

Summary of 2020-21 to 2024-25 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 University of Chester at www1.chester.ac.uk/undergraduate/widening-participation/access-and-participation-plan.

Key points

The focus of our access and participation plan to support access to higher education and improve outcomes for specific groups of students. Data shows that, compared to their peers at the University of Chester, accessing higher education and outcomes are lower for certain groups of students.

See pages 17 of the full plan

- Young White males from low participation neighbourhoods and low income backgrounds are less likely to come to the University of Chester;
- Students with a known disability are less likely to continue in higher education;
- The following groups of students are less likely to achieve a degree award of 2:1 or above:
 - Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students;
 - Males from low participation neighbourhoods and students in general from low participation neighbourhoods;
- Plus young students from low participation neighbourhoods are less likely to progress to highly skilled employment or further study.

Overall our degree awarding gaps and employability rates for our students have improved.

Fees we charge

At the University of Chester, the maximum fees we charge are:

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

See pages 39 of the full plan

You can see a full list of fees for courses at the University of Chester at www1.chester.ac.uk/undergraduate/finance/tuition-fees

Financial help available

We offer financial support to students who are from specific underrepresented groups. This helps students to access higher education and continue studying until their course is completed. From 2022-23 onwards, the support includes:

See pages 37 of the full plan

- A **travel bursary** to attend our open days and interviews/auditions if you receive free school meals/pupil premium, are Looked after Children/those have been in local authority care or are Estranged, are a Carer, or are in receipt of benefits due to low-income or declared disability.
- An annual **household income bursary of £500** for eligible new undergraduate students for the duration of the course if you have a **household income of £25,000 or less**.
- An annual **Carer Support bursary** of £1,500 for the duration of the course for undergraduate students if you regularly look after and have responsibility for a sick, elderly, or disabled family member.
- An annual **Care Experienced bursary** of £1,500 cash, £1,000 fee waiver and 50% discounted university owned accommodation fees for undergraduate students if you are care experienced.
- An annual **Estranged student bursary** of £1,500 cash and 50% discounted university owned accommodation fees for undergraduate students if you are estranged.
- An annual **Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman and Boater community bursary** of £1,500 cash for undergraduate students if you are from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman and Boater communities.

- A **Financial Assistance Fund** if you get into financial difficulties during your time at university, with a **digital inclusion element** dedicated to providing those most in need to digital hardware and/or software.

You can find the most up-to-date information on our financial support, including the full eligibility information and criteria for the above, at www1.chester.ac.uk/undergraduate/finance/bursaries.

Information for students

See pages 33 to 34 of the full plan

If you are a prospective student, you will receive information on fees and financial support at in-person events, such as Outreach events in schools and colleges, our open days and interviews/auditions, and by email communications. This information is also provided on UCAS.

Current students receive information about fees and the financial support available through our student portal, internal communications and emails, social media updates and via our university App.

For the most up-to-date information on fees and financial support, see our university website www1.chester.ac.uk/finance.

What we are aiming to achieve

See pages 18 of the full plan

Our overall aim is to **support all students to have equal opportunities to access, succeed in and progress from higher education**. We aim to create a high quality and supportive environment where students at the University of Chester can achieve their full potential.

Based on assessment of our performance, we have identified and set ambitious targets to focus our work in the areas of:

- **Support attainment at school and access to higher education** – We work with schools to raise pupil attainment through direct GCSE and A Level revision sessions or by providing collaborative lesson/curriculum design and coaching/professional development of teachers delivering GCSE Maths and English. We also offer additional sustained programmes to those from underrepresented backgrounds to help enhance pre and post 16 student skills and aspirations. During 2022-23, we will identify how to support primary aged pupils and local schools with lower attainment rates to develop a programme of activities to start in 2023-24.
- **Diversify our provision to enable a flexible, lifelong learning offer** – We will review our current degree apprenticeships and foundation years during 2022-23 and look to grow the offer for 2023-24, in terms of numbers of learners recruited into current programmes.
- **Success and progression of Disabled students** – By 2024-25, we aim to reduce the continuation gap between non-disabled and disabled students to 3%.
- **Success and progression of Black and ethnic minority students** – By 2024-25, we aim to reduce the awarding (1st or 2:1 awards) gaps between White and Black students to 10% and White and BAME students to 4%.
- **Low participation neighbourhoods** – By 2024-25, we aim to:
 - increase the proportion of young (18/19 year old) White males from low participation neighbourhoods coming to the University of Chester to 9%;
 - reduce the gap between female and male students from low participation neighbourhoods being awarded a good degree (1st or 2:1 awards) to 4%;
 - reduce the gap between students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1 being awarded a good degree (1st or 2:1 awards) to 2%;
 - reduce the gap between young (under 21) students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1 progressing into highly skilled employment or further study to 4.5%.

What we are doing to achieve our aims

See pages 22 to 28 of the full plan

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

1. **Extend our programme of work in partnership with schools** – this supports more pupils from underrepresented groups, at an earlier age, to attain good grades and progress to study for a higher education qualification.
2. **Develop and embed flexible modes of learning** and offer a diverse range of provision to give students a choice in how they learn. This includes offering a suite of higher and degree apprenticeships across several disciplines, enabling a more flexible approach to learning than the traditional degree route.
3. **Deliver targeted enhancements to the student experience** – working groups with student representatives and advocates from our target groups will inform our teaching and learning and support provision feeding into our Student Success Subcommittee.
4. **Develop, promote and embed inclusive teaching and learning practices** – to support all students to succeed in and progress from higher education by providing; inclusive practices; embedded academic and employability skills; and social and cultural capital activities to engage students in their own development of personal, social and professional skills.
5. **Extend and deepen our external partnerships**, for example local communities, charities and employers, to collaborate on improving access to higher education, success in the chosen course of study, and progression to employment or further study. This includes investment in the Studiosity platform to assist students with academic skills, and providing vulnerable cohorts with a greater number of paid graduate-level internships with local employers.
6. **Adopt a more targeted approach to financial support**, which includes bursaries and hardship funding for the most vulnerable students and those from underrepresented groups, along with practical support for students applying to [Student Finance England](#).

How students can get involved

We work with the Students' Union to gather student input into the development of our access and participation plan, including the monitoring of our progress towards our objectives, yearly milestones and the evaluation of impact of our initiatives. Students are represented on our Student Success Subcommittee which is responsible for overseeing implementation of the plan.

See pages 29 of the full plan

To provide feedback, students can contact their student union representatives at csu@chester.ac.uk.

To become involved in this work, you can contact our [Access and Participation Leads](#).

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

Our initiatives and activities to improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education are informed by the best available evidence about what works for students. We will collect data and feedback to evaluate:

See pages 29 to 32 of the full plan

- Our activity programme design;
- the impact of the activity we are providing to achieve our aims and objectives;
- the six actions outlined above;
- and the impact on achieving our overall aim of improved access and an inclusive environment.

The Student Success Subcommittee monitors and reports on these processes to the Student Voice and Experience Committee, which reports to our Governing Council. The Subcommittee oversees the implementation and monitoring of our initiatives and activities to ensure ongoing progress is made against the yearly milestones in our access and participation plan. Impact of initiatives and activities on our target groups is monitored, to ensure we are addressing our aims. Where appropriate, we 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 our Access and Participation Managers at accessparticipation@chester.ac.uk for further information.