WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN OUTWARD MOBILITY
In 2017 the UUKi/ EHEA Widening Participation in UK Outward Student Mobility Project developed a report and toolkit to support higher education institutions and colleges of further education to develop effective strategies to increase participation in mobility programmes by students from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds.

The work is intended to help achieve a year on year increase of students from widening participation backgrounds engaging with outward mobility programmes.
STUDENT GROUPS

- Students from low socio-economic backgrounds
- Students from low participation neighbourhoods
- Black and Minority Ethnic Students
- Disabled Students
- Care experienced students
Six months after graduating mobile students in this sample were: less likely to be unemployed. More likely to be in a graduate job and earning higher starting salaries than their non-mobile peers.

**DISADVANTAGED GROUPS GAIN THE MOST**

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds and black and minority ethnic groups are least likely to participate in study, work or volunteer abroad programmes but have the most to gain from them.

**GRADUATES FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS WHO WERE MOBILE EARN**

6.1% more...

**BLACK GRADUATES WHO WERE MOBILE WERE**

41% less likely to be unemployed...

...than peers who did not have international placements.
KEY FINDINGS

• **Students from low socio-economic backgrounds:** advantaged students *65% more likely* to participate.

• **Students from low-participation wards:** participation rate *1.0%* for students from LPW – *1.8%* for peers.

• **Black and minority ethnic students:** BME students represented *22.2%* of the student cohort but only *17.6%* of the outwardly-mobile group.

• **Disabled students:** *1.5%* of students with a disability participated in outward mobility.

• **Students who are care leavers:** 75 care leavers participated in outward mobility.
MULTIPLE BARRIERS AND OVERLAPPING IDENTITIES

Important to recognise that some students have overlapping disadvantaged identities and therefore may face compounded barriers to mobility.

All of the target demographic groups are underrepresented in mobility numbers, and students with overlapping disadvantages have even lower rates of participation.

*Intersectionality:* ‘The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as *race, class, and gender* as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating *overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage*’
Students from the UK went on outward mobility placements to on average 170 countries each year across the world during the last three years.

**Top 9 countries** visited by students from disadvantaged groups reflected the national pattern:
- Europe: France, Spain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands
- English speaking: United States, Canada, Australia
- Asia: China
When splitting the data by either socio-economic background or by low-participation neighbourhood the majority of students were taking part in either Erasmus+ or a provider-led programme. This follows the national pattern.

BME students were more likely to undertake a period of mobility as part of a provider-led programme.
MOBILITY DURATION

Over the period analysed, among those engaging in outward mobility, students from low-participation wards, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, BME students and students with a disability were all more likely to undertake short term mobility than their peers.
A NOTE ON SHORT-TERM MOBILITY

➢ The institute of international Education found that developing teamwork was “an area of strength for shorter term programs” and that development of certain skills is “unaffected by length [of mobility], including curiosity, leadership, and work ethic.”

➢ Universities Australia cited evidence that “a well-designed short-term programme can have a significant lasting impact upon participants” and that “more is better, but some is better than none”.

➢ The British Council and UUKi’s (2015) Student Perspectives research found that students “reported valuable outcomes for very short and short-term mobility programmes.”

➢ Focus group participants contributing to this toolkit who had been on a short-term mobility programme described the experience as “life-changing.”
FOCUS GROUPS

Countries visited by focus group participants

Subjects studied focus group participants

Accounting
Business
Drama
Economics
Education
English Literature
Fine Art
Football
French
International Relations
International Tourism
Nursing
Politics
Professional Care
Psychology
Software Engineering
Spanish

Length of mobility periods for focus group participants

Short term: 50%
Long term: 38%
Not mobile: 12%

Note: some countries were visited by more than one student
WHAT MIGHT BE THE BARRIERS TO OUTWARD MOBILITY FOR STUDENTS FROM LESS-ADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS?

WRITE YOUR ANSWERS ON A POST-IT!
FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

**Finance:** This was raised in every group and by most students. Concerns related to the cost of the programme, accommodation, travel, subsistence, course materials, visas, passports, insurances and health services.

**Accommodation:** When mobile, students often found it difficult to source accommodation within budget; on return to the UK, particularly for students on semester mobility, many encountered issues if trying to secure a lease for less than 12 months.

**Language:** This was particularly raised by students in the context of short-term mobility, who voiced uncertainty about having the language proficiency to navigate the host country.

---

**Cohort-specific factors**

**Pre-mobility**
- First time abroad
- Leaving support networks
- Perception by locals
- Medical support

**Challenges in country**
- Behaviour from locals
- In-country support
- Visa and Immigration
- Health crises

*Recommendations: Messaging, Information, Logistics, Support, Networks, Post-mobility activities.*
STUDENT QUOTES

Barriers:

“I’ve worked since I was 16, I’ve always had a full-time job so didn’t think I needed work experience”.

“(I) couldn’t afford (to do) it without the grant”.

“(I) felt intimidated going through border security”

“I was travelling alone for the first time”

“(It was) my first time abroad“

“If I mess up a little bit it would be really bad in a foreign country”.

Outcomes:

“I will never be the same person again; I’m changed forever, for the better.”

“(I have) a brilliant network of people that I know from everywhere in the world”.

“(It) massively increased my confidence”.

“(It) changed my entire worldview in a year”

“(It was a) really interesting and eye-opening experience”.

“It’s literally changed everything for me”
PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support from leadership
2. Institutional targets
3. Academic buy-in
4. Collaborate
5. Transparency
6. Flexible offer
7. Widening Participation agreements
8. Funding information
9. Scholarships, grants and bursaries
10. Marketing
GOOD PRACTICE

- Student mentor scheme
- Summer Internships
- Student led support
- Expanded marketing activities
- Intercultural Competencies Module
- CV workshops
- Targeted funding
- Dedicated support roles
- Leadership programmes
- Ambassador scheme

Access Agreement
Short-term
Collaboration
Post-mobility
Student Support
**CORE MARKETING**

- Features in student newspaper and magazines
- Institutional intranet
- Student Ambassador programme
- Student Facing Office
- Email and e-newsletter campaigns, both targeted and generic
- Printed materials including brochures, flyers, postcards and posters
- Advertising on screens across the institution
- Inclusion in prospectus
- Inclusion in Welcome publication

**EVENTS**

- Widening Participation team activities and promotions
- Promote during foreign language classes
- Departmental correspondence and circulars
- Careers Office activities and promotions
- Personal Tutor resources to signal opportunities
- Brief Student Union Sabbatical Officers on opportunities
- Present at Staff Orientation Programme
- Presentations to Academic departments
WHAT WORKS WELL AT THE UNIVERSITY, AND WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED TO SUPPORT MORE STUDENTS TO GO ABROAD?

DISCUSS WITH THE COLLEAGUE SITTING NEXT TO YOU!
TOOLKIT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Take a whole institution approach
2. Be student-led
3. Offer short-term mobility opportunities
4. Foster academic engagement
5. Provide targeted funding
6. Expand marketing activities
7. Involve parents and guardians
8. Include applications and interviews
9. Start preparations early
10. Establish a mobile student network
11. Deliver expert support:
12. Offer language learning
13. Deliver post-mobility activities
14. Create an ambassador scheme
15. Introduce a buddy scheme
NEXT STEPS

There are three specific areas of work that would benefit from further exploration following the publication of this toolkit.

1. Further examples of good practice on targeted support for care leavers and BME students to encourage access to mobility opportunities.

2. Good practice on support for demographics who are outside of the scope of this project but who may face barriers in going abroad, including part time students, lesbian, gay and bisexual students, trans students, mature students and students with caring responsibilities.

3. Clarity on the extent to which short-term mobility results in positive outcomes. It would be valuable to explore students’ progression from short to long-term activities.