

Equality and Diversity Policy for the EAUC Board and Trustees

Background and Context:

The diversity of boards and governing bodies is receiving greater attention. The updated UK Corporate Governance Code, the Committee of Universities Chairs' (CUC) all give prominence to the issue. In Scotland, the Scottish government is consulting on the aim for there to be gender parity on governing bodies. The NHS has also reviewed workforce race equality and made a case for diverse boards.

The UK Corporate Governance Code warns that a lack of diversity can lead to 'groupthink'. The Code indicates that diversity includes, but should not be limited to, gender and race. The Code acknowledges that diversity is about differences of approach and experience. One of the seven primary elements of the revised CUC Code (element 6) is the need for a governing body or board to promote equality and diversity. Governing bodies are expected to routinely consider their composition and take steps to ensure they reflect 'societal norms and values'. The current emphasis on diversity reflects concerns that many governing bodies have in the past been self-perpetuating, with new governors/members largely recruited through personal contacts and networks. A starting point for change is for a board to accept the need and benefits of having a more diverse membership; and then to take effective action to increase their diversity.

It has been accepted by the EAUC that this is an area that needs to be addressed initially through reviewing its own Board membership and recruitment strategy and that these priorities should be addressed through a policy led approach. This will be an organisational wide policy which will include both staff and Trustees. This policy will include both elected Trustees as well as Regional Branch Convenors.

This document has been developed with the People and Performance Sub-Committee and has had input and advice from a group of members that volunteered to assist the Board in this area. The Board have also sought advice and collaboration opportunities with Advance HE.

Composition of the EAUC Board: Questions and policy positions

- *Have you considered your current composition in terms of protected characteristics, such as gender, age and ethnicity?*

The Board has considered the current composition of the Board and noted that the composition does not reflect societal norms and values. The Board has also noted that in the generality across member institutions the representation from which we recruit may not reflect societal norms and values which has impacted on the pool for recruitment. The Board wishes to reflect the need to support those with protected characteristics to play an effective part in Governance arrangements and recognises that future meeting arrangements should be flexible and adaptable.

- *Do you need to improve the diversity of the membership?*

The Board recognises that it needs to improve the diversity of its membership at Board and Trustee level and that this is a continuous and ongoing process that needs to be implemented over multiple Board recruitment cycles.

- *What positive action could you take to broaden your recruitment of new members?*

The Board seeks to pro-actively address the situation to improve the diversity of its membership at Board/Trustee level. It will seek to do this, where appropriate, through co-option as a mechanism when Board vacancies become available as well as through maintaining the existing the election process. The Board will seek to maintain an appropriate balance between Co-option and Election. EAUC will actively engage with other proposals and mechanisms to enable effective recruitment and link this to leadership and governance training more widely. The Board will also actively encourage participation at Board level by the use of guests through representatives of other organisations, speakers and visitors to address this priority.

- *Will you monitor the actions to improve diversity and their impact on the composition of the board/governing body, and, if judged not to be effective, revisit your action plan?*

The Board will approve a framework to monitor its actions to improve diversity and to monitor the impact of its actions on the composition of the Board. Members of the People and Performance Sub-Committee will take responsibility for developing the monitoring framework during 2018-2023 taking 2018 as a baseline against which the impact can be measured and for assessing the effectiveness of the measures that have been implemented. The Board will receive reports annually against this agreed monitoring framework. In developing this monitoring framework the EAUC Board will seek to reflect good practice as seen in other sectors and to provide leadership and translational research results that may be of value to the wider EAUC membership. If the action plan proves ineffective it will be further developed.

In adopting this approach the Board recognises the need to simultaneously address the need for capacity building through leadership training, to support the wider EAUC membership and to work with other networks including Advance HE to maximise the transferability and sharing of good practice.

Approved by the Board 10th June 2019