Evaluation Capacity Building
in Widening Participation Practice

What is widening participation? 2B

Finding out what colleagues across the institution understand by widening participation is important for several reasons. It helps to identify different colleagues' perceptions and working definitions that can allow you to collectively agree what is or is not widening participation, what services, sections or staff are involved in delivering widening participation and who may or may not be involved in the evaluation process.

To stimulate discussion you can invite colleagues to define widening participation from their perspective, refer to your institutional widening participation strategy and OFFA Access Agreement which will have provided an institutional definition.

List A: What does widening participation mean?

This list was generated by one HEI, you might use these ideas as a basis for discussing what is important and identifying institutional or partnership priorities.

Handout sheet (see below) and invite individuals or pairs to discuss and decide which statements they:

- Agree / disagree with, or
- Are important / not important **to them**
- Are important / not important to their area of work
- Select the three most important

Invite them to add to the list.

You can send this information out in advance and colleagues asked to bring their ideas to the meeting, this might be particularly helpful if colleagues are representing other members of their team or group.

The discussion is an important part of the process as it allows you to develop a shared understanding which will save considerable confusion, tension and misunderstanding in the future and enable you to communicate clearly and consistently with new staff and other stakeholders with whom you wish to work in the future.

Remember the group who generated list A agreed their understanding of the terms used; some of these may not be relevant to you.

Activity focus

You can use the open ended question approach to explore different terminology and what colleagues understand is or might be included:

- What is included in the Learner progression framework?
- What is retention and what retention activities do we deliver?
- What is 'outreach' and what activities do we deliver?

By focusing on activities rather it is possible to then map ideas generated onto the student life cycle and / the year groups or phases of a learner progression framework.

A linear mapping of activity delivery see Tony Acland's Director of Aimhigher Hampshire and Isle of Wight Workshop Presentation Papers to the Learner Progression Workshop 14.4.2008 - please note these papers are work in progress. http://www.actiononaccess.org/download.php?f=1037

You can generate a list of activities which you might subsequently evaluate and map these in a variety of ways (see Evaluation Preparation 2C: Auditing existing evaluation data)

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List A: What does widening participation mean?	Agree Important	Disagree Not Important
1. Governmental aspiration		
2. A socially responsible university ought to engage in		
3. Lower tariff intake and therefore lower grading in league tables		
4. Equal access to university for able students		
5. Internal challenge		
6. Risk of categorising students		
7. Potentially greater risk of drop-out and potentially greater risk of support needs.		
8. Raising expectations which are beyond what we can provide		
9. Improving the educational level of the local area and the aspirations of school children in this region		
10. Contributing to the regional skills agenda and cultural change		
11. Cultural change within the university		
12. Broadens the educational experience for all students		
13. Drives curriculum change		
14. Promoting the benefits of learning in schools and enhancing the school curriculum		
15. Removes perceived barriers in the community – university becomes an accessible place, the university engages with the community		
16. Builds good relationships		
17. Retains high achievers in the community		
18. Employability in the region		
19. Helps students to make informed choices		
20. Costs more		
21. Raises the aspirations of teachers in schools		
22. Bums on seats		
23. Meeting or progress towards benchmarks		
24. Compliance with legislation		
25. Brings in funding		
26. Promotes collaborative relationships between universities		
27. Raises questions in the university about the 'business case' for WP (recruitment and resources and focus)		
28. Perceptions of altruism or waste of money		
29. Involves a lot of good will		
30. Long term campaign		
31. Enhance the profile of the university or not		
32.		
33.		
34.		
35.		

Available from: www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/events/capacitybuilding/index.php

What widening participation activities do we deliver? 2B

6 Employment

1 Aspiration

5 On course

2 Pre-entry

6

1

5 **Activity Focus** 2

4

3

4 Entry 1st Term

3 Admission