

Newman University

2020-21 to 2024-25 Access and participation plan executive summary

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 the full access and participation plan for Newman University at [Access and participation plan](#)

Headlines – pages 1-7

Newman is a small Catholic university, with 2,900 students, situated on the south-western edge of Birmingham. We see our small size as a benefit in allowing us to support each student personally within our learning community. Our undergraduate and postgraduate students are overwhelmingly drawn from the local area, with a very high proportion of commuter students. We consistently exceed sector averages for recruitment from under-represented and disadvantaged groups including mature students, disabled students, students from low-participation neighbourhoods and first generation HE students. People from under-represented groups make up the large majority of our student population, for example, over 80% of our current students are either Black, Asian, mixed ethnicity, mature or disabled, with many facing intersectional disadvantage.

Student success as measured by continuation is a key focus of our plan, particularly improving the continuation rates for students from low participation and high deprivation areas, disabled students, mature students, and Black, Asian and mixed ethnicity students. Student success in terms of attainment for students from under-represented groups upon completion is strong at Newman, with many target groups out-performing the general population. The clear exception is around ethnicity and Black student attainment, which is another key focus for enhancement. We wish to expand existing strong performance for progression of certain under-represented groups into employment and further study to all under-represented groups.

Fees – see appendix, pages 25-26

The maximum fee that Newman University will charge for the duration of this Access & Participation Plan is £9,250 for full time 3-year undergraduate courses. For 2-year accelerated courses the maximum fee will be £11,100. Part-time first degree courses will be charged at a maximum of £6,935. The University will review tuition fees and increase fees in line with any inflationary uplift as determined by the UK Government, if permitted by law or government policy, in subsequent years of a course. It is anticipated that such increases would be linked to the Retail Price Index.

Financial support – page 14

Newman University Support Fund [NUSF] provides financial support to students on an individual basis. This has been partially de-centralised in its approach in order to target smaller sums of financial support to students requiring immediate intervention. Changes have included allowing the Welfare Adviser to make small awards of travel tickets, short-term loans and food vouchers, whilst advising on larger applications to the NUSF, which are means-tested and take longer to process. While this fund is available to all students, it is overwhelmingly accessed by students from underrepresented groups. An online application form and guidance notes are available via the Intranet and this is signposted from the University website.

Aims – pages 8-9 and Page 27

Our targets over the long term are to ensure positive and equitable outcomes for all students across our diverse population. We intend to enhance our already strong access work; improve continuation rates for all students, as well as specific under-represented groups; make significant progress in closing the Black awarding gap; and ensure lessons are learned from our successful work with some under-represented groups in terms of progression to work or further study so enhancements can be made for the progression of all underrepresented groups. Specifically, by 2025, we aim to:

1. Eliminate the 5% continuation gap for students from low participation neighbourhoods.
2. Half the Black attainment gap from 20% to 10%.
3. Eliminate the 5% continuation gap for Black students.
4. Reduce the continuation gap for mixed ethnicity students from 8% to 3%.
5. More than half the continuation gap for disabled students, from 7% to 3%.
6. More than half the continuation gap for full-time mature students, from 9% to 4%.
7. More than half the attainment gap for Asian students, from 11% to 5%.
8. More than half the gap in progression into employment and further study for disabled students, from 15% to 7%.
9. Half the gap in progression rates into employment and further study for BAME students, from 13% to 6%.
10. Half the gap for progression into employment and further study for full-time students from high deprivation areas, from 8% to 4%.
11. Eliminate the 5% gap for progression into employment and further study for part-time students from high deprivation areas.

The timescales and interim targets for narrowing these gaps are set out on page 27.

Actions – pages 9-17

Programmes of activity have been developed across the student lifecycle to deliver on our aims for:

1. Access – including partnership in the NCOP programme, providing progression programmes and progression ambassador, provision of on-campus learning days and a range of outreach and enrichment activities, and provision of a Foundation Year with contextual admissions.
2. Continuation for under-represented groups – enhanced induction, transition support, and personal tutoring, use of engagement data analytics, student peer mentoring. Academic and learning skills development, a new student engagement and success role, reviews of regulations and facilities, and targeted student partnership project funding. Support funding, mature student panel, support for disabled students accessing DSA and individualised learning plans. Mental health advisors and first aiders, counselling services, wellbeing events and support for care leavers, including achievement of the Stand Alone Pledge.
3. Black and Asian student attainment – BAME panel and mentoring provision, Muslim student experience research and a Muslim Chaplain. English as an Additional Language support and provision of sanctuary scholarship. Senior leadership of an institutional conversation about race to drive development of racially diverse and inclusive environments.

4. Progression to further work and study – embedded work placement in all undergraduate programmes, volunteering opportunities, enterprise support and careers advice, participation in transformation West Midlands project, including BAME and disability reverse mentoring.

Student consultation – pages 17-19

Students have been consulted on all aspects of this plan. We work closely with the Students' Union, involving them in all key decision-making bodies of the University. Many of the initiatives presented in this Plan were developed as a result of working with Newman Students' Union or on student-staff partnership projects. We have Students' Union representation on all University committees and task groups involved in the development, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of this Plan.

Evaluation – pages 19-23

University Council have oversight of the monitoring of this Plan while monitoring of specific programme progress is undertaken by our three student life-cycle Task Groups. Our evaluation involves, institution-wide KPIs, broken down into more situated departmental targets, revisited throughout the year and iteratively revised on an annual basis in the light of evaluation. The individual programmes will largely be implemented by central departments and monitored and evaluated in reporting to key task groups. Student-staff project teams within departments will be able to bid for funding to carry forward strategic enhancements at a local level, addressing targeted issues and taking account of situated practices. These partnership projects will operate as participant action research projects on an annual cycle of funding, implementation and evaluation. All these partnership projects will report back to a University-wide annual event, subjecting them to collaborative qualitative analysis which will draw out thematic learning from across all the projects to inform the call and guidance for the following annual round.

Provision of information to students – pages 23-24

Work on providing applicants and potential applicants with the information they need to make an informed decision starts with the student liaison team leading sessions in schools and colleges. Newman University makes use of all the expected platforms for providing information on fees (including UCAS, the University website and Student Loan Company Website), extensive use is also made of other forms of communication including social media platforms (including the University's Facebook page, twitter and Instagram). The website also includes a section on living costs which provides applicants with a breakdown of what they can expect to have to budget for whilst studying. On open days and applicant visit days - as well as staff available, who provide advice on finance, student loans, any additional costs and disability support - Student Ambassadors provide the student view on life University life and specific courses. For current students, we provide access to key information via our intranet and internal communications.

Variation to address new Office for Student priorities – pages 24

Work is continuing to address the Office for Students new priorities as shared in early 2022. This executive summary helps make our Access and Participation Plan 2020/21-2024/25 more accessible to prospective and current students, their guardians, and other stakeholders. The focus of this Plan was, from the beginning, to ensure access leads to participation on high quality courses and the achievement of good graduate outcomes. Evaluation of our Plan continues and will develop further over the arc of its delivery. Additional actions have been added to the Plan to develop more diverse pathways into and through HE through more flexible courses, with the development of Higher Technical Qualifications and a variety of exciting new short courses, particularly in Health and allied disciplines. Partnership with schools and other local organisations to raise the attainment of young people has always been implicit in our work and we will be undertaking additional work with school placement providers, through our PGCE students, to provide literacy, numeracy and booster sessions across approximately 60 schools.