

Every Researcher Counts

Resource E

Supplementary guides

E3 – A guide to incorporating equality and diversity into existing staff development workshops: Notes for staff developers

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As institutions review their policies to support a diverse research workforce, this may open up opportunities for research staff to benefit more from practices such as flexible working, career breaks and increased support with issues such as working with a disability and working in a second language. The provision of these resources can contribute to training Principal Investigators (PIs) in the diversity and equality principle of the Concordat (Principle 6), encouraging them to work with a diverse range of researcher staff within their group, where every researcher counts.

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Incorporating equality and diversity into existing staff development workshops: Notes for staff developers

Overview

When providing training and development to researchers, there is a need to consider the requirements of a diverse range of individuals, their needs in terms of development and their personal needs regarding delivery of the training. There is also an obligation to meet legal requirements relating to equality that all staff developers need to be aware of.

This brief overview is intended to raise awareness and provide links to further information for staff developers as they consider how to embed thinking and practicalities of equality and diversity into the training and development provided to research staff. It is about having an approach to equality and diversity that suffuses the way in which training and development is delivered to all staff.

HEFCE on behalf of other UK funding bodies has commissioned the provision of a 'programme of strategic activity to ensure that equality and diversity in relation to research staff is understood, visible and prioritised in higher education institutions'. Vitae has produced three workshop based learning resources specifically about equality and diversity and they also recognise the need to incorporate the themes of equality and diversity into existing development provision within higher education institutions without the need to re-write material. This guide provides some general resources and pointers regarding additional information that may be useful to staff developers when thinking about integrating or strengthening equality and diversity in existing training.

Equality Challenge Unit (www.ecu.ac.uk) provides a wide range of guides, information and briefings that are essential reading for staff developers. Reference is made to some of these documents below; a more comprehensive guide and range of downloadable resources is provided on their website.

Starting point: what does equality and diversity mean?

Equality Challenge Unit provides three very useful definitions in their comprehensive A-Z guide to equality and diversity which provides guidance and a useful lexicon of terms relating to this subject.

Diversity recognises that everyone is different in a variety of visible and non-visible ways, and that those differences are to be recognised, respected and valued. They may include, but are not limited to, differences protected by anti-discrimination legislation such as marital status, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and age.

Equal opportunities, or equality of opportunity, may be defined as ensuring that everyone is entitled to freedom from discrimination. There are two main types of equality encompassed in equal opportunities.

Equality of treatment is concerned with treating everyone equally. Thus, in an organisational context it recognises that institutional discrimination may exist in the form of unfair procedures and practices that favour those with some personal attributes, over others without them. The task of equal opportunities is therefore concerned with the elimination of these barriers.

Equality of outcome focuses on policies that either have an equal impact on different groups or intend the same outcomes for different groups. The term Equal Opportunities has mostly been replaced by Equality and Diversity (E & D) in recent years.

It is based on the legal obligation to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. Equality protects people from minority groups from being discriminated against and gives people the same opportunities regardless of their group membership, i.e. sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age.

The Equality Act 2010 requires us to treat each other equally regardless of visible or non-visible differences and this affects the way in which training and development is provided within higher education institutions. When individuals are treated less favourably than others because of factors that are unrelated to the quality of their work, they are not being treated equally and a case for discrimination could be made. Direct discrimination is when this lack of equality of treatment is obvious and indirect discrimination is when the discrimination takes place as a result of unseen communication or decisions.

The theme of positive action is seen in many universities through the provision of equality and diversity teams within Human Resources, who provide specific courses for minority groups, lead affinity networks and provide expertise on assessments of diversity in the workplace. Positive action is about the introduction of measures to eliminate or reduce discrimination or its effects. It is not the same thing as positive discrimination; it is about fostering an environment for the fair treatment of all members of staff (and students where appropriate).

The introduction of women only career development programmes moves towards the formal introduction of flexible working practices, and the introduction of affinity networks for disabled researchers, lesbian, gay and bisexual researchers and women researchers are all part of positive actions evident within the sector.

How can staff developers review their programmes in line with equality and diversity requirements?

- Building and developing relationships between staff development and the equality and diversity teams within the higher education institutions to access expertise on the subject
- Undergoing equality and diversity training and/or coaching to be able to review existing materials and provision in line with good practice and legal requirements and to be as informed as possible when delivering all material but especially material that directly relates to equality and diversity
- Inviting equality and diversity practitioners within the higher education institution to assist in strategic reviews of staff development materials

Additional notes

Staff development often involves the use of external training and facilitation providers and there is an opportunity to make them aware of equality and diversity requirements and to encourage them to make their programmes as diverse and inclusive as possible through the understanding of researchers with diverse needs and the applicability of their materials for this audience. Equality Challenge Unit provide a useful guide to selection of equality and diversity trainers and training providers.

www.ecu.ac.uk

In considering diverse needs of research staff you might consider the following resources:

Vitae and the UK Resource Centre for women in SET have produced a set of resources for institutions to run career development courses for women solely or in collaboration with their local Hub. www.theukrc.org

The Royal Society produced a guide for Mothers in Science that might be a useful supplementary link to any courses run specifically for women.

www.royalsociety.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=4294975307

For appraisal, career development and doctoral supervision courses, cover issues to do with non-traditional career paths as well as traditional academic career paths.

For courses including physical activity and group work, ensure the leader is aware that any female, Muslim participants may not want to take part in activities where they may come into physical contact with others (however small), particularly men.

Administration of workshops

A few thoughts.

Arranging workshops around religion based dates and times allows the widest participation. The BBC has an interfaith calendar at www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/ to help with event planning.

Non exhaustive examples include thinking about courses run over a weekend – they may need to allow time for Christian participants to attend church on Sunday and Jewish staff going to Shabbat at the Synagogue on Saturday. Arranging courses around Friday prayers at 1.30pm for Muslim staff enables them to attend the whole of workshops rather than part or none of the training.

Pre-course and on-course materials may need to be provided in Braille or larger font for partially sighted or blind participants.

For courses where deaf or hard of hearing participants are part of the group give consideration to use of microphones or availability of hearing loops in the room you are using.

Running programmes with later start times and earlier finish times facilitate a wider number of part-time staff attending the programme as it can be easier to fit around childcare provision.