



Progress with Equality and Diversity

Purpose

- 1 The purpose of the paper is:
 - to update the Access and Inclusion Committee on the ongoing implementation of the Equality and Diversity Framework; and
 - to ask members to note and agree the suggested way ahead for its further implementation.

Corporate plan implications

- 2 This paper relates to strategic theme 5, *Equality and Diversity* and outcome 2, *Access, Inclusion and Progression*, of the Corporate Plan.

Background

- 3 In November 2009, the Council agreed a new framework for the enhancement of equality and diversity delivery within colleges and universities. This framework made a series of recommendations which were to be taken forward by the SFC Access and Inclusion Committee.
- 4 Acting on these recommendations, the Committee considered the separate needs of colleges and universities while identifying opportunities and structures which would promote collaboration between the sectors, where this was both relevant and possible.
- 5 The Committee was updated on progress in March 2010, and noted the proposed programme of work to assist the implementation of the Equality and Diversity Framework. This involved:
 - delivery of service to the university sector by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU); and
 - development of a strategy for enhancing equality and diversity delivery within the college sector, targeting funding at building capacity within individual colleges and building the capacity of the college sector as a whole.

- 6 In June 2010, the committee noted that:
- agreement had been reached with ECU on delivery of an equality and diversity service for the HEIs in Scotland, which, in order to align with the HEFCE funding cycle, would commence in January 2011, but with an interim arrangement from August 2010;
 - agreement had been reached with Scotland's Colleges on the delivery of a central information point to co-ordinate information and advice to colleges;
 - agreement had been reached with the equality practitioner networks over their role and contribution to the framework;
 - funds had been distributed to the college sector to identify and deliver college specific development on equality and diversity issues; and
 - there were on-going discussions with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) over a joint college university proposal to deliver a programme of work on inclusive learning and teaching.
- 7 In July 2010, the Investment Committee agreed funding of up to £200,000 a year for AY 2010-11, AY 2011-12 and AY 2012-13 for ECU and funding of up to £60,000 for AY 2010-11, AY 2011-12 and AY 2012-13 for the collaborative project between the HEA and Scotland's Colleges on inclusive learning and teaching.
- 8 Funding of up to £240,000 had also been secured for the development of an appropriate equality and diversity service to colleges in 2010-11; funding of up to £225,000 has since been secured for further development within the college sector in 2011-12.

Update

Enhancement of University Equality and Diversity delivery: the role of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)

- 9 Annex A outlines the agreement with itemised costs established with ECU.
- 10 In the interim period from August 2010-December 2010, the ECU:
- recruited and appointed a full-time project officer, Freya Douglas, who is based in London;

- established the Scottish Liaison Group (SLG) with meetings held on 27 October 2010 and 15 December 2010;
 - identified, through the SLG, two Scottish-specific projects, *Mainstreaming: equality at the heart of Higher Education* and *Attracting International Students: equitable services and support, campus cohesion and community engagement*, which are now being taken ahead. In addition, ECU is updating the *Resource Pack for Departmental Disability contacts*;
 - attended meetings of the three Equality Practitioner Networks (EPNs), which involves colleagues from both HEIs and FECs;
 - ran a well-received seminar on the Equality Act 2010;
 - undertook staff training on the Scottish scene (delivered by Alastair Sim of Universities Scotland); and
 - appointed a firm to act as legal contractor for the Scottish HEIs.
- 11 Since January 2011, ECU has, additionally:
- drawn up a schedule for quarterly meetings of the Scottish Liaison Group (SLG) with the latest held on 29 March 2011;
 - appointed consultants to take ahead the *Mainstreaming* project (BSV Associates Ltd.), with consultants for the *Internationalisation* project to be appointed shortly. In addition, two ongoing projects have been extended to include Scottish HEI representation – *Enabling equality: furthering equality for disabled staff in HE* (Edinburgh Napier University) and *Using data to improve the disabled student experience* (University of Aberdeen); and
 - organised a seminar on *Athena Swan*.
- 12 The executive has observer status on the ECU Board and additionally attends meetings of ECU's Funders Forum.

Enhancement of College Equality and Diversity delivery: the role of Scotland's Colleges

- 13 Scotland's Colleges has appointed Dr Rick Hollstein, Manager – Next Practice, to take ahead the co-ordination of the central information point for equality and diversity information and advice for colleges.

- 14 Part of his role is to run four equality and diversity events during AY2010-11 which are solution focussed and provide practical support rather than simply promoting best practice. The first event, *'Equality and Diversity – Creating Systemic Change'*, was held on 28 January. The event was well attended and provided an opportunity for practitioners to consider implementation of the Framework and how best to promote systemic change through the four interrelated strategic priorities – Leadership, Capacity Building, Action Research, and Information and Advice.
- 15 Three further events are planned in May/June which will address the major issues identified:
- Ten top tips;
 - Transparency in Equality Impact Assessment; and
 - Embedding Equality and Diversity within the College quality systems.
- 16 Scotland's Colleges are also joint partners with the Higher Education Academy in a collaborative project designed to embed equality and diversity in the curriculum (see below).
- 17 Funds have also been distributed to individual colleges to enable each:
- to acquire expertise to work alongside senior management to build capacity in relation to a particular challenge they face; or
 - to support colleges which choose to collaborate with others to pool the funding available to tackle consistent or difficult problems shared by colleges.

The results of this exercise will be collected and collated by Scotland's Colleges in April and reported back via the Equality Practitioner Networks (EPNs) in May. These results will be used to advise the development of year two of the Framework as this applies to the college sector.

Embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum

- 18 The collaborative project, designed to further the embedding of equality and diversity within learning and teaching, has been agreed between, and is being jointly progressed by, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and Scotland's Colleges.

- 19 A survey, designed to identify institutional strengths and achievements, priority areas for development and support needs in this area, was circulated to all universities and colleges in the autumn, with a good response received, more particularly from the university sector.
- 20 Two identical seminars, *Developing a high quality learning experience for all students: Embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum*, were held on 18 February and 9 March at Argyll Court and Heriot-Watt University (resp.). The seminars attracted around 80 colleagues from both sectors, including 40 academics. The aims of the seminars were:
- to situate the *Embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum* programme within the broader context of the Scottish Funding Council's equality and diversity framework;
 - to report on the findings of the survey;
 - to enable a sharing of practice and identify institutional priorities and support needs;
 - to discuss strategies for embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum; and
 - to develop a vision for a high quality and inclusive learning experience for all students.
- 21 The seminars additionally reported on the establishment of three Special Interest groups (SIGs) which would cover cross-institutional sharing of current practice, future priorities and support needs in relation to:
- Inclusive Assessment
 - Inclusive curriculum design; and
 - Inclusive curriculum delivery.
- 22 The feedback from the seminars is currently being assessed and will help advise ongoing work in this area.

The Equality Practitioner Networks (EPNs)

- 23 The three regional Equality Practitioner Networks – West, East and North - are college and university led practitioner partnerships tasked to:

- share best practice;
- share information;
- identify areas requiring CPD; and
- identify leadership challenges.

Each holds quarterly meetings and plays a critical role in supporting practitioners in both sectors through providing peer support to those institutions that require specific support.

- 24 The EPNs also help to co-ordinate best practice events and assist with the selection of academic staff both to lead CPD and to participate in CPD programmes.
- 25 The SFC, in partnership with the EPNs, is holding a *National Equality and Diversity Conference*, hosted by the University of the West of Scotland, on 19 May 2011. The purpose of the Conference is to provide an opportunity for practitioners to come together to discuss the developing framework. This will assist colleges and universities in responding to the challenges of delivering equality outcomes, embedding equality and delivering systemic change for the benefit of the sectors and society as a whole.¹ A flyer, promoting the event, is attached as Annex C.

The way ahead

- 26 Much has been achieved during the first year of the implementation of the Framework. The Higher Education sector is content with the services provided by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) which, at present, are available only to universities.
- 27 It has, however, become apparent that certain services offered by ECU could be usefully extended to include the FE sector. Both ECU and Scotland's Colleges have indicated that this would be possible.
- 28 The SFC wants to enable a transition toward more integrated working between the sectors but, at the same time, wants to ensure continuity of support for both sectors and to ensure that sector-specific issues are appropriately addressed, more particularly for the college sector. To achieve this, the executive would wish to combine the well established networks provided by Scotland's Colleges with the expertise of the ECU.

¹ The Conference Brochure can be viewed at:
www.sfc.ac.uk/access/equality_diversity/equality_diversity_event.aspx

- 29 It is therefore proposed that consideration is given to a proposal for college provision in AY2011-12 which would require Scotland's Colleges to provide an administrative role, to co-ordinate activity and make maximum use of its college contacts, and which would facilitate equality and diversity support from the ECU.
- 30 The proposal is outlined in Annex B. This proposal would deliver specific advice to the college sector, ensure there is overlap between college and university projects and deliver funds for a series of college specific projects that build on the outcomes from year one investment.
- 31 It is expected that Scotland's Colleges would administer the process, communicate with the sector and engage with colleges on the content of a series of Scottish specific college projects. It would be expected that ECU would provide specific equality and diversity advice and expertise.
- 32 The Access and Inclusion Committee is invited to **consider** this proposed direction of travel and **agree** that the executive should continue to investigate the viability of extending some ECU service delivery to the college sector.

Recommendations

- 33 The Committee is invited to:
- **note the update on the ongoing development of the Equality and Diversity Framework; and**
 - **consider and agree that the executive continues to investigate the viability of extending some ECU service delivery to the college sector.**
- 34 The Committee is also invited to:
- **agree to publish the paper, with the exception of the annexes A and B, on the Council website following the meeting.**

Financial implications

- 35 There are no new financial implications for the Committee inherent in this paper.

Further information

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