

ACCESS TO THE HIGH DEMAND PROFESSIONS

Synopsis

Access to the Professions - a contextualised admissions scheme, which recognises that, due to personal circumstance, able school pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds may not be able to compete 'fairly' in high demand subjects. This programme attempts to support talented pupils to acquire the breadth of experience necessary to be successful within highly selective universities for entry to high demands professions such as Medicine, Law, Dentistry. It also encourages those institutions to consider the context of attainment within selection.

Access To The High Demand Professions

In academic year 2010-11, the Scottish Funding Council committed £1.6m over three years to support the universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews and four of the small specialist arts institutions, to improve access to the high demand subjects.

Access to Scotland's selective institutions is important because their courses lead into 'professions' that should better reflect the society they serve.

Despite the past effort of these institutions over many years, the evidence suggests that the social backgrounds of students entering the highly selective universities has not changed, and students from more privileged social and economic backgrounds continue to be overrepresented in these types of universities.

In response to this challenge, the Scottish Funding Council agreed a programme of work that would support institutions to engage schools with low progression to HE to help identify pupils with the potential to be successful in highly selective institutions. This would be achieved by funding additional activity to encourage disadvantaged but talented young people to apply to and enter highly selective institutions. Working with this cohort, the aim is to:

- increase the number of pupils applying to the highly selective institutions;
- deliver systematic support to develop the capacity of applicants based on activity which facilitates experience of particular professions; and
- increase the number of entrants, in part, through greater consideration of the context of an applicant's prior-attainment in the admissions process.

Who are we targeting?

- schools which, over a three year period (06/07-08/09) have a below national average progression to HE (this may include some schools currently targeted by the Schools for Higher Education programme but will predominantly target those schools with between 20% - 35% progression rates);
- pupils at S4 and above; and
- those pupils with the potential to progress who reside in the 20% and 40% most deprived postcodes, and / or are in receipt of EMA (Educational maintenance Allowance) and /or would be first in family to study at university and / or were formerly looked after and accommodated.

What Professions



Scotland – Good practices in Social Dimension implementation in Higher Education



In discussions with the institutions involved, we have identified that we should target medicine, law and the creative arts, with a further list of degree programmes identified to address the specific contexts of the institutions.

Increasing applications to these institutions from low progression schools

The Scottish Funding Council will fund each institution to coordinate a programme of systematic engagement with targeted schools and pupils. Importantly, this does not mean generic awareness raising activity for year groups within schools, but, rather, an organised and targeted relationship with distinct cohorts of pupils, involving in and out of school contact time, organised for a portfolio of high demand subject areas. In this sense, therefore, this is not a schools programme; rather, the schools are simply the conduit for engagement with the target young people. Funds are targeted through the widening participation (WP) functions of institutions to help coordinate access across a range of high demand professions. This activity should be additional to existing school engagement and is a ring-fenced activity so that funding could not be diverted to other school activity.

This work will be carried out in four phases of activity that coordinated within the WP team within each institution but institutions will be expected to deliver for the targeted cohorts of learners:

- awareness raising events which would provide realistic insight into a career in a particular profession;
- visit to an institution and access to university facilities, lectures and events;
- specific events for advice and guidance to parents;
- support for and use of mentors (role model students and professionals) in key events;
- one to one advice at S6 in relation to the application process;
- interview preparation; UCAS application; and advice and contacts for work experience and volunteering;
- coordinated summer school activity; and
- support with transitions.

While recognising regional difference, the funding should support collaboration and help coordinate the individual effort of institutions.

It is expected that the implementation of these four phases will lead to an increase of applicants with the potential to be successful on entry.