

WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS STRATEGY

Background

1 The Widening Participation and Access Strategy was developed throughout 2017 and 2018. It has been created as a sub-strategy of the institutional Strategic Plan for 2016-2020. It has been discussed and approved by the Widening Participation and Access Committee that reports to the Academic Board.

Definition

2 The University uses the 2018 Office for Fair Access (OFFA) definition of under-represented and disadvantaged groups as its definition of to whom its widening participation and access strategy is focused.

3 Both these terms normally mean groups that are currently under-represented in higher education (at the national level, rather than at a particular institution or course). They include, but are not limited to;

3.1 People from lower socio-economic groups or from neighbourhoods where higher education participation is low;

3.2 People from low income backgrounds (as defined by OFFA for the relevant academic year);

3.3 Some ethnic groups or sub-groups, including White males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds;

3.4 Disabled people;

3.5 Mature and part-time learners;

3.6 Care leavers;

3.7 Carers;

3.8 People estranged from their families;

3.9 People from gypsy and Traveller communities;

3.10 Refugees;

3.11 Students with mental health problems, Specific Learning Difficulties and/or who are on the autism spectrum;

3.12 Children from military families.

Overview

4 The Strategy establishes a clear vision for widening participation and access at the University along with key commitments and aims spread across the entirety of the student lifecycle. It is intended to act as a forerunner to the first Access and Participation Plan that the University intends to submit to the Office for Students (OFS) in 2018. As such the strategy seeks to identify the key areas of institutional focus that should feature in the University's Access and Participation Plan.

5 Success of the strategy will be measured by progress made towards meeting and exceeding benchmarks established as part of the annually produced Access and Participation Plan submitted to OFS.

Vision

6 The vision of the University is to be the professional University of choice for students of law and of business, delivering an outstanding academic and employment-focused student experience.

Commitments

7 The University is committed to;

7.1 recruiting and supporting individuals who can benefit from our programmes and who might otherwise miss educational opportunities;

7.2 extending our relationships with schools and colleges, working to encourage those from diverse backgrounds to undertake higher education, and supporting them to ensure best possible progression to work/further study outcomes;

7.3 widening participation by delivering courses to students from a diverse range of backgrounds, through a range of delivery modes and by recognising the validity of a range of appropriate entry routes;

7.4 providing a supportive environment, and vocationally focused training and development, and in this way widen access to, and participation in, the legal and professional communities;

7.5 building our infrastructure to better support all students whether they study full-time, part-time, online, face-to-face or through blended learning and delivering the best student experience throughout.

Aims of the strategy

8 To realise these commitments, the University aims to increase the number and success of students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups participating in higher education, by:

8.1 actively encouraging applications from under-represented and disadvantaged groups in terms of socio-economic background, ethnicity, age and disability via a nationally delivered portfolio of access-themed recruitment activity;

8.2 supporting students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups with appropriate support services both prior to and throughout their studies to help ensure retention, and student success;

8.3 gathering and analysing data to review and evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy and taking appropriate action.

8.4 encouraging and assisting under-represented and disadvantaged groups in their preparation for and onward progression to both further academic or professional study and graduate level employment.

Responsibility for this strategy

9 The delivery of activities under this strategy is a priority which will be engaged with by all parts of the University. Specific responsibility lies with the Widening Participation and Access Committee of the Academic Board. Analysis of widening participation metrics, including and not limited to those on the Teaching Excellence Framework, and scheduled review of the strategy, lies with Registry. Ultimate responsibility for this strategy lies with the University's Academic Board.

Version history

Version	Amended by	Revision summary	Date
V1.0	Vice Provost – Academic Enhancement	Initial drafting group	30/11/16
V1.1	Academic Standards Committee	QA group	07/12/16
V1.2	Academic Board	Approval	16/12/16
V1.3	Registry	Final Published Version	04/01/17
V1.4	Widening Participation and Access Committee	Updates approved	07/03/18
V1.5	Director of Conversion & Enrolment	Employability bullet added at 8.4 to fit with access/success/progression structure of required Plan	21/03/18
V1.6	Registry Officer	Change to coding convention	24/03/2020
V1.6	Registry Assistant	Extension approved for 1 Year	October 2021