Access and Inclusion Committee Minute

The thirtieth meeting of the Access and Inclusion Committee of the SFC was held at 9.30am on Tuesday 16 February 2016 at SFC offices, Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.

Present: Audrey Cumberford
Veena O’Halloran
James Dunphy
Vonnie Sandlan
Alan Sherry
Heather Dunk
Dr Anne McGillivray

Officers: Fiona Burns (Secretary)
John Kemp
Sarah Kirkpatrick (items 8 to 13)
Halena Gauntlett
Sheila Meehan (Clerk)
Alyssa Newman (item 9)
Anna Thomson

Apologies: Maggie Kinloch (Chair)
Vincent Docherty
Frank Coton
Miriam Craven
Iain MacRitchie
Leni Oglesby
Lynn Graham (Scottish Government)
Jane Johns

Welcome and introductions

In Maggie Kinloch’s absence, John Kemp chaired the meeting and welcomed all members, observers and executive officers to the thirtieth meeting of the Access and Inclusion Committee.
Declarations of interests

The Chair reminded the Committee members of their responsibility to indicate if they have or may be perceived to have a conflict of interest under any item.

1. Chair’s business and Council executive update (AIC/16/01)

The Committee received and noted the Chair’s business and Council executive update.

The Council executive confirmed that, following the publication of the report from the Commission on Widening Access, a future planning workshop would be held with the Committee to discuss the direction of the Committee’s work over the next three years. The aim was to take a whole system approach and consideration would be given to the future of Learning for All measures of success reports and the annual conferences.

2. Minute of the 19 November 2015 meeting (AIC/15/Min4)

The minute of the meeting on 19 November 2015 was confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising (AIC/16/02)

The Committee noted the matters arising from the last meeting of the Committee.

4. Long Term Agenda (AIC/16/03)

The Committee received and noted a paper informing members of substantive agenda items proposed for future meetings.

The Committee agreed that a review of the long term agenda would take place at the Committee’s future planning workshop to ensure that it was consistent with and relevant for the renewed priorities going forward and in light of the report of the Commission for Widening Access.

The Committee also agreed that:

- The EIA for the Credit based college funding model and the demographic model be presented to the May Committee meeting
- The implications of the Spending Review/Scottish Budget item would cover both an update from the last Spending Review and discuss the priorities for the future Spending Review
To ensure that meetings were strategically focussed, background or reference information would be emailed to members in between meetings to focus discussion rather than contained in papers to meetings.

5. **Update on Council business (oral)**

The Committee received an oral update on Council business.

The Committee noted that the focus of the last Council meeting had been the indicative allocations for the higher education sector for 2016-17, and that discussions had taken place with the universities on embedding of the widening access additional places, which would be challenging for institutions.

The Council executive also confirmed that discussions had taken place, and were ongoing, with the college sector, re: the request in SFC’s Ministerial Letter of Guidance: to consider how best to set a framework for further improvement, including in both learner outcomes and support, in light of the changing context for the college sector. The Minister had requested a response by 19 February 2016.

6. **Update on Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) (oral)**

The Committee received an update on the Commission on Widening Access and noted that this year had involved an intense period of work for the Commission and that the report would be published in the Spring.

7. **Update on Youth Employment Strategy (oral)**

The Committee received an oral update on the Youth Employment Strategy.

The Committee noted that:

- The senior phase for academic year 2015-16 had involved 2,500 pupils, supplemented by 300 places supported by SDS
- A small amount of funding had gone to the regions to help build capacity
- The focus was on STEM and gender and the Council executive were trying to evaluate if there were any access issues
- The aim is to assess if courses are becoming long term, valued pathways to see if the original vision is being realised
- College Principals had raised an issue around the rigidity of level 6 foundation apprenticeships and discussions were ongoing with SDS on this.
The Committee advised that:

- It was important that parents were informed and engaged with the foundation apprenticeship route as it gave some learners a better chance to attain a sustainable career path
- There was potential for local authorities to be more engaged in the foundation apprenticeship route.

8. Impact for Access funds update (AIC/16/04)

The Committee received and noted a paper reporting on the use of the Impact for Access funds.

The Committee advised that:

- The paper was helpful but that the inconsistencies between the findings of some of the projects noted needed further investigation, e.g.:
  - The dropout rates from the ancient universities of students from more deprived areas
  - Students unwillingness to be classified as poor, thus incorrectly attributing other causes for non-completion
- The Who Cares? Scotland Corporate Parent training had received a lot of positive feedback
- Gender imbalances would benefit from a subject specific approach as the issues differed between subjects, e.g. teaching and lack of male role models as compared to engineering and lack of female participation
- My World of Work was a useful resource and a more joined up approach between SFC and SDS would be advantageous
- It was important to focus on the areas that SFC could affect while recognising the larger context.

9. Extended Learning Support (AIC/16/05)

The Committee received a presentation and a paper outlining the findings from the phase 1 of a review into how colleges have used the SFC Extended Learning Support funding system to meet the needs of their learners.

The Council executive advised that:

- They had met with all of the college regions and stakeholders and had undertaken student focus groups
- The remit was to consider if the process for claim ELS was still fit for purpose, the second phase would consider how an allocation system could be developed
They had noted an increased level of partnership working from the college sector
The needs for support in schools was different from that in college as there was a need, in the college sector, to encourage independent learning
Previous ELS claims could not be used as an indicator of how need was distributed across Scotland
More work needed to be undertaken to investigate the needs of deaf students and the attractiveness of certain subject areas for different groups, this would be completed separately
There was an ongoing problem around student declaration which impeded the help that was offered to these students
The aim was to invest funding in the people who help students rather than in infrastructure or equipment
Initial discussions with SAAS indicated that it may be possible for DSA funds to be allocated through the Access and Inclusion Fund. It is the SFC Executives view that this would decrease the bureaucracy and would be a better use of funds but it would mean that students would not get the money directly in their hands. SAAS had informed the SFC that a previous review of DSA had indicated that institutional management of the funds was popular with the colleges but not the universities
An equality impact assessment was being undertaken, with initial findings showing an issue around gender.

The Committee advised that:

- They were supportive of the views provided in the paper
- The emphasis on institution led self-evaluation and evidencing with a move away from bureaucratic reporting was the best way forward
- Data sharing was key to anticipating and meeting the needs of students
- Consultation with the sector in advance of issuing the outcome agreement guidance would be welcomed
- The Council executive should investigate if CDN could deliver the gathering event, to be led by SFC.

The Committee agreed to recommend:

- The outcomes of the ELS review, including using an Access and Inclusion Strategy to replace the current ELS claims process
- The approach advocated for UHI and SRUC to enable them to use these funds for all college students rather than just those on FE-level courses
- That the SFC hold a gathering event for ELS staff and stakeholders (following investigation of CDN delivering the event)
• That the SFC enhances its data gathering and reporting to support and future-proof an Access and Inclusion Strategy approach
• That the SFC undertakes a trend analysis in relation to the commonality of subject specific additional needs
• That the SFC discusses with SAAS and the Scottish Government the possibility of colleges managing the funds currently allocated to students through the DSA allowance
• That the SFC should develop a recommendation for bursary funds to support study costs for students with additional study needs being transferred to the Access and Inclusion Fund.

10. Meeting the post 16 educational needs of those with profound and/or complex needs (AIC/16/06)

The Committee received and noted a paper on Meeting the post 16 educational needs of those with profound and/or complex needs.

The Committee noted that there were different viewpoints as to the definition of profound and complex needs.

The Committee advised that:

• There may be a need for specialist centres to assess and deliver to the needs of the individuals involved
• The SFC should consider simplifying the OA guidance
• Further dialogue with the sector was needed to consider the needs and implications involved.

The Committee agreed that the Council executive would undertake further dialogue with the sector in advance of amendment of the outcome agreement guidance.

11. Articulation: mapping of activity and draft vision and 10-year strategy (AIC/16/07)

The Committee received and noted a paper outlining the activity of articulation across Scotland and presenting a draft vision and 10-year strategy for the Committee’s consideration.

The Committee advised that:

• Retention was high for articulating students
• It was important to include students articulating within college courses e.g. UHI and SRUC, full-time and part-time, and 16-24 as compared to adult students when considering the full picture on articulation
• The value of HNs as a direct route into employment needed to noted, not just the merit of HNs as an articulation route to university
• The use of part-time while in employment should be considered, this was valuable for flexibility of the learner journey and in ensuring that students could earn as they learn
• There were concerns around students completing an HN but then not being progressed into year two or three of university courses
• While bridging courses could be undertaken there were impacts on the student then not being able to work over the summer period
• Both a regional and national view had to be considered, as students could decide to travel to get into a university offering further progression or stay at home and undertake a longer course, depending on their personal circumstances.

12. Access and Inclusion Committee effectiveness review (AIC/16/08)

The Committee received the Access and Inclusion Committee’s effectiveness review.

The Committee advised that the standard and quality of the papers was exceptional. Committee members expressed a variety of views on the future format of Committee papers.

The Committee agreed that, to ensure that meetings were strategically focussed, background or reference information would be emailed to members in between meetings to focus discussion.

13. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place from 9.30am to 1.30pm on 24 May 2016 at the Scottish Funding Council, 97 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.