Support Widening Participation

What we will do:

Lobby the University to...

1. Increase the proportion of Widening Participation (WP) student at the University
2. Give more support while WP student are here in the most important areas, such as affordable accommodation, subsidized extra-curricular access, covering unexpected course costs and affordable transport
3. Actively work to combat elitism and classism within the University’s social context
4. Make all WP students known to the University, not just UK students, developing indicators and data beyond UK scholarship receipt
5. Create and promote initiatives which support WP student success after graduating, including but not limited to access to employment and mentorship

Students’ Association to...

1. Work with the University to pursue a bolder Widening Participation strategy
2. Pursue the expansion and sustainability of the Activities & Sports Participation Grant

Background to this:

1. The University’s WP Strategy has been made, and is now at the implementation stage. It is unclear what changes the new Principal will make to it, and it is unclear what the final version will be. The student association should have its own directive regarding WP alongside the eventual strategy
2. Accommodation: currently the university offers 10 percent of its beds at a rate below £420 a month (the fee agreed by the University as the maximum for a student from a financially disadvantaged position). The price of accommodation here puts some WP students off from even applying.
3. Transport: Spatial pressures in the centre mean that students are living further and further out of city. As well as this, courses are being moved to satellite campuses. This is only going to increase the transport costs for students.
4. The Activities & Sports Participation Grant, which provides funds to UK WP student to subsidize costs to participating in societies, volunteering and sports, has had consistently high demand in excess of £15,000 every year, and data shows that Officer Bearers are less likely to be WP students. Other University, such as Bucks New University, have opted to completely cover society costs.
Beliefs and motivating actions:

1. The University of Edinburgh, like many of its peers, has historical roots in being an elite institution comprised largely of a very economically privileged population. This historical legacy has continued, and will continue without proactive strategies to counteract this inequality.

2. There is no justifiable reason why people with more economic privileged should have better access to tertiary education – University should be accessible to all.

3. The Students’ Association’s role is to push for greater equality of access to University, and life while at University, for any historically marginalized group, of which WP students are a part.

4. The universities’ substantial piece of work on WP proves they acknowledge change is needed- it is up to us to lobby them continuously to make this change as impactful as possible

Submitted by Association Executive.