



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



Widening Participation

Our commitments to
outreach and
the student
journey

Welcome

It has been a privilege to participate in and observe the wide range and diversity of outreach activities that occur across the University and Colleges. We've made great progress in recent years and are proud of that, but we appreciate there's more to do.

Our focus is not only on admissions and access, but in supporting our students throughout their time at Cambridge and beyond. We're delighted that our Access and Participation Plan for 2025-29 has been approved by the Office for Students. You can find out more about our key objectives throughout this guide. We're looking forward to working on these over the coming years.

I hope that you find this guide to be of interest, and if you have any questions about the activities it describes, please feel free to contact me for further information.



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Our Progress

Low participation: IMD Deciles 1-2 (Q1+2) admissions¹:

2014 **14.0%**

2023 **21.2%**

Black-British student admissions:

2014 **40**

2023 **116**

135

Number of students successfully enrolled on the Foundation Year programme since 2022.

1,700

Number of students at Cambridge in 2023-24 from low income households².

£11,397,165

Amount of money awarded to students through the Cambridge Bursary Scheme in 2023-24.

¹ The indices of multiple deprivation (IMD) is a measure of relative deprivation for fixed geographic areas of the UK.

² Low income households are defined by the Government as Home students with a household income of £25,000 or less.

Access and Participation Plan

Our Access and Participation Plan (APP) sets out what we're doing to promote equality of opportunity. While we have made significant progress in recent years, the new 2025-29 APP sets out our ambitions for the future. Our analysis outlines 6 objectives, which focus on equality across admissions, on-course experiences, and beyond into further study or employment.

To read the full APP, scan the QR code below.



Admissions

We are committed to ensuring that high-achieving students can make successful applications to study at the University. The APP outlines how we will increase access to admissions information for those from underrepresented backgrounds.

Objective 1:

Increase the representation of students from the least socio-economically advantaged areas of the UK.

We will seek to increase the number of students from these areas by continuing our existing outreach activities, including Apply: Cambridge, as our generous Cambridge Bursary Scheme and the fully-funded Foundation Year course.

As well as this, we plan to expand our STEM-focused attainment raising programme, establish outreach for regions which are currently underrepresented at Cambridge, and increase our intake of students who have been eligible for Free School Meals.

Apply: Cambridge

Apply: Cambridge is a specialist programme designed to support high-attaining students from underrepresented backgrounds and areas to make competitive applications to the University. The programme is delivered across a six-month period and includes information workshops, guided learning opportunities, Q&A sessions, webinars and mentoring from a current student at the University.



www.cam.ac.uk/apply-cambridge

598

Number of Apply: Cambridge participants in 2023.

Foundation Year in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

The Foundation Year is a free and fully-funded one-year programme, aimed at those who have experienced significant educational disadvantages or disruption. Students who complete the programme and who reach or exceed a threshold for academic performance will be able to progress automatically on to a full Cambridge degree.

 www.foundationyear.cam.ac.uk

Cambridge Bursary Scheme

The Cambridge Bursary Scheme provides financial support for full-time undergraduate students of up to £3,500 a year, to help with living costs. The bursary is non-repayable, meaning that students won't need to pay it back. Additional funding is available for independent students, including care leavers, and students who are eligible for Free School Meals.

 www.cam.ac.uk/financial-support



STEM SMART

In collaboration with Isaac Physics, The STEM SMART programme provides free teaching and support to students considering applying to Engineering, Computer Science, Physical or Biological Sciences courses. The programme is open to students who attend a UK maintained (non-fee paying) school and have experienced educational disadvantage, or belong to a group that is statistically less likely to progress to higher education.

 www.cam.ac.uk/stem-smart

neaco

The Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach (neaco) delivers outreach activities across East Anglia, with the aim of supporting the most disadvantaged young people in England to progress into higher education. neaco works in targeted areas of the region, where participation in higher education is lower than would be expected based on GCSE attainment.

 www.takeyourplace.ac.uk

Atom Valley Education Challenge

The Atom Valley Education Challenge is an outreach programme for students in Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The programme, run with the University of Oxford and Rochdale Sixth Form College, aims to support students from Years 5 to 13 in making successful applications to Cambridge or Oxford.

To find out more about the programme, contact our Widening Participation team (access@cao.cam.ac.uk).

Outreach across the UK

Through our Colleges we work with schools across the UK and provide a dedicated contact point for all secondary schools and colleges to engage with Cambridge.

Insight

Our Insight programme works with highly-able students from targeted schools in Cambridgeshire to raise attainment and challenge assumptions about higher education, right from the very beginning of their secondary school journey.

 www.cam.ac.uk/insight

289

Number of Insight participants in 2023.

Objective 2:

Increase the representation of students from Black-British, British-Bangladeshi and British-Pakistani ethnicities at Cambridge.

We aim to increase the proportion of students from these underrepresented ethnicities by expanding our engagement with students in these groups. As well as continuing our existing programmes for Black-British students, we will develop new interventions in consultation with Bangladeshi and Pakistani students.

Target Oxbridge

Funded by the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford along with Rare, Target Oxbridge aims to increase successful undergraduate applications to Cambridge and Oxford from Black-British students. The programme provides Year 10 and Year 12 students of Black heritage with mentoring and practical advice, offering an immersive experience of life at the University.

 www.targetoxbridge.co.uk

190%

Target Oxbridge is just one strand of the work which has led to numbers of Black-British students at Cambridge increasing 190% since 2014.



Supporting students on their course and beyond

We're not only committed to addressing the barriers that impact equality of admission to the University. Our Access and Participation Plan also focuses on the on-course experiences of our students and their progression to further study or employment.

Objective 3:

Improve the experiences and outcomes of Black-British and British-Bangladeshi students and tackle the awarding gap.

We will increase staff awareness of and engagement with the awarding gap, and support students and staff on a range of research projects aimed at understanding and addressing these issues. We will also continue activities designed to build a diverse and inclusive community for all students and staff, including those undertaken by our Centre for Teaching and Learning.

Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning (CCTL)

CCTL supports educators, encourages innovation and provides a focus for enhancing education at Cambridge. The Centre encourages and facilitates the adoption of inclusive curricula and practices, alongside more diverse forms of assessment and feedback. They also work with students and staff to improve opportunities for students to develop academic and personal skills.

 www.cctl.cam.ac.uk

Objective 4:

Reduce the risk to educational outcomes for students with mental health conditions.

We aim to implement a new mental health case management system; develop and deliver a new integrated student mental health service in partnership with the NHS and our local university, and promote our Wellbeing Stimulus Fund to support innovation in preventative and early intervention activities within the Cambridge Colleges. We will also continue to deliver the wide range of services offered by the Student Support team. In total, we will spend over £6.6 million on this objective throughout the 4 years of the APP.

Student Support

The Student Support team offer a wide range of services for students to help them fulfil their academic and personal potential. The services provided by the team include counselling; disability adjustments and support; mental health advice and workshops; mentoring; wellbeing support; harassment and violence support and financial support.

 www.studentsupport.cam.ac.uk



Objective 5:

Address the lower rate of progression to postgraduate study at Cambridge among undergraduates from other universities, particularly students from underrepresented ethnicities, those who've faced socio-economic disadvantage and mature students.

We plan to create an applicant support programme to help those who haven't previously studied at Cambridge. We'll also continue to develop access to funding for Master's study and research experience placements across all of our academic Schools.

Objective 6:

Address the gap in progression to further study, employment or other positive outcomes for students with a declared disability.

We will seek to improve outcomes for students with a declared disability by providing additional, specialist one-to-one and group careers support, and utilising our skills discovery tool to help these students to recognise, understand, build and articulate their skills. We'll also survey them 6 months after they've graduated to see how they are doing.

Careers Service

From their first day with us, our Careers Service helps all our students by providing impartial, people-centred careers information, events, resources, experiences, guidance and coaching so that they can make informed decisions, have the skills to progress and feel empowered to reach their definition of success.

Our service is inclusive by design, which means that all of our output is devised to meet the needs of all of our students, whatever their background.

 www.careers.cam.ac.uk



Evaluating our work

We will evaluate the impact of our work in a number of ways, including:

- regular self-assessment of our evaluation practice using resources provided by the Office for Students
- clearly identifying evaluation responsibilities and accountability for each intervention
- embedding a culture of evaluation in staff members through training and building knowledge
- reviewing our interventions annually
- sharing learnings both internally and with the sector.



Find out more

Scan the QR code to find out more about our Access and Participation Plan and the work that we are doing to achieve our objectives.

Contact us

To find out more about the outreach and widening participation work conducted by the University and its Colleges and departments, please contact Student Admissions and Access.

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www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk



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