

University of Westminster: 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.

We were asked to understand the experience of disadvantaged and underrepresented students within our university and to set out plans to solve any 'gaps' in the experience of different student groups. These student groups include the experience of BME, disabled, mature, estranged and care leaving students and those from low-income backgrounds. You can see the full access and participation plan for University of Westminster [here](#).

We want to take you through our ambition for change, what we plan to do to achieve this change and the targets we have set ourselves to ensure progress. Our plan outlines the money we spend to make that change possible. We submit yearly monitoring documents to the OfS to demonstrate progress towards our commitments. We are monitored each year to ensure we meet our commitments.

This work is an integral part of the University's '[Being Westminster](#)' strategy and is reflected in our mission: to help students from different backgrounds fulfil their potential.

Key points

The focus of our access and participation plan is on improving outcomes for specific groups of students. Data shows that, compared to their peers at the University of Westminster, outcomes are lower for certain groups of students.

- Students are less likely to complete their studies if they have a disability, are mature learners (21+), are from an ethnic minority or if they come from a neighbourhood where not many people go on to higher education.
- The following groups of students are less likely to achieve a degree award of 2:1 or above:
 - Students from low-income backgrounds
 - Ethnic minority students
- The same groups of students are less likely to progress to highly skilled employment or further study.

Fees we charge

Fees at the University of Westminster. You can find more information [here](#).

- £9,250 for full-time students
- £6,935 for part-time students.

Financial help available

As part of our commitment to progress we have introduced a number of [financial support schemes](#) for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds.

- [Living Expenses Support Scheme](#)

The scheme aims to help UK undergraduate and postgraduate students with an additional grant that can be used to meet any maintenance needs, such as rental costs, travel costs, childcare costs or day-to-day costs.

- [Care Leaver Bursary](#)

If you're a UK undergraduate student, you can apply for a University Care Leavers' Bursary for each year of academic study. You must provide evidence from your Local Authority that you are a care leaver. It is £750 each year of study.

- [Estranged Students' Bursary](#)

If you're under the age of 25 and have been classified as an independent student on the grounds of estrangement by Student Finance England, you may be eligible to apply for a University bursary. It is £1000 per academic year. You can take a look at our [Support for Estranged Students page](#) to find out more about the help available.

- [Westminster Employability Award](#)

The Westminster Employability Award is an employability achievement award supporting your career and personal development by formally recognising the extra-curricular activities you complete during your time at the University of Westminster. There are 12 x £500 financial rewards which will be awarded to 12 UG students with the most points, four per College and 3 x £500 financial rewards which will be awarded to three PG students with the most points, one per College.

Information for students

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Prospective students receive information on fees and financial support at in-person events, such as our open days, and by email communications. Find information about the range of courses we offer [here](#).

Current students receive information about fees and the financial support available through our student portal, internal communications campaigns and emails. Students can access [employability stories](#), [explore careers](#), take part in activities to improve [employability](#), seek information about [jobs and work experience](#). Visit the [Student Hub](#) to access support.

We regularly update our information for [care leavers](#) on our dedicated webpage. Our Disability Learning Support team can be contacted [here](#). We offer a [counselling service](#).

What we are aiming to achieve

Within 20 years we want to:

- **eliminate** gaps associated with access and success measures for all disabled students.
- **eliminate** gaps associated with access and success measures for all mature students.
- **eliminate** gaps associated with success measures for all BME students.
- **eliminate** gaps associated with success measures for all students from low income areas.
- **eliminate** gaps associated with success measures for all Care Leavers.
- **significantly reduce** gaps associated with progression to highly-skilled employment or further study for all BME students.
- **significantly reduce** gaps associated with progression to highly-skilled employment or further study for all disabled students.
- **significantly reduce** gaps associated with progression to highly-skilled employment or further study for all students from low income areas.

What we are doing to achieve our aims

We have identified seven programmes of activity to support achievement of our aims and targets.

1. Offer **financial support**, including bursaries and hardship funding for eligible students, and practical support for students applying to Student Finance England.
2. Establish and embed **flexible modes of learning** to give students a choice in how they learn; through Degree Apprenticeships and Degrees with a Foundation Year.
3. Designed activities specifically tailored to students from disadvantaged backgrounds; [Students as Co-creators](#), [Westminster Working Cultures](#), [Future Ready Mentoring](#) and [counselling](#).
4. Extend our **programme of work with schools** – this supports more pupils from underrepresented groups to attain good grades and progress to study for a higher education qualification.
5. Enhance **support for study** throughout the institution so all students can access tailored support.
6. **Engage external partners** to collaborate on improving access to higher education, success in the chosen course of study, and progression to employment or further study.
7. **Engage students** in their own development of personal, social and professional skills.

How students can get involved

We worked with the Students' Union to gather student input into the design of our access and participation plan. Students are represented on our EDI Committee and EDI Education Steering Group which is responsible for overseeing implementation of the plan.

To provide feedback, students can contact their student union representative. To become involved in this work, visit our dedicated [website page](#) to see the opportunities to have your voice heard.

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 doing to achieve our aims
- the impact on achieving our overall aim of improved access and an inclusive environment.

The EDI Education Steering Group will monitor and report on these processes to the Education, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and University Executive Board. The Committee will oversee implementation of actions to ensure ongoing progress against yearly milestones in our access and participation 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

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