

## University

Scotland's universities are amongst the best in the world, four of which are in the top 200 of the [Times Higher Education \(THE\) World University Rankings 2019](#). Scotland has 19 autonomous higher education institutions which are represented by Universities Scotland. These are funded through the Scottish Funding Council.

Ensuring an excellent education is available to all is a driving principle across our entire education system. Following a commitment in the 2015-16 Programme for Government we set up the Commission on Widening Access to advise us on the steps necessary to ensure every child, irrespective of background, should have an equal chance of entering and succeeding in higher education (targets 4.5 and 4a). [A Blueprint for Fairness: Final Report of the Commission on Widening Access](#) (2016) made 34 recommendations covering the whole education system which were accepted in full. This led to publication of [Implementing 'A Blueprint for Fairness': Progress Report](#) in 2017. Our aim is that by 2030, 20% of students entering university will be from Scotland's 20% most deprived background. The focus of our work is on helping more people from disadvantaged backgrounds enter higher education. We:

- Have kept free tuition fees for Scottish and EU students
- Are providing financial support to students, particularly those who need it most
- Have appointed an independent commissioner for fair access to help drive change across the system
- Are supporting a range of initiatives to widening access and setting targets for individual universities
- Are helping more students from deprived backgrounds gain a place to study medicine
- Have set up an Access Delivery Group to help ensure the whole education system works together and monitors progress on the 34 recommendations
- Are working with partners through the Equally Safe in Further and Higher Education Working Group to ensure universities are safe places to study

## Closer Look - Strathclyde University Vertically Integrated Projects

Strathclyde University runs a programme of classes called Vertically Integrated Projects (VIPs) which encourage students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to original research and development projects. In so doing they take part in multi-disciplinary teams on cutting edge research and development projects working with undergraduate and postgraduate students from all years and staff from across the University. This exposes students to new knowledge and skills while also enabling them to help progress the SDGs. This year's projects include:

- Goals 1 and 8 - Enterprise VIP
- Goals 2, 6 and 7 - Water and Sanitation
- Goal 3 - Drug discovery
- Goal 4 - Text Lab STEM Education and Public
- Goal 5 - Text Lab
- Goal 7 - Sustainable Energy for Development
- Goal 9 - Rover
- Goal 9 - Strathclyde Analytical Institute of Law

Scottish higher education has a worldwide reputation for excellent teaching and research. Our [International Framework and International Policy Statement](#) set out how we want to help universities to continue building educational links and research collaborations around the world (targets 4.7, 4b). Initiatives include; the Saltire Scholarships which offer study opportunities in the areas of science, technology, creative industries, healthcare and medical sciences, and renewable and clean energy; support for students to move between educational opportunities via the Erasmus+ initiative and a pilot scheme by the Student Award Agency for Scotland (SAAS) to fund Scottish domiciled students studying at five universities across the EU; the Scottish Bologna Stakeholders Group to increase student mobility across Europe and establish a common framework for higher education systems; and Connected Scotland which is helping higher education institutions to position themselves as world leaders in teaching, research and knowledge exchange. We also contribute funding to a number of organisations and programmes for international education.