



IPA
INCLUSIVE
PRACTICE
AWARD



HIGHER EDUCATION:
Ensuring access, participation
and progression for all

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Foreword

The move of this award into its second year is exciting for the sector. With its focus on an holistic and collaborative approach, the award promises much that higher education dearly needs. At its heart, it offers support for universities to develop and improve our institutional priorities on a collaborative basis. And this is a recognition that collaboration is needed not only across departments and in alliances between academic and professional service staff, but also between students and staff as co-partners in solution-finding. Even though the sector knows that partnership working is the only way to find long-lasting and effective solutions, institutional practices often relegate it to a short-lived, agreement-getting process rather than the long-term and interactive process that the award envisages.

More than this, the award encourages us to share best practice and will be developed over time to reflect the key issues in higher education. It is all the more positive that the award involves sector representatives in its comprehensive assessment of applications. As such it aims for an adaptive and realist approach as a way of building its ambitions into sector practice. We shall be all the stronger for it.

The award is personally exciting for me, as a PVC responsible for education at London South Bank University (LSBU) and also someone deeply committed to providing a transformative environment for all our students. One day I'd like to see LSBU in the list of awardees - and not only because it aligns with my own ideals, but because the process of application and assessment is one that would tell us a great deal about how our practice is perceived and where our strengths lie. I'd encourage all higher education providers to engage with the award as a way to engage in this important area.



Professor Deborah Johnston
Chair, Inclusive Practice Award Panel

University of West London Inclusive Practice Award winner 2020-21



The University of West London (UWL) were delighted to be awarded the winners of the Aimhigher London Inclusive Practice Award.

The application process to submit our nomination for the award was a really helpful exercise to take stock and reflect on all of the work we have done over recent years to improve both student and staff experience. It's rare in our fast paced jobs that we take time to reflect and appreciate how much great work you do in your own institutions and celebrate the success. It allowed us as a team to reflect and feel proud of the work we have done and acknowledge the developments in inclusive practice we have managed to achieve in recent years. We are very lucky at UWL to have really supportive senior managers that are willing to listen to new ideas and give things a go to see if we can improve student experience.

I personally am very lucky to have such a dedicated and skilled multi-disciplinary team who work incredibly hard supporting each other to constantly look to innovate and improve the service we provide our students and staff. There is still a long way to go and we know we can learn a lot from other institutions who are also doing amazing work innovating their service in the pursuit of truly inclusive practice.



Michael Cobden
Head of Wellbeing
University of West London

Our Vision

Supporting universities to fulfil their potential to be key influencers for individual, institutional, social and economic change for those with a disability into, through and beyond Higher Education

We believe that complex problems are better addressed by bringing together all of the available knowledge, expertise, resources and wisdom within and across teams in institutions. This together with the strategic commitment of senior managers can make a difference and drive real change.



the Award

The Award recognises Higher Education Institutions' in London's commitment to widen access to and from higher education and improve the experience and outcomes for learners and staff

Although over the last 10 years there are greater numbers of learners with additional needs applying to HE, the disparity between those who have declared a disability and those who haven't in relation to attaining degree-level qualifications, remains the same.

Equally there continues to be a higher proportion of disabled graduates who are unemployed (at all qualification levels) compared with their non-disabled graduates (AGCAS, 2021)

Due to the effects of the recent pandemic and a desire to 'level up,' the five-year focus of Access and Participation Plans is an opportunity to realise a more strategic approach to social mobility and identify where policies (APPs; Inclusion and Diversity Policies; Mental Health Charters) may align.

The Award is built on many of the findings and recommendations from the Disabled Students' Commission 'Arriving at Thriving' report (Policy Connect, 2020).

Signing up is an opportunity to shout about work, in development, or as part of current and/or desired institutional practice and think innovatively about ways to drive social mobility in the years ahead, whatever the starting point.

'An opportunity to demonstrate the clear and sustained impact of a particular area of focus across your institution – how well you're doing at leading and supporting the diversity agenda in your institution'

What works for one institution may not work for another so the focus is on where you are now and where you aspire to be. Future iterations of the Award will continue to build on this approach to utilise new learning

The award is intended to recognise and effect change at a whole-institutional level where responsibility is shared and embedded.

Applicants are encouraged to reflect on existing good practice where this is having an impact and the development of new activity at both systemic and programme levels.

These are assessed within 3 stages of the learner journey: Access (pre-induction), Participation (access, retention and engagement) and Progression (post graduate support and employability).

The aim of the award is to recognise and encourage holistic and inclusive approaches to supporting students and staff where responsibility is shared and embedded. Staff may want to include curriculum developers, library staff, learning technologies and IT departments, estates and accommodation teams and careers and employability teams.



The framework

The assessment framework is informed through recommendations from the Arriving at Thriving report, the Disability Working Group² and the expert panel.

Expert Panel

- Disability Rights UK
- Diversity and Ability
- Ambitious about Autism
- Driver Youth Trust
- South Thames Colleges Group
- Brookfields School
- National Association of Disability Practitioners

Disability Working Group²
Aimhigher London School, college and University
practitioner task group



Figure 1. Indicators and Areas

Themes

The framework uses **6 indicators** of progress/success (figure 1) across **9 themes**;

- Stretching targets
- Curriculum, design, delivery and development
- Professional learning
- Inclusive recruitment practices
- Student Unions
- Student engagement and support
- Students and staff as champions
- Staff and students who disclose a disability
- Employability

Each theme is attributed to each of the **3 areas** Access, Participation and Progression. Examples given are suggestions and not exhaustive.

1. Stretching targets

Institutional targets that are benchmarked and specifically relate to learners with additional needs in Access, Participation and Progression

2. Curriculum design, delivery and development

Delivery and/or approaches to designing, developing or integrating teaching methods to address a range of needs

3. Professional learning

CPD and training available to staff to raise awareness of additional needs; facilitate conversations with academic staff around disclosure

4. Inclusive recruitment practices

Policies, strategies and training that supports and attracts staff and students with additional needs (celebrates the diversity of the institution)

5. Student Unions

Every student and member of staff has the opportunity and is able to fully participate in clubs and social activities; the union/representatives are consulted on Policy changes/initiatives; representation on Governance groups

6. Student engagement and support

Managers effectively coordinate the sharing of information, track progress so that all staff are able to respond to needs

7. Students and staff as Champions/ Ambassadors/Role models

Ways in which staff (leaders, managers, academic and support) pro-actively lead and champion the institution's equality and diversity practices (attendance on task, policy groups and committees)

8. Staff and students who disclose a disability

Incentives, systems and support in place to encourage staff and learners to disclose their needs

9. Employability

The extent to which careers and employability teams collaborate; specialist staff are employed within Careers teams

How will I be assessed?

You will be able to apply for a standard, silver, gold or platinum level of award within as many themes as you want. You will receive an accreditation level for each theme and (depending on the number of themes applied for) an overall award accreditation.

The strength of applications will be assessed on the extent that each indicator is reached within each theme and the strength of the supporting evidence of impact provided.

Feedback

Overall level award winners will be invited to Aimhigher London's practitioner awards on 7th July. Those institutions who have achieved an Individual standard, silver, gold or platinum award will receive notification by post together with a certificate and feedback from the Panel which you may want to incorporate into your wider institutional plans.

Duration of the accreditation?

One year (July-July)

The levels of Award

There are four different levels of Award; Standard, Silver, Gold and Platinum

Individual theme level

An individual award is based on to what extent you meet each indicator within each theme, so you might score a 'standard' in curriculum, design, delivery and development but a 'platinum' in student engagement and support (1 indicator is Standard, 2 is Silver, 3-4 is Gold and 5-6, Platinum)

Overall level

Your overall level will be determined by how many indicators you have met within and across themes

Overall levels

Standard

(all nine themes at a standard level) You've got the right practices and principles in place and everyone knows what is expected of them

Silver

(minimum – 7 of the 9 themes at a Silver level – plus the other two at Standard)

Getting the silver means that not only do you have the right principles in place but you are making active efforts to check that they're happening consistently

Gold

(minimum – 7 of the 9 themes at a Gold level – plus the other two at Silver)

A gold accreditation means that your people and your leadership take full ownership of the practices in place. You are taking steps to make improvements for all involved

Platinum

(minimum – 7 of the 9 themes at a Platinum level – plus the two other at Gold)

Platinum's the highest accreditation you can get. It means your policies and practices for supporting staff and learners with additional needs are embedded across the institution. You are doing well and looking for ways to improve

Don't feel there is enough to say?

If you don't have a strategy that's developed enough to gain an award, you will still receive a summary response and recommendations for steps you may want to consider when applying next year



Applying

What's involved?



Next Steps

1. Read this information and refer to the website <https://ipawards.org.uk>
2. Ask further questions at our Q&A webinar, 22nd February, 10-11am
3. Speak to your team(s) and decide if you want to apply
4. Identify what you are looking to get out of it
5. Register your application and upload your supporting evidence at <https://ipawards.org.uk/registration>
6. Deadline: 5pm **Friday 6th May**

Supporting evidence

Evidence can be submitted in a range of formats

Examples

- **Policies**
(leadership approach to championing diversity; management structure)
- **Strategy**
(Alignment/integration with other institutional priorities; benchmarking/targets)
- **Testimony**
(student voice; student union; staff submission)

Format

You can upload supporting evidence for each theme in a range of formats (word documents, audio files/ visual recordings).

Authorisation

The application form and any additional documents need to be submitted online and authorised by a member of senior staff.

The contact details given on the registration form will be used as the main point of contact.

The name entered onto the final line of the registration form will be taken as confirmation of senior management approval.



www.ipawards.org.uk

email: info@ipawards.org.uk