

Welcome to the first issue of the Disability Equality Partnership (DEP) Bulletin.

In this issue, we aim to update the higher education sector on the work of the three organisations that form the DEP, Action on Access (AonA), the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) and the Higher Education Academy.

The DEP is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) until December 2008 and has a remit to:

- support wider dissemination of good practice to improve provision for disabled students in higher education
- respond to the needs of the sector and proactively engage with current and emerging themes and priorities
- provide added value through joint partnership working.

The main themes of our individual organisations are:

AonA – Widening participation
ECU – Promoting equality and diversity
The Academy – Learning and teaching

As the DEP we are bringing our individual organisations together to provide a comprehensive, co-ordinated service to help embed disability issues in all aspects of higher education.

This bulletin contains information about current activities, publications and events that we hope will assist you to raise the profile of disability within your own institutions.

DEP activities

Web resources

Action on Access's website (www.actiononaccess.org) contains information on issues relating to widening participation including a wide range of disability resources. The majority of these resources were previously held on the National Disability Team's website and are now embedded within the Action on Access webpages. There is a dedicated disability section containing information on past HEFCE-funded projects, checklists to support inclusion and the resource directory, which contains over 800 HE and disability related materials.

Other sections are now embedded within the 'Resources' area of the website; there you will find an introduction to the legislation, case studies, presentations and publications as well as statistical tables on the numbers of disabled people applying to and enrolling on programmes. We are currently working with the HEFCE and HESA to update these tables and over the next few months will be adding information on statistics on levels of disability within the general population. There is an events and news section on the website.

Helpdesk

A key area of the DEP's work is to provide accurate, up-to-date advice and guidance about disability to staff working with higher education students. If you have a query about any aspect of support (teaching and learning, legislation etc.) please send your enquiry directly to the helpdesk:

email: help@actiononaccess.org

Telephone: 01695 650 870

Text telephone: 01695 650 874

Fax: 01695 584 098

Action on Access will process your enquiry and forward it on to a team member in the relevant DEP organisation.

The Disability Equality Duty

The new disability team at the Equality Challenge Unit (appointed in April 2006) has been focusing on providing support for institutions in drawing up produce their Disability Equality Schemes (DESSs) in connection with the specific public duties specified under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, for completion of these 4 December 2006.

In May/June 2006 the ECU sent out a survey to all those in HEIs leading on drawing up DESs to identify progress in developing a DES, and to find out what further support might be required. The DES Progress Survey Report can be found at www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance/disability/.

As a result of this survey several further targeted activities were identified as being useful, and these are being or have been implemented by the ECU:

- A DES feedback service – a free service to individual institutions to provide professional and constructive advice about their DES (fully booked)
- Emergency surgeries for HEIs who may have problems in meeting the 4 December deadline (contact ECU for further information).
- A follow-up project to contact survey non-respondents in order to find out about any additional support needs they might have (Sept –December 2006)
- Publications on involving disabled people in developing DES, an update on disability data and statistics, guidance on appointing equality and diversity trainers and consultants and practical guidance on the new legislation for academics (see below).

Additional activities proposed during 2006/2007 to support cultural and organisational change to improve disabled students' experience include investigating the experience of disabled students transferring from FE to HE, and the importance of inclusive campus design, clubs and societies.

HEFCE Single Equality Scheme

Comments are welcomed on HEFCE's Single Equality Scheme, which is currently out for consultation. The HEFCE Single Equality Scheme is intended to respond to the spirit as well as the letter of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006. It also aims to promote other forms and strands of equality and human rights that might be relevant to HEFCE's work. The full document can be found at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2006/06_28/ and comments should be submitted to HEFCE by 31 October 2006.

DEP publications

To request copies in large print or in an alternative format, please contact the relevant partner.

Embedding Success: Enhancing the learning experience for disabled students (July 2006)

Available at www.heacademy.ac.uk/disability.htm.

This publication from the Higher Education Academy celebrates the successes, the outputs and the value added experiences of the HEFCE-funded projects running from 2002–05 in relation to improving provision for disabled students. Five themes are addressed with commentary from Academy staff and Subject Centres:

- Staff development
- Benchmarking, auditing and validation
- Employability, work placement, key skills, professional bodies
- Learning, teaching and assessment
- Online learning, multi-media.

The publication includes accounts of project activity and innovative practice in relation to disabled students and learning and teaching in HE. To request a copy please contact publicationmailings@heacademy.ac.uk

Disability Legislation: Practical Guidance for Academic Staff (October 2006)

This will be available at www.ecu.ac.uk.

This joint guidance produced by the Equality Challenge Unit and the Higher Education Academy provides academic staff with information about the application of DDA Part 4 to learning and teaching. It draws on a host of resources from across the sector and signposts examples of challenges and good practice when teaching disabled students.

The publication has sections on the following topics: admissions and induction; programme design and validation; lectures; practicals; group work, seminars and tutorials; e-Learning and distance learning; work placements, field trips and study abroad; assessment; retention issues; progression and transition; employability. The guidance is also intended to be used as a staff development and training tool.

Electronic copies of the publication will be available from the Equality Challenge Unit Website in October. Hard copies can be requested in advance by contacting **pubs@ecu.ac.uk**.

Briefing Paper 4: Involving Disabled People in Disability Equality Schemes (2006)

HEIs must produce their first Disability Equality Schemes by 4 December 2006, and must involve disabled people in all key aspects of this work. This ECU research has demonstrated that HEIs, in common with other public sector bodies, are finding the involvement of disabled people to be one of the biggest challenges of the new disability equality duty. Developing themes from the Disability Rights Commission's recent guidance on involving disabled people, this Briefing Paper provides tailored advice for the sector, illustrated with a broad range of examples of involvement from HEIs.

Disability Data: Categories and Statistics (October 2006)

This Equality Challenge Unit publication has been produced to update the higher education sector on the developing data categories for disability monitoring and the location of statistical information. It is intended to be useful to equality and diversity specialists, human resources, admissions and disability officers.

Choosing and Using Equality and Diversity Trainers and Consultants (October 2006)

The public sector duties on race, disability and gender, as well as legislative requirements relating to the other equality strands, require HEIs to work actively to ensure that all members of the HE community understand both individual and corporate responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity. This guidance suggests a process that will help staff in HEIs to identify and refine their particular equality and diversity training and consultancy requirements.

Rough Guide to Disability (November 2006)

Following on from the success of the Rough guide to widening participation for higher education providers Action on Access will be publishing a Rough guide to disability for staff who work in widening participation.

The guide is intended as a general introduction to the issues at different levels of the education sector and will describe some of the key drivers and barriers that influence the progress of disabled people into higher education.

Forthcoming events

For a more comprehensive list of disability-related events across the student life-cycle please see the Action on Access website: www.actiononaccess.org/?p=1_3_2

Action on Access seminars for Widening Participation and disability practitioners

Action on Access recently ran three widening participation and disability forums to explore ways of joint working and embedding disability within the widening participation agenda of HEIs. Two additional seminars will be held in the South West and North West on 7 and 9 November respectively.

For further details and booking information please contact:
m.murphy@actiononaccess.org

Telephone: 01695 650 870

Textphone: 01695 650 874

The Disability Equality Duty What does it mean for the education sector? Disability Rights Commission

Date: 18 October 2006

Venue: Holiday Inn London Regent's Park, London W1

Cost: £295 plus VAT (£346.63) [Rate for universities/colleges and other public bodies].

Further info can be found from www.neilstewartassociates.com/sh213/

Mental well-being and learning: exploring the connections

The Universities UK/SCOP Committee for the Promotion of Mental Well-Being in Higher Education and the Higher Education Academy are holding a joint conference.

Date: 10 November 2006

Venue: Woburn House Conference Centre, 20 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HQ

Cost: £188 inc VAT

Booking details: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/events/Default.asp?id=116&sortByYear=2006

Skill Annual HE Conference

This year's theme is inclusive teaching and learning. The keynote speakers will be Professor Sally Brown, Pro-Vice-Chancellor at Leeds Metropolitan University and Professor Cliff Allan, Deputy CEO of The Higher Education Academy, both renowned experts in this area.

Workshops will cover a diverse range of topics, including curriculum accessibility for students with mental health conditions, learning and placement support agreements, student involvement in inclusivity and impact assessing your curricula. There will also be briefing sessions on the latest publications and toolkits in teaching and learning in HE.

Date: 27–28 November 2006

Venue: Marriott Leicester Hotel

Cost: tbc

Contact: Sally Hayward: sally@skill.org.uk

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Contact details

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We hope that this first issue of our joint bulletin has provided you with useful information. We welcome any constructive feedback that could inform future issues.

Future issues of this publication will be available from any of the above websites.