

How are Institutions Doing at Mainstreaming Equity? Learning from the Widening Participation Strategic Assessments

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A Changing Policy Context

- Higher Ambitions (Nov 2009)
- Unleashing Aspiration : The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions (July 2009)
- Independent Review of HE Funding and Student Finance (Nov 2009)
- Introduction of WPSAs by HEFCE (June 2009)

A Changing Narrative for WP

“British higher education is a success story. Over the last decade, we have pursued the twin objectives of supporting excellence and widening access, and these have proved to be complimentary and mutually reinforcing.”

‘Higher Ambitions: The Future of Universities in a Knowledge Economy’ (Nov 2009)

A Changing Evidence Base

“The fact that young people from areas that traditionally have some of the lowest participation rates are 30% more likely to go to university than even five years ago clearly illustrates that the Government’s long term investment in raising aspirations and widening participation through programmes such as Aimhigher is working”

David Lammy, Universities Minister

(The Telegraph, 28/1/10)



The National Co-ordination Team for Widening Participation



What are the external strategic drivers for WP?

- Social mobility has stalled
- National Policy (Targets, HEFCE, Government exaltations, NAO, Government reports)
- Funding (WP premium, Aimhigher, fees, Access Agreements, LLN)
- Introduction of Widening Participation Strategic Assessments as a condition of WP funding

What are the external strategic drivers for WP?

“I look to you to continue to do all you can to widen access to our higher education system. Our ambition is wide-ranging; from more local vocational study opportunities for those with little recent educational experience, to more help for our most talented young people to go to highly selective universities, whatever their background. In this task you will be able to build on the good progress that has been made in recent years, and the energy and expertise we have within the sector.”

BIS Grant Letter to HEFCE, Lord Mandelson, 2010-11

What are the HE sector strategic drivers for WP?

- History and Mission (Teaching, Research, Third leg)
- Leadership (Internal policies and approaches to WP)
- Market position (implications for WP)

What are the institutional practical drivers for WP?

- Funding pots (Central, Departmental formula, bidding)
- Institutional change hot spots (Champions, Key Committees, data collection and use, Corporate Plans, School Departmental Plans)
- Influencing the decision makers (Resistors/Supporters)
- Widening Participation Strategic Assessments (Cross university planning, aligning policy with practice, monitoring and evaluation)

What are the institutional practical drivers for WP?

- Every HEI submitted a WP Strategic Assessment (129)
- Show how WP is becoming embedded in mission and policies
- A chance for sector to take credit for good work
- Initial findings:
 - Role of Aimhigher critical
 - Links with schools central
 - Evidence of WP being embedded

Widening Participation and Mission

“Progress towards WP while maintaining standards of excellence and building on institutional strengths”

“Creating and facilitating opportunities for people to participate and access HE is central to our vision and corporate plan”

“Widening participation is an extended part of our mission statement underpinning our ambition to serve students, staff, our partners and the community”

Widening Participation and History

“For over 180 years, Uni X has remained true to its original mission of creating and supporting opportunities for participation in higher education for under represented groups and is proud of this tradition”

“We retain our absolute commitment to our historical mission of widening access and increasing participation in HE”

“Strong history of widening participation in many forms”

Widening Participation and Place

“Mission embraces WP in the context of the university’s relationship with the local community”

“The university is located in one of the most ethically and socially diverse parts of London and possibly the UK”

“WP is a fundamental part of the university’s global position as an influential civic university, with a commitment to its region and a strong culture of engagement”

Where next?

1. Focus on Widening Participation Strategic Assessments
2. Fees review and funding for WP
3. Building the evidence base for WP
4. Access essential for excellence

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