

## Welcome for 'Disability Agenda'

Contributed by Kate Edwards  
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The University and College Union (UCU) has welcomed today's launch of the Disability Rights Commission's 'Disability Agenda', which sets out the chief public policy challenges regarding disability for the coming decade - and the action needed to meet them.

UCU is already playing a significant role in challenging disability discrimination. The union is conducting its own campaign to press university and college employers to implement new duties under the Disability Discrimination Act. This requires all employers to publish a disability equality scheme and to eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act and promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.

In an innovative joint project with UNISON, UCU is undertaking a year long project led by Sian Davies, on the implementation of the new disability duties in further education.

In December 2006 UCU produced a guide for its 120,000 members on the rights of disabled staff and has been training members and branch representatives to monitor employer implementation of the DDA.

The union guide 'Enabling not Disabling' (created with the union's disabled members' group) informs members of the rights of disabled staff and provides a check-list so that the union's branches can see how their institutions measure up to their new obligations. Managements are being asked to make 'reasonable adjustments' to working environments and work patterns to suit disabled staff, and to examine recruitment practices such as short-listing so suitable disabled candidates are not excluded from consideration for positions they could fill.

Roger Kline, head of equality and employment rights today said: 'Today's launch of the 'Disability Agenda' is a further reminder to colleges and universities to implement their duties to disabled staff and students. This is essential if we are to create a dynamic economy in which everyone's skills and potential are utilised.

'UCU is currently monitoring the progress of employers in implementing these duties and working with many to develop good practice. We shall be critical, however, of employers that decline our support and are slow to tackle the needs of disabled staff and students.

'We welcome the DRC's agenda and hope that the Commission for Equality and Human Rights starting work in October this year will place this agenda centre stage.'

Disability Agenda: <http://www.disabilitydebate.org/>  
UCU guidance to implementation of DDA: 'Enabling not disabling':  
[http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/r/a/ucu\\_enablingnotdisabling\\_1.pdf](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/r/a/ucu_enablingnotdisabling_1.pdf)