



UNIVERSITY
of
ABERTAY DUNDEE

Widening participation strategy: background context

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1. National Context

The Scottish Parliament's Report in 2002 into Lifelong Learningⁱ expressed the belief that the development of lifelong learning was essential to the future of Scotland. The arguments put forward included the need for a highly skilled workforce, the need for a modern democracy to have an educated population and the importance of equality of opportunity to learning as a means of achieving social justice. The Report recommended that the articulation between FE and HE be improved and that efforts be made to continue to widen access to higher education. In its Higher Education Review, the Scottish Executiveⁱⁱ indicated that it would expect institutions 'to help raise aspirations and breakdown barriers to learning for different types of learner' and to 'contribute to closing the opportunity gap between those who achieve their full potential and those who do not'.

Since 1999, SHEFCⁱⁱⁱ has provided a Wider Access Development Grant comprising of four strands namely the Development of the FE/HE interface, institutional development and co-ordination, the establishment of four regional wider access forums and funding for projects to widen participation. From 2004, the wider access forums will assume responsibility for developing regional strategies, identifying priorities and allocating funding to help FE and HE institutions work together to realise these strategies.

SHEFC^{iv} also provides funding to each HEI as part of the main teaching grant in the form of the part-time fee-waiver, a disabled students premium and a wider access premium as well as providing some 1200 additional funded places since 1999 to widen access to both full-time and part-time programmes. Institutions are required as a condition of grant to devise and implement strategies for equality of opportunity and widening participation.

The development of the Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework (SCQF) was seen by the Lifelong Learning Report^v as playing an important role in promoting articulation between FE and HE and helping learners to make lateral as well as vertical progression across the qualifications structure. The SACCA/QAA project on mapping, tracking and bridging is aimed at providing information on student flows between FE and HE with a view to informing its expansion. In 2003 SHEFC^{vi} announced a £2million grant to support FE/HE articulation by enhancing existing links and developing new links, it is anticipated that HEIs will receive some of this funding on the basis of current students entering with advanced standing from FE colleges.

The approaches to funding wider access taken by SHEFC and HEFCE are significantly different. HEFCE^{vii} currently allocates £265m out of its £3.4bn teaching grant (i.e. 7.7%) to wider access and improving retention. This includes £38m for a postcode premium to encourage recruitment of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and £155m allocated on the basis of entry qualifications and age to support retention activities for the most at risk groups of students. This funding is closely linked to detailed institutional plans. In contrast SHEFC^{viii}, with its strategy of minimising top-sliced funding and a less interventionist approach to institutional planning has allocated £17.2m of its £555m teaching grant (i.e. 3.3%) to funding wider access via grants and premiums. SHEFC have therefore left it to individual institutions to develop their own strategies for widening participation. The planning documents developed by HEFCE and the English institutions do provide a useful resource to help inform the development of an institutional strategy.

SHEFC and the HE sector institutions in selecting employability and student

2. Regional Context

2.1 University Entry from Low Participation Areas

Dundee has 31% of its 150,000 population living in areas within the highest 10% of the Scottish Deprivation Index¹, compared with just 3% in Angus. A similar situation exists in Glasgow with 60% of its 618,000 population living within areas of high deprivation.

Students from low participation areas tend to go to their local universities². For example typically 32% of the entrants to Scottish Universities from low participation areas in Dundee enrolled at the University of Abertay and 51% enrolled at Dundee University, leaving just 17% enrolling at Universities outwith Dundee. A similar picture occurs in Glasgow where just 1.4% of entrants from low participation areas enrol at either of the Dundee universities. Any effective wider access strategy is therefore most likely to be one that addresses the needs of local students.

Both Dundee and Abertay universities³ are successful in exceeding their HESA benchmarks for young full-time undergraduate entrants from low participation neighbourhoods.

2.2 Demographic Trends

The Scottish Parliament's Lifelong Learning Report^{ix} pointed out that by 2020 demographic factors would lead to a 25% decline in the number of young workers and that with 80% of University entrants currently coming from professional backgrounds there was an opportunity to address the future skills gap by widening participation.

The decline in the population of young people in the Tayside and Fife area⁴ will be particularly severe in Dundee City. The same survey predicts that while the population of Scotland will decline by 0.8% from 1998 to 2016 the decline in Dundee City will be 16%. In addition the performance of pupils in Dundee schools⁵, expressed in terms of the percentage achieving 3 or more Highers at grades A-C, is significantly lower than in other areas of Tayside and Fife. The University is clearly located in a city in which there is a particular requirement to increase participation in HE in order to address the agenda of the Lifelong Learning Report.

2.3 Fife & Tayside Wider Access Forum

The Forum was established in 1999 as the regional access forum of the HEIs in Fife and Tayside as part of the SHEFC wider access initiative. In 2001, when SFEFC joined SHEFC in funding the regional forums, the membership of the Forum was expanded to include the FE colleges in the region. The Forum has carried out a number of worthwhile projects^x but in its first five years of operation it did not realise its potential to make a strategic impact on the development of wider access in the region. Following the decision by the SFC to channel all wider access project funding through the regional forums, the Fife & Tayside Forum

¹ See Appendix table 3

² See Appendix table 4

³ See Appendix table 5

⁴ See Appendix table 1

⁵ See Appendix table 2

has been reconstituted. The proposed new Forum will have a small executive of principals/deputy principals of HEI/FEIs and a regional manager and will aim to develop a regional strategy for widening access to higher education and fund projects to help the participating institutions realise the strategy.

The regional strategy will aim to widen participation in HE from schools, colleges and from potential mature students who are not engaged in FE.

3. University Context

3.1 Wider Access Projects

The current measures to encourage wider access comprise of the activities of the Abertay Wider Access Centre (AWAC) and the Student Recruitment Office(SRO). Both AWAC and SRO work closely with the Schools of the University.

AWAC currently co-ordinates the following activities:

- AHEAD – 1 and 2 semester evening access programmes targeted at adult returners with a dedicated drop-in centre for additional support
- [Learning@Edzell](#) project with Angus College, the University of Dundee and Angus Council taking wider access and e-learning into a rural community
- 4-week summer school for entrants, identified by their schools as being disadvantaged by background or circumstance
- 3-day bridging programme for direct entrants from FE Colleges
- WAIT – ESF funded programme to help women enter IT degree programmes

SRO currently co-ordinates the following wider access activities

- Abertay Compact aimed at motivating young secondary school pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to aspire to attend University
- Turning Heads Programme aimed at providing students from local schools in low participation areas to sample University life and study
- Visits by School staff to local schools to raise awareness and stimulate interest in study in specific areas

3.2 Wider Access Routes at Abertay

The University has been successful in attracting students from under-represented groups in HE, exceeding its benchmark for both undergraduates from social classes IIIM-V and mature students.

Category	Number of entrants	Percentage of total
Total	1265	
Young (under 21)	885	70%
Young – Social Class IIIM-V	327	26%
Mature	380	30%
Under represented Groups	707	56%

Figure 1 Abertay Students from Underrepresented Groups 2001/2

Source – HEFCE/HESA Performance Indicators in HE – Dec 2003

Numbers refer to all home undergraduate entrants to full-time programmes and includes entry to first and subsequent years.

From Figure 1 it can be seen that typically some 710 (56%) of undergraduate entrants to the university are either young students from social classes IIIM-V or

are mature students. In comparison⁶ the University's summer school results in between 25 to 40 entrants and the AHEAD programme for adult returners between 15 and 25 entrants. Articulation from HNC and HND programmes⁷ into stages 2 and 3 of undergraduate programmes provides wider access opportunities for typically 250 students each year.

Currently therefore the main ways in which the University is providing wider access opportunities is actually through its undergraduate provision either by entry into the first year of programmes or via articulation routes from local colleges rather than through formal access programmes.

3.3 Student Achievement

There is some evidence⁸ that young entrants from low participation areas may be performing less well at Abertay. Mature students at Abertay⁹ in common with other HEIs are also less likely than young entrants to progress into their second year of study. Given the Abertay's success in recruiting students from under-represented groups a key part of the University's widening participation strategy should be to work to improve the completion rates of wider access students

4. Widening Participation rather than Wider Access

Hitherto the University has used the term wider access to describe measures to increase participation in higher education from underrepresented groups. The emphasis has been on measures to encourage participation from raising awareness, inspiring an ambition to study in HE and the development of skills needed for successful participation. To date there has been little emphasis on measures that promote successful completion of studies.

It is recommended that the term wider participation strategy be adopted because it includes post entry support and also the concept that in a world of lifelong learning the engagement with HE may be intermittent and may involve non-traditional modes of study and personal development.

SFEFC and SHEFC in funding a recent report into cross-sector collaboration to widen participation^{xi} defined widening participation as '*a process which seeks to increase and enhance initial access to and participation in and progressing through further and higher education for under-represented groups There are many factors, often inter-related, which may constitute barriers to participation in post-compulsory education. These factors include, but are not limited to socio-economic status, gender, age, disability and geographical location.*'

By seeking to remove barriers to higher education the widening participation strategy has much in common with the accessibility agenda associated with the University's equal opportunities strategy.

APPENDIX 1

DATA

⁶ See Appendix table 10

⁷ See Appendix table 10

⁸ See Appendix table 6

⁹ See Appendix tables 6 and 7

Local Authority	Projected Population Change 1998-2016		
	0-14 years	15-29 years	All Ages
Dundee City	-28%	-14%	-16%
Angus	-15%	-9%	-2%
Fife	-16%	-8%	0%
Perth & Kinross	-4%	+2%	+6%
Glasgow City	-16%	-10%	-4%

Table 1 Projected Population Change by Age Group
[Source GROS 1998-based population projections^{xii}]

Local Authority	Percentage of S5 achieving 3 or more Highers at A-C		
	1999	2000	2001
Dundee City	14	22	15
Angus	24	26	25
Fife	21	22	23
Perth & Kinross	25	16	28
Glasgow City	11	13	13

Table 2 Performance of School Pupils at Higher Grade
[source HM Inspectorate of Education^{xiii}]

Local Authority	Population	Percentage of Population in high deprivation postcode sectors
Dundee City	150,250	31%
Angus	111,000	3%
Fife	349,300	2%
Perth & Kinross	132,570	5%
Glasgow City	618,430	60%

Table 3 Percentage of Local Authority Population in Postcode Sectors in worst 10% for Scottish Area Deprivation Index
[source COSLA, 1998 Directory of Scottish Local Government^{xiv}]

HEI	Undergraduate enrolments from postcode sectors with a SPR less than 65 in 2001-02				
	Dundee	Inverclyde	Glasgow	N Lanark	Total
Abertay	152	11	9	3	163
Dundee	242	4	12	13	270
Paisley	2	57	206	51	317
Bell	1	1	48	280	329
Strathclyde	5	23	230	211	469
G Cal	1	36	514	232	782
Glasgow	4	33	249	141	427
Total	472	178	1486	1102	

Table 4 Comparison of HEI Enrolments in Postcode sectors with low participation. Standardised Student Participation Ratio (SPR) is the ratio of students from the postcode area divided by the expected number x 100
[Source SHEFC Circular Letter HE/09/03^{xv}]

University	Total First Degree Entrants 2001-2	Social Class IIIM,IV,V	Low participation post codes	Mature Entrants
Abertay	1265	37%	26%	30%
Dundee	1510	24%	20%	24%
Paisley	1560	42%	34%	46%
G Cal	3531	37%	29%	32%
RGU	1419	30%	16%	19%

Table 5 Participation of Under-Represented Groups in HE
Social Class and Low Participation expressed as a percentage of young first degree entrants [source HESA^{xvi}]

University	Percentage of group not continuing in HE following year of entry – 2000-1 entrants			
	Young from low participation areas	Young from other areas	Mature	All Home undergraduate Entrants
Abertay	19	12	17	15
Dundee	13	7	17	10
Paisley	17	16	20	18
Gcal	16	12	18	14
RGU	12	9	14	11

Table 6 Non-Continuation Following Year of Entry
[source HESA^{xvii}]

Age	Entry Qualifications	Number of students	Percentage not continuing
Young	> 17 UCAS points	103,300	4.1
	10 to 16 UCAS points	52,500	8.8
	<10 points, BTEC etc	63,400	13.5
Mature	>27 points	3,700	10.3
	<27 points at A level/Highers	37,800	14.8
	BTEC, GNVQ etc	19,000	19.3

Table 7 Non Continuation rate from First to second Year of entrants to first degree courses in 1999-2000 by risk category
[source - HEFCE^{xviii}]

Category		Number	Percentage
Young		881	70%
	State Schools	(863)	98%
	Social Class III-V	326	37%
	Low Participation Areas	229	26%
Mature		386	30%
	No prev HE & low participation areas	73	6%
Disabled	Disabled Allowance	74*	2.4%
	Self assessed	88	7
Female		570	45%
Ethnic Minorities		145*	5%
Tayside & Fife		(760)	60%

Table 8 Profile of first year undergraduate student population at the University of Abertay for 2001-02 (* denotes data refers to total undergraduate population) [Source HESA]

Social Class	Percentage of students working
Unskilled	79%
Partly Skilled	39%
Skilled Manual	51%
Skilled Non-Manual	41%
Intermediate	32%
Professional	17%

Table 9 Percentage of Students working during term-time by social class
[Source – Prospects Careers Service^{xix}]

	Students entering a Degree/ DipHE programme		
Access Route	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4
AHEAD	16	18	24
Summer School	42	19	25
FE College	281	226	330

Table 10 Comparison of Wider Access Routes
[FE College entrants are direct entrants to years 2 or 3 of programmes]

	Achievement Rates in first year at University		
Access Route	2000/1	2001/2	2002/3
AHEAD	50%	63%	83%
Summer School	51%	62%	63%
FE College	80%	71%	64%
All year 1 students	71%	71%	65%

Table 11 Comparison of Student Achievement from Wider Access Routes
[Achievement Rate is the % of students progressing to the next stage or exiting with the stage award]

REFERENCES

- ⁱ Enterprise & Lifelong Learning Committee of the Scottish Parliament, 2002, pages 16 - 19.
- ⁱⁱ Scottish Executive, 2003, A Framework for Higher Education in Scotland, Higher Education Review: Phase 2, pp32-33.
- ⁱⁱⁱ SHEFC, 2003, Circular Letter HE/17/00, Wider Access Development Funding: outcomes, reporting requirements and appointment of a national co-ordinator.
- ^{iv} For example – SHEFC Circular Letter HE/09/03, Main Grants in support of teaching and research for 2003-04, Annex A, paras 58 to 75.
- ^v Enterprise & Lifelong Learning Committee, *ibid* p25.
- ^{vi} SHEFC circular letter HE/09/03 *ibid* para 26.
- ^{vii} HEFCE March2003/10, Recurrent grants for 2003-04, p3
- ^{viii} SHEFC circular letter HE/09/03, *ibid*, table 1
- ^{ix} Enterprise & Lifelong Learning Committee of the Scottish Parliament, *ibid*, para 23.
- ^x The initial projects carried out by the Forum were aimed at gathering information on both the flow of students from FE to HE and the provision of part time degrees and funding part-time advisers to facilitate adult entry to HE. The second phase projects created a web site to help potential students at early stages in making decisions on HE entry, delivered motivational conferences for school pupils and identified potential barriers to transition for disabled students.
- ^{xi} SHEFC, 2002, Circular Letter HE/25/02, Cross Sector Collaboration to widen participation, *Pyramids or Spiders? – A Report prepared by the European Access Network for SFC*, p4
- ^{xii} SFEFC, 2002, Demand & Supply of Further Education in Scotland, National Report, Appendix 4.1 p65
- ^{xiii} SFEFC, 2002, *ibid*, Appendix 3.1 p 64
- ^{xiv} in SHEFC, 2003, Circular Letter HE/09/03, Main grants in support of teaching and research for 2003-04, Annex A Table A5a
- ^{xv} SHEFC, 2003, HE/09/03, *ibid*, Table A5b
- ^{xvi} HEFCE, 2003, Performance indicators in higher education in the UK, Table 1b
- ^{xvii} HEFCE, 2003. *ibid*, Tables T3a, T3b, T3c
- ^{xviii} HEFCE, 2003, March2003/14, Funding for widening participation in higher education, Responses to consultation and funding for 2003-4 to 2005-6, Annex B Table 3 p16
- ^{xix} Prospects Careers Service Desk, <http://www.prospects.ac.uk/>