Board of Management

Learning & Teaching Committee

Date of Meeting	**Tuesday 23 April 2019**
Paper No.	**LTC4-K**
Agenda Item	**14**
Subject of Paper	**National Articulation Forum**
Status of Paper	**Disclosable**
Primary Contact	**Joanna Campbell, Vice Principal: Student Experience**
Date of Paper	**April 2019**
Summary	
Action Required	**Noting**

1.   Recommendation

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

2.   Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on activity from the National Articulation Forum.

3.   Strategic Context and Key Points

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

4.   Background

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

4.2   WTWA:

- set out a series of actions on articulation, including the establishment of the National Articulation Forum to be co-owned by Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland;

- provided a definition of articulation;

- made a recommendation to the SFC on articulation;

- set out the working group's main findings.

These actions have informed Forum's initial priorities (**Appendix 1**).

5.   Progress Update

5.1   National Articulation Database

The SFC curated National Articulation Database has been updated. The database is in its final stages of development and data would be issued to universities to quality assure, prior to publishing at the end of April 2019. As the database is data-driven, it would not capture all articulation arrangements however, it would show HNC/D related delivery, this is an area that further consideration will to be given to how we can capture all articulation delivery.

The next steps are for universities to sign data sharing agreements and this would allow them access to the tool. Colleges would be required to wait until the data is published or access it through their own data sharing agreements.

5.2   SQA Next Generation Project

An update on the project was provided to forum members. Main driver is the need to reassess the role of Level 7/8 qualifications and vocational training in the light of new technologies and changing demands from learners, to create a single set of skills for a 21st century Scotland and for 21st century learners.

The first year of the project had now been completed following consultation with learners, colleges and SDS. The second year of the project would involve wider consultation with universities, SFC and other key stakeholders (industry and business).

The new HN frameworks are aimed to encourage co-designing of pathways with colleges and universities, alongside industry and should allow for flexibility around the different learning styles as well as take into account regional variances.

An outline of timescale for the project are as follows:

Phase 1 - August 2019 (three selected sectors)
Phase 2 - December 2019/January 2020
Roll out - Spring 2012

The forum will input into the project at each of these phases to ensure that cognisance is given to the objectives of the NAF.

5.3   Learner Journey Review

Scottish Government updated members on Learner Journey Review. It is recognised that the work of the Forum is addressing the key deliverables in Recommendation 14 as part of implementation programme around understanding the current routes, gaps in provision and hurdles to linear progression.

Recommendation 13 is more complex and requires interaction between both schools and universities which would look to see an increase in school-university collaboration and minimise unnecessary duplication at SCQF level 7. Further updates will be provided to NAF as this work progresses.

6.   Impact and Implications

6.1   The NAF action plan will culminate the final research reports due in December 2019. It is envisaged that the Forum would then consider all the research findings and put forward recommendations to the college/university sectors around where possible expansions could be achieved. It would also be fitting at this time to consider the future of the NAF and its membership.

6.2   The forum is due to meet again in June, September and December 2019.

7.   Risk

There are no risks associated with this paper.

*Appendix 1 – NAF Action Plan

National Articulation Forum Action Plan

Overview

1. This action plan currently scopes out work for one calendar year, and it is recognised that work will continue past that time. However, the plan has been drafted as such to allow for any unexpected overruns or unanticipated activity that the National Articulation Forum may request over the course of the two work streams. Annex A to this action plan includes detail on related external policy drivers that link to articulation and the work of the National Articulation Forum.

2. We recognise that there has already been a significant amount of work undertaken in exploring articulation from both an opportunities and barriers approach, therefore, all of this work – coupled with any work that is happening in parallel and linked to other drivers on articulation – will be seen in the wider context. We know where there are issues with articulation and what we want to see happen, so, in terms of knowledge, we are not starting from a blank page.

Work stream one - Improving articulation by expanding full-credit recognition (research project)

3. Work stream one is a research project that will explore how articulation currently operates as well as looking at how it can be increased across the university sector by determining ways to improve recognition of previous higher education study.

Action	Definition	Key Tasks	Outputs	Dependencies (see Annex A)	Completed by/Report to National Articulation Forum	Owner
a) Explore and understand institutional cultures on articulation	• Assess where individual universities stand in relation to articulation, with regards to current delivery and existing models. • Assess the relationships between colleges and universities; such as where there are strong, existing links or where there are little or no links.	• We will review any individual institutional articulation reviews. • We will review articulation sections of institutional outcome agreements for initial views. • We will meet with selected institutions to cover the range of articulation arrangements.	• Demonstrate where there is scope for more articulation to take place and at what level. • Demonstrate where further support is required in establishing articulation relationships between colleges and universities.	• Potential links to external policy drivers 1, 3,6, 7, 12 & 15	September 2019	Anna Thomson
b) Establish outcomes of articulating students (degree awards)	• Review, where known, the final awards of students who have gone through the articulation process.	• We will review available data from National Articulation Database.	• Demonstrate the efficacy of articulation. • Determine if more needs to be done to ensure improved outcomes for articulating students.	• Potential links to external policy drivers 2, 4, 5, 8, 13, 14, 15 & 16	June 2019	Anna Thomson

c)	Review cross-regional articulation with subject cross-over	• Review known articulation pathways to understand what specific subjects students are leaving their local area to study at university via an articulation pathway.	• We will review institutional web pages and articulation information. • We will review available data from the National Articulation Database. • We will meet with selected institutions to cover the range of articulation arrangements. • We will meet with selected focus groups (students) to assess their views on articulation options.	• Determine the frequency with which learners are expected to leave their local area to undertake an articulation pathway. • Demonstrate where improvements could be made, in particular around removing any additional barriers. • Determine where possible expansion can be achieved.	• Potential links to external policy drivers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 16	June 2019	Anna Thomson
d)	Explore and understand barriers for subjects leading to professionally accredited degrees	• Assess the barriers that exist for articulating students on professionally accredited degrees.	• We will meet with professional bodies (i.e. General Teaching Council for Scotland for teaching degrees). • We will meet with selected focus groups (students) to assess their views on articulation options.	• Understanding of any existing barriers to articulation on professional degree routes. • Determine what action, if any at this point, can be taken to remove said barriers. • Determine where possible expansion can be achieved.	• Potential links to external policy drivers 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 13 & 15	December 2019	Anna Thomson
e)	Explore and understand the subjects that are most active in articulation	• Review known articulation pathways to understand what specific subjects have the highest rates of articulation.	• We will review available data from National Articulation Database. • We will meet with selected focus groups (students) to assess their views on articulation options.	• Confirmation of most active articulation subjects. • Numbers of students articulating per academic year into key subjects. • Determine where possible expansion can be achieved.	• Potential links to external policy drivers 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 13 & 15	September 2019	Anna Thomson

f)	Explore and understand the subjects that are least active in articulation	• Review known articulation pathways to understand what specific subjects have the lowest rates of articulation.	• We will review available data from National Articulation Database. • We will meet with selected focus groups (students) to assess their views on articulation options.	• Confirmation of least active articulation subjects. • Numbers of students articulating per academic year into other subjects. • Determine where possible expansion can be achieved.	• Potential links to external policy drivers 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 13 & 15	September 2019	Anna Thomson
g)	Investigate models of articulation currently in use	• Assess the most commonly used (i.e. at what level the transfer of credit occurs/is recognised) models of articulation between colleges and universities.	• We will meet with selected institutions to cover the range models of articulation in use. • We will review institutional web pages and articulation information. • We will meet with selected focus groups (students) to assess their views on articulation options.	• Determine if some models of articulation should be counted as articulation (i.e. franchised/ validated). • Determine how possible expansion can be made through existing models.	• Potential links to external policy drivers 1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 16	September 2019	Anna Thomson
h)	Explore and understand the credit top-up issue	• Assess where there remains an issue of credit-deficit/top-up for students moving from Higher National Certificate (HNC) courses onto Year 2 of degree programmes.	• We will meet with selected institutions to discuss where the issue arises.	• Determine how frequently credit deficit/top-up is happening and if it localised to any particular subjects. • Establish what, if any, solutions have been implemented, and the ease with which they could be applied more widely.	• Potential links to external policy drivers 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 15 & 16	December 2019	Anna Thomson

Work stream two – Improving understanding of articulation

4. Work stream two will build on the findings of the research project (work stream one) by examining how articulation is understood by pupils, students, schools, parents/carers and external stakeholders. The goal will be to establish ways of improving national awareness and understanding around articulation.

Action	Definition	Key Tasks	Outputs	Dependencies (see Annex A)	Completed by/Report to National Articulation Forum	Owner
a) Examine the definition of articulation	• Assess if 'articulation' is understood as an equivalent term with all relevant stakeholders (i.e. school, learners, access programmes, colleges, and universities)	• We will review institutional web pages and articulation information. • We will meet with selected institutions to discuss terminology. • We will meet with selected focus groups (schools, students, and access programmes) to discuss terminology.	• Determine if the current definition (as used and defined by SFC) is understood by relevant stakeholders. • Determine if and what other terminology is widely used and understood. • Determine if other terminology should be put forward as alternative to 'articulation'.	• Links to Research (a, c & g) • Potential links to external policy drivers 1, 3, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 16	June 2019	Anna Thomson
b) Utilise research findings (work stream 1) to establish national understanding of articulation	• Ensure findings from work stream 1 in relation to definitions and understanding is utilised for work stream 2.	• We will review and take account of all research findings to inform and improve understanding of articulation.	• Establish national understanding of articulation in all its forms: language, application and pathways.	• Links to Research (a - h) • Potential links to external policy drivers 1 - 16	June 2019	Anna Thomson
c) Establish understanding and knowledge levels around articulation in schools/ families	• Assess what is known about articulation processes and pathways by schools for staff, pupils, parents and carers.	• We will meet with selected focus groups (school staff, pupils, parents and carers, existing students) to discuss what is known and understood around articulation.	• Determine levels of knowledge and understanding around articulation. • Establish where and how improvements can be made on knowledge and understanding.	• Links to Research (a, c & g) • Potential links to external policy drivers 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 14 & 16	December 2019	Anna Thomson

d)	Examine and understand language used by external agencies when describing recognition of prior learning at HE level	• Assess what language is used by external agencies (i.e. Scottish Qualifications Authority, Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework Partnership, Student Awards Agency Scotland, etc.) when referring to the recognition of prior learning at HE level.	• We will review external agencies web pages and articulation information. • We will meet with selected external agencies to discuss terminology and understanding of articulation.	• Determine if external agencies use language to refer to recognition of prior learning at HE level that differs from language used by colleges, universities, Colleges Scotland, Universities Scotland and SFC. • Establish if and how alignment can be made across all sectors and agencies to improve knowledge and understanding.	• Links to Research (a, c & g) • Potential links to external policy drivers 1, 3, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 16	December 2019	Anna Thomson

Next steps

5.   Member of the National Articulation Forum are asked to consider this draft action plan and provide feedback to Anna Thomson, Senior Policy Officer – Articulation. Once this action plan is approved and agreed, activity will begin immediately.

Further information

6.   For further information on this paper, please contact Anna Thomson, Senior Policy Officer – Articulation (athomson@sfc.ac.uk; 0131 313 6605).