
NSP SAG membership announcement

We are delighted to announce that the membership of the National Schools Programme Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) has been confirmed. The establishment of the Strategic Advisory Group is an outcome of Recommendation 5 of the [2024 NSP Review](#), and its role will be to oversee and monitor the implementation of the fifteen NSP Review recommendations.

The Strategic Advisory Group will be co-chaired by Mhairi Harrington, OBE, alongside Erica Russell-Hensens, Deputy Director of Student Interests, Access & Quality at SFC. Mhairi has worked for over 40 years in Education and has invaluable expertise spanning from Primary Education to Adult Learning. She currently sits on the [SFC Board](#), and is involved in several of SFC's Board Committees:

- [Skills, Enhancement, Access & Learning Committee](#) (Chair).
- [Capital Committee](#) (Chair)
- [Finance Committee](#) (Vice-Chair)

Erica's background is in Higher Education, having held a range of roles focussed on student experience, learning and teaching quality and broader student interests. Erica now leads the SFC team responsible for driving forward SFC's work on [Student Interests, Access and Quality](#).

Erica and Mhairi previously co-chaired the NSP Review Steering Committee which provided guidance over the course of the review, and we are pleased to welcome them back to continue this work.

Some words from our co-chairs

Mhairi Harrington

"I am delighted to have the opportunity to co-chair the National Schools Programme Strategic Advisory Group and, importantly, to provide some continuity as we move forward with implementing the recommendations from the recently completed National Schools Programme Review.

"These recommendations were based on the feedback and findings from an extensive and well-structured consultation which was inclusive and far reaching and which we believe will further improve access to Higher Education for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds."

Whilst the consultation highlighted many areas of good practice and success, this was not consistent across Scotland, with gaps in provision and inconsistent evaluation of outcomes for young people.

I look forward to seeing the progress that needs to be made if we want to deliver stronger and more successful pathways into Higher Education for our young people.

Erica Russell-Hensens

“Thank you to the many people who have contributed to this work over the past year, it has been an amazing team effort and I am looking forward to working with the Strategic Advisory Group to continue the implementation of the recommendations set out in the 2024 National Schools Programme review report.

“Working with students, practitioners, institutional leaders and the Commissioner for Fair Access will provide us with invaluable insights, advice and guidance as we continue to develop this important programme to the benefit of young people across our communities in Scotland.”

Strategic Advisory Group Membership

We were fortunate to receive so many strong applications from colleagues representing a range of expertise across the sector. Membership has been selected to ensure a balance of perspective across tertiary and school sectors, and with consideration for coverage across all four NSP regions and both rural and urban areas.

Student voice is central to the work of the NSP and we are excited to have five alumni of the NSP programme joining the Strategic Advisory Group to share their experience of the programme as participants and student volunteers.

We are also pleased to welcome the Commissioner for Fair Access, Professor John McKendrick, who will attend the Strategic Advisory Group as an observer and ‘critical friend’.

The first meeting of the Strategic Advisory Group will take place on May 12, where the group will provide advice on the prioritisation and sequencing of the review recommendations and attributed taskforces.

There will be many more opportunities to become involved in this work through one of the short-life collaborative taskforces working on specific recommendations, or through wider

sector consultations as part of the implementation work. Details on further opportunities for engagement will be released in due course.

Committee role	Member	Title
Co-chair	Mhairi Harrington, OBE	SFC Skills Enhancement, Access & Learning (SEAL) Committee Chair, SFC Board Member
Co-chair	Erica Russell-Hensens	Deputy Director, Student Interests, Access & Quality, SFC
SFC Member – Senior Policy Officer	Steph Kirkham*	Senior Policy Officer, National Schools Programme
SFC Member – Corporate Services	Ffion Heledd	Assistant Director, Policy Evaluation
SFC Member – Finance & Funding	Gordon Craig	Deputy Director, Tertiary Education Funding
Tertiary Sector Member – Admissions	Helyn Gould	Deputy Associate Principal & Director of Admissions and Curriculum Development at Strathclyde Business Schools, University of Strathclyde
Tertiary Sector Member – Widening Participation	Gemma Burnside	Partnership Manager, Open University in Scotland
Tertiary Sector Member – Student Support & Wellbeing	Jonathan Staal	Assistant Director (Wellbeing), University of Dundee
Tertiary Sector Member – Researcher	Prof. Edward Sosu	Deputy Head of School (Research), University of Glasgow
Tertiary Sector Member – Further Education	Jackie Andrews	Head of Academic Partnerships, UHI Moray
Tertiary Sector Member – Further Education	Dr. Lindsay Snodgrass	Vice Principal (Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality), UHI Inverness
School Sector Member	Peter Bain	Executive Head Teacher, Oban and Tiree High Schools

Schools Sector Member	Murray Watson	Quality Improvement Officer, Falkirk Council
Third Sector Member	DonnaMarie Steel	Project Development Manager (Scholarship), The Robertson Trust
Third Sector Member	Patricia Anderson	Development Manager, Scottish Community of Access and Participation Practitioners (SCAPP)
Student Member	Josh Gibson	Alumni: Focus West, Reach Glasgow
Student Member	Moryam Akanji	Alumni: Reach Glasgow, Reach Aberdeen
Student Member	Wiktorja Karbowniczek	Alumni: LEAPS, Reach Edinburgh, Reach Dundee
Student Member	Alsadeg Bilal	Alumni: Reach Edinburgh
Student Member	Codie Walton	Alumni: Aspire North, Reach Aberdeen
SFC Secretariat	Mary Macgowan	Policy Officer, National Schools Programme
Observer	Prof. John McKendrick	Commissioner for Fair Access

*Steph Kirkham will be on maternity leave from 30 May 2025. Cover arrangements will be confirmed in due course.