



Fife & Tayside
Wider Access Forum

Operational Plan 2004-2008

FIFE AND TAYSIDE WIDER ACCESS FORUM

OPERATIONAL PLAN – 2004 –2008

1. Introduction

This operational plan develops the strategy submitted to the Scottish Funding Councils in March 2004 and outlines the range of activities that will be employed to take the strategy forward. Feedback from the Implementation Conference held in June 2004 has been used to inform this operational plan and a summary of the main recommendations is included as the preamble to each theme.

The operational plan will develop 3 themes that will be supported by cross theme activity:

Themes

- 1 – Schools transition
- 2 – FE HE transition
- 3 – Transitions - Communities

Cross theme activities

Development of Website
Staff development activities
Student Link programme – using students to support forum activities

2. Rationale for Strategy and Operational Plan

In order to provide a clear rationale for the strategy and resultant project activity, Critical Thinking has been commissioned to carry out some research to:

- prepare an overview of patterns and rates of participation in higher education in the region based on existing data and new data, where available;
- undertake a review of recent literature relating to young people and schools and participation in higher education and summarise key findings; and
- analyse both sets of information in the context of each other and identify those barriers to participation where a programme of intervention would have most impact in the Fife and Tayside Region.

This study will be completed by the end of December 2004 and will inform the development of activities specifically in relation to schools activities but will also be considered in relation to the other themes.

The above information will be used in conjunction with the forthcoming Scottish Executive targets to assist in identifying and targeting areas of greatest need in the region.

PLANNED PROJECT ACTIVITIES

3. THEME 1 - Schools Transition

3.1. Conference Feedback

- a. Schools activities should focus on raising aspirations and positive expectations of lifelong learning and should form a continuum of activities from primary through to end of secondary school.
- b. Existing activity should be mapped and gaps filled by new forum projects, targeted at areas of greatest deprivation
- c. The link between schools and communities should be acknowledged

3.2 Project Activities

Schools activity will be targeted at those schools in areas of greatest disadvantage and with low progression rates to higher (and in some cases further) education. Research is being carried out to identify target schools and also those interventions that are likely to have most impact on raising achievement.

Factors to be considered in developing a Schools Transition programme

- Existing schools activities being carried out by colleges and universities
- The need for a continuum of activities with each activity building on previous work
- Whether a branded common approach is required
- The significant enhancement that can be provided through use of student tutors
- The need to avoid curriculum overload

Taking the above factors into account, it is proposed that the Forum will introduce new activities, mainly in upper primary and lower secondary, and will support and enhance existing activities in upper secondary.

The proposed programme shown below has been developed through discussion with Forum members and consultation will be carried out with the Education Authorities before proposals are invited for its co-ordination and delivery. It will also be reviewed in light of the research findings from Critical Thinking, which will also influence the final shape and content of the programme.

A continuum of activities might look something like the following:

Activity	Year Group	Development required	What is needed
Raising aspiration, motivation, awareness activities	P7 – S1 – whole year groups	Consider how existing activities could be used e.g. The Learning Game, Insights activities	Commission new materials, support target schools through provision of student tutors to enhance programme
Raising aspiration – drama group	S2 – whole year groups	New activity	Commission drama workshop (from FEC) Performers will act as role models
Residential HEI experience	S3 – targeted pupils	Build on existing projects – e.g. St Andrews/Viewforth	Provide student mentors to assist
Profiling activity	S4 – targeted pupils	Development of profiling from Motiv8	Develop profiling tools and link to institutional shadowing/visits programme
Information sessions	S4-S6 targeted pupils	Use students and website info to facilitate one to one sessions	Provide student mentors/advisers
Easter study skills/orientation	S5/S6 Pupils sitting highers		Provide student mentors/tutors
FE/HE information	Staff in schools	Annual seminar in each area	Organise and facilitate events

3.3 Other potential collaborative activities

- The Forum will explore with local authorities the potential for collaborative developments with Determined to Succeed to avoid duplication of activity in this area.
- Careers Scotland has produced an interactive resource (Career Box) to equip young people from 3-18 with enterprise and career planning skills. Again this offers potential for collaborative working.

3.4 Aimhigher

Aimhigher will visit 27 schools in Fife and Tayside in 2005. The Forum will seek to ensure that this initiative complements and supports other schools activities delivered through the Forum's schools programme.

4. THEME 2 - FE-HE Transitions

4.1 Conference Feedback

- a. The benefits of SWAP should be maximised
- b. Skills gaps should be identified and existing activity co-ordinated and this should form the basis of an FE-HE transitions project
- c. Work should be carried out on curriculum development and design issues to ease transition; this work should include progression routes for employed people studying SVQs and others studying through part time routes.

4.2 Project Activities

Although the progression rate of school leavers to higher education in Fife and Tayside (excluding Perth and Kinross) falls below the national average, progression to FE, particularly in Dundee exceeds the national average.

The numbers of students articulating with advanced standing in the three universities in Fife and Tayside compares well with similar institutions in the sector. Abertay with 6% of its intake from articulating students, is exceeded only by Paisley.

Activities in this area will be targeted at three main groups of learners

- Those progressing from from FE to HE in further education colleges
- Those progressing from HN programmes to degrees and entering with advanced standing
- Those who are likely to encounter problems and may be at risk of dropping out

The website will become a primary source of information for students at transition points and through a programme of staff development and awareness raising, this will become a useful tool for guidance staff supporting learners.

A transitions project, drawing on the experience of On-Track and other similar transition projects will be developed and introduced. This will consist of a series of workshops and seminars on topics appropriate to each of the above groups. This may include awareness raising activities, buddying and mentoring programmes, academic writing and research skills, preparing for exams, familiarisation with the university campus etc. This programme will be facilitated by student mentors and will complement existing transition activities.

4.3 Curriculum development and design – issues for transition

SACCA has recently produced guidelines on facilitating credit-based links in higher education. It is proposed that a series of case studies highlighting existing good practice be developed to support the guidelines. This will be available in paper form and on the web site and will form the basis of a staff development programme for FE and HE teaching staff.

5. THEME 3 - Transitions - Communities

5.1 Conference Feedback

- a. The Forum should map provision and facilitate development of effective partnerships to ensure greater coherence, consistency and co-ordination of work in communities.
- b. Development of a pre-access programme that would feed into existing progression routes
- c. The need to raise awareness of SCQF with community workers and within institutions
- d. Support for development of part time work based learning routes

5.2 Project Activities

Further discussions and consultation will be carried out with community learning practitioners to identify a communities' programme to be developed that will add to, and complement, existing activities.

Activities are likely to be focused in the following areas:

- Integration of SWAP-East activities into the Forum programme of activities
- Awareness raising and staff development activities will be offered to community guidance workers. This will raise awareness of the Lift-Off website as a guidance resource and will also cover topics such as SCQF and opportunities for work based learning
- Further work will be carried out to identify and promote pre-access activities that offer routes to higher education and consideration will be given to development of provision to fill gaps.

6. CROSS THEME ACTIVITIES

6.1 Development of Website

The existing website www.lift-off.org.uk will be developed to:

- assist the decision making process at transition points
- direct learners to appropriate support activities
- raise awareness of access activities and transition support available
- provide a source of information for wider access staff
- publicise the work of the Forum
- provide opportunities for sharing of good practice and collaborative activities

Content

The home page will be redesigned to provide information on the forum, dreamcatcher case studies, a news section and links to the following sections:

- Transition information (this is essentially the current site)

- Schools
- Students – potential and existing
- Communities
- Staff
- Forum Projects
- Partner Access Activities

A future development may be to provide a facility for interaction between website visitors and information providers through e-mail, chat etc.

Development and maintenance

Technical and design developments will be carried out by Wideopenspace who were responsible for the existing website. This will require some changes to the structure of the site and will involve using a content management system that will allow on-line updating of information. Through this system, various levels of access rights for updating can be given to a number of people.

Initial content will be provided by the Forum Manager and updating will be responsibility of Forum Administrative Assistant.

A steering group comprising guidance practitioners from all sectors will advise on the development and content of the site.

Each institution in the Forum will be asked to provide a summary of access activities preferably in calendar form to be included on the website. They will also be asked to provide a link from their institution's home page to the lift-off site under the banner of "partner in Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum"

6.2 Student Link Project - Using students to support Forum projects

The use of students to act as links at, and between, transition points underpins many of the activities planned across all three themes in the Forum strategy.

Throughout the Forum area and across institutional widening access activities, there are already a number of programmes in which students, in a variety of ways, act as tutors, mentors and ambassadors and provide invaluable role models.

A co-ordinated student link programme will be developed that will do the following:

- Support Forum activities across all three themes
- Identify and train link students
- Administer a student link programme including Disclosure Scotland checking, monitoring timesheets and arranging payments as appropriate
- Match students to projects

This activity will fulfil the requirements for trained link students to support Forum projects, complement existing student link programmes and help fill gaps in provision.

Proposals will be invited for a Student Link Project that will allow for student participation in a variety of ways:

- Voluntary activities that will contribute to students' personal development
- Link activities that can be structured to allow students to gain credit for the activity
- Paid part time employment that will involve an application and selection process

By encompassing the above options, a wide range of students will be encouraged to participate, thereby bringing a range of differing skills, background and experiences to enhance Forum activities.

6.3 Staff development activities

A range of staff development activities will be carried out. As mentioned above the website will become a primary source of information, particularly for guidance practitioners and a programme of awareness raising/staff development events will be carried out with the following groups:

- College and university staff working in guidance, access and community activities
- Careers Scotland staff
- Guidance staff in outreach centres (Learndirect?)
- JobCentre plus Advisers
- Community Education Workers
- Library staff
- Teaching staff in schools

Forum plenary sessions and conferences will also provide opportunities for sharing of good practice and other staff development opportunities.

7 Delivery of projects

The Forum will deliver its programme of activities as follows:

7.1 Development work

Proposals will be invited for development work that will support projects within themes or cross theme activities This will be open to both internal and selected external bidders.

7.2 Co-ordination of programmes

Forum members will be invited to submit proposals for co-ordination of project within and across themes. This process will begin in November 2004 with the first of a series of meetings that will be held with Forum members to outline programmes of activity and invite collaborative proposals for the development and delivery of Forum projects. Criteria will be set for projects and proposals will be required to show how these criteria will be met. Collaborative bids will be encouraged and joint bids where organisations or institutions work in different geographical locations will be acceptable. Staff working on projects will be employed (either through secondments or new appointments) by the organisation/s submitting proposals but will be responsible to the Forum Manager for delivery of projects.

The Forum Manager will be responsible for developing strategy, ensuring that projects operate in line with the strategy, allocating resources, monitoring progress and evaluating activity.

8 Sustainability of projects

It is the intention that projects will become sustainable over a 4 year period. To this end, wherever practical, staff development to allow organisations to deliver activities in-house will be an integral part of the project.

9 Evaluation

Project proposals will require partners delivering Forum projects to show how they will evaluate the success of projects. These evaluations will be brought together to assess the overall effectiveness of the Forum in meeting its objectives.

10 Funding of activities

The attached spreadsheet shows a suggested allocation of resources. An amount has been allocated to unspecified projects and it is intended that this will be used for contribution to projects that one or more of the four Regional Forums might wish to develop on a national basis and also to support innovative new projects from Forum members.

11 Timescale

November 2004	Present plan to Scottish Funding Councils Further consultation with practitioners Finalise criteria for projects and invite proposals
January 2005 – March 2005	Further meetings and invitations to submit proposals Proposals assessed by panel* If more than one proposal received for any project, successful bidders informed and agreements finalised
February 2005	Full forum meeting and conference to launch Transitions Themes and projects

*The Panel will comprise representatives from the Forum Executive but in order to ensure impartiality will also draw on expertise from other Forum areas.