

# Widening Participation Strategy

2019-2024

***Excellence with Purpose: unlocking talent and fulfilling potential***

## Mission

The University positions widening participation (WP) and social inclusion as core to its mission, embodied by our commitment to provide a transformative educational experience for all students, manifested in sector leading academic attainment and career outcomes.

## Vision

By 2030, Warwick will be regarded as the UK research-intensive university with the greatest impact on social mobility, through its ability to recognise, inspire, and enrich talented students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

To be regarded as a beacon of excellence for our approach to social mobility and WP evidence-based research and practice nationally and internationally.

Through this strategy we aspire to remove economic, social and cultural barriers that have prevented people from studying and succeeding at Warwick, and to be recognised as best in class in our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, for staff and students by 2030.

We will:

- Be a regional leader in the pursuit of social and economic equality to ensure students fulfil their academic and personal potential
- Provide inspiring opportunities for learners to consider entering higher education in areas and communities where the challenges are greatest
- Remove barriers to access and participation to Warwick and in higher education (HE) in general
- Address and eliminate any profound gaps in access and attainment in our student communities.
- Foster an inclusive environment where regardless of background, students have the opportunity to excel across all stages of the student lifecycle.

The University is committed to ensure its ambition is reflected through a new strategy taking a whole student lifecycle view. We will move towards a holistic institutional approach where our core strategic priorities are reflected and embedded at all levels of the institution.

## WP Strategic Priorities

The University has a strong foundation in its WP policy and practice and we will continue to build on the strengths of our successful widening participation programmes in recent years. To be truly sector-leading requires us to analyse, strengthen and accelerate our approach. We will deliver our vision through six core WP strategic priorities, all of which intersect and reinforce our approach to reducing economic and social barriers to inclusion.

Our WP strategic priorities consider all interlinked stages of the student lifecycle where we ensure background has no profound impact on the ability to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education.

These priorities start with supporting learners from primary age upwards, and includes pre-entry outreach, admissions, transition, learning and teaching, student engagement and support, and access to postgraduate study and/or employment. These priorities are all underpinned by institutional and sector-based evidence.

	WP Strategic Priority (SP)	
1	To widen <u>demand</u> and increase support to facilitate a talent <u>pipeline</u> for widening participation target groups to consider higher education	Underpinning research and evaluation nexus to enhance impact and strengthen the evidence base
2	To accelerate <u>access</u> of our undergraduate intake to Warwick from a range of WP target groups regionally and nationally	
3	To improve <u>student experience and success</u> outcomes for WP targeted groups at Warwick at undergraduate and postgraduate level	
4	To enhance <u>progression</u> outcomes to further study and graduate employment for Warwick students from WP groups	
5	To profile Warwick's <u>commitment</u> to widening participation and social inclusion- sector leading at the <u>policy</u> forefront shaping and influencing	
6	To provide <u>regional leadership</u> to ensure access and participation in higher education is championed and collaborative efforts are aligned with regional priorities	

## Ambition and Approach

Our approach will be place-based, student-centred and evidence-led to ensure any barriers to access and participation are removed and student outcomes are positive across all stages of the student lifecycle. A Warwick education is distinct and transformational; hence, our ambition for a truly inclusive experience drives us to be more radical in our approach to promote access whilst ensuring our students are empowered to succeed and thrive during their Warwick journey.

Our ambition is by 2030, Warwick will have the highest proportion of entrants from areas where participation in HE is low and disadvantage is high in the Russell Group. Moreover, we will prioritise opportunities and enhance progression for more vulnerable groups, including care leavers. Our approach will be shaped by our institutional priorities which will contribute positively to the outcomes in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) at institutional and subject level.

Our ambition will be realised through a more intensive and strategic approach underpinned by the following areas of focus.

### Regional focus

In recognition of the University's Strategy, Warwick will focus its approach and ambition to where it can have the greatest impact, place and region will be central to this. We will continue to target our efforts nationally for specific groups and provision. However our WP ambitions will also be aligned to regional education and skills drivers where Warwick will play a leading anchor role in enhancing access and participation in HE. We will achieve this through effective partnership working and pioneering new approaches which respond to removing barriers to access and participation in HE.

Our targeting will be more geographically orientated by identifying regional hubs where we can make a difference to educational attainment and progression to HE and Warwick.

We will:

- Adopt a schools, colleges and communities targeting and engagement strategy that responds to need and furthers opportunity to fulfil our strategic priorities
- Develop our collaborative reach to ensure our WP efforts are connected to and engaged with local educational priorities
- Provide and support opportunities for our students to play a leading role in civic engagement through volunteering around WP activities and ensuring that our graduates can contribute to filling regional skills gaps

- Promote and champion our work with key stakeholders to demonstrate commitment, synergy in approach and alignment with regional education and skills priorities.

## **Partnerships and collaboration**

A Warwick education can offer unparalleled opportunities and be a great enabler for upward social mobility. However we recognise that to truly make an impact we must work in partnership with schools, colleges, communities, universities, the charitable sector and industry to meet our ambitious vision.

Warwick already has many excellent national and international partnerships and collaborative approaches focusing on all stages of the student lifecycle. We must strike a balance where we feel as an institution we have the expertise and resources to deliver on priorities or where working collaboratively would add value to our approach.

We will:

- Review, extend and expand our range of partnerships to facilitate inclusive opportunities for WP target groups and ensure they demonstrate strategic fit and support our overarching WP vision
- Pioneer student-centred, evidence-based programmes and partnerships to enhance outcomes for students
- Work with our partners and collaborators to demonstrate impact and influence policy and practice
- Capitalise on our partnerships in the region, the UK and the world to facilitate exchange, mobility and other opportunities for students and staff
- Continue to strive to achieve geographical diversity in our students and our partnerships to provide an international experience.

## **Best evidence approach**

Nationally and internationally we want to be recognised for our contribution to the field of WP research and practice. Core to our approach will be how we understand the effectiveness of our work and respond to institutional and sector-wide priorities on access and participation. Our evidence-led work will underpin our priorities, evaluate our practice and provide a platform to champion our positive impact and promote best practice. Through creating a new Centre for Social Mobility, our research excellence will contribute to the understanding of sector and societal issues that impact on inequality and inequity in higher education and will inform practice to respond positively.

We will:

- Harness evidence-led research and evaluation to improve practice and demonstrate positive impact
- Enhance the availability of appropriate data and evidence to better understand our access and participation performance, inform strategic and operational decision making, and evaluate process and impact.
- Empower our researchers, practitioners and students to work together to share knowledge, insight and expertise to ensure our work is strengthened by evidence and provide a platform to share this locally, nationally and on an international stage.

## **Collegiate approach**

This strategy will empower staff and students to understand the University's commitment and approach towards WP, social mobility and inclusion, ensuring that there is a collective approach taken. We will ensure that our WP strategic priorities are recognised, understood and valued by taking a whole institutional approach to this agenda. All access and participation work should be underpinned by an evidence-informed approach with an expectation that evaluation and impact is at the forefront of efforts.

We will:

- Demonstrate clear and explicit leadership and institutional commitment to access, student success and progression

- Establish a collegiate approach to widening participation and social inclusion across the University community
- Promote best practice to harness innovation and enhance departmental approaches
- Develop a recognition and 'value' model for staff and students involved in leading and championing WP
- Build more effective approaches to engage with student voices from a diverse range of backgrounds, empowering student-led and co-created provision to enhance student opportunity.
- Promote and celebrate our positive impact within Warwick and with our wider communities and partners.

Our ability to deliver will be supported by embedding WP and social inclusion priorities in all our education and professional service plans.

## WP Target Groups across the Student Lifecycle

Our strategy will respond to institutional and sector-wide challenges for underrepresented groups, ensuring equality of opportunity for all, regardless of background. To engender a truly diverse and vibrant student community we will be more progressive, embracing intersectionality within our target groups to ensure we respond to all types of underrepresentation.

We will instil a common institutional language for WP target groups that provides clarity of purpose and approach, with a greater emphasis on individual-level indicators of underrepresentation. We will continue to use a combination of WP area-based<sup>1</sup>, individual<sup>2</sup> and educational<sup>3</sup> indicators in our pre-entry targeting to reflect different forms of disadvantage and underrepresentation in HE.

### WP Target Groups

These are our priority groups where there is the greatest evidence of need to unlock talent and fulfil potential across all stages of the lifecycle.

- Areas and communities where progression to HE is low or deprivation is high based on. Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN) and Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)
- Students from low socio-economic backgrounds
- Students where educational disadvantage is greatest
- Care Leavers and estranged students

Further key groups where there is evidence of differential outcomes across certain stages of the student lifecycle and when they intersect with the core groups indicating multiple layers of disadvantage or underrepresentation will be prioritised, including white males from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

- Students of particular ethnicities (strategic priority 3)
- Students with specific disabilities (strategic priority 3)
- Mature students (strategic priority 3)
- Gender
- Refugees

<sup>1</sup> From a POLAR 4 Q1 area (least represented in HE)

<sup>2</sup> Be eligible or in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM), no family history of attending HE, is or has been in local authority care

<sup>3</sup> Schools with a high proportions of students in receipt of FSM; schools or colleges where GCSE or A Level attainment is below the national average, schools and colleges with low progression rates to HE.

## Key Performance Indicators

Our core performance indicators will provide a measure of progress for each strategic priority and inform our approach to be a beacon of excellence for WP in the sector. These indicators will link to national access and participation performance measures<sup>4</sup> where the focus is on narrowing gaps. Where possible these indicators will be benchmarked externally against relevant competitor groups and TEF metrics. In addition to these KPIs, appropriate milestones will be developed linked to our practice.

Our impact will be measured beyond metrics and KPIs, with student voice, partnership recognition and opinion leadership used to demonstrate progress and drive improvement.

WP Strategic Priority	Performance Indicators
SP1. WP demand and pipeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the awareness and understanding of HE for targeted groups on institutional sustained programmes</li> <li>Improve the attainment of students from targeted groups and schools in targeted areas.</li> <li>Support the narrowing the attainment gap in Coventry and Warwickshire schools for disadvantaged groups</li> </ul>
SP2. Accelerating access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the access gap between entrants from POLAR Q5 (most represented) and Q1 (least represented)</li> <li>Increase the number of entrants from a care background</li> <li>Increase the proportion of entrants from the region to Warwick</li> <li>Increase the proportion of entrants of white males from lower socio-economic backgrounds</li> <li>Collaborative target- increase the proportion of Realising Opportunities students nationally progressing to research intensive universities</li> </ul>
SP3. Improving student success and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce gaps in degree outcomes (1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1) between white and black students</li> <li>Improve continuation rates for mature students</li> <li>Improve continuation rates for students with a disability</li> <li>Continuously improve our results for Teaching, Assessment and Feedback, Academic Support and Continuation to rank in the top quartile sectorally and above benchmark for 'disadvantage' ethnicity, age, and disability groups.</li> </ul>
SP4. Enhancing progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek attainment of Graduate Outcomes metrics consistently above benchmark for 'disadvantage' ethnicity, age, and disability groups.</li> <li>Increase the proportion of WP groups taking up and engaging with student mobility opportunities</li> <li>Increase the proportion of Warwick students from WP groups progressing to PGT and PGR study at Warwick</li> <li>Enhance the career readiness of our students</li> </ul>
SP5. Reputation and commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop impactful case studies that are recognised as excellent nationally and internationally</li> <li>Academic-led and practitioner-informed research outputs which explore the deep-rooted issues on social mobility and promote a 'what-works' agenda</li> </ul>
SP6. Regional engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction and engagement measures to improve and deepen amongst our regional partners (i.e. schools and employers)</li> </ul>

## Oversight, Governance and Co-ordination

We recognise that to deliver transformational change requires a strategic vision with a range of complementary approaches, endorsed by university leadership through effective governance and embedded at all levels across the institution. University Council will have oversight of the vision and

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/participation-performance-measures/>

commitments in this strategy are met, with Senate and Education Committee empowered to ensure alignment with other institutional strategies.

The Widening Participation Committee will have responsibility for the delivery and evaluation of this strategy working closely with other committees and groups across the University to promote engagement.

Departments will be supported to work to institutional priorities and KPIs with some local approaches to enhance outcomes and opportunities for students. The new Teaching Excellence Group (TEG) process will support departmental TEF preparations and provide a supportive lens on WP performance indicators related to TEF outcomes. Greater co-ordination and support will be provided at a faculty level to co-ordinate the implementation of the strategy through fostering collaborative and joined up approaches.

A range of WP Working Groups<sup>5</sup> have been created to support implementation and will inform and deliver the strategic priorities. These groups have cross-institutional representation and report in to the Widening Participation Committee.

Students will play a pivotal role in the shaping and development of widening participation policy and practice at the University. A new Student Advisory group will act as a forum where students from a range of backgrounds can support the University to enhance its practice to support specific groups across the student lifecycle.

Faculty Education Committees will also take a strategic approach to implement the widening participation strategy including considering faculty and departmental outcomes and working to ensure WP work is joined up and aligned to institutional priorities whilst commending discipline-specific provision.

We will:

- Develop and enhance cross-institutional approaches that respond to strategic priorities
- Ensure that the WP strategy is considered and monitored regularly across all nodes of institutional governance
- Ensure that students are engaged in formulating, supporting and evaluating access and participation work across the University
- Develop further local and institutional staff and student WP fora to promote a two-way communications dialogue for WP strategy and practice
- Demonstrate alignment with external regulatory processes including access and participation plans and TEF Strategy.

Dependent Strategies: Education, Social Inclusion, Student Recruitment, International, Regional, Employability, Communications, Development and Giving, Wellbeing, Departmental Strategies.

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<sup>5</sup> Outreach and Access, Student Success and Progression and Research and Evaluation

## Strategy Facilitators

The following facilitators and enabling factors articulate how each strategic priority will be supported.

### **SP1. To widen demand and increase support to facilitate a talent pipeline for widening participation target groups to consider higher education.**

*Raising the aspirations and attainment of targeted groups from an early age through sustained and progressive intervention to enhance progression to HE*

F1.1. Enhanced sustained provision to raise the awareness of HE with primary age groups in targeted schools and communities where disadvantage is high

F1.2. Highly targeted geographically-defined school partnerships that facilitate a high-value collegiate offer from Warwick and responds to school-based challenges for pupils, teachers, leaders and governors.

F1.3. Development and enhancement of our current WP provision focused on targeted individual indicators regionally and nationally

F1.4. Launch of the Warwick Attainment Academy to enhance attainment at KS4 and KS5 for targeted groups, including a scaled tutoring programme

F1.5. Develop and expand community based support raise aspirations and enhance educational outcomes for disadvantaged groups, i.e. IntoUniversity partnership

F1.6. Development of purposeful collaborative partnerships that demonstrate strategic fit with our WP priorities and offer added-value to our approach.

### **SP2. To accelerate access of undergraduate intake to Warwick from a range of WP target groups regionally and nationally**

*Removing barriers to a Warwick education for WP target groups to support a diverse and inclusive student body*

F2.1. Launch a new Warwick Access Programme for regionally targeted WP learners at the latter stages of their post-16 study. The programme will spearhead recruitment to Warwick by removing educational, financial and social barriers to Warwick

F2.2. Ensure that admissions policies and procedures are fair and reflect quality but do not create barriers to entry, including the development of progressive policies which support admission of students from non-standard backgrounds (WP) and qualifications to ensure wider accessibility to Warwick courses

F2.3. Develop and enhance alternative inclusive pathways to a Warwick education by continuing to develop and invest in proven successes like Degree Apprenticeships, International Foundation Programme, 2+2 degrees, Gateway to HE and the WBS Foundation Year Programme

F2.4. Development and enhancement of our current WP provision focused on targeted individual indicators regionally and nationally

F2.5. Implement a national schools targeting and engagement framework aligned to our WP target groups and congruent with other strategies (i.e. Student Recruitment Strategy)

F2.6. Development of purposeful collaborative partnerships that demonstrate strategic fit with our WP priorities and offer added-value to our approach.



### **SP3. To improve student success outcomes for WP targeted groups**

*Providing a unique student experience through inclusive curricula and transformational opportunities which respond to social, educational and economic barriers to success*

F3.1. Progressive and well defined bursary and scholarship awards for targeted groups

F3.2. Promote curriculum orientated, holistic and systematic approaches to address persistent attainment gaps for BAME students, students with disability and students from low socio-economic backgrounds

F3.3. Expand and refine Scholar-based programmes (MSP, WSP, Lloyds etc.) which provide a community for students to enhance their student experience and facilitate employability opportunities

F3.4. Expand and enhance international student mobility and study abroad experiences for targeted WP groups

F3.5. Explore the opportunity for peer to peer engagement supporting a positive transition to Warwick

F3.6. Facilitate more inclusive opportunities for students to engage with undergraduate research outside their course, i.e. URSS

F3.7. Provide enhanced wellbeing support for students to ensure they are equipped to reach their academic potential

F3.8. Respond to institutional barriers that effect student success for non-traditional students, including care leavers.

### **SP4. To enhance progression outcomes to further study and graduate employment for Warwick students from WP groups**

*Supporting students to make positive and informed choices about their future by providing effective opportunities for students to fulfill their potential regardless of background*

F4.1. Enhance access to high-value opportunities to gain experience and industry insight, including embedded volunteering opportunities that link in to SP1 and SP2

F4.2. Develop an early insight programme promoting the value and routes to postgraduate study

F4.3. Provide students with access to alumni and other professionals through mentoring and constructive insights into current industry practice

F4.4. Collaborate and innovate with industry, employers and partners (e.g. upReach) on the social mobility agenda to enhance opportunities for students and promote inclusive practices

F4.5. Evidenced and well defined financial support for targeted WP groups to enhance progression to PGT study at Warwick.



**SP5. To profile Warwick's commitment to widening participation and social inclusion- sector leading at the policy forefront shaping and influencing**

*Ensuring Warwick is recognised as a beacon of excellence for its approach to widening participation and social inclusion nationally and internationally*

F5.1. Launch the Warwick Centre for Social Mobility, a research unit to explore, understand and respond to sector-wide and institutional social mobility issues.

F5.2. Develop an evaluation framework that evidences our approach and measures our impact

F5.3. Develop a communication plan to promote impact and best practice internally and externally

F5.4. Engage and empower Warwick alumni and donors to commit support to address core WP priorities

**SP6. To provide regional leadership to ensure access and participation in higher education is championed and collaborative efforts are aligned with regional priorities**

*Supporting and informing work across the region to ensure there is an understanding of priorities, consistency in approach, and a desire to collaborate to improve outcomes.*

F6.1. Take a highly targeted approach to regional engagement where we can support systemic change in areas and communities where the need is greatest

F6.2. Create flexible pathways for people to upskill in their own profession or industry, responding to regional skills driver, i.e. degree apprenticeships.

F6.3. Lead engagement with local and regional stakeholders (Local Authorities, LEP etc.) in response to barriers to access and participation in HE.