

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, 16 May 2002.

Present

Dr D Anderson (Acting Chairperson); Ms L Burnett, Ms J Crawford, Dr C Dallemagne, Dr C Dillon, Ms E French, Ms J Healy, Ms T Hutchinson, Ms M Kelly, Ms S Lusan, Ms D Messer, Mr G Smith, Dr J Synott, Dr S-A Wallace, Mr T Wilson; Ms S Johnstone (Secretary).

Apologies

Ms G Austen, Ms R Christie, Mr T Cochrane, Dr C Eastwood, Dr P Yarlagadda.

By invitation

Ms W Cusack, 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 Sue-Anne Wallace as the Chairperson of the Division of Research and Advancement Equity Committee, Ms Sonja Lusan as the Chairperson of the Division of Administrative Services Equity Committee, Ms Erica French as the Chairperson of the Faculty of Business Equity Committee and Mr Tony Wilson, as a representative from the Chancellery. The Chairperson called for starring of additional items on the agenda. Items 4.1.1 and 4.3.1 were starred. All items remaining unstarred were noted or adopted as appropriate.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Equity Board meeting of 14 March 2002 were confirmed subject to the following words being inserted in the second dot point in 5.4.1.

...and QSTEP and ATSI students and other students referred by Counselling.....

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

3.1 Support for students from low socio-economic status backgrounds 95/0049

Resolved to note the matrix of financial support services provided to students from low socio-economic status backgrounds (low-SES or low income) from a variety of sources at QUT, as attached to the submission.

4. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES/FACULTIES

4.1 Low- SES Student Equity Committee

4.1.1 Report of meeting of Low-SES Student Equity Committee held on 7 May 2002 00/0419 / 95/0287 / 99/0921

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

- The nature and number of loans provided by the Student Assistance Scheme was considered by the Committee and the value of the Scheme highlighted. The Committee expressed regret that cash could not be provided under the Scheme, and concern that the fund must be protected, and not be allowed to decrease. The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly commented that the fund was in fact one of the few funds in the University that was allowed to retain its own interest, and hence she believed it was in a good position.

- The Committee welcomed the production of a matrix of financial support services available to students as documented in item 3.1 above, but commented that awareness of the QStep program needed to be increased, as many more students were probably eligible for the scheme. The other issue that was raised by the Committee was the need for first year students to be made aware of learning support early in the first semester, as this was also seen to be a major factor in first year attrition.
- Dr Dallemagne also drew the Board's attention to the need to appoint an "academic staff member with expertise in the area of educational disadvantage" to the Low SES Committee, and commented that it would be useful to have a Secretary to the Committee that was not an active member, and requested that the terms of reference be amended to require the Committee to meet only four times a year. The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly indicated that she would discuss the need for secretarial support, and the Board endorsed the change in the number of meetings required by the Committee's terms of reference.

The Board discussed the issue of QStep, and commented that the awareness of this program was directed to schools rather than the University, and the label best describes how these students were recruited. It was queried whether students could join the program after being admitted to the University. Ms Kelly responded that it was true that QStep students were only a subset of all low-income students, and given QStep concentrated most of its effort on recruitment, the University needed other strategies to pick up other low-income students. Ms Kelly commented that the work referred to in item 3.1 above was a good start in bringing together all the information on support for low-income students, and more effort was needed to publicise the support currently available in the faculties.

Resolved to note the report of the Low SES Student Equity Committee 7 May 2002 meeting.

4.2 Disability Services Committee

4.2.1 Minutes of meeting of Disability Services Committee held on 28 March 2002 95/0786

Resolved to note the minutes of the Disability Services Committee 28 March 2002 meeting.

4.3 Cultural Diversity Committee

4.3.1 Minutes of meeting of Cultural Diversity Committee held on 25 March 2002 96/0803

The Chairperson of Equity Board invited Ms Kelly to speak to this item, in the absence of Dr Prasad Yarlagadda the Chairperson of the Cultural Diversity Committee. Ms Kelly commented that the main item from this Committee was the draft Implementation Plan for the Cultural Diversity Policy which she tabled. The implementation plan grouped its recommendations by type, and Chairpersons of faculty and division committees were requested to take the document back to their own committees for comment. Subject to no major concerns being expressed, Ms Kelly indicated that she would circulate the final plan for endorsement by flying minute to the Board before the next meeting.

Members requested an electronic copy of the Plan to facilitate consultation, and a member commented that the minutes of the Cultural Diversity Committee should reflect the work of the Carseldine Equity Committee and not individuals in item 5.

Resolved to note the minutes of the Cultural Diversity Committee 25 March 2002 meeting.

4.4 Reports from Faculty / Division Committees 95/0831

4.4.1 Faculty of Education

The Chairperson of Equity Board invited Ms Burnett in the absence of the Chairperson, Faculty of Education Equity Committee, to speak to this item. Ms Burnett tabled some information on the study 'One in Ten: Investigating the Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Bachelor of Education Students' and presented information on this project which was funded by a Faculty Equity grant.

The Board discussed the presentation, and made the following comments.

- One member commented that she was pleased to see this work, and would suggest that the report be circulated to the entire University. The Faculty's response to the project was queried, and the Board was informed that the completed report had only just been forwarded to the Faculty, and thus the Faculty's response was unknown.
- The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly commented that some of the issues raised in this project were also discussed at the last meeting of the Board, with the outcome that a new target was inserted in the Equity Plan relating to support mechanisms for gay and lesbian students.

Resolved to note the presentation on the completed study, "One in Ten: Investigating the Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Bachelor of Education Students".

4.4.2 Faculty of Business

95/0831

The Chairperson of Equity Board invited Ms French the Chairperson of the Faculty of Business Equity Board to speak to this item. Ms French tabled a report prepared by the Faculty's Equity Project Officer, and commented that as she had just taken over as Chairperson, she was not totally familiar with all the Faculty activities, but highlighted the following.

- The Faculty now had a designated Equity Project Officer on a 12 month contract and dedicated budget.
- The Faculty website had been updated and both staff and students are encouraged to use this as equity information source, as well as the quarterly newsletter, *Equity Business*.
- The Faculty would focus on staff equity training as a high priority in 2002. \$10,000 had been allocated this year to increase participation of faculty staff in equity training, and specific equity training which explicitly takes into consideration the needs of faculty staff would be trialed.
- The Faculty Equity Committee would host a table at each Business Leader's Forum during 2002, as a means of raising the Committee's profile and networking within QUT and external organizations.

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

5. SUBMISSIONS

95/0049

5.1 Staff Awareness Survey – Progress Reports

The Chairperson, Dr Anderson, requested Faculty and Divisional chairpersons to brief the Board on how their faculty or division had responded to the outcomes of the Equity Staff Awareness Survey. It was noted that some reports would be held over until the next meeting, given the number of new chairpersons.

Faculty of Business

The Chairperson, Ms French commented that the Faculty had responded to the recommendations of the survey in the following ways. It had responded to the perception of lack of senior management support for equity by employing a project officer and providing a dedicated budget for equity, and in relation to the need to raise awareness of staff equity, it had made staff equity training as a high priority for 2002. Ms French indicated that she had also written an article for the newsletter highlighting the activities of each School within the Faculty. By this, she was hoping to introduce an element of competition and that the Schools with poor performance in equity training would be motivated to improve their record.

Division of Information and Academic Services

The Acting Chairperson, Ms Crawford indicated that this issue had been discussed at a meeting on 27 February, and it was pleasing that the divisional response on equity staff awareness was quite high. Staff appear to get their information from emails and supervisors, and at this stage no specific activities targeting this issue were planned.

Faculty of Law

The Chairperson, Ms Hutchinson commented that the main issue for the Faculty that arose out of the survey was staff concern at bullying. However, as this is really a human resource management issue, one of the main concerns of the Equity Committee was to educate staff about equity. There appears to be a

misunderstanding that fairness equates to equity, hence material relating to this had been prepared for the next newsletter, and it was hoped that this issue would also be addressed at the forthcoming School retreat.

QUT Carseldine

The Chairperson, Dr Synott, advised the Board that the Carseldine Committee was responding to the survey by focusing on building an equity ethos on campus which is inclusive of staff and students. Hence the Committee was working with the Guild, and had held discussions with management regarding the inclusion and recognition of equity work as legitimate work within a staff member's performance planning and review document. A newsletter was also being produced, and equity would be reported on regularly at School meetings.

Faculty of Information Technology

The Acting Chairperson, Mr Smith, informed the Board that the results of the survey indicated that the Faculty was very polarized regarding its equity awareness. The Faculty had responded to this, by running an in-house Equity basics course for staff in 2001, which would be repeated this year. All staff received an Equity calendar, and the Faculty newsletter now had an equity section, in an effort to raise awareness of equity issues. It is expected that these initiatives would now be enhanced, following the recent appointment of an Equity Project Officer in the Faculty.

Faculty of Science

The Chairperson, Dr Dallemagne, indicated that this issue was discussed at the last meeting of the Committee, and the immediate focus was to ensure that equity was discussed as an item at each School meeting, and that it also becomes a standing item at the Faculty Academic Board meetings.

Faculty of Health

The Chairperson, Dr Anderson, commented that the survey indicated that there was a misunderstanding of what equity was within the Faculty, and this had resulted in some faculty based equity training being undertaken last year, and further training would be done this year. The Committee was also trying to address the awareness issue through its website, and the production of a newsletter.

Resolved to note the reports on progress with recommendations from the Equity Staff Awareness Survey, from the seven faculties and divisions above, and request that the remaining faculties and divisions report to the next meeting.

5.2 Equity Plan 2003 - 2007

95/0049

The Equity Board considered the Equity Plan 2003-2007, and noted that feedback provided by the Board at its last meeting had been incorporated into the revised Plan. A member not present at the last meeting commented that it might be preferable to replace 'public advertising' with promotion in target 2.1.

Resolved to endorse the revised Equity Plan 2003-2007, subject to the change to target 2.1 as outlined above.

5.3 Grievance resolution procedures for discrimination-related grievances

95/0015 / 95/0111 / 96/0060

Resolved to note the progress made on the grievance resolution procedures for discrimination-related grievances since the last meeting, and that further reports to the Board would be made as appropriate.

5.4 Cultural diversity and racism - progress

95/0049

The Equity Board considered a tabled submission from the Equity Coordinator on cultural diversity and racism, and the Chairperson Dr Anderson invited the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly to speak to this item. Ms Kelly indicated that this submission was a follow up to the discussion the Board had at its last meeting on this topic. Ms Kelly commented that she thought this was an important year to be promoting cultural diversity and racism and a number of activities are proposed in order to engage the community as outlined below.

- Continuation of current activities which promote cultural diversity or anti-racism, including implementing the cultural diversity policy, awareness raising activities, the cultural diversity calendar and training;
- Practical support for local refugees, such as English lessons, and faculties considering assistance with fees for refugee students; and

- Intellectual analysis of the situation. A seminar held at Carseldine on this issue was very successful, and it had been suggested that a similar activity be held on the other campuses.

The Board discussed the submission and the following comments were made.

- Dr Wallace indicated that she had preliminary discussions with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Advancement), and he was supportive of the idea of providing English language teaching for refugees, and would consider taking this activity on as the Division of Research and Advancement major equity initiative.
- Dr Synott commented that the seminar at Carseldine on cultural diversity and racism had been very well supported with staff from other campuses attending. The organizers were keen to repeat the exercise at Gardens Point including speakers from Gardens Point.
- A member queried the viability of scholarships for refugees, and Ms Kelly indicated it was a complex issue, as the fees have to be paid. However, she indicated that she would explore the possibility with the faculties, to ascertain the level of interest in the proposal.
- The Board was advised that one of the University photographers was currently working with the refugees and it might be a good awareness raising strategy if her work could be exhibited.

Resolved to note the program of activities for 2002 related to promoting cultural diversity and anti-racism.

5.5 First-year-experience program and equity group students

00/0908

The Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator on the first-year-experience program and equity group students. The Chairperson, Dr Anderson invited the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly to speak to the item. Ms Kelly advised the Board that the first-year-experience program had just started, and the main aim was to lower the attrition rate. The groups of students at most risk of leaving were similar to the equity groups, thus although this was a generic program, it would address many student equity groups.

The Board was informed that the activities in the program as set out in Attachment 2 to the submission, were currently being trialled at the local and university level, and the Chairperson encouraged faculty and divisional equity committee chairpersons to inform their committees of this program.

Other members commended the program given the high costs of attrition, and Dr Synott indicated that at Carseldine it was already evident that this program was responsible for reducing the attrition rate.

Resolved to note the activities of the inaugural First-Year-Experience (FYE) program, and request that details of the program be forwarded to faculty and divisional equity committees.

5.6 Equity-related elements of Higher Education Review (Nelson Review)

02/0115

The Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator on the equity related elements of the Higher Education Review (Nelson Review). The Chairperson, Dr Anderson invited the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly to speak to the item. Ms Kelly informed the Board that a consultation process had begun on the overview paper "Higher Education at the Crossroads", issued by the Commonwealth Minister for Education, as part of the review of Higher Education. She indicated that potentially this review could have a major impact on public policy; hence she was looking for input from the Board on the equity issues as set out in the overview paper.

The Board considered the consultative questions as set out in the overview paper and made the following comments.

- Dr Synott raised the issue of whether equity and indigenous units should be directly funded by the Commonwealth, and whether this would be a better way for resources to be put into higher education to address equity issues. Ms Kelly indicated that currently the Equity Section was funded by a mix of targeted grants and operational funding, and she would be reluctant to move to a wholly targeted model of funding, as it then makes it possible for the Government to make the funding conditional.

- The Chairperson asked Ms Kelly what issues she intended to canvass in the response, and was advised that she would be raising poverty as a major issue, and suggesting that reform was required to Austudy or the provision of other scholarships. The response would oppose differently structured courses for disadvantaged students, and would recommend the abolition of fees for summer semester and working in partnership with schools to encourage participation in higher education.
- The Board generally agreed that the cost of living while at University was the major deterrent to increasing the level of low SES students in higher education, and for the current situation to change, a major policy change in the current funding arrangements would need to be proposed.

Resolved to note that the Equity Coordinator would be providing input on the equity elements for the University's response to the Higher Education Review as outlined above.

5.7 Divisional and Faculty Equity Committees

95/0831 / 96/0188

Resolved to note the matrix providing information about the budgets and activities of Divisional and Faculty Equity Committees as attached to the submission.

6. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The following items were noted.

6.1 Post-meeting action sheet for Equity Board 14 March 2002 meeting

6.2 Report on QUT Staff Participation in Equity Training 1997-2001

6.3 An Invitation to all QUT Staff and Students: Reconciliation Week 2002

99/0701

The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly tabled a program of events taking place in Reconciliation Week 2002, and encouraged members to attend.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 22 August 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 3:50 pm.

Confirmed
 Chairperson Date