

Lancaster University

Summary of 2025-26 to 2028-29 access and participation plan

What is an access and participation plan?

An access and participation plan sets out provisions that will be meaningful and effective in promoting equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups, as determined by the Office for Students.

You can find the full access and participation plan for Lancaster University at <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/widening-participation/strategy-and-engagement/#d.en.586375>

Key points

Our plan outlines our commitments to achieving our widening participation (WP) and social mobility strategic goals, with the aim of creating a diverse and fully inclusive learning environment. This will enable students from underrepresented backgrounds to access, succeed in, and progress from our institution and higher education more broadly.

By analysing our data, we have identified key areas to prioritise in order to achieve our goals:

- Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (those eligible for free school meals or from areas with the highest indicators of deprivation) are less likely to attend Lancaster University, attain top grades, and progress to graduate employment or further study compared to their more advantaged peers.
- Students from UK Asian and UK Black backgrounds are underrepresented at Lancaster University.
- Mature students (over 21 years of age on entry) are less likely to continue their studies than younger students.
- Students with declared disabilities, particularly those with mental health disabilities, are less likely to continue their studies than students without disabilities.
- Students from UK Asian, Black, Mixed, and other heritage backgrounds are less likely to be awarded the highest grades compared to white students.

We address these priorities through a series of objectives, targets, and intervention strategies.

See pages 4-7 of the access and participation plan for more information.

Fees we charge

Lancaster University, the maximum fees for full-time undergraduate UK (home) students are £9,535 per year.

You can find a list of our fees at: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/study/fees-and-funding/>

Financial help available

We offer financial support to students from underrepresented backgrounds. The primary aim of our financial support programme is to help students access higher education, continue their studies, and achieve the best possible grades. This support includes but is not limited to:

- **The Lancaster Opportunity Scholarship** supports students who are part of our Contextual Offer scheme. Each scholarship is paid in annual instalments of £1,000 per year of study.
- **The Lancaster Bursary** is a non-repayable bursary for students with a household income of up to £30,000. Each bursary is also paid in annual instalments of £1,000 per year of study.

See pages 43-4 of the access and participation plan for more information.

Information for students

Prospective students can find information on fees and financial support on our website, as well as during open days, offer holder events, and on-campus school visits.

Current students receive this information through our student portal, student support and finance teams, internal communications, and emails.

For the most up-to-date information, please visit our university website:

<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/>

What we are aiming to achieve

Our plan includes ten objectives designed to address and tackle our eight key risks to equality of opportunity. By addressing these risks, we aim to reduce the gaps between overrepresented and underrepresented student groups at Lancaster. Based on our performance assessment, we have identified the following focus areas:

Access

- Increase the percentage of Index of Multiple Deprivation Quintile 1 students from 14.5% to 17%.
- Increase the percentage of Free School Meal students from 10.1% to 12.1%.
- Increase the percentage of UK Asian students from 12.8% to 16.8%.
- Increase the percentage of UK Black students from 4.6% to 6.6%.

Completion

- Reduce the gap in completion rates between mature students and younger students (under 21 at entry) from 8.9% to 5%.
- Reduce the gap in completion rates between students with declared mental health disabilities and the wider student population from 7.1% to 5%.

Awarding Gap

- Reduce the awarding gap between students from UK Asian, Black, Mixed, and other heritage backgrounds and White students from 8.8% to 7%.
- Reduce the awarding gap between UK White and UK Black students from 16.1% to 13%.

Progression

- Reduce the gap in progression to a positive graduate destination between students from UK White and UK Black backgrounds from 10.2% to 5%.

Additionally, we will continue delivering, evaluating, and improving support for other WP student groups, such as care leavers, neurodivergent learners, and asylum seekers and refugees, to help them thrive and succeed at all stages of the student lifecycle.

See pages 8-9 of the access and participation plan for more information.

What we are doing to address key risks to equality of opportunity

To address our key risks, we have developed five intervention strategies. Each strategy includes activities designed to support students who may be at risk at different stage of their academic journey. Our intervention strategies are:

- Increase applications, offers and enrolments of students from lower socio-economic groups (FSM and IMD Q1), UK Black students, UK Asian students.
- Improve the retention and completion rates of mature students and students with a declared mental health disability.
- Improve the degree outcomes for UK Black, Asian or other ethnic backgrounds.
- Improve the progression outcomes for UK Black students.
- Develop a culture of allyship across the university to create a more inclusive environment.

See pages 9-34 of the access and participation plan for more information.

How students can get involved

- We collaborated closely with students and our Students' Union (LUSU) to co-create our access and participation plan.
- Students are represented at all levels of governance at Lancaster through the Student Officers in LUSU, who amplify the voice of the student population.
- Students interested in participating in access and participation activities can contact the WP Team and the Student Success Team to learn about our WP Ambassador Scheme, Lancaster Success Programme Advocate Scheme, and internships programme.

See pages 38-40 of the access and participation plan for more information.

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

Evaluation is integral to our approach. Our evaluation commitments focus on nurturing a culture of evaluation and reflective practice by:

- Building the capacity of individuals and teams to evaluate interventions.
- Ensuring all projects and activities are appropriately evaluated.
- Enhancing the standard of evidence generated by evaluations.
- Sharing our evaluation findings both internally and externally.

Our Widening Participation Advisory Group will monitor our progress towards targets and report on evaluation activities to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the University Council.

See pages 40-43 of the access and participation plan for more information.

Contact details for further information

Please contact the Social Mobility and Student Success Team on wp@lancaster.ac.uk for more information.