

# Summary of 2020–21 to 2024–25 Access and Participation Plan

## What is an Access and Participation Plan?

Most higher education providers have Access and Participation Plans. These set out how they will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education.



You can see the full Access and Participation Plan for The Open University (OU) at [www.open.ac.uk/about/wideningparticipation](https://www.open.ac.uk/about/wideningparticipation)

## Key points

We are the largest provider of flexible part-time and distance learning in the UK, with students in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our mission is to be 'Open to people, places, methods and ideas' and our vision is 'To reach more students with life-changing learning that meets their needs and enriches society'. Our students come from all backgrounds and all ages and there are no entry qualifications required for most of our courses.

We offer Access modules to help students find out more about their interests and develop their confidence and skills. At postgraduate level we have both taught and research programmes of study as well as degree-level apprenticeships, and higher technical qualifications. We also provide informal learning through our partnerships with the BBC and via our free OpenLearn platform.



See page 3 of the full plan

## Fees we charge

Most OU students are considered part-time and study at a rate of 60 credits a year. For most students in England, it will cost £3,228.

Even if you choose to study at full-time equivalent intensity, you will still be considered a part-time student. That means your eligibility to claim existing state benefits and to fund your studies with a part-time tuition fee loan will usually be unaffected.



You can find out more information about our fees at <https://www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding>

or see a full list of fees for courses at The Open University at <https://www.open.ac.uk/about/wideningparticipation/about/england>

## Financial help available

We understand that finances can sometimes be a barrier to education. Our offer of financial support to qualifying students includes:

- Two scholarship schemes offering full fee waivers to disabled veterans and carers.
- A fee waiver for Access courses. This is for students with no previous experience of higher education whose income is less than £25,000 or who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit.
- Study-related costs schemes that provide support if a student's income is less than £25,000 or they are in receipt of a qualifying benefit.
- A one-off bursary of £250 for carers and care experienced students where their income is less than £25,000 or they are in receipt of a qualifying benefit.
- A one-off bursary of £1,000 for students who identify as being from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background and their income is less than £25,000 or they are in receipt of a qualifying benefit.
- 50 scholarships for undergraduate study for Black students with no prior higher education qualifications and whose income is less than £25,000 or who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit.



See page 54 to 58 of the full plan

## Information for students

**Prospective students** can find information on fees and financial support on our website.

**Current students** can find this information on our website, through email communications and on our Student Help Centre.



Details can be found on page 53 of the plan.

For the most up-to date information, see our **University website**.

## What we are aiming to achieve

**Our aim** is to make access and success fairer for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. We want the University to work in a way that supports all students and enables success.

This Access and Participation Plan commits the University to address:

- Underrepresentation of Black and Asian undergraduates.
- Better degree outcomes for Black, Asian and minority ethnic students.
- Better progression after graduation for Black, Asian and minority ethnic students.
- Better degree outcomes for students with declared disabilities and students from the most deprived areas.
- Better progression to employment or further study after graduation for students with declared disabilities and students from the most deprived areas.

We have set ambitious targets for these priorities and track how well we are doing, and which activities are working well.

Full information on our targets can be found on **our website**.



See page 23 and 24 of the full plan

## What we are doing to achieve our aims

Across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the OU has an Access, Participation and Success Strategy. It underpins our commitment to fairness through:

- **Curriculum choices:** we guide and support all students to find the right study path.
- **Fees and funding:** we provide students with meaningful financial support.
- **Identity and belonging through inclusive design:** we work with our students to develop their confidence and a sense of identity and belonging. We want all our students to feel they are part of the OU family.
- **Proactive student support:** we learn about how students want to be supported and apply this to all we do.
- **Personal and professional outcomes:** we want to understand our students' personal and professional aims and provide routes to achieve these.

## How students can get involved

We work with The Open University Students Association and have a team dedicated to Student Voice with students being employed as consultants.



To provide feedback, students can contact [The Open University Students Association](#).

To become involved in this work, contact our [Access, Participation and Success team](#).

## Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

The OU makes plans based on what works for our students. This means we test the actions we take for the Access and Participation Plan, and we make improvements based on what we learn.

## Contact details for further information

You can contact our Access, Participation and Success team at [aps@open.ac.uk](mailto:aps@open.ac.uk) for further information.