

Access and Participation Statement 2021 – 2022

Introduction

This Access and Participation Statement sets out The School of Information Risk Management's (SIRM) commitment to widening participation, and supporting students, to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education into further studies or graduate-level employment. The School will comply with the law in promoting equality and diversity and is committed to ensuring all students succeed in their studies. This commitment is reflected in the School's mission: *'To encourage wide access to education and training by providing high-quality teaching and learning, training and higher education experiences.'*

This statement applies to all programmes of study at the School that lead to awards from its validating partners. The content follows the recommendations and guidance contained in the Regulatory Notice 1 Access and participation plan guidance for 2019-20 provided by the OfS, which can be accessed at: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1093/ofs2018_03.pdf.

Background

SIRM has a proven track record of successfully providing high-quality education at an affordable price to students from non-traditional backgrounds for over four years. Widening participation is embedded in the School's strategic approach to its provision of higher education programmes. To this end, the School actively seeks partnerships with organisations who also prioritise widening participation and access to Higher Education. Through these strategic partnerships, SIRM can design, develop and deliver programmes which meet the needs of non-traditional entrants.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are central elements of our student experience, reflected in our Admissions Procedures, mapped to our awarding body partner's criteria and The UK Quality Code for Higher Education. We are working towards Matrix accreditation and provide impartial advice and guidance to ensure all applicants are supported to secure the most appropriate programme for them. We analyse the data we hold on the backgrounds of our applicants and students, to assess the areas where we are performing well and the areas where we wish to take further action to improve participation.

This Access and Participation Statement has been developed and implemented after careful analysis and consideration of a wide array of student data sources including the process of programme development and review, admissions, progression, retention, assessment, HESA indicators, post-graduation employment, the number of our students receiving the maximum maintenance grant, NSS and other student surveys.

Access to Higher Education

Our recruitment data indicates that the majority of our students come from communities that would not traditionally encourage its members to pursue Higher Education at UK HEIs. Our courses are open to everyone who meets our entry requirements, though the majority choosing to study at our School are from mixed ethnic backgrounds, which reflects the demographics of our catchment area. Our marketing literature and website are all designed to attract the widest possible demographic.

In reviewing our data, the School caters for students from a broad range of backgrounds (male and female and from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds). We recruit students who have the potential to complete an award successfully, and our student support mechanisms ensure we can take

students with not traditional education backgrounds. We ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants irrespective of colour, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, age, disability, religion or socio-economic background. Additionally, in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, students with criminal records may apply to undertake courses at SIRM.

As the majority of our students tend to come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, we have kept our tuition fees at the basic fee amount as set by the Office for Students to facilitate access. The Courses section of our website provides course-specific fee information.

We will support the entry of participants into HE by considering applicants recognised qualifications (or other records of achievement), their maturity and their professional/work experience. Offers will be given to those who demonstrate a commitment to their learning, a passion for their subject and are likely to be successful in their studies. Our programmes are designed to attract mature students who aim to advance their specialisation, broaden their career prospects or cross-train into a new sector. Where appropriate, students will be offered additional support with their studies or a transition programme if they are not quite ready.

Flexible attendance patterns along with blended approaches that take advantage of online learning will be used to help students manage their studies and professionals/home lives. Over time, working with our awarding bodies, we will continue to develop our blended learning approach to help widen participation and support our students learning styles and personal circumstances.

The School encourages students with disabilities and seeks to facilitate their inclusion. We have done all that we can in terms of reasonable adjustments to assist in enabling such students to study with us and be successful. However, health and safety considerations mean there may be students that we cannot support with access to our building.

The Recruitment & Admissions team manage the School's outreach work, actively seeking to develop strong working relationships with local schools, business groups and faith groups. We are also working hard with potential employers to ensure our apprenticeship programmes recruit from the widest possible demographic. Termly open days are used to enable potential students to visit our campus, meet our staff and current students, and find out more about our courses and student life with SIRM.

In line with our work towards Matrix accreditation, we will ensure that all information issued in the course brochures and on the website is comprehensive and accurate at the time of publication or posting. We will also ensure this information is made available in different formats upon request.

SIRM is committed to ensuring its recruitment and admissions processes work effectively, are fair and transparent and are subject to continual review and enhancement. All policies, procedures and processes related to recruitment, admissions, selection, induction and enrolment are reviewed regularly and approved by our SLT (Senior Leadership Team).

Where it is not possible to provide a place for an applicant, we will endeavour to place them on an appropriate feeder programme, either with ourselves or another institution. We will ensure that effective and appropriate arrangements are in place for providing feedback to applicants to improve their chances in the future.

Success

The School is committed to ensuring its students succeed in their studies and achieve their future career aspirations. To ensure our students realise their full potential through their studies we carefully tailor their support, relative to their starting points and closely monitor progress against outcome targets and grade profile indicators. Aligned to this is the School's high aspiration strategy, which is introduced to students during their induction and reinforced by staff throughout the year. This is further supported by a robust target setting and detailed feedback, enabling students to own their own progress.

To ensure our students have a smooth transition into their studies, the School operates a dedicated induction programme which introduces students to aspects of higher education such as academic regulations, educational resources, welfare support. This also allows the student to identify any support they require.

Progression

We provide opportunities for the seamless progression for students who might otherwise not be able to successfully access further study. This includes the development of the knowledge, behaviours and skills required to progress to high-level skilled employment. We provide students with the opportunity to study at Level 7 either with us or through progression agreements with our partners. We offer students structured study skills support, 1:1 and small group tutorial support to provide a more personalised approach to learning. Ongoing careers guidance is used to support our students' readiness to progress.

Our ambitions and strategy

We will continue to use a range of metrics based on characteristics and comparators to evaluate and report on the impact of our access and participation activity, which include:

- Student enrolments
- Student retention rates
- Student pass rates and grade outcomes
- Student progression rates

The School will also monitor the Key Performance Indicators developed and agreed through our new Strategic Plan. These will be agreed by our SLT and published annually.

Overall student outcomes suggest the School's access and participation policy is working with overall student achievement and progression as follows:

2020 – HND in Business Enrolment (all students still in learning)

- Jan 2020 – 50 student with East Sussex College Group
- Oct 2020 – 53 students with East Sussex College Group

2019 – HND in Business

- Enrolment - 50 students
- Withdrawals at HNC level - 1 student
- Completed at HNC level as not achieved- 6 students
- Completed with Pass at HNC level - 6 students
- Achieved at HNC level - 43 students (86%)
- Progressed to HND - 37 out of 50 students (74%)

2018 – HND in Business

- Enrolment - 41 students
- Withdrawals at HNC level - 10 students
- Achieved Pass at HNC level - 31 students (76%)
- Completed with Pass at HNC level - 4 students
- Progressed to HND - 27 students (66%)
- Completed HND with Pass - 25 students (93%)
- Overall success rate HNC/HND (2 years) 27 out of 41 students (61%)

We are not complacent, and detailed analysis of our data shows the following areas for further development:

- Increase the entry rates of students on our HE courses, particularly those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and those from groups who would not normally access higher education, including students from families with no previous HE experience.
- Improve the rate of students continuing from the HND to level six, achieving a full degree.

Our outreach efforts will aim to continue facilitating access to the widest possible range of students. We will work with education partners, community groups and employers to improve access and participation through sharing of best practice and the development of collaborative improvement strategies. Partnership working will also be used to raise awareness of the benefits of Higher Education to individuals, industry and the local economy.

Our students' voice is very important to us and we are committed to hearing their views. We have an active Student Representative from each group who worked with School staff in the development of this statement. Through the School's feedback processes and governance structure, students will have the opportunity to reflect on and review this Access and Participation Statement on an annual basis.

Our activities and support for students

The School provides a range of services to support the access and participation of students in higher education. This support is provided from initial enquiry through to the end of their courses. Students can access support with course information; travel and transport; health and well-being; mental health; childcare, study skills and academic writing; English and maths; careers guidance; specialist equipment and software and physical assistance.

We recognise that non-academic factors also contribute to the non-completion of our courses. Besides pastoral and welfare support, we assist students who are under financial pressure and who, as a result, are at risk of withdrawing from the School. Depending on the circumstances, we provide hardship (bursaries via our partner colleges) support; give fee discounts and also scholarships where available in a given financial year. In addition, our students get access to student finance through partner college and the course fee comes through loans. There have been only 2 cases since 2018 that a student did not get a loan and had to pay themselves, in both cases we provided them with a very flexible payment plan.