

SOAS University of London

Summary of 2025-26 to 2028-29 Access and Participation Plan

What is an Access and Participation Plan?

Our Access and Participation Plan (APP) outlines what SOAS University of London will do to ensure equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups, as determined by the Office for Students.

You can see the full [APP](#) for SOAS on our website.

Key Points – see pages 1-3 of the full plan

- SOAS is one of the world's leading institutions for the study of Asia, Africa and the Near and Middle East. Our approach to education focuses on creating a fairer and more just world through what we teach and research. We aim to connect with global communities and build fair partnerships. We encourage open discussions, challenge traditional ways of thinking, and empower our students to question how the world works and tackle today's biggest challenges.
- Our APP focuses on breaking down barriers and creating an inclusive, welcoming environment where everyone has an equal chance to succeed and achieve their goals. By offering targeted support and working with partners, we aim to attract, support, and help underrepresented students thrive. Our goal is to reflect the diversity of society in our student community. By promoting inclusivity and valuing diversity, we strive to provide a transformative education that helps students excel, connect with their communities, and make a positive impact on the world.
- In our previous APP, we achieved some successes but still face challenges. SOAS has done well in improving access to higher education and supporting social mobility. This means more people, especially Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students and those who received Free School Meals, have been able to benefit from higher education opportunities.

What we are aiming to achieve – see pages 3-4 of the full plan

SOAS has identified six key objectives to address equality of opportunity across the student lifecycle:

1. **Widening Access:** Increase participation from students in low HE progression areas (TUNDRA Q1), those eligible for Free School Meals, and BAME backgrounds.
2. **Improving Continuation Rates:** Reduce gaps for students from disadvantaged areas and those with mental health conditions.
3. **Eliminating Ethnicity Gaps in Continuation:** Address disparities for Black and White students.
4. **Supporting Students with Mental Health Conditions:** Enhance access to mental health services and promote resilience.
5. **Reducing Socioeconomic Awarding Gaps:** Minimise disparities in degree classifications for students eligible for Free School Meals.
6. **Closing Ethnic Awarding Gaps:** Focus on reducing gaps between Black and White students.

What we are doing to address risks to equality of opportunity - See pages 4-19 of the full plan.

To address our key risks, we have developed three intervention strategies. These strategies set out the activities, programmes and support we will undertake to deliver the aims of our plan. These strategies are:

1. Access:

This strategy focusses on raising awareness of university and supporting young people from different backgrounds to progress to university. This will be done through:

- Partnerships with schools for in-school and on-(SOAS)campus activities. These collaborations allow us to connect with young learners in their familiar environments while also offering opportunities to experience the university setting firsthand. Together, these activities aim to inspire students, raise aspirations, and provide them with a clearer understanding of higher education pathways.
- Targeted programmes such as assisted reading and critical thinking development to improve reading skills and increase attainment are designed to directly support students in building essential academic skills.
- Year 10 and Year 12 Summer schools that offer an insight into university life and develop study skills. These immersive programmes offer a blend of academic activities and practical workshops, giving participants a taste of higher education.
- Collaborations with organisations like The Brilliant Club strengthen our ability to reach and support talented students from underrepresented backgrounds.

2. Success:

- Comprehensive student success programme co-created with students focuses on supporting students at every stage of their university journey. From the moment they transition into higher education to their progression through their studies, this programme provides tailored guidance and resources. By involving students in its design, we ensure that the programme addresses real challenges and meets the diverse needs of our student community, helping them thrive academically, socially, and personally.
- Targeted programmes of support such as peer mentoring, Student Ambassador panels, and belonging-building activities are designed to create a supportive and inclusive university environment.
- Enhanced mental health services aligned with the University Mental Health Charter. Providing accessible and comprehensive support for student wellbeing. These services address the unique mental health challenges students may face and aim to promote resilience and self-care.

3. Awarding Gaps:

- Initiatives like the Bridging the Gap project to address racial awarding gaps aim to tackle racial awarding gaps. This student-led project is designed to ensure that all students, regardless of their racial or ethnic background, have equal opportunities to achieve academic success.

- Programmes like Ebony Initiative and the Advance HE Race Equality Charter are central to our commitment to promoting racial equality and inclusion. The Ebony Initiative focuses on empowering and supporting Black students, while our work with the Advance HE Race Equality Charter helps us assess and improve institutional practices to create a more equitable and inclusive environment for everyone.

Evaluation - See pages 23-25 of the full plan.

SOAS will continuously evaluate its APP through annual reports, involving students in governance and assessment. A dedicated Student Ambassador Advisory Panel ensures student voices are central to implementation and improvement.

The Access, Participation, and Success Steering Group oversees the plan's delivery, the group meets termly to review progress and reports to the School's Teaching, Learning & Student Experience Committee. Regular updates come from the Access, Participation, and Success Delivery Group, which handles the day-to-day implementation of strategies, and the Student Ambassador Advisory Panel. Key actions to stay on track include holding regular evaluation-focused team meetings and creating detailed evaluation workplans for all initiatives. Additionally, SOAS will publish an Annual Impact Report to share progress and findings.

How students can get involved – see pages 22-23 of the full plan

Students will continue to play a vital role in developing, delivering, and evaluating the APP. The Student Ambassador Advisory Panel will monitor progress and outcomes, reporting to the APS Steering Group, which oversees strategic and operational aspects of the plan. Regular meetings with the Students' Union ensure ongoing collaboration on access, student success, and progression. Students will also contribute to the annual impact and evaluation report, ensuring their voices remain at the heart of our efforts.

Fees and financial support - See page 28 of the full plan.

- At SOAS the maximum fees charged £9,535 for UK Undergraduate full-time fees. Increases in home fees will be in line with national increases and published on our website. A [full list of our fees](#) can be found on our website.
- [Financial support](#) includes a bursary of £1,500 per year for UK Undergraduate students with a household income under £25,000.

Information for students - See page 26 of the full plan.

Students and prospective applicants can access detailed information about fees, financial support, and APP commitments through the SOAS website and dedicated events such as open days.

This summary provides an overview of how SOAS is working to address challenges related to access and participation in higher education. It highlights the institution's unique mission to create an inclusive and equitable environment that supports students from all backgrounds. For a more detailed explanation of these efforts and initiatives, you can view the full Access and Participation Plan on the SOAS website.

Contact details for further information

Please contact the Head of Access, Participation and Student Success, Victoria Edwards at ve2@soas.ac.uk for further information.