

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

EQUITY BOARD

MINUTES

Equity Board met in S403, Level 4, S Block, Kelvin Grove Campus at 2:00 pm on Thursday, 1 September 2005.

Present

Dr C Dickenson (Chair); Dr B Atherton, Dr D Battistutta, Dr J Carr, Ms R Christie, Dr C Dallemagne, Dr E French, Ms R Field, Mr S Pincus, Ms D Redfern, Ms C Young; Mr M Hills (Secretary).

Apologies

Ms K Brickell, Ms D Eden, Ms S Garske, Ms M Kelly, Mr A Perrau, Dr B Senadji.

Absent

Nil.

By invitation

Ms W Cusack, Ms D Dobinson, Ms G O'Brien, Ms S Phillips (for Item 5.3).

1. APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND FINAL STARRING OF AGENDA 02/00295

Equity Board noted the above apologies.

The Chair, Dr Dickenson called for starring of additional items on the agenda. Items 5.3 and 5.4 were starred. All items remaining unstarred were noted or adopted as appropriate.

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 July 2005 were confirmed subject to two minor amendments.

3. PRESENTATION

There was no presentation.

4. REPORTS

4.1 Chair

The Chair, Dr Dickenson, informed the Board of the following developments at the University level.

Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU)

95/00036

Dr Dickenson informed the Board that the *Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Student Union Fees) Act 2005* had been listed in the House of Representatives and was due to be considered in the next week. There was substantial opposition to the details of the Act and it was uncertain that the Act would be passed in its current form. However, Dr Dickenson indicated that the Act will be passed eventually in one form or another. The longer this process took, the harder it would be for universities to prepare for its introduction in January 2006.

The challenge for the QUT Student Guild was to review its activities and advisory services and to only retain commercially viable elements. The non-viable elements would be considered by the University to see if any of these could be run and funded by the University. The issue of childcare facilities was raised. It was noted that should the QUT Student Guild not retain this service, the University had the responsibility as an employer to provide for this service.

New Student Management System

98/00137

Dr Dickenson informed the Board that after an extensive review process, the University had decided not to renew its contract with Calista and to tender for a new student management system. It was noted that the current system's company had struck financial difficulties in the wake of the recent Nelson reforms.

The tender process would conclude by the end of 2005 and it would take up to two years for the migration to the new system to be completed.

2006 University Budget

Dr Dickenson informed the Board that forecasts indicated that it would be a tight 2006 University budget due to a number of factors which included a 15% decrease in applications from Year12 students and the substantial revisions to international students fee structures.

AUQA Report

04/00194

Dr Dickenson informed the Board that the finalised Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) report for QUT was now available. The report reflected well on the University, but there were elements that needed to be addressed.

4.1.1 Business arising from minutes - Post-meeting action sheet for Equity Board 4 July 2005 meeting

Equity Board reviewed the status of the following outstanding post-meeting actions from the meeting held on 4 July 2005.

PMA Item 4.3.2 – Faculty of Business

Action: Forward latest data on women in research to Erica French for incorporation into her presentation to the faculty's Research Committee.

Action Officers: Equity Coordinator.

Outcome: The Board was informed that this action was completed.

4.1.2 On campus child care arrangements – Update

This item was discussed under Item 4.1. It was further noted that the University had no plans at present to include private childcare facilities in the Kelvin Grove Urban Village Project.

4.2 Equity Board Sub-Committees

4.2.1 Low-SES Student Equity Committee

99/00921

The Chair, Low-SES Student Equity Committee, Dr Dallemagne, informed the Board that a meeting on 16 August 2005 was scheduled to discuss scholarship issues as well as how best to address rising student costs.

4.2.1.1 Minutes of meeting – 3 May 2005

99/00921

Resolved to note the unconfirmed minutes of the Low-SES Student Equity Committee's 3 May 2005 meeting.

4.2.2 Disability Services Committee

95/00786

The Chair, Disability Services Committee, Ms Field, informed the Board that the current priority of the Committee was to provide assistance to the Equity Section in the development of materials to assist staff in dealing effectively with staff and students with psychiatric difficulties. It was noted that it would be beneficial for appropriate materials to be included in conflict resolution training sessions through the Human Resources Department. The Board provided its support of this project.

In response to a query regarding the position of Web Governance Officer, the acting Equity Coordinator, Ms Dobinson, informed the Board that to date, the position remain unfilled. It was noted that the University was open to considerable legal issues should its web presence not be compliant with appropriate accessibility standards. The Chair, Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support Equity Committee, Dr Young, undertook to discuss this issue with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support).

In response to a query regarding the status of the physical accessibility audit, Ms Field undertook to provide further information to members via email.

4.2.2.1 Minutes of meeting – 15 April 2005 95/00786

Resolved to note the unconfirmed minutes of the Disability Services Committee's 15 April 2005 meeting.

4.2.2.2 Minutes of meeting – 15 August 2005 95/00786

Resolved to note the unconfirmed minutes of the Disability Services Committee's 15 August 2005 meeting.

4.2.3 Cultural Diversity Committee 96/00803

The Chair, Cultural Diversity Committee, Dr Battistutta, informed the Board that the Committee was involved in the following matters.

- The Committee's membership category was under revision to decrease the number of members.
- There was a need for a review of support structures for students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Informal feedback has indicated that the University's support structures were lacking in this important area. Dr Battistutta informed members that she would circulate to members a survey about this issue.
- Three members of the Committee were investigating possible ways to increase the response rate of the Equity Survey through the QUT Virtual portal. The Board was informed that due to low responses rates, it was difficult to obtain accurate trend data. Dr Battistutta requested members encourage their staff to complete the survey.
- A 'Multicultural Fiesta' was to be held in the near future to encourage the appreciation of diversity across the University.
- The Committee was working on local cultural diversity issues which included the appropriate placements of prayer rooms, the effective orientation of international students, and the important issue of integration of students. The Chair, Equity Board, Dr Dickenson, suggested that the Committee should contact the organisers of the 'East Meets West' initiative for further ideas.

4.2.3.1 Minutes of meeting – 9 June 2005 96/00803

Resolved to note the unconfirmed minutes of the Cultural Diversity Committee's 9 June 2005 meeting.

4.3 Divisions / Faculties

4.3.1 Division of Finance and Resource Planning

The Board was briefed by the Chair, Division of Finance and Resource Planning Equity Committee, Mr Pincus, on recent activities which included its continued support of Indigenous employment and development initiatives and the commencement of a career mentoring scheme.

4.3.2 Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering

There was no report.

4.3.3 Faculty of Creative Industries

There was no report.

5. SUBMISSIONS

5.1 Annual Report to Vice-Chancellor – draft framework

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

5.2 Low-SES recruitment – aspiration and admission

03/00629

Equity Board considered a submission from the Registrar (and Chair, Equity Board), Dr Dickenson, on developments in Low-SES recruitment and proposed changes to the Q-Step process.

In providing background to the submission, Dr Dickenson indicated that though substantial efforts were made in the past towards low-SES recruitment, there was little improvement in numbers to date. Dr Dickenson informed the Board that these issues were discussed at a recent meeting of the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee and the proposed changes were accepted and funding approved for the next three years. Dr Dickenson was confident that the revised initiatives would result in a significant increase in recruitment numbers over the next few years.

The Chair, Low-SES Student Equity Committee, Dr Dallemagne, expressed concern that the Committee was not invited to provide input during the consultation process. Dr Dickenson acknowledged her concern.

During discussion, the following comments were made.

- There were lessons to be learnt from joint initiatives with other Queensland institutions like University of Queensland and Griffith University, as well as sponsors.
- It was suggested that there might be a better way of targeting a 'team' approach in the development and implementation of these initiatives.
- Parent involvement might be an additional positive mechanism in recruitment.

Resolved to

- (i) note the developments relating to recruiting students from low-income backgrounds, and
- (ii) endorse the proposed changes to the Q-Step process.

5.3 Progress Report on Equity-related KPIs99/00883, 01/00264,
03/00537

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator in relation to equity-related Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the QUT Strategic Plan.

The Chair, Dr Dickenson, provided background to the submission and informed members that under the guidance of QUT Council, the University developed a suite of KPIs which were to be embedded within the QUT Blueprint and top-level strategic plans. Dr Dickenson indicated that this was the first report in the revised reporting framework to be considered by Planning and Resources Committee and QUT Council. Dr Dickenson encouraged members to read the full report which was available on the Finance and Resource Planning website.

During discussion, the following comments were made.

- It was encouraging to see a rise in the Indigenous staff employment (KPI 4a ATSI FT/FFT). However, the Board was informed by the Indigenous Employment & Development Officer, Ms Phillips, that this KPI was to be reviewed as part of the overall review process of Indigenous employment and development.
- It was noted that online resources were available through the Finance and Resource Planning website for Board members to further explore the statistical analysis contained in the report.
- Several members expressed their concern that chairs of faculty and divisional equity committees were not included in the overall KPI review process and other equity-related University-level issues. There was general agreement across the Board that the exclusion of equity committee chairs in high-level equity-related discussions could impact negatively on these committees. The acting Equity Coordinator, Ms Dobinson, acknowledged these concerns and undertook to raise the issue with the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, on her return. It was further agreed that chairs of equity committees should approach their Executive Deans to highlight possible issues of equity committees being excluded from appropriate planning processes.

