

THE MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JUNE 2007

Present: Professor J Brooks, Vice-Chancellor (Chairman)
Mr D Creary (UNISON)
Ms N Greaves (Faculty Office, HLSS)
Ms M Heaney (Director of Services)
Ms D Holden (Chairman, BME Staff Forum)
Mr K Hughes (University Secretary)
Ms K Lee (EO Officer)
Ms S Lewis (Institute of Education, Didsbury, HSCE)
Mr F McDwyer (GMB)
Ms J McKeating (Embroidery, School of Design, Art and Design)
Mr K Miller (Computing and Maths, Science and Engineering)
Ms J Moores (Acting Development and Training Manager)
Mr P Okojie (UCU)
Ms E Pell (HSCE)
Dr D Rogers (Food and Tourism Management, Hollings)
Dr A Siddiquee (Vice-Chairman, BME Staff Forum)
Mr B Simpson (Acting HR Director)
Professor M Wayman (Dean of Faculty, Art and Design)

In attendance: Miss M Donnelly (Secretary)
Ms S Maccario, UNIAC (For Minute 12)
Mr A Snowden, External Consultant (For Minute 16)
Mr R Young, UNIAC (For Minute 12)

10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Dunn, Professor B Plumb, Ms R Clarke and Professor A Holmes.

11 WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and gave a brief outline of his role in relation to Equal Opportunities (EO) and highlighted that with the change agenda developing there was a real opportunity to adapt a radical approach to EO. The Chairman informed colleagues that he was the Universities UK representative on the Board of the Equalities Challenge Unit and had been invited to become its Chairman.

The Committee was informed that a UNIAC review of the University's EO procedures would provide the University with the opportunity to take a new approach to equality issues. There was a need for EO to be ranked as highly as other policies within MMU.

12 UNIAC REVIEW

Ms S Maccario and Mr R Young, UNIAC presented a report (DEO/07/08) on progress on EO throughout the University. The Committee was provided with details of the background and the process for carrying out the review. Emphasis was given to the point that a risk based approach had been used and the performance would be assessed and monitored by the Audit Committee and periodically by HEFCE. There had been a number of meetings across the University and UNIAC would conduct a follow up review in approximately 6 months time. All dimensions of Diversity and EO had been included (age, disability, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation) and the review concentrated on the staff body only in order to make the review manageable.

The review programme would be developed from:

- Risk Register
- Knowledge of the University and the Sector
- Audit Committee suggestions
- Discussions with management

A member raised concern about UNIAC's ability to work with race issues when its background was audit. UNIAC explained that there were specialised staff who would assess the risks and the approach undertaken was similar to other reviews. The Vice-Chair of UCU raised concern about consultation with Unions as UCU had not been informed of the review. It was agreed that UCU, Unison and GMB should be consulted and kept informed of progress on the Review.

Ms Maccario, UNIAC, informed the Committee that guidance had been sought from HEFCE on the legal and compliance aspects of the review. The emerging themes from the initial fieldwork indicated that:

- There was significant activity at all levels of the University but it was not joined up. Structures needed to be co-ordinated to share information;
- The University was underperforming in monitoring the implementation of previous initiatives and policies;
- EO was embedded in the Board, with EO being a standard item on the Finance and Human Resources and Board agendas. The Board had appointed a Diversity Champion and Board members had received EO training;

- There was a need to develop a more mature approach to grievances and reduce polarisation. On average it was taking 160 days to resolve grievances and consideration needed to be given to setting time limits to resolve problems and the use of mediation;
- There was limited communication of improvement/success;
- Staff surveys needed to be used more regularly.

There was a discussion about the recommendations by UNIAC to ensure the issues arising from the emerging themes were improved. Arising from UNIAC's report the main areas for improvement were:

- Communication – Internally and externally;
- Policy implementation and compliance;
- HR Management Information Systems;
- Timescales for resolution of issues;
- Managerial objectives – through PDR's/PDP's

The Committee was informed that approximately 25-30 interviews had taken place as part of the Review. Concern was expressed that this was a small number when compared with the number of staff within the University.

The report would be submitted to the Audit Committee who would review it and make any recommendations before going to the Board of Governors for final approval. The Committee was informed that Mr Creary, UNISON had been appointed as a member of the Audit Committee in his role as a member of the Board of Governors and would be able to provide input to Committee discussions on the report.

A member suggested that the University should hold an annual/biannual conference to share information and celebrate achievements.

Concern was expressed about access to technology for staff who were not desk-based as they received a lot of hard-copies which many staff felt was unnecessary given the technology which was available. It was agreed that the Director of Services would consult the Marketing Manager to discuss ways of improving communication with staff who were not desk-based.

13 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 MARCH 2007

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2007 were approved as a correct record.

14 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Arising from the minutes it was suggested that influencing international policies should be added to the Background paper (DEO/07/02) which was submitted to the last meeting of the Committee.

15 STUDENT EXTREMISM ON CAMPUS

The Chairman informed the Committee that all Vice-Chancellor's had received a directive from the Government on how to spot possible terrorist activity on campuses. The Vice-Chancellor felt that this guidance singled out Islamic groups and many Universities were refusing to follow the guidance contained within the directive. The University had also received a visit from the Greater Manchester Anti-Terrorist Unit who had informed the Directorate that the likelihood of a terrorist attack was high. It was agreed that all staff and students needed to be extra vigilant and report any suspicious behaviour as soon as possible.

It was agreed that the Students' Union should liaise with institutions at a national level and with the NUS to ensure the University was kept up to date with extremism issues.

16 DIVERSITY OF THE STAFF BODY

The Acting Director of Human Resources presented a report (DEO/07/06) detailing the composition of the staff body. An annual detailed workforce analysis had been undertaken and the full report would be compiled in July 2007. A copy of the full report would be provided to the Committee at its next meeting.

Arising from the report the following issues were raised:

- The average staff age was 45 and this created concerns in relation to the retention of younger staff;
- Turnover of BME staff was high;
- Turnover of disabled staff was poor.

Mr Andrew Snowden, informed the Committee that projects were being undertaken on refreshing equalities targets to ensure the targets were realistic. Institutional targets had been set for the period up to the end of 2009 and details of the targets were provided within the report. It was noted that the University wanted to improve the staff experience for all staff groups and that targets could create change if simple and clearly communicated and this needed to be driven from the top supported by sections.

There was a discussion about promotions and whether the data could be tracked through the HR system. It was noted that the data could not be tracked although a salary breakdown would be included in the full report to review promotions at the next meeting.

It was agreed that further work was required on the report and the full report would be provided to the next meeting of the Committee.

17 PROPOSALS FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC STAFF

A report was provided (DEO/07/07) which outlined proposals for career development for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff within the University. It was noted that the proposals were being put forward following consideration of feedback from the first meeting of the BME Staff Forum on 21 May 2007 and as a result of discussions at the subsequent meeting of the sub-group of the forum set up to look at career development issues.

The report detailed various ways in which BME staff could progress their careers within MMU. These included:

- Mentoring Programme;
- Secondments;
- Self Development Training.

It was proposed that the University should commission an external consultant to design and deliver the self-development training, the training for mentors and managers of secondees. Concern was expressed over the price of the consultant and at £1,700 per day it was suggested that an alternative option would be to consider the possibility of using an internal member of staff with the relevant experience.

Concern was expressed about the report and the perception that BME staff were lacking in knowledge and experience. It was agreed that the report should be re-worded to take into account the concerns, and the issues should be raised with the BME Staff Forum.

It was noted that experience was a major barrier for BME staff as many had not been given the opportunity to gain experience. It was envisaged that the secondments programme would enable BME staff to gain experience.

There was a discussion about interview panels and the possibility of having a BME staff member on all of them. It was agreed that the Acting Human Resources Director would submit a paper to the next meeting of the Committee on interview panels.

There was also a discussion about exit interviews and how they are conducted and how their results could be used. It was agreed that a paper providing a comprehensive analysis of comments received at exit interviews would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

18 DATES OF MEETINGS

The dates of meetings were agreed as:

- 5 September 2007 at 2.00pm
- 17 January 2008 at 2.00pm
- 29 April 2008 at 2.00pm

19 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Communication to Staff

There was a discussion on how the Committee could communicate its progress to staff. It was agreed that this would be looked at by the Acting HR Director and the subject of discussion at the next meeting.

Infrastructure

It was noted that three additional members of staff would be recruited to help supplement the work on impact assessment.