



Admissions Working Group update

1. Universities Scotland's Admissions Working Group (AWG)¹ has been considering the definition of *care experienced* as part of its work to implement the actions in *Working to widen access* (WTWA).
2. The relevant action referred to is as follows:

"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."

3. WTWA also states that HEIs will develop "*a fair, inclusive and consistent definition*", and the Convener of Universities Scotland, in a letter to Who Cares? Scotland in 2018, stated that she "...*expect[s] my colleagues to adopt an inclusive approach so that as many learners as possible benefit*".
4. In order to avoid duplication of effort, the AWG sought to build on the definition of care experienced recently agreed by the Care Experienced Governance Group:

*"The term 'care experienced' refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage of their life, no matter how short. This care may have been provided in one of many different settings such as in residential care, foster care, kinship care or looked after at home with a supervision requirement."*²

5. The AWG agreed to endorse this definition with the addition of the following words, which were suggested by one institution: *'including adopted children who were previously looked after'*.
6. This means that Universities Scotland will be putting forward the following definition to our Main Committee for approval:

The term 'care experienced' refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked after background at any stage of their life, no matter how short, including adopted children who were previously looked after. Care may have been provided in one of many different settings, such as in residential care, foster care, kinship care or looked after at home with a supervision requirement.

7. AWG members recommended that institutions, in publicising the guarantee, should clearly state that they may seek to verify applicants' care experienced status. Verification processes should not be onerous for applicants, and Who Cares? Scotland has suggested that they could advise institutions on issues surrounding verification.

¹ The AWG is chaired by Professor Sally Mapstone and includes representatives from HEIs, NUS Scotland, SFC and UCAS.

² The SFC uses this definition in its guidance on developing Outcome Agreements:

http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance_sfcgd212018/SFCGD212018_University_Outcome_Agreement_Guidance_2019-20.pdf



8. The AWG will also recommended to Main Committee that institutions should make it clear that the definition applies to all relevant prospective students, not just those domiciled in Scotland.
9. If Main Committee accepts the definition then we, and institutions, will need to consider how best to communicate this to (prospective) applicants, and would very much appreciate advice on this from CEGG members. We note that communicating the offer is raised in SFC's recent Outcome Agreement guidance, which also details institutions' reporting requirements vis-à-vis care experienced learners.
10. Main Committee might also wish to consider reviewing the definition at a future point, as well as the overall effectiveness of guaranteed offers to care experienced learners, to determine whether these are operating effectively.
11. More broadly, AWG members have suggested that Universities Scotland might call on the Scottish Government to widen eligibility for SAAS' Care Experienced Students' Bursary, to widen eligibility for it and establish a greater coherence between the two different definitions.

Further information

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