

## Materials EDIA Age Discussion Group

12<sup>th</sup> February 2021

### Action Points

#### **Academics**

Academics starting out in their careers sometimes have their age brought up in conversations with older academic colleagues. It may not be malicious but it does undermine confidence.

**ACTION: Encourage all staff to become active bystanders if they see an inappropriate mention of someone's age. Ask them to do it discreetly so as not to cause public embarrassment.**

Academia doesn't seem to take in to account experience that academics have had before entering academia.

Terminology for people who are new to being academics is patronising. Conferences have sessions for "Young Scholars". The university talks about Early Career researchers, but many "Early Career" academics have already had successful careers in industry before moving into academia.

**ACTION: Ensure that all University events use terminology that doesn't assume that staff who are early in their *academic* careers are young, or don't have other valuable experience. Write to organisers of external events to highlight this issue.**

The online unconscious bias and other training that is supposed to highlight and eradicate EDIA issues has been ineffectual and can feel like a tick box exercise. It is sometimes even highlighted in emails how quickly you can "get through it". It could be the case that those staff who would benefit the most from EDIA training are the least likely to engage with this format as they do not see EDIA issue as something that affects them.

**ACTION: Investigate how EDIA training can be made more engaging. Emphasise the benefits of EDIA to *everyone* and consider how EDIA training can be embedded into other, existing training activities and away days, perhaps without an explicit emphasis on EDIA as this term might be off-putting to some.**

The NAP is the perfect opportunity to get staff buy-in to EDIA issues from the *start* of their career. IT is important that *all* new staff take part in the EDIA-related components of the NAP, even if they are being appointed to a senior position.

**ACTION: Contact [Daniella.ryding@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Daniella.ryding@manchester.ac.uk) to determine whether *all* new UoM academics have to complete the NAP (even those appointed at SL and above) and discuss how we can add further EDIA education to the programme**

Setting up a code of conduct for a research group, or even for the whole department, could help to create the right environment and expectations. A good example can be found here:

<https://www.expmicromech.com/people/code-of-conduct>

**ACTION: Put forward the idea of PIs creating research group codes of conduct to the Department Leadership Team.**

**ACTION: Create a Code of Conduct for the whole department. It should include treating *all* staff respectfully, and should explicitly address the issue of some academics treating PS staff disrespectfully.**

Time to address EDIA issues and training must be built into workloads. The EPSRC have said that staff can have up to 50% of time dedicated to EDIA on fellowships – the university should encourage this by recognising contributions to EDIA in promotions applications. Staff should not feel they are putting their future career progression at risk by dedicating time to EDIA.

**ACTION: Request that time for EDIA activities and training is built into the Faculty Workload Model**

**ACTION: Request that contributions to EDIA are recognised equally to contributions to Teaching and Research in Promotion cases to encourage staff to apply for EDIA time on fellowships**

### **PS Staff**

Problems faced by PS staff are not perceived to be because of age discrimination; however, of the staff who are remaining after the VS drive, very few are over 50, which could potentially point to an element of discrimination. Anecdotally, it seems that few PS staff reach retirement age before leaving – many take early retirement, take advantage of voluntary severance, leave on ill health, or just leave to pursue other interests.

**ACTION: Contact HR to obtain figures on the age of PS staff leavers to determine whether this anecdotal evidence is supported by the data. If it is, an investigation should take place to determine *why* older staff are leaving before they reach retirement age.**

### **Age in General**

Older male colleagues may need to go to the toilet more often. More breaks in Zoom meetings are needed. This could also benefit pregnant women and staff with caring responsibilities, and would help with general wariness suffered in meetings.

**ACTION: Put forward idea to have comfort breaks in meetings.**

Centrally controlled heating can lead to problems with colleagues that are going through menopause. Allowing flexible working may enable women to work around impacts such as tiredness.

**ACTION: Take points forward to School, University level that there needs to be flexibility in working times and spaces (i.e. if the temperature is not suitable for some staff in shared offices).**

### **Other Business**

There is a general feeling of low morale amongst staff and students, which is evidenced by the fact that students/the UCU are voting on/have passed motions of no confidence vote in Nancy Rothwell/the University's SLT.

The management style is seen to be tearing up relationships between PS and Academic staff. The use of generic emails is not liked by academics. Staff are more likely to be rude when emailing a generic email address. This has already been shown not to work with HR and IT so why are they taking PS down this route?

PS Ops Staff are being shifted around to cover work without any consultation, decisions are made over PS staff heads. It is hard to take ownership of work if you don't know how long you are going to be working on it. There is also no notice given to colleagues of those who are asked to change roles, which creates a break in the relationship between them.

Emails to named people contain "how are you?" "hope you are having a nice day etc", which helps build a positive working culture. Generic emails are generally just instructions. You even feel bad

writing “Thank you” to a generic email address. At a time when we are crying out for human interaction, the Uni is trying to turn PS staff into robots.

The route for PS staff to take issues higher is not clear at all.

**ACTION: Raise the issues associated with joint mailboxes with the School EDI Committee**

**ACTION: Determine the mechanism that PS staff should use for raising issues if they are not satisfactorily resolved by their line managers and advertise this to raise awareness**