

Colleges Scotland Briefing: Equity and Excellence in Education Debate – Tuesday 26 May 2015

Introduction

Colleges are the most accessible path to learning for those in deprived communities or with additional needs, offering an invaluable route to gaining skills, improving employability or gaining a higher education.

Colleges recognise the importance of supporting young people into positive destinations. Colleges Scotland believes that it is vital that young people are given the opportunity to build their skills, abilities and play an active part in the labour market. Studying at college enables young people to gain skills, confidence, qualifications and access to educational pathways that will help them become independent contributors to their community and to the Scottish economy. Colleges are now focusing 70% of their provision on young people and continue to work pro-actively in partnership with schools, local authorities, universities and employers to provide the best opportunities for young people.

Over the past few years the college sector has demonstrated its capacity to deliver improved outcomes for its learners, with attainment rates currently standing at their highest level for both further and higher education students. This, coupled with the sector's success in engaging learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, confirms the important contribution that the sector is making to achieve equity and excellence in education. The college sector also has demonstrable success in overcoming the many challenges faced by such learners and is using this experience in its contributions to the Commission on Widening Access. It is important to the college sector that its learners continue to have clear pathways into further study in universities, to continue the highly successful partnership that exists between colleges and universities, as well as into work.

Facts and Figures

In 2013/14:

- Over 76 million hours of learning were delivered to around 238,000 students
- 30% of learners studied full-time
- 47% of learners were 16-24 year olds
- 19% of activity was higher education
- 40% of full-time learners were studying on higher education courses
- 2,788 learners left college last year and articulated directly into a university course
- 66% of further education learners successfully completed their course – the greatest number of further education graduates of all time
- 71% of full time higher education learners successfully completed their course – the greatest number for higher education graduates of all time
- Almost 1/3 learners were from the 20% most deprived backgrounds
- Just over 5% of enrolments were for learners from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Learners with a disability or additional learning needs accounted for 15% of all learning hours.

Colleges work hard to improve access for those living within the most deprived communities in Scotland. The following figures show that over the last five years, colleges have continued to improve access for those within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 10%, 20% and 40% most deprived areas:

	Proportion of SUMs delivered			Proportion of Students		
	10% most deprived	20% most deprived	40% most deprived	10% most deprived	20% most deprived	40% most deprived
2009/10	15.7%	28.8%	51.2%	13.6%	25.1%	46.1%
2010/11	15.9%	29.3%	52.1%	14.0%	25.7%	46.9%
2011/12	15.8%	29.4%	52.5%	14.9%	27.1%	48.5%
2012/13	15.9%	29.6%	52.6%	15.4%	27.9%	49.2%
2013/14	16.3%	30.4%	53.5%	15.8%	28.6%	50.1%

Sources: All figures from Scottish Funding Council (SFC) 2015 (*Baseline Report, Learning for All: Measures of Success and College Performance Indicators publications*)

How the college sector is working with schools to enhance educational attainment

Colleges make a major contribution to the targeted improvements in positive outcomes for young people. Colleges work in partnership with schools, local authorities and other agencies to provide highly effective 'alternative curriculum' provision for young people in schools at risk of disengaging and non-attenders. These include vocational taster experiences, programmes designed to develop core and personal skills and a variety of experiences that build relationships with disengaged young people and begin to bring the college environment, and learning itself, within their comfort zone. For example, Perth College UHI has developed Youth Unlimited, a transitional support programme, which aims to make positive connections with training, education and work for young people who have dropped out of education. Programmes such as this often have high levels of successful progression into 'mainstream' vocational education and training. Around 28% of Scottish school leavers move onto a further education course at college as their first destination.

Colleges Scotland supports the intention of the *Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Scotland's Youth Employment strategy* to ensure that vocational pathways are seen as equally desirable routes to a successful career in employment. School learners will be able to make an informed choice about vocational or academic routes and this will impact positively on attainment for all.

How the college sector is tackling inequality

Colleges provide access courses to give learners the opportunity to find out what the college has to offer and build self confidence, core skills and employability skills. These courses allow learners to experience a range of academic and vocational tasters and offer progression to further study.

The college sector has a long and successful track record of helping to tackle inequality by its positive actions in relation to implementing the Equality Act 2010 and its programmes to target recruitment from sectors of the population where there has been under-representation in post-16 learning. SFC's 2015 report '*Learning for All: Measures of Success*'¹ shows that colleges have been highly successful in attracting learners from the lowest 20% Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) areas with 29% of learners in college within this group.

The sector has also improved the overall gender balance of its learners to achieve close parity between the sexes, and although much more remains to be done in addressing sector-specific gender imbalances, some colleges are already experiencing success in improving gender balance at subject level through specific initiatives.

In addition, all colleges will now have published their Equality Mainstream Reports which are available on their websites. These reports show what steps individual colleges are taking to embed

¹ <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/communications/Statisticalpublications/2015/SFCST062015.aspx>

equality and diversity within all of their functions. For example, see City of Glasgow College's [Equality Outcomes 2013-17](#) document.

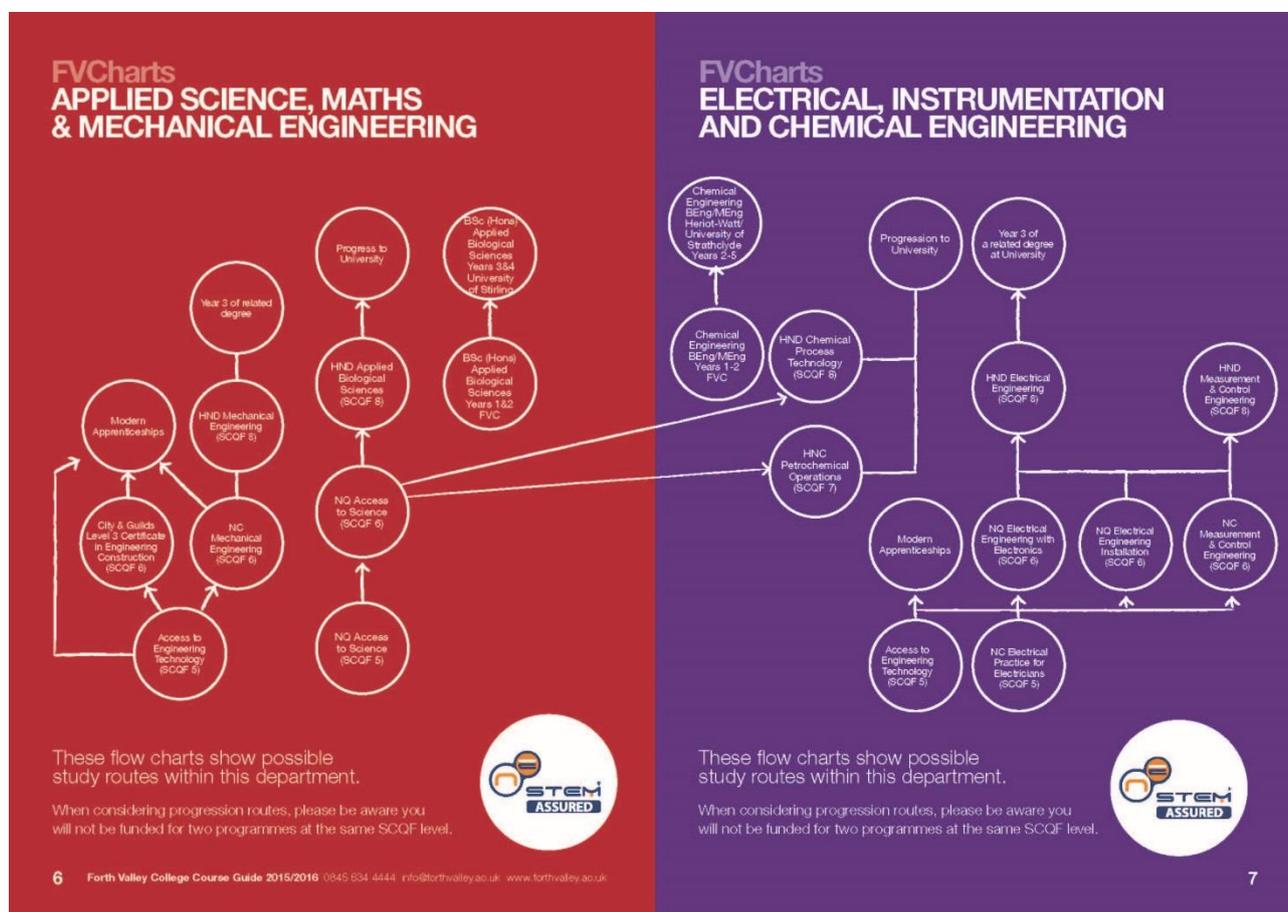
How the college sector is working with universities to widen access

Colleges provide Access to Higher Education courses which are designed to prepare learners for articulation routes in further and higher education. Colleges are actively involved in a variety of programmes, working in partnership with universities, to provide opportunities for those wishing to achieve a higher education. For example, there are 16 colleges involved in the [Scottish Wider Access Programme](#) (SWAP) which provides one-year full-time courses which prepare adults for university:

SWAP East	SWAP West
Borders College	Ayrshire College
Dundee and Angus College	City of Glasgow College
Edinburgh College	Dumfries and Galloway College
Fife College	Forth Valley College
Forth Valley College	Glasgow Clyde College
Newbattle Abbey College	Glasgow Kelvin College
Perth College UHI	New College Lanarkshire
West Lothian College	South Lanarkshire College
	West College Scotland

In addition, colleges work in partnership with universities through five articulation hubs to create sustainable mechanisms for embedding articulation routes for learners. Colleges are involved with five hubs (Greater Glasgow, Lothian and Borders, North East, Fife and Tayside, and South West). Through the hubs, colleges are working with universities to determine suitable Higher National qualifications and degree programmes for articulation agreements, regionally and nationally.

As an example, the diagram below shows the possible study routes and articulation paths available at Forth Valley College in 2015/16 for key STEM subjects:



In 2013/14, 40% of full-time learners were studying on higher education courses in colleges and a total of 2,788 learners left college and articulated directly into a university course.

Case Studies

Edinburgh College – South East Scotland Academies Partnership (SESAP)

SESAP is a ground-breaking collaboration between Edinburgh College, Queen Margaret University, Borders College and local authorities which bridges the gap between school, college, university and employment for 15-18 year old high school students.

With academies in Hospitality & Tourism; Food Science & Nutrition; Health & Social Care; and Creative Industries, the partnership gives students the opportunity to gain transferrable work skills, work experience and valuable industry knowledge before they leave school, raising aspirations, improving their chance of moving on to further or higher education, and boosting employability.

The project is now in its third year. Following the success of the first cohort of 34 students at the first academy – Hospitality & Tourism, which launched in 2012/13 – the other three academies launched in 2013/14 with a £4.6m SFC award to expand the project. Now, 160 students have taken part and this year students from 44 schools across Edinburgh, the Lothian's and the Borders take up an increased 470 places over the four academies. Each of the academies is in one of Scotland's economic priority areas and they were all developed with the needs of their related industries in mind.

Forth Valley College – SCOTS Programme

An innovative programme is proving successful in encouraging high school pupils to consider applying to college. The one year School-College Opportunities to Succeed (SCOTS) Programme is primarily aimed at fourth year pupils and was piloted in session 2013/14. It was developed by Forth Valley College and Falkirk Council to give pupils a taster of different subject areas and introduce them to the college environment. Pupils on the programme attend college one afternoon per week and experience eight different subjects including construction; hair & beauty; engineering; business administration & tourism; care; fitness, health & exercise; creative industries; and science. They also work towards the Falkirk Employability Award throughout the course.

Within their schools, the young people involved also work with teachers to improve their skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life. They also develop employability skills such as researching for jobs, creating a CV, preparing for interviews and also learning more about the 'taster' subjects they were undertaking within Forth Valley College. The initial pilot was a huge hit with 106 pupils successfully completing the programme and 84 subsequently applying to a college course. 118 pupils from the Falkirk Council area have already signed up for session 2014/15 and the programme has now been launched with Stirling Council.

Glasgow Clyde College – Project SEARCH

Glasgow Clyde College provides courses for school pupils and young adults with learning disabilities. The successful Schools Link programme provides a supported transition from school into further education. The courses offered to pupils who have left school provide a transition from further education to employment. However, the college recognised that finding jobs when you have additional support for learning needs is very challenging and so decided to engage with Project SEARCH to improve the positive destinations for students who have learning disabilities.

Project SEARCH is a model that was first developed at Cincinnati Children's Hospital in 1996. It is a targeted programme of employment training and support for people with learning disabilities. Project SEARCH involves an employer, an education provider and a job coach who work together to improve the employability skills of young adults with learning disabilities. The ultimate aim of the programme is to get jobs for the students. The successful partnership with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) Health Board and the Glasgow Supported Employment Service has meant that eight students with additional support for learning have now gained employment and the other three who successfully completed the programme are being supported to find employment.

Glasgow Kelvin College – Learning Network

The John Wheatley Learning Network is the main vehicle for Glasgow Kelvin College's wider access programme, which supports community groups and individuals living in deprived communities to commission the college to deliver learning tailored to meet the needs and goals of local residents. This provision offers Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework benchmarked learning and certification. The Learning Network is supported by the North East Glasgow community planning

partnership and is a key element in the North East Learning Programme. It has been strengthened by the recent signing of a strategic partnership framework between the Wheatley Housing Group and Glasgow Kelvin College. This has extended the reach of the learning network beyond the north east of Glasgow and includes a commitment to the refurbishment of existing learning centres to the highest quality of environment.

The network comprises 25 community learning centres and three main campus progression hubs (flexible learning units), providing a variety of access points supporting the needs of diverse communities and supports approximately 7,000 people each year. The Network allows community inclusion agencies to take advantage of college technical services, software, security and URL filtering services and technical experience.

North East Scotland College – Women into Energy

Every year, North East Scotland College runs a ‘Skills for Work – Energy’ course as part of an initiative to encourage female school pupils aged between 14 and 17 to consider Engineering as a potential career path. The all-female energy course is sponsored by a number of industry partners including ACE Winches, Score Europe, Shell UK and Schlumberger. This year the participating Academies include: Banff; Ellon; Hazelhead; The Gordon Schools – Huntly; Meldrum; Mintlaw; Peterhead and Turriff. The course is designed to build skills around science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and to open young women’s eyes to the energy industry’s wealth of career options. Many of the pupils who have previously taken part in the scheme have gone on to study Highers in STEM related subjects and/or have successful careers within the engineering sector.

Jennifer Conlan, fifth year pupil at Mintlaw Academy said: “I really enjoyed getting to pilot an ROV at Subsea 7 – I really like the technical stuff. And my favourite part about being an ‘energy girl’ was probably the work placement I got to do at Shell in Tullos, Aberdeen. There were four of us there for two weeks last summer. We also got to talk to loads of people from different departments, including drilling and subsea. I’ve applied to the Shell Engineering Scheme at North East Scotland College. I definitely want to work in oil and gas. I never realised how many jobs there were in the industry. Before I started the scheme I wanted to be a vet, but being part of this and going on placement really changed my mind”.

Colleges Scotland
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Colleges Scotland: This briefing has been provided by Colleges Scotland for MSPs’ information. More information can be found on www.collegesscotland.ac.uk. To discuss, or for further information, please contact Shona Struthers, Chief Executive, Colleges Scotland, email: shona.struthers@collegesscotland.ac.uk or Tel: 01786 892100.