Commission on Widening Access Implementing ‘A Blueprint for Fairness’ update report

- This paper provides a summary update on SFC progress with the implementation of the Commission on Widening Access final report ‘A Blueprint for Fairness’ recommendations. It builds on papers and discussions at both the February and May meetings.

- It highlights key developments under each of the SFC implementation themed project work streams on:
  - Engaging with schools
  - Evidencing improvements in the admissions and selection processes
  - Effective pathways and transitions into HE
  - Funding, targets and regulation
  - Measurement and reporting.

- Actions and progress against each of the recommendations within these themed areas of work is also included in more detail in annex C.

- Key developments, since the last AIC meeting include:
  - Publication and promotion of research from the University of Durham on contextualised admissions.
  - Publication of the SFC Report on Widening Access and next steps for a wider consultation process
  - The inclusion of the COWA target in the University Outcome Agreement Guidance
  - A programme of statistical work to develop institutional and sector targets to better inform the OA negotiations
  - A review of the additional widening access places and plans for next steps
  - The development of a School Engagement Framework (see separate paper)
  - A joint funding proposal with The Robertson Trust for HEAN to develop a pilot of access champions in schools
  - Financial support for the development of a Framework for Fair Access
Recommendations

- The Committee are invited to:
  - Consider the progress to date in relation to the SFC’s implementation plan
  - Advise on how we can best evidence our progress in this area
  - Consider and advise on the need for us to intensify our approach

Financial implications

- There are no financial considerations to be taken account of in this paper.
Implementing Commission on Widening Access ‘A Blueprint for Fairness’ - update report

Purpose

1. A progress report on our implementation of the CoWA recommendations from *A Blueprint for Fairness* directed to SFC and our contribution to system-related recommendations.¹

Background

2. At February AIC (paper AIC/17/04) we provided the Committee with information on a project plan to ensure that the SFC effectively implements the SFC recommendations from the Commission on Widening Access ‘A Blueprint for Fairness’ and fully contributes to the system related recommendations. For the benefit of new members of the Committee, the project implementation plan with revised membership and updated timeline is attached at annex A. The list of recommendations directed at SFC is at annex B.

Scottish Government strategic commitment and direction

3. Since the last AIC meeting in May, as required by the Blueprint, the Scottish Government published an annual report on progress *Implementing A Blueprint for Fairness: A report on progress with recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access*, on 30 May 2017.

4. In terms of strategic direction, as referred to in the Chair’s business and Council executive update paper (AIC/17/16), the First Minister has published the *Scottish Government’s Programme for Scotland for 2017-18*. Key commitments in that document include continuing to drive forward the recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access, to meet the commitment to equal access to university by 2030.

5. In addition, as summarised within the Progress on our Access ambitions and outcomes paper (AIC/17/21), in October, the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, Shirley-Anne Somerville, wrote to SFC on the ‘intensification’ of the Outcome Agreement process setting out her expectations and ambitions. In relation to universities, she specifically outlines her expectations for ambition in relation to the CoWA targets and states that universities should make clear how they will achieve their ambitions.

¹ System Related Recommendations are recommendations that require partners to work together to effect change
6. The Scottish Government have set-up a National Delivery Group to drive and oversee the implementation of *A Blueprint for Fairness*, supporting the Scottish Government to meet its goal of tackling socioeconomic inequality in higher education. In particular, the Delivery Group brings together senior leaders from across the education system and policymaking to:

- Develop a plan for delivery of the Commission’s recommendations to include key activities and milestones, and be accountable for the delivery of that plan.
- Coordinate and encourage a whole systems approach to delivery and a collaborative approach to identifying solutions and overcoming delivery challenges where they arise.
- Provide mutual advice, support and, where appropriate, challenge.
- Provide a mechanism through which the Commissioner for Fair Access and Scottish Ministers can receive regular updates on progress and challenges with implementation.
- The Delivery Group provides a forum to discuss and coordinate implementation of future policy developments to reduce student inequalities in all aspects of higher education. These may include developments in areas not covered in detail by the Commission, e.g. retention; graduate outcomes; and recommendations from the Commissioner for Fair Access.

7. The Chair of the Group is the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science. The Commissioner for Fair Access Professor Peter Scott is an observer and membership includes representatives from Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland. Council executive and Scottish Government civil servants are officials on the group. The first meeting establishing the Group was held on 22 August and the next meeting will take place on 15 November. SFC has direct responsibility for the 14 shaded recommendations in Annex B and we have reported our progress to the Scottish Government and this will be reported to the Delivery Group. As the 15 November meeting takes place between this paper being issued to the committee and the committee meeting taking place, the Council executive will provide an oral update from the Delivery Group meeting on 15 November.

**Commissioner for Fair Access**

8. Since the last AIC meeting in May, the Commissioner for Fair Access has published a number of discussion papers on key issues relating to fair access. The stated aim of these papers is *to bridge the gap between detailed research (where it exists), which is often only accessible to experts, and the wider public conversation, especially in political circles and the media. The hope is that these discussion papers will contribute to, and stimulate, that conversation by*
presenting data and evidence as accessibly and objectively as possible. Each discussion paper will also include a commentary section by the Commissioner’.

9. On 19 June 2017 a discussion paper was published on Contextualised higher education Admissions. The paper considers:

- What current contextual admissions processes are in place within Scotland’s Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as they move towards fulfilling the recommendations from the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA).
- What criteria are used by HEIs to determine eligibility for contextual admissions.
- How these processes might be understood by an applicant.
- The Commissioner’s view on contextual admissions.

10. On 19 June 2017 a discussion paper was published on University and college admissions, offers and acceptance. This paper considers:

- Trends in applications, offers and acceptances over recent years and the changing policy context.
- How offer making behaviour and the applicant pool varies by institution.
- The Commissioner’s thoughts on the strengths and challenges highlighted by the UCAS data.

11. On 14 November 2017 a discussion paper was published on League Tables. This paper considers the nature of league tables and university rankings and their relationship to fair access. The paper considers:

- The nature of league tables and university rankings.
- The criteria used to measure quality for different league tables and the challenges associated with those measurements.
- Concerns that have been raised within the sector about league tables, and their relationship to fair access.
- The Commissioner’s view on league tables and fair access.

Progress on the SFC recommendations to date

12. On 28 October SFC published our updated college and University Outcome Agreement Guidance for 2018-20 to reflect the Minister’s intensification expectations. This includes that SFC ensures that institutions access commitments are sufficient to ensure delivery of the targets contained in recommendation 32 of the CoWA report. Also, within the university Outcome Agreement technical guidance we have included an additional new measure in line with the CoWA indicators ‘measure 2c: The number and proportion of Scotland domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived
postcodes’. This will allow us to effectively monitor progress against this specific measure in future.

13. The CoWA project steering group met on 28 August and convened specific meetings on 9 and 26 October to drive forward work on statistical modelling for evidencing sector and institutional CoWA targets to ensure interim and overall targets are achieved.

14. The full progress reports for the 5 themed SFC project implementation areas are attached at annex C. This work will be built on and will continue to be progressed as part of the work streams outlined in our implementation project plan:

- Evidencing improvements in the admissions and selection processes.
- Engaging with schools.
- Effective pathways and transitions into HE.
- Funding, targets and regulation.
- Measurement and reporting.

**Key developments under each work stream**

**Evidencing improvements in the admissions and selection processes**

15. Durham University research on Contextualised Admissions was published on 31 October. *Mapping and evaluating the use of contextual data in undergraduate admissions in Scotland*. This research was funded as part of SFC’s Impact for Access funds. The series of reports covers:

- Mapping the use of contextual indicators.
- Institutional orientations to contextual admissions.
- Evaluating the validity and reliability of potential indicators.
- Identifying minimum entry requirements for contextually disadvantaged applicants.

16. The 14 recommendations from the executive summary are attached at annex D. The report responds to the challenge set by the Commission on Widening Access to ensure that university admissions systems do not perpetuate the disadvantages learners have faced earlier in life.

17. SFC is pleased with this report and considers it an in-depth piece of work. It delivers new evidence with the potential to help drive forward a step-change in the use of contextualised admissions in Universities across Scotland. SFC recognises that the recommendations are potentially a bit conservative but consider that is a sensible approach if we want to bring the sector with us. We
are keen that this new evidence and research are promoted and supported which is why, in an unusual step, SFC decided to publish it on the SFC website and issued it along with a blog by the author Professor Vikki Boliver and press release citing commitment to act on the recommendations. SFC Interim Chief Executive also wrote a short opinion piece for the Herald newspaper: ‘Agenda: Making the most of Scotland’s young talent’.

18. Two points to highlight from the research:

- It recommends SIMD is used as a combined measure for contextualised admissions i.e. an indicator that should be supported by another measure to corroborate disadvantage and not used as standalone indicator. We think this is a fair point and consistent with messages from the SFC which has always been that SIMD is an area-based measure of deprivation and that it is the best measure of deprivation, at a sectoral level, that we have.

- It evidences entry to University at lower grades and the probability of achieving a 2.1 or first. This does not take into account interventions that Universities are already putting in place to support these students post-COWA so the probability figure could be raised significantly and indeed equalised with the right support from institutions.

19. The report findings were widely reported in the press and received positive response from both the Scottish Government and Universities Scotland in the press²:

Scottish Government:

"This research provides a welcome addition to the Scottish evidence base to support our drive for equal access to higher education.

It reaffirms the need for more transparency and consistency in the use of contextual admissions, as highlighted by the Commissioner for Fair Access in his June discussion paper on admissions.

It also provides, for the first time, evidence of how access thresholds could be applied in practice and their potential to double the number of applicants from our most deprived areas who would meet the entrance requirements at our most selective institutions."

² http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-41819039
Universities Scotland:

“We have been closely following this research and we support one of its main findings which is that exam grades don’t always give us a true measure of a person’s potential. Universities are excited to set out a range of actions in just a few weeks' time that address many of the findings in this research.

We welcome the emphasis the research has given to student retention as this is a really important part of the picture. We want our retention rates to keep improving and will look closely at the retention thresholds used in the report.

Some universities are already adjusting grades to help widen access. They've found this works well, and the students can thrive, where decisions are made on an individual basis and where additional support is in place to help students adjust and succeed."

20. We have also agreed in principle to provide up to £90k strategic funding over 3 academic years from AY 2017-18 to commission the development of a Scottish Framework for Fair Access Toolkit. The request was made by the Scottish Government and was supported by the Commissioner for Fair Access, Professor Peter Scott, and the Framework Development Group chaired by Conor Ryan (CoWA commissioner). This Group has met regularly since May 2017 to develop detailed proposals for the Framework. The Group comprises experts in widening access research and practice and representatives from the SFC, college and school sector. This supports a foundational system-related recommendation3 (recommendation 2).

21. The strategic gap the proposal will address was identified by CoWA. The Commission highlighted the lack of robust evidence on the impact of access activities and the fact it was not possible to identify which interventions were effective and why. This gap is a barrier to successful implementation of CoWA targets such as the scaling up of effective access interventions. Further information on the awarded funding proposal is attached at annex E.

**Measurement and reporting**

22. CoWA recommended that the Scottish Government and SFC “enhance the analyses and publication of data on fair access” and, in particular, should publish “a coherent and consistent set of statistics to show progress on fair access”. The SFC [Report on Widening Access](successor to [Learning for All](#))

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3 Recommendation 2: By 2018, the Commissioner for Fair Access, working with experts, should publish a Scottish Framework for Fair Access. This authoritative, evidence based framework should identify the most impactful forms of access activity at each stage of the learner journey, from early learning through to higher education and provide best practice guidelines on its delivery and evaluation.
published in September 2017 has been developed in response to this recommendation. CoWA key indicators have been included for the first time as a defined section within the new report (see next section). In terms of the continued commitment towards supporting this data recommendation, SFC will issue a wider consultation on the scope and content of this report (winter 2017) and intend to aim for earlier publication timescales (Spring 2018).

**Funding, targets and regulation**

23. The Commission proposed a range of targets to drive progress, which were subsequently accepted by the Scottish Government. The overall target relates to entrants to all undergraduate higher education at colleges and universities whilst the interim targets focus on full-time first degree entrants to university. As referred to above, until now, there were no statistics published on a basis that was consistent with the targets proposed by the Commission. The inclusion of those statistics in this report will allow progress on access to be monitored effectively in future, in line with CoWA targets. The Commission’s final report was published during the 2016-17 admissions cycle so the impact of the Commission’s recommendations is unlikely to be apparent in the data until 2017-18. The latest statistics in the report are for academic year 2015-16, so could be considered as a ‘baseline’, rather than an indication of progress as the Commission published its blueprint in March 2016. However, under-representation in both SIMD20 and SIMD40 has been a key element of the Outcome Agreement process since its inception in 2012-13. Our progress on these targets is discussed in separate paper.

24. The interim targets proposed by CoWA focus on Scottish domiciled entrants to full-time first degree courses at Scottish universities. The *Report on Widening Access* presents data for this group showing the number and percentage of entrants from the 20% most deprived areas (SIMD 20) for the three latest academic years available.

**Table 1: Scottish Domiciled Entrants, Full-time First Degree at University and All Undergraduate HE, by 20% Most Deprived (MD20) Areas, 2013-14 to 2015-16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COWA Key Indicator - Entrants</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FT First Degree</td>
<td>All UG HE</td>
<td>FT First Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Entrants</td>
<td>28,285</td>
<td>86,650</td>
<td>28,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrants from MD20 % MD20 entrants</td>
<td>3,850</td>
<td>14,730</td>
<td>3,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
25. The data shows modest increases over the three year period, although it should be noted again that these figures predate the publication of the Commission’s final report. In 2015-16, 14.0% of Scottish domiciled full-time first degree entrants to university were from SIMD 20 areas. This means that an increase of 2 percentage points is required to meet the interim target of 16% by 2021.

26. The overall target proposed by CoWA was that by 2030, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent 20% of entrants to higher education in Scotland. The data for all undergraduate entrants to HE shows that 17.7% were from the 20% most deprived areas in 2015-16. This is higher than the percentage for full-time first degree entrants due to the relatively higher percentage for HE courses at colleges.

27. The data for individual institutions (table 2 below) shows that, in 2015-16, the percentage of Scottish domiciled full-time first degree entrants from SIMD 20 areas was higher than 10% at 10 of the 18 universities included in the analysis. It should also be noted that 2 of the 8 institutions with a percentage below 10% were the Robert Gordon University and the University of Aberdeen. The Commission recognised the particular challenge that the use of SIMD as a marker for deprivation presents to institutions in the north east of Scotland and suggested that SFC should consider other measure(s) in addition to SIMD when monitoring the progress of Robert Gordon University and the University of Aberdeen towards the targets.
### Table 2: Scottish domiciled Full-time First Degree Entrants at Scottish HEIs by Institution and 20% most Deprived, AY 2013-14 to 2015-16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen, The University of</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abertay Dundee, University of</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundee, The University of</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh Napier University</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh, The University of</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow Caledonian University</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow School of Art</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow, The University of</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heriot-Watt University</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands and Islands, the University of</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Gordon University</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Conservatoire of Scotland,</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Agricultural College</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Andrews, The University of</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stirling, The University of</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathclyde, The University of</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The West of Scotland, The University of</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Full-time First Degree Entrants</strong></td>
<td><strong>13.7%</strong></td>
<td><strong>13.9%</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modelling of institutional and sector targets – evidence to inform negotiations

28. To ensure institutions do achieve the sector and institutional targets set by the Commission, analysts within SFC have been developing evidence and modelled regional and national data to help identify robust and achievable annual incremental targets until 2030, recognising the defined CoWA measure and key target timescales for 2021 and 2026. This new evidence and CoWA targets will be provided to Outcome Agreement managers for their negotiations with institutions. This focus on the more narrowly defined CoWA measure will also ensure improvement in performance against the broader SFC Outcome Agreement SIMD 20 measure. Progress against existing OA measures for SIMD 20 and SIMD 40 will continue to be monitored. This will support the intensification of the OA approach as advocated by the Minister in her letter of guidance to SFC.

Review of additional access funded places

29. In AY 2013-14 SFC introduced three new investment schemes providing universities with additional funded places to widen access, increase articulation and support key sectors of the economy with additional undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate skills places. AY 2016-17 saw the fourth tranche of additional undergraduate places being allocated for each of these schemes. There were a small number of additional places in AY 2017-18 because of some re-distribution between institutions and for courses that started after AY 2013-14.

30. In the SFC Outcome Agreement funding letter (SFC/AN/09/2017) we said that we remain committed to the principles of widening access based on the potential to learn regardless of a student’s background. Universities must continue to use the funded places allocated to them (2,706.7 FTE places
4) between AYs 2013-14 and 2017-18 for the purpose of widening access.

31. From AY 2017-18 we stated that we expect that the widening access places will be used to allow universities to increase the number and proportion of their students from the 20% most deprived areas. We recognised that this change of focus from SIMD40 to SIMD20 might require some adjustment in the targeting of activities by universities and that for AY 2017-18 there may be some continued focus on SIMD40. However, as indicated, from AY 2018-19 onwards, universities will be expected to use these places to increase the student intakes from SIMD20 only. We expect that universities will use both these additional places and their core places to continue to make progress in widening access.

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4 Total widening access places funded in AY 2017-18 SFC/AN/09/2017 Table 3
http://www.sfc.ac.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.aspx?lID=17046&sID=9744
and for this to be clearly articulated in their Outcome Agreements.

32. SFC reviewed the widening access places for the sector and each of the ten universities that received additional access places. We looked at the actual intake each year from SIMD40 to see if that was more or less than expected. The expected number was the baseline that was agreed through the Outcome Agreement process plus the additional places.

33. The review has shown that this investment has been successful in meeting the original aim of increasing access to university. In each year from AY 2013-14 to AY 2016-17 the actual intake from SIMD40 exceeded the expected level. Although we do not yet have final data for the AY 2016-17, over the three years prior to this the total number of places for both SIMD40 and SIMD20 has grown. However, there has been less growth in SIMD20 which is the reason, along with the expectations of the implementation of CoWA, for our re-prioritisation of these places going forward.

34. The review concluded that the investment scheme has been a success and recommended that the additional places should be mainstreamed within the institution’s core funded places. In return for the mainstreaming of these places we expect the sector as a whole and each university to meet the Commission for Widening Access targets. As referred to above, through the Outcome Agreement process we aim to agree institutional targets to ensure that the sector and institutions achieve the CoWA targets.

35. SFC is in the process of writing individually to all universities awarded additional access funded places to confirm this position.

**Effective pathways and transitions into HE**

36. Outcomes from the Universities Scotland work streams - as reported to AIC in May, the SFC Executive and AIC members (Professor Maggie Kinloch, Alan Sherry and Professor Frank Coton) carried out joint working with Universities Scotland on three short life work streams (see below) that US put in place to support the implementation of *A Blueprint for Fairness*.

37. On 13 November 2017 Universities Scotland published a report *Working to Widen Access* on plans to progress widening access and the recommendations from the 3 work streams.

38. They report on 15 actions that ‘will make a difference to learners of all ages, parents, advisors, and teachers. This will take hard work to deliver but they are realistic and achievable.’ The list of actions for admissions, articulation and Bridging Programmes are listed in annex F. In particular US highlight the
actions:

- Scottish higher education institutions will develop clear and consistent information about contextualised admissions, articulation, and bridging programmes. We will work to publish a set of terms and descriptions that pass user-testing and are ready for use to inform the application cycle for 2020/21 entry at the latest.
- Scottish higher education institutions will use a consistent core of contextual indicators in their admissions.
- Every Scottish higher education institution will set minimum entry requirements for their courses in 2019 for entrants starting in 2020/21. The minimum requirements will reflect the best evidence on the level of achievement necessary for successful completion.
- Every university will undertake a fundamental review of their ability to increase the number and percentage of students who articulate with full credit for the start of 2018/19. This review will need to involve college partners and others.
- We will create a National Articulation Forum to be co-owned by Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland and with the Scottish Funding Council and NUS Scotland also taking a strategic role. It will provide strategic guidance to further the work on articulation and a structure within which expert practitioner work can be taken forward to increase the range and diversity of articulation pathways.
- The National Articulation Forum will investigate student perspectives on articulation, including financial and cultural barriers they may face.
- Universities Scotland will work with others to scope the development of a single online resource that enables learners and their advisers to access information about bridging programme opportunities offered across Scotland. We will deliver this scoping exercise for the start of 2018/19.
- Higher education institutions will work to improve the national coherence of bridging activity. This will include better regional coordination of bridging programmes and more mutual recognition of programmes making it easier for students to transfer. This will be implemented during 2018/19.

39. Universities Scotland also make one recommendation to SFC on articulation within their report: *The Scottish Funding Council should improve the accessibility of data it holds on articulation to inform the work taken forward by higher education institutions and the National Articulation Forum.*

40. These recommendations will assist us in further developing some of the progress outlined in Annex C and will assist us in developing proposals to address the recommendations on:
Engaging with schools

41. As referred to in the Developing the School Engagement Framework paper (AIC/17/22) as previously referred to in May AIC/17/11, SFC received a proposal from the HE Access Network (HEAN) on an ‘Access Champions Scotland’ pilot project. The bid was successful in June 2017 and the project has been awarded approx. £200k over 2 years through our Strategic funds. It is intended that that will support CoWA recommendations as well as linking to work on the Schools Engagement Framework and the Gender Action Plan. It was a condition of SFC funding that HEAN secure funding from The Robertson Trust for the third year of the project. The HEAN bid to The Robertson Trust went to their 1 November meeting and was successful and they have levered in £124k for the third year of the project. SFC will be represented on the Steering Group and the project development phase will begin early in 2018.

42. In brief, the HEAN Access Champions project is to implement and refine an evidence-based pilot in at 3 secondary schools in Glasgow. The programme will be delivered in partnership with MCR Pathways and key outcomes will be a sustained network of current senior teachers (Access Champions) to improve the current system, improved resources and support for disadvantaged pupils, targeted mentoring and an increase in successful University and College applications from those from disadvantaged areas. ‘Access Champions Scotland’ is a sustainable school-centred model and does not seek to increase provision of events and activity; rather it seeks to structure existing provision more effectively.

Next steps

43. The National Delivery Group met on 15 November and we will provide an oral update on this at the meeting’

44. The next CoWA implementation group meets on 22 November. We will inform the group of the AIC discussion and any actions agreed.

45. We will provide the AIC with an assessment of the CoWA related elements of the draft 2018-20 OAs at the February 2018 meeting and will seek their advice on CoWA related amendments to the OA guidance at the May 2018 meeting.

46. In line with our commitment to report annual progress we will provide a progress update to the SFC Board in February 2018 (before the second
anniversary of the publication of the *Blueprint for Fairness* - March 2018).

**Risk assessment**

47. Failure to deliver the SFC recommendations – specifically recommendation 32 (CoWA targets) would represent a significant reputational damage to the SFC and indeed the university sector. It is very clear from the Minister’s letter on the intensification of Outcome Agreements that she expects to see a step change in progress in this area.

**Equality and diversity assessment**

48. This work is being equality impact assessed as we implement it. This includes an:
   - EIA of the 2017-20 Outcome Agreement Guidance and funding allocations.
   - The development of an EIA of the 2018-20 Outcome Agreement Guidance and funding allocations. Please note that the EIA on the access related elements of the 2018-20 OA Guidance is set-out within the Progress on our Access ambitions and outcomes paper (AIC/17/21).
   - EIAs of the funded projects.

49. We will use this to develop an EIA of our overall implementation which we will publish in March 2018 as outlined in the project plan in Annex A.

**Financial implications**

50. There are no financial considerations to be taken account of in this paper.

**Recommendations**

51. The AIC is asked to:
   - Consider the progress to date in relation to the SFC’s implementation plan.
   - Advise on how we can best evidence our progress in this area.
   - Consider and advise on the need for us to intensify our approach.

**Publication**

52. This paper will be published on the Council website.

**Further information**

53. Contact: Carina MacRitchie, tel: 0131 313 6546, email: cmacritchie@sfc.ac.uk
Annex A

Project Remit: Implementation of the Blueprint for Fairness in the SFC

Purpose

- To ensure, through effective leadership and co-ordination, that the SFC effectively implements the SFC recommendations of the Blueprint for Fairness and fully contributes to the system related recommendations.$^5$

Key Outcomes

- The key outcomes from the project are:
  
  - **February 2017** - An agreed plan and programme of work for the SFC which will be reported to the SFC’s Access and Inclusion Committee in Feb 2017 to align with the Scottish Government’s requirement to report on progress on the Blueprint for Fairness by March 2017
  
  - **February 2018** – A progress report to be presented to the SFC Board in Feb to align with the Commissioner for Fair Access’s requirement to report on progress by March 2018
  
  - **March 2018** – A published EHRIA of SFC’s implementation of the Blueprint for Fair Access
  
  - **May 2018** – Implement the outcome of a full review of the additional access places introduced in 2013-14 (the first cohort will graduate in 2016-17)
  
  - **December 2018** – An increase in the intake of SIMD20 (as evidenced by HESA data for AY 2017-18). This will be the first year of the implementation of the Blueprint for Fairness. This national increase needs to at least equal to the increases projected and shared with Outcome Agreement Managers in December 2016. It also needs to be equal to the institutional increases required to meet the 10% institutional target by 2021

Background

- The Commission on Widening Access published their final report called the Blueprint for Fairness in March 2016. The recommendations in the

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$^5$ System Related Recommendations are recommendations that require partners to work together to effect change.
The report have been accepted in full by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Government expects the SFC to implement the recommendations directly related to us and to report on this progress.

- The report also includes a set of system related recommendations where we have a significant role and contribution to make.
- This project is to enable us to co-ordinate our response to the direct and system related recommendations and to evidence our progress.

**Rationale**

- The report includes a significant number of recommendations spanning several different areas ranging from admission processes to evidencing institutional spend to improved data tracking, sharing and reporting. A key element of our success will be in our ability to chunk this into concrete work areas with expected reporting requirements.
- The skillset, knowledge and relationship links to implement and support these recommendations sit in both the Access Skills and Outcome Agreement Directorate and the Funding Directorate and in most cases will require the two directorates to work together to identify the best approaches.
- The Board, Scottish Government and the new Commissioner will expect regular updates on progress and reassurance that the SFC is embedding these requirements into their leadership, planning and reporting.

**Project Objectives**

- The overall objective of the project is to implement the SFC recommendations of the Blueprint for Fairness and fully contribute to the system related recommendations. To achieve this objective, the project will:
  - Set up a Project Steering Group chaired by the Interim Director of the Access, Skills and Outcome Agreements Directorate
  - Agree an implementation plan and resources required
  - Agree leads for key recommendations and reporting requirements including input in the February 2018 progress report
  - Co-ordinate stakeholder engagement on recommendations and
ensure consistency of communications in relation to progress

- Support SFC Senior Management engagement with the Commissioner for Fair Access and enable Senior Management to implement new direction from the Commissioner

- Support and agree SFC Officer reporting on progress to Scottish Government Officials and other stakeholders

- Undertake a full EHRIA assessment on the SFC’s implementation of the Blueprint for Fair Access

**Project Organisation**

- The project is being set up by the Interim Director of Access, Skills and Outcome Agreements to help SMT lead the SFC implementation of the Blueprint for Fairness. Its progress will be reported to the CEO through the SMT members.

- It will be overseen by a Project Steering Group. It is proposed that this group will meet monthly initially (until the work streams are established) and then quarterly.

- It will be supported by the Assistant Director for Access who will arrange agenda items and papers where required. The discussion will be minuted and actions will be agreed at the end of each meeting.

**Project Steering Group**

- Michael Cross (Chair)
- Carina MacRitchie, Senior Policy Officer
- Dee Bird, Assistant Director – Outcome Agreements
- Fiona Burns, Assistant Director – Access and Outcome Agreements
- Ken Rutherford, Assistant Director – Outcome Agreements
- Martin Smith, Chief Funding Officer
## Timeline for project – up to first reporting deadline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Responsible Officers</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An agreed SFC implementation plan</td>
<td>Feb 2017</td>
<td>Fiona Burns and Carina MacRitchie</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish work streams, agree work stream leads and reporting requirements</td>
<td>Feb 2017</td>
<td>Fiona Burns and Carina MacRitchie</td>
<td>Work stream leads established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend and report on US COWA short-life working groups</td>
<td>Feb 2017 to June 2017</td>
<td>Fiona Burns and Dee Bird (Admissions) Fiona Burns and Anna Thomson (Articulation) Fiona Burns and Carina MacRitchie (Bridging Programmes)</td>
<td>These groups have all met for the last time. US are aiming to publish a report in November. This will be discussed at the 2nd Access Delivery Group in November. Draft report provided at meeting 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicative Funding Allocations including confirmation of guidance for SIMD40 additional access places moving to SIMD20</td>
<td>Feb 2017</td>
<td>Lorna MacDonald Martin Smith</td>
<td>Published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second meeting of the Project Steering Group</td>
<td>March 2017</td>
<td>Cancelled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication of final funding allocations for AY 2017-18</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>Lorna MacDonald Martin Smith</td>
<td>Published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Responsible Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second meeting of the Project Steering Group</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>Fiona Burns</td>
<td>Complete – initial plans provided and remit amended so that the review of additional places impacts on the 2018-19 allocations. Agreed that the next meeting would include: - Progress reports - New Access publication - Review of additional places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reporting on progress as outlined in draft OAs for 2017-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Agree proposals from work streams</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Report to SG on progress with SFC implementation of recommendations - to contribute to SG first annual published report on progress with COWA Implementation and Minister’s statement to Parliament</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>Fiona Burns</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third meeting of the Project Steering Group</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Cancelled</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Progress report from work streams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Second meeting of SG Framework for Fair Access Development Group</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Dee Bird</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First meeting of the Access Delivery Group – Chaired by the Minister</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
<td>Michael Cross and Fiona Burns</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Responsible Officers</td>
<td>Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Quarterly meeting of the Project Steering Group</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
<td>Fiona Burns</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication of research into Contextualised Admissions</td>
<td>October 2017</td>
<td>Fiona Burns/Carina MacRitchie</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress report provided to the AIC</td>
<td>Nov 2017</td>
<td>Fiona Burns/Carina MacRitchie</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second meeting of the Access Delivery Group – Chaired by the Minister</td>
<td>Nov 2017</td>
<td>Michael Cross and Fiona Burns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universities Scotland publish report on Admissions, Articulation and Bridging Programmes</td>
<td>Nov 2017</td>
<td>Fiona Burns/Dee Bird/Carina MacRitchie/Anna Thomson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Quarterly meeting of the Project Steering Group</td>
<td>Nov 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Update from Access Delivery Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Response to US publication on access</td>
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<td>• Ministerial Letter of Guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Funding allocations</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Third Quarterly meeting of the Project Steering Group</td>
<td>Feb 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Agree progress report</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Agree future meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progress report to SFC Board and Scottish Government</td>
<td>Feb 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third meeting of the Access Delivery Group – Chaired by the Minister</td>
<td>Feb 2018</td>
<td>Michael Cross and Fiona Burns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task</td>
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<td>Responsible Officers</td>
<td>Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publication of EHRIA</td>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourth meeting of the Access Delivery Group – Chaired by the Minister</td>
<td>Nov 2018</td>
<td>Michael Cross and Fiona Burns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting on progress as evidenced by HESA and Access Returns</td>
<td>Dec 2018</td>
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Annex B: The Blueprint for Fair Access Recommendations

Commissioner for Fair Access

Recommendation 1: The Scottish Government should appoint a Commissioner for Fair Access by the end of 2016 to:

- lead cohesive and system wide efforts to drive fair access in Scotland; acting as an advocate for access for disadvantaged learners and holding to account those with a role to play in achieving equal access.
- coordinate and prioritise the development of a more substantial evidence base on the issues most pertinent to fair access, including the commissioning and publication of independent research. The Scottish Government should ensure an appropriate annual budget is made available to support this work.
- publish, annually, a report to Ministers outlining the Commissioner’s views on progress towards equal access in Scotland to inform development of effective policy at national, regional and institutional level.

Identifying and Sharing Good Practice

Recommendation 2: By 2018, the Commissioner for Fair Access, working with experts, should publish a Scottish Framework for Fair Access. This authoritative, evidence based framework should identify the most impactful forms of access activity at each stage of the learner journey, from early learning through to higher education and provide best practice guidelines on its delivery and evaluation.

Recommendation 3: Public funding for access programmes – either through specific external funding or funding from core budgets – should focus on programmes that are consistent with the Scottish Framework for Fair Access.

Coordinating the Delivery of What Works

Recommendation 4: Universities, colleges, local authorities, schools, SFC funded access programmes and early years providers should work together to deliver a coordinated approach to access which removes duplication and provides a coherent and comprehensive offer to learners.

Flexible Transitions

Recommendation 5: Universities should ensure their admissions processes and entry requirements are based on a strong educational rationale and are not unnecessarily prescriptive, to the detriment of learners who take advantage of the availability of a
more flexible range of pathways. This should be monitored by the SFC through the outcome agreement process.

**Recommendation 6:** The Scottish Government, working with key stakeholders, should ensure the key transitions phases around SCQF levels 6 to 8 are better used to provide students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the qualifications and experiences required to support fair access.

**Bridging Programmes**

**Recommendation 7:** The Scottish Funding Council, working with professionals, should develop a model of how bridging programmes can be expanded nationally to match need.

**Articulation**

**Recommendation 8:** The SFC should seek more demanding articulation targets from those universities that have not traditionally been significant players in articulation.

**Recommendation 9:** Universities colleges and the SFC should closely monitor the expansion of articulation to ensure it continues to support disadvantaged learners to progress to degree level study. Should this not be the case, a proportion of articulation places should be prioritised for disadvantaged learners.

**Recommendation 10:** The Scottish Funding Council, working with universities and colleges, should explore more efficient, flexible and learner centred models of articulation which provide learners with the choice of a broader range of institutions and courses.

**Access Thresholds for Admissions**

**Recommendation 11:** By 2019 all universities should set access thresholds for all degree programmes against which learners from the most deprived backgrounds should be assessed. These access thresholds should be separate to standard entrance requirements and set as ambitiously as possible, at a level which accurately reflects the minimum academic standard and subject knowledge necessary to successfully complete a degree programme.

**Recommendation 12:** All universities should be as open and transparent as possible over their use of access thresholds and wider contextual admissions policies. In particular, they should seek to maximise applications from disadvantaged learners by proactively promoting the access thresholds to the relevant schools, pupils, parents, local authorities and teachers.
University Rankings

**Recommendation 13:** The Commissioner for Fair Access, should engage with those compiling key university rankings to ensure greater priority is given to socioeconomic diversity within the rankings and to ensure that institutions who take the actions necessary to achieve fair access are not penalised.

Non-Academic Factors in Admissions

**Recommendation 14:** The SFC should undertake an independent review of the processes – such as personal statements and interviews – that are used to evaluate non-academic factors in applications, with the aim of assessing whether, and to what extent, they unfairly disadvantage access applicants.

Early Years

**Recommendation 15:** Universities and colleges should increase engagement with our youngest children and their families as part of the provision of a coordinated package of support for those in our most deprived communities in line with Recommendation 4.

School Attainment

**Recommendation 16:** Universities, working with schools, should take greater responsibility for the development of the pool of applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds by delivering academically based programmes to support highly able learners, who are at risk of not fulfilling their academic potential.

Information, Advice and Guidance

**Recommendation 17:** SDS and schools should work together to provide a more coordinated, tailored offer of information, advice and guidance to disadvantaged learners at key transition phases throughout their education.

Access to Key Subjects

**Recommendation 18:** Universities, colleges and local authorities should work together to provide access to a range of Higher and Advanced Higher subjects, which ensures that those from disadvantaged backgrounds or living in rural areas are not restricted in their ability to access higher education by the subject choices available to them.
Financial Support for Learners

Recommendation 19: The Commissioner for Fair Access should commission research, within three months of appointment, to assess how student finance impacts on the participation of disadvantaged learners in higher education.

Recommendation 20: Disadvantaged learners and their parents, should be provided with clear, accurate information on both the availability of student finance and the conditions for repayment. This should be taken forward by the bodies identified in Recommendation 17 and the Student Awards Agency Scotland.

Supporting those with Care Experience

Recommendation 21: By 2017, those with a care experience, who meet the access threshold should be entitled to the offer of a place at a Scottish university. Entitlement should also apply to those with a care experience who have had to take a break from higher education and wish to return. Learners should be assessed against minimum entry level in 2017 and 2018 and the access threshold thereafter.

Recommendation 22: The Scottish Government should replace student living costs loans with a non-repayable bursary and provide a more flexible package of student support for learners with a care experience from academic year 2017/18.

Recommendation 23: The Scottish Government should develop an approach to allow those with a care experience to be identified from early years to post-school and on to employment to enable additional support, for example, a marker or a flag. Young people with care experience must be included in the development of how this would be used and shared.

Funding

Recommendation 24: The SFC should review the best use of its funds, specifically the Access and Retention Fund, to deliver the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations.

Recommendation 25: The SFC should monitor how institution spend from core funding is being used to support access through the Outcome Agreement process.

Recommendation 26: By 2021, the SFC, in consultation with the Scottish Government, should explore options for more targeted funding models to better support the recruitment and retention of greater numbers of access students.
Regulation

**Recommendation 27:** The SFC should make more extensive use of their existing regulatory powers, where appropriate, to drive greater progress. The Scottish Government should ensure that it provides the SFC with the necessary mandate to take this action.

**Recommendation 28:** The Scottish Government should ensure that objectives relating to fair access are embedded in the regulatory frameworks of other agencies/public bodies with a role to play in advancing equal access.

Better Use of Data to Support Fair Access

**Recommendation 29:** The Scottish Government should improve mechanisms to track learners and share data to support fair access. Specifically, the Government should

- lead the work necessary to develop and implement the use of a unique learner number to be used to track learners’ progress from early learning, throughout education and onwards into employment.
- review data access arrangements to provide a national process for the provision of information to practitioners and policy makers working on fair access. This review should consider access to and sharing of data held by local authorities, schools, UCAS and SAAS.

**Recommendation 30:** The Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government should enhance the analyses and publication of data on fair access.

Measures to Identify Access Learners

**Recommendation 31:** The Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council, working with key stakeholders, should develop a consistent and robust set of measures to identify access students by 2018.

Targets

**Recommendation 32:** The Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council should implement the following targets to drive forward the delivery of equal access in Scotland:

To realise the First Minister’s ambition of equality of access to higher education in Scotland:
• By 2030, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent 20% of entrants to higher education. Equality of access should be seen in both the college sector and the university sector.

To drive progress toward this goal:
• By 2021, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent at least 16% of full-time first degree entrants to Scottish HEIs as a whole.
• By 2021, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent at least 10% of full-time first degree entrants to every individual Scottish university.
• By 2026, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent at least 18% of full-time first degree entrants to Scottish universities as a whole.
• In 2022, the target of 10% for individual Scottish universities should be reviewed and a higher level target should be considered for the subsequent years.

Agenda for the Future

Recommendation 33: The Commissioner for Fair Access should:

• consider what further work is required to support equal access for other groups of learners and within specific degree subjects.
• consider what further work is required to support equal outcomes after study for those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with a care experience.

Final recommendation

Recommendation 34: The Scottish Government should report on progress against the recommendations it accepts from this report, 12 months after issuing its response. Thereafter, progress towards equal access should be reported on annually by the Commissioner for Fair Access.
Annex C: Work streams update

- Engaging with schools
- Evidencing improvements in the admissions and selection processes
- Effective pathways and transitions into HE (with separate update on articulation recommendations)
- Funding, targets and regulation
- Measurement and reporting.
| Recommendation 4: | Universities, colleges, local authorities, schools, SFC funded access programmes and early years providers should work together to deliver a coordinated approach to access which removes duplication and provides a coherent and comprehensive offer to learners. This should include:  
- the development of mechanisms by which access programmes undertaken at one institution, or in one part of the country, can be recognised by other institutions, while also serving institutional and local needs. Credit rating programmes on the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) should be considered where appropriate |
| Lead Delivery Partner: | SFC and Scottish Universities [Recommendation doesn’t specify lead] |
| Key Stakeholder(s): | i.e. who are the key stakeholders in delivery of this recommendation?  
Schools, Scottish Colleges and Universities, SCQF partnership |
| What are the 5 key milestones to implementation and when will they be completed? | i.e. what are you going to do to deliver on the recommendation and when will you do it by? |
| 1. | Publication and implementation of Universities Scotland and SFC work stream recommendations on Admissions, Articulation and Bridging programmes (November 2017) |
| 2. | SFC development of the Schools Engagement Framework – paper to be taken to the SFC Access and Inclusion Committee (November 2017). Following the Committee meeting, a full framework will be devised and finalised with stakeholders, with a view to initial implementation starting from August 2018. |
| 3. | SFC strategic funding awarded to HE Access Network to deliver ‘Access Champions’ evidence-based pilot project in 3 Glasgow secondary schools in partnership with MCR Pathways. Access Champions Scotland is a sustainable school-centred model and does not seek to increase provision of events and activity; rather it seeks to structure existing provision more effectively. (AY 2017-18 to AY 2018-19). |
| 4. | SFC strategic funding awarded to fund an educational researcher to map existing activity within the Glasgow region – including HEIs, Focus West and third sector organisations. The researcher will develop proposals on the access approach in Glasgow region involving sustainable activities from nursery through to secondary |
5. Current funding for Access to High Demand Professions (AHDP) and Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP) continues until July 2020. Therefore, future funding will be requested for these programmes – in support of the School Engagement Framework – in December 2019/January 2020. The intention is for all strategically-funded access programmes (AHDP, SHEP, SCQF and SWAP) to be funded on the same timeline.

| When will/did implementation start? | 2017 – Preliminary School Engagement Framework discussions and development update at SFC Access and Inclusion Committee [February 2017 and May 2017] |
| When will delivery be complete? | As noted above, the intention is for the initial implementation of the School Engagement Framework to begin from August 2018. As there is an expectation of engaging with a greater number of schools, this will require lead-in time and relationship building, however full implementation of the new framework is hoped to be in place by July 2020. Delivery will not be ‘complete’ per se, as this is an ongoing piece of work engaging with schools and raising aspiration for positive destination in pupils. |
| Does this differ from the Commission’s target date? | No – The Commission did not set a date for delivery of this recommendation |
| Does this recommendation sit within any existing CoWA work streams or relate to other policy/practice developments? | 

- Universities Scotland and SFC work stream on Admissions, Articulation and Bridging Programmes
- SFC CoWA sub-group on Engaging with Schools
- SFC Schools Engagement Framework
- SFC Adult Engagement Framework (this piece of work is expected to be complementary to the School Engagement Framework, and will focus on raising aspirations of adults who have gaps in their education and/or did not move into positive destinations from secondary school).
- Scottish Government Youth Employment Strategy
- SG 15-24 Learner Journey review |
**Recommendations 8,9,10:**

Recommendation 8: The SFC should seek more demanding articulation targets from those universities that have not traditionally been significant players in articulation.

- These targets should have a clear focus on the benefits, both to learners and the public purse, of awarding full credit for prior study.
- In establishing new articulation pathways, colleges and HEIs should build upon best practice models already in place to secure the curricular alignment necessary to ensure that learners are equipped with the necessary prior learning and academic skills to enable them to succeed in degree level study.
- For the purposes of more effective IAG, the SFC should develop, or commission, an articulation 'map', setting out all of the available pathways across Scotland.

Recommendation 9: Universities colleges and the SFC should closely monitor the expansion of articulation to ensure it continues to support disadvantaged learners to progress to degree level study. Should this not be the case, a proportion of articulation places should be prioritised for disadvantaged learners.

Recommendation 10: The Scottish Funding Council, working with universities and colleges, should explore more efficient, flexible and learner centred models of articulation which provide learners with the choice of a broader range of institutions and courses.

**Lead Delivery Partner:**

SFC(8)
Scottish Universities and Colleges and SFC (9)
SFC, Scottish Universities and Colleges (10)

**Key Stakeholder(s):**

*i.e. who are the key stakeholders in delivery of this recommendation?*

Scottish Universities and Colleges

**What are the 5 key milestones to implementation and when will they be completed?**

*i.e. what are you going to do to deliver on the recommendation and when will you do it by?*

1. The publication and implementation of Universities Scotland and SFC Articulation work stream recommendations (November 2017)
2. The development of the articulation database and improved monitoring and publication of data on participation, progression, success/retention and destination of students (early 2018 and ongoing annual
<table>
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<tr>
<th>When will/did implementation start?</th>
<th>2016-17 (measures within university and college Outcome Agreements)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When will delivery be complete?</td>
<td>2026 (SFC 10 year articulation strategy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does this differ from the Commission’s target date?</td>
<td>No – The Commission did not set a date for delivery of these articulation recommendations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Existing CoWA work streams or related developments?</td>
<td>Does this recommendation sit within any existing CoWA work streams or relate to other policy/practice developments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Universities Scotland and SFC work streams on Admissions, Articulation and Bridging Programmes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Scottish Government 15-24 Review of Learner Journey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• SFC Effective pathways and transitions into HE CoWA sub-group</td>
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<td>• SFC School Engagement Framework</td>
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<td>• SFC Adult Engagement strategy (articulation a route for mature learners)</td>
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<td>• SFC Gender Action Plan Link (e.g. positive numbers of young, most deprived males who access university via this route - articulation is vehicle to support the GAP targets for male representation at Universities and address subject imbalances.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SFC Triennial Reviews on Widening Access</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Scottish Government national improvement programme to raise FE attainment and improve retention in Scotland’s colleges</td>
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</table>
| **Recommendation 5,7:** | Recommendation 5: Universities should ensure their admissions processes and entry requirements are based on a strong educational rationale and are not unnecessarily prescriptive, to the detriment of learners who take advantage of the availability of a more flexible range of pathways. This should be monitored by the SFC through the outcome agreement process.

Recommendation 7: The Scottish Funding Council, working with professionals, should develop a model of how bridging programmes can be expanded nationally to match need.

- Given the clear benefits to the learner, the model should ensure that academic credit awarded through the completion of such programmes is transferrable between universities.
- Successful completion of such programmes may form one of the conditions of the access thresholds to be developed in line with recommendation 11.
- This model should have particular regard to the evidence that bridging programmes are especially beneficial when delivered earlier in the education journey |

| **Lead Delivery Partner:** | Universities and Universities Scotland and SFC for monitoring (5)

Universities, Universities Scotland and SFC (7) – In reality, Universities Scotland are doing a great job of implementing this and perhaps should be allocated the lead role. However, unless there is specific and discrete funding available it is difficult to see how SFC could support growth in this area, other than as a contributory activity to our expectations on SIMD20 intake and outcomes. The SFC support the Universities Scotland recommendations for more regional collaboration and agrees with US, that OA teams have a significant role to play in securing this. |

| **Key Stakeholder(s):** | *i.e. who are the key stakeholders in delivery of this recommendation?*

Scottish Universities and Colleges |

| **What are the 5 key milestones to implementation and when will they be completed?** | *i.e. what are you going to do to deliver on the recommendation and when will you do it by?*

1. Publication and implementation of the recommendations of 3 Universities Scotland work streams (Admissions, Articulation and Bridging Programmes) (November 2017)
2. Publication of the research finding and recommendations from SFC-funded Durham University research on Contextualised Admissions (November 2017) |
3. SG outlines a timeline to deliver recommendation 29 and improves mechanisms to track learners and share data to support fair access.
4. SG delivers recommendation 29 and improves mechanisms to track learners and share data to support fair access.
5. SG report on phase 1 of 15-24 Learner Journey review (November 2017)
6. Subject to the delivery of recommendation 29, Universities, SFC, SG and other stakeholders use a consistent set of measures to identify, support and report on access students within annual statistical and policy publications, reviews, evaluations and Outcome Agreements

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<th>When will/did implementation start?</th>
<th>February 2017 (US Bridging Programmes and admission work streams)</th>
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<td>When will delivery be complete?</td>
<td>Within five years New OA guidance covering the three year period 2020-23 will be published in September 2019 – this will include details on how we intend on monitoring the implementation and impact of new Access Thresholds as we move towards the first milestone point of the CoWA targets. The progress on this to be published in March 2022.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does this differ from the Commission’s target date?</td>
<td>No – The Commission did not set a date for delivery of this recommendations (although does refer to access thresholds implementation which has a 2019 timescale and the milestone for the CoWA target is 2021)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Existing CoWA work streams or related developments?</td>
<td>Does this recommendation sit within any existing CoWA work streams or relate to other policy/practice developments?</td>
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| | • Universities Scotland work streams on Admissions, Articulation and Bridging Programmes  
• SFC CoWA sub-group on Evidencing Improvements in the admissions and selection processes  
• SFC CoWA sub-group on Effective pathways and transitions into HE  
• SFC CoWA sub-group on Engaging with Schools  
• SFC CoWA sub-group on Funding, Targets and Regulation  
• SFC CoWA sub-group on Measurement and Reporting  
• SG 15-24 Learner Journey review  
• Scottish Government Youth Employment Strategy |
### Recommendation 14:
The SFC should undertake an independent review of the processes – such as personal statements and interviews – that are used to evaluate non-academic factors in applications, with the aim of assessing whether, and to what extent, they unfairly disadvantage access applicants.

- This review should also consider whether there are other processes or assessment techniques that would increase fairness and more accurately evaluate the potential of applicants. The Outcome of the review should be reported to the Commissioner for Fair Access.

#### Lead Delivery Partner:
SFC (with the support of Universities Scotland)

#### Key Stakeholder(s):
*i.e. who are the key stakeholders in delivery of this recommendation?*

SFC (with the support of Universities Scotland)

#### What are the 5 key milestones to implementation and when will they be completed?
*i.e. what are you going to do to deliver on the recommendation and when will you do it by?*

1. Publication and implementation of the recommendations of Universities Scotland 3 work streams (Admissions, Articulation and Bridging Programmes) (October 2017)
2. Publication of the research findings and recommendations from SFC-funded Durham University research on Contextualised Admissions (October 2017)
3. Agreement with Universities Scotland on an initial survey of all Scottish HEIs (end 2017) and US to issue survey (Spring 2018), collate responses and provide summary analysis (by late 2018).
4. SFC to report outcome of review to the Scottish Government, Commissioner for Fair Access and SFC Access and Inclusion Committee
5. Based on response rate and initial US analysis, SFC to fund academic research during 2018 to inform and publish evidence and best practice (by 2019). SFC Access team to source and secure funding for research from the Strategic Funding Group (AY 2017-18)

#### When will/did implementation start?
February 2017 (Universities Scotland work streams began)

#### When will delivery be complete?
2019 (To tie in with access thresholds timescales)

#### Does this differ from the Commission’s target date?
No – The Commission did not set a date for delivery of this recommendation

#### Existing CoWA work streams or related
*Does this recommendation sit within any existing CoWA work streams or relate to other policy/practice developments?*
<table>
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<th>developments?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Universities Scotland work stream on Admissions, Articulation and Bridging Programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• SFC CoWA sub-group on Evidencing Improvements in the admissions and selection processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• SG 15-24 Learner Journey review</td>
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<tr>
<td>• SG Youth Employment Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Publication of Durham university research on Contextualised Admissions (support rec 11 on access thresholds and rec 31 on development of measures used for contextual data within university UG admissions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Recommendations 24,25,26,27,32:**

- Recommendation 24: The SFC should review the best use of its funds, specifically the Access and Retention Fund, to deliver the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations.

- Recommendation 25: The SFC should monitor how institution spend from core funding is being used to support access through the Outcome Agreement process.

- Recommendation 26: By 2021, the SFC, in consultation with the Scottish Government, should explore options for more targeted funding models to better support the recruitment and retention of greater numbers of access students.

- Recommendation 27: The SFC should make more extensive use of their existing regulatory powers, where appropriate, to drive greater progress. The Scottish Government should ensure that it provides the SFC with the necessary mandate to take this action.

- Recommendation 32: The Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council should implement the following targets to drive forward the delivery of equal access in Scotland:
  
  To realise the First Minister’s ambition of equality of access to higher education in Scotland:
  
  - By 2030, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent 20% of entrants to higher education. Equality of access should be seen in both the college sector and the university sector.

  To drive progress toward this goal:

  - By 2021, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent at least 16% of full-time first degree entrants to Scottish HEIs as a whole.
  - By 2021, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent at least 10% of full-time first degree entrants to every individual Scottish university.
  - By 2026, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent at least 18% of full-time first degree entrants to Scottish universities as a whole.
  - In 2022, the target of 10% for individual Scottish universities should be reviewed and a higher level target should be considered for the subsequent years.

**Lead Delivery Partner:**

- SFC (24)
- SFC (25)
- SFC and Scottish Government (26)
- SFC and Scottish Government (27)
- Scottish Government and SFC (32)
We are considering recommendation 26 as we progress our review of the SIMD40 (now SIMD20) and articulation places. This includes the consideration of the use of suggested institutional targets in these areas for all institutions regardless of whether they received additional places or not. Once this is complete we will consider how the Widening Access and Retention Fund (WARF) could best support the core funding model (recommendation 27).

**Key Stakeholder(s):**
*i.e. who are the key stakeholders in delivery of this recommendation?*
SFC, Scottish colleges and universities

**What are the 5 key milestones to implementation and when will they be completed?**
*i.e. what are you going to do to deliver on the recommendation and when will you do it by?*

- SG to provide mandate for SFC to use existing regulatory powers and strengthen OA guidance and ‘intensification of OA process’ for AY 2018-20 onwards – as per recommendation 27 (Autumn 2017)

- The SFC Access and Inclusion Committee considers progress in CoWA as evidenced by draft and near final OAs including use of WARF in February and May (Feb 2017)

- The SFC Access and Inclusion Committee refines and strengthens the AY 2018-20 Outcome Agreement guidance to support CoWA including strengthened requirements on reporting of use of WARF (May 2017)

- SFC to include the CoWA measure as an additional measure within the AY 2018-19 OA guidance *(number and proportion of full-time first degree SDUEs from the 20% most deprived data zones)* (Autumn 2017)

- SFC review use of SIMD 40 additional access places, additional articulation places and TPG places to inform SFC funding allocations for AY 2018-19 onwards (by early 2018)

- Subject to the outcome of the above review on the use of places, SFC to review the wider purpose and allocation of WARF (early 2018)

- SFC to undertake statistical modelling to evidence effectiveness of OA negotiation by providing OA teams with suggested SIMD 20 institutional and sector targets for AY 2018-19 onwards to ensure COWA targets are achieved. This may also include articulation targets. (Winter 2017)

- SFC to develop proposals for responding to under-delivery of SIMD 20 and articulation OA targets including possible re-allocation of places. (early 2018)
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<tr>
<th><strong>Review of AY 2018-20 Outcome Agreements to assess improvements in evidence and reported use of WARF by those 8 HEIs in receipt of it and check corresponding quantitative access and retention data (Spring 2018)</strong></th>
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| **When will/did implementation start?** | AY 2016-17 (CoWA targets set out with University Outcome Agreement measures) |
|---|

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<th><strong>When will delivery be complete?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• We review the use of WARF annually. As part of our consideration of how to use our funding model to incentivise change we will re-consider the purpose and use of WARF. (rec 24)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• We will continue to report on the implementation of CoWA through OAs. For the next three year OA period 2020-23 we will consider the need for institutions to provide a distinct CoWA implementation plan in their OAs to support their SIMD 20 ambitions and targets outlined in their OA. This will focus on activity (not spend) and is likely to be similar to institutional Gender Action Plans. The guidance for this would be published in September 2019 – (rec 25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• We will publish annual data on recruitment and retention and will expect institutions to develop activities to target any inequalities in outcomes (by 2019) – (rec 26)</td>
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<td>• Targets to have been achieved by 2030 (rec 32)</td>
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| **Does this differ from the Commission’s target date?** | No – align with timescale set by COWA for recs 26 and 32. |

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<tr>
<th><strong>Existing CoWA work streams or related developments?</strong></th>
<th><strong>Does this recommendation sit within any existing CoWA work streams or relate to other policy/practice developments?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Ministerial letter of guidance to SFC and ‘intensification of the Outcome Agreement approach’</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Universities Scotland work streams on Admissions, Articulation and Bridging Programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• SFC CoWA Funding, Targets and Measurement sub-group</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Scottish Government national improvement programme to raise FE attainment and improve retention in Scotland’s colleges</td>
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Recommendation 30: The Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government should enhance the analyses and publication of data on fair access. This should include:

- enhanced monitoring of fair access at key stages of the learner journey including analyses by socioeconomic background of: early learning and school attainment; UCAS applications, offers and acceptances; entrants to higher education; qualifiers from higher education and their destinations.
- publication of a coherent and consistent set of statistics to show progress on fair access, either through development of the SFC’s Learning for All publication or a successor publication.
- working with UK producers of statistics, including HESA and UCAS, to develop an agreed method of comparing progress on fair access over time and across UK nations.
- exploring with The Data Lab the feasibility of a project to develop a data science solution to support fair access e.g. a schools based data solution to identify those from a disadvantaged background with the potential to succeed in higher education and who could most benefit from additional support.

Recommendation 31: The Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council, working with key stakeholders, should develop a consistent and robust set of measures to identify access students by 2018:

- In addition to SIMD, this should include a measure for school environment, a marker for income and a marker for care experience.
- The development of these measures should take account of the findings from SFC funded research on the use of contextual data in undergraduate university admissions being undertaken by Durham University and due to report in 2016.
- The SFC should review the measures it uses within outcome agreements and the access work it funds in light of the outcome of this work.

| Lead Delivery Partner: | SFC and the Scottish Government (30)  
The Scottish Government and SFC (31) |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Key Stakeholder(s):    | *i.e. who are the key stakeholders in delivery of this recommendation?*  
SFC, Scottish Government, UCAS, HESA, The Data Lab, Scottish Universities and Colleges, Durham University |
| What will successful delivery look like? | *• Improved and enhanced monitoring of access data at key transitions points of the learner journey  
• User-friendly consistent publications clearly identifying and reporting on sector progress, including the SFC Report on Widening Access publication  
• An agreed and consistent approach by Scottish (preferably UK) organisations reporting on access data when comparing data within* |
and across the UK
- Data Science projects regularly supporting the Scottish education system and providing innovative and ‘disruptive’ data solutions to support and evidence fair access
- Consistent use of measures, robust evidence and clear messages, (for key stakeholders, politicians, practitioners, policy makers, the general public, the media)

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<tr>
<th>What are the measures of success?</th>
<th>i.e. how will we know this recommendation has been delivered?</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Annual enhanced publication of <em>SFC Report on Widening Access Publication</em> to indicate progress on access in general and specifically progress against CoWA targets within recommendation 32.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Universities, SFC, SG and other stakeholders use a consistent set of measures to identify, support and report on access students within annual statistical and policy publications, reviews, evaluations and Outcome Agreements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Agreed SFC, HESA, UCAS approach on reporting and publication of UK comparisons</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Data science solutions projects identified and undertaken to support fair access</td>
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<tr>
<th>What are the 5 key milestones to implementation and when will they be completed?</th>
<th>i.e. what are you going to do to deliver on the recommendation and when will you do it by?</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Initial review and the publication of the interim SFC <em>Report on Widening Access</em> (successor to LfA) for AY 2015-16 data which includes for the first time CoWA measures and provides a baseline against which future CoWA progress can be reported (CoWA final report published March 2016). (September 2017)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Broader consultation with key stakeholders on new access publication (2017) and publication of new Report on Widening Access in AY 2017-18 (March 2018)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Publication and implementation of the recommendations of the Universities Scotland 3 work streams (Admissions, Articulation and Bridging Programmes) (November 2017)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Publication of the research findings and recommendations from SFC-funded Durham University research on Contextualised Admissions (November 2017)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• SFC to review measures used within Outcome Agreement process in next cycle (by 2019 for AY 2020-23)</td>
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<tr>
<th>What are the key risks to successful delivery of the 5 milestones described above?</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Costs - new technology/software/data gathering to support necessary improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Costs - SG and SFC statistical staff resource and time/training needed for implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of progress with recommendation 29 on improved data-sharing and tracking of access students</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>When will/did implementation start?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>When will delivery be complete?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Does this differ from the Commission’s target date?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Interdependencies?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Existing CoWA work streams or related developments?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | • Universities Scotland 3 work streams  
| | • SFC CoWA sub-group on Evidencing Improvements in the admissions and selection processes  
| | • SFC CoWA sub-group on Measurement and Reporting  
| | • Scottish Government 15-24 review of the learner journey  
| | • Scottish Government Youth Employment Strategy |
Annex D – Summary of recommendations from the Publication of Durham University research ‘Mapping and evaluating the use of contextual data in undergraduate admissions in Scotland’

Mapping the use of contextual indicators

1. Institutions should provide clearer guidance to applicants on their websites about whether or not they can expect to be considered contextually disadvantaged for admissions purposes.

2. Institutions should provide clearer guidance to applicants on their websites about what actions the institution will take in relation to applicants identified as contextually disadvantaged for admissions purposes.

3. Institutions across the sector should work together to develop a common nomenclature to be used when describing contextualised admissions policies to prospective applicants.

4. There is scope for institutions to make greater and more ambitious use of adjusted offers to applicants identified as contextually disadvantaged.

Institutional orientations to contextualised admissions

5. While institutions recognise that high achieving applicants from contextually disadvantaged backgrounds have performed exceptionally well despite the odds, institutions could do more to recognise the potential of contextually disadvantaged applicants whose prior achievement is below the institutional norm but is strong relative to those from similarly disadvantaged backgrounds. In this regard, institutions may find it helpful to have access to information about the Highers attainment profiles of contextually disadvantaged groups, so that it is clear what constitutes a strong academic performance on the part of a contextually disadvantaged applicant relative to others in similar circumstances.

6. Institutions could do more to recognise the significant role they can play in supporting the learning of contextually disadvantaged students to help ensure that they fulfil their potential once at university.

7. While some institutions already take a research-informed approach to selecting appropriate and trustworthy indicators of contextual disadvantage, other institutions could increase their confidence in their own contextualised admissions policies by drawing on research evidence to inform their choice of contextual indicators.

8. Institutions could do more, individually and collectively, to communicate to the
wider public the purpose and value of contextualised admissions policies.

**Evaluating the validity & reliability of potential indicators**

9. Institutions should, where possible, make use of all indicators of contextual disadvantage which carry a low risk of incorrectly identifying an applicant as contextually disadvantaged when they are not. Such indicators include the following administratively verifiable individual-level markers of socioeconomic disadvantage: has spent time in care, is a carer for a family member, is a refugee or asylum seeker, was in receipt of free school meals, or received an Education Maintenance Allowance. These indicators are suitable for use singly on an EITHER/OR basis (i.e. applicants are highly likely to be genuinely contextually disadvantaged if they meet any one of these criteria).

10. Institutions should exercise caution when using contextual indicators which carry a moderate risk of incorrectly identifying an applicant as contextually disadvantaged when they are not, and should use such indicators only in conjunction with others on an AND/OR basis. Such indicators include the following area-level and school-level measures of socioeconomic disadvantage which, by definition, may not accurately capture the personal circumstances of specific individuals: resides in an SIMD20/40 postcode area, resides in a POLAR quintile 1 or 2 postcode area, resides in an ACORN 4 or 5 postcode area, attended a school with a high percentage of students in receipt of free school meals, attended a school with a high percentage of students in receipt of an Education Maintenance Allowance, attended a low attainment school, and attended a low progression school. These indicators are more likely to correctly identify applicants as contextually disadvantaged if they are used in combination on an AND/OR basis (i.e. applicants are more likely to be genuinely contextually disadvantaged if they meet two, rather than just one, of these criteria).

11. Institutions should avoid using indicators which carry a high risk of incorrectly identifying an applicant as contextually disadvantaged when they are not. Such indicators include individual-level measures that are not readily administratively verifiable, such as parental education and parental occupation, or which define socioeconomic disadvantage too broadly, such as living in a rural area and attending a certain broad type of school.

12. Valid and reliable indicators of contextual disadvantage should be made available to institutions at the point of admissions decision-making. This will require data providers and institutions to work together to develop systems for sharing robust contextual data about applicants in a timely manner and to put appropriate data protection and data sharing agreements in place.
Identifying minimum entry requirements for contextually disadvantaged applicants

13. Scotland’s higher education institutions should set minimum entry requirements for contextually disadvantaged students which recognise potential and are predictive of an appropriately high likelihood of success at degree level.

The indicative evidence presented in Report 4 suggests that a high probability (80%+) of progression from year 1 to year 2 of an undergraduate degree programme can be achieved with Highers grades of BBBBB at highly selective HEIs; with BCCCC/BBBCC for science/arts programmes respectively at moderately selective HEIs; and with BCCCC at less selective HEIs.

The evidence presented in Report 4 also indicates that a high probability (65%+) of a first or upper second class degree rather than a lower second or third class degree can be achieved with Highers grades of ABBBB/BBBCC for science/arts programmes at highly selective universities; withBBBBB/BBBBBC for science/arts programmes at moderately selective institutions; and with BBBBC/BCCCC for science/arts programmes at less selective HEIs.

Appropriate minimum entry requirements are, of course, likely to vary between programmes, and some programmes may require minimum levels of prior academic achievement in prerequisite subjects. As such, the grade profiles listed above are indicative rather than definitive. Where possible, institutions should calibrate minimum entry requirements against evidence for their own programmes. More research is needed to identify appropriate minimum entry criteria for contextually disadvantaged backgrounds with 4 rather than 5 Highers, and with qualifications other than Highers.

14. Institutions should provide appropriate learning support for contextually disadvantaged students to help ensure that they fulfil their potential at degree level. Several institutions already offer pre-entry programmes, supported first years of study, and ongoing academic and pastoral support services for contextually disadvantaged students. It would be valuable to share evidence-based examples of good practice in this regard across the sector, and further research is needed to identify the most effective ways of supporting the learning of contextually disadvantaged students.
Annex E - Scottish Framework for Fair Access Toolkit - proposal and recommendation

Summary of the project and why SFC is being asked to fund it

1. Funding has been requested to commission the development of the Scottish Framework for Fair Access Toolkit. The request is made by the Commissioner for Fair Access, Professor Peter Scott, and the Framework Development Group chaired by Conor Ryan, which has met regularly since May 2017 to develop detailed proposals for the Framework. The Group comprises experts in widening access research and practice and representatives from the SFC, college and school sector.

2. The strategic gap the proposal will address was identified by the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA). The Commission highlighted the lack of robust evidence on the impact of access activities and the fact it was not possible to identify which interventions were effective and why. This gap is a barrier to successful implementation of CoWA targets such as the scaling up of effective access interventions. Recommendation 2, therefore, asked that:

   • By 2018, the Commissioner for Fair Access, working with experts, should publish a Scottish Framework for Fair Access. This authoritative, evidence based framework should identify the most impactful forms of access activity at each stage of the learner journey, from early learning through to higher education and provide best practice guidelines on its delivery and evaluation.

3. After consideration by the Group, it has been agreed that the Framework will consist of a Community of Practice and a toolkit. This proposal concerns the development of the toolkit, which will have two distinct elements:

   • The evidence toolkit: this will summarise evidence on the impact of different interventions and activities across the learner journey and with a full range of target participants.

   • Evaluation and implementation guidance: accessible and brief guidance on evaluation methods, building evaluation into current programmes and planning new initiatives, for example. This section of the toolkit will provide practitioners with practical information for use in their interventions and to build consistent approaches to data collection, tracking and evaluation across the sector.

4. The toolkit will mirror the design of the Teaching and Learning Toolkit produced by the Education Endowment Foundation. It will be written in accessible language and easily understood by those with no prior knowledge of research.
or evaluation. The intended audience is widening access practitioners in colleges and universities, those in schools and local authorities as well as funders and practitioners in the third sector.

5. It will cover the full range of the learner journey, including:

i. Activities/interventions which promote fair access to higher education
   - increasing levels of academic achievement at school
   - promoting high educational aspirations
   - encouraging and supporting applications to higher education
   - facilitating access to the most selective institutions and programmes

ii. Activities/interventions which promote successful participation in higher education for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds
   - high rates of progression/retention and completion of higher education programmes
   - high levels of academic achievement at higher education level
   - high levels of student integration and well-being in higher education

iii. Activities/interventions which promote successful post-higher education outcomes
   - access to postgraduate study
   - access to employment
   - access to graduate-level jobs

6. Once developed, the toolkit will be published online.
Annex F – Summary of 15 actions and 1 recommendation from Universities Scotland report ‘Working to widen access’

Admissions

1. Scottish higher education institutions will develop clear and consistent information about contextualised admissions. We will work to publish a set of terms and descriptions in 2018 that pass user-testing and are ready for use to inform the application cycle for 2020/21 entry.
2. Scottish higher education institutions will use a consistent core of indicators in their contextualised admissions.
3. Every Scottish higher education institution will set minimum entry requirements for their courses in 2019 for entrants starting in 2020/21. The minimum requirements will reflect the best evidence on the level of achievement necessary for successful completion.
4. Care experienced learners will be guaranteed an offer of a place at university if they meet minimum entry requirements. Until then, universities will continue to give care experienced applicants additional consideration.
5. Universities Scotland will work with our members to consider whether there are other categories of learner who should receive special consideration.
6. Universities Scotland will work with the Scottish Funding Council and Scottish Government to identify and share the data universities need to inform their contextualised admissions policies.

Articulation

7. Every university will undertake a fundamental review of its ability to increase the number and percentage of students who articulate with full credit for the start of 2018/19. This review will need to involve college partners and others.
9. The National Articulation Forum will examine how we can offer full credit articulation to more students. It will do this by looking at opportunities to improve articulation in specific subjects as well as considering how to expand the model of articulation to include other qualifications in addition to Higher Nationals.
10. The National Articulation Forum will investigate student perspectives on articulation.
11. The National Articulation Forum will develop clear information about articulation

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

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

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

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

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