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A photograph of three diverse students sitting on a stone wall outdoors. On the left, a young woman with a blue headscarf and a brown leather jacket is smiling. In the middle, a young man in a red and white striped jacket is also smiling. On the right, a young woman in a blue t-shirt is smiling and looking towards the others. They appear to be in a relaxed, social setting with greenery in the background.

University of Edinburgh Widening Participation: a whole institution approach

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What I plan to cover



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1. Widening participation in Scotland context
2. University of Edinburgh context
3. Why whole institution approach? And why whole student lifecycle approach
4. New WP strategy, what we want to achieve & what we learnt from the process
5. Actions following the new strategy

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“I want us to determine now that a child born today in one of our most deprived communities will, by the time he or she leaves school, have the same chance of going to university as a child born in one of our least deprived communities.”

Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland,
26 November 2014

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Scotland and Higher Education

- Overall high rate of participation in higher education: 55% in 2014
- Colleges a main contributor (20% via college, 35% go to university from school)
- 18 year-olds from Scotland's 20% least deprived communities are more than four times as likely to enter university as those from the 20% most deprived communities.
- Lack of access to the qualifications needed to reach higher education

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The Commission on Widening Access



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34 recommendations, but one stood out...

By 2030, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent 20% of entrants to higher education.

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What is widening participation and why do it?

- Socio-economic disadvantage is at the core of the widening participation mission in Scotland
- Education as a potential tool for social mobility, social progress and economic prosperity
- intersects with many other characteristics such as educational attainment, parental/family heritage of higher education, gender, ethnicity, disability etc.



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Defining widening participation



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- Scottish government approach: focus on SIMD and low progression schools (SHEP <22% progression)
- University of Edinburgh approach: contextual admissions policy, i.e. multiple indicators
- Differing approaches in rest of the UK: Polar3, BME, Free school meals (HESA performance data)
- Students with protected characteristics to be considered, e.g. disabled students, gender imbalance

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University of Edinburgh

In 2018 there were 58,000+ applications for 5400 places

Around 11% of entrants in 2018/19 were from SIMD 20

Over 50% of our Scottish domiciled entrants have at least one marker of disadvantage

27% of our Scottish domiciled entrants have 2 markers of disadvantage

Around 20% of our Scottish students come from low income households



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How do we measure and target for WP activity?

Scottish Funding Council/Scottish government approach – focus on SIMD and low progression schools via the SHEP programme

University of Edinburgh approach: contextual admissions policy, i.e. multiple indicators for disadvantage
Some differing approaches in the rest of the UK, e.g Polar3, BME, free school meals



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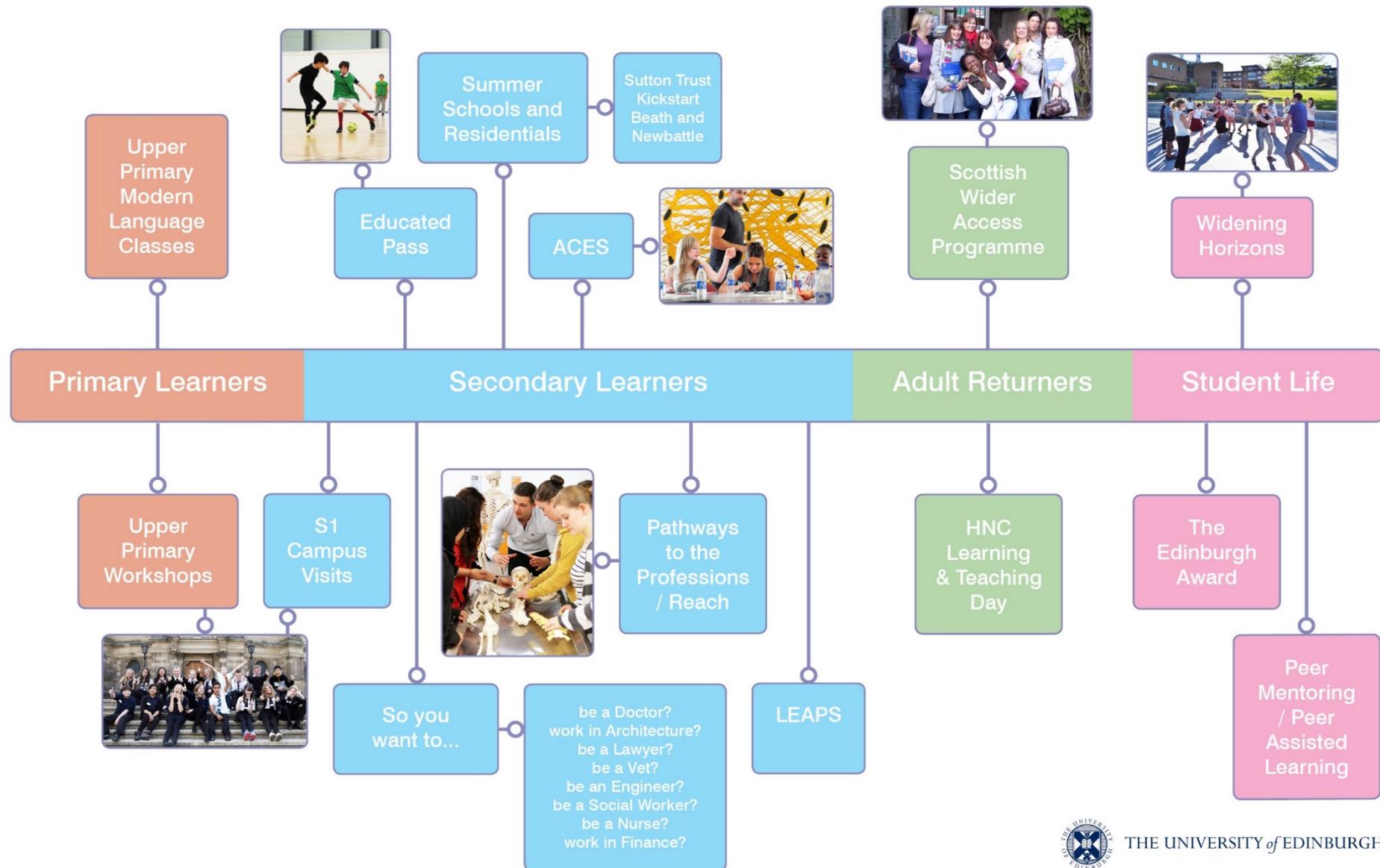
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Why contextualised admissions?

- 58,000+ applications for 5400 places
- 1,300 students achieve AAAAA at Higher
- 50% of these students are from 38 (of 435) schools
- Almost 50% of schools and colleges in Scotland have no or only one AAAAA student
- Policy provides difference of 3 grades between the typical and minimum requirement (from AAAA typical to ABBB contextualised)



Widening Participation Outreach



Outreach programmes

- Commitment to collaboration and coordinated delivery
- Partnership working LEAPS, REACH, ACES, SWAP East
- Educated Pass
- Pathways to the professions



Educated Pass

Established in 2006

Academic underachievement and underengagement of young men

S2 upwards

Partnership project

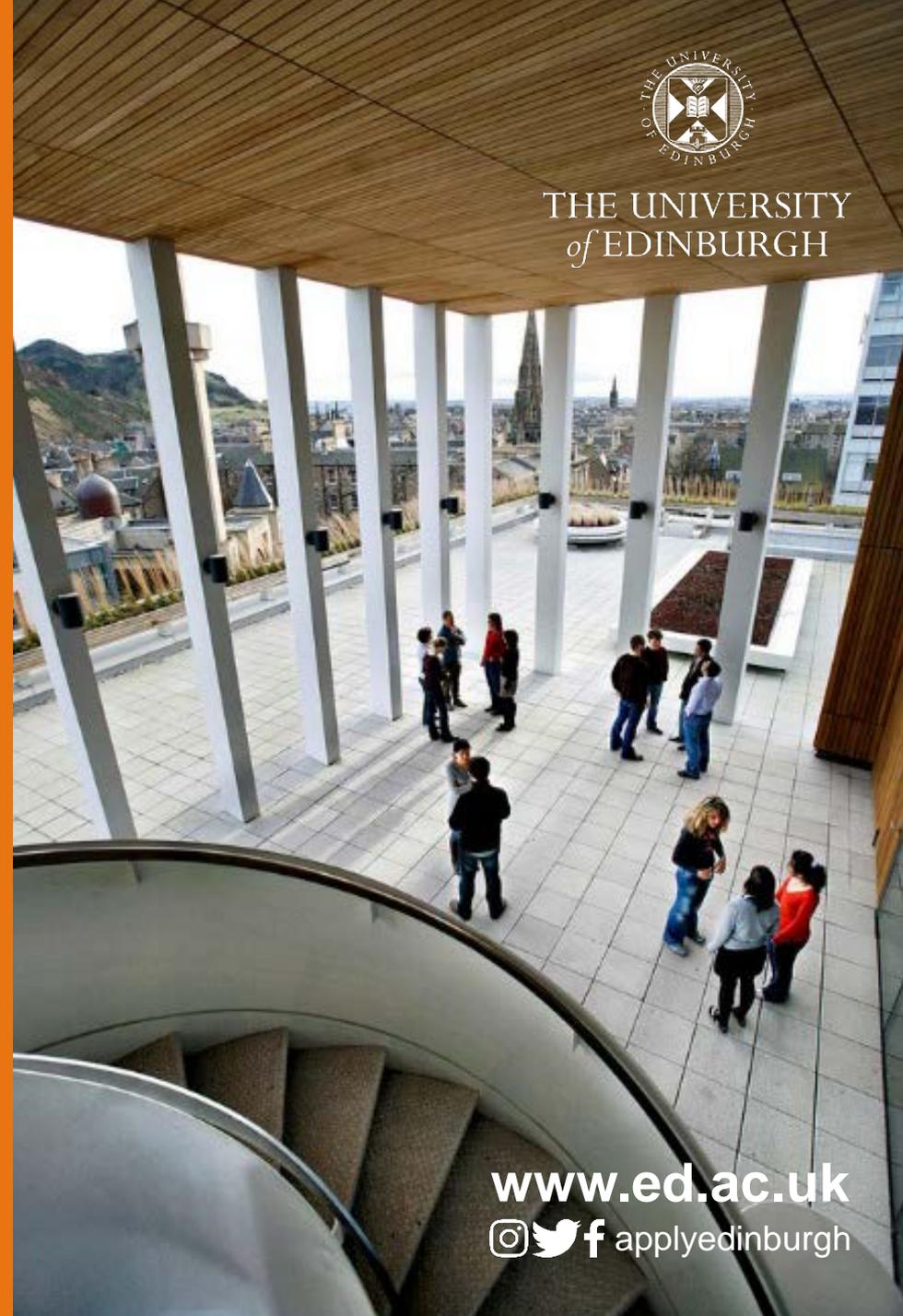
Higher staying on rate than average

98% positive destinations

[Film](#)



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Non-continuation rates and WP



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- **Some initial findings:**
- Type of school (independent/state) has some impact on non-continuation
- Bursaries support retention (Scottish students)
- SIMD20 students more likely to non-continue
- Mature students (over 25) much more likely to non-continue (particularly those from SWAP)

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What does a whole institution/university approach look like?



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- Whole lifecycle approach to widening participation
- Everyone is involved in creating a culture where issues of access and participation thrives
- Clear institutional commitment to widening participation
- Expected outcomes and aims are clearly defined

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First generation: Individual champions

Project work and additional support, initially to widen access, and then to support success



Second generation: Pockets of excellence

Some teams and groups working well across the lifecycle (WP teams, academic courses, student services etc)



Third generation: Inclusive institution

Whole institution approach: working across the lifecycle and student experience, involving all staff

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This strategy seeks to be a starting point in a process of developing a campus of belonging; a University where we do not simply focus on representation or under-representation, but more importantly upon a sense of community and being in the right place, where students from a range of diverse backgrounds can thrive and feel a sense of belonging.

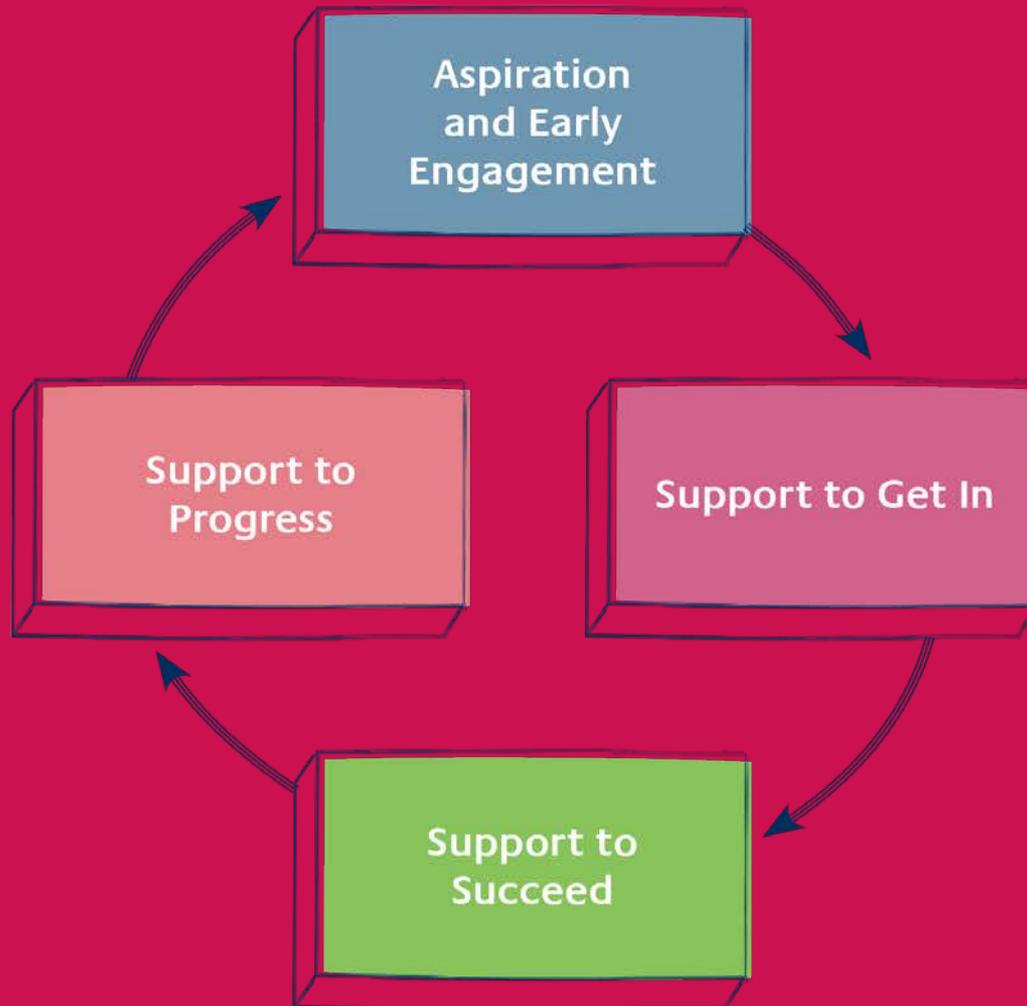
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WP strategy: whole student lifecycle



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What have we learnt from the process of developing the strategy?



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- **Strong and supportive senior leadership is essential**
- **High profile and transparent communications**
- **Clear governance and accountability should be established before you gain approval**
- **Consult, but have clear parameters**
- **Ensure you have listened to and engaged with students**
- **Keep reviewing and revising**
- **Demonstrate impact**

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University of Edinburgh WP Strategy



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Major initiatives over the next 3 years:

- Community hubs model
- YourEd schools partnerships
- Edinburgh Cares
- Access thresholds & transition support
- Expanding access course and entry routes provision
- Enhanced participation fund
- Grow Local/Global Insights programme

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Reports/references



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**A Blueprint for Fairness: Commission on
Widening Access report March 2016**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/>

Access in Scotland, Sutton Trust., May 2016

<https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper>

University of Edinburgh WP strategy

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