Summary: Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2025/26 – 2028/29

Kaplan Open Learning (KOL) delivers 100% online undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, in partnership with the University of Essex. KOL primarily supports mature students in employment offering accessible and flexible education to students worldwide. The APP sets out how KOL aims to ensure equality of opportunity at each stage of the student lifecycle: Access (getting onto a higher education programme), Continuation and Completion (progressing through and completing your programme), and Attainment and Progression (going onto graduate level employment or further study after you finish your programme).

Key Points of the Plan

KOL's mission is to widen access to higher education through inclusive policies and flexible, industry-relevant programmes. Our strategic focus has always been and continues to be on widening participation for those students who could not enter higher education through traditional routes. Recognising that the withdrawal rates for students with our demographic profile combined with the part-time mode of delivery can be high, we have developed a comprehensive wraparound structure of academic and pastoral support which is at the forefront of online learning.

The APP focuses on supporting:

- Mature students transitioning into online higher education.

- Students who enter without traditional academic qualifications

- Students experiencing mental health challenges

- Students facing financial pressures, especially from deprived backgrounds

KOL is committed to:

- Reducing the early withdrawal rate

- Halving the module pass rate gap for students with mental health conditions

- Reducing the continuation rate gap between students from the most and least deprived backgrounds

Intervention Strategies

KOL's APP outlines three main strategies to support student success:

1. Targeted Academic Support for Mature Students

- Enhanced induction and support

- Peer mentoring and technical literacy assistance

- AI-powered 24/7 study skills chatbot

- Academic readiness assessments

- Resubmission support

2. Addressing Mental Health Challenges

- Launching an Online mental health platform

- Staff mental health awareness training

- Resilience training workshops for students

3. Mitigating Financial Pressures

- Establishing hardship funds

- Merit-based and needs-based scholarships

University of Essex Online

Tuition Fees

Fees align with the approved status under the OfS fee cap. Details of programme-specific fees, scholarships, and funding options are available on the **University of Essex Online (UoEO) website** and provided in students' offer letters.

Financial Help

KOL offers:

- Scholarships and discounts for eligible students

- A hardship fund for unexpected financial difficulties

- Dedicated Student Finance and Retention Team

Informing Students

Students made aware of our APP via:

- Admissions Advisers during the application process

- Information in offer letters and on UoEO website

- Resources and updates on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

Student Involvement in the APP

There are several ways that our students are involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the plan**:**

- Consultations with the Student Council and through a VLE forum

- Progress will be shared on an annual basis with our Student Council

- Through consultation with the whole student body on the operation of the plan

- Students can also feedback on the intervention strategies through their course representatives, and through end of module surveys

Evaluation of the APP

- Establishing an Evaluation Group to review the APP progress and report quarterly to the Operations Management Committee (OMC)

- Improved data systems and dashboards for data tracking and analysis

- Annual reports shared with stakeholders

- Periodic external audits to provide an independent assessment of success