

Mr James Dornan MSP
Convener of the Education and Skills Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Thursday 31 May 2018

Dear Mr Dornan,

I would like to thank you again for inviting Universities Scotland and university Principals to attend the Committee's meeting on 16 May, where we discussed the progress we are making in widening access to our universities and specialist institutions.

We found the debate to be lively, stimulating and wide-ranging, and hope that we provided Committee Members with a clearer insight into the many initiatives underway that aim to ensure an increasing number of disadvantaged learners are able to benefit from a university education.

Nevertheless, the Committee quite reasonably challenged us on the pace of change and to demonstrate that all universities, particularly our ancient institutions, are making good progress in delivering on our commitments. I have therefore set out in the Annex below examples of the wealth of work being undertaken by each ancient university to widen access, and further information on how we are implementing the actions contained in [Working to Widen Access](#), our response to the Commission on Widening Access.

The Committee has taken a considerable amount of evidence to date, including a visit to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Colleagues at the University of Edinburgh would be delighted to host a further visit and discussion, which would allow Committee members to observe first-hand how one of our ancient universities is promoting opportunities for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We are also very willing to suggest ideas for how we can work with the Committee to ensure that further progress is made. For example, the Scottish Government has recently published data on school level attainment by SIMD quintile¹, which show some progress in the attainment levels of learners from SIMD 20 areas. However, there is still a significant poverty-related attainment gap and we must therefore consider how

¹<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Lifelong-learning/Publications/attainmentbySIMD>

the progress noted could be significantly accelerated to grow the number of disadvantaged learners who wish to go to university and have the requisite qualifications to do so.

We know that the Commissioner for Fair Access will be focusing on schools over the coming year, while this issue will also no doubt arise as you continue your work on the attainment of school aged children experiencing poverty.

We briefly highlight two further points that you may wish to consider. Criticisms about using the SIMD as the sole indicator of disadvantage are well established. We will continue to explore supplementary measures with the Scottish Government, but highlight to you now that according to Scottish Government data made available since 16 May more than half of those who receive free school meals live outside SIMD20 areas. If so many young people are effectively excluded from current access targets, it would be difficult to reconcile this with a commitment to greater equality and fairness in the admissions system.

Further, we suggest that clarity could be sought from the Scottish Government about the ultimate aim of its policy on widening access. For example, is it for the 20% most-disadvantaged learners to be 20% of the existing numbers of Scots-domiciled students, or is it for an expansion of opportunity for the most-disadvantaged without detriment to other learners so that we avoid a 'squeezed middle' of qualified applicants who find it more difficult to get into university? As we stressed to the Committee, we want to ensure a fair system for all learners, with equal opportunity for applicants from all backgrounds.

Seeking this clarification would be particularly helpful given that the wider policy landscape for young learners continues to develop through initiatives such as Developing the Young Workforce, the growth of Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships, and the Learner Journey review. We know from the launch of the Learner Journey report that some pupils still believe that schools are overly-focused on university being the ultimate goal of secondary education. We would like learners to have information about the full range of options open to them to achieve their ambitions, among which should be the opportunity for all suitably-qualified learners to progress to higher education if that is the right option for them, regardless of their socio-economic background.

Work to address gender based violence in higher education

I also undertook to write to the Committee to clarify the specific action we are taking to create a support card which will list specialist helpline numbers for gender-based violence (GBV). The idea is one of the campaign objectives of the #EmilyTest led by Fiona and Germain Drouet. Having met with the Drouets to discuss gender-based violence and the #EmilyTest campaign in February, Universities Scotland wanted to help make this happen. My staff are currently providing project support and working with a group of stakeholders to develop, test and distribute a card listing specialist support line numbers for GBV and to have this available to colleges and higher education institutions in time for the start of the next academic year. The Group membership includes Mrs Drouet, Anni Donaldson as project lead of Equally Safe in Higher Education, NUS Scotland, Scottish Women's Aid, Rape Crisis Scotland, College

Development Network, Colleges Scotland, Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council, amongst others. It has met twice so far and will next meet on 15 June.

The Group discussed whether the cards should be available to students as well as staff at its last meeting on 2 May. The Group's discussion has focused primarily on the cards as a new resource to be made available to staff, as we believe this would meet a baseline level of need that may not already be in place across all universities and colleges. In planning how best to support students directly, we have agreed to work with colleges and universities to add a specialist GBV support line number to the existing student cards, as issued by individual institutions, and which serve as ID but also grant library access etc as there is more reason for the students to have that card on their person. The Group also wants to make GBV support line numbers available to students in the form of stickers to be placed on doors in student accommodation and in toilets on campus etc. A dual-purpose sticker will provide specialist separate GBV and mental health support line numbers, recognising the issues are distinct but can be connected. Stakeholders have been very generous with their time and expertise but it will be necessary to secure some funding support to meet essential development and print costs of the project. If we are able to do so in a way that allows the scope of the project to extend the print run of the support cards to enable every college and university student in Scotland to carry a card, we would very much like to do that at the same time. The Group will continue to meet throughout the summer to oversee the project. The next significant step is a series of focus group sessions to test the card design with students, college and university staff, UCU members and survivors of GBV.

The support cards are one of many actions that higher education institutions are taking to combat GBV; the roll-out of the Equally Safe Toolkit key amongst them. Universities Scotland will also be delivering additional programmes of work on GBV over the next year, where we can add value at a sector level. Our plans tie in very closely with the objectives of the #Emilytest and we intend to stay in close touch with the Drouets as we do so. We would be pleased to keep you and the Committee informed of this work as it progresses.

Yours sincerely,



Alastair Sim
Director

Cc:

Ms Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science

Ms Aileen McKechnie, Director of Advanced Learning and Science

Annexes:

A: Selected examples of work by Scotland's four ancient institutions to widen access and an update on Working to Widen Access

B: Progress on Working to Widen Access (WTWA)

Annex A: Selected examples of work by Scotland's four ancient institutions to widen access and an update on *Working to Widen Access* (WTWA)

Action by the ancients

Please find below examples of how our ancient institutions (the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews) are working to widen access and participation.

We have set out a varied range of initiatives, encompassing outreach to schools and bridging programmes; access to the professions; and contextualised admissions and support for disadvantaged students.

The information is designed to provide a flavour of what is on offer at each institution, rather than to provide a comprehensive or comparative analysis. We would be happy to provide further examples on request. Please note that, in addition to individual programmes highlighted below, the ancients take part in multi-institution programmes designed to widen access and participation.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

Outreach to schools and bridging programmes

- **Aberdeen Children's University** encourages primary and secondary school children to engage in educational and active extra-curricular activities in their local area as well as further afield.
By targeting low progression schools, UoA aims to increase its interaction with pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds at a younger age and have a positive impact on their learning
- **Access Aberdeen** is an UoA initiative offering a wide range of activities for young people in the North of Scotland designed to raise attainment, support post-school study choices, and widen access into HE. The scheme includes careers events, revision and application support, and on-campus experiences.
- The **Summer School for Access** provides a route into degree study for those whose current qualifications do not reflect their true potential. The programme is held on campus, full-time for six weeks. Students study a range of subjects, all taught at first year level. The programme consists of three streams: Arts and Social Sciences; Life Sciences; or Physical Sciences.

Access to the professions

- UoA's new **Transitional Summer Schools** in Engineering and Accountancy are designed to help prepare college students to move into university study, supporting them to develop key academic skills; meet future classmates, lecturers, and support staff; familiarise themselves with the campus, facilities and student support services, and experience student life. The Summer Schools are free of charge, and free accommodation is provided in university halls.
- The **Gateway 2 Medicine** programme has been designed to transform the aspirations and ambitions of secondary school pupils from the most deprived areas in Scotland, and who may have believed that application to medical school was out of their reach. UoA's new partnership model with North East Scotland

College and NHS Grampian involves a dedicated tutor, small-group learning, paid work experience, and up to £2000 in bursary support.

- **Online Access Courses** at UoA in English and Mathematics are designed around the principle of flexibility, enabling learners to study wherever and whenever they want, with exit points in October, January, April, and July. In particular, the courses aim to address the large numbers of students who wish to join PGDE courses across Scotland without being able to satisfy the English and Mathematics requirements of the GTCS.

Contextualised admissions / support for disadvantaged students

The University of Aberdeen has provided the following information:

We are keen to encourage students from the widest possible range of backgrounds to participate in University studies, and we appreciate that not all students have the same opportunity to meet our advertised entry requirements. For this reason we take “contextualised information” into account when making decisions on the applications we have received and the exact grades we might require in any given case. Applicants who meet our criteria may be made an offer of admission at or below the relevant Access Threshold level.

The following are some of the key Widening Participation Criteria that the University will consider when making an Adjusted or Access Threshold Offer:

- Applicants who normally reside in a SIMD 20 Scottish postcode area.
- Applicants who normally reside in a SIMD 40 Scottish postcode area.
- Applicants who have experience of being in Care.
- Applicants who normally reside in a POLAR 4 Quintile 1 (Rest of UK) postcode area.
- Applicants who have an unpaid Caring Role.
- Applicants who, as a young person, went through the Children’s Panel process.
- Applicants who have regularly attended a Scottish Low Progression Secondary School.
- Applicants who are Estranged from their family.
- Applicants who identify as coming from a Gypsy, Roma or Travelling Community.
- Applicants who are in the first generation of their family to attend University.
- Applicants who have been in receipt of Free School Meals.
- Applicants who have been in receipt of Education Maintenance Allowance.
- Applicants who have experienced a mental health issue that has impacted on their education in the senior phase (or throughout the majority of their secondary education).
- Applicants who have experienced a physical health issue that has impacted on their education in the senior phase (or throughout the majority of their secondary education).
- Applicants whose home address (in Scotland) is in an area that is considered to be (4) Remote Small Town, (5) Very Remote Small Town, (7) Remote Rural, (8) Very Remote Rural as classified by the Scottish Government 8 fold Urban Rural Classification.
- Applicants who have been granted Refugee / Asylum status (and meet the eligibility criteria for Home Fees (Scottish / EU)).
- Applicants who have been granted Refugee / Asylum status (and meet the eligibility criteria for Rest of UK fees.)
- Applicants whose parent(s) have had a custodial sentence.
- Applicants who have parents in British Military Service.

- Applicants who have been in British Military Service (Veterans/ Early Service Leavers).

We use contextual information, as provided by our applicants, to offer targeted pre-entry support. For example for 2017 entry and 2018 entry we offer free accommodation for the 1st year of studies to applicants who come from SIMD 20 postcode areas. We guarantee offers for care experienced applicants. These offers are made at the lower Access Threshold rate. We also seek to guarantee interviews (where these are necessary) for care experienced applicants. We also offer 365 day accommodation contracts, for the full duration of studies, to students who are care experienced.

Further information is available here:
www.abdn.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/widening-access.php
<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/contextual-admissions--2847.php>

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Outreach to schools and bridging programmes

- [Educated Pass](#) is an innovative project targeted at boys – particularly those from under-represented groups – through their coaches and clubs and builds upon their commitment to sport to generate a similar interest and commitment to education. It uses sports related courses as a hook, but also gives general advice on school, college and university pathways.
- Primary & Early Secondary Years Initiative: Once the pupils are in the first year of their secondary education they take part in a 10 week outreach programme. They work with academic schools at the University of Edinburgh and other local partners. The pupils are able to contextualise their school-based learning, to begin to understand its connectivity to the employment world.
- Moving On Summer programme: designed as a week-long bridging course linking pre-university study with undergraduate work, taking place prior to Welcome Week.

Access to the professions

- [Pathways to the Professions](#) is a ground-breaking project initiated in 2001/02, that encourages under-represented school students into professional courses in Law, Medicine or Veterinary Medicine. The project provides advice and guidance to school students in all 46 state schools in Edinburgh and the Lothians.
- [ACES \(Access to Creative Education in Scotland\)](#) provides encouragement and advice for students who may be under-represented in universities and who are considering applying to art and design based courses. It works with S4, S5 and S6 pupils in schools of lower than average progression to Higher Education – in Edinburgh, the Lothians, the Scottish Borders and Forth Valley

Contextualised admissions

The University of Edinburgh has provided the following information:

- The University of Edinburgh has a strong commitment to widening access. We recognise that not everyone has an equal opportunity to demonstrate their full academic potential from their school or college qualifications alone. For this reason, we use contextual data/information to identify applicants, both from

Scotland and RUK, who could benefit from additional consideration in the admissions process.

- Applicants with contextual factors receive the highest priority for an offer. In accordance with our approach to contextual admissions outlined here: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/applying/selection/contextual-admissions>, applicants we flag 'Context Plus', and who have achieved or are predicted to achieve the minimum entry (access threshold for the 2019/20 cycle), are made an offer at that level.

Support for disadvantaged students

- [The Scotland Scholarship](#) is available to assist Scotland domiciled students with living costs during their undergraduate study:
 - support of between £500 and £2,000 to Scotland-domiciled undergraduate students, with enhanced awards of £3,000 available to students who meet certain other criteria.
 - Scholarships will be awarded to eligible students who are in receipt of either a Young Students' Bursary (YSB), an Independent Students' Bursary (ISB) or a Care Experienced Student Bursary (CESB) (from the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)).
- [Committed to Care Experience](#): Support can include 365-day accommodation, and help in accessing available bursaries, grants, or other forms of funding. Students who receive the Care Experienced Student Bursary from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) will be eligible for the Scotland Scholarship
- [Peer Mentoring](#) is offered to first year Widening Participation students, to help them settle into university. Mentors are senior students who have attended lectures on the theory and practice of peer mentoring.
- [Widening Horizons](#) gives enhanced exchange and study abroad opportunities for widening participation students and was short listed for the Times Higher Education Initiative of the Year in 2014.
- The New '[Insights Programme](#)' is piloting in June with Widening Participation students. It aims to inspire them, increasing their confidence and widening their networks through alumni hosting them for short periods of supported career and workplace exploration. **These programmes are only possible thanks to the double generosity of Edinburgh University's alumni** - for the funding of the programme and for hosting the student placements.

Further information is available here:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-recruitment/widening-participation/about> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-recruitment/widening-participation/projects>

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Outreach to schools and bridging programmes

- The 'School Transitions Programme' is delivered to pupils and their parents/guardians. It aims to ease the transition from Primary to Secondary Education, and to introduce parents and pupils to the idea and prospect of Higher Education.
- The 'Higher Transition Programme' aims to raise the aspirations of pupils in S4 and increase attainment in their first SQA examination diet. The programme is delivered through an in-school session which focuses on different career

pathways and study techniques. By focusing on future prospects it is hoped that the programme will encourage pupils to remain in education.

- The “Top-Up Programme” is designed to help S5 and S6 school pupils who are planning to enter higher education after school or considering that option. Top-Up promotes aspiration in under-represented groups and prepares learners for the transition from school to HE study.
- The University of Glasgow Summer School offers a six week experience of student life and undergraduate study. Participants choose two academic subjects (40 contact hours each) and a study skills module (30 contact hours), to ensure they have a solid grounding in the independent learning style they will need at university.

Access to the professions

- The ‘Access to a Career programmes’ supports access to degrees in Teaching, Engineering and Accountancy & Finance. Programmes consist of in-school sessions and on campus experiences for each year group from S4 to S6 preparing learners to apply for professional degrees.
- Applicants to Medicine and Dentistry via the ‘Reach Programme’ or residing in SIMD20/40 postcode areas have 10% added to their UKCAT score², to aid their ability to reach the threshold for interview. Work experience placements are obtained for some applicants, if they have difficulty accessing these personally, for subjects such as Veterinary Medicine, Medicine and Education. Personal statement workshops or online advice are provided.

Contextualised admissions/ Support for disadvantaged students

The University of Glasgow has provided the following information:

- We operate a distinct WP (widening participation) Admissions process. Any applicant identified as being a WP/Access applicant, is considered via this process, out with the standard applicant pool. WP applicants are automatically considered at our adjusted Access Threshold for the subject to which they are applying. Therefore, every WP/Access applicant receives contextualised consideration automatically. Any applicant identified as a WP/Access applicant, is guaranteed an adjusted offer of entry or adjustments in the Admissions process to reach the interview stage (where an interview is used), as long as they have the potential to reach the adjusted Access Threshold tariff. Therefore, all entrants who were identified as having contextual factors were made an offer at the adjusted Access Threshold.
- We take a very broad view regarding who may benefit from contextualised admissions and WP provision. To widen participation, UoG targets what could be termed as ‘non-traditional’ students. For UoG, a ‘non-traditional’ or WP student could be from any other background. This encompasses a wide range of applicant groups, but a WP student could meet certain criteria. These criteria are used to identify applicants who should receive a contextualised offer and/or to target students for support on course:
 - Reside in an SIMD20 or SIMD40 postcode area³
 - Care experience
 - Attend a school with low progression to HE

² <https://www.ukcat.ac.uk/ukcat-test/>

³ MD20 and MD40 are the 20% and 40% most disadvantaged postcode areas in Scotland by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). This is the main measure by which the Scottish Government and Scottish Funding Council judge the effectiveness of an HEI at widening participation.

- In receipt of Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)
 - In receipt of Free School Meals (FSM)
 - Is a Carer
 - Is living or studying without family support (estranged from family)
 - Refugee/asylum seeker status
 - First in family to enter HE
 - Adult returners to education via an Access Course
 - Entrant from Further Education College (FEC)
- Applicants from SIMD20 or SIMD40 postcode areas, or who have spent time in care, or are estranged from family support, are **guaranteed** an adjusted offer of entry at our Access Threshold. This can be up to 7-8 Higher Grade points below the standard tariff. As a condition of this offer, applicants will also have to have participated successfully in one of our pre-entry WP programmes.
 - Similarly, adult returner students on Access Courses (our own UoG Access Courses, SWAP Access Courses and other Access Courses) are guaranteed an offer if they perform to the requisite level on the Access Course.
 - Additionally, we offer Care Leaver Bursaries and direct care experienced applicants to other financial support. Study, emotional and transitional support is also offered. Students are contacted by our Care Leaver Support Coordinator upon application, if they have not already been put in touch via our varied partners across Social Work and the third sector.

Further information is available

here: https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_411924_en.pdf : https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_557309_en.pdf

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

Outreach to schools and bridging programmes

- 'First Chances Foundation' works with P7, S1 and S2 pupils, encouraging them to develop their skills, motivation and self-esteem in order to achieve their full potential as they progress through their education. Each year pupils follow a specially designed programme, culminating in an annual residential summer school at the University. The programme is delivered through a series of workshops and events both in St Andrews and the local community by schoolteachers and University staff, supported by current University students.
- The senior phase of the 'First Chances Project' aims to equip pupils with the skills necessary to achieve their full potential during their time in education, as well as provide them with a range of information on further and higher education which will allow them to make informed decisions about their future. The project aims to enhance the chances of pupils being offered a place at a competitive university or course of their choice (wherever this may be) and encourages pupils to make the most of their 'first chances' and access all opportunities available to them.
- Access for Rural Communities is a pioneering project aimed at supporting and enabling young learners on their journey into university. Working with S4 to S6 pupils, the ARC project provides a platform for pupils to explore opportunities in higher education in Argyll and Bute, Highland, Eilean Siar (Western Isles) and Shetland and Orkney.

- The University's Gateway programmes promote the uptake of higher education among those groups that are traditionally under-represented at university. They have been designed to help those who have experienced some disadvantage in their schooling gain entry to the University. The University currently operates three Gateway programmes, in Computer Science, Medicine and Physics and Astronomy.
- Each year, the Admissions team organises a free week-long residential summer school intended for those studying anywhere in the UK who still have a year to complete at school. The aim is to demystify elite universities and to equip students with the knowledge and insight to make high-quality applications to top universities. Participants take part in a varied programme of academic and social activities designed to give insight into what university study would be like. Students will live in a university hall of residence and attend academic sessions in two subject areas of their choice. Sessions are also held on the UCAS application process, personal statements and student finance to ensure advice and guidance are given on all aspects of the journey to university.

Access to the professions

- The University works with Fife secondary schools to support S4 to S6 pupils who wish to study Medicine, Economics, Management or Psychology as part of the 'Reach Scotland' Project. Reach members receive support and guidance throughout the university application process, aiming to give them the tools, know-how and confidence to stretch themselves and succeed in higher education.

Contextualised admissions/ Support for disadvantaged students

The University of St Andrews has provided the following information:

The University's ambition is to see equity of access across the country, regardless of socio-economic background. We pledge to make an offer to all applicants who:

- declare a looked after or in-care background.
- who reside in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland as indicated by the SIMD and attend a school which has 30% or lower progression to higher education; provided that the desire to study the subject is demonstrable, the minimum asking rates within all specified required subjects are met and if relevant there is success in external testing or interview.

To support our students from the most disadvantaged areas in Scotland while at the University we will:

- offer a full transition programme, with taster days along with a First year mentoring programme for all students with access criteria such as socio-economic disadvantage, attendance of a low progression school or a background of being looked after or in care.
- provide a bursary of £1,500 for every year of study for all students with a household income less than £34,000.

Further information is available here:

<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/access/>

<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/access/contextual-admissions/>

Annex B: Progress on *Working to Widen Access* (WTWA)

You also asked for information on our WTWA actions.

The implementation of WTWA is responsive to developments such as the Scottish Government's newly published Learner Journey report. That involves working in partnership with education stakeholders. For example, the National Articulation Forum is a shared venture involving close joint working with Colleges Scotland, staffing support from the SFC and the commissioning of student research.

All such initiatives are designed to deliver improvements for learners but our inclusive and evidence-based approach will take time to deliver in full. Nevertheless, we are pleased to confirm that we remain on track to meet our deadlines and to deliver all actions.

The list below summarises those WTWA actions that have specific deadlines for 2018/19.

We then provide a more general update on our actions, which are being progressed by various working groups. This update builds on our recent written submission to the Committee⁴.

WTWA actions with 2018/19 deadlines (the numbering refers to the actions as listed in WTWA)

1. Scottish higher education institutions will develop clear and consistent information about contextualised admissions. We will work to publish a set of terms and descriptions in 2018 that pass user-testing and are ready for use to inform the application cycle for 2020/21 entry. **UNDERWAY**
7. 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. **UNDERWAY – universities have provided the National Articulation Forum with an update.**
8. Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland will establish a National Articulation Forum in academic year 2017/18. **COMPLETED**
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. **UNDERWAY**
13. Higher education institutions will agree a common language on bridging programmes for use across the sector to ensure clarity for learners and their advisers. This process will be fully inclusive of relevant stakeholders and be delivered in 2018. **UNDERWAY**
14. Universities Scotland will work with others to scope the development of a single online resource that enables learners and their advisers to access information about bridging programme opportunities offered across Scotland. We will deliver this scoping exercise for the start of 2018/19. **UNDERWAY**

⁴ http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Meeting%20Papers/20180516Meeting_Papers.pdf

Clarifying language (WTWA actions 1, 11 and 13)

Our Language Sub-Group is going to run a discussion session involving students, prospective students and sector professionals to consider how the language of admissions could be made clearer. We expect to hold this in June.

Clearly, the final output of this work has still to be determined, although it is likely that a communications campaign will be required to promote any changes and emphasise that universities will be talking about admissions in more consistent language than before.

In order to enable HEIs to consider the content of their prospectuses for 2020 entry, advice on institutions on terminology and definitions would have to be issued by this autumn.

Admission Working Group (actions 2 to 6)

The Admission Working Group (AWG) will meet again in the summer. It has already agreed to widen its remit, by considering how to respond to feedback from schools about how universities take account of personal statements, Foundation Apprenticeships and Advanced Highers in the admissions process.

The AWG will also have to take account of the Scottish Government's *Access Data Working Group*, whose aim is to address COWA Recommendation 31: "develop a consistent and robust set of measures to identify access students by 2018". This will include the AWG considering whether free school meals should be used as a core indicator for contextualised admissions.

Articulation (actions 7 to 11)

The National Articulation Forum held its first meeting in April, since when the Scottish Government has published its final 'Learner Journey' report which contained further recommendations on articulation. The Forum will meet again in June to consider these recommendations, along with other items.

Bridging programmes (actions 12 to 15)

We will meet the SFC to discuss whether and how its work on bridging programmes could complement our actions. Given our commitment to scope the development of a single online resource (see action 14 above) we will also discuss the Learner Journey recommendation that learners should have access to "*an online prospectus setting out the learning choices available in their region*".

ENDS