

University Centre Colchester at Colchester Institute Summary of 2025-26 to 2028-29 Access and Participation Plan

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.

You can see the full Access and Participation Plan for University Centre Colchester at <https://www.colchester.ac.uk/ucc/ucc-policies-and-procedures/>

Key points

Colchester Institute is a large general further education college based in North Essex which delivers higher education programmes under the approved brand of University Centre Colchester. Our curriculum is made up of employer-informed professional programmes with a large percentage of students on apprenticeship or part-time employer-sponsored programmes. In 2024/25 we had approximately 300 learners studying on our Higher Education courses.

For our Access and Participation Plan we undertook a thorough assessment of performance. We found that we had a diverse student community, with access onto our programmes in-line or above both local and national characteristics. However, we also discovered that students with certain characteristics had lower rates of continuation, attainment, and progression than either their peers or the national average. Our Access and Participation Plan has been designed to improve on-course outcomes for these student groups.

Fees we charge

At University Centre Colchester the maximum fees charged are:

- £8,795* for full-time students:
- £6,596* for part-time students.

Fees will be subject to an annual inflationary increase which will be linked to the RPI-X inflation rate.

You can see a full list of fees for courses at University Centre Colchester at

<https://www.colchester.ac.uk/ucc/higher-education-finance/>

Financial help available

We offer the following financial support to students. These funds help students access higher education and continue studying until their course is completed.

- An **Engagement Fund** to support students who experience financial hardship during their time at University Centre Colchester and require financial support to help continue engagement with their programme.

Information for students

We publish information regarding fees for the preceding year on both our own and the UCAS websites. We signpost prospective students to this information through in-person events such as UCAS fairs and open events and through email communications during the application process.

Current students receive information about fees and financial support available through our UCC Academic Services Moodle site, internal communication campaigns and emails. More information on how we provide financial information to current or prospective students can be found on page 25 of our Access and Participation Plan.

What we are aiming to achieve

Based on our assessment of performance we have identified the following objectives on which to focus our work:

- 1) Improvement of on programme success metrics through enhanced student support
- 2) Improvement of progression rates for young learners on full-time programmes
- 3) Safeguarding of diversity and success of student population as the percentage of apprentices within the student body grow.

What the provider is doing to address key risks to equality of opportunity

To meet these objectives, we have set the following targets:

1) Improvement of on-programme success metrics through enhanced student support

Students with a declared disability

- Reduce the continuation rate gap between full time undergraduate students with and without a declared disability to 0% by 2028-29.
- Increase the continuation rate for full time undergraduate students with a declared disability to the national average by 2028-29.

Students from low-income households

- Reduce the continuation rate gap between full time undergraduate students entitled to Free School Meals (FSMs) and those who are not to 0% by 2028-29.
- Increase the continuation rate for full time undergraduate students entitled to Free School Meals to the national average by 2028-29.

Young Students

- Increase the continuation rate for full time undergraduate young students to the national average by 2028-29.
- Reduce the attainment gap for full time undergraduate young learners to within 5 percentage points of the national average and within 5 percentage points of mature learners at University Centre Colchester by 2028-29.

2) Improvement of progression rates for young learners on full-time programmes

Young Learners

- Reduce the progression gap between full-time young and full-time mature learners studying at University Centre Colchester to be within 10 percentage points by 2028-29.
- Reduce the progression gap for young students on full time courses to be within 5 percentage points of the national average by 2028-29.

Students with a declared disability

- Reduce the progression rate gap between students with and without a declared disability who study on a full-time course at University Centre Colchester to 0% by 2028-29.
- Reduce the progression rate gap for students with a declared disability to national averages to be within 4% of the national average by 2028-29.

3) Safeguarding of diversity and success of student population as the percentage of apprentices within the student body grow.

- Maintain the percentage of apprenticeship learners who declare a diagnosed disability to be above the national average.
- Increase the percentage of apprenticeship learners who declare a diagnosed disability to be the same as those on full-time programmes.
- Maintain the percentage of mature apprenticeship learners to remain above the national average.

What we are doing to achieve our aims

We are undertaking the following initiatives to achieve our aims and targets:

- Providing funding for learners that may have an unidentified learning support need (mainly dyslexia) to receive formal diagnoses and in turn Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) support.
- Committing to provide equal 1-1 academic support to apprenticeship students, which would normally be provided by the DSA, but for which apprenticeship students are currently ineligible.
- Investing in an 'engagement fund' to support students where they may be struggling to engage with their studies for financial reasons.
- Committing to continue with the Students' Assistance Programme, which provides 24/7 wellbeing and safeguarding support to students.
- Committing to develop an enhanced induction programme, designed to ensure all learners are aware of all support programmes and how to access them.
- Expanding our Academic Skills Centre which provides students with on-line and in-person study skills support.

How students can get involved

We consulted with a cross-section of current and former students to help design our plan. Our current students will be central to the monitoring of our initiatives with our Student Council (which is composed of student representatives from all courses) receiving annual reports and updates. The Student Council is also represented in our internal quality assurance meetings, including Academic Board, which has responsibility for overseeing implementation of the plan.

A list of Student Council members can be found on the UCC Academic Services Moodle site. To become more involved in this work, and to discuss becoming a Student Council member, current students can contact UCC Academic Services at uccacademicservices@colchester.ac.uk More information regarding student consultation can be found on page 24 of our Access and Participation Plan.

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

Monitoring and evaluation of the intervention strategies listed in our Access and Participation Plan will be undertaken centrally by our UCC Academic Services department. All evaluation will be shared with internal stakeholders through the UCC Academic Board, UCC Student Council and Governing Body.

Insights gained from evaluation processes will be presented to fellow UK based partners of our main validating body, the University of East Anglia. More information regarding our approach to evaluation can be found on page 24 of our Access and Participation Plan.

Contact details for further information

If you would like further information on this Access and Participation Plan, please contact UCC Academic Services at uccacademicservices@colchester.ac.uk for further information.