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OF ESTATE MANAGEMENT

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Widening Participation

Strategy 2024-30

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1. Overview

UCEM's Widening Participation Strategy 2024-2030 outlines the vision for how the institution will deliver increased equality of opportunity for primarily UK-based students to access, succeed on and progress from UCEM programmes. Widening participation covers equality, diversity and inclusion student activities, of which UCEM's Access and Participation Plan (APP) sits alongside.

The Widening Participation Strategy aligns with the institution's core purpose: *to provide accessible, relevant and cost-effective education, which enhances careers, increases professionalism and contributes to a sustainable Built Environment*, and subsequently, UCEM's Strategic Plan 2019-2025 and new Strategic Plan 2025-30, including the institution's vision to become the Centre of Excellence (CX) for built environment education..

This strategy also aligns to UCEM's current [Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy](#) (LTAS) 2020-25, where offering different pathways, welcoming more diversity, and improving accessibility is embedded in UCEM's pedagogic approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

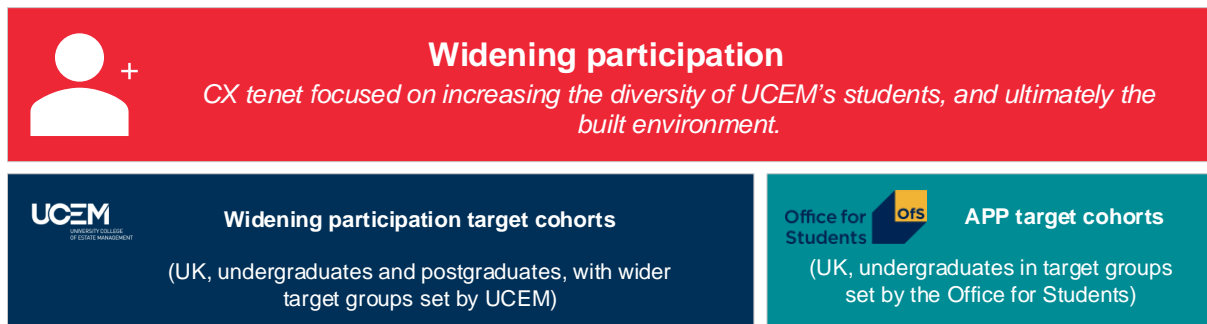


Figure 1. Diagram of Strategic Plan and widening participation

2. Strategy Summary

'Widening participation' as a term represents a broad range of individuals from across society. UCEM's target groups to be covered by this strategy in the list below:

- Forces veterans
- Cohorts where there are gender imbalances: Women in the built Environment (UG and PG)
- Students from areas across the UK who live in areas designated as 'cold spots' for Higher Education Institutions
- Students from areas across the UK who live in areas designated as 'cold spots' for the built Environment
- Disabled students (UG and PG)
- LGBTQ+ (UG and PG)
- Care Experienced students (UG and PG)
- Mature (UG and PG)
- Ethnic Minorities (UG and PG)

The institution is mindful that this strategy does not cover all students who could be under-represented or could benefit from support services at UCEM or across the UK Higher Education sector in general. It should also be noted that UCEM delivers, as standard, success initiatives for all students at UCEM and that this strategy focuses specifically on targeted interventions for UK-based, under-represented groups.

Student groups listed as part of the UCEM APP will be considered as part of the Widening Participation Strategy groups but also have their own Intervention Strategies as listed as part of the current APP. For more information, see the UCEM's [2024-25 to 2027-28 APP](#) and Office for Students guidance on risks to equality of opportunity.

The five core principles underpinning this strategy are as follows:

01 Student outcomes

UCEM will carefully consider each student's individual journey and experience, leading to the right outcome for that student.

02 Sustainability

UCEM has set out an ambitious eight-year programme of work (Globe) focusing on sustainability. This strategy has been mapped to the following United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



03 UK-based

UCEM will primarily focus on UK-based students, but an ambition of this strategy is to explore and consider widening participation within an international context.

04 Collaboration

As part of UCEM's influence work under Globe, the institution will lead, collaborate and partner with industry, professional and other organisations to progress sustainability and widening participation in Higher Education and the built environment.

05 Simplify

This strategy will ensure UCEM has clear aims and defined target student groups, and will look to implement a small number of high-quality initiatives that can grow sustainably over time.

2.1 Widening Participation objectives and targets

UCEM has set out five key objectives that will run until 2030, and ensure equality for target groups of students and reduce gaps in achievement. Within each of these objectives there are a number of target which are all outlined below:

- To increase the attainment of pre-16 young people from secondary schools and Further Education colleges

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- UCEM will be undertaking interventions to raise school attainment for under 16-year-olds, in line with Office for Student regulatory requirements within its APP 2024-25 to 2027-28. UCEM will look to enhance the Geography and Design, Engineer Construct curriculum and training of teachers in order to raise pre-16 attainment of secondary school pupils in deprived Reading based postcodes. For further details, please see UCEM's APP 2024-28.
- To increase the number of young, college, and adult learners with an expectation that they can progress into UCEM programmes
 - By 2028, 20% of UCEM's medium-sized employers will have published formal EDI strategies and targets, (expanding the current APP apprenticeship groups to include apprentice disability and other postgraduate groups).
 - 25% of surveyed young people who take part in UCEM activities are considering built environment careers in the future.
- To broaden the diversity of UCEM students by supporting their transition into the institution
 - To encourage 10% of disabled students to declare a disability earlier in the semester, in order to receive earlier support.
- To focus further support to widening participation students who could face sustained disadvantage or barriers during their studies
 - To monitor, evaluate and set new targets relating to PG ethnic minority, mature and disabled students by July 2025 and to be monitored within the Quarterly Business Review pack from Autumn 2025. Targets to be set from August 2025.
 - 100% of staff to undertake agreed levels of equality, diversity and inclusion training, in order to address barriers to students in business-as-usual delivery.
 - To increase the number of UG diagnosed disabled students with an Additional Support Plan to 65% by 2028, so that they are more likely to continue with their studies.
- To build the experience, skills and knowledge for widening participation students to enable them to influence change and contribute to a diverse built environment.
 - Fewer than 10% of WP students in the final year of their programme that respond to the Careers Registration survey will express requiring additional support in joining a relevant PSRB by July 2028.
 - 80% of students will answer positively in an evaluation questionnaire regarding their career confidence after participating in progression widening participation activities.

In addition to these support activities, funds are available to support all students experiencing challenges. In addition, financial and additional support for care experienced students will also be undertaken, although this group is too small at present to set a target and related activities (for more information on the group, see Appendix A).

There will be the opportunity to apply for additional research grants and funds throughout the duration of this strategy. It will be important to investigate grant opportunities relevant to the objectives of this strategy and applications will be made if UCEM has the staffing capacity to support these funds.

For further targets relating to these objectives, please see [UCEM's 2024-25 to 2027-28 APP](#).

3. Monitoring and evaluation

Widening participation activities will be subject to the same robust evaluation framework that UCEM's APP commits to. Every activity has a specific theory of change supporting it, that ensures UCEM is delivering activities that will impact on the targets identified for each student group. UCEM will implement an annual cycle of evaluation to assess each widening participation activity and will use evidence-informed data to assess improvements. In terms of dissemination, UCEM staff will be encouraged to share the findings of their work internally and externally, in line with APP arrangements.