

## Summary of University of Sussex 2020-21 to 2024-25 Access and Participation Plan

### What is an access and participation plan?

Access and participation plans set out how higher-education providers 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 University of Sussex at <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/study/terms-and-conditions/access-agreements>

### Key points

The focus of our access and participation plan is on:

- 1) Increasing access to higher education and reducing the gaps between the most advantaged groups of students that apply to university and the least advantaged.
- 2) Improving outcomes for specific groups of students. When we put together the Plan in 2019, our data showed us that outcomes were at that time lower for certain groups of students. The following groups of students were less likely to achieve a degree award of 2:1 or above:
  - Black, Asian and students from other minority ethnic groups.
  - Students with disabilities.
- 3) Ensuring that all students have a similar likelihood of progressing on to highly skilled employment or further study. We aim to eliminate the gap in progress into highly skilled work or higher study for students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. We also aim to eliminate this gap for the least advantaged students.

To date, we are making progress against our targets on increasing access to higher education. Degree outcomes have improved for these student groups and we are ahead of our targets in that area. However, we still have further to go. For more information on our targets, please see pages 1-10 of [the full access and participation plan](#).

### Fees we charge

At the University of Sussex, the maximum fees charged are:

- £9,250 for full-time students

See page 27 of [the full Plan](#) or our [fee summary page](#).

### Financial help available

We offer financial support to students from underrepresented groups. This helps students access higher education and continue studying until their course is completed. The support available includes:

- if a student's household income is below £25,000 or they are care experienced - an annual bursary of £1,000 for the first year of the course and £500 for each subsequent year as they progress through their studies
- estranged students and carers – whose household income is greater than £25,000 may also be eligible to apply and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis

- a student hardship and retention fund for eligible students who experience financial hardship during their time at university. These funds may also be used to provide support to students with disabilities and specific learning differences. The funds may be used for support no longer available through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and/or diagnostic assessment of specific learning differences. To find out more about who is eligible see: <https://student.sussex.ac.uk/money/help/hardship>

See page 19 of [the full Plan](#).

### Information for students

Prospective students receive information on fees and financial support at in-person events, such as our Open Days, and by email communications. Open Day dates can be found here:

<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/study/visit-us/>

- We regularly update our information for care leavers on the [Propel](#) and [mycovenant](#) websites.
- Current students receive information about fees and the financial support available through our [Student Hub](#), internal communications campaigns and emails.

For the most up-to-date information, see our [University of Sussex website](#).

See page 24 of [the full Plan](#).

### What we are aiming to achieve

Our overall aims are to support students to access higher education and achieve their full potential.

Based on assessment of our performance, we are focusing our work in the following areas below.

[Please see pages 2 and 3 of the full Plan for more information:](#)

- supporting more students from low-participation neighbourhoods and low-income backgrounds to access higher education
- improving degree outcomes among Black and Asian students and disabled students
- increasing the number of students from low-participation neighbourhoods and Black students progressing to highly skilled employment or further study at the end of their course.

Through our longstanding partnerships with schools and colleges, we will deliver engaging activities for pre-16 students to raise awareness of the benefits of higher education. We will review our pre-16 activity before 2024 to find further ways of supporting the young people we work with. We will review good practice across other universities to ensure we are delivering activity that works and achieves its objectives.

- Diversifying our provision – we will offer a Degree Apprenticeship through the Institute of Technology in Crawley from 2024, and review whether we wish to offer further degree apprenticeships during 2023-24.
- Students from low-participation neighbourhoods and low-income backgrounds – by 2024-25, we will improve:
  - the rate of students entering higher education by 12%
  - the number of students from low-participation neighbourhoods and low-income backgrounds progressing to highly skilled employment or further study by 16%.
- Disabled students – by 2024-25, we will improve the number of disabled students gaining a 2:1 or above by 7%.
- Ethnic minority students – by 2024-25, we will improve:
  - the number of ethnic minority students joining the University to ensure that for every registered student defining themselves as white, we have 2.2 minority ethnic students

- the number of ethnic minority students gaining a 2:1 or above by 20%
- the number of ethnic minority students progressing to highly skilled employment or further study at the end of their course by 15%.

### **What we are doing to achieve our aims**

We have identified a number of programmes of activity to support achievement of our aims:

1. Working with schools – our Access programme will encourage more students from low-participation neighbourhoods and low-income backgrounds to join Sussex.
2. Focusing on co-creation, where students shape our teaching and learning. We have created ‘Curriculum Change Agents’, to create a curriculum that is truly inclusive.
3. Creating a student-led wellbeing and support offer for students who study at Sussex.
4. Engaging students in their own development of personal, social and professional skills through the creation of a comprehensive ‘Student Connector’ scheme.
5. Ensuring that students get good jobs through: career support; a personal development programme led by former students; and opportunities to apply for paid work on campus.
6. Engaging external partners to improve access to higher education, on course success and progression to employment.
7. Research and Evaluation – we are mapping a framework developed by the Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions or [NERUPI](#) to our programmes so that we can understand comparability of learning outcomes across our activities. We are using an evaluation plan to evaluate and monitor all that we do.
8. Offering financial support for eligible students.

### **How students can get involved**

We worked with the Students’ Union to gather student input into the design of our Plan. Students are represented on the Steering Group responsible for overseeing implementation of the Plan. To provide feedback, students can contact their Students’ Union representative or become involved in this work by contacting our Access and Participation Manager.

Email: [APP.lead@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:APP.lead@sussex.ac.uk)

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

Our programmes of activity are informed by the best available evidence about what works for students. We will collect data and feedback to evaluate:

- our programme design
- the impact of the programme of activity we are delivering
- the impact on achieving our overall aim of improved access and an inclusive environment.

The access and participation plan Steering Group will monitor and report on these processes to the University’s Student Experience Committee (SEC). The SEC will oversee implementation of actions to ensure ongoing progress against yearly milestones in our Plan.

We will monitor impact on our target groups, to ensure we are addressing our aims. Where appropriate, we will adjust our interventions in the best interests of our students.

We will publish evidence from our evaluations on our website by January 2024.

### **Contact details for further information**

You can contact Marcus Williams, the lead for the access and participation plan, for further information: [APP.lead@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:APP.lead@sussex.ac.uk)

