



Furthering the involvement of disabled students

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Promoting equality and diversity in higher education

Structure of workshop



- ECU – who we are and what we do
- ECU and HE Academy involvement project
- Legal context of involving disabled people
- University of Derby Case Study
- Example institutional strategies
- Discussion

Equality Challenge Unit



- Established in 2001 to promote equality for staff in higher education in the UK
- Remit extended in 2006 to include students
- Funded by the 4 UK higher education funding Councils, Universities UK and GuildHE
- 15 staff, based in London

Promoting equality and diversity in higher education



Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) supports the higher education sector to realise the potential of all staff and students, whatever their race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief, or age, to the benefit of those individuals, higher education institutions (HEIs) and society.

ECU & HE Academy involvement project



- Impetus for project:
 - Sector evidence and direct enquiries
 - DRC 2007 review of Disability Equality Schemes (DES)
 - Legal requirements of Disability Equality Duty
- More recently:
 - CHERI's report to HEFCE on student engagement
 - HEFCW's review of eleven Welsh DES's

Legal context for involving disabled people



- DDA 1995 - disabled people to be treated fairly
- DDA 2005 – introduced Disability Equality with general and specific duties
- General duties includes HEI responsibility to:
 - promote **positive attitudes** towards disabled people
 - encourage **participation of disabled people in public life**
- Specific duty includes:
 - Legal obligation to involve disabled people when drawing up Disability Equality Schemes

ECU & HE Academy project continued:



- Call out for participants (15 responses)
- 7 HEIs chosen (Brunel, De Montfort, Derby, Staffordshire, Sunderland, Swansea and UWE).
- HEIs reflective of a range of institutions
- Cross institutional project groups
- Senior management support
- Outputs:
 - Guidance document Spring 2010

The Derby Experience



- Right place, right time
- Student experience strategy already in place
- Main aim - to take a holistic approach to embed attitudes and behaviours which ensure the ongoing engagement of disabled students in change processes
- Project ran for 9 months - not long to consult, implement and embed change culture
- Initial tasks – scope out objectives, put project group together and get backing from the top of the organisation

What did Derby do?



- Four key strands: Estates, Students' Union, Support and Advisory Service, Statistics and Student Experience team. Reps from each area co-led with a student on mini-projects to embed mechanisms to go 'beyond consultation'
- One working party to lead on change culture
- Fed into the long term strategy via University's Disability Equality Scheme, chaired by a PVC
- Final report presentation to executive and senior management for feedback and further debate
- Held the first ever dedicated Disabled Students' Forum May 09 – now an annual event.

Involving Derby's statistics team



- Filled a gap in analysis of surveys and data.
- Wanted to get a feel for what our students were experiencing as well as their backgrounds.
- Action plan forwarded to teams that can make a difference.
- Interventions – framework for capturing the disabled student voice.

Future plans at Derby



- Invite other functional areas to join working group and run workshops on other key areas, eg Library
- Use project as a template to mirror successes in other Equality and Diversity areas, eg BME.
- Continue to embed participation and look at long term objectives.
- Working with HE Academy/ECU, explore mechanisms for the dissemination of the project outcomes across the sector.

Derby Top tips



- Get backing from the top from the start
- Use all avenues available to you to raise awareness about the project
- Be inclusive – close working between SU and University staff
- Agree clear and realistic goals with key stakeholders
- Be prepared to challenge mind-sets
- Encourage students to be co-producers in their own education

Involving disabled people



- To be effective involving disabled people should:
 - Be at an early stage
 - Be influential and meaningful (partnership working)
 - Be focussed
 - Include relevant people
 - Use accessible mechanisms
 - Be proportionate to the policy
 - Consider sustainability – cross HEI working?

Benefits and risks to involvement



Benefits:

- Develop inclusive culture
- Be known as responsive
- Reduce complaints
- Avoid damage to reputation
- Avoid litigation
- Staff development

Risks:

- Consultation fatigue
- Raising expectations that won't or can't be met
- Driving disability agenda at expense of others
- Over/under representation of certain views

Involvement strategies



1. Research:
 - Focus groups, surveys, appreciative enquiry & action research.
 - Collecting and analysing data
 2. Events/campaigns
 3. Student representation (committees, ambassadors, SU posts)
 4. Working groups
 5. Technology
 6. Employment
- Will the strategy be student led, led by the HEI or part of a national strategy?

Overcoming challenges



- Provide a range of opportunities
- Incentivise
- Engage students from outset
- Ensure accessibility of strategy
- Consider frequency and timing (student workloads)
- Always close the loop – you said...we did...

Discussion



- What involvement strategies have you adopted in your HEI?
- What further developments might you consider as a result of attending this session?

Key resources



- DRC Code of practice The Duty to Promote Disability Equality (paragraphs 2.52 to 2.56 and 3.7 to 3.27)
http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/drc/library/publications/disability_equality_duty/the_duty_to_promote_disability1.html
- DRC: The Disability Equality Duty and Involvement
http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/drc/library/publications/disability_equality_duty/the_disability_equality_duty_a.html
- ECU: Involving Disabled People in the Disability Equality Schemes: Briefing Paper for the HE Sector (available on www.ecu.ac.uk/publications)
- Forthcoming ECU/HE Academy Guidance (to be available from April/early May 2010) – check websites



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