

# Supporting access, participation and student success

Impact Report 2024-25





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# Introduction

The University of Bristol is committed to the transformative power of higher education. We proudly champion equality of opportunity and the broad social, educational, and cultural benefits that widening access and participation brings to our students and to society.

We have worked hard to build a strong track record of delivering ambitious initiatives to ensure equality of opportunity for under-represented groups. This includes a commitment to diversifying our student body; fostering an inclusive learning environment; and providing tailored pastoral and academic support appropriate to the needs of a diverse student body. Central to these efforts is the work that has been delivered through our Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020-24, which provides an evidence-based framework for identifying and supporting student groups at risk of disadvantage across the entire student lifecycle - including access, continuation, attainment, and progression.

Funded partnerships with civic, third-sector, and charitable organisations are integral to our work. The collaborations detailed in this report drive our mission to widen engagement, and ensure students are fully supported throughout their Bristol journey. Together, we work to challenge and reduce structural inequalities in education and create lasting impact.

We are proud of the progress we have made over the last 4 years against our nine APP objectives. The diagram below highlights the significant gains so far. However, there is still more to do, and we remain committed to addressing access, success and progression gaps.

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## read our full access and participation plan 2020-21 to 2024-25



[https://www.bristol.ac.uk/applicants/  
media/policy-documents/2020/undergraduate/  
access-participation-plan-2020.pdf](https://www.bristol.ac.uk/applicants/media/policy-documents/2020/undergraduate/access-participation-plan-2020.pdf)

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# University of Bristol Access and participation plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

	Objective	Impact
<b>Access</b>	Narrowing of the gap in intake between Q1 and Q5 students from 10:1 to 6:1 by 2024-25	Gap narrowed to 7.98:1
	Increasing the number of students from Q1 entering higher education	7.3% of our student intake in 2024-25 came from a Q1 area
	Increasing the number of Black students enrolling at the University of Bristol by 2024-25	3.4% of our student intake in 2024-25 were black
	Increasing the number of Asian students enrolling at the University of Bristol by 2024-25	9.9% of our student intake in 2024-25 were Asian
	Increasing the number of mature students at the University of Bristol by 2024-25	4.7% of our student intake in 2024-25 were Mature

	Objective	Impact
<b>Success</b>	Narrowing the gap in continuation rates between young and mature students from 9% to 5% by 2024-25	Gap in continuation rates between young and mature students closed to 5.6pp in 2022-23*
	Narrowing the gap in continuation rates between non-disabled students and those with mental health conditions from 7% to 3.5% by 2024-25	Gap in continuation rates between non-disabled students and those with mental health conditions closed to 1.1pp in 2022-23*
	Narrowing the attainment gap between global majority and white students from 7% to 1% by 2024-25	7.1pp gap in 2023-24*
<b>Progression</b>	Closing the gap in progression rates between disabled and non-disabled students by 2024/25	1.7pp gap in 2022-23*

## \*Most recent data

The main body of this annual report examines the impact of our activity during the 2024–25 academic year, in this final year of the APP cycle.



## An inspiring education and transformative student experience

### **Strategic Alignment**

The work outlined in this report, directly supports the University's Vision and Strategy 2030, particularly our commitment to diversifying our learning community and ensuring that all students benefit from a transformative student experience.

The University of Bristol Vision and Strategy articulates a clear commitment not only to attracting and inspiring a diverse community of learners, but also to ensuring they thrive during their time with us and beyond. We are committed to:

- Making a positive impact by diversifying our learning community and educational offer, with a particular focus on communities where participation in higher education is lowest.
- Supporting and empowering every student to reach their potential, academically and personally, providing the skills and experiences to thrive in their studies and beyond.
- Working with all our students and the University of Bristol Students' Union to create an inclusive and tolerant culture, where everyone feels respected and that they belong, and we grow and celebrate our diverse communities.

# Supporting Access into Higher Education

## Widening Participation

The Widening Participation team lead projects that provide targeted support for students from underrepresented backgrounds and support them to access University. Participants in these programmes often present multiple, intersecting characteristics associated with barriers to equality of opportunity and are consequently among those least likely to progress to a high-tariff institution such as Bristol.

The programmes are designed to increase knowledge and confidence about higher education and provide admissions benefits on completion, including eligibility for a guaranteed contextual offer, or a guaranteed interview.

In 2024-25 over 1200 prospective students completed a targeted Widening Participation programme.

### Access to Bristol

Access to Bristol offers local students the opportunity to experience university life firsthand. The programme acknowledges the multiple and intersecting barriers that local students may face in accessing higher education.

Through subject-specific sessions, tailored advice and guidance, and meaningful interaction with staff and students, Access to Bristol provides participants with both academic insight and practical support.

- 2024-25 saw 672 prospective students complete the programme.
- All learners on the programme held multiple widening participation characteristics: 53% identified as being from Global Majority

backgrounds, 46% were the first in their family to progress to higher education, and 18% had been eligible for Free School Meals.

- After completing Access to Bristol, participants were more likely to agree that 'the University of Bristol is a welcoming and inclusive HE institution'.
- After completing Access to Bristol, participants were more confident that the 'the University of Bristol [was] a good fit' for them.
- In 2024-25, 249 Access to Bristol participants selected the University as their firm choice - a strong indicator of the programme's continued impact in the local community.

### Next Step Bristol

Next Step Bristol supports year 13 students who identify as Asian or Black. Through a series of interactive sessions both online and at the University, Next Step Bristol empowers prospective students to shape their own perceptions of university life and build a sense of belonging - helping them to see themselves as part of the University of Bristol.

- 2024-25 saw 207 students complete the programme and be eligible for a guaranteed contextual offer or interview.
- 83% of survey completers believed that the University of Bristol would be a good fit for them, compared to 33% before the programme.
- 73% of survey respondents knew about the support available for Students of Colour at the University of Bristol, compared to 33% before the programme.

“

I am very grateful to be able to take part in this programme, which has helped me a lot and has given me a lot of confidence, reducing my anxiety and stress significantly. I really think that this programme is very useful and meaningful, I hope that it can help more students in the future. ”

### FE Colleges Engagement

We partner with Further Education providers to support recruitment of mature students on the Access to HE Diploma. Through targeted information and advice, adult learners are enabled to progress into undergraduate study at Bristol.

- In 2024-25 we engaged with 620 mature Access to HE students.
- Mature students who engage with us in this way are much more likely to convert to Bristol than their counterparts. They are over 40% more likely to apply and over 30% more likely to go firm with the University.

**1,200**  
prospective students  
completed a targeted  
Widening Participation  
Programme in  
2024-25



# Supporting Students through University

Our work supports and empowers students from underrepresented groups to reach their potential after entering higher education, academically and personally, providing the skills and experiences to thrive in their studies and beyond.

## Student Inclusion

The Student Inclusion Team work with staff across the University to develop inclusive practice to improve the experience of students from underrepresented groups, run peer support programmes to help students successfully transition to University life, and provide community building and tailored support for groups of students who may need additional help to reach their potential.

### Tailored support

Bristol Scholars, care experienced and estranged students, and Sanctuary Scholars are supported by dedicated members of staff throughout their time at university and provided with a framework of support and access to further opportunities.

We welcomed 23 new Bristol Scholars to the University in September 2024, bringing the total number to 125 Scholars across all year groups. The Bristol Scholars scheme has been running for 8 years with 139 students successfully graduating. 25 Bristol Scholars successfully graduated in 2025, with 17 achieving a 1st or 2:1.

The University of Bristol's Sanctuary Scholarship provides funding for students from forced migration communities. We awarded 12 Scholarships in 24-25.

“

My Sanctuary Scholarship provides me with a feeling of belonging and recognition. It also provides much needed stability.”

In 24/25 we produced 100 welcome packs for incoming care experienced and estranged students, including gifts and a personalised card, offered individual coaching and advice appointments to 32 students, supported 12 students through the estrangement process, and ran regular drop ins for 85 students throughout the year.

“

This has made me feel so welcome. I didn't know what to expect coming to Uni, it feels like someone knows I'm here.”

### Race Inclusion Advocate programme

Our Race Inclusion Advocate programme ran 5 projects in partnership with colleagues from across the University, to improve the experience and outcomes for global majority students. Advocates engaged in projects that reached over 900 global majority students. 83% of staff who worked with the RIAs have already used RIA feedback to improve the support they provide to global majority students, and 96% of RIAs said that being an advocate helped improve their sense of belonging at university.

“

I learned a huge amount about the lived experiences of our Global Majority students and the ways in which we can use this to shape institutional policy. I also learned about the impact the Race Advocates are already having and the ways in which we can incorporate them further in the work of the division”

staff member

### Mature student support

Our enhanced mature student transition and belonging programme includes our Building up to Bristol pre-arrival academic preparation course, introductory events throughout the welcome period, community building events such as monthly mingles throughout the year, and personalised support and advocacy. There were 226 attendances at mature student community building events throughout the year, and the University's mature student WhatsApp group provided informal support and information sharing for 335 students.

### Peer Support

We have developed a strong peer support offer to help our diverse students to feel more confident at university, both academically and personally.

2024-25 saw 185 Peer Mentors providing support to a total 853 students. 95% of mentees reported positively about Peer Mentoring. Pre and post survey scores demonstrated mentees felt more confident accessing wellbeing (up 36%), financial (up 31%), academic (up 42%) and career support (up 51%), and increased confidence engaging in social opportunities (up 26%), as well as increases in the sense of belonging of the mentees.

2,700 students attended a PASS session, supported by 300 PASS Leaders and 16 Senior PASS Leaders. Our evaluation showed that PASS positively influenced students' meta-cognitive strategies, especially in self-motivation, use of effective study techniques, and self-assessment after studying, and improved students' sense of belonging.

Our TNB mentoring programme offers trans and non-binary students the opportunity to be supported by a mentor with similar lived experience. 8 mentees reported improvements across 18 impact markers, there was a 57% increase in positive indicators of mentees self-esteem, a 43% increase in positive indicators of mentees confidence, and 72% increase in positive indicators that mentees felt comfortable participating in student life beyond their academic studies.

“

I gained a greater acceptance of myself as a trans person and getting a sense of trans community in Bristol.”

**853**  
students received  
Peer Mentoring  
in 2024-25



**469**  
total recipients  
of Futures  
Scholarship

### **WP Research Internships**

The Widening Participation (WP) Summer Research Internships provide students with hands-on experience of research during the summer holidays, with the aim of improving their confidence and independent study skills. 32 students undertook a summer research internship - 18 WP Research internships and 14 Welcome Trust Biomedical Vacation Scholarships. 78% of students on the programme were from Asian or Asian British; Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African; Mixed or multiple ethnic groups; or another ethnic group category. 31% of participants were mature students, and 38% were eligible for Free School Meals.

“

I gained a greater understanding of what it means to be a researcher, the challenges and opportunities that provides. I learned the techniques that researchers use to develop their ideas and remain on task when presented with a lot of information. I understand more about myself, my skills and what I am capable of. ”

### **Careers**

Our Careers Service helps students to get to where they want to be when they graduate and offers additional support to students from underrepresented groups. We value equal, diverse, and inclusive workplaces. Our support drives equity for students from underrepresented groups.

### **Futures Scholarships**

The Futures Scholarship provides comprehensive financial, pastoral and career support to students who have experienced hardship to help students thrive at Bristol and beyond. In 24-25 there were:

- 469 total recipients of Futures Scholarship
- 364 active scholars: 324 undergraduate students and 40 graduates
- 118 new Futures Scholars
- 150 scholars with a disability
- 192 scholars who are from a global majority background
- 131 appointments at the Careers Service by Futures Scholars
- £30,713 been spent by 43 individual scholars making 77 requests for funding

### **Bristol Mentors**

200 students in total were matched with their own alumni career mentor in 2024-25, a 12.5% increase from last year.

The scale of our provision puts Bristol Mentors into the top 20% of 1-1 mentoring programmes across the whole of UK Higher Education.

Three years of data show clear benefits in employability outcomes for former mentees.

“

As a neurodivergent care leaver from a low-income background, I often struggled to envision myself in certain spaces and lacked the career guidance that many of my peers received from family or established networks. The peer encouragement, combined with the steady support of my mentor, gave me the confidence and tools to aim high and begin building the future I once thought was out of reach. The blend of near-peer relatability and professional experience is exactly what makes the programme not just supportive, but transformative.”

### **Flying Start**

20 editions of the Flying Start careers newsletter were sent out to all students from widening participation backgrounds. Over 30,000 newsletters were opened across the year demonstrating significant reach.

### **SME internship scheme**

The SME Internship Scheme provides opportunities for students to gain 4 weeks of paid work experience with small and medium sized businesses and organisations.

- 107 students from widening participation backgrounds secured internships, including:
  - 34 students from global majority backgrounds

- 43 disabled students
- 64% of these internships were advertised by employers, and 36% were sourced directly by students reaching out to employers

### **Disabled and neurodivergent careers support**

Self-bookable 15-minute ‘Disabled and neurodivergent career meetings’ were delivered for the first time, providing information and advice for students as well as triaging them into the careers support, they require. These were offered alongside ringfenced 45-minute careers guidance appointments for disabled and neurodivergent students and recent graduates.

- 224 appointments were delivered in total across 2024-25.
- We continue to partner with EmployAbility who offer 1-2-1 appointments supporting students with queries around disclosure and adjustments in the recruitment process.
- 39 students attended our sessions on understanding adjustments in the recruitment process and workplace.
- A Specialist workshop delivered by Blind in Business.

“

Your patient guidance and gentle questioning really helped my interview answers to gain shape and structure, and also really helped me grow to be confident in my professional identity”

“

The service is really well informed and well set up for neurodivergent people. They (Advisors) are really professional, very well informed on neurodiversity and they have really helpful, practical strategies.”





## Money Advice and Funding

In 2024–25, the University of Bristol delivered over £10.5 million in financial support to more than 5,000 students, complimented by specialist advice from the Money Advice Team.

More than 16,000 individual payments were made, with the Advice Team providing 4,936 engagements, ensuring students received both practical financial help and tailored guidance when they needed it.

The University of Bristol Bursary supported 4,078 students, with an average award of £1,688.46, plus a £250 one-off payment, representing a total investment of £7,847,960.

The Financial Assistance Fund remained a vital source of emergency support. With 2,934 applications and 2,356 awards, the fund distributed £847,800, including 430 food vouchers to ensure students facing acute hardship could maintain access to essential items.

For care experienced and estranged students, the Standalone Bursary provided £1,500 to 98 students, totalling £141,750.

The Money Advice service supported 2,269 students in 2024–25 and recorded an 86% satisfaction rate. Through casework and specialist advice, the team helped students navigate complex funding issues. 84% of participants said the service had effectively addressed their financial concerns.

**The Money  
Advice service  
supported 2,269  
students in  
2024–25**

# Strategic Partnerships

Funded partnerships with civic, third sector, and charitable organisations, support the work of our Access and Participation Plan. These partnerships aim to support pre-enrolment attainment and engagement as well as supporting students during their time at Bristol. A snapshot of our partnerships include:

## **IntoUniversity – Bristol East & Bristol South**

The University supports two IntoUniversity collaborations—Bristol East and Bristol South—and 2024–25 marks another year of remarkable achievement.

- 2,721 students engaged across the academic year
- Bristol East: HE progression 65%, compared with a 19% local average
- Bristol South: HE progression 47%, compared with a 10% local average
- Nationwide, IntoUniversity supports FSM students to achieve a 60% HE progression rate, more than double the 29% national average

These centres are transforming educational trajectories in communities experiencing some of the deepest inequalities.

## **South Bristol Youth – Learning to Lead**

The Learning to Lead programme strengthens school engagement with pupils and their families and, in doing so, reduces persistent absenteeism among targeted learners in Years 5, 6 and 7 across Hartcliffe and Withywood.

- 120 young people participate every year
- 72% saw improved school attendance at a primary level
- 74% saw improved school attendance at a secondary level

## **South Bristol Youth – Unlocking Potential**

Strengthening oracy, building self-efficacy, and deepening parent and carer understanding of the value of communication skills together broaden young people's horizons and increase their awareness of future pathways, including progression to higher education.

- 75% reported the programme helped them at school
- 93% reported increased confidence
- Nationally the 'gap' in Attainment 8 average between disadvantaged young people and non-disadvantaged young people is 15.4. For young people on the Unlocking Potential Programme, it is less than 1

Unlocking potential has shown a significant, measurable shift in outcomes for children who often face the greatest barriers.

## **The Brilliant Club: The Scholars Programme**

Now in its 9th year, The Scholars Programme continues to grow

- 53 Bristol researchers delivered tutorials to 1,409 students, building academic skills and university readiness
- 5 placements delivered to 66 students in 2024–25
- Students reported a 52% increased understanding about university study
- Bristol hosted 6 graduation events for 26 schools and 313 students, with 86% agreeing: *"I have learned something new about university on this trip"*





2,721

students engaged in  
Bristol East & Bristol  
South IntoUniversity  
centres in 2024-25

These programmes expand horizons, elevate confidence, and support understanding of university life.

**The Brilliant Club: Join the Dots** is a university transition programme targeted at students who are most likely to face barriers in making a successful transition to university, and who are at risk of missing the life changing opportunities of Higher Education.

58 first-year undergraduates supported in 2024-25

Statistically significant improvements:

- +15% academic self-efficacy
- +20% cognitive strategies
- +13% metacognitive strategies

“

Join the Dots is a great head start to Uni as it equips you with essential skills.”

### **Unite Foundation Scholarship**

We are proud to partner with the Unite Foundation to provide rent-free accommodation for estranged and care-experienced students through their #HomeAtUniversity scheme.

- In 2024-25, 22 students applied, and 4 scholars were awarded places

This partnership ensures that finances and housing stability do not stand in the way of talented students succeeding at Bristol.

“

I'm so grateful to have the Unite Foundation Scholarship, it means I have less money worries.”

# Aims for the Future: Our 2025–29 Access and Participation Plan

Our next Access and Participation Plan (2025–29) renews our focus on student success, while sustaining our long-standing commitment to improving equality of opportunity in access to the University of Bristol.

We will focus on students who experience systemic barriers, tailoring support across the student lifecycle. At the point of access, we aim to increase enrolment from lower socio-economic groups and Black and Asian students, while maintaining mature student participation. We will work to close degree outcome gaps affecting students who declare a mental health condition, mature learners, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and Global Majority students.

Over the next year we are strengthening our overall approach to supporting students' transition into, through and beyond university. By combining high-quality universal transition provision with targeted, evidence-informed interventions, we will ensure our support is equitable, accessible, and impactful.

Over the next four years, we will implement ambitious interventions to close persistent outcome gaps where disparities remain. Through strong partnerships across the University and with external stakeholders, we will continue to invest in evidence-based activity that delivers meaningful and sustained change.

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**read our access and  
participation plan  
2025–26 to 2028–29**



<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/study/documents/policies/Access%20and%20participation%20plan%202025%20-%202026.pdf>



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