

# Solihull College & University Centre

## Summary of 2025-26 to 2028-29 access and participation plan

### What is an access and participation plan?

An access and participation plan sets out 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 Solihull College & University Centre at <https://www.solihull.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/access-participation-plan-2025-26-to-2028-29.pdf>

### Key points

The purpose of this plan is to promote equality of opportunity to all students, regardless of their background, and to highlight the considered actions we aim to take during the plan's duration. These actions should lessen the barriers that under-represented groups may experience in accessing, completing and succeeding in higher education, and progressing onto successful outcomes.

Our data shows that fewer young people who live in areas which traditionally have a lower participation in higher education join Solihull College & University Centre, compared to those who live in areas that have high participation.

Our data also shows that following groups of students are less likely to complete their studies once they have joined us: Students who were entitled to free school meals; students with a diagnosed mental health condition; part time students who live in areas of deprivation; Black and Mixed Ethnicity students, and to a lesser extent Asian students.

After they have finished their course, disabled students are less likely to progress onto such successful outcomes as non-disabled students.

We have been working hard to improve access and outcomes for many under-represented groups and are proud of the progress we have made, but there is still more work to be done.

See pages 2 and 3 of the access and participation plan for more information.

### Fees we charge

The maximum amount of fees we charge are

- £8,763 per year for full time courses
- £4124 per year for part time courses

However, many courses have significantly lower fees. Please see the course information on the college website or see pages 50-51 of the access and participation plan for full details of fees for each type of course.

## Financial help available

We offer a financial support to help eligible students from under-represented backgrounds continue with their course.

- An annual bursary of £1000 for full time and part time first-year students whose household income is less than £30,000 per annum
- A non-means tested welfare payment that can be made to support students over short-term times of hardship

## Information for students

Information on fees is available on our website, as part of the information on each course. See also page 50-51 of the full access and participation plan.

For information on student finance, bursaries and financial support, see the Student Services section of our website, at the college website at <https://www.solihull.ac.uk/about-us/student-services/>.

See page 7-10 of the access and participation plan for more information.

## What we are aiming to achieve

Our overall aim is to create a supportive, inclusive environment where all students, regardless of background, can thrive and succeed in their education. After careful consideration of our data, we have set ourselves the following targets:

- To increase the number of younger students from low-participation neighbourhoods from 21.5% to 23.5% over the lifetime of the plan.
- To reduce the number of students who 'drop-out' of their studies, with a particular focus on the following groups: Part-time students from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, Black and Mixed Ethnicity students, students with a mental health condition, students who were eligible for free school meals.
- To support disabled students to move onto successful outcomes once they finish their course with us.

See pages 3-4 of the access and participation plan for more information.

## What we are doing to address keys risks to equality of opportunity

In order to increase the number of young people from low-participation neighbourhoods studying with us, we plan to approach sixth forms and colleges in these areas, to offer progression agreements for their students, with a minimum guarantee of an interview for the course, if not a guaranteed place (subject to course entry requirements). We will work with Aim Higher West Midlands to increase the outreach work we do with schoolchildren. We will pilot a student ambassador scheme, where our university students from widening participation backgrounds work with similar school and/or college students, to become role models, raising aspirations about the possibilities and opportunities higher education can bring.

To reduce the number of students who do not complete their studies with us, we will offer a financial bursary to those who are eligible and ensure more visibility of the bursary scheme. We will provide a full-time academic skills support tutor who can provide students with drop-in support and promote the support that can be provided. In line with government policy and timelines, we will reconsider our delivery modes to widen the flexibility of our offering, to include modular delivery. We will put further funds into providing mental health support that is more accessible (e.g. 24/7) than the current mental health support available. We will work to promote a sense of belonging and create an inclusive curriculum.

Full details of the various strategies are laid out across pages 4-20 of the access and participation plan.

## **How students can get involved**

Student consultation was crucial to the development of our access and participation plan. We also encourage students to join the evaluation meetings where we monitor our progress towards the targets and aims in the plan. See page 6 of the access and participation plan for more information.

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

We will use data and feedback to allow us to evaluate that the steps we are taking are having the desired outcomes. Each intervention has its own evaluation strategy outlined in the plan - see pages 6-21 of the access and participation plan for more information.

Evaluation will take place primarily through the group that monitors the progress towards the plan, although specific projects may also take place and be presented at these meetings for consideration. Three times a year a Higher Education Strategy meeting takes place, and progress towards targets and evaluation of activities is reported to the senior leadership who chair this meeting. We will also publish a summary in the annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report, that is found on the college website.

## **Contact details for further information**

Please contact Claudine Barnes for more information:

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