



HIGHER EDUCATION LIAISON OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

Widening Participation to Higher Education

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HELOA is the professional association of staff in higher education who work in the field of education liaison, providing guidance and information to prospective higher education students, their families and advisors. Established in 1990, the Association has approximately 900 members from 135 higher education institutions across the UK. Our members work in a wide range of functions within universities, covering schools and colleges liaison, student recruitment, widening participation, external relations, marketing, publications and publicity, and student services. What binds the membership together is our commitment to encouraging high standards of professionalism amongst our members. Our members are spread across all stages of university careers, including graduate-entry Officers and Assistants, to Heads of department and Directors. HELOA members are actively in contact with prospective students on a daily basis, working with students from primary school to sixth form, and prospective students within the community and business/industry.

HELOA members have direct contact with students considering higher education, and recognise that they have a commitment to promoting education to students from non-traditional backgrounds. HELOA members are committed to providing information, advice and guidance to all prospective students, regardless of background, ethnicity, age, or socio-economic status. As such, all HELOA members support the belief that everyone should have access to information to make an informed choice about higher education.

HELOA members are involved in a range of activities, including careers conventions and education fairs, talks and workshops in schools and colleges, on-campus events, and summer schools, amongst others. HELOA recognises that each member institution will organise and participate in activities that meet institutional strategic priorities of student recruitment and widening participation; however each institution and HELOA member is encouraged to continually support the ethos of widening access to higher education. Students from non-traditional backgrounds should not be discouraged from attending any event that may promote awareness of higher education.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, the Association generally recognises widening access groups as:

- Young people from lower socio-economic groups
- Mature students
- Looked after children/care leavers
- First generation HE applicants
- Students with disabilities
- Minority ethnic applicants
- Young people from military families
- Asylum seekers and refugees
- Students of one specific gender for certain subject areas

The Association recognises that responsibility for widening participation activities is sitting more within member institutions due to changes within the sector, and specifically changes to organisations and agencies. HELOA offers training and opportunities for members to network and share good practice, and members should lead in collaboration and sharing good practice relating to student recruitment and widening participation.

Principles: Widening Participation to Higher Education

1. Universities have a responsibility to raise aspirations of students from widening participation backgrounds. This includes, but not exclusively, students from the following groups: first generation to higher education, low income backgrounds, living within areas of social and/or economic deprivation, care leavers, students with disabilities and mature students.

2. HELOA recognises that students, who could be considered as being from a non-traditional/widening participation background, may be studying within any pre-HE educational establishment in the UK. All

recruitment work in schools and colleges should therefore reflect that some students may need additional information, advice or guidance to make decisions about progressing to higher education.

3. HELOA encourages collaboration between universities to widen participation in higher education.

4. Universities should work in partnership with a wide range of organisations to support the widening of participation in higher education. This includes all types of educational institutions, businesses, charities, local authorities, and employers.

5. Higher education can and should be a positive experience for all who participate in it. The experience of higher education should ensure the development of knowledge and skills that lead to wider employment opportunities. Widening participation is not solely about admissions to higher education, but includes the provision of information, advice and guidance pre-application, support the student throughout their studies and the development of skills for graduate employment.

6. HELOA supports the development of strategies to widen participation to postgraduate study.

7. HELOA members, both individual and institutional, should seek to provide potential applicants, their parents and advisors with the best possible information, advice and guidance to assist them in making the most appropriate decisions for their future. Members should seek to recognise the role that they play in dispelling myths about higher education which exist in the public domain.

8. HELOA recognises the importance of parents and advisors in supporting young people in making the choice to progress to higher education. HELOA encourages all members to work with all those involved in providing information to students.

8. In advising potential applicants, HELOA members shall ensure that they do not provide information or advice that is inaccurate, incomplete or out of date.

9. HELOA members should ensure that all institutional representatives, whether or not they are HELOA members, are aware of the existence and contents of the HELOA Good Practice Guidelines.

10. HELOA members should seek to keep themselves fully up to date with developments in Higher Education and related sectors and pass this information to students, their parents and advisors, where relevant.

11. HELOA members should be able to effectively signpost potential students to authoritative sources of information and guidance if they themselves are unable to assist with questions or queries.

12. HELOA members and their institutions should aim to only attend UK events and conventions that visitors may attend free of charge, and where the cost to institutions is not prohibitive or exclusive.