

Office for
Students



Engaging with higher education providers

Elizabeth Garnham

Directorate for Fair Access and Participation

We aim to ensure that every student,
whatever their background,
has a fulfilling experience of
higher education that enriches
their lives and careers.

What is a meaningful encounter?

‘A ‘meaningful encounter’ is one in which the student has an opportunity to explore what it’s like to learn in that environment.’
- *Good career guidance, Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2014)*

- Identify the right students for each intervention
- Set clear objectives for interventions
- Situate interventions within sustained and progressive programmes of activity
- ‘Light touch’ activities (e.g. a stand at a fair) are not meaningful encounters unless they are part of a wider programme

How to contact the right people

University or college recruitment and admissions

- Often dedicated teams on request – the same people who coordinate attendance at UCAS fairs
- Engagements similar to that required by the Gatsby benchmarks; a couple of engagements for **all** students

OfS access and participation plans

- Provider funded
- Regulated by the OfS. Universities and colleges have a legal responsibility to ‘promote equality of opportunity’
- Targeted at sustained intervention with students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds
- Access to, student success during, and progression from HE

OfS National Collaborative Outreach Programme

- OfS funding
- Focused on local areas where higher education participation is lower than might be expected given the GCSE results of the young people who live there

Schools of education

- Academic research
- PGCE courses

What are universities and colleges doing

Outreach (sustained, coordinated, and collaborative)

Sponsoring a school, setting up free schools including maths schools or formal partnerships with schools

Programmes to enable university and college staff to act as school governors

Teacher CPD

Partnerships with third sector organisations

How university and college attainment raising activities contribute to HE access

Short term

University & college activities support:

- Quality of teaching and leadership
- Student characteristics associated with increased attainment in those from under-represented or disadvantaged groups
- School characteristics associated with increased attainment in those from under-represented or disadvantaged groups

Medium term

Attainment rises in:

- GCSE or other exam grades
- Creative arts performance
- Other skills or attainment needed for higher education application

Long term

Higher education access and participation improves in:

- higher education in general
- higher tariff universities
- specialist courses and institutions

Evaluating the impact of engagement

Aims	Example metrics
Long term – based around access to higher education	Entry to higher education compared to comparison groups Tracking using the Higher Education Access Tracker Progression into conservatoire education
Medium term – related to improved attainment in the institution’s selection method	Improved academic grades (particularly in teacher, Key Stage 2 or GCSE assessments) Improved Ofsted rating Impact on Progress 8 Measurable improved subject knowledge Improved audition results
Short term – related to student, teacher or school characteristics which have been evidenced to be associated with increased attainment in the selection method for the institution	Whole school metrics e.g. attendance, quality of governance Coursework outcomes Student feedback and focus groups demonstrating impact Feedback from teachers demonstrating impact Portfolio review Testing of increased subject knowledge

Source: Topic briefing - Raising attainment in schools and colleges to widen participation, OFFA (2017)

Five key factors for creating a sustainable and successful partnership

- all partners have equal value, including university/college (academic) and school (teacher) voice
- strategic leadership from both organisations to drive the project
- a strategic plan and relevance for both organisations
- creating a “third space” with shared values away from the cultural values of either organisation
- material resource

Source: School-university partnerships: fulfilling the potential (2014)

Thank you for your participation

Elizabeth Garnham

elizabeth.garnham@officeforstudents.org.uk

Twitter: @lizzief_123

@officestudents

Copyright ©

The copyright in this presentation is held either by the Office for Students (OfS) or by the originating authors.

Please contact info@officeforstudents.org.uk for further information and re-use requests.

Office for
Students

