

# QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

## EQUITY BOARD

### MINUTES

Equity Board met in the Council Room, Level 2, U Block, Gardens Point Campus, at 2:00 pm on Thursday, 14 March 2002.

#### **Present**

Ms G Austen (Chairperson); Dr D Anderson, Ms R Christie, Mr T Cochrane, Dr C Dallemagne, Dr C Dillon, Dr G Chattopadhyay, Ms J Healy, Ms T Hutchinson Ms M Kelly, Ms D Messer, Dr J Synott; Ms S Johnstone (Secretary).

#### **Apologies**

Dr C Eastwood, Ms H Tinsley, Dr P Yarlagadda, Ms L Watson.

#### **By invitation**

Ms D Dobinson, Ms G O'Brien.

#### **1. APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND FINAL STARRING OF AGENDA 95/0831**

The Chairperson welcomed new members to the Board; namely Dr Dillon as the Council nominee, Ms Healy as the Student Guild nominee and Prof Jones (who was absent) as the Creative Industries Faculty Chairperson. The Chairperson called for starring of additional items on the agenda. Items 3.2, 5.1.1, 5.2.1 and 5.3.1 were starred. All items remaining unstarred were noted or adopted as appropriate.

#### **2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the Equity Board meeting of 20 September 2001 were confirmed.

#### **3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

##### **3.1 Review: Community Services Advisory Committee 96/0773**

**Resolved** to note that:

- (i) the Community Services Advisory Committee had been advised of the Board's interest in the review of the policies and arrangements relating to community service at QUT;
- (ii) the Community Services Advisory Committee intends to circulate the final report of the review to relevant committees, including Equity Board for comment; and
- (iii) no formal outcomes of the review have been achieved to date.

##### **3.2 Staff Awareness Survey - Progress Report 95/0049**

The Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, drawing members attention to her intention to request Faculties and Divisions to report to the next meeting of Equity Board on the issue specific reports that arose from the Equity 2000 Staff Awareness Survey. The reports for each faculty and division were circulated in 2001 to the deans and heads of division.

The Faculty of Science Chairperson, Dr Dallemagne indicated it would be useful if the Faculty of Science report could be forwarded to her electronically.

**Resolved** to note that a progress report on implementing recommendations arising from the Equity 2000 Staff Awareness Survey would be considered at its next meeting.

#### **4. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP 95/0831**

The Chairperson of Equity Board, Ms Austen, drew the Board's attention to its terms of reference. Ms Austen, commented that as there were a number of new members on the Board, it was appropriate for it to

review the terms of reference and remind itself of its role. In summary the Board has as its main functions; development of policy, provision of advice, and coordination and monitoring. Ms Austen indicated that increasingly a lot of this work was actually done outside scheduled meetings, but members were still expected to participate and provide feedback as appropriate when requested outside the formal meetings.

**Resolved** to note the Equity Board's terms of reference and membership as attached to the submission.

## 5. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES/FACULTIES

### 5.1 Low- SES Student Equity Committee

#### 5.1.1 Minutes of meeting of Low-SES Student Equity Committee held on 30 October 2001 99/0921 / 00/0739

The Chairperson of Equity Board invited Dr Dallemagne, Chairperson of the Low-SES Student Equity Committee, to speak to this item. Dr Dallemagne spoke to the minutes and highlighted the following matters.

- The Committee had supported the Chairperson's suggestion that a consolidated booklet be produced, which outlines all the bursaries and financial assistance that SES students can access. The Equity Coordinator agreed that all this material should be brought together, and the Faculty based support officers for SES students must be involved in helping to disseminate the material. It was agreed that the Equity Coordinator and Dr Dallemagne meet in order to progress this matter. The student representative commented that it would also be useful if the relevant Guild activities were included in the material, eg, textbook scheme.
- The Committee had discussed the Student Finances Survey, and in particular how students were often unaware of the total cost of courses, specifically the costs of textbooks and equipment. The Chairperson commented that faculties could be requested to be more explicit about the costs in course material. The Equity Coordinator, however, suggested that the important issue, was not the actual costs, but having adequate support mechanisms in the faculties to assist SES students manage the costs. Ms Kelly suggested that this issue also be considered in her meeting with Dr Dallemagne.

**Resolved** to note the minutes of the Low SES Student Equity Committee 30 October 2001 meeting.

### 5.2 Disability Services Committee

#### 5.2.1 Minutes of meeting of Disability Services Committee held on 6 December 2001 96/0011

The Chairperson of Equity Board invited Dr Anderson, Chairperson of the Disabilities Services Committee, to speak to this item. Dr Anderson commented that the major item of business for the Committee had been the Disability Action Plan, which was currently on this agenda as an item. However, she did wish to draw the Board's attention to Disability Access Week, which will be held in July.

**Resolved** to note the minutes of the Disability Services Committee 6 December 2001 meeting.

### 5.3 Cultural Diversity Committee

#### 5.3.1 Minutes of meeting of Cultural Diversity Committee held on 13 November 2001 96/0803

The Chairperson of Equity Board invited the Equity Coordinator to speak to this item, in the absence of the Chairperson of the Cultural Diversity Committee. The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly commented that the Committee had considered a number of issues, but the main items were concerned with 'mapping the University's cultural diversity activities', the approval of the Cultural Diversity Policy and language skills/cultural knowledge register.

Ms Kelly informed the meeting that the Implementation plan for the Cultural Diversity Policy was still being developed, but acknowledged the need to remind the University that the policy had been approved.

**Resolved** to note the minutes of the Cultural Diversity Committee 13 November 2001 meeting.

## 5.4 Reports from Faculty / Division Committees

### 5.4.1 Faculty of Science

95/0831

The Chairperson of Equity Board invited the Chairperson, Faculty of Science Equity Committee, Dr Dallemagne to speak to this item. Dr Dallemagne tabled a report and highlighted the following activities.

- The Mathematics Access Centre started out as an equity issue, as it was identified that it was largely students from equity groups who were not doing well with mathematics, however after gaining a large teaching and learning grant it has expanded its role as a drop in center and access to weekly enabling tutorials. It was noted that the Centre did not only cater for mathematics students, but all students who needed assistance with mathematics. Mr Cochrane queried the long-term outlook for the Centre after the teaching grant expires. It was suggested that as the mathematics pre-requisite for many courses had been dropped, the Centre would continue to be needed, but did the Faculty have plans for its continuing operation?
- The Faculty has established an Equity Library through the donations of staff and publishers and some fund raising activity, which allows equity students to access books for up to a semester. In response to a query, the Board was informed that first year books are targeted, and QSTEP and indigenous students, and other students referred by Counselling will also be welcomed to utilize the resource. The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly reinforced her view that although this activity is commendable, she believes the University should not be a lender of objects to students, but should concentrate its efforts on finding the funding and setting up appropriate strategies to assist students to purchase course material as necessary.
- The Faculty was developing a web presence for Equity, which aims to bring or link information on resources for equity students, and provide them with an email address for further information.
- Dr Dallemagne briefly outlined the equity activities, and support the Faculty would be offering to equity students in 2002, and commented that a major activity would be participation in the Science Train, as this activity is very important in accessing and providing information to rural areas.

**Resolved** to note the report from the Chairperson of the Faculty of Science Equity Committee.

### 5.4.2 Faculty of Information Technology

95/0831

The Chairperson of Equity Board invited the Chairperson of the Faculty of Information Technology Equity Committee, Ms Christie to speak to this item. Ms Christie apologized for not tabling a report and informed the Board on the following activities.

- The Faculty had run an Equity Basics course, which 15 staff had attended, and intended to run the course again for new staff.
- The Equity Committee would now have a permanent column in the newsletter produced by the Faculty, which would assist with communication of equity issues in the Faculty.
- The Faculty scholarship and support program now consists of 12 bursaries for low SES students, for which there were 21 applications this year; a scholarship for a new female student from Software Engineering Australia; a postgraduate scholarship, and book allowances.
- This year for the first time, the Faculty held a pre-orientation for equity groups, including the implementation of a mentoring scheme.
- A pilot workshop for female school leavers was held in 2001, as was one for indigenous students. Given the success of the workshops, the Faculty now plans to hold two workshops each year, one for low SES students and one for indigenous students.
- The Faculty held a language workshop in 2001 for NESB students, which focused on interview techniques.

- Given the growth in students studying in Summer Semester, the Faculty was considering the feasibility of providing summer scholarships.
- The Faculty would be interviewing for a Faculty Equity project officer within the week. The position was currently two days ongoing, topped up with another two days on a contract basis for 12 months. Ms Kelly informed the Board that this would be the first ongoing Equity position established in the faculties, and she hoped other faculties would follow with similar initiatives.

**Resolved** to note the report from the Chairperson of the Faculty of Information Technology Equity Committee.

## 6. SUBMISSIONS

### 6.1 Disability Action Plan - Final Draft

96/0011

The Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator with the final draft of the Disability Action Plan. It was noted that the Plan was finalized by email with the Board during February; hence the final version was forwarded for information. The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly advised the Board that the Plan would be going to the next meeting of the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee for endorsement.

The Chairperson of the Disability Action Plan Advisory Group, Mr Cochrane, informed the Board that the group had looked at other examples, and had made a conscious effort not to produce a discursive document. The Action Plan contained a lot of work and detail, but the group had aimed to produce a document, which could be worked through in a deliberate manner.

The only comment that was made was in relation to item 5.2.4 of the Plan. Ms Healy indicated that she would hope that any 'buddy system' that might be established for students, would be inclusive.

**Resolved** to note the final draft of the Disability Action Plan and that endorsement from the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee was being sought.

### 6.2 Equity Plan 2003 - 2007

95/0049

The Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator requesting input into the Equity Plan 2003 -2007. The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly commented that she had forwarded the Annual Report - 2001 on the Equity Plan (2001-2005) to the Board for information, but she was now requesting input into the review of the current Equity Plan to ascertain whether changes should be included in the future version.

In particular, the Board's attention was drawn to the three strategic issues set out in the context of the Plan, and Ms Kelly queried whether the Equity Plan should continue to focus on the issues of poverty as a barrier to university study, increasing respect for cultural diversity, and promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The Board made the following comments.

- The Chairperson commented on the need to focus on cultural diversity which was more critical, following the events of September 11, 2001, and Ms Kelly commented that the three strategic issues were still critical and no new directions were required.
- The issue of religious tolerance was raised, and the Board agreed that was subsumed by the wider issue of cultural diversity.
- It was noted that objective 3 did not explicitly cover sexual orientation, and it was queried if the objective could be enhanced, or an appropriate target developed, that would explicitly address queer students as an equity target group.

Ms Kelly indicated that any revisions to the Plan needed to be submitted by 28 March 2002, so she would appreciate any further feedback reaching her by 20 March 2002.

### 6.3 Grievance resolution procedures for discrimination-related grievances

95/0015 / 95/0111 / 96/0060

The Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator with the final draft of the Grievance resolution procedures for discrimination-related grievances, which were intended to replace the existing separate procedures for racial discrimination and harassment complaints and sexual and gender-based harassment complaints.

The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly tabled a draft Grievance Resolution Policy, which was intended to provide a common framework for the resolution of grievances within the University. The procedures for discrimination-related grievances would follow on from this policy, as would sets of procedures for Workplace Related Grievances and Student Related Grievances. It was noted that the policy and other two sets of procedures had not yet been finalized.

Members of the Board who had not seen the procedures previously endorsed by the Board, and finalized by email following the last meeting, raised the following issues.

- Under section 4.7 Victimisation, a member felt replacing 'may' with 'should' in relation to disciplinary action should strengthen this and members agreed that a stronger wording of this section would assist complainants. Ms Kelly agreed to seek advice on alternative wording, which would strengthen the intent, but still allow the Vice-Chancellor some discretion.
- It was commented that under section 5 Definitions, it might be more appropriate to replace 'sexual preference' with 'sexual orientation', and that the current list as defined does not cover transgender discrimination.
- It was queried whether complainants are encouraged to put their complaint in writing, and Ms Kelly responded that this was something that the Discrimination Contact Officers were encouraged to work through with the complainant.

**Resolved** to note the final draft of the Grievance Resolution Procedures for Discrimination-related Grievances.

#### 6.4 Cultural diversity and racism - current issues

95/0049

The Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator requesting the Board to discuss the latest domestic and international developments related to cultural diversity, and develop ideas for QUT activities in response. The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly indicated that she felt the need to initiate some dialog on this subject, given cultural diversity is one of the three strategic equity issues the University has chosen to pursue. She was therefore asking the Board to consider whether it could do more for its students and staff, in relation to the refugee debate and war on terrorism.

The Board discussed this issue and made the following comments.

- Dr Synott informed the Board that Carseldine was keen to develop its profile in the community, and as such would be holding a public forum on these issues. Initially it was planned for Harmony Week, but it would now take place later in the Semester. The forum would be widely publicized, as the campus was keen to build links with the relevant community groups. Dr Synott suggested that if the event was successful, it might be useful to repeat the exercise at the Gardens Point campus.
- Mr Cochrane commented that the most powerful equity related activity he had experienced, was a student lead activity in which the students discussed the impact of equity issues on themselves, and suggested that a similar activity might be useful, eg Norwegian students currently studying at QUT could discuss the Tampa issue from their perspective. Ms Kelly cautioned that an exercise along these lines would have to be handled sensitively, as self-disclosure exercises do carry risk. However, she could see the merit of a well designed series of events, and the possibility of a community service grant to take these activities into schools.
- Ms Healy from the Student Guild commented that a proposal was being put to the Guild to hold a world forum day on 11 September, and this activity could dovetail in with any student lead events organized by the University as suggested above.
- It was queried if any recommendations for relevant activities would arise from the review of Internationalisation currently being undertaken by the University. Ms Kelly commented that she thought this unlikely.

**Resolved** to request the Equity Coordinator to report to the next meeting on the outcome of planned cultural diversity and racism activities (Harmony Week and the Carseldine Forum) and any proposed new activities.

**7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

The following items were noted.

- 7.1 Post-meeting action sheet for Equity Board 20 September 2001 meeting**
- 7.2 Division of Information and Academic Services Cultural Diversity Audit 2001**
- 7.3 Equity News No 30, February 2002**
- 7.4 2001 QUT Equity Awards**
- 7.5 Equity in 2002 Upcoming Events and Latest Issues**
- 7.6 Equity Board meeting schedule 2002**

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

**9. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 16 May 2002, in the Council Room, Level 2, U Block, Gardens Point Campus, at 2:00 pm.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 4:00 pm.

Confirmed ..... Date .....  
 Chairperson