

Equality and Diversity practice – University of Leeds

At the University of Leeds, equality and diversity are embedded in each faculty rather than at an institutional level. This is achieved in a variety of ways, including:

- Induction
- Training
- Acting on robust data
- Diversity officers in each faculty
- Celebrating diversity-related events.

Induction

All staff members new to role take part in a full induction process, including a session with the Equality and Diversity team, covering information and policies relating to equality and diversity. There is ample opportunity to ask questions on such things as maternity leave and flexible working, and ensures everyone knows what is available to them and how to access it.

Training

All managers at the University of Leeds are trained in Equality and Diversity practices, following a module developed as part of the University achieving Investors in People (IIP) status. This module includes information on how to support and develop members of staff, and delegates are taken through the employment cycle to show how the Equality and Diversity team can help in achieving good recruitment practices, the probation process and other important employment practices. Crucially, the training is designed to make people aware of the assumptions that are often made inaccurately about certain diverse groups in order to challenge and dispel these inaccuracies.

The process of training all 1,700 managers at the University of Leeds in Equality and Diversity practices has taken two years.

Equality and Diversity is also monitored and managed in each of the nine academic faculties, and is an agenda item on management committee meetings, which are chaired by someone with the necessary level of authority to effect change. Any early career researcher new to role will benefit through

- increased knowledge of what is available to them as a result of their Equality and Diversity training as part of induction
- having a manager/PI trained in the appropriate practices and aware of how they can support their staff with any specific needs that may arise.

Acting on robust data

The University of Leeds bases its activities on robust data collection. As part of their integrated planning exercise, they focused on promotions data so that their faculties could decide where to spend time and resources and in which area, based on the data collected. For example, there has been a focus on how to progress staff in the female and black and minority ethnic groups to senior roles

Focus groups around career progression have also been held, exploring the hidden/invisible barriers to promotion, with a view to breaking down these barriers.

To support this focus on equality in recruitment practices, the Pro Vice Chancellor presents a breakdown of the promotions by gender and staff biannually. The data is broken down by applications received and applications that are successful. Thus, the University is able to pick up and show trend data and act upon it where necessary.

Similarly, feedback received as part of the university 'Single Equality Scheme' suggested that staff wanted dedicated time to observe religious festivals. As a result, a calendar of events is regularly updated, to ensure staff are aware of any festivals taking place, and enabling them to make arrangements if required. Additionally, prayer space is provided on campus for three main religious groups:

- chaplaincy
- Islamic prayer room
- Jewish room

The University also provides spaces for quiet contemplation.

Diversity Officers in each faculty

It is also important to continue to embed equality and diversity across the University. To that end, there are dedicated lead higher level managers and a network of diversity officers who are a mix of frontline staff, lecturers, professors and administration staff to be the eyes and ears on the ground. These officers will share information on events and activities taking place, raise diversity issues and spread good practice across the University. It is a voluntary role but staff members receive a 10% workload remission in recognition of the extra work this might entail. This helps to ensure all the faculties are involved in, and aware of, equality and diversity best practice which helps to spread positive messages across the University.

Celebratory events

The University of Leeds additionally supports a number of specific events which promote good relations across campus. These include celebrating Black History Month, LGBT History Month and International Women's Day events. This is considered to be an excellent way of fostering good relations. So, for example, during Black History Month, to acknowledge the achievements of the black community, over 20 events were held throughout the month. These included talks, seminars, debates with staff and students, guest speakers, writers and film makers showing films on relevant topics. Similarly, throughout LGBT History Month a programme of events was shared to celebrate the lives and achievements of LGBT people throughout history which all helped to promote equality, understanding and an inclusive environment. Finally, to celebrate International Women's Day, a collection of events including public lectures, assertiveness for women 1 hour taster sessions, awards to celebrate the achievements of women at the University and an exhibition on Feminist Activism in Leeds 1970's to 2011 were held.

All of these activities support the University of Leeds' ethos of being an inclusive place to work, study and live. The aim is that, by engendering a culture of inclusiveness, providing training and support to line managers and by making people aware of what is available to them, all staff, students and early career researchers can be supported in their roles and PI's can effectively manage staff expectations appropriately.

Learning points/evaluation

- Ensure everything is reasonable and people's expectations can be managed
- Get buy-in from the top to lead by example
- Don't push the legislation onto people – sell the benefits instead