

Introduction

UEA are one of 27 universities to make a commitment to mature students in their 2020-2025 Access and Participation Plan (1). Targets were set to increase the market share of regional learners using Access to HE as a proxy measure with three local colleges offering this pathway.

Although UEA is below the national average for non-continuation, there is an additional target to close the gap between mature and non-mature students leaving studies.

Methods

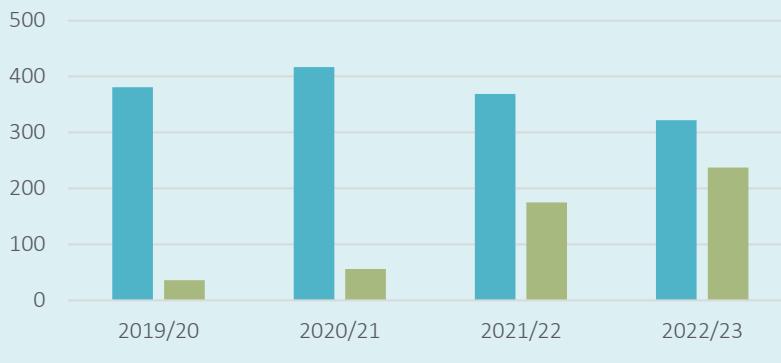
A dedicated programme of activities including:

- ❖ Named contact to support colleges.
- ❖ Contextual offer for Access to HE students.
- ❖ Information, advice and guidance (IAG) through talks, interview preparation sessions, a targeted annual event and online bookable meetings.
- ❖ Transition support and dedicated welcome programmes.

Results

Although uptake was initially slow (partially due to Covid), we now engage with the majority of students across all Access provision. We have also seen a small but steady increase in applications from target colleges. Furthermore, partner colleges have fed back that the additional bespoke support available has helped them to answer specific questions and support HE progression.

Students engaged from partner FECs



Percentage of applications received



View our Padlet for more information and resources.

Discussion

Colleges directly serve their communities locally and offer HE provision. This can help to widen the economy for highly skilled workers in line with educational policy (2).

HEI's can support colleges to support mutual APP targets whilst providing students with the information required for progression and informed decision making. Keeping students at the heart of the partnership has helped increase relationships and trust within our target colleges.

Conclusion

Since the partnership and contextual offer were introduced, we have seen:

- ❖ A steady increase in engagement within our target colleges.
- ❖ An upward trend in applications received.
- ❖ The number of repeated engagements has increased as we strengthen our relationships.
- ❖ More students are achieving places and progressing into study with UEA.
- ❖ Colleges feeding back that the majority of students are progressing into HE.

References

- (1) Office for Students. (2021) *Improving opportunity and choice for mature students*.
- (2) Chase, J. (2018) 'Success was in the structure: engaging further education colleges in widening participation networks' in Atherton, Kendall, Naughton and Webster (eds.) *Widening Access throughout the student lifecycle*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp.35-51.