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1. **Annual Equality Conferences 2011**

Registration is now open for the Annual Equality Conferences. The conferences are an excellent opportunity to meet other UCU members, discuss key issues and help formulate policy for UCU on each of the equality strands. The four Equality Standing Committees will also be elected at the conferences. The conferences are free of charge and reasonable travel expenses will be met. You can register online by following this link: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1868>. In accordance with Rules, Branches and LA's will be able to submit nominations and motions for each of the equality standing committees. Nomination and motion forms are also available online or can be requested from eqadmin@ucu.org.uk.

**Friday 25th November 2011
Disabled Members' Annual
Conference**

**Friday 11th November 2011
Black Members' Annual
Conference**

**Saturday 5th November 2011
LGBT Members' Annual
Conference**

**Friday 4th November 2011
Women Members' Annual
Conference**

Register online: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1868>

There will be guest speakers at the events (tbc), and we would like to encourage as many of the membership as possible to come and be a part of the day, as we continue to campaign for and prioritise equality. A flyer has been produced that can be printed out and distributed which you can find overleaf.

UCU Equality Conferences 2011

At the conferences there are

- practical workshops
- speakers

They provide opportunity to

- learn and discuss current issues.
- network and
- engage mutual support.

You can book your place or find out more by visiting

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1868>

or emailing:

eqadmin@ucu.org.uk

For these conferences you have to be a self-identifying member

Women members

4th November

LGBT members

5th November

**Dates for
conferences**

2011

Black members

11th November

Disabled members

25th November



University and College Union

2. Equality Reps Training dates 2011/12

Dates have now been set for the Equality Rep's training courses in 2011 and 2012. The details of the dates and locations can be found below, as well as links to application forms and further information on how and why you should sign up.

This is a great way to get more involved and we want to encourage more black members, disabled members, LGBT members and women members to become equality reps. Your expertise and experience is needed!

UCU Equality reps and officers work within branches to promote equality with the employer and union members. This could include looking at issues such as flexible working, absence management, discriminatory practices, equal pay and equality impact assessments. This course gives reps an introduction to the knowledge and skills that they will need to carry out their role. The course is designed to help you:

- understand the role of the UCU equality rep or equality officer
- ensure equality is embedded within the branch bargaining and organising agenda.
- find out more about discrimination legislation
- improve equality policies and agreements
- find out about good practice and share success stories
- promote equality in the workplace, branch and the union
- develop tools and techniques for raising equality issues
- develop equality networks
- sharpen negotiating skills
-

Dates/Locations

- **London, Thursday 3rd November 2011 (2 days)**
- **Birmingham, Thursday 15th December 2011 (1 day)**
- **Manchester, 7th February 2012 (2 days)**
- **London, 2nd May 2012 (2 days)**

For more information visit the UCU webpage here:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4093>

For the course booking form visit the following link:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/a/2/Equality_reps_courses_all_regions_2011-12.pdf

3. Equality Reps Survey

The Equality Unit has produced a short survey for equality reps, equality officers and regional equality officers to give feedback on their experiences. We would appreciate as many responses as possible to the questionnaire, and will use the information gathered to identify how we can best support these important roles in the future. You can fill out the survey online here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/stateofunionequality>

4. Age Equality FAQ

Equality Support Official Seth Atkin has produced a frequently asked questions guide dealing with some of the issues surrounding age equality. It provides information on how age discrimination is protected against in equality legislation, age equality in employment (incorporating the scrapping of the default retirement age) and advice on how to take action.

The guidance can be found here:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/7/k/Age_Equality_FAQs.pdf

If you have any questions relating to the guidance, please contact equadmin@ucu.org.uk or satkin@ucu.org.uk

5. Anti-choice counselling

Plans are afoot to introduce new **pre-abortion counselling** requirements – opening the door for anti-choice organisations to receive public funds to advise women facing unplanned pregnancy. Abortion Rights are urging as many supporters as possible to contact their MP to urge them to vote against these proposals if they are debated in Parliament on 6th September. They've set up an easy-to-use lobbying facility on their **website**.

STOP PRESS: The proposals were defeated on the 6th of September. MP's voted against the changes by 368 votes to 118, but there will be a consultation on improving services.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-14817816>

6. Sustainable working event

Achieving sustainable workplaces and creating work-life balance – 30 September 2011

In education the increasing workloads threaten work-life balance. The challenge of work-life balance is a significant struggle faced by many staff in colleges and universities, yet the issue is often seen as an individual concern and approached as such, if at all. This one day event in London will be an opportunity to discuss strategies for achieving work-life balance and explore the idea of sustainable working from a union perspective. There will be workshops on sharing good practice, implementing flexible working policies for all and on what sustainable

working means for carers and in the context of age. The event is free of charge for UCU members, with lunch provided. Reasonable travel expenses will be covered by UCU. For further information and/or to register, please contact the Equality Unit: Charlotte Nielsen: cnielsen@ucu.org.uk or Seth Atkin: satkin@ucu.org.uk

7. Public Sector Equality Duty Update

The Specific Duties – legislative update

The Specific Duties regulations are intended to support institutions to meet the requirements of the general equality duty. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 were laid before Parliament for approval on 28th June 2011. They were debated in the House of Commons on 11 July. The debate in the House of Lords is expected to take place in September 2011 and the specific duties will come into force following parliamentary approval (replacing the previously stated intention to have them in force before the summer recess).

Although the General Equality Duty is Great Britain-wide, Scotland and Wales are able to set their own specific duties. The specific duties in Wales came in to force on 6 April 2011 and specific duties that will apply to Scottish public bodies are still being decided.

Specific Duties – proposed requirements

The specific duties regulations will require institutions to publish:

- one or more equality objectives by 6 April 2012, and thereafter at least every four years. Equality objectives must be specific and measurable.
- information to demonstrate their compliance with the equality duty by 31 January 2012 and thereafter, at least annually.

The information required must relate to employees and others affected by an institutions policies and practices such as students and other service users who share a relevant protected characteristic.

The information must be published in a manner that is accessible to the public and can be published within another published document.

Specific Duties – applying ‘due regard’

Although the specific duties regulations do not specify undertaking an equality impact assessment, institutions must

‘... under the requirements of the general duty to have ‘due regard’ to the matters set out in the Act, public bodies will need to understand the effect of their policies and practices on

equality – this will involve looking at evidence, engaging with people, staff, service users and others and considering the effect of what they do on the whole community.’

(Government policy review paper Equality Act 2010: The public sector Equality Duty: reducing bureaucracy)

Undertaking an equality impact assessment is the best way to demonstrate ‘due regard’ and branches should continue to demand their employers carry them out. Branches should keep a record of how decisions on service delivery or staffing are reached in their institution which will help identify good and poor compliance.

These principles developed through case law and used by the Government Equality Office must be considered by public bodies to show ‘due regard’

Knowledge: those who exercise the public body’s function need to be aware of the requirements of the Equality Duty. Compliance with the Equality Duty requires a conscious approach.

Timeliness: The Equality Duty must be complied with before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration or decision is taken. A public body cannot satisfy the equality Duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.

No Delegation: Public bodies are responsible for ensuring that any third parties which exercise functions on their behalf are capable of complying with the Equality Duty; are required to comply with it and that they do so in practice.

Sufficient information: The decision maker must consider what information he or she has and what further information may be needed in order to give proper consideration to the Equality Duty.

Real consideration: Consideration of the three aims of the Equality Duty must form an integral part of the decision-making process. The Equality Duty is not a matter of box-ticking; it must be exercised in substance with rigour and with an open mind

Review: Public bodies must have due regard to the aims of the Equality Duty not only when a policy is developed and decided upon but also when it is implemented and reviewed. The Equality Duty is a continuing duty.

Remember

- the duty arises before a decision is made or a proposal is adopted
- the decision maker must be aware of the requirements of the duty – check existing equality policies and schemes. Is there a commitment to undertaking EIA’s?
- actively seek to be consulted and engaged with the process

- where negative effects are identified, potential mitigation must be considered – seek reasons for any unwelcome decision. Community groups or individuals with sufficient interest in the decision can bring a challenge.
- the process of having due regard should be documented and transparent

The Equality and Human Rights Commission

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) will be providing guidance on good practice on assessing the effect of policies and practices.

The EHRC is also responsible for assessing compliance with and enforcing the Equality Duty. It has powers to issue compliance notices to public bodies that have failed to comply and can apply to the courts for an order requiring compliance. The Equality Duty can also be enforced by judicial review.

Further advice and guidance

The TUC will be publishing guidance in the autumn and UCU Equality Unit will supplement this with Higher and further education specific advice and guidance.

A link to the Equality and Human Rights Commission website is below. The link takes you to the guidance produced by the EHRC in 2010 for higher and further education on sound financial decision making. Although based on the old duties, institutions should be reminded of this guide.

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance-and-codes-of-practice/using-the-equality-duties-to-make-fair-financial-decisions/>

The Equality Committee will be undertaking a survey of branches in the late autumn to find out where good practice and poor compliance exists in higher and further education. The Equality Unit welcomes feedback and information from branches on the Equality Duty. Please email: eqadmin@ucu.org.uk

Get connected

If you would like to join one of our networks, please send an email to eqadmin@ucu.org.uk stating your preferred email address along with the name of the network you would like to join. You should note that these networks are not discussion forums, but that you will be sent information relating to the area of equality. The networks available for joining are:

Black Members Network
Disabled Members Network
LGBT Members Network
Women Members Network