Introduction

On Monday 15 January 2018, the Committee will be visiting the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS). The Committee will speak to staff and students at the RCS to learn about its widening access activities.

The Committee will also meet with staff and students from: University of West of Scotland, University of Glasgow, Glasgow School of Art, University of Strathclyde and Glasgow Caledonian University. The purpose of the meeting is to hear about the different approaches to widening access to university / higher education, including the views of students on this issue.

There are three areas of practice that have been identified as important to widening access to university. Committee members may find it helpful to consider these themes in their discussions with staff and students:

- Contextualised admissions – the use of this approach and the issues it raises for HEIs in terms of admissions practice.
- Bridging / Outreach programmes – how these currently work and what steps could be taken to better coordinate and deliver them.
- Articulation – current practice in supporting progression into HEIs taking account of prior learning at college (e.g. HN level study) and school (e.g. Advanced Highers).

Policy Context

The Scottish Government’s Programme for Government 2014-15 set out a renewed commitment to widening access to university; although this has been a long standing policy priority in Scotland.¹ In the statement accompanying the publication of the Programme for Government 2014-15, the First Minister set out its goal that: “a child born today in one of our most deprived communities should, by the time she or he leaves school, have the same chance of going to university as a child born in one of our least deprived communities”².

¹ For example, there was a SPICe briefing written on Widening Access to Higher Education: Policy in Scotland published in February 2010. This sets out the policy focus at that time.
The Commission on Widening Access (“the Commission”) was established in 2015 to advise Scottish Ministers on what was required to meet this ambition. It published an interim report in November 2015 (setting out learning to that point). Its final report A Blueprint for Fairness (“the Blueprint”) was published on 14 March 2016.

The Blueprint included 34 recommendations directed at the Scottish Government, Scottish Funding Council and universities. The Commission’s work was framed around four themes, discussed briefly below.

**Theme 1: A Whole System Approach**

The interim report noted that socio-economic inequality in access to university is a problem that pervades the whole education system. As such, the focus of activity to achieve equal access should be wider than what happens within universities:

“Despite our conclusion that access is a whole system problem, the debate on equal access often centres on what more universities can do, with the primary strategic responsibilities for access resting with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). We believe these arrangements are insufficient. The SFC has jurisdiction only over post-16 education bodies, with no locus over the many other parts of the system with vital roles to play. This makes it difficult to ensure that the responsibility for driving progress is shared right across the education system. Moreover, as one of the key contributors to access policy and principal funders of access programmes, we believe that the SFC, as well as the Scottish Government, should themselves be held to account for progress.”

The recommendation to appoint a Commissioner for Fair Access was intended to address this narrow focus and ensure that there was independent scrutiny of activity in this area.

**Theme 2: Embracing New Talent**

Much of the activity to widen access to university was focused on supporting and developing individuals to realise their potential. While the Commission welcomed this work, the Commissioners were clear that the focus should not all be on individuals. Rather systemic change is needed to achieve meaningful opportunities for all learners. To achieve this, the Commission highlighted the importance of creating fairer admissions systems and more flexible and joined up transition opportunities. Ten recommendations in the final report contribute to this (Recommendations 5 to 14).

**Theme 3: Supporting Our Learners**

Alongside the work to challenge and remove systemic barriers to higher education, the Commission pointed out that more needs to be done to support potential learners to access the opportunities that are being opened up. The issue here is both supporting people to gain entry to university as well as ensuring the right support is in place to enable learners to sustain their education once they are in. Under this theme there was a range of activity proposed (summarised in Recommendations 15 to 23).
Theme 4: The Architecture to Support Fair Access

The final theme is the systems that need to be in place to support the delivery of a fair access agenda. This includes ensuring funding is in place to support the activity that is needed. Adequate regulatory mechanisms are also needed to ensure that commitments are met and that institutions are aware of the expectations on them and consequences for not delivering on agreed commitments. Finally, the data that is available needs to be better used; and more varied and relevant data measures are needed to allow proper tracking of progress towards equal access to university (see Recommendations 24-32).

Commissioner for Fair Access

On 16 December 2016, Professor Sir Peter Scott was appointed by the Scottish Ministers to be the first Commissioner for Fair Access (“the Commissioner”). His role is to act as “an advocate for disadvantaged learners, working across the education system to provide strategic leadership and drive change across the system”.

As Professor Scott is contracted to perform this role three-to-five days each month\(^3\), the main function he is performing is influencing those who are charged with developing and implementing policy in this area. The role has been developed as one that is independent of the Scottish Government. This is in line with the rationale laid out by the Commission; that the Commissioner’s role was to direct and oversee widening access activity.

The Scottish Government notes that the main functions of the Commissioner are to:

- Lead cohesive and system wide efforts to drive fair access in Scotland; acting as an advocate for access for disadvantaged learners and holding to account those with a role to play in achieving equal access, including the Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).
- Coordinate and prioritise the development of a more substantial evidence base on the issues most pertinent to fair access, including the commissioning and publication of independent research and the development of a Framework for Fair Access.
- Publish, annually, a report to Ministers outlining the Commissioner’s views on progress towards equal access in Scotland to inform development of effective policy at national, regional and institutional level.

The first annual report from the Commissioner for Fair Access was published on 13 December 2017. The Commission had suggested that the annual report would be the place where progress against its recommendations would be reported. Instead a separate mechanism has been established (the Access Delivery Group chaired by the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science) to take forward this monitoring activity. The annual report states that this is an appropriate step that allows the Commissioner in the annual report “to take a broader, and more open, view of progress and also to introduce new themes to the access debate in Scotland”.

---

In this first annual report the Commissioner takes a broad look at the context of widening access in Scotland. The first chapter discusses the way that higher education is delivered in Scotland, funding arrangements\(^4\), policy milestones and progress made to date. The next six chapters then look in more detail at relevant policy issues such as free tuition, admissions procedures, progression from school and college, bridging / outreach programmes, and the use of targets to measure progress. The annual report also includes 23 recommendations directed at the Scottish Government, the SFC and colleges and universities (these can be found, with accompanying text, on pages 38-45 of the annual report). The key issues that inform the recommendations are summarised at Annexe A.

**Targets and Data**

The Blueprint set out a number of targets for widening access, which the Scottish Government has signed up to. These are\(^5\)

- By 2030, students from the 20 per cent most deprived backgrounds should represent 20 per cent of entrants to higher education\(^6\). Equality of access should be seen in both the college sector and the university sector.
- By 2021, students from the 20 per cent most deprived backgrounds should represent at least 16 per cent of full-time first degree entrants to Scottish universities as a whole.
- By 2026, students from the 20 per cent most deprived backgrounds should represent at least 18 per cent of full-time first degree entrants to Scottish universities as a whole.
- By 2021, students from the 20 per cent most deprived backgrounds should represent at least 10 per cent of full-time first degree entrants to every individual Scottish university.

Since 2007, the SFC has been producing *Learning for All* – a statistical report that presents data on participation in college and university among equalities groups. With the publication of the Blueprint in 2016, the SFC reviewed the scope and content of *Learning for All* to take account of the recommendation that “the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government should enhance the analyses and publication of data on fair access”.

The review resulted in the publication in September 2017 of the first SFC Report on Widening Access. This publication supersedes *Learning for All*, with two distinct sections – the first providing data on widening access to indicate progress against the Blueprint targets; the second continuing to report on data from the *Learning for All* publication.

\(^4\) Although the report is clear that beyond support for the free tuition fee arrangements no comment is being made on student support arrangements as the Student Support Review was still being considered by the Scottish Government.

\(^5\) The data are for academic year 2015-16. The publication noted that this first publication was to be treated as an interim report, with a further publication - including data from 2016-17 – to be published “earlier next year”

\(^6\) There is an important distinction between widening access to “higher education” and widening access to university / first degree study. The former refers to higher education programmes offered at both college (commonly Higher National Certificate / Diploma) and university (commonly degree level study). The latter refers only to degree programmes offered at universities.
Table 1 shows the number of students entering higher education in each academic year from 2013-14 to 2015-16. The first column for each year offers data on those entering a full time degree programme at an HEI, while the second column represents all higher education participation (both at colleges and HEIs).

The data included in Table 1 offers a baseline against which progress toward the first three of the four bullets above can be measured. It shows that in 2015-16 (the most recent year for which data are available):

- 17.7 per cent of entrants to higher education were from SIMD20 areas.
- 14 per cent of entrants to full time first degree programmes at Scottish HEIs were from SIMD20 areas.

### Table 1: Scottish domiciled entrants, full-time first degree at HEIs and all undergraduate higher education by SIMD20, academic year 2013-14 to 2015-16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FT first degree</td>
<td>All UG higher education</td>
<td>FT first degree</td>
<td>All UG higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Entrants</td>
<td>28,285</td>
<td>86,650</td>
<td>28,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrants from SIMD20</td>
<td>3,850</td>
<td>14,730</td>
<td>3,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% SIMD20</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [SFC Report on Widening Access](#) (Table 1)

The first bullet refers to a broad target of 20 per cent of entrants to *higher education* (rather than entrants only to full time first degree programmes) being from SIMD20 areas. At present to meet this target requires a 2.3 per cent increase in entrants from SIMD20 areas. However, to meet the target means ensuring representation in both HEIs and colleges. At present, the 17.7 per cent entrants figure hides an over-representation of people from SIMD20 areas who are participating in higher education at college. The SFC data (at Table 5b) shows that over 27 per cent of entrants to full time higher education programmes at colleges were from SIMD20 areas.

The second and third bullets focus only on entrants to full time first degree programmes at Scottish HEIs. The data published by the SFC indicates that there is a two per cent increase needed to achieve the 2021 target of 16 per cent of entrants to full time first degree programmes being from SIMD20 areas; and a four per cent increase needed to achieve the 2026 target of 18 per cent of entrants to full time first degree programmes being from SIMD20 areas.

Table 2 provides data to inform the target that at least ten per cent of full time first degree entrants at each individual HEI in Scotland are by 2021 from a SIMD20 area. It shows that in academic year 2015-16 there is significant variance between individual HEIs in success in relation to engaging people living in SIMD20 areas in higher education.
Table 2: Scottish domiciled entrants to full-time first degree at each individual HEI by SIMD20, to 2015-16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher Education Institution</th>
<th>Proportion SIMD20</th>
<th>SIMD20</th>
<th>Total entrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen, The University of</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abertay Dundee, University of</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>1,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundee, The University of</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh Napier University</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>2,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh, The University of</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow Caledonian University</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>3,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow School of Art</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow, The University of</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>2,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heriot-Watt University</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands and Islands, the University of</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Gordon University, The</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, The</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Agricultural College</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Andrews, The University of</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stirling, The University of</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathclyde, The University of</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>3,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The West of Scotland, The University of</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>1,045</td>
<td>3,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,015</strong></td>
<td><strong>28,770</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SFC Report on Widening Access (Table 1b)

**Approaches to Widening Access**

In the work conducted to produce the Blueprint report, the Commission noted that addressing barriers to access and retention in university among under-represented groups means recognising that there is not one approach that will work for every person in every situation. Rather a range of measures are needed that address different barriers facing different people. Three sets of activity were, however, recognised as constituting best practice and/or localised practice that could be scaled up to apply across institutions.

*Contextual Admissions*

“Contextual admissions” is the term used to describe an approach to admissions decisions made by universities. It challenges the traditional approach that focuses largely on qualifications achieved or expected. Instead it looks at applications from people from under-represented groups, drawing on a wider range of information to identify those with potential to succeed at university.

Data to inform a contextualised admissions approach could include information on the school the applicant attended, the level of parental education achieved or whether the applicant received free school meals. These indicators, alongside qualifications achieved, can provide admissions officials with a richer picture of someone’s potential where the data suggests that they do not have many or all of the social advantages that some applicants from more affluent backgrounds may take for granted.
Two research reports were published in October 2017 that looked at the use and potential of contextual admissions at UK level and within Scotland. A mini-briefing was previously provided to Committee members, which drew out relevant points from these reports (copied at Annexe B for information).

**Outreach / Bridging Programmes**

Outreach activity was highlighted as an example of good practice. Programmes that offer people the opportunity to take part in summer schools or enter a degree programme via a specific “access” programme were highlighted as particularly important contributors to widening access. This includes programmes such as Scottish Widening Access Programme (SWAP) East, SWAP West, and Lothian Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS).

**Articulation**

Articulation was highlighted as a way of offering a more flexible and accessible education system. Articulation is the practice whereby someone can start their programme of higher education in one setting and transfer the credits gained toward future study elsewhere e.g. starting at school and transferring to college, or going from college to university. One common route involves study for an HNC or HND at college and this qualification enabling entry to second or third year of a degree programme at university.

**Response from Universities Scotland**

Thirteen of the recommendations in the Blueprint report were directed at HEIs. In November 2017 Universities Scotland published *Working to Widen Access*. This report sets out a programme of action being pursued by HEIs under the three themes of admissions; bridging programmes; and articulation.

The fifteen actions laid out across these three themes are underpinned by the following principles:

A. Every applicant deserves to engage with a fair admissions system.
B. Collaboration between HEIs is important to ensure HEIs are learning from each other.
C. Valuing the diversity of the Scottish HEI sector, which offers applicants choice about the type of institution that suits their situations.
D. Ensuring that decisions made by HEIs are informed by reliable and robust data.
E. Judging success in widening access on the achievement of successful outcomes.

The recommendations from the Blueprint and the action being taken by HEIs to address it, including dates for completion, are copied at Annexe C for ease of reference.

*Suzi Macpherson*

SPICe Research

---

7 Info on both SWAP East, SWAP West and SWAP national can all be found at this link: [http://www.scottishwideraccess.org/national-home](http://www.scottishwideraccess.org/national-home)
ANNEXE A – SUMMARY POINTS FROM COMMISSIONER FOR FAIR ACCESS’ FIRST ANNUAL REPORT (DECEMBER 2017)

- Scotland has a high rate of higher education participation but young people from affluent areas are still three times more likely to go to higher education than those from the most disadvantaged - and over three times as likely to go to university.

- The Scottish Government targets on widening access are challenging but achievable.

- Progress towards meeting those targets has been steady, but the current forward momentum may not be sufficient. Bolder steps will be required by the Scottish Government, the SFC and (most) institutions.

- All institutions contribute to meeting the targets. Ancient universities as they currently have “the most privileged student intakes” and play an important leadership role and colleges as they enrol a high proportion of students from deprived areas.

- Free higher education for Scottish students provides the foundation for fair access, but it is “a necessary rather than sufficient condition”. In addition, other action is needed around admissions, progression from college to university, academic support and funding.

- Lower grade offers to students from deprived backgrounds recognises that not all applicants have the same advantages e.g. family support or school experience. Making the same offer to all students, regardless of context, fails to identify students with the greatest potential. Universities need to make much bolder use of contextual admissions.

- Widening access is not just about applications, but also about the students need - academic, financial and pastoral - to succeed. A debate is needed on how ‘success’ is defined.

- Scotland has a unique opportunity to produce a joined-up tertiary education system, across higher education, further education and workplace learning. This would reduce barriers to progression, benefitting all learners but especially those from more deprived backgrounds. It would also increase the efficiency and capacity of the system.

- College students with Higher Nationals (HNs) who transfer to universities should receive full credit as a matter of routine. Anything less needs rigorous justification. Smarter articulation promotes fair access by freeing up more college-university pathways but also by creating more capacity generally.

- There is also scope for improving the transition between school and university - a better fit between S6 and Year 1, more co-delivery of the curriculum, and greater opportunities for S6 learners with Advanced Highers to go straight into Year 2. This would produce the same benefits as smarter articulation between HNs and degrees.

- Unfair access is rooted in socioeconomic deprivation, typically located in particular communities and perpetuated across generations. There are other forms of
disadvantage - age, disability, immigrant status and so on - which also need to be urgently addressed. But none is as intractable and as deeply entrenched as socioeconomic deprivation, which must remain the main focus of fair access.

- The Scottish Government should review the number of funded places it provides for Scottish students. It should guarantee that any savings produced by demographic change, Brexit or smarter articulation between HNs and degrees (and schools and universities) will be retained within the higher education budget. This would also help to address fears that some students are being 'displaced' by more deprived applicants.

- The Scottish Funding Council should make fuller use of its powers to promote fair access, and ensure that outcome agreements become effective instruments not just for monitoring but also rewarding performance in line with the Government’s desire to see their use ‘intensified’.
Widening access to university education among those living in the 20 per cent most deprived areas of Scotland (SIMD20) is a key policy priority for the Scottish Government. To this end a target has been set that 20 per cent of Scottish domiciled entrants to study full time for a degree at a Scottish higher education institution (HEI) by 2030 are those who live in the SIMD20 areas.

“Contextualised admissions” is an approach increasing being used to achieve this target. This publication (including four themed reports) was commissioned by the SFC to consider contextualised admissions at Scottish HEIs.

Mapping the Use of Contextual Indicators

The first report considers publicly available data on the use of contextual data to inform admissions decisions. Different practices across Scottish HEIs were found, both in terms of the transparency of approach and in the ambitiousness of the approach being taken. Some of the recommendations from this work were that institutions should provide clearer guidance to applicants on their websites about whether or not the applicant might be considered through any contextualised admissions approach being used. In addition, the team suggested that HEIs could make clearer the actions it takes when using a contextualised admissions approach. This report also recommended that HEIs make greater and more ambitious use of adjusted [lower grade] offers when employing a contextual admissions approach.

Institutional Orientations to Contextualised Admissions

The second report draws on interview data to highlight the extent to which each HEI is using, and open to using, contextualised admissions data. This report noted:

- While HEIs seem to recognise that high achieving applicants have performed well despite the odds, they could do more to recognise when individual students have achieved well relative to those from similarly disadvantaged backgrounds.
- HEIs could do more to recognise the important role they play in supporting learning once students are taking part in university education.
- Some HEIs have a research informed approach to contextualised admissions. Others, however, could do more to use research evidence to inform the contextual indicators they use.
- HEIs could do more, individually and collectively, to communicate to the wider public / prospective students the value / benefits of contextualised admissions policies.
Evaluating the validity and reliability of potential indicators of contextual disadvantage

The third report assesses which contextual indicators, singly and in combination, constitute the most valid (appropriate) and reliable (trustworthy). The indicators considered include those that are used by HEIs and those that are not commonly used.

The following were identified as suitable either alone or as part of a package of indicators:

- Having spent time in care
- Being a carer for a family member;
- Being a refugee / asylum seeker;
- Receiving free school meals / Education Maintenance Allowance.

Other indicators that were seen as suitable only in combination with other indicators:

- Being a resident of an SIMD20/40 area
- Attending a school where large numbers of pupils are in receipt of free school meals
- Attending a school where attainment / progression to higher education is lower than the national average.

Finally indicators that were found not to be suitable in their current form either alone or in combination. These include: parents not having a degree; parents not in professional level or equivalent employment; and where socio-economic inequality is defined too broadly e.g. living in a rural area or attending a state school.

Identifying minimum entry requirements for contextually disadvantaged applicants

The final report draws on non-continuation (drop-out) and qualifications data to explore what the minimum prior qualifications required for entry should be set at. There is not one definitive set of requirements that can be put in place to ensure success, rather the requirements vary by the type of HEI and the course studied.

Vikki Boliver, Claire Crawford, Mandy Powell and Will Craige Admissions in Context: the use of contextual information in leading universities The Sutton Trust [Oct 2017].

This study analyses data from 30 of the most selective HEIs in the UK (including Edinburgh; Glasgow; St Andrews and Strathclyde). It highlights four types of contextual data:

- Individual-level (e.g. free school meals or first in family to study for a degree);
- area-level (e.g. living in a deprived area);
- school-level (e.g. low performing school); or
- completion of an approved outreach programmes (e.g. access course)

The majority of the HEIs were found to use contextual information to inform admissions decisions, although the data used varies widely. Most HEIs use area-level information although around half focus centrally in admissions on “strong prior academic performance”. Where reduced grades were considered, this tended to only occur when the applicant had successfully completed a widening access programme at the same HEI.
As with the SFC commissioned study, the team found a lack of transparency in how, and in what circumstances, contextual data was being used by HEIs. This in itself may be a barrier to access if a potential applicant is not aware that they may benefit from access to the contextual admissions policy in use.

Analysis of the prior qualifications of students from disadvantaged backgrounds who entered these HEIs in 2016-17 showed little difference in the grades held compared with other students. There was also very little difference in the entry requirements set for students from disadvantaged backgrounds relative to others. The authors indicate that there is far greater scope to use contextual data to widen access to HEIs, and little evidence that those that enter through this route will have a higher risk of dropping out / not completing their studies or achieving lower class awards than other entrants.
ANNEXE C – HEI actions on Commission for Widening Access Recommendations

Reproduced from *Working to Widen Access* (Universities Scotland, November 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4: Universities, colleges, local authorities, schools, the SFC funded access programmes and early years providers should work together to deliver a coordinated approach to access which removes duplication and provides a coherent and comprehensive offer to learners.</th>
<th>12. Higher education institutions will work to improve the national coherence of bridging activity. This will involve better regional coordination of bridging programmes and more mutual recognition of programmes making it easier for students to transfer. This will be implemented during 2018/19.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5: Universities should ensure their admissions processes and entry requirements are based on a strong educational rationale and are not unnecessarily prescriptive, to the detriment of learners who take advantage of the availability of a more flexible range of pathways. This should be monitored by the SFC through the outcome agreement process.</td>
<td>3. Every Scottish higher education institution will set minimum entry requirements for their courses in 2019 for entrants starting in 2020/21. The minimum requirements will reflect the best evidence on the level of achievement necessary for successful completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: The Scottish Funding Council, working with professionals, should develop a model of how bridging programmes can be expanded nationally to match need.</td>
<td>12. Higher education institutions will work to improve the national coherence of bridging activity. This will involve better regional coordination of bridging programmes and more mutual recognition of programmes making it easier for students to transfer. This will be implemented during 2018/19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: The SFC should seek more demanding articulation targets from those universities that have not traditionally been significant players in articulation.</td>
<td>7. Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland will establish a National Articulation Forum in academic year 2017/18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Every university will undertake a fundamental review of their 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.</td>
<td>11. Every university will undertake a fundamental review of their 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>As actions 7-11 take effect universities will work with the SFC and colleges to monitor how this is supporting disadvantaged learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: The Scottish Funding Council, working with HEIs 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.</td>
<td>8. The National Articulation Forum will look at 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11: By 2019 all universities should set access thresholds for all degree programmes against which learners from the most deprived backgrounds should be assessed. These access thresholds should be separate to standard entrance requirements and set as ambitiously as possible, at a level which accurately reflects the minimum academic standard and subject knowledge necessary to successfully complete a degree programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12: All Universities should be as open and transparent as possible over their use of access thresholds and wider contextual admissions policies. In particular, they should seek to maximise applications from disadvantaged learners by proactively promoting the access thresholds to the relevant schools, pupils, parents, local authorities and teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15: Universities and colleges should increase engagement with our youngest children and their families as part of the provision of a coordinated package of support for those in our most deprived communities in line with Recommendation 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16: Universities working with schools, should take greater responsibility for the development of the pool of applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds by delivering academically based programmes to support highly able learners, who are at risk of not fulfilling their academic potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18: Universities, colleges and local authorities should work together to provide access to a range of Higher and Advanced Higher subjects, which ensures that those from disadvantaged backgrounds or living in rural areas are not restricted in their ability to access higher education by the subject choices available to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are several examples of HEIs providing and/or supporting delivery of Higher and/or Advanced Higher qualifications. Other HEIs deliver alternatives at the same SCQF level. Some of these initiatives operate nationally, whilst others operate more regionally, but all work with partners in schools and local authorities and some work with colleges. HEIs are happy to discuss expanding this work with relevant partners, but would not want to pre-empt the outcomes of the Scottish Government’s Learner Journey Review. The Review is expected to report by the end of 2017.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21. By 2017, those with a care experience, who meet the access threshold should be entitled to the offer of a place at a Scottish university. Entitlement should also apply to those with care experience who have had to take a break from higher education and wish to return. Learners should be assessed at the minimum entry levels in 2017 and 2018 and the access thresholds thereafter.

30. The Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government should enhance the analyses and publication of data on fair access.

4. Care experienced learners will be guaranteed an offer of a place at university if they meet minimum entry requirements. Until then, universities will continue to give care experienced applicants additional consideration.

6. Universities Scotland will work with the Scottish Funding Council and Scottish Government to identify and share the data universities need to inform their contextualised admissions policies.

The working group also set out a recommendation for the Scottish Funding Council:

The Scottish Funding Council should improve the accessibility of data it holds on articulation to inform the work taken forward by higher education institutions and the National Articulation Forum.