Widening Participation Conference, 27-28 April 2016
Speaker Biographies

**John Widdowson CBE**
John Widdowson is Principal and Chief Executive of New College Durham. The College was graded “Outstanding” by Ofsted in 2009 and is the lead sponsor for two Academies in County Durham. The College offers a wide range of vocational, technical and professional courses, including apprenticeships. In 2011 the College became one of the first two colleges to be granted Foundation Degree Awarding Powers by the Privy Council. John is President of the Association of Colleges and his term of office is for one year which commenced on 1 August 2015. He also Chairs the AoC NE Regional Committee, the AoC UK China VET Forum and the Mixed Economy Group of Colleges. John is currently a Director of the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC). He has previously served on the Board of the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Association of Colleges.

John has published papers and articles on a range of education subjects and has spoken regularly at national and international conferences, focussing in recent years on the challenges of widening participation in higher education and developing college based higher education.

**Professor Jacqueline Stevenson**
Professor Jacqueline Stevenson is Professor of Education Research and Head of Research in the Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University. She is a sociologist of education with a particular interest in policy and practice relating to equity and diversity in higher education, widening participation, access and student success, pedagogic diversity and the stratification and marketisation of higher education. Key areas of interest are the social and academic experiences of religious students, Black and Minority ethnic students' degree attainment and success, and policy and practice relating to the access of refugees and asylum seekers to HE. She co-convenes the Society for Research into Higher Education's Access and Widening Participation Network and is a member of the Executive Committee of the National Education Opportunities Networks.

**Professor Tim Blackman**
Professor Tim Blackman joined Middlesex University as Vice-Chancellor in July, moving from The Open University where he was Acting Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Scholarship and Quality. Tim graduated from Durham University, where he also completed his PhD, returning there after professorial appointments at Teesside and Oxford Brookes Universities. His last position at Durham was Dean of the University’s campus in Stockton, a post he left in 2011 to join the OU. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and served on the Social Work and Social Policy panel for REF 2014. Tim also worked in local government for several years and has held various advisory and consulting roles in urban renewal, health and wellbeing, and research methods, which have been his main teaching and research areas.
David Hughes, Learning and Work Institute (LWI, formerly NIACE)

David Hughes became Chief Executive of NIACE in 2011, following 11 years in the further education sector, working at the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In the LSC and SFA David led funding relationships with colleges and providers and successfully took on trouble-shooting roles to rescue crises in capital funding and Educational Maintenance Allowances.

Prior to that, David worked in the voluntary sector across a wide range of roles and organisations in the UK and Australia, in social housing, co-operatives, welfare, regeneration and community development.

Under his leadership, NIACE has strengthened its campaigning voice across all forms of learning, in support of more equal and fairer access to the benefits of learning for people throughout their lives. He is a regular speaker, blogger and writer, promoting more inclusive learning, skills and employment policies and practice.

David has held many Board and Committee roles, including a few years as Vice-Chair of the East Midlands Regional Assembly in the 1990s.

David lives in Loughborough with his wife, three teenage children, chickens, dog and four bikes.

Sir Simon Hughes, former Justice Minister and Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Head of Public Affairs at The Open University

Simon Hughes was born in Cheshire and brought up in England and Wales, and with family from Scotland too. His university years were spent at Selwyn College, Cambridge, where he graduated in Law and then studied at the College of Europe in Bruges.

Simon was called to the bar by the Inner Temple in 1974 and worked as a barrister before being elected to Parliament for his home constituency in 1983. He remained the MP for Bermondsey and the northern part of Southwark until 2015. From 1983 he was a front bench spokesman in the House of Commons for the Liberals and Liberal Democrats until 2013, including on Education and as Deputy Commons Liberal Democrat Leader from 2010 – 2014. Simon was London Mayoral candidate in 2004. In December 2010 Simon was appointed as HMG Advocate for Access to Education, and reported to the Prime Minister in July 2011. From 2012-2014 Simon was a member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights; from December 2013 to May 2015 he was Minister of State for Justice and Civil Liberties, which included responsibility for all female offenders in England and Wales, and from 2014-2015 a Member of the Prime Ministers Holocaust Commission.

In Parliament, Simon was founding Co-Chair of the All Party Groups on Conflict Issues and Islamophobia and Co-Chair of the Group on Youth Issues.

Simon has been an Honorary Fellow of London South Bank University since 1992, and is a Trustee of Bacon’s College, Chair of Governors at St. James’ CE Primary School, and a former Trustee of the Social Mobility Foundation. Simon became a Privy Counsellor in 2010, and was knighted in 2015. In February 2016, Simon was appointed as Head of Public Affairs at the Open University.

Anthony Hudson, Research Manager, Continuum – the Centre for Widening Participation Policy Studies at the University of East London

Tony has undertaken consultancy and research for a wide range of funders, locally, nationally and internationally. He is currently undertaking research on a number of projects including: HEFCE Learning Gain and a small scale study on the learning careers and professional identity of Access HE tutors.

Tony is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and currently serves on the London Open College Network Advisory Board for Access HE.