

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, 12 June 2008.

Present

Dr C Dickenson (Chair); Prof D Buisson, Ms D Dobinson, Dr J Lampert, Ms D Redfern, Dr R Reeves, Ms J Stokker, Dr R Tunny, Dr R Wickramasekera; Mrs K Lockwood (Secretary).

Apologies

Mrs R Carpenter, Ms A Gabiola, Mr E Jones, Mr M Thomas.

Absent

Mr G Edmondson, Dr J Fraser, Ms S Parkin, Ms K Williams.

By invitation

Ms W Cusack (observer).

1. APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND FINAL STARRING OF AGENDA

Equity Board noted the above apologies.

The Chair, Dr Dickenson, welcomed members, in particular Prof Buisson attending on behalf of Dr Senadji and Ms Dobinson attending as acting Equity Coordinator on behalf of Ms Kelly.

Dr Dickenson called for starring of additional items on the agenda. No additional 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 15 November 2007 were confirmed.

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

3.1 Equity-related items in PPr agreements – 2007 revised guidelines and report framework (item 3.3 of minutes 8 March 2007)

Due to the absence of the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, this item was deferred to next meeting.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair, Dr Dickenson, briefed the Committee on the following matters.

Federal Review of Higher Education

08/00240

Dr Dickenson advised members that the Committee engaged to undertake the Federal Review of Higher Education, the Bradley Review, had released a discussion paper on universities. The paper canvassed general issues and posed a series of broad-ranging questions, QUT would be providing a response by the 31 July 2008 deadline.

Carseldine Campus Relocation

08/00021 (R)

Dr Dickenson reminded members that Carseldine Campus would be closed from the beginning of the 2009 academic year. Activities associated with moving the major part of Carseldine Campus to the Kelvin Grove and Gardens Point Campuses was in progress. Discussions were underway to address the needs of the disabled staff and students.

Frontline Counter Personnel

08/00645

Dr Dickenson advised that QUT had engaged Assure Programs to provide an Employee Assistance Scheme. The Scheme would offer staff access to support services and fully trained counsellors to address a range of work and personal problems. Frontline counter staff who experience a variety of workplace problems and difficult situations would be undertaking a pilot program over the next few months. She stated that it would be possible to modify a program for academic staff.

Staff Opinion Survey

07/01204

Dr Dickenson advised that the results for the Staff Opinion Survey would be released soon and made available to all staff through QUT Virtual. A presentation would be made to Council at the 25 June meeting. She stated that it was interesting to compare the 2008 results to previous year's especially in relation to the major issues identified, this year it was workload.

QUT Scholarships

Dr Dickenson advised that from 2009 the Federal Government would be significantly increasing the number of low-SES scholarships provided to eligible higher education students. QUT were currently reviewing their Scholarship arrangements with a view to increasing the number and dollar value of merit scholarships without eroding the commitment currently provided to low-SES scholarships.

4.1 Equal Opportunity for Women

08/00398

The acting Equity Coordinator, Ms Dobinson, advised that QUT had secured a waiver from submitting the annual compliance report to Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA). She reported that QUT had received the Employer of Choice for Women Award (EOCWA) for 2008, an award which symbolises the high level of commitment QUT has as an institution to achieving excellent outcomes for female staff.

When questioned on the background of the award Ms Dobinson advised that the EOCWA was an award sponsored by the government department EOWA. Set criteria are required to be addressed to be eligible for application for the award. QUT has been successful in securing the award in 2007 and again in 2008.

5. SUBMISSIONS**5.1 2008 Equity Board Orientation****Resolved:**

- (i) to note the orientation information provided, including the Board's terms of reference and membership; and
- (ii) to note that all members were to review entries on the Active Register of Disclosed Interests for Equity Board and return a completed *Disclosure of Interests Form* to the Secretary if the register needed to be amended.

5.2 Review of Equity Board Committees – proposed working parties06/00042, 06/00088,
06/00093, 06/00087

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, that recommended it consider proposed changes to the Equity Board committees. The Chair, Dr Dickenson, invited acting Equity Coordinator, Ms Dobinson, to speak to the submission.

Ms Dobinson advised members that in January 2008 the Vice-Chancellor had approved the Board's recommendation to disestablish the four Equity Board sub-committees and their continuation as working parties. Equity Board was now required to consider how it wanted the working parties to operate and whether their existing membership and terms of reference needed adjustment.

Discussion of the four resolutions raised the following points.

Disability Services Working Party

- Ms Dobinson stated that the membership and terms of reference of the Disability Services Working Party were largely unchanged from the former Committee. The Committee worked well in the past, particularly in its role of monitoring issues for staff and students with a disability. She noted that one proposed change was that the Chair no longer be from Equity Board.
- Dr Reeves questioned why the Chair could not be a member of the Equity Board, Dr Dickenson stated that it would allow more flexibility if the incumbent were not a member of the Equity Board, that the majority of Board members already had faculty-based responsibilities. She stated that the Chair could be an observer on the Board.
- In response to comments regarding reporting procedures, in particular whether reports should be received regularly and/or annually, Dr Dickenson stated that by requiring reports 'as needed' gave the Committee more flexibility. She stated that during the Committee Review Cycle, the Board could scrutinise the progress of the working parties and initiate a review on their activities. She requested that this be noted and included in the procedures for the next annual review of the Board.
- Minor typographical corrections were noted: Under membership 'Secretariat services' be changed to 'Secretarial services'; Under Tenure and frequency of meeting, second sentence, 'Working Party report to Equity Board as needed' changed to 'Working Party meets as needed'.

Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Working Party

- Ms Dobinson stated that the change of name, from Cultural Diversity Committee to Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Working Party, reflected the name of the revised policy and the importance of anti-racism. She noted that the membership had not been substantially changed.
- Dr Wickramasekera expressed concern on the participation of student representatives on the Equity Committees. He stated that in his Faculty, Faculty of Business, student nominees were not reliable and did not attend meetings. Dr Dickenson stated she would raise this in her next meeting with the Student Guild. She requested that activeness of Student Guild nominees be reviewed as part of the Committee Review of the Board.

Low-SES Working Party

- Ms Dobinson stated that it was proposed to split this working party into two elements – one focussed on outreach/admissions and the other focussed on support. She stated that it was envisaged the Outreach to Low-income Students Working Party would meet annually or biannually, and the Support for Low-income Students Network would meet more regularly. The Network would be supported by the Equity Section but would not report directly to Equity Board.
- When questioned on the reporting procedures for these groups, Dr Dickenson responded that it was normal practice for network groups not to provide written reports as the issues they addressed normally fed into other avenues or back to Equity Board through the Equity Section.

Equity Awards Working Party

- Ms Dobinson stated that the current award categories, eligibility and nominations/selection procedures were outdated and in dire need of revamping. It was proposed that the former Committee review the current methodology of Equity Awards and report back to the Board on options for rewarding equity-related excellence. In line with the new procedures the Committee was asked to review the working party membership and terms of reference and make it consistent with whatever model of equity awards was adopted.
- Ms Stokker stated that past applicants had experienced difficulties completing the forms and suggested the Working Party speak to past nominees for feedback on these difficulties and the usability of the forms.

Resolved:

- (i) that following incorporation of the amendments as suggested by the Board, to approve the membership and terms of reference for the Disability Services Working Party;
- (ii) to approve the membership and terms of reference for the Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Working Party as provided in the submission;

- (iii) to support the creation of the 'Outreach to Low-income Students Working Party', and the 'Support for Low-income Students Network', with the terms of reference and memberships to be provided to the next Equity Board meeting for approval; and
- (iv) to request the Equity Awards Working Party to review the current Awards categories, eligibility and nominations/selection procedures, and in line with these revisions, to review the terms of reference for the Working Party and report back to the next Equity Board meeting.

5.3 Annual Report against Equity reporting Framework 2007-2010

08/00617

Equity Board considered a submission from the Senior Equity Officer, Ms Dobinson, that recommended it note the report on equity-related activities in the faculties, divisions and institutes of QUT during 2007. The Chair, Dr Dickenson, invited acting Equity Coordinator, Ms Dobinson, to speak to the submission.

Ms Dobinson advised the Committee that due to changes in reporting practice in 2008, the Equity Section had to access and extract relevant text from the Faculty and Research Institute 2007 Annual Reports and the 2007 Annual Reports against QUT Top-Level Plans. In addition all faculties and divisions were asked to provide more detailed information on their activities and outcomes against the five priorities outlined in the Equity Reporting Framework: student diversity; student inclusivity and support; staff diversity and support; research and community engagement, and institutional commitment.

In discussion the following points were noted.

- Ms Dobinson stated that information about Institutes' activities was not generally available, except for IHBI in its report against the top level plans; as the Divisions of Research & Commercialisation and International & Development share an equity Committee much of their information was combined; and the data for Faculty of Information Technology was not exact as it was extracted at the same time as the Faculty had heavy commitments with its restructure.
- Dr Dickenson commended Ms Dobinson on the format of the report and encouraged members to read the report.
- Ms Stokker suggested a method to make it easier for participants would be to look for common themes across the board and provide a checklist, with options to 'tick-off' common responses, and an optional section to add comments.
- When questioned on the timing of this year's deadline, a deadline which overlapped with the orientation period, Ms Dobinson advised it was becoming more difficult to find a down-period.
- Dr Reeves questioned the absence of some Faculty of Science activities. Ms Dobinson advised that all information provided by faculties had been incorporated in the report. Dr Dickenson advised that although it was too late to include the omitted information in the version before the Board, if Dr Reeves provided the details to Ms Dobinson it could be included in the version to be submitted to the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee.

Resolved to note the report on equity-related activities in the faculties, divisions and institutes of QUT during 2007.

5.4 Role of Equity Committees and Grievance Management

08/00618

Equity Board considered a submission from the Senior Equity Officer, Ms Dobinson, that recommended it note the reminder on referring inquiries about equity-related complaints, grievances or disputes to the Equity Section or Discrimination Contact Officers. The Chair, Dr Dickenson, invited acting Equity Coordinator, Ms Dobinson, to speak to the submission.

Ms Dobinson advised the Committee that the Equity Section had become aware of instances where Equity Committees or individual members in the faculties and divisions had provided advice or assistance on complaints, disputes or grievances to staff or students. Although the majority of these had been redirected to the Equity Section there had been instances where the referral had occurred late or not at all. While it was acknowledged that the faculty and division based Equity Committees were a readily available source of information the more appropriate action was for instances to be referred to the Equity Section or to the Discrimination Contact Officers.

Resolved to remind the Faculty and Division Equity Committees on referring inquiries about equity-related complaints, grievances or disputes to the Equity Section or Discrimination Contact Officers.

6. FACULTY AND DIVISION EQUITY COMMITTEE REPORTS

6.1 Faculty of Education Equity Committee Report – 13 March 2008 06/01315

Resolved to note the Education Equity Committee Report - 13 March 2008 provided in the submission.

6.2 Faculty of Business Equity Committee Report – 3 June 2008 06/01317

Resolved to note the Faculty of Business Equity Committee Report - 3 June 2008 provided in the submission.

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The following items were noted.

7.1 Post-meeting Action Sheet for Equity Board's 15 November 2007 meeting

7.2 Equity Board Items Pending Sheet – 5 June 2008

7.3 Outreach Programs – Equity Section 2008.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

9. NEXT MEETING

The Board noted the next meeting was scheduled for 28 August 2008.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3:05 pm.

Confirmed

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Chair

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Date