Action on Access

The National Co-ordination Team for Widening Participation

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Department for Employment and Learning
www.delni.gov.uk

HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND

Ensuring Fair Access in the New Environment

- Topic briefings on social mobility through HE based on thematic review of 129 Widening Participation Strategic Assessments (WPSAs).
- Social mobility through Higher Education – Flexible Learning

(Action on Access Topic Briefing - Social Mobility through Higher Education: Flexible Learning, 2011, Action on Access)

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Ensuring Fair Access in the New Environment

- WPSAs highlight the ways that HEIs have seen flexibility as a means of opening up new possibilities for WP including:
  - The use of alternative forms of delivery
  - The development of alternative programmes of study (Foundation degrees)
  - The use of accelerated learning
  - The opportunities made available with innovations in ICT which have allowed the development of distance and blended e-learning

(Action on Access Topic Briefing - Social Mobility through Higher Education: Flexible Learning, 2011, Action on Access)

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Emerging Themes from the WPSAs

- Flexible Admissions and Entry:
  - Relationship between alternative entry qualifications, fair access and WP.
  - Limited reference to how changes to the school/ college 14-19 curriculum will impact on admissions (9% or 12 HEIs).
  - AP(E)L mentioned by a few HEIs (5% or 6 HEIs).
- Other Sites of Learning:
  - Links between FECs and HEIs with collaborative provision of various types.
  - Links with employers involving work based learning with a part-time study element

Emerging Themes from the WPSAs

- Alternative Modes of Delivery:
  - 39% or 50 HEIs mention their electronic learning resources.
  - 19% or 24 HEIs make reference to distance learning.
  - One university notes the challenges of integrating part-time and those studying at a distance and the value of VLE.

Emerging Issues and Implications from the WPSA Analysis

1. Ensuring the introduction of flexible learning is an integral aspect of overall institutional strategic change
2. Ensuring flexible learning planning is aligned to other strategies, e.g. admissions, learning and teaching, e-learning and associated staff development
3. Addressing organisational and infrastructure implications, such as extending opening hours of student support services, library, IT services etc., and providing access to these services from alternative sites of delivery

(Action on Access Topic Briefing - Social Mobility through Higher Education: Flexible Learning, 2011, Action on Access)

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Emerging Issues and Implications from the WPSA Analysis

4. Identifying the workforce development implications e.g. of teaching in the summer term or at weekends or evenings
5. Developing market research and marketing strategies, including information about what flexible learning entails
6. Developing a careful business case which includes the additional costs of providing extended student support services

(Action on Access Topic Briefing - Social Mobility through Higher Education: Flexible Learning, 2011, Action on Access)

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