



Higher Education Access and Participation Statement

Document Status	
Author:	Director of Innovation, Enterprise and Quality Assurance
Version:	
Date:	March 2026
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form	
Approved by:	Corporation
Date of Approval:	30 March 2026
Date of Policy/EIA Review:	

United Colleges Group

Higher Education Access and Participation Statement 2025/26

1. Introduction

United Colleges Group is committed to delivering an inclusive and ambitious higher education curriculum that empowers all students to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education. Our Access and Participation Statement outlines our strategic approach, actions, and measurable targets to ensure equality of opportunity for all students, in alignment with the Office for Students (OfS) requirements. This statement is reviewed and updated annually.

2. Strategic Aims and Objectives

Our aims are to:

- Increase the proportion of students from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups accessing higher education.
- Improve continuation, attainment, and progression rates, with a focus on closing gaps for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups.
- Foster a culture of inclusion, respect, and aspiration across our college community.

3. Commitment to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are central to our values and vision. Our EDI Policy sets out how we fulfil our statutory duties, celebrate diversity, and eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. All staff, students, and governors are responsible for upholding these commitments, and we provide up-to-date resources to promote understanding and respect for all personal characteristics and backgrounds.

4. Target Groups

We prioritise support for:

- Students from POLAR4 Quintile 1 and 2 postcodes (low participation neighbourhoods)
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Mature students (aged 21+ at entry)
- Students with declared disabilities or learning difficulties
- Care-experienced and estranged students
- Students from low-income households (household income below £25,000)
- First-generation higher education entrants

5. Actions and Interventions

To achieve our aims and targets, we will implement the following actions:

- Targeted outreach in local schools and communities, focusing on low participation neighbourhoods and underrepresented groups.
 - Level 3 and Access to HE programmes to support progression for adult learners without traditional qualifications.
 - Flexible delivery and recognition of prior learning for mature students.
 - Employer engagement in curriculum design and delivery.
 - Personalised academic and welfare support, including mental health and disability services.
-

- Tuition in academic skills for Level 3 students preparing for higher education.
- Financial support advice and targeted bursaries for eligible students.
- Additional learning support and specialist staff for students with disabilities, mental health needs, or learning difficulties.
- Marketing campaigns that challenge stereotypes and reflect diversity.
- Support for students whose first language is not English.
- Events such as career and employment fairs, open days, and progression talks to promote higher education pathways.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

We will monitor, evaluate and continually improve our access and participation in higher education by:

- Annual review of access and participation data at programme and institutional level.
- Quarterly monitoring of recruitment, retention, attainment, and progression for target groups.
- Student voice captured through surveys, focus groups, and representation on HE committees.
- Evaluation of interventions through impact assessment and regular reporting to the HE Strategy Board and Board of Governors.
- Action plans revised annually based on data and feedback.
- Annual Self-Evaluation Document and Quality Enhancement Plan for higher education.

7. Student Consultation and Engagement

The Access and Participation Statement is reviewed annually with Student Union representatives and course reps. Student feedback informs the development and evaluation of support services and interventions. Student representatives participate in curriculum development and quality assurance processes.

8. Financial Support and Student Success Measures

UCG will support HE students in the following ways:

- Bursaries of up to £1,000 per year for eligible students from low-income households.
- Hardship funds available for students facing acute financial challenges.
- Financial support information provided at application, enrolment, and throughout the student lifecycle.
- Comprehensive support services including academic tutorials, mental health resources, and career guidance.

9. Transparency and Publication

This statement is published on our website and intranet and shared with all stakeholders. It is reviewed and updated annually in line with OfS guidance and institutional priorities.

Linked policies include our Curriculum Strategy, EDI Policy, HE Admissions Policy, HE Fees Policy, HE Student Support and Engagement Policies, and published transparency data.

United Colleges Group is dedicated to removing barriers to higher education, promoting equality of opportunity, and supporting the success of all students. We will continue to monitor our progress, engage with students and partners, and take action to ensure all learners can achieve their potential.
