

# **MC Representation & Accountability**

## **Forum '09 Open Session**

Facilitators: James Blair and Joe Greenwood  
Attendees: Three plus facilitators

### **Summary**

The small, but perfectly formed, group discussed whether the MC was fully representative of the network and whether they are as accountable to the network as possible.

The group decided that the MC wasn't diverse enough, however it was also agreed that this was a problem with the wider network. A potential proposal was put forward for a reserved BME position on the MC which the group felt needed to be called for by BME members of the network. The MC will discuss the possibility of a BME focus group to tackle these problems.

A discussion on the pros and cons of whether a one-year term for MC members would increase accountability was had. The group wanted the MC to discuss further and possibly bring to the next Forum.

### **Aims of the session**

To discuss and look at solutions to issues surrounding the MC's diversity, its representation of the network and the level of accountability the MC holds.

### **Overview of the session**

The small group had an open discussion of the issues offering practical examples and looking at ways to overcome problems identified.

#### **Representation/Diversity**

The group agreed that the reason the MC isn't as diverse as it could be was due to the broader issue of network diversity. There was, however, a potential proposal to initiate a BME reserved position on the MC. This raised debate and as a result it was agreed that any proposal like this needed to come from BME members and not imposed on them. It was however decided to take things forward with a focus group meeting.

Another idea discussed included publicising case studies of BME network members.

#### **Accountability**

Discussion on the level of accountability of the MC began with a potential proposal to reduce MC members' terms to just one year. There were pro and cons expressed by the group and certain caveats that the group decided were important in order to make the annual term as useful as possible.

There was also discussion of the lack of procedure for the network to remove MC members who were under (or not) performing. It was agreed that an one year term would overcome this.

There was a very brief discussion of the lack of regional diversity in the network. There was no outcome or actions to this.

## **Key outcomes/action points**

### **Representation/Diversity**

AP: James to report back demographic statistics from 07/08

AP: MC to discuss and set-up a diversity focus group

◦ Possible first 'meeting' at the summer gathering

### **Accountability**

AP: MC to discuss one year term and bring to forum

## **Notes from the discussions**

### **Representation**

#### **Scene setting**

- There has only ever been one BME MC member ever
- We now (as of this year) have an equal gender split in the MC
- Is this actually a reflection of the network?
- Are we monitoring the make-up of network?

#### **Discussion**

- Groups not diverse
  - Generally white and middle class
- Good gender split
  - Often more females than males
- Sixth forms & colleges: often private schools and girls schools so has impact on diversity
- Forum has fairly equal gender split, but men dominate discussion

**Possible proposal:** reserved seat on the MC for a BME member of the network

- Could this be patronising and tokenistic?
- Feeling amongst group that we need to work on the diversity of the network first
- Do BME members want a seat? We should ask them not decide for them
- Would the role pigeon-hole them?
- Should the MC lead the network or follow it?
- Is there a difference between the newly created sixth former position and a BME position?
- Not necessarily to do with racism but more insipid prejudice
- Is this a race or class issue?
- Is P&P seen as irrelevant to certain groups/communities?
- Do BME students see the benefits of P&P?
- Groups do not reflect their institutions
- Should we adopt a similar model to the NUS?

#### **Other options:**

- Publicise case studies of BME network members
- Set-up a focus group - physical or by email

- Possible first 'meeting' at the summer gathering
- Or should this be separate?

**AP:** James to report back demographic statistics from 07/08

## **Accountability**

- No method of network getting rid of MC members
- MC can remove other MC members if they miss two meetings with no apologies
- Make minutes more available and accessible
- An MC charter is being written
- Options for group charters, a forum charter, an office charter and others

## **Discussion**

Is a two year term right or would annual elections help democracy?

- Good MC members likely to be re-elected annually
- Would the network know who was good or bad?
- If not, how could they find out or be informed?
- Annual election allows more people to stand and have the opportunity to be a part
- Accountability of those elected in their final year (i.e. not students anymore) would increase
- Depends on the circumstances of the individual - they could actually bring a lot to the MC after graduation
- Could include set factors in the personal statement - key background info

## **Regional diversity**

- Regions not always fully represented on MC
- Should there be regional positions?
- After first year there should be a requirement to stand again in order to retain some experience

**AP:** MC to discuss one year term and bring to forum