

## West Suffolk College

### 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.



You can see our full access and participation plan for the West Suffolk College at [Access and Participation | USWSC - University Studies at West Suffolk College](#)

#### Key points

The focus of our access and participation plan is on improving outcomes for specific groups of students. Data shows that, compared to their peers at West Suffolk College, outcomes are lower for certain groups of students.

Students less likely to complete their studies:

- Students with a disability – including physical, mental health difficulty and learning difficulty
- Male students from low-income backgrounds with mental health difficulties
- Students from low-income backgrounds with mental health difficulties
- Ethnic minority students from low-income backgrounds

Students less likely to progress to highly skilled employment or further study:

- Students with a learning disability
- Students suffering from a mental health disability

See our aims and objectives on page 14-15 of the full plan

#### Fees we charge

At West Suffolk College, the maximum fees charged for first degree are:

- £8500 for full-time students
- £4250 for part-time students

At West Suffolk College, the maximum fees charged for HNC/HND are:

- £6360 for full-time students
- £4240 for part-time students



You can see a full list of fees for courses at West Suffolk College at [www.universitystudies.wsc.ac.uk](http://www.universitystudies.wsc.ac.uk)

#### Financial help available

We offer financial support to students from underrepresented groups. This helps students access higher education and continue studying until their course is completed.

The support includes:

- WSC Bursary: An annual bursary of up to £600 for the duration of the course if the student's household income is below £25,000 and the

- A Specific Learning Difficulty Diagnostic Assessment Bursary: To pay for the cost of a SpLD assessment, allowing eligible students to have a formal diagnosis of their learning difficulty, which can be used to develop an individual learning plan and/or support an application for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).  
Eligibility criteria includes:
  - Positive indicator of SpLD using WSC screening tool
  - Enrolled WSC HE student, with a minimum of one full semester left on their course
- Student Hardship Fund: A means tested; one off payment available to students experiencing financial disadvantage.

## Information for students

- **Prospective students** receive information on fees and financial support at in-person events such as our open days, on our website and by e-mail communications.
- **Current students** receive information about fees and the financial support available to them via our physical and virtual student hub, via personal academic and pastoral support tutors and via the student newsletter.



You can see details of the financial support available at Policies | USWSC - University Studies at West Suffolk College

See page 30 of the full plan

## What we are aiming to achieve

Our overall aim is to support students to access higher education. We want to ensure equality of opportunity and an approach to teaching, learning, supporting, and developing our students that leaves no one behind.

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

### Support attainment at schools and colleges, and access to higher education, through a programme of activity and bespoke interventions during 2022-2025:

- To close the gap in participation in higher education for students from under-represented groups, with a specific target for care leavers.
- To broaden opportunities for students from low participation neighbourhoods to engage in higher education
- To increase the proportion of students from low-income backgrounds, particularly white males, mature students, students with learning and mental health difficulties to engage in higher education
- **Care experienced students** – by 2024-25, we will increase the number of students with experience of the care system accessing higher education by 2.45%

**Diversifying our provision** – We seek to diversify our provision to extend vocational education to include higher technical qualifications and undertake pilot projects to inform the future development of foundation and bridging programmes to support access to higher education.

### Students with disabilities:

- By 2024-25 we will improve the continuation rate of students with disabilities 11%

### Male Students:

- By 2024-25 we will improve the continuation rate of mature male students from low-income backgrounds with mental health difficulties by 14%
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### Students from low-participation neighbourhoods:

- By 2024-25 we will improve the continuation rate of students from low-participation neighbourhoods with mental health difficulties by 8%

### Ethnic Minority Students:

- By 2024-25 we will improve the continuation rate of students from ethnic minorities by 7%

### Disabled Students:

- By 2024-25 we will improve the continuation rate of students with learning disabilities progressing to post graduate study or graduate employment by 11%
- By 2024-25 we will increase the number of students with mental health disabilities progressing to post graduate study or graduate employment by 10%

See page 14-15 of the full plan

## What we are doing to achieve our aims

We have identified the following programmes of activity to support achievement of our aims and targets:

1. Co-ordinate our **programme of work with schools and colleges** to include adult returners and students studying English and as a second language – to support students from underrepresented groups to attain good grades and navigate progression opportunities through an understanding of pathways of study within higher education
2. To develop and continually **review the curriculum offer** which is designed to provide flexible approaches to learning and enable greater access to Higher Education
3. Development of our Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy to support transition to higher education from technical and vocational courses at level 3, embedding academic skills, assessment literacy and time management within programmes of study
4. Enhance **support for study** through the continued development of our student support framework to include academic skills development through pre-sessional and early on-session assessment, access to a robust programme of wider academic support for students with mental health and specific learning needs, monitored by the Student Review Panel
5. Offer **financial support**, including hardship funding for eligible students alongside pastoral support for managing time, money, and debt
6. Embed employability skills and personal development into the curriculum and extra-curricular student support framework to further develop **careers guidance** to support students to apply and prepare for selection processes

See pages 18-24 of the full plan

## How students can get involved

We worked with students to gather student input into the design of our access and participation plan. Students are represented on our Access and Participation Plan Evaluation Group through the Student Governor. The Evaluation Group is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the

plan. Student Representatives inform the plan through the Student Council and via thematic focus groups as part of the student voice strategy.

To provide feedback, students can contact their Student Representative or the Student Governor. To become involved in this work, students have an open invitation to attend the Student Council but can also contact the Head of Student Success.

Details can be found on the Student Hub and within the Student Handbook.

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

Our programme of activity is informed by the data we collect and feedback to evaluate:

- Our overarching plan
- The impact of the interventions we have put in place to achieve our aims
- The six programmes of activity outlined above
- The impact of achieving our overall aim of improved access, progression, and success

The Access and Participation Evaluation Group will monitor and report on these processes to the Quality Assurance Board. The Board will oversee the implementation of the actions to ensure ongoing progress against milestones in our access and participation plan. We will monitor impact on our target groups, to ensure we are addressing our aims. Where appropriate we will adjust our interventions in the best interests of our students.

We will publish evidence from our evaluations on our website by January 2024.

See pages 26-29 of the full plan

### **Contact for further information**



You can contact Elspeth Lees at [Elspeth.lees@wsc.ac.uk](mailto:Elspeth.lees@wsc.ac.uk) for further information.