

Cardiff University Widening Participation Strategy 2020-25

1. Our vision

1.1 At Cardiff University, we believe in the power of education to transform lives, and believe that socio-economic deprivation, low participation rates in university education, educational disadvantage, and education disruption should not be barriers to students achieving their full academic potential and gaining access to meaningful and fulfilling careers.

1.2 Our vision is two-fold:

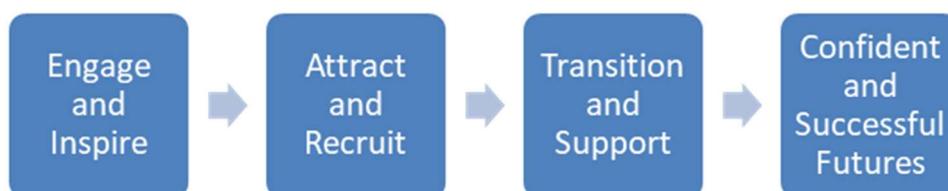
- That all students regardless of their background or personal experience, are inspired to consider higher education as an achievable option, and can study, succeed and thrive at Cardiff University and beyond. This vision is founded on our values and commitment to supporting and celebrating diversity and creating an open and inclusive community and putting students at the heart of what we do.
- That widening participation students because of their background, skills and personal experiences and an education at Cardiff University flourish and develop to become our professionals of tomorrow and future leaders of society.

1.3 This strategy elaborates on our aims in [The Way Forward 2018-23](#), to be a world-leading, research-excellent, educationally-outstanding university, driven by creativity and curiosity, which fulfils its social, cultural, and economic obligations to Cardiff, Wales, the UK and the world. It brings together all our commitments in [sub-strategies of The Way Forward](#), Education and Students Sub-Strategy, our [Strategic Equality Plan](#) and the Welsh Language Strategy (subject to approval in 2020-21) which relate to widening participation. In addition, our annual Fee and Access Plan will align to this strategy.

1.4 Our Widening Participation strategy has four main aims:

1. To engage and inspire people of all generations to consider higher education as a realistic and achievable option.
2. To attract and recruit students with academic potential, regardless of background or personal experience.
3. To enable successful transition to University and foster an excellent and supportive student experience.
4. To nurture and encourage confident and successful futures for all.

Widening Participation at Cardiff University



2. Our scope

2.1 The term 'widening participation' represents individuals from a broad range of societal and demographic groups. We have defined below those groups that will receive focused attention as part of our institutional strategy; however we are mindful that this does not represent all students who are presently under-represented at Cardiff University (or HE more generally), or all of those whom would benefit from our education and academic and support services.

2.2 However, it is important that we prioritise, and the following scope has been based on guidelines from our regulatory bodies on widening participation definitions, data intelligence, and existing strategies and policies. We will keep this scope under review on an annual basis using current data and performance, and wider contextual information.

2.3 The groups considered in scope can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

2.4 Cardiff University is committed to promoting and celebrating the Welsh Language. Realising these ambitions entails an integrated approach, and our commitments to the Welsh language are embedded in the Way Forward, in our Civic Mission, and more recently in the newly published Welsh Language Strategy Yr Elwad/Embrace it. This latter strategy presents the key principles, targets and functions of our work in this area, and includes details of how widening participation within the University's Welsh-language community is also integral to our planned approach.

2.5 The scope of our Widening Participation Strategy will be reviewed as part of the strategy's annual evaluation process.

3. Our Activity

3.1 We will ensure that there is a clear pathway of support for widening participation students, from their earliest engagement with Cardiff University right through to their graduation from our University and on to employment or further studies.

3.2 Our widening participation strategy is underpinned by an implementation plan that outlines and monitors all our widening participation activity in detail. The summary below highlights new and extended activity.

4. Our Strategy Aims and Objectives

Aim 1 - Engage and Inspire people of all generations to consider higher education as a realistic and achievable option

Intended Outcome: *Higher education is considered an accessible and achievable option for all members of society.*

We will:

- Continue to develop our primary and secondary school engagement, to be led through our civic mission agenda.
- Continue to work collaboratively to develop educational opportunities for students. This includes the continuation of key partnerships such as Reaching Wider and the Higher Education Roadshow.
- Extend our 'Access to the Professions' programme to reach more students and expanding the scheme to incorporate other healthcare professions, law, dentistry and STEM subjects.
- Expand our flagship *Step-Up scheme* to reach more college and sixth form students across South East Wales. We will introduce digital provision for those who cannot travel to Cardiff. Subject streams will focus on the Welsh Government's six areas of learning and experience: expressive arts, health and wellbeing, humanities and social sciences, languages, literacy and communication, maths and numeracy, and science and technology.
- Work with the *Reaching Wider* partnership to develop a programme of activities to support young carers.
- Continue to build on the *Confident Futures* programme for care leavers, delivering mentoring and support to encourage progression for care leavers aged 16–25. We will work to develop the programme to provide progression pathways from the pre-16 provision offered through Reaching Wider through to university and beyond.
- Continue to run the Discovery programme: a transition scheme into HE for young people with autism spectrum conditions.
- Continue to work collaboratively with Reaching Wider to grow and develop our '*Live Local; Learn Local*' community programme for adult learners and increase progression rates to the Pathways to a Degree programme, as well as Level 4 learning opportunities.
- Identify further opportunities to support veterans who wish to engage in higher education, through partnership working and building on the support already available.

- Develop a blended approach to widening participation, offering both physical and digital engagement opportunities, thus promoting accessibility and supporting students who cannot easily travel to Cardiff.
- Introduce travel bursaries for Widening Participation students to attend Cardiff University open days and interviews.

Aim 2 - Attract and recruit students, regardless of background or personal experience with the potential to achieve at Cardiff

Intended Outcome: Higher education students will think Cardiff University is able to support them to achieve their potential.

We will:

- Seek to extend our pathways to a degree programmes, and work to increase the number of degree apprenticeships that we offer.
- Pilot a 'Back to School' programme to reach schools and colleges with high proportions of widening participation students with whom Cardiff does not yet interact. Current Cardiff students and Step-Up 'graduates' will return to their former schools and sixth form colleges to share their experiences of university life and act as a mentor for students at the school who want to apply for a university.
- Continue to embed our multivariate contextual admissions policy, based on a breadth of indicators of deprivation [\[1\]](#).

Aim 3 - Transition support and success - enable successful transition to University and foster an excellent and supportive student experience

Intended Outcome: All students at Cardiff University will be successfully supported in their transition to and through the higher education.

We will:

- Develop a transition programme that provides holistic support for widening participation students from the point of receiving an offer through to the end of their first year at university.
- Identify widening participation learners early in their application journey, ensuring that they have access to support and advice to successfully transition into Higher Education.
- Launch a residential transition programme, which aims to better prepare students for university life. All applicants eligible for a contextualised offer, including those who have taken part in the Step Up and Access to Professions programmes, will be invited to take part in the programme, which will focus on developing key academic skills as well early sign-posting to key services in Student Support and Wellbeing.

- Improve our provision for mature students, recognising the continued provision of a mature students' induction event, recognising that their needs can differ to that of school leavers.
- Ensure that there are opportunities to build confidence through networks of support; additional support in developing skills in digital learning, and easily accessible information.
- Build an 'understanding your cohort' workshop as part of our academic and professional services staff CPD.
- Enhance our peer support for widening participation students through our peer mentoring projects.
- Continue to offer financial support packages in the form of needs-based scholarships, bursaries and money advice.
- Enhance our academic skills provision for Widening Participation students through the study skills provision as this supports transition into and through University.
- Finalise and implement our University BAME Awarding Gap Action Plan with the aim of eradicating of the BAME attainment gap to zero and a <5% gap across all University programmes by 2025.
- Use Learner Analytics to develop data dashboards by 2021 for us to learn more about our student population, and their engagement with their own learning, develop strategies to support widening participation students; and improve student outcomes.
- Identify and implement measures to be taken to mitigate the impact of digital exclusion on students' learning.
- Ensure our curriculum is inclusive and accessible to all, by establishing and implementation of an institutional inclusive curriculum project.

Aim 4 - Confident and Successful Futures - nurture and encourage confident and successful futures for all

Intended outcome: *We want all our students to have an equal chance succeed in their studies and future careers.*

We will:

- Provide a dedicated accessible career development programme available to all widening participation students, who enter the university via contextualised admissions policy, including career coaching, work experience, skills workshops and networking with employers.
- Further develop the Step-Up scheme to support those students who have progressed from the programme to study at Cardiff. 'Step-Up Plus' will support students for graduate life through a tailored programme of training and paid work experience opportunities, including the back-to-school programme.
- Continue to develop the Access to Professions programme to support current students who want to enter specific careers that have a low tradition of attracting widening participation students.
- Develop a widening participation graduate intern programme, offering widening participation students a supported transition into employment.
- Continue to develop, support and promote a wide range of global opportunities, in terms of duration, location and type of activity, that are accessible to, and appropriate for, our diverse student population, including international opportunities specifically for students on the Step-Up Plus and Transition programmes.
- Ensure the continuation of the Global Opportunities Bursary Scheme to ensure financial accessibility of international opportunities.
- Continue the work of the widening participation work experience bursary to support those students who are undertaking a UK based, work experience placement between 6-12 months.

5. Our Partners

5.1 We will continue to work with a range of strategic partners to support our widening participation activities. Our partners include:

- Reaching Wider
- Cardiff Metropolitan University (Higher Education Roadshow)
- Seren Network
- Russell Group and the Advancing Access project
- Sutton Trust
- Welsh Education Consortia
- Welsh Refugee Council
- Carers Trust
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Stand Alone
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
- University Health Board (UHB)
- Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

Further information about our partners can be found on our University webpages here [Link to be added once finalised].

5.2 We will seek out opportunities to further develop relationships to support widening participation in partnership with others.

6. Creating a University Community that Supports Widening Participation

6.1 Our strategy has been developed by our staff and students, with input from/ informed by the needs and requirements of our partners and regulators.

6.2 We will build a network of academics, professional services staff and students, including the Students' Union, who will advise, contribute and shape the University's widening participation strategy and activities, bringing subject-specific insight to our engagement programmes. We will work together as a learning community to share evidence of best practice from across the sector and beyond.

6.3 We will support our Academic Schools to innovate and engage with widening participation students and agendas, including providing opportunities to pilot and test new initiatives aimed at retention, support and student success. We will also develop dashboards of student populations at School and programme level to ensure our academic schools are aware of the diversity of their student body. We will introduce widening participation academic leads for each College and School.

6.4 Our students are key to a successful and dynamic widening participation strategy. We will work with network of student advisors, from a range of educational backgrounds, to inform and shape our activities, and to challenge us in our ambition to be a university for all.

7. Enabling our Strategy

7.1 Successful implementation of this Strategy will rely on enablers from across the University and beyond.

We will:

- Have an implementation plan for the strategy which sets out what we will do; when we will do it; who will do this and what our measures of success will be. The plan will also identify required resources to deliver our commitments.
- Develop a University engagement and communication plan to ensure awareness and ownership of the strategy amongst our staff; to promote awareness of opportunity to our students, and to share our ambitions; celebrate our successes; and promote what we do with our partners, regulators and general public.
- Establish a governance framework for the strategy which aligns to other strategies and plans within the University; ensures accountability for delivery and which enables tracking of our commitments; and which will afford the strategy visibility and strong leadership.
- Have robust data sets on which we can take targeted action and evaluate the activity we undertake.

8. Monitoring and Evaluating our Activity

8.1 We will continuously monitor and evaluate our widening participation activities, benchmarking the University's performance against both the Welsh and the UK sector and analyse our recruitment, retention and progression data for widening participation students.

Our monitoring and evaluation activity will include:

- The development of a widening participation evaluation and impact model, using robust research methods to ensure we take an evidence-led approach to widening participation across the student lifecycle.
- The evaluation of our engage and aspire programmes, with relation to the Network of Evaluating and Research University Participation Interventions (NERUPI) framework and onward progression to higher education.
- A regular cycle of audit against our widening participation activities.
- The creation of widening participation advisory group with external members, and students, to support and challenge us.

Appendix 1 – Scope of the Widening Participation Strategy

The term ‘widening participation’ represents individuals from a broad range of societal and demographic groups.

We have defined below those groups¹ that will receive focused attention as part of our institutional strategy; however, we are mindful that this does not represent all students who are presently under-represented at Cardiff University (or HE more generally), or all of those whom would benefit from our education and academic and support services.

However, it is important that we prioritise, and the following scope has been based on guidelines from our regulatory bodies on widening participation definitions, data intelligence, and existing strategies and policies. We will keep this scope under review on an annual basis using current data and performance, and wider contextual information.

Individual Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care experienced (been in care for 3mths or more at any point) • Forces veteran • Refugee / Asylum seeker
Individual Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age – mature • Disability (including autism) • BAME • Black Afro-Caribbean and Male • White and Male and index of multiple deprivation • Part-time students • Welsh-medium
Family Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring responsibilities • Estranged from family students • DWP household gross annual earnings • Parents not educated to HE level
School Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh and English 6th form data • Welsh & English free school meal (FSM) rates
Neighbourhood Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 40 (quintile 2) • Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 20 (quintile 1) • POLAR4 • English, Scottish, and Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation

¹ Home students