

# Aston University: 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 universities and colleges will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education. You can see Aston University's full access and participation plan [here](#).

## Key points

Aston University exists to serve three groups: our students, businesses, and our region and wider society. We aim to support people to enter Aston University so that they can become employable graduates who will, in turn, support Birmingham, the West Midlands and the wider society to thrive. Aston University is one of the most diverse universities in the UK, with over 80% of our new undergraduate students coming from ethnic minority backgrounds in 2020-21. Data shows that, compared to their peers at Aston University, outcomes are lower for certain groups of students ([see pages 2-9 of the full plan](#)). The focus of our access and participation plan is to improve outcomes for these groups of students.

We are working to ensure more students the groups below **access** Aston University:

- Students from 'POLAR 4 Quintile 1' areas (students living in neighbourhoods where few young people go to university)
- Mature students (students over the age of 21)
- Disabled students
- Care leavers (students who have been in care)

We are working to ensure more students from the groups below **succeed** at Aston University:

- Students from the most deprived areas of the country (using the 'Index of Multiple Deprivation')
- Black and Asian students
- Mature students

We are working to ensure more students from the groups below **progress** into good careers:

- Black and Asian students
- Students from 'POLAR 4 Quintile 1' areas

## Information for students on the fees we charge

The maximum fees charged at Aston University are £9,250 for full-time students and £6,935 for part-time students. Information on fees and financial support is available on our [website](#) and is also provided in the communications incoming students receive before they join Aston University. Students regularly receive reminders of financial support available.

## Financial help available

We offer a range of [scholarships](#) as set out in the table below [and on page 14 of the full plan](#).

Aston Achievement Scholarship (grades BBB+ for students with a household income of £42,875 and below)	£500 for year 1 or foundation year
Aston Aspiration Scholarship (for students with a household income of £42,875 and below)	£500 for year 2

Aston Mature Adult Learners Scholarship (for those aged 21 or over at their first year of study)	£500 for each year of study (excluding placement year)
Aston Support Scholarship (for care leavers, children from a military family or refugees).	£1,250 for each year of study
Placement year scholarship (for students with a household income of £42,875 and below, for unpaid or overseas placements)	£1,250 for placement year
Aston Extra (for students with a household income of £42,875 and below)	£50 for each year of study (excluding placement year)
New: <a href="#">Ernest Edwards Scholarship</a> (for students who are seeking refuge in the UK)	Full tuition-fee waiver and support for accommodation and living costs up to £25,000
New: Alumni Undergraduate Scholarships.	£1,500 in the first, second and final year with an additional £500 in the first year, totalling £5,000.

## What we are aiming to achieve

The focus of our access and participation plan is to improve outcomes for groups of students where the data tells us outcomes are currently lower than they could be. To help us to keep on track, we have agreed targets with the Office for Students, the university regulator, which are [detailed in the table on page 11 of the full plan](#).

We are working to ensure more students from the groups below **access** Aston University:

- Students from 'POLAR 4 Quintile 1' areas. *Target: Increase by 2% each year until 2023, then by 1% until 2025.*
- Mature students. *Target: Increase the number of mature students at Aston University by 0.64% per year (equivalent to 20 additional students per year) until 2025.*
- Disabled students. *Target: increase by 2% each year until 2023, then by 1% until 2025.*
- Care leavers. *Target: increase by five care leavers per year until 2025.*

We are working to ensure more students from the groups below **succeed** at Aston University:

- Students from the most deprived areas of the country. *Target: reduce the attainment gap between the most and least deprived students by 1% each year until 2025.*
- Black and Asian students. *Target: reduce the attainment gap between ethnic minority and White students by 1% each year until 2025.*

We are working to ensure more students from the groups below **progress** into graduate-level jobs or further study after they leave Aston University:

- Students from 'POLAR 4 Quintile 1' areas. *Target: improve Q1 student progression by 1% each year until 2025.*
- Black and Asian students. *Target: increase ethnic minority students progressing to further education or graduate level employment by 3% by 2025.*

## What we are doing to achieve our aims

To support students to **access** Aston University we are:

- Delivering a wide-ranging programme of work (including, for example, our 'Aspire to Aston' programme) to raise the attainment and aspirations of young people across a broad age range – from primary school to school and college-leavers.

- Expanding the attainment raising work we do with schools, for example through the ‘Villa Vision’ project with the Aston Villa Foundation, which is providing free eye care to primary school children in Birmingham and exploring the link between better vision and school achievement.
- Investing in scholarships to support access, as highlighted above.
- Expanding the breadth of degree apprenticeships we offer and supporting different pathways into university through being a partner in the [Greater Birmingham and Solihull Institute of Technology](#).

To support students to **succeed** at Aston University we are:

- Running peer mentoring and peer assisted learning schemes (this means trained students supporting other students) and providing students with extra support for the transition to university, maths and academic writing.
- Using ‘learner analytics’ (this is a way of using data, such as on students’ attendance at seminars, to help us identify if students are disengaged and potentially in need of support).

To support students to **progress** from Aston University we are:

- Supporting more students to take work placements during their degrees, as evidence shows students who take placements have better degree and employment outcomes.
- Matching students with professional mentors, and matching graduates with paid project work opportunities within Aston University, through a new Graduate Projects Office.

See pages 13-17 [here](#) and the ‘variation’ section of our full plan for more information.

### How students can get involved

We worked with the Aston University Students’ Union to create our plan and variation. Students are represented on our ‘widening participation forum’, responsible for sharing good practice, and our ‘senior strategy group’, responsible for overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the plan. There are also opportunities for students to become involved in delivering the plan, for example by becoming a [student ambassador](#), [mentor](#), or [peer-assisted-learning leader](#).

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

- We use a ‘**theory of change**’ model which means we design our interventions around the outcomes we are hoping to achieve and can readily assess whether these outcomes have been achieved.
- In many cases, **published research**, for example into the effect of placement years and mentoring, informs the measures that we use.
- We are using more **objective and comparable measures of success**, so we can better compare the effectiveness of our different activities.
- We use the Higher Education Access Tracker tool to **keep track of the higher education destinations of students we have worked with**.
- We are part of a project with Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) which is testing the **causal link** between our different outreach activities and subsequent participation in higher education.

See pages 12, 18 [here](#) and the ‘variation’ section of our full plan for more information.

### Contact details for further information

You can contact Professor Kathy Daniels for further information at [k.daniels1@aston.ac.uk](mailto:k.daniels1@aston.ac.uk).