



Access and Inclusion Committee Minute

The twenty seventh meeting of the Access and Inclusion Committee of the SFC was held at 9.30am on Thursday 21 May 2015 at SFC offices, Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.

- Present:** Ali Jarvis (Chair)
Audrey Cumberland
Maggie Kinloch
Lorraine McMillan (items 4 to 14)
Vincent Docherty
James Dunphy
Professor Frank Coton
Alan Sherry
- Officers:** Rachel Adamson
Fiona Burns (Secretary)
Catherine Carr (items 10 to 16)
Anna Thomson
John Kemp (items 7 to 12 and 14 to 16)
Sarah Kirkpatrick
Loretta Naylor
Halena McAnulty
Sheila Meehan (Clerk)
Seamus Spencer (items 1 to 7)
- Observers:** Lynn Graham (Scottish Government)
Iain MacRitchie
- Apologies:** Heather Dunk
Dr Anne McGillivray
Gordon Maloney
Miriam Craven (SAAS)
Jane Johns
Leni Oglesby

Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all members, observers and executive officers to the twenty seventh meeting of the Access and Inclusion Committee.

The Chair reminded the Committee of the SFC Board Strategic Development Workshop taking place in October that would have access as its main theme. The workshop would be considering the key strategic questions of:

- What change is needed?
- What does the evidence tell us?
- What are the implications for Outcome Agreements?
- Are our strategies working?

The Committee members were encouraged to inform the Council executive if they had anything they would like to feed in to the workshop and it was confirmed that Committee members would be invited to attend the workshop.

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/15/09)

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

2. Minute of the 19 February 2015 meeting (AIC/15/Min1)

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

3. Matters arising (AIC/15/10)

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

4. Long Term Agenda (AIC/15/11)

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

The Committee **agreed** that an update on the Widening Access Commission be added to the long term agenda for May 2016.

5. Widening Access Commission (oral)

The Committee received an oral update on the Widening Access Commission from the Scottish Government

The Committee noted that:

- The Chair, Dame Ruth Silver, and the full membership of the Commission had been appointed and the first meeting had taken place on 29 April 2015
- The Commission's first action was to create three working groups (with membership incorporating Commission members and other relevant participants) covering:
 - Barriers to access
 - Initiatives and best practice
 - Data and measurement
- The data and measurement working group had met and was preparing an early call for evidence that would be presented to the second meeting for approval then widely distributed as a general call with the aim of engaging with the sector to collect information quickly
- The aim was to gather evidence and take stock quickly to help bring a strategic focus and cut through to the things that make a difference, using hard evidence.

The Committee advised that:

- It would be beneficial to engage with the leadership within institutions to encourage dissemination of the message from the top down to ensure change
- Partnership across and between publicly funded bodies and across regions was critical to ensure delivery to those in need.

6. Triennial Review (AIC/15/12)

The Committee received and noted a paper informing on policy developments around the Triennial Review and key findings so far that would inform the interim review.

The Committee advised:

- Of the importance of the review identifying and filling any data gaps and the need to prioritise data over anecdotal evidence
- On the importance of capturing external data, where possible, to see where there are overlaps and/or possibility of joint working
- That analysis at a regional level and by 'type' of institution was necessary to complete the picture and identify any stumbling blocks, specifically on articulation to higher education

- That the review should be used to encourage colleges and universities to consider further opportunities for joint working, including extending articulation and better communicating the possible routes through education to young people
- The review should be used to highlight the key features of good practice in widening access, specifically work on articulation.

The Committee **agreed** to the approach and structure of the review as outlined.

7. Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (AIC/15/13)

The Committee received and noted a paper providing a diagram demonstrating the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (DYW) programme of work at the Scottish Government and SFC's role within that programme.

8. Developing a Gender Action Plan for the college and university sectors (AIC/15/14)

The Committee received a paper updating on the development of the Gender Action Plan and noted that the Council executive were commissioning research to map initiatives.

The Committee noted:

- That the focus was being placed nationally in the first instance, taking stock, and that international evidence and experiences would be considered but fitting them within the Scottish context may be challenging
- That linkages were being considered and areas for joint working, e.g. with Skills Development Scotland, would be taken forward
- The timings of the publication of the Gender Action Plan and the intended approach to enhancing SFC's expectations within outcome agreements
- The Council executive's approach to developing the Gender Action Plan, including the proposal to align with the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (DYW) Programme Board's KPIs for DYW.

The Committee advised that:

- There would be benefit in encouraging colleges and universities to work collectively where possible
- There would be value in unpicking the data and ensuring that, while the approach of targeting some of the big subject areas was good, any impacts to other institutions should be taken into consideration
- Linking retention and subject choice was useful

- Developing guidance for institutions on admissions practices in relation to addressing gender imbalances would be good and the SFC should engage both Heads of Access and the group who worked with SPA on Contextualised Admissions in developing such guidance
- A range of suggestions on who to commission to conduct research were given, including engaging a collaboration across both the college and university sectors as this would be beneficial in expanding the evidence base and aligned with the Council's efforts to expand College research capacity
- The gender action plan should go beyond the focus within DYW on 16-24 year olds as a substantial proportion of students at College were post 24 years and there were potentially issues around that, including around updating of skills and apprenticeships
- The most benefit would be achieved by focussing where a difference can be made, within SFC's scope, ensuring that the work dovetailed or tied in with others' (e.g. the ICT and digital strategy).

9. Extended Learning Support: Trend Analysis (AIC/15/15)

The Committee received a trend analysis in relation to the use of extended learning support (ELS) in the college sector.

The Committee advised that:

- There would be benefit in SFC engaging with SQA as they were also considering ELS and had gathered data that may be helpful for comparison purposes
- The change to the funding methodology impacts on ELS and the AIC reiterated their request to see an equality impact assessment for both the funding methodology and ELS to enable the Committee to consider the effects
- There was clear benefit to the unflagged ELS students receiving support especially for groups of students but that collecting data for these students would be too bureaucratic and time intensive
- The effect of ELS on deprivation needed to be considered, as there was the risk that the gap would widen because of the support put in due to unmet need
- The challenge of negative perception be kept in mind (in terms of students seeking support) and the need to ensure that students are informed of the benefits of using the support available to them.

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- The trend analysis would inform the review that was being undertaken on ELS

- The Council executive were working with a practitioners groups on the use and impact of ELS to see how this resource can best support students and groups of students.

The Committee **agreed** that an equality impact assessment on the new funding methodology, which was in the process of being completed, would be brought to the September Committee meeting. They also noted that an equality impact assessment was being developed as part of the review of ELS.

10. Bursary funding scenarios (oral)

The Committee received a presentation on bursary funding scenarios.

The Committee noted:

- The funding scenarios comparing Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) and bursaries
- That a funding group from the Scottish Government were considering the future management of bursary funds and the Council executive had provided this group with information on the costings for an entitlement system in the FE sector (as is already in the HE sector), as requested by the Cabinet Secretary
- That the timeline for any changes to future funding for bursaries was unclear but an early agreed approach was not expected
- That 18 and 19 year old students can qualify for either EMAs or bursaries
- That if students switched from bursary to EMA they would still be entitled to other benefits e.g. travel costs etc
- The need for parity with the HE system but the stated that this, in their view, should not include introducing a loan system for FE
- The main constraint was the level of funding available
- Finding a long-term sustainable solution was a priority for the SFC and the Scottish Government.

11. Call for action: a national ambition for potential and existing students from a care experienced background (AIC/15/16); and Buttle UK Quality Mark Legacy Plan (AIC/15/17)

The Committee received papers:

- Presenting a national ambition for potential and existing students from a care experienced background
- Providing an update from CELCIS on the Buttle UK Quality Mark Legacy Plan.

The Committee considered the national ambition and advised that:

- The addition of a statement around acknowledging that ‘some may not want to declare but they will be supported if they do’ would be relevant
- It was recognised that there was a higher likelihood of declaration if a student benefit was behind the declaration, e.g. student support
- Having a clear message, in language that is easily understood by young people, was a priority
- The Committee was supportive of the ambition and the recommendations as noted in the paper.

On the Buttle Quality Mark the Committee advised that:

- Corporate parenting legislation is a statutory duty and a driver for change and therefore cross-sectoral information sharing and support was essential and needed. The SFC should, where possible, seek to support that.
- The Universities Scotland Learning and Teaching Committee had discussed the legacy of the Buttle Quality Mark and that the Committee were supportive of a supportive framework but not a quality mark
- There is a need for a supportive framework. The AIC praised many of the points made in the paper which were based more on an enhancement rather than a compliance model. This included the points on CPD and “in kind” time.
- The SFC ought to consider funding a supportive framework model. The AIC also discussed the need for a focus on supporting the sectors to work together to provide clear pathways/options and guaranteed articulation routes. It was felt that this had not been a focus for the Buttle UK Quality Mark and was perhaps an element that we should focus on now.
- The paper presented needed to evidence more support from each sector before the AIC could consider endorsing this particular approach.
- Any future request for support for SFC funding should only be considered for a 3-5 year basis only and the request should include a long-term sustainable solution.

James Dunphy and Alan Sherry left the meeting

The Committee **agreed** that CELSIS be invited to provide a revised bid based on the above points.

James Dunphy and Alan Sherry returned to the meeting

12. Widening Access additional places scheme (AIC/15/18); Additional places for articulation provision (AIC/15/19); and Additional places for Postgraduate Taught (PGT) provision (AIC/15/20)

The Committee received papers:

- Reporting on the findings of an interim review on the additional widening access places
- Informing on progress of the review into the additional articulation places
- Informing on the impact of the additional places allocated for PGT

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- Overall the places are achieving the desired outcome with some concerns on embedding and how much behavioural change is being achieved
- There is evidence of good practice in the widening access scheme
- A wider review is needed on articulation to set a strategy and attain some consistency but there is evidence of some impressive achievements
- There has been less demand for the post graduate places than was suggested by the sector at the time of the bids.

On the widening access scheme the Committee **agreed**:

- That the SFC should continue to support the four year programme to its completion, including reallocated places where necessary, and repeat the review at the end of the process
- SFC should invest in a deeper understanding of Contextual Admissions and decipher what approaches are successful and they noted that the SFC has agreed to fund a project about contextual admissions under the Impact for Access funding stream. The project 'Mapping and evaluating the use of contextual data in undergraduate admissions in Scotland' is expected to start summer 2015.

On the articulation places the Committee **agreed** to:

- Develop a vision and strategy for what SFC wants to achieve from articulation in the next ten years
- Retain the current guidance in relation to articulation which outlines a preference for the degree model.

On the Postgraduate taught places the Committee **agreed**:

- That Council executive make SFC's expectations for these places clearer – not necessarily suggesting they are used in new ways, but emphasising the

ambition for them to support Scottish-domiciled students (whilst recognising institutions cannot discriminate)

- That institutions should be encouraged (through our guidance and Outcome Agreement Managers) to proactively recruit the places to students from a widening access background particularly to students in their third year who live in or are from the SIMD20 and SIMD40 areas.

13. Achieving and promoting access outcomes with our regional coherence funding (AIC/15/21)

The Committee received a paper presenting the result of a review of regional coherence funding and proposing new guidance to redefine the purpose of the fund and to increase the visibility of its impact and noted the conclusion that, overall, the correct institutions were receiving the funds.

The Committee **agreed** that:

- The funds should continue to be allocated to institutions currently in receipt of the funding
- Council executive should assist the institutions in receipt of the funds to promote and share their achievements and learning.

14. Developing SFC's College and University Outcome Agreement Guidance (AIC/15/22)

The Committee received a paper outlining some initial work to develop the AY2016-17 Outcome Agreement Guidance.

In discussion the Committee advised that:

- The Council executive must encourage acceleration of the pace of change to meet the ambition in the Programme for Government
- SHEP should feature in both university and college outcome agreements to show increasing overlap
- The priority areas noted in the guidance were correct with no gaps identified
- Profound and complex needs should be clearly defined, with individual and group characteristics noted.
- More work was need on recognised prior learning before it could be included in the guidance.

The Committee noted that a substantive paper on profound and complex needs was due to come to the May 2016 meeting.

15. Access and Inclusion Committee meeting dates 2016

The Committee received and noted the schedule of Access and Inclusion Committee meeting dates for 2016.

16. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place from 9.30am to 1.30pm on 3 September 2015 at the Scottish Funding Council, 97 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.