



Background

BPP University has a proud history of supporting a wide range of students and providing access to the professions. The University has a clear commitment to Widening Access and Participation *and* Equality and Diversity at both a local and national level. Our multi-site provision has modern, city-centre based facilities, which provides accessible, localised learning opportunities for students close to transport hubs and amenities; ensuring that students from a diverse range of backgrounds are able to fully participate in study, whilst remaining close to their support networks and employment.

The University's strategies and policies set out a clear commitment to fair access and the removal of barriers for applicants at all levels, and our transparent entry criteria ensures that students with a wide range of skills and experience are able to access our degrees. In 2015/16 20% of all UK domiciled undergraduate admissions were from groups with the lowest participation in Higher Education (POLAR Quintiles 1 & 2), 61% of undergraduate students identified as Black, Asian or other Minority Ethnicity and 88% of undergraduate students were aged 21 and over.

Admission and Support

The University is committed to providing a fair admissions process which admits students on merit and potential, irrespective of their background. In so doing, BPP University is committed to the five key principles of Fair Admissions as outlined in the Schwartz report: transparency, minimising barriers to entry, selecting for merit, potential and diversity, professionalism and using assessment methods that are reliable and valid.

The Admissions Team works in partnership with programme teams and other University services to deliver a professional and equitable admissions service. With fair admissions at the heart of the selection process, all applications are assessed against the same entry criteria including consideration of prior learning. For applicants from diverse educational, professional and personal backgrounds we may request alternative forms of evidence in support of an application such as an interview with a member of faculty, an admissions test or references from previous work experience.

BPP University understands that making the decision to attend university can be a daunting experience. By offering opportunities for face to face communication through a range of open events and post-graduate fairs, one-to-one campus tours and telephone calls with a tutor, potential students are able to speak to faculty members and ask questions in a way that suits them.

BPP University offers a wide range of internal and external Scholarships for students from all backgrounds. BPP University is a proud sponsor of the Amos Bursary for young British males of African/Caribbean heritage and the Law and Business Schools recently supported a scholarship fund for 42 St Lucian Scholars providing a range of experiences in Higher Education in the UK.

Students who feel they would benefit from further preparation before embarking on a degree course have the opportunity to complete one of BPP University's Pathway programmes in Legal Studies, Business Studies, Accounting, Psychology or Healthcare within the School of Foundation and English Language Studies. Courses are specifically designed to prepare students for onward progression onto a degree programme on completion of the course. These programmes also enable students who do not meet all the entry criteria for our degree programmes to enhance their knowledge, skills and confidence as an additional access route to our degrees. Students who successfully complete the Pathway programme are provided with a guaranteed place on the relevant BPP University degree programme. The Pathway programmes also provide students with the opportunity to understand the commitment and rigour required of higher education and whether it is right for them before they sign up to a full degree.

BPP University benefits from a central Inclusion and Learning Support team which works closely with the admissions team to ensure that students with learning difficulties and disabilities receive timely and appropriate support from the outset. The team also monitors admissions data and identifies specific groups such as care leavers to ensure that students are supported and feel included from day one.

Diversity Groups

Once registered, students are encouraged to join one of the Inclusion and Learning Support team's Student Diversity Groups (BME, Mature, Disability, Women's) which are operated by students for students, with the support of the Inclusion team. The groups provide opportunities for students to engage in peer to peer support, participate in the development of new diversity initiatives, attend events and join networks, and importantly feedback directly into the University to ensure that the student voice is loud and clear. Student Inclusion Representatives also sit on the Equality and Diversity Forum to provide invaluable input to the University Equality and Diversity Strategy and continuous improvement in this area.

Ongoing Support and Progression

The Learning and Teaching and Inclusion teams play a central role in driving the Widening Participation and success agenda forward at BPP University. Both teams provide training and development and bespoke courses on Inclusion in Learning and Teaching and supporting more vulnerable students. For example the development of a Professional Conversations series in which the Learning and Teaching team recorded video conversations providing support for tutors on various topics including inclusive classroom management; dealing with culturally sensitive scenarios and handling difficult and sensitive materials in the classroom. Further training and development for staff includes drafting inclusive assessment and providing supportive and inclusive feedback and marking.

The Inclusion and Learning Support team provides tailored support for students and has a particular focus on supporting students with mental health difficulties across all programmes; this is in response to the recent rise in individuals presenting with these issues. Both teams are currently offering peer mentoring programmes to students in the Business, Health and Law Schools, with the aim of supporting students achieve their full potential. These include the opportunity for locating and supporting vulnerable students via student success tutorials as part of our retention progression and achievement agenda.

An accessible Virtual Learning Environment includes the facility to watch and listen again to lectures and in some cases tutorials, thus providing students with further opportunities to reinforce key learning points and provide a valuable resource for revision. In 2015 the University embedded a 'Career Ready' Strategy in all programmes. This is designed to ensure that students develop a range of skills, attributes, and positive behaviours throughout their course which will enable them to gain employment, or progress in their career or on to further study.

Projects and Initiatives

The University delivers a wide range of targeted projects and initiatives to support both students and staff develop a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding participation, achievement and progression to ensure that a holistic approach is embedded across all Schools. These include an Inclusive Curriculum Group, to develop an embedded approach to inclusive curriculum design and delivery, and an IT Accessibility Group to develop innovation and to maximise the accessibility of online materials and IT platforms. The University recently delivered a 2 day Digital Literacy Conference with associated projects and events for students and staff which focused on inclusive digital literacy, this included the continuing opportunity for all students to undertake IT qualifications alongside their studies.

In order to support Inclusivity across the University in 2015 the Inclusion team provided Equality Analysis training for a number of teams. This training was designed to support staff and provide the tools and processes for Inclusive thinking and innovative development. The approach is supported by opportunities to advance specialist knowledge and understanding through tailored training for faculty and students on areas such as autistic spectrum, dyslexia and specific learning difficulties, physical disability, visual and hearing impairment, mental health and care leavers. Training for Student Managers and other teams has also provided a focus on inclusive practice, identifying vulnerable students, cultural sensitivity and mental health awareness; including suicide prevention training and self-harm awareness.

In the wider community BPP University works closely through outreach activity with local schools. BPP offers legal workshops, mock trials and street law sessions. In 2017 BPP is running the school for young professionals in Leeds, which is a two day course for students considering an apprenticeship rather than a traditional university route into a legal or accountancy career. This will cover CVs, interviews and a business game to prepare students for employment.

Tracking and Monitoring

Information and data covering equality and diversity indicators is monitored at programme level and by University boards and committees, including the Equality and Diversity Forum, which collate and share equality and diversity reports to ensure that teams within the University understand the retention, achievement and progression of particular disadvantaged groups.

Access to the Professions

BPP University is well-connected to numerous organisations in the Legal, Business and Health sectors. BPP University works directly with a number of law firms on their Diversity Access Schemes, provides fee waiver places to the Amos Bursary charity and provides three full fees waiver places for The Law Society's Diversity Access Scheme every year. The University is actively recruiting Law students to the Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme, which is designed to broaden access to legal careers in law firms and challenge under-representation.

BPP University also provides collaborative events around the inclusion of women, black and minority ethnic, LGBT+ and disabled students with the Chancery Bar, individual barristers chambers, the Amos Bursary, SWIM - Strength Within Me, (campaigning against domestic violence to women), the Law Society, LawCare, InterLaw - LGBT networks and Stonewall. Forthcoming initiatives include a workshop on racial equality in the workplace at the Business School, which is a collaboration between various teams and students.

These events provide students with the opportunity to discuss career opportunities directly with experienced professionals who have shared similar experiences and to gain a deeper understanding of the professional sectors; whilst accessing diversity initiatives which they can progress into or become involved in.

Moving Forward

The University is well placed to continue to make a positive and proactive contribution to social mobility. A unique combination of regional locations, flexible modes of delivery, structured and tailored student support, training and development, activity with local schools, professional courses and links with employers underpins a clear focus and commitment to widening access and participation.

BPP University seeks to build more links with schools, colleges and local community groups and provide more opportunities for potential students to experience University and raise aspirations through a wide range of activities. In 2017 a work experience scheme will be trialled at the law school in Leeds as part of this initiative to engage local communities.

Internally, the continuation of bespoke staff development activities is planned, with a continued focus on the inclusive curriculum and strategies for supporting and engaging students from disadvantaged backgrounds; including during the admissions process and responding to and supporting students with anxiety, depression and more complex mental health conditions.

A new staff intranet site dedicated to Inclusion and Learning Support is almost ready for publication and will be used to ensure that all new and existing staff have the opportunity to

build skills and understanding regarding the challenges facing disadvantaged groups and strategies to support them.

Further plans include the development of a Mental Health tool kit for students to assist with their wellbeing and managing stress and anxiety. The University is also rolling out TextHelp Gold and Zoomtext, assistive software in IT suites in each library to complement existing Mind Mapping software and JAWs.

A planned consultation on faith and religious belief will begin in 2017 which will explore the impact of faith on learning and the learning environment. This will include discussion with students, staff and external faith groups and will provide a further opportunity to build community relationships and champion the benefits of higher education.

BPP University will continue to review its approach and activities in relation to its widening access and inclusion agenda to ensure that its activities are targeted, effective and meeting the needs of its student community.

Published January 2017