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Minutes of the meeting of the Committee on Equality and Diversity on 29 May 2026

Participants: Jesper Wengel (JW), Louise Pape-Haugaard (LPH), Line Randa (LR), Trine Schultz (TS), Mette Me-chlenborg (MM), Anne Estrup Olesen (AEO) and Kirstine Kjær Mathisen (KKM – reporter).

Other participants: Dennis Jim Frederiksen (DJF).

Cancellations: Jakob Skovrup Stampe, Christian Schilling and Birgit Feldtmann.

1. Approval of the agenda

Appendix: Agenda for the committee meeting on 29 May 2026

The agenda was approved.

2. Approval of minutes

Appendix: Minutes of the meeting of the Committee on Equality and Diversity on 25 February 2026

The minutes were approved.

3. Messages from the chairperson

The chairperson informed about participation in an international seminar on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), where the importance of management for the work with gender equality and diversity was highlighted as central to creating organisational change. At the seminar, several speakers noted that women often contribute significantly to tasks and functions that support the working environment, cooperation and well-being, but which are not necessarily weighted in traditional merit-based systems.

In addition, information was provided on the status of the upcoming inclusion survey. It was stated that challenges have arisen in connection with access to the data basis from the inclusion survey in 2022, as the original raw data is no longer available. Only parts of the report material are still available, and the qualitative data in particular have been omitted. This limits the possibilities of direct comparisons and further analyses.

Considering this, different models for the future inclusion survey were discussed. Consideration was given to either conducting an independent inclusion survey or integrating inclusion issues into AAU's existing staff well-being barometer from 2027 onwards. In the discussions, it was emphasised that integration in the staff well-being survey can support a closer link between staff well-being, inclusion, and diversity, as well as reduce the burden of multiple concurrent surveys. At the same time, it was emphasized that there remains a need for a sufficient data foundation to enable meaningful analyses and follow-ups.

It was agreed that further work will be done to investigate practice at other universities and to gather experience from Rambøll regarding the scope of questions required to be able to carry out a meaningful inclusion survey.

Finally, information was given about the program "Living Labs", which works with projects concerning equality and equal opportunities in STEM environments. Work is underway on an application for an extension of the initiative.

4. Proposal for a framework for a new strategic action plan

Appendix 5.1: Case presentation

The committee discussed the overall framework for the new strategic action plan for gender equality and diversity 2026-2029. It was emphasised that the work is based on the discussions from the strategy day as well as the themes and perspectives that have previously been identified in the committee's work.

There was support for the action plan to be structured around three overarching themes:

- Gender balance in academic positions
- Neurodiversity and mental impairments
- Language and culture

The committee also approved that the other initiatives and perspectives that are not included as independent initiatives in the action plan will not be continued as separate tracks in the upcoming strategic action plan.

It was agreed that the action plan should include both cross-cutting initiatives and local activities, so that a common direction is created across AAU while at the same time allowing for local adaptation at departments and administrative units. Several pointed out that local activities can be advantageously linked to existing workflows and action plan structures to avoid parallel processes and strengthen organisational anchoring.

The committee also discussed the degree of commitment in the local initiatives. There was support for the units to relate actively to the themes of the action plan and contribute with concrete initiatives, while at the same time being able to adapt the activities to local needs and issues. It was emphasised that clear anchoring, ownership and systematic follow-up are crucial for the initiatives to lead to real organisational change.

Decision:

The framework for the new strategic action plan was approved.

5. Proposal for content of new strategic action plan 2026-2029

Appendix 5.1: Case Summary
Appendix 5.2: Draft Initiatives: Gender Balance
Appendix 5.3: Draft Initiatives: Neurodiversity and Mental Health Conditions
Appendix 5.4: Draft Initiatives: Language and Culture
Appendix 5.5: Draft Initiatives: Local Action Plans
Appendix 5.6: Additional input and perspectives from the committee's strategy day
Appendix 5.7 Background: Updated data basis for the development of a strategic action plan for gender equality and diversity

Recommendation: The Committee on Equality and Diversity *discusses, qualifies and approves the proposed initiatives for the strategic action plan for equality and diversity 2026-2029.*

Gender balance in academic positions

The committee discussed the proposed initiatives regarding gender balance in academic positions. Information was provided about the work on new merit frameworks at AAU, including the ambition to develop a more manageable and holistic credit concept inspired by experiences from the University of Copenhagen. It was emphasised that the new merit framework should be able to be used in connection with performance reviews, salary negotiations, career interviews and recruitment processes, and contribute to employees being assessed more broadly than solely on traditional research merits. There was support for the Committee on Equality and Diversity to be represented in the further work on the development of new merit frameworks. As a follow-up to the members of the committee, it can be mentioned that at the executive management meeting on 3/6 it was decided that a more manageable and holistic credit concept should be prepared inspired by experiences from the University of Copenhagen, and that this should be copied in an assessment form setup that will also be used throughout AAU.

Attention was drawn to the fact that concepts such as academic citizenship, collaboration, impact and contribution to research environments and organisational culture must be made more visible in future assessment and assessment processes. At the same time, it was emphasised that changes in merit frameworks alone do not necessarily solve the underlying causes of gender imbalances and drop-out rates in academic careers. Several pointed out that assessment practices, culture, management and organisational structures also play a significant role.

The committee also discussed the need for clear implementation and local anchoring at faculties and departments. It was emphasised that it is important to ensure coherence between the new merit framework and the specific assessment criteria used in practice. There was also a focus on the importance of management support and the role of management in the implementation of new principles and workflows.

It was proposed that further work be done on monitoring and measurement points, including, for example, the development of gender balance, comparison with other universities, knowledge of new initiatives and the connection between merit frameworks and assessment criteria. It was also pointed out that there was a need to develop new target figures for senior management for future discussions in the committee.

Neurodiversity and mental impairments

The committee discussed the proposed initiatives concerning neurodiversity and mental disabilities. It was emphasised that the area is perceived as increasingly relevant both on the student side and in relation to personnel matters, but that at the same time there is still a lack of knowledge about the extent and nature of the problem on the staff side.

It was agreed that the area requires additional professional qualification before specific initiatives can be determined. The Committee therefore pointed to the need to involve persons with special knowledge and experience in the area, both in relation to the formulation of the initiative and in the further work on any activities and studies. It was emphasised that it was important to ensure correct concepts and formulations and to build a more solid scientific basis for further work.

It was also pointed out that experience from the student side as well as inspiration from other organisations can contribute to the further work in the area. It was suggested that the efforts should initially focus on creating knowledge and clarification of needs, after which actual efforts can be formulated if a sufficient basis and need for this are identified.

International employees – language and culture

The committee discussed the proposed initiatives regarding international employees, language and culture. There was support for the proposed direction, including a focus on onboarding, language conditions and social communities.

It was proposed to investigate the possibilities for additional English-language offers, including, for example, English language training for administrative staff. In addition, the importance of social and professional networks was emphasised, including how international employees can be included to a greater extent in social activities and local communities. It was suggested that this perspective be incorporated into the work on onboarding and local inclusive activities.

Decision:

The committee approved the overall themes and the proposed direction for the new strategic action plan. At the same time, it was agreed that the current draft should be further revised into a more comprehensive and final format until the next committee meeting.

Follow-up:

KKM and DJF will further revise the draft of the strategic action plan based on the committee's discussions and comments with a view to presenting a more complete draft at the next committee meeting on 3 September 2026.

In addition, proposals are prepared for targets that can be included in the action plan, including, for example, new targets for the gender balance in the senior management at AAU.

In the further work on the theme of neurodiversity and mental impairments, relevant professionals are involved in order to ensure professional relevance as well as precise formulations and conceptual applications.

Furthermore, the possibilities of English teaching to administrative staff are investigated as part of the work on the theme of language and culture.

The committee will have the opportunity to comment on the revised draft prior to the next committee meeting.

6. Communications from the Committee

No further points.

7. Any other business

No further points.