School of Mathematics and Physical Sciences
Equality and Diversity Newsletter

Welcome (or welcome back) to everyone this so far warm and generally sunny autumn term. This is the second newsletter of the School’s Equality and Diversity Committee. For those of you who are new to the school, we are a committee seeking to promote practices and policies within the School that improve equality, diversity, and inclusion for all. The committee consists of student and staff members from across Mathematics and Statistics and Meteorology departments. Our activities and other items of interest are outlined in this quarterly newsletter. We realize that everyone is busy so we aim to keep the content brief enough to glance through over tea/coffee...

If you want any further information or there is anything you would like to raise please email Joy Singarayer (j.s.singarayer@reading.ac.uk) or Calvin Smith (calvin.smith@reading.ac.uk).

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1. Deans of Diversity and Inclusion

Congratulations to Professor Ellie Highwood and Professor Simon Chandler-Wilde on their joint appointments as Deans of Diversity and Inclusion. Ellie and Simon have been instrumental in the success of the school in our silver Athena SWAN award as well as providing superb leadership more broadly, as a Head of Meteorology and Head of School respectively. They will now work together across the three university priority areas of gender, race, and sexual orientation and gender reassignment with an immediate focus on the University of Reading submission for Athena SWAN Bronze re-accreditation next spring. They have already begun setting an example by their 50:50 job-share in a major University leadership role! For more information see the following link: https://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staffportal/news/articles/spsn-636990.aspx

2. New E&D committee student members sought

The E&D committee is composed of staff and student members from across the school, and is the only school committee to advertise for membership. As several student members graduated over summer and left the university we are seeking
new student members (undergraduate and postgraduate will be considered). The committee advises on priorities for action across the school, ensure benefits from E&D are embedded in policies and practice, and ensure that our proposed activities align with other institutional strategies and priorities. One key task of the E&D committee will be to work towards the school renewal of the Athena SWAN award (in April 2017 at Gold level). We have two committee meetings per term, which all committee members are expected to attend if possible.

Volunteers Wanted

From the undergraduate and postgraduate student body, we seek individuals for at least a one-year commitment, but this could be continued for as long as they wish to maintain involvement and are studying within the school. This is an exciting opportunity to work with school management directly and engender changes across the school. If you are interested please email the school E&D champions, Joy Singarayer (j.s.singarayer@reading.ac.uk) and Calvin Smith (calvin.smith@reading.ac.uk) by 24th October 2015.

3. Third Annual Morley Distinguished Seminar

On the 30th September Professor Alison Etheridge FRS gave a fascinating talk in the third Annual Morley Distinguished Seminar, entitled “The pain in the torus: modeling evolution in a spatial continuum”. Professor Etheridge is Professor of Probability and Deputy Head of the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division of the University of Oxford. Her background is functional analysis and she has worked at the interface of analysis/probability, followed by a move into modelling biological populations and theoretical population genetics.

The School Annual Lecture series, given by a prominent female mathematical or physical scientist, is named after Edith Morley, who was the first woman appointed as a University professor in the UK, at University College, Reading, which became the University of Reading in 1926.

4. ‘Working with Diversity’ student sessions

Over the last year the school and broader university introduced ‘Unconscious Bias in Decision Making’ training workshops for staff, which have been developed by the Department of Psychology and the People Development department in HR. The training explores how naturally occurring unconscious biases affect the
decisions and interactions we make on a daily basis, and their influence on diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The staff workshop is especially useful for those undertaking recruitment and selection of staff or students, as well as for generally understanding our interactions with others.

The E&D committee members were keen that similar sessions were developed for our students, to enhance the interpersonal skills training available to them, and as future employers and leaders. In conjunction with Professor Patricia Riddell (Head of Psychology) we are developing a ‘Working with Diversity’ session with a similar focus to the staff training. We have incorporated the session into the undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes in the Maths and Meteorology departments for piloting this term and next term. We are also piloting the session for research postgraduates as an RRDP (Reading Researcher Development Programme) workshop. Please feel free to give us (Joy Singarayer or Calvin Smith) feedback if you attend one of these sessions, so we can continually strive to improve them.

5. LGBT+ Workplace Equality Survey

The University of Reading is again participating in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index which aims to assess how inclusive workplaces are for staff, with a special focus on LGBT+ employees (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans). A key component of the submission is a brief staff survey. We would like to encourage all colleagues to complete this survey so that the data generated is a fair reflection of the University of Reading as a working environment. You do not need to identify as LGBT+ to participate! For convenience here is the link to the Staff Portal piece which also contains vital log-in information:

http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staffportal/news/articles/spsn-643819.aspx

The Vice Chancellor has recently announced the target of the University of Reading being a Stonewall Top 100 employer by 2020. This is an ambitious but realistic target and we have already made progress towards this goal such as the provision of some gender-neutral toilets across campus as well as our public events such as Stephen Fry’s Reading Town Hall lecture on Oscar Wilde.

Positive actions which have emerged from previous engagement with Stonewall include the creation of LGBTPlus, the network for staff who identify as LGBT+ and their allies (for email updates see http://www.lists.rdg.ac.uk/mailman/listinfo/lgbtplus), as well as the University signing up to become a Stonewall Diversity Champion and regularly showing support for the LGBT+ community through events like Gay History Month and raising the rainbow flag as part of the IDAHOBiT celebrations (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia).

Once Stonewall have assessed all the submissions we will be provided with feedback, which can be used to help the University continue to become a more inclusive working environment for the benefit of all its staff and students. The
more people who participate the more useful Stonewall’s feedback to us will be so please do spare five minutes of your time and complete this important survey.

For more information about the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index please see https://www.stonewall.org.uk/get-involved/workplace/workplace-equality-index

6. LGBT+ STEMinar

There will be a one-day conference "LGBT STEMinar" to be held at the University of Sheffield on January 15, 2016. The conference is designed to bring together people from a variety of fields to showcase the wonderful STEM work being done by the LGBT+ community. The conference is inclusive: i.e. you do not need to identify as LGBT+ to attend, allies who want to discover and support work are most definitely welcome!

Details of the conference as they emerge can be found on the LGBT STEM blog https://lgbtstem.wordpress.com/lgbt-steminar/

7. Grade 6 career development workshop

On the 25th September 2015, 24 post-docs attended the Grade 6 Career development workshop, which we hold every two years to talk about career development for post-docs. We had presentations from Anna Macey from Research and Enterprise, who explained what support to post-docs is available from their service. Ellie Highwood, Mike Lockwood and Simon Chandler-Wilde also gave us their insights as to career development in modern academia and developing independence, each giving a unique perspective on these topics. This was followed by two case studies from staff who had successfully applied for a promotion and fellowship. Comments from attendees were very positive and there were some interesting discussions at the end of these sessions. Anyone wanting a copy of the presentations should email Marguerite Gascoine.