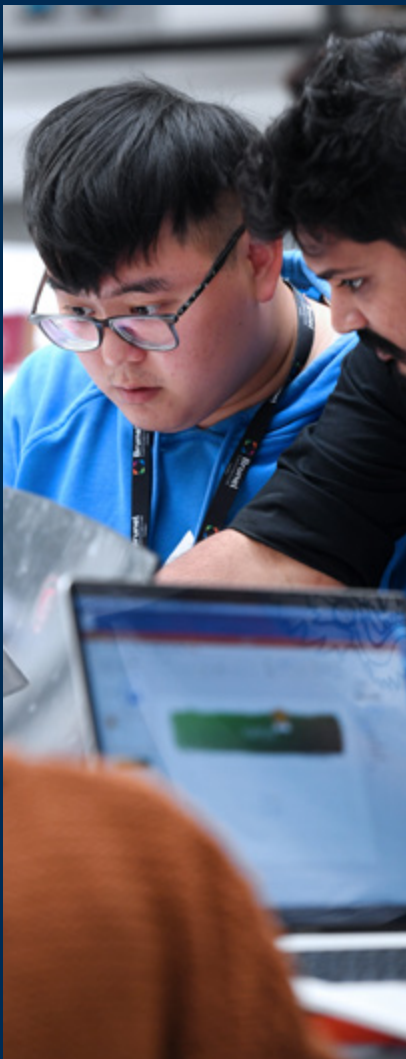




Brunel
University
London

Access and Participation Strategy 2020+



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Introduction

Brunel University London has an enviable reputation for both encouraging aspiration and providing high quality, research-led teaching to a very diverse student population. Enabling all students to realise their potential, irrespective of their social or cultural backgrounds, is important to us, and we aspire to be recognised across the world as an engine of social mobility.

These words are built on solid foundations of: outreach to focus aspirations, attainment and access to higher education; supporting students to achieve academically; and of preparing them for successful futures. This Access and Participation Strategy sets out how we will continue to underpin our valuable work with the community at large whilst re-doubling our efforts on the activities that will provide even better outcomes and success for our students in future years.



Ranjeet Rathore
President, Union of Brunel Students



Professor Mariann Rand-Weaver
Vice-Provost (Education)



Aim: To reduce the gap in participation in Higher Education for students from underrepresented groups.

Objectives

To significantly increase the number of entrants from areas with low levels of participation in Higher Education

To significantly increase the number of mature entrants

To support students in receipt of pupil premium to meet or exceed their GCSE English and Maths targets



Strategy

Brunel's diverse student population reflects the considerable success of our outreach work to date and we will build on current activities to offer a sustained outreach package to primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and community groups. We envisage students engaging with multiple activities which aim to focus aspirations and raise attainment.

A curriculum of STEM activities which cover KS1 – KS5 will help to raise interest in STEM subjects, support skills development and encourage underrepresented groups into STEM degrees. Our particular focus on STEM aligns with the identified need in the Industrial Strategy to tackle shortages in STEM skills, and we will capitalise on the investment made in our new STEM Learning Centre to support students from underrepresented groups to access and benefit from innovative technology and equipment.

We will use student ambassadors at the heart of our activities to ensure their expertise is utilised, supporting their employability and enabling them to act as role models to prospective students. We will work in partnership with the third sector and other higher education providers to co-deliver activities and identify best practice through engaging with external networks. Our support for schools and colleges will continue with many of our staff acting as governors in the local community. We will also support students from underrepresented groups to access Brunel through an improved contextual admissions process.

Target groups

We will continue to offer specific outreach for disabled students and build on our relationships with local authorities to support care experienced students to access higher education. We intend to expand the current reach of our outreach activities and the schools that we engage with to further target areas of deprivation and areas with low levels of participation in Higher Education.

Brunel is committed to supporting the Armed Forces community and was pleased to sign the Armed Forces Covenant in September 2016 which was followed by the award of a Gold Employer Recognition Scheme award in August 2019. We will build on this activity to support children of military families to access and succeed in Higher Education.

How we'll measure success

Our practice will be influenced by active engagement with the sector and research literature to ensure that good practice flourishes both at Brunel and the wider HE community. In order to monitor the effectiveness of our activities we will utilise and contribute to resources such as the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT). In addition to long term measures of impact such as those available through HEAT we will also evaluate the short term and intermediate impact of our interventions in accordance with guidance from the OfS.



Aim: To ensure that all students, regardless of background, have an equal opportunity to succeed during their studies at Brunel University London.

Objectives

To eliminate the non-continuation gap between mature and young students

To reduce the attrition rate for Care Leavers

To reduce the attainment gap between White and Black students

To reduce the attainment gap between White and Asian students



Strategy

Our strategy is to engage academic departments and professional services, which we believe is key to successful transition into university: to engender a sense of belonging; to deliver an inclusive and positive student experience; and a joined-up approach to academic support and mental health and wellbeing.

We are committed to responding to the Universities UK Step Change Framework (2017) and will provide sufficient opportunity, resource and strategic guidance to embed positive mental health and wellbeing awareness, messages and interventions into all areas of University life as set out in our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Students.

We will continue to focus on closing the ethnicity attainment gap by developing inclusive curricula, using the student voice to guide our activities and engaging staff and students to talk directly about race, racism and the attainment gap. In line with guidance from the OfS we will also target specific support and interventions to students where appropriate.

In order to support a joined-up approach, our access and participation priorities will be embedded into our annual education review practices and we will seek to improve our approach to data, allowing us to identify students in need of support and to target interventions effectively.

Target groups

Brunel is committed to supporting estranged students and plans to support this group is outlined in our Stand-Alone Pledge. In addition, care-experienced students and young carers will be supported by targeted pastoral support.

Through an inclusive and curriculum-focussed approach we are addressing identified gaps in retention and attainment outcomes. We provide excellent support and facilities for our disabled students and will continue to do so via our Wellbeing service.

How we'll measure success

In order to measure the impact of our activities related to success we will embrace a wide range of methodologies. In addition to seeking feedback from students through tools such as surveys and focus groups we will measure impact using pre-post intervention measures, wherever possible drawing on existing inventories, constructs, and theories. We aim to build on our improved data collection processes and conduct statistical analysis in order to both guide the selection of our interventions and measure their long term impact.



Aim: To improve the progression rates of students from underrepresented groups into professional employment or higher study

Objectives

To reduce the progression gap between White and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students

To reduce the progression gap between students from the most deprived areas and least deprived areas¹



¹ As defined by the English Index of Multiple Deprivation

Strategy

As pioneers of work placements, Brunel University London strongly believes in the value of work-based experience to develop the attributes and attitudes required for professional careers, and we will continue to facilitate and diversify opportunities for students from underrepresented groups. We intend to develop our processes to recognise work-based experience beyond the one year thick sandwich placement, to include other experiences such as internships, and will encourage students to reflect on the skills they have developed.

Brunel has a very international student community with students from over 110 countries on campus, and we want our students to build on this by undertaking international experiences during their studies. These activities have been shown to have benefits for academic success as well as graduate outcomes and we will support underrepresented groups to access these opportunities in line with our pledge to the Go International: Stand Out campaign.

We will work to continue to embed employability within the curriculum via employer engagement and research-led teaching, taking a joined-up approach with both our professional services and academic activities. Our work with our students will continue post-graduation to ensure they are supported as they begin their careers.

The student voice is at the heart of our access and participation activities, and we will continue to employ them across a range of roles to ensure their expertise is utilised and support their professional development.

Target groups

Support will be targeted to students with identified gaps in graduate outcomes, including Black students and care experienced students, and those from low-income households. We will also continue to support our disabled students to continue their excellent graduate outcomes.

How we'll measure success

The ultimate measure of our interventions focused on progression will be the rates of graduate level employment and further study among our graduates. We will diligently analyse Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data and Graduate Outcomes data to assess our performance and keep abreast of wider trends within the sector. A limitation of these data sources is that by necessity there is a delay, sometime significant, between participation in our activities and the collection of employment data following graduation. In order to assess the effectiveness of our interventions prior to graduation we will measure changes in confidence around skills and behaviours crucial to professional development. We will also track future engagement with opportunities to gain work experience, such as placements, which have been demonstrated to have significant impact on securing graduate level employment.



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