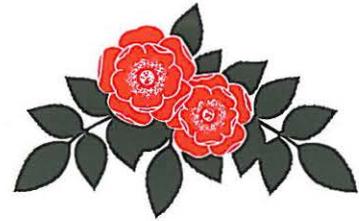


NEWS RELEASE

UNIVERSITY
OF CENTRAL
LANCASHIRE



FAO: EDUCATION EDITOR

12th February 2002

Universities prepare for new legislation

Universities need to prepare now for the impact of the new Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, which from September 2002 will demand far greater accessibility to all aspects of educational provision.

That's the message from a national conference to be held on Wednesday 13 February which has attracted delegates from over sixty FE/HE institutions across the UK and Ireland, including 30 universities.

The conference, "Access for All", has been organised by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) in Preston. Focusing on web-based services including promotional websites and e-learning, it will demonstrate clearly how the new Act will impact on many university activities.

Specialist presentations from the RNIB, the JISC-funded Technology for Disabilities Information Service and from Higher Education will cover a range of topics including how to build a truly accessible website; the use of assistive technology; inclusive practices in learning, teaching and assessment; and the implications of the Act for e-learning.

Conference organiser Michael Wood, from the University of Central Lancashire, is a specialist designer of accessible websites. He says: "There is clearly concern over the impact of the new Act and rightly so – it is essential that people know exactly how they and their working practices are going to be affected.

"As we rely more and more heavily on web-based technologies, not only to promote and sell our institutions but also to teach our students we must make sure we do not compromise accessibility in any way."

-ends-

Notes:

1. The conference will be held at the Harris Park Conference Centre, Garstang Road, Preston on Wednesday 13th February 2002, from 09:30 to 16:30.
2. Speakers include: Professor Alan Hurst, University of Central Lancashire, trustee and former Chair of Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities; Julie Howell, Campaigns Officer (Internet), RNIB; Lawrie Phipps, Manager of TechDis, the JISC-funded Technology for Disabilities Information Service.
3. For further details or to arrange interviews with speakers, please contact Liz Kelly (01772 892256) or Emma Woodward (01772 892250), in Business Services at the University of Central Lancashire.