

University of Reading: Summary of 2020-21 to 2024-25 Access and Participation Plan

What is an Access and Participation Plan?

Access and participation plans (APP) set out how higher education providers will improve equality of opportunity. This supports underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education. You can see the full access and participation plan for the University of Reading [on our website](#).

See pages 1 to 2
of the full plan

Context

The focus of our access and participation plan is on improving access and outcomes for specific groups of students. Our data shows that:

- Our current student population disproportionately represents more advantaged parts of society.
- Students are less likely to complete their studies if they come from a disadvantaged background or from some underrepresented groups.
- The proportion of students getting a 'good' degree (ie a first or 2:1) is lower for some ethnicities and for those from more deprived backgrounds.

Our track record for retaining students once enrolled is high overall and our students' employability is a strong area for us. However, we still have further to go.

Fees we charge

At the University of Reading, the maximum fees charged are £9,250 for full-time students, with part-time students pro-rated. You can see a [full list of fees](#) for courses at the University of Reading.

Financial help available

See pages 20-21
of the full plan

We offer [financial support](#) to students from underrepresented groups. This helps students access higher education and continue studying until their course is completed. We will deploy an estimated total of £3 million in financial support. The support includes:

- The Reading Bursary Scheme is an annual bursary of £1,100 for the duration of the course if the student's household income is below £27,000.
- Work and Study Placement Bursaries covers expenses such as travel, accommodation and/or childcare for students from households with annual incomes of less than £45k
- Any student in financial hardship may apply to the University Student Support Fund.
- We provide diagnostic tests for students from households with annual incomes of less than £27k who have been recommended by the Disability Advisory Service
- The Care Experienced or Estranged Bursary is an annual bursary of up to £1000.
- Despite not paying the full tuition fee, students on a year abroad or a year-long placement will continue to receive the full amount of any bursary that they are otherwise eligible for.

We also provide our students with financial education and training in order to support them to be more financially prepared to come to University, in areas such as budgeting and debt management.

Information for students

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the full plan

- The University of Reading provides appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance to prospective applicants, prospective students, teachers and parents on fees, loans, fee waivers, financial support, and pre-entry bursaries, via our website, prospectus and mailing lists, etc.

- We hold a clear online hub of information for students called [Essentials](#) which hosts all relevant information
- Our [Student App](#), brings together current information and helps students stay organised, informed and connected
- We build professional relationships with teachers to ensure they can provide local students with relevant information.
- Our [Access and Participation Plan](#) is published in an accessible form on the University's website.

What we are aiming to achieve

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We want all students who choose The University of Reading to experience an inclusive and supportive environment in which they can develop personally, academically and professionally and have the best possible chance to achieve their potential.

Based on assessment of our performance, we have identified the following areas of focus:

1. Reach more disadvantaged people through programmes of activity that support a successful application to University of Reading courses.
2. Further reduce perceived and real barriers to entry to University of Reading for applicants from a disadvantaged background.
3. Achieve a student population that is more representative of society.
4. To work with schools, and other local and national organisations, and individual students to raise attainment at key points from Key Stage 3 – Key Stage 5.
5. Ensure that under-represented students who begin their studies at University of Reading remain on course and complete their studies.
6. Close the unexplained degree awarding gaps that correlate with ethnicity, disability, disadvantaged backgrounds.
7. Seek to develop more diverse pathways into and through higher education through expansion of flexible Level 4 and 5 courses and degree apprenticeships.

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What we are doing to achieve our aims

See pages 14-26 of the full plan

To achieve our aims, we will take an institution-wide approach: these issues need to be understood and owned across the institution including professional services and academic colleagues at all levels of the University.

Access

1. We will further invest in and deliver highly targeted long-term activity with Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 students, teachers and potential applicants locally and nationally to support attainment, awareness of Higher Education options, entry pathways, and finance.
2. We will continue to review, invest in and expand our Reading Scholars (year 12) and Reading Young Scholars (year 10) programmes, with emphasis on developing our existing attainment-raising provision within the year 10 offering to include intensive tutoring in years 9 and 11 and visit support for off-site events.
3. We will redevelop our early career teacher work (with emphasis on raising attainment in the classroom), to focus on teachers at all levels, including middle and senior leaders.
4. We will create a staff role with a remit that includes enabling our PhD (and other) students to provide academic tutoring to local school pupils in order to raise attainment.
5. We have adopted a contextual offer-making approach. Applicants who meet the criteria (for example disability or disadvantaged background) will receive an offer that is 2 grades lower than the standard offer, and we also offer 1:1 support for applicants in target schools and colleges.
6. We will develop new apprenticeship provision aimed at 18 year olds/college leavers. We will work with FE providers to identify whether we can provide education to fill local skills needs.

Transition

7. Explicit activities have been developed for underrepresented students in consultation and led by students during Welcome week and throughout the Autumn term.
8. We will continue to offer a wide range of both academic and personal support offerings, such as our academic tutors and student welfare team, STaR mentoring scheme, pre-arrival course StudySmart and the opportunity for disabled students to arrive at campus a few days early.

On course support and attainment

9. In consultation with students, we will establish and embed inclusive ways of learning, our Curriculum Framework and Portfolio Review focus on inclusivity and awarding gaps.
10. Schools will be asked to explicitly consider awarding gaps in their planning, to ensure these stay an institutional priority. Schools will be able to consult with our paid Student Inclusion Reps.
11. The University is joining the University Mental Health Charter Programme, to aid us in identifying areas where we can support mental health even more.
12. We offer financial support and training, including bursaries and hardship funding for eligible students, and we will continue to review these offerings to ensure they meet needs.
13. We will continue to work with our Digital Technology Services department to find ways to use technology to support the engagement and attainment of our learners.

Progression into graduate careers

14. We will continue to trial and evolve our tailored employability strategies and approaches to student development, which have already yielded a strong employability track record.

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How students can get involved

Reading University Students' Union (RUSU) has been involved in the creation of all our Access Agreements since 2012/3, both the RUSU Diversity and Education Officers were full members of the writing group who authored this 2020/21 APP. The committee overseeing this area of work and other related governing boards also have RUSU representatives on them.

We view students as partners and develop approaches and interventions with them. We use student groups such as our paid Student Panel to feed into decision making at all levels on a broad range of subjects. The new Inclusion Consultant scheme enables students to contribute directly to issues relating to inclusion. For our pre-entry access work, our students are involved as role models and deliverers of sessions in order to share their experiences, and also provide input to the design and content of some of our intensive programmes such as the Scholars programme.

Evaluation: how we will measure what we have achieved

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Our programmes of activity are developed from the best available research and evidence about what works for different students in university access, participation and success. We will collect data and feedback to evaluate the design and activities of our programmes, including the short-term and long-term impacts of our flagship initiative: Reading Scholar. We will also assess the impact of our activities that aim to promote student aspirations and attainments at school and university, and their successes after graduation.

The Access and Participation Plan committee oversees the delivery and progress of these programmes to ensure our yearly targets are met against our Plan. We regularly monitor the impact on our target student groups to ensure that our programmes are working. If needed, we will adjust these programmes or create new initiatives to ensure that we best support our students in a timely manner. We aim to publish evidence from our evaluations on our website by January 2024.

You can contact a.henderson@reading.ac.uk for further information.

University of Reading, July 2022