

UWE Staff Networks Support and Resourcing Protocol

Revised draft August 2014

Introduction

Staff networks are run by staff *for* staff and bring together people from all faculties and services that identify with an equality group, or an equality related issue.

UWE welcomes and supports the development of staff networks as an important opportunity for staff to share their experiences, develop their skills and careers, and as an effective consultative tool for UWE policies and strategies. UWE recognises the value of staff networks in creating an environment that respects the diversity of staff and the University's inclusivity ambitions for its diverse student body.

Staff networks can be started by any UWE staff member. The UWE Equality and Diversity web pages provide contacts for all existing networks and information on starting and developing networks.

UWE's current staff networks are:

- Black & Minority Ethnic staff forum
- Christian Staff Network
- Disabled staff network
- European Union Staff Network
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender staff network
- Maternity staff network
- Non-Permanent Staff Network
- Women's staff forum

Presently, there are eight staff network chairs/coordinators – five are professional services staff and three are academic staff.

To ensure all UWE staff networks are adequately supported for the benefit of their members and the whole University, the following Protocol has been developed.

1. Resourcing

Staff networks are allocated an annual budget to support the running of the network.

- Staff networks aligned to protected characteristics are entitled to a £250 annual budget.
- Non protected characteristic specific Networks and Networks covering an element or aspect of a protected characteristic, e.g. mental health, are entitled to £100 on an annual basis.

To receive the minimum level of resources, staff networks will need to have a strong link to the E&D agenda in terms of their membership or the issues they wish to address, for example, a network for part time staff. During the course of the academic year all staff networks may have the opportunity to bid for additional funds for specific activities.

All expenditure must be in line with the purpose of the network and within the University's financial regulations.

2. Staff time allocation

Time allocation for chairs/coordinators of networks reflects the increased responsibilities and expectations from the University. Networks play an important role in University consultation activities and with Equality Analysis processes, as such, UWE time allocation is there to enable networks to effectively participate in these activities.

Members of staff networks

Staff members are entitled to participate in network meetings and events during the working day, up to a maximum of 15hrs (pro rata for part time staff) in a calendar year. **Managers are encouraged to support staff participation where service needs allow. Given advance notice, managers should pro-actively seek to cover employee absence to enable members to attend network activities**

Chairs/coordinators of staff networks

Network chairs/coordinators have a critical role in ensuring the effective coordination of the network. They are also essential in contributing to a wide range of University initiatives and consultations exercises.

- The chairs/coordinator of each staff network are entitled to 1 hour per week to conduct network activities. (This equates to approximately 20 bundles for academic staff.)
- The allocation applies equally to full time or fractional staff.
- The allowance is allocated per network, as such, if a network chooses to share this role across more than one member of staff so the time allocation is shared.
- If a member of staff is a chair/coordinator of more than staff one network, the individual member of staff will only have one amount of time allocated i.e. one hour per week/20 bundles – as such the network may need to seek others to take on some of the chairing /coordination activity.

UWE acknowledges the challenges that many part time staff experience in managing their day to day duties whilst being active members or chairs/coordinators of staff networks. Therefore, the part time allocation of network allocated time will require careful management on the part of the employer and the staff member.

Backfill as Chairs/coordinators of staff networks

UWE recognises the importance of supporting the involvement of academic staff in University staff networks. For the 2014/15 academic year funding has been made available **(on a trial basis)** for any staff member who is a chair/coordinator of a staff network aligned to a protected characteristic. The funding is available to positively support and promote staff networks. Therefore, there is an expectation from the University of demonstrable network engagement in University activities.

If an staff member requires backfill to create the time to carry out the role of a network Chair/Coordinator, then the following will apply:

- Funding will be granted if the staff member is a chair/coordinator of a staff network aligned to one of the Equality Act's Protected Characteristics. For example, chair/coordinator of the Disabled Staff Network.
- Staff networks which are aligned to a sub section or an element of a protected characteristic such as a network for Christian staff, do not meet the funding criteria. Staff networks that are closely related to a protected characteristic, do not meet the funding criteria. For example, a European Union staff network.
- Staff networks such as The Women's Forum, The BME Staff Forum and the LGBT Staff Network meet the funding criteria due to their membership covering the main identities protected under the Equality Act for their specific protected characteristic.

How to apply for time allocation funding

1. The chair or coordinator should discuss their involvement and time required ie 1 hour per week if taking on whole role for a network where funding is available with their line manager.
2. Line managers/Heads of Departments should contact the Equality & Diversity Unit before the beginning of each academic year to access the necessary funds to pay for the appropriate level of Workload Bundles. Faculties can apply for a maximum of 20 Bundles for a network chair/coordinator. Services can apply for the cost of 1 hour per week of the staff members time.
3. Contact the Equality & Diversity Unit for any clarification or queries on the funding criteria.

3. Responsibilities of the University

The University will:

- Ensure network support and development information is available online.
- Provide all networks with an opportunity to attend the Joint Networks' Forum and E&D Unit forum, to raise issues of concern and share information.
- Involve and consult networks when reviewing or developing relevant employment/service based policies, procedures and strategies. Involve and consult networks when developing and carrying out Equality Analysis. Network consultation should be built the activity's consultation timetable. Provide appropriate feedback to networks on actions arising out of consultation exercises.
- Provide staff networks with advance notification of policies in development or reviews to enable staff networks to plan for consultation.
- Respond to issues of concern which are raised by staff networks in a timely fashion, especially where discrimination or harassment is of concern.

- Provide monitoring reports on a regular basis on workforce diversity targets and discrimination cases.
- Reflect the views and comments of the networks in equality analysis' that support relevant policy/practice reviews.
- Promote membership of the networks through employee newsletters/briefings, induction training, welcome fairs, the intranet and other methods of reaching all staff.
- Organise and service the Equality & Diversity Forum as a consultative forum between staff networks, UWE equality stakeholder groups and the VC.
- Support the development and maintenance of network web pages on request.

4. Responsibilities of the staff networks

Staff networks will:

- Produce an annual report on the current levels of staff involvement and the range of activities they have engaged in. For example, these may be consultation exercises, responses to equality analysis etc.
- Provide an inclusive, supportive and well publicised network for employees from equalities groups.
- Maintain up to date distribution lists which are held by more than one member of the group.
- Actively respond to consultation opportunities that are relevant to the interests of equalities groups in the workforce. To nominate people to respond on the network's behalf or via a subgroup in order to respond within timescale. Where this is not possible, network chairs must advise and inform the University accordingly.
- Raise network members' issues of concern with the University and seek action to address these concerns.
- Respond to University consultative processes within agreed timescales.
- Lead and steer equality campaigns where they relate to an aligned protected characteristic.
- Participate in the University's Equality & Diversity Forum and scheduled meetings with the HR Director and Senior Equality and Diversity Champion.

5. Responsibilities of ALL network chairs/coordinators

Network chairs/coordinators will:

- Ensure the production of an Annual Report on their network activities, including how 'funded' Chairs/Coordinators have contributed to the work of their respective Professional Services/Faculties.
- Ensure an evidence trail is maintained of network events and activities.
- Be the contact point for the network, or delegate this to a network member
- Ensure succession planning is considered for future network operations and activities
- Ensure network members are kept up to date with UWE activities, including key strategies, policies and action plans
- Ensure their network engages with UWE consultations and Equality Analysis, (this is particularly relevant for the funded chairs/coordinators).
- Fully participate in appropriate UWE fora