

# School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London: Summary of 2020-21 to 2024-25 Access and Participation Plan

## What is an access and participation plan?

Access and Participation Plans (or 'APPs' as they are often called) set out how universities and colleges of higher education will improve equality of opportunity and widen participation to many students who may not traditionally see going to university as something they could do.

You can see the full detailed access and participation plan for SOAS University of London by clicking on the following link:

[www.soas.ac.uk/access](http://www.soas.ac.uk/access)

**Key points:** See pages 1 to 9 of the full plan

The focus of our Access and Participation Plan is improving the outcomes for specific groups of students. Data shows that outcomes for specific groups of students are lower than for others.

SOAS has identified the following key areas for improving the educational experiences for specific groups of students currently underrepresented in higher education: accessing or entering university, continuation; achieving the highest grades (a First Class honours degree or a 2:1) and progressing to a graduate career or postgraduate study.

## Summary of target groups:

Based on our assessment of performance across the student lifecycle, we will be targeting the following underrepresented groups in our access and participation work:

1. Those living in areas of low HE participation – access, non-continuation and progression
2. Those from lower household income - non-continuation and attainment
3. Those from lower socio-economic status groups - access, attainment, progression
4. Those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups - all stages of lifecycle
5. Mature students - non-continuation and attainment
6. Those with a declared disability - access, non-continuation and attainment
7. Care leavers - all stages of lifecycle
8. Intersectionality, specifically Black Asian and Minority Ethnic students from Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) areas in Quintiles 1+2. IMD measures levels of deprivation in small areas - all stages of the life cycle

## Fees we charge *How much does it cost? Our undergraduate Fees*

At SOAS University of London, the maximum fees charged are • £9,250 for full-time students. You can see a full list of fees for courses at the SOAS University of London <https://www.soas.ac.uk/fees>

**Financial help available-** We offer financial support to students from underrepresented groups. This helps students enter higher education and continue studying until their course is completed. The support SOAS offers include:

- A travel bursary for students from low-income households to attend our open days and interviews

- An annual bursary of £1,500 for the duration of the course if the student's household income is below £25,000
- A hardship fund to support students from households with an income below £40,000 who experience financial hardship during their time at university

## Information for students

We provide both prospective students and current students with information on fees and financial support. Visit our website here: [Tuition fees and Fee Payments | Registry | SOAS University of London](#) and UCAS' web pages here: [Student Finance - Student Loans And Tuition Fees \(ucas.com\)](#)

We also regularly update our information for care leavers on the Propel website here: [Propel | The School of Oriental and African Studies](#)

## What we are aiming to achieve See pages 7 to 18 of full plan

Our Access and Participation Plan aims to improve the outcomes of students who are less likely to enter higher education. More specifically, during the 5 year period covered by the Access and Participation Plan we are committed to:

1. Reduce the gap in access for students living in areas of low HE participation to 35 percentage points
2. Eradicate the gap in non-continuation for students of mixed ethnicity
3. Eradicate the gap in non-continuation for mature students
4. Eradicate the gap in non-continuation for black students across academic departments
5. Eradicate the gap in non-continuation for students with a mental health disability
6. Eradicate the gap in degree attainment for students from IMD quintile 1 and IMD quintile 5
7. Eradicate the gap in degree attainment for black students
8. Eradicate the gap in degree attainment for students from BAME backgrounds
9. Improve attainment rates for students from BTEC courses receiving a good degree by 10 percentage points
10. Reduce the gap in degree attainment for mature students to 7 percentage points
11. Eradicate the gap in degree attainment for BAME students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 compared with white students from IMD quintiles 3, 4 and 5
12. Eradicate the gap in progression for students from IMD quintile 1 and IMD quintile 5

## What we are doing to achieve our aims See pages 14 to 18 for full plan

SOAS recognises that a whole institution approach will be most effective in reducing gaps in access, student success, and progression. SOAS will ensure significant investment by ring fencing funding to support all stages of the student lifecycle.

### Access

Several key initiatives support SOAS efforts to reduce the gap in participation outlined in our assessment of performance: (i) we monitor our contextual admissions policy, (ii) we deliver outreach activities in areas of deprivation and low HE participation such as summer schools, long-term programmes and masterclasses; and (iii) we work with third sector organisations

like the Access Project (West Midlands) and Elephant Group (London and the East Midlands). These initiatives increase understanding of university study & SOAS disciplines and improve confidence regarding preparedness for HE.

### **Success**

We invest in several activities proven to improve non-continuation and improved attainment such as (i) expanded pre-entry Bridging Courses; (ii) departmental peer mentoring programmes and (iii) BAME mentoring. The impact of these programmes include improved academic experience; increased confidence in academic skills; improved academic experience of students during first year and supporting students to challenge systemic barriers

### **Progression**

We will further develop and deliver a range of measures to improve progression outcomes. This will include the development of mentoring through the UpReach project; work placements within SOAS, pedagogical-focused work to embed employability skills in our curriculum, and the establishment of a Careers data dashboard for academic staff.

### **How students can get involved** see page 20 to 21 for full plan

The SOAS Students' Union has been engaged in the development, planning, monitoring and evaluation of all our Access and Participation Plans. Outreach Student Ambassadors, also from underrepresented backgrounds, play a key role in the development and delivery of our programme of activities. In addition, Ambassadors feedback are reflected upon as part of the process of continual improvement, providing another way students from diverse backgrounds are involved in evaluating the activities underpinned by the Access & Participation Plan.

### **Evaluation: how we will measure what we have achieved** p20 to 21 for full plan

We use a rigorous evaluation method appropriate for all parts of our work with students. We will collect data and feedback to evaluate all aspects of our work throughout the student lifecycle. We regularly review programme design, the impact of activities to achieve our aims. We are establishing bi monthly quality review meetings to ensure regular monitoring of progress. We report the progress against our Access and Participation Plan Targets and Milestones to key operational and strategic committees with the responsibility of monitoring progress and reporting this to senior leaders with overall responsibility for the university's Access and Participation Plan.

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