

NEON Awards 2024 Nominations

Category

NEON Widening Access Initiative (Outreach) Award

Name of project and institution

The Discover Course, University of Sheffield

Brief Description

Discover is a free short course run by the University of Sheffield's Department for Lifelong Learning. It aims to reach mature learners from under-represented groups, who are interested in progressing to University. The University, local museums and community organisations have worked together to create a course which builds on learners' experiences and offers participants an opportunity to experience what HE study involves, as well as giving the knowledge and confidence to make their next steps. The learning centres on objects which gives the course its unique potential to engage those taking part and to create a community of learners.

Why has this project been nominated

Discover is a free outreach course that is successfully supporting mature learners to reach higher education. Delivered by the University of Sheffield's Department for Lifelong Learning (DLL) in partnership with local museums, the course has been running for the past 12 years. In that time, over 300 learners have completed the course and many have gone on to secure a university place. Discover has been designed to support mature learners who have been out of education for some time and don't have the usual university entry qualifications. These learners often face a number of barriers to learning, such as low confidence, caring responsibilities, English as a second language, or previous negative educational experiences. As well as building the confidence and skills to apply for University through a series of taster sessions, workshops and IAG sessions, the Discover course adopts an innovative approach to learning that links higher education with the museum sector. This combines a focus on learning from participant's own objects as well as from the objects within museum collections. This approach is designed to help participants build confidence and foster a sense of belonging to help them thrive in higher education. In partnership with Learn for Life, a Sheffield-based organisation who look after vulnerable and hard-to-reach members of the community, the course also offers specific support for refugees and asylum seekers including English language support. On completion of the course all participants are guaranteed an interview for their chosen degree with a foundation year subject to meeting published entry requirements.

How long has the project been running

Since 2012, with detailed impact/progression data available from 2016

Number of participants for each year of the project's operation

Since 2016 (when detailed data is available from), 155 participants have taken part in the Discover course, either a full course, a summer school, or an online course (during the pandemic). Of those participants, 78 (50%) applied for a place on the DLL foundation programme. 67 (86%) of these applicants were successfully offered a place on the course.

More details

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/dll/events/discover#:~:text=Discover%20is%20an%20award%2Dwinning,the%20Department%20for%20Lifelong%20Learning.>

