WINGS (WIDENING ACCESS INDICATORS for GUIDANCE of STUDENTS)

Final Report

Contents

Executive summary

The Widening Access Indicators for Guidance of Students (WINGS) project was devised in response to a request for bids under the Impact for Access stream by the Scottish Funding Council. The main aim was to use a qualitative approach to examine the present guidance measures used by College courses and University widening participation projects to identify quality benchmark indicators. These indicators and the good practice identified in the process, provide a framework for guidance and student support (in both further and higher education institutions) to reduce the inequality gap in education provision.

Methodology

A key element of the project was to look at guidance provision as widely as possible. While taking a student lifecycle approach, the project also considered alternatives angles, but concluded it is still the best way to evaluate success for students in both sectors. The project collated the present quality indicators used by Education Scotland and QAA in respect of student support, guidance, progression and awareness of the diversity of students. From these ten broad quality benchmarks the project then analysed all of the processes that involve the student life cycle from initial engagement to progression. 95 indicators were identified which have a bearing on the student journey.

The project undertook a series of face-to-face interviews with colleges and universities to build a body of evidence around guidance practices and current initiatives relating to these indicators. Various primary and secondary research sources and publications were utilised to ensure appropriate scope and depth of analysis, particularly stressing outcome agreements and quality reports.

KEY RECOMMENATIONS

The project will make key recommendations in this report around four key stages of the student learner journey, which we have simplified as follows:

1. **GETTING IN**
2. **SETTLING IN**
3. **GETTING ON**
4. **MOVING ON**

The report will highlight a number of recommendations within each of the headings as well as highlighting a number of good practice case studies which we believe will benefit the development of our widening participation students and the ability of our education sectors to respond well to their ambitions.

In addition there are a number of elements that can be regarded as shared across the key stages, these require particular attention.

1) Development and professionalism of all staff involved in the key stages and awareness of the responsibility of educating and responding to students who may have many complex requirements.
2) Identifying potential at selection, nourishing and challenging our students' talents will ensure high quality students and better sustained progression.
3) Using data can considerably assist our ability to provide high class education. Sharing and responding effectively to data will be a defining point in succeeding in reducing the inequality gap.
4) There is considerable good work across both sectors, which we have highlighted and detailed in appendix I. While there is good work across all 4 key stages, the third GETTING ON stage requires development. Particularly in terms of academic and student support staff working together effectively for the benefit of students.

Some additional thoughts

In addition to these key cross cutting aspects, we have noted in the report general recommendations where these have been significantly highlighted across institutions and sectors. For example, developing systems that can respond more effectively to mental health issues, the benefits Student Associations can bring to the work of guidance, and how education providers can work with other organisations involved with students with complex needs. A very clear theme that is often not picked up in using a student journey approach is the need for guidance for influencers, particularly in reducing the inequality gap.

For guidance to be further developed using quality mechanisms, both sectors need to clearly report on how they are developing their work both within their institution and, we would hope, collectively. In order to do so, all of the main headings we have used can effectively be implemented within present quality reporting mechanisms. There should be no need for any additional work. We would also very much support the work being carried out by the SFC and the quality providers to ensure simplification of reporting.

In terms of improving guidance work across both sectors, the QAA enhancement theme approach – where a theme is developed across a longer period of time, generally 3 years – is one that we believe will be useful.

However, for the university sector it is clear that the remaining issue is the mainstreaming of very good practice when much of the widening participation work remains resourced on a project basis. As a substantial amount of the widening access work carried out in universities relates directly to guidance, we would suggest taking a quality enhancement approach – one that can go some way to sustaining the good practice that exists. Clearly we would hope that the new framework for access, recommended by the Commission on Widening Access will utilise the very practical aspects of our report in terms of using these indicators as a way of measuring effective success.

1. Prelude

The WINGS Project was devised in response to a request for bids under the Impact for Access stream by the Scottish Funding Council. Our proposal was to evaluate by examining present guidance measures from college courses and university widening participation projects. There was a practical element to the project in terms of providing quality indicators for guidance work that can be benchmarked for future work by the sectors and SFC. The project considered a College and University Community of Guidance Practitioner group and a set of qualitative case studies of good practice; however, the main focus was on providing a coherent set of quality guidance indicators in order to further reduce the inequality gap in education provision.

> **' "Widening participation students" are not a homogenous group. They may have a range of identities, diverse social characteristics and come from a variety of backgrounds.' (Access All Areas Report, pii.)[1]**

With the Commission on Widening Access[2] (CoWA) recommendation for a Scottish Framework for Access by 2018 being at the forefront of action around widening access (Recommendation 2), we felt it was important that this report mirrored the issues raised by CoWA. We have detailed the evidence collected and collated from interviews with staff in colleges and universities, along with case studies of best practice and widening participation work.

The WINGS recommendations below are set out in terms of a four stage learner journey. Concurring with CoWA, we found evidence of duplication of development of widening participation initiatives and have striven to suggest ways in which resources across the sectors could be better used in channelling work into focused activity (Recommendation 4).

1.1 WINGS Project outcomes

-   To develop a quality framework (including a set of benchmark indicators) for guidance work with students from a widening participation background. The indicators provide a benchmark for successful progression to Higher Education. These can be utilised as an expectation of the standard of guidance for students involved in widening participation work.
-   To provide indicators which specify what "makes a difference" in progressing students to Higher Education. The quality guidance framework can be used in parallel with existing Education Scotland and QAA quality frameworks for colleges and universities in widening participation projects.
-   To bring together a community of guidance practitioners who specifically work with widening participation students in order to continue to develop mechanisms that work in considering the multiple complexities faced by students.
-   To gather and collate a qualitative set of good practice guidance case studies.

In considering the quality indicators, the project worked with guidance specifically developed for the following students:

-   Living in SIMD 20 postcodes
-   With specified socio-economic factors e.g. family background, first in family, adult learners with no qualifications above SCQF level 5 and disability
-   Relevant protected characteristics e.g. gender where students are studying in specifically gender specific degrees (e.g. men into nursing, women into engineering)

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[1] www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/wp.../ACCESS-ALL-AREAS-3MB.pdf
[2] http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00496535.pdf

1.2 Rationale

Good guidance is often cited as key to successful progression for students from non-traditional backgrounds. It is a striking statistic that: **'on average, retention rates for the 20% most deprived students are 7.2% lower than those for students overall'** (p.6, *Unlocking Scotland's potential: Promoting fairer access to higher education*, NUS 2012). Guidance project work initially started as widening participation initiatives have now become mainstream activities which benefit all students – e.g. induction, UCAS workshops, study skill visits, mentoring, and effective learning. It is clear that much work is still required to be done to reduce inequality in the student experience. Whilst recognising the professionalism of college and university staff involved and the "extra miles" they are prepared to go to, to get the best support for their students, there are still areas for improvement.

A selection of hard-hitting, 2014 Education Scotland Aspect Reports[3] highlighted the considerable difficulties facing college students and the strain placed on college support guidance structures as a result. WINGS showcases proven guidance successes and addresses the complex issues that still require to be tackled to enable more students to successfully access higher education. The quality indicators will provide a useful resource to those actively involved in guidance and provide funders and senior management with benchmarks to ascertain success.

1.3 Collaboration

The project worked with four sectors:

1. College sector – working with Student Services staff.
2. University sector – lifelong learning and access provision staff
3. Specific widening participation bridging and transition projects e.g. Top Up
4. Students – the project worked with 2 groups: first those who are receiving guidance and considering progression; second students at University who reflected on their widening participation intervention.

1.4 Methodology

WINGS can be broken down into four phases; some of these ran in tandem.

Phase One
The initial phase of WINGS focussed on setting the benchmark indicators that would cover the student journey from their initial contact with the institution to pre-exit and transition. During our interviews, we identified many examples of best practice already in use in colleges and universities (see Appendix I). The top level 10 indicators below (with 95 subsidiary level points) run parallel with the quality requirements of both Education Scotland and QAA with a specific emphasis on widening participation and protected characteristics. The full list of indicators is available at Appendix II.

1. Selection for Course
2. Interview and Analysing Potential
3. Induction and Settling in
4. Choices
5. In Course Guidance
6. Self-Evaluation and Reflection

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[3] http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/Supportinglearnerstosucceed_tcm4-843313.pdf, http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/MaxisingLearnerSuccess_tcm4-839323.pdf, http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/m/genericresource_tcm4827493.asp?strReferringChannel=inspectionandreview&strReferringPageID=tcm:4-682712-64&class=l1+d147708

7. Progression
8. Transition
9. Transition Experience/Employment Options
10. Attendance and retention

In developing these indicators, we tried to ensure that the guidance the student received was paramount in influencing and assisting with the trajectory of their journey. Additionally in Phase One we researched previous Education Scotland HMIe Reviews and the Regional Outcome Agreements for each institution. Recognising that some reviews were dated, particularly in the case of the merged colleges, we nonetheless felt it was important to acknowledge practice, especially already identified excellent practice, and to be aware of the direction the institution planned to take in the next few years on a broader perspective.

Phase Two
This consisted of interviewing predominantly Student Services Staff in each of the institutions, although in some, senior managers played a role, and in others the interview was conducted with the person responsible for widening participation and access. For reasons of time and economy, not all UHI institutions took part although a representative sample was covered.

Taking consideration of the institutions' Outcome Agreements (and also the Education Scotland Reviews for Colleges) the Project Team identified key questions within the indicators on which to focus and these formed the basis for the agenda of interviews, along with further examples of practice from each institution's data. The project team are very grateful to all those who took time out of their busy schedules to share their experience and knowledge.

Interviews often raised further examples of excellent and innovative practice as well as instances where the practice had changed in the course of college mergers. That often highlighted the individual nature of some good guidance processes which had on occasions been lost due to the staff member leaving.

Student interviews/sessions took place to consider whether their experience of the guidance systems matched what had been outlined by staff. Focus group sessions and some individual interviews were held, on occasion by telephone although mostly face-to-face.

Phase Two also involved consideration of the outcomes of the Top-Up[4] and Reach Programme[5] and initiatives aimed at schools whose students have a history of low participation rates in higher education. Both projects use recent graduates and postgraduate students who are trained to deliver a programme of activity. The project spent some time discussing their role and the highly effective guidance these students provide.

Phase Three
Early analysis of the interviews with staff suggested some recurring themes. The Project Team had made use of College Development Network's Access, Inclusion and Guidance Development Network to promote the project. However the examination of guidance factors is such that the bi-annual meeting of this group does not afford the depth of consideration that is required.

To unpack the workings of these systems, a face-to-face session was arranged with a broad spread of representation to discuss a challenging agenda focusing on areas where improvements could be made and guidance strengthened. The outcomes of this initial meeting are included within the recommendations of

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[4] http://www.gla.ac.uk/about/wideningparticipation/supportingaccesstogeneralsubjects/top-up/
[5] http://www.gla.ac.uk/about/wideningparticipation/supportingaccesstoprofessionalsubjects/reachaccesstomedicineveterinarymedicinedentistryandlaw/

this report but essentially considered pressures on guidance and student services staff, in particular students in colleges who are challenged by welfare changes, age policies, and the shift of demographics. As one participant said:

'Students are simply not the same as they were 5, 6, 7 years ago. Complex cases are now the norm, not the exception. We are seeing 10x more [complex] cases than previously'.

The influencers' role was debated, together with the SDS service in schools. The role of student associations merited further discussion. Roles and responsibilities for both academic and student services were considered in the context of providing the best information and support for learners. Development of the existing Community of Practice was a further topic of interest to participants in the meeting.

As part of a commitment to broadcast the work of the project we met with Education Scotland, QAA and SDS, all of whom have an interest and engagement with guidance in the sectors. We additionally carried out an evaluation of some other agencies whose function includes the provision of specific types of advice and guidance to learners and young people.

Phase Four
In the final phase of data analysis, we took account of how the quality frameworks are used to guide the institutions and to shape the project findings. In this case, using the frameworks to identify good practice and considering whether this could, and should be, rolled out to form a baseline for guidance was a high priority.

The emerging themes from the analysis of the data were:

- The changing student applicant profile
- Analysing Potential
- Effective Induction
- In-Course Guidance
- Choices and Progression
- Self-Evaluation and Reflection
- Challenges around student mental health issues
- Student Funding
- Joint Training of academic and support staff in selected areas

2. The Student's Journey Key Recommendations

This section is divided into four which roughly reflect the stages of the learner journey: applying for and being accepted onto the course; induction and early days of teaching; on-going guidance practice and support; and finally, the transition onwards to further study or employment. These match the indicators which we devised from QAA and Education Scotland terminology for inspection and review. We have summarised the four stages of the learner journey as: Getting In, Staying In, Getting On and Moving on.

2.1 Getting In

> **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**
> 1. **Universities and college widening access staff should be recognised as the front line of community engagement.**
> 2. **Potential to succeed activities should be carried out at the selection stage.**
> 3. **A central database of information on learners should be available to institutions.**
> 4. **"Forever" buttons should be available to students to update their information at key stages throughout their journey.**
> 5. **Interviews and face to face contact with education institutions are central to success of a student feeling welcome. Training and consideration of interviews should be made available to all relevant staff.**

1. Recommendation 17 of the CoWA Report, states that "SDS and schools should work together to provide a more coordinated tailored offer of information, advice and guidance to disadvantaged learners at key transition phases throughout their education". This information needs to be timeous and factually correct to have impact. Too many of our interviewees commented on concerns that guidance was out of date and incorrect. We would recommend college and university guidance staff engage with schools and SDS to ensure the tailored offer recommended.

> **Case Study**
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> **Fife College** prepares students for entry by providing access to a Facebook page, with prompting messages sent out both before and over the summer period. These messages offer concrete advice to students on crucial elements post acceptance. One example is the message which goes out around the time parents and guardians would receive their P60 notice to remind students that this will be needed for their bursary application and to keep track of where it is.

2. CoWA recommends (Recommendation 16) that universities and colleges develop a community approach to encourage participation from populations which traditionally do not engage in education, and to make contact at the early stage of the learner's journey. Edinburgh University's Primary and Early Secondary School Programme provides an example of this in practice.

3. At interview and selection stage, an assessment should be carried out as to the student's aptitude and interest, and therefore potential to succeed on the course. There are a number of examples of this in the Excellent and Innovative Practice Section of the report.

4. Interviews are often key to the initial engagement with students from a widening participation background. It is often the first contact with a positive learning environment and therefore staff involved need to consider the potential student needs as well as the needs of the Institution to recruit. Alternative assessments may have to be considered for students with additional learning

needs. Good examples of standard interview questions are from UHI Perth and South Lanarkshire College.

> **Case Study**
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> "Step Ahead" is the system of support from **UHI Inverness** that prepares students through a number of transition workshops which are offered prior to the start of session. These workshops cover tours of the campus, study skills and information about support services. Tailored workshops run for FE and HE students highlighting the study skills relevant to the level of study.

5. While identifying protected characteristics for different access groups, and assessing learner needs to provide additional support is done well, there are instances where the student does not initially disclose these. We recommend that students are given the opportunity to revisit their information 3-6 months after enrolment, to make any necessary changes. This could be as straightforward as declaring a pregnancy, but could be a disability which has become a problem during early study, e.g. arthritis. In some institutions the student has access to their personal records at specific times of the year and is able to update these, using a "Forever" button. This would seem to be a useful addition from the transition stage onwards, and an ideal way of encouraging disclosure of needs.

   This CDN video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=de_FwDHHyWk&list=PLj4Y8EJHQ3ESyiThSzxsHw0ddcYclg1fa may help clarify for students why colleges need this information. This video is designed for those whose first language is not English. However, it is informative for everyone who is about to start study at college and could be further developed.

6. Protected Characteristics and additional support needs are handled very well across the sectors. In all cases where a student discloses on the application form, Student Services are pro-active in contacting the student and arranging the support required. In the vast majority of cases, the identification of protected characteristics, as well as issues in respect of care, if identified early, are dealt with expertly by Student Services. In some universities they are referred to a senior adviser of studies. In some attendance registers, e.g. Queen Margaret University, Newbattle Abbey College, students are highlighted for the tutor's information.

   We found all institutions mentioned specific support aimed at Care Leavers. Good examples are the strategic development at Strathclyde University and practical assistance at West College Scotland http://www.westcollegescotland.ac.uk/money-advice-support-services/care-experienced/.

   Both sectors, colleges and universities, have been doing considerable work around support for those in care and in developing care plans and their corporate parenting systems. Many mentioned this as an important adjunct to the work they are doing and the vital support they are giving to a substantial number of students.

7. The SDS Datahub contains information on young people progressing from school with either a learning need, care experience or other protected characteristic. Many institutions feel that it is not robust enough due to the time delays in inputting information and a variance in what is accessible by different levels and types of staff. Never the less, in line with proposals in the CoWA Report, the SDS Datahub could be a good starting point for gathering information on young people with a view to carrying out research into widening participation.

8. All staff involved in interviewing for programmes should undertake training on equalities and be provided with useful updating including the protected characteristics.

2.2 Settling In

1. Induction usually takes the format of a day when student groups meet the tutors; complete enrolment forms; attend generic talks – funding, attendance, health and safety, etc.; tour the college and discuss their timetables (60% of respondents). The better examples we have seen of induction formats practise this, but the college also has an induction or orienteering section on the website with interactive web-based activities with a log-in section. Students complete with "just-in-time" or phased sections covering the first weeks of term. The guidance tutor guides learners through accessing this and checks at week six and again at week 12 that the student has covered the materials. This ensures that 'information overload' on Day 1, or even Week 1, does not happen and that students who have missed the initial days or weeks can catch up. For most learners a longer structured period in which to address induction issues is preferable. A number of good examples are available in both sectors.

    Where there are additional support needs induction should be tailored to include all students. One very good practical example of this is at UHI Inverness, where QR codes have been placed around the building as a guide for students who have anxieties due to autism or Asperger's syndrome. They are shown how to utilise these codes on familiarisation tours prior to the start of the academic year.

Case Study

Phased Induction is successfully carried out by **Forth Valley College** with an on-line programme on their Moodle called iLearn which is carried out over six weeks. This resource provides, amongst other things, learners with a phased induction programme, guiding them through the Learner Charter (which lists student and College responsibilities), Academic Honesty Statement, Health & Safety information, Equality and Diversity information, an introduction to our Learning Resource Centres and other similar short information sessions. Following the phased induction period, Curriculum Managers ensure useful supporting materials are available on iLearn to support a learner's programme of study.

2. Additional support is offered to those with protected characteristics during the early days of their transition. Examples of this include named member of staff contact, peer mentoring and buddy systems (see Appendix I). Peer mentoring particularly is regarded as an effective way to assist transition.

3. Colleges have systems for checking student attendance, mainly used to ensure Bursary and EMA criteria are met but also alerting academic guidance tutors to non-attendance. The most frequent comments about this were around a lack of flexibility where Student Services and the guidance tutor are aware of the student's background but are unable to justify maintaining the EMA or Bursary due to finance/attendance rules and therefore the student is forced to leave. It is clear that a stable financial position ensures clarity for widening participation students. Checking attendance

is useful for highlighting initial issues but should not be used to further penalise students as this can easily result in an unintended vicious cycle of a student not being able to attend the college due to finance.

> **Case Study**
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> Peer Mentoring is offered at **Queen Margaret University**. This initiative is run by the Outreach and Community Engagement Team and Widening Participation. Students who have attended QMU Advance or Direct Entrant induction are prioritised. Mentors are recruited (about 40) prior to the summer break and given Mentor training. Students are asked before the start of term if they'd like a mentor, then are matched up at the start of their studies.

4. Advisers of Studies. We wanted to particularly highlight the use of advisers of studies at university. As they are a well-established part of university life there has perhaps been less focus on their role. It is central to the success of students at university. We would want to highlight where universities use the data they have on students to ensure students with specific needs are matched with experienced advisers of study. The relationship is even more enhanced where advisers of study work with widening access initiatives to provide feedback on the development of students. There are many good examples of this but we would particularly highlight the model used at the University of Glasgow, where the relationship has developed across widening participation initiatives, academic adviser of studies and admissions.

2.3. Getting on

> **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**
> 1. **The role of the course tutor should be clearly defined and training given to staff.**
> 2. **Closer relationships between academic and student services staff will benefit widening participation students.**
> 3. **Consideration should be given to a framework of guidance on programmes that develop learning skills such as employability, self-evaluation and reflection.**
> 4. **Volunteering opportunities relevant to the chosen course should be given recognition.**
> 5. **Students should be aware of their responsibility in developing their academic skills.**

1. The stark statistic that informed the thinking around the GETTING ON phase of the student journey was that the retention of MD20 students while on a college course was 7.2% lower than for other quintiles.

2. It is clear from our discussions that there are many dedicated individuals in both college and university sectors who will go the extra mile for their students. The role and definition of class tutor or academic adviser though can differ widely between institutions.

   In comparison with the other elements of the student life cycle considered in this report, in-course guidance appears at times to have been given less consideration. For example there is sometimes little clarity as to content, consistency and frequency of guidance. Much depends on the personality and interest of the class tutor. In some institutions students meet the tutor three times per annum or arrange a meeting if they need support. In others, the whole class meets weekly. Often what happens relies on the proactivity of the tutor to investigate and deliver what s/he feels would be of most value to the students. SWAP students are exempt from this as they follow a more rigorous structure and there are other examples available in the Excellent and Innovative Practice Section

   Where a schedule of activities was available there was at least a minimum guarantee that students would be guided through basic systems. Where this did not exist, there was a feeling that, in a few cases, students were told to see the tutor if there was a problem and very few activities took place during the timetabled period. This reinforces a *Teaching and Learning Point* from the NUS Race for Equality investigation[6]

   > *While the majority of respondents (71 per cent) felt adequately supported by their academic tutors, with one student even describing their tutor as 'the nicest and most understanding person I have ever met', almost one in four (24 per cent) did not.* **(p. 25)**

   Some colleges have clear direction for academic guidance tutors, for example Borders College where learners identify targets and learning aims through completion of Personal Learning Plans. These ensure learners reflect carefully on their progress towards achievement of personal and learning goals. Course tutors are expected to deliver supportive on-going guidance through regular one-to-one interviews and informal meetings with learners and to provide support and feedback to learners.

   Good guidance on programmes makes a difference to the academic and personal development of a student. Professional, trained Careers staff is an essential element to that development and need to be utilised more efficiently throughout the student learning journey. We recommend that

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[6] http://www.nus.org.uk/PageFiles/12238/NUS_Race_for_Equality_web.pdf

consideration be given to a schedule of activities, which should be undertaken by all students with a mix of on-line and face-to-face events, and systematic training of tutors to undertake the guidance role including 'What Questions to Ask' training to ensure a more consistent approach. Mentoring systems between experienced student services staff and new academic staff would work to expand expertise and knowledge. Glasgow Kelvin College is currently developing an on-line module for SWAP tutors which could be modified to cover all guidance tutors.

3. Developing the relationship between academic and guidance support services staff will considerably assist widening participation students. The nature of our benefit system and the issues facing students ensures that their place of learning is at times one of the few helpful and supportive environments they have. The evidence of staff going above and beyond the call of duty to assist individuals is staggering. However there are also instances where staff trained in working with external agencies can be more effective in respect of resolving issues. It is one of the most difficult aspects we have been required to consider as often individuals will often only open up to trusted class tutors. Therefore it is not a case of our recommendation suggesting "experts" handle the so called "problem cases". The relationship between staff acknowledging the close bond class tutors have with students can ensure effective processes are in place to handle complex and difficult situations. We would stress again that we appreciate fully that this already happens and is often handled sensitively and well within both sectors, nonetheless, a closer relationship between academic and support staff can make it more effective. Awareness that there is an institutional responsibility can develop staff capacity and bring process and understanding closer together. New staff require clear explanations of where they fit into the system and how they can use this to keep retention and performance indicators high. Induction for newly recruited academic staff should make it clear how important guidance and support services are in their day-to-day role.

It has been drawn to our attention that external agencies are aware that the college is a good access points for engaging with students. The partnership approach would see colleges and universities as central points in the drive for social justice.

> **Case Study**
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> A **"**Mystery Shopper**"** initiative at **UHI Moray** questioned students about what would be helpful for them in guidance terms. As a result the One Stop Shop was set up with all student services in one area of the college. This area includes the Study Bar where students can seek additional support with literacy and numeracy as well as report writing, assessment and study skills. This has led to an unanticipated benefit in that students who do not need additional support are joining sessions to improve their skills in the Study Bar as it is seen as being for everyone. It is also where the Student Development Day is run and previous students return to speak on their experience studying at Moray College.

4. There are some very good examples of developing effective learning across the university sector. There is an on-going debate as to whether developing learning skills should be a mandatory element of courses. There are many identified good examples and therefore developing a framework of learning skills, including challenging students around self-evaluation and reflection is helpful – we would suggest – for all students. Where there are opportunities for choices within the college setting, the student should be clear about the progression routes to careers or further academic progression. Personal Learning Support Plans, or similar techniques, allow the student to initiate reflection and planning of their learning. There are excellent examples of these being used for learners with additional support needs and should be part of the guidance framework for all students e.g. City of Glasgow Learner centred e-portfolios.

> **Case Study**
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> Study support is a useful addition to services at college and university and it appears in several formats. **Heriot Watt University** has Power Hours, skills workshops for Heriot-Watt students and staff. The workshops offer a range of topics covering information, research, study and IT skills.

5. While some volunteering opportunities are offered in most institutions, only a few offer formal or informal recognition of these. The benefits of volunteering, particularly in opening up opportunities for students from widening participation backgrounds cannot be underestimated. To encourage volunteering, it should all be given recognition.

> **Case Study**
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> Called the YES Programme (Your Essential Skills), **West College Scotland** combines online guidance and a skills' reflection tool which invites students to interact with staff, create a CV, set goals, and most importantly reflect upon and record their skills and personal development. The YES application allows them to reflect on what they have learned and express it in their own narratives, using the vocabulary of industry, related directly to transferable skills and attributes. The students are required to think more about the skills and attributes required for life, learning and work. The method of accumulative incremental logging of skills allows a progressive record of distance travelled, benefiting every learner.

6. The main objective of the getting on phase is ensuring that the guidance measures enhance the academic or skills development of a student. Students themselves have a responsibility to ensure they develop these skills.

2.4. Moving On

> **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**
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> 1. **Pre-exit guidance should be the conclusion of a well thought out programme of events developed during the first three phases of the student lifecycle.**
> 2. **Students should be given clear information on progression routes.**
> 3. **Appreciation of the continuing importance of transition to University.**

1. There was again evidence of good work with in colleges of exit interview sessions, CV sessions and a record of education and training, for example UHI Inverness include it as part of their programme. Education Scotland is presently undertaking an Employability aspect report which will conclude in September 2016. The report will define employability to provide clarity for Colleges. Student employability skills are rarely recorded or evaluated and consideration should be given to the development of these skills in respect of the structured guidance framework suggested in the previous section. Furthermore, an awareness of additional qualifications required for certain professions should be highlighted to students in both sectors at the earliest possible opportunity. We will not have succeeded if consideration of employment opportunities is only addressed at the conclusion of a student's learning journey.

2. One of the strengths of widening access in Scotland is the broad variety of progression routes available to students. There are over a 1000 degree progression routes for SWAP students alone. The complexity of progression and articulation has at times being questioned by those seeking simplicity. The issue is not so much the diversity of routes but the guidance available to enhance the choices available for students. We now have some very good visual examples charting progression routes.
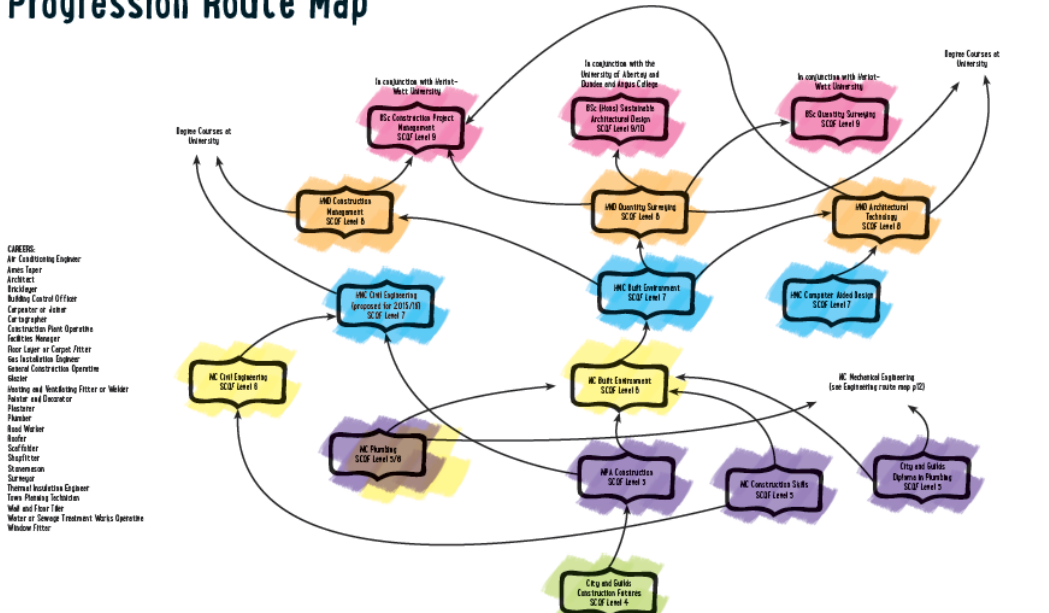
(Source: Fife College Prospectus, p. 58)

Where progression is well supported by events and visits to and from receiving institutions it works very well. Specific examples are available in the Excellent and Innovative Practice Section. Student services staff provides good support in transition to those with learning support needs and protected characteristics.

> **Case Study**
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> For students articulating from colleges to the **University of Stirling**, a web page called 'Articulation Listing' allows potential students to easily enter their course details, which course they would like to progress to and whether they would prefer advanced entry. The requirements for entry are immediately visible to them.

> **Case Study**
>
> At **Ayrshire College**, students are given feedback in February regarding their likely progression steps in the following session. Specific guidance is then offered in relation to this option. Progression routes are confirmed after the June meeting of the College's Assessment and Progression Board.

Articulation arrangements have been highlighted in CoWA report recommendation 18. We would suggest that the guidance arrangements around articulation and progression will be key to success in developing routes to a wide range of institutions.

3. The work carried out in transition to higher education has well been well evidenced and is again a source of strength for widening access. Work initially carried out as widening access projects is now well established. The theme has also benefited from the three year QAA enhancement theme which allows universities to consider how the activities can be installed and sustained. We would re-iterate that providing a three year development phase is useful in considering how practice can be thought out and embedded. Due to the maturity of the work carried out in transition we are only going to briefly highlight two aspects. The first relates to the considerable resource Universities in particular now have with the involvement of their student body in transition work. The guidance provided by these students in particular in the Reach project, is often far in advance of what some children receive with in their own schools. In a project where we have seen a considerable amount of inspirational work, the endeavour of Top-Up and Reach tutors stands out. We have highlighted this to the SFC for further consideration in terms of recognition and development.

The second aspect relates to the strategic development of widening access work within the mainstream activities of a university. There are again many good examples of this. If we consider that the main recommendation of CoWA was for Scotland to consider a whole systems approach to resolving the inequality gap, then a step up is required from simply recommending good practice. The strategic development work Glasgow Caledonian University has undertaken to mainstream College Connect is a beneficial case study. Mature widening access projects have benefited from engaging with and being challenged by academic departments. In addition the effectiveness of outcome agreements in terms of engagement with senior management to sustain progress for widening participation students is a useful starting point for the strategic development required to ensure we sustain progress for our students.

3. **General Recommendations**

> **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**
>
> 1. **Opportunities to develop and share good practice for student services staff should be increased.**
> 2. **A catalogue of best practice should be available for all institutions.**
> 3. **Systems for more "joined-up" handling of complex issues amongst students should be devised.**
> 4. **Consider guidance for influencers of potential students.**
> 5. **Student Associations should offer or signpost services in health and well-being.**
> 6. **Evaluation of guidance activities take in to account the quality indicators highlighted in the report.**
> 7. **Guidance and how it effects widening participation can be streamlined into quality and outcome related reports.**

1. Student Services staff have little or no opportunities to meet and review practice out with their own institutions except twice or thrice per annum at the College Development Network Community of Practice events where there is likely to be a full agenda. While we appreciate the demands on staff time, technology has made the sharing of practice easier and the use of video conferencing allows for opportunities to share without leaving the office. In addition, themed working groups, that gather, collate and share best practice would be a way forward.

   We received really good support from CDN throughout the project and consider that it can provide a focus for development of the guidance work we have highlighted in the report. We did not get a sense that a new body working with both colleges and universities would be beneficial at this stage. Relationships between sectors are strong especially in transition work and therefore a new general body would simply duplicate existing work.

   There is, we feel, some advantage in colleges specifically working closer with external agencies, re-iterating the point made earlier that colleges are good places for external agencies to engage with students. We would expect regional colleges as they mature to cement these relationships and for CDN to naturally consider how these relationships develop. That also may be a point for further consideration in respect of the framework for access.

   For universities there are a number of opportunities to engage with partners in widening access. Many are already facilitated by the SFC for example the REACH working group. Our recommendation is that these work more effectively in terms of guidance where there is a theme to work around rather than an overarching body.

2. Additionally there may be an opportunity for cataloguing excellent practice in short video clips supporting materials in one place – on the website of CDN or Education Scotland. This would enable staff to access ideas under defined headings without needing to read through numerous reports or policy documents. The material could be organised by college and by heading, providing two click support. We would hope this report and the Excellent and Innovative Practice section has made a start to the process.

3. It is widely acknowledged that colleges and universities now deal with more students with complex issues. This is due, in part, to the effects of government policies e.g. welfare changes, focus on specific age groups, and shifts of demographics. We recommend a more "joined-up" approach to working with these complex cases which would assist colleges e.g. better relationships with NHS

Scotland, SDS, social work departments and the criminal justice system. One college reported a tenfold increase of more complex cases within an equivalent budget to previous years. We would highlight that our education providers can be agents for social change and, where resourced, can be very well equipped to handle these complex issues. It suggests that at last we are starting to deal with the issues we need to if we want to create a change in inequality.

4. Family, friends, peers and teachers are key to the decisions that potential students make but where these influencers do not have recent, or any experience or knowledge of further or higher education; this may limit the student's aspirations. The interim CoWA Report stated:

> *There is strong evidence that parental experience of higher education is one of the most influential factors in determining the likelihood of a child entering university. This means that equal access is capable of transmitting the social and economic benefits of higher education between generations, breaking cycles of deprivation and contributing to a society that is healthier, wealthier and fairer. The problem is that these realistic aspirations are often not supported by a clear, accurate understanding of the steps and choices necessary to convert that aspiration into reality. The upshot is that high aspirations, however realistic, matter very little if they are not underpinned by sustained, relevant and up to date advice and guidance.*

In addition, CoWA Recommendation 20 states: 'Disadvantaged learners and their parents should be provided with clear, accurate information on both the availability of student finance and the conditions for repayment'. We should like this advice to be more wide-reaching and include not only finance but progression routes through articulation options and be available to care givers, social work departments and other external agencies.

While initially out with the remit of this project, we would suggest that all of us involved in widening participation give some thought to this issue.

5. We noted some very good examples of Student Associations across both sectors engaging and being actively involved in widening access activities. Student Associations are at times better able to assist students around health and well-being needs provided there is strategic development and senior management support. Student Associations in colleges tend not to be the social hubs that work in the university sector but they can be very useful adjuncts for Guidance and Support Service teams, particularly the Class Reps who can refer cases on to the right person in college. Colleges need to manage the expectations of a client group who know their rights and expect good customer service. Sabbatical Presidents with administrative support and Development Officers could build wider community partnership support bases. Again we are being careful in terms of the remit of the project but would suggest that this is an exciting area for the growth of guidance initiatives in the future.

6. In line with the CoWA Report, we feel that whilst some widening participation initiatives were evaluated and the impact discussed, many others were not. There is a need for more evaluation and understanding of the aims and outcomes from these to assess what makes a substantial difference to students and what is nice to have but delivers little impact. Research done in other areas (HEA's *Whose job is it anyway?* for example) finds comparisons with tackling gender imbalance and advises that while not devaluing the activities occurring, we should look at what the overall results are. We concur with the sentiment here. Many of the university widening access projects have an element of guidance. We would recommend that consideration be given to ensuring that the quality measures identified and in most cases already utilised by the institutions provide the foundation for evaluation of guidance. The framework for access is an ideal

opportunity to take an approach based on enhancing and developing good guidance for the benefit of students.

7. Finally, we recommend that guidance and the measures taken to develop students should be reported on by both sectors. Again we would stress that we would not want this to be an added "piece of work". The indicators we have highlighted are part of the quality frameworks used by both sectors. These indicators can all be utilised as part of present college and university quality process. As part of that process we hope this report will provide an opportunity for institutions to reflect on each of the stages of their student development. We would respectfully suggest from the SFC, Education Scotland and QAA that the inputs to student success developed through good guidance mechanisms are highlighted within the reports. That will provide a good platform for the framework for access recommended by CoWA and the central position guidance plays in ensuring student success.

4. Conclusion

While we have made suggestions as to where key areas could be considered and improved, we found considerable evidence of institutions striving to do their best for widening participation students. We also acquired a convincing insight into the many areas of excellent practice that work well. Trying to do better is always at the forefront when practice is discussed and we feel that staff from all institutions should be rightfully proud of what they achieve.

Appendix I   **Excellent and Innovative Practice**

GETTING IN		SETTLING IN	
Borders College	Inclusive and Effective Admissions Process "Taking down Barriers" system	**New College Lanarkshire (also Perth)**	Bursary office closure – for 2 days to process application at beginning of session
UHI Inverness	Transitions Co-ordinator (pre-application and Selection)	**UHI Perth**	Use of external agencies for financial capability e.g. CAB, Barclays Money Skills
Glasgow Kelvin College	Engineering Scholarships	**Glasgow Clyde College**	BME workers provide specific advice for asylum seekers and refugees at Induction
University of Edinburgh	Educated Pass	**Forth Valley College**	Phased Induction over 6 weeks on Moodle with H&S, Equalities sections mandatory. Learner Charter is also on Moodle
University of Abertay	2 week preparation programme for course start	**UHI Inverness**	Transitions Officer and Transitions Board review progress at 6 months
Fife College	Facebook page for new applicants with timeous messages e.g. Keep your parent's P60 form handy	**UHI Inverness**	Wellbeing programme – *needs evaluation*
UHI Argyll	Diagnostic scripts are assessed for core skills (FE applicants)	**New College Lanarkshire**	"My Equalities" policy on Moodle
Dumfries and Galloway College	Applicants with protected characteristics are flagged in registers with personalised drop-down menus for advice e.g. "Joe has epilepsy, here's what to do if he has a fit"	**West College**	Induction to course DVD (also available on line)
UHI Inverness	"A Step Ahead": information sent out over the summer re transition workshops	**West College**	Shout magazine with up to the minute information
UHI Inverness	Induction materials on the website (*college prepared to share*)	**UHI Perth**	'Settling In' and 'Get Ready for College' programmes with the same staff for additional support students and those coming from a care experience background
UHI Perth (also South Lanarkshire staff trained)	All staff trained in interview scoring system with standard questions, notes	**Queen Margaret University**	QM Connect: mentoring for direct entrants or QM Advance students

	recorded and "good to know but not assessed" section on student record		
West College Scotland	Care Leavers' Support Leaflet	**City of Glasgow**	Student Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Induction E-module
Edinburgh Napier	All care leavers are offered a mentor through the e-Mentoring programme	**Dundee and Angus**	SEE SCOTLAND mentoring system for international students
Edinburgh Napier	The School of Nursing and Midwifery run "Preparing for Higher Education" day for all access students. A new tool kit is being prepared for the pre-interview stage	**Edinburgh Napier**	"Signpost to Success" one day workshop for college students and Mature student and school leavers workshop on the Saturday before the start of term
Edinburgh Napier	Get Ready for University study on-line resource for all prospective students	**St Andrews**	All FE students have a dedicated mentor, as do care experienced students
St Andrews	Sutton Trust Summer School	**University of Glasgow**	Use of experienced advisers of studies for w.p. students
St Andrews	Access to Rural Communities		
Strathclyde University	Strategic development of work with carers		
GETTING ON		**MOVING ON**	
West Lothian College	Course Risk Assessments	**Forth Valley College**	Improving Job Prospects (matching the skills of unemployed people to needs of local economy)
Dundee and Angus	D&A Sports Union promoting physical and mental health	**New College Lanarkshire**	Project Search
Forth Valley College	Implementing a Learning Strategy (Self-Evaluation and Reflection)	**Fife College**	Progression graphics in the prospectus of steps to be achieved
New College Lanarkshire	Enhancing Learning through Motorsport	**Forth Valley College**	Facebook page – learners asking about moving on
UHI Perth (UHI Moray also)	BRAG – attendance system	**UHI Inverness**	All FE students take a module in employment
Glasgow Clyde College	Student Association runs Buddy System	**UHI Moray**	Student Development Day
Ayrshire College	"Protecting People" runs a tea dance with a dance psychologist for learners with	**UHI Moray**	Students are given feedback in February re likely next steps for them and this is confirmed in June after the Assessment and

	problems support by social sciences students		Programme Board has met
West Lothian College	Health and Well-Being at West Lothian	**North East Scotland College**	Use of My World at Work 4 click system for employment skills with PLPs
Ayrshire College	Healthy Body, Healthy Mind for mental health support	**University of Stirling**	"Articulation Finder" on the university website has a specific page for College students with a searchable function. "Route Finder" on ELRAH and Fife shows some routes but not all.
University of Edinburgh	Peer Assisted learning for all with Maths PALS and Maths Buddies in some faculties	**Forth Valley College**	*Meeting the Opportunities for All Guarantee:* Development of a portal with Falkirk Council and SDS which provides Council and School staff, along with SDS Careers staff, access to College application information for School pupils with the aim of providing enhanced support for school pupils in their application, and also to enable better tracking of young learners to help ensure a positive transition from school.
Forth Valley College	"Listening to Learners" Learning activity planning tool with outcomes for Curriculum for Excellence, Learning and Teaching Strategy and Equalities and Diversity reports	**Focus West**	Top-Up programme facilitated by the University of Glasgow. Structured programme and use of student graduates
Forth Valley College	Learner Videos on what it's like to move on	**SFC**	Reach project. Working with schools and universities to increase admission to professions. Again highlighting the beneficial use of graduates in delivering a structured programme
Newbattle Abbey College	Adapted use is made of Brookfield's Critical Incident Questionnaire to develop self-evaluation skills	**Glasgow Caledonian University**	Strategic development of their widening access activities, around College Connect and the University 2020 strategy.
Heriot Watt University	Peer Support programme through e-mentoring	**University of the West of Scotland**	Student link providing advice and guidance

Heriot Watt University	Power Hours – *many do this where there is a support session e.g. maths*
UHI Moray	Weekly newsletter publicises volunteering opportunities for fund raising etc. and department undertake other activities.
UHI Moray	Study Bar – available to all for core skills
UHI Moray	"Mystery Shopper" to find out what would be helpful to students in guidance i.e. in Moray; it helped to recommend the One Stop Shop for guidance.
West Lothian	"Project Champions" have a new theme each year. Mindfulness for session 2014/15 with a garden
West Scotland College	YES Programme to assess skills and set goals (Your Essential Skills)
South Lanarkshire College	Pastoral support through emotional support
University of Stirling	"Listen Again" system for lectures offers recording of these
Edinburgh Napier	The Confident Futures Team workshops throughout the year on personal and professional skills development
Edinburgh Napier	Girl Geek Scotland – a network for women in technology

HIGHLIGHTS	
Ayrshire College	Medics against Violence – extending to hairdressing and beauty therapy
City of Glasgow College	Languages Café for ESOL
City of Glasgow College	Help Hub for ESOL
Dundee and Angus College	Project with ex-offender women to encourage return to employment or education
UHI Inverness	Mandatory training in equalities and the 9 protected characteristics for all staff, supplemented by policies on Fitness to Study, procedures for at risk learners and challenging behaviour
UHI Inverness (Dumfries and Galloway also interested in this)	On-line Highers with monthly seminars on Saturdays
North East Scotland College	*Data Management and Reporting Group* Data Management and Reporting Group meetings in order to explore greater opportunities to collaborate and share information and data, in order improve future data analysis management and reporting between the College and the SFC. In particular, both DMRG and SFC representatives recognised the need to improve the collation, analysis and reporting of data for all protected characteristics. Currently, neither the College nor SFC does report fully on all protected characteristics. The most robust equality-related data exists for ethnicity, disability, age, gender and other special interest groups that are not specifically linked to the designated protected characteristics. By working more collaboratively through the DMRG it is hoped that alternative, effective and consistent approaches will be developed by the College and SFC to ensure that any improvements required for both students and staff can be made and based on as full and accurate data as possible. It is hoped that the work of the DMRG will enable the College to understand how protected characteristics data can be used effectively. **This project is being viewed as a national pilot by Scottish Government**
UHI Perth	Equalities and Diversity Leaflet: hard copy and on-line
University of Stirling/Fife/Perth	Mention of leaflet and info for the influencers
Forth Valley College	*Meeting the Opportunities for All Guarantee:* …the development of a portal with Falkirk Council and SDS which will provide Council and school staff, along with SDS Careers staff, access to College application information for school pupils with the aim of providing enhanced support for school pupils in their application, and also to enable better tracking of young learners to help ensure they secure a positive transition from school *This is being viewed as a national pilot by Scottish Government*

Appendix II   **Benchmark Indicators**

1 Selection for Course
1.1 Do all learners find it easy to access course recruitment, application and selection information?
1.2 Are application systems accessible for all including those with little knowledge of IT?
1.3 Do course selection processes take protected characteristics into account?
1.4 Are Entry requirements clearly laid out for learners?
1.5 Are Bursary, Childcare and other financial information e.g. scholarships clearly available at the point of application?
1.6 Are risk factors identified at the application stage and information passed to relevant staff?
1.7 Is additional support given to late applicants to ensure they make informed choices?
1.8 Are there opportunities for learners to read about the expectations for the course/programme, independent learning requirements, assessment, writing styles, etc. prior to the start of the course/programme?
1.9 Are processes in place for timely acknowledgement of applications and invitations to interview?

2 Interview and Analysing Potential
2.1 Have all staff been trained in interview techniques?
2.2 Are all potential learners offered an interview/chance to discuss the course with a member of staff (other than "For more info contact email/telephone")?
2.3 What format does the interview/analysis take?
2.4 Is there a transparent scoring system with justifiable criteria for interview/analysis?
2.5 How does the institution enable learners from different backgrounds to demonstrate potential to succeed?
2.6 Are risk factors identified at this stage and information passed to relevant staff?
2.7 Are quality assurance arrangements in place to review learner interviews?
2.8 Are late applicants subject to the same rigour when courses are slow to fill?
2.9 Are unsuccessful applicants offered feedback/alternative choices?
2.10 Is signposting to advice and guidance clear for both successful and unsuccessful candidates?
2.11 Where selection uses information from interviews, auditions, aptitude tests, etc. are learners made aware of why these are being used and the contribution they make to the selection process?
2.12 Are outlines of the institutions' expectations available to learners before they enrol?
2.13 Is the balance between scheduled activities, independent study and time on placement or other learning clearly outlined to learners?
2.14 Are assessment schedules made clear to learners?

2.15 What use, if any, is made of references for applicants?

SETTLING IN

3 Induction and Settling in
3.1 Do learners have access to information when they need it?
3.2 Can learners access induction information prior to the course start date?
3.3 Can learners access induction information on-line if they miss a session, are late starts or need to review details?
3.4 Is induction a "drip feed", just in time, longitudinal process or a single hit?
3.5 Are vulnerable learners given additional support at induction e.g. are SIMD learners encouraged to gain the tools/learn about the culture/ offered financial advice early?
3.6 Are risk factors identified at this stage and information passed to relevant staff?
3.7 Are expectations of learners in terms of independent learning, self-assessment, writing styles, study techniques, etc. explained at induction? e.g. format of the day-to-day, shape of the academic week
3.8 Is the relevance of the course/programme to employment/progression communicated to the learner?
3.9 What shape does financial guidance take for learners?
3.10 Are money advice workshops available at induction?
3.11 Are sessions offered to learners on diversity and appropriate behaviours towards those with protected characteristics e.g. acceptance of differing sexual orientations?
3.12 Are additional opportunities offered to learners to provide a more comprehensive learning journey e.g. volunteering?
3.13 Is the specific value of these opportunities linked to each learner's course?

GETTING ON

4. Choices
4.1 Are learners offered choices within the programme/course?
4.2 Where these choices are offered early, are the learners clear about the content of choice?
4.3 Are learners clear on the impact that these choices will have for their progression within F/HE?
4.4 Are there choices around assessment and personal challenge?

5. In Course Guidance
5.1 Are all leaners offered guidance on progress?
5.2 Are vulnerable learners offered additional support?

5.3 Is there a process for teaching staff to refer learners for support and guidance where they feel it may be necessary?
5.4 Is learning support available to learners on an informal basis?
5.5 Are mentoring/buddy systems available to support learners (whatever form these take)?
5.6 Is on-line support available for learners where they would prefer to be anonymous?
5.7 Is finance and budgeting support available for learners?
5.8 What emergency support is available for learners in crisis?
5.9 What support with study skills and learning techniques is available to learners?
5.10 Are potentially vulnerable learners given additional support with study?
5.11 Are effective learning plans available and readily reviewed for vulnerable learners?
5.12 What form does feedback on assessment take to allow learners to improve their learning and set targets?
5.13 Are feedback and target interventions monitored regularly to assess impact on learner success?
5.14 Are there opportunities for personal tutoring in areas of low or partial success?
5.15 Do staff have opportunities to offer learners time to learn and demonstrate learning techniques in their subject area?
5.16 Are learners with specific issues (protected characteristics) given special treatment with regard to attendance requirements for bursary payments? e.g. childcare issues, disability
5.17 Are there opportunities for small group study to encourage diversity and allow learners to support each other?
5.18 Are additional opportunities offered to learners to provide a more comprehensive learning journey e.g. volunteering?
5.19 Is the specific value of these opportunities linked to each learner's course?
5.20 Is recognition given for learner effort through skills accreditation, awards schemes, recording activities in transcripts or records thereby enhancing the learner journey?

6 Self-Evaluation and Reflection
6.1 Are learners shown how to select relevant points from feedback to improve performance?
6.2 Are learners shown how to reflect on assessment e.g. are they aided to be resilient when progress is slow, helped with strategies to aid learning?
6.3 Are learners encouraged to self-evaluate and reflect?
6.4 Are small groups used to encourage reflection on performance?
6.5 Are learners shown how to critically analyse their learning? Is there evidence to show development of these skills as different from normal social context?
6.6 Do learners understand the criteria/marking schemes used and how these relate to their self-evaluation and reflection on their assessments/ assignments?

7 Progression
7.1 When do learners hear about possible transition routes, particularly additional HN routes in Regional colleges?

7.2 Are the alternative routes clearly laid out for them?
7.3 What opportunities are provided to discuss these routes with staff/students from
(a) current institution (HN)
(b) transitioning institution
7.4 Are additional opportunities offered to learners to provide a more comprehensive learning journey e.g. volunteering?
7.5 Is the specific value of these opportunities linked to each learner's course?
7.6 Are learners clear about their progression routes based on their achievements on their course?
7.7 Is impartial, confidential and student-centred careers guidance available for learners who choose to exit from learning?
7.8 Are there additional efforts required by the learner at specific progression points in courses
7.9 Are there additional efforts by the institution at specific progression points in courses?

MOVING ON

8 Transition
8.1 Does relevant information on vulnerable learners pass to the receiving institution?
8.2 What action is taken to ensure continuing support for learners with special requirements?
8.3 Is information shared appropriately between the learner, the institutions and their departments on facilities and support required by the learner?

9 Transition Experience/Employment Options
9.1 Does the university visit the college/course regularly throughout the year?
9.2 Are opportunities offered to learners to meet existing university students or take part in learning activities?
9.3 Are informal mentoring/buddy systems in place before the move to help transition?
9.4 Are additional supports available to students with protected characteristics?
9.5 What funding and financial support help is available for transitioning learners prior to course start date?
9.6 What place does work such as that done by projects like Top-Up and Reach have in the Institution? Is credit available within their institution for this activity?
9.7 What support is offered around making the decision to go on to higher education, applying, going through the selection process, receiving the decision and feedback?
9.8 Is information available on the diversity of the student body to enable learners to make informed choices about routes and options?
9.9 Are outlines of the institutions' expectations available to learners before they enrol?
9.10 Is the balance between scheduled activities, independent study and time on placement or other learning clearly outlined to learners?
9.11 Are assessment schedules made clear to learners?

10 Attendance and Retention
8.1 Are all students aware of attendance requirements for class and tutorials, and the financial implications of non-attendance, prior to the course/programme start?
10.2 Do these attendance requirements take into account learners with specific needs or protected characteristics?
10.3 What systems are in place to support learners with protected characteristics? e.g. on-line learning packages
10.4 How closely is retention and progress monitored?
10.5 Is a traffic light system in operation?

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