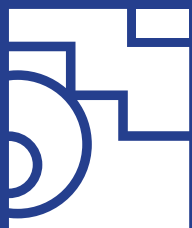# Action on Access

Recommendations to achieve further progress on widening access to higher education in Scotland

Universities
Scotland

12

This report, Action on Access, is linked to another published by Universities Scotland in late 2013 entitled *Access all Areas.*

Access All Areas contains over 50 case studies of widening access programmes and initiatives run by Scotland's 19 higher education institutions. Many of the programmes, and therefore the report, are customised to focus on different underrepresented groups from primary school through secondary school; pre-entry support, collaboration with colleges, a focus on mature students. It also looks at initiatives to encourage retention as we believe it is not enough to admit more students from underrepresented backgrounds, we must ensure they are support to a successful outcome from their studies.

You can find Access All Areas on the Universities Scotland website at: www.universities-scotland.ac.uk

Universities
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ACCESS   ALL AREAS

NURSERY & PRIMARY SCHOOL
SECONDARY SCHOOL
SENIOR PHASE
COLLEGES & ARTICULATION
MATURE LEARNERS

Executive Summary

Universities Scotland and its 19 higher education institution members are deeply committed to widening access to higher education.

The sector in Scotland currently delivers a significant number of programmes and initiatives focussed on the goal of widening access. Many of these are showcased in Access All Areas. There is no easy one-size-fits-all approach that universities can or should be taking to widen access not least because underrepresented groups are not homogenous. To get a better understanding of what is effective when it comes to widening access in certain circumstances, Universities Scotland commissioned a literature review into the evidence base. This work was carried out by Professor Sheila Riddell of the Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity (CREID) at the University of Edinburgh.

Professor Riddell's literature review was overseen by a working group comprised of:

Mhairi Moore, School Leaders Scotland
Robin Parker, NUS Scotland (until July 2013)
Gordon Maloney, NUS Scotland (from July 2013)
Dr Pete Cannell, Open University in Scotland
Professor Mike Mannion, Glasgow Caledonian University
Kathleen Hood, University of Edinburgh
Russell Gunson, NUS Scotland
Martin Kirkwood, Scottish Funding Council
Halena McAnulty, Scottish Funding Council

and Universities Scotland officers:

Alastair Sim, Director
Dr Kirsty Conlon, Head of Learning & Teaching & Widening Access Policy
Mark Wild, Policy Officer

Universities Scotland has also relied on a parallel piece of work into the evidence base underpinning widening access, commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for Education (HEFCE), and also published in 2013.

Drawing from both sources of evidence, we have produced a set of 12 recommendations for the higher education context in Scotland that we feel will help to deliver greater progress in widening access; a goal in which there is a vast amount of shared support. The recommendations come with the endorsement of the Principals from Scotland's 19 higher education institutions.

The recommendations are focussed in four different areas:

•	Inclusivity and evidence
•	Getting into higher education
•	Staying in higher education
•	Getting on

An overview of the recommendations

The evidence that underpins the recommendations is set out in full further on in this publication, but for those primarily interested in the recommendations, they are as follows:

Measures, evidence and inclusivity

A

Universities Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Scottish Government should ensure that their policies and measures for widening access (including in relation to Outcome Agreements) recognise the wide range of underrepresented student groups and modes of educational delivery, and widening access through lifelong learning. The policy perspective needs to broaden from the current focus on young full-time undergraduate entrants.

B

Universities Scotland and the SFC should work to identify a small number of suitable measures for monitoring performance in widening access to supplement the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), given that the definition of widening access in the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act goes beyond the scope of SIMD[1] and that Professor Riddell's report raises significant issues with SIMD as a primary measure. This work will be foundational for many of the other recommendations.

C

SFC should ensure that there is adequate evidence available to enable it to conduct the triennial reviews of access to higher education institutions (HEIs) and colleges required by the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act[2].

D

HEIs should ensure that all widening access initiatives have appropriate and sufficiently rigorous processes of evaluation built into their design. This is important for performance monitoring purposes, but also for improving the possibility of objectively determining what actually works in widening access. Where appropriate, suitable elements of these evaluations should be published, at intervals, as a matter of public interest. Universities Scotland should seek to establish some common principles to help facilitate consistency and therefore wider use of the studies.

E

SFC should ensure that relevant data about part-time and mature students and widening access is available and situated prominently online. This might include the publication of indicators for these groups alongside the participation indicators it produces for young, full-time students. This does not require new data collection but is about the publication of existing data already gathered by SFC.

F

The report recognises the value that involving current students in widening access and retention initiatives can bring. HEIs should, therefore, continue to involve students and students' associations in the development and running of widening access and retention initiatives, and consider whether and how this might be enhanced.

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1   Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act
2   Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act

Getting in

G
Recognising the importance of having coherent admissions and widening access policies, HEIs should seek to enhance these links and ensure that changes to policies (for example, because of Curriculum for Excellence), do not interrupt this.

H
It is helpful to HEIs to understand why applicants who decline their offers choose to do so, and where those applicants go instead. SFC should consider whether there is a need for national research on this, and what can be done to ensure there is an evidence base on why people decide not to study at an HEI.

I
In light of the introduction of Outcome Agreements, Curriculum for Excellence and ongoing work about contextual admissions, SFC should commission research which examines the impact of the various reviews and revisions of admissions policies and practices which have taken place in recent years on widening access. This also relates to SFC's responsibilities to review widening access under the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act.

Staying in

J
HEIs should seek to enhance their strategies for securing the academic engagement of all students, and should continue to develop and share good practice about how this work might be used to target effective support interventions.

Getting on

K
HEIs already track the post-study destinations of students. HEIs should consider tracking different student cohorts, including those entering from a widening access background, and any unfair or hidden obstacles to positive destinations.

L
Universities Scotland, SFC and the Scottish Government should give focussed consideration to issues about widening access to postgraduate level study opportunities (both full-time and part-time). This should include both direct entry into postgraduate level study following graduation and entry after a gap (e.g. in employment).

Preface

Our position

Widening access is a key part of each Scottish higher education institution's (HEI's) mission. Scotland has a diverse HEI sector made up of 16 universities, Glasgow School of Art, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Scotland's Rural College (SRUC).

It is important to give people opportunities to achieve their potential, regardless of their background or current circumstances, on an individual level but it is also important on a national level. Quite simply, Scotland needs to make the best use of the talents of all its citizens in order to compete in the global skills-based economy.

In order to achieve this there needs to be an holistic and joined-up approach involving schools, colleges, universities and the Scottish Government. Raising aspirations and closing the attainment gap between groups of school pupils[3] is a formidable challenge and initiatives focussed on young pupils can take a generation to deliver results. Universities cannot deliver this alone but there are many things they can do.

The principle of accessibility based on ability rather than means is a longstanding one within the higher education sector in Scotland. It goes back to the founding principles of many of our institutions[4].

Reinforcing this belief, in 2012 every one of Universities Scotland's member institutions signed up to the following commitment:

"University should be equally open to any learner with the appropriate academic potential to benefit, regardless of their social or economic circumstances. It is of equal importance that those learners are properly supported to complete their studies successfully and fulfil their potential.

"Each university is able to point to its own distinctive and considerable achievements already made in widening access and retention and each is committed to delivering further progress. Principals share the determination that universities should play the fullest role possible in the pursuit of these goals, working in partnership with schools, colleges and others."

The recent Universities Scotland report *Access All Areas,* published in late 2013, showcased just some of the many initiatives that Scottish HEIs are running to raise aspirations and encourage and support potential applicants, applicants and students from widening access backgrounds.[5] Some of these initiatives have been in place for ten or 20 years whilst other projects have been developed very recently to address a new or specific need.

HEIs' Outcome Agreements with the Scottish Funding Council[6] also reflect the importance of widening access to our sector. HEIs have committed to recruiting more students from deprived backgrounds, offering more articulation places, making use of contextual data in admissions, supporting care leavers, and improving retention, particularly for students from more deprived backgrounds and those with protected characteristics.

Steady progress to improve access is being made and there are very positive examples of achievement in widening access within different projects or at institutional level. However we share in the feeling of frustration that the pace of change has not been quicker at national level.

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3   Save the Children Policy Briefing *Better Odds at School* and Sutton Trust (2013) *The Reading Gap*
4   Universities Scotland (2013) Scottish Higher Education: Our Values, Our Value Added, annex A
5   Universities Scotland (2013) Access All Areas.
6   Which started as a Scotland-wide process for all HEIs in 2011 and was published for the first time in 2012. See Universities Scotland's website for a sector wide summary of the outcome agreements.

Our aspiration

The sector shares the aspiration to achieve more progress on widening access to higher education at a national level. In 2013 Universities Scotland commissioned a literature review of the evidence behind different widening access initiatives from the Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity (CREID), University of Edinburgh, which was led by Professor Sheila Riddell. Professor Riddell's report is available on Universities Scotland's website. The intention was always to use the evidence uncovered in this literature review to inform the development of recommendations which the sector and its partners can work to deliver to make greater progress on widening access. Simply having the report on the evidence base is not enough and so we are now publishing these 12 recommendations.

In addition, the passage of the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill (now Act) prompted a wide-ranging discussion on widening access and who access is to be widened to. The emerging consensus was that it was appropriate to consider any underrepresented group as the focus of widening access initiatives. We welcome this broader definition – HEIs have always sought to work with a wide range of underrepresented potential applicants to encourage participation in higher education, as shown in the diverse range of examples in the *Access All Areas* report. The Act also gave new responsibilities to the SFC to report on widening access and to review activity every three years (known hereafter as a triennial review).

About the recommendations

We have grouped these recommendations under four broad headings:

• Inclusivity and measurement;
• Getting in;
• Staying in; and
• Getting on.

These headings reflect the fact that some recommendations need to reflect national policy, but many can be associated with different stages of the student lifecycle.

Five of these recommendations are aimed solely at HEIs (albeit one with some action for Universities Scotland); four seek action from SFC, recognising their role in this regard; one require Universities Scotland to work with SFC; and two look for joint action from SFC, Scottish Government and Universities Scotland.

These recommendations draw on the literature review produced by CREID as well as the 2013 HEFCE literature review, and the rationale behind each recommendation is clearly outlined. The recommendations have also been shaped by discussions with a sounding board, with representatives from a range of stakeholder bodies. This was deliberate – we want to work with schools, students and SFC to make progress and we value their views.

We believe that acting on these recommendations will contribute to increasing widening access in Scotland.

Recommendations and the evidence to inform them

Inclusivity and measurement;

Recommendation A:

Universities Scotland, SFC and the Scottish Government should ensure that their policies and measures for widening access including in relation to Outcome Agreements, recognise the wide range ofunderrepresented student groups and modes of educational delivery and widening access through lifelong learning. The policy perspective needs to broaden from the current focus on young full-time undergraduate entrants.

Evidence to support recommendation A:

There is a wide consensus in the literature that many different groups of students should be considered as "widening access" or "widening participation" students and that the best approaches to widening access take a broad view of the term rather than seek to narrow it to socio-economic criteria only or further to one specific measure of socio-economic status.

As stated in both the CREID report and HEFCE's literature review:

"the range of under-represented groups is wide, wider than the current policy focus on young full-time undergraduates might suggest."[7]

The HEFCE review noted:

'"Widening participation students" are not a homogeneous group. They may have a range of identities, diverse social characteristics and come from a variety of backgrounds. For the purpose of this review the following key target groups were identified:
o   People from lower socio-economic groups
o   Mature students
o   Part-time learners
o   Learners from ethnic minority groups
o   Vocational and work-based learners
o   Disabled learners
o   Care leavers"[8]

The evidence suggests that the diversity of underrepresented groups in higher eduction can have significant implications for the approaches taken by institutions and their likely effectiveness. Given the heterogeneity of underrepresented groups, a one-size-fits-all approach to widening access is discouraged by all:

'The diversity of the groups who remain under-represented in higher education, however, and the complexity of the factors which may hinder their educational progress, suggest that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the persistent problem of widening participation in higher education, and no one single measure, be it SIMD or NS-SEC, which can be used with confidence to target those who might benefit from outreach activities and additional support.'[9]

"Widen the focus beyond 'traditional' conceptions of HE. This acknowledges the limitations of formulating policy on the basis of one distinctive cohort: young full-time students who enter HE through an academic route. It is particularly important to understand the distinctive characteristics of the part-time student population."[10]

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7   CREID *Widening Access to Higher Education: Does Anyone Know What Works?* p.vi.
8   HEFCE (2013) *Literature review of research into widening participation to higher education p. ii.*
9   Riddell, S. et al (2013) CREID p.25.
10   HEFCE p.x.

"Some target groups face particular barriers to participation in outreach and progression activities and may need specific targeted approaches, e.g. care leavers and disabled learners. Higher education providers should seek to develop outreach programmes that are sensitive to the needs of both male and female learners."[11]

The HEFCE literature review makes a further cautionary remark about the risks inherent in pigeon-holing students even within different sub-groups of the broad category of 'under-represented'. It goes on to explain:

"...individuals often have multiple or hybrid identities and are simultaneously members of a number of different groups e.g. a minority ethnic, working-class, part-time mature learner with vocational qualifications. It is important to take a range of social background factors into account when seeking to understand the experiences of key target groups. Indeed the most revealing insights may occur at the points where different variables intersect (Burke et al., 2013)."[12]

A heterogeneous approach is in evidence in the widening access initiatives across the higher education sector in Scotland as highlighted in Universities Scotland's 2013 *Access All Areas* report. It includes over 50 case studies of different widening access programmes which focus on a wide variety of targeted groups including care leavers, schools with low progression rates to HE, returners to education, girls in regards to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects, college students etc.

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11   HEFCE p.iii
12   HEFCE p.10.

<u>Recommendation B:</u>

Universities Scotland and the SFC should work to identify a small number of suitable measures for monitoring performance in widening access to supplement the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), given that the definition of widening access in the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act goes beyond the scope of SIMD and that Professor Riddell's report raises significant issues with SIMD as a primary measure. This work will be foundational for many of the other recommendations.

Evidence to support recommendation B:

If the reader accepts the evidence laid out in relation to recommendation A, that policy makers should define widening access students in the broadest terms, then it follows that reliance on any one metric of progress will be insufficient to capture progress with different groups of underrepresented students.

In Scotland, policy developments over the last year or two have seen a move towards reliance on the SIMD and a focus on the most deprived quintile (SIMD20) or two most deprived quintiles (SIMD40).

The CREID report picks up on evidence surrounding this as it specifically relates to the Scottish context, noting many concerns on the overreliance on SIMD as a sole indicator of progress. Key concerns with SIMD include the narrowness of approach which this encourages and the measure's unsuitability for remote and rural areas:

'there is widespread discontent about the use of SIMD as a measure for assessing progress in widening access, given the uneven spread of postcodes throughout Scotland and the reluctance of some prospective students to move from their home area.'[13]

'It should be noted that in Glasgow City, around 48% of the population live in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods [...]. The equivalent figure for Renfrewshire [...] which is near to one of the University of the West of Scotland's campuses, is around 28%. Fife has around 19% of its population in the 20% most deprived [...], whilst in Edinburgh City and Aberdeen City [...] about 12% of the population live in the most deprived neighbourhoods. In Aberdeenshire, only around 2% live in the most deprived neighbourhoods.'[14]

'SIMD is based on the area that the student lives in and does not necessarily equate to the socio-economic status of their family.'[15]

The limitations of the measure is acknowledged by its owners. A Scottish Government publication available online entitled *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2012: A National Statistics Publication for Scotland* itself comments that:

"The SIMD has been developed for the specific purpose of identifying small area concentrations of multiple deprivation. It is therefore appropriate to use the SIMD if your focus is on areas with high levels of multiple deprivation.

'However, it is important to remember that the SIMD identifies areas not individuals. If your focus is on all deprived people then a different approach needs to be taken. It may be possible to use the underlying data from one of the domains, rather than the overall index. However, as can be seen from Table 1.1 below, not everyone living in a deprived area is deprived, and not all deprived people live in deprived areas – even when looking at individual domains."[16]

13   CREID p. *vi*
14   IBID *p.13*
15   IBID p.15-16
16   Scottish Government (2012) *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2012: A National Statistics Publication for Scotland. p.7*

Table 1.1: Levels of income deprivation in Scotland's 15% most deprived areas

	Number of income deprived people	Total population	Percentage of income deprived (%)
15 per cent most deprived areas of Scotland	232,050	742,210	31.3
Rest of Scotland	468,430	4,479,890	10.5
All of Scotland	700,480	5,222,100	13.4

Source: Scottish Government (2012) *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2012: A National Statistics Publication for Scotland.* p.4.

"For example, out of the total population of Scotland of 5.2 million, about 700,000 (13.4%) are deemed to be income deprived on the SIMD income domain, and about 740,000 people live in the 15% most deprived datazones on the overall SIMD. However, these are not the same people. Only about one third (232,000) of income deprived people live in the 15% most deprived datazones, with the other two thirds (468,000) living elsewhere. So it is important to remember that the SIMD identifies multiply deprived areas – not everyone in a deprived area is individually deprived, and not all deprived individuals live in multiply deprived areas."[17]

We have therefore recommended that Universities Scotland and SFC look at a small number of additional measures to SIMD, to better reflect the diversity of the issue. This should include information on part-time and mature students, which the researchers found more difficult to identify and which the HEFCE report also mentioned. This recommendation also reflects the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act, as passed by the Scottish Parliament in 2013, which states that:

"For the purposes of this section, a socio-economic group is to be treated as under-represented in fundable higher education if participation in such education by persons in that group is disproportionately low.

"The Scottish Ministers, the Council and higher education institutions may take into account any social or economic characteristics which they consider appropriate when determining which groups are to constitute "socio-economic groups" for the purposes of this section."[18]

Speaking primarily in an English context, evidence accrued in the HEFCE report leads many academics to acknowledge that serious weaknesses with certain metrics can actually hamper efforts to target or indeed evaluate progress in widening access. The extract below talks about a measure which is no longer used in Scotland (POLAR 2, now POLAR 3) however the principle behind the concern remains relevant in a Scottish context particularly as the comment below relates to areas of rurality which is an acute issue for Scotland:

"…Harrison and Hatt (2010) point out that 'many young people from lower socio economic groups will be missed by a rigorous targeting guidance' and find that 'there is a strong bias towards urban areas inherent in the proxies' that are routinely used. The report articulates something that has been widely acknowledged informally, that it is far harder to use the available methodologies effectively in rural areas. It is important that any new work on monitoring and evaluating widening participation policies revisits targeting methodologies for this reason, and facilitates a way for 'local knowledge' to be balanced with consistency of approach. Local knowledge and good links with employers, FE colleges and community group are also essential for targeting mature students…".[19]

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17   Scottish Government (2012) *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2012: A National Statistics Publication for Scotland.* p.4.
18   Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act.
19   HEFCE p.15.

<u>Recommendation C:</u>

SFC should ensure that there is adequate evidence available to enable it to conduct the triennial reviews of access to HEIs (and colleges) required by the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act.

Evidence to support recommendation C:

The Scottish Funding Council is now required to undertake triennial reviews of access to higher education institutions (and colleges) using the outcome agreements process. This recommendation urges the Council to do so ensuring that such reviews – and any assessments of the outcomes and progress that institutions have been able to make - are informed by the evidence and an understanding of the wider factors at play.

There is a need for greater collation of evidence and understanding in the policy area of widening access. One of the main findings in the CREID report was about the need for further research along several lines of inquiry:

*"Some interesting questions for further research have arisen in the course of the research.
There is certainly scope for more rigorous research on widening access initiatives."*[20]

The HEFCE report also noted research gaps when it comes to widening access:

'Gaps in research should be looked at in the context of national and higher education provider widening participation priorities. Approaches to research should aim at bringing together academic research and practitioner-led initiatives. The review identified the following priorities: establishing what works in HE-related IAG, particularly in light of changes in the broader careers guidance sector; continued research into successful financial support mechanisms; greater understanding of progression to and success in postgraduate study; and better data to support the evaluation of outcomes from widening participation interventions."[21]

In addition, the steering group, overseeing the development of the CREID report, commented on the lack of Scottish specific research available. It is therefore important that the SFC ensures that it has sufficient evidence for the triennial review required by the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act.

This need is also reflected in the recommendations which call for evidence to inform future practice (recommendations C, H and I).

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20   CRIED (2013) p.59.
21   HEFCE (2013) p.xii

HEIs should ensure that all widening access initiatives have appropriate and sufficiently rigorous processes of evaluation built into their design. This is important for performance monitoring purposes, but also for improving the possibility of objectively determining what actually works in widening access. Where appropriate, suitable elements of these evaluations should be published, at intervals, as a matter of public interest. Universities Scotland should seek to establish some common principles to help facilitate consistency and therefore wider use of the studies.

Evidence to inform recommendation D:

This recommendation is two-fold. It calls for the adoption of assessment and evaluation into universities' widening access initiatives as common practice. However, it also acknowledges and lays down the problems inherent in robustly determining what works in widening access given the longevity of many projects and the difficulty of determining causality rather than correlation.

A call for evaluation as common practice

Firstly, focussing on the need for evaluation and assessment in projects as common practice, both the CREID report and HEFCE's literature review support this:

"The review points to the need for practitioner and academic researchers to work more closely together so that there is a tie-up between what widening practitioners are doing and how the success of their work is measured. Academic researchers should be encouraged to work alongside practitioners to develop robust research practices from the beginning and to feed into an agreed national evidence strategy." [22]

It also calls for some caution in the use of the data that does exist as "success" may be a mark of what is more easily measurable:

"Certain types of intensive interventions seem to be particularly effective such as summer schools and mentoring. However, these might be easier to measure. Detailed information may be collected on participants (e.g. through an application process, which could include permission to share data between stakeholders). In the case of older participants the transition to HE may be relatively soon so evaluation information becomes available earlier, compared to other types of interventions which target young learners at an earlier stage in their journey to HE." [23]

Separating causation from correlation

Even where monitoring and evaluation is part of a widening access programme, many academics acknowledge that there are real added difficulties in getting past correlation to determine causality between a widening access intervention and participation in higher education. HEFCE's literature review into what works in widening access started its task by aiming to include projects that met certain standards of quality for research and reporting as well as one other primary criterion. However, it found projects that met the former difficult to come by, as explained below:

"Criteria for critiquing the materials for the current review were agreed with HEFCE and OFFA. As part of the review process materials were categorised against their relevance to the themes of the report and against broad standards for quality research and reporting. Few of the studies drawn on in this overview were able to include experimental design features, often for sound

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22   HEFCE p xii.
23   HEFCE p.iii.

practical and ethical reasons, and this inevitably means that they fall short of strict definitions of 'causality' (Gorard et al., 2006). However, a number easily surpass more pragmatic thresholds which focus on the likelihood that an outcome was influenced to a significant degree by a particular intervention (HEFCE, 2006 in Thomas, 2011), without attributing any change solely to it. Such an approach recognises that the ecology of widening participation is complex, and whilst requiring that evidence should be robust, enables reasonable judgements to be formed about the relationship between an intervention and the outcome."[24]

Another example of the frustration caused by correlation or causation in assessing what works to widen access:

"An extensive report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation drew upon national and international evidence (much of it from the USA) to find evidence of association between parental aspirations, attitudes and behaviours and their child's aspirations, though that evidence fell 'short of that needed to assume a causal influence'.[25]

Causality is particularly difficult to determine given that many widening access initiatives span multiple years of a child's life at a point where they are subject to multiple and competing influences. This difficulty is well expressed within the HEFCE literature review:

"The report found that a focus on changing behaviour and actions, rather than changing attitudes, might have a more direct effect on attainment. It may be telling that even such an extensive statistical study concludes that intervention must start early and focus upon the factors affecting the lives of individual children. As a study from the University of Warwick notes, contextual details are important: '... it would be difficult to attribute universal "rationality" to all young people since emotional and attitudinal dimensions are important to choices, with variations between groups and at different phases.' (Stanley and Goodlad, 2010)."[26]

Qouted in the CREID review, the Scottish Parliament Spice Briefing on Barriers to widening access to higher education (Mullen, 2010) acknowledges the difficulty of establishing causality:

'Without tracking these people throughout their educational life (and possibly their career paths), it is virtually impossible to say comprehensively which policy interventions are most effective at improving access and which ones work less well. This is a problem particularly with targeting resources at school pupils.'[27]

Further, whilst collaborative access projects are generally welcomed for a host of reasons, several authors have raised the potential problem that collaborative approaches present when trying to "disentangle" and assess the impact of one intervention as compared to another. Writing specifically about a (now discontinued) national project to widening access in the English sector which relied on multiple partners collaborating to deliver aspects of the programme the HEFCE report comments:

"... the collaborative approach in partnerships made it difficult to disentangle the impact of Aimhigher from that of other interventions. Paradoxically, although the development of local partnerships may be seen as a positive strength of the programme, enabling interventions to be tailored to local needs, the local character of the evidence of its success that was gathered created difficulties in evaluating the programme on a national level, and this may ultimately have been a contributory factor in the decision taken by the coalition government to abandon it. There are clearly relevant lessons for Scotland from the Aimhigher experience, if efforts are made to evaluate local partnerships by nationwide criteria."[28]

This very last point above relating to local versus national measurement, has relevance to the concerns raised in recommendation B about the over-reliance on one measure which may work at a national level (SIMD is a nationwide measure within Scotland) where this might overshadow or cause people to overlook progress made at a local or an institutional level using different measures more attuned to local circumstances.

24   *HEFCE and OFFA (2013) p.56.*
25   *HEFCE p.17.*
26   HEFCE p.14.
27   CREID, p.26.
28   CREID p.28.

<u>Recommendation E:</u>

SFC should ensure that relevant data about part-time and mature students and widening access is available and situated prominently online. This might include the publication of indicators for these groups alongside the participation indicators it produces for young, full-time students. This does not require new data collection but is about the publication of existing data already gathered by SFC.

Evidence to support recommendation E:

Much of the focus on widening access to higher education has concentrated on full-time and young learners, predominately school-leavers. This leaves a gap in both the measurement and tracking of participation of part-time and mature students as well as a lack of understanding of what approaches may be effective for this group. The CREID report offers the background for the omission of data on mature and part-time students in Scotland:

> *"The only WP indicators for mature and part-time undergraduate students are those based on low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR). As mentioned above, indicators based on POLAR are no longer used for Scottish institutions. The last year that Scotland was included was 2006-07… Performance indicators for part-time students relating to NS-SEC and state schools are not published by HESA as institutions are not required to provide statistical information to HESA for part-time students. SFC gathers data on part-time and mature students and data relating to mature students by deprivation level are included in the publication Learning for All (SFC, 2012b). Information on part-time and mature students does not, however, feature amongst the high level indicators published on the SFC website (http://www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/higher_education_statistics/HE_performance_ indicators/Participation_indicators_for_Scottish_HEIs_documents.aspx).Since a high proportion of part-time and mature students are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, it would be a good idea in future for the SFC to include information relating to participation rates of these groups amongst its high level indicators."[29]*

This omission has been noted by others in a wider, UK-context:

> *"In their review, Gorard et al. (2006) consider evidence from research on the life stage before HE, transition to HE, learning, teaching and supporting students' success in HE, the implications for organisational change required for the access and retention of non-traditional students, and their destinations after graduation, in the labour market or in postgraduate study. They identify considerable gaps requiring further research, especially on part-time students, non-participants, early life factors affecting educational opportunity, students with disabilities, looked-after students, local students living at home and groups of ethnic minority students."[30]*

> *"He [Robert Jones] also notes that most measures, policy and research relate to full-time student retention and that there is lack of clarity about the meanings of retention and success for part-time students, interrupted or partial patterns of participation being generally perceived in terms of individual or institutional failure (2008, p.2)"[31]*

And the HEFCE literature review also picks up on specific issues potentially affecting part-time students which would warrant focussed research:

> *"Part-time provision (an overlapping category) is also diverse and needs to be disaggregated to be properly understood. Many part-time students have characteristics associated with widening participation. Part-time HE may be perceived as being lower status and issues of identity may impact on the extent to which part-time learners see themselves as being 'authentic' HE students. Work/life/study balance issues are particularly important for part-time learners."[32]*

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29   CREID p.5.
30   CRIED p.26.
31   Robert Jones in CREID p.37.
32   HEFCE p.vi.

<u>Recommendation F:</u>

The report recognises the value that involving current students in widening access and retention initiatives can bring. HEIs should, therefore, continue to involve students and students' associations in the development and running of widening access and retention initiatives, and consider whether and how this might be enhanced.

Evidence to support recommendation F:

NUS Scotland was a member of the Steering Group that oversaw the commissioning and development of the literature review produced by CREID. In discussions within the Steering Group NUS Scotland commented it would be helpful if we commended the involvement of students' associations in widening access and retention initiatives.

There is evidence in the literature to support the involvement of students although this primarily focuses on students as individuals rather than students' associations. The CREID report recognises the value of using students in widening access activities, and the HEFCE report comments on the positive contribution students can make to Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG):

"HE students and other positive role models can make a significant contribution to delivery of IAG interventions and partnerships between higher education providers can support the provision of impartial IAG." [33]

"The need for personalised of support was also a finding from a recent review of the Widening Access, Student Retention and Success (WASRS) archive which included an examination of the role of HE students as providers of widening participation outreach programmes (Sanders and Higham, 2012) in which it was established that flexible and personalised outreach was the key when working with young people. The need for personalised support within IAG activities mirrors the general finding that outreach programmes work best when are based on 'sequenced activity which form part of a learner's personalised development' (HEFCE, 2008/05)." [34]

And from HEFCE's report:

"Use of current and former HE students can be an effective delivery model for IAG outreach. (McCaig et al., 2006) report that higher education providers consider contact with HE students as one of the most effective widening participation activities. HEFCE funded the Aimhigher Associates programme, originally as a pathfinder in 2008/2009 and then as a national programme from 2009 onwards. For national rollout HEFCE clearly identified the scheme as an IAG outreach programme (HEFCE, 2011/35) although early guidance and the evaluation of the pathfinder phase suggests its original focus was intensive mentoring (Rodger and Burgess, 2010). Evaluation of the pathfinder found that HE students, acting as Aimhigher Ambassadors, were providing information about HE and their own experiences, and that the impact was on learners' levels of knowledge and understanding of HE.

"The role of HE students in delivery of widening participation outreach programmes is addressed by Sanders and Higham, 2012 in their review of the HEA's Widening Access and Student Retention and Success (WASRS) national programmes archive. It is reported that students have played a key role in delivery of outreach activities and that they have had a direct impact on the aspirations, skills, attitudes and knowledge of under-represented groups. Students are seen as valuable sources of 'hot' information that have effectively delivered a range of IAG related outcomes. The clearest impact was evident when learners and HE students engaged in sustained relationships and when students were effectively selected, trained and supported for their role, for example as part of the Aimhigher Associates Scheme or mentoring programmes led by higher education providers. The same report identifies some evidence however that there are concerns over their role as IAG providers, particularly around their impartiality and the limits of their own knowledge and experience.

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33   CREID p.iv.
34   HEFCE p.35.

"Use of 'role models' to support the decisions of under-represented groups appears to be an important component of some HE-led provision, and there is much said in the literature about the use of role models in supporting under-represented groups make the journey to HE. For example, a study of first and second year medical students supports the need for role modelling and suggests that widening participation programmes need to choose positive role models to intervene early. It has been reported that vocational learners identify their tutors as positive role models (Shaw, 2012) and we have seen above how both graduates and students can be used effectively to deliver IAG and part of this success appears to rely on their status as a role model. In their review of the Aimhigher Graduate Officer scheme Moore et al., (2011) report that Graduate Officers offer a positive role model to young people and that this helps to engage learners in discussion about HE. Sanders and Higham (2012) find that HE students are frequently termed role models and that young people value the experiences that they bring. Research also identified the importance of role models to disabled young people (Impact Associates, 2009)."[35]

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35   HEFCE p.37-38.

Getting in

Recommendation G:

Recognising the importance of having coherent admissions and widening access policies, HEIs should seek to enhance these links and ensure that changes to policies (for example, because of Curriculum for Excellence), do not interrupt this.

Evidence to inform recommendation G:

Recommendation G draws on discussions with the Steering Group, with Universities Scotland's Learning & Teaching Committee and Universities Scotland's Main Committee of Principals. The importance of admissions to widening access was recogised as was the increasing pressure on admissions decisions and admissions staff because of various changes to processes (including the approach of the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence as well as a drive towards the increased use of contextual admissions) and the ongoing need to ensure that admissions and widening access remain closely linked.

The HEFCE review acknowledges that admissions offices can be an important source of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) that supports widening access which again highlights the need for connectivity between admissions and other parts of an institution with responsibility for widening access policy:

"Delivery of IAG has been shown to be a key feature of widening participation outreach programmes. As an example, delivery of IAG activities was an established, core feature of both Aimhigher (HEFCE, 2008/05) and Lifelong Learning Partnerships (SQW, 2010) and evidence is that the Sutton Trust summer school programme has successfully embedded IAG activities, and that these are valued by participants (The Sutton Trust, 2008a). However, IAG is provided to widening participation groups through a range of other HEI functions, for example through admission teams, departmental/faculty staff, careers services and disability or learner support teams."[36]

Recommendation H:

It is helpful to HEIs to understand why applicants who decline their offers choose to do so, and where those applicants go instead. SFC should consider whether there is a need for national research on this, and what can be done to ensure there is an evidence base on why people decide not to study at a higher education institution.

Evidence to inform recommendation H:

One of the particular areas where the CREID report identified a lack of research was in university admissions. The report identifies the area of why widening access applicants decline places at university as one worthy of more research:

"Gaining a better understanding of why offers of places at university are not accepted by widening access students. Is there reluctance to leave home, lack of confidence, or lack of belief in the eventual rewards for the individual who undertakes higher education? The findings of such research might help establish whether outreach activities need to focus more on developing confidence and social capital."[37]

"further research is needed into the reasons why some offers, both for entry into first year of undergraduate courses and for articulation from HN courses in colleges, are not taken up. Tracking the numbers and progress of those who do enter higher education is important, but so too is understanding why some prospective students who have been offered places decide not to proceed."[38]

The CREID report cites the University of Dundee's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council as it specifically raises a concern that there is a significantly higher rate of non-take up of places offered amongst students from more deprived areas (described below as Q1 and Q2 meaning SIMD20 and SIMD40) than non-deprived areas.

"The disadvantaged nature of our local catchment has meant that historically such students have gravitated to us naturally; however, SFC data suggests that more recently factors such as increases in entry grades and reduced school subject choices, have reduced this flow. We know that around 50% of Q1 and Q2 students offered places at Dundee decline them."[39]

If students from deprived areas are reaching the application stage, and being offered a place at university, but declining the place at much higher than average levels, it is important to determine what factors are influencing this.

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37   CREID p. vii.
38   CREID p.57.
39   University of Dundee Outcome Agreement 2012/13, p. 7.

<u>Recommendation I:</u>

In light of the introduction of Outcome Agreements, Curriculum for Excellence and ongoing work about contextual admissions, SFC should commission research which examines the impact of the various reviews and revisions of admissions policies and practices which have taken place in recent years on widening access. This also relates to SFC's responsibilities to review widening access under the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act.

Evidence to inform recommendation I:

There has been a real drive toward the use of contextual admissions in Scotland in the last couple of years. Whilst some institutions pioneered the use of contextual admissions many years ago and have accumulated much experience, recently many more have committed to do so through the Outcome Agreements process with the Scottish Funding Council.

The CREID report suggests that there is a need for more analysis of how the contextual admissions affects universities, given that this is a new policy for many:

"given the stated intentions of many institutions to revise their admissions policies and procedures, and taking account of the varying ways in which contextual data are used, further research in due course on how these new policies are being implemented would be useful."[40]

In this context, it is interesting to note one of the conclusions of the *Supporting Professionalism in Admissions* (SPA) report from 2013:

'A more coordinated evidence based with research at a sector level and comparative research between institutions is needed. Quantitative analysis of large student cohorts over several years created the most robust evidence but this research also indicates the need for more comparative research between higher education providers, and the need for additional qualitative analysis of the influence of student experience on final outcomes. There would be value for both higher education providers and policy-makers in the development of a coordinated evidence base that includes sector-level and provider-level studies.'[41]

In a UK context, the number of institutions using contextual admissions has been relatively small and so research into the impact of this process has been relatively limited and focussed on individual institutions which may not be more widely transferrable given the tremendous flexibility there is for the use of contextual admissions. However SPA observes:

"What research there is suggests that the application of contextual data in admissions has made some difference, albeit small, to the profile of admitted applicants at some higher education providers with high entry grades. It is hard to identify the scale of impact overall due to the range of factors that are taken into account in admissions decision making and because not all providers evaluate the extent to which the use of contextual data changes the profile of the student cohort admitted. It is frequently a methodological challenge to consider the counterfactual scenario of what would have happened if contextual data had not been applied. Those providers that have used contextualised admissions over several years are starting to build up evidence about how individuals admitted using contextual information and data (including those contextualised through participation in targeted outreach) succeed when in higher education. Overall, these groups of individuals appear to be on a par relative to other students."[42]

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40   CREID p. vii.
41   Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (2013) p. 3-4.
42   IBID p.4.

Staying in

HEIs should seek to enhance their strategies for securing the academic engagement of all students, and should continue to develop and share good practice about how this work might be used to target effective support interventions.

Evidence to support recommendation J:

The CREID report noted:

'measures to encourage retention are in use, although plans to improve monitoring of student attendance and performance and improve support for widening access students and others were also noted' (page vi)

The HEFCE review looked at the evidence for retention and found much to support the importance of cultivating a sense of student belonging if retention is to be improved:

"Fostering a sense of belonging lies at the heart of retention and success. The prime site for nurturing engagement and a strong sense of belonging is located in the academic domain. The attitudes, approaches and methods of academic staff have a key role to play, as do developments in learning, teaching and assessment. The issues underlying student withdrawal are complex and often interlinked: academic issues, feelings of isolation or not fitting in, and worries about achieving future aspirations are highlighted in the research. Different groups may experience 'higher education' in very different ways. This can impact in particular ways on students' identity and vital sense of belonging. There are distinct challenges involved in engaging specific groups such as mature students and part-time learners."[43]

There is a question within the literature as to whether retention initiatives should be focussed on all students equally or whether widening access students could benefit from being singled out for different or enhanced retention initiatives. The general view seems to be that students should be targeted equally as expressed in HEFCE's review of the literature:

"Universal rather than targeted approaches are the preferred model in most retention and success (including attainment) strategies. Although, specific interventions like peer mentoring and peer tutoring have been shown to be particularly effective, the precise activity is less important than the way in which it is offered and linked to other endeavours."[44]

And in the CREID review:

"There are questions to be raised about whether interventions to improve retention should be targeted specifically at those identified at the start of their course as coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, or at the whole student body, on the grounds that overtly special treatment of the disadvantaged group may hinder their social and academic integration into the full cohort."[45]

The CREID review points to some interesting evidence that suggests that participation in widening access initiatives pre-entry to university may be of value in supporting the retention of those students. This would be compatible with the view that students should be treated equally, as far as retention initiatives are concerned, once they are enrolled in higher education but focussing on specific groups prior to enrolment as part of a widening access agenda can actually pay dividends with the retention of these groups later down the line:

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43   HEFCE, p.57.
44   HEFCE p.v.
45   CREID p.58.

"... Walker et al. (2004) and Jones (2006) found that participation in preparation and access programmes had a positive impact on students in terms of progression, attainment, retention, motivation and increased self-confidence. Again, these findings indicate that students on these programmes experience multiple benefits within their student life-cycle."[46]

The evidence base seems to identify a range of factors which institutions may want to focus on if looking to improve retention including consideration of the institution's culture and the attitudes of staff. The CREID review touches on pedagogy and culture:

"Other papers consider the impact of specific pedagogical interventions on retention and success of widening participation entrants. Yorke and Thomas (2003) looked at retention rates of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and interviewed senior managers from six institutions (Aston, Lincoln, Newman, Sheffield Hallam, Staffordshire and Westminster) that score high on retention rates among this group. These HE institutions score high on 'young entrants from state schools', in combination with either a high score on: 'young entrants from working-class backgrounds, young entrants from neighbourhoods with low participation rates or mature entrants with no familial experience of higher education and from low participation neighbourhoods.' (2003, p.65)

"Common themes found across all these institutions are the enhancement of the student experience and the focus on student-centred teaching. The institutional habitus of higher education (see Thomas, 2002) is often seen to be focused on middle class students, so improving retention may require a shift in institutional culture. Social and academic integration was fostered by student-centred approaches and this was seen as a vital aspect of achieving retention. These institutions were also active in monitoring their curriculum and pedagogies in order to meet the needs of the students. Examples included: organising induction events, investing in the student experience during the first year, rewarding extra-curricular activities such as part-time employment and social engagement, reviewing assessment practices, and offering personal tutoring. Furthermore, these institutions also tended to invest in staff development to facilitate their teaching practices and to encourage research about widening participation themes."[47]

And picks up on the importance of awareness and the right attitude amongst staff:

"Before leaving this topic, it is worth noting that students' retention depends not only on the quality of support available from institution's central student services or widening participation staff, but also on the skills and attitudes of the subject staff who teach them. Poor understanding on their part of the challenges faced, particularly in the early stages of University life, by students from under-represented groups or articulating students, may do a lot of damage."[48]

46   CREID p.37-38
47   CREID p.38.
48   CREID p.51.

Getting on

HEIs already track the post-study destinations of students. HEIs should consider tracking different student cohorts, including those entering from a widening access background, and any unfair or hidden obstacles to positive destinations.

Evidence to support recommendation K:

The evidence is inconclusive when it comes to determining whether students from a widening access background are less likely to achieve a positive destination (classed as work, further study or a combination of the two) upon graduation.

The CREID report comments that *'there is more to be learned in future about the career destinations of these groups, and whether they achieve the career roles to which they were encouraged to aspire.'*[49]

The HEFCE literature review suggests this may be the case:

'destination and other data suggest that students from non-traditional backgrounds are disadvantaged in the labour market '[50]

However, the CREID report did not find this stating that:

'The limited evidence available suggests that graduates from under-represented groups are not disadvantaged when they enter the labour market, but more research is needed on career destinations.'[51]

Indeed, looking at the destinations of mature graduates, Woodfield, cited in CREID, found no disadvanatage:

"Woodfield (2011) takes a more optimistic view, in her paper which considers whether mature students are disadvantaged when they move from university into employment. She notes that there has been very little research on the employment outcomes for mature students, as opposed to traditional-entry graduates, and the prominence of the 'narrative of disadvantage' describing the challenges facing mature students, in, for example, the accounts of Brine and Waller (2004); Redmond (2006) and Hinton-Smith (2009). The literature demonstrates mature entrants' lack of confidence in whether their educational investment will lead to enhanced employability (2011, p. 410). Woodfield's analysis of a HESA dataset of 232,063 students six months after graduating in 2006 leads to the conclusion that the 'discourse of disadvantage' is not in fact warranted in relation to employment, since: 'the headline trends were for mature students to secure paid employment more readily, with greater likelihood of achieving an above-average graduate salary and for them to secure graduate level employment more often."[52]

Where the evidence is more aligned is on the importance of participation in extra-curricula activities in finding success employment:

"Tchibozo (2007) examined the effect extracurricular activities had on the transition from HE to the labour market. From the survey of 119 graduates it was found that participation in extracurricular activities had a significant influence on the transition process, finding that employers most appreciated those activities where students were classified as leaders or had engaged in citizenship activities.

"At the same time research has established that under-represented groups are less like to participate in extra-

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49   CREID p. 58.
50   HEFCE. p. viii.
51   CREID p. vi.
52   CREID p.41.

curricular activities which leave them in a weakened position when entering the labour market. For example, 67% of Futuretrack respondents from a routine or manual background had taken part in extra-curricular activities compared to 80% of graduates from a higher managerial or professional background (Purcell et al., 2012)".[53]

One study, specific to a certain region, found that although middle-class, less disadvantaged students were more likely to participate in on-campus extra-curricula activities, other groups of students did partake in similar activities but were more likely to do so outside of their university environment:

"However, not all studies have identified a low level of participation in extra-curricular activities. Holdsworth and Quinn (2010) sought to test the theory that volunteering activities were dominated by the middle class. Their research, conducted with over 3,000 HE students across Merseyside, found that the 'characteristics of student volunteers reflect those of non-traditional students rather than middle class entrants into higher education'. Researchers argue that when the traditional view of extra-curricular activities (for example voluntary work and sporting activities facilitated by higher education providers) is applied, other valuable activities are neglected (e.g. local students may continue to participate in non-university activities or undertake non-paid caring roles).

"This finding is backed up by Futuretrack research (Purcell et al., 2012) in which it is identified that students attending general HE colleges were more likely to have pursued an activity outside of the college rather than within it, which may well be linked to the fact that only 30% of respondents studying in a general HE college thought their institution had excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities (as opposed to 85% of those in the highest tariff universities). Adopting a wide definition of such activities and enabling students to articulate their involvement in these is key in developing employability (Holdsworth and Quinn, 2010)."[54]

If these findings are found to hold more widely then there may be a role for universities in helping mature, socio-economically disadvantaged and other groups of students to understand and communicate the relevance and applicability of their off-campus pursuits (jobs, hobbies and other responsibilities) to their future career aspirations as not doing so could be acting as a barrier to higher levels of graduate-level employment at the individual level even if the data is unclear as to whether there is a concern at the group-level. The introduction of more reflective learning, the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), and initiatives like it at universities across Scotland may help to overcome this issue.

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53   HEFCE p.111..
54   HEFCE p.111.

Recommendation L :

Universities Scotland, SFC and the Scottish Government should give focussed consideration to issues about widening access to postgraduate level study opportunities (both full-time and part-time). This should include both direct entry into postgraduate level study following graduation and entry after a gap (e.g. in employment).

Evidence to support recommendation L:

Despite the high level of interest there has been in widening access amongst policy makers it has been noted by many that interest has rested solely at undergraduate level study and not at postgraduate level study. To the extent where postgraduate study has been called the "new frontier of widening participation":

"Postgraduate study is emerging as 'the new frontier of widening participation' and has generated much recent policy interest. Postgraduate study is very diverse and needs to be disaggregated and analysed in discrete sections to be properly understood.[55]

As a result relatively little is known about the representation of different groups of students at postgraduate level:

"Research in this area is relatively scarce, but is growing in range and depth. All parties agree that more work is needed, particularly using the centralised data that is available. Research efforts are hampered by the complexity of the provision and the extent of inter and intra-institutional variation. Little is known about the retention and success of postgraduate students or what works."[56]

"A particular stumbling block facing researchers is the absence of easily accessible data on which to base large-scale investigations into the demographics of postgraduate study. In contrast to UCAS at the undergraduate level, there is no 'national clearing house for postgraduate applications' Wakeling and Hampden-Thompson, 2013, p.14). Consequently it is difficult to investigate institutional or sector-wide trends. Equally, the fact that much postgraduate study is part-time adds to the 'data lacuna' within which researchers on the topic are forced to work (HEC, 2012)."[57]

Yet what evidence is available suggests that widening access is also likely to be an issue at postgraduate level:

"Destinations data highlight significant differences in the postgraduate progression rates of students from different economic backgrounds. DHLE data show 'students from the poorest families were between 1.8% and 2.4% less likely to progress in to postgraduate study than students from wealthiest backgrounds, even after controlling for their individual characteristics and prior academic attainment' (Wales, 2013, p.42) [Note that this research is limited to 'direct entry' postgraduate students who have entered higher level study within six to nine months of graduating from their first degree].

"Students from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds, who were less likely to have entered undergraduate studies, were then less likely to progress to taught masters and postgraduate research courses. They were, though, more likely than other socio-economic groups to progress to other postgraduate courses (HEFCE, 2013/13).

"Graduates from NS-SEC classes 1 and 2 outnumber graduates from NS-SEC classes 6 and 7 by a ratio of seven to two amongst postgraduate students on taught higher degrees in 2010-11 (Wakeling and Hampden-Thompson, 2013).

"Research undertaken by Stuart et al. (2008a) suggested that family experience of HE is more relevant than occupational background as a predictor of students going on to postgraduate study. Their analysis indicated that students who were the first in their family to go into HE were less likely to go onto postgraduate study."[58]

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55   HEFCE p. vii.
56   HEFCE p.92.
57   HEFCE p.94.
58   HEFCE p.99.

If further research were to be carried out in this area there are a number of suggested issues which could be explored:

"What is known about progression to PG study, there are a lot of factors that influence it including attainment at undergraduate degree level with students get a first class honours degree more likely to pursue PG study, finance (but the research most concentrates in England where the circumstances are sigfnicaintly different and therefore probably not that relevant/helpful in a Scottish context) and type of institution. Another factor is:

"Progression rates to postgraduate study also appear to depend on the subject studied at undergraduate level. Stuart et al. (2008a) describe undergraduate study subject as a 'highly significant predictor' of intentions to take up postgraduate study. They found those students who studied more applied undergraduate courses, such as Engineering and Health occupations, had lower intentions to take up postgraduate study and were more likely to move directly into work. Recent NUS research (2012a) echoes this finding. Students who study 'pure' subjects are more likely to progress onto postgraduate study than students who studied more 'applied' subjects such as medicine. Wakeling and Hampden-Thompson (2013) confirm these differential progression rates depending on whether a student has studied a 'pure' or 'applied' subject. HEFCE's recent work on transitions within one year reveals stark contrasts between the lowest transition rates (Medicine and Dentistry: 0.9%) and the highest rates (Physical Sciences: 25.4%) (HEFCE, 2013/13). There are also concerns about the potential 'broken bridge' between undergraduate and research degrees, especially in subjects where a masters degree is required for entry to doctoral research (HEFCE). ''[59]
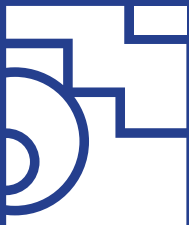
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59   HEFCE P.98.

Annex A: Membership of the Steering Group

- Mhairi Moore, School Leaders Scotland
- Robin Parker, NUS Scotland (until July 2013)
- Gordon Maloney, NUS Scotland (from July 2013)
- Dr Pete Cannell, Open University in Scotland
- Professor Mike Mannion, Glasgow Caledonian University
- Kathleen Hood, University of Edinburgh
- Russell Gunson, NUS Scotland
- Martin Kirkwood, Scottish Funding Council
- Halena McAnulty, Scottish Funding Council

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- Alastair Sim
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