who they see before them. Although efforts are always made to get diversity it doesn't always work out. One key issue is Professorial recruitment panels, where it is seen to be more important to have all professors than to have a diversity of gender.

**Quote from Feedback form:**
‘An all-male interview panel is so incredibly off-putting to candidates even if they are 'used to it' - we need to be better than that, and as the tone set will not help female candidates perform well or be attracted to the institution. There is a view that it is more important that someone on the panel knows what it is like to be a woman than that all the panel know what it is like to be a professor. The lack of female Professors also put an added burden on the existing ones who are asked to spend a lot of time doing recruitment. More women Professors are needed ultimately, but in the meantime we should be more flexible to ensure gender diversity on recruitment panels.’

- As it is already acknowledged all efforts are made to ensure that recruitment and selection panels are diverse in composition. It does mean that women professors tended to sit on such panels on a more regular basis.

**CONSULTATION FEEDBACK FROM STUDENT**

1. Equality Objective One: good.
   - A measure of success is “Increased student satisfaction levels” – is this the NSS? In which case, are their questions directly related to understanding of diversity at university (by staff)?

- We would need to look at overall satisfaction as part of the student barometer survey – we are able to match demographic data with the results so we can explore satisfaction rates by some of the protected characteristics / those groups that we’re concerned about e.g. ethnicity, nationality. For those that we don’t collect e.g. sexual orientation – there are two options, we either (as some of the other objectives suggest) start trying to collect the data by asking students to declare (confidentially) other protected characteristics that we can then chart satisfaction levels against – or we need some other periodic reporting mechanism from representative groups and
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perhaps combined with self-identifying focus groups as suggested by the SU until we are collecting enough data.

- Fourth point promoting internationalisation – to have events by college, by the SU and in collaboration. Also, to create a small bursary only for international students as International Students are not eligible for any bursary or financial aid whilst at university, and in particular asylum seekers are charged international student rates with no access to additional financial support. STAR (an organisation representing and supporting Asylum Seekers) recommend charging home fees for asylum seekers and having some bursaries. Queen Mary University have done this well and it would improve our reputation as a university.

  We will make it clearer that the intention here is for collaborative events across a range of professional services with the SU. Asylum Seekers students would already have been assessed by Student Finance England and deemed home students and be in receipt of a maintenance loan and grant. Anyway in these circumstances we would be able to assist them with hardship funding and bursaries if they meet the criteria. We have also secured a small budget to assist international students who find themselves in hardship during their studies.

- Fifth point: welcome week and first year induction – how are they going to encourage integration of all student communities? Again, work with and apart from SU.

  We will amend welcome week to make it more specific e.g. encouraging the Pre-sessional programme students to act as peer guides and welcome week volunteers for new international students, to review the current programme of induction events to ensure the right balance of international student specific and generic “all-student” events, work with current international students to identify any barriers they felt to integration to help bring those barriers down for the next cohort…..

- The main tenet is for it to be noted to work with the SU and apart from them on all of the aims.

  Agreed we need to work together, but we also need to do some work on our own here. There are elements of welcome week/integration that the College needs to improve, and I think there is work for the SU to do itself (as I know you are already thinking about) e.g. engaging and involving under-represented groups in terms of membership services and representation.

  Where we need to work together, we should – but we also we need to recognise where it’s more appropriate for us to communicate what we’re doing and hold each other to account for it. In response to a general query as to whether there is an equivalent equality and diversity action plan in place for the SU (specific to SU services) the SU although currently do not have an Equality & Diversity Action Plan intends to develop one.

2. Equality Objective Six:

- Increased student satisfaction measures – clarify what this means and where we will discover this. If it means we have to run our own survey, not a problem.
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- It is right that we do need something that gives users of mental health support services an opportunity to feedback, although we do have broad brush satisfaction results in the student barometer – on areas such as Disability Support, Student Advisory, Counselling etc
  - It would be good to look at how we could expand the services we provide with the ESO and MH advisor. See what students love and need more of, as a part of this objective so it’s about more than just take up.

- We are continuously monitoring that the ESO service meet with the needs of students in terms of range and capacity. The MH Advisor is an example of our response to a growing need. It is a relatively new service and we will be monitoring its take up and assessing whether student needs are met. In addition, we are committed to providing students with a clear and structured opportunity to feedback on their individual experiences of the service.

3. Equality Objective Seven:
  - Already most of this is in the pipeline, so I’m not seeing anything incredible here. Still sceptical of their success measures, especially as feedback from disabled students is famously difficult to obtain, let alone positive feedback.
  - We do have some measure in the barometer but it’s not really specific enough. Ideally we really need some instantly accessible 24/7 feedback mechanism that lets people comment on services they have received – we will have to explore this further.
  - Would be good to have something about integration for physically and socially disabled students.

- As part of the College’s commitment to formalising and structuring the myriad social and co-curricular opportunities available to students we will work to promote greater integration of all students, irrespective of any protected characteristics and promote parity of opportunity for all. This will include a self-assessment of College run “Campus Life” events and functions to ensure the Programme is achieving these objectives.

4. Equality Objective Eight:
  - The first point is far too vague, as are the measures, but it’s still vitally important. I’m not sure what I can suggest apart from working with Educational Development, namely Mark Crompton who has some very good ideas.
  - We will tighten this up. Among other things we are also amending the Programme Approval Process to include equality impact assessment and a series of challenges that will encourage academics designing new programmes and reviewing existing ones to consider the appropriateness of teaching methods and assessment regimes for those with a range of protected characteristics.