



Edge Hill
University



Widening Access and Student Success

Annual Impact Report 2024-2025

Welcome



I am delighted to share our first Widening Access and Student Success Annual Impact Report.



2024/25 has seen us deliver Year One of our **Widening Access and Student Success Strategy** and make progress against the commitments in our Office for Students (OfS) regulated **Access and Participation Plan (APP)** for 2024/25 to 2027/28.

This annual report is structured around the three core pillars of the student journey addressed in our Widening Access and Student Success Strategy: Access, Student Success, and Progression. This holistic approach to supporting students from underrepresented backgrounds is crucial to ensuring equitable outcomes.

This year, colleagues across the university have intensified their efforts to deliver innovative activities and interventions that attract and support students from a range of backgrounds into and through the university. Evidence informed practice, student voice, and evaluation is key to this, to ensure that our efforts are having the required impacts. This report highlights and celebrates the evaluation and impact of our work.

We look forward to delivering Year Two of our strategy in 2025/26 and continuing to see the impact of our collaborative work to widen access and improve student success.

Dr Heather Lloyd,
Head of Widening Access and Student Success

Strategy



In October 2023, our latest APP was approved by the OfS, the regulatory body of Higher Education.

The OfS asked universities to focus their APPs on the risks to equality of opportunity seen locally. Our data identified that we attract a large proportion of students from backgrounds typically underrepresented in Higher Education. Therefore, student success (continuation, completion, awarding gaps and progression) are our key area of focus. As such, we have eight APP targets focused upon these areas, alongside one access target.

Access and Participation Plan Targets

Increase the proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students studying at Edge Hill from 8.8% of students in 2021/22 to 11.2% in 2027/28

Reduce the gap in continuation between those who have studied BTEC and those who have studied A-Level from 6.6% for 2020/21 to 4.3% for 2026/27

Reduce the gap in completion between those from IMD¹ Q1 & IMD Q5 neighbourhoods from 8.6% for 2017/18 to 4.3% for 2024/25

Reduce the gap in completion between those who have been eligible for free school meals and those who have not from 6.6% for 2017/18 to 4.5% for 2024/25

Reduce the gap in attainment between those from IMD Q1 & IMD Q5 neighbourhoods from 11.8% for those awarded in 2021/22 to 8.2% for those awarded in 2027/28

Reduce the gap in attainment between those who have studied BTEC and those who have studied A-Level from 23.9% for those awarded in 2021/22 to 18.9% for those awarded in 2027/28

Reduce the gap in attainment between care experienced and non-care experienced students from 18.7% for those awarded in 2021/22 to 14.7% for those awarded in 2027/28

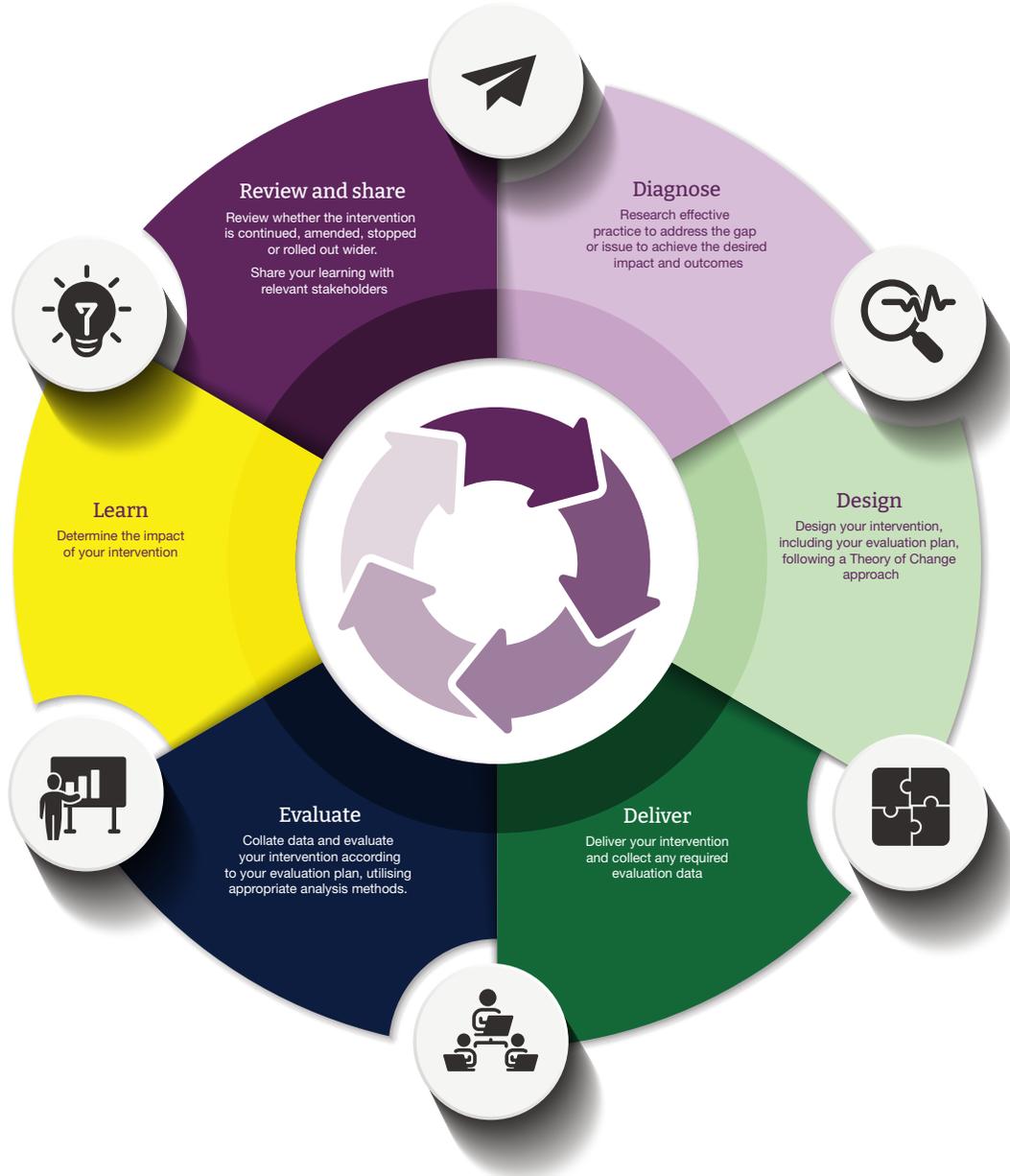
Reduce the gap in attainment between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students and White Students from 8.9% for those awarded in 2021/22 to 5.9% for those awarded in 2027/28

Reduce the gap in progression between those from IMD Q1 & IMD Q5 neighbourhoods from 3.3% for those who graduated in 2019/20 to 2.1% for those graduating in 2026/27

Once our APP was approved by OfS, we created our **Widening Access and Student Success Strategy** to clearly articulate the university wide actions required to meet our commitments and work towards our targets. This annual impact report provides an update on progress to date.

¹ Index of multiple deprivation

Evaluation Framework



The Evaluation Framework and associated resources developed by the Widening Access and Student Success team provides a structured approach to evaluating interventions aimed at widening access, enhancing the student journey (continuation, completion, attainment, and progression) and addressing barriers to equity of opportunity.

The Framework supports the University to adhere to **OfS regulation** and **Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education** (TASO) recommendations.

The Evaluation Framework ensures that where appropriate, all interventions are being evaluated, following a Theory of Change approach. Theory of Change is a tool that outlines the cause-and-effect relationship of activities in an intervention. This method of evaluation makes sure interventions are evidence informed, and that appropriate and proportionate evaluation measures are in place from an initiative's inception.

Evidence informed practice, student voice and data are at the heart of Theory of Change. Our **Student Advisory Panel** and **Access and Participation Data Tableau Dashboard** support colleagues to plan interventions that are both co-produced with students and informed by data.

All staff at Edge Hill are encouraged to access and use the Evaluation Framework and supportive resources via the Widening Access and Student Success SharePoint.

2024/25 snapshot

18
of the 23 commitments made in our Access and Participation Plan are underway or complete.

Edge Hill has climbed

15
places to rank 13th out of 100 universities in the English Higher Education Social Mobility Index.



Supported over

200



first-year undergraduate students from underrepresented backgrounds through our Student Success Programme Thrive, with a 98.5% retention rate for programme students.

Became one of

25 Driving Change in Higher Education

universities working on Driving Change in Higher Education; a project focused on breaking down the barriers into and through university faced by young adult carers.

Saw our first cohort of Medicine students graduate, of which

80%

were from underrepresented backgrounds. All have secured a job as a Foundation Doctor.

Over

85%

of our new entrants met one or more widening participation criteria². As we have such a vibrant and diverse student body, we remain alert to gaps in student outcomes to ensure equitable student success.

Launched our Fair Entry Criteria and issued

4581

contextual offers (35% of our total offers).

Supported

65 Thrive programme students through **1:1** coaching.



Began work on the University Mental Health Charter, embedding best practice across campus and ensuring that our wellbeing strategy addresses the complex, intersectional barriers faced by underrepresented student groups.

2nd in the North West



5th in the UK

for NSS Student Voice. Through our Student Advisory panel, we hosted 18 hours of student engagement with 14 stakeholders across 10 different teams.

All programmes led by Widening Access and Student Success now have a Theory of Change and Evaluation Plan in place and the team are supporting teams to develop their own approaches.

Supported over

34,000

students pre-entry in schools, colleges, on campus and in the community³.



Were re-awarded the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) quality mark that recognises our high standards of supporting care leavers, care experienced and estranged students into and through university.

students from

71

underrepresented backgrounds were awarded financial support to take part in career enhancing opportunities through our Student Opportunity Fund.



² Widening Participation defined as mature, IMD and POLAR 1-2, disabled, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, Care Leaver, first in family.

³ Inclusive of Widening Access, Fastrack, Education Liaison, Tackling the Blues and Faculty of Education Partnerships activity.

Widening Access



Though our Widening Access programmes and activities, we have supported 616 students from underrepresented backgrounds with bespoke information, advice and guidance in 2024/25.

Two targeted access programmes were delivered in 2024/25 to support underrepresented learners into Higher Education: Diversity Access Programme for Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority students, and Ignite for students eligible for Free School Meals.

Both programmes consist of a year-long series of on-campus and in-school events. These were designed upon insights from prospective and current students, policy reports, academic literature, and feedback from schools and colleges. The programmes are tailored to student need and cover a range of topics including:

- Networking and team building
- Future mapping with Edge Hill alumni
- Student Q&A sessions focused on navigating university life
- A sense of belonging and what university life could be like, including sessions led by Students' Union societies and Student Ambassadors
- 'In Conversation With' events featuring staff with shared lived experience

“ There is a place for everyone of all backgrounds at Edge Hill.”

Widening Access Programme Student



85% of Diversity Access Programme participants reported increased confidence in understanding university life. Students praised the programme for its relaxed, inclusive environment and how it acknowledged their individual backgrounds.

80% of Ignite participants reported increased sense of belonging within Higher Education, as well as increasing their knowledge of university. Students also commented that Ignite reinforced their “belief in self and further hopefulness” for the future.



We also...

- Delivered application and interview support workshops to 199 Access to HE students.
- Ran 7 tailored campus visit days for specialist school providers to support students who have complex needs to explore Higher Education. On one visit, 82% of students agreed that they knew what studying in Higher Education would be like based on their experience on campus, with students commenting on the campus facilities and the opportunity to meet new people.

Outreach



The Uni Connect programme is a government-funded initiative that promotes higher education access for underrepresented student groups in England.

Edge Hill partners with three Uni Connects: Shaping Futures (Liverpool City Region), FutureU (Lancashire), and Hello Future (Cumbria). In 2024/25, through Uni Connect activities we have supported 973 students.

Faculty of Education Outreach

The Faculty of Education continue to work with partner schools to broker and raise aspirations for children and young people across the region. We work with students in years 5, 7 and 9, and welcome them onto our campus to engage in a range of activities. Activities range from a pop-up planetarium, an experience in our TV studios, or a range of sports activities from Quidditch to Tag Rugby. During the 2024/25 academic year, through this work, we have welcomed over 6,000 young people from 100 schools.



Tackling the Blues

This year marks 10 years since the **Tackling the Blues** programme first launched, created to address the unmet mental health needs of children and young people. Delivered by our Faculty of Education in partnership with Everton in the Community, it continues to make a tangible difference in communities that face barriers to health and educational opportunities.

In 2024/25 we engaged with 232 children and young people across 7 primary schools and 2 secondary schools. There are also 21 Edge Hill University students volunteering as mentors to support the delivery in schools.



Outreach activity

By virtue of the demographics of our current and prospective students, and the schools and colleges from which we recruit most heavily, a high proportion of the students we work with via outreach activity are from widening participation backgrounds. In total, in the 2024/25 academic year, we have delivered 65,827 separate interactions with schools and colleges, reaching over 27,000 students.

The vast majority of this activity is undertaken regionally, and a significant number of schools and colleges we work with most prominently are located in some of the most deprived areas of the country, with significant proportions of neighbourhoods ranked in the lowest decile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), such as North Liverpool, Knowsley, St Helens, Wigan, Halton and the Wirral.

Teachers' Conference

We host an annual Teachers' and Advisers' Conference, which attracted 62 attendees this year. As a number of our feeder schools and colleges do not have large advice and guidance teams, this event aims to provide delegates with updates and information about the sector to support them to best advise their students about future options.

School and College Governor Network

We support local schools and colleges by encouraging staff to undertake roles as governors. To facilitate this, we run a school and college governor network within the University, which meets 3 times per year, provides a forum for existing governors to share practice and a forum for aspiring governors to find out more about what the role entails. Any member of staff who is part of the network qualifies for 25 hours per year during work time to undertake governor duties.



Student Guides

We manage a pool of around 150 student guides who undertake paid work supporting activities such as open days and school/college visits to campus. Any applicants to become guides who meet specific widening participation criteria are guaranteed an interview, with 37% of the 2024/25 intake of new guides indicating one of these characteristics.

Contextual Admissions

Launched in 2024/25, our **Fair Entry Criteria** recognises that students from underrepresented backgrounds often face significant barriers to higher education. This contextual admissions policy aims to address this by providing a fairer admissions process whilst still maintaining the high academic standards of the institution. This year, we have issued 4,581 contextual offers (35% of our total offers issued).

Pathways into Higher Education



Foundation Programmes

We offer two Foundation Programmes at Edge Hill. Both support students to develop the skills and subject-specific knowledge to progress onto a degree.

In 2024/25, across our **STEM and Humanities Foundation Years**, we had 122 students on course: a 50% increase on 2023/24.

The Foundation Programmes attract students from a range of underrepresented backgrounds. Notably, a higher proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students than the university population (23.1% vs 13.5%) and a higher proportion of male students (60% vs 31%).

Medicine Foundation Year

The **MBChB Medicine with Foundation Year** is aimed at students from the North West of England who have the potential and aspiration to become doctors, whose background may mean it is less likely that they will be able to meet the academic requirements for direct entry. In 2024/25:

- 19 students studied the Medical School Foundation Year
- 18 of the 2023/24 Medical School Foundation year students progressed onto year 1 of undergraduate study
- Our first cohort of Edge Hill Medical School students graduated, of which 80% were from underrepresented backgrounds and 24 completed the Medicine Foundation Year

“ Doing the foundation course before my first year has given me the confidence to complete academic work at a good level... I now look ahead and feel very well-prepared for my coming three years of studies... I do not come from a background of study, so I didn't know what to expect from university life”

Foundation Programme Student

“ As someone who had been out of education for a number of years, I felt apprehensive about returning to study and managing academic demands alongside personal responsibilities. The Fastrack course was essential to my success. Without its diverse teaching approaches and rich curriculum, I truly believe I wouldn't have achieved as highly as I did.”

First Class Honours Graduate

Fastrack

Fastrack: Access to Higher Education, is our intensive level 3 access course, specifically designed for mature students returning to education. Delivered over six weeks, the programme focuses on building key academic skills and subject knowledge to prepare students for success at degree level.

Originally piloted in 1998 with a small group of adults interested in Social Sciences, Fastrack was officially adopted and expanded by Edge Hill University in 2000.

Fastrack students thrive once on course too, with 75.2% of those who graduated in 2022/23 achieving a first or upper second class degree and 89.2% of those who graduated in 2021/22 had a good graduate outcome.

2024/25 marked 25 years of Fastrack. During this time we have supported over 3,000 students to access higher education through this pathway.

In 2024/25,

- 150 students successfully completed the Fastrack programme
- 136 progressed onto degree study at the University; a progression rate of 91%.
- Over 73% of the cohort identified with one or more widening participation characteristics. 17% identified as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic



Student Advisory Panel: Change through collaboration

Our Success activity focuses upon ensuring that all students can continue with their studies, complete their degree, and achieve their academic potential.

Our **Student Advisory Panel** continues to play a vital role in ensuring students from underrepresented backgrounds have a direct voice in shaping the university experience. Now in its fifth year, the Student Advisory Panel provides a structured and meaningful way for students to inform, influence, and review university policies, programmes, services and interventions.

In 2024/25 we recruited 30 Student Advisory Panel members who shared their lived experiences across 12 meetings, equating to 18 hours of student engagement. 14 stakeholders attended, generating 37 action points.

Student Advisory Panel input has led to several impactful developments. These include:

- Bespoke support on the Extra Edge employability award for students with particular widening participation characteristics
- The co-creation of a BTEC Transitions Project and a toolkit for staff to better support BTEC learners
- A co-created UniSkills Time Management session
- Improvements to Open Day and Offer Holder Day resources, particularly around financial information for supporters
- Multiple services using feedback from students to review consistency of resources and materials, system and webpage language, navigation, discoverability of content and overall ease of student experience



Student feedback about the panel has been overwhelmingly positive, with 90% saying they believe the Student Advisory Panel positively impacts the student experience.

“ It allows for students from all walks of life to share what higher education is for them. This fosters a fully represented, inclusive student body and community.”

“ ... It is amazing to see all of these services try to change to be more inclusive.”

“ If you are passionate about improving something, say it, by being a champion of improving inclusivity, you will be able to improve the university experience of many students.”

Thrive



In 2024/25, the **Thrive Programme**, now in its third year, provided holistic support for over 200 first-year undergraduate students from underrepresented backgrounds. The programme aims to support smooth transition into university life and positively influence students' sense of belonging, resilience, and awareness of support services. In 2024/25, 98.5% of Thrive students remained on course, demonstrating the programme's strong contribution to student success and continuation. Thrive supports students in four key ways:

- **Pre-arrival online sessions:** introducing students to the benefits of the Thrive programme and key support services, with over 100 students engaging.
- **Social opportunities:** inviting Thrive to social activities, including the Student Life Fest.
- **Coaching Conversations:** ensuring students have access to the resources and guidance they need throughout their first year, 79% of Thrive students opted into to Coaching Conversations. Across the year, 65 students were allocated one of 22 staff volunteer Student Success Champions, and 102 coaching meetings were held.
- **Career insight opportunities:** supporting students to explore career paths, build confidence, and develop key employability skills as well as hear from a range of employees with similar lived experience. In 2024/25, two tailored Thrive insight opportunities took place with the Civil Service (DEFRA) and Matalan Headquarters.



At the end of the Thrive programme, evaluation told us:

- 71.4% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they feel confident in their ability to succeed at university.
- 81% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of the support services available at Edge Hill.
- 100% of participating students agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the different career paths that are available at an organisation such as Matalan and felt confident their networking skills developed after speaking to industry professionals.
- All participating students rated themselves highly in graduate attributes such as communication, self-motivation, and professionalism following the events.

Feedback from Thrive students:

“ [Thrive was a] supportive experience that made the shift to university easier as I knew I had the support there if needed.”

“ I would say it's an amazing support system for students!”

“ My Thrive coach was very warm and friendly. She made me feel safe and comfortable to speak to her in the first meeting.”

“ Incredibly supportive and useful for integrating into university life”

Supporting BTEC Students: Progress Through Partnership



At Edge Hill, nearly half of our students enter with a BTEC or alternative Level 3 qualification. These learners bring a wealth of strengths; resilience, motivation, and a breadth of assessment experience, but national and internal research shows they often face additional challenges compared to their A Level peers.

In response, Widening Access and Student Success collaborated with the Centre for Learning and Teaching to take action. Through this work, we're championing the strengths of BTEC learners and building the conditions for their continued success at Edge Hill.

2024/25 saw extensive work to allow us to plan an appropriate intervention. This included gathering staff and student insights about the strengths, challenges and concerns experienced by students pre-entry and once on programme and included gathering insight from:

- A focus group with members of the Edge Hill BTEC Working Group and level 3 BTEC educators representing six North West schools and sixth form colleges
- A focus group with BTEC learners at Edge Hill
- A Student Advisory Panel attended by students with alternative qualifications
- A focus group with academic colleagues at Edge Hill in one Department with a high proportion of students with BTEC entry qualifications
- External survey to level 3 BTEC and NCFE learners across two level 3 providers

Using these insights we identified themes of transition, university culture and expectations, belonging, assessment, teaching & learning and motivation. As a result, we have:

1. Taken a theory of change approach to plan a pilot of a holistic, embedded, tailored support package aimed to support BTEC students in one department, alongside a comprehensive evaluation plan so we can learn what works and embed this learning wider.
2. Co-developed a staff training toolkit titled *BTEC and Beyond - a toolkit for supporting students with vocational pathways*. The toolkit and training will be available in 2025/26.



“ The Grit (Growth, Resilience, Insight, Tenacity) Students of Colour Leadership programme was an

incredible and empowering experience that had a lasting impact on me as a student from a minority ethnic background. From the beginning, the programme created a welcoming and inclusive environment where I felt seen, heard, and valued for who I am.

It was refreshing and inspiring to be surrounded by a diverse group of students who shared similar experiences, challenges, and aspirations. The programme acknowledged the unique struggles that come with being part of an underrepresented community but

also celebrated our cultural identities and the strength we bring to the table.

I built strong, supportive relationships with my peers; connections that went beyond the sessions and have continued to grow. We encouraged each other, shared resources, and held space for vulnerability and growth. Grit didn't just equip me with practical leadership skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving; it also gave me a sense of belonging and the confidence to take up space in rooms where I may have once felt out of place.

I came out of the programme with a clearer vision for my future and a renewed belief in my ability to lead and make a difference; not just in my own life, but in the lives of others.”

Esosa Odiase, Grit Programme Student



Supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students at Edge Hill University

The Grit Students of Colour Leadership Programme was designed in collaboration with and is delivered by the charity Grit. The programme includes a series of workshops where students are provided with time and space to: explore and celebrate identity, build supportive mechanisms which can be sustained during and beyond university, increase levels of confidence and amplify feelings of belonging.

Evaluation showed that:

- 100% of students reported that their understanding of being a leader has improved.
- 100% of students reported that they have a better understanding of help and support.
- 97% of students reported their self-efficacy as a student leader has improved because of participating in the programme.
- 99% report that their sense of connection, community and belonging has increased.
- Prior to the programme, 40% of participating reported they had been considering leaving the university. After the programme, 100% reported they were now more likely to stay.

“ Honestly, this was an amazing experience, and I wish I had something like this sooner in my education. It was so insightful and informative and I'm so glad I was a part of this, and had the opportunity to meet the people I did, and I hope to continue living what we have been taught. It has really improved my confidence being in and around uni. I can't wait for the follow up”

Grit Programme Student

Supporting Care Experienced and Estranged Students

In 2024/25, Edge Hill University was re-awarded a national quality mark that recognises our high standards of supporting care leavers, care experienced and estranged students (CEES) into and through university.

In 2019, Edge Hill were one of seven universities that volunteered to pilot the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) Quality Mark and were delighted to receive the award.

Now, six years later, by continuously learning from NNECL, our students, and sector effective practice, our offer is even stronger. We were delighted to be awarded the prestigious national award for the second time in February 2025.

The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers said that:

“NNECL is delighted to re-award Edge Hill University with the NNECL Quality Mark and to recognise the commitment to supporting learners from a CEES background at every stage of their journey into and through Higher Education. Their submission continually demonstrated how the learning from their data, the student voice and strategic buy in leads to better outcomes for our young people. NNECL is confident that any student entering Edge Hill University will be well looked after and supported... Well done Edge Hill!”



Highlights from 2024/25 include:

- Working with over 10 local authorities and secondary schools to have 73 CEES school and college students visit Edge Hill on campus visits.
- In collaboration with Shaping Futures Uni Connect, we hosted our second CEES CPD Conference in March and had 56 attendees from higher education and further education providers, local authorities, charities, teachers and alternative education providers. We were honoured to have the Director of NNECL, Denise Rawls, deliver an inspiring Keynote.
- We delivered a programme of online professional development sessions aimed at Local Authorities on supporting CEES students into and through Higher Education to 23 attendees.
- We became members of Wigan Council's Corporate Parenting Board.
- In total, of those who chose to tell us, we had 346 CEES students studying with us.
- 80 Care Leavers received a welcome package, and 93 received a Christmas Hamper.
- 49 Care Leaver Bursaries were awarded.
- A EHSU society for CEES students was established. Originally set up by staff in the Widening Access and Student Success team as a 'hollow society' to encourage students with similar lived experience to come together, this is now independently led by students and is flourishing.
- 4 bespoke social events were hosted by the Student Support Team.
- 35 CEES students received a graduation support package including photography, grown hire, travel and accommodation.



“Wigan Council are delighted to be working in partnership with Edge Hill University and welcome the support in developing an enhanced and flexible offer for our Care Leavers.

The Head of Widening Access and Student Success has attended the Corporate Parenting Board and Operational Corporate Parenting Board in Wigan on a number of occasions and has been able to share the support offered by Edge Hill to Care Leavers, along with contributing to the wider discussions about support to looked after children to promote their aspirations and trigger their interest in higher education.

Two of our Care Leavers have just completed courses at Edge Hill, one has now passed his interview for a post within Merseyside Police, and the other has completed a degree in Computing and is about to start his own business. It is really appreciated that Edge Hill staff understand the challenges Care Leavers have experienced and the need for enhanced support to enable them to achieve in line with their peers.

The Widening Access and Student Success team also supported our Care Leavers Easter appeal by donating lots of Easter Eggs which were very much appreciated by our care leavers, a group of young people who often miss out on such treats.”

Jacqui Hardman,
Service Lead for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Adoption, Wigan Council

Whole-Provider Commitment to Student Success



Autism Transition Event

Inclusion's Transition Day Event provided autistic applicants with a chance to familiarise themselves with campus, to further explore the support available, and to understand how this support differs from that provided by school and college. 36 students attended.

- 100% of students agreed that the day helped them to feel more prepared for joining us at Edge Hill.
- Feedback highlighted the benefit of giving students the opportunity to become more familiar with their surroundings, with their favourite elements of the day being accommodation room tours, Catalyst and campus tours and a visit to Ormskirk town centre.

Digital Accessibility

In 2024/25, we worked with AbilityNet to enhance the Digital Accessibility practices at the university. This collaborative project:

- Improved student and staff consultation on digital accessibility
- Developed and enhanced staff training and guidance
- Established mechanisms for students to resolve challenges
- Developed gold standard resources for digital accessibility and assistive technology
- Enabled colleagues to develop our strategy and structure

In summer 2025, after completing our work with AbilityNet, we were awarded Gold for our Digital Accessibility practices at the university.

Physical Accessibility

In 2024/25, the University launched the AccessAble Guides. This development was a collaborative project with AccessAble to map the physical accessibility of the buildings and spaces on campus. These guides help students, staff and visitors to plan their journeys around campus and each guide contains comprehensive information in an accessible format. This partnership has enabled our community to better navigate and enjoy our fantastic facilities and campus.





Resilience & Growth Module

The Resilience and Growth Module was developed by the Mental Health and Wellbeing team and aims to equip students with the necessary skills to support their personal growth and resilience. The Resilience and Growth Module was run as a 7-week pilot with two first year cohorts in the School of Law and Criminal Justice in 2024/25.

Initial evaluation findings have indicated that 80.1% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident to use what they'd learnt to continue building their resilience in the future.

Driving Change in Higher Education Project- Support for Young Adult Carers

This year the university has embarked on the Driving Change in Higher Education Project, led by Learning and Work Institute, who are partnering with the Carers Federation, supported by the National Lottery Community Fund. This project focuses on breaking down the barriers to university faced by young adult carers. To date, this project has included collaboration with 14 teams across Edge Hill University, a training session led by the Learning and Work Institute and the development of our action plan.

Driving Change in Higher Education

Led by



Supported by



EHSU launches team of Liberation Officers

In 2025, Edge Hill Students' Union (EHSU) recruited its first team of Liberation Officers to represent and advocate for students from traditionally underrepresented communities. This newly formed Liberation Network, comprising the Black Students' Officer, Women's Officer, Disabled Students' Officer, Trans Officer, and LGBTQ+ Officer, has quickly become a driving force for inclusion, equity, and student-led change across the University. Their work has focused on tackling systemic barriers, raising awareness of key issues, and creating more inclusive environments both within academic faculties and the wider campus.

Progression: Careers and Employability



Our progression activity supports all students to achieve their goals for further study and their career.

Careers work with all students at every stage of their journey with us. For our students from underrepresented backgrounds, this support is tailored to individual needs, utilising the career goal data obtained as part of our approach to career readiness.

Careers at Edge Hill were the first UK HEI to ask students what their career goal or future plans are as part of the career readiness process. Every year, at enrolment and re-enrolment, students are asked what career they have in mind and this data is thematically analysed and shared with professional services staff and personal tutors. The diverse responses we receive to this question allow us to target information and support to individuals.

Students from underrepresented backgrounds are able to book **Get Ahead** appointments which are slightly longer and more structured than a typical appointment. In 2024/25, Get Ahead appointments represented 4% of all Careers appointments.

Horizons placements

Careers offer bespoke work-integrated learning activities to student from underrepresented backgrounds in conjunction with an external partner, Practera. The Horizons Digital Industry Project is a 3-week, virtual, work-based learning programme designed to provide students with valuable professional experience. Based on the success of Industry Project Placement delivered by Practera and Edge Hill, Practera offered 5 complimentary placements which were delivered during July 2025.

Next Generation Talent Experience

Students from underrepresented backgrounds across the University were invited to attend the Next Generation Talent Experience in Birmingham, organised by TG Consulting, to build confidence and empower students to achieve their career goals. Two students attended the event which comprised of inspirational speakers and workshop sessions including partners such as Amberjack, Coca Cola Europacific Partners and Birmingham Mind.

Student Opportunity Fund

Our Student Opportunity Fund supports career-enhancing projects, initiatives or opportunities that enrich student experience and enable students to stand out in a competitive environment. In 2024/25, we financially supported 71 students from underrepresented backgrounds to take part in these opportunities.

Following evaluation of the Student Opportunity Fund, in 2025/26 we will launch a new **Thrive Fund**, to further support students from underrepresented backgrounds with career enhancing opportunities.

Staff training and development



We committed in our Widening Access and Student Success Strategy to support our staff to deliver the stretching commitments through training and resources. Below are a few examples of what has been achieved in 2024/25.

Supporting Staff to Support Students Toolkits

Supporting Staff to Support Students toolkits are available for a variety of student groups across Edge Hill. These toolkits aim to provide a single resource which can be used by all university staff to increase knowledge, understanding and confidence to help students maximise their academic potential.

To date, 1,529 staff members have completed the mental health awareness training that accompanies the Mental Health toolkit, upon completion:

- 97% of participants agreed or strongly agreed they felt confident in discussing mental health with students, compared to 65.9% before the training.
- 97.5% of staff reported they felt confident in knowing how to refer students for specialist support, a significant rise from 63.9% before the training.

In 2025/26, a *BTEC and Beyond- A Toolkit for Vocational Pathways* will be launched by the Widening Access and Student Success team.

Allyship

Increasing staff awareness of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic student experience is essential if we are to address underlying systemic and structural inequalities in learning experience, assessment, curriculum, and staff-student interactions.

This year the Widening Access and Student Success team have been keen to share learning and knowledge gained through work with students from ethnic minority backgrounds. Through delivering staff training sessions at the **Evolve** staff development week and **Solstice and Centre for Learning and Teaching conference**, 27 members of staff engaged in workshops focused on embracing discomfort and becoming allies. These workshops provided the time and space for staff to reflect on their own biases and discomfort to support Equity, Diversity, Inclusion work.

Anti-Racism course

Recognising the institutional picture at Edge Hill and the attainment and continuation challenges identified at faculty level for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students, throughout 2024/25 Dr Heather Marshall designed and delivered a 6-week Anti Racism course to 30 members of staff reflecting the Faculty of Education's ABC approach to anti racism.

- 100% of staff reported increased confidence in discussing race.
- 100% of staff said they were very likely or somewhat likely to apply learning in their professional context.

In 2025/2026, the work of the Widening Access and Success team and Faculty of Education work will feed into the development of an updated Race and Ethnicity Supporting Staff to Support Students toolkit, and associated training will be available for all staff.