

Arden University

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

What is an Access and Participation plan?

Access and Participation Plans detail what interventions a university will take to ensure that learners from underrepresented groups have an equal opportunity to be successful in terms of gaining access to, succeed in and progress from higher education.

You can see the full access and participation plan for Arden University [here](#).

Key points - for full details see pages 1 to 11.

Arden University's mission is to be digital first, to remove barriers to education and to deliver on the ambitions of its students. Arden typically recruits students from non-traditional higher education backgrounds who are likely to be:

- Mature (over the age of 21)
- Reside within travelling distance of their campus in London, Birmingham, Manchester or Leeds
- Living in neighbourhoods with low progression rates of residents progressing into higher education (known as Low Progression Neighbourhoods)
- From Black, Asian and other diverse ethnic backgrounds
- From areas of high social deprivation (we used the national index of Multiple Deprivation, which measures relative deprivation for small local areas, to identify this)

In our Access and Participation Plan, we detail how we will:

- Expand the community engagement programme and work with schools, colleges and community groups to support progression into higher education from underrepresented groups.
- Increase our academic skills support for learners who speak English as an additional language in order to provide an equal opportunity to achieve a good degree classification outcome for these learners.
- Develop a range of academic skills learning materials that are tailored to the curriculum content of each degree programme and are freely available online in order to make academic skills development more accessible to learners regardless of their ethnic background or gender.
- Develop a range of activities that promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to ensure equality of opportunity for learners from different ethnic groups, care experienced learners and those with a reported disability.
- Provide a consistent point of contact for learners with a care experienced background throughout their learner journey from application to graduation and progression into employment or further study.
- Support learners with the Cost of Living pressures including access to free of charge reading materials and key texts, financial and digital accessibility support including a laptop loan scheme.
- Improve the rate of progression into full employment or further study for learners from different ethnic backgrounds, those with a disability and those who are care experienced through the creation of a career mentoring scheme.

Fees we charge - for full details see page 50.

At Arden University, the maximum fees charged are:

- £9,275 for full-time students
- £6,955 for part time students

Financial help available - for full details see pages 30 - 34.

We offer a range of financial support packages which learners can access subject to meeting the eligibility criteria. These include:

Travel Bursary. In response to the cost-of-living crisis faced by learners, we will provide additional support in the form of a Commuter Travel Bursary. The bursary is aimed at learners who need financial support for travel costs to attend university lectures in person.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)200. We acknowledge that students who may be managing a long-term health condition or have disclosed a disability may also face difficulties in relation to their financial stability and we are committed to further reducing barriers for our learners. This fund offsets the mandatory contribution for IT equipment requested by DSA when awarded and therefore enabling learners to access their IT equipment at no extra cost.

Digital Fund. We understand that many of our learners, having returned to study after a significant gap, may not have the IT equipment and access necessary to support their learning. The Digital Fund looks to offset the cost of a laptop and broadband and therefore enabling students to fully engage with their studies by removing the financial burden of purchasing this equipment.

Laptop loan Scheme. Initially piloted in the Leeds and Tower Hill campuses; the laptop loan scheme was introduced in 2024/25 to all UK campuses in recognition of the financial hardship that may be experienced by learners. The laptop loan scheme enables learners to borrow a laptop for up to 2 weeks for educational purposes for remote and on campus use. The laptops can be issued to learners at any time during their studies and is particularly aimed at learners waiting for financial support from the University to purchase a laptop or due to damage or breakdown of their own laptop.

Financial Support Bursary. In response to the cost-of-living crisis faced by students, we will continue to provide additional support in the form of financial assistance via the Financial Support Bursary. This financial award is aimed at students who can demonstrate that they are experiencing financial hardship which is creating a barrier to them engaging with their education. This financial support fund routinely covers costs around rent, food, travel and utility bills to reduce financial stressors which we know to be a huge barrier for learners.

Milestones / Emergency Fund. This fund is designed primarily to support students who require financial assistance during the milestones period of their course. The milestone period is defined as the first two weeks of an Arden University learner's academic course and includes a series of mandatory components which must be completed in order to be registered as a learner. Unlike most students attending more traditional universities, learners at Arden University will not have access to their maintenance loan until they have passed this milestone stage, and this can therefore leave students struggling financially. This fund aims to support travel/and or food purchases so that students can remain engaged.

Graduation Fund. In response to the cost-of-living crisis faced by students, we will continue to provide additional support in the form of a Graduation Fund via the Hardship Fund. This bursary is aimed at students who need financial support to enable them to celebrate their graduation, which is held in London, and covers support towards travel costs, gown hire and photo packages.

Information for students – for full details see page 30.

We publish our Access and Participation Plan on our website which also includes detailed information on programme fees and the maximum year on year increase we may make to these fees. Applicants and current learners can also find information on the range of financial support packages available as well as the eligibility criteria.

What we are aiming to achieve - for full details see pages 11-12

The purpose of our Access and Participation Plan is to achieve equality of opportunity by working towards meeting the following targets by 2029:

Access Targets

- To increase the percentage of full time learners from a non White ethnic background progressing onto undergraduate programmes to 65%.

Success Targets

- To improve overall full time completion rates to 80%.
- To improve overall part time completion rates to 45%.
- To improve overall full time continuation rates to 85%.
- To improve part time continuation rates to 62%.
- To improve overall fulltime attainment to 65%.
- To improve overall part time attainment to 66%.

Progression Targets

- To improve full time progression rates to 65%

What we are doing to address key risks to equality of opportunity- for full details see pages 13-26

We have identified a number of projects that will support the achievement of the plan's targets and help support our students:

- Creation of a Community Outreach network to help strengthen our links with schools, colleges and community groups to help support learners from non-traditional higher education backgrounds achieve good grades and progress into university.
- The expansion of the Fundamentals of Academic English Language project for learners whose English is a second language. The project will support students with the challenges of studying in English, improve their confidence in tackling module assignments and help with the improvement of the students' grades.
- Ensuring that 100% of all key, essential and wider reading lists are accessible online and free of charge for students.
- The creation of online academic skills learning materials that are relevant to each curriculum area and level of study and can be used both within the classroom as part of a planned session and available online for students to access externally.
- The appointment of a Care Experienced Wellbeing Advisor who will act as a single point of contact for learners with a care experienced background throughout their journey with us.
- The recruitment of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) interns from the student population to help shape our EDI policies and procedures.
- The creation of a series of short, accessible online videos that cater for the needs of students seeking disability, mental health and welfare support.
- The creation of a mentoring network consisting of current students, former students and professionals from industry that will support learners from different ethnic backgrounds, those with a disability or care experienced to improve their career confidence, develop career plans and progress into professional employment or further study.

How students can get involved- for full details see page 29

As part of the development of the Access and Participation Plan, a series of workshops were held with student representatives through the Student Association. The workshops focused on specific equality of opportunity risks identified within the Access and Participation Plan and students were invited to put forward their views on how the risks impacted on them. The panel consisted of a range of students from both full and part time programmes and from different ethnic backgrounds as well as those with, and without, disabilities. We will continue to work with the Student Association throughout the lifetime of this plan to evaluate the impact of each of the projects and to identify new projects to meet the changing needs of our students.

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved -for full details see page 29.

We will formally monitor the performance of the Access and Participation Plan through our committee structure. In order to gain an in depth understanding of the impact each of the projects are having on addressing the identified areas of risk, as well as identifying areas for further improvement, we will also work closely with the Student Association, the Student Inclusion panel and beneficiaries of each of the projects to gather both quantitative and qualitative feedback alongside performance against the targets identified in the Plan. We will also adopt the Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI) framework to provide a structured approach for assessing the effectiveness of programs aimed at widening participation and enhancing student success.

Contact details for further information.

Please contact Tim Robson, Director of Quality, Access and Participation, at trobson@arden.ac.uk for more information.