



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Scotland's colleges and universities launch plans for more flexible pathways for learners in the post-COVID economy

A new report released today [Tuesday 11 August] sets a series of recommendations for colleges and universities to create more opportunities for students to progress seamlessly between a Higher National (HN) qualification into a university degree. Produced by the National Articulation Forum, a joint initiative by Colleges Scotland and Universities Scotland, the report calls for an acceleration of action to develop pathways from college into university, to help more students avoid repeating levels of study across different qualifications by recognising their credit for previous learning. Known within the tertiary education sector as “articulation”, the route has been an option for learners for many years; the Forum’s task has been to scale-up and make articulation more accessible in every college and university so that it is more attractive to a larger group of students.

The report’s recommendations take on even greater significance in the context of the recovery following the coronavirus pandemic and its disproportionate impact on young people and those who are already disadvantaged. The recommendations are focused on creating more flexible opportunities for learners as well as closer collaboration between colleges and universities to meet learner demand in the post-pandemic economy.

From the outset, the Forum made a clear commitment that student experiences would be key to their work. To that end, 13 focus groups were held involving 90 students at various stages of their learner journey. Those views have helped shape this final report.

Highlights from the 14 recommendations for colleges, universities and other stakeholders, include:

- All Scottish colleges and universities should ensure that a baseline level of support is in place for all stages of the articulation pathway (pre-transition from college to university, and post-transition) including provision of study skills, academic writing practice, and research skills;
- Colleges and universities should make use of available evidence of student demand and of skills gaps in the Scottish economy to develop new articulation routes;
- The Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council should support the development of a national articulation map in an app for students which would show all articulation options in one place. This should follow on from the pilot of a regional app which launched in the south east of Scotland in July 2020; and



- The Scottish Government, SDS, colleges and universities, should coordinate and fund a public-facing Scotland-wide campaign to raise awareness of articulation as desirable route into university and promote this to pupils and students of all backgrounds.

The National Articulation Forum Final Report was created with support from the Scottish Funding Council and builds on the Commission on Widening Access's 2016 report, [A Blueprint for Fairness](#), which identified increased articulation as a means to widen access to university. The Forum took forward the Commission's recommendation on delivering progress for student articulation and to provide national leadership on this agenda.

Commenting on the report, Professor Nigel Seaton, Joint Convener of the National Articulation Forum and Principal of Abertay University said:

*“Over four thousand students a year are already using full-credit articulation as a way into university, building on their college qualifications in a way that fits in with their own aspirations. The Forum wants to increase the opportunities available to students to articulate from college to university, and our report makes a series of recommendations that we believe will achieve this.*”

*“The Forum was a collaborative effort between the college and university sectors, building on experiences of effective collaboration between colleges and universities in different parts of Scotland. We put student perspectives at the heart of our work, learning from students about what worked for them, and where they saw opportunities for us to do better.*”

*“There has been a positive shift over the last couple of years, with more colleges and universities making articulation routes available. We need to accelerate that progress. Whilst the pandemic has brought much uncertainty, I can only see a greater role for articulation in Scotland's post-pandemic future.”*

Lydia Rohmer, Joint Convener of the National Articulation Forum and Principal of West Highland College UHI, said:

*“Colleges and universities have been working in partnership for many years to provide opportunities and pathways to enable students to make the transition from college to university. The work of the Forum has been invaluable in helping to provide focus on ways that colleges and universities can enhance that provision and provide more opportunities for students to progress towards their chosen careers.*”

*“Articulation routes provide a valuable pathway from college into university for many students, some of whom will have already overcome significant barriers; therefore, it is important that the routes are flexible, seamless, and provide equality of opportunity. The recommendations encourage even closer working relationships between colleges and universities – and indeed collective leadership across the wider Scottish education system – to deliver fair, equitable and sustainable pathways into university, and reducing any unnecessary repetition of the learner journey.”*

Karen Watt, Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council said:

*“Flexible routes into and through degree courses play a vital part in creating a fairer and more accessible higher education system in Scotland. I very much welcome today's report and its consideration of how more progress can be made in this area.”*



**Notes:**

- The Scottish Funding Council currently defines articulation as a student gaining entry into second year of a degree with a Higher National Certificate (HNC) gained at college, or into third year with a Higher National Diploma (HND) gained at college. The report calls for a change in the definition, which limits the introduction of new approaches to learner progression. See recommendation 1.
- Following the publication of the Commission's report in 2016, Universities Scotland published [Working to Widen Access](#) (WTWA), its action plan for responding to the relevant recommendations contained in A Blueprint for Fairness. WTWA proposed the establishment of the National Articulation Forum in order to examine how full credit articulation can be offered to more students, looking at specific subjects and expanding the current model to include other qualifications in addition to HNs.

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