**ACTION PLAN FROM THE WIDENING PARTICIPATION GROUP IN SEED**

**What *is* Widening Participation?**

Defining – and approaching – ‘Widening Participation’ can be difficult for three reasons: First, ‘WP students’ is not as concrete a term as ‘international students’, for example; WP students are not normally identified to staff members in the first instance; and some WP students may, in fact, resist being ‘labelled’.

However, for such a broad category, I use the university’s broad definition to approach WP students: *‘students from backgrounds where people do not generally go onto a university education’*– this includes, for example, students from communities with a low university attendance, low-income backgrounds and those who have disabilities; a common theme is ‘disadvantage’.

**Action Point One – Understanding what WP actually means *and* what services are offered by the university**

The website below provides an overview of WP at the University of Manchester and the services offered:

<https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/social-responsibility/widening-participation/>

In addition, further information is available regarding the support offered by the university, such as financial support, the Manchester Access Programme and Access Manchester:

<https://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/contextual-admissions/>

**Action Point Two – Pointing SEED students to the SEED-level provision on offer**

Could **all** academic advisers **and** programme directors ensure that all students in SEED are made aware of the additional support I provide in terms of **study skills sessions** and the **writing centre**? The SEED brochure is all that is needed and if this could be made part of induction materials and given to your advisees, this would help to ensure more WP students take advantage of the extra help on offer, as well as signposting them to university-wide support that the brochure refers to, such as the bursary, and technical support pertaining to online issues (I will email the brochure to SEED staff again before the 20/21 year begins). A key sample from the brochure is available here:

It takes time to get used to university expectations, e.g. to know the basics of how to write a good academic essay, and what it means to be ‘critical’. To that end, there is help in place to develop your understanding and skills.

You can email Alex Baratta**,** [**alex.baratta@manchester.ac.uk**](mailto:alex.baratta@manchester.ac.uk)**,** who runs the School of Environment, Education and Development (SEED)-level writing centre – *Write Away* – and he can look at a page of your essay for you. This allows you to have feedback before you submit.

Also, Alex runs study skills sessions throughout the semester, on topics such as ‘how to write a dissertation’ and ‘how to be more critical’ – email Alex for more information.

**Action Point Three – Mapping WP work across the university**

I am keen to join up my work in WP with those involved with similar work which might be ‘under the radar’ and/or come under different, but related, terms. Thus, I would be grateful for SEED staff to contact me if they are involved in relevant work involving key terms such as **diversity, outreach, disadvantage** and/or **wellbeing** (or indeed, any similar terms you can think of). This is especially relevant for those already working in schools, as my outreach involves current work in this regard such as INTO University; The Elephant Group; and The Blackrod Project.

**Action Point Four – SEED links for recruitment**

I have initiated links with Trinity and Waterhead Academy, to include further schools in the future such as Oldham and Connell Sixth Form Colleges. This will involve school children coming to the university for a day to be exposed to both university life in general, as well as SEED subjects; doing hands-on exercises; meeting staff; having a university tour; and doing a follow-up assignment at their school. While I have SEED lecturers already on board as volunteers, I would be grateful if additional a/ SEED members of staff; b/ student ambassadors; and c/ PGCE trainees already in schools could contact me in terms of being involved in some way; this also applies to outreach when I visit schools.

**FAQs**

**What do WP students ‘look’ like?**

Taking the university’s approach to WP, relevant students can be from a range of backgrounds and, again, do not necessarily define themselves as WP. On a concrete level, the university makes contextual offers (i.e. grade drops) to prospective students identified as WP as this is one way that they are identified as such.

**What does the SEED-level support that I offer involve?**

The study skills sessions currently involve Zoom meetings in which I discuss skills such as how to write an essay; how to be critical; how to use references; and so on (there are currently over ten different sessions). I will retain these online sessions throughout the calendar, not just school, year, as well as moving back to face to face teaching in the spring so students have a choice. The writing centre allows for students to meet with me so I can look at a page of an essay in detail; for now, this involves sending work by email (but in the future, it will return to face to face meetings).

**Are WP students formally identified to staff?**

Currently, no. While we do of course have a list of all such students, it is not shared across campus. Whether or not staff (e.g. lecturers, academic advisors) should be made aware of WP students is open to discussion.