

Discussion paper

Purpose of paper

1. This paper provides a report on bridging programmes to assist the group's discussion on bridging programmes. The full report is provided in Annex A and a summary is outlined below.

Summary

2. The paper outlines that the achievement of a National Bridging Programme that can be accessed across Scotland and is recognised by admission processes across all institutions would be a significant achievement in the pursuit of demonstrating fair access. It demonstrates an excellent evidenced foundation from which to build such a vision but also outlines issues relating to tensions between the delivery of a consistent and recognised programme against the need for flexibility and inclusion.
3. The paper seeks to progress discussion on the scope of bridging programmes with a focus on the existing summer schools. In relation to a programme that meets national need it suggests that, with the inclusion of online programmes, we already provide national coverage (although perhaps not to the scale visualised by the recommendation) so therefore the development of a national model is possible. It also outlines that achieving the scale of access and use of bridging programmes suggested by a national programme could have financial implications.
4. It recognises that, under recommendation 7 (bridging programmes) and recommendation 11 (access thresholds) of the Blueprint for Fairness, that bridging programmes need to be multi-exit. It highlights that most but not all summer schools currently operate in this way. For those who have set up their summer schools for direct entry into their own institution there may be a requirement for further discussion.
5. With that exception it outlines that applying a SCQF credit rating of at least SCQF level 7 should be relatively straightforward for all bridging programmes. It also outlines a principle that bridging programmes should lead to a qualification. However, it raises questions for discussion in relation to what that credit "buys" for the student - is it entry to university, will all universities recognise it, should it enable advanced entry?
6. The paper recognises that the recommendation requires a national bridging programme to be aligned with the Framework for Access – given the evidence

already in place for the impact of the summer schools it concludes that this will not be problematic.

7. It outlines the role of Outcome Agreements in working with a national bridging programme and raises concerns over bridging programmes being used to compete for the delivery of access targets emphasising the need for bridging programmes to lead to the best fit for the student.
8. The paper outlines the benefits of a national model and the merits of consistency but also provides reflections on the need for any model to be inclusive of all learners including adult returners. It also outlines the need for potential students to access this provision on a part time basis and/or out with the summer period. Finally it outlines how a national bridging programme could act as a pathway for other outreach/access programmes to flow into and how it might work with the proposed wider remit for the SFC funded schools programmes.

Bridging Programme Advisory Group meetings and structure

9. BPAG is asked to consider the attached paper. In particular, BPAG is asked to consider the issues raised in relation to the delivery of recommendation 7 of the Blueprint for Fairness.

Further information

10. For further information, please contact Ged Lerpiniere, glerpiniere@sfc.ac.uk

Discussion Paper

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1. Introduction

11. There has been and continues to be some debate as to what a bridging course is. There are many models of bridging and they will all have individual characteristics that will make the programme unique. However broadly speaking one can distinguish between different types of bridging Programmes:

- A programme that contains an access and admissions element. In this context these programmes we will call **Access Programme Summer Schools (APSS)** can ask students to commit up to and over 100 hours of study over a period of 4-7 weeks. In this I would also include the Top Up Programme based in Glasgow although not a Summer School
- Programmes that bridge between college and university which can include articulating students
- A bridging programme that helps to familiarise students with academic study or a particular area of study. EG A programme promoting STEM
- A one week-ten days experience such as the Sutton Trust Summer Schools targeted at S5 students with **Academic sessions, designed to be challenging and inspiring.**
- Generic 'taster' programmes which could be run by colleges or universities or a Widening Access programme such as Aspire North, Lift Off, LEAPS or Focus West
- Foundation year programmes such St Andrews Pathways programmes to Medicine, Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities

12. Several of these programmes will be delivered across a period of time in school or are delivered at an intersection between say S4/S5 and as such can be seen as a 'bridge'.

13. This paper will distinguish between different types of programmes and takes the view that bridging in the context of Recommendation 7 relates to access and admission to higher education. In this context we are discussing, in the main, the bridge from school to higher education.

14. It is important that we begin to understand the differences in what is meant by bridging. Following the publication of CoWA, Universities Scotland (US) set up a working group to discuss Bridging. In the paper *Working to Widen Access* US note that: *"Defining what we mean by bridging programmes is an important first step in bringing greater clarity to a crowded area."* Pp 28.

This formed the basis of Action 13 from the group:

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

15. The US paper also highlights over 100 bridging programmes in Scotland. This was a fairly extensive mapping exercise. Having looked at the list, not every one of 100 plus examples could really be defined as bridging. There are for example Outreach Programme's listed that have been established to raise awareness, raise expectation/aspiration and deliver advice and guidance. These programmes may well entail elements of, what could be termed bridging or a preparation for transition to higher education. However, in most cases this is likely to be *experiential* or a taster programme.
16. The purpose of this paper or purpose of BPAG is not to note what every bridging programme is. Instead it **looks to define how interpretations of bridging can help meet the demands of Recommendation 7**. Therefore it is necessary to focus on what is deliverable and to take account of the resources required to develop existing provision to meet the requirements of recommendation 7. SFC already funds substantial school outreach work and other access models; developing policy which dovetails with bridging programmes seems a natural development and 'joins up' these two elements.
17. This paper will look at some of the existing APPS models within Scotland and examine the benefits of attending for both students and Higher Education Institutions.

2. CoWA Recommendation 7

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 benefit 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 learner journey

18. So within this recommendation it can be seen that 'bridging programmes' at the nexus between schools, colleges and universities are of particular relevance but it

also notes ...bridging programmes *'are especially beneficial when delivered earlier in the learner journey.'* However, if we are to define what we mean by a 'bridge' it surely must identify a crossing from one point to another.

3. Discussion: what do bridging programmes achieve?

19. A comparative study of 71 countries around the world completed in 2018 *'All around the world-Higher education equity policies across the globe'* Jamil Salmi found that; *'Equity is a priority theme in the higher education agenda of governments.'*

He also found that *'This official commitment reflects the fact that young people all over the world are keenly aware that opportunities for professional success and social mobility are directly linked to opportunities in higher education.'*

<https://worldaccesshe.com/research/higher-education-equity-policies/>

20. It is clear that many countries some of which are presented with huge challenges in relation to political, financial upheaval and in some cases natural disasters are increasingly aware that developing 'all' of their people is crucial to economic and cultural development. Recognition of this basic fact means that Scotland is in a competitive environment and for our own national economic, social and cultural wellbeing we must continue to develop policy which reflects our commitment to developing the most disadvantaged in our communities.

21. Salmi also notes that: *'Many countries' definition of equity policies is still traditional in focus, with a heavy emphasis on financial aid as a principal instrument, and a tendency to look at access barriers instead of promoting interventions to boost the chances of success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are enrolled in higher education institutions.'*

22. The development of flexible pathways into HE such as 'bridging programmes' are available but are not as prevalent as financial support as a way of trying to address equity. It is important to recognise that offering financial support will only remove one of the barriers the most disadvantaged face.

23. Bridging has a significant role to play in removing other barriers. As we continue to invest in outreach, access, transition and contextual admissions policies it is important to identify what the barriers are and to state our intention to remove them. For universities to feel comfortable that making contextual offers 'will' result in completion of qualifications and retention of students we must know that students are adequately prepared and qualified. Another crucial point is that students must also have an expectation that they will complete their studies. If we accept that significant barriers remain for students from the most disadvantaged communities in relation to completing higher education studies and we are designing policy to remove these barriers, then it is important that

those we seek to support are confident that they will be able to complete their studies.

24. The above supports the argument that bridging can support contextual admissions policies. The APPS and Top Up programmes are a method of familiarising students with the academic environment and the level of study required. They provide a supported environment in which students can prepare for higher education as well as prove that they are capable of 'achieving' in this setting. This 'proof' is important to both the student and the institution.
25. Some could argue that 'bridging' programmes can be seen as another barrier or hurdle for the student to negotiate. It is true that students are required to do additional work but the benefits for doing this are well known. It is also common to view the completion of a summer school as an additional qualification. APPS are taught at first year university level at SCQF Level 7. It is possible to offer students credit for completing summer school which they can take into their first year at university or college. Gaining a qualification and credit is an additional incentive to attend an APSS. It could also be seen as a way to remove the view that this is a further barrier.
26. There are four existing APSS models in Scotland that can be described as delivering '*academic credit awarded*' programmes, to provide **access** and admission. The four are hosted by University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Glasgow and LEAPS. LEAPS is a partnership, of five Edinburgh based universities; The University of Edinburgh, Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh Napier University, Queen Margaret University and SRUC. Within those models there are, already nine universities in Scotland involved in delivering APPS that relate the Recommendation 7. There is therefore a foundation here for building on good practice and developing a coherent national model at the interface between school/college/university.

University of Glasgow also hosts the Top Up programme which is a longer programme across the school term, but also includes an admissions strand.

27. Of the four models, the University of Dundee, the University of Glasgow and LEAPS; have produced evidence that Widening Access students who complete summer schools will achieve at the same level as students coming through a more traditional route. These students have increased attainment in higher education when compared to Widening Access students from similar backgrounds. It is also apparent that the satisfaction levels of students who complete such programmes are very high. Students do see the benefits of such programmes. Summer school programmes have been popular amongst students, even when recruitment for the programmes has not been tied to an admission offer. However, when attendance at summer school/ Top Up is tied a contextual offer the demand for places becomes greater.

28. The models share a number of things in common. One is that they are delivered at a recognised level of SCQF level 7 (8) or (first year university level, HNC, AH). There is scope however to explore the potential to continue to develop these programmes so that they can be even more 'inclusive' for the most disadvantaged students in Scotland.
29. As noted earlier in the introduction, there is a great deal of widening access work that could be called experiential activity. This is acknowledged in '*A blueprint for Fairness in Glasgow Region Exploring widening access activities to inform a collaborative, regional approach* A. Brown and Dr Robert Ingram:
- A key theme running through the qualitative research was the benefit of experiential activities. These were primarily through visits to HE campus and mentoring from student role models or adult professionals*
30. The APSS are the most intensive post school experiential models of access work currently on offer in Scotland. These current established models have much to recommend them as the basis for a national policy. However, this is not to say they are the only bridging programmes with well-established programmes such as the University of Glasgow's Top Up programme having clear transition and bridging elements to it.

4. The Current Access Programme Summer Schools Models

31. A table summarising how similar the 4 programmes are is at Annex A1. All four of them have undergone significant changes over the years but all are established and have been delivering programmes for over 20 years.

The University of Glasgow Summer School

32. The University of Glasgow select based on their published Adjusted Entry Requirements. All adjusted offers include compulsory APSS or Top Up (running Nov-Mar in schools) element. An Online option is used for those meeting or close to meeting S5 entry requirement in S5, whilst other do a face to face Summer School. Required grades are published for both S5 and S6 time points.
33. Glasgow like LEAPS does already have a multi exit element, around 60 students each year progress to other Higher Education Institutions from the University of Glasgow APSS. Therefore between LEAPS and University of Glasgow a template does exist where reciprocal agreements can be built upon. University of Glasgow do accept students who have completed other summer schools Such as LEAPS.
34. The University of Glasgow is also developing new HNC bridging models with three Glasgow FE Colleges. These HNC's require students to complete some extra work throughout the year but also a three week summer school. The first of these is an

HNC in Applied Sciences and this will be developed to encompass both Social Sciences and Engineering in the coming years.

35. **Evidence of impact** - The University of Glasgow carried out some research into their summer school recently and one of the main conclusions was that: '*Summer School students are more likely to continue and progress than students in the WP comparison group, especially if they are from SIMD quintile 2 (MD20-40).*'

Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS)

36. For 2018 the statement below represents the commitment from the LEAPS partnership. For 2019 the LEAPS Summer School is under review and a shortened pilot programme will be delivered with no admission element; this is part of the review. The LEAPS Summer School has been in operation since 1995 and prior to this it existed as a University of Edinburgh Summer School.

LEAPS: Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh Napier University, Queen Margaret University and Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) are committed to an admissions policy which pledges admissions officers to:

- *make offers of places if at all possible to students who are identified as LEAPS eligible;*
- *hold open places for LEAPS Summer School students who do not meet the conditions set until reports on their performance are available;*
- *consider for admission any LEAPS Summer School Student who does not meet their conditions set on SQA results but whose Summer School report shows potential to succeed on the course for which they hold an offer – regardless of pressure on places.*

The University of Edinburgh is committed to point one above (make offers of places if at all possible to students who are identified as LEAPS eligible) and encourages students to attend the LEAPS Summer School as an aid to the transition to university study.

Many other higher and further education institutions consider and admit LEAPS applicants on the basis of the Summer School report.

The higher education institution members of the LEAPS partnership are committed to a policy that encourages suitably talented [LEAPS eligible students](#) to make an application to the university or college.

37. **Evidence of impact** - LEAPS recently attempted to conduct research into student progression from but due to data protection issues and the multiple partners involved this has proved significantly more difficult than first thought. The nature

of the multi-faceted partnership means that sharing data across so many institutions is difficult. LEAPS concluded research in 2005, using a logistical regression model. The findings were positive that attendance at summer school does have an impact on retention.

'LEAPS firmly believes that summer school is a very worthwhile exercise. It takes a great deal of time and effort from a number of parties to ensure its smooth running. Encouragingly students who complete summer school are more than twice as likely to successfully complete first year at university as none summer school students.' McClements 2005.

38. LEAPS has for many years delivered a multi exit summer school where students engaging in study at summer school do so knowing whether a university will take their summer school report into account should they fail to meet conditions as stated in their UCAS offer from an institution. This has worked well over many years as universities and colleges have accepted the summer school report as evidence of a student's ability to perform at first year university level.
39. This means that student UCAS offers, vary. Some students will be offered places below the minimum entry requirement and some at the minimum entry requirement. University Admissions do require to be flexible for this to work effectively and places need to be held open for students who are taking part in the summer school. It is understandable that a student who doesn't perform to the standard required or also falls short of any minimum offer is not subsequently offered a place. In this instance LEAPS students will have been offered advice before attending summer school in relation to the possible outcomes. For example a student in most cases will have an insurance offer and/or a college place at HN level. Beyond this, LEAPS staff will help students to navigate other options, usually through clearing, a return to school or into employment.
40. In some cases a reciprocal agreement may have been agreed. In the case of The University of Glasgow, (see also 33) a student attending the LEAPS Summer School is given the same offer as a student attending the University Glasgow Summer School. They must achieve the grades offered in conjunction with the summer school for example: the going rate for the course might be AAAA but the student is offered a place with AABB and a successful completion of LEAPS Summer School.
41. This LEAPS example would work well as a national template. It would be a good point at which to begin discussions as to how this can be developed. Blending the admission elements from the universities of, Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow APSS models to interact with the LEAPS model might be a way of opening up discussions. Potentially, students could be made admissions offers along the lines of the illustration above between LEAPS and the University of Glasgow. The University of Glasgow APSS is working with a multi exit principle already.

Encouraging a principle of student mobility can make the APSS work better for learners and the institutions.

42. The Summer School for Access provides a route into higher education for those whose current qualifications do not reflect their potential for degree study. The Programme is held on campus and is full-time for 6 weeks from mid-June until the end of July. Students who successfully complete the Summer School and meet the conditions of their UCAS offer are guaranteed entry onto their chosen course at the University of Aberdeen.
43. Recruitment is primarily aimed at students from widening access backgrounds. There are 30 places reserved for students who require accommodation. As Aberdeen has a vast rural geographically area on its doorstep it does require a large number of accommodation places.

University of Dundee - The DUAL Summer School

44. The DUAL Summer School can be studied face to face or online and is part of the students UCAS offer to University of Dundee.

Summer School is an alternative qualification and preparation route for eligible students. Students join to do either; one or two subject modules as well as completing, a university skills course.

Online Summer School will:

- prepare students for University level study;
- give students access to lots of advice from a dedicated team of experts to help the student along every step of the way. Each student is assigned their own online Personal Tutor to work with throughout the course. Students who have completed the course the previous year (mentors) are also constantly on hand to help students find what they need and ensure they progress well.

45. **Evidence of impact** - The Director of the University of Dundee Summer School John Blicharski offered the following quote:

'Since 1993 over 2,500 future students have benefited from pre-entry support through the University of Dundee Access Summer School. Students find the course incredibly useful, for example when the 2018 cohort were anonymously asked just after the course how far the course met their expectations of it, 51% stated that it fully met their expectations, a further 45% said it surpassed their expectations. Informal tracking over several cohorts has shown these Access Summer School students then are retained at a higher level than matched peers – the difference typically being between 5% and 10% each year. Equally, their student experience

is significantly enhanced, as is their subsequent contribution to and support of peers and others.'

46. **Admission and exit** - Attendance at the DUAL Summer School either face to face or online comes as part of an admission offer from the University. Successful completion of the course will gain the students entry to the programme applied for.

Conclusions

47. The fact that these APSS have been in operation for such a long time means that there is a reservoir of expertise already in place to help SFC develop a policy initiative linked to Recommendation 7.

48. Benefits: APPS and Top Up are concentrated experiential activities and the benefits can be summarised in this way for Higher Education Institutions and students:

- From a universities perspective financially this type of model pays off in respect of recurrent and current income and strategic outcomes. In that students attending summer school are less likely to drop out
- They prepare students academically for HE
- They provide the student with the opportunity to develop academic study skills
- They prepare students to cope and balance a social life, part time work and study
- They prepare students to cope mentally and build the resilience required for a big transition in their lives
- Successful completion provides students with a qualification at SCQF level 7 which builds their confidence and confirms they are capable of achieving in HE and raises their expectations of success
- It provides universities and colleges with proof that the student can cope with HE study
- Potentially allows the students to gain some academic credit before starting their course
- Allows universities and colleges to encourage the development of potential in students who might not have reached the minimum requirement
- It allows the student to acclimatise to an academic, institutional and bureaucratic environment
- It allows the student to become more aware of the subjects they are applying to study and develops the interest, allowing them to understand the difference between how subjects are taught at school and university

- It gives an accurate feel for what it's like to study at university
- Allows those that might not be ready to understand this before committing to a course in HE
- Those with special needs may be able to see how they can cope and what services and facilities are available within the HE sector

49. In the past, other universities have delivered summer schools for example: Strathclyde University and Glasgow Caledonian University. University of Stirling also ran an experiential summer school. For this to become a national policy then it will be necessary for all universities to be part of the programme in some way. This could mean that we address this from a regional perspective and it maybe that we consider the establishment of another summer school should this be believed to be necessary to deliver on Recommendation 7.

5. Online Development and engaging with the Open University

50. In the case of both Dundee and Glasgow Universities an online version of the Summer School already exists. In looking at the national picture the further development of online accessibility will be a necessary if students across Scotland are to have all options open to them.

51. If the four programmes are to be developed as a foundation for the development of a national strategy and policy then we must make sure that summer schools are as accessible as possible. This means that the development of online provision must be a factor to ensure that those who live in remote areas, have restricted mobility or for prior commitment reasons; carers for example, can also access this service or provision. An online option also opens up flexibility for those who wish to complete it on a PT or accelerated basis.

Glasgow	Edinburgh/LEAPS	Dundee	Aberdeen
Face to Face	Face to Face	Face to Face	Face to Face
Online	Not available	Online	Not available

52. The Open University has experience of running summer schools for many years and reaching students in remote areas and students who may not otherwise be able to access degree level education. It would be important to engage with the Open University in relation to the development of a national bridging programme, particularly in relation to online provision.

53. Being mindful of recommendation 4 it is also relevant that we do not attempt to duplicate what is already in place particularly in relation to online provision. For example: if we have a national strategy with a multi exit policy would it be necessary for all summer schools to be online? This is a point for discussion as we develop the idea.

6. Suggested model for discussion relating to Recommendation 7

Developing a national model

54. This paper outlines the common features of the four models of Access Programme Summer Schools. This demonstrates that there are many features already in place that could allow the sector to develop a '*bridging programme*' that can be '*expanded nationally to match need.*'
55. There is a certain amount of symmetry between the Summer Schools as noted above so it should be possible for a national strategy to evolve from the existing programmes. It is possible for all models to open up to become 'multi exit' in that completion of a summer school can help gain access to any university and the qualification can also be used to access higher education in colleges.
56. Universities would make offers to students using minimum offers which have an option to attend a summer school in the way that the University of Glasgow and others do. For example a student is offered a place at summer school as part of their conditions within a minimum offer or with the condition that they choose to achieve more grades in S6 or attend an APSS. The Universities Scotland report '*Working to Widen Access*' recommends that:

'Every Scottish higher education institution will set minimum entry requirements for their courses in 2019 for entrants in 2020/21. The minimum requirements will reflect the best evidence of the level of achievement necessary for completion.'

The development of *bridging programmes* that *can be expanded nationally to match need* could provide the impetus required to meet this objective.

Transferability and consistency of SCQF levels

57. As far as a national strategy is concerned programmes might seek to further develop the 'common' aspects of the existing models. This would not necessarily mean that changes in delivery would be required. For example: incorporating a requirement for the programmes to be certified as SCQF level 7 would not be challenging. However, to ask a university that has, until now provided a summer school as a bridge for entry to a single institution might be more challenging and require further discussion.
58. As a point of principle, APSS might be able to agree that bridging not only prepares the student for the rigours of higher education and academic study, it is also a qualification in its own right. As the existing four summer schools are embedded within universities and are taught by university academic staff, the universities should be assured that the quality of delivery and content is compatible with the first year level university programmes. To ensure that there

is symmetry between the programmes in this respect it is recommended that; unless this has already been secured, all of the programmes are assessed and delivered at SCVQ Level 7 or where appropriate level 8. This should also apply to any new summer school or bridge.

Developing an inclusive, joined-up and flexible approach

59. In essence, the proposal here is to develop what we already have and perhaps add to that with an additional APSS or development of 'online' and flexible blended options. If the structures are in place by which students can access 'bridging /summer schools' then it becomes a question of recruiting appropriately for these courses. Some of the programmes already include adult returners and others not coming straight from school. This should also be encouraged, where possible, as both younger students and adult returners will benefit from a more realistic environment. However, the flexible nature of the experience must also be open to those who cannot commit to a longer summer school experience.
60. We will need to give full consideration of a range of options to scale up delivery. There are different models of delivery; online or face to face, a blended model involving both or a longer thin option such as Top Up. Whatever the method of delivery, we must try where possible to develop a flexible system that allows students more than one option to choose from if the face to face model does not suit their personal circumstances.
61. Another consideration relates to the length of a bridging programme. As long as every programme is certified at SCQF level 7, the length should not matter. A transition bridging programme could be 'long and thin' such as Top Up or a shorter summer school or a part-time summer school that is longer. To achieve Level 7 it is probable that the number of hours of study required is likely to be at least 100.
62. The SFC funded national schools programme is currently working on a proposal to seek to engage with all state secondary schools in Scotland. It therefore makes sense that SFC funded programmes' work in a joined up fashion and so SHEP, Reach and ACES programmes should all have a role in recruiting and advising students in relation to attendance at the APSS and bridging programmes. Reach West is already delivering subject specific summer schools and the University of Dundee has incorporated Reach entrants in their DUAL APSS.
63. As noted earlier in the work by *A. Browitt and Dr Robert Ingram* the widening access interventions thought to be the most beneficial are experiential. Many of the SFC funded programmes and other university led interventions are experiential and also can be seen as a 'bridging' activity. It would make sense for these to be joined up with a view to students engaging in these programmes, aiming to take part in the APSS, where applicable, when they reach the end of

their school education. For example it would be possible for students to take part in High Flyers a LEAPS short summer programme at S4, then engage with the St Andrews Sutton Trust Summer School at S5 and complete an APSS at the end of S6.

Alignment with the Framework for Fair Access

64. Developing a national partnership for the delivery of a bridging strategy would fully align with the Framework for Fair Access. The development of the Toolkit for Fairer Access will look into aspects of practice that works, or that have been successful. CoWA asks that we recognise and ... *identify the most impactful forms of access activity at each stage of the learner journey...* the models identified in this paper can provide evidence of impact.
65. The first Aim of the consultancy CFE in designing a Toolkit is to: *Provide an accessible summary of the evidence of impact for different interventions to allow practitioners and funders to select those that are most appropriate Toolkit.* The Phase 2 of the assessment specifically mentions, *summer schools*, this paper makes the case that summer schools as a bridging method, work.

7. Summary - challenges and topics for discussion

66. We can say that there is a framework in place that will help us to develop a national programme in relation to bridging. That said, it doesn't mean that this will be an easy task. There are a number of issues that we will need to consider carefully and be prepared to adapt a policy that university and admissions staff can support.
67. The paper outlines the tensions in balancing a consistent bridging programme offer to students with the need to ensure the offer is inclusive and flexible to consider intake outwith the summer period and/or modes of delivery. There is the potential to build on online options (taking care not to duplicate effort) but there will also be a need to scale up activity which may require travel and residential support to take part in the programmes.
68. It is important that full discussion and consideration should be given to the allocation of the SCQF credit and/or currency in relation to Access Thresholds. This is to say, can we make offers based on successful completion of summer school/Top Up? Also can we offer transferable credit where appropriate?
69. Full discussion and consideration should be given to the transferability of programmes, including scope for agreement of 'core content'. The LEAPS Summer School has worked for many years as a multi exit programme and Glasgow and Dundee summer schools have students who complete the programmes then move to other institutions, hence the principle is already in

operation. However, more clarity around how this can be developed nationally is required. Even if this is achieved we still need to ensure that universities are prepared to offer places on this basis. The APSS will need to be agreeable to flexing their current offering and be able to respond to and work with multi institutional admission policies.

70. Issues relating to Outcome Agreements should be discussed in relation to 'bridging'. How will development of a national policy or strategy affect these? For example: if we are encouraging students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds to attend summer schools with a multi exit ethos, then how do we ensure that this does not become a competitive environment if the students carry a premium. For the strategy to work coherently we must trust the advisers working with students to offer impartial advice and guidance to ensure the best fit for the student. In short, the strategy must be student centred and targeted at those who meet the widening access criteria and not related to recruitment.
71. To scale up and to develop this policy there will undoubtedly be financial implications. At this exploratory stage it is hard to estimate what type of budgets we are looking at. However, increased accommodation and travel costs, online development, teaching costs and SCQF accreditation are perhaps some of the headings we will need to consider. That said, four summer schools already exist with their own budgets and building on what exists should mean that development is scalable and partnership 'should' entail economies of scale. For example SHEP programmes preparing, advising, guiding and recruiting for APSS.
72. The four APSS detailed in this paper have already begun discussion and have formed a group that meets three times annually to share good practice and issues. So the dialogue within the APSS has already begun.

8. Conclusion

73. The development of a national strategy for a bridging programme is a step change. If we are ambitious and develop a Widening Access Bridging Partnership or programme that can be accessed by all of the students we are trying to reach across the country, we will be breaking new ground in our pursuit of equity and fair admissions.
74. The Commission on Widening Access has at its heart a vision of equity spelt out in the first Minister's quote relating the child born in 2014 she also gave us a date to work towards, 2030. In 2016 the Chair of the Commission Dame Ruth Silver said:

'Taking a hard look at admissions, bridging programmes and articulation between college and university marks a very positive response in three key areas which link closely to many of our recommendations. I believe wholeheartedly that the most powerful, genuine and lasting change will come from within.'

75. From a university perspective, investment in students' educational preparation at summer school comes with a dividend. Not only in relation to strategic outcomes but also in relation to current and recurrent income as students are more likely to be retained. For the students themselves, attending an APSS means they are more likely to succeed in higher education.
76. Academics outline that summer school is the best possible preparation for university study. The LEAPS Summer School programme co-ordinators, and senior lecturers in History and Geography (respectively at the University of Edinburgh; David Kaufman and Neil Stuart) all expressed the view that the rigour and the testing at summer school prepared students well and increased the chances of the most disadvantaged students completing their courses. They have witnessed this over many years of teaching on summer school and then working with the same students on degree courses.

Neil Stuart added:

"I would say it is not only the 'rigour and the testing' of the summer school - but it is the knowledge, skill and experience they receive of how to be a student, of how to manage themselves, to develop successful approaches to studying, and the skills they learn through the summer school that collectively give them the most realistic preparation possible for being a successful student at a university. For that reason, over the past 20 years, we have very good retention of our LEAPS students who have gone on to study degrees in Geosciences. Indeed, some students who entered through LEAPS have gone on to be our most successful students, obtaining first class degrees, and with some becoming Geography Teachers."

77. This paper is the first step in opening up a discussion to engage with Higher Education Institution partners across Scotland, partners in Scottish Government and Universities Scotland.