

## University of Portsmouth: summary of 2020-21 to 2024-25 access and participation plan

### What is an access and participation plan?

For any university to be permitted to charge the £9,250pa fee for full-time 'home' (or non-international) undergraduates, the higher education regulator - the Office for Students (OfS) - must approve its 'access and participation' plan.

An access and participation plan sets out how a higher education provider will address significant inequalities in access to higher education and student outcomes. As access and participation plans are focused on a university's most significant inequalities they are not comprehensive and do not include everything a university does to improve equality of access and success.

In 2019, the Office for Students approved the University's Portsmouth plan which covers the period 2020/21 to 2024/25. This document summarises the Office for Students-approved commitments the University has made and outlines progress against those commitments. You can see the full access and participation plan [here](#).

### Key points: the University of Portsmouth

The University of Portsmouth has a diverse student body. Our full-time undergraduate population includes a high proportion of students from state schools (96%), Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) students (29%), students from low income households (30%), and students from low-participation neighbourhoods (30%) [all figures, 2018/19].

The University is committed to ensuring that our students have a high-quality experience while they are with us and are set-up to succeed in their chosen careers after they leave us. We select students on the basis of their potential to benefit from what we offer.

The University has a good record in promoting access to and success in university. Our success is reflected in our 2017 gold award, the highest award possible, in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) - an independent national exercise to assess teaching quality in higher education.

However, we recognise that improving equality of opportunity and outcome for University of Portsmouth students is a work in progress and that there is more we can and must do. This insight is reflected in the University's '2030 Vision' to become the top modern university nationally, and one of the top 100 young universities globally by 2030. Working towards realising this Vision will drive the continuous improvement necessary to reduce the inequalities that some of our students experience.

### What we are aiming to achieve

Data analysis identified four key areas of difference in student performance at the University. The Office for Students agreed that these four areas should be the University's access and participation areas of focus for 2020/21 to 2024/25. They are

1. Attainment gaps between White and Black students
2. Attainment gaps between male students from deprived areas and male students from non-deprived areas
3. Attainment gaps between students officially defined as from '[low participation areas](#)' and students from '[high participation](#)' areas
4. Attainment gaps between students with disabilities and those with no known disabilities

An 'attainment gap', in reality an awarding gap, is the difference in degree outcomes - 1st, 2:1, 2:2 etc. - for different student groups at the end of their degree programmes. Sometimes attainment gaps are 'explained' by students' prior attainment. As a general rule, you would expect that students who did less well in their GCSE and A level equivalent qualifications would do less well at degree

level too. But sometimes gaps are not explicable in this way. The attainment gaps in 1-4 are only partially explained by prior attainment.

The University agreed targets with the Office for Students in relation to 1-4 to reduce unexplained attainment gaps. These are given in Table 1 below.

The University's number one access and participation priorities are to reduce the attainment gap between White and Black students and the gap of males from the most deprived areas. As at 2020/21 the University is ahead of schedule to achieve all targets. In particular we have reduced the attainment gap between White and Black students to 19% and male students from deprived areas to 9%. We are making progress but have some distance to go.

<b>Table 1: University of Portsmouth access and participation plan targets (to 2024/25)</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Target for 2024/25</b>
Attainment gap between White and Black students	26%	10%
Attainment gap between male students from deprived areas and male students from non-deprived areas	13%	6%
Attainment gap between students officially defined as from 'low participation areas' and students from 'high participation' areas	3%	1%
Attainment gap between students with disabilities and those with no known disabilities	5%	2%
Data source: Access and Participation Dashboard, Office for Students (March 2022).		

### **How will we achieve our targets and monitor progress?**

Effective monitoring of the University's access and participation plan is delivered through the University Education and Student Experience Committee, chaired by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and the Quality Assurance Committee. These committees report to the Academic Council and the University's Governing Body. There is student representation (Student Union elected officers) on all of these committees. We are also implementing a revised annual monitoring process, providing staff with access to data dashboards so they can more speedily address any problems, as well as monitor progress towards our targets.

The University plans to create a 'Centre for Pedagogic Innovation' to underpin our education-related research and we recently established the Education Research, Innovation and Consultancy (ERIC) unit. ERIC will undertake research and evaluate the impact of the University's involvement in local schools.

### **Fees we charge**

As 95% of University of Portsmouth students who are the focus of access and participation plans are full-time (2018/19), the University's approved plan focused on full-time students. The fee the University charges these students is £9,250pa. For details of the fees the University charges for other students see [here \(pp.30-32\)](#).

## **Financial help available**

We offer bursaries of £750p.a. to all English Home fee-paying full-time and sandwich undergraduates, with household income of £25,000 or less.

Bursaries are paid to eligible students on OfS-supported courses, paying £9,250p.a. fees, including previously NHS-commissioned courses, Master of Architecture and other Integrated Masters courses. Full-time and sandwich students paying lower fees, including franchised, sandwich and year abroad students, are not eligible.

The University Support Fund of £1m p.a. is targeted at priority groups including disabled students, mature students and care leavers. These hardship funds are allocated on a needs basis after careful assessment of the financial position of individual students who apply for support.

Care leavers receive an additional annual bursary of £1,700, with £750 for Estranged students, along with a support package including a named contact, wellbeing support and year-round accommodation, as part of our commitment via the Stand Alone Pledge.

## **Information for students**

Through our main University website and our 'MyPort' student information hub, the University ensures that information about our access and participation plan is accessible to both prospective and current students. This includes information about fees, financial support and eligibility criteria.

Our Student Finance Centre also provides comprehensive and impartial information on financial support to applicants and students. Our Additional Support and Disability Advice Centre proactively contacts applicants and students with a declared disability with information about how they can be supported through their academic studies. This support includes visits to the University before they formally join us to support the transition to university study. It also provides tailored advice to disabled applicants and students on the specific financial support available.

## **How students are involved**

The University is committed to putting student involvement at the heart of our teaching and learning. We have a Student Charter, co-created with students. There is student representation on the University Board of Governors and on all relevant academic committees, including those which have oversight of our access and participation plan.

We also have a Student Voice Policy which focuses on partnership working with our students and is subtitled 'Valuing students' views and opinions'. For a statement by the President of the Student Union who was involved in the creation of our access and participation plan see [here, p.4](#).

Student input shapes the University's approach to access and participation, the most significant example of which is our commitment to student bursaries. In light of unclear national evidence about the benefits of student bursaries, the University considered scaling back bursaries funds and using the money in other ways. The University's Students' Union gave strong representations against this so we retained our existing bursary model.

## **Contact details for further information**

For further information in relation to our Access and Participation plan, please contact Fiona Loughran, Director of Planning ([fiona.loughran@port.ac.uk](mailto:fiona.loughran@port.ac.uk))