

# QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

## EQUITY BOARD

### MINUTES

Equity Board met in the Council Room, U214, Level 2, U Block, Gardens Point Campus, at 2:00 pm on Thursday 16 November, 2006.

#### **Present**

Dr E French (Acting Chair); Dr B Atherton, Dr C Dallemagne, Dr J Fraser, Ms C Jackson, Mr E Jones, Ms M Kelly, Mr J Knowles, Ms J Lampert, Mr S Pincus, Ms D Redfern, Dr G Smith; Ms R Ivey (Acting Secretary).

#### **Apologies**

Dr C Dickenson, Mr C Melvin, Dr B Senadji, Mr M Thomas, Ms C Young.

#### **Absent**

Mr A Perrau.

#### **By invitation**

Ms W Cusack, Ms D Dobinson, Ms M McIndoe, Mr A McNiven.

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

Equity Board noted the above apologies.

The Acting Chair, Dr French, called for starring of additional items on the agenda. No further items 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 7 September 2006 were confirmed, subject to the following amendments:

- Replacement of the first and second paragraphs under item 5.1 with the following:

Equity Board noted the confirmed minutes of the 23 May 2006 meeting of Low-SES Student Equity Committee.

The Chair, Low-SES Student Equity Committee, Dr Dallemagne, reported briefly on the Committee's meeting of 11 July 2006 where Low-SES Student Equity Committee commended QUT on its efforts to support students from low-SES backgrounds. However Dr Dallemagne commented that there was concern about this support becoming limited at QUT because of resourcing issues and it was noted that this should be raised under the Q-Step umbrella.

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

#### **3.1 Post-meeting action sheet for Equity Board's 7 September 2006 meeting**

##### **PMA Item 3.1 – Annual Report to Vice-Chancellor – draft structure**

Action: Prepare discussion paper on raising awareness of equity through PPRs.

Action Officer: Equity Coordinator.

**Outcome:** The Acting Chair informed the Committee that a submission addressing this item is on the agenda at item 7.5.

### **4. CHAIR'S REPORT**

Due to the absence of the Chair, Dr Dickenson, there was no Chair's Report.

## 5. SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

### 5.1 Low-SES Student Equity Committee

Equity Board noted the confirmed minutes of the 11 July 2006 meeting of Low-SES Student Equity Committee.

### 5.2 Disability Services Committee

Equity Board noted the unconfirmed minutes of the 12 October 2006 meeting of the Disability Services Committee.

The Chair of Disability Services Committee, Mr Pincus, advised that the Committee had been actively involved in the preparation of a training program and guide for staff relating to dealing with students with a disability.

### 5.3 Cultural Diversity Committee

Equity Board noted the unconfirmed minutes of the 1 November 2006 meeting of the Cultural Diversity Committee.

The Equity Coordinator advised that the Committee was focussing on the areas of curriculum and student retention.

## 6. FACULTY AND DIVISION EQUITY COMMITTEE REPORTS

### 6.1 Summary reports – Faculty and Division Equity Committees

Equity Board received the following reports from faculty and division Chairs on recent equity-related activities.

**Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support** – Equity Board considered a tabled report from the Chair of the Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support Equity Committee, Ms Young. The Committee had been involved in a project to improve access to the Course Materials Database for students with a visual disability and positive feedback had been received from the students involved.

**Division of Finance and Resource Planning** – Mr Pincus reported that, following a major re-structure within the Division over the past two years, a number of staff cultural issues had been examined by the Division of Finance and Resource Planning Equity Committee. The Committee would be looking at prioritising specific equity initiatives in 2007.

**Faculty of Information Technology** – Dr Smith reported that the Faculty of Information Technology Equity Committee had targeted female students, especially those currently in Year 10, with a view to increasing the number of female students undertaking IT studies in the future. A number of scholarships and bursaries were offered each year to female students, and the faculty had been involved in sponsoring and hosting IT workshops for female students. Unfortunately these efforts had not been able to reverse the decline in numbers of females commencing and continuing in the undergraduate IT degree. The Faculty of Information Technology had also offered a number of other scholarships and bursaries to students in equity groups. The Faculty of Information Technology Equity Committee continued its work on improving numbers of female academic staff in the faculty, and regular networking events had been organised.

**Student Guild** – Mr Knowles presented a Powerpoint presentation on the Student Guild's Welfare Portfolio which provided support for students in the areas of free legal services, Centrelink advice, textbook bursaries, emergency food vouchers and tenancy advice. It was noted that, due to the introduction of Voluntary Student Unionism legislation, the Guild's Welfare budget had been cut from \$53,630 in 2006 to a projected \$14,500 in 2007 which would have severe ramifications on the services provided to needy students. Other student services budgets had also been cut significantly and may still be cut further, resulting in vital student services and support mechanisms being slashed. Equity Board members expressed interest in obtaining a copy of the Welfare Portfolio presentation and the Acting Chair, Dr French, asked Mr Knowles to forward a copy to the Secretary for circulating to all Board members.

## 7. SUBMISSIONS

### 7.1 Review of Disability Action Plan

07/00218

Equity Board considered a submission from the Chair, Disability Services Committee, Mr Pincus, outlining the first major review of the Disability Action Plan since it was endorsed by Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee on 21 March 2002. Mr Pincus commented that good progress had been made across most areas of the Plan, particularly in the areas of support for students with disabilities and support for staff in assisting students with disabilities. In discussion it was noted that whilst the scope of the Plan was quite broad, a number of positive outcomes had been achieved including an audit of every building on every campus resulting in specific areas being targeted for improvement.

The Equity Officer asked that chairs of faculty and division equity committees seek responses from their committees on the review to date of the Disability Action Plan and provide feedback to the Equity Section.

#### Resolved:

- (i) to note the document attached to the submission which provided comment on the progress of the Disability Action Plan and suggestions collected to date; and
- (ii) to seek responses from faculty and divisional equity committees on the review to date of the Disability Action Plan, and request that they provide feedback to the Equity Section as appropriate.

### 7.2 2006 Equity Board self-assessment

07/00219

Equity Board considered a submission from the Secretary, Ms Ivey, on its annual self-assessment and noted that the term of membership of nominated members had been reduced from three years to two years. However, this would have little impact on Equity Board membership because the majority of members were members by virtue of their role as chair of their relevant faculty or division equity committee. The Board noted a request from the Chair, Dr Dickenson, that the outcomes of the self-assessment survey be discussed at the first meeting for 2007.

#### Resolved:

- (i) to note the members' attendance report and the report on 2006 Equity Board business against terms of reference;
- (ii) to note the results of the 2006 Equity Board self-assessment survey of members and to include this as an item on the agenda for the first meeting of 2007 for general discussion of the outcomes; and
- (iii) to forward comments on the Board's self-assessment to the Vice-Chancellor through the Secretariat.

### 7.3 Revised term of office for Equity Board members

06/00033

Equity Board considered a submission from the Secretary, Ms Ivey, which indicated that QUT Council had approved a reduction in the term of office of all University committees from three years to two in order to align committees with Council's four year term. As a result, the term of office of all current members of Equity Board, other than ex officio members, would conclude on 31 December 2006. All chairs of faculty or division equity committees would be reappointed for the next two year term.

#### Resolved:

- (i) to note that amendments to *Council Procedure 1 - Committees* (MOPP Appendix 2), approved by QUT Council at its 25 October 2006 meeting, included the reduction in the terms of office of all University committees from three years to two; and
- (ii) to note that in late 2006 and early 2007 the membership of Equity Board would be reconstituted for a new two year term to run from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2008.

### 7.4 Review of equity related policies at QUT

06/01758

Equity Board considered a submission from the Senior Equity Officer, Ms McIndoe, regarding the ongoing review of the suite of equity policies currently in Chapter A of the Manual of Policies and Procedures (MOPP). It was noted that the policies would be reviewed as a package with a view to creating a set of social justice policies applicable to staff and students, and which included Indigenous policies and equal opportunity and diversity policies. A member commented that 'social justice' as a term was not as well understood as the term 'equity' and that perhaps this needed to be further considered.

Equity Board also considered a draft of the revised equal opportunity and diversity policy, which included policy principles that placed social justice firmly within QUT's vision, goals and organisational values.

Ms McIndoe advised that further work would be done on the policy review with a view to submitting the revised policies to the March 2007 meeting of Equity Board, before forwarding them to the Vice-Chancellor for approval.

**Resolved** to give approval in principle to the Equity Section to proceed with the development of the social justice suite of policies in consultation with the Oodgeroo Unit and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee.

### **7.5 Equity-related items in PPR agreements**

06/01844

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, which sought endorsement of a proposal to draw the attention of senior managers across the University to the Equity Guidelines and Reporting Framework 2005 – 2010, a resource designed for use by QUT faculties and divisions in designing and reporting on their equity and social justice activities. Ms Kelly proposed that managers also be asked to embed equity-related objectives, including the QUT Reconciliation Statement, into core business, and to have all staff update their equity details via QUT Virtual and complete the new EO Online training package.

As discussed at the 9 March 2006 meeting of Equity Board, the inclusion of equity-related activities in PPRs was considered a useful strategy for embedding equity, although it was recognised that some senior staff in the University felt that too many objectives were expected to be achieved through the use of PPRs. However the objectives and strategies of the People and Culture Plan 2007 -2011, together with the Equity Guidelines and Reporting Framework, did provide strong contextual statements to support the inclusion of equity initiatives in PPR agreements.

**Resolved** to endorse in principle the preparation of a memo to senior managers drawing attention to the Equity Guidelines and Reporting Framework, and to Equity Board's preference for embedding equity-related objectives into core business activities.

### **7.6 Staff Equity Data Collection**

07/00248

Equity Board considered a submission from the Senior Equity Officer, Ms McIndoe, regarding the data gathered from the Staff Equity Survey which staff completed and then had the opportunity to update in QUT Virtual. In order to maintain the integrity of the data and to improve on reporting and analysis, QUT Systems had put forward a proposal to transfer the staff equity data from QUT Virtual to StaffConnect. This proposal offered many benefits including ease of access for staff and the prospect of a higher response rate, but also had some limitations relating to the length of questions and the need to modify some questions, particularly those which were long and required explanation. Equity Board supported the proposal to transfer the data to StaffConnect and suggested that chairs of the faculty and division equity committees promote this exercise by encouraging staff in their faculty or division to update their equity details in StaffConnect on a regular basis.

**Resolved** to note the transfer of the staff equity data collection from QUT Virtual to StaffConnect.

### **7.7 Equity Scholarship Schemes 2006**

**Resolved** to note the Report on 2006 QUT Equity Scholarship Schemes, as per the submission.

### **7.8 Student Equity Report 2006**

**Resolved** to note the QUT Student Equity Report 2006, as per the submission.

### **7.9 Gender Equity Report 2006**

**Resolved** to note the QUT Gender Equity Report 2005 – 2006, as per the submission.

**8. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

There were no items for information.

**9. OTHER BUSINESS**

**9.1 Acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land**

The Acting Chair, Dr French, advised that the Faculty of Business Equity Committee had sought advice on how to promulgate the appropriate acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land at functions, events and lectures. The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, advised that information and guidelines about correct protocols for use of the acknowledgement was available on the Reconciliation at QUT website, and that the acknowledgement could be personalised where appropriate.

**9.2 Refugee students**

The Acting Chair, Dr French, raised the issue of the increasing number of African students who appeared to be experiencing difficulties. The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, advised that this group of students was on the equity radar because of their migration patterns in and around Brisbane. Issues relating to poverty, academic ability, visas etc should be referred to the counselling service within International Student Services.

**10. NEXT MEETING**

This was the final meeting for 2006. Meetings for 2007 are scheduled for 8 March, 12 July, 6 September and 15 November.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3.55 pm.

Confirmed .....  
Chair Date