



Higher Education

Access and Participation Statement

2022/23

UKPRN: 10001476

1. Introduction

United Colleges Group (UCG) recognise that some groups of people are less likely to achieve the qualifications needed to study in higher education (HE); these gaps in achievement are apparent from a young age; there is also inequality between groups once they get into HE; and some people are more likely to do well than others, even when their prior academic performance is the same.

Broadly speaking, UCG consider underrepresented groups to include:

- Students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income or low socioeconomic status
- Some black, Asian and minority ethnic students
- Mature students (entering HE at 19+)
- Disabled students
- Care leavers
- Carers
- People estranged from their families
- People from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Refugees
- Children from military families
- Students with English as a second or other language
- LGBTQ+ students
- Students who identify as female

As evidenced by the UCG HE Strategy 2022-25 (in which Access and Participation is a key strategic theme) UCG share the Office for Students' (OfS) ambition that future generations should have equal opportunities to access and succeed in HE, and to achieve successful and rewarding careers.

The publication, annual update, and re-publication of an Access and Participation Statement is a requirement of the OfS Regulatory Framework (Condition A2), in place to support this ambition. This applies to Approved (fee cap) providers charging fees up to the basic amount

(£6,000 for providers without a TEF award) – a threshold which none of UCG’s qualifying courses exceed.

The Access and Participation Statement sets out UCG’s commitment to supporting access and participation in HE by students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups. The Access and Participation Statement is informed by UCG’s circumstances and the characteristics and needs of our students, setting out plans and achievements in this area.

The Access and Participation Statement will be reviewed annually in consultation and collaboration with students through student, management and governing bodies.

2. Context

UCG currently enrol 250+ HE students per year, across 4 campuses onto 12 courses from STEM subjects (Science, Construction, Engineering, and Computing) to Business, Sport, Music, and Professional Qualifications.

Predominantly Pearson HNC/Ds, these span a range of awarding bodies, including an FdSc in Computing (Software Engineering) validated by Middlesex University.

In addition to this, we hold partnerships with University of Westminster for their delivery of degree apprenticeships in the construction and healthcare industries; and with Islington Music Workshop for their HNC/D in Music.

UCG’s HE offer attracts students from across London and beyond. Our students come from a wide range of backgrounds, with many from typically low HE participation groups, such as mature students (19+); students from lower socioeconomic groups; students who are the first in their family to study HE; and students with English as a second or other language. Typically, students choose to study HE at UCG for one or more of the following reasons:

- Already in professional employment and seeking promotion
- Returning to education
- Uncertain about committing to a full 3-year degree
- Employment/financial/family/care ties to the local area
- Prefer smaller group sizes with closer support from tutors
- Seeking a cheaper alternative to traditional HE
- Already studying at the college and wish to progress in the same environment, with the same teachers, and same resources.

3. Data

UCG 2021-22 HE EDI Data

Please note, this dataset includes UCG's entire HE provision across CWC and CNWL FT, PT, and Professional Quals. Not all of the courses/students included in this data qualify for OfS Access and Participation returns.

Ethnic Group	Enrolments (%)	Withdrawals (incl. early and transfers)	Continuing	Achieved	Predicted Success %
British	130 (32%)	15	97	18	88%
African	51 (13%)	15	36	N/A	71%
Arab	20 (5%)	8	12	N/A	60%
Bangladeshi	4 (1%)	1	3	N/A	75%
Caribbean	20 (5%)	2	17	1	90%
Chinese	4 (1%)	0	4	N/A	100%
Indian	22 (5%)	1	19	2	95%
Irish	2 (0.5%)	1	1	N/A	50%
Pakistani	13 (3%)	3	8	2	77%
White and Asian	2 (0.5%)	1	1	N/A	50%
White and black African	4 (1%)	0	3	1	100%
White and black Caribbean	9 (2%)	1	5	3	89%
Other white ethnicity	57 (14%)	8	49	N/A	86%
Other Asian ethnicity	30 (7%)	5	25	N/A	83%
Other black/African/Caribbean ethnicity	19 (5%)	3	15	1	84%
Other mixed/multiple ethnicity	12 (3%)	3	9	N/A	75%
Other ethnicity	7 (2%)	1	5	1	86%
Ethnicity not provided	3 (1%)	0	3	N/A	100%
Total	409	68	312	29	83%

Gender	Enrolments	Withdrawals (incl. early and transfers)	Continuing	Achieved	Predicted Success %
Male	262 (64%)	47	195	20	82%
Female	147 (36%)	21	117	9	86%
Total	409	68	312	29	83%

Sexuality	Enrolments	Withdrawals (incl. early and transfers)	Continuing	Achieved	Predicted Success %
Asexual	7 (2%)	1	6	N/A	86%
Bisexual	3 (1%)	1	2	N/A	67%
Heterosexual	217 (53%)	42	170	5	81%
Homosexual	1 (0.2%)	0	1	N/A	100%
Other	11 (3%)	2	9	N/A	82%
Prefer not to say	3 (1%)	0	3	N/A	100%
Not disclosed	167 (41%)	22	121	24	87%
Total	409	68	312	29	83%

First Language	Enrolments	Withdrawals (incl. early and transfers)	Continuing	Achieved	Predicted Success %
English	31 (8%)	7	24	N/A	77%
Other	39 (10%)	10	29	N/A	74%
Not disclosed	339 (83%)	51	259	29	85%
Total	409	68	312	29	83%

Age at entry	Enrolments	Withdrawals (incl. early and transfers)	Continuing	Achieved	Predicted Success %
18	29 (7%)	3	23	3	90%
19+	380 (93%)	65	289	23	82%
Total	409	68	312	29	83%

- Proportional enrolments show a number of significant gaps:
 - o 32% British / 67% BAME
 - o 64% Male / 34% Female
 - o 53% Heterosexual / 6.2% asexual, bisexual, homosexual, or other
 - o 83% first language not disclosed / 8% English as first language / 10% other first language – data skewed by non-disclosure
 - o 93% 19+ on entry / 7% 18-years-old on entry

- Overall predicted success rate is 83%. 4 demographics show a significant negative difference (-10% or less):
 - o African ethnicity (-12%)
 - o Irish ethnicity (-33%) – small group so low statistical certainty
 - o White and Asian mixed ethnicity (-33%) – small group so low statistical certainty
 - o Bisexual (-16%) – small group so low statistical certainty

OfS Access and Participation Data

The OfS have defined the following aggregated statistically significant gaps evident across our qualifying HE provision since 2016/17.

Please note a degree of statistical uncertainty in that this data is based on very small numbers of qualifying HE courses/students, as well as inconsistent data returns completed by numerous parties throughout the merger, lockdown, and restructure.

Please also note further statistical uncertainty in that, of the small numbers mentioned above, we have a very small % of 18-year-old entrants (who account for 5 of the 6 significant gaps identified below), so a nominal number of students may account for significant statistical difference.

Lifecycle stage	Mode of study	Level of study	Split type	Split combination	Latest three years		Latest five years	
					Gap	Sig	Gap	Sig
Access	Full-time or apprenticeship	All undergraduates	Ethnicity	Black_Population18 Black_Age18	-15	Yes	-20	Yes
Access	Full-time or apprenticeship	All undergraduates	Ethnicity	White_Population18 White_Age18	35	Yes	42	Yes
Access	Full-time or apprenticeship	Other undergraduate	Ethnicity	Black_Population18 Black_Age18	-15	No	-20	Yes
Access	Full-time or apprenticeship	Other undergraduate	Ethnicity	Mixed_Population18 Mixed_Age18	-15	No	-15	Yes
Access	Full-time or apprenticeship	Other undergraduate	Ethnicity	White_Population18 White_Age18	40	Yes	50	Yes
Progression	Part-time	All undergraduates	Sex	Male Female	N	N	-19	Yes

- There is a significant gap between the % of black 18-year-olds in the population and the % of black 18-year-old UCG FT HE and Professional Qualification entrants (-20 over last 5 years). The size of this gap has decreased to -15 over the last 3 years.
- There is a significant gap between the % of white 18-year-olds in the population and the % of white 18-year-old UCG FT HE (+42 over last 5 years) and Professional Qualification entrants (+50 over last 5 years). The size of these gaps have decreased to +35 and +40 respectively over the last 3 years.
- There is a significant gap between the % of mixed-race 18-year-olds in the population and the % of mixed-race 18-year-old UCG HE Professional Qualification entrants (-15 over the past 5 years). The size of this gap has stayed the same over the past 3 years (and no longer considered 'significant' by the OfS).
- There is a significant graduate progression gap between the % of male UCG PT HE students and the % of female UCG PT HE students (-19 over last 5 years).

4. Areas to Address

2018 National Priorities:

Access

- To increase the entry rates of students from underrepresented groups to higher education, in particular reducing the participation gaps for those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and at higher tariff providers, where they are widest.
- To reverse the decline in higher education participation by mature students from underrepresented groups.

Success

- To improve the non-continuation rates of students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, and to reduce the gaps between these groups and other students.
- To reduce the attainment gaps between students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, and those from other groups.

Progression

- To improve the rates of progression of students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, into graduate-level employment or further study, and to reduce the gaps between these groups and other students.

2022 National Priorities:

- Partner with schools and other local organisations to raise the attainment of young people
- Develop more diverse pathways into and through higher education through more flexible courses

- Ensure access leads to participation on high quality courses and secures good graduate outcomes
- Improve the quality and volume of evaluation of access and participation plan activity
- Make access and participation plans more accessible in a way that prospective students, their parents and other stakeholders can easily understand.

UCG 2022-23 Priorities:

- To increase the range of data collected about our HE participants at application, enrolment, during study, on completion, and after graduation
- To increase the range of data sources used to collect data about our HE participants and provision
- To improve the reliability of internal and external data systems through consistent, accurate course grouping, and data returns
- To invest time and money in developing data analysis and reporting on trends in access and participation
- To utilise the Access and Participation Statement annual update process to collate and thoroughly evaluate the impact of activities and support for access and participation
- To increase the entry rates of female-identifying students across our HE provision
- To increase the entry rates of non-heterosexual people across our HE provision.
- To increase the entry rates of 18-year-old students, particularly of black and mixed-race ethnicities on to our FT HE and Professional Qualifications
- To improve the continuation and achievement rates of African students, reducing the gap between these and students of other ethnicities

- To improve the rates of progression of female-identifying students into professional employment, management roles, or further study, reducing the gap between these and male-identifying students

5. Ambitions and Strategy

UCG's broad ambition to provide future generations with equal opportunities to access and succeed in HE, and to achieve successful and rewarding careers, is central to our mission, values, method, strategy, themes, and objectives.

UCG Mission:

To deliver outstanding, world class education and skills. We achieve this through our values (or STAIRS) and UCG Method

UCG STAIRS:

- **Student-focused** – listening to, understanding, and meeting the needs of students
- **Transparent** – being open and honest, delivering on promises and communicating effectively
- **Ambitious** – promoting high aspirations and creating a high performance and innovative culture
- **Inclusive** – promoting the highest standards of EDI and challenging intolerance and inequity
- **Respectful** – treating each other with respect and fairness and responding to any issues raised
- **Supportive** – supporting each other to be the best we can be and helping when we face challenges

UCG Method:

- Teachers will develop their art of teaching supported by the science of education
- Staff will create and support a compelling experience for our students
- We will make a difference to our students through evidence-based judgements

UCG HE Strategy 2022-25

The HE Strategy shares in the mission, values and method, addressing contexts themes, objectives, and delivery specific to HE. UCG's **HE strategic themes** are:

- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Growth and Development
- Access and Participation
- Successful Outcomes and Progression

HE objectives of particular relevance to the Access and Participation Statement are:

- Giving our students a voice, listening to it, and acting on it to improve the student experience
- Attracting, recruiting, and supporting the needs of a larger, more diverse cohort
- Continuously improving accessibility, equality of opportunity, diversity, and inclusivity of our HE provision for all participants
- Developing innovative, authentic, subject and demographic-specific strategies to target low HE participation groups
- Offering high quality, consistent student support to meet the diverse needs of all HE participants, and provide swift, impactful, individualised interventions where necessary
- Celebrating the diversity of our applicants, students, graduates, and staff as a key strength of our HE provision
- Delivering, no matter the context and diverse needs of our students, sufficient educational gains for all students and graduates to achieve successful outcomes and progression into further study, professional employment, and management positions

6. Activities and Support

Bursary/Hardship Fund

This year, the OfS allocated £5,177 in student hardship funding, all of which was distributed to students on Level 4 and above qualifications through our bursary scheme.

UCG employs a dedicated bursary team that reviews the bursary money it receives (across all funding streams, including HE) with a view to distribute this to eligible learners. The College makes use of the college's student portal, MydayUCG app as well as digital displays located around its campus sites to advertise the bursaries available to students. Tutors are also required, in their session with the students, to inform them of the financial support available to them and the bursary team that can help them. The bursary team reviews applications as soon as they are submitted to make sure recipients meet the requirements of the bursary schemes allowing payments to be made as quickly as possible.

Additional Learning Support

United Colleges Group is committed to ensuring an inclusive environment and that reasonable adjustments are made so that students with a disability are not disadvantaged in any way.

We have a specialist team who provide additional learning support for students with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties on HE courses.

We are committed to ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that students with a disability are not disadvantaged in any way in their studies or time at College.

City of Westminster College works in partnership with Disabled Go, an award-winning disability organisation. They produce online access guides in a great deal of detail to a huge range of venues.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Support

UCG's Mental Health & Wellbeing Team offer a drop-in service and can make referrals to external professionals where needed.

Students can also access Togetherall which is a safe, online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health and wellbeing.

Togetherall works with the college to offer complementary mental health support choices to students.

Student Advisor/Support Officers

UCG offer a range of support services through Student Advisors and Support Officers at our Information Centre at Paddington or Student Services Office at Willesden. Some services include:

- Referrals to Emergency Housing Advice and information
- Welfare Benefits information and support
- Sexual health signposting including issuing free condoms
- Emergency food parcels
- Period Poverty packs.

People leaving care or estranged from their families are encouraged to come and see a Student Advisor/Support Officer. We can check that they are aware of the support we offer and have applied for the nominated bursary. Where appropriate, when we meet with students we can contact their social worker or Personal Advisor.

Safeguarding

We are committed to ensuring all our students are in a safe and secure environment, both on our premises and online. We have a dedicated team of staff that students can contact at any time. All college staff have been trained in safeguarding and will take appropriate action.

Tutorial Support

Every full-time student at the college has a subject specialist Personal Tutor. The tutor is there to help students complete their course and achieve their qualification by:

- Making sure students understand their course and what is expected of them
- Supporting them with any personal issues or problems that may affect their progress including referring them to support services inside or outside the college

- Monitoring progress and setting targets and actions to help them achieve their best
- Looking at options about what to do next and making sure they are ready to progress onto their next step of further study, work, apprenticeship, or university

Every full-time student has a timetabled group tutorial every week.

Student Voice

We recognise that HE students experience challenges and needs distinct from those of our FE students. Equally, we recognise that HE students offer a unique point of view on the strengths and areas for development for UCG and our HE provision.

We seek a range of opportunities to engage with the HE student voice, supported by a range of mechanisms to ensure your voice is not only heard, but recorded and acted upon.

These include:

- A Personal Tutor
- A weekly tutorial including regular one-to-one tutorials
- An invite to regular course team meetings
- An elected Student Rep
- A chaired and minuted HE Student Council (HESC)
- Representation at UCG Student Council
- A termly 'you said, we did' response to HESC
- Introduction to the HE Management Team during induction
- On-site Enrichment team and Student Voice Officer
- Contribution to External Examiner's visits
- QDP, NSS, Student Engagement and Graduate Outcomes survey

Internal Progression

With a vast portfolio of Entry Level, Functional Skills, Level 1-3, Access to HE, and Professional Qualifications, UCG offer continuous internal progression opportunities for all students from Level 1 right through to Level 5 and beyond. Internal progression from FE to HE is encouraged through Student Services, Tutorial, HE Fair events, and our Progression Pledge – for Level 3 students who successfully complete their course with ABB or equivalent grades, we guarantee an offer of a place on an appropriate Higher Education course with us. This is subject to a satisfactory interview, reference and application.

ASPIRE

In partnership with London Southbank University, UCG are offering Londoners the opportunity to study an accredited Unit of our Level 4 (HNC) Construction and the Built Environment, or Computing courses.

This project helps develop an understanding of the benefit of higher-level skills and how this can lead to career progression, Level 4 and above qualifications, or higher and degree apprenticeships.

PowerBI

UCG have invested significantly in developing Power BI, allowing improved monitoring and reporting on attendance, completion, achievement, and EDI data. We are now in the process of developing a HE-specific Power BI Dashboard, which will allow regular, dynamic, sophisticated monitoring and reporting on HE access and participation data.

Employability

We support Pearson's alignment of existing Higher National (HN) programmes with the IfATE requirements for Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQ) in England. This will allow us to deliver a new type of HN, specifically ensuring appropriate coverage of the Occupational Standard that the pathway or qualification aligns to. The HTQ quality mark signals to employers and students that courses are considered high quality technical education developed with employers and aligned to Occupational Standards. Following re-approval of our HNC/D Computing programmes as a HTQ, UCG's first HTQ will launch in September 2023. We plan for this to be followed by our HNC Construction and the Built Environment pathways; HNC/D Business; HNC/D Music; HNC/D Applied Science (Chemistry); and HNC/D Sport by 2025.

We continue to offer a range of Higher Apprenticeship programmes in the construction and accounting industries through our Business Development Unit, who also work in partnership with University of Westminster for their delivery of Degree Apprenticeships in the construction and healthcare industries.

Finally, we work with external agents to facilitate employer-funded study, particularly on our HNC Construction and the Built Environment pathways, to maximise participation and progression of our students.