

# Imperial College London

## Disability Action Committee

Tuesday 1 March  
14:00 – 15:30  
MS Teams Meeting

### Minutes

Present:

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| Kani Kamara        | Head of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre – Co-Chair (KK) |
| Susan Littleson    | Deputy Director of Human Resources – Co-Chair (SL)                   |
| Mark Allen         | Careers Service (MA)   |
| Hannah Bannister   | Director of Student Services (HB)                                    |
| Chris Banks        | Assistant Provost (Space), Director of Library Services (CB)         |
| Harbhajan Brar     | Director of HR (HBR)   |
| Daniela Bultoc     | Senior Organisational Development Consultant (DB)                    |
| Benita Cox         | Principal Teaching Fellow, Business School (BC)                      |
| Lorraine Craig     | Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), Engineering (LC)             |
| Stephen Curry      | Assistant Provost (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) (SC)             |
| Richard Johnson    | Faculty Operating Officer, Business School (RJO)                     |
| Bouquette Kabatepe | Digital Accessibility Officer, ICT (BK)                              |
| 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)                                       |
| 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)                                       |
| Awais Seyyad       | ICU Disabilities Officer (AS)  |
| Liz Scholfield     | Communications Lead, ICT (LS)  |
| Cynthia So         | Secretary to DAC (CS)  |
| Maggie Taylor      | Assistant Buildings Manager (MT)                                     |
| Chris Watkins      | Faculty Operating Officer, Medicine (CW)                             |

Agenda Item

### 1.0 Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 SL and KK welcomed the Committee to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from: David Ashton, William Hollyer, Richard Jardine, Nathalie Podder, Roddy Slorach, and Tim Venables.

### 2.0 Minutes of the last meeting 1 December 2021

- 2.1 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 December 2021, minute 3.1 – Communications piece about workplace adjustments: KK said that this action had now been completed and the numbers of people requesting support for workplace adjustments had been included in the written update from EDIC.
- 5 March 2020, minute 3.4 – Mental Health at Work Commitment: KK said that COB's further input was needed on this action.
- 12 November 2019, minute 3.3 – Adjustments to student assessment: KK said that this action was still open and an update was needed from David Ashton.
- 13 March 2019, minute 4.3 – Staff Disability Support Project: KK said that this action was still open and that a review of the work EDIC had started in terms of disability support for staff would be taking place in the second quarter of this year.

### 4.0 Membership, Terms of Reference (ToR), and mission statement

4.1 The Committee considered the membership, ToR and mission statement document, which had been produced based on the Padlet exercise done in the previous meeting. The following points were made:

- i. CB suggested the meeting would be augmented by a more senior presence from the Estates team and someone with input into the design of new buildings. A new space in White City, despite being on the ground floor, was not fully accessible, and this was a brand-new building. Designing accessibility from the start of a process needs to be committed to. MT responded that Estates are recruiting for a Head of Building Operations and that she would bring up CB's comments with the Head of Estates, Nick Roalfe. It was suggested that this role may be a candidate to attend the DAC. It was also suggested that a person from the Projects team would be helpful, since the Projects team is involved in the design of new buildings. KK would approach Nick Roalfe, to discuss this.  
**Action: KK**
- ii. More clarity was requested around the governance and where the DAC sits within the organisation, and how DAC feeds into the EDI strategy. It was felt links could be strengthened including into the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Group, so that this governs EDI activity across the board, sets priorities and looks across the EDI landscape. EDISG should have a broad overview of DAC was committing to so that the College was more intersectional and joined-up. Links were also needed with the People Strategy, the Imperial Together action plan, the REC action plan, etc. to tie things together. It was considered that EDISG's role was pivotal for the DAC going forward.
- iii. On responsibilities, "encourage the uptake of best practice" seemed more like an action and not a responsibility. To inform the College of what good practice is would be a better responsibility.  
**Action: Secretary**
- iv. On skills of DAC members, there didn't seem to be any expertise listed about managing disability policies and practices. The DAC were asked if there was

expertise in the group which should be listed. MOB was happy for that to be included in the list of skills, as a skill she had.

**Action: Secretary**

- v. On priorities, there was a comment that instead of ‘supporting managers’, perhaps the ToRs should prioritise ensuring that managers had the skills to do their job. Discussion focused on the correct balance between offering a course that they might or might not take, and as an organisation making sure that our managers had the skills to deal appropriately? Managers needed to have awareness of the likely issues and be able to link people to support mechanisms at the College. As an organisation we wanted to equip our managers to do their jobs rather than encourage them to do their jobs.
- vi. There were a lot of College individuals on the DAC responsible for various parts of the College, but only two student members, which put a lot of burden on two people and could present a slight imbalance. Perhaps more student reps could become involved? It was suggested that somebody from the ICU staff team could be invited to attend, and the question of how to increase student representation could also be explored with the ICU staff team. There were several representatives from Student Services, and a lot of work went on in this area. The Student Committee and the Education Committee were looking at things that students were very involved with. KK asked if there could be any value in terms of an update from those committees. HB said that they were looking at refreshing the Learning and Teaching Strategy and asking that inclusion remained front and centre. There was desire to incorporate learning from the pandemic. It would be useful for HB to report on what was happening in those committees and other areas of work so the DAC membership would be aware. There was also the Access and Participation Working Group and Committee, who had got a commitment to reduce the discontinuation gap for disabled students. CS would ask HB for written updates to include in the papers going forward.

**Action: Secretary**

- vii. The Committee had a lot of members, and perhaps it was not possible to bring everyone into the conversation while functioning properly as a Committee. More thought was needed as to how to ensure there was representation from different areas without it becoming difficult to manage and move forward.
  - viii. There was a worry that the College was quite a way from the vision based on the existing data and the earlier point made about accessibility in new buildings. Perhaps it needed to be made clear that the vision was our aspiration.<sup>1</sup>
  - ix. SL amended the vision in the paper. It was agreed to use the term “vision” instead of “mission statement” for consistency.
- 4.2 Summing up, KK confirmed there was broad agreement from the group with the Membership, Terms of Reference (ToR) and Vision.

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<sup>1</sup> **Post meeting note from the Secretary:** MT noted that Nick Roalfe got in touch with CB after the meeting and gave information on access to the White City buildings she had queried and clarified that there were actually no accessibility issues to these buildings. He confirmed that collaboration with DAS does take place when new buildings are being planned and constructed.

## 5.0 New action plan

5.1 The Committee considered the new action plan draft. The following points were made.

- i. Actions should have named owners and timelines that do not use the word “ongoing”.

**Action: Action owners**

- ii. A question was asked about using Bluetooth technology instead of the hearing loops technology. MOB said that she was starting to look at that with Caroline Carter and Nick Roalfe.
- iii. It was considered that some of the actions should apply for every department. This led to the idea that the action plan could be more widely applicable and completed by departments across the College rather than just those departments that are presented on this group. Either those widely applicable actions should be extrapolated as an action across all departments, or they should be taken out of this particular action plan.

**Action: Secretary**

- iv. Action owners should think about SMART goals and objectives coming out of the vision and that would cover specific measures of success and timelines.
- v. A question was asked about the Hidden Disability Sunflower Scheme, and whether this was something the College wanted to promote beyond COVID for other reasons. KK said that Hidden Disabilities was used during the pandemic around mask-wearing and keeping people safe during that time, but the original campaign for Hidden Disabilities was to promote all of those disabilities, e.g. diabetes, heart disease, etc., that were not visible. Its profile had grown higher since then and there would need to be a shift in emphasis in the way the College promoted it.
- vi. With regard to the action on encouraging staff and students to declare, if there was a desire to make this into a bigger campaign, we would need more content in terms of case studies and examples. We would need people to talk about the fact that they filled in the declaration form on ICIS, and how the College has acted on the data and changed services on the basis of the data. If that content does not exist, then the communications around it may need to be simpler in terms of reminders. This should be tabled for a future meeting.

**Action: Secretary**

- vii. It was considered that the DAC would be asked what the top five priorities were and that we needed to reduce the items for this year’s action plan. Members were asked to consider how to prioritise and what they wanted to achieve in the short term. Some of the ongoing actions could be pushed further back if they had a lower priority.

**Action: All**

## 6.0 Mental Health Awareness Week (May 2022)

6.1 DB said that Mental Health Awareness Week was an annual event in the UK, and the People & Organisational Development (POD) team were coordinating a

programme for the Week across the College. The theme for this year's Mental Health Awareness Week, taking place 9 – 15 May, was loneliness. Loneliness was affecting more and more people and a huge impact on physical and mental wellbeing, especially during the pandemic. The programme for the Week would contain a series of events, formed by people's contributions across the College. This included coffee mornings, guest speakers, mindfulness sessions, etc. DB asked the DAC to consider what they could contribute. She was looking to get ideas from across the College by 16 March.

- 6.2 KK said that it would be a good idea to get in touch with Able@Imperial to do something around one of their coffee mornings.

## **7.0 Update from Disability Advisory Service**

- 7.1 MOB said there had been a huge increase in demand for screenings for SpLD, autism, and ADHD, and an increase in diagnostic assessments as a result of the increase in screenings. This was a significant increase compared to the last academic year. The service was very busy meeting that demand. They had also set up drop-ins for students to bring evidence to get temporary adjustments for exams, which were very successful as many students were not able to get appointments with the NHS to get their exam adjustments made permanent.
- 7.2 A question was asked about the increase in individuals who were asking for ADHD support. MOB said that there had been a huge increase across the sector. Many students were reporting that they couldn't concentrate or focus, and it could be that a different style of learning and teaching might have brought that out. Students were coming to the DAS already wanting to a medical diagnosis for ADHD. MOB asked if there had been a staff increase in reporting ADHD as well. KK said that there had been towards the beginning of the pandemic, especially in female members of staff, and this was maybe something to explore in conjunction with the other work that EDIC had done with DAS on neurodiversity.
- 7.3 A point was made that there had been a study on the longer-term effects experienced by people who had had mild COVID, and they included the inability to concentrate, so this could be having an impact as well.
- 7.4 A question was asked about how Imperial's numbers compared to other Russell Group universities. MOB said that other Russell Group universities were also seeing an increase in screenings across different conditions, and definitely in ADHD. Unlike other institutions, Imperial was screening for it as a SpLD. Imperial was also screening for autism, which other Russell Group universities were not doing, and the College was able to offer diagnosis, and a strong level of support for students.

## **8.0 Update from Imperial College Union**

- 8.1 AS said that Nathalie Podder was working on looking at the report from the sexual misconduct survey that the ICU had run. A working group had been set up to look at why sexual misconduct was disproportionately affecting disabled students. The Union also doing a big push on retaining some of the education provisions that had popped up around COVID, even as students were transitioning back into in-person learning. In addition, they were looking at how disabled students might be suffering higher financial burdens, and whether that might be linked to the higher drop-out rate for disabled students.
- 8.2 HB said that in the context of the sexual misconduct report, it had also been received by the College's working group which was reviewing the student discipline

process, and the working group would be picking up what they could do to support students who were accessing that complaints procedure.

## **9.0 Update from the EDI Centre**

- 9.1 KK said that in terms of raising awareness, a successful pilot of “Understanding LGBTQ+ mental health” training had taken place during Disability History Month, and three more sessions had been arranged. They were also recruiting for the Calibre programme, a talent development programme for neurodivergent and disabled staff. KK asked the Committee’s help to encourage individuals to apply and spread this information far and wide.
- 9.2 Continuing, KK said that EDIC was currently doing some scoping work around the idea of a disability passport within College. A disability passport would be a vehicle where people could record the adjustments that had been put in place for a particular disability, and this document would move around with individuals. KK had found an external provider who would do this piece of work with them. KK should be able to give more updates at the next DAC meeting.
- 9.3 Concluding, KK discussed the graph showing the number of requests for support with workplace adjustments and dyslexia and neurodivergence. She said that there was a lot of work happening locally that would not be captured in this graph. There had been an increase in individuals coming to EDIC for support. With the current government stance on masks, the requests for face mask exemption cards would decrease, but she expected more people would want some identifier in terms of hidden disabilities.

## **10.0 Update from Able@Imperial**

- 10.1 LP said that the DAC should encourage others to join the Able@Imperial coffee morning as they were planning a relaunch. They were also planning lunchtime sessions and workshops. They had over 130 members but wanted to get to 200. LP and Dez Mendoza, Able’s Communications Officer, had been giving talks to various faculties. LP said that if any DAC member would like Able to give a talk to their department to raise awareness, they should get in touch.
- 10.2 Continuing, LP said that Able were going to celebrate Disability Pride Month in July by holding a big event, and they were looking for any volunteers to help. They were aiming to organise an outdoors picnic. They were also giving out their new purple lanyards to members. LP said that all DAC members should consider joining Able if they were not a member already.

## **11.0 AOB**

- 11.1 MOB said that in the June 2021 DAC meeting, she had discussed the definition of neuro terminology that she had worked on together with EDIC, and using neurodivergent as the umbrella term. They had sought buy-in from the Student Union as well, but the definition had not been adopted through the DAC. MOB would bring this to the June 2022 meeting.

**Action: MOB**