ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PROGRESS REPORT

2023 - 2025

PROGRESS ON OUR APP TARGETS

In autumn 2023, David Game Higher Education (DGHE) began implementing its new Access and Participation Plan (APP), setting ambitious targets to widen participation and improve outcomes for underrepresented students. This report presents a summary of progress based on our latest internal data and feedback from our students and Advice and Wellbeing Services team, Careers Advisor, Academic and Administrative team.

In our first two years, we can report that we are <u>on track to exceed all our Access and Participation targets!</u>

This data is based on 3-year aggregate averages, combining data from September 2022 until March 2025. Note that 'Continuation' refers to students continuing from Year One to Year Two of studies and 'Attainment' is achieving Merit or Distinction.

7%
GAP IN ATTAINMENT RATE BETWEEN MOST AND LEAST DEPRIVED STUDENTS

Exceeds our target 21% gap milestone for 2024 - 2025
Percent Gap in 2021: 54%

2%
GAP IN CONTINUATION BETWEEN WHITE AND MINORITY ETHNICITY STUDENTS

Exceeds our target 10% gap milestone for 2024 - 2025
Gap in 2021: 12%

10%
DISABLED ENTRANTS

Above our target 7% milestone for 2024 - 2025.
Percentage in 2021: 5%

25%
MINORITY ETHNICITY ENTRANTS

Above our target 11% milestone for 2024-2025.
Percentage in 2021: 8%

43%
OF MATURE STUDENTS ACHIEVING MERIT OR DISTINCTION

Above our target 39% milestone for 2024 - 2025
Percentage in 2021: 30%

"The Senior Management Team champions our APP by investing and actively participating in initiatives meant to encourage access and success of under-represented students - who make up the majority of our community.
We see this as core to developing our students' spirit of inquiry to realise their full potential, through offering quality education in a culturally diverse, supportive and inclusive environment."
~ Paul Talan, Head of Centre

ACTIVITIES DELIVERED

1. Financial Support

DGHE now offers bursaries and other financial support to students, including:

Student Success Bursary

£750 bursary for each year of study for students from low-income households living in areas of high deprivation.

Refugee Support Bursary

£750 bursary for each year of study for any student holding refugee status.

Veterans Support Bursary

£750 bursary for each year of study for all students who previously served in the UK Armed Forces – and their children.

Care Leavers Scholarship

20% Fee Waiver plus £1000 for each year of study for students who were in care.

Hardship Fund

Available to assist students in financial need because of emergency circumstances, so that they may continue studying without disruption.

Total Dispersed

Between September 2023 and December 2024, 33 students received the Student Support Bursary, 4 students received Refugee Bursary and 11 students received hardship fund grants.

"Hardship Fund applications tend to be for accommodation and outstanding bills costs... AWS offers other support in tandem with Hardship funding."

~ Advice & Wellbeing Services

2. Student Support and Development

In recent years, we have significantly expanded our student support services.

- Increased staffing and budget for Advice and Wellbeing Services (AWS)
- Pre-Sessional and In-Sessional English courses now provided
- Expanded One-on-One tutoring and additional IT/tech skills support
- Careers and employability skills integrated into course curricula in the classroom.

3. Community Outreach and Marketing

We organised new Community Outreach programmes to share skills and encourage people in our local community to pursue higher education.

This included many events, such as:

- Climate Matters Symposium 2023
- Women's Day Alumni Healthworker panel 2024
- Visiting local A Level School Fairs and hosting guest lectures for them at DGHE
- Engaging with community groups in Aldgate and Tower Hamlets such as Aldgate Connect BID, AccessHE, Switch Back and an Eid Market
- Hosting workshops for Accumulate unhoused people
- Back to Education public taster seminars on presentation skills, Cybersecurity, research skills, etc. for local mature learners.

In addition to outreach activities, our Marketing department has dedicated a portion of its digital ad budget to reaching a more diverse ethnic mix of prospective students, through geo-targeting our nearby communities in East London, different languages and ensuring a diversity of our students were invited to photoshoots so that our ads include real students representing different ethnic communities.

Pie chart segments: Asian 24%, White 22%, Black 13%, Mixed 7%, Not Reported 34%
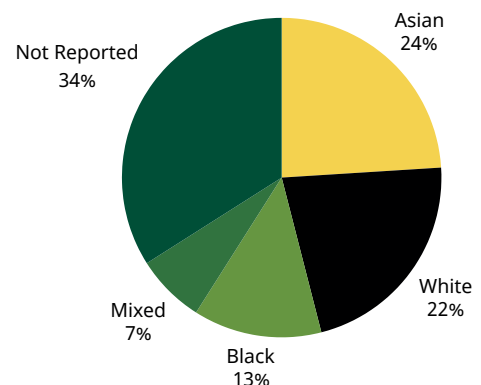
44%
Participants reported being of Minority Ethnic descent

"It was a really interesting session, which brought home to me the importance of Cyber Security and how it will only get more important over time."

"It helped me to understand options from studying this sector"

~ Outreach event participant feedback

DGHE

15-16 JAN
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4. Website Accessibility Update

Our website was redesigned to enhance accessibility. Updates included: improving WCAG2 score by adding Alt Text, Aria IDs, other tags and labels, increased Control size, improved contrast, navigation, clarity of content, more friendly to tabs and screen readers.

5. Staff Trainings

93% of DGHE staff say they personally value widening access and success in higher education and 75% say they feel able to initiate and implement widening participation interventions.

We have intensified staff training on Access and Participation at DGHE. Academic Skills and Advice and Wellbeing Services led workshops with Academic and Administrative Staff to develop knowledge and skills across our organisation to foster an inclusive, supportive learning environment. Topics have included unconscious bias, inclusive teaching practices, and supporting underrepresented and minority student groups. We also engaged Specialist Evidence Evaluation and Research (SEER) to train a new APP Manager and Senior Management on regulatory standards and best practices.
In addition, all staff receive ongoing training opportunities through induction and beyond, including on Mental Health, Prevent, Suicide Prevention, First Aid, pursuing professional fellowships related to our APP goals, and others.

6. Curriculum Review and Improvements

We are pursuing our target to embed careers and inclusivity across course curricula, introducing more employability-focused assignments and providing a diverse range of assessments styles.

Regular curriculum reviews include staff and student feedback to ensure texts, resources and curriculum content reflects diverse perspectives and experiences, and is practical and useful to students' career aspirations. Internal training and development work is enhanced through membership of Independent Higher Education (IHE) and the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSHEE).

"Curriculum feels relevant to the area of study and career ambitions."
~ 2025 Student Focus Group

"They used different teaching methods to ensure we understood everything clearly and were always kind and patient."
~ 2024 Graduate

7. Hybrid & Online Learning Access

In response to the needs of busy mature learners, DGHE has introduced a hybrid model—offering a portion of the classes online—to increase flexibility. This model leverages our Moodle Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to make learning more accessible and responsive to the schedules of mature students.

Since 2023, we have completed a successful pilot of this programme and increased our hybrid provision to three HND courses. We also hired two full-time Digital Learning Technologists to develop interactive Moodle content for these courses and are now tracking engagement rates against set targets.

"I received one-on-one instruction due to the small number of students. I also learned how to work with Adobe software, how to make an oral presentation for a client and pricing a project. I think these are important things regarding this specialty, as it is directly related to business."
~ 2024 Graduate

"I was really impressed by the fact that they had students from multiple countries with multiple backgrounds. So it's a lot of diversity… made me feel like, OK, I'm in the right place."
~ DGHE Student

"The tutor worked with one of our mature female students who on arrival had poor English and very fragile IT skills […] Via the Disability Support Allowance… [The student] is scoring Merits and Distinctions… clearly a result of taking up DSA support."
~ Advice & Wellbeing Staff

Looking Ahead

DGHE is currently developing a new APP for 2026, including insights from students and staff. We aim to continue the interventions where we see real impact and adjust based on lessons learned, activating more robust internal data collection on access, success and progression. We are committed to continuing APP investment to reach our access and participation goals, and encourage our community of students, staff and local partners to join in the effort!

Access and Participation Targets for 2030

14%

Students identifying as Disabled

55%

Attainment rate (achieving Merit or Distinction) for Mature Students.

0%

Gap in continuation rate between White and Minority Ethnicity students

5%

Gap in attainment outcomes between the most and least deprived students.

* Maintain at least industry average percentage of Minority Ethnicity entrants.

* Improve Alumni communications and data keeping on Progression.

0%

Gap in attainment outcomes between disabled and not disabled students.

Conclusion

DGHE has made strong progress in diversifying access to higher education, particularly among minority ethnicity and disabled learners. Support structures like Advice and Wellbeing, one-to-one tutoring, English classes, careers advice and IT support are expanding, and new initiatives like hybrid online learning and additional financial aid are addressing barriers to success and progression. As we prepare for the next APP cycle, we will continue to review lessons learned and enhance our approach to create equitable outcomes for all students.

DGHE's full APP 2023 can be found on our website's Policies page at:
https://dghe.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/David-Game-Higher-Education_APP_2023-24_V1_10015688.pdf