

National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2022-2026

Submission from the Western Institute for Studies in Education (WISE)

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1. Preamble

The Western Institute for Studies in Education (WISE) is a 'virtual' institute aimed at stimulating and consolidating the collective expertise of three initial teacher education (ITE) providers in the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) and St. Angela's College, Sligo (STACS), which were collectively identified as 'Centre 6' in the review of ITE provision in Ireland carried out by the Department of Education and Skills (Sahlberg et al., 2012, 2019).

WISE provides a collaborative space and joint platform to develop and enhance research, teaching, and public engagement of the collective. A formal structure to develop and consolidate our collaborative work fully aligns with the recommendations of the national reviews of the ITE sector, by "provid[ing] a critical mass for improving capacity for high quality research [and teaching] and the integration of students and staff across a number of disciplines" (Sahlberg, 2021, p. 24). The institute has three scholarly priorities which together provide a framework for action across three pillars: Pillar 1: Initial and In-Career Teacher Education; Pillar 2: Research-Informed Practice in Education; and Pillar 3: Public Engagement: Advocacy, Contribution, and Impact.

A core concern and commitment of institute partners is to widen participation in ITE. The School of Education at NUI Galway has a long history of scholarly engagement in this field, building on Dr. Elaine

Keane's research on widening participation in higher education in Ireland (cf. Keane, 2009, 2011a,b, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017), and the Irish Research Council-funded *Diversity in Initial Teacher Education* (DITE) national research project, led by Dr. Elaine Keane and Dr. Manuela Heinz, which established Ireland's first national evidence base in relation to the socio-demographic backgrounds and motivations of applicants and entrants to primary and post-primary state-funded ITE at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and resulted in numerous publications (see References list). Drs. Keane and Heinz (NUIG), along with Dr. Eileen Kelly-Blakeney (STACS) are also Principal Investigators of the NUIG/STACS Access to Post-primary Teaching (APT) project, funded under the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH1), Strand 1 (Equity of Access to Initial Teacher Education). Through this project, we support student teachers from lower socio-economic groups in ITE, pupils in DEIS schools, and students via FE routes.

In this submission regarding the next National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, while some points relate to the higher education (HE) access space in general, in the main our focus is initial teacher education (ITE) and the teaching profession, and access and diversity issues therein. There are two main sections in this document, based on the main headings in the HEA consultation document, focusing on a) priority goals, and b) priority actions. Throughout our submission, we include feedback from students from the NUIG/STACS PATH1 APT project, which was sought as part of the External Evaluation of Phase 1, submitted to the HEA in autumn 2020.

2. Priority Goals: Data, Research and Target Groups

In relation to priority goal 3 in the current National Access Plan (to gather accurate data and evidence on access and participation and to base policy on what the data tells us), we argue that a focus on data, and evidence-based policy development, be maintained in the next National Access Plan. However, some refinement of this goal is needed. While a national system for accurate data collection is obviously needed and central to evidence-based policy development, existing (accurate) data *need to be used* by policy-makers.

Furthermore, the gathering of new, and the use of pre-existing (accurate) data, ought to be *sector/profession-based*. For example, in applications for PATH1 funding to diversify ITE, HEIs were advised that the target groups in PATH1 had to be the same as the general target groups for HE (undergraduate level) as a whole, as per the National Access Plan. This is not evidence-based policy development, as the national research evidence (cf. Keane and Heinz, 2015, 2016; Heinz and Keane, 2018) has been clear about which groups are most under-represented in the teaching profession, that is, minority ethnic groups, and

yet this group is not a target group in the National Access Plan¹, greatly constraining equity of access and participation initiatives for this group. Therefore, in the case of access to the professions, specifically here access to the teaching profession, policy-makers need to base target groups and actions on sector/profession-specific data.

Further, updated data collection now needs to be conducted on the socio-demographic profiles of current ITE cohorts. We would also advise that similar data collection be conducted in relation to other professions, especially in subjects and professions identified as 'prestigious', including law, medicine, veterinary science, for example, in which students from lower socio-economic, and minority ethnic groups, are very significantly under-represented (Social Mobility Commission, 2016; Government of Ireland, 2007; National Access Office, 2013).

Additionally, while it is important to track entry by socio-demographic background into ITE programmes, and to examine progression and retention rates, quantitative data tell us nothing about the lived experiences of students from under-represented groups in and beyond ITE. Qualitative research exploring the student experience of HE is vital in assessing the impact of widening participation initiatives in addressing equality of access to HE in Ireland. We also recommend research be conducted on the impact of gender imbalances in specific subject areas (e.g. Home Economics and Woodwork) in ITE and teaching, and the various structures and practices which sustain these imbalances at system and institutional levels.

We regard research as a key strand of widening participation in ITE. Many of the PATH1 projects contain a research strand, including the NUIG/STACS APT project, which has already resulted in two academic publications. Additionally, in November 2019, as part of the NUIG aspect of the APT project, Drs. Keane and Heinz hosted an international research symposium on the topic of diversifying the teaching profession, which showcased not only key research findings from the PATH1 projects, but also projects from the international context. A second international research symposium will be held in 2023. As a separate activity, Drs. Keane and Heinz, along with Dr. Rory McDaid in Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, are currently working on an edited volume about diversity in the teaching profession, to be published by Routledge in 2022. A major section of this book features a number of PATH1 projects' research findings.

In relation to ITE and teaching, and indeed other professions, supporting students from under-represented groups *into* the profession (e.g. as NQTs), will be very important, and research about their early career experiences is vital in this regard. We are conducting some small-scale research in this regard as part

¹ More broadly in terms of the target groups in the National Access Plan re. the undergraduate HE sector as a whole, we also believe that students from migrant and/or ethnic minority groups (other than Travellers) ought to feature as a distinct target group.

of the NUIG strand of the APT project, and two of our NUIG PhD students are researching this area, but larger-scale research would be welcome.

3. Priority Actions

3.1 How can pre-entry and post-entry activities be developed?

In relation to **pre-entry activities**, there is significant evidence of the need to work effectively with students from a very early age to encourage their progression through schooling and into further education (FE) and HE. It is vital that early years' education is adequately resourced, particularly in marginalised areas, and that early childhood providers are adequately resourced and supported in this work. Pre-entry exposure to HE, and the opportunity to take classes, view the facilities, meet staff and students, and to get a 'feel' for what HE 'is like' is important for raising awareness among under-represented groups.

STACS has a strong tradition of recruiting students from under-represented groups into ITE, having established a pre-entry Access course route onto all undergraduate ITE programmes in 2002 for both school leavers and mature students. For primary and post-primary students, the Access Schools' programmes provide taster days, workshops and other activities for students in the local area. Continued and increased funding is vital to ensure that the 'reach' of pre-entry activities which target students at different stages of the educational trajectory can be extended.

Additionally, since 2017, as part of the NUIG/STACS PATH1 APT project, a range of pre-entry activities are undertaken, including:

- The NUIG annual schools' event, in conjunction with the Access and Career Development Centres, working with senior cycle students in DEIS schools to provide information about HE access routes, including to teaching, and financial and other supports, which more recently as part of Phase 2 has extended to include work with career guidance teachers, thus extending our impact;
- The NUIG APT student teachers' work with senior cycle students in their DEIS placement schools, through their year 2 Practitioner Research project, through which they research and support their students' thinking and learning about HE access routes, including to teaching, and financial and other supports. Comments from participants included:

"It was incredibly eye opening. At a basic level, I was surprised to find that so many students had poor knowledge of the many pathways to further education, college, university and teaching. Many of the students' perceptions of teaching, and their teachers, were both surprising and eye-opening. Their feedback showed that now more than ever, teacher diversity matters and can make a difference to their educational experiences and aspirations".

As part of their work on their practitioner research projects, many of the APT student teachers chose to 'disclose' their 'working class' status to their students (Keane, Heinz and Lynch, 2020), which had a powerful impact on their students in DEIS schools. Comments included:

"My students felt that there was a teacher who had a similar experience to them and hence influenced the students to try their best. Students came to realise it is possible to progress to be a teacher or other careers involving higher education".

"Students need to see teachers from under-represented backgrounds making a difference and thriving in the teaching profession. The APT project gives future teachers the opportunity to pursue their dream and influence future students and potential teachers".

"The building of student-teacher relationships is a widely accepted strength of good teaching. For students (possible teachers), having a teacher who comes from a similar underrepresented background will allow for positive engagement due to relatability".

- The St. Angela's strand of the APT project provides pre-entry InReach sessions where FE students attend the College on a number of days throughout the academic year and are afforded the opportunity to attend Open Day and all associated activities, sit in on lectures, work alongside current students in Laboratory sessions, and meet existing students. Outreach sessions are also provided, and this involves staff from St. Angela's providing taster classes in the FE colleges, as well as academic writing sessions. Feedback from students indicated the benefits of the pre-entry activities:

"The APT project allowed me to gain a greater insight into the course I would be studying in the future and allow me to meet fellow peers...and tutors ...to ask any questions I may have".

"The APT project had a positive impact on me I thoroughly enjoyed meeting students and staff from St. Angela's. Everyone was very welcoming and put me at ease straight away. It was a brilliant experience overall and I feel I am better prepared to go into Angela's as a first - year student than I would have been if I had achieved the points needed in my Leaving Cert".

"The APT project has allowed me to grow in more ways than one, I have grown enormously academically as I've had to push myself to achieve 8 distinctions and this has carried with me in my college studies, it has encouraged me to think about my future and how I want the future to be not only for me but also for others from under-represented backgrounds".

As evidenced in the External Evaluation of Phase 1 of the APT project submitted to the HEA in 2020, these pre-entry activities have resulted in significant positive impact and we would advocate the continuation of such activities.

Learning from our work to date in the APT project in relation to pre-entry activities, particularly in the case of primary and post-primary students, we see a need to create opportunities to engage with the students' families. Additionally, research from the NUIG strand of the APT project (Keane, Heinz and Lynch, 2018, 2020) indicates that significant work is needed with teachers and career guidance teachers regarding the impact of socio-demographic positionality on student participation and achievement, and the role of teacher expectations therein. This important work is done in ITE, but generations of teachers have not had the benefit of engaging with these very important bodies of international research, and often approach teaching and student support from deficit perspectives, particularly in DEIS schools. Our research (ibid.) also points to the urgent need for work with career guidance counsellors, as many students in DEIS schools, and/or those from lower socio-economic or minority ethnic groups, frequently report *being actively discouraged* from thinking about HE and the professions.

At post-entry level, explicitness is needed about academic processes and practices; too much of academic practice is opaque and academic staff need to be supported in providing clear guidance about academic practice and process in their subjects. Additionally, semester one at undergraduate level may benefit from a re-think in terms of approach, towards a more student-centred and activity-based approach, aimed at student engagement and retention through building a community of learners. Programmes need to be reconceptualised and restructured to allow for multiple exit routes, e.g. exit awards, embedded awards, transfer options; so that all students are set up for success via incremental progression. Moreover, a discussion (and action) about diversity amongst HE academic staff is also needed. While much-needed work has commenced with respect to gender, there has been an absence of discussion about other aspects of diversity (ethnicity, social class, disability, for example) in relation to Ireland's academic staff. The lack of diversity amongst academic staff is very evident to students from under-represented groups and communicates particular messages about knowledge, status, and power. As a small start, in relation to ITE, more visibility of those from minority groups would be welcome in terms of contributions to teaching but it is vitally important that these are not just 'token appearances' and, additionally, that such an approach would not contribute to the insecure and casualised employment patterns so evident for many staff in HEIs.

In the ITE context, again based on the NUIG/STACS PATH1 APT project, the importance of specific social, academic, and financial post-entry supports for student teachers from under-represented groups has been evidenced. Such supports need to be continued.

- Both NUIG and STACS APT participants heavily emphasised the importance of the financial supports. In the APT Phase 1 external evaluation, 10 of the 19 NUIG respondents referred to the benefits of the financial support, and comments included:

“Without this funding I would not have been financially capable of completing the PME”.

“The APT project has most definitely changed my life. If I had not received the funding to complete this course, I would not have been able to afford to accept my place and survive for two years as a student. I had already big loans to pay from my undergraduate years. The fact that I don't have to take out another loan for my education has allowed me to continue to repay my current loans and know that I can enter the work place in the near future with a lot less debt than anticipated, which will no doubt have a positive impact on my career initiation”.

“The funding has helped me to overcome some of the stress I found when completing the masters as I was working weekends and had little time to myself. Overall it has been a very worthwhile and positive experience”.

- The STACS participants also emphasised the benefits of the financial supports, including the equipment bursary provided at the start of year one, which removed the financial pressure associated with commencing ITE. They also identified the Student Mentor and Personal Academic Liaison (PAL) initiatives, and the academic support provided by the Academic Writing centre, as being particularly valuable to them.
- At both NUIG and STACS, training workshops were held with academic and support staff regarding widening participation in HE, diversifying the teaching profession, and how best to support student teachers from under-represented groups throughout ITE.
- In both NUIG and STACS, APT project staff and/or academic staff provided significant additional support to APT participants, including through the PAL initiative, and there is significant scope to build upon such personal tutoring systems.
- In a partnership between GMIT and Foróige, the latter implemented a successful mentoring programme supporting access scholarship GMIT students. The students have found this support very beneficial, and it is planned to expand the programme in the 2021/22 academic year. This model could be rolled out with pre-service students in collaboration with other representative organisations.

3.2. How can current funding programmes be better utilised to further the objectives of the National Access Plan?

The establishment in 2017 of the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) by the Department of Education and Skills as a dedicated fund to support the goals set out in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2018 was a very welcome development. PATH Strand 1 focused on supporting new initiatives to increase access into ITE by students from specific target groups, and demonstrated the commitment of the Department to addressing the lack of diversity in the teaching profession. Going

forward, we would recommend that the practice of assigning dedicated funds to specific fields of study continue, particularly the professions (including teaching). While access to the professions has been on the international widening participation agenda for some time, this work in Ireland is really only beginning, and we need to move forward in this regard (cf. in the UK: Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, 2009; Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013).

In relation to how such funds might be better utilised, from our experience of the Access to Post-Primary (APT) Project which was funded under PATH 1, the greatest challenge has been being under-resourced re. staffing. Access and widening participation initiatives require very significant staff input, in terms of the time needed to provide the necessary pastoral and other supports for students from under-represented groups. Some sort of funding which Student Unions could avail of would also be advantageous, as peer support is key for students from under-represented backgrounds. It is also important that the impact of different initiatives is examined, not only in terms of numbers on programmes but also with regard to their programme and related experiences, and their further career development.

With regard to the PATH 2 1916 Bursary Fund, there is no doubt that this initiative targets those students from lower socio-economic groups who are most in need of financial support. There is perhaps scope to raise awareness of the Bursary at an earlier stage among potential students who meet the criteria and who are thinking about applying to HE, through targeted promotion by Career Guidance teachers at post-primary level, and by designated personnel in FE and community-based settings. There is also scope for the outcome of applications to be communicated earlier, and for bursaries to be awarded earlier in the academic year.

Given the additional costs and financial pressures (accommodation for placement, equipment and materials) for student teachers associated with placement, the recent discontinuation of the dedicated PME support fund is of significant concern. If we are serious about diversifying the teaching profession, adequate, easily accessible, and *visible* financial supports must be available. Further, it needs to be noted that student teachers are not paid for placement teaching. This is something that ought to be looked at, particularly for final year students.

3.3 How can the goal of mainstreaming be further embedded within HEIs?

Mainstreaming of access activities requires not only 'mental' buy-in but also significant workload time from academics and other teaching staff in HEIs, not just from staff in Access and Widening Participation Centres and related initiatives. This means that academic staff will need to see the value in training in inclusive teaching and student support and be given the time to upskill in this area. A significant barrier here is what is valued (and not valued) by institutions in terms of academic promotion. Access and inclusion-related

work is generally invisible and un/under-valued; this needs to change for the work to be genuinely mainstreamed within HEIs. However, this is not just about what is valued in promotion, student support in a widening participation context is extremely time-consuming, and in a vastly under-resourced HE system, particularly in terms of inadequate staffing in spite of constantly increasing student numbers, academic workloads simply cannot sustain the level of work required. This issue is also gendered, with more women academics undertaking the necessary student support and 'pastoral' care work required in this context, impacting negatively on their research time.

Additionally, language around access and widening participation remains quite exclusionary, for example, with students who avail of non-CAO routes being positioned, or positioning themselves, as 'other'. Work remains to be done to embed non-CAO routes as *just routes* to HE, rather than as 'alternative' routes. Finally, mainstreaming of widening participation and access activities must not mean a withdrawal of state funding. These activities are resource-intensive and must continue to be supported.

3.4. How can a whole-of-education approach to widening participation in higher education be achieved?

In order to achieve a meaningful whole-of-education approach to widening participation in HE, action is required at all stages of education, and greater linkages between the stages is needed. Exposing primary school students to HE at an early age, particularly those students who have no family history of attending HE, is really important in raising awareness. At post-primary level, students from underrepresented groups require support and advice on the value *and feasibility* of HE, along with practical support on a whole range of issues such as accessing grants, accommodation, support services available in the HEI etc. *before* they enter HE.

Career guidance teachers clearly have a key role to play. As previously noted, professional development work with *all teachers*, but especially with career guidance teachers, is urgently needed regarding their understanding of the impact of socio-demographic positionality on student engagement and achievement, and the role of teacher expectations therein. *All teachers*, from early childhood providers and junior infants teachers up, need (mandatory) professional development to ensure that they normalise discussion of FE and HE, and different professions, and, crucially, FE and HE routes, pathways and supports, into their daily teaching and learning activities. It is far too late to wait to do this work when students are 16/17. From an ITE (and other careers) perspective, all children and young people need to hear and learn about different careers, and pathways to same, from an early age,

Targeting parents is also important. It is important to understand that parents who themselves had negative experiences of education and/or are from marginalised communities have not had the opportunity to gain knowledge of routes and pathways to, and supports for, FE and HE. Furthermore, the international

research suggests that such parents may consider FE and HE as out of reach, unattainable, and even as risky for their children. Sourcing and completing all the documentation, including supporting financial documentation, to apply for financial supports, including SUSI, is a significant barrier for many families; direct and practical support needs to be made available to parents in this regard. Additionally, the DEIS initiative requires further reform; it remains vastly under-resourced. Further, it is clearly no panacea for educational disadvantage more broadly, with research underlining the significant proportion of students from low-income backgrounds who attend non-DEIS schools. A more coherent wrap-around system which responds to the actual needs of individual students irrespective of what school they attend is badly needed, whilst maintaining and extending focus on and supports for DEIS schools, which experience additional challenges.

In relation to mature-aged entrants to HE, it is concerning that participation by this group has decreased in the last ten years, with first-time new entrants comprising just over 7% of all new entrants in 2019/20, compared to 13% in 2012/13. A specific promotional campaign targeting mature learners in 'return to education' settings might be a useful first step in helping to raise awareness of teaching as a career option and encouraging more applicants from this sector.

3.5 How can pathways between further education and training and higher education be better developed?

The last National Access Plan lists “to build coherent pathways from further education and to foster other entry routes to higher education” (HEA, 2015, p. 24) as one of five key goals. The STACS aspect of the NUIG/STACS APT project is an excellent example of how a pathway from FE to ITE in HE has been successfully established, maintained, and grown over four years. A key objective was to formalise partnerships between STACS and FE providers in the BMW region. Over the three years of Phase one (2017-2020), partnerships were established with nine FE providers in the Border Midlands and West (BMW) region. In the first year of Phase 2 (2020-2023) of the project, we have grown the number of partnerships to seventeen, and hope to increase this number over the remaining years of Phase two. Through these partnerships, a new restricted entry-route specifically for students from under-represented socio-economic groups attending partner FE colleges within the BMW region, has been created. Students in the partner FE colleges who were enrolled on selected courses were invited to participate in the project over the academic year and to apply via the CAO restricted entry route onto the three concurrent five-year BA /PME programmes offered by STACS. The STACS APT FE route, encompassing a range of pre-entry activities that students avail of alongside their FE studies, along with post-entry financial, social and academic supports, is a model that works.

For pathways to be developed and sustained between FE and HE, HEIs need to be proactive in forging links with FE providers. It takes time to build relationships between parties, and it requires dedicated personnel within the HEI, and ideally having personnel from all relevant Schools/Faculties/Departments involved in the process. As it is challenging for HEIs to resource this from existing budgets, additional funding to support this work would be welcome. A QQI award in Education and Training is offered in some FE colleges, and this award offers much potential as a pre-entry course for ITE programmes. With funding to support, there is scope for collaboration between ITE providers and FE colleges at a local level to work together to develop modules that are aligned to the subject disciplines offered by the HEI, and which could form a component of the QQI award.

Additionally, the establishment of greater links between HEIs and FE and Youthreach centres is important. A promotional campaign within FE for mature students wishing to seek a career in teaching would also be useful.

3.6 How can other social inclusion initiatives outside of the higher education sector be harnessed to support equity of access objectives?

The creation and/or strengthening of local links and partnerships between HEIs and non-Governmental and community organisations, and the non-formal education sector, is an important pathway in supporting equity of access objectives (for example, links with youth groups, community mental health initiatives, Travellers' groups, direct provision centres, and women's groups). As part of this, HEIs could develop programmes to further upskill and certify workers and leaders in this sector.

In the context of ITE, there is significant potential here for widening participation work. For several years, through a unique service learning module designed by Dr. Elaine Keane, groups of NUI Galway School of Education student teachers completed the 'placement' aspect of the module in various youth, community and non-governmental organisations, supporting the educational engagement of young people from lower socio-economic and minority ethnic groups, and greatly enhancing their development as teachers committed to social justice-oriented pedagogy. Unfortunately, this module was not sustainable into the long-term due to the very heavy (and unresourced) administrative load, particularly associated with identifying, building, and maintaining links with external organisations to provide placements for the student teachers.

In the above regard, it is worth considering broadening the list of 'approved' school placement 'locations' for student teachers in ITE programmes. Conducting some of the required school placement hours in 'non-traditional' or 'alternative' educational settings would provide significant and highly valuable diverse pedagogical and student support experiences for student teachers (who, as we know from the

research, are predominantly from white, middle class, non-disabled, and majority group backgrounds), whilst simultaneously providing valuable educational support for the relevant students. Importantly, this non-school placement experience would need to be a requirement for *all* student teachers, in order to ensure all ITE students, and not just those drawn towards issues of equity and social justice, engage and learn from this experience. Furthermore, this work, and the student teachers' engagement in same, would need to be supported within the ITE academic programmes, to support student teachers' critical understandings of the work in a social justice context, as per service learning approaches to this type of civic engagement work. All of the above would need to be supported and approved by the Teaching Council, and while the Teaching Council's (2020) Céim document appears to make some such provision (cf. section 1.3.6 on diversity of placement settings and "alternative placement experiences", p. 18), it is unclear if such alternative placement experiences can be *part of* the required 200 hours in schools, required of all student teachers, or if such alternative placement would need to be *in addition to* these hours, the latter which would be extremely difficult to achieve in the short semester timeframe. Further, and crucially, resources would need to be made available to ITE to organise and implement this additional type of placement experience (cf. Boland and Keane, 2009).

3.7 What challenges has COVID-19 presented in relation to an inclusive higher education system and how can they be addressed?

Perhaps the greatest challenge COVID-19 has presented in relation to the establishment and/or embedding of an inclusive education system has been the curtailment of social interaction and the on-campus experience. It is much more challenging for students to form and maintain relationships with their peers, and to avail of college supports, without an on-campus experience. In the case of students from under-represented backgrounds, this challenge is even greater. The move to a virtual learning experience, while presenting some inclusive learning benefits and possibilities as well as financial benefits for some students (e.g. in terms of not having to fund accommodation), also presents further challenges in the engagement of students from under-represented groups. The Student Laptop Scheme initiative has been highly beneficial this year, and it would be logical to continue this initiative post-COVID-19. However, access to high quality broadband for all students constitutes a serious access issue, in terms of both actual availability in certain areas, and affordability.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, we recommend building on and extending the PATH1 initiative supporting access to and success in ITE, based on existing (and to be updated) research evidence in the field in order to ensure that

the next National Access Plan is truly evidence-based. We emphasise the importance of engaging with the more developed conceptualisation of access, which focuses not just on getting students from under-represented groups *in* to HE (and ITE) (vital as that is), but also on the provision of meaningful supports with a view to the retention and success of these students.

In relation to ITE and teaching, and indeed, other professions, supporting students from under-represented groups into the profession (i.e. post-graduation) will also be vital. Much learning has already been gained from Phase 1 of the PATH1 projects, and we recommend that any further funding be based on this learning, therefore allowing institutions to develop new proposals and initiatives, rather than just entering a 'Phase 3' that repeats the previous phase (as happened with the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2). The work of diversifying teaching will only be effective if it is sustainable, and in that regard, it will need to continue to be resourced. In this context, with the student-staff ratio continually increasing in HE, including in ITE in spite of the Teaching Council requirement of a 15:1 ratio, the Teaching Council needs to be more vocal about the required ratio to HEIs, particularly in the context of accreditation and reaccreditation requirements. Access and widening participation, in/to HE in general and in/to ITE specifically, needs to be understood and approached from a lifecycle perspective in relation to educational disadvantage and inequality. Much work needs to be done in early years' education and throughout schooling, and, as we have argued, CPD is urgently needed with teachers and school leaders, including careers' guidance teachers, to equip them with the skills and knowledge to better support *all* students in thinking about their futures.

The real impact of PATH1 will be seen over the lifetime of the next National Access Plan. As members of WISE, we have identified diversifying the teaching profession and inclusive ITE as a core focus of the work of our developing institute on a wider regional level, and we look forward to further building on our expertise and experience in the area into the future.

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