Introduction to Unconscious Bias Training

Background
In responding to the demand for Unconscious bias training we appreciate it is driven by applications for the Athena Swan award that acknowledges significant and sustained progression and achievement in promoting gender equality. However, we are concerned to address unconscious bias as it pertains to diversity generally because here at Newcastle we are committed to recruiting, retaining and supporting staff and students from all sectors of society will enable us to achieve excellence in our core functions. So whilst focusing mainly on gender bias we would like to use the opportunity to address discrimination generally.

Most academic/service units are asking for short, practical interventions for all staff - our challenge is to do something that will make a difference. So far we have had poor feedback from large mixed groups, and have found generic training can cause staff to ‘switch off’ especially if they do not see the links between the training session and their job role and responsibility. We have come up with three one and a half hour workshops - one for general staff, one for academics and one for all decision makers involved in staff management, student /staff recruitment and promotion.

There will be 3 workshop options:

1. Workshop for academic staff with more emphasis on the impact of unconscious bias in teaching and research environments
   To provide participants with knowledge about bias and strategies for reducing bias in the student experience and in the academic experience:
   • Define the term unconscious bias and understand the psychology of subconsciously processing information – implicit bias: stereotyping, first impressions, priming, confirmation bias
   • Identify biases in themselves – reactions to range of biases and stroop test (similar to implicit bias tests)
   • Identify biases in practice by looking at the scholarly evidence
   • Understand how gender bias can creep into in the curriculum, and student experience
   • Look at steps for addressing unconscious bias in their thinking
   • Promoting a positive culture for working and studying to which every student and member of staff contributes and within which they are able to develop to their full potential

2. Workshop for decision makers involved in the recruitment, selection and progression of staff and students
   Increase general awareness of unconscious bias in matters relating to:
   • Recruitment of staff and students
   • Student/staff career progress in the university
   • Promoting a positive culture for working and studying to which every student and member of staff contributes and within which they are able to develop to their full potential

3. General workshop (suitable to all staff)
   • Increase general awareness of unconscious bias in matters relating to:
     ▪ student experience and
     ▪ student/staff career progress in the university
   • Promote a positive culture for working and studying to which every student and member of staff contributes and within which they are able to develop to their full potential
Workshop structure
Each workshop will be 1.5 hours and will have 3 main parts:

Part 1  **Introduction to Unconscious bias:** to increase general awareness of unconscious gender bias

Part 2 **Case studies:** to discuss and debate unconscious bias in matters relating to student recruitment, student experience and student/staff career progress in the university

Part 3 **Deliberations on what works best to counter unconscious bias:** to encourage staff to question themselves around organisational practices that perpetuate gender bias.

Our approach
These workshops are designed to address a growing body of research which suggests unconscious biases influence key decisions in the workplace and can result in unwitting negativity towards people who are different to us. When we automatically respond to others, we do so in positive or negative ways depending on our deeply ingrained thinking and emotions. Unconscious bias may affect our institutional welcome may interfere with the way we nurture a diverse staff and student body, may results in exclusionary ways of doing things.

The main point we will make is that unconscious bias is very subtle and often has unintended effects. For example, only 22% of professors are women. The University is not consciously discriminating against women, but attitudes and behaviours can erect powerful, indirect and often invisible barriers by way of cultural assumptions, organisational structures, practices, and patterns of work that inadvertently benefit men.

Raising awareness of unconscious bias is about getting our people to recognise the ways in which we treat people differently - in unintentional ways that can disadvantage them. It is about crafting a culture of ‘slow thinking’ in situations where people might meet unconscious bias so that our practices recognise, respect and value difference.

We will not be heavy-handed as these sorts of attempts to change bias have been shown to have unintended negative consequences with participants actively resisting change, so training will question expressions of bias in sensitive ways. Women also resent any suggestion that they should have ‘special treatment’ – so we need to emphasise that we are talking about fair treatment. Similarly the research into effective ways of changing attitudes suggest that discussion, case studies that encourage people to take the perspective of another and judicious information giving work best.

**Costs**
Each workshop will cost £400 + VAT for a maximum of 20 participants.

**Toolkit**
A small printed toolkit will be made available to delegates. The full version will be available to download from the web.

**Further help and information**
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