

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

EQUITY BOARD

MINUTES

Equity Board met in the Council Room, Room U214, Level 2, U Block, Gardens Point Campus, at 2:00 pm on Thursday, 20 May 2004.

Present

Mr R Morley (Chair); Mr C Ackland, Dr D Battistutta, Dr J Carr, Ms R Christie, Mrs J Crawford, Dr C Dallemagne, Ms D Eden, Ms R Field, Ms S Garske, Ms L Hellyer, Ms M Kelly, Mr S Pincus, Ms K Tune, Mr I Wynne, Assoc Prof P Yarlagadda; Ms W Cusack, Ms M McKinnon, Ms S Forrest; Ms C Garcia (Secretary).

Apologies

Dr C Dillon, Dr E French, Mr J Slater, Mr T Wilson, Ms C Young.

Absent

Mr C Ackland.

By invitation

Ms D Dobinson (for items 6.1 and 6.7).

1. APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND FINAL STARRING OF AGENDA

02/0295

Equity Board noted the above apologies and that Mr Morley would be chairing the meeting as Acting Registrar.

The Chair, Mr Morley, welcomed members noting that Ms Cusack, Ms McKinnon and Ms Forrest were attending as observers, Ms Hellyer was attending for Mr Slater, Ms Tune was attending for Ms French and Mrs Crawford was attending for Ms Young.

Mr Morley called for starring of additional items on the agenda. In addition to items 1, 2, 3, 4.1.1, 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.3, 5.4.4, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7, items 4.2 and 4.2.1 were starred. All items remaining unstarred were noted or adopted as appropriate.

Item 6.6 was withdrawn from the agenda.

No conflicts of interest were declared at the opening of the meeting.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of Equity Board's meeting of 4 March 2004 were confirmed.

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

3.1 Free dial-in access for QUT HECS students

96/0976

Equity Board considered a submission from Dr Dallemagne in relation to a proposal to improve pre-commencement communication with those students experiencing financial difficulties. The Chair, Mr Morley, invited Dr Dallemagne to speak to the submission.

Dr Dallemagne suggested that the same privileges in relation to free dial-in access should be available to students whether full-fee-paying or not, and further indicated that those students who did not have access to a computer were prone to missing out on any emails distributed prior to orientation week.

In the discussion which ensued the following comments were made.

- The Edial service is now available for low income students, however this was not advertised widely as there were only one thousand accounts available and these were generally allocated to computer scheme recipients. In response to a query in relation to the account limitations, Ms Kelly suggested that it could possibly be attributed to technical reasons and undertook to pursue the matter.

- QDial, which was a full paying ISP service was no longer available to students.
- Academics need to be made aware of the limited access to the internet for students.
- In comparing dial-up schemes between universities it was noted that most universities did not offer ISP services and most of those who did charged for the service.

Mr Morley thanked Dr Dallemagne for the report.

Resolved to refer the matter to the Orientation and First Year Experience groups for consideration.

4. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES / FACULTY AND DIVISIONAL COMMITTEES

4.1 Low-SES Student Equity Committee

4.1.1 Minutes of 26 February 2004 meeting 99/0921

Equity Board considered the minutes from the Low-SES Student Equity Committee from its meeting of 26 February 2004.

Resolved to note the Low-SES Student Equity Committee meeting minutes of 26 February 2004.

4.2 Disability Services Committee

4.2.1 Minutes of 27 April 2004 meeting 95/0831

Equity Board considered the minutes from the 27 April 2004 meeting of Disability Services Committee. The Chair, Mr Morley, invited Ms Field to speak to the item.

Ms Field advised the Board that the minutes had not yet been confirmed and indicated that the Committee had recently been looking at producing regular updates for general and academic staff, possibly through Equity Committee Chairs, on developments in relation to disability issues. It was further reported that the issue of psychiatric disabilities had been raised by the Faculty of Law which was concerned that certain policies, for example, exclusion, were not written in consideration of those with psychiatric disabilities.

Mr Morley thanked Ms Field for the report.

Resolved to note the Disability Services Committee meeting minutes of 27 April 2004.

4.3 Cultural Diversity Committee

4.3.1 Minutes of 19 April 2004 meeting 96/0803

Resolved to note the Cultural Diversity Committee meeting minutes of 19 April 2004.

5.4 Reports from Faculty / Division Committees

5.4.1 Report from Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering 95/0049

Equity Board considered a tabled report from Assoc Prof Yarlagadda on equity matters in the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering. The Chair, Mr Morley, invited Assoc Prof Yarlagadda to speak to the report.

Assoc Prof Yarlagadda outlined the report and drew member's attention to the following:

- In 2003, two Equity Training sessions had been facilitated for Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering staff in relation to equity basics and grievance resolution for managers and supervisors.
- In 2003, the terms of reference for the Faculty Equity Committee had been amended to include one representative from the Women in Built Environment and Engineering (WIBEE) from each School on the Faculty Equity Committee.

- Two new scholarships had been sponsored by the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering in 2003 for first year undergraduates in financial hardship.

Mr Morley thanked Assoc Prof Yarlagadda for the report.

Resolved to note the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering report.

5.4.2 Report from Faculty of Creative Industries

95/0049

Equity Board considered a verbal report from the Chair, Faculty of Creative Industries Equity Board, Ms Eden, on equity matters in the Faculty of Creative Industries.

Ms Eden reported that the Faculty had recently awarded the Deans Incentive Award and the Q-Step book vouchers. Ms Eden further indicated that the Faculty had recently employed the services of a business student to provide advice on how to improve the quality of university life for students, and that the Faculty was now considering introducing a "buddy system" for students.

During the discussion that ensued, it was noted that Student Guild had received some positive feedback on the use of brail signs at the Faculty of Creative Industries at Kelvin Grove, however there had also been some complaints in relation to problems experienced in navigating the site. It was further noted that the distance issue between the new cultural precinct and the remainder of the campus would not be so apparent once the remaining construction works were completed.

The Chair, Mr Morley, thanked Ms Eden for the report.

Resolved to note the Faculty of Creative Industries report.

5.4.3 Report from Division of Finance and Resource Planning

95/0049

Equity Board considered a verbal report from the Chair, Finance and Resource Planning Equity Committee, Mr Pincus, on equity matters in the Division.

Mr Pincus indicated that as a small division with little interaction with students, they mainly provided support to the faculties and divisions in identifying equity plans. Further, it was noted that the Division had endorsed the staff development strategy and Indigenous development strategy, and had been very involved with the Student Financial Support Scheme.

The Chair, Mr Morley, thanked Mr Pincus for the report.

Resolved to note the Division of Finance and Resource Planning report.

5.4.4 Report from QUT Carseldine

Deferred to the next meeting.

6. SUBMISSIONS

6.1 Scholarships for male students in teaching

95/0049

Equity Board considered a submission in relation to scholarships for male students in teaching. The Chair, Mr Morley, invited Ms Dobinson, Equity Officer, Division of Administrative Services, to speak to the submission.

In providing a background to the submission, Ms Dobinson reported that an application had been made by the Catholic Education Office to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) for a temporary exemption from the operation of certain provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 to offer scholarships for male student teachers. While the original application had been refused as it was discriminatory under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, a subsequent application seeking to offer a number of new scholarships for male and female teachers had been successful and was announced on 19 March 2004.

In order to redress the low levels of male nurses and teachers in Australia, the Federal Government had advocated that scholarships be made available for male students in teaching and nursing and was seeking an amendment to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* as a result of the Catholic Education Office attempt.

In the discussion that ensued it was noted that there was a disparity between male and female enrolments in teaching at QUT, however legislation would need to be passed before government scholarships would be available.

Mr Morley thanked Ms Dobinson for the report.

Resolved to note the information provided in relation to scholarships for male students in teaching.

6.2 Report of 2004 Scholarship and Computer Scheme

03/0519

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, in relation to the 2004 Scholarship and Computer Scheme. The Chair, Mr Morley, invited Ms Kelly to speak to the submission.

Ms Kelly reported that for the second year in a row, QUT had administered scholarships for commencing low-income students, and free computers for low-income continuing and commencing students. In 2004, 25 scholarships had been awarded and 312 ex-QUT student laboratory computers had been allocated. This had increased substantially from the 10 scholarships granted and 100 computers allocated in 2003.

Ms Kelly advised that the QUT Scholarship and Computer Scheme would be continued in 2005 given the strong response to the scheme and the un-met need amongst the student body. The Board was advised that the budget for next year would be increased to \$1million. Ms Kelly advised that the program would not give away more than 300 computers as this number seemed to be adequate to fulfil the needs of the students.

Discussion ensued and the following comments were made.

- The number of applications for computers had fallen which was attributed in part to the rigorous application process, the difficulty in capturing the target market, and the deterrent effect of students being advised that there were limited scholarships available.
- Student Guild had awarded 33 text book bursaries and were considering providing financial assistance for disabled students to purchase software for use at home in second semester.
- It was reported that some recipients of computers, in particular those with a disability, had experienced some difficulty in physically relocating the computers to their place of residence. While it was noted that the University was unable to provide a delivery service, there were other means of assistance which could be provided.
- Consideration could possibly be given to employing the services of Faculty of Information Technology students, in particular students from low socio economic backgrounds, to assist in the installation of computers.

The Chair, Mr Morley, thanked Ms Kelly for the report.

Resolved to note the report of the 2004 Scholarship and Computer Scheme, as attached to the submission, and request that it be distributed to relevant QUT officers.

6.3 Elaboration on advice re full fee paying undergraduates

04/0254, 04/0368

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, in relation to full fee paying undergraduates. The Chair, Mr Morley, invited Ms Kelly to speak to the submission.

Ms Kelly drew members' attention to the correspondence recently sent to the Vice-Chancellor on the Board's behalf reiterating and elaborating on the Board's views in relation to full fee paying domestic undergraduate students. Ms Kelly advised that the submission was for noting.

The Chair, Mr Morley, thanked Ms Kelly for the report.

Resolved to note the report on the elaboration of advice in relation to full fee paying undergraduates as attached to the submission.

6.4 Scholarships and the Income Test

04/0157

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, in relation to Scholarships and Income test. The Chair, Mr Morley, invited Ms Kelly to speak to the submission.

Ms Kelly informed the Board that she was providing an update on recent amendments to the Centrelink income rules. The Board was advised that monies or goods given to a student are counted by Centrelink as income. There were a few exemptions to this rule and they are listed as follows

- Providing a student with a Commonwealth scholarship
- Providing a student with a "free" place rather than discounting their fees
- Providing a student with a partial payment of their students fees or HECS

Ms Kelly advised that the core components of the University's Scholarship and Computer program were still regarded as income by Centrelink.

However, Ms Kelly informed the Board that there were attempts being made to rectify this and that it was important to ensure that in awarding a scholarship to a student from a low socio economic background that their Centrelink payments were not adversely affected. Faculty scholarships were largely merit based and often faculties were unaware of the implications of awarding these scholarships to students from low socio economic backgrounds.

The Faculty of Law Equity Coordinator, Ms Cusack, advised that the Faculty spread out their scholarships over a two year period in an attempt to lessen the impact of the scholarship on a student's Centrelink payment.

The Chair, Mr Morley, thanked Ms Kelly for the report.

Resolved to note the report pertaining to Scholarships and the Income Test.

6.5 People and Culture Plan

03/0666

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, which recommended that it discuss draft thirteen of the People and Culture Plan. The Chair, Mr Morley, invited Ms Kelly to speak to the submission.

Ms Kelly reported that the People and Culture Plan was one of four top-level, five year strategic plans which were currently being developed under the University's planning framework. While equity was embedded in each of the plans, the majority of equity information resided in the People and Culture Plan which concentrated primarily on staff and students.

Ms Kelly noted that while the generality of the Plan may warrant the need for operational guidelines for the Divisions and Faculties, organisational culture and values had been made quite explicit.

Mr Morley thanked Ms Kelly for her report on the People and Culture Plan and requested members to forward any comments directly to the Equity Coordinator.

Resolved to note draft thirteen of the People and Culture Plan.

6.6 Equity Board Working Party Report on the Nelson Reforms

This item was withdrawn.

6.7 HEEP Review

04/0007

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, which recommended that it note a submission to the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) in relation to the review of equity groups and the development of a new funding formula for The Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP). The Chair, Mr Morley, invited Ms Dobinson, Equity Officer, Division of Administrative Services, to speak to the item.

Ms Dobinson reported that the DEST submission had been developed by a working party comprised of representatives from QUT, Griffith University, University of Queensland, and the University of Southern Queensland. The report had been prepared in response to a call for submissions from DEST on the review of equity groups as targets for equity planning, and the development of a new funding model for the Higher Education Equity Program. It was further noted that in addition to the collective response, QUT had submitted an individual response.

Mr Morley commended the QUT Equity Section for their efforts in coordinating the response.

The Chair, Mr Morley, thanked Ms Dobinson for the report.

Resolved to note the submission to the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) on the Higher Education Equity Program review.

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The following items were noted.

7.1 **Post-meeting action sheet for Equity Board - 4 March 2004 meeting**

7.2 **Items pending sheet for Equity Board – May 2004**

7.3 **Equal Opportunity Practitioners Association (EOPA) – Professional Development Program**

8. OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 **Disabled Access to Faculty of Science offices**

03/0680

A submission from Dr Dallemagne was tabled regarding access for the disabled to all areas of QUT campuses, in particular access to R Block. Dr Dallemagne reported that the Faculty of Science Academic Board and Equity Committee had expressed concern in relation to the lack of lifts, and subsequently access to the Faculty office, which is located on level 4, for students with disabilities.

It was reported that the University was in the process of conducting an audit of buildings from which priorities would be determined and recommendations would be made to the Registrar for funding.

It was suggested that the business of the Board was to consider the broader issues affecting the university.

Mr Morley thanked Dr Dallemagne for her comments.

Resolved to forward the amended submission to the Registrar for funding consideration as part of the building audit.

9. NEXT MEETING

Meetings for the rest of 2004 were scheduled for 12 August and 28 October.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3:47pm.

Confirmed

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Chair

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Date