



# The NEON Awards 2024 Categories

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## **NEON Widening Access Initiative Awards**

The idea of defining leading or best practice is one that is seen as a continuous priority in the widening access community. The NEON Awards should make a contribution to increasing our understanding of leading practice. These awards will seek to identify and recognise widening access initiatives being delivered in the NEON community that act as distinctive, effective and innovative beacons to take our work forward.

## **NEON Widening Access Initiative Award (Outreach)**

The criteria for this award are:

- An outreach initiative that has been delivered for a minimum of one year.
- Evidence of how the initiative has made a tangible impact on either the aspirations of learners regarding HE, information and knowledge of learners regarding HE, learner attainment, progression to HE or attitudes/knowledge of HE of the parents/professionals who support learners.
- The initiative must be led by a NEON member but may involve non-NEON members.
- There is no minimum or maximum size for the initiative in terms of number of learner/staff participants.

## **NEON Widening Access Initiative Award (Retention and Progression)**

The criteria for this award will be:

- An initiative carried out with existing undergraduates, particularly aimed at those from under represented backgrounds, that has been delivered for a minimum of one year.
- Evidence of how the initiative has made a tangible impact on either the student experience of learners regarding learning and teaching, learner attainment, student retention and progression of learners to employment or postgraduate study.
- The initiative must be led by a NEON member but may involve non-NEON members.
- There is no minimum or maximum size for the initiative in terms of number of learner/staff participants.

## **NEON Widening Access Partnership Award**

Working in partnership has been a key aspect of widening access. This award will look to recognise organisations that have effectively worked together and supported each other to effectively widen access. The criteria for this award are:

- Sustained partnership over a prolonged period of time (one year or more) working to widen access.
- Clear evidence of a true partnership approach to widening access.
- Evidence of the value that has been added to the work by working in partnership.
- To be nominated partnerships must include at least one partner who is a NEON member.

## **NEON School or College Widening Access Award**

At the centre of progression to HE is the role of schools and colleges. We want to ensure in NEON that schools and colleges are part of our community. This award will look to celebrate the school or college that has worked particularly hard and successfully to enable their learners from under-represented groups to enter HE. The criteria for the award are:

- Clear statistical evidence of success in supporting the progression of learners from under-represented groups to HE.

- A clear description of what the school or college does to support the progression of learners from under-represented groups to HE in terms of activity with learners, either in partnership with HE/other external organisations to the school/college, or activity delivered by the schools/colleges themselves.
- Clear evidence of strategic and organisational commitment to supporting progression of learners from under-represented groups to HE and how this manifests itself.
- Any school or college which may be nominated or wish to nominate themselves, that is not a member of NEON will be expected to join NEON (there is no cost for schools/sixth form colleges to join in 2024).

## NEON Students of the Year Award

The work of higher education (HE) students is fundamental to widening access activity. They embody the ethos of access in what they do and are also responsible for much of the face-to-face work that goes on in our field.

This award looks to identify the student in the NEON community who has made an innovative and distinctive impact to widening access to HE. We will be looking to make **several awards** to students.

The criteria for the award are:

- A minimum of one year of engagement in widening access to HE activity.
- The student may be an undergraduate, postgraduate or a recent graduate (graduated within the last two years).
- Evidence of how the particular student has made a distinctive and innovative impact to widening access work in their organisations. This may be in face-to-face work with learners or in other ways. The panel will be looking in the submission for good descriptions of what **that student** has contributed in their work, as opposed to, for instance, a general description of a project they have been involved in, even if that may be quite innovative.
- The student may be one who is paid by their institution or who acts as a volunteer.
- We would like to make awards to students who have progressed to HE from a widening access background and also those who have not progressed from a widening access background. If you wish to nominate a student who has progressed to HE from a widening access background

and overcome barriers to make it to HE then we would particularly welcome this so please can you provide as much detail as is permissible and possible in the section on the nomination form.

## **NEON Higher Education Institution of the Year Award**

Widening access is a key strategic objective for all our members and advances have been made across the sector thanks to the commitment and hard work of institutions.

This award will recognise an institution that, the judging panel feel, ensures that widening access is at the heart of the institution and that looks to make a difference throughout the whole of the student lifecycle.

The criteria for this award are:

- Demonstrable senior management commitment to and support for widening access.
- A progressive programme of outreach activities that aims to both ensure young people can make informed choices about their futures and eases their transition to higher education.
- An appreciation of the diversity of the institution's own student body demonstrated through innovative approaches to teaching and learning and the delivery of student support.
- Comprehensive careers advice and support, especially for those students from under-represented backgrounds.
- A robust monitoring and evaluation process seeking continuous improvement.
- Evidence of progress made in widening access and in supporting learners from under-represented backgrounds.

## **NEON Contribution to Widening Access Award**

The access community is driven forward by a cadre of committed and inspiring individuals. NEON would like to recognise the work of such individuals as part of the process of recognising widening access work overall. The criteria for this important award are:

- A minimum of five years' experience working in widening access work.

- Clear evidence of the work that the individual has done in their widening access career and how this could be described as 'innovative and outstanding'. This evidence and description should include at least one example of their work directly with learners at some stage of their career.
- Nominees must be employed by a NEON organisational member or be a NEON individual member.

**The nomination deadline is 5.00pm on Friday, 12th April 2024**

**Shortlisted nominees will be informed in the week of 29th April 2024**

**PLEASE ENSURE YOU HAVE OBTAINED PERMISSION FROM NOMINEE(S)  
PRIOR TO SUBMITTING THE ONLINE NOMINATION FORM**