

What is an Access and Participation Plan?

All universities are required to produce Access and Participation Plans (APPs), which are approved by the universities' regulator, the Office for Students. St Mary's University is committed to providing a transformational experience for its diverse community of students. Our Access and Participation Plan sets out how we will improve equality of opportunity by supporting traditionally disadvantaged or underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education.



You can see the full Access and Participation Plan for St Mary's University [here](#).

Key targets (pages 3-11 of the full plan)

The focus of our APP is on improving outcomes for specific groups of students. Careful analysis of our data shows that, historically, outcomes can be different for some groups of students compared to their peers, so our key targets over the next few years will be to:

- Increase the numbers of students from areas of low participation in HE, older mature students and Asian students, to levels appropriate for our location.
- Remove any racial disparities in the proportions of students who complete their studies or graduate with a 1st or 2:1 degree
- Increase the proportion of boys from areas where few young people progress to university, and students with a declared disability, who complete their studies and graduate with a 1st or 2:1
- Reduce any gaps in the proportion of students from high and low deprivation neighbourhoods who are awarded the highest degree outcomes
- Increase the likelihood that students from a minority ethnic background, or with a declared disability, will progress to highly skilled employment or further study after their degrees.

Whilst we are working hard to address and eliminate any gaps and have made progress in many areas over recent years, we still have further to go and so we are constantly examining and improving our offer.

Fees we charge (page 30 of the full plan)

At St Mary's University, the **maximum** undergraduate fees charged for UK students are: • £9,250 per year for full-time study • £6,935 for part-time study • £11,100 for accelerated degree study.



You can see a full list of fees for courses [here](#).

Financial help available (page 30 of the full plan)

We offer financial support to students from households with low income to help them access higher education and continue studying until their course is completed. The support includes:

- An annual [excellence scholarship](#) of £3,000 for each year of undergraduate study for students with high academic potential and an annual household income below £25,000
- An annual [bursary](#) of £2,000 for each year of undergraduate study for students with an annual household income below £15,000
- A comprehensive package of financial and practical support for students with experience of the care system, or who are permanently estranged from their families, through our [St Mary's Cares](#) scheme:
- A [hardship fund](#) to support students who are experiencing extreme unforeseen financial difficulty or unexpected financial crisis during their time at university
- An [engagement fund](#) to help students with in financial need to access extra-curricular activities which enhance their studies and promote their 'sense of belonging' with St Mary's.



You can find information about the full range of financial support [here](#).

Information for students (page 30 of the full plan)

Prospective students receive information on fees and financial support at in-person and virtual events, such as our open days, and by email communications.

Current students receive information about fees and the financial support available through our student portal, internal communications campaigns and emails.



For the most up-to-date information, see our [university website](#)

What we are aiming to achieve - strategic aims and responses (pages 12-20 of the full plan)

Our overall aim is to support students to access higher education and create an environment where all students at St Mary's can achieve their full potential, regardless of their background or prior experiences. To this end we are constantly trying to identify and remove barriers and improve our academic, engagement and support offer for students. Based on continual assessment of our performance, we identify the needs of particular groups and have identified the following areas on which to focus our work:

- **Supporting attainment at school and access to higher education** – We will continue to expand our sustained engagement programmes with schools and colleges to raise pupil attainment and expectations to study for HE qualifications. We will also further improve our targeting of local schools and colleges to extend the reach of the outreach provision we offer.
- **Diversifying provision** – We will continue to evaluate our current degree offer and explore different study options, including growing our partnerships, apprenticeships and accelerated degrees.
- **Students from low participation neighbourhoods and low-income backgrounds** – By 2024-25, we will increase the proportion of our students from areas where young people do not usually progress to higher education. We will increase the proportion of males from low participation areas who complete their degrees. We will also reduce the gap in 1st and 2:1 degree outcomes between students from areas of highest and lowest levels of deprivation, and aim to eliminate these by 25/26.
- **Students from racially minoritised backgrounds** – We will increase the proportion of Asian undergraduate students to reflect our local population. We will also eliminate any gaps in good degree outcomes and significantly reduce any differences in continuation rates between our students from white and other ethnic backgrounds. We will improve progression to graduate employment or post-graduate study for these groups.
- **Disabled students** – We will reduce the gap in continuation between students with declared disabilities and non-disabled students and increase the number of these students progressing to highly skilled employment or further study at the end of their course.
- **Most disadvantaged or vulnerable student groups** – We will increase the number of students with experience of the care system, or permanently estranged from their families, who access our programmes, complete their studies, attain good degrees and progress to graduate work or further study.
- **Mature students** – By 2024-25, we will increase the proportion of older mature students (aged 26+) and try to ensure their outcomes are as good as those of younger students.
- For 22/23 we will also include students who would have been identified as 'young carers' whilst in compulsory education, refugee or asylum-seeking students and students of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma heritage within the strategies and initiatives we deliver for the most vulnerable or disadvantaged groups (as above).

What we are doing to achieve our aims - strategic measures (pages 21-27 of the full plan)

We have identified a number of programmes of activity to support achievement of our aims and targets:

- *Extend our sustained engagement programme of work with schools* to support more pupils from underrepresented groups to attain good grades and progress to higher education.
- Work more closely with our outstanding ITT teams, Uni-Connect and other new and established partners to develop collaborative programmes and increase our capacity for attainment raising work.
- *Improve the quality and availability of data* to monitor students' progress and use this data to scrutinise outcomes, drive initiatives and target resources.
- *Increase the availability, use and range of Technology Enhanced Learning resources*, to improve active engagement on campus and online and embed flexible learning and assessment.

- *Develop more structured, consistent and inclusive induction, engagement and transition programmes* focusing on both academic and social integration which meet the needs of different student groups
- *Ensure that our course design and review processes focus on continually improving inclusivity* in curriculum content, delivery and assessment practices and respond to diverse student feedback.
- Fully implement our curriculum framework, Learning & Teaching and Student Retention Strategies.
- *Continue to develop opportunities with FE and HE partners* to provide more flexible and diverse ways to access and succeed in higher education at levels 4 and 5 and improve progression to employment or further study.
- *Embed effective and inclusive teaching approaches* and student academic support and employability into programme design, delivery and assessment.
- *Offer meaningful financial support, advice and practical help*, including bursaries, hardship and engagement funding for eligible students, including refugee and asylum-seeking students.

How students can get involved (pages 27-28 of the full plan)

We collaborate with a diverse range of students through our Students' Union, WP Strategy and Implementation Group and Student Issues Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee to collaborate on the delivery of our APP. We have established several new student voices groups and new types of student representation to help us further increase the diversity of our collaborators and ensure they are representative of many backgrounds.



To give feedback, or become involved in this work, email our Widening Participation Team at wideningparticipation@stmarys.ac.uk find out more through our [Widening Participation](#) or [Student Engagement](#) webpages, or contact our [Students' Union](#).

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved (pages 28-29 of the full plan)

Our programmes of activity are informed by the best available evidence about what works for students. We will collect quantitative data about student outcomes, qualitative data about the student experience and use a wide range of feedback to evaluate:

- How well our programme design reflects the diversity of our population and supports the success of our students from different backgrounds
- How the different activities we are undertaking impact on the student experience and help us to improve the university experience for our target groups
- How the general strategies and targeted actions outlined in our APP impact on our overall aim of improved access, success and progression for traditionally disadvantaged or underrepresented groups

The Widening Participation team, including the specifically-appointed WP Research and Impact Evaluation Officer, will drive and lead the evaluation of the implementation of the APP, working with relevant departments across the university, including academic departments, Student Services and Strategic Planning. The WP Strategy and Implementation Group will monitor, evaluate and report on these processes to the appropriate committees. We will scrutinise the implementation of actions, monitor their impact on target groups and examine ongoing progress against yearly milestones to ensure we are addressing our aims and understand where resources should be targeted. We will use the best sector evidence to inform our decisions and incorporate appropriate impact evaluation methodologies, including the work of NERUPI and TASO.



We will publish evidence from our evaluations on our website by January 2024.
Find out more about current projects and how we evaluate impact [here](#)

Contact details for further information



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