Higher Education Funding Council for England

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HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND

Building evidence to effectively widen participation

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WHY?

Creating opportunities and realising potential

‘Widening participation is vital in creating a fairer society, securing improvements in social mobility and supporting economic growth… A diverse student population is essential to vibrant intellectual enquiry and a resilient knowledge economy. It encourages a higher education offer that is socially and culturally diverse, and more representative of local communities’.

Source: ‘Opportunity, choice and excellence in higher education’, HEFCE 2011

WHAT?

Creating opportunities and realising potential

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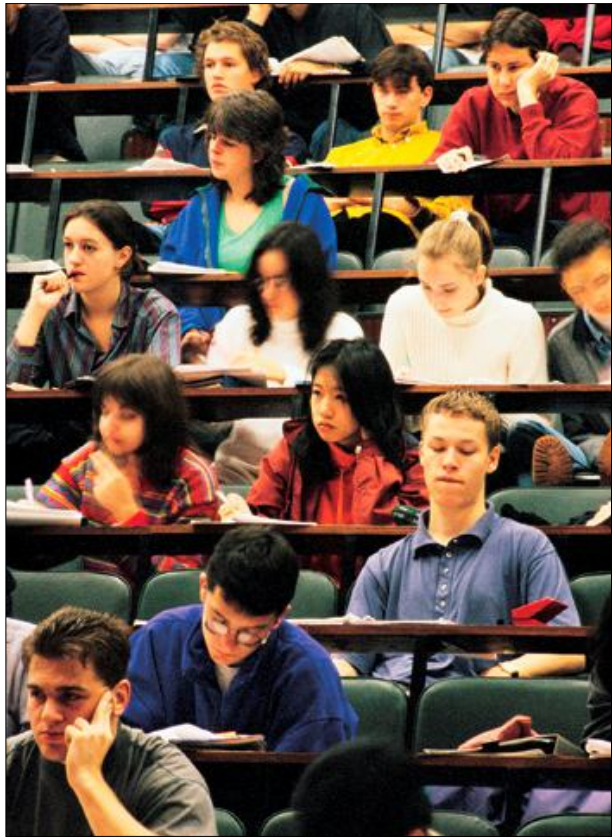
Funding widening participation

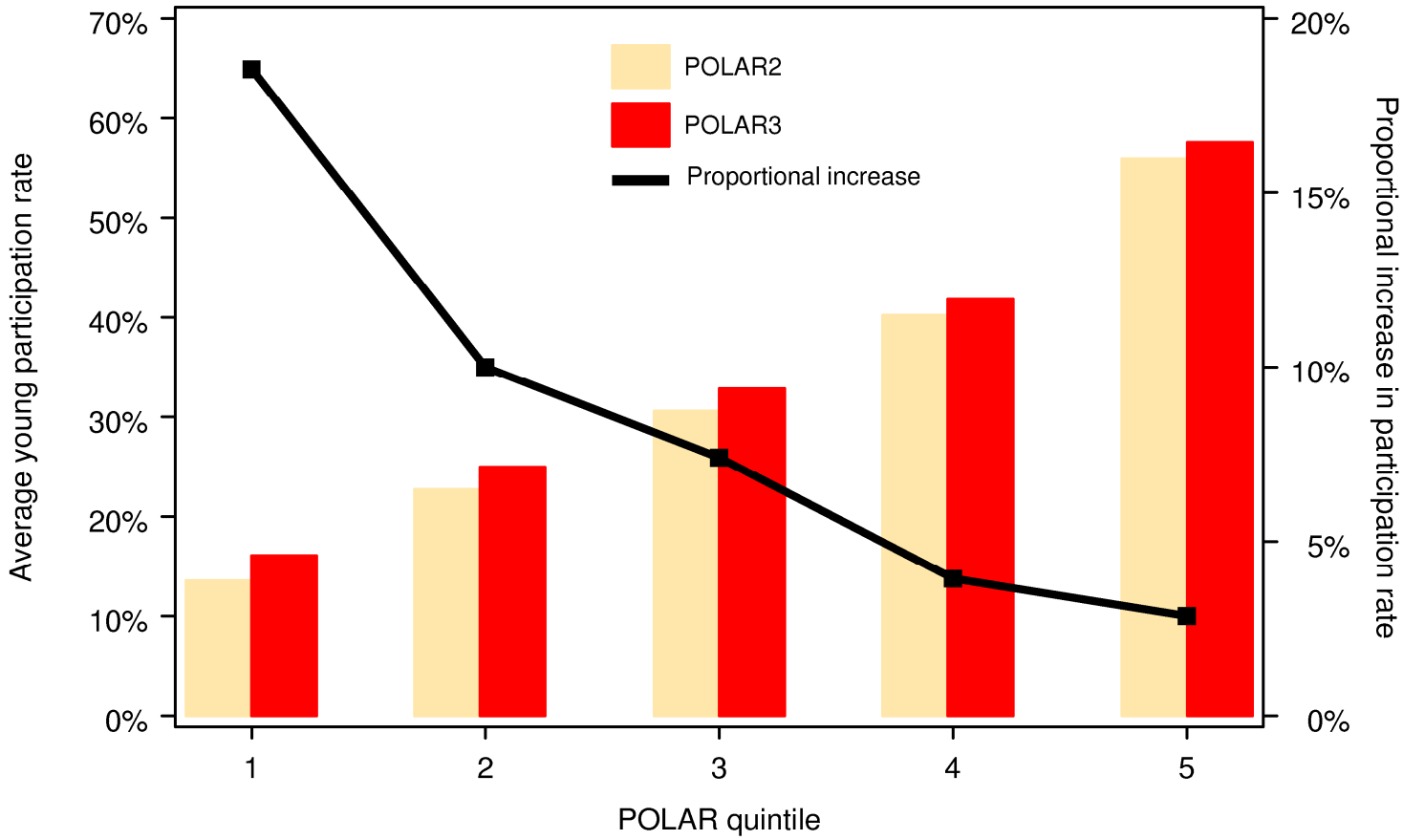
Over a decade of investment

- WP allocation since 1999-2000
- Mainstream allocation for disabled students since 2000-2001
- Improving retention introduced in 2003-04
- P4P in 2003-04
- Integrated Aimhigher 2004-05 to 2010-2011
- Lifelong Learning Networks 2004-05 to 2010-11



Latest POLAR3 evidence

Figure 1: Mean young participation rates for POLAR2 and POLAR3 quintiles and the proportional increase in rates for POLAR3 over POLAR2



http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2012/201226/

Funding WP in 2012 and beyond (1)

The changing context for widening participation funding

- Reductions to HEFCE funding for teaching from 2012-13 - replaced by increased fee levels
- HEFCE funds increasingly targeted investment to secure public and student interest
- Expanded remit and role for OFFA
- Continued student number controls
- Core /margin and AAB+
- Expanding sector – FECs and alternative providers
- Explicit remit to protect and promote the collective student interest

Funding WP in 2012 and beyond (2)

Continuing to support WP

- 2012-13 grant letter: WP confirmed as priority; HEFCE and OFFA to develop shared strategy
- HEFCE stage 2 teaching funding consultation: From 2013-14 WPA and IR brought together and become Student Opportunity allocation
- National Scholarship Programme: £50 million in 2012-13 rising to £150 million by 2014-15
- Increased contribution to access and retention activities from additional fee income through access agreements

National strategy for access and student success

Aims of the strategy as defined by ministers:

- Promote access and student success
- Maximise impact of the funding delivered to WP from all sources
- Evaluate effectiveness of new activities and arrangements in place from 2012-13
- Generate robust evidence of ‘what works’ to effectively widen participation
- Take a sector view of how best to meet challenges and make sustained progress in WP.

Our approach

- ‘National’ rather than ‘shared’
- Bring in others to lead where appropriate (eg SPA on contextual admissions)
- Clear focus on life-cycle including progression to postgraduate study
- Consultative and inclusive
- As part of strategy we aim to develop an evaluative framework for institutions to help them to provide robust evidence

Activity towards the strategy

There is already work planned and in train:

- HEFCE commissioned research into use and impact of WP allocation
- Mapping exercise of other relevant research in other sector bodies
- Developing options for further integration/alignment of access agreement and WPSS processes
- Developing specifications for research, including considering international approaches
- Assessing resource needs to deliver strategy

Recently commissioned research, evaluation and resources

- Outreach Toolkits using practice from Aimhigher and other national WP programmes to offer approaches and tools to support practioners:
- Developed by the International Centre of Guidance Studies at Derby University and The Progression Trust, the Toolkits will feature:
  - Partnership
  - Targeting
  - Programmes
  - Evaluation
- The series will be supported by an Overview and a resources handbook.
- The toolkits will be previewed at forthcoming NEON seminars in November and launched by HEFCE and the HEA on 18 December.

Recently commissioned research, evaluation and resources

- Commissioned from the HEA, a series of document reviews of Aimhigher partnership and LLN research and evaluation covering:
  - Findings from the final years of the Aimhigher Programme 2008 – 2011
  - The contribution of Further Education institutions to widening participation
  - The role of HE students in widening access and improving student retention and success
  - Collaboration and partnership working in a competitive environment
  - The contribution of pre-entry interventions to student retention and success
  - The role progression agreements are playing in promoting social mobility to the professions and vocational careers
  - Student finance: what have we learned to date to inform access, retention and success under the new funding regime in England?
- The toolkits and document reviews will be available on the Widening Access and Student Retention and Success National Programmes archive on the HEA website from 18 December

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/retention-archives

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Thank you for listening

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