

University College of Estate Management: Summary of 2020-21 to 2024-25 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 the University College of Estate Management (UCEM) at www.ucem.ac.uk/policies.

Key points

UCEM is the leading provider of supported online education solely for the built environment, with 100 years' experience of providing learning opportunities of the highest quality. UCEM was founded in 1919 and incorporated by Royal Charter (RC000125) on 22nd August 1922 and has been a registered independent charitable institution in England and Wales since 24 May 1963.

See page 1 of the full Plan for a summary of UCEM's provision and page 12 in relation to the core purpose statement and strategy summary.

The core purpose statement for UCEM, which is adapted from the objectives of its Royal Charter, reflects that providing access to all is integral to UCEM:

'to provide truly accessible, relevant and cost-effective education, enabling students to enhance careers, increase professionalism and contribute to a sustainable built environment'.

UCEM is committed to delivering courses that are accessible to all students, regardless of age, location, or protected characteristics, as well as to enhancing and supporting the longer-term employability of its graduates. The institution offers full-time and part-time courses, as well as degree apprenticeships. The average age of a student at UCEM is 29 years¹ so the institution has a strong mature student body, but wishes to widen access to a broader range of students and improve the outcomes for certain underrepresented groups.

Fees we charge

UCEM continues to support accessibility and affordability into higher education by charging fees that are generally lower than are set by UK Higher Education institutions. For example, students studying a full-time or part-time course starting in academic year 2022-23 are charged £1,200 per module. This equates to a total of £20,400 over the course of an undergraduate degree (although additional charges are made for module retakes). UCEM's part-time students typically study four modules per year (£4,800 for a student starting in academic year 2022-23) and UCEM's full-time students study a maximum of six modules per year (£7,200 for a student starting in academic year 2022-23). The maximum full-time fee that we will charge per year for students starting in year 2022-23 is £7,200, whilst the maximum part-time fee that we will charge per year for students starting in year 2022-23 is £6,935. Whilst the module fee is reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees, any changes only apply to new students; the module fee remains the same throughout a student's time on the course. UCEM's published annual fee information can be found here: www.ucem.ac.uk/policies. Course fees are not directly

See pages 9 to 10 of the full Plan.

¹ This was recorded at the time of writing the original 2020-21 to 2024-25 Access and Participation Plan.

payable by students studying as part of an apprenticeship; instead, the fee is paid by the employer through the apprenticeship levy.

Financial help available

See pages 16 to 17 of the full Plan.

UCEM offers financial support to underrepresented students in the form of fee waivers (offering between 25% and 100% of the module fee) and a Hardship Fund. Applications are invited from underrepresented groups of students covered by the Plan and will be considered by a UCEM Working Group that is chaired by UCEM's Principal. Applicants for this financial support must have received an offer for a UCEM undergraduate programme and provide evidence of their financial position. A short statement of the reasons they wish to undertake the course and how they plan to allocate time to their study must also be provided.

Information for students

See pages 17 to 18 and 20 to 21 of the full Plan.

A copy of UCEM's Access and Participation Plan is available at www.ucem.ac.uk/policies. UCEM's Student Representatives and Ambassadors are required to draw attention to the Plan and will be supported in obtaining feedback and comment from the student body on the projects contained therein. UCEM responses and actions arising from this feedback, as well as the findings from its monitoring and evaluation activities, will be fed back to the student representatives and summarised on UCEM's Virtual Learning Environment. Students are made aware of fees and the financial support available in their offer/re-registration letter and emails.

What we are aiming to achieve

See pages 10 to 11 of the full Plan.

UCEM's aims for Access by 2025 are to:

- Increase the proportion of new ethnic minority students;
- Increase the proportion of new students recorded as having a disability;
- Increase the proportion of new students from the most deprived neighbourhoods in England; and
- Increase the proportion of new students from areas with the lowest rates of young participation in higher education.

UCEM's aims for student Success by 2025 are to:

- reduce the gap in continuation rates between Mature and Young students;
- reduce the gap in continuation rates between ethnic minority students and white students; and
- reduce the gap in continuation rates between students from the most and least deprived neighbourhoods in England.

What we are doing to achieve our aims

See pages 10 to 12 of the full Plan.

To meet the aims set out above, UCEM will:

- raise the profile of a career in the built environment with pre-16 and 16-18 year-olds;
- enable access to financial support for those specifically from under-represented groups, through the provision of a fund to assist with the cost of tuition fees, and a hardship fund targeting those who otherwise may not be able to study through a lack of financial support for childcare or equipment;

- enable easier access to information of organisations and initiatives that provide access to work and education in the built environment, which enable under-represented groups to be more aware of the opportunities that are available, including higher education;
- remove unnecessary barriers for prospective students and ensuring our Admissions policy and procedure is inclusive and fair to everyone, regardless of background;
- work directly with employers to support the recruitment of underrepresented students onto UCEM's apprenticeship programmes;
- continue to expand the depth and breadth of our apprenticeship degree provision, and continue to support our partner employers who sponsor students to study an accredited degree, i.e. not funded through the Apprenticeship Levy;
- raise the profile of successful UCEM students and alumni from under-represented groups who provide peer-support and mentoring to students;
- continue to commit to enhancing our students' professional development as well as raising their aspirations whilst studying. UCEM has partnered with DiverseCity Surveyors to launch a mentoring scheme to support ethnic minority students succeed in the built environment;
- introduce a transition programme of activities, that starts with an initial week of concentrated events, which will particularly benefit groups of students that experience higher rates of drop out;
- introduce module resubmissions to support student continuation so that students stay on track with their studies which would benefit any groups of students that experience higher rates of drop out; and
- ensure all members of the UCEM Safeguarding Team, the Apprenticeship Outcomes Officers and academic support tutors have completed Mental Health First Aid training, offering an additional informal listening and signposting service to all students.

How students can get involved

UCEM's Student Representatives were consulted in preparing the Plan and will play a key part in the ongoing monitoring of the institution's targets and activities, as well as identify future action as necessary. The Lead Student Representative is a trustee on the UCEM Board, giving students a direct voice at the highest level.

See pages 17 to 18 of the full Plan.

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

UCEM is developing a robust evaluation framework for each activity set out in the Plan based on the resources shared by the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO), which is an independent hub for higher education professionals to access research, toolkits and evaluation guidance to eliminate equality gaps. An annual cycle of evaluation will analyse each activity by using evidence informed data from each evaluation to assess where improvements can be made and whether it should continue. The evaluation framework will also encourage staff to reflect on the types of evaluation used for the activity and to explore further methods to show the impact of an intervention.

See pages 18 to 20 of the full Plan.

Contact details for further information

Should you have any further questions or would like further information, please contact enquiries@ucem.ac.uk.