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**SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES**

**EQUALITY COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday 18 October 2005**

**MINUTES**

**Members:** Professor Elisabeth Croll (Chair)  
Mrs Jan Airey  
Dr Fareda Banda  
Ms Maxine Brown  
Dr Jeevan Deol\*  
Ms Jacqui Freeman  
Professor Werner F Menski\*  
Dr Timon Screech\*  
Mrs Jean Tullett\*

**In attendance:** Mrs Karen Clarke (Executive Secretary)  
Ms Zoë Davis  
Ms Jo Halliday  
Mr Terry Harvey  
Ms Emily Crofts♦  
Ms Jenneh Kebbie (Minute Secretary)

*\* Those whose names are marked with an asterisk were unable to attend the meeting*  
*♦ Representing HR*

**1 Membership and terms of reference**

The Chair welcomed back members. Apologies were received from Dr Jeevan Deol, Professor Werner Menski, Dr Timon Screech and Mrs Jean Tullett, who were unable to attend. The Chair reported that the Student Union (SU) were holding elections on Wednesday 20 October 2005 to nominate Equality Committee representatives to attend the meetings, therefore for this meeting only, the SU was not represented.

It was suggested that in future, the first meeting of the Committee could be rescheduled for a later date to accommodate the election and nomination of the SU representatives on the Committee. If this was not possible then one of the Co-President could attend in their place.

The Committee noted the terms of reference [Appendix A]. The Chair made particular reference to points 3, 5, and emphasised the importance of implementing policies.

**2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2005 were **APPROVED**.

**3 Matters arising**

(i) *Recruitment Policy (minute 22)*

The HR Manager, Emily Crofts, reported that members of the Committee had given their comments to Tina Ohagwa, the Interim HR Manager (who had since left SOAS).

(ii) *Disability Liaison Group (DLG) (minute 23)*

The Committee was informed that the amendments to the DLG terms of reference had been made.

(iv) *Harassment Policies (minute 25)*

The Chair reported that there would be no need for the policy to come back to the Committee, and that the Diversity Advisor would work with colleagues to ensure that the policy linked in with existing grievance procedures.

Fareda Banda sought clarification from the School on the phrase 'bringing the School into disrepute', as she felt it was open to a wide interpretation. It was **AGREED** that the Executive Board would be asked to provide a definition of the phrase for both staff and students.

#### 4 **Review of previous year's work from the Diversity Advisor**

Fareda Banda asked for clarification on the role the Diversity Advisor, as it she felt that people were unaware of what the role entails. The Diversity Advisor said that she was responsible for organising and seeing the effective running of Equality Committee meetings, developing equality policies ensuring the implementation of policies, planning delivery of equality training and working with managers by giving advice and support on issues raised. She stated that she had limited contact with staff and students as her job description did not include casework. This was only to be carried out in exceptional cases, where it was deemed necessary.

Work carried out during 2005/06.

- (i) **Committee work** - The Diversity Advisor attended Staffing Committee as an attendee and together with the Disability Student Advisor had presented the Disability Policy to the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee and Teaching Policy Committee

The Equality Committee's terms of reference had been amended to include working groups to discuss specific issues in detail, notably the Disability Liaison Group (DLG).

- (ii) **Policy Development** - The Sexual Orientation Policy and the Race Equality Action Plan had been approved and work would be continuing with regard to the Harassment Policy.

The report from Equality Committee to the Governing Body was due on 9 December 2005

- (iii) **Work with Colleagues** – The Diversity Advisor had worked in partnership with Ali Hartrey, Assistant Registrar, (Head of Registry Systems Team), and Simon Gwynne, Human Resources Projects Co-ordinator, in providing statistical data for students and staff respectively.

The Diversity Advisor had worked together with the Purchasing Manager to ensure compliance with the Race Relations Amendment Act. The School's larger contractors had received a copy and were aware of the School's Equality and Diversity Policy.

- (iv) **External links** - The Diversity Advisor had become a member of the Bloomsbury Consortium Nursery group and had attended several meetings throughout the

year.

The Diversity Advisor had worked closely with Tony Sewell in putting on a Generating Genius Project, in May 2005. The project was aimed at working with boys from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds.

- (v) **Equality Website** - Jenneh Kebbie, Administrative Assistant was responsible for managing and updating the equality and diversity website. The website included information for both staff and students, and also publicised events. The Diversity Advisor thanked Jenneh Kebbie for her efforts in designing and maintaining the website
- (vi) **Equality Survey** - The web based staff equality survey would be accessible to all members of staff from 31 October 2005.

The Deputy Secretary's asked if a survey for students would be available. The Diversity Advisor replied that it would be a matter for discussion in the future.

## 5 Impact Assessment Report

The Chair said that she had recently received the Report of the Impact Assessment exercise and expressed disappointment with the final report. She reminded the Committee that the remit of the report was to look at the various equality policies and to assess their impact within the School. The Diversity Advisor tabled a copy of the recommendations from the 2003/04 Impact Assessment Report and highlighted the following points.

- (a) Points 4.17 and 4.17.1, the School had already started collecting data on student and staff profiles relating to their ethnic groups. She said that the collation of this kind of data would be easier in the future because of the new HR system now in place. This would mean that each year the impact of the policies could be monitored and over time, the information gathered would be built into the Impact Assessment exercise. The Diversity Advisor said that staffing the data would be provided through the Registry.
- (b) Point 4.22, relates to the Sex Discrimination Act. It was recommended that the School should revise the Equality and Diversity Policy according to the requirements for the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) Code of Practice in order for the University's functions to respond appropriately to the advice and statutory requirements of the SDA.

Committee members pointed out that intersexuality as well the considerable gap between men and women's remuneration should not be overlooked.

- (c) Points, 4.27 and 4.35. As a result of the new HR system, the collation and monitoring of data would be more accessible in monitoring racial groups and would be implemented during the coming year.

The Chair recommended that further progress could be made on the following:

- a. Mainstreaming equality policies within the School.
- b. Locus of responsibility on implementation of the policies should include setting targets for those who are responsible for implementation.
- c. Whether current training is sufficient.

The Chair said that the full version of the Impact Assessment Exercise Report would be available for members to read at Vernon Square. However, she said that payment for the

Report had not yet been made; therefore, full distribution of the report at this point was not possible. Members were welcome to contact the Diversity Advisor to view the report at Vernon Square.

## **6 Nursery Provision**

The Diversity Advisor said that at the last Bloomsbury Consortium Nursery meeting at the Institute of Education, the possibility of smaller colleges providing joint nursery facilities had been explored.

The Diversity Advisor informed the Committee that she had received from the Head of Finance the School's existing nursery provision figures. The figures showed that in year 2004/05, the budget for nursery provision was £14,125 in which there had been nine claimants with the average amount per claim at £880. The remaining balance totalled £7,205. In year 2005/06, the budget was £14,125, during the first quarter there had been three claimants, with the average amount per claim at £177. The remaining balance totalled £13,595.

The Committee queried why, there had been such a large amount unspent in 2004/05. Members were concerned with how the financial support offered by the School had been publicised in the past and how it would be publicised in the future. The Committee also asked whether all members of staff were eligible. It was suggested that one way of informing staff of funding, could be during staff induction sessions. Prospective employees also needed to be made aware that this service was available at SOAS.

Members asked for more clarification on how the budget operated, the application process, how funding was designated and whether there was a fixed amount allocated per claim. The HR Manager, Emily Crofts replied that in order to claim, members of staff were requested to complete a claim form, although the form was not available on the HR website, and would therefore have to be requested via the HR Department.

It was **AGREED** that a central School email would be sent out seeking views from members of staff and informing them of the available financial support for nursery provisions. The Committee would discuss this at the next meeting and recommendations would be made which, would then go to Staffing Committee and then to Executive Board.

## **7 Academic Promotions 2001 – 2004/5**

The Committee received the Academic Promotions 2001-2004/05 from the HR department [Appendix C]. The Diversity Advisor explained that now the new HR monitoring system had been established, it would enable trends to be identified much quicker. The Chair said that the figures suggested some concerns.

Fareda Banda explained to the Committee that she had been refused this information on numerous occasions, but had managed to get some data relating to academic promotion via the 'SOAS Information' bulletin leaflets.

Jacqui Freeman stated that it was evident by the figures that a disproportionate number of staff members of white origin had been successful in their promotions compared with other ethnic groups. She said that it was important to show how many people had applied, how many of those who had applied and were unsuccessful, and then to compare this to the School population. She requested that an update of the gender and ethnic groupings within the School be presented at the next meeting.

The Diversity Advisor reminded the Committee that the law requires the collection of data in order to monitor and analyse what happens in the working environment. She stated that until we can analyse the applications of ethnic groups of applicants, track those who are

successful or unsuccessful in promotion it would be difficult to make recommendations. She pointed out that in previous years structures had not been in place to do this effectively.

Jacqui Freeman replied that the statistical evidence was available and that it had been possible to track employee's career progression throughout the School. She stated that academics should attend committee meetings and that it appeared that the School was not committed to monitoring this appropriately. She questioned the committee's commitment in challenging structures, which appeared to be less favourable to certain ethnic minority groups. She said that obtaining answers on statistical figures relating to why certain ethnic minority groups and women within the School, appeared to be more unsuccessful than others in their academic career progression had proved difficult, as information regarding this appeared to stall at a certain level with the School's hierarchy.

The Diversity Advisor said that there had been changes, although they had not progressed as quickly as hoped, but the Committee would be given the opportunity to make recommendations with regard to this now that the HR data system was in place.

Fareda Banda stated that although the School had developed several equality policies, the implementation of them had not been progressed. The Diversity Advisor replied that the Race Equality Policy had been in place, however the foundations of this had to be established and that this had been a steady process achieved over the years. She informed the members of the Committee that the onus now, for Equality Committee and the Diversity Advisor post was to look at the implementation of those policies, to scrutinise statistical data when necessary and to make recommendations to the relevant bodies. The Chair said that the implementation of equality policies would be a long-term commitment and would be put to the top of the Committee's agenda.

The Chair said that it would be possible to have an item on the agenda of a future Academic Board meeting. It was **AGREED** that the Committee would identify areas that required further scrutiny and then make recommendations to Academic Promotions Working Group (APWG). It was noted that the following points would be highlighted in the paper to APWG.

- (a) Whether there were any reasons preventing women, and ethnic minority groups from applying for promotion
- (b) Reasons why women and ethnic minority groups were not achieving promotion
- (c) Rates of success for women and ethnic minorities groups
- (d) Identifying reasons why low proportions of women and ethnic minority groups apply for promotion
- (e) Were there sufficient channels for applications
- (f) Encourage applications from women and ethnic minority groups
- (g) Possibility of mentoring groups

Jacqui Freeman raised concerns that tensions had developed within the Committee as to what role the Committee should have within the School, as this could cause frustration within the Committee. She suggested that the role of the Committee should be clarified. She pointed out that staff and students were unclear with regard to the work of the Committee, and therefore it was not fully recognised or known throughout the School and that perhaps ways that could improve the Committee could be discussed. She recommended that stronger links with other committees should be established and that the role of the Committee and its policies would benefit from being mainstreamed.

The Deputy Secretary said that it was important for Committee members to air any frustrations they may have about the work of the Committee. The Chair acknowledged the comments and asked members to submit views on what ways any difficulties or frustrations might be addressed.

## **8 Staff Development Monitoring 2004/05**

The Committee received a report from the Staff Development Manager, Serena Yeo, on staff who had attended training in 2004/05. The Staff Development Manager informed the Committee that during the summer of 2005 the Staff Development Office had implemented a new database, Resourcelink, which was linked up to the HR database. The new system would make it possible to monitor attendance at training events, and it was expected that if required, more detailed and accurate analysis would be available in the future. Members were informed that the data had been collated on the following basis:

- It recorded only events organized centrally by the staff development office and external events, which have been funded by that office (it therefore excluded training offered by the Learning and Teaching Unit and Library although this would be included in the current year's data, which was based on HESA reporting).
- It recorded all staff employed for any of the period from 01/09/2004 – 31/08/2005, including casual employees, who were included on the payroll.
- It recorded only training courses or events, which were completed during the above period.
- It recorded that a particular employee had attended training – not the number of courses taken.
- Some data, particularly on ethnicity and disability was at present incomplete and had been categorized as 'no data' or 'not known'

It was **AGREED** that a short report on the new database, Resourcelink monitoring system would be presented to the Committee at the next meeting.

It was **AGREED** that a report would be presented at the next meeting giving a breakdown of staff who had attended equality and diversity training by Faculty, Department, grades (e.g. Heads of Departments and age). The Committee **AGREED** that they would focus on how and who Equality and Diversity training should be targeted at. The Chair thanked the Staff Development Manager for her work.

## **9 The Diversity Advisor's Office**

The Chair informed the Committee that Karen Clarke, the Diversity Advisor had resigned and would be leaving at the end of November 2005. She thanked Karen for her work and conveyed members' appreciation running the Committee and also for her work in developing the School's equality policies together with the considerable work and progress achieved during her time in post. She said that she would notify the Committee in due course of the date of Karen's farewell party.

## **10 Any other business**

The Diversity Advisor said that an email had been received from Chris Gutkind, a member of the library staff, who felt that there was inequality of treatment towards certain research students, academics and external library users concerning the provision of services available in the Inner Asia, Japan and Korean sections of the Library compared with other

departments. Mr Gutkind felt that this was a direct consequence of the recent redundancies within the Library as there was no expertise on the related subjects.

Fareda Banda said that the AUT had also expressed concern with what it felt was a lack of transparency and accountability in the decision making process. She said that the expert services available from the library were core to academic life at SOAS and as a result of the present situation within the library, a feeling of distrust between the AUT and the School's Management had developed. She informed the Committee of the AUT's strong disappointment at the way in which the School's Management of the current events within the Library had been conducted.

It was **AGREED** that the Committee would take these concerns to both Executive Board and Governing Body.

**11 Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 28 February 2006 at 9.00am in room 116.