

Widening Participation in Post-Graduate Teaching and Research

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What is Widening Participation?

Free School Meals?

Disability/
Neurodiversity?

Working-class?

Difficult
circumstances?

Carer, care leaver or
estranged?

Deprived Postcode?

First Generation?

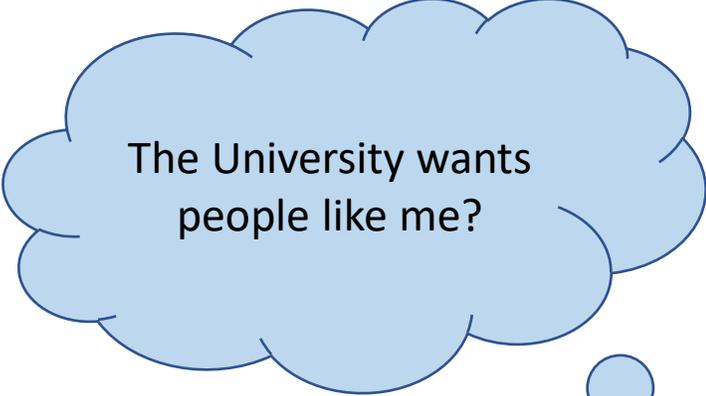
Minority Ethnic
Background?

Leaver
Minority
performing
Disability
Poor
First LOW Generation
area meals
Mental health
Circumstances
progression ethnic Disrupted
school Personal Free
income University
education Care
Carer



Access to Leeds Criteria

- You're from a household with an annual income of £25,000 or below OR in receipt of 16-19 Bursary Fund or Discretionary Learner Support with an income threshold of £25,000 OR in receipt of free school meals during your GCSE studies
- Your parents did not go to university
- You attend a school achieving below the national average at GCSE
- Your studies have been disrupted by circumstances in your personal, social, or domestic life
- You live in an area with low progression to higher education
- You live or grew up in public care



The University wants people like me?



The University cares about people like me

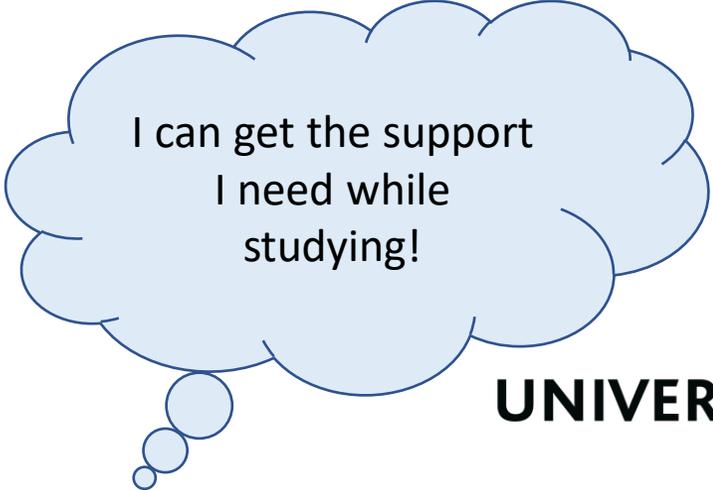


Access to Leeds & The Plus Programme

- Access to Leeds (A2L) is the University's access scheme for people from 'disadvantaged backgrounds'
- On completion of A2L, students are enrolled in The Plus Programme
- They provide a variety of support throughout university
- Not just academic support, but financial, career and social opportunities
- Currently not open to PGR students
- Ongoing improvement



I can meet people from my background!



I can get the support I need while studying!



BAME or PWER?

“Black African and Minority Ethnic”

Can feel ‘Othering’, White vs. Non-White

Minority groups have different issues to those from the Black Community!

Members of the BAME community increasingly rejecting the term



“People Who Experience Racism”

Allows research to focus on ethnic group affected rather than ‘Non-white’

Potentially more accepted within the PWER community

Let’s debate this within the student body!



Current Landscape

These issues may have been exacerbated by COVID-19

Sutton Report June 2021

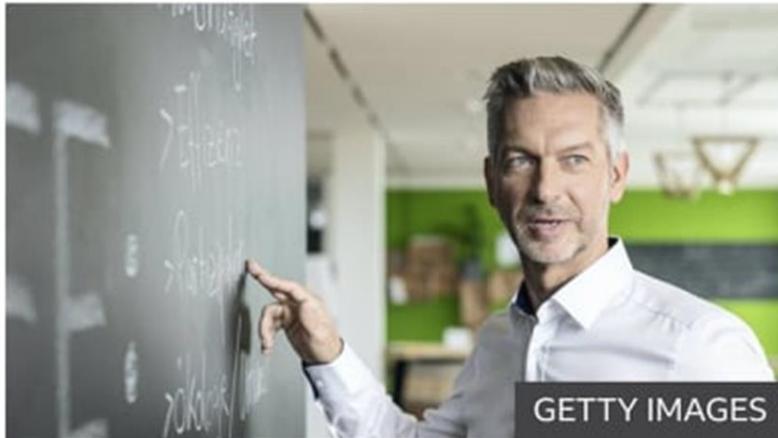
- Universities should extend their WP outreach (More summer schools)
- Financial barriers to PG should be addressed through centralised funding
- WP PG data should be published annually by all institutions
- A PG student was more employable (but not necessarily at a higher income) in the labour market
- Master's loans were successful in increasing WP PG
- Increasing PG tuition fees without financial help for WP students may damage the progress made
- Many students are dissuaded from further PG study due to rising tuition fees and living costs
- Universities and funders can do more to promote WP PG



Richer parents pressure teachers on exam grades

By Sean Coughlan
BBC News family and education correspondent

🕒 29 July | 💬 Comments



GETTY IMAGES

Teachers have faced lobbying from some parents over this year's grades, suggests research by a leading social mobility charity

These issues may have been exacerbated by COVID-19

Parents of pupils in private schools or living in affluent areas of England were the most likely to put pressure on teachers over exam grades, suggests research from the Sutton Trust.

Almost a quarter of private school teachers had been contacted by parents over A-level and GCSE grades, twice as many as in schools in deprived areas.

Teachers submitted grades this year after exams were disrupted by Covid.

Head teachers warned such lobbying was "inappropriate" and added stress.

'Sharpest elbows'

The research, based on a survey of 3,200 teachers, showed teachers in private schools came under the greatest pressure, with the highest number, 23%, reporting parents contacting them over exam grades.

BBC News 29th July 2021

(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-57999790>)



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Postgraduate Taught Data at the University

Recommendations from the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 PGT Data- Refer to report for full data!

- i) The BAME resitting rate at PGT level should be addressed, as this suggests that the attainment gap between BAME and White students exists at the University of Leeds and is the largest cause of BAME PGT non-continuation. The Plus Programme could develop specialised support for BAME students, who often have complicated personal lives (intersectionality)
- ii) University staff should receive regular training on intersectionality and the attainment gap in BAME students. Students should know who to do to for support if they feel they have been discriminated against.
- iii) Departments with a low LEB rate should investigate the reasons why these students may be struggling more than their peers and intervene early
- iv) The LEB data is somewhat unreliable, where only students from the bottom 20% deprived areas are classed as LEB- This should be expanded to include all students eligible for the plus programme- ensuring young carers and estranged students are included. The university acknowledges this
- v) The University should aim to understand why students may not disclose a disability, but also screen for neurodiversity in a non-offensive way. Specific support should be given to students who have communication difficulties.



Postgraduate Research Data at the University

Recommendations based on the data from the last five years

2017 to 2021 on postgraduate research applications:

- 1) Target setting to enable collective understanding of the milestones and aspirations for diversity in PGR study
- 2) Development of approaches to contextual admissions and/or ring fence interview slots and/or scholarships
- 3) Review and refinement of existing scholarship model to increase diversity and minimise barriers
- 4) Evaluation of impact of changes made and embedded from the outset

LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

- Information on ethnicity is not mandatory
- The categories do not match with UKRI
- There are currently only two gender options available
- Disability information is optional



UK Solutions

Varied approach from UK Universities....

Paid Internships: “You have to have experience to get experience!”
Open or ring fenced to particular students?
Links to black British business.

NEON (Leeds and Manchester) A working group that shares practice for widening participation at PG level. Provides support for staff and specific groups of students.

Glasgow University: Integration of refugees into their original higher professions, rather than starting from scratch

Sutton trust 2021:
“There is scope for significantly increased and co-ordinated efforts to further widen postgraduate participation by universities and funding bodies.”

Providing scholarships: Sheffield £10,000, Leeds £5,000, Manchester £4,000 etc. These are competitive and need to be advertised effectively.

Anonymisation: Previous degree(s) intuitions are anonymised during the application process for PG study.
More research needed!



International Solutions

What lessons can we learn from outside the UK?

United States of America

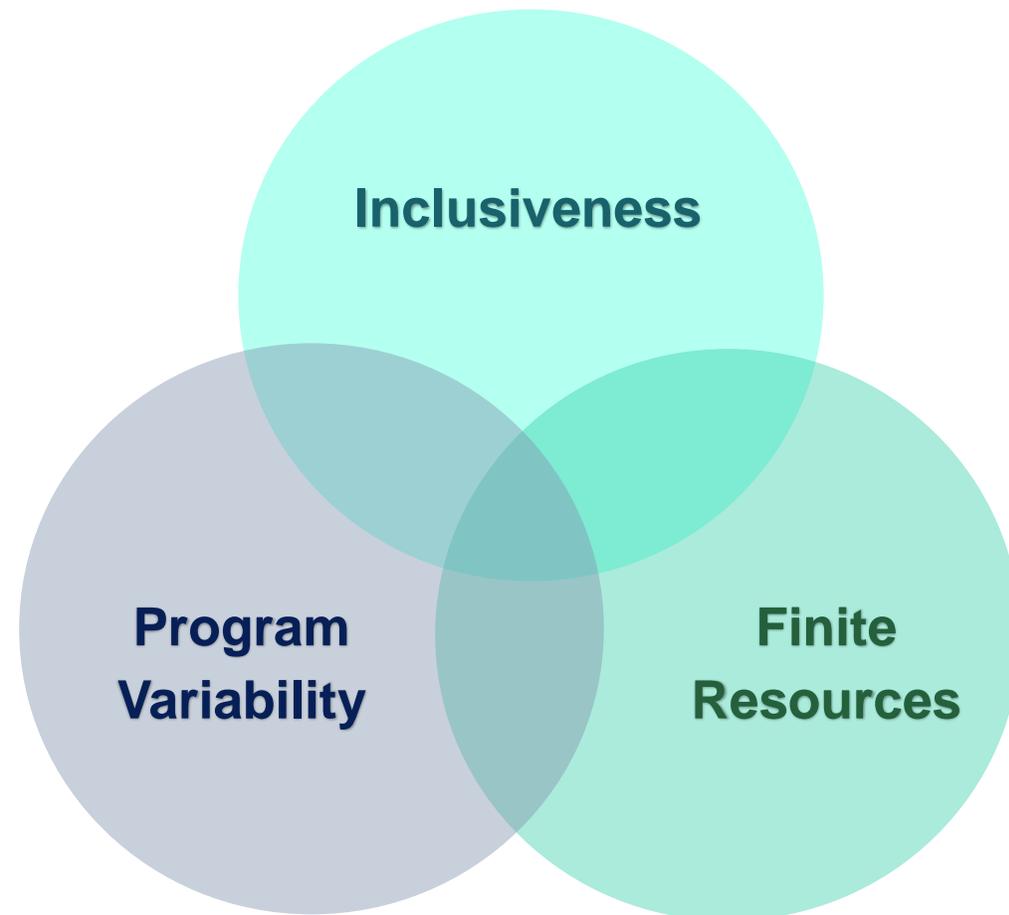
- History of Black Universities
- Controversy behind affirmative action
- Tripartite Model: Montana university 2019
- Diversification of the American Military

Europe

- Greece, flexible PG learning in mature female students
- Ireland Access course, 72% went onto PG study!
- Highlights early intervention and later flexibility for WP students

Africa (Zambia)

- Kwame Nkrumah University in Ghana, PG long distance programme since 2005!
- Resources available in the student's own town
- Entry and graduation any time of year
- University of Cape Town: reduced drop out of Black students by 50% through PG support & bridging programme



*Figure one: Inclusiveness – Benefits of WP at PG level
Program Variability- Differences between departments
Finite Resources- e.g limited number of scholarships.*



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Recommendations

More in the full report!

- ✓ Sector-wide collaboration is needed to establish a gold-standard for WP student admissions, retention, and professional development
- ✓ Strategies such as Access to Leeds and the ongoing support of the Plus Programme should be widely adopted and evaluated
- ✓ Students should be involved in any decisions which affect a particular protected group and be sufficiently compensated
- ✓ Research into WP postgraduate education should be prioritised
- ✓ Institutions should be aware of their postgraduate diversity where prospective staff and students can access this in the public domain



Summary

- Universities have more to give to WP at PG level
- The funding situation for PG students is dire
- There is no standardised UK or international WP approach
- Leeds University has the potential to lead the sector but must address it's attainment gap
- Research into WPPG should be a priority in all university departments
- WP students may benefit from online and flexible learning opportunities
- Involve students from the affected group as much as possible in decision making



Further Resources....

- Read the full report [HERE](#)
- How my Scholarship made my time at Leeds [HERE](#)
- [Sutton Trust](#)
- [NEON Working Group](#)
- [Access to Leeds](#)
- [The Plus Programme](#)

*If you have any questions or discussion points,
please feel free to contact me:*

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