

Durham 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 improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education. Durham University's full access and participation plan is available here: [Durham's APP](#).

Key points

The focus of our access and participation plan is on improving opportunities and outcomes for groups of students who have not traditionally attended university, in particular universities like Durham with high entry levels. Data shows that, compared to their peers at Durham, outcomes are lower for certain groups of students.

- Students are less likely to apply to and enrol at Durham if they come from a neighbourhood where not many people go on to higher education and/or if they are home students with Black heritage. See pages 1 to 3 of the full plan.
- Care experienced students are less likely to go to university and Durham has a very low number of care experienced students applying each year. See page 6 and 7 of the full plan.
- Disabled students are less likely than non-disabled students to achieve a degree award of 2:1 or above at Durham. See pages 5 and 6 of the full plan.
- Mature students are less likely than students classed as young entrants (under 21) to complete their degree at Durham and are less likely to achieve a degree award of a 2:1 or above. See page 4 of the full plan.

The number of students from low participation neighbourhoods who come to Durham has increased significantly since the start of the plan from 183 to 409, which means in 2021 they represented 8.8% of Durham's intake. This is ahead of where we expected to be, but we nevertheless intend to continue to do more to support this cohort. Similarly, the number of home undergraduate Black heritage students at Durham has also increased - 235 studying with us in 2021 compared with 170 in 2018. This is a 38.2% increase in three years. We recognise that there is more to do to reach our targets in recruiting more underrepresented Black heritage people to Durham.

Fees we charge

At Durham, the maximum fees are charged for an undergraduate degree. This is currently £9,250 per year for full-time students. However, if you spend a year undertaking an internship in industry then the fee for that year is £1,850, while the fee for a year including a period of study abroad is £1,385. See page 30 of the full plan.

Further information about fees and funding at Durham, as well as search courses here: [Durham University Fees and Funding](#).

Financial help available

We offer financial support to students from underrepresented groups and to those with low household income. This helps students access and make the most of their time at Durham, and to continue studying until their course is complete. There is a range of bursaries and scholarships available through the University. This includes but is not limited to:

- A travel bursary for students from low-income households, care experienced backgrounds, or those who have participated on one of our access programmes, to attend our open days
- An annual bursary of £2,000 through the Durham Grant Scheme for:

- students with a household income of less than £25,000
- students who successfully complete Durham's Supported Progression with a household income of £42,875 or less.
- An annual bursary of between £200 and £2,000 through the Durham Grant Scheme for students with household incomes of between £25,000 and £42,875.
- A Student Support Fund to help students with the essential costs of being a student, for students with a shortfall between the money available to them and their essential expenditure. This is means-tested on the *student's* personal income (not the parents/partner).
- A donor funded 'moving in' bursary of £500 and a 'moving on' bursary of £150 for care experienced and/or estranged students to help them with the costs associated with coming to Durham and with graduation respectively.

The information above is true as of the time of writing. Financial support is subject to change year on year. Further information about the financial support available to Durham students can be found at: [Financial Support at Durham University](#).

Information for students

- **Prospective students** receive information on fees and financial support at in-person recruitment events, such as open days and outreach activities, and by email communications. We have a dedicated campaigns team who communicate regularly with prospective students and applicants. We also publish clear, accessible, and timely information for applicants on the University's website.
- **Current students** receive information about fees and the financial support available through a variety of internal channels of communication, including campaigns and emails.

What we are aiming to achieve

Our overall aim is to support underrepresented students to apply to and be successful in higher education. We also want to create an inclusive and inspiring environment where students at Durham can achieve the extraordinary.

We have identified certain underrepresented groups, including those who are at risk of achieving their academic potential. We will focus our work with these groups and individuals:

- **Support attainment at school and access higher education** – through our Schools Membership Scheme and broader schools engagement activity, we are working with secondary schools and colleges to raise pupil attainment and expectations to study for a higher education qualification. During 2022-23, we will continue to grow the Schools Membership Scheme in the North East and nationally by working with more schools in disadvantaged areas or where we see fewer pupils accessing higher education. We will also pilot the scheme in a small number of primary schools in County Durham and the North East.
- **Students from low participation neighbourhoods and low income backgrounds** – by 2024-25, we will improve the percentage of students enrolling at Durham to 12%. We will further address the imbalance between those at Durham who are most likely to go to university and those least likely, to a ratio of 3:1.
- **Home Black heritage students** – By 2024-25, we will increase the percentage of Black heritage home undergraduate students enrolled at the University to 2.1%, which is approximately 100 students.
- **Care experienced students** - By 2024-25, we will increase the percentage of students with experience of the care system in the North East accessing higher education to 9%.
- **Disabled students** – By 2024-25, we will reduce the percentage point gap in attainment of first and 2:1 degree awards between disabled and non-disabled students to 2%.
- **Mature students** – By 2024-25, we will reduce the percentage of mature students who leave the University after one year to 8% and we will reduce the percentage point gap in attainment of first and 2:1 degree awards between mature and young undergraduates to 10%.

What we are doing to achieve our aims

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

1. **Extend our Schools Membership Scheme and expand our access activities for students in schools** – this will support more pupils from underrepresented groups to attain good grades and progress to study for a higher education qualification.
2. **Engage external partners to collaborate on improving access to higher education** – this will ensure we have breadth and depth to our approach to supporting a high number of young people to access Durham, and university generally, both in the North East and nationally.
3. **We will establish a Durham Mathematics School** – this will serve 150 students in years 12 and 13 to improve mathematics standards in the North East and will support students to come to Durham University.
4. **Offer financial support** – including scholarships, bursaries, and hardship funding for eligible students, and practical support for students applying to [Student Finance England](#).
5. Provide **dedicated contact and support** for target groups throughout the application process, as they arrive at Durham, and throughout their time at the University.
6. Establish an **attainment raising toolkit and evaluation approach** for North East primary schools.
7. We will **foster creativity in education** – this will increase participation and engagement in learning, and consequently attainment.

How students can get involved

We worked with the Students' Union to gather student input into the design of our access and participation plan. We also work closely with our students in a variety of ways in the development and delivery of activities such as our access programmes and so students are represented in the implementation of the plan. See the Appendix, pages 25-29 of the full plan.

To provide feedback, students can contact [Durham SU](#).

To get involved in this work, contact our [Student Ambassador Coordinator](#).

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

Our programmes of activity are informed by the best available evidence about what works for students. We will develop a framework for monitoring and evaluating all our access and participation initiatives. This will ensure we continue to understand what works well and what could be improved.

We will collect data and feedback to evaluate:

- The design and impact of the programme of activity we are doing to achieve our aims
- The seven actions outlined above
- The impact on achieving our overall aim of improved access and an inclusive environment.

The Access and Participation Plan Steering Group will monitor and report on these processes to our University Executive Committee. The Steering Group will oversee implementation of the actions to ensure ongoing progress against yearly milestones in our access and participation plan. We will monitor impact on our target groups, to ensure we are addressing our aims. Where appropriate, we will 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

For further information please contact Claire Smiles-Harrison at claire.smiles-harrison@durham.ac.uk