

## **SMB Group Summary of 2025-26 to 2028-29 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 SMB Group on the college website

### **Key points**

As a student of SMB Group student you will be studying at either Stephenson, Melton or Brooksby campuses.

When we developed our access and participation plan in 2023-24, our data showed us that in comparison to their peers, the college has reduced attainment gaps between different student population groups. However there remains a gap in continuation rates between certain student population groups.

The following groups are less likely to continue in their studies compared to other groups

- Areas of deprivation
- Male students

The number of internal further education students progressing into higher education remains below the local authority and national average. There also remains a gap in progression rates between mature students and those under-21 completing higher education programmes into highly skilled employment or further study.

We are committed to removing barriers and reducing inequalities that may delay the progress and grades of underrepresented groups.

Whilst our aim is to eliminate these gaps in inequality, we know that this will take longer than the life of this plan. However, as an institution we are committed to create a level playing field for all students by offering an inclusive and supportive learning environment that celebrates diversity, promotes social mobility, and embraces the unique strengths and perspectives of each student.

### **Fees we charge in Academic Year 2025-26**

At SMB the maximum fees charged in 2025-26 are:

- £8,250 for full time programmes  
Up to £6,187.50 for part time programmes or £68.75 per credit

For September 2025-26 the college reserves the right to increase fees by inflation and/or the maximum permitted by law or Government policy. You can locate the HE Fees policy on the college website.

### **Financial help available**

We understand that financial constraints can be a significant barrier to accessing and succeeding in higher education. Our financial support packages are designed to enable you to access your course and continue studying until you have completed your studies.

Therefore, we offer:

- A bursary of £400 for students for students who meet hardship criteria.
- Financial support with research/dissertation costs.

### **Information for students**

If you are intending to study with us but are yet to start your course, you will receive information on fees and financial support at in-person events, such as open days, by email communication and on our college, websites depending on where you wish to study.

As a **current student** you will receive information about fees and financial support via the SMB Group Student Services team. When the application window opens the team will email all students information on how to apply with the appropriate links, this message is also sent to your programme sites in Microsoft Teams.

### **What we are aiming to achieve**

Our mission is to deliver exceptional education to create transformative opportunities for individuals that will also strengthen the prosperity of their local communities. We want to empower you, individuals from all backgrounds to overcome societal and economic challenges, ultimately enabling social mobility. We firmly believe that every student at SMB regardless of their background, should have equality of opportunity to access, succeed in, and progress beyond higher education to fulfil your potential.

**Increase access for a number of underrepresented groups in deprived areas.** We aim to increase entry rates for the following groups.

Improve the absolute proportion of those students from the most deprived areas.  
Improve internal progression rates of level 3 students onto HE programmes.

**Improve experience for underrepresented groups in the first stage in a journey. Barriers continue to impact on success through access and continuation/ We will improve our understanding of barriers and work to improve performance for all.**

Specifically we aim to;

Improve continuation rates for students from the most deprived areas.  
Improve higher apprenticeship pass rates

**Increase the progression rates of students into further study or professional and managerial employment.**

Focus on improving the rates of progression to skilled employment and further study of young learners (U-21)

**Mental Health and Wellness.** Over the life of this plan we will continue to support the Mental Health and emotional wellbeing of all students at SMB, providing workshops and targeted pastoral support.

**What we are doing to address key risks to equality of opportunity.** We have identified several interventions and where we can create targeted support that we can offer to support this plan:

- Provide **workshops and online packages** to support Level 3 students to build academic skills, all Level 3 students from the target groups will be offered support with academic skills
- We will offer more **HNC and HND courses** to help students **build confidence** and academic ability ready for a degree
- Continue to participate in regional networks and initiatives aimed at raising aspirations of schools aged learners.
- We will work with the **Academic Support team to create workshops** for HE students that will develop academic skills, digital literacy, **understanding assessments and gradings to build confidence** in all aspects of Higher Education
- Offer degree level masterclasses to local schools to show learners a clear progression route into higher education and professional occupations.
- The SMB Group are committed to **addressing hardship** and reviewing all processes to offer **equal access to financial support**.

### **How students can get involved**

In developing our access and participation plan we worked with our student body together input into the design and targets. Students are represented at our programme committee structures which has the responsibility for implementing the plan.

To become involved in this work, contact our Quality Manager George Caplan  
gcaplan@smbgroup.ac.uk

### **Evaluation- how we will measure what we have achieved (**

For each area of improvement, we have set ourselves a clear expectation of what we aim to achieve. Our chosen evaluation methodology is a mixed methods approach that challenges and assesses how successful we have been in achieving the established targets and considers both qualitative and quantitative data. We collect data and student feedback to evaluate:

- The success of our interventions and engagement levels across all interventions
- Effectiveness of the workshops
- Student evaluation of the support offered

We will publish regular highlights annually, with the first results published in Autumn 2026 on our website.

### **Contact details for further information**

We are committed to providing our students an exceptional education and aim to offer an inclusive and diverse experience as part of the SMB Group. We are happy to answer any questions that you as students may have.

You can contact George Caplan [gcaplan@smbgroup.ac.uk](mailto:gcaplan@smbgroup.ac.uk) for further information.