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# BPP University

## Access and Participation Statement

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BPP INCLUSION

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. BPP University (BPPU) is proud of its diverse student body and inclusive environment. The University continues to be firmly committed to lifelong learning, through building access to the professions with its unique range of degree and apprenticeship programmes. Widening Access and Participation through Inclusion and Equality and a celebration of Diversity remain at the heart of our DNA.
2. Our flexible modes of delivery include online, blended and in-centre; with convenient, modern, city-centre facilities which provide accessible, localised learning opportunities for students near to transport hubs, amenities and personal support networks. All learning and teaching materials, including recordings of lectures and tutorials, are available on the BPP Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to ensure that students can revisit activities, materials and key learning points.

### ACCESS

3. BPPU continues to make a positive contribution to creating opportunities for individuals who may otherwise be excluded from higher education. The profile of our students, approximately 54% of whom are on postgraduate programmes, is diverse in a number of characteristics:
  - 3.1. From the Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) data, which illustrates the proportion of the young population who participate in higher education, 7% of UK domiciled, undergraduate students are from POLAR quintile 1 (1 representing areas of low participation (most disadvantaged) and 5 being the areas with high rates of participation (most advantaged)) and a further 13% from quintile 2, with 24% of students identifying as Black or Asian<sup>1</sup>.
  - 3.2. 63% of undergraduate students were aged over 21<sup>2</sup>. Across all programmes (UG/PG) 49% are aged 20 – 24 and 48% are aged 25 and over<sup>3</sup>.
  - 3.3. The gender balance on undergraduate programmes is 45% male and 54% female<sup>4</sup>. Across all programmes (UG/PG) this figure is 69% female and 30% male<sup>5</sup>.
  - 3.4. Disability disclosure rates across all programmes (UG/PG) remain around 11%, with some postgraduate law programmes at 14%.
  - 3.5. BPPU's postgraduate programmes reflect the diversity of the University. For example, 37% of students on the LPC identify as BME and 49% of students identify as BME on the full-time BPTC<sup>6 7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> TEF metrics data – June 2017 (available from the OfS website)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> BPPU data

<sup>4</sup> TEF metrics data – June 2017

<sup>5</sup> BPPU data

<sup>6</sup> 2016/17 Annual report submitted to Solicitors' Regulation Authority

<sup>7</sup> 2016/17 Annual report submitted to Bar Standards Board

## **WIDENING ACCESS**

4. BPPU works with a large number of both primary and secondary schools and 6<sup>th</sup> form colleges, where we deliver Business games, attend careers fairs, run public legal education workshops and mock trials.
5. BPPU is an active member of a number of Widening Participation networks including the NEON BME and Disabled Students working groups, the National Association of Disability Practitioners, The Mental Health Foundation and Time to Change.
6. BPPU offers a wide range of scholarships, and awarded over £850,000 in scholarships in 2017.
7. BPPU Law students volunteer for Mosaic (part of The Princes' Trust), a charity which helps young people who are struggling at school to transform their lives. Students act as mentors to primary and secondary schoolchildren on programmes designed to develop their confidence and aspirations. They also mentor schoolchildren through an Enterprise challenge designed to enhance their knowledge of the world of business.
8. In 2016/17, approximately 77% of the student population of BPPU were enrolled with the BPPU Law School<sup>8</sup>. BPPU has a number of projects which promote widening access to legal education and the legal profession, for example:
  - 8.1. BPPU runs the Law Ambassador Programme, which matches up schools with law firms in Yorkshire, to provide legal mentors and a variety of activities for pupils, including for example a day in Court.
  - 8.2. BPPU 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 each year.
  - 8.3. BPPU 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.
  - 8.4. A number of scholarships are available to law students including the BPTC Hardship Award and BPP University Law School Aspiring Solicitors Scholarships.
  - 8.5. The Streetlaw programme (a free public legal education project, which has been run by BPP's Pro Bono Centre with the support of volunteer law students since 2004) was once again recognised at a national level at the LawWorks and Attorney General Student Awards 2017 for its positive impact in local communities. The Streetlaw project works with a range of people, including schoolchildren (Streetlaw Schools and Youth Groups), prisoners and ex-offenders (Streetlaw Prisons), homeless people (Streetlaw Homeless) and carers of vulnerable adults affected by mental health issues (With Law In Mind).

## **ADMISSIONS**

9. BPPU is committed to providing fair admissions which facilitate access for students with outstanding achievement and potential, irrespective of their background in line with the 5 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.
10. The Admissions Team works in partnership with Schools and other sections of the University to deliver a professional and equitable admissions service. BPPU recognises that, at times, a course's standard procedure for assessing applications may not provide an accurate understanding of an applicant's suitability. In such cases applicants are asked to provide

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<sup>8</sup> BPPU data

alternative forms of evidence in support of their application such as via interview with a member of faculty, admissions test or references from previous employers.

11. Admissions Officers are able to make offers where standard entry criteria are met. They are supported by Admissions Validation Officers (AVO), who review the applications and either validate the offer or reject the application. All non-standard applications are scrutinised by AVOs, including all applications for accredited prior learning, before consulting with or referring to Faculty for a final decision. Each application is reviewed at least twice and in some cases three times. The AVOs do not communicate directly with applicants restricting unconscious bias towards an applicant, as all communication is via the Admissions Officer. This structure of review has been in place for over two years and has been acknowledged as sector wide good practice in the UCAS Report on Unconscious Bias and their study of name blind applications published in November 2017.
12. BPPU 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 the very start of their journey with BPPU.
13. In the last year, staff development has remained a key focus with a range of activity across BPPU. This included training with the Admissions teams on Inclusion and the barriers facing disabled, mature, BME and care leavers, which has led to an increased disclosure rate from the Admissions team and a deeper understanding of the experiences of some BME groups.

## **SUCCESS**

14. The retention and achievement of learners is monitored through the Student Assessment, Retention and Achievement Committee and our annual programme monitoring processes. Information and data covering equality and diversity indicators is monitored both at programme level and by University boards and committees, including the Equality and Diversity Forum. These boards collate and share equality and diversity reports to ensure that teams within the University understand the retention, achievement and progression of particular disadvantaged groups. Annual Equality and Diversity reports are produced to ensure the institutional and departmental focus is maintained. An online Equality Analysis training package is ready for deployment. This will provide further advice and guidance for staff designing programmes of study to ensure that inclusive practice remains a key focus from the design stage.
15. The University operates an Equality and Diversity Strategy, a Learning Support Strategy and has recently implemented an overarching Retention and Success Strategy and an Early Engagement Strategy. Taken together, these strategies aim to build targeted interventions, which cover, in detail, all aspects of the learning journey. This is coupled with ongoing training and development to share with BPPU staff the subtle and complex issues at play in student retention and achievement.
16. The University's differential attainment when split by ethnicity is consistent with the lower attainment of BME students in the HE sector more generally. The attainment gap between male and female students varies across programmes with no significant differences on the larger LPC programme. Differential outcomes do exist for mature students across most programmes. Where differential outcomes exist these are identified at programme level and analysis and actions agreed with the programme team and with the wider strategic approach in this area.
17. A dedicated project, Equality Retention and Achievement through Inclusive Curriculum (Project ERATIC) has been established to provide an institutional focus for understanding how, within the specific learning spaces of BPPU, students with a range of protected characteristics can be successfully retained and achieve their full potential. Reporting to the Equality and Diversity

Forum, this group of key staff from across BPP are working to develop effective processes which foster a deeper sense of belonging for mature, BME, care leavers and students with protected characteristics.

18. A consultation on faith and religious belief has begun with human resources, which will provide staff with the opportunity to share aspects of their faith through existing staff networks, with a view to leading a 'conversation on faith' with students.

#### **RESPONDING TO AT RISK STUDENTS**

19. In response to an increase in the number of students who become vulnerable to external and/or personal factors which affect wellbeing and the ability to study, BPPU has successfully introduced an 'At Risk' system which incorporates responses to mental health crisis, suicidal ideation, safeguarding concerns and Prevent issues. In February 2018 the Safeguarding and Prevent teams were incorporated into the Inclusion and Learning Support team to ensure that all aspects of student care and support are inter-connected. The At Risk strategy is a collaborative approach to support, protect and safeguard our most vulnerable learners. Utilising clear and simple procedures issued to all staff, the aim is to provide a rapid response service for students which has the ability to draw on the knowledge and experience of Learning Support, Prevent, Safeguarding, University Mental Health Field Lead and counselling teams. Students are supported, using this wide range of internal resources and referred to external agencies as appropriate. Students are then tracked and monitored to ensure that ongoing support and interventions continue as required.
20. BPPU has implemented training on mental health, suicide awareness, responding to students in distress and has disseminated a focus on the experiences of BME students in Higher Education, which has led to a clearer and more efficient response to students in distress from the wider University.
21. The Learning Support team, in response to student feedback, ran Wellbeing workshops aimed at students to help build resilience when dealing with anxiety and stress. The team is working towards the online deployment of this workshop for students who are unable to attend face to face.
22. The University is proud to report that a recent case study submission outlining the support for students with mental health issues was recognised as best practice by the QAA<sup>9</sup>. The University also renewed its commitment to supporting mental health through a re-signing of our renewed Time to Change Pledge, by our Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education Services.

#### **LEARNING SUPPORT FOR DISABLED STUDENTS**

23. The disclosure rates for disabled students at BPPU continue to increase steadily across all sites. This includes an increase in the disclosure of mental health, visual impairment and more complex health difficulties; hence the overall complexity of the student entitlement is increasing. This trend is well reported in both the national press and in the Higher Education sector more widely.
24. The Learning Support team is promoted throughout BPPU to ensure that all students are aware of the support available to them. This includes automatic welcome emails from the admissions system, a comprehensive VLE site, BPPU website, a hard copy Mini Guide to Inclusion and Learning Support, flyers, posters and a learning support presence at all inductions.
25. A Reasonable Adjustments Panel, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, is convened each term to provide equitable consideration of alternative formats of assessment for students with the most significant disability and health conditions. The panel considers the appropriateness and feasibility of alternative forms of assessment for students who are unable to sit examinations

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<sup>9</sup> Available to the QAA Subscriber Community

for disability related reasons. Students with complex disabilities are provided with an appropriate range of reasonable adjustments which aim to enable them to sit the actual exam with their peers in the first instance. Examples include students with severe anxiety and physical conditions such as chronic pain.

### **ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY**

26. A new Accessibility Strategy is in development which will review and identify improvements to the accessibility of the various learning platforms at BPP. In the recent Digital Skills conference, a key presentation included how to make accessible learning materials for students to ensure that all aspects of the provision remain accessible and inclusive. A resource base for faculty is under development and will provide key guidance and information on how to produce an inclusive learning environment.
27. BPPU has rolled out TextHelp Gold and Zoomtext, software across the main Library and IT suites which complements existing Mind Mapping software, JAWs and CCTV monitors.

### **DIVERSITY GROUPS AND THE STUDENT VOICE**

28. The student Diversity Groups have continued to be successful in engaging students with a range of characteristics. Students are encouraged to join the Culture and BME, LGBT, Mature, Disability and/or Women's Group which are operated by students for students, with the support and resources from 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 facilitate a clear student voice in this area. 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.
29. BPPU provides collaborative events for students around the inclusion of disabled students, women, black and ethnic minority, LGBT+. BPPU is a member of the Law Society, Lawyers with Disability Division, LawCare, InterLaw – LGBT+ networks and Stonewall. There are also a wide range of Students' Association groups which support and reflect culture, religion and diversity.
30. In the BPPU Student Experience Survey, which covers all programmes, 91% of our students are satisfied with BPPU as an educational institution and 95% would recommend BPPU Programmes to other students.
31. Students with disabilities continue to be more than satisfied with the service. There is an upward trend which rose to 92% satisfaction in 2017.
32. The same Student Experience Survey results for Equality and Diversity have also increased from the previous year, with 96% of students in 2017 reporting that BPPU is supportive in relation to their Equality and Diversity requirements.

### **PROGRESSION**

33. The 2016/17 DLHE survey data for undergraduate students shows that 93.2% of BPP University students went on to employment and/or further study 6 months after graduation, against a benchmark of 93.9%. Additionally, 85.1% of BPP University students went on to Highly Skilled Employment or further study, against a benchmark of 82.1% (3% above benchmark).
34. In tandem with a fully-embedded Career Ready Strategy, BPPU is well-connected to numerous organisations in the Legal, Business and Health sectors and committed to widening access to professions, such as:
  - 34.1. Assessment Days offered by BPPU, for example 'A Time to Shine', which is an opportunity for students aspiring to be barristers and solicitors to practice assessment

centre and pupillage interview activities at BPPU centres around the country and to network with the profession;

- 34.2 BPPU also runs sessions for aspiring barristers, assisting them with mooted tips and also how to become a barrister preparing them for the journey ahead.

#### **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

35. BPPU's ambitious plans to widen participation and provide equitable admissions will continue with a deeper focus through the Early Engagement strategy and training and development on the complex requirements of students during the transition into higher education and apprenticeships. Building the confidence of students to disclose they have a disability, they are leaving care or that they have had a break from learning will form the focus of this work. Reaching these students early on and providing support, guidance and engagement through the Diversity Groups and fostering a sense of belonging to the University. These key relationships with students further facilitate opportunities for both consultation and a deeper understanding of the most appropriate forms of support.
36. BPPU understands that more work needs to be undertaken to engage local schools and community groups to increase the number of disadvantaged (Polar 1 and 2, disabled, BME) students engaging with Higher Education. The importance of raising aspirations through a wide range of activities and breaking down barriers to encourage new participants into the professions will remain a central theme of our outreach activity. Activity such as existing Pro Bono work and activity in schools through mock trials and business briefcase sessions coupled with forging new links and relationships with both national and community groups will assist BPPU in this regard.
37. As outlined above, a wide range of retention and success strategies, coupled with a pro-active approach to Learning Support and student engagement form the basis of supporting students once on programme. These strategies are informed by both qualitative and quantitative information, student surveys and consultations. The importance of this wide approach cannot be overstated.
38. The Equality Retention and Achievement through Inclusive Curriculum (Project ERATIC) group remains a key focus with further developments planned to ensure that the sociological context, learning and life histories of students at BPPU is taken into account throughout the student journey.
39. BPPU will continue to utilise Banner, the BPPU management information system, to enable better metrics which will drive innovation.
40. BPPU provision strives toward maximising access and participation, leading to an inclusive educational experience. BPPU will continue building towards a future where all people can access, benefit and contribute to a wide range of dynamic and rewarding professions.