

# RNN Group

## Summary of 2026-27 to 2029-30

### Access and Participation Plan



## 1. What is an access and participation plan?

An Access and Participation plan (APP) sets out how higher education providers will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups of students. It explains how students will be supported to access higher education, succeed in their studies and progress to positive outcomes such as skilled employment or further study.

The RNN Group (The Group) APP reflects its mission to lead innovation and skills within its communities and its commitment to supporting students from areas of significant social, economic and educational disadvantage across South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire.

You can access the Group's full APP here:

<https://ucr.rotherham.ac.uk/app/uploads/2026/01/RNN-Group-Access-and-Participation-Plan-2026-27-to-2029-30-Final.pdf>

## 2. Key points (see pages 1 to 8 of the full plan)

The Group delivers higher education primarily through the University Centre Rotherham (UCR) alongside provision at its main college campuses: Rotherham College; North Notts College and Dearne Valley College. The Group serves a region with low levels of higher education participation, high deprivation and lower than average attainment. Data shows that the Group successfully recruits students from underrepresented backgrounds, including:

- 2.1 Students from areas of high deprivation and low participation in higher education;
- 2.2 Mature students;
- 2.3 Students declaring a disability, including mental health conditions;
- 2.4 Students from low-income households.

While access rates are strong, analysis of internal and sector data shows that some groups of students experience lower continuation, completion and progression outcomes. The key risks identified relate to:

- 2.5 Students eligible for free school meals (FSM);
- 2.6 Disabled students, particularly those with mental health conditions;
- 2.7 Young male students.

The Group's APP focuses on addressing these risks through targeted, evidence informed interventions to strengthen students' sense of belonging, academic skills, personal support and financial resilience.

## 3. Fees we charge (see page 27 to 28 of the full plan)

The maximum fees charged by the Group are:

- 3.1 £7,600 for full time students;
- 3.2 £3,800 for part time students.

You can see a full list of our fees here [Course Fees](#)

#### 4. Financial help available (see page 23 to 24 of the full plan)

The Group provides targeted financial support to help students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds access and remain in higher education. This support is designed to reduce financial pressures that may otherwise lead to withdrawal or non-completion. Support includes:

- 4.1 **Bursaries** for care experienced students of up to £1,000 per year for each year of full-time study;
- 4.2 **Means tested bursaries** for students from low-income households, subject to eligibility criteria;
- 4.3 **A higher education hardship fund** to support students experiencing acute financial difficulty during their studies.

Financial support is reviewed regularly to ensure it is targeted at students with the greatest need and contributes effectively to improved continuation and completion.

#### 5. Information for students (see page 27 of the full plan)

Clear, accurate and accessible information about tuition fees and financial support is provided to prospective and current students through:

- 5.1 The RNN Group website;
- 5.2 Course and induction materials;
- 5.3 Student services and higher education tutors;
- 5.4 Links to external organisations such as Student Finance England.

Students are supported to make informed decisions about their studies and are signposted to appropriate guidance and advice throughout their student journey.

#### 6. What we are aiming to achieve (see page 9 of the full plan)

The overall aim of the Group's APP is to improve equality of opportunity so that all students, regardless of background, can succeed in higher education. The Group has set clear objectives focused on improving on programme outcomes for students at greatest risk, including:

- 6.1 Eliminating continuation gaps between FSM-eligible students and their peers;
- 6.2 Improving continuation and completion rates for young male students;
- 6.3 Removing continuation and completion gaps between disabled and non-disabled students.

These objectives are underpinned by a commitment to creating an inclusive environment that promotes confidence, wellbeing, academic success and a strong sense of belonging.

#### 7. What we are doing to achieve our aims (see pages 9 to 25 of the full plan)

The Group has identified four core intervention strategies to deliver its objectives:

- 7.1 Inclusive induction: redesigning higher education induction to foster belonging, improve awareness of academic and personal support and support early engagement;

- 7.2 Enhanced tutorial provision: strengthening personalised tutorial support, with improved staff training to identify and respond to academic, wellbeing and mental health needs;
- 7.3 Academic skills development: enhancing assessment literacy, academic confidence and online academic skills support, informed by evidence of what works;
- 7.4 Targeted financial support: refocusing bursaries and hardship funding to support students most at risk of withdrawal or non-completion.

These interventions are designed to benefit all higher education students, while having a particular positive impact on the groups identified as facing the greatest risks.

## **8. How students can get involved** (see page 27 of the full plan)

Students have played an active role in shaping the APP through surveys, focus groups and representation within governance structures. Students will continue to be involved through:

- 8.1 Student representatives on course and committee meetings;
- 8.2 Feedback gathered via induction, on-course surveys and the National Student Survey (NSS);
- 8.3 Ongoing consultation on the design and evaluation of interventions.

This ensures that student voice remains central to implementation and continuous improvement.

## **9. Evaluation: how we will measure what we have achieved** (see page 27 of the full plan)

The Group is committed to robust evaluation of its access and participation activities. Evaluation will focus on:

- 9.1 Whether interventions are delivered as intended;
- 9.2 The impact of activities on continuation, completion and student experience;
- 9.3 Progress against the Group's stated objectives and targets.

A mix of quantitative data and qualitative feedback will be used, drawing on internal performance data, student feedback and sector evaluation frameworks. Findings will be reviewed regularly and used to refine interventions where necessary.

The Group's Higher Education & Higher Level Skills Strategy Group will monitor and report on these processes to the Quality & Standards Committee. This Committee will oversee implementation of actions to ensure ongoing progress against milestones in the plan. The Group will monitor impact on the target groups, to ensure the plan is addressing its aims. Where appropriate, the Group will adjust interventions to meet the best interests of students.

## **10. Contact for further information**

Further information about the Group's Access and Participation Plan can be obtained by contacting Cheryl Martin, Director of Quality & Academic Standards at [APP@rnnngroup.ac.uk](mailto:APP@rnnngroup.ac.uk) for further information.