

University of Sheffield

Summary of 2025-26 to 2028-29 Access and Participation Plan

What is an access and participation plan?

Our access and participation plan sets out how the University of Sheffield will improve equality of opportunity for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education, as determined by the Office for Students.

You can see the full access and participation plan for the University of Sheffield [here](#).

The key points in our plan

The University of Sheffield is a large Russell Group university based in the North of England with approximately 30,000 students, 8000 staff and a turnover of c.£850m. We are guided by our values of inclusivity and fairness to provide opportunities for all students to succeed regardless of their background. We develop our programmes and learning communities in ways that support and challenge our students and allow our graduates, whatever their backgrounds, to leave us with the knowledge, skills, confidence and self-awareness needed to succeed. We have defined what it means to be a 'Sheffield Student' and what **all** of our students should experience. This plan is an important vehicle in making sure we live up to these values.

By analysing our data we have identified key areas to prioritise so we can achieve our goal:

- Students from lower socioeconomic groups (including those eligible for free school meals and those from low income postcodes) are less likely to come to the University, attain the highest grades and progress to graduate employment or further study compared to their more advantaged peers.
- Our degree apprenticeship programmes attract a significant proportion of new entrants from lower socioeconomic groups and we want to continue to be an accessible route for these students and to maintain this success as our degree apprenticeship programmes expand.
- Older students and those with disabilities are less likely to complete their degree programmes compared to younger students and those without a disability.
- Black and Asian students are less likely to be awarded the highest grades than a white student.

The above are addressed through a series of objectives, targets and intervention strategies which make up the main elements of our access and participation plan. (See pages 1 to 5 of the Plan for more details on the risks to equality of opportunity we have identified.)

Fees charged

The University of Sheffield will charge £9,250 per year for home undergraduate students in full time study and £6,935 for part time students.

You can find out more about the fees we charge [here](#).

Financial help available

The University offers financial support to students from underrepresented groups. This helps our students access higher education and engage fully with their studies until they graduate. Examples include:

- **Bursaries** for home students to help with the cost of living. These are based on household incomes, with additional support available for students who are care leavers, students who are estranged, or who have caring responsibilities.
- **Scholarships and participation grants** to help students make the most of activities and opportunities provided by the University.
- **Emergency financial assistance** where students are experiencing financial hardship and need urgent support.

See page 29 to 30 of the plan for more information.

Information for students

Prospective students receive information on all aspects of university life including fees and financial support at in person or online events, such as open days; via our public facing web pages; our online chat services; and through our applicant processes which include targeted communications highlighting funding available.

Current students receive information about fees and financial support available via the Student Hub webpages and internal campaigns such as National Student Money Week. We also provide useful links to money management tools and students can access year round advice and support from both the University and Students' Union to help them manage their finances.

What we are aiming to achieve

The objectives and interventions described in our plan will help us to:

- Increase the proportion of students who are a) eligible for free school meals and b) from the lower quintiles of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) applying to, and registering at, the University.
- Increase the number of degree apprenticeships at Level 6, working with local and regional employers to ensure the offer supports the skills needs of the area, whilst providing access routes to those who may not previously have considered HE.
- Reduce the gap in students completing their programmes of study between those under 21 and those 21 and over and remove the gap in completion for students declaring a disability compared to those who do not.
- Remove the attainment gap for students from Black and Asian backgrounds compared to white students.
- Close the attainment gap between students a) from lower quintiles of IMD compared to higher quintiles and b) students whole were eligible for free school meals relative to those who were not.
- Reduce the gap in the number of students going into graduate jobs or further study between students a) from lower quintiles of IMD compared to higher quintiles and b) students eligible for free school meals relative to those who were not.

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

Our plan includes a number of Intervention Strategies that seek to:

- increase applications, offers and enrolments of students from lower socio-economic groups and Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- sustain the proportion of new entrants to degree apprenticeships from lower socio-economic backgrounds as degree apprentice numbers grow.
- improve completion rates for underrepresented groups, with a focus on disabled and mature, whilst creating a more inclusive environment for all.
- improve attainment rates for underrepresented groups, with a focus on Black, Asian, free school meals and IMD 1 and 2.
- reduce the gaps in progression to graduate level employment or postgraduate study for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

See pages 8 to 24 of the Plan for more information.

How students can get involved

There is student representation at all levels of our governance structures, from School and Faculty Education Committees through to the University Senate and Council. These bodies support delivery of the objectives set out in our plan and help us to track our progress.

We work closely with our Students' Union, who were active in helping us develop our plan and are a key stakeholder in its delivery. The Students' Union recruit, train and support up to c.1000 academic representatives volunteers each year and this community's engagement is invaluable, providing feedback locally across subject areas as well as via Students' Union structures. (See pages 26 - 28 of the Plan for more information about student involvement.)

How the plan is being evaluated

We have developed Theories of Change (see page 28) to ensure that access and participation Intervention Strategies have evaluation activity embedded from the start. Each Intervention Strategy within the plan has an underlying Theory of Change, providing clarity on our aims and how we will know we are making progress in the short, medium and longer term.

We will publish findings from our evaluations on our website and share them with the wider sector via a variety of means and as appropriate. (See pages 8 to 24 of the Plan for more information.)

Contact details for further information

You can contact Michelle Nolan, Deputy Chief Operating Officer (Student), m.nolan@sheffield.ac.uk, for further information.