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## SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

### EQUALITY COMMITTEE

29 May 2007

### MINUTES

**Members:** Professor Elisabeth Croll\* (Chair)  
Professor Stephen Chan (temporary 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)  
Vacancy\*\* (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

\*\* A replacement nomination for Jacqui Freeman was awaited from Unison

#### 27 Apologies

Apologies were received from Professor Lisa Croll, Dr Jeevan Deol, Dr Fareda Banda, Ms Zoë Davis, Dr Timon Screech and Mrs Domini Mitchell.

#### 28 Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 27 February 2007 were approved.

#### 29 Matters arising

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

- (i) *Annual Report to Governing Body 2005-06*  
The Diversity Advisor reported that the Annual Report had gone to Governing Body, though the Student Diversity Report 2005-06 had been omitted as was not yet complete.
- (ii) *Student Childcare*  
The Committee received an update on student childcare from the SU representative. She informed members that currently hardship funding for full-time

UK students was available from the Access to Learning Fund, was limited in amount and did not extend to part-time or international students.

She reported that the childcare SU informal fora for students with childcare responsibility took place on 5 March 2007. During these discussions concerns with regard to the following points were raised:

- Lack of publicity for students wishing to access information on childcare provisions. [Note: This has been addressed by the addition of information on childcare to the Diversity webpages].
- Students unaware of the School's student childcare funds and their eligibility for them.
- Members of staff generally unaware of students' childcare responsibilities and needs.
- Current student leaflet on childcare funding is under publicised.

The SU representative asked whether the following recommendations and proposals from the meeting could be considered.

- Students would like to be asked about childcare responsibilities and needs during the registration process. (Specific questions e.g. age of children, etc, as needs may differ according to age.)
- To raise student awareness of available childcare funding.
- Develop some sort of crèche facilities that could benefit students and possibly staff.
- Establish an online childcare forum (Blackboard site) which would enable easier access for students seeking information on childcare. It would create further awareness amongst those students with childcare responsibilities.
- Investigate different ways in which to access additional funding.
- SU would publicise information on student childcare issues in its annual leaflet.

She informed members that she was awaiting a reply from the Blackboard administrators and anticipated that the site would be up and running as of next year.

### **30 Gender Equality Scheme (GES) and Action Plan (AP) [Appendix B]**

The Committee considered a draft of the Gender Equality Scheme 2007- 2009 and its Action Plan [Appendix B], from the Diversity Advisor and members commented as follows:

The section dealing with student statistics has had to be altered following the correction of the original data. The revised draft (labelled draft 2) also incorporates the Equality Committee's views and will go to Executive Board and Governing Body.

At page 10, Progression (i.e. did students complete their year's studies successfully?). The Academic Registrar commented that the overall data could be viewed as problematic and that the data should be made more specific. At present the figures showed that 57.11% of all students successfully 'completed' the academic year (or their programme if it was their final year). However, 34.98% of all students were in the 'incomplete' group, this presented an ambiguous reflection of the data as the information collected by HESA was done so in July of each year which meant that at the end of the academic year the latter figure of

students were not schedule to complete, due to technical factors outside the student's control, such as varying course end dates.

At page 11, Gender and Progression, the Academic Registrar said that the information with regards to the progression rates for each gender in the UGs was as expected, however the proportion of PG students were slightly lower than one might expect. The Diversity Advisor pointed out that once the necessary computer software was in place, future analysis on data would be more robust in terms of greater detail and use of appropriate statistical tests. The Chair added that in terms of School policy on this matter, the School was actively looking to employ a planning officer to tackle the School's need for more statistical data.

Members were asked to indicate whether a sub-committee should be established in order to monitor the GES. The GES sub-committee would report to EC each term on progress. The Diversity Advisor said that she would have further discussions and contact each Faculty for a representative and report back at the next meeting on the membership of the Gender Equality Scheme Monitoring Group.

Subject to these changes, the GES and AP was approved.

### **31 HR Staff Diversity Report**

The Committee considered the updates on the action points in the HR Staff Diversity Report 2005-06 [Appendix C] which was published earlier this academic year. The HR Director reminded members that the School had produced this first Equality and Diversity Staff Report in November 2006, which was then updated in January 2007. A number of recommendations were made in relation to how the Equality and Diversity agenda could be further progressed within the School. He added that although the process of implementation had begun in certain areas, no particular timescale had been attached to them and that no specific responsibilities assigned in a formal way to the achievement of these recommendations had been decided.

The HR Director informed members that advances had already been made on a number of issues, in particular from the HR point of view, i.e. the school-wide projects relating to Job Evaluation; implementation of the new national pay framework; the Staff Survey; the negotiations to switch hourly-paid teaching staff to permanent fractional contracts; and the on-going development and agreement of the suite of HR policies and procedures. However, it was noted that not all of the actions described in the original report were within the remit of the HR team to deliver and in some cases additional resources would need to be sought.

The HR Director said that SMART<sup>1</sup> objectives for individuals would be implemented which would be monitored. This should include the introduction of an annual staff appraisal system, details of which cannot be finalised until the results of the School's staff survey had been gathered. The aim was to replace the current Staff Development Review, which many felt had not been consistently administered. This would encourage and establish a linkage between the School's achievements and the individual objectives. He added that an appraisal system could include collecting opinions about managers from the individual.

The Chair thanked that HR Director and HR team and expressed the Committee's appreciation of the work carried out.

### **32 Annual Report on the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and its Action Plan.**

The committee noted the DES + AP Annual report 2007 (Appendix D). The Diversity Advisor reported that the DES was on schedule and ongoing and that the development of a "Teaching and Learning" section had been discussed with the Associate Deans. She informed members that the current report would have to be the annual report for the year because it must be ratified by the Governing Body and published by 4 December 2007.

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<sup>1</sup> SMART = specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

### **33 Student Diversity Report 2005-06**

The Diversity Advisor conveyed the apologies of the Registry Systems Team to the Committee for the error causing the transposition of the undergraduate and postgraduate data, on which the report was based and which was only discovered after the report was circulated.

Members were informed that the report would be re-written taking into account the correct data and would be circulated to members before the next meeting in November 2007.

### **34 Report on the Assistive Technology Service (ATS) and Transcription and Alternative Formats Centre [T AFC] Bids**

The Diversity Advisor reported that the School had presented two bids relating to assistive technology for disabled people.

- i. The ATS bid is the product of the work of the Bloomsbury Disability Officers' Group and the current position is that the Heads of Admin group has approved the current draft and agreed that it may go to the next stage, which involves costing the bid and seeking funding from an external source. Discussions with the Bloomsbury group are on-going: the original idea of a shared single AT Centre has been set aside and we are now seeking to create a shared AT Service, with shared staff to carry out the proposed services.
- ii. The Diversity Advisor informed members that the University of London Disability Officers' Group (UoLDOG) recently submitted a T AFC bid to the UoL Vice Chancellor's development Fund. The outcome of the bid will be known in late June 2007. The main intention is to create a pilot service and run it for 12-18 months, after which the intention is that it should operate as "a stand alone" business, probably on a break-even or "not for profit" basis.

### **35 Recruitment and Selection Training for SOAS Staff**

The Committee received and noted a brief report from the Staff Development Manager [Appendix F] on the School's figures for Recruitment and Selection Training for staff. This reflects the recent decision by senior management to insist on R&S training for all recruitment panellists.

### **36 Forthcoming diversity related activities**

The Committee was informed that there would be a series of diversity related activities taking place

- All Inclusive Dining Club – The Diversity Advisor and three senior members of academic staff would be attending an evening dinner event with the Bloomsbury partners, facilitated by the Schneider-Ross consultancy and would give feedback to the Committee at the next meeting.
- Generating Genius - The Diversity Advisor informed the Committee that she was working with the School's Widening Participating Officer and Tony Sewell on organising a summer School project to be hosted by SOAS, for boys from African-Caribbean backgrounds. The week long project would involve the boys, aged between 12 and 15, attending Vernon Square and developing and building robots, the project will also involve themes around African music and culture. The project was scheduled to start the week beginning 20 August 2007.
- The Bloomsbury Diversity Week – will take place in either November 2007 or February 2008.

- The Bloomsbury well being week - will take place in either November 2007 or February 2008.

**37 Any other business**

The Chair expressed his thanks and appreciation on behalf of the School and Professor Lisa Croll to all members of Equality Committee for their work during the year.

**38 Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be circulated to members in due course.

No reserved business was considered at the meeting

**SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES**

**EQUALITY COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday 29 May 2007**

<b>Minute</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>By</b>
29 (i)	Matters arising	Complete Student Diversity Report	ASAP	DV
29 (ii)	SU Childcare	SU to pursue these issues in liaison with School Officers	ASAP	SU/DV
30	Gender Equality Scheme (GES) and Action Plan	Diversity Advisor to contact Faculties re representation on GES sub-committee	ASAP	DV
32	Annual Report of Disability Equality Scheme (DES)	Diversity Advisor to complete next official report	Dec 2007	DV
34	Report on the Assisted Technology Service (ATS) and TAFC Bids	Diversity Advisor to report by next meeting	Autumn 2007	DV