

EDI Committee Meeting

11 May, 2-4 pm

Present: Francesco Caselli (FC, Chair), Gilat Levy (GL), Nava Ashraf (NA), Maitreesh Ghatak (MG), Dimitra Petropoulou (DP), Lorna Severn (LS)

In Attendance: Andy Wilson (AW)

FC confirmed the agenda of the EDI Committee meeting: undergraduate admissions, composition of the EDI Committee, and EDI committee's input in Departmental promotion and review processes.

1) Undergraduate Admission:

DP gave a presentation on LSE's undergraduate admissions based on the School's data given to her. The Admissions Office does not have specific quotas or targets for under-represented groups. The Higher Education Academy and Office of Students provide only rough guidance on the intake number for the groups.

The School collects data about applicants' ethnicity, disability, being in care, socioeconomic background and other characteristics. Based on these traits students may be included in a WP (Widening Participation) group. Last year our Department admitted 45 students from the WP group, or 30% of the total intake. Across the School, the Department's intake is much higher than the average (30% vs 21%). Hence, it does not appear that the LSE Economics admission process contributes to the lack of diversity of the economics pipeline. Of course this does not mean that the department cannot contribute to enhancing diversity elsewhere, for example by participating in initiatives to change the perception of the field among under-represented groups.

Despite the positive admissions outlook, it was reported that some students from disadvantaged backgrounds did not do well in their studies. They tend to miss lectures, sometimes because they have jobs, and sometimes because they live at home (and hence far from campus) in order to save money. This also results in a degree of marginalisation. There was a brief discussion of prospects for creating jobs for these students. However, the paucity of RA jobs in the department makes it challenging to find ways to support these students financially.

DP was asked to collect more data over the summer on the Department's intake as well as students' attendance and to present new findings in the next academic year. Meanwhile, FC and AW will discuss the financial assistance which could be provided for the students.

2) Composition of the EDI Committee

FC reminded the Committee that there was a vacancy left by Rachael Meager's resignation. There was a discussion of the potential benefits of expanding the committee membership to allow both a like-for-like replacement of Rachael with another junior colleague, and the addition of an additional PS colleague – particularly in light of the fact of a PS colleague having expressed interest in serving. Since the terms of Reference limit membership to 7, any expansion would require preliminary approval by the Department of Economics Committee.

After a discussion, it was decided that the committee would be more agile and effective by continuing with its current size, and, since there were no junior academic colleagues at the moment on the committee, it would be best to recruit the new member from the ranks of the junior faculty. FC was instructed to seek a person who would be passionate about EDI issues, consider their membership as a service to the Department, and be a good fit and be proactive in communicating the Committee's activities to their colleagues.

It was also decided that FC would include reminders of the Committee's composition in his termly HoD's circulation email and in the Departmental e-newsletter, with a reiteration of the invitation to colleagues to raise with the members any EDI-related concerns.

3. EDI committee's input in Departmental promotion and review processes

NA gave an overview of benefits from diversity as applied to research and educational institutions. This was largely based on previous work of the EDI committee to inform departmental hiring practices. These considerations were then adapted to the context of promotion decisions. It was decided to form a working group (NA, MG, GL, and FC) to build on these considerations and prepare a report for the last professors' meeting of Summer Term (this report has indeed been prepared and presented. In addition to empirical and theoretical considerations on equity in promotion and benefits of diversity, it also contains detailed historical data on the female share of faculty in the economics department, including comparisons with the profession at large or relevant subset of comparator departments).