What is Unconscious Bias; considerations and top tips.

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2 June 2014
Outline of session

What is Unconscious Bias; considerations and top tips.

1. Overview – What is Unconscious Bias
2. Examples of Unconscious Bias
3. Mitigate - what can you do
4. Case studies
Reality =
79.5% male
93.7% white (among UK nationals
– 86.0% white among non-UK nationals)
97.6% non-disabled
95.8% over 40

Equality in higher education: statistical report 2013
Equality Challenge Unit
IMPOSSIBLE TRIDENT! HOW PROI

HOW MANY LEGS DOES THIS ELEPHANT HAVE?
What is Unconscious Bias?

Unconscious bias refers to a bias that we are unaware of, and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.

(ECU: 2013 Unconscious bias in higher education)
Examples

- **Student admissions**
  - Offer & acceptance rates
  - Images / publicity – inclusive & representative
  - Female staff on open days / Roles in dept
  - Names / address / foreign or local qualifications *

- **Students assessments**
  - Difference in attainment between genders in different modules, course work, year-end assessments & final degree class
  - Anonymous marking/ second marking
  - Group work – diversity
  - Look at feedback given to different groups of students
Examples

- Recruitment of staff *
  - Difference in ratios between applications, shortlisting, interviewing & appointments
  - Adverts visible to under-represented groups
  - Criteria for person spec – essential criteria
  - Use standard application not CV’s
  - Anonymous shortlisting
  - Interview panel – verbal commitment to equality, consider similarities, objective rather than subjective, reps, single gender on panel

- Promotion of staff
  - Gender differences in proportion of male & female staff self nominating / being nominated for promotion & rates of success
  - Difference by gender of time spent at each grade for academic staff
  - Clear objectives
  - Also merit pay
Examples

- Staff appraisals
  - Monitor the appraisal process among staff
  - Gender difference in the outcomes of appraisals
  - Appraisal recognises the variety of work – Research, Teaching, Outreach, Admin responsibilities

- Workload allocation
  - Gender difference in time allocated to various work areas - Research, Teaching, Outreach, Admin responsibilities
  - Volunteering or carry out work that is more positive to career progression or or work that is not highly valued
  - Process staff are allocated teaching responsibilities
  - Ensure admin work is not disproportionately allocated to certain groups of staff
Examples

• Other
  - Research Project – advisory group / steering group
  - Teaching – cases studies
  - Marketing / Website / Publicity
  - Meetings – timings & scheduling
  - Guest speakers / lectures – diversity
Mitigate

Mitigate the impact / increased awareness of strategies to manage our brain shortcuts

• Micro v macro situations

• In-group v out–group

• Confirmation bias
Practical examples

• Reduce levels of bias – males & females on panel, cultural diversity on interview / selection panel, have criteria & use them

• Policies & procedures eg Physics example

• Diversity of guest speakers & lectures

• Timings / scheduling of meetings. Also who attends

• If an organisation's performance management systems were stereotype-free; if they reflected attributes, characteristics, and behaviours of all talent – women and men– then the workplace would truly be inclusive.
What you can do

• Be awareness/ conscious
• Considerations
• Small changes
• Pragmatic
• Challenging stereotypes and counter stereotypical information
• Using context to explain a situation
• Changing perception and relationship with out-group members
• Being an active bystander
• Improving processes, policies & procedures
What can you do / change / adapt / recommend
Summary

• We all have unconscious biases and we are all affected by bias

• We can take action to manage the impact on our behaviour and decision making

• It’s up to individuals to decide what action to take

1. Introduction to Unconscious Bias
2. Examples of Unconscious Bias
3. Mitigating Unconscious Bias
Resources

ECU link http://www.ecu.ac.uk/

Unconscious bias in HE Literature review  
http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/unconscious-bias-in-higher-education/

Harvard Implicit Association tests measure UB  
www.tolerance.org/activity/test-yourself-hidden-bias