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Cc: Cara Aitchinson
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30 July 2025

Dear Francesca,

I am writing to set out a change in policy direction regarding the initial Commission on Widening Access recommendation (recommendation 32 – A Blueprint for Fairness) that students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent at least 10% of full-time first degree entrants in each of the individual universities.

In his annual report, published January 2024, Professor John McKendrick, Commissioner for Fair Access, makes 20 recommendations for a range of parties, including Scottish Government, the Scottish Funding Council, and colleges and universities. With regards to the 10% target, his recommendation was to:

Withdraw the SIMD institutional target but introduce a commitment from each HEI to take action to increase the proportion of SIMD20 among its entrants or, if this is demonstrably not possible without adverse consequences, to match the highest proportion and number of SIMD20 entrants that it achieved since 2013-14.

I am implementing the Commissioner's recommendation by removing the current target for each institution and replacing it with a commitment from each HEI to increase the proportion of SIMD 20 entrants or to match the highest proportion they have achieved since 2013-14. I would like SFC to work with my officials in SG and the sector to introduce this change for academic year 26/27.

I also expect institutions to continue to work towards achieving the 2026 and 2030 widening access targets and to commit to increasing the proportion of SIMD 20 entrants.

Thank you for progressing this matter.

Your sincerely,



Graeme Dey
Minister for Higher and Further Education and Minister for Veterans.

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