



WORKING TO WIDEN ACCESS

Scotland's universities have set out 15 actions they will take over the next few years that will create the potential for a big step forward in widening access.

"I welcome the planning in making transparent and accessible all the pathways for all who are able to access university courses. As a Guidance Teacher I look forward to the development of appropriate one-stop websites and databases informing the student, teacher and parent/carer, and to the increased partnership working between secondary and tertiary education, which will enable me to offer the highest level of support to all of our students."

MARIA RAWLUK
Pupil Support Leader at Drummond
Community High School

MORE INFORMATION

You can find the full *Working to Widen Access* report from Universities Scotland, with more detail on the actions and the evidence that informed the working groups online at: www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/publications/working-to-widen-access

The Commission for Widening Access (CoWA) made 34 recommendations in its *Blueprint for Fairness* in 2016, of which 13 were directly and indirectly for universities to act on. We believe our 15 actions do this.

Universities have taken a hard look at what we're currently doing, what is working well and what more we can do.

Our actions fall into three broad areas: admissions, articulation and bridging programmes into university. There are strong themes connecting many of the actions including:

- The need for greater clarity, consistency and transparency in the language that universities use when it comes to widening access. The terms used for good initiatives like contextualised admissions and articulation are not user-friendly and not always used by universities in the same way. We will change this by developing a common language used by universities.

- The need for our actions to be taken forward *with* potential learners as well as *for* them. We will make learner experience and feedback a core part of implementation.
- The need to establish robust data and evidence to inform widening access and the importance of sharing those data between organisations.

The process of responding comprehensively to the Commission was steered throughout 2017 by three Principals: Professor Mapstone of St Andrews University; Susan Stewart, Director of the Open University in Scotland; and Professor Wend of Queen Margaret University Edinburgh. Their approach has been inclusive and holistic as they each led a working group with membership from university practitioners and stakeholders from schools, colleges, NUS Scotland and others.

NEXT STEPS

Implementation starts straightaway. Many of the actions will be delivered in 2018. We'd be pleased to keep you informed of our progress. You can sign up for updates at: www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/sign-up



Action On Admissions

1. Scottish higher education institutions will develop clear and consistent information about contextualised admissions. We will work to publish a set of terms and descriptions in 2018 that pass user-testing and are ready for use to inform the application cycle for 2020/21 entry.

2. Scottish higher education institutions will use a consistent core of indicators in their contextualised admissions.

3. Every Scottish higher education institution will set minimum entry requirements for their courses in 2019 for entrants starting in 2020/21. The minimum requirements will reflect the best evidence on the level of achievement necessary for successful completion.

Changes to entry requirements need to be agreed at least 22 months ahead of an entrant starting their course. We think it will be stretching but possible to set out minimum entry requirements by 2019, the timescale asked for by the Commission, for entrants starting in 2020/21.

4. Care experienced learners will be guaranteed an offer of a place at university if they meet minimum entry requirements. Until then, universities will continue to give care experienced applicants additional consideration.

5. Universities Scotland will work with our members to consider whether there are other categories of learner who should receive special consideration.

6. Universities Scotland will work with the Scottish Funding Council and Scottish Government to identify and share the data universities need to inform their contextualised admissions policies.

Action On Articulation

7. Every university will undertake a fundamental review of its ability to increase the number and percentage of students who articulate with full credit for the start of 2018/19. This review will need to involve college partners and others.

8. Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland will establish a National Articulation Forum in academic year 2017/18.

9. The National Articulation Forum will examine how we can offer full credit articulation to more students. It will do this by looking at opportunities to improve articulation in specific subjects as well as considering how to expand the model of articulation to include other qualifications in addition to Higher Nationals.

10. The National Articulation Forum will investigate student perspectives on articulation.

11. The National Articulation Forum will develop clear information about articulation.

The working group also set out a recommendation for the Scottish Funding Council:

The Scottish Funding Council should improve the accessibility of data it holds on articulation to inform the work taken forward by higher education institutions and the National Articulation Forum.

Actions On Bridging Programmes

12. Higher education institutions will work to improve the national coherence of bridging activity. This will involve better regional coordination of bridging programmes and more mutual recognition of programmes making it easier for students to transfer. This will be implemented during 2018/19.

13. Higher education institutions will agree a common language on bridging programmes for use across the sector to ensure clarity for learners and their advisers. This process will be fully inclusive of relevant stakeholders and be delivered in 2018.

14. Universities Scotland will work with others to scope the development of a single online resource that enables learners and their advisers to access information about bridging programme opportunities offered across Scotland. We will deliver this scoping exercise for the start of 2018/19.

15. Higher education institutions will explore the potential of introducing regional widening access targets to encourage collaboration.

Currently the targets and measurements in the Scottish Funding Council's Outcome Agreement framework are set at a national or individual institution level. This can push institutions into competition for the same students and can work against collaborative action to widen access to higher education for under-represented groups. Potential regional targets would not replace anything that already exists.