Access and Widening Participation Policy

3 November 2026

Version 1.0

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta an Oirdheiscirt
South East Technological University

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	Approval by Student Experience Committee December 2024
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Revision History		
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NA	First Draft	0.1
0.1	Inclusion of references to EDI and RPL	0.2
0.2	Minor amends post consultation	0.3
0.3	Minor amends post consultation	0.4
0.4	Minor amends post EMT consultation	0.5
0.5	Reviewed by Policy Committee 21 Oct 2026	0.5
0.5	Approved by Governing Body 3 November 2026	1.0

Publication Details
SETU Website
All Staff Email

Feedback or issues arising on implementation of this policy should be communicated to the policy author.	
Policy Author:	Access and Widening Participation Group

Policy Management Framework Compliance Review as requested by EMT all draft policies should be reviewed by the Policy Review Group in advance of review by EMT. Please confirm that the policy was reviewed by the policy review group.	
Date Policy Reviewed:	10 May 2024

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1. Introduction/Context

The staff and student body of the SETU community are diverse.

The concept of equality is central to our ethos of academic and service excellence. SETU through its Policy for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion sets out commitment to the principles and promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of institutional activity. SETU seeks to provide an inclusive environment which promotes equality and values diversity and inclusion.

SETU's policy for access and widening participation as set out below, echoes the University's mission and EDI policy to offer student-centred education and a commitment to lifelong learning, access, equality and inclusion. This policy aims to provide entry pathways, programmes and support services that promote equal opportunities for all student groups to access, participate in, and succeed within the institution.

2. Purpose and Scope

SETU aligns to national access targets within the National Access Plan (2022 - 2028) and is committed to ensuring that all under-represented groups in higher education are represented within the student body. This policy seeks to promote and facilitate entry to and participation in undergraduate and postgraduate academic programmes and student life of the University .

3. Principles

The policy is informed by the National Access Plan (2022 - 2028), the strategic plan for equity of access, participation and success in higher education. SETU will endeavour to enhance provision of access by under-represented groups in line with the National Access Plan and reflect their guiding principles and priorities.

4. Definitions

This policy aligns with definitions (as listed below) in the National Access Plan and pertain to individuals within the remit of the National Access Plan.

SETU recognises that students experiencing disadvantage may come from various backgrounds including:

- Students from low-income families and/or who are long-term social welfare dependent
- Students from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas
- Students who are mature and have never previously accessed higher education
- Students who are mature and who previously attended higher education but did not complete a course (that is, 'second-chance' mature students)
- Students who are lone parents or teen parents
- Students entering on the basis of a QQI Further Education award
- Students who are migrants or refugees or who have experience of the international protection process
- Students from ethnic minorities
- Students who have experience of the care system
- Students who are survivors of domestic violence
- Students who are carers

- Students who have experienced homelessness
- Students who have experience of the criminal justice system
- Students who are members of Irish Traveller and Roma communities
- Students with disabilities including intellectual disabilities.

5. Policy

1. The University will ensure awareness of its access and widening participation policy among targeted groups through publicity material, the SETU website and positive engagement with schools and relevant representative groups.
2. The University will determine targets for entry into its programmes by people from each of these groups. Progress towards achieving these targets will be reviewed on a regular basis, and the targets will be revised as appropriate. SETU's targets are determined in performance agreements with the Higher Education Authority. Further detail is available at www.hea.ie.
3. The University will put in place accessible and clearly documented procedures to facilitate entry to its programmes by people from each of these groups.
4. The University will encourage positive engagement with the SETU community and stakeholders in the Access and Widening Participation Policy.
5. The University will continue to expand external activity with partners to challenge educational disadvantage and champion access opportunities:
    i. Supporting those in primary and second-level education to have equal access to third-level education
    ii. Promoting and supporting second-chance learning for the adult population, including the delivery of outreach programmes
6. The University will recognise prior learning for applicants from appropriate under-represented groups in accordance with its policy on the recognition of prior learning.
7. The University will seek input from under-represented groups and their representatives to further improve this policy and its related procedures.
8. The University will ensure that any future strategic and policy developments to widen access and participation from under-represented groups will be informed by evidence-based activities. For further reference, see SETU Lifelong Learning Strategy 2025 – 2028.
9. The University will perform annual quantitative and qualitative reviews of the implementation of this policy and associated procedures and programmes to ensure its objectives are fulfilled and to enhance its effectiveness.
10. The University will develop and sustain flexible access routes and learning modes for students from under-represented groups by promoting collaboration with other educational institutions, access consortia and organisations supporting regional and educational development. Such collaboration may include, but is not limited to:
    i. Outreach programmes
    ii. Access and foundation courses
    iii. Linkages to other educational programmes such as Apprenticeships, Further Education and Tertiary Partners.

iv. Flexible modes of teaching and learning, including recognition of prior learning where appropriate

v. Shared service models of provision

vi. Community engagement.

11. The University will strive to provide information, relevant training and means necessary to ensure compliance with this policy.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The Director of Student Life and Experience will facilitate the implementation of the policy in collaboration with the appropriate departments and personnel within the University. These include, but are not limited to, the Access and Disability Teams, Academic Faculties, Student Support Services, and other professional and administrative staff as appropriate. All University staff will have responsibility for contributing to the delivery of the University's access and widening participation objectives. Further information can be found at SETU Student Support Services.

7. Compliance

It is expected that all employees of the University will comply with this policy.

8. Useful Links

SETU Policies:

https://www.setu.ie/about/setu-governing-body/policies

National Access Plan:

https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/national-access-plan-2022-2028/

SETU Reasonable Accommodations Policy:

Reasonable Accommodation

SETU Student Support Services:

https://www.setu.ie/current-students/student-support-services

9. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in advance of the review date (insert date) and/or as soon as possible following new or updated legislation, national or sectoral policy.

10. Policy Author

The author of this policy is the Access and Widening Participation Group. Any feedback or issues arising on implementation of this policy should be communicated to the policy author. They are responsible to ensure that the Policy Owner is aware of these comments when reviewing the policy.