UNIVERSITY of York

A whole provider approach to widening access and student success

NERUPI Convention, Friends Meeting House, London, 12th September 2024

Access our WPA toolkit

Overview/agenda

- Defining a WPA
- WPA support programme and resources
- WPA student experience interventions
- Enabling environment interventions – what are they are how can they be evaluated
- Questions/reflections

What is a whole provider approach?

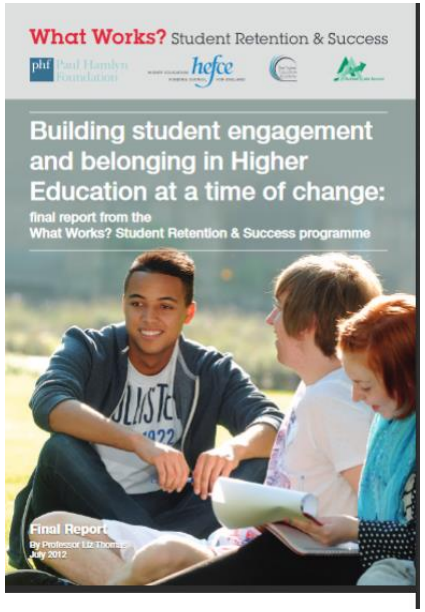
Whole provider approach (WPA)

WPA Student experience

1. A whole provider student experience extends across the student **lifecycle** .
2. WPA student experience takes into account and works across the **whole of students' lives**.
3. WPA student experience (practices, services and opportunities) are available to students **across the HEP**, rather than just in particular sites, departments or courses.
4. WPA student experience should be based on **institutional change** rather than requiring students to adapt and fit in (Kift 2015 & 2023, Thomas 2002, Thomas & Tight 2011, Zepke & Leach 2005).
5. The most effective way of reaching students – particularly those targeted by widening access and student success interventions - is through the **curriculum** (Kift 2024, Thomas 2012) rather than through supplementary activities, as participating in learning is often prioritised above the wider student experience (Thomas 2020).
6. Sometimes a **targeted** and proactive approach is required to meet the needs of specific groups (Moore et al 2013, Stevenson et al 2019).
7. **All staff**, not just professional widening access and student success staff contribute to WPA.
8. **Students** contribute to a WPA.

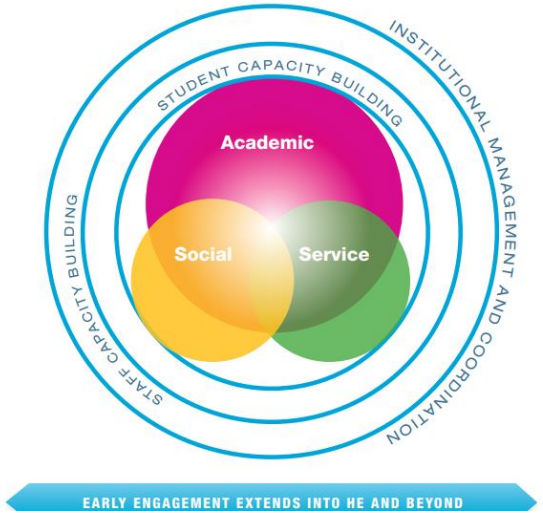
What works? Student retention and success

(Thomas 2012, Thomas et al 2017)



- At the heart of student retention and success is a **strong sense of belonging in HE for all students**. This is most effectively nurtured through students' engagement in mainstream activities that all students participate in.
- The **academic sphere is the most important site** for nurturing engagement which creates a sense of belonging. This puts inclusive **learning and teaching** at the heart of effective student retention and success.
- Some student groups find it **more difficult to engage and belong** than others, and this contributes to **differential outcomes**.
- To maximise the success of all students a **whole institution approach** is required based on cultural and structural change and underpinned by evidence.

Figure 1: Model of student retention and success from 'What Works?1'

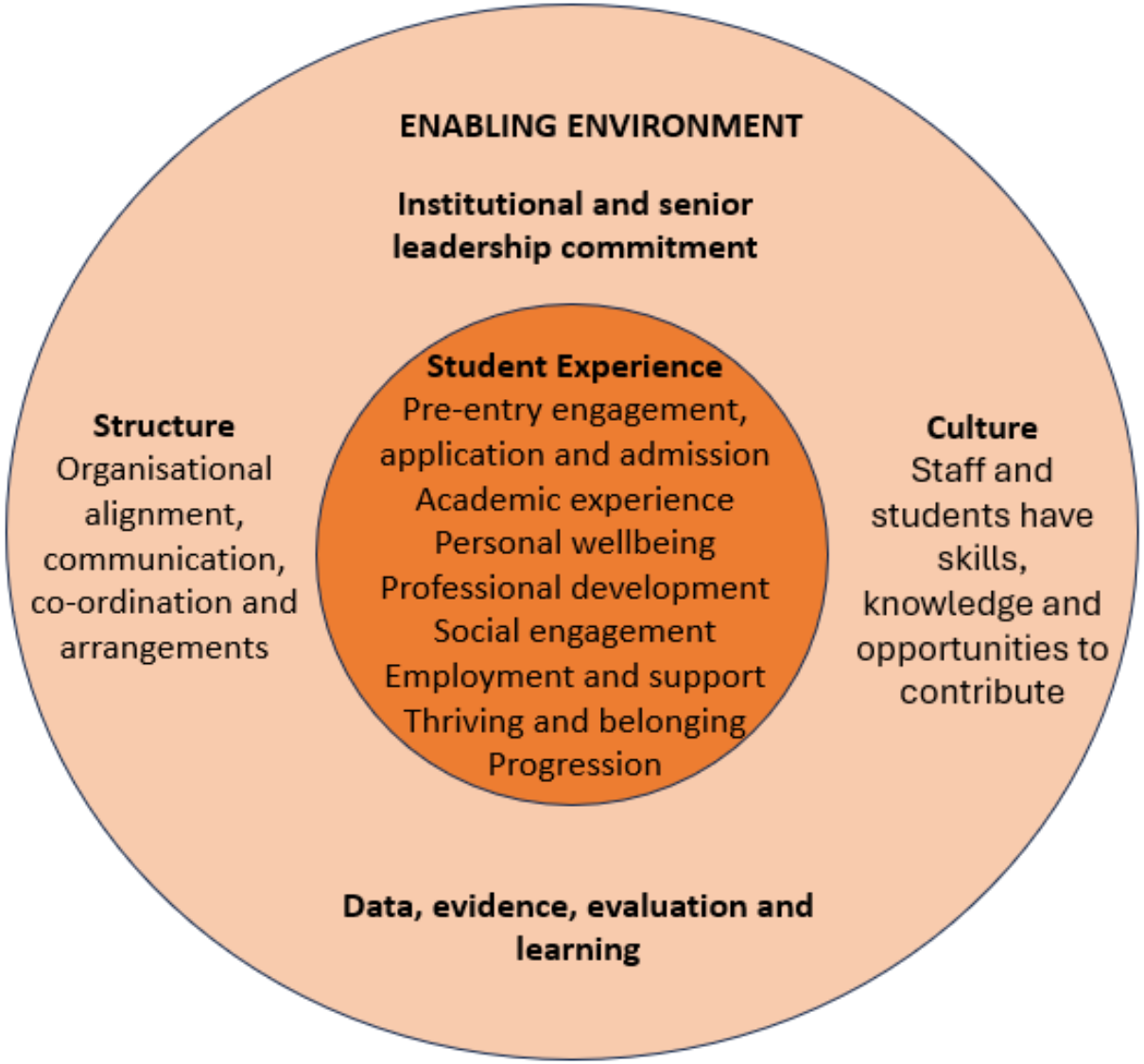


Enabling environment

Four dimensions:

1. Institutional and senior leadership commitment.
2. Alignment of HEP policies, processes and organisational arrangements.
3. Staff and student engagement and partnership in widening access and student success/WPA: Engagement, capacity and communication.
4. Data and evidence.

New ‘Whole Provider Approach’ model (2024)



Widening access & student success Maturity Model

First generation: Individual champions

- Project work and additional support, initially to widen access, and then to support success

Second generation: Pockets of excellence

- Inclusive learning experience, and some teams and groups working well across the student lifecycle (WP teams, academic courses, student services, etc)

Third generation: Inclusive institution

- Whole institution approach: working across the lifecycle, academic and wider student experience, involving all staff, promoting equity.

APP/WPA support programme and resources

WPA programme of support University of York 2024

Bloomsbury Institute, London	Central School of Ballet	Central School of Speech and Drama	City University of London	David Game Higher Education	FutureWorks	Institute of Contemporary Music Performance
Leeds Conservatoire	Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts	Liverpool John Moores University	London School of Architecture	London School of Economics and Political Science	Newcastle College Group	Northern School of Contemporary Dance
Plymouth Marjon University	St Mary's University	Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	University of Bedfordshire	University of Bradford	University of Greenwich	University of Lincoln
University of Manchester	University of Nottingham	University of Sheffield	University of Surrey	University of Warwick	University of York	York St John University

WPA Toolkit

1. Self-assessment of WPA. (a) Initial reflective questions; (b) More in-depth reflection.
2. Student experience mapping tool.
3. Enabling environment review tool.
4. WPA template (for writing this section of the APP)
5. WPA impact evaluation theory of change template
6. WPA evaluation framework (in development)

Tool 2: WPA Intervention Mapping Tool

- Please feel free to use this tool to map your own WPA interventions. For example, cross-institution or BAU that support equity groups

- Please give us feedback on the mapping tool. How have you used it? How have you adapted it? How can we make it more relevant and useful?

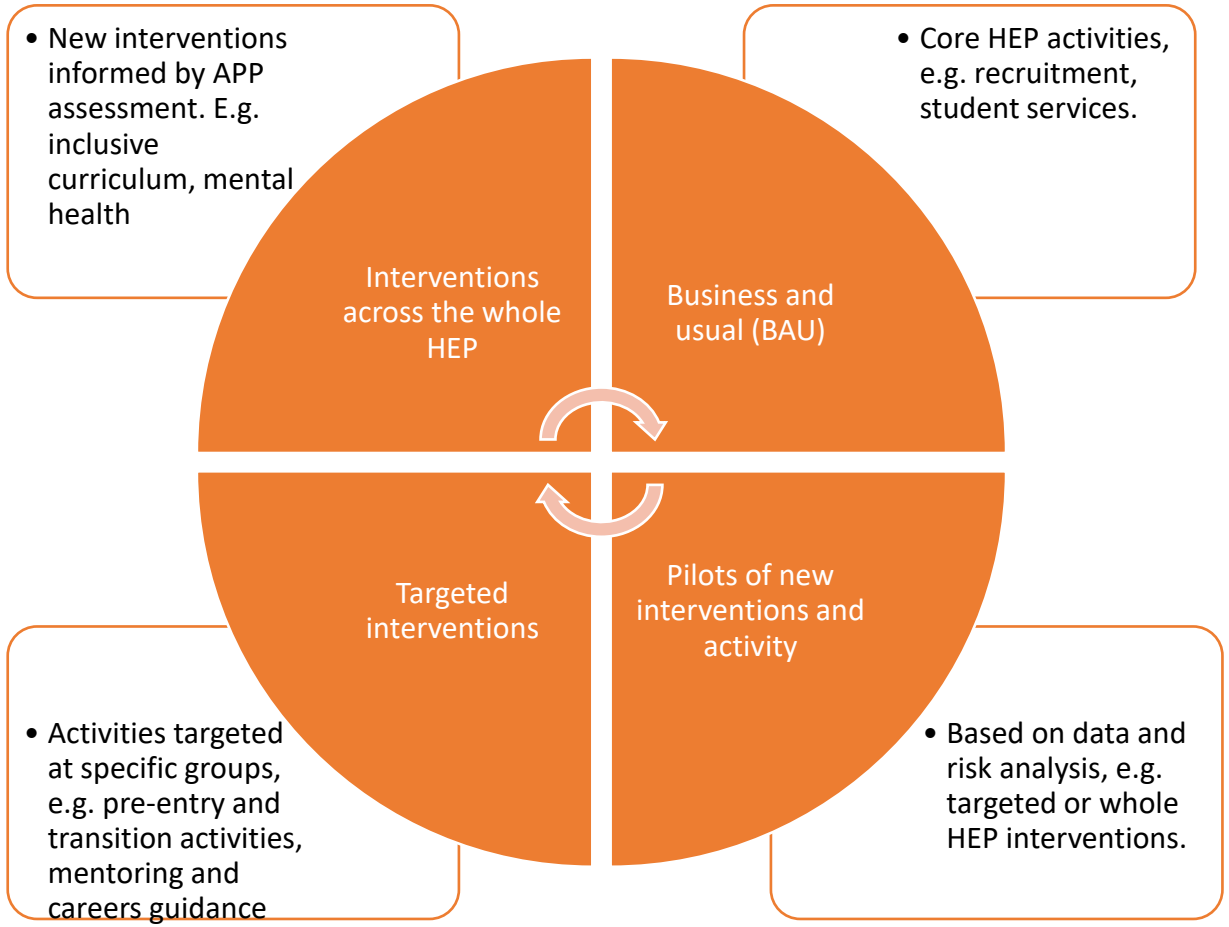
Tool 2: WPA Intervention Mapping Tool

Title	**Student experience intervention mapping tool (version 2)**
Context	This mapping tool has been prepared by Liz Thomas, as part of the 'Using research evidence to ensure a whole provider approach in your APP' programme of support, organised by the Centre for Research on Education and Social Justice, University of York. The mapping tool is inspired by the Critical Interventions Framework, MCSHE, 2013.
Purpose	The student experience intervention mapping tool is intended to help identify interventions across the HEP that contribute to an equitable student experience. You can add in your own interventions to map the student experience interventions at your HEP. Using the mapping tool may help you to identify interventions to include in your WPA, as well as inteventions that need to be monitored to ensure equity groups are benefiting from them, or interventions that need to be changed to make them more inclusive, or gaps in your student experience interventions.
Suggested process	Download the mapping tool and save it to a shared institutional drive, and provide access to it for everyone in your HEP. Start by inviting the core team to add interventions that contribute to the student experience. Encourage other groups of staff and students across the HEP to add in their interventions (be sure to provide sufficient detail that the interventions can be identified and differentiated from other similar activities in other parts of the HEP. Record the names of the people who have contribured to the student experience mapping, this will help you to identify who 'owns' each intervention, as well as seeing who has/has not contributed. The more contributions, the more comprehensive your mapping will be. Encourage people to leave feedback on the tool on the HEP page.
Citation	If you use and refer to this tool, please cite it as: Thomas, L. (2024) *Student experience intervention mapping tool (version 1)* . WPA support programme. CRESJ, University of York.
Feedback	Please send collated feedback to liz.thomas@york.ac.uk

Tool 2: WPA Intervention Mapping Tool

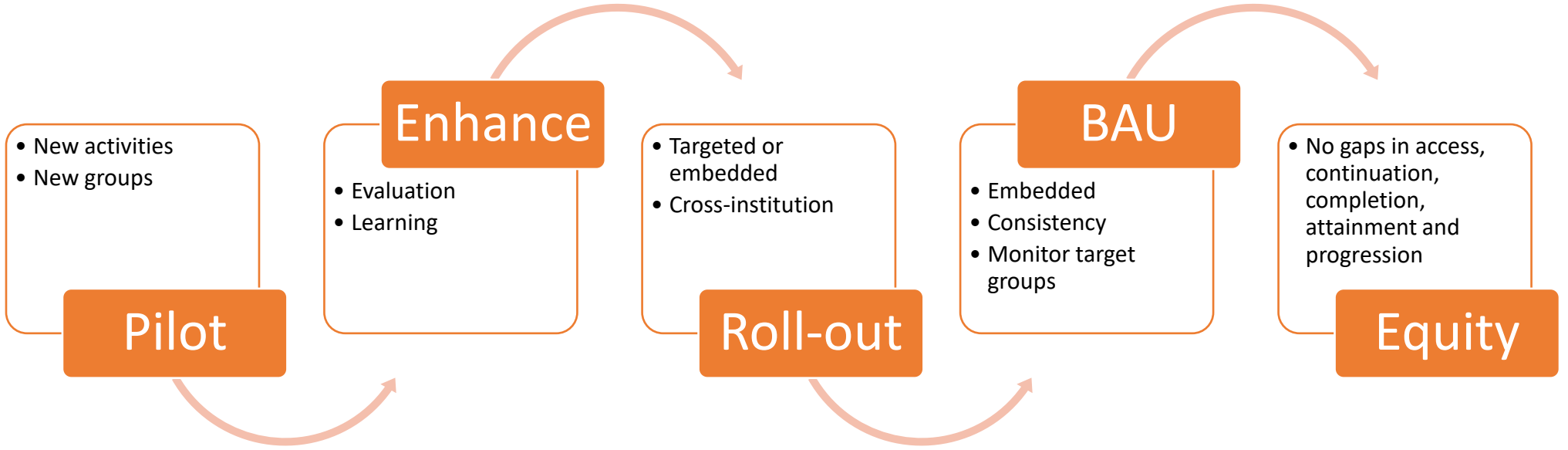
APP stage	**Access**								
Lifecycle stage	*Pre-entry*				*Admissions*				
Types/sites of interventions	Primary school	Secondary school	Colleges	Community	Support	Application	Offer	Acceptance	Enrolment
Outreach Team	Pre-16 access programme								
Outreach Team		Post-16 access programme							
Outreach Team		CPD for teachers							
Recruitment Team		National targeting of IMDQ1/2 schools and colleges							
Admissions/Depts						Contextual admissions			
Pre-degree Team				Foundation courses and offer of places					
Outreach Team					Travel bursaries				
								Bursaries	

Types of student experience interventions



From projects and interventions to inclusive WPA

Institutional maturity



Benefits from an enabling environment

- Encourages and facilitates change

Requires an enabling environment

- Requires and supports all parts of HEP to participate
- Facilitates engagement and change
- Reaches all students
- Promotes consistency and equity

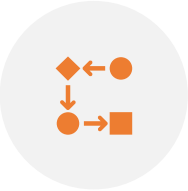
Enabling environment mapping tool (version 3)

About the Enabling Environment Review tool

Your HEP: who has completed the review and when, average scores and a radar chart

Institutional and senior management commitment

Alignment of HEP policies and processes



Communication and organisational arrangements

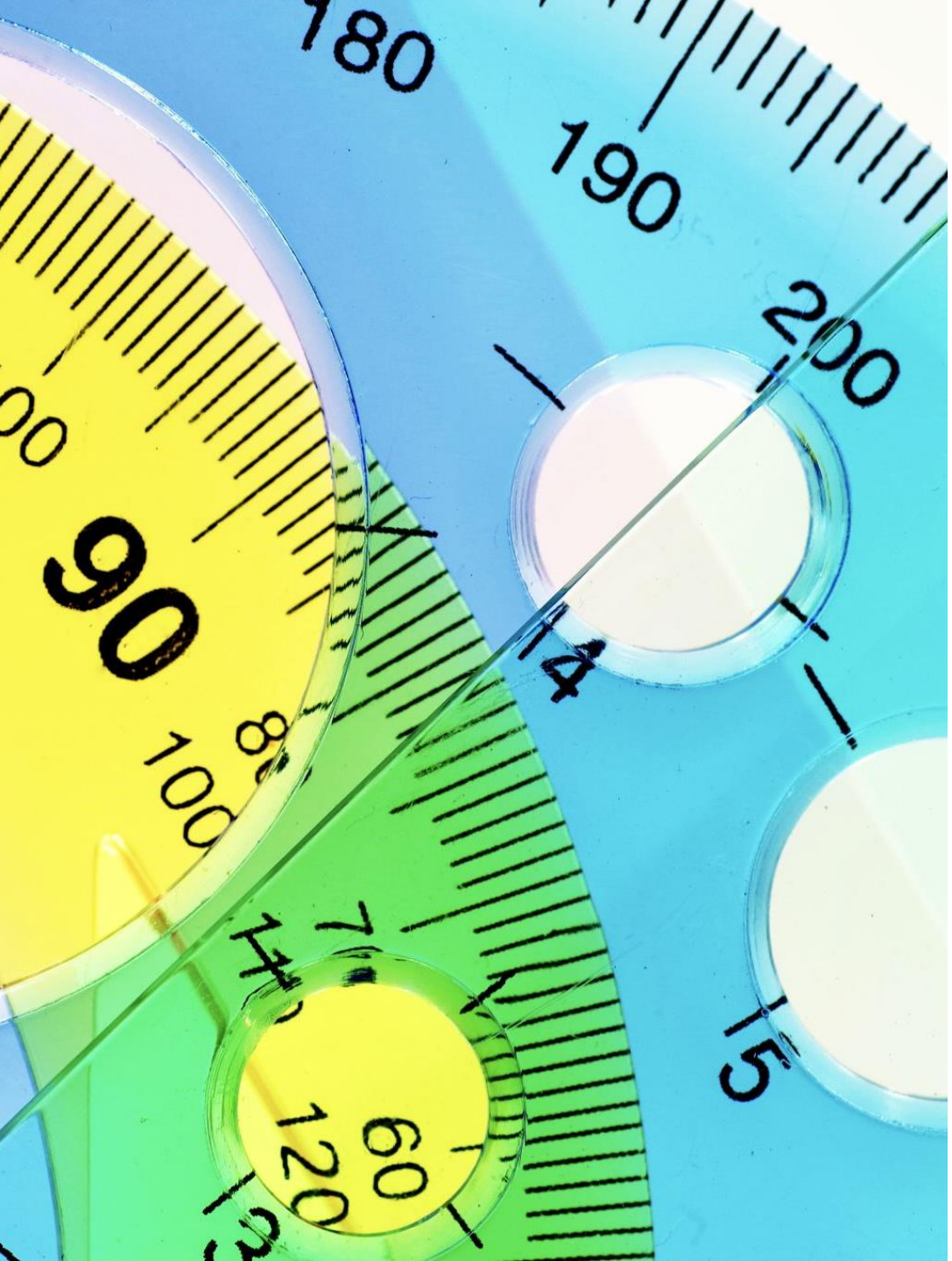
Staff engagement, capacity and partnership working

Students' values, development, opportunities and recognition

Using data and evidence to underpin and drive WP and student success

Tool 3: Enabling environment review tool

	Institutional and senior leadership commitment to widening access and student success is explicit, clearly communicated and demonstrated.				
	Average score	**0.0**			
	Indicator	**Assessment of progress**	**Example or evidence to support assessment**	**Reflections on current approach**	**Ways to improve performance and impact**
a	The HEP's commitment to widening access and student success is explicit in our strategic plan, mission statement and other strategic documents.				
b	Senior managers have knowledge and expertise about widening access and student success and are actively involved in leading our work in this area.				
c	Our widening access and student success governance structures enable the engagement of staff from across the institution, students from equity groups and senior managers.				
d	Widening access and student success work is co-ordinated across the HEP to ensure a strategic approach.				
e	Adequate financial resources and staff time are made available to support widening access and students success work across the student lifecycle and the whole student experience.				
f	Other (please specify)				



Assessing progress in relation to the indicators

Self-assessment is based on team discussion, a simple scale and examples or evidence to justify or explain the assessment.

0: Not started/no evidence available

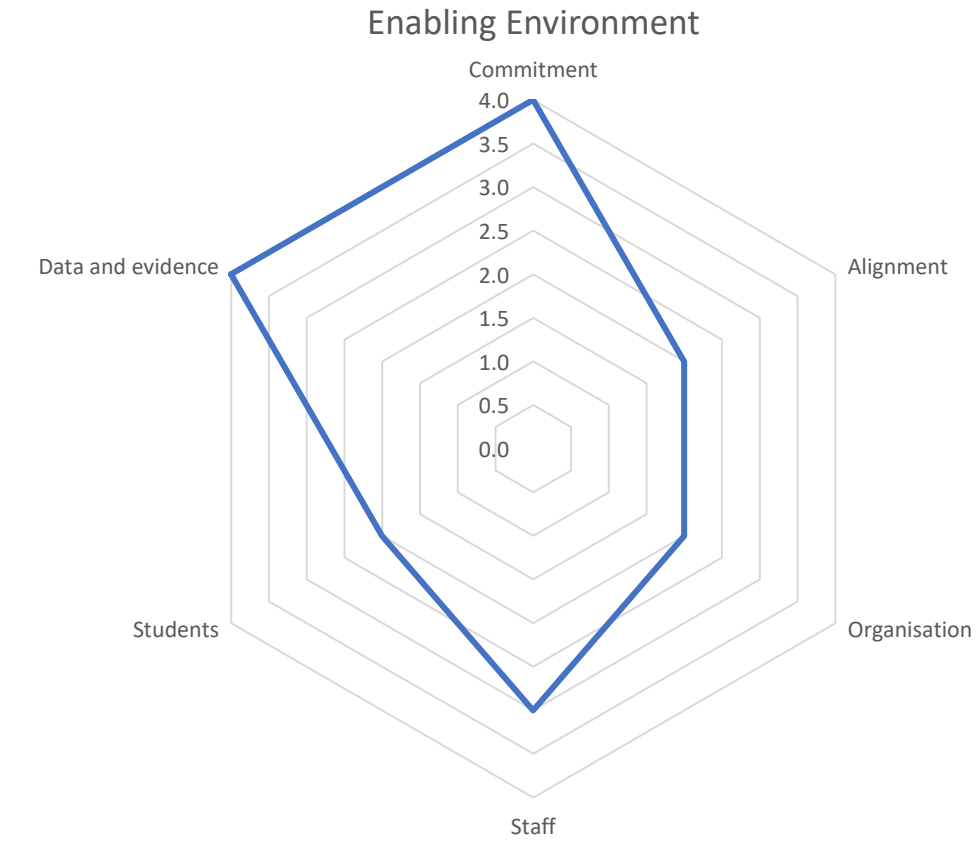
1: In progress (early stages)

3: In progress (advanced)

5: Completed/exemplary

2 and 4 can be used to indicate that you are between these descriptive points.

Identify gaps and agree priorities for enhancing the enabling environment



WPA improvement activities from Wave 1

Alignment of policies and processes, engaging staff

- APP governance structure incorporating staff from across the HEP and students from target groups.
- Hub-and-net model of distributed leadership, engaging colleagues and promoting collaboration.
- New strategic lead for access and participation promoting staff engagement, responsibility and change.
- Creating alignment between APP team and EDI committee through membership and working groups.
- Ensuring alignment between People Plan and APP.
- Localised planning and evaluation to meet APP objectives.
- Raise staff awareness and engagement of APP through roadshow.

Developing the capacity of staff and students

- Sharing good practice via an annual conference.
- Building diversity and success into the student induction programme.
- Introduction of new student feedback mechanisms which encourage reflection
- Involving students as paid curriculum consultants, and co-creating continuous improvement of APP.

Improving data, evidence and evaluation

- Development and use of data dashboards.
- Using CRM system to communicate with specific groups of students via targeted emails.
- Developing evaluation capacity by working with central teams and academic departments

Longer-term impact

WPA is a means to an end: greater student equity

- Understand what works
- Create an enabling context
- Roll ‘interventions’ out to HEP
- Improve experience & outcomes
- Student equity

Evaluating WPA: Logic chain

Assumes a causal relationship

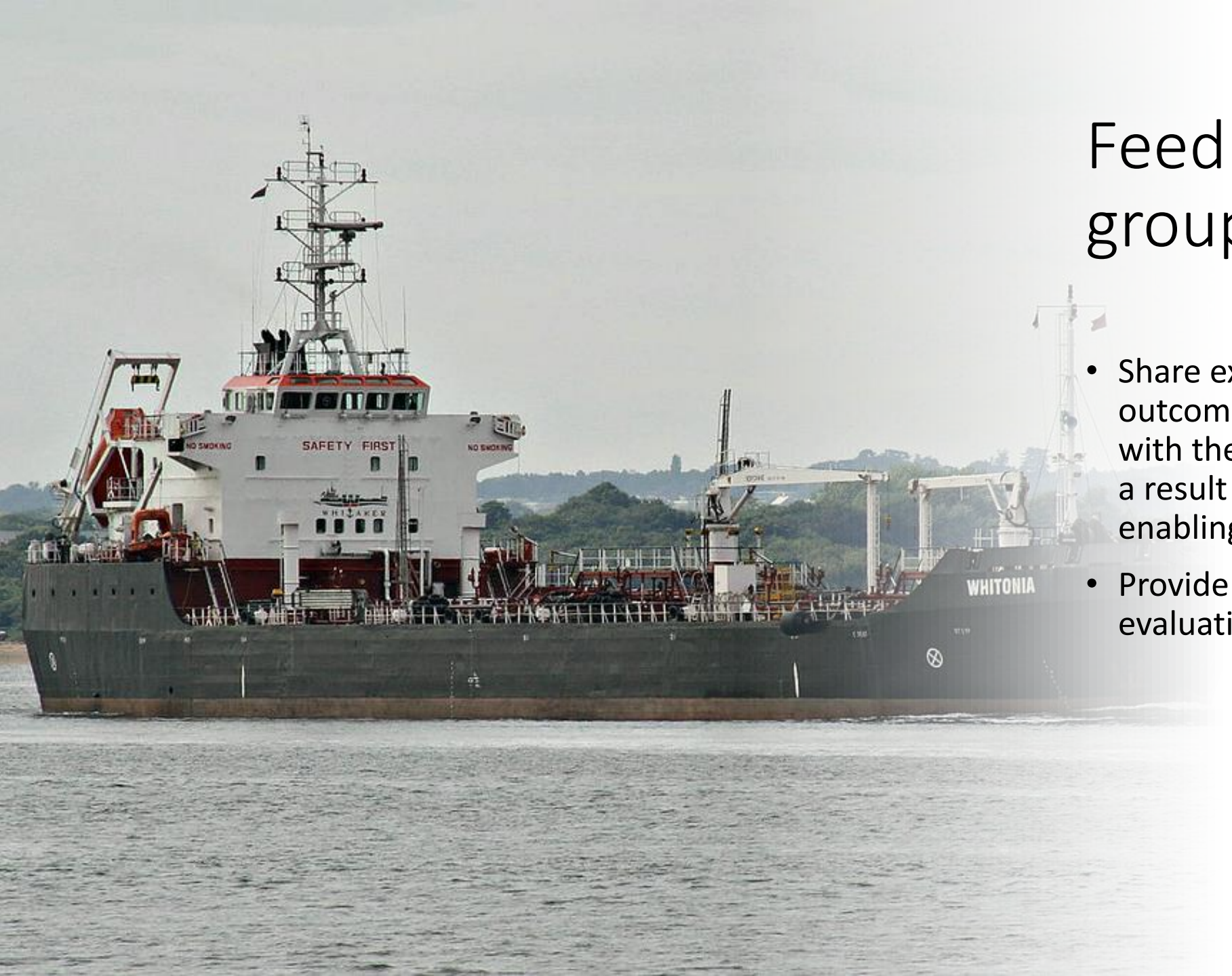
2 3 4 1

Activities | Short-term benefits | Medium-term outcomes | Longer-term impact

Intermediate outcomes

Activity: Identifying evaluation indicators for Enabling Environment interventions

1. In groups read the scenario.
2. Look at the yellow evaluation cards and select the longer-term institutional change(s) (1-2) you are focusing on.
3. Use the blue cards to select short-term indicators (around 4),
4. Use the red cards to select medium-term indicators (3-4).
5. You may need to adapt the indicators e.g. to be more specific to your example.
6. If you have time you can think about evidence sources.



Feedback on group task

- Share examples of medium-term outcome indicators (associated with the changes that happen as a result of enhancing the enabling environment).
- Provide reflections on the evaluation indicator cards.

WPA Evaluation Programme

- If you would like to work with me to design an evaluation framework for a WPA intervention, please get in touch.
- We will be selecting partners in late this year and delivering workshops at institutions in early in 2025.
- liz.thomas@york.ac.uk

Thank you

liz.Thomas@york.ac.uk

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