THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Strategy

2015-2020

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Summary:

This is a revision of the previous Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Strategy 2012-2015. Main revisions are:

- cross-referencing to the new Strategic Plan 2015-2020, Learning and Teaching Strategy 2013-2016 and Access Agreement 2016-17
- cross-referencing to the National Strategy for Access and Student Success in HE (BIS, 2014) and to OFFA's Strategic Plan 2015-2020
- stronger focus on targets, milestones and evaluation
- clearer focus on co-curricular student engagement initiatives
- updating of partnership and collaborative outreach activities

WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY 2015-2020

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Introduction

1   Definitions

   1.1 Widening Participation

Widening Participation is defined as 'increasing the participation of under-represented groups by working to ensure that all those with the potential to benefit from higher education have the opportunity to do so whatever their background and whenever they need it.' (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills: 2014 *National strategy for access and student success in higher education.*)

The National Strategy further defines participation as 'active engagement in all aspects of the student lifecycle, from outreach and pre-entry activity through to on-course engagement and the achievement of successful outcomes in terms of HE attainment and progression to employment or further study'.

In 2015 the Prime Minister and the Universities and Science Minister pledged to double the proportion of disadvantaged young people entering higher education by 2020 from 2009 levels, which is in line with the Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 produced by the Office for Fair Access. This set a target for the participation rate from the most disadvantaged areas (POLAR 3 quintile 1) entering higher education to increase to 36% by 2019-20.

   1.2 Lifelong Learning

The UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (1998), in its *World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action*, identified a key role for higher education in providing opportunities for

> *'…learning throughout life, giving to learners an optimal range of choice and a flexibility of entry and exit points within the system, as well as an opportunity for individual development and social mobility in order to educate for citizenship and for active participation in society…'*
> www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/declaration_eng.htm

2 The University's Mission, Values and Strategic Plan

Section 1.2 of the University's **Strategic Plan 2015-2020** states:

> *Higher education should be a force for opportunity and social mobility, not for the entrenchment of privilege. It is implicit in our Mission that we should seek to ensure that all who can benefit from a*

Winchester education will have the opportunity to do so, regardless of their background, and that we should do this with particular regard for marginalised groups. We will:

- *Continue to exceed sector benchmarks for widening participation to students from disadvantaged groups and we will continue to support those students to ensure that they achieve excellent outcomes (1.2.1)*
- *Celebrate and increase the diversity of our staff and students. We will monitor, support and encourage underrepresented groups to ensure that opportunities are inclusive of sexual orientation, race, disability religious affiliation and other characteristics (1.2.2)*
- *Continue to improve the life chances of those from vulnerable groups, building on our successful work with care leavers, young carers, asylum seekers and people with a disability (1.2.3)*

University Key Performance Indicators relevant to Widening Participation are:

	Milestone 2016/2017	Target 2019/2020
Full-time Undergraduate Student Entrants from Low Participation Neighbourhoods	Meet/exceed benchmark *(current performance 13.4%; benchmark 11.3%)*	Meet/exceed benchmark
Non-continuation of Undergraduate Students Yr1-Yr2	Meet/exceed benchmark *(current performance 6.5%; benchmark 5.8%)*	Meet/exceed benchmark
Full-time Undergraduate Students in Receipt of Disabled Student Allowance (DSA)	Meet/exceed benchmark *(current performance 13.2%; benchmark 7.1%)*	Meet/exceed benchmark

*We recognise that some of these KPIs may be in conflict with one another

The University's original Church Foundation in 1840 established a strong commitment to public service and social justice, within an inclusive institution. This persists today in our **mission** to "educate, to advance knowledge and to serve the common good." The plans and actions of the University are founded in these ideals together with the following values:

- Intellectual freedom
- Creativity
- Spirituality
- Diversity
- Social Justice
- Individuals Matter
- Compassion

The **values** of Social Justice, Diversity and Individuals Matter are all central to the Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Strategy, as we seek to ensure that those from groups under-represented in Higher Education are encouraged to progress to the University and that we meet individual needs to enable them to succeed. We value the experience, skills and knowledge which students from diverse backgrounds bring to other students and staff of the University.

3 Principles of the Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Strategy

Our strategy for more than a decade has been to focus actions on key stages of the student lifecycle (access, student success and progression to employment and/or further study), thus mirroring that of the recent National Strategy for Access and Student Success (BIS 2014).

We aim to encourage young people with whom we work to learn about the benefits of higher education, providing balanced and impartial information to children up to Key Stage 4, working collaboratively and in partnership with schools, local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and other higher education providers. In this way we align with the vision of the Office for Fair Access

… those with the potential to benefit from higher education have equal opportunity to participate and succeed, on a course, and in an institution that best fit their potential, needs and ambitions for employment and further study. (OfFA Strategic Plan 2015-2020)

For those at Key Stage 5, and for potential adult students, our focus is on access to the University of Winchester.

Key aims of our approach are as follows:

a) ***Provide information about the benefits of higher education and raise aspirations*** of those from groups currently under-represented in higher education, particularly within mid and north Hampshire including:
   o Young people from low participation neighbourhoods
   o People from low income groups including children on free school meals
   o Young people from families with no tradition of higher education
   o Young people who are, or have been, in care
   o Young carers and young adult carers
   o Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, especially those of Caribbean heritage
   o People with disabilities or impairments
   o Males (in relation to certain programmes and professions) and white working-class boys
   o Young people from military service families and those who have served in the armed forces*

   *We are currently researching the representation of service children in higher education. We know that many face particular challenges in their educational pathways

b) ***Break down perceived barriers*** which may discourage people from pursuing higher education. These could include financial, social, cultural or accessibility barriers.

c) ***Recruit students from groups currently under-represented in higher education*** through fair admissions and through proactive outreach to widen participation.

d) ***Support students through to successful course completion*** through innovative and motivational methods of learning, teaching, assessment and feedback, together with academic support systems and services to identify and help those experiencing difficulties. We pursue a student-centred approach in which 'all students are inspired to achieve and contribute' and 'our distinctive, well-designed programmes encourage students to become independent, critical and aspirational learners' *(Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015-18)*. Students' welfare needs are supported through excellent student services, including appropriate financial support, counselling and support for mental health, disability and wellbeing.

e) ***Promote graduate employability.*** We create 'opportunities within the curriculum to enable students to develop their employability skills in practical contexts' (*Employability Strategy 2014-16)*, including volunteering, work experience, employment placements, internships, foreign language learning and international exchanges. Outside the curriculum students have opportunities to participate in employability-enhancing initiatives, including those managed through the Careers service and those developed in partnership with the Student Union.

f) ***Base our widening participation approaches on evidence of impact and generate new insights through research.*** We strive to invest effectively in activities and approaches which demonstrate greatest impact across the student lifecycle. The University will draw on national, local and institutional research to guide the strategic direction of widening participation and will encourage staff to carry out and disseminate research which will help to illuminate and improve policy and practice, both at this University and more widely.

4 Partnerships and collaborations

The University continues to work in partnership with a range of agencies and organisations to achieve its widening participation goals, including (but not exclusively):

- Targeted primary and secondary schools which are partners in our WINdow on HE widening participation programme
- Compact partner colleges and schools
- Hampshire Children's Services and other local authorities
- Other Universities
- Voluntary sector agencies
- Employers

We have committed to support the **National Network for the Education of Care Leavers,** a national network of organisations that seeks to connect, inform, support and champion practitioners that support the educational progression of children in care and care leavers as it transitions to become an independent charity. The University of Winchester will continue to host the network and provide governance support through representation on the interim board of trustees.

The University of Winchester is the lead institution for a Ministry of Defence Directorate of Children and Young People (DCYP) funded national alliance: the **Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance**. The university continues to support the alliance aims to improve the national coverage, coherence and evidence base to support military service children's participation in higher education, through working collaboratively with its partners.

We work closely with our partners in the HEFCE-funded **Southern Universities Network for the National Collaborative Outreach Programme** (Arts University Bournemouth, Bournemouth University, University of Portsmouth, University of Southampton, Southampton Solent University) to collectively deliver outreach to support the most disadvantaged young People in Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to access HE. We also chair and lead the Vulnerable Children and Young People sub-group. HEFCE-Funding is available until December 2020 and, together with our partners, we aim to sustain collaborative activity beyond this period.

We continue to work collaboratively with the **Higher Education Access Tracker** partnership, attending steering group meetings and contributing to development of the service.   HEAT facilitates targeting of priority schools, postcode profiling and targeting of participants in WINdow on HE.   It also enables monitoring of outcomes of interventions by tracking participants through to Higher Education.

The University of Winchester has established a partnership with the **Rural Refugee Network** to support its aims of helping Syrian refugees resettle into rural communities in the UK. The university is developing educational outreach activities and resources to raise awareness, and challenge the misconceptions, of refugees entering the UK, whilst providing opportunities to engage with refugee families and asylum seekers.

5 Milestones, targets and indicators

The Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Strategy brings together in one framework objectives relating to each phase of the **student lifecycle** (as listed in Section 3 above) which are embedded in the plans of Faculties, Student Services, Student Recruitment and Admissions and Careers, as well as those activities undertaken by staff specifically employed in roles relating widening participation and lifelong learning.

Each year the University's achievement against a set of headline indicators for widening participation is monitored and reviewed by the Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Strategy Group.   These indicators relate to recruitment, retention and success of UK-domicile students from groups under-represented in higher education.

Key milestones set in our 2017-18 Access Agreement (Table 7a)	
1. Recruit young full-time undergraduates from state schools	97% each year from 2015/16 to 2019/20. *(96.1% in 2014/15 HESA Table T1b)*
2. Recruit young full-time undergraduates from NS-SEC 4-7	32.5% in 2015/16; 33% in 2016/17; 33.5% each year from 2017/18 to 2019/20 *(30.4% in 2014/15 HESA Table T1b)*
3. Recruit young full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3)	13.5% each year from 2015/16 to 2019/20 *(11.6% in 2014/15 HESA Table T1b)*

4.	Recruit full-time undergraduates in receipt of Disabled Student Allowance	11.5% each year from 2015/16 to 2019/20 *(13.0% in 2014/15)*
5.	Total number of males enrolling on primary ITT programmes	Annual increase in number from 2015/16 to 2019/20 from 2013/14 baseline of 47 students (58 students in 2015/16)
6.	Increase total number of BME students enrolling on ITT programmes	Annual increase in number from 2015/16 to 2019/20 from 2013/14 baseline of 11 students (18 students in 2015/16)
7.	No longer in HE after 1 year and in low participation neighbourhoods (young, full-time first degree entrants)	7% each year from 2015/16 to 2019/20 *(8.3% in 2014/15 HESA Table T3a)*
8.	Narrow the gap in achievement of firsts and upper seconds between UK BME students and white students	13 percentage points gap 2020/21 *(18.3 points difference in 2015/16)*
9.	Narrow the gap in progression to full-time work or full-time study for males as compared with females	<10 percentage points gap 2020/21 from baseline 15 point gap 2012-13 (4 percentage points gap 2015/16)
Other internal headline objectives		
8.	Retain full-time first degree students from NS-SEC 4-7	Maintain gap between NS-SEC 4-7 and 1-3 at no more than 1 percentage point difference *(1.5 points difference in 2014/15)*
9.	Students from NS-SEC 4-7 to achieve good degree outcomes	Maintain or narrow gap in achievement of firsts and upper seconds between students from NS-SEC 4-7 and NS-SEC 1-3 *(1.5 points difference in 2014/15)*
10.	Retain students with disabilities	Maintain or narrow gap in continuation between disabled students and those with no known disability *(1.9 points difference in 2014/15)*
11.	Students with disabilities to achieve good degree outcomes	Narrow gap in achievement of firsts and upper seconds between disabled students and those with no known disability *(5.4 points difference in 2014/15)*
12.	Recruit more UK-domicile first degree students from BME groups	Increase in number of non-white UK-domicile students *(531 students in 2014/15)*
13.	Retain students from UK-domicile BME groups	Narrow gap in proportion of UK-domicile non-white students leaving with no award compared with UK-domicile white students *(1.2 points difference in 2013/14)*
14.	Students from UK-domicile BME groups to achieve good degree outcomes	Narrow the gap in achievement of firsts and upper seconds between UK BME students and white students *(18.3 points difference in 2015/16)*
15.	Recruit students who have recently left care and are under 25	Recruit at least six new care leavers per year *(10 new care leavers recruited in 2016/17)*
16.	Increase take-up of degree apprenticeships	Increase number of students studying for degree apprenticeships *(from 2015-16 baseline)* Increase number of employers working with the University to offer degree apprenticeships *(from 2015-16 baseline)*

17. Measure learning gain by students from under-represented groups (ie by comparing degree outcomes and destinations with qualifications on entry)	Develop methods to identify and monitor learning gain through the use of Tableau software Engage in national pilot projects where possible

6 Actions and Activities

The achievement of planned outcomes is monitored and reviewed by the Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Strategy Group, using an over-arching framework which covers the full student life-cycle from outreach to graduation and beyond. This is embedded in our Access Agreement 2016-17 (pages 21-22). Key elements contributing to the framework are as follows.

a) Outreach by the central Widening Participation team

The central widening participation team, located within the Senior Management Group, is responsible for the University's planned programme of outreach (WINdow on HE) to target young people in priority primary and secondary schools, mainly in Andover, Basingstoke and surrounding areas. In addition to its school-focused outreach, the team continues targeted work with priority groups such as disabled people, young carers, care leavers, black and minority ethnic communities, children from military service families and asylum-seekers. The aim of the team is to raise aspirations, awareness, confidence and motivation among groups who are under-represented in Higher Education in order to achieve success in academic and vocational spheres. The team provides balanced information and guidance about progression pathways, ideally into higher education. Events include workshops in target schools from year 5 through to year 11, as well as taster events, experience days and residentials held at the University. Targets, embedded in our annual Access Agreements, are set for the number of participants and events. However, we also measure learning gain by participants and, for those participating in more intensive on-campus programmes, track their progression into Higher Education.

Partnership with other universities, through membership of the Southern Universities Network, ensures that impartial collaborative activities are undertaken and good practice is shared across the geographical area of Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

In order to reach vulnerable children and young people the team also manages the University's Sanctuary Award application process for asylum-seekers and relationships with key partners such as Carers Trust, Hampshire Young Carers Alliance, Hampshire Children's Services and the Civilian-Military Partnership Education Sub-Group.

b) Outreach by the Student Recruitment team

The role of the Student Recruitment team, in specific relation to widening participation, is to encourage students from a diverse range of backgrounds to apply to the University of Winchester. In particular, the team manages the Compact Scheme and relationships with the local colleges and schools it includes. Activities include an annual Higher Education Advisers conference held at the University and workshops delivered to post-16 learners in partner colleges and schools.

c) Inclusive Learning and Teaching

Our Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015-18 states '*in our approaches to learning and teaching we fully and positively embrace inclusivity'*. To achieve this aim we ensure practical guidance is in place to meet key challenges of delivering an inclusive curriculum; provide staff development and support for inclusive teaching and equality and diversity; promote understanding and dissemination of work of colleagues to support students from widening participation backgrounds; review and plan flexible online study resources and work with programmes to further encourage BME student achievement and progression to employment.

The contribution of our Learning and Teaching Strategy to widening participation is monitored through retention, degree outcomes and employability data in relation to NS-SEC 4-7, ethnicity disability, age and gender. However, it is acknowledged that other factors, not directly related to learning and teaching, will also impact on student outcomes.

d) *Success through Student Engagement Activities*

Much of the University's funding for widening participation is deployed in providing student engagement initiatives. '*Students are encouraged to participate in a wide range of opportunities for personal development from the earliest opportunity and throughout their time at Winchester and beyond*' (University Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015-2018).

These opportunities help to build students' portfolios of skills and experience and offer the chance to develop capacity to carry out research, enhance leadership and enterprise capabilities and become involved in community engagement and social action. For students from disadvantaged backgrounds, participating in these initiatives can enhance employment prospects and add value to their overall university experience at no financial cost to themselves. We therefore monitor the take-up of some of these initiatives by students from low participation neighbourhoods and measure degree outcomes and employment destinations of those who take part. In 2015-16 the initiatives monitored include:

- Common Purpose Frontrunner leadership programmes
- Study Skills Peer Mentor/Smart Buddy scheme
- Accredited Volunteering Module
- Student Fellows scheme
- Winchester Research Apprenticeship Programme
- Higher Education Ambassador scheme

The University is lead partner in REACT – a HEFCE Catalyst-funded project designed to investigate the impact of a variety of forms of student engagement on the student experience, including retention and attainment, especially in relation to so-called 'hard to reach' students. The purpose of REACT is to identify and share best practice to advance student engagement nationally.

Students are encouraged to participate in a wide range of other student engagement opportunities in addition to those listed above, including international exchanges, the student-led Student Hub and Student Union activities, together with the University-approved Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) activities.

e) *Well-being Support*

All students who disclose a disability, including a diagnosed mental health condition or learning difference, are encouraged to seek support via the Wellbeing Team. We provide screenings and fully funded diagnostic assessments for students who may have learning differences. We employ a mental health mentor in addition to wellbeing advisers to provide additional, targeted support for students who live with poor mental health.

The University has an Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy which seeks to further embed inclusivity across the provision of teaching and academic support. We aim to be proactive rather than reactive by thinking inclusively about the way we teach all students. To facilitate this an Inclusive Practice Support Co-ordinator is employed in the Wellbeing Team whose role is to identify and share best practice, working with students and Faculties to embed inclusivity.

f) *Financial Support*

We provide targeted financial support to students from low income backgrounds and those who are care leavers, young carers or asylum-seekers, to enable them to manage living costs at no detriment to their ability to study. We carry out research and seek feedback from students to ensure that the support is well targeted and impactful.   In addition to bursaries and scholarships, we also provide support for low income

students who take up opportunities for work experience, internships, volunteering and overseas study experiences.

g) Curriculum Development

In addition to the points above which are already embedded in the Access Agreement 2016-17, we will *'develop new degree apprenticeship programmes across the Faculty – that reach out to the needs of large and medium sized organisations in the region'* (Faculty of Business, Law and Sport Annual Operating Statement 2015-16 target 1.3.6). Degree apprenticeships may be especially attractive to students from low-income groups, those who wish or need to continue living at home and those who are mature, thus contributing to widening participation and inclusivity.   If the UK is to meet the growing demand for IT professionals and secure future growth in the sector, there will be a need to attract more people into technology related degrees and to tackle the technical skills gender gap.   We therefore aim to increase the number of part-time undergraduates from more vocational entry backgrounds including Level 3 apprenticeships and to increase the number of females joining IT-related programmes.

We will also explore and develop innovations in programme delivery which will particularly attract students from under-represented groups, such as 2 year degree programmes and online learning.

7 Relationship to other University strategies and policies

Other key University strategies and policies which drive or inform widening participation are:

- Strategic Plan 2015-2020
- Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Employability Strategy 2014-16
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015-2018