



Review of Progress in Widening Participation and Equality and Diversity in 2015-16

Summary

This is an amended version of a report submitted to the Conservatoire's Board of Governors at its meeting in March 2016.

This report summarises the key work undertaken by the Conservatoire over the year in relation to Widening Participation (WP) and Equality & Diversity (E&D).

Introduction

Over the past year, the Conservatoire has been conducting a review of its strategy, priorities and resources in the areas of WP and E&D, starting with the former. Part of that review has included looking at staffing resource within the Conservatoire's Shared Services Team to see whether work in these two areas can be brought closer together, to maximise effectiveness of cross departmental working. (More information on staffing is below.)

The value of better linking the Conservatoire's work on Human Resources Strategy and policy to E&D was separately recognised and the Conservatoire's HR Manager has now joined the E&D Committee; this will help to ensure that staff-related E&D issues raised at the E&D Committee are taken to the HR Managers' Group (which comprises staff with responsibility for HR matters from each of the eight Conservatoire schools).

While there has been a lull in the leadership and activity in WP and E&D centrally through this period, funds saved have been made available to the schools for WP projects, conditional to delivery to Access Agreement targets and effective data gathering.

Both the WP and E&D committees are extremely dedicated to leading the work forward at school level. There is an inevitable variance of capacity and experience across the schools, but also a commitment to working collaboratively and generosity in sharing experience.

Widening Participation

External Review of CDD's WP Activities

An external adviser (Janey Hagger, Progression Manager at Central Saint Martin's College of Art, University of the Arts, London) undertook a period of consultancy for the Conservatoire during 2015 and delivered a WP Report to the Conservatoire Leadership Board (CLB) in December 2015, outlining her recommendations on a structure for shared delivery of unified WP work across the eight Conservatoire schools and recommended strategic objectives.

CLB welcomed the report and there was strong consensus on the importance of developing a robust shared approach to data collection, which is being actioned within the current year. This will enable the schools to respond effectively to the more demanding requirements of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) in relation to Access

Agreements in which there will be increased focus on outcomes and greater emphasis on evidence and evaluation.

A New WP Strategy

It was agreed that a new WP Strategy should be drawn up, involving staff within/across the eight schools, where understanding of the importance of the distinctive offer of each school and the consideration of the differing structures for delivery within each school could best contribute towards designing shared strategic objectives, whilst also encouraging collaboration.

A draft new WP Strategy will be brought together by a small team drawn from across the schools, led by the WP and E&D Portfolio Principal, for discussion and approval by the WP Group, E&D Committee and CLB.

Ongoing WP Activities

In the meantime, WP actions to be completed in the current academic year are as follows:

- New appointment to the post of a Widening Participation and Access Coordinator in the Conservatoire's Shared Services Team.

This new post will play a key role in supporting the development and implementation of the Conservatoire's Widening Participation and Access Strategy, in liaising with the network of WP practitioners across the eight schools, and in ensuring that CDD and the eight schools meet all relevant external legal, statutory or other obligations or expectations in relation to this area. The Coordinator will also play a role in developing the Conservatoire's policy and guidance in relation to broader equality and diversity issues in respect of students.

- Embed a shared approach to WP data collection for outreach work and student records across the eight schools, ensuring robust, clean data to support the targeting, tracking, evaluation and reporting of WP delivery by the Conservatoire's Shared Services, to comply with new OFFA guidelines.

Work has already begun on data gathering to ensure all schools are compliant with the data gathering requirements of WP work which will be increasingly scrutinised in the setting and reaching of new Governmental targets over the coming period. This will enable the collective setting of ambitious but achievable Access Agreement targets under the new guidance. A piece of work on formatting data collection has already been led at school level by NSCD's Head of Learning and Participation; Alex Leigh, an external consultant on data architecture, attended the February WP Group meeting to provide advice on effective data sharing and protection for the Conservatoire structure.

- Arrange for a representative from OFFA to visit CDD to meet with relevant staff, to ensure all the schools are fully informed on Access Agreement requirements and to facilitate a broader access related conversation about the particular issues faced by small conservatoires.

An invitation has been sent to OFFA and we are looking at possible timings for a meeting.

The above CDD-level activities are in addition to the significant WP and outreach work undertaken locally within each of the eight schools, working with local and national partners, schools, and communities.

Equality and Diversity

E&D Committee

The E&D Committee, which is chaired by the WP and E&D Portfolio Principal, includes a senior member of staff from each school with responsibility for policy development in relation to E&D plus a further member of staff from each school with responsibility for student support. The Chief Operating Officer & Registrar and HR Manager also attend; there is also a student member.

The Committee's remit is essentially to monitor and respond to external developments in relation to E&D, help develop internal core policies and best practice guidelines, support the schools in meeting their legal obligations in this area, and act as a forum for sharing good practice across the eight schools.

Over the past year, the Terms of Reference and Membership of the E&D Committee have been reviewed by the Committee and approved by the Academic Board.

A New E&D Action Plan

The Conservatoire's last Action Plan covered the years 2012-2015.

Following the retirement of the former E&D Manager (Lois Keith), we are taking the opportunity to review our strategic aims in relation to E&D, linking this to the review of WP referred to above, with a view to developing a new E&D Action Plan for the Conservatoire.

E&D Committee has begun to consider what the priority areas for that new Action Plan might be. Themes identified so far include:

- work to encourage both increasing student and staff applications and recruitment from people from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities;
- retention of BAME students;
- supporting students with mental health issues;
- as overseas student recruitment increases, provision of support to integrate this student group into the student body;
- undertaking research into examining the impact of the new fee regime on the diversity in the student body;
- conducting data analysis regarding different equality and diversity trends in audition candidates, current students and staff.

Equality and Diversity Duty

The Conservatoire's commitment to E&D remains as set out in the public statement on its website:

Celebrating diversity and working to achieve the creative potential in all our students is at the heart of the work of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama. We are committed to training and supporting the most talented students, regardless of ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion. Applicants to the Conservatoire schools are chosen solely on the basis of their talent and potential to develop the skills required for their chosen profession.

The E&D progress report submitted to the Board in March 2015 set out planned work for the remainder of 2015; much of this work has continued into 2016. A summary of progress in that work is set out at [Annexe A](#).

Additional targets for 2016 include:

- Development of a new E&D Action Plan for CDD (see above).
- Provision of equality and disability awareness training for staff, especially managers (see below).

Disabled Students' Allowance

The E&D Committee continues to monitor the cuts and changes to the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) in which the Government is broadly passing responsibility to the universities as it withdraws funding support from disabled students. In the current year schools have responded to the need to provide the first £200 towards a computer to students assessed as eligible, either through across the board provision or else on a means-tested basis. We will continue to monitor this situation closely.

Equality and Diversity Training

The former E&D Manager delivered a highly effective programme of annual training for staff across the Conservatoire. E&D Committee has agreed that it is very important to continue disability awareness training sessions on an annual basis, particularly in helping all new staff understand the needs of students with specific learning difficulties. The former E&D manager continues to provide training sessions for the Conservatoire and the schools; other staff within the schools with particular expertise have also delivered training to share their expertise with colleagues across the eight schools, and we also use external trainers.

Staff value the chance for training and the mutual support gained through shared discussion with colleagues across the schools, particularly in dealing with the challenges of, for example, increased mental health issues in the student population and supporting students with ADHD. Training delivered or planned over the Spring and Summer Terms:

- Ros Leheny, NSCD's Learner Support Tutor, delivered a training session on managing students with ADHD in February.
- In response to requests, Helen Linsell, Artistic Director of Dance United Yorkshire, will be delivering training on managing and supporting students with disruptive behaviours as part of the CDD Staff Conference next month.
- Lois Keith has been developing a set of 'Guidelines for Supporting Staff with Specific Learning Difficulties' (SpLDs). The Guidelines will provide advice to managers on supporting staff who may have dyslexia and dyspraxia. Lois, who continues to provide E&D training for the Conservatoire and the schools, will be running a training session for line managers on the use of the Guidelines in May.

E&D Staffing in the Central Services Team

Given the level expertise in E&D issues within the schools, and their network of contacts with external training providers, it is not intended, at this stage, to make another permanent appointment to the E&D Manager role. The new Widening Participation and Access Coordinator will, together with the CDD HR Manager, support the work of the E&D Committee. However, this new structure will be monitored in relation to any potential need for further provision in this area.

March 2016

Annexe A

Progress against the 2014 E&D report actions

Action	Progress
<p>Board of Governors: to continue to develop the work started in 2014 on monitoring and improving the diversity of the Board of Governors, providing guidance and training for current and new governors</p>	<p>Diversity of the Board monitored by Nominations and Remuneration Committee and the Board itself.</p> <p>Training delivered in July 2015. Consideration to be given to a further training session to be delivered.</p>
<p>Guidance for Line Managers on Supporting Staff with Specific Learning Difficulties: to promote these guidelines through discussions with the HR Manager's Group, E&D Committee and a programme of staff training.</p>	<p>Guidelines prepared.</p> <p>Training to be delivered in May 2016.</p>
<p>Following the changes to the Disabled Students' Allowance, due to begin in September 2015-16, to ensure equality of opportunity for disabled students and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - establish a working group to discuss and plan for these changes (using the Guidance from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, due to be published in spring/summer 2015) - make decisions on how schools will deal with the additional costs of supplying computers to disabled students e.g. by working directly with computer suppliers to set 'bulk purchase' deals - continue to develop and improve inclusive practice in schools, for example through further dissemination of the Conservatoire's 	<p>Changes to the DSA, and steps to be taken in response to those changes, have been discussed in both E&D Committee and CLB, which continue to monitor developments.</p> <p>E&D Committee to review inclusive practice.</p>

<p><i>Guidelines on Inclusive Practice and Alternative Assessments for Students with SpLDs</i> and develop this work in practical and performance work across all disciplines.</p>	
<p>Decisions on future Equality Action: the Conservatoire Leadership Board, the Equality and Diversity Portfolio Leader and other appropriate staff and committees to decide how the Conservatoire will meet its legal duties under the general and specific duties of The Equality Act and continue to promote best practice well beyond legal compliance from September 2015.</p>	<p>This is being taken forward as part of the review of the Conservatoire's E&D Action Plan (see main report for update).</p>
<p>Equality and Diversity and Widening Participation targets: develop ways of improving sharing of information between E&D and WP and the inclusion of WP targets in the E&D Action Plan.</p>	<p>This is being reviewed as part of the review of the Conservatoire's WP Strategy and E&D Action Plan.</p>
<p>Equality Targets for Staff: consider whether and how to set equality targets for staff with protected characteristics in any future Action Plan.</p>	<p>This is being reviewed by E&D Committee as part of the development of a new E&D Action Plan.</p>
<p>Data collection, collation and reporting: to make decisions on how equality data on applications and registered students will be collected and reported in the future, particularly with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - establishing responsibility for this area of work within the Conservatoire's shared services team - the inclusion of WP data on such areas as bursaries, parental income, retention, completion under the protected characteristics of disability, gender and ethnicity - inclusion of equality data on staff in schools. 	<p>This is being taken forward as part of the work on WP data referred to in the main report.</p> <p>The work on developing a new Information Strategy and System for the Conservatoire is also relevant to this target.</p>