

Board of Management Learning & Teaching Committee

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 6 November 2018
Paper No.	LTC2-K
Agenda Item	14
Subject of Paper	National Articulation Forum
Status of Paper	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Joanna Campbell, Vice Principal – Student Experience
Date of Paper	16 October 2018
Action Required	Noting

1. Recommendation

The Learning and Teaching Committee is asked to **note** the contents of this report.

2. Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the newly formed National Articulation Forum (NAF).

3. Strategic Context

- 3.1 The National Articulation Forum is jointly owned by Colleges Scotland and Universities Scotland and reports to the boards of both organisations. The Forum includes partners with a key role to play in improving and increasing articulation routes, and it is intended that it will work in a cooperative and collegiate manner.

4. Background

- 4.1 In November 2017 Universities Scotland published 'Working to Widen Access' (WTWA) its action plan for responding to the relevant recommendations contained in the final report of the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA). The actions agreed in WTWA were informed by the work of three working groups on articulation, admissions and bridging programmes. The working group on articulation was chaired by Susan Stewart, Director of the Open University in Scotland, and included representation from Colleges Scotland and other key stakeholders, including SFC and NUS.

4.2 WTWA:

- set out five actions on articulation, including the establishment of the National Articulation Forum to be co-owned by Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland;
- provided a definition of articulation;
- made a recommendation to the SFC on articulation;
- set out the working group's main findings.

For ease of reference, the WTWA actions are summarised below along with relevant updates. These actions can be seen as the Forum's initial priorities:

- "The National Articulation Forum will examine how we can offer full credit articulation to more students. It will do this by looking at opportunities to improve articulation in specific subjects as well as considering how to expand the model of articulation to include other qualifications in addition to Higher Nationals."
- "The National Articulation Forum will investigate student perspectives on articulation": we expect that research will be commissioned on the student perspective at a later date. A specification will be developed by officials and presented at a future meeting.
- "The National Articulation Forum will develop clear information about articulation": initial work on the language used around articulation is being led by a separate, dedicated group that is also seeking to develop clear and consistent language on admissions and bridging programmes. This

group will report to the Forum when further progress has been made. It is also expected that the Forum, at a later date, will produce:

- case studies for learners and other stakeholders to raise awareness of the range of pathways available
- examples of articulation practice as a resource for universities and colleges.

4.3 The first action set out above – considering how to improve and expand articulation – will likely be the most challenging and time-consuming task for the Forum. However, the working group provided a base for the work at subject-level by analysing data supplied by the SFC.

4.4 In light of this analysis, WTWA set out seven broad degree subject areas with a lower than average rate of full credit articulation and with at least 100 students articulating. It is proposed that these subjects could be the starting point for the Forum’s work in this particular area. The subjects identified are; Creative Arts and Design, Biological Sciences, Social Studies, Law, Education, Physical Sciences, Subjects allied to Medicine.

4.5 Members were also encouraged to raise any other areas where they consider that progress requires to be made on articulation and where the Forum could clearly add value.

4.6 In this context, it is important to note that WTWA included one further action, which was aimed specifically at HEIs but which may inform how the Forum operates: “Every university will undertake a fundamental review of its ability to increase the number and percentage of students who articulate with full credit for the start of 2018/19. This review will need to involve college partners and others.”

4.7 Universities Scotland officers have asked all HEIs to provide an update on their progress to date on this action.

5. Other developments on articulation

Scottish Funding Council

5.1 The CoWA made three recommendations for the SFC on articulation:

- “Recommendation 8: The SFC should seek more demanding articulation targets from those universities that have not traditionally been significant players in articulation.
- Recommendation 9: Universities, colleges and the SFC should closely monitor the expansion of articulation to ensure it continues to support disadvantaged learners to progress to degree level study. Should this not be the case, a proportion of articulation places should be prioritised for disadvantaged learners.
- Recommendation 10: The Scottish Funding Council, working with universities and colleges, should explore more efficient, flexible and

learner centred models of articulation which provide learners with the choice of a broader range of institutions and courses.”

- 5.2 In order to help the Forum scope its work, the SFC is willing to provide an update on how it considers that these recommendations relate to the actions being pursued by the Forum. 5.3 It is helpful to note here that WTWA also contained a recommendation for the SFC, namely that it should improve the accessibility of its articulation data in order to inform the work being taken forward by HEIs and the Forum. The SFC has confirmed that it is redeveloping its National Articulation Database, which is currently being put through data quality control checks. SFC officials are also willing to provide an update on the National Articulation Database and discuss the information that would be most useful for the Forum.

Commissioner for Fair Access

- 5.3 The recent annual report by Sir Peter Scott, Commissioner for Fair Access, summarised recent developments on articulation including by reference to WTWA4. Sir Peter made a number of further recommendations on articulation and gave four reasons as to why he considered the current position on articulation to be “unacceptable”:
- “It has led to a sub-optimal use of public funding. Without this failure in articulation additional funded places could have been created without any additional cost, which might have helped to address some of the fears that the drive to recruit more SIMD20 students within a capped number of places might lead to other students being displaced;
 - It is unfair to progressing students. They are obliged to extend the time they take to pass through higher education, increasing the financial burden in terms of living expenses and income foregone. This is likely to increase drop-out, as well as delaying entry into the labour market;
 - The reluctance to give HN students fair credit tends to suggest that vocational qualifications are, in some key respects, inferior to academic qualifications. The clear implication is that HN students have a number of deficits that must be addressed before they can embark on full blown degree-level education;
 - The great majority of HN students who progress to degrees being confined to post-1992 universities. In effect, although this may not be the intention, they are largely excluded from the universities with the greatest academic (and social) prestige, whose graduates have greater opportunities in the job market.”
- 5.4 SFC has now employed a full time officer to assist the Forum and enable it to implement the CoWA recommendations on articulation that were directed at the SFC.

6. National Articulation Forum

- 6.1 The terms of reference for the National Articulation Forum are attached in **Appendix 1.**

7. Finance and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no finance or resource implications associated with this paper.

8. Risks to the College

- 8.1 There are no significant risks associated with this activity.

National Articulation Forum -Terms of Reference

Purpose

To support continuous improvement in articulation practice in Scottish Post-16 education and increased student participation in articulation pathways involving all of Scotland's colleges and higher education institutions.

Remit

1. To provide strategic guidance and to influence and challenge thinking on articulation in Scotland, in relation to policy (including Scottish Funding Council policy), practice, and pedagogy.
2. To serve as an efficient shared resource to analyse, report and advise on the development and potential growth of articulation routes and to address issues and opportunities.
3. To source expert advice and research and development work in support of continuous improvement.
4. To promote the collection, collation and dissemination of data and information about articulation and student success.
5. To develop outputs which promote, disseminate and raise awareness of success and best practice in articulation.

Membership

- Principal of a Scottish college nominated by Colleges Scotland (Co-Convener).
- Principal of a Scottish higher education institution nominated by Universities Scotland (Co-Convener).
- Principal/Deputy Principal or equivalent from a Scottish college nominated by Colleges Scotland.
- Principal/Deputy Principal or equivalent from a Scottish higher education institution nominated by Universities Scotland.
- Two representatives of the National Union of Students (Scotland).
- Two experienced articulation practitioners nominated by Colleges Scotland.
- Two experienced articulation practitioners nominated by Universities Scotland.
- Representative of the Scottish Funding Council.
- Representative of the Scottish Government Advanced Learning and Science Directorate.

In Attendance

- Leaders of 'Task and Finish' Groups established by the Forum who are not members of the Forum.
- Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland officers as required to inform and support the work of the Forum.
- Secretariat to the Forum.
- Additional stakeholder representatives by invitation in relation to specific agenda.

Engagement with Key Stakeholders

The Forum will ensure that all relevant stakeholders in Scottish Post-16 education are appropriately engaged in and informed about its work, including employer organisations, school leaders, individuals with direct experience of following an articulation pathway, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, SCQF Partnership, Skills Development Scotland, Education Scotland and UCAS.

The Forum will be mindful of the HN as a standalone qualification valued by stakeholders in its own right.

Frequency of Meetings

Normally three times per year, irregularly with the timing of meetings aligned to project initiation and reporting points in the Forum's work programme.

Reporting Requirements

The Forum will report formally to the College Principals' Group and to Universities Scotland Main Committee. It will report informally on an ongoing basis to the Convener of Universities Scotland, the Director of Universities Scotland, the Chair of the College Principals' Group and the Chief Executive of Colleges Scotland. The Forum will also be accountable to the Scottish Government's Access Delivery Group.

Sub-Committees

The Forum will establish expert 'Task and Finish' Groups to enable it to fulfil aspects of its remit particularly where there is an identified need to engage particular combinations of stakeholder interests and/or particular sources of expertise and advice. The Forum will agree terms of reference, leadership and membership of such groups at the time of their establishment. 'Task and Finish' Groups will operate pragmatically and efficiently and may be informal in structure and day to day operation.

The Forum may also commission work or seek advice and reports from established groups and networks across Scottish Post-16 education where it determines such an approach to be the most efficient and effective means of fulfilling aspects of its remit.