



L-R: Saman Haque, Becca Hawkins and Ellie Belton from ACCESS: Policy, Professor Matthew Johnson from Northumbria University and Director of ACCESS: Policy, Piotr Mahey, are pictured with Northumbria University students taking part in the programme.

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## **Northumbria partners with ACCESS: Policy to give students unique access to the world of policy making**

Ten students from Northumbria University are the first to take part in a new intensive programme providing an insight into addressing emerging global challenges through policy.

Current students with a passion for climate and the environment were offered

the chance to take part in the fully funded opportunity, alongside their studies, with [ACCESS: Policy](#) – a UK-based organisation which aims to inspire and empower young people from under-represented backgrounds to consider policy making as a career.

Members of the selected cohort are already studying a range of subjects including International Relations, Geography and Politics, and are now working with the experienced policy professionals who volunteer to run ACCESS: Policy to explore and develop proposals to address a real-world policy issue.

Some of the Northumbria University students selected to be part of the ACCESS: Climate & Environment programme.

ACCESS: Policy's first-ever programme, ACCESS: Climate & Environment, is aimed at giving Northumbria students first-hand experience of developing policy to address climate and environment issues, while working alongside seasoned professionals in the sector, including individuals and organisations who will share their knowledge and contacts through skills sessions and one-to-one mentoring.

The opportunity has been offered exclusively to Northumbria students, with the ACCESS: Climate & Environment cohort set to travel to London in the New Year for a unique Expo event, where they will meet a panel of industry experts and present the policy proposals and strategies they have developed during the programme.

Piotr Mahey, Director of ACCESS: Policy, explained: "I started ACCESS: Policy with the aim of inspiring and empowering young people from under-represented groups, like me, to pursue careers where they can help tackle global issues in a meaningful way. I've benefited hugely from positive action programmes like this. Without them, I wouldn't have had the career I've had, where I've had the privilege of working in central government and developing policy on some major international issues.

"Working in the climate and environment sector, there's much more we can do to bring people in from diverse and under-represented backgrounds and our programme is designed to help do just that, and to give people exposure to the kinds of experiences I've had. To properly tackle climate change, we need to meaningfully engage with the perspectives and solutions put forward

by those most affected by climate change.

“Partnering with a university like Northumbria, who recruit their students with these kinds of considerations in mind, was a no-brainer. Hopefully this cohort will go on to find a way through these very real and existential challenges. We need their help.”

The programme, which began in October 2023 and will run until the end of January 2024, is funded by the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. It provides a unique and transformative opportunity for Northumbria students to gain experience of working with policy makers from across the UK and beyond while considering ways of tackling climate change.

Matthew Johnson, Professor of Public Policy at Northumbria University, said: “Developing and making policy often feels distant to our region – as something that is done by others in faraway places. This programme provides the experience of global policy making in the North East, creating pathways through to international leadership in addressing the most pressing issue of our age.

“When I was a student at Northumbria, my parents were on benefits, I was living mainly with my grandparents, and I had very little confidence in my ability to do things like this. I know I would have been daunted by the prospect of applying for this type of programme and would have seen it as an opportunity for someone from a different background to me. But, having worked with policy makers for some time now, I can see the confidence boost I would have gained from an experience like this. Given that, I want to stress to all students who might be interested but daunted by opportunities like this – this is absolutely for you – you can make a crucial contribution. Give it a go.”

Among the industry experts the first cohort of students have already been able to meet and work with is Deborah Hardoon, Senior Lead at HM Treasury's Darlington Economic Campus.

Following a recent visit to Northumbria University, Deborah said: “This programme is a great example of how we can demystify the policy making process, share policy makers' skills and insights as well as bringing in more diverse voices and experiences to shape how policy is made the UK.



“Working with students who might otherwise not see themselves in this space, we hope this programme will inspire future policy makers, particularly in the North East of England, where people can now have a dynamic and progressive career at the newly established Darlington Economic Campus. There are now nine different government departments, including HM Treasury and the Department for Business and Trade, working alongside each other on policies of national importance, such that graduates can pursue all the main civil service graduate careers pathways without leaving the region.”

Professor Graham Wynn, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) at Northumbria University said: “As well as providing fair access to Higher Education, our ambition at Northumbria is to provide as many opportunities as possible for our students and graduates from all backgrounds to succeed in their studies, career and life ambitions.

“We are absolutely delighted that the ACCESS: Policy team have chosen to work with our students to launch their first climate and environment policy programme and I very much look forward to hearing and seeing the work put together by the students taking part.”

At Northumbria, the distinctive approach to learning combines research-enriched teaching with real-world experience. Discover more about study options at Northumbria University online by visiting [www.northumbria.ac.uk](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk)

## **ENDS**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

Piotr Mahey works as the Director of ACCESS: Policy in a voluntary and personal capacity.

### **Image captions:**

- Image 1. L-R: Saman Haque, Becca Hawkins and Ellie Belton from ACCESS: Policy, Professor Matthew Johnson from Northumbria University and Director of ACCESS: Policy, Piotr Mahey, are pictured with Northumbria University students selected to be part of the first ACCESS: Climate & Environment programme.

- Image 2. Some of the Northumbria University students selected to be part of the ACCESS: Climate & Environment programme.

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--- Please contact [media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk) with any media enquiries or interview requests ---

### Contacts



**Rik Kendall**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

[rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk)

07923 382339



**Andrea Slowey**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

[andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk)

07708 509436



**Rachael Barwick**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

[rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk)

07377422415



**James Fox**

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

[james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk)



**Kelly Elliott**

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

[kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk)



**Gemma Brown**

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

[gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk)