UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE RESTRICTED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 2 DECEMBER 2021 9.30-11.30AM, MICROSOFT TEAMS			
Present	Professor Christopher Hughes	CH	Pro Vice Chancellor (Education), (Chair)
	Paul Blagburn	PB	Head of Widening Participation, (Secretary)
	Dr Rebecca Freeman	RF	Dean of Students
	Baljit Gill	BG	Widening Participation Manager, (Assistant Secretary)
	Dr Letizia Gramaglia	LGra	Head of Academic Development
	Lee Griffin	LGri	Academic Director, Postgraduate Taught Education
	Professor Ruth Hewston	RH	Director of the Centre for Lifelong Learning
	Professor Kate Ireland	KI	Director of Centre for Teacher Education (till 10.30)
	Natalie Lloyd	NL	Deputy Director of Development
	Samuel McClenaghan	SM	Deputy Finance Director, Departmental Services
	Dr Ines Molinaro	IM	Academic Director, Warwick Foundation Studies
	Faye Murray	FM	Director of Strategic Planning and Analytics
	Kulbir Shergill	KS	Director of Social Inclusion
	Professor Emma Smith	ES	Director of Education Studies; Research and Evaluation Working Group Co-chair
	Professor Pat Tissington	PT	Academic Director of Employability and Skills
	Professor Richard Tunstall	RT	Head of Clinical Anatomy and Imaging, WMS
	Dr Chris Twine	CT	Academic Registrar
	Professor Gwen Van Der Velden	GV	Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education)
	Professor Derrick Watson	DW	Head of Psychology, Faculty of Science, Engineering & Medicine
	Roberta Wooldridge Smith	RWS	Director of Student Opportunity
	Peter Wreford	PW	Head of Student Funding and Finance
Attending	Amanda Bishop	AB	WP Faculty Co-ordinator, SEM
	Dr Daniel Cashmore	DC	WP Data Analyst (item 21)
	Claire Edden	CE	WP Faculty Co-ordinator, Social Sciences
	Kathryn Fisher	KF	Head of Disability Services (representing Dr Hannah Friend)
	Dr Damien Homer	DH	WP Faculty Co-ordinator, Arts
	Cherryl Jones	CJ	WP Access and Lifecycle Manager; Student Success and Progression Working Group Co-Chair
	Catherine Munn	CM	Widening Participation Manager
	Eilis O'Donnell	EO	Assistant Director of Operations, IntoUniversity (item 21)
	Alex Quin	AQ	Head of Data and Impact, Into University (item 21)
	Dr Tammy Thiele	TT	WP Evidence and Evaluation Manager; Research and Evaluation Working Group Co-chair
Ref	**Item**		
014	**Apologies for absence** Apologies were received from: Isabelle Atkins, (Education Officer, Students' Union); Dr Hannah Friend, (Director of Wellbeing and Safeguarding); Dr Elizabeth Hough, (Head of Admissions); Nathan Parsons, (Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union).		
015	**Declarations of Interest** No new declarations were made.		

016	**Minutes of last meeting on 12 October 2021**
	The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2021 (016-WPC021221{Protected}) were received and approved.
017	**Matters arising from last meeting on 12 October 2021**
	PB added that, while shortlisted as University of the Year, the University had unfortunately not been successful in the recent UK Social Mobility Awards. The charity will be releasing a new report in the new year, which will reference practice at the University of Warwick, and will be shared with the Committee.
	There were no other matters arising from the meeting on 12 October 2021.

Chair's Update

018	**Chair's Business and Actions**
	There were no updates from the Chair that were not covered in the agenda.

Strategic item

019	**The Experiences of Mature Students**
	The Head of Widening Participation, WP Faculty Co-ordinator (Arts) and the Director of the Centre for Lifelong Learning presented a paper to the Committee (019-WPC021221{Protected})
	a) PB opened discussions with an overview, citing that previously the University had numerical targets through the former Access Agreements, focussing on access incorporating all mature students, not just first-degree entrants. Priority has now moved to not just access, but retention and success, in line with the University's APP, Inclusive Education Model and wider government priorities around lifelong learning.
	b) The paper detailed an IATL funded study exploring the mature student experience at the University of Warwick, in collaboration with an undergraduate Arts student. Through the use of semi-structured interviews and the principles of a student-staff partnership approach, conversations were held with mature students across a range of disciplines, from a range of different backgrounds, from those with few previous qualifications, and also those enrolling on their first-degree course, through to others who were returning to do a postgraduate qualification or a degree in a new subject area as part of their career progression.
	c) Mature students are more likely to come from diverse backgrounds, have external responsibilities and are more likely to drop out of their studies. Mature student numbers across the sector have been in decline; over the last five years the number of undergraduate mature students at Warwick is consistently between 8% to 9% of the overall student population. Mature students at Warwick can access the university through a variety of routes, such as direct entry, and programmes such as the Gateway and 2+2 degrees in the Centre for Lifelong Learning, with relatively small numbers in pockets across the University.
	d) Within the departments outside of CLL there were issues around the lack of options for people who were part-time students, parents, and those with caring responsibilities. Students who were part of the CLL provision found the times of the contact hours, structure of the day and approach to module selection most favourable, with a recognition that the systems were built and created for their needs.
	e) Students who had accessed support found it useful, but many of the participants felt that university focused on the students who were in the majority. Most students felt that the Students' Union was also targeted to supporting younger undergraduates. The participants who took part in this research mainly relied on support from each other, particularly during the last two years. This led in some instances to students feeling like they did not belong to the wider 'student cohort' or for those that studied in specialist provision like CLL, that they were outside the main university community.

f) The mature student experience can be complex, not only due to issues around caring responsibilities, but also concerns around finance, housing and work. Routes into HE can be made more complex by a lack of clarity around student finance. The pre-applicant advice was seen by the participants as crucial not only to whether people would apply, but also what the options might be in the future. Other students felt the university did not do enough to encourage a wider diversity of students, particularly older applicants. This was evident in marketing materials, open days and a lack of outreach events in the community.

g) Student-led recommendations included: a charter for mature students at Warwick; further investment and consideration given to parents/carers/mature student groups and/or societies; a named contact point at the university for mature students; clear advice and guidance for mature students on pre-access finance and careers; more academic writing workshops and support; module/timetabling selection options.

h) RH provided a narrative of the approach taken within CLL and the challenges the Centre faces. Mature students make up the majority in CLL, and the Centre takes a whole-centre approach to provide support, from academic support and professional services to welfare. She pointed to the diverse nature of the mature students within CLL, who include Degree Apprentices, learners in the FE sector on the 2+2 pathway and those on professional programmes. The small inhouse welfare team aim to support students, with additional signposting to central service and the personal tutor role is particularly significant, demonstrating the importance of recognising that issues may prove different to those raised by more traditional aged students.

i) WP is framed differently in CLL due to the nature of their student body, but the students do not necessarily view themselves being 'WP' and may not see themselves as needing specific support around employability skills or study skills; neither do they find self-directed study support helpful. The Centre offers whole-student support, tailored to mature students, as central support tends to be geared towards more traditional-aged students. Furthermore, there is a high level of mental health issues amongst the students, often triggered by University processes, particularly around finance, definitions of mitigating circumstances and terminology in general. Duty of care issues have been further exacerbated during the recent online learning environment.

j) The paper generated great discussion, and a large number of questions and comments were posed by the group. GV added that the terminology used is an issue for all students, together with feelings of being 'normal' and belonging, and proposed further discussion around what would help. KI suggested that the research might be broadened to CTE students, and also whether the location of CLL played a factor. LG offered similarities in the experiences of PG students, particularly those studying part-time on PGT courses and suggested collaboration in support. Regarding timetabling issues, IM reflected on institutions where a significant level of teaching was delivered in the evenings.

k) RF detailed developments across the University that would additionally support mature students, and welcomed further discussion on personal tutor training. DW pointed out that searches for 'mature students' are directed to the Wellbeing pages of the University website, which is not particularly welcoming to prospective learners. PW added that mature students from CLL had disproportionally more challenges with finance, and perhaps more clarity is needed, with differentiation between payment profile.

l) PB informed that group that the definition of a mature student is being over 21, with more detailed classification by HESA, and pointed to compounding issues around intersectionality, impacting on motivation for study. RH echoed previous comments and welcomed further discussion.

m) DH suggested next steps should focus on a central point of contact in WP team, with further exploration with the Students' Union. CH proposed that this area would be part of a broader piece on how the University positions provision, to be brought back to the Committee.

RECEIVED:

The Committee **noted** the findings of the report.

	Monitoring, Policy and Practice
020	**Exploring the Impacts and Effectiveness of Financial Support Bursaries** The Committee received a report from the Head of Widening Participation, WP Evidence and Evaluation Manager and WP Data Analyst (020-WPC021221{Protected}) a) The report presents findings from the research conducted to date exploring the impacts and effectiveness of financial support bursaries as a tool for 'Widening Participation' at Warwick. This includes findings from Warwick Bursary surveys, and outputs from a quantitative analysis exploring differences in students' outcomes. b) While earlier survey findings suggested that eligibility for financial support did not substantially affect students' choices with regard to higher education participation, a high number of bursary recipients across all the years in which surveys were conducted reported that the bursary had a positive impact on their academic progress. In particular, most respondents noted that the bursary helped them feel more confident about completing their course/achieving academic success and allowed them to feel more satisfied with life as a student. These findings are consistent with the findings from quantitative analysis which suggest that bursaries do have a 'levelling effect' on students' outcomes, and are positively associated with students' chances of achieving academic success but must be considered in relation to other contextual factors. As such, after allowing for the effects of contextual variables, bursary recipients had significantly higher odds of completing their degree and achieving a 'good degree' than non-bursary holders. Furthermore, while bursary holders were slightly less likely to continue to year 2 than non-bursary holders, the differences were not statistically significant when considering contextual factors. c) It is important to note that findings are largely based on historic data and must be interpreted with a level of caution as there have been numerous changes that have taken place which may affect the trends which are reported. Further research, including qualitative research will be undertaken to explore these trends and better understand how bursaries may affect students' experiences, choices, and outcomes in greater detail. **RECEIVED:** The Committee **noted** the findings of the report.
021	**IntoUniversity Annual report** The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director of Operations and Head of Data and Impact, IntoUniversity (021-WPC021221{Public}) (a) Despite the challenges of COVID-19, IntoUniversity (IU) Coventry has had another successful year, improving young people's attainment and raising aspirations. 1,249 primary and secondary pupils have been supported this year. The Coventry Centre prioritised delivering the core schools-based FOCUS programme and in-centre Academic Support and current Warwick students have continued to volunteer virtually. Feedback from young people on all programmes has been very positive. (b) Impact has been significant: the Coventry centre progression rate to higher education stands at 59% compared to a local average of 30%, while nationally Into University progression rate is 66% compared to the national average of 43%. The University of Warwick remains a popular destination for IntoUniversity students; 76 IU students enrolled in 2021, bringing the total since the partnership began three years ago to 185. It was noted that Nottingham University offer bursaries to IU entrants; however, identification of IU students nationally is hampered by data sharing issues. (c) The Chair thanked the presenters, reaffirming the University's commitment to the partnership, and suggested that a visit to the Centre should be arranged for the Committee when restrictions are lifted.

	RECEIVED: The Committee **noted** the report.
022	**Access and Participation outcomes 2021** The Committee received an update from the Head of Widening Participation (022-WPC021221{Protected}) (a) The paper provides an overview of access and participation indicative outcomes related to the 2021-22 applicant cycle and the student success outcomes from the 2020-21 academic year, and an update on progress made towards achieving key Widening Participation targets committed to in the University's 2020/21 Access and Participation Plan. (b) Overall, the progress made towards APP annual milestones appears positive across the identified access targets, despite the challenges during the previous two Covid-19-impacted admissions cycles. The number and proportion of applications and entrants from POLAR4 quintile 1 areas were at record levels in 2021, as were the number of applications and entrants from the most deprived communities across the country. These increments are reflective of the flexible and supportive approach during the past cycle, working in the best interests of students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. These trends appear consistent with national data on POLAR4 quintile 1 increases. There has been an increase in the number of local entrants, however this is still short of the 2021-22 annual milestone set in the plan. The planned growth of Warwick Scholars should support this in the longer-term. (c) There has been a significant increase in the number and proportion of entrants from BAME students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2, exceeding the University's 2021-22 milestone. The racial diversity of Warwick UK entrants has changed significantly over of the past five years, including a two-fold increase in the number of Black entrants and a proportional shift of Black entrants from 7.1% in 2017/18 to 11.6% in 2021-22. (d) The University made a commitment in its access and participation plan to eliminate the awarding gap between Black and White students by 2025. There has been recent progress towards this target with the reported gap at 7.4% in 2020-21 (the 2020-21 milestone was set at 10%). Whilst there have been noticeable improvements in outcomes by specific ethnic groups, gaps are also evident between POLAR4 and IMD categories, despite continuous improvement in degree outcomes for the most disadvantaged groups in both categories over time. (e) Further exploration of the impact of Covid on student attainment and examining NSS data would determine whether certain groups have been disproportionately effected. PB credited colleagues in SPA for the development of new dashboards, which provide information that academic departments can also utilise to inform practice, particularly exploring the intersectional aspects of the student experience. (f) The equality and diversity implications of the report pertain to outcomes and for specific disadvantaged and underrepresented groups at the University. The report does not reveal any individualised-level data; however, it provides important findings for the Committee to consider as part of the University's ongoing drive to advance equality of opportunity for specific groups. **RECEIVED:** The Committee **noted** the report.
023	**The future Access and Participation landscape and APP national monitoring feedback** The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair and the Head of Widening Participation. (a) The Chair referenced the discussion at the last Committee meeting, led by the outgoing Director of Fair Access and Participation, indicating a shift in approach. The new Director John Blake and Minister Donelan are taking a 'genuine social mobility' approach to WP, with less focus on access numbers and greater emphasis on school attainment to support entry and retention in HE. Universities will be required to revise current five-year APPs to reflect this.

	(b) PB is currently writing a briefing paper on the University response, and pointed to some positive aspects of the revised approach, in terms of transparency and engagement. Previous focus had been on ensuring high tariff HEIs were supporting the A&P agenda. (c) There is likely to be a rebalancing of the definition and measurement of disadvantage, a suggesting move away from POLAR to free school meals (FSM) which will better align with schools, and a move to a more altruistic approach rather than recruitment. The move offers opportunities to expand vocational study, greater collaboration with the FE sector and graduate employability, areas that the University is already focussing on. GV agreed that it was unfortunate that the APP will have to be re-written, but pointed out that working pedagogically in the interest of students will enable Warwick to continue to progress. **RECEIVED:** The Committee **noted** the update.
013	**Any other business** There was no other business.
Close by 11.30 **Next meeting: 1 February 2022, 9.30-11.30**	