

University of Reading: Summary of 2024-5 to 2027-8 Access and Participation Plan

What is an Access and Participation Plan?

Our Access and participation Plan (APP) sets out how the University will ensure underrepresented groups at the University of Reading are given equal opportunity to participate and succeed. You can see the full APP for the University of Reading on the [APP section of our website](#).

Context (see pages 1-4 of the APP)

The focus of the APP is on increasing the proportion of underrepresented groups in the student population, ensuring all students have equal opportunity to complete their degree and ensuring all students have equal opportunity to achieve a positive outcome after graduating.

Our data analysis shows that

- Our student population could better represent disadvantaged parts of society.
- Students are less likely to finish their degree if they are of Black ethnicity, mature age, or from certain other underrepresented groups.
- Students are less likely to be awarded a 2:1 or a first if they are from a minority ethnic or socioeconomically deprived background, or from certain other underrepresented groups.
- Students from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds are less likely to progress to a positive graduate destination.

Fees for students

Tuition fees are £9,250 per year for full-time students. There are reduced tuition fees for part-time students. More information about fees and funding can be [found on our website](#).

Financial support for students

We offer financial help to students from underrepresented groups. We will deploy an estimated £4million per year in financial aid for the duration of the plan to support students to achieve their potential.

The support includes:

- **The Reading Bursary Scheme (RBS)** is an annual bursary of £1,100 for each year that a student is eligible (household income below £27k and be from an area of general disadvantage or low participation in higher education).
- **Work and Study Placement bursaries** cover expenses related to travel, accommodation and/or childcare for students with an annual income lower than £45k.
- **Care Experienced, Foyer students and Estranged students Bursary** of £1,000 for each year of study for eligible students.
- **Student Support Funds** ranging from £1-£3,000 for students in financial hardship.

- **Sanctuary Scholarships** of 4x £5,000 bursary payments for students with refugee or humanitarian protection status.
- **Pre-entry Travel Bursary** of up to £300 to cover the travel cost of underrepresented students attending Access events.
- **Pre-application Bursary** of up to £500 to covers the cost of travelling to on-campus for disabled applicants.
- **Digital Support Funds** of £400 per student to relate to the cost of IT equipment costs.
- **Diagnostic Testing** the University provides financial support towards the costs of diagnostic tests to confirm a disability for students with household incomes of less than £27k.
- **Commuter Travel Bursary** is a £250 contribution towards the cost of public transportation from a £40,000 total provision.

Information for students

We will provide information on fees, loans, fee waivers, financial support, and pre-entry bursaries, along with eligibility criteria using mechanisms such as websites, prospectuses, applicant, and student portals, mailing lists, and will also work hard to build professional relationships with teachers to ensure that they are able to readily provide local students with relevant information.

- The [Essentials webpages](#) offer support and information for students.
- Our [Student App](#) brings together essential information for students in an accessible format.
- The [full APP](#) is published on the university's website.

What we are aiming to achieve (see page 5 of the APP)

Based on our analysis, we have the following aims:

1. Help raise the attainment of students from target groups while they are in Key Stage 4, to support successful applications to university, and increase the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds at the University of Reading.
2. Ensure that Black students and mature age students are continuing in their course in similar rates to their counterparts and ensure that minority ethnic students (including Black students) and students from disadvantaged backgrounds are achieving a 2:1 or a first in similar rates to their counterparts.
3. Ensure students from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve positive graduate outcomes from their university degree at similar rates to their counterparts.

How we plan to address these risks to equality (see pages 6-25 of the APP)

Using a whole provider approach, these are some of the activities we expect to help us achieve these aims.

Access

- We will work with partner schools to provide tutoring, mentoring, visits to university, study skills sessions and training for teachers.
- We will provide intensive information, advice, and guidance for Year 12 students, alongside a masterclasses programme.
- We will focus our efforts on schools and Further Education colleges with higher proportions of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- We will provide a targeted application support programme called Access Reading.

Success

- We will simplify the continuation rules for degree programmes through our Portfolio Review project and work directly with Awarding Gap Representatives to enable support that is based on subject-specific needs.
- We will offer support with Decolonising the Curriculum through a series of toolkits and guidance resources.
- We will enhance the way we welcome and transition new underrepresented students so they can make the best possible start at university.
- We will learn directly from students who were unable to continue their studies about their experience.
- We will provide an anonymous and accessible platform for students to disclose problematic behaviours.
- We will enhance our residential support team to provide more inclusive living environments for underrepresented groups.
- We will provide financial education and financial support packages to eligible students from underrepresented groups.

Progression

- We will create paid internship opportunities for UoR students.
- We will provide career mentoring for second and final year students.
- We will facilitate a community of finalist students in person, online and via social media.

How students can get involved (see pages 26-28 of the APP)

Reading Students' Union (RSU) has been involved in the creation of all our Access Agreements since 2012/3. Both the RSU Diversity and Education Officers were full members of the writing group who authored this APP. The committee overseeing this area of work and other related governing boards also include RSU representation.

We view students as partners and develop approaches and interventions with them. We use student groups such as our paid Student Panel to feed into decision making at all levels on a broad range of subjects. The new Inclusion Consultant scheme enables students to contribute directly to issues relating to inclusion. For our pre-entry access work, our students are involved as role models and deliverers of sessions to share their experiences and provide input to the design and content of some of our intensive programmes such as the Scholars programme.

Evaluation of the plan (see page 29 of the APP)

Our activities are based on up-to-date research and experience about what works for underrepresented groups. For each activity, we will create a bespoke evaluation plan to learn what does and does not work. This means evaluating short, medium and long-term outcomes and publishing reports on our understanding as it develops.

The Access and Participation Committee will closely monitor the impact of our APP activities and the Access and Participation Evaluation Sub-Committee will bring together colleagues with the relevant expertise and responsibility to ensure our evaluation strategy is being followed carefully.

You can contact m.l.b.haine@reading.ac.uk for more information; University of Reading, November 2023.