



Danielle Hogg (Access Coordinator at Northumbria), Martin Webster (Interim Director of NEON), Emily Parkin (Student Experience and Enhancement Manager at Northumbria) and Laura Jobling (UK Student Recruitment and Access Manager at Northumbria).

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Northumbria wins recognition for expanding access to higher education

Northumbria University has been named Higher Education Institution of the Year at a prestigious national awards ceremony which recognises successful initiatives aimed at widening access to higher education.

The [National Education Opportunities Network \(NEON\) Awards 2025](#), which took place at London's Palace of Westminster on Thursday 5th June, shone a spotlight on the individuals and initiatives driving forward social mobility and

supporting learners from all backgrounds to reach their potential across the UK.

Hosted by Dr Adam Thompson MP, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group, the ceremony included seven award categories celebrating the outreach work and partnerships making a difference across the education sector, as well as remarkable students whose stories highlight the powerful, transformative impact of these efforts.

Northumbria University was named overall winner of the [NEON](#) Higher Education Institution of the Year Award at the event.

The judges recognised Northumbria's Access and Success Framework which underpins [support for students](#) from pre-entry and application to the point of graduation and beyond.

The framework reinforces Northumbria's 'whole provider approach' to access and participation, through initiatives such as [contextual admissions](#) – where student attainment and potential is assessed using information about the whole person, not just grades – alongside targeted [financial support](#) and [employability initiatives](#).

The University has built a strong reputation for working with industry partners to offer high-quality, real-world learning experiences that enhance career opportunities – especially for students from backgrounds without ready access to professional networks.

Speaking about the award, Laura Jobling, UK Student Recruitment and Access Manager at Northumbria University, said: "We're constantly striving to be inclusive and to demonstrate to learners that, regardless of background, Northumbria can provide the support they need to reach their goals. Regional engagement with our outreach work is strong, with over 6,900 pupils and 400 teachers currently involved. The improved continuation rates and rising graduate success among our students shows that these initiatives are making a real difference."

[Professor Graham Wynn](#), Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education at Northumbria University, said: "To truly break down barriers we must ensure equal access to education, resources, and the support systems that allow everyone to reach

their full potential. I'm very proud that this award highlights some of the successful initiatives Northumbria leads in this area and the impact of our approach.

“Universities are key to promoting social mobility, and Northumbria University plays a pivotal role in the North East,” he added. “Around 60 per cent of our UK undergraduate students come from the region, and nearly two-thirds of our graduates remain in the North East to begin building their careers. This helps bridge regional skills shortages, enhances productivity, and creates transformative opportunities for young people throughout our communities.”

Now in its twelfth year, the NEON Awards honour those making a real difference in the field of educational equity. Each year, around 100 nominations are submitted with the aim of encouraging greater recognition, support, and momentum for initiatives that foster a more inclusive and equitable future for all learners.

Martin Webster, Interim Director of NEON, said: “These awards are a chance to recognise and celebrate the achievements and impact that access work across the higher education sector has upon the lives and future opportunities of the learners we all strive hard to support. 2025 has been a challenging year for widening access across the sector but that means the work institutions like Northumbria are doing is vital in enabling students to both gain access to, and succeed within higher education. Northumbria University continue to make a real difference to learners and truly deserve to win this year's award.”

Discover more about [support for students](#) who choose to study at Northumbria.

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North

East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk

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