



HEON
HIGHER EDUCATION
OUTREACH NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT

22-23

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Welcome

As HEON's 5th full year draws to a close, I have been thinking about the journey HEON has been on – from where we started to where we are now, and where the coming years might take us.

HEON today looks quite different to the project that began in 2017, and our work in 2022-23 epitomises this development, which is why this year makes such good sense to launch an annual report.



While the basis of the HEON partnership formed a couple of years earlier, HEON in its current form started life under the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) in January 2017 with a singular focus – delivering Information Advice & Guidance (IAG)-focused outreach to students in Y9-13 from particular parts of the region with low overall and lower than expected (based on GCSE results) progression rates to HE. This of course was the basis of our “postcode obsession” for targeting our work, and for years our partnership has delivered effectively against this aim.

Since then, our partnership has grown, and our remit has expanded to include Strategic Outreach (originally Outreach Hubs) in 2019, which sees us essentially map existing outreach provision and work to fill any gaps in our region. This has generated some fantastic partnerships and work, including for students from military families and refugee and asylum seeking young people, which you can read about later in this report.

And over the last year our remit has shifted further to incorporate the sector's renewed focus on supporting KS4 attainment, which is recognised as a key indicator of eventual HE progression. We have piloted a dedicated programme this year for Y9s and are expanding this work in the year ahead. Again, more on this in the following pages.

While change and expanding remits can be daunting, I find these developments exciting, as our shift away from this “postcode obsession” means we can work more collaboratively and strategically in the region, delivering a more impactful programme that can better fit the evolving needs of learners, schools, colleges and communities, as well as our partner organisations.

As I look back on 22-23, pride is a feeling I keep coming back to – I am proud of the work that HEON has been able to achieve this year. I am proud of our team, who have worked tirelessly to deliver the best programme possible. I am proud of the students we've worked with, who have gotten involved in our sessions, and in many cases not been afraid to challenge what they may have thought about their future education, which is not always easy! And I am proud of our school and college partners, who have trusted in HEON to support and augment the existing excellent work they already do with their learners.

I hope you enjoy reading about our work in this report, and if you would like to reach out to discuss any aspects or how you can work with HEON, please do get in touch.

Chris Dexter

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About HEON

We believe everyone should be able to make informed and inspired choices about their future, whoever they are, wherever they're from.

The Higher Education Outreach Network (HEON) is a partnership of local organisations including universities and colleges working in Surrey and Northeast Hampshire.

Our mission is to encourage and enable collaboration between partners and other stakeholders, who work with schools, colleges and in the community in the region, to enable underrepresented learners to make informed choices about their future education and to fulfil their academic potential. We do this through programmes of targeted and strategic outreach, and attainment-raising work with schools, colleges, and in the community.



KEY 2022 – 2023 STATS

145

Activities Delivered

7,478

Learner Engagements

424

Learners took part in 3 or more activities

Residentials

HEON delivered two annual flagship events; the Discover HEON Summer School and Spring University, which took place at University of Surrey and Royal Holloway, University of London respectively.

Both the Summer School and Spring University consisted of workshops, practical activities and information sessions during the day, to showcase all Higher Education options and possible career routes. The evenings were filled with fun and informal activities such as bowling, quiz nights and more.

Attendees also got the chance to meet and spend time with current University students to really get a taste of what being a student is like. Sessions were delivered by many of our partner institutions, including the University of Law, Activate Learning and FCOT, which provided a varied, balanced insight into further and higher education options, enabling attendees to make informed decisions about their future education. The residentials also enabled students to truly experience life in higher education and see themselves in the setting, unlocking their confidence and motivation to progress to HE in the future.

HEON Discover Summer School ran in collaboration with the University of Surrey's Widening Participation team and took place across 3 nights and 4 days. This year we saw 54 students from Year 10 and 11 take part in the summer school and engage in varied, engaging activities including visits to the University for the Creative Arts in Farnham and the Academy of Contemporary Music in Guildford.

The Spring Residential was delivered collaboratively with Royal Holloway's Widening Access team over 2 nights & 3 days during the Easter break and featured delivery from HEON partners; University of Law, University for the Creative Arts & FCOT.

Evaluation of both events was excellent, showing that the programmes were successful in meeting planned outcomes, and inspired attendees:

“ I had an enjoyable time that has been full of activities that are filled with things that I can use to develop myself and gain more knowledge. All staff were very welcoming and I have learnt a lot of uni life. This had made me a lot more comfortable in the idea of my future and I'm thankful.

LEARNER, SUMMER SCHOOL

“ Brilliant, I made so many friends, had an amazing experience and so many laughs. It was so fun, and it has shown me it is very easy to fit in when I join higher education.

LEARNER, SUMMER SCHOOL

“ For me it's broadened my horizons, the opportunities, so I know what I can do, and what I need to do to get the qualifications.

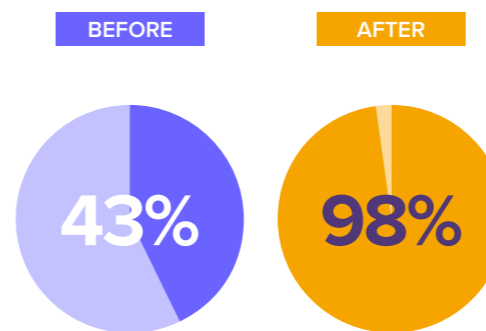
LEARNER, SPRING UNIVERSITY

“ It's really solidified the fact that I want to go to uni, especially seeing the social aspect of things, I don't normally struggle with but I'm not the most out-going person so really seeing that you can make friends and make them easily [made it so] this is really where I want to be.

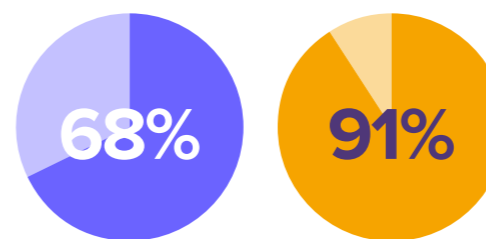
LEARNER, SPRING UNIVERSITY



SPRING UNIVERSITY

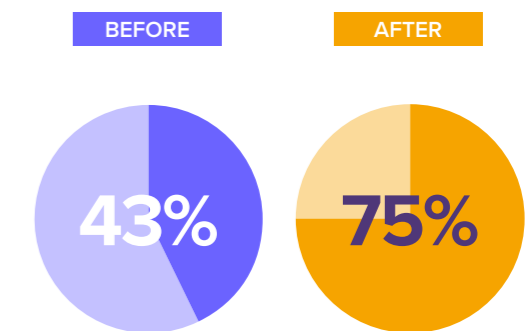


Knowledge of what student life would be like

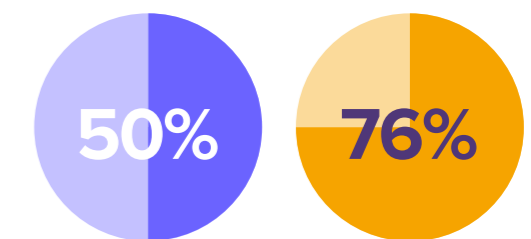


Confidence to make decisions about future study

DISCOVER UNI SUMMER SCHOOL



Understanding of how to find out about financial support



Awareness of learning support in HE

EMAR

Year 9 English & Maths
Attainment-Raising Programme

In 2022 the Office for Students encouraged both Uni Connect Partnerships and HE providers to focus their outreach programmes on raising attainment at KS4 for pupils from underrepresented groups in order to increase their capacity to access, participate, and succeed in Higher Education. As such, in the 2022-23 academic year, the Higher Education Outreach Network embarked on piloting their English and Maths Attainment Raising (EMAR) mentoring programme.

Supported by the Centre for Education and Youth and Causeway Education, HEON designed an evidence-based programme of activity which would see a select group of Year 9 students receive a mixture of classroom-based group sessions and one-to-one English and Maths mentoring with trained undergraduate students from Royal Holloway, University of London. These mentors were selected from the university's Student Ambassador Scheme, which employs current Royal Holloway students to work with schools and sixth form colleges, and they were coached in how to be effective English/Maths mentors (their respective mentoring subject depending on their studies).

A school in Surrey with which HEON has worked closely over the last few years were very happy to participate in the programme's pilot year. 28 students who met a number of our widening participation criteria and whose current English/Maths attainment scores were between 3 and 5 were selected to be part of the programme, and paired with one of our seven Student Ambassador Mentors.



The programme's activity commenced with an in-school group session which focused on the programme itself and introduced the students to the various pathways into HE and the benefits of participating and succeeding in it, followed by each mentor sitting with their four students for an introductory chat. The mentors would subsequently visit the students four times in the school year for 30-minute one-to-one sessions, helping them with specific parts of their English or Maths studies (usually in the form of homework!). The programme lead, Dr Jonathan Baldwin, our HEON Partnership Officer at Royal Holloway, noted how many of the students very quickly developed a good bond with their mentor, which was corroborated by a number of students themselves in their initial feedback.

Group sessions on revision skills, metacognitive learning and other forms of critical thinking also made up the programme's content, and it was concluded with bringing all participants onto campus for a taster day and to celebrate their success. Evaluation of the programme is ongoing, with attainment scores and comparison with a control group to be factored in, but initial feedback from both students and the school has been very positive. A slightly expanded EMAR mentoring programme will be delivered at the school throughout 2023-24, and we are happy to announce that several other schools we work with have signed up for the programme too.

MEASURING IMPACT

One of our evaluation methods for EMAR is using a control group to measure impact. Alongside the students taking part in the activity, we tracked the progress grades over the year of a matched group of students who did not take part. For the students receiving the English mentoring, their progress scores increased by an average of 2.5 grades, whereas the control group increased by just 1.5 grades over the same period. This suggests that the programme had a positive impact on the students taking part.

Intervention group

2.5
grade increase

Control group

1.5
grade increase



FOCUS



Academic year 22-23 saw us further develop **FOCUS**. It was designed to engage Year 11 students in a sustained and progressive programme of work which ran across five weeks with a total contact time of six hours. It included an introductory session, college application workshop and college visit, employability, wellbeing and revision workshops.

The programme aimed to re-engage students with their studies and identify a range of pathways available to them after they leave school.

PLANNED OUTCOMES

- Increased knowledge of the range of options available in HE, including how they link to careers and where to find out further information
- Increased understanding the UK application process for HE/apprenticeships
- Increased understanding of what it is like to study in HE
- Increased confidence that HE/apprenticeship is an achievable option
- Increased confidence in their ability to make informed and independent decisions
- Increased confidence in applying the skills required for study at HE
- Increased sense of self belief and awareness

The evaluation was based on a pre and post survey with students, a mini focus group with 6 students at one school and teacher feedback via an on-line survey. Overall, evaluation of the programme demonstrated significant positive impact.

The majority of students who attended 3 or more sessions, and completed both the pre and post survey, said that they found **FOCUS** enjoyable (86%) and useful (93%).

There was a significant increase from 53% to 88% in the proportion of students agreeing that they had a good understanding of their options when they leave school, and this exceeds our target threshold of 75% or more.

There was the same increase in the proportion of students agreeing that they understand how to apply for 6th form/college 53% beforehand, 88% afterwards.

FOCUS has greatly increased students understanding of what it would be like to study at college. Beforehand only 18% felt that they knew what this would be like and this increased significantly to 88% afterwards.

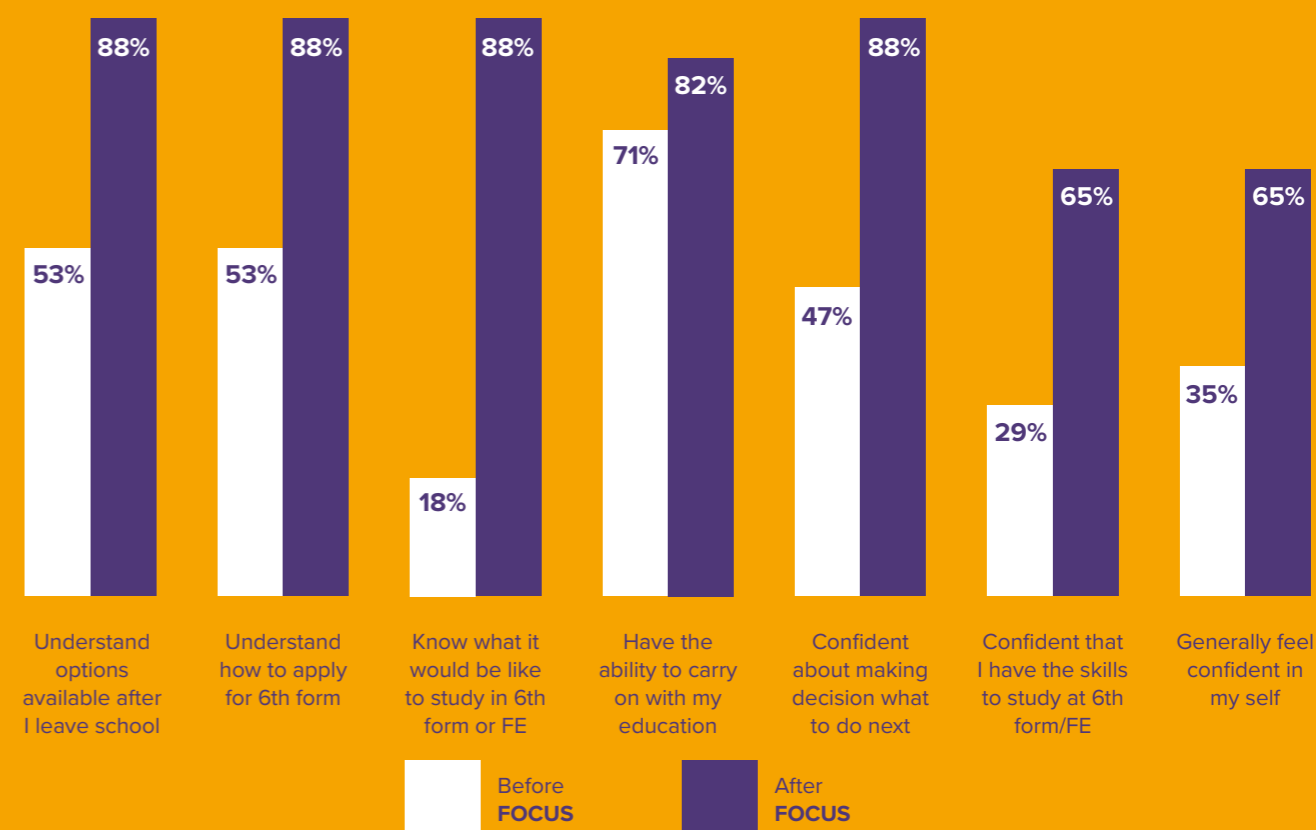
FOCUS was very effective in achieving planned outcomes as demonstrated by figures within the evaluation. A key area of development for the programme was to liaise more closely with the schools to ensure that students were in attendance.

For 23-24 we have developed **FOCUS** to align with our programme's attainment raising focus, extending the programme to include academic skills sessions and subject revision, all of which will aim to increase attainment levels of students taking part in the programme.

86%
found **FOCUS** enjoyable

93%
found **FOCUS** useful

OUTCOMES - BEFORE & AFTER FOCUS



“So you want to be...” guides

HEON has prepared a number of guides to raise awareness amongst students on the possible career and study pathways available to them. The guides have been divided into the following strands, each of which covers a wide range of careers related to these fields:

- Business
- Engineering
- Medicine
- Science
- Arts and Languages
- Humanities

Each guide outlines practical information on how to best access a particular course/career. For every course/career listed on the guides, you can expect to find recommendations and guidance on things such as:

- **Subjects to consider taking**
- **Useful and essential skills to strengthen**
- **Careers available**
- **Earning potential**
- **Further resources to help you prepare**

These guides will provide a great starting point for students, parents/carers and anyone advising young people to find out more about future career pathways in industries or areas of interest. The intention is then for students to utilise these guides to conduct further research into the more specific details of the courses they are interested in, such as entry requirements. This is facilitated by the useful websites and resources provided throughout the guides.

For an overview of the guides, as well as further information on useful resources to help support students in their future education and career pathways, please visit: <https://www.heon.org.uk/student-resources/>



Military families work

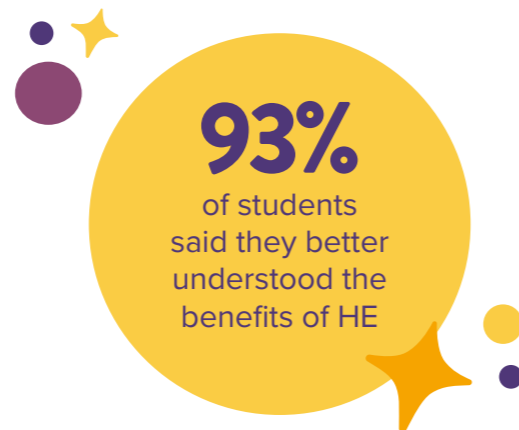
In July 2020 The Office for Students published a report on children from military families. This report identified this group of students as having low participation rates in higher education. **It is estimated that 24% of students from military families progress to higher education compared with the national average of 43%.**

Various factors were identified as reasons for low progression including disrupted schooling, inadequate transition arrangements when moving schools, fewer opportunities to meet pastoral needs or access extra-curricular activities, deployment of family members leading to behavioural or emotional difficulties and increased chances of taking on carer responsibilities.

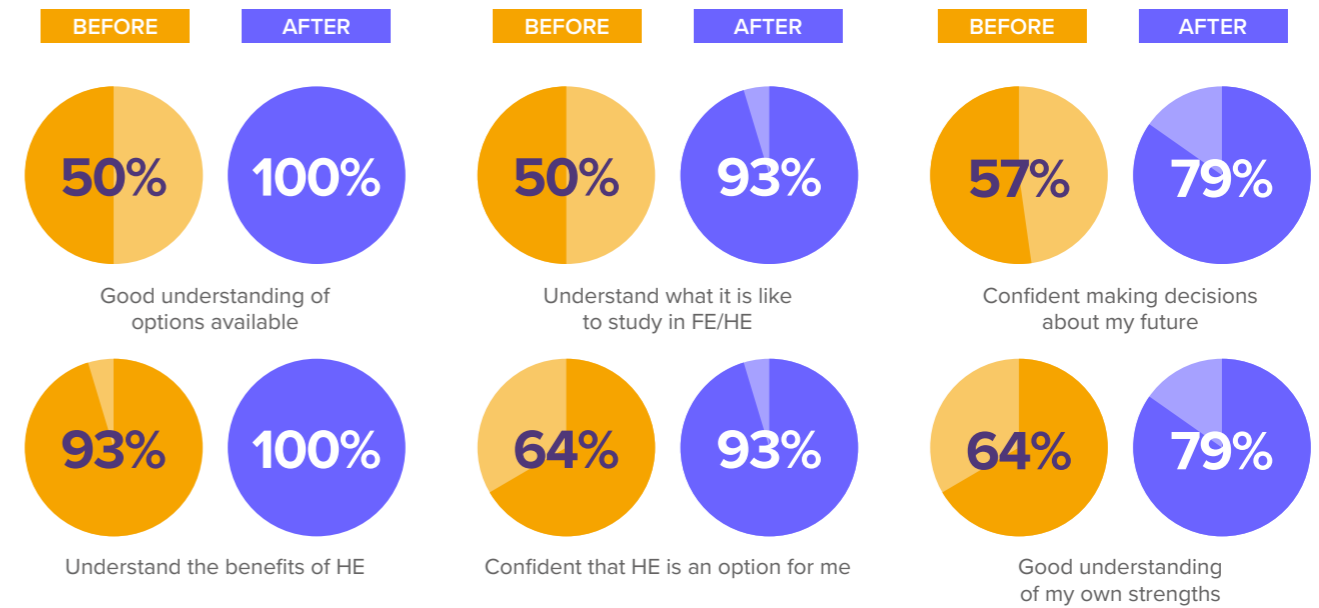
Children from military families has long been one of HEON's strategic priorities, and our work in 22-23 showcases the variety of ways we've worked to support young people in our area from this background.

CREATIVE FORCES DAY

In November, HEON delivered Creative Forces Day at the University of Surrey – an event designed to empower each student, giving them a voice and an opportunity to share experiences with other Service Children. It aimed to support and nurture openings for discussion and creative expression of ideas, while also enabling students to explore Higher Education opportunities. The programme was attended by 28 students from years 9 and 10 from 3 schools in the region. The day was supported by The University for the Creative Arts (UCA) and Forces Employment, a charity supporting military personnel & dependents into employment, with sessions covering a range of topics including learning about themselves, an Introduction to HE, a creative arts session and a careers/CV building session. The event proved to be a positive experience for the attending students, with evaluation demonstrating significant increase in students' knowledge of HE options and confidence to talk about career options.

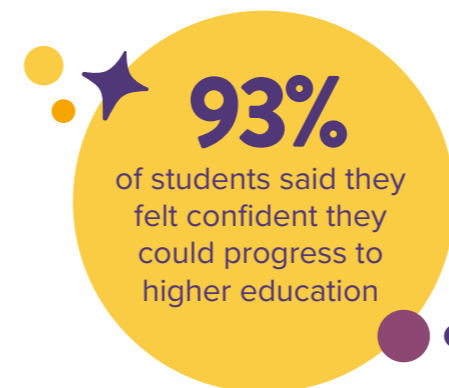


OUTCOMES - BEFORE AND AFTER CAMPUS VISITS



CAMPUS VISITS

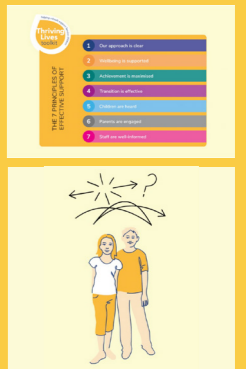
In June half-term, HEON delivered a two-day event based at UCA and Farnborough College of Technology (FCOT). HEON worked with the family welfare unit at the Aldershot Garrison in Hampshire to host 14 students from years 9 & 10 on each day. Students were given the opportunity to take part in taster activities ranging from ceramics, acting and animation to badge making and an engineering workshop. Students also were taken on tours of both campuses to explore the various subject options on offer at both establishments. There was a 50% increase in the proportion of students agreeing that they had a good understanding of the different options available to them at college/university. There was also a significant increase (+43%) in the proportion of students saying they understand what it is like to study in further/higher education. 93% of students said that they felt confident they could progress to higher education in the future (an increase of 29%). Overall, the taster events proved to be positive and impactful, with evaluation showing significant increases when comparing before and after the events.



SUPPORTING SCHOOLS / THRIVING LOVES TOOLKIT

HEON has partnered with Uni Connect partnerships from across the country and the SciP Alliance to develop a toolkit for schools. The toolkit is evidence-informed and supported by case studies and CPD guides.

School staff can use the toolkit to self-assess how they support their students from military families and develop plans to...



[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

SUPPORTING COLLEGES / DIVERSITY MEETS COMPLEXITY

HEON again partnered with the SciP Alliance to start work on extending the toolkit to the 16-19 education phase, where there to date is very little research, data and even dedicated support available. This has produced a report "Diversity meets complexity: Supporting Armed Forces young people to thrive in post-16 education" which will form the basis of extending the schools toolkit to the 16-19 context.



[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

Refugee & asylum seekers

Refugee and asylum seekers face significant barriers to higher education including uncertainty over immigration status, tuition fee concerns (including funding accessibility), language and cultural barriers and issues around validating previous qualifications.

HEON has supported young people from this background for a number of years, but our aim for 22-23 was to build on previous delivery and to bring in our partners to collaborate on activity to extend the reach and further showcase the range of possibilities at Higher Education.

IN FEBRUARY 2023,

a group of 14 female refugee & asylum seeking young people between the ages of 16-22 took part in a strategic programme over three consecutive days consisting of visits to three HEON partner institutions (University of Surrey, University for the Creative Arts in Farnham and Royal Holloway, University of London). Each of the days incorporated a campus tour, subject tasters relevant to the institution, and IAG sessions. Evaluation of the programme was excellent, showing that the programme was successful in meeting planned outcomes, and showcasing options for attendees.



IN MARCH - APRIL 2023,

HEON delivered a four-week Education & Employment Progression programme to 45 students at Brooklands College. The programme aimed to increase students' knowledge of the range of options available in higher education, the skills required for study at HE, and the benefits of HE. Through various activities centred around team work, the sessions were also geared towards increasing students' confidence in themselves and in their ability to make informed and independent decisions.

The programme succeeded in increasing students' knowledge of the range of options available to them in HE with 54% confirming they learnt 'a lot' and 46% stating they learnt 'a little'. 78% of students reported feeling 'much more confident' in making decisions about their future education and career decisions and 81% felt more confident in themselves more broadly. The evaluation also showcased that a number of students who were previously undecided about whether to apply to HE, after attending the programme, felt they would apply at some point in the future.

The same cohort then visited the University of Surrey in April over 3 consecutive days, with two of the days focusing on English & Maths GCSE preparation. These sessions were delivered by subject specialists and former principal examiners. The 3rd day included a tour of campus as well as information Advice & Guidance sessions and a subject taster session.

FINALLY, IN AUGUST 2023,

HEON supported the University of Surrey to host a non-residential summer programme with Big Leaf Foundation, hosting up to 50 displaced young people over 4 days on the campus. The programme was designed to showcase, inform and inspire the attendees about higher education in the UK.

HEON WILL LOOK TO BUILD ON THIS COLLABORATIVE APPROACH FURTHER IN 23-24.

65%

Learnt a lot about skills needed for HE study

78%

Much more confident making decisions about future education and career

81%

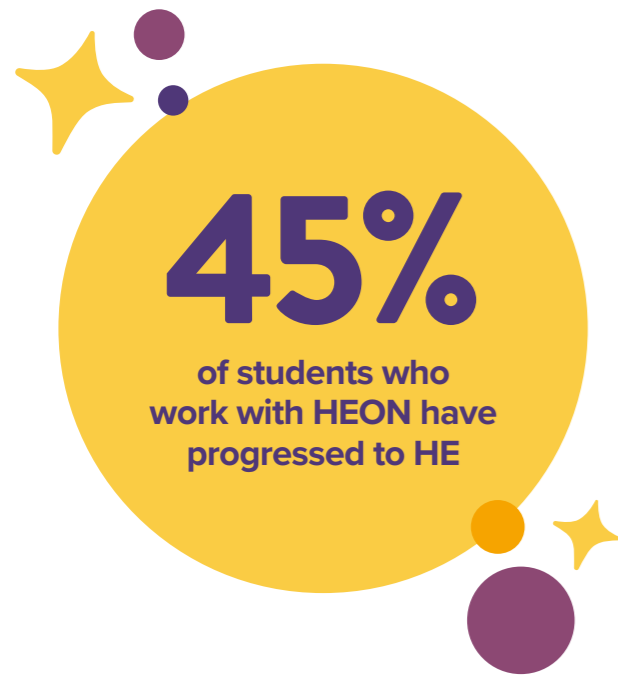
Much more confident in myself





Our impact

Early in his tenure as Director for Fair Access and Participation at the Office for Students (OfS), John Blake said his first priority was “**evaluation, evaluation, evaluation**”. At HEON, in line with other Uni Connect Partnerships, and many HE Outreach programmes, evaluation is embedded into our work so that we can understand what works in order to improve our own delivery and contribute to wider evidence.



Our Progression Framework is based on a “knowledge – attitude – behaviour” theory of change model, and forms the cornerstone of our delivery. For every activity that we do, we pinpoint the outcomes that we expect to achieve, ensuring that our work is outcomes-focussed and evidence-led. We then evaluate these activities to ensure our programme of delivery is having the intended impact.

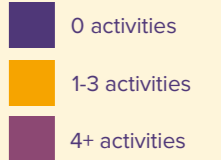
In addition to evaluating each of the activities and programmes we deliver, we also measure our impact using two longer term evaluation methods.

MEASURING PROGRESSION TO HE

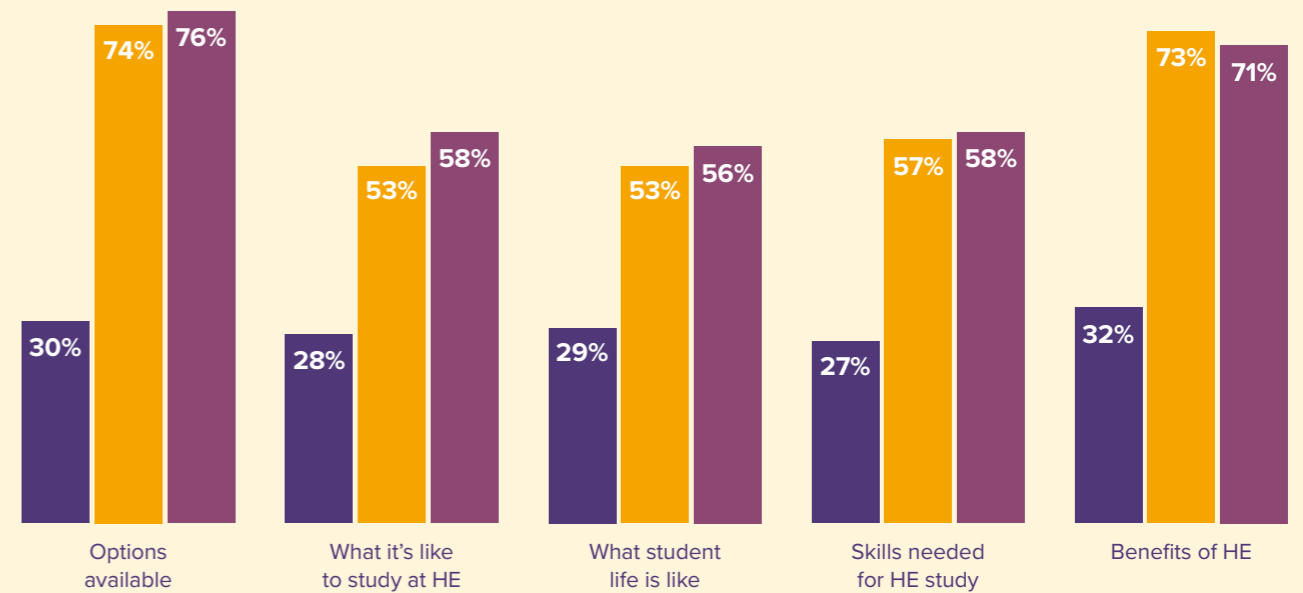
Students who engage with HEON (and who provide their data for us to do so) are tracked through to higher education via the Higher Education Access Tracker (heat.ac.uk), enabling us to measure the progression of students who we work with. Since the beginning of the programme, 45% of students who work with HEON have progressed to HE. This is slightly above the national average, and we believe especially impressive when factoring in that our programme aims to engage disadvantaged learners or those typically less likely to progress to HE.

HEON STUDENT SURVEY

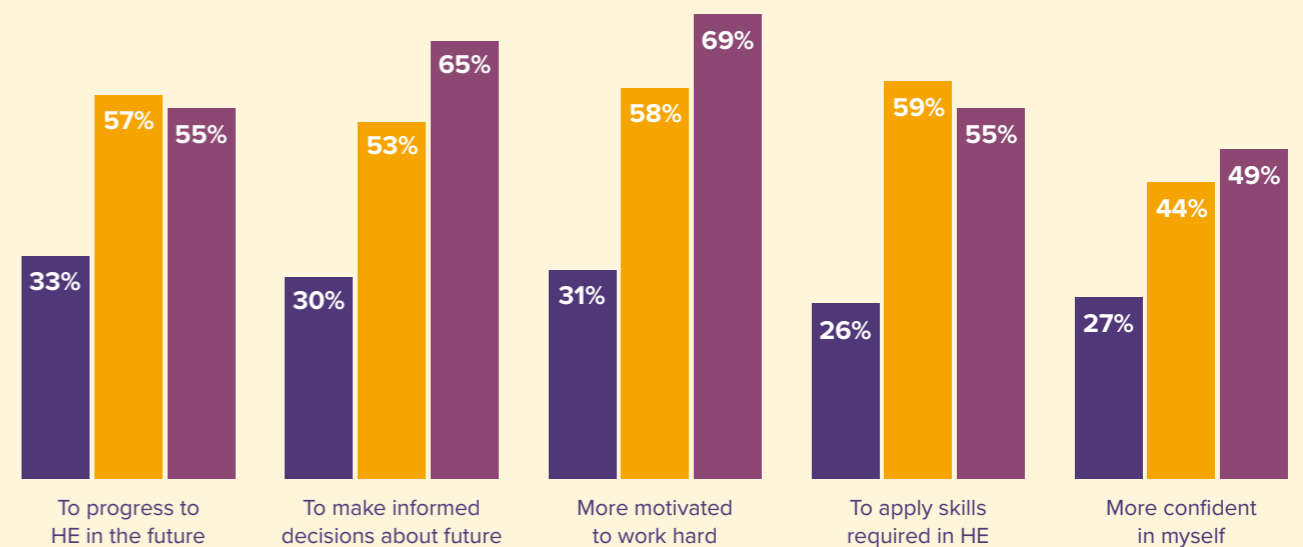
For the past 3 years, we have conducted an end of year survey with schools who have worked with HEON over the year. The survey is completed by whole year groups, and asks questions about students’ knowledge and attitudes towards HE. It also enables us to analyse whether the number of HEON activities students took part in influences how they respond to these questions. This analysis demonstrates a significant increase in positive responses based on whether students attended HEON activity:

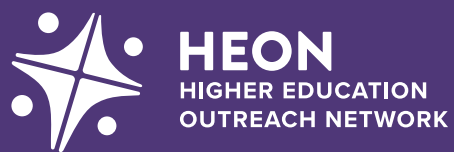


BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF



INCREASED CONFIDENCE





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