



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE DIGEST

Welcome to the **EDIC Digest** where you will find a rundown of the discussions held at EDIC on 9th of October 2023.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Ruth Taylor, Chair of EDIC and Vice-Principal Education, shared congratulations on recent Athena Swan Charter awards. In the last year, the Schools of Biological Sciences, Education and Social Science received Silver awards and the Schools of Natural and Computing Sciences and Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History received Bronze renewal awards.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF EDIC TERMS OF REFERENCE

EDIC reviewed its Terms of Reference for 2023/24. EDIC continues to retain overall oversight of the University's charter marks, with a newly established **Gender Equality Steering Group** now acting as the Athena Swan Self-assessment Team.

SCHOOL EDI LEADS UPDATE

EDIC noted that the **School EDI Leads** had received a presentation from a representative from the School of Psychology on work being undertaken to raise awareness of neurodiversity and had discussed accessibility and estates-related EDI issues.

EDI COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

A paper on EDI communications was received, highlighting how the University engages its community on EDI. It set out the aims of EDI communications and engagement mechanisms and how awareness and engagement with EDI are measured by the Organisational Development and the Experience, Engagement and Wellbeing teams. It was agreed staff EDI webpages will be further developed in the new year following the University's transition to a new Content Management System.



INCLUSIVE PERIOD PRODUCT PROVISION

EDIC provided support in principle for a proposal from the School of Psychology and School of Medicine Medical Sciences and Nutrition (SMMSN) EDI Leads, to provide menstrual period products in all University-owned bathrooms. However, logistical issues such as lack of storage space in some toilets were noted. The proposal will be reviewed within the Estates and Facilities Directorate to assess costings and logistical issues.



EQUALITY NETWORKS

It was noted that the chairs/co-chairs of the six [Staff Equality Networks](#) continue to meet for quarterly cross-network events to discuss areas for collaboration, identify where areas and initiatives can be shared, and work together around intersectional issues.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

EDIC welcomed a paper presenting the revised Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Toolkit and proposing changes to the EIA process to improve accountability and meet the University of Aberdeen's legal obligations. The EIA Toolkit has been revised to make it more user-friendly and to invite consideration of intersectionality within impact assessments.

To address the low numbers of EIAs being conducted and being conducted at the appropriate time, the paper proposed that an EIA should be submitted as an appendix to new policy (or significant changes to policies or procedures) to each decision-making committee and that policies cannot be approved without a completed EIA. The paper also outlined ways to improve awareness of EIAs, their purpose and available support and training. It was also noted that the Governance team is revising the committee cover paper template, which will include a section on progress / completion of EIAs.

EDIC requested that guidance is clearer on how consultation should be undertaken and by whom and clarification on the scope of EIAs, whether this includes policy, guidance and decision making. It was noted that EDIC would continue to review EIAs, and relevant committees approving the policy or process under the new proposed process would sign off the EIA.

ONLINE REPORTING TOOL ANALYTICS REPORT

EDIC welcomed a paper providing an update on changes made to the [Online Reporting Tool](#), a summary of data from the Online Reporting Tool, and a plan for publication and ongoing review for discussion and approval. It was noted that Schools are developing approaches in their Athena Swan (AS) action plans in response to incidences of bullying and harassment, awareness of and confidence in reporting mechanisms (as reflected in their AS culture surveys).

ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT STRATEGY GROUP UPDATE

A paper providing an update on the work of the [Addressing GBV and Sexual Harassment Strategy Group](#) was welcomed by EDIC. The EmilyTest application was submitted in September 2023 and it was noted that, as of 1 August 2023, the University had launched a new requirement on our offer holders and students to disclose relevant criminal charges and convictions that they have so that the University can adequately manage risk within our community.



AURORA UNIVERSITY CHAMPION

EDIC discussed a paper providing options for the role of the Aurora Institutional Champion. The University offers the opportunity for staff to take part in the [AdvanceHE Aurora Programme](#), a leadership development initiative for women. The University is currently seeking to appoint its next Aurora Champion, which provides an opportunity to consider how the Champion role is approached. It was agreed that the Champion should be at a senior level though not restricted to SMT or Heads of School and that, in the longer term, a sense check of engagement with the Aurora programme should be considered.

ANTIRACISM STRATEGY

EDIC was informed that the focus of the [Race Equality Strategy Group's](#) meeting in September 2023 included recent changes to the Race Equality Charter, action planning for the University's Race Equality Charter submission and implementation of actions within the current Antiracism Strategy Action Plan. Discussions covered actions to address the underrepresentation of Racialised Groups within academic and Professional Services through recruitment, career progression and within decision-making committees. It was noted that the University is a third-party reporting centre and has staff trained in responding to hate crime. The University delivered a workshop on race reporting mechanisms at the first ever NHS Grampian Diversity Festival on 4 October 2023.



Gaelic Language Plan

The Committee welcomed a paper providing an update on the University's legal obligation to promote the Gaelic language across the University, the work of the Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group (GLPAG), and the appointment of a new chair for the GLPAG which is in progress.