

The University of Bath will offer the most accessible university experience in the world



We are diverse - in our cultures and ethnicity, our prior experiences, our subject choices and in the way we learn.

We see this diversity positively - we value inclusivity and representation across identities and backgrounds. We advocate for social justice, equality, and the breaking down of barriers related to race, gender, sexuality, and other aspects of identity.

We expect institutions, workplaces, companies and communities to reflect and support our diverse perspectives. We see diversity as essential for progress and social harmony. We value our University operating on a human scale - the breadth of our partnership should facilitate the rewarding collaboration and innovation that diversity offers.

Sometimes "access" is viewed through disadvantage - through disability, race or socio-economics - a frame which emphasises a "deficit"

to be "fixed". But for us, access is about an ambition - where our diverse characteristics, backgrounds and political opinions become a strength to share and draw upon. We are ambitious that access at the University goes beyond the Equality Act, and that we seek to be a leading example of accessibility in the sector.

We believe that everyone deserves access to education that is inclusive, adaptive, and supportive - empowering us to reach our full potential so we can go on to change the world.

For us, access is about three things:

- 1 Our environments, teaching and services anticipate, and where that is not possible, respond rapidly and effectively to **disability and access**.
- 2 We can **afford** to learn and live comfortably.
- 3 Our whole community understands and celebrates **difference**.

Students told us:

Disability

Students shared with us their experiences regarding the implementation of Disability Access Plans (DAPs) across the University. In the *SU and Disability Advice Service Accessibility Survey 2022* students who had seen DAPs implemented successfully saw this support aiding them to achieve their potential. Those who had struggled told us that DAP information was not shared with all relevant staff, or was not being implemented.

In 2023/24, the Disability Advice Team reported that there were 1811 DAPs produced for undergraduate students; 87% of these contain the three adjustments - recorded lectures, notes in advance and the ability to self-record.

Students told us about their frustrations with the lack of lecture recordings and the impact on learning, especially for those who need to review content (not limited to students with a DAP or undisclosed disability or medical needs, but also international students, student carers, or students needing to work to afford university).

This is not a new issue and has explicitly been an SU Top Ten priority issue three times in the past 10 years². Despite this, elected student Faculty Reps reported (2023-24) that staff were not following through with the lecture recording progress made in the previous academic year (*SU Academic Exec meeting 24.11.23*), as well as widespread anecdotal evidence and individual cases of students acutely affected by this ongoing inconsistency - particularly for disabled students.

1811
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87%
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THE THREE
ADJUSTMENTS:
Recorded lectures
Notes in advance
Ability to self-record

Students who saw
DAPs implemented
effectively felt
supported to reach
their potential

Students who
struggled reported
a lack of shared
DAP information
and inconsistent
implementation

²SU Top Ten <https://www.thesubath.com/campaigns/topten/previous/>



"I'm dyslexic and really struggle keeping up with lectures. I find it challenging to take in verbal information, especially when there [are] little visual aids. Hence, recorded lectures are vital to my learning." - 2nd Year Undergraduate Female student

42% of students reported that they received recorded lectures for all lectures, a further 38% reported receiving for the majority of lectures (*Together We Shape Tomorrow Survey May 2024*). A key theme from the Together We Shape Tomorrow engagement activity was recorded lectures. Students spoke positively regarding the flexibility and accessibility of being able to catch up on content if they were ill, disabled, or had other commitments, thus relieving anxiety and pressure. Students particularly valued having recorded content available to support revision and understanding of complex topics.

Beyond recorded lectures making education accessible for disabled students, we also hear from students that they are struggling financially, leading to choices being made between earning money and attending lectures. 1 in 4 students are reducing their travel to campus due to their financial situation and 12% are missing lectures because they need to work.

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1 IN 4 students are reducing their travel to campus due to their financial situation

Affordability

Students are continuing to feel the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and continued increases in costs for students is impacting on all areas of the student experience. In the SU's *Impact of the increase in cost-of-living survey 2023* we saw students commenting on the negative impacts of their finances on their lives and student experience, with feedback given again in the *Together We Shape Tomorrow Survey May 2024*.

The situation has not improved for students, and for some we see impacts worsening, with students reporting cutting the size of meals or skipping meals due to a lack of funds, and this impacting their levels of concentration on their studies. Nearly half of students told us that they were worried about a potential negative impact on their final degree grade due to the cost-of-living crisis.

"I am currently paying 130% of my maintenance loan towards rent. This is before bills, food, transport and other living expenses. Without financial support from my family I would be severely in debt or homeless." - Undergraduate, Home fee payer (Housing Survey 2024)

In addition to current students telling us their financial concerns, we saw prospective students attending open day already highlighting concerns with the costs associated with being a student, demonstrating that this issue is not one which will go away soon. It is also not a new issue, with issues around student finances having been part of the SU's Top Ten priority issues seven times since 2011/12.

Students also tell us about frustrations with campus costs. Whilst students welcomed the introduction of the £1.50 meals on campus, the *Together We Shape Tomorrow* engagement also highlighted that students continue to view food and drink on campus as very expensive and would welcome more mid-price options which provide a greater variety and higher nutrition. There are also growing concerns that these options will be further limited or removed all together, as University financial pressures grow. We believe it is essential that this basic need for students is protected.



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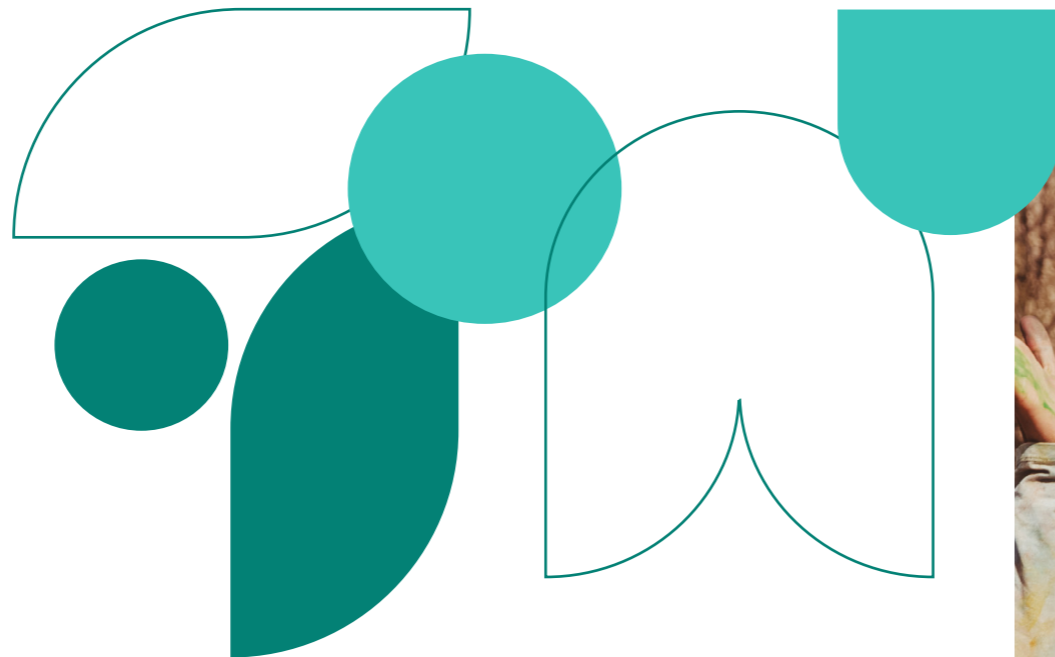


**ALMOST
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Difference

Students are also worried about political polarisation, their identity and background not being respected or understood, and through discussion groups, have expressed a desire for the University to better address controversial social and political issues. Students have identified that more support is needed for cross-cultural facilitation on campus, especially navigating differences between home and international students.

With reports from students on differential approaches to disability access initiatives and treatment from various University departments, we believe all students should be able to expect equity of treatment and experience from all areas of University delivery.



On disability, we want to see:

- ❶ Inclusive practice in teaching and learning as a de facto standard - with action plans and feedback measures on every programme that drive adoption and improvement.
- ❷ A commitment to ensuring that all students understand disability through induction - so that we can support and engage each other.
- ❸ Every student with a DAP gets the adjustments they need without friction - and is able to rapidly escalate for resolution, if not, without fear of reprisals.

On affordability, we want to see:

- ❶ The University calculates, adopts and recognises a minimum income³ for students - and where that can't be met, offers both financial support and a plan delivered internally and with its partners to drive down the costs that students face.
- ❷ A student basic needs approach and centre⁴ to provide a comprehensive support system ensuring that every student has access to essential resources like food, housing, mental health services, and academic support.
- ❸ A commitment - regularly tested for its efficacy - that every student enrolling at the University understands the likely costs they will face, and is

offered world-leading support to manage their money (i.e. through a meaningful, cash-value financial support scheme).

- ❹ Ensuring value for money for placement students through an ongoing assessment of support on offer before, during and after placements - adopting standards in the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Framework⁵.

On difference, we want to see:

- ❶ Visible targets and action plans, involving students, to improve the diversity of both staff and students at subject level - and a commitment to both engaging in and excelling in each and every relevant diversity charter or standard over the next five years.
- ❷ An outright ban on the instigation of romantic or sexual relationships between staff and students, and a dedicated inquiry, operated in partnership, into the causes of complaints from students about students that leads to preventative programming.
- ❸ A joint University-SU development plan to ensure that support exists for underrepresented communities to thrive and are enabled to both interact with others and celebrate and promote their cultures and concerns.
- ❹ A review to understand and address the experiential differences between home and international students, with a collaborative action plan built to provide an equity of experience.



³A-Minimum-Income-Standard-for-Students.pdf (hepi.ac.uk) ⁴Student Basic Needs (wonkhe.com)

⁵OIA, casework note and case summaries of complaints relating to placements