



## The SDG Accord

*The University and College Sector's Collective Response to the Global Goals*

### **Integration of SDGs in**

- Institutional governance/strategic level
- SDGs in research
- SDGs in campus operations
- SDGs in curriculum development
- SDGs in student engagement activities
- SDGs into community activities
- SDGs at a whole-institution level

### **Focus on**

- Goal 1 - No poverty
- Goal 2 - Zero hunger
- Goal 3 - Good health and wellbeing
- Goal 4 - Quality education
- Goal 5 - Gender equality
- Goal 6 - Clean water and sanitation
- Goal 7 - Affordable and clean energy
- Goal 8 - Decent work and economic growth
- Goal 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- Goal 10 - Reduced inequalities
- Goal 11 - Sustainable cities and communities
- Goal 12 - Responsible consumption and production
- Goal 13 - Climate action
- Goal 14 - Life below water
- Goal 15 - Life on land
- Goal 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions
- Goal 17 - Partnerships for the goals

## *SDG Accord Reporting 2021 CASE STUDY*

### **Widening Participation**

The University's work around Widening Participation (WP) has been developed over the last decade and is focused on ensuring that students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds can access higher education. The University's strategy in this area is underpinned by government policy, notably from the Office for Students, but the main driver emanates from our commitment to social innovation and impact that is underpinned by our institutional motto of 'Transforming Lives, Inspiring Change'. This commitment to reducing inequalities through the provision of quality education to all has developed through the University's research into this area, with a PhD study completed in 2019 underpinning the design of the University's WP strategy for 2020-2025.

The University's work mixes both on-campus support for students from underrepresented and/or minority backgrounds, to help them integrate into university life and support their studies (i.e. through cash bursaries and mentoring support). However, the WP work also includes the delivery of off-campus work in the community, through our UniConnect programme, which seeks to raise aspirations in schools and support children and young people to see university study as part of their future (including around STEAM subjects). Speaking about the role that the WP plays in the University's work, Wray Irwin (Director of Enterprise and Employability) stated *"The University's work to raise aspirations amongst underrepresented young people and support them into higher education, is part of our wider strategic commitment to reduce inequality and remains central to our vision to support our students and young people with their education and employability"*. The impact of the University's work here has also been internationally recognised, with the institution being ranked 27<sup>th</sup> overall globally for SDG10: Reducing Inequalities.

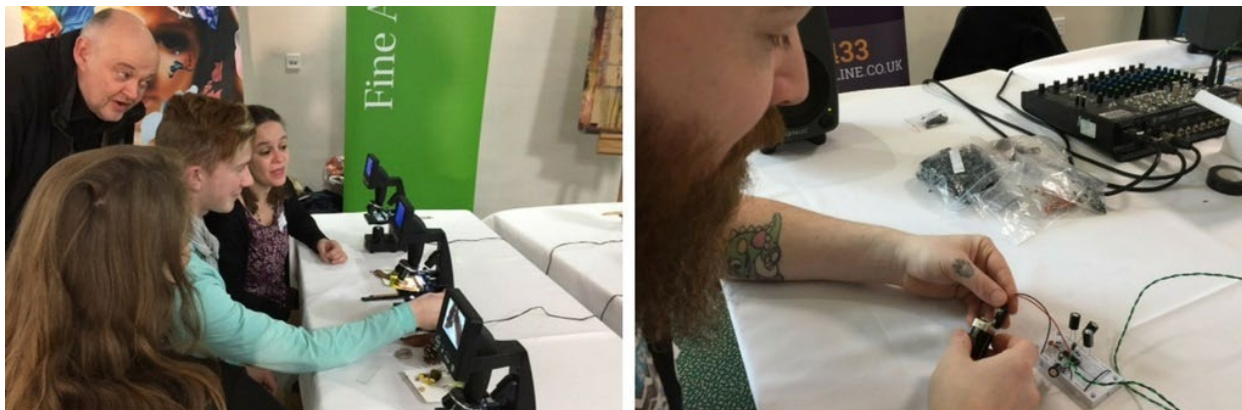
### **BENEFITS**

- 1. Supporting Young People:** The work enables young people from underrepresented backgrounds to engage with higher education, whilst enhancing the diversity and richness of the University's student body.
- 2. Anchor Institution:** Our WP work through APP/UniConnect makes the University a genuine anchor institution for its communities both locally and globally. This means that we can support these communities more effectively and deliver genuine social impact.
- 3. Employment & Employability:** The University can effectively support the studies and future employability of young people, enhancing diversity in the job market and contributing to reduce inequality and improved social mobility. This has been signified by a commitment to the Social Mobility Pledge

### **BARRIERS**

- 1. Understanding Needs:** Understanding the support that young people from minority or underrepresented backgrounds require to access higher education is complex and required significant trial and error in support, as well as in-depth underpinning research. The aforementioned PhD (completed by a former WP student) provided this understanding and gave a foundation to the University's five-year strategy in this area. However, we recognise that this work is very much ongoing and have committed as an institution to annual research to evaluate the efficacy of our WP work and understand how it can be better shaped to support students and institutional goals.

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### **CONCLUSIONS**

In developing this strategy, the University has sought to ensure that higher education and its own institutional environment on-campus is welcoming for students from across society, and that it supports them to reach their educational and employability goals. In this way we believe that our work enables students to reach their full potential, makes society more inclusive and contributes to making the world a better and more sustainable place.

Our learning from delivery of this programme of work is that it is critical to embed your approach in the experiences and needs of young people, as expressed by themselves. It is only by coproducing your approach that a university can ensure that it delivers impactful bottom-up social innovation to reduce inequality and promote quality education. In doing so the University is able to fully support students that study here, engage with and raise the aspirations of children and young people considering higher education as part of their future, and enhance the employability of young people to enable them to successfully compete in the jobs market.