UCQ UNIVERSITY CENTRE QUAYSIDE

Access and Participation Statement

Version: 9
Date: 17/07/2026
Document reviewer: Head of Policy and Governance
Due for review: 17/07/2027

1. Purpose

University Centre Quayside (UCQ) is committed to ensuring that every individual with the ability and aspiration to benefit from higher education has an equitable opportunity to access, succeed in and progress from their studies.

This Statement sets out UCQ's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity throughout the entire student lifecycle. It aligns with the expectations of the Office for Students (OfS), the Equality Act 2010, and UCQ's Strategic Plan 2026-2035.

As an OfS registered higher education provider, UCQ is committed to identifying and removing barriers that may disadvantage individuals from accessing higher education or achieving successful outcomes.

This Statement applies to all higher education applicants and students studying with UCQ.

2. Our Strategic Commitment

Access and participation are fundamental to UCQ's mission of assisting students, staff and organisations to achieve their potential.

Our commitment directly supports the Strategic Plan 2026-2035, particularly through:

- Delivering exceptional, inclusive and future-focused learning, teaching and assessment.
- Strengthening purposeful partnerships that create shared value for learners, employers and communities.

UCQ believes that widening participation is not simply about increasing access to higher education. It is equally about ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed, belong, achieve and progress regardless of background or personal circumstance.

3. Our Commitment to Equality of Opportunity

UCQ is committed to promoting equality of opportunity across every stage of the student lifecycle.

We seek to ensure that:

- admission processes are fair, transparent and inclusive
- applicants receive accessible information, advice and guidance
- students are supported to continue and successfully complete their studies
- learning, teaching and assessment are inclusive by design
- reasonable adjustments are implemented where appropriate
- students experience an environment that promotes dignity, respect and belonging
- students are supported to progress into employment, further study or professional advancement.

Equality of opportunity is embedded throughout institutional decision-making, programme design, quality assurance and continuous improvement activities.

4. Students We Seek to Support

UCQ welcomes applications from all individuals who can benefit from higher education.

Particular consideration is given to groups that have historically experienced barriers to higher education or differential outcomes, including (but not limited to):

- students from areas of low higher education participation
- students from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- mature learners
- disabled students
- care experienced students
- carers
- estranged students
- military family members
- students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities
- students with caring responsibilities
- students who may require additional learning support.

UCQ recognises that disadvantage may arise through the interaction of multiple characteristics or circumstances and therefore adopts an individualised approach wherever possible.

5. Fair Access

UCQ seeks to ensure that admissions are based upon an applicant's ability and potential to succeed.

Our admissions processes are designed to:

- be fair, transparent and evidence based
- provide clear and accessible entry information
- recognise prior learning and professional experience where appropriate
- provide flexible entry routes
- avoid unnecessary barriers to participation
- comply with relevant regulatory and funding requirements.

Applicants receive appropriate information, advice and guidance throughout the admissions process to enable informed decision-making.

6. Student Success

Supporting students to achieve successful outcomes is central to UCQ's mission.

We seek to create an inclusive learning environment through:

- flexible delivery models
- accessible learning resources
- inclusive curriculum design
- academic and personal tutoring
- learning support services
- wellbeing support

- reasonable adjustments
- digital accessibility
- timely academic feedback
- opportunities for student engagement and belonging.

Support is proportionate to individual need and aims to remove barriers to learning wherever reasonably practicable.

7. Student Participation and Voice

UCQ recognises students as active partners in the enhancement of learning and the wider student experience.

Students are encouraged to contribute through:

- Student Representative system
- Student Staff Liaison Committee
- module and programme evaluation
- institutional surveys
- complaints, compliments and feedback processes
- membership of institutional committees where appropriate.

Student feedback informs institutional enhancement and continuous improvement.

8. Progression and Graduate Success

UCQ is committed to supporting students beyond successful completion of their programme.

This includes supporting progression through:

- career development
- professional recognition
- employer engagement
- work-based learning
- progression to higher qualifications
- lifelong learning opportunities

Our programmes are designed to enhance both academic achievement and professional capability.

9. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

UCQ monitors equality of opportunity throughout the student lifecycle.

Where appropriate, institutional data is analysed across areas including:

- applications
- admissions
- continuation
- completion
- attainment
- progression
- student satisfaction
- protected characteristics
- disability
- socio-economic background
- care experience
- age
- ethnicity
- other characteristics where meaningful data is available

Where differential outcomes are identified, UCQ investigates the underlying causes and implements appropriate enhancement activities.

The effectiveness of interventions is reviewed through UCQ's quality assurance and governance processes.

10. Governance and Accountability

Responsibility for promoting equality of opportunity is shared across the institution.

The Academic Board provides oversight of academic quality, student success and equality of opportunity.

The Quality, Standards and Compliance Committee monitors student outcomes and institutional performance data, identifying areas for enhancement where required.

The Board of Governors receives assurance that UCQ is meeting its regulatory responsibilities relating to equality of opportunity and the student experience.

All staff share responsibility for fostering an inclusive learning environment consistent with UCQ's values.

11. Related Policies

This Statement should be read alongside:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Student Welfare Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Student Protection Plan
- Student Terms and Conditions
- Safeguarding Policy
- Prevent Policy
- Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University
- Strategic Plan 2026-2035

12. Review

This Statement will normally be reviewed annually, or earlier where required to reflect changes in legislation, Office for Students requirements, institutional strategy or identified enhancement opportunities.

Progress against this Statement will be monitored through UCQ's quality assurance and governance framework.

13. Document History

ISSUE NO.	DATE	PAGE	REVIEWER	DETAIL OF AMENDMENT
9	17/07/26	All	Tara Henderson	Statement completely revised following publication of 2026-35 Strategic Plan and updated Core Values.

14. Initial Equalities Impact Assessment

Department: All	**Completed by:** Tara Henderson, Head of Policy & Governance	**Date of initial assessment:** 17/07/2026
Area to be assessed:	GP-019 Access and Participation Statement	
Existing or new policy/procedure:	Existing	

What evidence has been used to inform the assessment and policy? (please list only)

- Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Office for Students (OfS) Regulatory Framework, including expectations relating to equality of opportunity.
- Office for Students guidance relating to Access and Participation Statements.
- Higher Education and Research Act 2017.
- UCQ Strategic Plan 2026-2035.
- UCQ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- UCQ Student Protection Plan.
- UCQ Admissions Policy.
- UCQ Student Welfare Policy.
- UCQ Student data relating to access, continuation, completion and progression.
- Sector good practice relating to widening participation, inclusive education and student success.

1. Describe the aims, objectives or purpose of the policy/procedure	This Statement sets out UCQ's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity across the entire student lifecycle, including access, participation, continuation, completion and progression. It demonstrates how UCQ seeks to identify and remove barriers to higher education, foster an inclusive learning environment and support students from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups to achieve successful outcomes.
2. Which stakeholders/groups are intended to benefit from this policy/procedure?	• Prospective higher education students. • Current UCQ higher education students. • Students from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. • Disabled students and those requiring reasonable adjustments. • Care experienced and estranged students. • Mature learners • Employers and partners engaged in widening participation activities. • UCQ staff responsible for admissions, student support, teaching and quality assurance. • UCQ through improved equality of opportunity, student outcomes and regulatory compliance.

The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have 'due regard' to the need to:- (1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization (2) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and (3) Foster good relations between different groups		**3. Could the policy/procedure have a disproportionately negative effect impact in terms of the aims set out in (1) to (3) of the Act on any of the protected characteristics: -** **High** **Medium** **Low** **No effect**	**4. Briefly explain how the policy/procedure furthers or prevents the aims set out in (1) to (3).**	**5. If there is a disproportionately negative impact on any protected characteristics, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality or any other reason? If yes, please explain.**
Protected characteristics	**Age**	Low positive	The Statement promotes fair access and lifelong learning opportunities for learners of all ages, including mature students.	Not applicable
	Disability	Low positive	The Statement commits UCQ to inclusive learning, reasonable adjustments, accessible resources and removal of barriers to participation.	Not applicable
	Gender	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Gender reassignment	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Pregnancy and Maternity	Low positive	The Statement supports inclusive learning and recognises that students experiencing changes in personal circumstances should have equitable opportunities to continue and succeed in their studies.	Not applicable
	Race	Low positive	The Statement explicitly supports widening participation and seeks to remove barriers experienced by students from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds.	Not applicable

	Religion or Belief	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Sexual Orientation	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable

6. Has there been any consultation/engagement with the appropriate protected characteristics?	The Statement has been informed by the Equality Act 2010, Office for Students expectations relating to equality of opportunity, UCQ's Strategic Plan, institutional policies and sector good practice. It has been developed to promote equality of opportunity across the student lifecycle and no adverse equality impacts requiring additional consultation have been identified.	
7. What action(s) will you take to reduce any disproportionately negative impact, if any?	• Continue to monitor student lifecycle data to identify any differential outcomes. • Regularly review access, continuation, completion and progression data across protected characteristics and other underrepresented groups. • Ensure inclusive learning, teaching and student support practices remain embedded across the institution. • Review the Statement annually to reflect legislative, regulatory and institutional developments. • Continue engaging with students through feedback mechanisms to identify emerging barriers to participation.	
8. Based on the information in sections 1 to 7, should this policy/procedure proceed to Full Impact Assessment? (recommended if one or more 'High' under section 3)	**No.** No high adverse impacts have been identified. The Statement is intended to promote equality of opportunity, widen participation and improve outcomes for all students, particularly those from underrepresented groups. Overall, the anticipated impact is positive.	
Assessor signature:	**Approved by:** **Michelle Elliott**	**Date approved:** 17/7/26