Equalities Committee / Forums Agenda Guide

Why are we providing this guide?

Currently agendas for various equality meetings are typically set by the Equalities Unit rather than the primary participants of the meeting. This guide intends to inform participants about useful sources of important issues and therefore useful agenda items that will help advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations between groups.

Who is this guide intended for?

- Departmental Equalities Officers
- Chairs of College Equalities Committee
- Equalities Fora (Disability, BME, LGBT)

Purpose of groups/roles

As defined in the relevant constitutions/terms of reference, the role of the stated foras/individuals/DEOs is to act as representatives for equalities within their department, college or for the characteristics they have expressed an interest in (for the fora).

As part of this role, individuals should be playing a pro-active role in identifying, raising and addressing equalities related issues. They should also be communicating these issues to relevant meetings such as committees and forums.

The role of the Equalities Unit is to support, advise and provide guidance for the stated individuals/fora. As part of this role, Equalities Advisers will attend all Committee and Forum meetings. They will also contribute (as and when required) to the agenda, however ultimate responsibility and accountability for agendas and minutes is with the committees/fora.

Background

It has been identified that there are inconsistencies across committees and fora with regards to initiation and responsibility for setting agendas and generally facilitating meetings. The Equalities Unit has previously played a role in arranging, facilitating and chairing meetings. However the Equalities Unit has reviewed its position in response to this and to ensure consistency across all groups/roles, would like committees/fora to initiate and facilitate their meetings.

Through consultation, it has been identified that where individuals express an interest and commitment to equalities, they are not entirely sure about the types of issues they should be identifying and raising.

Therefore the Equalities Unit has prepared this brief guide to highlight potential themes/topics for discussion. It is also recognised that further recognition needs to be given to Departmental Equalities Officers in terms of their selection and role. The Equalities Unit will address this through further awareness and training to Departmental Equalities Officers and Heads of Department.
Proposals of themes/topics for agendas

- Equalities Data
  - Obtaining and interpreting Equalities monitoring data to identify trends and gaps and having a pro-active role in identifying ways to address these
  - **Action** – to look at the breakdown of specific characteristics within your department/college and identify and address accordingly.

- Equality Initiatives
  - Having an overview/involvement of service/departmental specific Equalities initiatives and communicating progress/issues to relevant meetings.
  - **Action** – identify what (if any) equality related initiatives/work is currently being undertaken and identify ways in which you can be involved in this or how the group could contribute

- Equality policies/procedures/processes
  - Having an overview/involvement in new and reviewed policies, processes and procedures to ensure they are being subject to ‘due regard’ (e.g. have been equality impacted assessed).
  - **Action** – ensure that you have a good awareness/understanding of services within your departments and confirm whether they require/are being Equality impact assessed. If not could you could create a list of policies/processes that should have been impact assessed and ensure it has been done.
  - **Action** – discuss how you feel your department/college/the university is implementing the policy and identify potential areas for improvement

- Equalities representative
  - To champion and advance Equalities within the department/college, raising issues at committee and forum meetings as and when necessary
  - **Action** – ensure that colleagues are aware of your role and involvement with Equalities and that issues are addressed and discussed.

- Working group
  - To set up and identify the need for working groups around specific issues
  - **Action** – are there any Equalities issues which could be benefit from a working group to steer and drive initiatives

- Characteristics
  - To ensure that services, policies and processes do not adversely impact on the basis of a protected characteristic and to ensure consistency in the impact of these across the characteristics
  - **Action** – concentrate on a specific characteristic and identify how you feel your department/college/ the university ensures equality of opportunity.

- Corporate Equalities events
  - To contribute and identify potential presence/input to corporate events such as Mental Health Awareness day.
  - **Action** – To discuss national equality related days/events such as Mental Health Awareness day and identify potential involvement/contribution.