What is Widening Participation?

Universities recognise that a number of students with the ability to progress to Higher Education still do not do so. There are many perceived barriers to progression. Sometimes these are simply not recognising the benefits of Higher Education to future earnings and improved social mobility.

The Department of Widening Participation and Outreach at the University of Surrey delivers an important dimension of the University’s work in raising aspirations and attainment for students from a range of backgrounds, particularly those from groups currently under-represented in Higher Education.

The Department has recently formed a Schools Consortium, the core of which consists of local Surrey maintained schools. The Department aims to provide a sustained, coherent programme of intervention and activities and to track our work with these students to monitor the impact of the activities we are running.

Latest developments in Widening Participation

During 2013, OFFA and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) worked with Higher Education organisations and providers to develop a national strategy for access and student success, following a request from ministers in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in May 2012.

The overarching aim in developing the strategy is to ensure that everyone with the potential to benefit from Higher Education has an equal opportunity to do so, regardless of background, age, ethnicity, disability or gender.

The 3 aims of the strategy are:

- to support and encourage improvements in the number and/or proportions of students in Higher Education from low income and other under-represented groups.
- to reduce as far as practicable the barriers to Higher Education for students from low income and other under-represented groups by ensuring that institutions continue to invest in outreach and financial support.
- to support and encourage equality of opportunity through the provision of clear and accessible financial information for students, their parents/carers and their advisers.

http://www.offa.org.uk/
http://www.hefce.ac.uk/
Meet the Team

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Inspiring the next generation
raising aspirations and attainment through partnership
FAQs

What is a WP Student?

A WP Student is a term used to describe a student from a group currently underrepresented in Higher Education. For example:

- A student with no parental history of Higher Education
- A student in receipt of Pupil Premium
- A student with a disability
- A student in Local Authority Care
- A student from a low participation neighborhood

Common misconceptions

WP Students are less academically able
WP Students get offered university places with lower grades
WP Students study vocational courses
WP Students do not pay their way

Whilst WP students may have experienced challenging circumstances that have disadvantaged them in some way, many of the students we work with are very academically able yet do not always see their own potential to succeed and progress onto Higher Education. The Department of Widening Participation and Outreach aims to help these students recognise their abilities and strengths and to reach their full potential as well as reduce or remove any perceived barriers to Higher Education.

One of our Student Ambassadors, Izzy, does a demonstration at the 2013 Nursing and Midwifery Summer School

Inspiring the next generation - raising aspirations and attainment through partnership
On Wednesday 27 November, Professor Les Ebdon CBE, Director of the Office of Fair Access (OFFA), visited the University to discuss our Widening Participation and Outreach activities, particularly our new Schools Consortium.

Professor Ebdon’s day started with a meeting with Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Professor Gill Nicholls and members of the Division.

As part of his visit, he was able to observe over fifty Year 10 pupils from four of the Consortium Schools who engaged in Veterinary Taster Day workshops as part of a Vet Biosciences Day. He was then given a tour of the library facilities, including SPLASH (Student Personal Learning and Study Hub) and the dedicated Outreach room.

Following a lunch with senior staff from Consortium Schools, University staff and WP Student Ambassadors, Professor Ebdon concluded his visit with a tour of Surrey Sports Park and SSTL (Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd) based at the Surrey Research Park.
Students from Rodborough School take part in a spectroscopy activity at the Skills Fair!

We asked students to tell us about their experience at the Surrey Skills Fair. Answers were entered into a prize draw.

The winning entry reads:

‘I have had a lot of fun coming round the stalls and seeing all of the exhibits. It’s really opened my eyes to the fact that I can do anything. I found out lots of cool stuff, like the fact that Martin Freeman went to Brooklands college! In my opinion, that’s awesome. I hope this is run for next year’s Year 9’s too!’

£50 worth of book vouchers as well as £250 worth for their school were won by a student from Kings International College in Camberley.

The WP & Outreach Team will be presenting a certificate and gift vouchers during a school assembly in April.

The 2014 Surrey Skills Fair, held at the Surrey Sports Park, was a huge success with 2,012 students attending from 36 Surrey schools on Thursday 6th and Friday 7th February 2014. Organised by the Department of Widening Participation as part of their work to support students from groups underrepresented in Higher Education, the event is designed to help Year 9 students in advance of choosing their GCSE options as well as give them the opportunity to find out about a range of industries and training options.

This year, a total of 48 exhibitors attended, catering for a wide variety of interests. A large number of businesses including IBM, Procter & Gamble, Eagle Radio and Surrey Satellite Technology attended as well as a number of education providers from further and higher education institutions such as Brooklands College and Royal Holloway University.

A new feature of the event was the short careers sessions to highlight how participating in Further and Higher Education can widen the range of career options available in the future. Feedback from exhibitors was exceptionally positive, and the speakers that delivered careers talks during the event were also very impressed by the mature attitude and behaviour of the students that attended. Freelance Careers Consultant Alan Bullock said "I thought the conduct of the students who came to my talks was outstanding and they were an absolute credit to their schools”.

We hope that they Surrey Skills Fair will run again on Thursday 5th & Friday 6th February 2015.
MATHS TPD

On 7th November 2013, we were joined by a number of teachers from consortium schools for a fun and interactive session looking at maths and maths teaching.

Dr Anesa Hosein, from the Department of Higher Education lead a session in Geogebra; an app for iPads that can be used to teach maths in a digital way.

This was followed by a session on interactive teaching methods with Matt Parker – Maths Comedian, Public Engagement in Mathematics, Fellow at Queen Mary University and Maths teacher. Matt showed us some of the many things you can do with Mobius Loop and some fascinating maths-based card tricks.

More events in the programme will be listed on the website and disseminated to schools.

The programme of Professional Development Events for Teachers in the wider Surrey Schools Consortium was launched by the Department of Widening Participation and Outreach in the Summer term 2013 with two pilot events. It has subsequently developed into a full academic year programme.

The premise is to re-inspire teachers with the love of their subject, discover practical ways to develop their teaching and provide opportunities to meet with peers, academics and other specialists in order to better work with students.

The programme gives teachers increased engagement with Higher Education and will lead to improved abilities to instil confidence and motivation in relation to their Widening Participation students’ progression to Higher Education.
Our Student Ambassadors

Along with our colleagues in Student Recruitment and Marketing, the work of the Department of Widening Participation & Outreach is supported by a dedicated team of over 70 Student Ambassadors.

The Student Ambassador Scheme gives both undergraduate and postgraduate students the opportunity to act as a positive role model by providing information to younger students to help with their decision making about attending university.

Student Ambassadors benefit from comprehensive training and support which includes making effective presentations, guidance on group dynamics, as well as the University Child Protection, Equality & Diversity, Data Protection and Anti-bribery Policies.

While they earn, Student Ambassadors undoubtedly see their role as meaningful. It requires enthusiasm and dedication and also allows them to develop a wide range of skills to help with their own personal and academic progression.

The positive comments we receive from teachers and pupils reinforce the enormous value that the Ambassadors have in supporting younger students, as they consider their own journeys to Higher Education.
Forthcoming events

Year 6 History of Science Day
Wednesday 21 May 2014 - Tillingbourne Junior School

Business TPD Event
Thursday 22 May 2014

Year 6 Junior University
Wednesday 28 - Friday 30 May 2014

Year 12 Chemistry Lab visit
Wednesday 18 June 2014 - Woking College

Year 12 Young Persons University Courses
One Health
Science & Engineering
Business, Hospitality & Tourism and Law
Languages
Nursing & Midwifery

Year 12 Chemistry Experience Day
Tuesday 8 July 2014

Year 9/10 Dragonfly Day
Friday 11 July 2014

Year 10 Archaeology/Anthropology Day
Tuesday 1 July 2014 - Royal Alexandra & Albert School

Year 6 Transition Days
Wednesday 30 July 2014 - Esher C of E School
Wednesday 20 August 2014 - Reigate School
The Beacon School - tbc

Want to get involved?

If you would like to be involved in the delivery and support of any of the events listed, please contact a member of the team to find out how you could contribute.

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