

HOT TOPICS?

COOLE SOLUTIONS!



coole insight ltd

Getting the right thing done

1. The Hot Topic – Widening Participation and Access



Widening participation and access (WP) has been a hot topic for years, but recently the heat has been turned up to make sure the required level of strategic importance is placed on an area of work that students fought to get on the agenda many years ago. As a result of the OfS regulatory requirements and funding that institutions can now access, SU's have responded differently to how they partner with their institution in this space...

2. The Insight



With WP the context and environment is everything if you are taking a strategic approach to improvement. An understandable, yet common mistake is to try and address every issue for every group at once, leading to resource being spread too thinly and as a result creating little to no impact. That's not to say that some groups are more important than others, it's about understanding the context and environment of each institution where numerous factors create more barriers to some groups than others, and the development of a prioritisation **process** (within a strategy). So, the role of an SU? Critical friend or supporter of the institution's WP strategy/activity, or both? Funded to deliver regulated institutional work? Campaigning for underrepresented groups? All the above?

3. The Coole Solution



Coole Insight were invited into the University of Bournemouth to work with the institution and students' union on WP, to consider some of the questions outlined above. This involved a benchmarking exercise which included a further 8 students' unions in relation to WP activity. The difference in approach was fascinating as the level of strategy and activity ranged significantly across the spectrum of the above questions. This range of approaches were mainly linked to SU capacity, resource, risk, values, growth, institutional partnership and an overall understanding of the subject. To find out more about how you can better define your role in WP then book a free consultation by emailing steve@cooleinsightltd.co.uk