

Summary of 2024-25 to 2027-28 access and participation plan

What is an access and participation plan?

An access and participation plan sets out our provisions that will be meaningful and effective in promoting equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups, as determined by the Office for Students. You can see the full access and participation plan for University of Chester at

www1.chester.ac.uk/undergraduate/widening-participation/access-and-participation-plan.

Key points

See page 4 of the full plan

The University of Chester is a broad-based institution of more than 14,000 students, with provision delivered across nine distinctive sites in Chester, Warrington, Shrewsbury, and Birkenhead. Data shows that, compared to their peers at the University of Chester, accessing higher education and outcomes are lower for certain groups of students. These are:

- Relatively low proportions of **male students from the most deprived areas** and an on-course continuation gap between these students and their male peers from the least deprived areas,
- An on-course completion and awarding gap between **students from the most deprived areas** and those from the least deprived areas,
- An on-course continuation, completion and awarding gap between **students who enter our university with non-A Level and vocational qualifications** and all other students,
- An on-course completion and awarding gap between **students who were eligible for free school meals** and all other students,
- An on-course awarding gap between students from **the ethnic minority groups** and the white ethnic group students.

The focus of our access and participation plan is to support schools to raise academic results and provide provision to widen access to higher education. We aim to improve the outcomes for the above student groups by creating a supportive environment and creating high-quality courses that are inclusive, flexible, digitally enhanced and skill based.

Fees we charge

See page 53 of the full plan

At the University of Chester, the maximum fees we charge are:

- £9,250 for full-time students
- £6,935 for part-time students

You can see a full list of fees for courses at the University of Chester at

www1.chester.ac.uk/undergraduate/finance/tuition-fees

Financial help available

See pages 22 to 23 of the full plan

We offer financial support to students who are from specific underrepresented groups. This helps students to access higher education and continue studying until their course is completed. From 2024-25 onwards, the support includes:

- A **travel bursary** to attend our outreach events, open days, applicant days, campus tours and interviews/auditions if you receive free school meals/pupil premium, are Looked after Children/those have been in local authority care or are Estranged, are a Carer, or are in receipt of benefits due to low-income or declared disability.
- An annual **Carer Support bursary** of £1,500 for the duration of the course for undergraduate students if you regularly look after and have responsibility for a sick, elderly, or disabled family member.
- An annual **Care Experienced bursary** of £1,500 cash, £1,000 fee waiver and 50% discounted university owned accommodation fees for undergraduate students if you are care experienced.

- An annual **Estranged** student bursary of £1,500 cash and 50% discounted university owned accommodation fees for undergraduate students if you are estranged.
- An annual **Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman and Boater community** bursary of £1,500 cash for undergraduate students if you are from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman and Boater communities.
- A **Student Support Fund** if you get into financial difficulties during your time at university, with a **digital inclusion element** dedicated to providing those most in need to digital hardware and/or software.

You can find the most up-to-date information on our financial support, including the full eligibility information and criteria for the above, at <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/undergraduate/finance/bursaries>.

Information for students

See page 29 of the full plan

If you are a prospective student, you will receive information on fees and financial support at in-person events, such as outreach events in schools and colleges, our open/applicant days and interviews/auditions, and by email. This information is also provided on UCAS.

Current students receive information about fees and the financial support available through our student portal, internal communications and emails, social media updates and via our University App.

For the most up-to-date information on fees and financial support, see our university website www1.chester.ac.uk/finance.

What we are aiming to achieve

See pages 3 to 5 of the full plan

Our overall aim is to **support all students to have equal opportunities to access, succeed in and progress from higher education**. Where risks to equality of opportunity have been identified, we have set ambitious targets to focus our provision to create a high quality and supportive environment where our students can achieve their full potential. These are:

- **increase our proportion** of male undergraduate students from the most deprived areas to 14% by 2028.
- **eliminate the continuation gaps** by 2030:
 - between males from the most deprived areas and their male peers from the least deprived areas,
 - and between students who enter our university with non-A Level and vocational qualifications and all other students.
- **reduce the completion gaps by 50%** by 2028:
 - between students from the most deprived areas and students from the least deprived areas to 4%,
 - between students who were eligible for free school meals and all other students to 5%,
 - and between students who enter our university with non-A Level and vocational qualifications and all other students to 5%.
- **eliminate the awarding gaps** by 2030:
 - between students from the most deprived areas and students from the least deprived areas,
 - between students who were eligible for free school meals and all other students,
 - between the ethnic minority groups (excluding the white ethnic groups) and the white ethnic groups,
 - and between students who enter our university with non-A Level and vocational qualifications and all other students.

What we are doing to address key risks to equality of opportunity

See pages 5 to 14 of the full plan

We have five intervention strategies with activities to help us achieve our ambitious objectives and targets, and to address the risks to equality of opportunity that certain student groups may be experiencing.

- **Intervention Strategy 1** – aims to extend our **collaborative work in partnership with schools** to raise academic results so more pupils can progress to study for a higher education qualification. This addresses the risk to equality of opportunity where pupils from underrepresented groups may not have **knowledge and skills**, and the **ongoing impact of coronavirus** on academic results.

- **Intervention Strategy 2** – will provide activities for school or college pupils, for example Pathfinder and Taste of University. The activities will provide **information and guidance** on higher education qualifications, improve **knowledge and skills** required to progress to study for a higher education qualification, and break down barriers and **perceptions of higher education**. Activities also focus on providing **flexible modes of learning** and information on our diverse range of provision to give students a **choice in how they learn** (i.e., Degree Apprenticeships).
- **Intervention Strategy 3** – aims to provide students with a **sense of belonging and community and enable connections** through our online mentoring and social capital building activities. We will also **financially support** students to continue and complete their studies. Activities have been designed to address risks to equality of opportunity of **insufficient academic and personal support**, the growing concerns of student’s **mental health** and **cost pressures** students may experience.
- **Intervention Strategy 4** – supports students’ success by **enabling academic skills and providing personalised support**, particularly those who enter with non-A Level and vocational qualifications (for example, our transition/success programme). These students may not experience equality of opportunity in relation to **insufficient academic and personalised support**, and the **ongoing impact of coronavirus** on academic results prior to or during their time at university.
- **Intervention Strategy 5** – aims to **enhance the quality of our provision to deliver high quality, inclusive and skills-based courses**. The IDEAS Model is an inclusive curriculum model and design tool developed by Oxford Brookes University. The intervention strategy aims to address risks to equality of opportunity in relation to **insufficient academic and personalised support**, and the **ongoing impact of coronavirus** on academic results. It will also address any risks to equality of opportunity in relation to **progression from higher education**.

How students can get involved

See pages 26 to 28 of the full plan

We work with the Students’ Union to gather student input into the development of our access and participation plan, including the monitoring of progress towards our objectives, yearly milestones, and the evaluation of impact of our activities. Students are represented on our Student Success Subcommittee which is responsible for overseeing implementation of our plan.

To provide feedback, students can contact their Students’ Union representatives at csu@chester.ac.uk.

To become involved in this work, you can contact our [Access and Participation Managers](#).

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

See pages 28 to 29 of the full plan

Our intervention strategies and activities to improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups are informed by the best available evidence about what works for students. We will collect data and feedback to evaluate on:

- our activity programme design,
- the expected outcomes of the activities within the five interventions strategies outlined above,
- the impact of the activities we are providing to achieve our aims and objectives,
- and the impact on achieving our overall aim of improved access and an inclusive environment.

We will evaluate each activity separately within the intervention strategies to Type 2 standards of evidence. We will use pre and post intervention quantitative and qualitative methods and, where possible, track outcomes of participants against non-participants. Where appropriate, we adjust our activities accordingly to the evaluation results to ensure the best interests of our students.

We will publish evidence from our evaluations on our [website](#), and to external networks and organisations from 2025 onwards.

Contact details for further information

You can contact our Access and Participation Managers at accessparticipation@chester.ac.uk for further information.