



Widening Participation Strategy 2030



Putting students with lived experience at the heart of our strategy.



Widening participation and student success across the whole student lifecycle.



Enhancing our evidence-based approach.

Why this matters to us

Poverty and inequality can have a devastating impact on people's lives. Widening participation is primarily about minimising that impact through the transformative potential of higher education.

At Edinburgh we are passionate about social justice and mobility. We believe that students from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds deserve equitable access to the University, as well as equity of opportunity for those engaged in study and research while here. Widening participation is about nurturing talent across all parts of society. It is about us continuing to represent and be relevant for the communities we serve, whether local, national or international.

We're proud of being known as a global leader and highly selective research-driven institution. However, we're even more proud to be known as a place which welcomes students from all backgrounds and provides an exciting, inclusive and supportive environment in which all students can feel they belong and grow, and thrive and succeed through their studies at the University.

Our guiding principles

The principle running through the strategy is to work towards the University's Strategy 2030 ambition to lead Scotland's commitment to widening participation.

We are committed to a whole student lifecycle approach to widening participation (Aspiration and early engagement; Support to get in; Support to succeed; Support to progress). We are dedicated to ensuring those same students who join us have a positive experience, and are supported to achieve degree and graduate outcomes to match their peers.

Students with lived experiences are at the heart of our decisions within this strategy. We will build on insight gained and engagement with students to push for supportive change.

Within our strategy we are working towards institutional and national 2030 ambitions and setting ourselves milestones to achieve these.

We believe that our approaches must be evidence based and data driven, and we will establish clear measures of success. It is our responsibility to be transparent and accountable for what we set out to achieve.



www.ed.ac.uk/student-recruitment/widening-participation

© The University of Edinburgh 2023. The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, with registration number SC005336.

Icons: Getty Images

EDINBURGH
extraordinary futures await



Setting clear goals, valuing transparency and accountability for what we set out to achieve.



Striving for excellence and demonstrating leadership in our commitment to widening participation.



Providing an inclusive and supportive environment in which all students can feel they belong, thrive and succeed.

Our priorities

We will be evidence-led, transparent and demonstrate our impact clearly

We will benchmark and hold ourselves accountable, always seeking to meet our Strategy 2030 ambitions. We will be clear about what we want to achieve and by when, and track and share that progress. We will ensure there is governance to monitor progress and define levels of accountability across the University.

We will focus on the individual's whole life context

We recognise that individuals are shaped by multiple aspects of their identity and many of our students who have faced barriers accessing higher education experience multiple factors that affect their opportunities, in particular protected characteristics. In acknowledging that students from the most deprived communities in the UK are underrepresented within the University, we seek to understand and address the impacts of multiple disadvantage that can lead to inequality of opportunity.

We approach widening access and diversity from a UK-wide perspective

We value the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation as a reference for our work in Scotland, but our strategy emphasises a need for a UK-wide approach to widening participation. We attract students from across the UK to the University and so our diversity agenda should extend to those groups of students. We will continue to ensure our admissions processes focus on the contextual relevance for the individual and to seek to identify applicants with the potential to thrive at the University no matter their background. We will be ambitious in terms of both access and student success as well the importance of a positive student experience.

We value and support a range of learning pathways into the University

Attainment gaps in the UK have been steadily widening, in particular for learners from some of the most socio-economically challenged backgrounds, and this is making it more difficult for learners to access the University. We aspire to increase access from further education colleges to the University, and develop more access routes into the University for learners returning to education, without formal qualifications, or who need an alternative means to demonstrate their potential. Our minimum entry requirements will be set at the right level to enable students to apply to us while ensuring successful applicants can succeed on course.

We will ensure that all of our students have equal opportunities to flourish and thrive, and develop a sense of belonging

Our first year will appropriately prepare all students with full consideration for their journey into the University. Our curriculum transformation programme will regularly consult with a range of students and staff to make sure we're listening and acting upon their feedback. We will review our undergraduate scholarships to ensure they meet the needs of our students. We will also look beyond scholarships to a sense of belonging within our accommodation, on our campuses, and within student societies and activities. We will focus our efforts on groups of students most in need, in particular care-experienced students and students estranged from their families. We will monitor retention, degree attainment and graduate outcomes to ensure students from underrepresented backgrounds are thriving at the University and we will act if this isn't happening.

We will enable greater access to postgraduate study

We acknowledge that barriers to university study do not stop at undergraduate level. Building on our successes within access and support for our undergraduate students, we will drive innovation in Scotland to attract and support students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds to study at postgraduate level at the University. This will involve application and financial support, mentoring, and careers guidance and insight throughout their journey with us.