

Summary of 2025-26 to 2028-29 Access and Participation Plan

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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. You can see the full Access and Participation Plan for University Centre St Helens at:

<https://www.sthelens.ac.uk/about-us/policies-and-statements/>

Key points

Providing quality education since 1896, St Helens College is one of the largest further and higher education providers in the Northwest. We support students of all ages, studying at all levels, and provide courses and training to around 5,000 students, across four campuses within two local authority boroughs. This includes 400 HE students as part of our University Centre St Helens (UCSH).

Within the Access and Participation Plan, UCSH sets out how we will support underrepresented groups to apply for and enrol on our courses, to flourish and succeed on their chosen course, and to progress successfully from Higher Education into industry or further study.

Using the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register provided by the Office for Students, as well as our own internal student data, we have identified that access and outcomes are lower for some groups of students than their peers. From this starting point we have identified four key objectives that we would like to achieve, in order to address these key risks to equality of opportunity. These are laid out in detail within the plan, and summarised within this document.

More detailed information can be found within the full Access and Participation Plan

Fees we charge

Fees vary between courses, but we currently charge the following maximum fees:

Full-time undergraduate students: £8750.

Part-time undergraduate students: £5450

Part-time postgraduate students: £4125.

Financial help available

We offer financial support via the following methods:

- A Study Enhancement Gift for all full-time Foundation degree, Bachelor's degree and HND students, in the first year of a two or three year course. This is provided in the form of subject specific equipment and resources up to the value of £400. Where some courses require higher specification technology (such as some Creative Arts courses), students pay a higher tuition fee and receive equipment up to the value of £1500. Where technical equipment is less relevant, alternatives such as extra qualifications or course related trips have been funded through this enhancement gift.

- The Student Opportunity Fund provides discretionary financial assistance to all full and part-time higher education students to help them access and remain in education, with two awards available:
 - 1) Standard Awards (SA) - provided to students to help meet general living costs e.g. rent, mortgage, food etc. These are also referred to as 'Hardship awards'
 - 2) Non-Standard Awards (NSA) - discretionary awards that may be provided to students who fall into the APP target groups. These can help cover course-related costs linked to access, progression or achievement.

(See pages 26-27 of the Access and Participation Plan for more information)

Information for students

Prospective students can find information on fees and financial support on our website, as well as via UCAS, during college open events, interviews and careers events.

Current level 3 and Access to HE students at St Helens College receive information through their tutors and Personal Development Coaches, through the HE lecturers in talks and workshops, and also via the careers and finance teams in Student Services

Information on fees and financial support for current UCSH students, can be found on the college intranet, from the HE Student Liaison Officer and the Student Finance Officer.

For the most up to date information, please visit the college website at www.sthelens.ac.uk

(See page 30 of the Access and Participation Plan for more information)

What we are aiming to achieve

Our plan includes four objectives designed to address and tackle our four key risks to equality of opportunity. By addressing these risks, we aim to reduce the gaps for underrepresented student groups in St Helens. Based on our assessment, we have identified the following objectives:

- **Objective 1:** UCSH will increase the number of part-time students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) continuing in their studies to 78% by 2029.
- **Objective 2:** UCSH will increase the proportion of full-time students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) completing their higher education studies to 75% by 2029.
- **Objective 3:** UCSH will increase the proportion of students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) attaining a 2:1 or above to 75% by 2029.
- **Objective 4:** UCSH will increase the proportion of full-time students eligible for free school meals progressing into graduate employment or further study to 57% by 2029.

(See pages 6 to 7 of the Access and Participation Plan for more information)

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

To address our key risks, four intervention strategies have been devised. Each includes activities designed to support students who may be at risk at different stages of their academic journey. Our strategies are:

- **Objective 1 Actions:** Review financial, personal and academic support available, and the ease of accessing this support. Provide new resource development, formalising tutorial hours for HE students, enhancing HE specific inductions and increasing early academic support to help bridge the gap between level 3 and entry into level 4, and support those returning to education.
- **Object 2 Actions:** Enhance the HE student experience to increase completion rates of IMD quintile 1 students through further utilisation of study spaces, investment, review of the

existing curriculum and provide further academic and personal support through tailored sessions and drop-in events.

- **Objective 3 Actions:** Increase the proportion of students from IMD quintile 1 through incorporation of attainment raising sessions into the Academic Skills programme, hosting level 3 progression sessions, developing HE aspiration sessions and resources, revalidation of current provision to include assessment revisions and introducing a staff/student research project fund.
- **Objective 4 Actions:** Increase the proportion of full-time students eligible for free school meals progressing into graduate employment by hosting HE careers events and employability sessions and developing HE career resources. The guest speaker calendar will be formalised, post-graduate study sessions will be introduced with additional resources and HE progression events will take place with our validating partners.

(See pages 8-24 of the Access and Participation Plan for more information)

How students can get involved

- Student consultation took place at two stages before submission of the plan. Discussions and activities related to Office for Students' expectations for plans, data analysis, risks to equality of opportunity and potential intervention strategies.
- Once strategies had been drafted, the same group were asked to provide their thoughts and suggestions for changes or additions to the activities.
- Students will continue to be engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of the plan through membership of the governance structure.

(See pages 28-29 of the Access and Participation Plan for more information)

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

The College is committed to evaluating the activity set out in the Access and Participation Plan as well as evaluating the individual intervention strategies.

- The evaluation section of each intervention strategy sets out the activities and publication plans (see pages 8-24).
- The overall plan and impact on performance data will continue to be evaluated annually.
- Reports against stated targets will be produced, feeding into annual reporting to the Governing Board's Curriculum and Quality Committee as well as being made available on the College Access and Participation webpage, which will be ready in Spring 2025.
- Continual monitoring of student groups identified through exploration of data will take place annually.

(See page 29 of the Access and Participation Plan for more information)

Contact details for further information

For further information about the APP please contact us via our University Centre St Helens email address ucsh@sthelens.ac.uk