



# **Strategy for Access and Student Success**

**2016 - 2021**

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## Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework for all access and student success activities carried out by Brunel University London over the next 5 years. It will be underpinned by a delivery plan.

## Contribution to the University Strategic Plan

The Access and Student Success strategy is a demonstration of the inclusive and ethical values set out in Brunel's Strategic Plan 2012 - 2017, securing the mission "To create knowledge and advance understanding and equip versatile graduates with the confidence to apply what they have learnt for the benefit of society".

It addresses the following core values:

- Integrity  
We act with integrity, treat each other with dignity and respect, and are committed to fairness in our practices, policies and procedures
- Empowerment  
We encourage, support and empower members of our community to achieve individual and collective goals
- Community  
We have a shared responsibility for developing our University, and we want everyone to feel that they can contribute

It addresses the following priorities and objectives:

- Priority A  
Improving the quality of learning opportunities for all our students
- Priority C  
Providing an enabling culture in which all students and staff feel that they can excel

## Enabling the University Education Strategy

The Strategy for Access and Student Success supports the Education Strategy 2015-2017 outcome to, “Ensure an inclusive environment that recognises the diversity of our students and supports their varying development and educational needs”.

It complements the Education Strategy Delivery Plan 2015-2017 by linking with relevant strategic themes and objectives:

- Leading Edge, Relevant Education, 2.3,2.4,2.6,2.7 and 2.14
- International and Diverse, 3.2
- Seamless Academic and Pastoral Support, 4.5, 4.7

## Our Commitment

- To support students in Higher Education, particularly under-represented groups across the UK
- To ensure students from disadvantaged backgrounds are provided with excellent support: financial, pedagogical and pastoral
- To enable all students to be successful in their studies and to enhance their opportunities and life chances during their time at Brunel

## History and Background

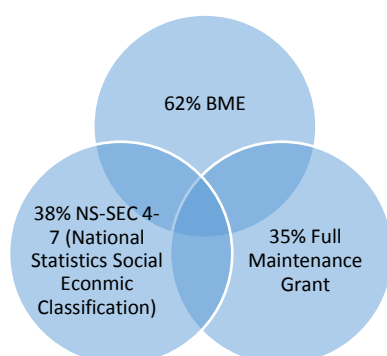
### Brunel's Story

The University has a long tradition of widening participation in Higher Education. In the region, nationally and internationally Brunel has developed a strong reputation for attracting, supporting and delivering versatile graduates, many from under-represented groups, with skills and knowledge to advance society.

Since the millennium the University has developed and refined widening participation strategies in line with government and funding council initiatives. During that period there has been significant change within the sector, but Brunel has maintained its commitment to outreach, retention, progression and financial support.

Brunel University London has a very diverse student population. Over 35% of the University's current home undergraduate students are in receipt of a full maintenance grant.

Fig 1: Brunel University's Diverse Student Population



Source: Brunel University London - Central Student Database 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015.

### OFFA Access Agreement

Each year Brunel University London submits an Access Agreement to the Office For Fair Access (OFFA) in which it sets out how it plans to improve/sustain access, student success and progression for home students from lower income backgrounds and other under-represented groups.

The University is committed to spending around 20% of its additional fee income (over £6,000) on relevant activities which are monitored by OFFA on an annual basis.

## Access and Student Success 2016 - 2021

### Our Principles

The new strategy is built upon the following principles, which have been established to build on existing strengths and support students on their Higher Education journey.

1. The University is committed to access for all and will create opportunities for those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented in higher education. This will be done by identifying and tackling barriers which can prevent students from accessing higher education, and studying successfully, seeking creative solutions that are consistent with agreed priorities and budgets.
2. Brunel will make a distinctive contribution to the sector, building on our unique strengths and capabilities. The Urban Scholars programme is a prime example of an innovative widening participation (WP) outreach intervention.
3. The University will maximise its contribution to widening access and student success by ensuring its priorities are in line with OFFA related goals.
4. Brunel will allocate an agreed annual sum to support widening access and student success. This will be determined within the context of the University's financial strategy and will be reviewed on an annual basis.
5. Allocated resources will be targeted at priority student groups identified in line with principles 1-3.
6. We will widen access and success for priority student groups using the learning and teaching technologies designed for the student population as a whole and will work actively to overcome barriers to curriculum access for priority groups.
7. Success measures will be put in place to demonstrate that expenditure is both enhancing life chances for priority students and benefitting the University.
8. We will identify and work in partnership with organisations which have complementary objectives, in order to reach and support students and encourage pathways into and on from the University.
9. The University will open a STEM Learning Centre dedicated to inspiring people to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

## Our Priority Groups

In line with principles 1-3, our priority groups will be (in no particular order):

- Black and minority ethnic students
- Disabled students
- First generation Higher Education
- Looked-after children and care leavers
- Mature Students
- Pupil Premium Students (for school age students)
- Students in receipt of Free School Meals
- Students from low socio-economic groups

## Delivering Success

The University will create a virtual *Brunel Inclusion, Access and Student Success Centre (BIASSC)* which will be at the heart of all access and student success activities. The Centre will be created in 2016/17 and oversee the following activities:

- Widening Participation
- HeadStart
- Urban Scholars
- Student Success and Progression activities
- STEM Centre
- Bridging the attainment gap
- OFFA Access Agreement and Monitoring Returns
- All OFFA related activities including management of budgets (including bursaries), evaluation and equality impact assessments

The creation of the BIASSC will allow the University to have a dedicated area for all activities under this strategy and enable clear co-ordination and robust evaluation. The BIASSC will be tasked with ensuring the strategy is delivered across the complete student lifecycle:

- Outreach, Recruitment and Transition
- Attainment, Progression and Employability
- Student Satisfaction

The BIASSC will liaise with the Brunel Educational Excellence Centre (BEEC), the Professional Development Centre (PDC), the Colleges and central support services to ensure maximum synergy and the alignment of strategies so that the University meets its stated objectives. It will be chaired by the DVC (E+I) in the first instance.



## Scope

The strategy, BIASSC and all underpinning activities fall under the remit of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education & International). Within the University governance structure the proposed new BIASSC Sub-Committee will be the appropriate area where all access and student success activities are reported. This Committee will report to the Education Strategy Committee which reports to the Executive Board.

The establishment of the BIASSC Sub-Committee will include elements which were previously in the remit of the Fees, Scholarship and SASS Sub-Committee and the Terms of Reference of this Committee will be amended.

## Evaluation

A comprehensive cycle of evaluation will be established from within BIASSC for all activities under this strategy, with evaluation embedded in planning and delivery. The Centre will regularly review monitoring information and use this evidence to help decision making and improve performance in the design and delivery of services. This will enable a clear link between resources invested and outcomes achieved.

## Equality and Diversity

Equality and Diversity are integral to the University's ethos. The Equality and Diversity Strategy supports the University's vision and is guided by its values. Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) will be carried out on all access and student success projects and outcomes monitored for under-represented groups and students with protected characteristics.

## Glossary:

**Access:** OFFA define access as any activity that involves raising aspirations and attainment among potential applicants from under-represented groups and encouraging them to apply to higher education.

**BME:** Black and Minority Ethnic

**Disadvantaged Groups and Under-represented:** Disadvantaged and under-represented and disadvantaged groups can include (but are not limited to):

- people from lower socio-economic groups or from neighbourhoods where higher education participation is low
- people from low income backgrounds (household income of up to £42,875)
- Some ethnic groups or sub-groups, including white males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- disabled people
- mature and part-time learners
- care leavers
- carers
- estranged young people and students
- students from gypsy and Traveller communities
- refugees

(OFFA February 2016/02)

**Progress Work:** OFFA define progress work as “to support undergraduate students from disadvantaged backgrounds as they prepare to progress to employment or postgraduate study. This might include measures such as internships or help with interview skills, or other activities which are designed to help disadvantaged students progress to employment or postgraduate study.

**Student success:** OFFA define student success as “Work to retain and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds through their studies, for example through induction programmes and study skills support”.

**Widening Participation:** “Widening Participation is a government-driven initiative to increase the number of students from under-represented groups participating in higher education”.