



Equalities and Inclusiveness  
Annual Report  
2008-2009

## 1. Purpose of the Report

This is the annual report on Equalities and Inclusiveness presented by the Equalities Committee. It outlines:

- A summary of actions and outcomes of the Equalities Committee for the Academic Year 2008-2009
- The results of monitoring and review exercises.
- Proposals for action for the future.

## 2. Terms of Reference

The Equalities Committee terms of reference are attached in Appendix 1. The progress and achievement against the group's action planning for 2008-2009 is detailed throughout the report.

## 3. Policy Procedures and Plans

The Equalities Committee utilised its action plan to direct the work of the group during session 2008-2009. The action plan was created using input from and active involvement of students, staff and external stakeholders including members of 'Forward Mid' recruited onto the College Equalities Committee. The action plan for 2008-2009 was also informed by the College Race Equality Scheme, Disability Equality Scheme and Gender Equality Scheme following approval of these schemes by the Board of Directors of the College.

During session 2008-2009, the SMT and Equalities Committee reviewed and amended the existing equalities action plans and all current College policies and procedures in line with the College Policy Review Schedule. Reviews and amendments were informed by staff self evaluation activities, learner focus groups, and feedback from the annual Professional Development Planning (PDP) process.

A devolved annual budget was agreed for staff development activities and a staff development programme was implemented to meet the needs of the action plans created from the College Gender Equality Scheme 2007-2010, Race Equality Scheme 2006-2009 and Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009.

The College has an Equalities Impact Assessment tool and a timetable so that all college policies and procedures undergo an impact assessment. Data generated by this assessment informs amendments to policies and procedures in order to raise awareness of equalities issues among all stakeholders and ensure equality of provision to recipients of that provision.

#### 4. Partnerships and Networks

The Equalities Committee, chaired by the Principal, is responsible for advising the Senior Management Team on the development and implementation of the current race, disability and gender schemes as well as the promotion of the public equality duties and legislation relating to the equality strands of age, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

Representation from staff, students and from external stakeholders and agencies is important for effective engagement, involvement and consultation on equality matters. The Equalities Committee currently has representation from "Forward Mid", a disability rights campaigning organisation located in Midlothian and this year from Central Scotland Racial Equality Council. The Committee is seeking to expand its membership to include other equality groups and networks.

The College is a member of SKILL Scotland, the organisation for disabled students in Scotland and Skillnet Edinburgh, an organisation promoting the social and economic equality of minority ethnic communities through education, training and employment.

The Depute Principal is a member of the Operational Group of the East of Scotland Staff Development Collaborative Group, which plans joint training on equality and inclusion.

In addition, the Depute Principal attends the South East Forum whose remit is to widen access, increase participation and raise the learning aspirations of learners in the South East of Scotland. This post includes membership of the National Working Group to implement the basket from measures from "Learning for All".

#### 5. Staff Development

All members of staff, committee members and members of college groups and teams carried out annual self evaluation activities as individuals and in groups, in order to reflect on the impact of equality on their particular job role and responsibilities. This reflective activity resulted in action planning for improvement with SMART objectives being set and systematic monitoring in place in order to judge progress towards achieving these objectives.

In addition, clear guidance is now provided to staff on how to deal with discrimination, or harassment within different learning and teaching situations.

## 6. Students

Induction sessions for new students include discussion about equality and anti-discrimination. This explicit reference at induction provides a clear signal to students of how seriously the College takes issues of equality and anti-discrimination. Students are informed about the College equality schemes and policies and the support available to students, including how to report discrimination or harassment. Equality and anti-discrimination provisions are written into learning contracts and classroom etiquette guidelines. In addition guidance tutors are given appropriate information throughout the year to pass on to students. Equality statements are now included in student handbooks.

## 7. Equality Impact Assessment

A robust system has been set up to ensure impact assessment is carried out on all College policies and procedures and improvements have been made to these as a result. Impact assessment has been carried out on key policies relating to staff and students and a timetable is in place for the remainder. Between 2007 and 2009 the College undertook equality impact assessments on the following policies and procedures and functions:

- Absence from Work and Ill Health Policy
- Staff Development Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Policy
- Staff Recruitment and Selection
- Staff Induction Handbook
- Staff Induction Policy
- Employee Health and Safety Handbook
- Academic Handbook
- Student Admissions Policy
- Student Interview Pack
- A-Z Guide for Students
- Student Accommodation Lease Policy
- Student Residential Policy
- Business Park Tenant Lease Policy
- Draft Procurement Policy

## 8. Race Equality

The College has a Race Equality Scheme 2006-2009 with an accompanying action plan to support implementation of the scheme. This will be reviewed in 2010.

During 2008-2009, all staff attended a half-day workshop focussing on diversity in the workplace.

Equality, inclusiveness and the promotion of cultural diversity in classroom displays has improved this year but continues to be a priority in developing new learning and teaching materials.

The Equalities Committee considered how best housekeeping and facilities staff in accommodation services could work to promote good relations between people of different racial groups and different religious beliefs. The College provides a Calendar of Religious Festivals and basic information is made available to staff regarding cultural and faith matters.

Informal mentoring systems are in place for minority ethnic students via college sub wardens and using informal networking from previous students. According to student feedback this is working well. Discussions are in progress between the Depute Principal and the sub wardens regarding advocacy and the role of sub wardens.

Learning Support policies have been revised in order to provide appropriate support to bilingual students who require learning support.

Student guidelines have now been put in place for all students explaining what constitutes plagiarism. This guidance has been written in a way that is accessible for students whose first language is not English.

All learning and teaching materials currently in use have been audited using the quality and equality of learning toolkit.

## **9. Gender Equality**

The College has a Gender Equality Scheme (GES) 2007-2010 with associated action plan and a policy statement on equal pay. This is due to be reviewed in June 2010.

The Equalities Committee has identified a number of gender equality groups to be approached in preparing for the review of the GES.

In 2008 the Equalities Committee undertook a self-evaluation exercise which highlighted, amongst other areas, the need to consider flexible working, career breaks, and the provision of childcare facilities to help parents and carers meet domestic responsibilities and continue to pursue their occupations.

## 10. Disability Equality and Accessibility

The College has a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) 2006-2009 and an action plan to support the implementation. The DES has now been revised and a second scheme and action plan (2010-2013) has been submitted to the Equalities Committee for approval.

In 2008, the College undertook an "Equalities Walkabout" with a sight impaired student. This resulted in a number of suggestions and recommendations which have now been completed:

- The College reception area has been refurbished and new lights added to improve visibility;
- The ladies toilets in the crypt have been refurbished and the lighting altered to improve visibility;
- Rugs have been removed in the armoury and replaced by vinyl;
- The back stairs to the dining room has been re-carpeted;
- Lighting has been fixed in the residential block.

The College is committed to doing everything it can to improve accessibility without destroying the character of the grade A listed building. The College is at the very early stages of considering refurbishment of the residential block.

Guidelines on the quality and equality of learning and teaching materials have informed college staff and ensured the accessibility of learning and teaching materials for disabled learners.

In addition, the College is continuing to diversify the curriculum and update the ICT infrastructure and now has most learning and teaching materials in electronic format. Staff have undergone training to ensure that the use of images and the content of learning and teaching materials promote positive attitudes to disabled people.

In session 2008-2009, funding from the Scottish Funding Council enabled the College to establish an ICT infrastructure to support a more flexible inclusive delivery model. A curriculum diversification project is in progress to support a model of blended learning and enable part-time delivery.

A JISC partnership is now in place to help embed an inclusive learning and teaching model, supported by assistive technology.

## 11. Involvement and Consultation

Student representation is in place on most College Committees including the Board of Directors, the Equalities Committee, the Marketing Group and the

Health and Safety Committee. Student representatives meet with Senior Management at least three times per year and are invited to attend most other groups and committees on an ad hoc basis. Feedback from learners and staff is obtained following "inclusiveness" workshops and is generated in a way that guarantees confidentiality and encourages transparency of response and a high level of participation.

The College website currently contains three questionnaires relating to equality: one for staff and students on disability and gender equality and one targeted at staff in relation to staff development and disability equality. Stakeholders and members of the public can also access these questionnaires and take the opportunity to inform our practice and procedure.

In addition, staff and students are encouraged to submit questions anonymously to Senior Management and these are discussed at monthly focus groups meetings.

A student focus group met in March 2009 to review the College Equalities and Inclusiveness in relation to the student learning experience.

Concerns raised by students and responded to by staff have included:

- Magnification of materials on ICT equipment;
- Use of coloured paper and handouts for students with dyslexia;
- Support for students with mental health difficulties; and
- The role of staff in challenging discrimination.

## 12. College website

The College is currently looking at how to improve the website and ensure it is both inclusive and promotes equality and diversity. Consultants have been commissioned to look at the website and the Marketing Committee have been tasked with collecting any statistical feedback from the website. External stakeholders, such as "Forward Mid" and a cross college group have also been asked for their views.

## 13. College Library

An accessibility audit of the College Library was undertaken in February 2009 by Philip Wark, Head of Libraries, Midlothian Council and a paper presented to the Equalities Committee. It was agreed to set up a Focus Group with the Academic Team to look at recommendations. Academic and support staff have volunteered to be part of this group.

## 14. Quality Framework

Particular emphasis has been placed on the new HMle quality framework introduced in September 2008 which prioritises equality and diversity in terms of three core areas:

- High quality learning;
- Learner engagement; and
- Quality culture.

## 15. Equalities Data

Data collection for students is taken from the student enrolment form at the start of the course. Feedback has informed us, however, that this is not a true reflection of disabled student numbers as disability can be disclosed once a student is on course and enrolment forms are completed. Although students are encouraged to disclose a disability at various times throughout their course and college life, this may not always feed back into the college statistics.

The College continues to work towards improving the monitoring systems of employment data to enable us to judge the impact of disability on recruitment and selection. We are working towards benchmarking the College Staff Profile against local and national profiles in order to look at the impact of any discrepancies.

In addition, we want to promote the benefits for staff of disclosing a disability. Monitoring of staff usually requires that they indicate a disability, rather than indicate the access or other requirements that they may need to support them in working effectively.

The College will seek to further improve the collection and analysis of future equalities data.

Learner Status: Disability	2008-2009 Enrolled Learners
Disability not listed	4%
Dyslexia	10%

Deaf/Hearing impairment	3%
Mental health difficulties	1%
Unseen disability e.g. diabetes, asthma, epilepsy	3%
Multiple disabilities	0%
No disability stated	77%
Information refused	1%
Wheelchair restricted user/mobility	0%
Blind/partially sighted	1%
Total enrolled learners	78
<b>Learner Status: Ethnicity</b>	2008-2009 Enrolled Learners
White	87%
Black Caribbean	1%
Chinese	0%
Other (not specified)	12%
Total enrolled learners	78

<b>Learner status: gender</b>	2008-9 enrolled learners
Female	38%
Male	62%
Total enrolled learners	78

<b>Staff: gender</b>	<b>2008-2009 (FTE)</b>
Female	16
Male	11
Total staff	27

There are currently no staff who have disclosed a disability to the College. However, this does not mean that we have no staff who fall under the protection of disability legislation. However, as the College has only 15 FTE members of staff, to publish any data on staff disability may result in staff being easily identified and would breach confidentiality.

Research by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) and disability organisations has highlighted factors that can influence an individual’s decision on disclosure, including the following:

- Identification with the term “disabled” which, for a number of reasons may not be a term adopted by all those with disabilities;
- Confusion regarding what constitutes a disability; and
- Disabled individuals may feel their disability is not relevant to their job, so may consider there is no reason to disclose it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/inclusive-practice/disclosure-of-disability>

## 16. Moving Forward

The Senior Management Team and the Equalities Committee are reviewing the college's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Procedures to reflect the changes to legislation which now include the other equality strands:- sexual orientation, age and religion or belief. This we feel emphasises holistic inclusiveness and we are therefore looking towards developing a Single Equality Scheme during 2010. This Single Equality Scheme will still identify actions specific to particular equality strands where this is deemed appropriate.

## Appendix 1

### Equalities Committee: Terms of Reference

The Equalities Committee was set up in response to the College Strategic and Operational Plan objectives to establish the College as an inclusive and access oriented national learning centre. It reports to the Senior Management Team.

#### Remit

- Identify, develop and monitor policy and procedures concerned with equality of opportunity and inclusiveness
- Monitor the effects of the Race Equality Policy, Disability Discrimination Policy and other legislative requirements relating to equality and inclusiveness
- Carry out audits and conduct self evaluation to contribute to the College's Quality Assurance and Improvement
- Inform Senior Management Team and report to Board of Directors through the Estates and Finance Committee
- Agree Action Plan, and once agreed, inform the Senior Management Team for implementation (e.g. Design and implementation of Staff Development programme as it relates to Equalities and Inclusiveness).

#### Membership

The group has a membership of eight, drawn from the academic staff, administrative and housekeeping staff and students. It also has two external advisers. The Group is chaired by the Principal.

#### Working Practices

The Group meets at least four times a year and may, if there are specific tasks to be completed, delegate work to a sub group. Action minutes are taken and circulated to the group. The Group has an action plan that is drawn from the Operational Plan.