

## **Bridging Programmes Advisory Group – 7 March 2019**

### **SFC note**

Frank Coton, *Vice Principal (Academic and Educational Innovation)* – Chair of the Bridging Programmes Advisory Group (BPAG) – welcomed all members and invited round-table introductions.

It was agreed that understanding the role of BPAG was important to set and understand the complex landscape of COWA, where many recommendations from different groups overlap and support each other.

### ***Paper 19\_01A – Purpose of Bridging Programmes Advisory Group and Paper 19\_01B – Related Commission on Widening Access Recommendations (for noting)***

Members were advised that an Implementation Overview Report (IOR) (Annex A) written by the SFC had already been agreed by the Ministerial-led Access Delivery Group for delivery of Recommendation 7 of *A Blueprint for Fairness*.

It was noted that the first key milestone (setting up this advisory group) was undertaken in March 2019, rather than October 2018, due to a delay in collecting information from Universities Scotland on the Bridging workstream of *Working to Widen Access*, which was essential to understanding how BPAG aligns with this. Although there was this delay, it was agreed that the group can still meet the priorities outlined below by May 2020.

The third milestone in the IOR identified the role of the BPAG;

*The advisory group will develop a model for expansion of bridging programmes nationally in line with need. This will be referred to as the National Framework for Bridging Programmes and will include guidance on bridging programmes including their transferability and allocation of credit.*

*Key priorities will be:*

- a. Consideration of a range of options to scale up delivery.*
  - b. Full alignment with the Framework for Fair Access*
  - c. Allocation of SCQF credit and/or currency in all Access Thresholds*
  - d. Transferability of programmes, including scope for agreement of ‘core content’.*
- The model and guidance will be agreed by May 2020.*

Members agreed this, and also highlighted another key priority as the ability to make available clear and consistent communication on Bridging opportunities to all relevant stakeholders.

It was emphasised that the role of current Bridging Programmes are highly respected and this is why the emphasis of BPAG should be on how we build on these and make them available to more learners across Scotland.

It was agreed that the group would meet four times before May 2020.

Through discussion, the members noted the following key initial considerations:

- What is a Bridging Programme?
- What is it that is being scaled up?
- What is a reasonable level of 'scale-up' alongside other activities and recommended actions?
- Are Access Programmes and Bridging Programmes completely separate or is one a subset of the other?

It was also noted that the outputs of this group will require shaping by a range of professionals within the sector.

### ***Paper 19\_01B – Discussion Paper***

Members were asked to note that no table was included, as indicated in point 31, as the content of this can be found throughout the paper.

Ged Lerpiniere introduced the vision for the paper and the focus of Bridging Programmes on raising expectations of success for the learner. Due to the current Bridging Programme work being conducted there is a general belief that there is a good framework already existing, and what we now need is the willingness of institutions to create a national approach and a clear definition of the pupils we would like to see benefitting from these programmes.

Feedback on the paper was positive from group members.

### **Definition**

Upon discussion it was agreed that a Bridging Programme;

- Was a 'bridge' between one institution (primarily focussing on school at this stage) and another (usually university).
- A programme which is run at some point during the senior phase of high school (from the beginning of S5 to entry into HE) and is aimed at pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Programmes should be based on academic preparation and have a standardised form of SCQF Level 7 accreditation which can be used as a 'credit' in Admissions processes.



It was agreed that this definition needed to be widened to include programmes like YASS and not just summer programmes or Top Up.

The point was raised that this definition may exclude programmes which involve adult learners. However, it was agreed that other initiatives were looking at this (i.e. through conversations on articulation and SWAP) therefore the primary definition for this group should be school to university. However, it was acknowledged that adult learners could still be invited to participate in these types of programmes in the future.

There was some concern voiced around the term 'Bridging' itself, but there was no consensus on a viable alternative. Words like 'transition' have similar difficult connotations to 'bridging'.

### The Landscape

It was noted that different universities will have different strategic demands and will also have a pressure to meet certain thresholds/targets. However, current regional partnerships and recognition of one institutions summer school during the admissions process of another, shows that national partnerships can exist while still taking account individual institutions autonomy and needs.

Within the sector we must have agreement on national best practice. This may be difficult when institutions see their own programmes as the best for learners. There will need to be open discussion and debate around this. There will also need to be trust in SCVQ Level 7 being worth the same when attained through any awarding Bridging Programme (regardless of length or type). It should be emphasised that not all institutions need to have their own Bridging Programmes, and that these can be created as partnerships.

### National Bridging Programme Structure

Although there is recognition that the programme would be targeted at high school pupils demonstrating traditional forms of disadvantage, more work needs to go into outlining this. It was also suggested that although Bridging Programmes would target these specific learners primarily, that this could also be flexible enough for universities to use for institutional needs (e.g. to recruit more adult learners).

It was decided that intervention in the summer at the end of S6 could limit a learners options and was suggested that Bridging Programmes could run throughout the senior phase at various points, e.g. a learner gaining credit from a summer school programme run between S5 and S6 could use that credit more generally during the application process. S6 summer programmes, although academically rigorous and



transactional, were seen by some panel members as a tool for transition to a particular university. There was a general agreement that summer schools taking place at the end of S5 and end of S6 gave learners the greatest amount of options and greater momentum for entry. From a school perspective, this was seen as most beneficial for learners making early applications (15 Oct).

It was also recognised that online study skills courses would give more opportunities to work with pupils nationally during expansion.

The majority of the group agreed that although a national programme could and should exist, how the programme was run should not be dictated centrally, and should be left to the institution to decide. The Sutton Trust Summer School programme was given as an example of this. However, it was agreed that the learner should have the same outcomes from any programme attended so there will need to be agreed upon targets.

As programmes will be credit bearing, it was recognised that these will fall under Quality Assurance rules and evaluation at each institution. There was a general understanding that evaluation of how institutions are inputting in to these programmes should not be included in Outcome Agreements, but that evaluation of the national approach can tie into current SFC funded programme evaluation (e.g. SHEP).

#### **SFC WILL SCHEDULE THE NEXT GROUP MEETING FOR JULY/AUGUST 2019**

#### **SFC WILL OUTLINE A DEFINITION OF BRIDGING PROGRAMMES AND PRESENT TO THE STEERING GROUP FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE JULY/AUGUST 2019 MEETING**

#### **SFC WILL MAP PREEXISTING BRIDGING PROGRAMMES AND PRESENT AT JULY/AUGUST MEETING**

- *This should include information on how;*
  - *programmes are recognised beyond the institutions which deliver them and who these programmes are targeted at.*
  - *Core elements currently used across Bridging Programme delivery.*
  - *The geography of where these are being delivered.*

#### **MEMBERS OF THE BPAG WILL CONSIDER HOW BEST TO FACILITATE STAKEHOLDER/PRACTITIONER ENGAGEMENT**