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1. UCU Equality Scheme

UCU is currently developing an equality scheme covering all aspects of the union's activities. The scheme will cover the role of UCU as a membership organization, as a trade union with bargaining, campaigning and organising priorities and as an employer. A detailed guidance document has been sent to all branches and regional committees and is available at:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4137>

The guidance document sets out the progress to date and asks your regional committee to identify three priority action points for inclusion in the scheme.

Branches and local associations have not been asked to identify their own priorities for inclusion in the scheme. In each region, regional committees will be the key conduit for identifying the three priority areas for the scheme's action plan, with the involvement of all their local associations and branches. Regional committees are strongly encouraged to involve branch equality officers and members of any regional equality networks. Branches and local associations are encouraged to discuss the equality scheme and to feedback thoughts and suggestions for priority areas of work to regional committee members.

It is important to note that the purpose of the scheme is to identify how equality can be embedded within UCU's current work and priorities. It is not about creating a whole new set of objectives for the union to work to.

Equality Committee priorities

The Equality Committee has identified the following issues as potential priority action points for inclusion in the scheme:

- Ensure better representation of under-represented groups in the union.
- Provide training, support and encouragement to new members and activists early in their involvement in the union.

- Consider when meetings are held to encourage maximum attendance
- Focus on employers' compliance with their equality obligations (to include lodging collective grievances on equality issues)
- Ensure there is an equality officer in every UCU branch and region

The committee would be grateful for any comments by no later than **15 January 2010**. These will be reported to the Equality Committee at the meeting to be held on 29 January and will inform the decision about which three priority areas to include in the Scheme.

Please send comments, questions or suggestions to Sharon Russell srussell@ucu.org.uk

2. Review of Retirement Age

Ministers are calling for businesses and individuals to submit evidence on the default retirement age to feed into the review taking place next year. The government is asking for evidence including:

- the operation of the default retirement age in practice
- the reasons that businesses use mandatory retirement ages
- the impacts on businesses, individuals and the economy of raising or removing the default retirement age
- the experience of businesses operating without a default retirement age
- how could any costs of raising or removing the DRA be mitigated and benefits realised.

You can read more at <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4257>

UCU will be making a submission to this from the equality unit and we welcome your input. Please send evidence to Seth Atkin satkin@ucu.org.uk. The deadline for inclusion in the UCU submission is 14th January 2010. After this we will not be able to include your evidence so please send it in as soon as possible.

UCU policy is that the default retirement age should be removed. The most effective evidence could include examples where

- default retirement age has had negative impact on individual workers
- default retirement has had negative impact on other staff and students
- someone not retiring has had benefit for the organisation
- flexibility around retirement has been beneficial for staff and students

3. Developing Sexual Orientation Equality: Report from a UCU Survey

In May 2009 the UCU equality unit sent the sexual orientation equality checklist to UCU branches for completion. The aim was to find out to what extent FE and HE institutions were implementing measures that would develop sexual orientation equality. The government has proposed a single equality bill, which if passed, would extend the pro active equality duties currently in operation for race, disability and gender. The new equality areas would include sexual orientation. Legislation in place now applies to individuals who may have experienced discrimination which in effect means that organisations need to take steps to prevent discrimination in order to not be complicit with any case of individual discrimination.

In this first run of the checklist over 30 returns were received. It was clear from returns that amongst UCU branch reps there is a considerable range of knowledge about developments in sexual orientation at their workplace. In some places reps met with others in their institution such as equality managers, HR, and / or senior managers. This level of communication is a model of good practice as effective equality measures should involve the whole organisation.

The UCU publication '*Lesbian and Gay Rights at Work: An Issue for Branches*' is useful for those who have questions about the role of the branch in sexual orientation equality. UCU website hosts resources for sexual orientation equality including '*Lesbian and Gay Rights at Work*' which can be accessed at

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/r/3/lgbt_adv_revmar09.pdf (October 2009)

Good practice was found in all key areas covered by the checklist. These areas are: compliance, developing supportive environments, training, prominence of equality within the institution, internal and external engagement on equality (2 separate areas). However no one return reported good practice across all areas. Good practice is noted at the end of each section and a few examples have been provided to illustrate the kind of activity that can be put into practice.

To view the full report, go to: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/lgbtres>

4. Disability Equality Briefing

A new Disability Equality Briefing has been produced to help branches and local associations progress disability equality in the workplace.

In this briefing:

- New national agreement on disability equality, including disability leave
- Revision of Disability Equality Schemes
- Update on case law.

The full briefing can be found here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2306>

Or email jpantland@ucu.org.uk for a copy.

5. UCU Equality Reps training

Don't forget to register for the UCU Equality Reps Training which will be taking place on:

16 Dec 2009 & 5 Mar 2010 – London
10 Feb 2010 & 14 May 2010 - Manchester
8 Apr 2010 & 11 June 2010 – Glasgow

The course is delivered as two 1-day sessions and participants are expected to attend both days.

This course will 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

For more information or to register, go to:

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

6. Enterprise and Employment for people with disabilities and learning difficulties

Monday 30 November 2009, Birmingham – 9.30am to 3.30pm

Monday 7 December 2009, York – 9.30am to 3.30pm

Increasing economic participation through sustainable employment is a key priority in Learning for Living and Work – the LSC's national strategy to improve education and training opportunities for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These three conferences will:

- provide an opportunity to share policy and practice developments that enable people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to progress to employment
- discuss arrangements to take forward the Learning and Skills Council's Learning for Living and Work and Mental Health strategies
- present the 'Learning for Work: Employability and people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities report', compiled following nine regional conferences and the social enterprise research project.

They will also provide information on key national policy initiatives:

- National Apprenticeship Service and people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- The Department of Health Valuing Employment Now: real jobs for people with learning disabilities strategy
- LSC Learning for Living and Work strategy and the Mental Health strategy

Event fee per person: £35 (includes lunch, tea/coffee)

For more information, to download an application form or to reserve a place online, visit the NIACE website: <http://www.niace.org.uk>

Enquiries to Gurjit Kaur at NIACE Events Team – Tel: 0116 204 2833;

E-mail: gurjit.kaur@niace.org.uk

Get involved

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
Women Members Network
LGBT Members Network
Disabled Members Network