

Access and participation plan: Checklist for providers

This document should only be used in conjunction with 'Regulatory notice 1: Access and participation plan guidance' (OfS 2019.05) when preparing your access and participation plan. The guidance is available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-notice-1-access-and-participation-plan-guidance/

This checklist is intended as a supportive tool and guide and does not guarantee that a plan will be approved. Approval of a plan is based on the provider's context and the ambition and credibility of the plan, and therefore you should aim to make your first submission as ambitious and credible as possible.

Where you have not included any of the information on this checklist in your plan you should state the rationale for doing so, and present alternatives where appropriate. This will then be looked at on a case-by-case basis to see if it is acceptable. For example, very small providers may not be able to disaggregate figures in their assessment of performance as requested here. In this instance providers should state this is the case and include details of alternative evidence they have used, such as academic evidence, to understand whether it is a problem they need to address.

Initial checks

Plans should:

- be in a Word document format
- be no more than 20 pages in length (longer plans may take longer for the OfS to assess)
- exclude personal details or any data which makes individuals identifiable
- be submitted alongside the following completed documents:
 - The targets and investment plan (Excel document, template provided on the OfS portal)
 - Fee information (Excel document, template provided on the OfS portal)
 - A student submission (see the student consultation section below).

The content of the plan should:

- demonstrate a clear theory of change between the assessment of performance → the strategic aims, objectives and targets → the strategic measures → a provider's investment

Assessment of performance (see page 20 of the guidance)

A. Content required for the OfS to conduct an initial approval assessment

A plan should identify underrepresented groups where there are equality gaps. This includes an analysis of:

- The **gaps** between **each** of the following **underrepresented groups** and their peers in absolute terms, including consideration of **progress over time** across the **student lifecycle**:
 - Those living in areas of low higher education participation or from lower household income or socioeconomic status backgrounds
 - Black, Asian and minority ethnic students disaggregated by individual ethnic groups
 - Mature students
 - Disabled students (those in receipt of DSA and those who have declared a disability but are not in receipt of DSA) disaggregated into disability type
 - Care leavers
- Intersections of characteristics of disadvantage

B. Content related to risk of breach of condition A1 in addition to the content listed in column A

Plans may include:

- Consideration of other groups where there are known barriers to higher education including:
 - Carers
 - People estranged from their families
 - People from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
 - Refugees
 - Children from military families
- Reference to the use of other data sources such as internal data, UCAS data or quantitative or qualitative research
- A further disaggregation of disabled student groups

Within this analysis providers should:

- Consider the **whole student lifecycle** comprising of access, success (non-continuation and attainment) and progression (employment/further study and progression into highly skilled employment)
- Consider their role in the national context using sector-wide evidence and data including the OfS key performance measures
- Reference the sources of data used in the assessment of performance which includes the OfS access and participation dataset

Strategic aims, objectives and targets (see page 23 of the guidance)

A. Content required for the OfS to conduct an initial approval assessment

B. Content related to risk of breach of condition A1 in addition to the content listed in column A

Strategic aims and objectives

Providers should set out in their plan the **strategic aims and objectives** which reflect the areas for development identified in their **assessment of performance, reflecting the OfS key performance measures** where appropriate. This section of the plan should include:

- An articulation of your overarching strategic aims in respect of the delivery of equality of opportunity and outcomes for all students
- A summary of which underrepresented groups you will be targeting and at which stage(s) of the student lifecycle based on your assessment of performance
- Your objectives (what you aim to achieve) relating to each target group and stage of the lifecycle you have identified
- The timescale over which you expect to deliver your aims and objectives.

Plans may include:

- Detail about how your aims and objectives will contribute to equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups nationally based on sector-wide evidence considered in your assessment of performance. This may be achieved through collaborative aims and objectives.

Targets (completed in the Targets and investment plan)	
<p>Providers should set ambitious, clearly defined outcomes-based targets that directly reflect the strategic aims and objectives, and the OfS key performance measures where applicable. These should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretching • Outcomes-based • Measurable on a consistent basis, with baseline data where possible • Set over five years, and include annual or interim milestone which will be used to measure progress 	<p>Plans may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes-focused targets related to sustained engagement with pre-16 students or working with the community or employers to support mature student access to higher education • Outcomes-focused targets related to raising attainment in schools and colleges • Collaborative targets across particular types of providers, or a regional or geographical target which may relate to promoting equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups nationally

Strategic measures (see page 26 of the guidance)

A. Content required for the OfS to conduct an initial approval assessment

An access and participation plan must set out the strategic measures the provider will put in place to achieve its ambitions, demonstrating continuous improvement in practice and outcomes for students.

- Providers must state **when** they aim to achieve the commitments made in their access and participation plan.

B. Content related to risk of breach of condition A1 in addition to the content listed in column A

Whole provider strategic approach

Providers must state how they are taking a whole provider approach to meeting their access and participation strategic aims. Plans should include:

- An **overview** of your whole provider approach which articulates your overarching, evidence-informed theory of change
- Details of how your access and participation plan is linked to other **strategies**:
 - Equality, diversity and inclusion including a demonstration that you have paid due regard to the Equality Act 2010 when designing your plan
 - Learning, teaching and assessment

<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Employability● At a high level, the main strategic measures you will take to deliver your aims and objectives, including a statement about how each measure relates to your aims and objectives and is underpinned by evidence. This should include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Curriculum, pedagogic and student support development to promote inclusivity and address attainment and progression gaps○ Employability and skills development○ Collaboration with other bodies across the student lifecycle. This includes other higher education providers, students, schools and colleges to raise prior attainment, employers and third sector bodies○ Alignment with other work and funding sources such as the NCOP, outreach hubs, and local graduates where applicable● Where you are using financial support as a strategic measure to achieve your access and participation aims you should state what it is trying to achieve and how this has been informed by evidence. This should include a statement about the level of funding you are investing in your financial support package and the eligibility criteria you will apply.	
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Student consultation

Plans should:

- Demonstrate how students have had the opportunity to express their views about the content of the plan and how you have responded to this
- Include evidence of how students from a range of backgrounds have been involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the plan
- A description of the mechanisms in place for students to engage in a meaningful way

Plans may include:

- A separate student submission
- A description of your collaboration with students
- A description of the channels available for student feedback
- A description of the training provided to student representatives
- Include how students have been included on decision-making panels
- Demonstration of how students contribute to a whole provider approach

Evaluation strategy

Plans should include a description of a **robust and credible evaluation strategy** which demonstrates continuous improvement in practice. This should include:

- A description of the mechanisms in place to enable the outcomes of evaluation to influence practice
- Details of how your evaluation strategy has been informed by a self-assessment of evaluation

Plans may include:

- An overview of findings from the completed self-assessment tools (such as the OfS self-assessment of evaluation tool)
- A description of how a provider has used the OfS financial support evaluation toolkit
- A description of collaboration between providers (for example, sharing good practice or developing evaluation centres)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how you will evaluate the impact of those areas where they are investing heavily (including financial support) • A description of how you have used evidence and evaluation findings to inform programme design that targets underrepresented groups for whom the largest gaps in access, success and progression have been identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the process a provider has, or plans to have, in place to share findings both internally and externally
<p>Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan</p>	
<p>A plan should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the governing body is engaged with the monitoring of performance and provisions of the plan • How students are engaged with the monitoring of performance and provisions of the plan • Who at the provider is responsible for monitoring • How progress against the plan will be monitored, and what action will be taken if progress is worsening • How monitoring is embedded across the provider 	

Investment (see page 35 of the guidance)

Completed in the Targets and investment plan

C. Content required for the OfS to conduct an initial approval assessment

The targets and investment plan should include an estimate of a provider's level of investment in addressing the gaps in access and participation for underrepresented groups. The investment recorded should only relate to the work delivered to support underrepresented groups. This spend should be disaggregated into:

- Access – categorised by pre-16 activity, post-16 activity and work with adults and communities
- Financial support
- Evaluation and research

D. Content related to risk of breach of condition A1 in addition to the content listed in column A

Provision of information to students (see page 37 of the guidance)

E. Content required for the OfS to conduct an initial approval assessment	F. Content related to risk of breach of condition A1 in addition to the content listed in column A
<p>A plan should contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Details of the arrangements in place to ensure that prospective students are provided with information about the fees they will be charged for the duration of their course, before they commit themselves to undertake the course• A commitment that providers will make available to students, information about the financial support that students are entitled to as a result of the provisions within an access and participation plan. This must include the eligibility criteria and set out the level of financial support students from underrepresented groups will be offered in each year of their studies	