



Become a part of the
largest national
network
committed to widening
access in higher
education



The National Education
Opportunities Network



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Working to help widen
access to Higher
Education.

ABOUT US

The National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) was founded in early 2012 as the professional organisation to support those involved in widening access to higher education (HE) and social mobility.

At the heart of NEON is a cross-sector approach bringing together HE institutions, schools, colleges, the voluntary sector, professional bodies and employers.

NEON grew from the need for a strong, coherent community of professionals that could support learners from under-represented backgrounds to both enter and succeed within HE. NEON is shaped and led by its members.

VISION

Access to and success in higher education should not be related to social background but based on ability and willingness to participate.

AIM

To empower and enable those with a commitment to widening access to HE to affect change in their institutions and communities.

OBJECTIVES

Development

To increase the professionalisation of widening access work through the development and accreditation of practice.

Resources

To be a research and advocacy resource for those working in access at the local, regional and national level.

Quality

To develop and enhance practice and quality in widening access work throughout the student lifecycle.

Support

To offer input and support to policymakers and government from the widening access community.

NEON PROGRAMMES

NEON SUMMITS

Our summits are the leading one day conferences in the sector focused on the needs of the widening access community and delivered at a cost-effective rate. We bring together experts from strategy, policy and practice to address the key issues in widening access, participation and success in HE.

ACCESS ACADEMY

NEON's Access Academy focuses on the professionalisation of widening access work via skills development. Academy sessions are interactive training days limited to 30 participants led by experts in the field of widening access, education and HE. Since 2015 there have been over 740 participants in Access Academy events.

NEON AWARDS

Put your institution forward as a leader in widening access to higher education and social mobility by participating exclusively in the greatly anticipated NEON Awards. The Awards are now in their 7th year with the reception hosted at the Palace of Westminster. Categories include Higher Education Institution of the Year Award, Widening Access Partnership Award, School or College Widening Access Award and the coveted NEON Student of the Year Award.

The transformative power that HE can have on the lives of its learners is best captured by widening access work and the awards aim to celebrate this.



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Over 1000 delegates attended NEON events in 2018-19.

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... I found the mixture of research, policy and practical information and sharing was really useful. Lots of information to take in and take back to my institution.

SUMMER SYMPOSIUM

The Summer Symposium is the largest annual event focused on widening access to HE in the UK, attracting over 250 delegates each year. Since 2012 there have been over 230 papers presented at the Symposium.

Recent keynote speakers have included the Shadow Minister for Further & Higher Education, and representatives from the National Association of Headteachers, Office for Students, Hugh Baird College, Social Mobility Commission and the Higher Education Policy Institute.



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By joining NEON you are providing your organisation with a unique chance to shape policy and the widening access research agenda.

WORKING GROUPS

NEON Working Groups are a network of national communities of practice bringing together members to shape their work collaboratively exchanging knowledge, sharing practice and developing materials and resources that help all members make a difference. All members are updated about their progress via our website and our weekly newsletter, NEON News.

The following Working Groups meet four times a year and members benefit from FREE participation in these national communities.

- Access and Outreach for Disabled Learners
- Establishing Evidence and Measuring Impact
- Mentoring to Widen Access
- Widening Access for Mature Learners
- Working at Primary Level
- Addressing Differential Outcomes for BME Learners
- Widening Participation for Refugees and Asylum-Seekers
- Supporting BTEC Students
- Student Unions and Widening Participation
- Widening Participation in Post Graduate Study

RESEARCH AND POLICY

NEON is the premier membership-based organisation advocating for policies which support greater diversity in the student population. NEON has nurtured close relationships with policymakers and produced a number of influential research reports. These include 'The financial concerns of students', conducted for Universities UK by NEON and Portland Communications, released at a parliamentary round table in June 2018, which found that the available information on tuition fees and the student loan system in England is often inaccessible and unclear, and that students want more information on how universities spend tuition fee income.

Our latest report, 'Working Class Heroes – Understanding access to higher education for white students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds' received extensive coverage including: Metro, The Guardian, The Times, Independent to name but a few.



HOW WILL NEON PLUS WORK?

Our membership, and their activities, are diverse meaning that areas where they could benefit from the support of NEON will vary. For some NEON may be able to assist in designing projects focused on specific learner groups, for others it may be assisting with the implementation of priorities in their APP/NCOP plans or the development and delivery of evaluation strategies. Below we outline some examples of the work we can do, building on our own CPD and knowledge exchange work, but we are keen to speak with members about any area of their APP or NCOP activities where we can add value.

- **Working with parents and carers:** We know this is a key area of challenge for many of our members. Over 230 practitioners have attended NEON's '*Working with parents and/or carers to widen participation*' Access Academy course since 2015. We are keen to build on this course and work with members to develop a parental engagement strategy and to both design bespoke activities and assess their impact.
- **Building strategic engagement with partner schools:** Via our successful 'NEON for Schools' initiative we have worked with over 30 schools to develop evidence based Higher Education progression plans. In 2018-19 we collected data on the views and attitudes of over 4000 pupils, teachers and senior management teams to inform this work. As our members embark in 2020-21 on new 5 year APPs there is significant potential for NEON to assist them in building embedded, sustainable partnership relationships with their partner schools.

NEON PLUS

What is NEON Plus?

Since its formation in 2012, over 1,000 professionals have participated in our continuing professional development (CPD) programme and working groups. NEON is continuing to grow. We now have over 100 organisational members including over 70 HE providers. However, we believe there is more a national professional organisation can do to support its members beyond CPD and knowledge exchange. **NEON Plus is a new service to support our members in any or all aspects of the design, planning, delivery and evaluation of their access and participation work.**

As our members embark on the implementation of new Access and Participation Plans (APP) and the second stage of NCOP, we want to extend what we can do to help them reach the ambitious targets in their plans. Drawing on our expertise, and that of the NEON community, we want to offer project support to our member organisations to help them achieve their access & participation goals.



- **Design & implementation of outreach for disabled learners:** We have two disability working groups for both the North and South of England and over 50 practitioners attended our 2017 Summit, '*Enabling Access to Higher Education for Disabled learners*'. It is clear the sector wants to take action to ensure we attract more learners from this target group. NEON can help members consider how participants currently engage with their outreach offer and improve participation & progression for these learners.
- **Design and delivery of evaluation strategies:** A key area of strength for NEON is our work supporting members in the delivery of evaluation. Nearly 200 people have participated in our 4 day '*Evaluating Access*' course and our working group in this area has been active for 6 years. We have a dedicated Research & Policy Officer and are able to offer bespoke support in designing evaluation strategies & tools, undertaking external evaluation and working directly with stakeholders and learners.
- **Enabling access & participation for learners from BAME groups:** Closing gaps in participation and progression by ethnic group is one of the major challenges facing our members. NEON convenes a national working group in this area and has undertaken national research looking at targeting of different communities. We would welcome the opportunity to support our members in addressing their challenges in this area.

NEON'S APPROACH

To deliver NEON Plus services we have constructed a team, including the members of the NEON Secretariat and a group of associates with specialist expertise across the whole access & participation portfolio. We will:

- Work with you to fully understand the area you need to focus upon and take account of your requirements to arrive at the best solutions.
- Agree the costs associated with our work on an individual per assignment basis.
- Identify who within the NEON Plus Team will be best placed to deliver the assignment.
- Establish clear aims in order to monitor success and a time frame for delivery.
- Deliver outcomes that meet the priorities in your APP.

WORKING WITH NEON PLUS

As we enter the 2020s, addressing access & participation challenges requires deeper collaboration and NEON Plus provides the opportunity to make this happen. To explore how to work with us on NEON Plus and how we can support you work please contact **Martin Webster** via email at neonconsultant@londonhigher.ac.uk.



MEMBERS RECEIVE

35% off all NEON events

Unique opportunity to be part of NEON's research

EXCLUSIVE participation in the NEON Awards

Weekly updates on the widening access landscape via NEON News

FREE participation in NEON resources

FREE attendance at any of our 10 NEON Working Groups

Discounted attendance at events with NEON partners

JOIN NEON

BE PART OF NEON AND SHOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S COMMITMENT TO WIDENING ACCESS.

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP

Higher Education Institution
Premium Membership
£860 per annum

Further Education College
Premium Membership
£780 per annum

Charity & Voluntary Organisation
Premium Membership
£730 per annum

Premium Membership includes three NEON event credits — worth £169 each.

Membership
£490 per annum

Membership
£390 per annum

Membership
£330 per annum

Private Sector Organisation
£660 per annum

Local Authority
£330 per annum

School & Students Unions
FREE Membership

