

Office for
Students



Student engagement in access and participation plans

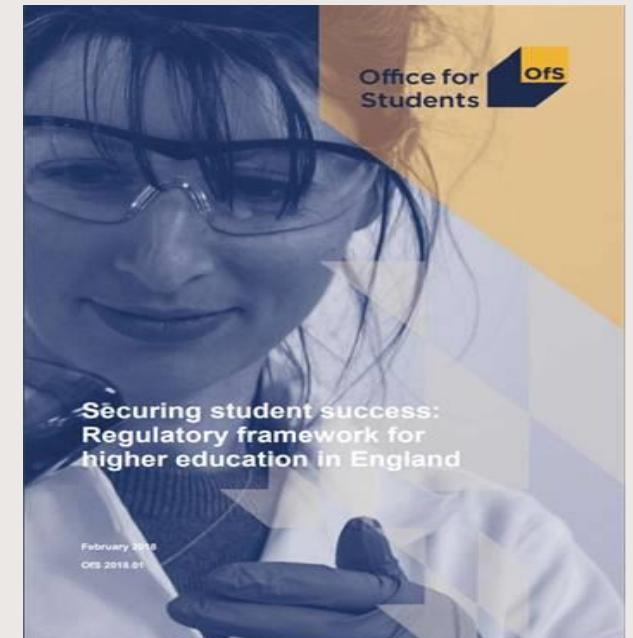
Jess Woodsford

Access and Participation Plan Team, OfS

OfS Regulatory Framework objectives

All students, from all backgrounds, and with the ability and desire to undertake higher education:

- are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education;
- receive a high quality academic experience, and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of provider, campus or course closure;
- are able to progress into employment or further study, and their qualifications hold their value over time;
- receive value for money



Our priorities across the student lifecycle

Access

- To increase the entry rates of students from underrepresented groups to higher education, in particular reducing the participation gaps for those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and at higher tariff providers, where they are widest.
- To reverse the decline in higher education participation by mature students from underrepresented groups.

Success

- To improve the non-continuation rates of students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, and to reduce the gaps between these groups and other students.
- To reduce the attainment gaps between students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, and those from other groups.

Progression

- To improve the rates of progression of students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, into graduate-level employment or further study, and to reduce the gaps between these groups and other students

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
- Requirement of registration with the OfS for certain categories of higher education provider
- Includes:
 - provider's ambition for change
 - measures put in place to achieve that change
 - Targets
 - investment made to deliver plan

What do we mean by under-represented groups?

Includes groups of students who share the following particular characteristics:

- those living in areas of low higher education participation, household income, or socio-economic status
- particular ethnicities
- mature students
- disability status
- care leavers
- Carers
- people estranged from their families
- people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- refugees
- people with mental health problems, specific learning difficulties and/or who are on the autism spectrum
- children of military families.

Student engagement in access agreements

- All agreements had to include a commitment to engage with students
- Half of providers refer to their students unions
- Activities include:
 - Delivering access, success and progression activities
 - Providing information, advice and guidance
 - Monitoring and evaluation
 - Equality and diversity activities

Why get involved?

Access and participation plans as a lever for change:

- Influence fees and financial support
- Support access to higher education
- Improve student success and progress for fellow students

Student consultation and involvement

You must include details of the following in your access and participation plan:

1. how you have provided your students with the opportunity to express their views about the content of your plan
2. how you will involve students in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of your plan
3. how you will ensure that students from a range of backgrounds are included in your consultation on and delivery of your plan.

1. An opportunity to contribute to plans

University of West London (2017-18 access agreement)

“The Student Union is represented through the University’s committee structure and through liaison with senior management. There is also student representation on the university’s OFFA planning group which meets monthly throughout the year to plan the access agreement, discuss and agree financial support packages and monitor OFFA targets.

2. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Writtle University College (2017-18 access agreement)

“The Student Union is helping to facilitate HE and FE peer mentoring and support. These activities not only target internal progression from FE to HE, but also serve to increase the aspiration of FE students more generally”

The University of Surrey (2017-18 access agreement)

“The Student union sabbatical officers played an important part in the evaluation and development of the existing bursary schemes.”

SOAS (2017-18 access agreement)

“SOAS are working with the Students’ Union to undertake qualitative analysis to understand the causes, and possible steps to address, undergraduate attainment gaps, and to recommend evidence-based actions to address them.

3. Diversity in consultation

University of Plymouth (2017-18 access agreement)

“The diversity of the student voice is further augmented through the University of Plymouth Student Union (UPSU) ...including such groups as mature students, black and minority ethnic students, students with disabilities, LGBT students and postgraduate students. The chairs of each of these forums sit on the Student Union’s Executive Committee (UEC), which was consulted during the preparation of this agreement.”

University of Derby

“We are proud of the diversity of our community and supporting students from gender and sexual minorities (GSM*) is of great importance to us... We undertake proactive work with our LGBT Society and Student Union to run awareness raising and social events for our GSM students. We provide links to local groups, external support and social networks.”

How the OfS will engage with students

- Student interest at the heart of what we do
- Using the student panel
- Developing s Student Engagement Strategy

Student Preferences for Engagement

- Recently conducted an evaluation with students, looking at how hefce's approach to engagement with students might be improved
- Face to face interactions, excluding travel
- Personal approach to engagement
- Ensure project is meaningful i.e. include students at touchpoints along the way
- Important considerations: time constraints & logistical barriers

Further support

- New Provider event – 20th Feb in London
- 1 hour workshops and 1:1 surgeries
 - London 1st May
 - Manchester 1st May
 - Bristol 8th May
- To book onto a workshop and/or a surgery slot, please reply to APP@officeforstudents.org.uk
- All other queries email registration@officeforstudents.org.uk
- Guidance on OfS website
 - Regulatory Notice 1 (guidance)
 - Regulatory Advice 6 (good practice)

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