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SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

EQUALITY COMMITTEE

27 February 2007

MINUTES

Members: Professor Elisabeth Croll (Chair)
Mrs Jan Airey
Dr Fareda Banda (UCU representative)
Ms Kristen Burchill (SU representative)
Ms Maxine Brown*
Mr Marcus Cerny
Dr Jeevan Deol*
Ms Lauren Evans (SU representative)
Ms Jacqui Freeman* (Unison representative)
Professor Werner F Menski*
Dr Timon Screech*

In attendance: Ms Deb Viney (Executive Secretary)
Ms Zoë Davis
Ms Jo Halliday
Mr Terry Harvey*
Mrs Domini Mitchell
Mr Peter Mitchell
Ms Jenneh Kebbie (Minute Secretary)

** Those whose names are marked with an asterisk were unable to attend the meeting*

15 Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Jeevan Deol, Mr Terry Harvey and from Ms Jacqui Freeman who had stepped down as the UNISON representative.

16 Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 21 November 2006 were approved subject to the following changes.

- (i) At minute 1 'Membership and terms of reference' the last paragraph should read 'The Committee noted the membership and terms of reference [Appendix A]. It was **AGREED** that the Committee would note the procedure for the conduct of meetings paper at the next meeting.'
- (ii) At minute 6, (i) Key Data – (page 2) should read 'Members felt that the presentation of the statistics was difficult to read and therefore it was **AGREED** that the data in this section would be revised e.g. to show percentage of staff in each category'.
- (iii) At minute 10 Childcare Provision – Staff, the last paragraph should read, 'It was **AGREED** that HR would put forward a paper to the Resources Committee, asking them to consider increasing the Childcare budget'.

17 Matters arising

Members received an update paper on matters arising [Appendix A] and there were further comments on those matters as follows:

- (i) *Membership and Terms of reference*
The Committee noted the procedure for the conduct of meetings.
- (ii) *Race Equality Policy Action Plan (REP)*
The Committee was informed by the Diversity Advisor that the revision of the REP and action plan would be deferred until after Easter 2007 due to the work on the Gender Duty. Therefore the Committee will receive the new REP and action plan for consideration in autumn 2007.
- (iii) *Annual Report to Governing Body (GB)*
The Annual Report to GB went to GB in March but the Diversity Monitory data would be deferred until after Easter 2007. The report would be circulated to all EC members prior to it going to Governing Body for consideration. The Diversity Advisor asked members to forward any views and comments to her by 23 March 2007.
- (iv) *Academic Promotion*
The HR Director informed the Committee that a paper to the Promotions Committee had been presented, which paid particular attention to analysis and trends. He assured the members that he viewed the matter as a serious issue and that a further breakdown of figures would be required. The Diversity Advisor pointed out that the current figures indicate that women and people from ethnic minorities are under-represented among the higher positions at SOAS. She suggested that a positive action strategy could be applied to help with succession planning. For example, people suitable for promotion could be identified from among existing female and ethnic minority staff and they could be provided with a mentor to encourage development towards such posts, as a possible way forward.
- (v) *HR's Annual Staff Diversity report 2005-06* – appears below on the agenda.
- (vi) *Disability Equality Scheme (DES)*
The Diversity Advisor reported that the DES had been published on time on 4th December 2006 in draft form and had subsequently been approved by Governing Body on 15th December 2006 and that monitoring the implementation of the scheme would be undertaken by the Disability Liaison Group.
- (vii) *Childcare Provision*
Staff childcare arrangements

The HR Manager reported that some additional funds had been allocated to the 2006/07 childcare budget from the Diversity Advisor's budget. However, future resources were dependent on budget constraints. More analysis of demand would have to be conducted and reported to Resources Committee. Resources Committee noted that an age limitation of ten years for the children was arbitrary.

The HR Manager informed the Committee that the new Childcare Voucher Scheme had been approved by F&GPC and would come into effect as of 1 May 2007. She said that all staff would be eligible to the new scheme and that it was not dependent upon grade. It was reported that both HR and Payroll departments would hold surgeries so that members of staff were fully aware of the scheme. Further information on this would be available to all staff shortly.
- (viii) *Student Childcare*
Kristen Burchill informed the Committee that hardship funding for full-time UK students was currently available from the Access to Learning Fund, but this is limited in amount and does not extend to part-time students or those from overseas. She informed the members that during next week informal fora for parents would be taking place to discuss the issue of demand for childcare

or for financial assistance with childcare in these areas. It was **AGREED** that she would report back at the next meeting on this issue.

18 Standing Item: Report from the Disability Liaison Group

The Committee received a report from the Disability Liaison Group [Appendix B] on its monitoring of the Disability Equality Scheme (DES). Members were informed that the DLG would take on the role of monitoring the implementation of the DES Action Plan and report each term on progress.

As the first report occurred only six weeks after the publication of the Action Plan, progress was likely to be minimal at present as most targets were longer term. The Diversity Advisor also noted that the first annual report on the DES is required by 4th December 2007 and that in order to have that report approved by Governing Body beforehand the report would need to be ready for GB to consider in June 2007, hence the first annual report would in fact cover only the period December 2006 to May 2007, but subsequent reports will then follow a similar time schedule and will each cover the June to May period each year.

19 Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan

The Committee considered a paper from the Diversity Advisor [Appendix C], on her current work towards the Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan. The Diversity Advisor reported that the Equality Opportunities Commission have indicated that only four or five major action points per institution were expected and for SOAS those were likely to include:

- An Equal Pay Review
- A Full staff attitudes survey
- Analysis of the staff survey broken down by the diversity variables
- Establishment of a student and staff forum to discuss issues of gender
- Impact Assessments for gender issues to be conducted as part of the planned Equality Impact Assessments
- Additional Data collection to improve our monitoring of gender issues for students and staff

The HR Director informed the Committee that the Staff Survey would be undertaken by an external specialist called NHS Partners. This non-profit organisation carries out and analyses all staff surveys within the NHS and has also worked with a number of other sectors. This information would be important for benchmarking within the HE sector and against other sectors and would be useful for comparisons to other institutions.

The HR Director reported that they were in the process of finalising the key questions to be included in the attitude survey, which would be complete by the end of March 2007 which would then have to be ratified by the Trade Unions and senior managers. Some members noted that staff within the School had become survey-fatigued. The HR Director responded by saying that the survey would be quite extensive and would take approximately 20 minutes to complete and emphasised to members of staff the benefits of completing it. Full participation was vital to the usefulness of the survey. For it to have statistical validity the response rate would have to be at least 50% – 60% of all staff, as this would shed light on the effectiveness of the School's equality and diversity policies, and would also examine the culture of the organisation. The survey could result in a set of future organisational values. Therefore views from staff were important.

Members were concerned with the quality of the survey and its analysis, together with concerns about safeguards, as previous School surveys had been ineffective and disappointing. The HR Director said that the overall costs of the survey, in comparison to previous ones undertaken was relatively low and would amount to approximately £8000 (inclusive). He gave his personal assurance to the Committee members with regard to the quality of the survey if undertaken by NHS Partners.

The SU representative enquired whether the survey could be conducted for both students and staff. The Diversity Advisor said that the Learning and Teaching Unit would instead be carrying out a separate student experience survey which is being led by the Student Experience Officer. The Diversity Advisor thought it would be important to ask the LTU and the Deans to report on the diversity variable breakdowns from the student experience survey in any future faculty annual reporting system.

The Deputy Secretary thought that it would be useful and important with regards to any overlap in information to pass on the relevant contents of the NHS staff survey to the Student Experience Officer. The Committee **AGREED** that the Student Experience Officer would be contacted by the Diversity Advisor to provide this information.

20 **QAA Code of Practice on students with disabilities (QAA CoP SwD)**

The Committee noted the review of SOAS activities against the QAA Code of Practice: Students with Disabilities [QAA CoP SwD, Appendix D] written by the Student Disability Advisor and the Diversity Advisor. The Deputy Secretary reminded the Committee that the School was currently undergoing a QAA Institutional Quality Audit. It would also be important to continue to monitor the implementation the QAA CoP SwD through the DLG. The Committee thanked those who had taken part in producing the document.

21 **HR Staff Diversity Report**

The HR Director reported that the points raised at the last meeting were substantial and that he had noted the Committee's concern that the statistics focused more on monitoring and less on analysis and that more substantial trend data would be required. Members pointed out that the statistics did not include the following:

- Promotion statistics (these are to be provided in a separate report)
- Staff Training development (these are provided in a separate annual report from the Staff Development Manager)
- Comparative statistics with other Higher Education Institutions and
- Comparisons with the wider population (important)

It was noted that the Staff Diversity Report would be circulated to Executive Board and other relevant Committees and that the Governing Body should be concerned by this trend.

Some concern was expressed that in the average salary figures with regards to ethnicity, groupings are relatively small and it may be possible to identify individual colleagues.

One colleague asked for an explanation of "Spot salaries" which are those not on the standard scale who receive no annual pay increments.

The Chair thanked the HR department for work done and said that the issues discussed would receive a wider circulation and would accompany the report when it is presented to Governing Body and Academic Board.

Members asked what action would now be carried out as a result of the recommendations suggested by the Committee at the last meeting. The HR Director stated that some of the suggested actions had been started, namely the targeting of advertising to attract more people from ethnic minorities (who were under-represented). The actions would include selecting relevant advertising, trend analysis and also encouragement of applications from people with disabilities.

Members asked for an update on the implementation of the new National Pay Framework. The HR Director said that once the new salaries had been agreed the pay would be backdated to August 2006. The overall result of the new pay framework should be that all institutions have a more transparent pay structure.

The UCU representative said that the final resolution of the pay issue was a matter of urgency as salaries was a major issue which had caused tension with the School amongst Union members. The HR Director pointed out the Staff survey would ask the relevant questions.

It was **AGREED** that the HR would report back to EC at the first meeting of the next session in November 2007 on the implementation of the new National Pay Framework.

It was **AGREED** that HR and the Diversity Advisor would present an update on the action points identified in the Staff Diversity Report 2005-06 at the next EC meeting in May 2007.

The Chair thanked HR for the work done.

22 Diversity training for all staff involved in Recruitment of new staff

In autumn 2006 the Executive Board agreed that diversity training should be mandatory for all staff concerned in staff recruitment. The next two diversity courses had already been advertised and were recruiting well.

The issue of student recruitment was discussed and it was **AGREED** that the Committee would recommend to the Student Recruitment Committee that their members, together with the admissions tutors, should also attend the diversity training.

The Chair thanked the Staff Development Manager for the work done on this and welcomed the first stage of implementation.

23 Assisted Technology Centre Proposal to be presented to the Bloomsbury Colleges Principals' Group

The Diversity Advisor reported that she had met with Terry Bishop (TBC facilitator) and that he had met with the Bloomsbury Principals' Group to discuss ideas for a consortium project to improve the Bloomsbury Colleges' Assistive Technology facilities for disabled students and staff. She reported that a paper was being drafted seeking opinion from the Principals on whether to proceed with a joint project and if so, how it should proceed, as there were several possibilities. Once these decisions had been made, a formal costed bid could be prepared for submission to the appropriate funding body.

The SU representative asked what facilities the School currently had with regards to assisted technology. The Disability Advisor replied that at present that all of the School's public workstations had access to two special programmes: *Read and Write Texthelp* and *Inspiration*.

Members briefly discussed the use of assistive technology in examinations though it was agreed that further resources would be required to manage this effectively. The Special Assessments Panel was in the process of considering this and the Student Disability Advisor said that she would update the Committee at a later date.

24 Forthcoming events relating to diversity issues

- The Committee was informed that there would be a series of events taking place at SOAS from 28 February until April 2007 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave trade.
- The SU reported that they would be hosting events marking International Women's Day on March 8 2007.

25 Any other business

This issue of departmental meeting times which were family-friendly was discussed.

The Diversity Advisor agreed to write to all Heads of Departments to remind them that meeting times should be discussed with ALL colleagues to ensure that no one is being excluded from such important events or inconvenienced by the timing of those meetings as that could potentially be a form of discrimination and any coercion could potentially be harassment.

The SU representative commented that first Faculty meetings of the academic year were typically scheduled prior to the student representatives being elected. The SU said they would inform the Deans of this situation.

26 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be on Tuesday 29 May 2007, at 10am in room 116, Russell Square.

No reserved business was considered at the meeting.

SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

EQUALITY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 27 February 2007

Minute	Item	Action	Deadline	By
15	Apologies	Secure replacement Unison member for Committee	asap	JK/DV
16	Minutes	To amend following minutes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ minute 1 'Membership and terms of reference ▪ minute 6, (i) Key Data – (page 2, last Para) ▪ minute 10 Childcare Provision – Staff 	asap	JK
17	Matters arising	(iii) Annual Report to GB 2005-06 would be deferred until after Easter 2007 – to be circulated prior to May meeting. (vi) DES Annual Report to be prepared by DLG in time for the May EC meeting. (viii) SU to report back at the next meeting on this issue.	May 2007	DV DV/ZD SU(KB)
19	Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan	1).Diversity Advisor to contact the Student Experience Officer relevant information of the NHS staff survey. 2).The Diversity Advisor to ask the LTU and the Deans to report on the diversity variable breakdowns from the student experience survey in the next faculty annual reports.	asap asap	DV DV
21	HR Staff Diversity Report	HR to report back to EC at the first meeting of the next session in November 2007 on the implementation of the new national pay framework HR and the Diversity Advisor to present an update on the action points identified in the Staff Diversity Report 2005-06 at the next EC meeting in May 2007.	Nov 2007 May 2007	HR HR
22	Diversity training for all staff involved in Recruitment of new staff	Committee to recommend to the Student Recruitment Committee that their members, together with the admissions tutor should attend the diversity training for all staff involved in recruitment.	asap	DV
25	Any other business	Diversity Advisor to write to HoDs to remind them that meeting times should be discussed with ALL colleagues so as to try to make times off meetings fit the requirements of family friendliness. SU to inform the Deans of the situation re timing of first faculty meeting each year.	asap asap	DV SU