

Access and Inclusion Committee meeting minutes

The thirty-ninth meeting of the Access and Inclusion Committee was held at 9.30am on Wednesday 14 November 2018 at 99 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.

Present: Professor Maggie Kinloch(Chair)
Angela Cox
Vincent Docherty
James Dunphy
Hugh Hall
Dr Veena O'Halloran (items 18/30 to 18/39)
Iain MacRitchie
Liam McCabe
Dr Edward Sosu
Professor Valerie Webster

Officers: Fiona Burns (Secretary)
Carina Macritchie
Linda McLeod (item 18/37 to 18/44)
Sheila Meehan (Clerk)
Dr Scott Montgomery (item 18/30 to 18/31)
Emma Roberts
Anna Thomson

Apologies: Professor Charlie Jeffery
Susan Stewart
Lynn MacMillan
Lorna Caldwell

18/30 Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all members, observers and Council executive officers to the meeting.

The Chair also welcomed Liam McCabe, President of NUS Scotland and Emma Roberts, who had recently been appointed by SFC to oversee the work to ensure access to free sanitary products in institutions, to their first meeting.

National Articulation Database (Presentation)

The Committee received a presentation from Scott Montgomery, Senior Policy/Analysis Officer on the National Articulation Database (NAD).

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- The NAD provided information on students who were classified:
 - Advanced standing (progressing into third year of a degree-level course from HND or year 2 of a degree from an HNC)
 - Advanced progression (progressing into second year of a degree-level course from HND)
 - Progression (entering the first year of a degree-level course).
- The NAD was a scalable model, showing all college to university student movement, not just articulating students.
- The data could show, for example, gender split or Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) numbers on courses etc, at an institutional or national level as required and could be interrogated in such a way as to inform policy development.
- The Council executive was engaging with stakeholders to assess the reasons behind why some students did not have a FES record (thus were not classed as ‘articulating’). This could be partly due to participation in associate degree programmes and such activity. The plan was to add students undergoing that type of activity to the NAD to complete the picture.
- The Scottish Government was responsible for progressing the issue of a Unique Learner Number.
- The aim was to incorporate outcomes to the NAD to depict the reality of student movement.
- Access to the NAD was restricted due to General Data Protection Regulation requirements but data sharing agreements were being arranged between SFC and all institutions.
- Accessing school data was problematic but would be essential for illustrating the full learner journey.
- While there would be an alignment period, ‘the same version of the same truth’ was being sought to ensure stakeholder buy in to the final iteration of the NAD.

The Committee **agreed** that an update on the Unique Learner Number would be circulated to members.

18/32 Declarations of Interests

The Chair reminded the members of their responsibility to indicate if they had or may be perceived to have a conflict of interest under any item.

18/33 Chair's business and Council executive update (AIC/18/18)

The Committee received and noted the Chair's business and Council executive update.

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- The Equality and Human Rights Commission had published '*Is Scotland Fairer? – The state of equality and human rights 2018*' and noted the recommendations relating to further and higher education.
- Declaration of protected characteristics was voluntary and this impacted on the veracity and clarity of data collected and made it more difficult to assess if targets were either being met or impacted on.
- Due to changing demographics, in future the focus would have to change to be on older learners, learning in work and flexible learning. Articulation would also have a different look in future, to fit the changed landscape.
- To achieve fundamental change, policy and funding would have to change. When seeking to achieve a response then the use of mechanisms to encourage new behaviour, including incentivisation, tended to be effective. SFC's new Learning Enhancement Committee would be taking this into account and considering different approaches.
- The importance of getting the message across early and including schools in the conversation to support the learner journey and achieve a fully integrated system was stressed.

18/34 Minutes of 22 May 2018 meeting (AIC/18/Min2)

The minute of the meeting of 22 May 2018 was confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

18/35 Matters arising (AIC/18/19)

The Committee noted the matters arising from the last meeting of the Committee.

18/36

Update on Council business (Oral)

The Chair gave an oral update to the Committee on the recent Scottish Funding Council Board business meetings.

The Committee noted that, at its recent meetings, amongst other things the Council had considered:

- SFC's Annual report and accounts.
- Interaction with the Strategic Board for Enterprise and Skills and the Strategic Board's Strategic Plan.
- SFC's own Corporate Plan for 2018-19 and the Council's long term vision and strategy (taking into account the Strategic Board's Strategic Plan).
- The key areas and corresponding recommendations of the Scottish Government's Learner Journey Review.
- The remit for the 2019-20 Outcome Agreements.
- The Scottish Government's response to the Review of Student Support.
- SFC's Equality and Diversity Annual Report, updating on progress towards SFC's published Equality Outcomes for 2017-2021.
- The annual report on the implementation of the Commission on Widening Access recommendations.
- The impact of Brexit on colleges and universities.

In discussion it was noted that the Council had tasked the Committee with looking at the Equality and Diversity impacts of the implementation of the CoWA recommendations and undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment.

18/37

Progress on the Learner Journey Review (Oral)

The Committee received an oral update on the Learner Journey.

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- Following the publication of the Report in May, the Scottish Government (SG) had been progressing the implementation programme with early scoping work now underway.
- As the work crossed over three Ministerial portfolios, their SG Directorates were all directly involved in taking forward the implementation programme, with clear lines of responsibility and each Directorate being jointly responsible for delivery.
- The Scottish Government had brought together key agencies including SFC, SDS, SQA, Colleges Scotland, Universities Scotland and Education Scotland to confirm their role in delivering the desired outcomes.

- SFC had a lead role for delivering on recommendations 13 and 14 and had joint responsibility for many of the other recommendations (with SDS and others).
- Recommendations 13 and 14 focussed on minimising unnecessary duplication at SCQF level 7 and greater recognition of articulation, ensuring more learners progress from college to university with full recognition/advanced standing.
- As to timeline, some recommendations were expected to begin delivering outputs by January 2019, while others would require a longer timeframe.
- Meetings had taken place so far on recommendations 5 (the college application process) and 11 (vocational routes).
- The focus was on a 'whole system approach'.

The Committee advised that:

- Resource implications should be kept in mind, with some agencies having more available resource than others.
- As the recommendations for SFC also involved SDS, the Director of Skills Alignment was ideally situated to support the implementation work.
- The aim was to maximise vocational routes, growing the work experience element and learning from Foundation Apprenticeships and Modern Apprenticeships.

The Committee **agreed** that the finalised Implementation Plan would be disseminated to Committee members when available.

18/38

Update on the Implementation of the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) recommendations (AIC/18/20)

The Committee received a paper providing an update on some of the work to implement the recommendations from the CoWA report, *A Blueprint for Fairness*.

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- There had been good progress in delivering the priorities, supported by outcome agreement intensification, and articulation and bridging programmes were being taken forward.
- Council had received the CoWA recommendations update at its November meeting and were pleased with progress and had agreed that the Access and Inclusion Committee would oversee the Equality Impact Assessment for implementation.
- Potential additions to the basket of measures, to supplement the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) measures, were being investigated, e.g. free school meals, Education

Maintenance Allowance recipients.

- Parental income information would be a valuable indicator and the SG was investigating if that data could be accessed through the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).
- The Access Delivery Group was focussed on socio-economic deprivation and income deprivation and was aware that parental education was relevant.

The Committee advised that:

- It was important to take into account local situations and what was possible for individual institutions to achieve, as well as the potential impacts for individual institutions.
- There was a risk that university activity to achieve CoWA targets would impact negatively on college activity and those unintended consequences had to be monitored and managed.
- In some areas, the relationship between colleges and universities was suffering due to competition for students, but other institutions were ensuring that their close working relationship was maintained.
- The University of the Highlands and Islands students were not best served by SIMD and noted that the outcome agreement manager worked closely with those individual institutions to ensure that the local issues were taken into account.

The Committee **agreed** that the Scottish Government would provide an update to the next AIC meeting on how they are monitoring the risk and seeking to mitigate the impact of CoWA on the college sector as universities intensify their approach to recruiting SIMD20 students.

18/39

Mental Health (AIC/18/23)

The Committee received a paper updating on SFC's work on mental health.

The Committee noted that:

- The mental health area was a new policy area for SFC.
- There was a requirement for institutions to have a mental health strategy within the outcome agreement guidance.
- Mental health impacted on student outcomes more than any other disability type.
- NUS Scotland's Freedom of Information request on mental health support at colleges and universities had clarified the issue and provided clear evidence to support the announcement in the Programme for Government (PfG) - £20m of funding to support 80 mental health counsellors in colleges and universities.

- SFC was considering the issues around recruiting the number of mental health counsellors that were required.
- The diversity of the student population and their need for counselling was being taken into account in the Equality and Human Rights Equality Impact Assessment.

In discussion the Committee advised that:

- Where possible the student voice should be heard and the scope to involve Students' Associations or Student Unions in any way would be welcomed.
- For small colleges, there were concerns around how the resource was deployed, due to capacity issues.
- If full counselling support was provided, then supervision costs would need to be taken into account.
- In some cases it would be preferable to engage as part of a wider network, but the application of additional resource needed to be considered, as there could also be geographic issues etc which greatly impacted on costs.
- Institutions would welcome, and get more value from, a more rounded wellbeing services offer.
- The level of flexibility with the funding available should be investigated as the PfG wording was very restrictive.
- The importance of moving towards a more holistic system was stressed.
- Staff mental health training would be valuable to support students directly and promptly.
- An implementation model would be welcomed, specifying direct investments, to ensure that the funding was targeted where required and that appropriate monitoring and reporting took place.
- Better partnership working with the NHS would be required.
- As to the (short-life) Working Group, it would be beneficial for membership to include:
 - Someone who knows about the frontline businesses, impacts and nuances, e.g. a Director of Student Experience.
 - A Director of Education, to provide schools representation.
- There would be value in the college and university sessions, which the SG was to arrange, containing representation from both sectors to facilitate the sharing of knowledge.
- The possibility of creating a toolkit to embed practices to support prevention of mental health issues should also be explored.

The Committee **agreed** that Committee members would be invited to the meeting with the colleges and universities to consider the baseline

survey and undertake a wider discussion on supporting well-being and preventing mental ill health.

18/40 School Engagement Framework (AIC/18/21)

The Committee received a paper setting out the most recent stage in the development of the School Engagement Framework (SEF).

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- The SEF was in the early implementation stage in the West of Scotland.
- Schools were keen to see teacher CPD as part of the access programmes.
- The programmes, e.g. REACH, ACES, were scoping out new models of delivery, with the aim of expansion without duplication, while capturing the impact of parental influence.

The Committee advised that:

- Mapping was useful to visualise 'who' and 'where' as well as the outcomes.
- It was important that universities engaged young people as early as possible, for S1/S2 directly in schools, and for S3/S4 at the university, so that they can have the full 'university experience'.
- There was a complex landscape of programmes but also the understanding that, if it was found that different approaches were necessary to suit the regional needs, then fitting that into a national co-ordinating framework would be investigated.

18/41 Progress on Developing the Young Workforce (AIC/18/22)

The Committee received a paper updating on progress with Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) over the past year.

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- The DYW programme had achieved a 40% reduction in youth unemployment and the work would continue to ensure that it was embedded in schools and colleges.
- The programme was now in its fifth year – the sustaining stage.
- 85% positive destinations had been achieved, regional STEM strategies were in place, but there were still gender imbalances and work was ongoing to improve the outcome agreement process to ensure commitment.
- DYW was connected to and embedded in the Learner Journey process and colleges responded well to what was asked of them.

The Committee **agreed** that the Equality and Diversity assessment would be expanded on for the next DYW progress report.

18/42 Race Equality update (AIC/18/24)

The Committee received a paper updating on SFC's work to progress race equality including progress on specific SFC and sector actions in the Scottish Government's Race Equality Framework Action Plan for 2017-21.

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- The data evidenced gaps in the employment outcomes of BME students' post-college or university, with unemployment rates of 9% for black students as compared to 3% for white students.
- SFC was trying to identify the barriers so that they could be addressed and was working with partners to take this agenda forward.
- Institutions were keen to engage on the Race Equality Charter Mark but the success rate, to date, was very low. The outcome agreement guidance would continue to encourage institutions to apply for the Charter Mark.
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission survey and call for evidence would allow individual's voices to be documented.

The Committee advised that:

- Organisational ethos was important to the student and the desire of the institution to engage was critical.
- Data showing differences between different ethnic groups would be useful to provide qualitative data and would clarify the experiences of the different groups.
- Employment outcomes should be fed up to the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board as it was a productivity for Scotland issue.

18/43 Long-term agenda (AIC/18/25)

The Committee received a paper informing members of proposed agenda items for future meetings of the Committee.

The Committee **agreed** that an item on Digital as a means of securing access and inclusion and digital infrastructure, would be added to the long-term agenda. Caroline Stuart, SFC Board member was to be invited to participate for that item.

The Committee also **agreed** that the:

- Update on the CoWA recommendations include the SIMD20 impact on college enrolments and advanced provision, for new or articulating students.
- As outlined in 18/38 the Council executive would request an update on the CoWA Risk Register particularly in relation to how any unintended consequences on college provision were being managed.

18/44

Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place at 9.30am on Tuesday 26 February 2019 at 99 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.