



HEEON

Higher Education Equal Opportunities Network

National Newsletter for Equal Opportunities Practitioners Autumn 2006 Issue 22

SOUNDBITES:

'The post-16 provisions of Part 4 (the education section) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 have been amended from 1 September 2006, so as to comply fully with the European Employment Framework Directive. The new duties will apply to virtually all universities and colleges.' See UCU's website for further details:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1742>

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 came into force on 1 October 2006. See ECU's website for further details:

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance/age/>

The Disability Equality Duty came into force on December 4th 2006. See the DRC's website for further details:

http://drc.org.uk/employers_and_service_provider/disability_equality_duty/further_and_higher_education.aspx

HEEON



HEEON's Chair for the last two years, Syd Kent, University of Essex and Vice Chair, Kate Parsons, Aston University, swapped roles during this year's highly successful 14th annual residential conference: 'Leading Institutional Strategy on Equality and Diversity: Influencing Change'.

HEEON events scheduled for 2007 include the launch of a set of guidance documents resulting from a HEFCE funded project conducted in conjunction with the ECU on the 25th January; an Impact Assessment training event on the 21st May and a return to the University of Warwick for the 15th annual residential conference.

In addition to these national events, HEEON members also take part in regional groups. For further details of the way The Eastern Region Equality and Diversity Forum operates, please see p.3. If you are interested in joining a group, regional or special interest, or providing other feedback to HEEON please complete and return the questionnaire on p.11.

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The Eastern Region Equality and Diversity Forum

The Eastern Region E & D Forum (the forum) is an informal gathering of E & D practitioners and others with any kind of E & D remit from HEIs in the Eastern Region. The forum meets three times a year and so far the meetings have been hosted by Felicity Cooke and her staff in Cambridge.

Membership of the group is restricted only by geography and presently E & D staff from, Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Grossteste College, University of Cambridge, University of East Anglia, University of Essex, University of Northampton, University of Hertfordshire and Norwich City College have attended. The group was established about 4 years ago by members of HEEON in the east. Attendance at our meetings is not restricted to HEEON members, although in fact most people who attend are members of HEEON

*The informality and the fact that the group operates under *Chatham House Rules means we can freely and openly discuss our achievements, failures, frustrations, strengths and weaknesses. As in all good networks we also swap documents and share our experience and expertise. Over time we have built up a high level of trust, in which newer members are invited to share. We do not keep formal records of discussions! Members can testify to the value and supportive nature of the meetings – time spent in focused conversation, and the mutual support which follows, is generally agreed to be invaluable.*

** "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."*

Consulting and involving stakeholders

Increasingly HEIs are being asked to consult and involve stakeholders in policy development initiatives. This could be driven by compliance with legislation or because it is the right thing to do. The Open University's mission "open to people, places, methods and ideas" and "promotes educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential", has yet again challenged the Equal Opportunities Office as it has required genuine engagement with stakeholders in policy development. Recent months have witnessed unprecedented activity as several projects have been progressed, some in response to meeting new legislative requirements and others because it was felt important to be seen to demonstrate how we are working towards being an increasingly more diverse and inclusive organisation.

As we are the only university in the UK dedicated to distance learning (our style of teaching is called "supported open learning"), our size and scale present us with a unique situation, for example we have around 150,000 undergraduates, more than 30,000 postgraduate students, over 4,500 staff and some 8,000 teaching staff located across the UK and beyond. Consulting and involving stakeholders has

required mixing and matching methods according to circumstances and needs.

- Race equality impact assessment public consultation

In the spirit of openness and transparency, the University published all the findings of its race equality impact assessment work along with action plans from a wide range of functional areas. In addition, an online and postal public consultation was held for three months giving students, staff and partner organisations an opportunity to comment on these specific plans and on race equality initiatives more generally. The feedback is now helping to shape the University's revised Race Equality Policy and Action Plan which is expected to be launched early in 2007.

Using a range of communications channels (such as internet and intranet sites, OU screensavers, our internal staff magazine, and leaflets circulated to Race Equality Councils across the UK), the public consultation proved an effective way of raising the profile of our race equality impact assessment work and generated a lot of supportive comments from colleagues in other HEI's and other organisations. However, we achieved a limited response from staff, students and other stakeholders with whom we were consulting. We may have published too much detail – a single report (rather than reports for each department) summarising our findings and action plans might have been more appropriate. Similarly, the feedback form we used might have been too extensive, and this might have deterred some people from responding. Perhaps for EO practitioners, this is proof positive that the practice of public consultation on equalities is an evolving one for all public institutions. The

reports and details of the public consultation are published on the OU website at <http://www.open.ac.uk/equalopportunities/p6.shtml>.

- Supporting lesbian and gay staff

The University has been building the infrastructure that enables greater participation and involvement from some stakeholders who previously might have been invisible. Whilst lesbian and gay staff have participated and responded to consultations in isolation before, they have rarely been given a collective voice to respond to issues from the perspective of sexual orientation. This year, the EO Office has led several initiatives to support lesbian and gay staff:

- developed a new lesbian and gay staff email network
- celebrated lesbian and gay history month
- joined Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme.

As a result, lesbian and gay staff have been empowered and have developed further the network into a recognised OU Club. Recently the Network has contributed actively to the development of the University's new 5-year equality and diversity strategy.

- Involving disabled staff and students in the development of our Disability Equality Scheme (DES)

Involving disabled staff and students in the development of our Disability Equality Scheme (DES), has presented us with some unique challenges as a distance learning organisation with around 10,000 disabled students and

about 350 disabled staff (includes teaching staff). We provided a variety of opportunities for consultation and involvement so that individuals could choose those that suited them best. These included:

- placing messages in our staff and student magazines
- displaying messages on a range of staff and student internet and intranet sites that included hyperlinks to drafts of the Scheme and action plan for comment
- providing a dedicated email box
- arranging an electronic conference
- conducting regionally based student focus groups, one-to-one meetings and telephone discussions.

Providing a dedicated email box with a guarantee of confidentiality proved a successful way of involving disabled students in the discussions. Over 170 messages have been received to date providing valuable insights into what is working well, what is not working well and where there are gaps in our policies and provision. This email box will remain open for students to provide ongoing feedback on how well our DES and action plan are working in practice. Students who preferred to contact us by letter were able to do so via our EO Office.

The electronic conference on promoting disability equality, which was open for 4 weeks, also provided a valuable and lively discussion forum for disabled students to share their experiences. Around 30 students took part. We plan to make use of electronic conferences focussed on specific topics to monitor the impact of the DES and action plan.

Logistically the regionally hosted focus group meetings for students did not work as well as we had hoped. Owing to the widespread location of our students in each of our 13 regions, the number who opted to take part was predictably small. We will need to consider how we might engage more students and staff in focus group meetings as part of the ongoing monitoring and review of the Scheme and action plan.

Our disabled staff were invited to contribute via messages in the staff newspaper and staff websites. The opportunity was then provided to speak by phone or face-to-face with a member of HR about experiences, and around 15 staff contributed with a wealth of detailed information.

Much of the feedback from students and staff has been positive however, it has highlighted a number of areas where improvements could be made, and this is helping us develop the DES and prioritise actions for the three year DES action plan.

To date our experiences of consulting and involving stakeholders in our work has been a positive one. We hope that by learning from our experiences, not only will we improve our techniques and expertise but also, encourage ownership and generally produce more effective policies and practices that will actually deliver desired outcomes.

Penny Burgoyne, Open University

Quality Assurance and Accessible Training in Europe

SCIPS is an outcome of a HEFCE funded project entitled 'Academic Standards and Benchmark Descriptors: Developing Strategies for Inclusivity'. The project ran from January 2003 to December 2004 at University College Worcester (UCW), and was a collaboration between UCW, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and representatives of academic subject benchmarking groups. The project was an outcome of a successful bid to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) under its 'Improving Provision for Disabled Students' funding programme for 2003 - 2005

The purpose of this project is to facilitate the delivery of a high quality service for disabled people in mainstream Vocational Education and Training (VET) and to enable their needs to be incorporated at all stages of the quality assurance process.

Who is SCIPS for?

SCIPS (Strategies for Creating Inclusive Programmes of Study) is a resource primarily for teachers and trainers. It offers strategies for promoting inclusive teaching, learning and assessment within programmes of study taught at degree level (including foundation degrees). It identifies potential challenges that disabled students may experience in achieving and/or demonstrating key skills and attributes as defined by subject specialists. It also suggests strategies and adjustments to practice that academic staff might consider in helping students overcome these challenges.

The advice included in SCIPS is supplemented with subject-specific

case studies to highlight good practice. Although your subject may not have been included in the original sample of ten, you will find that the advice provided can be generalised to most subjects.

The barriers can be physical (e.g. adaptations to laboratories), technological (e.g. failure to meet accessibility standards in online learning), matters of traditional pedagogy (such as the way lectures or seminars are delivered), or inappropriate assessment systems.

As well as offering strategies for inclusive curriculum design, SCIPS acts as a gateway to hundreds of other resources resulting from research and project work conducted within the Higher Education sector both in the UK and overseas.

From this a new project was developed to include transnational partners: Marie-Curie Association in Bulgaria, ORT in France, University of Ioannina in Greece and the University of Jagiellonian in Poland . The project is coordinated by French and Burt Consultancy and the University of Worcester is the lead institution.

QATRAN is a Leonardo da Vinci funded project that aims to help remove barriers to participation for disabled people in mainstream VET. This transnational project aims to assist the VET providers in developing a more inclusive approach to the design of teaching, learning and assessment that will enable disabled students to take advantage of the widest range of opportunities in education and training.

Part of the research from this centres on participation rates of students with disabilities and Quality Assurance systems in participating countries.

Research and analysis:

Disabled students and teaching across Europe

Part of the foundation of the Qatrain project was a commitment to carry out a programme of research in each partner country to uncover evidence about the presence of disabled students, their experience and that of staff of teaching disabled students.

The following were the main conclusions of this exercise.

There are generally low rates of participation by disabled students in partner institutions. In the UK participation rates are significantly higher than other countries, although it is widely recognised that further progress is needed in the UK. Other than in the UK, only Jagiellonian University records a significant proportion of disabled students. In countries other than the UK, the statistics concerning disabled students are limited, in some cases non-existent. Therefore much of the data on which this summary is based had to be collected specifically for the project. Clearly all institutions have more disabled students than their records recognise. Although we were unable to generate comprehensive and reliable data, it is quite clear from discussions with staff that there is far more experience of teaching disabled students than the formal records indicate.

In all institutions many students choose not to disclose their disability, although the rate of non-disclosure clearly varies considerably. The reasons are also variable; while sometimes it may be related to self-esteem, too often it seems likely to be caused by a real fear of prejudice and discrimination.

Only in the Jagiellonian and Worcester Universities is there any organised support for disabled students, in the sense of an office to help meet their needs and to liaise with teaching staff. Elsewhere it is up to teaching staff to provide whatever support they think fit. However, many staff report positive experience of teaching disabled students and often have made adjustments to normal practices to accommodate them, even if this is not recognised in official records.

But, in most countries there is very little – if any – support for staff in meeting the needs of their disabled students and few opportunities to exchange ideas and good practices. So it is too easy for the lessons provided by positive innovations in teaching and learning to be lost.

Staff on the whole don't have access to knowledge about what their peers elsewhere have been able to achieve in supporting the needs of disabled students without sacrificing academic standards: in some cases this lack of knowledge leads to a fear of the unknown and can underpin apparent prejudice. But many staff express an openness to change and to learn from experience elsewhere. The research indicates that the time is favourable for the work of the Qatrain project.

This readiness to change on the part of teaching staff is reflected by national and European policies that increasingly emphasises the need for more disabled people to have access to mainstream VET. However the research indicates that in most countries the implementation of such policy is still at a very early stage of development; this factor will need to be taken carefully into account in planning the next stages of the project.

For more information see:

www.qatrain.eu or
www.scips.worc.ac.uk

Zena Morton-Jones, University of
Worcester

HEEON RESIDENTIAL CONFERENCE

'The Changing Climate: From Compliance to Best Practice'

Wednesday 13th & Thursday 14th
June, 2007

to be held at Scarman Training and
Conference Centre, University of
Warwick.

The Aims of this conference are:

- To consider the progress HEIs are making with the implementation of an increasingly complex legislative agenda;
- To identify and explore best practice in the work of Equalities Practitioners and Managers in this process.

By the end of this Conference you will:

- Have a better understanding of the issues involved in implementing the legislative agenda;
- Be able to more effectively assess your own institution's progress;
- Be more aware of examples of good practice that go beyond compliance in relation to specific responsibilities such as the prevention of harassment, establishing good campus relations, promoting work-life balance initiatives, monitoring staff and student progress and reducing inequalities.

Please email m.lefevre@worc.ac.uk for further details or see www.heeon.ac.uk

Achieving real diversity in the arts world: seven steps to success

One would imagine that the colourful worlds of art and diversity would entwine together like a beautiful art piece. In reality, even being immersed in creativity, such as that in the art world, does not necessarily mean that creative action is always applied to everything around us. What about our interactions with other people? Is the creativity of the arts world truly reflected in its human relationships, social interactions and structures?

The arts world would be wise to consider the reality of who controls the arts. Who are the decision makers? What effort has been made to progress 'minority' artists? Do questions need to be asked about 'token' minority artists being placed at senior levels to simply satisfy funders or just to 'tick-box' diversity policies? When will 'minorities' be accepted on their own terms, rather than when their interests are looked after by 'majorities' to emphasise fairness?

At the bottom of the art world hierarchy exist the many projects, organisations and initiatives targeting black, disabled, gay - and other so-called hard to reach communities. At the top, there are the exclusive white middle and upper class networks with double-glazed glass ceilings.

What does all of this mean for students of art? More importantly, what does this mean for those responsible for education in the arts? Like other HE / FE institutions, arts universities and colleges are sometimes overwhelmed with equal opportunities and diversity strategies, policies and action plans, which are all determined by legislation and public duties. The diversity 'business case' drives many institutions

to compete in the global market to attract and retain students and staff from around the world. Universities approach the subject of diversity generally through policy – the stick, and the carrot – bums on seats, and oh yes: ‘I have a scheme!’

This approach is promoted widely within the public sector diversity arena. But we must question whether the ‘carrot and stick’ approach ultimately promotes self-centeredness at one end and fear at the other. Clearly, legislation has its place as an enforcer of change if critical masses engage, for example, since the seat belt law has been in place the majority of us comply. If arts universities emit creativity as a natural resource, should it not be the case that this creative energy be utilised in management structures and practice; curriculum development and community relations?



I celebrate the statue of Alison Lapper (above), criticised by some sections of the media as ‘all message and no art’. In my view, no challenge, no change. The statue has raised the profile of

disability but we still have a long way to go to progress disabled artists into the mainstream. The statue also raises the challenge of balancing freedom of expression with respect for the values of particular groups.

What needs to be done beyond writing policies? I believe there are seven steps to success:“

1. Create a powerful, consistent, guiding coalition to drive diversity – without this, real change is difficult. The inconsistency of leaders in words and deeds undermines efforts to be more inclusive;
2. Deal with complacency. Too much ‘management happy talk’ and avoiding conflict leads to slow change or none at all – this creates blind spots for leaders;
3. Develop a clear and understandable vision. Trying to chip away behind the scenes and avoid dialogue about future direction only maintains the status quo;
4. Remove barriers within organization structures – these could be people or systems;
5. Plan your diversity journey with short, medium and long term wins – this builds momentum;
6. Make a conscious effort to anchor diversity within the management systems of the organization – supervision and appraisal, starting with the head of the organization, governors and senior management;
7. Create a realistic plan through dialogue from the top right the way down. Action plans created by a few individuals and only endorsed

by those at the top leads to lack of 'buy in', responsibility or accountability.

I remember once offering a two-week session of 'free' diversity training to a group of busy senior managers in a sunny location abroad to support them with their roles. All of them immediately agreed to the proposition. The reality was, I had no training to offer, but was amazed at how they all managed to find 70 hours to work on strategic diversity in light of all the resources and time restrictions they identified as reasons for lack of progress with the agenda... watch out for complacency.

In my view targeting people from underrepresented groups should be approached in the spirit of collaboration - mutual learning to achieve the sharing of ideas, ideologies and concepts to add to the innate creative power that exists within us all, as Chief Seattle (1854) said, "We did not weave the web of life; we are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves¹."

Amit Popat, University of the Arts, London (The views expressed are Amit's personal opinions and do not represent those of HEEON or the University of the Arts)

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<http://www.kyphilom.com/www/seattle.html>

Equality Impact Assessments: 'The experience so far'

A HEEON event supported by the AUA Equality Advisory Group and the Equality Challenge Unit, to be held at UUK, Woburn House, London on Monday 21st May, 2007

The theme of this event is Equality Impact Assessments in Higher Education. Although the requirement to undertake equality impact assessments has been in place for some years, it is one which we struggle to implement in a systematic way. Institutions may take an individual approach to this duty but there is a great deal to be learned from sharing experiences across institutions.

The aim of this event is to:

- share the experiences of colleagues in trying to overcome the barriers and problems associated with setting up impact assessment processes in our institutions.

At the conclusion of the event we will:

- have a better understanding of what is happening in the sector;
- have had the opportunity of learning from the experiences of colleagues to inform our own activities.

The fee for this event is £175 plus VAT. There is a reduction of £50 for delegates from corporate member institutions.

Booking forms for this event are available at:

<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/ADMIN-EO.html> or www.heeon.ac.uk

Please return the completed forms to: Michele Lefevre, HEEON Administrator, University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester, WR2 6AJ.

HEEON Input request

We would be very grateful if you would complete the following questionnaire.

- 1 Is your institution a corporate member of HEEON? Yes/no/don't know

- 2 If not, what would attract you, on behalf of your institution, to join HEEON?

- 3 What are your key concerns/priorities for the coming year?

- 4 What event format, theme/s and/or speaker/s are most likely to attract you to attend a HEEON event in the coming year?

- 5 Would you prefer to attend a one day or residential event, either or both?

- 6 It has been suggested that HEEON should provide training for new equalities practitioners. What information/contacts/links do you think would be most helpful to a new practitioner?

- 7 What else could HEEON provide to meet your needs?

8 Is there any other feedback you would like to provide?

For HEEON members only:

- 9 Would you be interested in joining any sub groups and, if so, what type, for example, regional or special interest?

- 10 The latest edition of the HEEON newsletter is being piloted in an on-line only version. Are you happy with this or would you prefer a hard copy?

- 11 Invoices for outstanding annual membership fees are currently raised towards the end of the academic year, however, it has been suggested that it would be preferable if these were raised at the beginning of the year. Would you prefer invoices to be raised at the start of the academic year or at the end?

- 12 Are you interested in joining the HEEON steering group?
Yes/no/possibly.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this.

HEEON MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Annual Membership Fees:
£150.00 Corporate Membership
£30.00 Personal Membership

Membership entitles you to:

- Reduced rates for HEEON Conferences (Currently £50 per day for up to 3 delegates from Corporate member institutions)
- Copies of any HEEON Conference Proceedings
- 3 Copies of the HEEON Newsletter
- Access to the Register of Expertise
- Advice and support from other Network members

First Name:

Surname:

Position:

Institution Address:

.....

.....

Post Code:

Telephone:

Fax:

E-mail:

Professional interest in EO:

.....

Expertise in EO:

.....

Do you agree to your name and address being circulated to other members of the Network? Yes/No

I enclose a cheque, payable to University of Worcester, for: £150.00/£30.00.

Send to: Michele Lefevre, HEEON Administrator, University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester, WR2 6AJ.

ADMIN - EO MAILBASE

Admin-EO is a useful list for seeking and giving EO related information. For details of how to join; HEEON events and an archive of messages see:

<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/ADMIN-EO.html>

HEEON NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to the Newsletter are very welcome. The deadlines for copy are 28th February and 31st August.

The Newsletter is available on the HEEON Website and in electronic format - please contact m.lefevre@worc.ac.uk to request a copy.

HEEON WEBSITE

HEEON has launched a new website: <http://www.heeon.ac.uk/>

This site was created by the ECU and aims to feature HEEON news and information related to equalities in the Higher Education Sector, including project up-dates. If you have any suggestions for site content or would like to submit research project information please contact Michele Lefevre at the address on the inside cover.

Contributors please note:

The HEEON Newsletter aims to inform Network members about events and good practice within the sector. Occasionally articles may be reviewed by those with relevant expertise; however, the Newsletter is not a refereed journal and the views expressed are those of the writer and not HEEON. The decision of the editorial panel regarding the suitability of submission is final.