

Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion) – Update October 2020

Introduction

1. Since the Senate meeting in June 2020, I have continued to progress EDI initiatives across the institution and, in doing so, to engage more proactively with staff and students on a range of EDI projects and activities. I am encouraged by the significant progress that has been achieved over the course of this challenging year and am looking to build on our work through the People, Culture and Inclusion Enabling Plan, to embed EDI throughout all aspects of our University over the lifetime of Strategy 2030.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group (EDISG) and Enhancement of EDI Governance

2. Feedback received from staff and students in response to the Black Lives Matter movement has led us to review and extend the membership of EDISG to more adequately represent black staff and students. Early meetings of the newly constituted group have been very positive. Within the governance structure of EDISG, there are now three sub-committees: the Race Equality Action Group (REAG); the Gender Equality Self-Assessment Team (GESAT); and the Professional Services EDI Steering Group (PSEDISG). Under our new governance structures, REAG and GESAT will provide updates to EDISG following each meeting and likewise EDISG will provide an update to SET. This will ensure progress is monitored against our plans to maintain momentum.

People, Culture and Inclusion Enabling Plan:

The draft People, Culture and Inclusion Enabling Plan was presented to EDISG and SET at meetings in August and received positive and enthusiastic feedback. It will now be the subject of University-wide consultation with key stakeholder groups. The five objectives of our new People, Culture and Inclusion Enabling Plan articulate how we intend to deliver on our ambition to be the most inclusive University of its kind anywhere. Specific actions have been identified and key performance indicators (KPIs) established to ensure our objectives become a reality. Progress will be monitored through EDISG.

External accreditations and internal action groups:

Race Equality Action Group (REAG)

We have established a Race Equality Action Group (REAG), which will oversee race equality issues at Queen Mary. The Group has established five working groups to target specific areas of activity:

- Understanding and celebrating race and ethnicity
- Addressing the ethnicity pay gap and supporting career progression for people from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Investigating and addressing issues around racial bullying and harassment
- Reducing the student ethnicity attainment gap
- Developing inclusive curricula

The Group is chaired by me as Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion) and will focus on taking actions to promote race equality. The Group's composition includes staff from across the University from a wide range of backgrounds, grades and experiences, including representation from trade unions and, importantly, from Queen Mary Students Union (QMSU). All working groups also include representatives from QMSU and a number of individual students with expertise in relevant areas.

REAG is working directly with QMSU and relevant student societies as an early action to counter racial harassment, discrimination and hate crime, including developing proposals for the adoption of definitions of Antisemitism and Islamophobia (considered elsewhere on this agenda). I am working with the Jewish Society and the Islamic Society on the development of these statements and we are keen that their adoption by the University will encourage other student societies to also work in collaboration with the University to develop similar statements to address incidents of hate crime directed at different communities within society.

Black History Month

One of the first successes of the Race Equality Action Group has been a joint initiative with the Communications team to develop a comprehensive programme to support Black History Month, with a range of activities throughout October. These include:

- i) An interview with Arthur Torrington, co-founder of Windrush Foundation
- ii) BHM Art Exhibition 2020, which features the work of Matthew Brazier and Morgan Malcolm (Mrgzart)
- iii) The School of Business and Management: Breakthrough! Women's Café are presenting: Female Entrepreneurship and the possibilities.

The Students Union are again offering an exciting programme this year and we are jointly publishing these events on the University's web pages to ensure that there is comprehensive coverage and communication of the wide range of offerings available. <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/blackhistorymonth/events-programme-2020/>

Gender Equality Self-Assessment Team (GESAT)

We have just conducted a review of the Terms of Reference and membership of the Gender Equality Self-Assessment Team (GESAT) to ensure the continuing effectiveness of the group and to more closely align with best practice with the sector. In the lead up to the November 2021 submission, GESAT has been scheduled to meet every other month to inform our actions and monitor progress against our updated action plan. As of 1st October 2020, the University holds 10 School awards, four Silver and six Bronze and a number of Schools are working towards their first successful Bronze award. Going forward, GESAT will take an overview of how Schools are progressing with their Athena Swan work.

Stonewall Working Group

The Stonewall Working Group is realigning our action plan in support of achieving recognition under the Workplace Equality Index, the timeline for which has been delayed until 2022. Stonewall has also updated their application process to align with other charter marks in the sector, establishing a Bronze, Silver, Gold award system in addition to the publication of the Top 100 LGBTQ+ Inclusive employers. This is a welcome development as it gives Queen Mary the opportunity to map our progress of LGBTQ+ inclusion within a structured framework and acts as recognition of the progress we have made in this area.

Some notable developments and successes that will feed into our Stonewall application are:

- The launch of the [Pride 2020 video](#) featuring colleagues from across Queen Mary and closing with a personal statement from me on why Pride is important to me.
- The launch of [two new bi+ role models profiles and a blog post to mark Bi Visibility Day](#).
- The publication of a [Trans Inclusion Statement](#), co-signed by me as Vice-Principal People, Culture and Inclusion, and Tom Barringer, the Chair of QMOU, the Staff LGBTQ+ Network.

Academic Promotions and Career Pathways Review:

Since the last meeting of Senate an Academic Promotions and Career Pathways Task and Finish Group has been set up, chaired by Professor Amrita Ahluwalia, to review Queen Mary's current academic pathways, promotions criteria, processes and guidelines to explore how to embed the principles of citizenship and the introduction of thresholds into academic promotions. Professor Ahluwalia chaired the previous review conducted in 2018 which resulted in significant improvements in our processes, thereby providing a strong basis from which to further enhance our academic career pathways. It is proposed that amendments will be made for the next academic promotions round to be launched in November/December 2020.

Dignity and Respect

We are developing a range of initiatives to tackle negative behaviours, as referenced in our staff, survey, and improve staff engagement (one of our KPIs). A Values in Action Framework describes clear expectations of staff behaviour at all levels of Queen Mary, aligned to each of our Values. The Framework was very well received by EDISG, who advised that the tone and content were appropriate and reflected the culture that we aspire to achieve. We plan to launch the Framework in Autumn, once we have concluded University-wide consultation. In parallel, we are developing expectations of our leaders, through a Leadership Framework. This will include a focus on inclusive leadership and inform the design and content of our future leadership and management programmes, for which there is strong interest.

We have invested in nationally recognised Active Bystander training to give colleagues the skills to challenge inappropriate behaviour such as bullying and harassment. To ensure maximum impact, workshops will be rolled out by Faculty with senior champions role modelling and communicating their support. All sessions include tried and tested decision-making and personal effectiveness techniques to overcome the initial fear of tackling challenging situations. This award-winning training is in use at organisations and HE institutions across the UK and Europe, including Imperial College London, the University of Manchester, and Oxford University among many others.

In recognition of our need to more effectively respond to complaints of bullying and harassment, work has continued to establish our Dignity Disclosure Officer network. Dignity Disclosure Officers have been trained extensively in a range of skills, including EDI awareness and an understanding of the Report and Support system. There has been, and continues to be, action to ensure diversity in the Dignity Disclosure Officers network, to support staff and students to feel confident in making a disclosure.

Training

The Organisation Development Team have been working closely with me in updating and extending our EDI provision. We have developed a mandatory online programme of EDI training, which is being rolled out to all new starters, decision-makers and more widely across existing staff. The programme was piloted with SET, EDISG and relevant stakeholder groups and has generated excellent feedback from stakeholders at all levels of the University.

We have developed a recruitment and selection e-learning programme and assessment that is bespoke to Queen Mary. The e-learning complements our Recruitment Policy and highlights actions to support our inclusion agenda. The e-learning programme is mandatory for colleagues who have attended recruitment training elsewhere or need a refresher, having last attended QM training over two years ago. The e-learning allows us to offer "just in time" training so that colleagues involved in recruitment

and selection processes have greater knowledge retention. We also offer additional targeted provision on recruitment and selection to compliment the on-line offering.

Engagement with QMSU

I am also pleased to be working very closely with Queen Mary Students' Union (QMSU), to advance a number of initiatives where we share a common interest. EDISG provides a valuable forum for collaborative working with Sabbatical Officers and Student Union staff on defining key equality priorities of Queen Mary and agreeing actions for their implementation.

I have also instituted regular meetings with Shamima Akter as SU President, to discuss and agree EDI priorities. Similarly, I also have regular meetings with Tiana Dinard-Samuel as, SU VP Communities, and Jack Jukes, as SU VP Welfare. We are currently engaged in discussing the development of an integrated student and staff wellbeing and mental health strategy using the UUK Step Change Framework.

SU Sabbatical Officers are also active members of the REAG, contributing to shaping its agenda and action plan. We have made important progress in advancing our work on the race agenda having agreed the broad outline of a Race Equality Strategy, underpinning Action Plan and Statement on Race Equality.

External Activities

I am pleased to report that I was invited to deliver the keynote speech at the Queen Mary Virtual Conference for Teachers and Advisers held in June 2020. I presented on the theme of 'Inclusivity at the heart of Queen Mary'. The Conference offered an excellent opportunity to share the important work that we are delivering in the area of increasing access to students from underrepresented groups, our outreach work with schools and colleges, preparing students ahead of them joining Queen Mary to facilitate their successful transition to University, and our peer assisted study support and Q-Mentoring schemes.

Universities HR, the Higher Education professional body for Human Resource (HR) professionals, invited me to join a panel in July, to address HR Directors from across the United Kingdom, to discuss Black Lives Matter and how institutions can address the challenges experienced by black staff and students. I have since been invited to join a panel debate at the Association of University Directors of Estates Conference event later this month, on the topic of: 'Tackling race inequality: how estates and facilities staff can support, engage, challenge and close the gap'.