

Summary of 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 Manchester](#).

Key points

The University of Manchester is part of the prestigious Russell Group of universities, with outstanding facilities and the widest range of courses. We are highly respected across the globe as a centre of teaching excellence and world class research and one of the largest single site Universities in the UK. We have over 45,000 students and 12,000 staff based in Manchester. We are a research intensity university, and in the recent research excellence framework, 93% of our research activity was assessed as 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent'.

At the university, social responsibility sits alongside teaching excellence and world class research as one of our three core goals and describes the way we are making a difference to the social and economic wellbeing of our communities. Our three core goals combine to help us to create an institution with no boundaries to learning, and no barriers to study that helps drive our access and participation actions. Embedded into our access and participation plans are a set of principles and values that commit us to identifying, attracting, and supporting the most able students, regardless of their background, and providing a superb higher education and learning experience so that all are enabled to reach their potential and go into graduate employment.

Access into higher education has been a real strength of the university, we have, for the last 10 years, worked in partnership with schools across Greater Manchester to increase GCSE attainment levels. We are committed to developing further innovative and impactful partnerships with schools and we are prioritising activities to ensure we contribute to helping raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups across England. We continue to develop and expand our working partnerships focusing on developing innovative, research-informed continuous professional development and Partnerships with External Bodies, Charities and Other Third Sector Organisations.

We are committed to working in partnership across Greater Manchester to raise attainment and embedding our [Civic University Agreement](#). The Civic University Agreement commits us to collective actions in six priority areas: education and skills, reducing inequalities, jobs and growth, the digital economy, net zero and the creative and cultural economy. These and other strategic partnerships offer opportunities for collaborative working across the education sector to create diverse pathways.

The University has developed a holistic and integrated approach to student success that ensures that our students from underrepresented groups are supported to participate successfully on their courses and achieve good outcomes. To support this, we are rolling out our Student Experience Programme, a major change initiative for our university, introducing new technology and processes to improve the experience for our students and staff. The programme provides more consistent and convenient access to student services by bringing more student services online; creating a consistent experience for all and giving students more flexibility, to access personalised services and continue their learning at times convenient to them. To support our students and drive success we have three key strategic themes: Supporting Individuals, Skills Development and Educational Gain and Career Readiness.

We have seen steady increases in registration for Undergraduate degrees from students from areas where participation in university and colleges is lower than in other areas and which correlates with low household income (parents and guardians' income below £25,000) and socio-economic background. We have also seen increased registration rates for Black, Asian, minority ethnic (BAME)¹ students.

55% of our students from areas of low participation in higher education are from the top 20% of most deprived areas in the country, and we are ranked fourth in the Russell Group² for access for students from low participation areas in 2020/21. Our [Post 16 Access programmes](#) and [contextual offers](#) for students play a substantive role in supporting entry into the University for those who meet our Widening Participation (WP) criteria.

Whilst awarding gaps persist for students from low household income and least advantaged backgrounds in comparison with more advantaged groups, we are working hard to develop effective initiatives that are proven to impact student success. Our 'Living at home' students have been identified as a target group for support and we are working in partnership with our Students' Union to support these cohorts³.

¹ We use the term BAME to collectively describe our Black, Asian and ethnic minority students as this is the most widely used term.

² A group of 24 world-class leading UK universities.

³ Our Low Participation Neighbourhood students aged under 21 are more likely to reside in the parental home and they are the group that is least likely to continue from year 1.

Degree attainment has increased for all students at Manchester over the last five years, but the increase in attainment for our students from low participation in higher education neighbourhoods is almost double that of students from areas of greatest advantage (POLAR4 Q5)⁴. This shows our progress in reducing gaps between students from areas of greatest and least advantage.

Although access and attainment for all of our students has increased over the last five years, our focus, as set out in the access and participation plan, is to improve outcomes for specific groups of students, particularly students from underrepresented groups. Data shows that outcomes are lower for certain groups of students, especially:

- Students from low-income backgrounds, who are predominantly from the Black and ethnic minority community
- Students from ethnic minority backgrounds who are less likely to attain a good degree (1st or 2:1), specifically Black and Asian students.

Fees we charge

At the University of Manchester, the current maximum fees charged are:

- £9250 for full-time students
- £6,935 for part-time students

You can find a full list of course fees at the University of Manchester at: [Tuition fees | Student finance | The University of Manchester](#)

Financial help available

The University offers a range of financial support for eligible UK students from low-income households and underrepresented groups through our financial support package of bursaries and scholarships. This support enables students to access higher education and complete their courses, see here for details: [University scholarships | Finance | The University of Manchester](#).⁵

Support for students includes:

- The **Manchester Bursary** of £2000 for students from households with income below £25,000 and £1000 for households with income between £25,001 to £30,000, for the duration of the course, subject to yearly financial reassessment
- **Undergraduate Access Scholarships** of £1000 a year for the duration of the course, with additional funding for care-experienced or estranged students

We also provide: **Living Cost Support Fund** awards small grants and loans to students facing financial hardship; and the university also offers a range of **subject-specific scholarships**.

Information for students

Prospective students can learn about the university through [Open Days](#) and [online information sessions](#). Pupils and prospective WP students local to Greater Manchester may also be able access the range of virtual and on campus information, advice and guidance activities we offer, in collaboration with our local UniConnect partner Greater Manchester Higher, and through our own [outreach offering](#) which is predominately targeted at schools or colleges.

Current students receive information about fees and financial support through our student portal, internal communications campaigns, email and our Students' Union. Please see our university website [The University of Manchester](#) for the most up-to-date information.

What we are aiming to achieve

We aim to attract the brightest and best students irrespective of their educational or socio-economic background. A number of pupils in the UK live in low participation in HE neighbourhoods, where socio-economic, educational and other forms of disadvantage act as barriers making progression and success in HE less likely, possible or desirable. For all our students, we are seeking to; remove barriers to learning to enable academic success for all; provide a high-quality teaching and learning experience; and to ensure all staff across the institution work collaboratively to support all students to thrive in HE.

At Manchester, we are focused on providing support and guidance pre and post entry, to enable all students to achieve their full academic potential. Some of our current key OfS approved targets for supporting WP pupils and students through their educational journey currently include:

- Improving the ratio of our students who come from the lowest participation in HE neighbourhoods in relation to those who come from the highest participation in HE neighbourhoods. (20/21 AY = 4.6:1; our goal for 2024/25 AY is for the ratio 3:1 or below)

⁴ POLAR 4 is a statistical measure which classifies local areas into quintiles by the number of young people within that area who enter higher education. Quintile 1 has the lowest participation rate in HE and quintile 5 the highest.

⁵ The University will take all reasonable steps to maintain the value of the annual financial support packages available to students.

- Reducing the unexplained gap between white and black students (20/21 AY = 16%; our goal for 2024/25 AY is for the gap to be 5.8% or below)
- Reducing the unexplained attainment gap between white students and Asian students (20/21 AY = 5.3%; our goal for 2024/25 AY is for the gap to be 3.7% or below)
- Reducing the unexplained attainment gap between disabled students and students with no known disability (20/21 AY = 3.7%; our goal for 2024/25 AY is for the gap to be 0%)

What we are doing to achieve our aim:

- Targeted pre- and post-entry support for the care-experienced and care leavers, estranged students, refugees and sanctuary seekers, students who are care providers or parents, and other potentially vulnerable or isolated student groups
- Support for target groups known to face increased barriers to success such as the care experienced, young carers, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and disabled learners
- Increasing collaborative volunteering and work opportunities with our Students' Union to support student skill development, drive our inclusion agenda and support our local communities
- Piloting Student Success-focused programmes with our Black and Asian undergraduate students to identify effective interventions for improved student success and graduate outcomes
- Building capacity through partnerships with our local UniConnect Greater Manchester Higher, and education charities like the Tutor Trust, ReachOut, and the Brilliant Club to support pupils' academic skills and to nurture their educational aspirations
- Improving our Flexible Learning Pathways into and through higher education, as we recognise that no one size fits all and individual learners' needs will change as they access, continue and progress through university and post-graduation
- Core services like My Learning Essentials, to support students' academic and digital literacy skills
- Improving partnerships between core services like our careers and employability team and our Faculties and Schools to build programmes of in-curriculum employability support for students; to ensure inclusivity and to ensure all students have the opportunity to engage with careers support and employability programmes on core curricula programmes
- Variety of financial support packages to support WP students or students in financial crisis

How students can get involved

Our access and participation plan was produced in partnership with our students' union. We also work with Student Partner Interns and the Students' Union to ensure student perspectives are embedded into our planning and strategy and shape our future direction. Over the last two years, we have recruited and paid 119 Student Partner Interns for this collaborative working, and they sit on all our strategic change projects. Students' Union representatives sit on all our key institutional education committees and boards to ensure accountability. If you would like to be involved in this work, contact your student union representative at [Manchester Students' Union](#) and, or our Access and Success team at: accessandsuccess@manchester.ac.uk

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

Embedding a robust evaluation strategy across the institution is a key priority, so we understand what works in improving success for our students. This best practice in evaluation is being widely disseminated to underpin institutional activity around access and success.

Please contact: accessandsuccess@manchester.ac.uk for further details.