



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

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University hits social diversity recruitment goal three years early

The University of Edinburgh has met a key Scottish Government objective to attract students from the country's most economically challenged areas, three years ahead of schedule.

The news comes as the University unveils its Widening Participation Strategy – launched today (31 October) at an event with Deputy First Minister John Swinney MSP –outlining a three-year plan to further improve access into higher education.

The University has delivered against the initial Commission on Widening Access Target that 10 per cent of new full-time Scottish degree students are from so-called SIMD20 areas – the 20 per cent most deprived areas in Scotland – by 2021.

The figures show that 195 of those accepted to the University this year are from these areas, representing 11 per cent of its intake of fulltime students from Scotland.

Longstanding outreach programmes and a boost in scholarships, as well as increased support throughout the application process and students' transition into the University, are credited as contributing factors towards the result.

The new Strategy builds on this approach and includes a schools partnership, part-time access routes for adult learners and funding to support students who commute to the University.

Professor Peter Mathieson, University of Edinburgh Principal and Vice Chancellor, said: "These figures are a springboard for further action. While we welcome the news that we have met the figures set by the Scottish Government, the University will continue to strive to encourage more people from disadvantaged backgrounds to consider higher education at Edinburgh.

"Our strategy pushes us to not only further widen access to our institution, but also ensure that those students are supported in their transition, their academic journey, and their progression onto a satisfying career or further study."

Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, said: "We want every young person in Scotland to have an equal chance of success no matter their background or circumstance and we are making good progress on widening participation.

"This year we saw a record number of students from Scotland's most disadvantaged areas successfully gain a place at university, the third year in a row a new record has been set.

Ranked among the top universities in the world

“I’m delighted to note the positive progress the University of Edinburgh is making on widening access. Its Widening Participation Strategy will build on this success to further encourage people from disadvantaged backgrounds to consider higher education.”

Using SIMD20 metrics is only one of the factors that the University considers when seeking to attract a range of applicants.

Each mechanism – such as targeting schools where few pupils go on to higher education, young carers, or those from low socio-economic groups – addresses a specific barrier.

The University has a long history of initiatives that aim to make higher education more accessible to people from economically challenged backgrounds.

In 1995, the University pioneered the now-established Lothian Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS) initiative, which supports students from under-represented schools in south-east Scotland into higher education.

This year, it launched an access programme for part-time adult learners who wish to return to education to study humanities, social sciences or art and design.

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