

Buckinghamshire New University

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 advance equality for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education.

→ You can see the full access and participation plan for Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) [here](#).

Key points

BNU attracts a diverse range of learners and is above the university sector average for learners who come from an ethnic minority; mature learners; learners from more deprived neighbourhoods; or who were eligible for free school meals while at school. The focus of our access and participation plan is on improving outcomes for specific groups of learners. Data shows that, compared to their peers at BNU, outcomes have been lower for some groups of learners. This can change from year to year and is not an indicator of individual chances of success.

In 2019/20, the last year of OfS data, the following groups of learners were less likely to continue their studies after their first year:

- Ethnic minority learners
- Learners eligible for free school meals while at school

In 2020/21, the following groups of learners were less likely to be awarded a degree award of 2:1 or above:

- Asian learners
- Mature learners over 21
- White learners from areas of high deprivation
- Learners from areas where fewer young people go to university
- Ethnic minority learners on part-time courses

The following groups of learners were less likely to progress to highly skilled employment or further study:

- Asian learners
- Learners eligible for free school meals while at school
- Learners with a disability

Fees we charge

At BNU, the maximum fees charged are:

- £9,250 for full-time home learners
- £6,935 for part-time home learners

→ For a list of fees for different types of courses at BNU see our website: [Fee summary](#) and for course specific fees, see our [course](#) pages.

Financial help available

We offer financial support to learners from underrepresented groups who are taught directly by BNU (not taught by sub-contractual partners). This helps learners access higher education and continue studying until their course is completed. The support includes:

Short-term loans - Made on a short-term basis, usually for one month and are interest free.

Criteria: UK full-time student; in receipt of Student Loan Company funding

BNU hardship fund – For learners who need financial help to meet specific course and living costs that cannot be met in another way. Priority given to some groups of learners; up to £3,000 per year. Criteria: UK full-time or part-time student; in receipt of Student Loan Company funding

BNU Student Success Programme - For learners from low-income backgrounds and learners from groups currently underrepresented in higher education; up to £1,000 per year. Criteria: UK full-time or part-time student; in receipt of Student Loan Company funding; Either from an area with a low proportion of young people entering higher education; from area of high deprivation (based on home postcode); or household income less than £25,000

Care leaver bursary - For care experience learners; up to £1,000 per year. Criteria: Care leaver status disclosed and evidenced; UK student; aged under 25 at start of course

Estranged Student Bursary - For learners estranged from parents or legal guardians; up to £1,000 per year. Criteria: Assessed as independent by Student Finance England (undergraduate only); eligible for Student Loan Company funding (undergraduate only); UK student; aged under 25 at start of course

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boater (GRTSB) Bursary - For learners who identify as Gypsy or Traveller ethnicity; up to £1,000 per year. Criteria: UK student, identify as Gypsy or Traveller ethnicity on student record.

Bucks Future Success Package - £150 'account' to spend on goods specific to your course/study. Criteria: UK student; full-time undergraduate; first year only

Disability Assistance - For learners needing disability assistance. Criteria: have applied for DSAs and have been assessed as requiring a computer on the grounds of your disability; household income less than £25,000

→ For the most up-to-date information, including the full criteria, see our [Fees and funding](#) pages. or email bursary@bucks.ac.uk.

Information for students

Prospective learners receive information on fees and financial support at in-person events, such as our open days, and by email.

Current learners receive information about fees and the financial support available through our website, Student Success team communications campaigns and emails.

For the most up-to-date information, see our university website.

→ [Student success and support](#) → [Fees and funding](#)

What we are aiming to achieve

Our aim is to support learners from underrepresented groups to stay in higher education, to get good degrees and progress into highly-skilled employment or further study.

Based on assessment of our performance, we have identified the following focus areas:

- Increasing the proportion of learners who are disabled, care experienced, identify as GRTSB, are children from military families, or from neighbourhoods where fewer people go to university.
- Improving continuation at university after the first year for all learners, particularly ethnic minority learners and those from deprived backgrounds.

- Working towards more learners who are Asian; mature (21 years or older); white and from deprived areas; or from areas where fewer people go to university being awarded a 2.1 degree or better.
- Seeing more of our learners going into highly-skilled jobs and further study after they graduate, especially Asian learners, those eligible for free school meals when they were at school, and learners with a disability.

What we are doing to achieve our aims

- Redesigning our curriculum to be inclusive and accessible and focused on learners getting good degrees outcomes and developing the skills needed to go into highly-skilled employment.
- Offering different pathways through higher education, including full and part time three-year programmes, degree apprenticeships, professional education, and technical qualifications.
- Working with local schools to provide guidance on post-16 and post-18 options and offering subject specific enrichment activities in areas such as art, design, and sport science. Supporting Buckinghamshire UTC with curriculum development and pathways into further and higher education.
- Creating action plans to advance race equality and building a sense of belonging and equality for all students as part of our belief in 'Being you at BNU'.
- Working with our learners and their communities as collaborative partners so we can better understand the barriers and challenges they face.
- Ensuring that learners understand the targeted support available and the benefits of declaring their status as disabled, care experienced, from a military family, an ethnic minority – or feeling confident to ask for support whatever their background or identity.

How students can get involved

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

→ To provide feedback, learners can contact their student union representatives or course reps

→ To become involved in this work, contact the Student Union Vice President Education & Welfare.

Email: surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

Enhancement activity is informed by evidence about what works for our learners. We collect data on the student journey and feedback to help us evaluate our performance. The learning from this is shared with curriculum development teams and academic staff. We monitor the impact of our action on our target improvement, to ensure we are addressing our aims. Where necessary, we adjust our plans in the best interests of our learners. The University Quality Enhancement Committee monitors and reports on these processes to the University Council. The Committee oversees implementation of actions to ensure ongoing progress against milestones in our access and participation plan. We will publish an evaluation report on our website by January 2024.

Contact details for further information

→ You can contact Anna Buckett at anna.buckett@bucks.ac.uk for further information.