

World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED): Invitation to participate

1. Why World Access to Higher Education Day?

Recent research looking at the evidence available on participation in HE by social background across the world in the '*Charting Equity: Drawing the Global Access Map*' report has shown that in over 90% of countries in the world we have evidence of inequalities in participation in HE by social background. It is crucial that more concerted efforts to make access more equitable are made. UNESCO have recognized the importance of this by making access to lifelong and higher education one of their Global Goals for 2030. To reach this goal, new innovations in thinking and practice are necessary, and the engagement of new stakeholders from within and outside HE. There is evidence to suggest that increasing participation in HE from more marginalised groups needs to be a higher priority for policymakers and education stakeholders inside and outside HE. In Europe for example, despite nations agreeing in 2009 to set targets to reduce inequalities in access to HE by 2015 only 20% had actually done so, while globally access to HE is invisible in global and regional rankings structures.

2. Aims of World Access to Higher Education Day.

The proposal is to establish an annual World Access to Higher Education Day which can focus the attention of stakeholders from across the world on the issues of access and diversity in higher education (HE), modelled on other international commemoration days. It has the following objectives:

- To engage stakeholders from across the public and private sector in equitable access to HE.
- To advance understanding regarding how equitable access to HE is understood.
- To establish a set of goals which can orientate action to make access to HE equitable across the world.
- To launch a new global **Higher Education Access & Diversity** consortium

3. How will it be organised?

World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED) is being initiated by the University of Edinburgh and the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON), who are the professional organisation for access HE in the UK. The objective is to establish a steering group of like-minded organisations who can work together to take the project forward. The project can only be successful through global collective effort. The aspiration in the medium term is to designate World Access to Higher Education a UN approved international day.

4. How will World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED) work?

It is anticipated that WAHED will be delivered in Autumn/Fall 2018, and officially launched in summer 2017. It is proposed WAHED will be made up of have 4 components:

- **A network of 5-6 conferences**

Conferences in each continent, connected together virtually, with a major hub conference at the University of Edinburgh.



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- **Worldwide ‘access & diversity slam’**

Supporting partners in individual countries to showcase innovative access & diversity activities in their own countries on the day and associate/brand them with WAHED, connecting to the network of conferences.

- **Global student voices campaign**

Bringing together the voices of students from diverse communities and their stories from across the world.

- **Launch of the Global Higher Education Access & Diversity Consortium**

The aim is to explore over the period up to the Day what an organisation to take forward this work globally could look like from 2018 and launch it on the day. It is envisaged such a consortium will focus in particular on building the evidence base and using this to advocate for change and driving forward innovation in practice.

5. Taking WAHED forward

WAHED will need in kind and financial support and to go forward. Establishing the nature of this support is a key goal of this initial consultation phase from March to June 2017. A consultation event to gather support for WAHED will take place after the British Council Going Global Conference in London, on May 25th 2017. Leading up the event we are undertaking a consultation with a number of organisations regarding the WAHED proposal. We are inviting prospective partners to give feedback on the following questions:

1. *Are the aims of WAHED appropriate?*

2. *Are the activities that constitute WAHED appropriate?*

3. *Is your organisation able to contribute to supporting WAHED and if so how? In particular:*

- ***Hosting one of the regional conferences.***
- ***Disseminating information on WAHED and the call for innovative activities.***
- ***Becoming part of a global steering group***
- ***Offering in kind organisational support***
- ***Financial support, or links to potential financial support***