Business School

EDI
Newsletter

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

September 2021

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UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

BUSINESS SCHOOL

ECU GENDER CHARTER

Athena SWAN
Bronze Award

Welcome

Welcome to the EDI Autumn 2021 Newsletter, unless you are south of the equator in which case "Welcome to the Spring Newsletter"! Firstly a big thanks to the many of you who filled in the survey some time ago – not only are your answers crucial to us in understanding the issues and the successes but it is also a key part of our Athena Swan resubmission that is talked about below.

Sometimes it can seem that life continues at some pace and just staying in the same place without slipping back feels like an achievement, yet moving forward, whilst taking account of changing context, needs to be our motivation for our own, colleagues, students and our communities too. It is now some time since we sought to move on from being "Athena Swan" to "Equality Diversity and Inclusion" with us normally taking definitions of this from the Equality Act 2010. This is fully adopted in Scotland including the Socio-economic inequalities section unlike other parts of the UK. Of course, as academics we can and should question meanings for ourselves.

Athena Swan itself has evolved over time and continues to do so from an understandable initial focus on the poor opportunities for women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects, which perhaps controversially for some excluded Business. It now includes all parts of the University including all disciplines and professional services areas. It also now recognises the need for pursuing broader gender equality and the need to recognise that there may be impact from the interaction of a person's identity and other "protected characteristics". We are pressing forward with an application for renewing our Bronze charter award and this needs to be completed and submitted by the end of March 2022 with the consideration of a final draft by an outside expert a couple of months before. Success

with this will then be the foundation for building towards a Silver award.

As Athena Swan moves forward, we are well aware that we need to remember that gender is but one source of potential inequality. Members of the committee and others are engaged with the University's work on race equality as well as a process of thinking through what "Decolonising the Curriculum" means for Business. At present, the main focus of meetings is at University level, but there is understanding that decolonising may look different from one academic area to another. We are also engaged with disability groups across the University which has built awareness that online learning and home working has opened up opportunities and raised equality for some, alongside the frustration in lack of social contact for others. Listening to the views from presentations from the Disabled Students' Forum rather than assuming that staff know the answers has been salutary.

Many thanks to the Centre for Academic Development for organising both the sessions above, sessions on coping with Inter-cultural challenges and for the regular "Open to All" discussions. "Open to all" is open format and discusses what's on the

minds of the staff members who attend and can often lead to highlighting areas that we may not have thought about before.

EDI impacts all our lives and moving forward on this enhances research grant opportunities, the profile of the School, as well as the gains from moving towards everyone being welcomed and able to contribute everything they have to bring to their work and our community. Each year we seek to refresh the membership of the committee and now would be a great time to get in touch if you would like to be involved. Please get in touch with us for a chat if you would like to be more engaged in any aspect of EDI.

Mark Whittington and Cheryl Dowie – Co Chairs, Business School EDI Committee

Committee Spotlight

Professor Stephanie J Morgan

I have been interested in driving forward the EDI agenda for many years. Possibly because of my many years in the computer industry, which was the least 'equal' profession one could work in at the time. Although I reached Senior levels I can still recount some true horror stories. In those days EDI stood for 'Electronic Data Interchange' and the industry was the opposite of inclusive.

When I worked as a Non-Executive Director in the NHS (2005-2009) I agreed to take part in the Appointments Commission special task group on diversity. I also ran a number of workshops on areas such as 'Equality and Diversity Human Rights' and sessions for National Ban Bullying Day.

Later, after moving to Higher Education I took part in a range of activities including the Staff Equality Mentoring Scheme at Kingston, where I was able to use my experience as Associate Dean to engage other female faculty in working towards promotion. I did my utmost to encourage and promote the value of those who were from minority backgrounds. I am delighted to be able to continue this interest with the EDI team at Aberdeen and look forward to working with everyone in the School towards ensuring we develop even further a professional, collegiate and respectful culture that takes EDI seriously.

Article Work-life balance – a personal perspective

In the blog article I wrote a while ago, I reflected on the challenges in work-life balance as a result of the first Covid lock down as an academic and also as a parent of young children. Since then, we had another lockdown after Christmas 2020, and the memory of home schooling a 7-year-old and a 4-year-old is still vivid. Juggling my own work and school work was a challenge, there were frustration and break downs. But looking back, it was an invaluable experience for all of us. The children now understand that we need to manage our time properly, they know that during 'work time' we need to concentrate and do our best, but it is also important to take breaks and have a 'coffee' (not that I am caffeine addicted or the children would appreciate caffeine at their age). I felt that I was setting a good role model for my children and feel less 'guilty' for a being a working mum. I had a better idea of the progress they made with their schoolwork, I got involved in their learning. We spent so much time together as a family. Those are the times I treasure very much. As a friend said to me recently, it is very strange how every cloud has silver lining.

'Work-life balance is a cycle, not an achievement', I came across this recent article by Lupu and Ruiz-Castro in the Harvard Business Review (see **https://hbr.org/2021/01/work-life-balance-is-a-cycle-not-an-achievement**). I agree that there is no one-time fix of work-life balance, but rather, we must continuously engage in a cycle as our circumstances and priorities evolve. The pandemic has made me more aware of the mental process where I examined the imbalance and challenges, reprioritised and implemented strategies (with help from family, friends and colleagues). I have learnt new skills and become more organised. On that note, I'd like to consider the balance of my work-life, during the unprecedented times, a proud achievement.

Now normality is slowly returning, I look forward to going back to the office, having coffees with colleagues, and seeing my students face-to-face. As my children are getting busy with their after school activities, I will miss the time we spent together, even the home schooling.

Nan Liu

School Engagement

Pam Cumming

It gave me great delight during Pride Month to be presenting prizes and certificates to Pupils at Portlethen Academy for their winning entries at the Business School, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion competition.

Pupils were invited to show by means of a slogan/logo their understanding of EDI at home, in the school and wider community. We received approx. 60 entries and our judges had a difficult time deciding the winners.

Prizes were awarded to Joanna Smith, Princess Obiekezie and Jessica Cutler-Howie for their winning entries here.

Celebrate our differences. Live as one

- FAIRNESS FOR ALL -

⟲ **UoA Business School Retweeted**

Portlethen Academy RMPS @PortyRMPS · 10m

Congratulations to @Portyacad S3 students who participated in @UoABusSchool's logo and slogan competition to promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Here are the whole school winners receiving prizes from @Pamjamcumming #proudofporty

What's On

8th October 2020

Dr Sola Kasim from the Business School presented some findings on inequalities in staff attainment rates across UK Universities. This interesting presentation was followed by a Q&A session for around 15-20 minutes. Overall, the session helped staff improve their understanding and awareness on these institutional inequalities.

24th March 2021

Dr John Bone gave a presentation on the 24th March 2021 that centred around social inclusion and cultural diversity issues. The presentation was for 30 minutes after which the audience were able to ask some questions. The session introduced the aim, challenges and key themes of this topic that generated ideas and could lead to interdisciplinary research collaborations.

27th April 2021

Professor Illaria Boncori, a Professor of Management and Marketing at the University of Essex, presented her work at the Business School that centred on pregnancy loss at the workplace. It was a very informative session for all, and she managed the questions from the audience in a clear and sensitive manner, which was very impressive. Professor Boncori's research interests are centred around experiences of inequality in organisations, with a particular focus on embodied practices, feminist approaches and Writing Differently.

9th September 2021

The EDI committee at the Business School organised an EDI workshop on 9th September 2021, titled 'Leading the Change: Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across Business and Social Science Projects.' The event was opened out to the School of Law and the School of Education. We had scholars from the Business School and the School of Education, who presented evidence-based insights into the importance of equality and inclusion, along with some strategies to promote a gender-diverse workplace. Our keynote speaker was Dr John Bone (Interim Director for Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity). The event was successful in a sense that it enabled the exchange of ideas, provided opportunities for research collaboration, and helped build a sense of community.

Promotions Support Network, 29th September 2021

The purpose of the school's promotions support network is to harness experiences of staff across the school, sharing thoughts and strategies for achieving successful outcomes. All who would like to get involved are very welcome. So far we have received top tips from Senior Lecturer Lindsay Tibbetts and Professor David McCausland; sincere thanks from all of us to them both. We are looking forward to hearing from Professor Keith Bender during our next meeting on 29th September 2021, 11.10am to 11.55am. Our next scheduled meeting thereafter is on 24th November 2021, 11.1am to 11.55am. Thank you to all for supporting career progression in the school. Please get in touch for further information and methods for becoming involved – mail to:
angela.black@abdn.ac.uk

Future event

Menopause in the Workplace

The EDI committee in the Business School is delighted to be hosting this talk on National Menopause Day Tuesday 18th October. The talk entitled 'Menopause in the workplace' will explore how women experience menopause transition in the workplace both through an embodiment lens and in relation to their job satisfaction and well-being. It also presents some practical recommendations for supporting women in menopause transition. Presented by:

Professor Carol Atkinson, Faculty Head: Research and Knowledge Exchange – Manchester Metropolitan University
https://www.mmu.ac.uk/business-school/about-us/our-staff/profile/index.php?id=1058

Carol Atkinson is Professor of Human Resource Management at ManMet Business School, where she is based in the Decent Work and Productivity research centre. Her research focuses on employment and careers for diverse groups, including women and older workers, and for sectors such as adult social care and small and medium-sized enterprises. She has led or been part of projects that cover menopause in the workplace and gender pay gaps in medicine (Department of Health and Social Care funded) and is currently a Co-Investigator on an ESRC Good Employment Learning Lab project, leading the adult social care stream.

Hybrid meetings – my first experience

Mark Whittington

We had our regular School EDI committee meeting on the 31st August, following on from the walk in Seaton Park (great to see people!) Going forward, there will be days when meetings happen when we might already be on campus (like yesterday for me) and days when the two hours commute seems a lot of time and carbon for a one hour meeting. Online meetings seem to have encouraged or enabled attendance from those with family or care responsibilities (School Forum attendance has been much higher than when we used to meet in person, for example) as well as those with disabilities and longer commutes. It would be good to keep these

positives whilst avoiding the rather sad idea of meeting attendance from your individual office or annoying your colleagues in a shared office.

The potential solution is a "hybrid" meeting where some are physically present and some are digitally present. The aim is for those attending physically and digitally to be treated as equally present and to have equal

opportunity to see, hear, to be seen and to be heard – this, of course, is one more inclusion issue once the hybrid meeting concept is taken onboard.

I am sure we will learn the new skills of chairing and participating in these meetings quickly enough, but we thought it would be worth sharing a few immediate reflections.
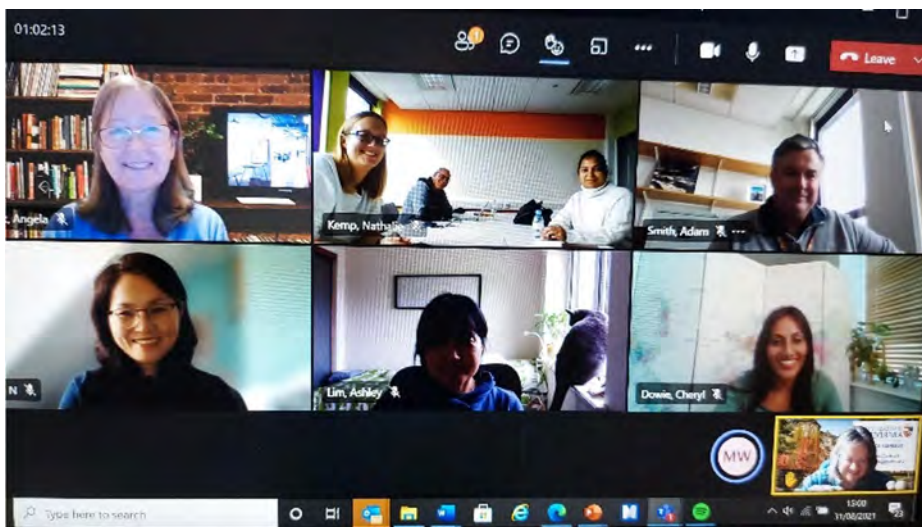
- Check the room sizes, for example our meeting room, MacRobert 810, currently only takes 5 people so wouldn't have worked if we were all on campus.

- Get there early to ensure the IT works. Yesterday, the IT in the room didn't work and there wasn't the time to get an expert. However, we coped and maybe the IT wish list for a hybrid meeting (large screen, fixed camera, microphone, …) is nice for smaller meetings at least (we had 10 people yesterday) rather than totally necessary.

- Starting the digital conversation five minutes ahead and then starting on time would be good! Those online won't know what is going on in the room. The IT situation meant we didn't tick this box yesterday.

- The chair needs to be physically present or, alternatively, a physically present "co-ordinator" could be a useful role to work with the chair if they are online.

- Keeping an eye on the laptop and the room for hands going up was tricky. Interestingly, it seemed those in the room probably lost out to those on the screen … Maybe the big wall screen would have helped with this. Continual scanning across both room and screen is a skill I definitely need to develop more!

- The chair needs to ensure there is no "after meeting" in the physical room – all attendees should have a chance to be present for the whole discussion.

- We need to show courtesy to each other. Some talking over each other is probably inevitable but the chair needs to intervene and give each person the chance to speak and be listened to. Be nice to the chair, they are probably doing their best!

- Eye contact is important when communicating, but it's more challenging in a hybrid situation.

- Animals are still welcome in hybrid meetings and we enjoyed having Ashley's cat join us on this occasion.

Hybrid meetings – my first experience

...continued

At our meeting we didn't need to share a screen on this occasion but when it is needed, using the mouse to highlight, rather than hand waving, might be more likely to engage everyone. We also didn't need to use a whiteboard, but this would also need some preparation or training to make sure everyone can follow and contribute.

Thanks to all the members of the committee for being willing to try this out and particularly to Pam for clerking this different sort of meeting.

The EDI committee is a regular meeting and aiming to have a more physically present meeting occasionally would be good for social contact, perhaps with 30 minutes of coffee time at the beginning. I'd be very interested to hear other views and experiences – I am sure I could learn to avoid the mistakes I made yesterday! Learning to do this well should ensure more inclusion and stop our carbon emissions rising back to where they were before the pandemic.