

## University of Cumbria

### 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.

Access and Participation Plan (APP). You can see the full access and participation plan for the University of Cumbria on our [website](#).

#### Key points

The University of Cumbria was established to meet the needs of communities in Cumbria and North Lancashire with historically low rates of HE participation and, accordingly, an underskilled local workforce. Cumbria as a county has particularly poor rates of HE participation for male school and college-leavers, and this population is a significant priority in our outreach and recruitment work.

Our assessment, using data from a number of sources, indicates that we continue to fulfil our mission in making Higher Education accessible to learners from a variety of backgrounds. Success rates are similar in many cases for students from the target groups and the whole student population.

Our monitoring so far highlights a solid foundation of widening participation practice across the University of Cumbria with a focus on improving opportunities and results for students from disadvantaged groups.

The University of Cumbria recognises the potential to increase the 'joined' up aspects of student life, supporting the student academically, personally and practically throughout their study within a positive, inclusive university community.

#### Fees we charge

At the University of Cumbria, the maximum fees we charge for UK based students on undergraduate courses are £9250 per year for full time students and £6935 per year for part-time students. Information on the fees payable for other types of courses and for international students can be found on our [student finance pages](#).

#### Financial help available

Bursaries are available on a needs-based assessment. A student is eligible for consideration if they have been assessed by the Student Loans Company as having a household income below £25,000. Because we are not able to fund all eligible students, a points scoring process is used to prioritise the award of bursary support for those from groups identified as experiencing additional barriers to accessing and succeeding in Higher Education. Points are allocated to students from neighbourhoods where relatively few people go to university; those who have been in care; and those with a declared disability. In addition, a defined proportion of bursaries is set aside for mature students.

For full-time students, the Cumbria bursary is £1000 for each year of study. The bursary for part-time students is £500 per annum; to be eligible, part-time students must be studying at least 50% of full-time credit.

#### Information for students

The University is committed to publishing timely, clear and accessible information to existing and prospective students on all aspects of their course and particularly the financial expectations.

There is a particular focus on ensuring that students from the target groups are informed of the financial support that they are entitled to. The University is determined that no student will be deterred from exploring and achieving entry to an appropriate UoC programme because of poor information or poor access to information.

The University takes the following actions in this area:

- The annual tuition fee for each programme is stated in formal offer letters alongside details of the basis of any inflationary increases that may be applied during the programme. The fees are also published on the University's website as soon as they are confirmed.
- Eligibility criteria for the Cumbria Bursary, how to apply and the amount of the bursary are published on the University's website and prominently linked for applicants and current students on the Student Finance page.
- Student Financial Regulations are published each year and students are asked in their offer letter to read these prior to enrolment. These provide details across a range of subjects including how and when the University collects fees and how the University will respond if students are unable to make payments. These Regulations are available on the University's website, enabling prospective students to read these ahead of their application.
- Course webpages provide students with detailed information with respect to fees, additional costs, and the financial support packages we offer.
- The University participates fully in the Unistats official course data scheme.
- Student Money Advisors are trained to provide accurate information, advice and guidance on fees and funding.
- The University works closely with the Students' Union and through its student support and information services to ensure that students have a clear understanding of student finances and the current loan and payment arrangements.

## **What we are aiming to achieve**

- To ensure that we recruit and support students in our target groups:
  - people from Asian, Black, Mixed and other minority ethnic backgrounds
  - people with disabilities
  - people from homes where the income is low
  - people from homes in areas where fewer people generally go to university
  - people who have in the past been cared for by public authorities (for example, those who have been in foster care or children's homes)
- To ensure that students from the target groups are as likely as all other people to come to the University of Cumbria, and as likely to succeed in study and in gaining professional employment when they graduate. We aim to make substantial progress on this during the life of this plan. Where we are not able to do this, we will continue to work on this in the following years.
- To contribute further to the national priorities set by the Office for Students.
- To develop our understanding of Part-time students from the target groups.
- To raise educational attainment by children and young people from the target groups, and especially those from disadvantaged homes, through working collaboratively with schools and colleges, UniConnect and other Higher Education providers in our local areas.
- To continue to develop our portfolio so that we offer a range of course types and entry routes; these include our integrated foundation year degrees, apprenticeships, and new Higher Technical Qualifications.

## **What we are doing to achieve our aims**

We have an annual action plan which sets out the activities we will use to achieve these aims. The action plan is used by tutors, student support staff and senior managers to ensure that we have a clear focus on what will benefit students.

Our work through the action plan is monitored against targets that we have agreed with the Office for Students. These targets are very focused, so that we can be precise in making judgements about whether what we are doing is really working for the students who will benefit most. However, all of our work is designed to apply to all students. We seek to create a study environment where every student has the opportunity to learn and develop, and to realise their full potential. We regularly take steps to evaluate the effectiveness of our actions, and we add or change actions when the evaluation shows that a different approach would work better.

### **How students can get involved**

The Students' Union works with the University to develop the action plan and to ensure that we are making progress through it. We also invite students from the target groups to work with us on specific projects. Learning from the students' experience ensures that we fully understand what students need in order to overcome any barriers or disadvantage, and how we can best meet those needs in the University.

### **Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved**

We have an evaluation toolkit that gives University staff guidance on how to judge the effectiveness of an activity. Our evaluation starts with considering the results our target-group students achieved, compared to those of students who are not in the target group. We then use evaluation tools to understand why our planned activity did or didn't work well for the targeted students. We sometimes use focus groups and surveys to ask students in the target group about their experience, to guide us in designing future activity.

The University of Cumbria works closely with other universities based in North-West England to develop our strengths in evaluation. We share projects and learning through formal meetings, ensuring that we use the most reliable and up to date approaches to evaluation. Increasingly, we will use this network and national organisations to make an external assessment of the effectiveness of what we are doing to reduce disadvantage and promote equality of opportunity within the University of Cumbria.

### **Contact details for further information**

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