

Women's Officer Report (OBU Branch of UCU), 2023-24

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In my role as Women's Officer, both before and after my one-year career break in 2022-2023, I have played key roles in informing gender-relevant policy developments (particularly as related to promotion) and in supporting members concerned with work-based bullying, harassment and/or gender discrimination.

Previously, for example, as a result of the case-work I was involved with, changes were made to the university's academic promotion process to better recognize maternity and care leaves and to provide greater overall transparency related to promotion processes – with the aim of assuring more equitable outcomes for women. (More details with updates below.)

This year, my role on the Joint Staff Committee, enabled me to query the equality impacts of the university's proposal to halt **all** promotions as part of its cost-saving efforts – with the result that the ability to apply to Senior Lecturer from Lecturer was reinstated. In the latter half of this year, I have also secured partial membership on the university's EDI Advisory Group (EDIAG) and, as a result of the one meeting I was allowed to attend, I secured two significant outcomes:

(1) In relation to commendations given by the Athena Swan Panel to an initiative in TDE to counter the loss of career velocity following career breaks and/or family leave with enhanced research allowances, I asked if there was any reason this was TDE-specific and if it was not and/or should not be considered “best practice” throughout the university. At the meeting it was agreed that this should be applied to all faculties. I am awaiting the minutes of the meeting so that we can secure the rights of members who have taken maternity, or other forms of leave, in the future.

(2) Upon questioning the VC at this meeting about the chilling effect of statements he has made that could impact academic freedom and freedom of speech, more generally, on the matter of Israel/Palestine, I was given assurances that academics and students can have reasonable discussions on this topic without fear of censorship or disciplinary action. I will also ensure this is included in the minutes.

In addition to progress on these issues. I have continued to consult with members regarding concerns related to gender-based discrimination in promotion processes as well as work-place practices of harassment and/or bullying. Through these consultations, I have gained experience working the People's Directorate and relevant management teams to secure good work environments for members as well as detailed knowledge of (and experience with) the university's relevant policy frameworks and grievance procedures. My work has also been informed by ongoing UCU-training available and attendance at the Women Member's Equality Conference. In terms of UCU training, I have completed the following courses and/or workshops during my time as Women's Officer:

- Challenging Sexual Harassment in the Workplace (Course)
- Challenging LGBT+ Exclusion (Workshop)
- LGBT+ Language in Use (Workshop)
- Bullying and Harassment (Workshop)
- Community Accountability for Racial Justice (Workshop)
- Challenging Excessive Workload in Education (Workshop)

This summer I am also scheduled to attend a workshop being offered, titled ‘Menopause is a Workplace Issue.’

In addition to following up with the outcomes of the last EDIAG meeting (ensuring that responses to issues I raised were appropriately addressed in the minutes - so that we have these guarantees going forward), I have two immediate objectives for the next academic year:

(1) Currently, I am trying to secure full membership on the EDIAG so that I can remain intimately involved with policy developments relevant to gender equality issues. For example, the university is currently revamping its policies to address the gender pay gap (which currently stands at 9.5%) and, even more disturbingly, the pay gap between white men and BAME women (which currently stands at 19.7%).

By way of context, the EDIAG has stated it will only allow one UCU member to attend committee meetings with the result that I am currently splitting the role with our EDI Officer, Alon Lischinsky, who kindly offered to share their place on the committee with me, such that we each attend every other meeting. I am insisting, however, that Alon and I are covering different files and that I need to be in a capacity to follow up on gender-relevant developments and feed into discussions as they develop – or my role will be mere tokenism.

(2) I want to follow up on the aforementioned policy changes regarding promotion practices (that were approved at the 20 July 2021 meeting of the Senior Academic Promotion Committee) – as there is evidence that the approved changes are not being implemented.

***** If there are any other issues that members would like me to be aware of or get involved in, please contact me. *****