

**Further and Higher Education Student Support Review  
Working Group**

**Friday 24th February 2017 15:00 to 16:00  
By Conference Call**

**MINUTES**

**In attendance:**

Jayne-Anne Gadhia (Chair)  
Yvonne MacDermid (Money Advice Scotland)  
Paul Lowe (Student Awards Agency Scotland)  
Dr John Kemp (Scottish Funding Council)  
Phillip Whyte (NUS Scotland)  
Shona Struthers (Colleges Scotland)  
Russell Gunson (IPPR Scotland)  
John Gallacher (UNISON)  
Stephen White (Scottish Government)  
Liz Shevlin (Scottish Government)  
James Boyce (Scottish Government)  
Emily Cox (Virgin Money)  
Graeme Hudson (Virgin Money)

**Secretariat:**

Stephen Pearson (Virgin Money)  
Lisa Keevash (Virgin Money)  
Geraldine Campbell (Scottish Government)  
Jennifer Finn (Scottish Government)

**Apologies:**

Alastair Sim (Universities Scotland)  
Louise Macdonald (Young Scot)  
Erin McAuley (Scottish Youth Parliament and Student)  
Annag MacLean (Castlebay Community School)  
Vonnie Sandlan (NUS Scotland)  
Angela Toal (Child Poverty Action Group)

**1. Welcome**

- 1.1 Jayne-Anne Gadhia (JAG) thanked Working Group members for participating in the call and set out the objectives for the meeting.
- 1.2 JAG also provided clarification to the group on plans for preliminary recommendations by May. The intention is for high level principles to focus work for the remaining period of the Review, rather than a detailed list of recommendations by interim reporting stage. The Chair suggested that the half-day workshop on 20<sup>th</sup> March will provide a suitable opportunity to discuss preliminary recommendations in more detail.
- 1.3 JAG asked Russell to outline his 'Principles Plus' approach which he has adopted for the Benefits and Support sub-group. The aim of this approach is to provide principles for improvement but to supplement these with an illustration of how the principles will work in practice. This would generally be done via the use of case studies. The group discussed this approach and agreed on the benefits, as well as setting out assumptions used as part of the review.

**Action:** The Chair asked that all sub-group Chairs adopt the 'Principles Plus' approach.

**Action:** Shona to share case studies made available from City of Glasgow College that can be used to test early emerging principles.

- 1.4 JAG restated parameters for the review - that current policy on tuition fees is out with scope and need to investigate how to make best use of current maintenance funding levels.

## 2. Timetable

- 2.1 The Chair invited the sub-group chairs to outline their proposals to the group and talk through update papers provided in advance of the meeting:

- **Product Design** (Shona Struthers)

Shona updated the group on progress, in particular on the draft set of principles being refined by the Product Design sub-group. Shona outlined her intentions to ensure these are; right, simple, understood and future-proof. She also explained the importance of considering any principles against wider issues such as; the Learner Journey Review, Widening Access and the commitment to maintain 116,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) places. Shona is planning focus groups from w/c 27<sup>th</sup> February with both students and sector staff.

- **Benefits and Support** (Russell Gunson)

Russell referenced the first meeting of the Benefits and Support sub-group on 16<sup>th</sup> February at which the sub-group agreed on remit, membership, timetable and evidence gathering proposals. Russell outlined the reliance of this sub-group on information covering the interactions between student finance and welfare benefits. The Chair agreed on the value of this information.

**Action:** Scottish Government to consider availability of information/statistics in this area.

- **Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) and Financial Literacy** (Jennifer Finn in Louise Macdonald's absence)

Jennifer talked through the update paper and provided details of this sub-groups first meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> February, at which, the sub-group agreed on remit, membership, timetable and evidence gathering techniques. She advised that the sub-group intend on issuing a stakeholder survey w/c 27<sup>th</sup> February as well as further consideration of desk research and focus group plans. Jennifer outlined some of the key findings/themes so far which included; inferior knowledge of Scottish students on loans compared to RUK counterparts and a lack of a national source of IAG across both FE and HE.

**Action:** Jennifer to share Sarah Minty research with John Gallacher following his request.

- **Effective Administration & Delivery** (Dr John Kemp)

John K outlined progress to date by the Effective Administration sub-group and explained this group is most concerned with the practicalities of how to deliver an effective system. He explained that the group are considering how students flow through FE and HE system as well as obvious improvements on the FE side. John K suggested that further consideration will be required into how the 'Principles Plus' approach fits with the delivery aspect of student finance and that the sharing of information between sub-group Chairs will help to facilitate this.

- **Finance** (Jayne-Anne Gadhia)

JAG explained that her team have been working with Scottish Government to better understand funding available within current FE and HE systems. John K explained that consideration has to be given to repayment of loan funding. That is, the totality of the

function has to be considered rather than cost of delivery to individual students. The Group discussed the role of FE funding in supporting students to progress onto HE and interactions with the attainment gap.

### 3. International Comparators

- 3.1 Emily talked through the paper on international student funding models. Of particular interest were the systems in place in Germany and Singapore. Emily asked the group for views on whether it would be beneficial to carry out further more in-depth research into this area.

The group agreed on the benefits of more detailed information in this area.

**Action:** Emily to work with Scottish Government team on taking forward further research.

### 4. Update on Central Evidence Gathering

- 4.1 Graeme talked through the paper on evidence gathering and 4 approaches:
1. YouGov student survey
  2. Student focus groups
  3. Research into international student models
  4. Consultation on preliminary recommendations

The group agreed that there has been a positive response rate to the YouGov survey so far. The Chair suggested that early numbers mean that the survey has statistical validity.

Liz asked if more could be done to encourage males to complete the survey given higher response rate from females. Graeme agreed to consider this with SG colleagues. Liz suggested that if there is a gender imbalance by the time of final results that this be made clear.

**Action:** Graeme asked that Working Group members get in touch with him directly should they have any comments on evidence gathering plans.

**Action:** Geraldine to share YouGov survey link with Shona.

### 5. Closing and AOB

- 5.1 The Chair thanked everyone for their positive contributions and agreed to circulate minutes of the meeting. The next meeting will take place on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> March at City of Glasgow College from 10:30 – 12:00. Sub-group Chairs will be invited to meet students ahead of the meeting.

The Chair also explained that the group will receive the principles from the Product Design sub-group for discussion at that meeting (10/03).

**Action:** All to consider case studies and share with Review Group, Geraldine/Jennifer to collate.