WC35 - Widening Access and Participation

College Policy	
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Contents

Introduction

At Westerfield College, we are dedicated to creating an inclusive educational environment where individuals of all backgrounds, abilities, and circumstances can obtain quality education and succeed academically and personally. This Widening Access and Participation Policy is aligned with our mission to eliminate barriers to education, encourage social mobility, and advocate for diversity within our college community. It details the principles, procedures, and responsibilities that support our initiatives to expand participation and ensure fair access to education for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.

This policy applies to:

- All prospective and current students at Westerfield College, irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic.
- Staff members are involved in admissions, teaching, support services, and outreach efforts.
- Partners, stakeholders, and external organisations working with Westerfield College to improve access and participation.

Definitions of Terms

a) **Widening Participation**: Initiatives designed to encourage underrepresented groups to enter and succeed in education.

b) **Underrepresented Groups**: Individuals from backgrounds or circumstances historically less likely to access higher education, including:

- Those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups.
- Care leavers.
- Students with disabilities.
- First-generation university students.

c) **Access**: The opportunity to enter higher education without undue barriers.

d) **Participation**: Active engagement and success in the academic and extracurricular aspects of education.

Purpose

Westerfield College is dedicated to:

- Encouraging equal opportunities and tackling inequalities in educational access.
- Eliminating obstacles that hinder individuals from disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds from pursuing higher education.

- Offering customised support and programs to assist students in overcoming difficulties and reaching their maximum potential.
- Collaborating with community partners, educational institutions, employers, and other stakeholders to improve outreach and involvement.
- Consistently assessing and refining our strategies to ensure they are effective and up-to-date.

Procedure

1. Responsibilities and Accountability

a. The Senior Leadership Team:

- Responsible for overseeing the development, implementation, and monitoring of the policy.
- Ensure that resources are allocated to initiatives that promote access expansion.

b. Admissions Team:

- Ensure that the admissions process is fair and inclusive.
- Develop outreach programs targeted at marginalized communities.

c. Teachers:

- Foster an inclusive and welcoming environment in the classroom.
- Identify students who may be at risk of disengagement and provide appropriate support.

d. Student Support Services:

- Provide specialized counseling, guidance, and mentorship for students from underrepresented backgrounds.

e. Students:

- Take advantage of the opportunities presented by the policy.
- Act as advocates for diversity and inclusivity.

2. Procedure.

a. Outreach and Engagement:

- Establish partnerships with businesses, community organizations, and educational institutions in disadvantaged areas.

- Plan mentoring initiatives, open houses, and workshops specifically aimed at underserved communities.

b. **Admissions Support:**

- Simplify the application process and provide clear guidance.
- Consider personal circumstances alongside academic achievements when evaluating admissions.

c. **Financial Support:**

- Offer scholarships, grants, and various forms of financial aid to students from low-income backgrounds.
- Inform students about their financial options during the application process.

d. **Academic and Wellbeing Support:**

- Provide workshops focused on study strategies and personalized academic guidance.
- Ensure access to peer support groups, disability services, and counseling resources.

e. **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- Collect and examine data related to application, enrolment, retention, and success rates for targeted demographics.
- Solicit feedback from students and staff to improve initiatives.
- Publish annual reports assessing the impact of widening participation efforts.

f. **Staff Training:**

- Offer continuous training on unconscious bias, diversity, and inclusion.
- Equip staff with the necessary resources to effectively assist students.

g. **Complaints and Appeals:**

- Enable students to voice concerns regarding access and participation without fear of negative consequences.
- Establish a straightforward and accessible process for addressing concerns.

Policy Principles

- Fairness: Every student is entitled to equal opportunities and achievement in their education.

- A diverse student population enriches both the academic and social experiences at the institution.
- We emphasise inclusivity by dismantling systemic obstacles and creating an inviting environment for everyone.
- Openness in the processes related to admissions, funding, and assistance.
- Teamwork: Achievement relies on partnerships with both external organisations and internal partners.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the WC 35 Academic Board unless there are internal or legislative changes necessitating an earlier review.

Version History

No	Revised on	Version	Changes	Approved by	Date of Approval	Revised by