

Imperial College London

Disability Action Committee

Wednesday 15 June
14:00 – 15:30
Hybrid meeting

Minutes

Present:

Kani Kamara	Head of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre – Co-Chair (KK)
Susan Littleson	Deputy Director - Organisational Development and Inclusion (SL)
Mark Allen	Careers Service (MA)
David Ashton	Academic Registrar (DA)
Stephen Curry	Assistant Provost (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) (SC)
William Hollyer	Head of Sport, Sport and Leisure Services (WH)
Richard Jardine	Senior Consul (RJA)
Richard Johnson	Faculty Operating Officer, Business School (RJO)
Angela Kehoe	Strategic HR Partner (FoNS) (AK)
Hanna Magdziarek	Student Wellbeing Advisor Maternity Cover, Business School (HM)
Adrian Mannall	Co-Chair of Able@Imperial (AM)
Dez Mendoza	Co-Chair of Able@Imperial (DM)
Kalpna Mistry	Staff Network Coordinator (KM)
Elizabeth Nixon	Internal Communications Manager (EN)
Claire O'Brien	Director of Occupational Health (COB)
Maureen O'Brien	Head of the Disability Advisory Service (MOB)
Lisa Phillips	Co-Chair of Able@Imperial (LP)
Graeme Rae	Faculty Operating Officer, Natural Sciences (GR)
Cynthia So	Secretary to DAC (CS)
Maggie Taylor	Assistant Buildings Manager (MT)
Chris Watkins	Faculty Operating Officer, Medicine (CW)

Also present:

Ana Faro	Staff Wellbeing Manager, People & Organisational Development (AF)
Robin Peters	Head of User Services, Library (RP)

Agenda Item

1.0 Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 SL and KK welcomed the Committee to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from: Hannah Bannister, Chris Banks, Harbhajan Brar, Daniela Bultoc, Benita Cox, Lorraine Craig, Bouquette Kabatepe, Nathalie Podder, Nick Roalfe, Awais Seyyad, Roddy Slorach, Tim Venables.

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting 1 March 2022

- 2.1 MT had some suggested amendments to the minutes, which she would send to CS. CS to amend the minutes accordingly.

Action: Secretary

- 2.2 The minutes of the last meeting were deemed to be an accurate record of events.

3.0 Action tracker

- 3.1 The action tracker was considered. The following points were noted:

- 1 March 2022, minute 4.1.i – Estates representation: KK said that she had met with Nick Roalfe to discuss the suggestion of having additional representation from Estates. Nick Roalfe had agreed to attend DAC meetings.
- 1 March 2022, minute 5.1.i – New action plan – owners and timelines & minute 5.1.iii – New action plan – local actions: CS said that they had gone through the action plan and highlighted all the “ongoing” actions in one colour and all the local actions in another colour. Further discussion about the action plan was tabled for agenda item 4 in this meeting.
- 1 March 2022, minute 5.1.vi – Encouraging staff and students to declare: CS said that they would table this as an agenda item for the December 2022 meeting.
- 12 November 2019, minute 3.3 – Adjustments to student assessment: DA said that Registry had a new governance structure, with a Student Lifecycle and Product Line Board. Essential work for the first year of the agenda had already been planned out. This piece of work was in competition with many other things that were planned for the next 2-5 years of the agenda. There was a meeting next week which would focus on this, so after that, DA would have a better idea of where this fell in terms of priority order.
- 13 March 2019, minute 4.3 – Staff Disability Support Project: KK said that the EDI Centre was bringing on some additional resource and this was planned to be one of the areas that some of the new staff members would be looking at.

4.0 Action plan 2022-23

- 4.1 The action plan was considered. The following points were made:

- i. SL said that where there were “ongoing” actions, committee members were encouraged to come up with an end date where possible, where that helped with seeing what had been achieved.

Action: All

- ii. MT said that on “Remove barriers”, a new 3-year contract had been signed with AccessAble. AccessAble surveys were annual. MT would be leading on that action as she had done since 2018.

- iii. Where possible named individuals should be assigned to take ownership rather than the team. Committee members should look at actions under their area and add in whether they considered those actions business as usual or project activities. CS would add a column to say “Project or BAU”. BAU items would be taken out of this action plan and recorded in a separate document. Any committee member unfamiliar with those terms should discuss with KK and SL.

Action: Secretary/All

- iv. KK said that it would be helpful if committee looked at the action plan and considered what should be the top five priorities for focus.

Action: All

- v. WH said that he was happy for Move actions to be assigned to him.
- vi. MT said that on embedding accessibility in new buildings and spaces, the DAS were working on hearing loops. Hearing loops were going to be added to receptions where there had previously been no hearing loops. Purchase Orders had been raised and orders put in. MOB said that there had been a successful pilot of a mobile app that could be connected via Bluetooth to people's phones as a hearing aid. MT said that she was leading a project to update accessible toilets across Hammersmith campus, which was underway. Dangoor Plaza had been completed, which made the Queen's Lawn highly accessible for wheelchair users. A handrail was being installed in 170 Queen's Gate. There was discussion about the accessibility of 170 Queen's Gate. MT said that Nick Roalfe would be more familiar with this issue as it had been discussed in depth before. CS to add this to the agenda for the next meeting.

Action: Secretary

- 4.2 Summarising, KK said that colleagues should make suggestions or amendments to the action plan based on discussions in the meeting. Any updates could be sent to CS.

Action: Secretary/All

5.0 Membership list

- 5.1 KK said that there had been some additions to the membership list. She welcomed GR who was attending the DAC for the first time. She thanked Nick Roalfe for agreeing to attend the meetings going forward, and DM as well who was the new co-chair from Able. KK asked if the Committee had additional suggestions for membership.
- 5.2 SL said that AK, the Strategic HR Partner for FoNS, was present, and asked if AK fed back to other strategic HR partners and brought their issues to the DAC. AK said that her participation was initially to represent FoNS while GR's predecessor was in post, but she could feed back to other strategic HR partners going forward and take on more of that role.
- 5.3 KK said that AF had been nominated to be a member of this Committee.
- 5.4 RJ said that the Senior Consul post would rotate in September. Jonathan Mestel would be the new Senior Consul and should be invited to the DAC meetings in 2022-23.

Action: Secretary

6.0 Terminology around neurodivergence

- 6.1 MOB had brought this to the June 2021 meeting. As an update, she had met with KK, David Mooney (Senior Inclusion Consultant and SpLD tutor) and Gabriella Kerr-Gordon (EDIC Advisor) over 12 months ago to agree on the terms neurodivergent and neurodiverse. MOB had taken this to the ICU after the June 2021 DAC meeting to see if they were happy with this terminology to be accepted. These terms did not replace a diagnosis, but there was a desire to recognise that individuals might prefer

to be labelled as neurodivergent or neurodiverse. The DAS wanted to work with the EDI Centre to have that continuity across staff and students, so that across the College community, the same terminology was being used. MOB asked the DAC if they would accept this terminology.

6.2 A question was asked if rather than using the words dyslexia or ADHD, the word neurodiverse should be used. MOB responded that dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, autism spectrum condition were diagnoses and should still be used as such, but it should be respected that individuals might want to identify as neurodivergent or neurodiverse, as there were positive things associated with those labels that really appealed to some people.

6.3 A suggestion was made that documents defining neurodivergent and neurodiverse could be added to the resource page on the EDI website.

6.4 KK said that it would be helpful if people within the community could familiarise themselves with the definitions.

7.0 Reflection on Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW)

7.1 AF presented on Mental Health Awareness Week, which took place from 9-15 May 2022. The theme had been loneliness. Daniela Bultoc, who had led the work on MHAW, wanted to take the theme and use it to promote connection. They had reached out to many people in the College and designed an offering which would enable connection between various groups of people. Overall there had been over 50 offerings as part of MHAW in 2022, including two webinars that were focused on the theme of loneliness, and networking opportunities, as well as practical sessions. The majority of sessions had been online with some in-person ones.

7.2 Continuing, AF said that a feedback form had been sent out, which had garnered 52 responses. The outcomes had been overwhelmingly positive. 90% found the sessions extremely useful. 82% were highly likely to apply what they had learned. When it came to what could be improved, some people said they wanted more time for discussion, or that the session they attended should become available on a regular basis or be made a mandatory session (particularly for the session "Burnout: Recognising the signs"). People also wanted more sessions related to women's mental health. For some topics, it was mentioned in the feedback that it was slightly awkward when senior colleagues of the department were also attending. AF said in the future they would explore using more tools that would allow people to ask questions anonymously or having one-to-one sessions as a follow-up as people might not want to ask questions in front of colleagues.

7.3 In summary, AF said that MHAW had went well with a great variety of offerings and with generally good feedback. They had also advertised on the website well in advance to allow time for sign-ups, and it had been a real collaborative effort across the College. In future they could improve the user journey for booking on courses, and the method for capturing attendance and evaluation data. They could also offer more signposting and follow-up support, and run more in-person events.

7.4 A point was made that it would be good to make this a strand that was curated and accessible throughout the year, and to signpost to support under this banner. AF responded that they were developing a strategy where they were looking to develop a programme that will run throughout the year, and have a common approach to offerings with Move Imperial. Everything would live on a landing page with a common visual identity. This programme would align with some celebratory dates and events throughout the year, not only addressing themes of wellbeing and

mental health but also of inclusivity, for example LGBTQ-related offerings during Pride Month. AF wanted to ensure they were enabling and giving visibility to any offerings that already existed, instead of creating something completely new.

- 7.5 A point was made that there was no specific offering for people who identified as men during MHAW. AF responded that she had the same observation. November is Movember, which raises awareness of men's health issues, so there could be some tie-in at that time to promote offerings around wellbeing and mental health for men. COB said that during the planning stages, they identified someone who could facilitate a session on men's mental health, but this person was female and it was decided not to go ahead with this session as it was felt that a male facilitator was needed. With Mental Health First Aid, there had been an attempt in the past to raise awareness among men in the community to get more men trained as MHFA Aiders, but this had only been somewhat successful. AF said that at a previous role, they had run an event led by a senior male professor to discuss issues of mental health and wellbeing in academia, which was well-received. They also had an early career researcher who talked about their own experiences dealing with mental ill health in the workplace which was very well-attended. The first step might be to try and identify key role models in the faculties and departments, who were happy to be open in starting this discussion.
- 7.6 A point was made that a better understanding was needed of how loneliness and mental health affected disabled people, as some strategies for dealing with loneliness, for example large in-person social gatherings, were not applicable or helpful for neurodiverse members. Loneliness often affected disabled people all the time in the workplace, whether it was because they were not getting their support needs met, or because they were excluded from certain activities. This was a complex issue and more work could be done around this. KK responded that this was a great issue to highlight and that it needed further discussion.
- 7.7 KK said that AF should become a member of the DAC and be invited to DAC meetings going forward as the new Staff Wellbeing Manager in People & Organisational Development.

Action: Secretary

8.0 Update from Disability Advisory Service

- 8.1 MOB said that demands on service had increased in all areas and there were more students coming forward with more complex needs, including a lot more students declaring two or more disabilities. They had piloted a drop-in session every Wednesday afternoon to see a greater number of students particularly around exam time, which had worked well for students to come to the service without having to wait. This drop-in session would be continued over the summer and become business as usual.
- 8.2 Continuing, MOB said that there were increasing numbers of students in terms of screenings and diagnostic assessments. The previous year (2020-21), there were 250 SpLD screenings and in 2021-22, up to the end of May, there had been 305. For autism, there had been 39 screenings in 2020-21, and 83 in 2021-22 up to the end of May. This increase also translated into diagnostic assessments, with 230 SpLD diagnostic assessments in 2021-22. There had been times in the previous academic year when full diagnostic assessments could not be conducted because of lockdown, but even so this was a huge number. For autism, there had been 63 students diagnosed with autism from September 2021 to May 2022.

8.3 Continuing, MOB said that they were trying to reach all students, not just those with a disability, with inclusive technology. There were more students attending webinars and one-to-one training with experts. Due to the increase in students coming to the DAS, there had also been an increase in expenditure through the reasonable adjustments fund. The DAS would continue to broaden their outreach to non-disabled students and encourage students to declare on application.

9.0 Update from the EDI Centre

9.1 KK said that the focus on training for the last quarter had been on Understanding LGBTQ+ mental health sessions, and sessions on briefing managers in regards to neurodiversity. The EDI Centre were continuing to deliver Mental Health First Aid two day and half day training as well as Refresher sessions. The Calibre programme graduation was on Friday 17 June and the DAC had been invited.

9.2 Continuing, KK said that they were looking into the feasibility of disability passports for all staff. An external consultant, Steph Cutler had been engaged and they were about to start engaging with feedback from volunteers to inform that piece of work. The EDI Centre had also experienced an increase in staff asking for neurodivergence screenings.

10.0 Update from Able@Imperial

10.1 DM, who had recently been appointed co-chair of Able, said that Able had been rolling out presentations to raise awareness about disability and the network. If any department would like an Able presentation, they should get in touch with DM. Able had a themed coffee morning for Neurodiversity Celebration Week, and a lecture at Imperial Lates about the neurodiverse brain. The network also participated in a hybrid working focus group about the impact of hybrid working on disabled staff. For Mental Health Awareness Week, their themed coffee morning included a video from members around disability and loneliness.

10.2 Continuing, DM said that Able had more presentations coming up including for Disability Pride in July. DM was doing an event as part of the Neurodiversity Zone at the Great Exhibition Road Festival that was taking place on the weekend of 18-19 June.

11.0 AOB

11.1 KK asked the group to give their feedback on any aspects of the meeting they might have found challenging due to the hybrid format.

Action: All