

Annex B: Summary of approved access and participation plan

Introduction

1. The summary aims to show students, parents and others your commitment to support equality of opportunity. This means it should be accessible, clear and accurate. The summary should not exceed three pages, and you should submit it with your variation request.
2. The illustrative example of the plan summary template on page 5 provides guidance on the kind of information you could include in your summary. A weblink to the template for you to complete will be available on the OfS provider portal from 1 May (more information on how to access this template is in paragraph 3 in Annex C). The summary template is also provided on our website.¹
3. We have provided a fictional exemplar plan summary to illustrate what a completed summary might look like.² You may find it useful when writing your summary.

Contents of the summary

4. This is a three-page summary of your access and participation plan and variation. It does not require detailed information. For each section of the summary, you should indicate the relevant page(s) of your approved plan where readers can find more information.
5. You should provide a link to your full access and participation plan at the top of the page. Where relevant, you should also link to further information on your website or specific groups and initiatives you include in your summary.
6. The summary should not exceed three pages and you should not alter the margins in the template.
7. You should only include information contained in your approved access and participation plan. How you express the information contained in your approved plan is your decision.
8. You should complete information under each heading in the template. You can decide how you want to present this information.

¹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/advice-on-requests-to-vary-access-and-participation-plans-2023-24/.

² See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/advice-on-requests-to-vary-access-and-participation-plans-2023-24/.

9. In the 'fees' section of the template, you may wish to indicate the maximum fee for full-time and part-time students at your provider. You can also provide a link to further information, such as your published annual fee information document.

Hints and tips for writing your summary

10. Students, parents or others with an interest in equal opportunities may have little or no knowledge of access and participation or the regulations which govern it. The style and tone of the summary should be accessible, clear and simple, and should not assume what the reader will know. In this context we advise the following:
- **Sentences** – should be short and no more than 25 words.
 - **Paragraphs** – should have no more than three sentences.
 - **Words** – don't use long words where short ones will do.
 - **Tone** – be clear and concise and write in the way you would speak to someone.
 - **Spelling, grammar and consistency** – make sure you check the summary for spelling, grammar, and a consistent style. Ideally, ask an editor to review it.
 - **Technical terms and acronyms** – try to avoid them wherever possible, but if they are needed, make sure you explain them or spell them out.
 - **Jargon** – avoid all jargon and clichés, including terms commonly used in academic and management circles.
 - **Bureaucracy and governing structures** – access and participation plans often refer to committees, groups or other governance structures at a provider. Do not assume that student readers will know what these are. If you need to refer to them, explain what they do.
 - **Active voice** – wherever possible use the active voice ('we used student feedback') rather than passive constructions ('student feedback was used').
 - **Links** – if you are embedding a link in text, make sure the text describes the content of the link ('Read the [report on degree outcomes](#)' **not** 'Read the report [here](#)').
 - **Emphasis** – we recommend that you use bold for emphasis but **use it sparingly**.
 - **Accessibility** – make sure that your document complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1.³ Published PDFs should, for example, include structured headings, alternative text where appropriate, and a title in the document properties.

³ See <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>.

Examples of concise and simple language

These are a few brief examples. Many freely available resources, including other examples, are available online.

Use	Rather than
start	commence
use	utilise
show	demonstrate
main	predominant
most	the majority of
the main way to	the primary means of
we discussed	we had a discussion
we must	it is a requirement that we
concluded	came to the conclusion
grow	grow in size
indicates	indicative of
based on	on the basis of

Examples of acronyms

By their nature, acronyms tend to be technical. For this reason, we discourage you from using them. If they are needed, make sure you spell them out on first mention, but consider if you need to explain their meaning. We have highlighted some common examples.

Acronym	Our suggestions
APP	We suggest you avoid using 'APP'. Either spell out 'access and participation plan' or refer to 'our plan' or 'the plan'.
'POLAR' or 'POLAR quintiles' or 'POLAR Q1'	This is a statistical measure to inform access and participation policy. It may not mean very much to a general reader. Explain that it is a measure which classifies local areas into five groups – or quintiles – based on the proportion of young people who enter higher education.
IMD	As with POLAR, don't assume readers will know what this is. Spell out 'Index of Multiple Deprivation' and explain that it measures relative deprivation for small areas.
FSM	Spell out that this refers to 'free school meals' and that it is used as a measure of deprivation.
HEI	We suggest you avoid this acronym and the term 'higher education institution'. Try to use more commonly used terms like 'university', 'college' or 'professional school'.
FEC	Avoid this acronym and avoid the term 'further education college'. Use the term 'college'.
UG	Use 'undergraduate'.

Acronym	Our suggestions
PG	Use 'postgraduate'.
FT	Use 'full-time'.
PT	Use 'part-time'.
BAME	Research by the Race Disparity Unit suggested the acronyms BAME and BME were not well understood. Universities and colleges will have their own style guides, but we encourage you to refer to specific ethnic groups instead (e.g. 'Black', 'West Indian', 'Chinese', 'Asian').
TASO	Don't assume that readers will know what TASO is or means. Explain that it is an independent hub for higher education professionals to access research, toolkits and evaluation guidance to eliminate equality gaps.
TEF	Explain that the TEF is a national exercise to assess excellence in higher education teaching.

Examples of jargon and bureaucracy

We have drawn out, by way of example, a list of terms and titles which you should either avoid or explain in the summary:

- 'Theory of change'
- 'deficit model'
- 'Student Protection Plan'
- 'monitoring provider impact reports'
- 'Programme and Evaluation Design Framework'
- 'Academic Board'
- 'HE Student Engagement Policy'
- 'College Student Council'
- 'Corporation board'
- 'Access and Participation Committee'

Plan summary template

[Name of provider]

Summary of [dates for which this plan applies, e.g. 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 [insert provider name] at [insert link].

[Please ensure your summary does not exceed three pages.]

Key points

In reflecting what to include in this section you may want to consider the type of provision you offer, your size, geography, and make-up of the student body. You can draw on contextual information contained in your access and participation plan and key challenges identified in your assessment of performance. You should also briefly summarise the main areas you are seeking to improve in your access and participation work.

Fees we charge

This section should set out your maximum fees for both full-time and part-time provision. You can include an 'inflationary increases' statement if this is relevant to your provision and provides the reader with appropriate information on fees. You can insert a link where readers can find more information, such as your published annual fee information summary document.

Financial help available

This section should set out any financial support available to students and the eligibility criteria. If you do not provide any financial support, you can indicate this here.

Information for students

This section should describe how you provide information on fees and financial support to prospective and current students, prior to them starting their course and for the duration of their course.

What we are aiming to achieve

This section should summarise the main focuses of your access and participation work, which groups it will support and at which stages of the student lifecycle.

You should also explain your aims and measurable objectives identified in your assessment of performance. This should include key targets and the timescale in which you aim to achieve them.

What we are doing to achieve our aims

This section should summarise the key strategic measures you will take to achieve your strategic aims, objectives and targets.

You should outline how you will address the new access and participation priorities included in the variation to your plan, such as school attainment raising, diverse and flexible provision and successful participation, as appropriate.

This section can also include activities that support individuals on to other positive outcomes – including apprenticeships, vocational education and access to other universities.

How students can get involved

This section should detail how students have and will be involved in the planning, monitoring, evaluation and delivery of access and participation work.

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

You should provide a high-level overview of:

- how you will ensure your work is evidence-informed
- how you plan to evaluate your activities to ensure that they are having the desired impact on your aims and objectives.

If you have included information in your variation which describes how you will record, publish and share the outcomes of your evaluation, please include this here.

Contact details for further information

You should include contact details here for readers who would like to get in touch for further information.