People, Culture and Engagement Committee

TIME /DATE / VENUE	1330, Thursday 5 December 2024 in Room 0.32, Unit 1, St Andrew's Court
PRESENT	Claudia Iton (Chair) David Willan (via video-conference) Stacey Parrinder-Johnson (via video-conference) Mark Readman Professor Graham Galbraith
IN ATTENDANCE	Fiona Hnatow, Chief People Officer Wayne Bowen, Head of HR Strategic Planning Becky Miles, Professional Services Staff Governor Kevin Child, Director of Student Services and Principal Safeguarding Officer (Min 4 only) Chris Chang, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement and Student Life) (Mins 16 and 17 only) Ebi Sosseh, Head of Equity, Wellbeing and Inclusion (Mins 16, 17 and 19 only) Yvonne Howard, Director of Race and Equality (Mins 16 and 17 only) Martin Hand, Wellbeing Manager (Min 19 only)
SECRETARIAT	Paul Mould, Executive Director of Corporate Governance Jacqui Bryden, Senior Governance Officer

To facilitate the attendance of staff for specific items, some items were taken out of the order designated in the agenda.

11 Welcome, Quoracy, Conflict of Interest and Apologies

11.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

11.2 Apologies were received from External Governor, Chris Williams and Professor Sherria Hoskins, Provost.

11.3 The Executive Director of Corporate Governance confirmed that the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business.

11.4 There were no conflicts of interest declared.

12 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.

13 Matters Actioned and Matters Arising

13.1 Action was reported within the agenda papers on four items to be noted.

13.2 There were no other matters arising.

14 People, Culture and Engagement: New Safeguarding Policy

Kevin Child, Director of Student Services and Principal Safeguarding Officer provided a presentation on the new University Safeguarding Policy that had been implemented on 1 October 2024.

14.1 The key points noted were:

i. The safeguarding duty could be considered in terms of 'Big S' safeguarding which would require referral to external agencies and 'Small S' safeguarding which referred to the provision of internal support. 'Small S' safeguarding applied to the University because the OfS has both an expectation and a condition of registration that HEIs have appropriate levels of support practices, policies and resources in place to support students.

ii. A comprehensive safeguarding structure and governance framework had been implemented in October 2024 and a new leadership team established.

iii. Key achievements included an update of the Safeguarding Policy; a focus on staff safeguarding and Prevent training and development; improvements to support provided to apprentices; and extending external and local partnerships.

iv. Future actions would build upon these achievements to progress and develop the University's approach to safeguarding for students.

14.2 In discussion, it was noted that:

i. Safeguarding training for staff was mandatory and part of the University Induction although completion rates were not monitored. Monitoring would be managed more effectively with the introduction of a new Learning Management System (LMS) to ensure completion of both induction and biennial update modules. A solution would be sought to ensure training was mandatory for students.

ii. Prevent training would become a separate module from being embedded within the safeguarding training. Governors and UEB would receive specific Prevent training.

iii. The effectiveness of training would be measured in rates of completion, feedback and various fora. It was important to identify and monitor qualitative compliance as well as quantitative measurement.

iv. The new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) called Salesforce would be implemented in 2025 which would have the ability to identify vulnerability at an earlier stage in order to facilitate proactive action.

v. Safeguarding would be included in the updated risk register to ensure that appropriate resources and increased costs were identified and managed.

vi. Governors were not expected to complete safeguarding training because as an HEI the University responsibility was for 'Small S' safeguarding. Information and content could be included in future governor Induction.

vii. The increase in safeguarding referrals was due to the higher profile of safeguarding within the University and no specific themes had been identified to date, although the increase in poor mental health in the lower age groups indicated the need for focused support mechanisms and care, which could include financial issues.

viii. It was important that students were able to make the most of their University

experience and to benefit from their learning which was measured through completion rates, reasons for withdrawals and graduate outcomes.

ix. The University had wide-ranging support provision for staff with poor mental health. Staff tended to have longer term and more complex issues. The University Mental Health Charter for staff and students was in development.

x. The increase in right wing groups and hate incidents was an increasing concern within the city and emphasised the need to address the Prevent Duty, particularly with University partners such as Portsmouth Football Club.

14.3 Following discussion, the Committee noted the presentation and how safeguarding was a key factor in maximising student success and would be discussed further with the Board.

15 People, Culture and Engagement: University People Data - confidential

16 EDI Framework Update

Chris Chang, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement and Student Life), Yvonne Howard, Director of Race and Equality, and Ebi Sosseh, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion provided an update on the progress of the EDI Framework and future planned actions.

16.1 The key points noted were:

i. The report provided an update following the last update to the Committee in 2022. The three objectives of the Framework from 2022 to 2024 were set out to relate to the progressive stages of the employee lifecycle.

ii. The EDI team had increased to include wellbeing to become the Equity, Wellbeing and Inclusion (EWI) team.

iii. Students who undertook roles as part-time ambassadors for EDI programmes had been offered part-time contracts of employment to support involvement and engagement. The approach facilitated improved access to the student voice, increased connection and understanding.

iv. Colleagues were supported to have open conversations about race and there had been a focus on diversifying recruitment panels to increase representation.

v. To improve consistency across the University, the EDI team had provided a new governance structure for faculty EDI committees and action plan templates, updated diversity and race in the workplace training, improved communication via the monthly EDI Bulletin, established Staff Network Operating Guidelines and promoted high-profile EDI events.

vi. Having achieved the Athena Swan silver award, it was important to share relevant and important information to ensure consistency and alignment to the University Strategy regarding EDI.

16.2 In discussion, it was noted that:

i. There had been considerable progress in embedding the EDI Framework and there was still work to be done such as reducing the awarding gap, expanding diversity especially on recruitment panels, enhanced support for disabled students and improving disclosure rates and intersectionality data monitoring.

ii. Data indicated the detrimental impact of poor mental health and there would be a greater focus on wellbeing for both students and staff.

16.3 Following discussion, the Committee noted the report.

17 EDI Data Reports for Staff and Students

Chris Chang, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement and Student Life), Yvonne Howard, Director of Race and Equality, Ebi Sosseh, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and James Ross, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Information Officer presented the data reports about equality, diversity and inclusion for both staff and students for the academic year 2022/2023.

17.1 Key points noted were:

i. As requested by the Committee, the report provided analysis and a summary of key themes and issues. The data related to 2022/2023 and an updated report would be available for the meeting in May 2025. The summary report provided an overview and the student and staff data reports were attached as appendices.

ii. Student data referred to People of the Global Majority (PGM) and staff data referred to Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic (BAME) which aligned with the preference of each group.

iii. The top 4 issues identified within the six themes in the analysis were:

Recruitment

a. Data indicated that inclusive applicant applications could be improved. 17% of applications were received from ethnically diverse applicants compared to 11% in 2022. However, success rates at each progressive stage of recruitment reduced to 15% who were shortlisted and 11% who received offers.

b. The pattern changed where a panel member was ethnically diverse. Of the 19% of applications received from BAME candidates, 19% were shortlisted and 22% received an offer.

c. 15% of interview panels had ethnically diverse representation and a call for volunteers to sit on recruitment panels had produced 65 responses from colleagues who were keen to be involved.

Access and Progression

d. The proportion of women professors increased to 27% in 2022/2023 compared to 23% in 2021/2022. The indication for 2024 was that this had decreased to 26% and therefore did not reflect the steady increase in the national average which was 31%.

e. The proportion of professors at the University with an ethnically diverse background has consistently been above the national benchmark, of which 4 are women and lower than the national average.

f. The proportion of women Associate Professors increased by 10% to 42% in 2022/2023. There would be a focus on improving the opportunities for promotion to Professor for women in the coming year. Of 247 Associate Professors, 7 (3%) were ethnically diverse women.

g. The Faculties of Technology and Business and Law recruited the greater number of staff internationally. It was important therefore to develop women and ethnically diverse staff to attain senior and Professor roles.

Awarding Gap

h. The ethnicity awarding gap for UK and home students was 17% in 2022/2023 and had stayed the same compared to the previous year. The national average is 11% and the largest gap was identified in men. In 2024, the awarding gap had reduced to 15% driven mainly by the performance of ethnically diverse men.

i. It was important to make sustainable and consistent improvements to the awarding gap and each Faculty had an action plan to address the awarding gap and increase student engagement.

Disability

j. 11% of employees and 26% of undergraduate students at the University have a declared disability in 2022/2023, and had increased in 2024. Both staff and student rates of disability are higher than the national average.

k. There was an increase in the number of staff and students that had declared a neurodiversity disability.

l. Disability appeared to have an indirect effect on progression rates. Depending on the declared disability, 76% to 79% of disabled students completed their course compared to 84% of students who did not declare a disability.

iv. The action plan to address the identified issues in the analysis would continue to progress in 2025.

17.2 In discussion, it was noted that:

i. It was important to be clear about the actions that would enable all staff and students to reach their full potential. Actions would be monitored by data analysis to ensure agility in the approach and make changes when necessary.

ii. Interrogation of the data in the appended reports for students and staff distinguished between the characteristics presented and identified intersectionality. For example, women appeared to outperform men but was inconsistent depending on country of origin, ethnicity, and age.

iii. UEB drove the progress of the EDI action plan and ensured accountability in professional services and the faculties. The proactive management of EDI was essential to prevent 'cancel culture' and having open, honest conversations to achieve integration into the University culture and business as usual.

17.3 Following discussion, the Committee noted the reports and the successes achieved over the last year.

18 HR Policy Rolling Review Update

Wayne Bowen, Deputy Chief People Officer provided an overview of the current status of the scheduled reviews of HR policies.

18.1 The key points noted were:

i. The report provided an annual status report (dated November 2024) on the progress of HR policy reviews to include the current and future review dates.

ii. There were a smaller number of HR policies because some policies were internal guidance or process for staff and managers

iii. Five policies are subject to the approval of the PCE Committee:

    a) Disciplinary;
    b) Managing Sickness Absence;
    c) Management of Underperformance (Capability);
    d) Organisational Change & Redundancy; and
    e) Grievance

iv. The Disciplinary, Grievance and Organisational Change policies had been approved by the Committee at its meeting in September 2024 (Minute 9) and would be reviewed at the appropriate time in 2027.

v. Managing Sickness Absence and Managing Underperformance were under review and would be approved by the Committee at a future meeting.

Action: Head of HR & Strategic Planning and Senior Governance Officer

18.2 The Committee noted the overview and update.

19 Annual Staff Mental Health Training Report

Ebi Sosseh, Head of Equity, Wellbeing and Inclusion and Martin Hand, Wellbeing Manager presented a report on staff mental health training. This is the second year that this had been received by the Committee which provided an update on health and wellbeing activity and staff training events including mental health.

19.1 The key points noted were:

i. The report included health and wellbeing information in addition to training information. The Wellbeing Manager had been appointed in July 2024 and had developed a Health and Wellbeing Framework to enhance wellbeing across the University and would include the Mental Health Charter.

ii. The Staff Bereavement Group had been set up in collaboration with Chaplaincy.

iii. A network of wellbeing champions had been proposed to build upon the Mental Health First Aid Programme and would be launched in February 2025. Other initiatives were in discussion to create an action plan.

iv. There had been a slower uptake of training in the first quarter of 2024/2025 and would increase as the year progressed.

19.2 The Committee noted the report.

20 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee would take place on Tuesday 4 March 2025 from 13:00 to 16:00.

Confirmed Committee dates for 2025:

- Thursday 29 May 2025