



Disability Equality Policy - June 2009

YUSU

University of York Students' Union

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DISABILITY EQUALITY POLICY

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THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK STUDENTS' UNION (YUSU) PROMOTES EQUALITY AND PURSUES ITS AIMS AND OBJECTIVES WITH A POSITIVE INCLUSION OF THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS AT ITS HEART.

This will include not only a firm commitment not to discriminate against a student or group of students on any grounds (including age, gender, race, religion, creed, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, class, unrelated criminal conviction or medical condition); but also a commitment to embrace that difference and celebrate that diversity. Wherever necessary, YUSU will lobby the University to comply with the requirements of the DDA. On a strategic level, YUSU consults and considers the needs of disabled people during planning processes, taking into consideration YUSU policy, recommendations and legislation. Wherever possible we update premises, equipment, procedures and resources in line with DDA requirements.

A 2004 Union General Meeting voted in favour of passing a motion that ensured that all YUSU officers will continue to show a positive attitude to inclusion of students with any form of disability in all YUSU activities.

More recently, a 2009 (21st May) Union General Meeting voted in favour of passing a motion that YUSU ensures all materials (e.g. publicity and information services) are accessible and to support students with disabilities as much as possible.

Representation



YUSU has two officers with specific responsibility to support the needs of disabled students:

Welfare Officer (full-time sabbatical post): Has responsibility for promoting good welfare of all YUSU members, provides support, and is the budget holder for expenditures relating to raising awareness of disability.

Disability Officer (part-time non-sabbatical post): Must self-define as being Disabled, as defined in YUSU's constitution. Works alongside the Welfare Officer and other YUSU officers and staff to raise awareness of disability, overcome discrimination within the University and YUSU, and provide support to disabled students. Offers an additional source of contact to Disability Services and refers students when necessary. Represents disabled students and YUSU on the Disability Equality Scheme Working Group and the e-Accessibility Forum. Also represents disabled students on the YUSU's Equality, Welfare and Diversity committee and Campaigns committee.

YUSU's Women's committee has a position available for a disabled representative. The colleges have Welfare Officers on their JCR committees, but don't currently have Disability Officers. YUSU will work with the colleges to create these positions.

Services

YUSU's services include a print room, a late-night minibus service, an Advice and Support Centre, a shop (Your:Shop) and a bar (the Courtyard). There are definitely areas where these services can improve, but are limited by structural restraints (e.g. the print room) or by funding (e.g. the late-night minibus). Your:Shop is wheelchair accessible. The Courtyard is accessible as all areas of the bar can be accessed, but not all of the bar can be accessed without leaving the bar area. There are plans to make it entirely accessible and a bid has been put to the University for funding.

The Union Manager controls a budget area dedicated to access improvements within the physical environment of YUSU. The Student Centre is currently making changes to its physical environment, though the main responsibility for structural changes lies with the University. It is largely accessible with low-counter reception, lift access, open-plan office, accessible toilet (opposite outside), induction loops in the Advice and Support Centre and Reception, good lighting and with power assisted entrance doors.

The Disability Officer co-ordinates with the Welfare Officer to ensure that all YUSU communications are accessible, for example offering alternative formats. There are no formal guidelines are yet in place for creating YUSU publicity, but this is currently being looked at. YUSU checks bulk items (e.g. planners) with Disability Services and if a student requests communications in an alternative format (e.g. braille, audio, etc), YUSU contacts the university supplier.

Services

Voting for elections takes place online using an eSTV system. YUSU aims to make sure that this system is as accessible as possible. YUSU can offer advice as to where there are computers with large text option available, and if this is not enough will work with the Disability Officer, and if necessary the University, to ensure that everyone is able to have a say in the democratic running of their YUSU. This could involve a paper ballot that is entered onto the system by a designated individual or the Returning Officer (by default, the Democracy & Services Officer). The Returning Officer's details are available on all parts of the election system, allowing users' easy contact if they experience any problems or require assistance. To this end the contact details of the Disability Officer will also be placed on-line (and on 'How To Vote' posters) for elections as an additional point of contact.

Sport

YorkSport does everything that it can to help if a disabled person comes to them. The YorkSport President and Disability Officer have both promoted the new disabled-friendly gym to students with disabilities.

Societies

All societies must be open to all members of YUSU and follow its aims and objectives. It is more difficult to govern how societies operate internally however. Our volunteering and charity work aims to be as inclusive as possible, for example it was checked whether disabled students could participate in abseiling down Central Hall to raise money for World Aids Day (which they could).

There is policy on publicity regarding legibility and how events are advertised (i.e. whether smoke and strobe will or will not be used). As part of this during Welcome Week at Access All Areas, the first event of the term, smoke and strobe are not used in a variety of venues to make sure the event is open to all and this is clearly promoted.



The Future

YUSU HAS STRONG POLICIES AND GOOD REPRESENTATION REGARDING DISABILITY BUT STILL HAS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, AND THE SERVICE PROVISION.

YorkSport has much to do to promote itself to disabled students and must be more pro-active in this area.

YUSU must look into providing all marketing and publications in alternative formats and encourage all JCRC chairs and society and club presidents to be trained to ensure they are aware of disability legislation and that everything they do is open to disabled students.

Policy passed through our Ents committee allows carers in free to an event and ensures that a wristband is set aside for them at an event, so that if a disabled person with a carer arrives at an event they are not turned away because of capacity issues. However, this is not currently being advertised, so YUSU must look at publicising this more.

Entertainment providers don't currently receive basic training of in awareness of access issues at events. YUSU must look at including basic awareness training as part of the required responsible persons events training (RP training) as well as ensuring that all doorsafe and YUSU bar staff have awareness training.

Students with disabilities will be consulted about YUSU and the university via focus groups and YUSU will continue to raise awareness about disability among all students. YUSU current website is reasonably accessible, but it could be better. A new website is being designed with the intention of improving accessibility.

Future Areas for Development 2009-10

- 1 The Disability Officer will review the YUSU Disability Equality Scheme each spring term and write new YUSU policy on disability if necessary.
- 2 Ensure YUSU's new website is accessible to disabled students.
- 3 Information about students with disabilities and the DDA to be incorporated into all training sessions where appropriate.
- 4 In particular, provide basic disability awareness training for events as part of RP training.
- 5 Provide all doorsafe and YUSU staff with disability awareness training.
- 6 Create guidelines for YUSU publicity to ensure it is accessible.
- 7 YorkSport to promote itself to disabled students.
- 8 YorkSport to evaluate its provision for disabled students.
- 9 Ensure, where possible, all YUSU buildings on Heslington East and the old campus are DDA compliant.
- 10 Create a focus group where students with disabilities will be consulted about YUSU and the university.
- 11 Work with colleges to ensure each has a Disability Officer.
- 12 Create a YUSU Disability Committee for YUSU officers and college Disability Officers.
- 13 Establish a termly meeting between Disability Services, the YUSU Disability Officer and all college Disability Officers.
- 14 Ensure information on carers being granted free access to events is available on the YUSU website.
- 15 Ensure all YUSU officers take the university's online disability awareness course.

