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- 26 For some subjects, particularly those in professional / chartered fields (eg health, engineering) engagement with accrediting professional bodies will be critical to ensure course work is properly mapped between college and university provision. The SFC is aware of some emerging work in life sciences that demonstrates the added value of the articulation route in terms of the employability of students as on completion of their degree they possess both the technical and theoretical skills required in today's marketplace.

### *Advanced entry*

#### *Increasing numbers of students are staying on at school for sixth year ...but most are receiving acceptance to university based on their results in fifth year*

- 27 The vast majority of Scottish school leavers who go on to study at university in Scotland do so after having done a sixth year at school. For the period for which data have been reviewed (2007/08 – 2009/10), there has been a consistently upward trend in the numbers of pupils staying on to sixth year.
- 28 Students in sixth year can either study for additional Highers (SCQF level 6) and / or Advanced Highers (SCQF level 7). In addition, the Scottish Baccalaureate (SCQF level 7) has recently been introduced as an alternative option (albeit take up to date has been low). As the SCQF is presented it is clear that for those students studying at Advanced Higher / Scottish Baccalaureate level and proceeding to first year of university there is repetition of study at SCQF level 7 – however there are differences in both the depth of curriculum and teaching methods offered at school and university.
- 29 Almost all offers from Scottish universities to Scottish students are made on the basis of their Highers results in S5 (SCQF level 6 study), and therefore (because most pupils choose to apply during S6 rather than S5) the offers are primarily 'unconditional'.
- 30 Anecdotal evidence suggests that following receipt of their unconditional offer many students disengage with the remainder of their sixth year studies. Indeed, several of the universities that we spoke to during the course of this study, as well as the main awarding body

SQA, confirmed that this has a resulting negative effect on uptake, retention and achievement at Advanced Higher level.

*Although a large number of students are taking Advanced Highers most are not gaining sufficient qualifications to ensure direct entry to second year.*

- 31 In 2009-10, there were 24,293 Scots entrants to the first year of a full-time degree level course in Scotland, of which 15,861 were under 19. In the previous year (2008-09), SQA reported 11,984 Advanced Higher candidates. Allowing for Scots school leavers who access HE elsewhere in the UK (of which there were 1,150 in the under 19 age group in 2009-10, 25 per cent of whom achieved 3+ Advanced Highers), we might reasonably conclude that around 70 per cent of first year Scots students in Scottish universities have studied at Advanced Higher level.
- 32 This does not mean that the majority of school leavers are sufficiently qualified to enter with advanced standing: most institutions which offer this route require at least two, if not three, good passes at Advanced Higher or equivalent, and the numbers of candidates taking more than one Advanced Higher is still low. We estimate 1,400 students<sup>4</sup> achieved 3 or more passes at Advanced Higher level in 2009-10.
- 33 If the synergy between the Advanced Higher syllabus and the university syllabus could be improved, and entry from school into year two could become a standard route into a suitable degree programme (with Advanced Higher, and the Scottish Baccalaureate, also Level 7, as a standard entry requirement for this), with appropriate transitional support built into the system, we believe there would be an incentive for more candidates to take a greater number of Advanced Highers and strive to achieve the results required for second year entry.
- 34 The roll out of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) senior phase is also relevant in this context. The first cohort of students is due to complete sixth year in 2015/16. If CfE delivers the benefits anticipated then these students should be more mature learners capable of individual learning which will make them more ready for direct entry to second year upon achievement of Advanced Highers<sup>5</sup>.

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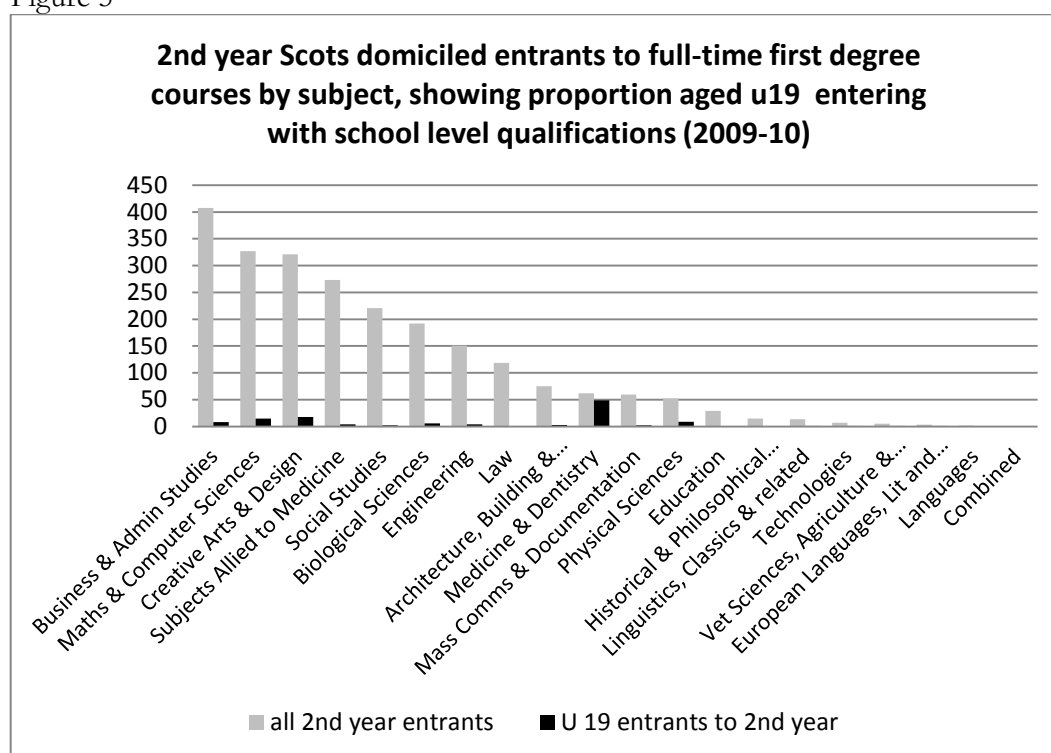
<sup>4</sup> 2009-10 data for publicly funded school leavers show just under 1,100 gained 3+ qualifications at SCQF level 7 (which we take mainly to be Advanced Highers). We have used 2008-09 data for independent school leavers. Data are not available for students achieving 2+ passes.

<sup>5</sup> Much of the discussion on CfE is focused on pursuing Highers over a 2 year period which will not necessarily increase Advanced Higher uptake. However it is SFC's view that overall CfE will increase the numbers of students pursuing study at both level 6 and level 7 in schools with the 2 year sitting attracting

*Only about 125 school leavers per annum are gaining direct entry to second year based on their school qualifications.*

35 The SFC estimate that only around 125 Scots students under 19 enter with advanced standing, and this represents no more than one or two students in any one subject area in any one institution<sup>6</sup>. There are two exceptions to this: Medicine at the University of St Andrews, which we understand routinely, admits students directly in to the programme at SCQF level 8, and Edinburgh College of Art.

Figure 5



Source: SFC, based on HESA

36 We might assume that prospective students in today’s market would have an interest in shortening the length time it takes to graduate because of debt implications, but we have found little evidence in the course of this study to suggest that this is the case – evidence from a survey undertaken by SAAS as part of this work found that only 1 in 4 students commented that debt was an issue in choosing a course. The full survey results are presented in an annex to this report.

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those students that may not currently consider Highers as an option and with the added flexibility for some to take Highers in a 2 year sitting over fourth and fifth year.

<sup>6</sup> Our estimate is based on HESA stats showing all u19 entrants entering 2<sup>nd</sup> year with a school only qualification.

- 37 More commonly, we are told that most school leavers would rather progress with their peer group than follow a non-traditional route. And there is some logic behind this: anecdotal evidence from several institutions suggests that students opting for year two entry often fall back to year one within a few weeks of starting their course, possibly because they find it difficult to assimilate into an already established peer group and possibly because there is not enough synergy in terms of the syllabus.

***However some institutions are starting to develop more routes for advanced entry***

- 38 As for the institutions themselves, there is some evidence that some institutions are beginning to develop ideas to encourage greater numbers to come through this route. In line with the Scottish Government's Green Paper *Building a Smarter Future*, CfE should enable universities to work with schools to ensure their curriculum is planned to meet the needs of the new generation of learners that are leaving school with a different skill set and method of learning.
- 39 The case study below presents an overview of the work currently on-going at the University of Dundee to develop a degree based on a shared Level 7 curriculum thereby enabling students to complete a degree in only three years.

**University of Dundee College of Life Sciences**

The University of Dundee's College of Life Sciences (CLS) is intent on improving students' transitions from school or college and ensuring that students have the right encouragement and support to continue on an upward trajectory – in terms of SCQF levels – at these transitional stages. The College's aspiration is that from 2013-14, a significant number of students on its Life Sciences degree programme will enter the programme at level (or year) two, allowing full-time students to graduate with an Honours degree after just three years of study at the university or with an MSci after four years.

Key to this is the notion of a core, or shared, curriculum at SCQF level 7 – developed in partnership with the schools and Colleges, initially locally – which will enable students to access level two of the

degree programme with appropriate level 7 qualifications no matter which route they have come through.

The key academic driver is to better prepare Dundee graduates, developing core key skills which will equip them to adapt to new knowledge in any future work or research setting. To this end, CLS has rewritten the curriculum for level one, and a similar exercise is underway to bring level two of the programme into line. To enable the notion of the core curriculum to work, the revised degree programme will demonstrate a greater focus on the skills-based elements at levels one and two, with more of the subject specialist elements coming into play at levels three and four.

The university also recognises that students, having come through a variety of routes, will have varying needs for transitional support. So, from 2011-12, new entrants to the life sciences programme are invited to

complete an online skills audit prior to the start of the session. This enables the university's advisors of studies, in discussion with each student, to identify gaps in the student's skills or knowledge and to build appropriate support into the student's programme of study. Examples include a dedicated life sciences module and access to open labs, at which students can work on their lab skills in a supported environment. A similar skills audit tool is under development for access into level two.

The university has given one of its lecturing staff a part-time remit to work with the school sector to raise awareness of the option for entry into level two of the life sciences degree. The changes have been received positively by current students on the programme – and from the students' union – giving the university reason to be confident that this will be a popular option. The university is planning for a significant increase in the proportion of students entering the degree at level two in 2012-13 (up from around 10 per cent to 30 per cent

or more), and intends that this trend will continue.

For those interested in using this as a pathway to the MSci, there are the added benefits of being able to access student support for the whole programme (as it is reduced to four years) and of being able, within four years, to achieve a Masters qualification that will stand out in the international market place.

Implementing this model involves an upfront investment of time, but in the medium to long term the university expects to see tangible improvements in student retention and achievement, while the approach to supported transition should reduce the need for remedial support and allow for a more efficient use of academic time.

The success of this approach will be monitored closely, and discussions are already underway with a view to rolling out similar models in the other curriculum areas.

40 All of this suggests that, if we are seeking to change the status quo, this change needs to be driven by schools, colleges and universities and/or incentivised by changes in student support arrangements.

***There has been a consistent decline in the numbers of school leavers entering university directly from fifth year***

41 There are very few entering degree level courses directly from fifth year. In 2009-10, there were 15,251 fifth year leavers of which 1,312 went straight on to HE.<sup>7</sup> We estimate that fewer than 500 of those entering full-time degree level courses in Scottish universities are fifth year leavers (NB the remaining c.800 fifth year leavers destined for HE are most likely to be studying at sub-degree level, either in a college or an HEI).<sup>8</sup> So the fifth year school leaver group now represents less than 2 per cent of the total first year intake of Scots full-time undergraduate students in Scotland. This has been a consistent pattern in recent years.

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<sup>7</sup> From figures provided by Scottish Government Analytical Services. The actual number is likely to be higher, as this figure does not include those from independent schools

<sup>8</sup> SFC, based on HESA



#### ***Section 4: Growing flexible entry routes, how much could they grow?***

- 42 This section sets out the potential growth for both articulation and advanced entry. Our forecasts are for ambitious growth in both articulation and advanced entry and reflect what could be achieved if significant structural change is implemented. Section 5 goes on to detail what type of structural change needs to happen to achieve our ambitious growth forecasts.

#### ***Improving the synergy between schools, colleges and universities at SCQF level 7 is the key to improving flexible entry to higher education.***

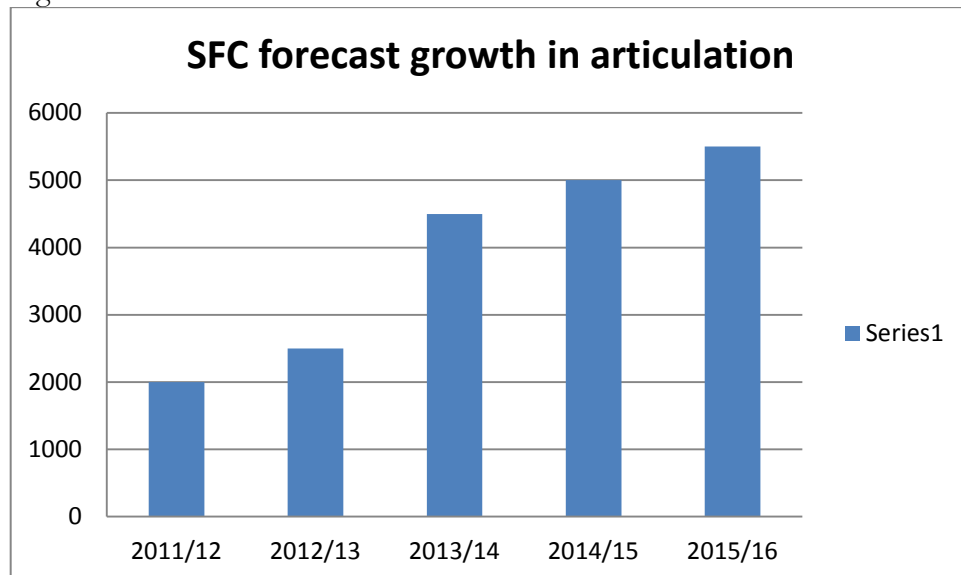
- 43 The key issue on the supply side is that all of the major learning providers – schools, colleges and universities – offer provision at SCQF Level 7, but in many cases there is insufficient synergy built into the system to avoid learners having to repeat Level 7 when they make the transition from one type of provider to another.

#### ***There is potential to grow both articulation and advanced entry to achieve cost efficiencies***

- 44 Growing articulation in the short term should be achievable by ensuring full credit is given to all HNQ recipients entering HE. The SFC has been pursuing this approach for a number of years through the use of outcome agreements which include articulation student volume as a key indicator, and this has had a significant positive impact. However we recognise that more could be done to build on this approach.
- 45 Some 5,500 qualify with a HNQ per annum and enter HE with only 2,000 of these receiving full credit. As articulation becomes an accepted route to HE there is also scope to increase those pursuing a HNQ prior to entering degree study.
- 46 For these reasons the SFC considers it reasonable to anticipate growth in articulation from the current 2000 students up to a total of 5,500 by 2015/16. This is obviously reliant on the required structural and funding changes, as outlined in the next section, being implemented.
- 47 This growth will occur slowly over the next two years with more significant growth forecast from 2013/14 onwards. The slow growth reflects the time taken to embed articulation and work needed on curriculum mapping / reform and marketing to students. By 2015/16

SFC considers that the intake via articulation could grow to 5,500 per annum.

Figure 6



Source: SFC

48 For advanced entry SFC estimate that this number could grow to 800 students per annum by 2015/16 – see table 3. We have assumed figures for 2012/13 remain broadly comparable with what was achieved in 2009/10. We have then assumed more significant growth if structural changes are made to embed S6 to advanced entry as a more common place route to HE.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Total number of S6 leavers*	26,600	26,200	26,400	25,700
Total number of Advanced Higher candidates achieving 3+ passes**	1,400	1,600	2,000	2,000
Total number of Advanced Higher entrants direct from school to 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	125	200	400	800
% of Advanced Higher qualified candidates (ie 3+) entering 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	12.5%	12.5%	20%	40%
* to forecast the number of S6 leavers SFC took the 2009/10 number of S6 leavers and applied the GRO projections for 18 years old to this figure. Figures have been rounded for presentational purposes. The number of S6 leavers could increase in absolute terms if more students stay on from S5. At present we have not included this increase in our figures.				
** approximately 270 of these students, roughly 1 in 5 go to England for university study.				

- 49 The choice of where to go to university is a complex one and each student will make their decision based on a number of factors including: location (pros and cons of moving away from home); subject choice (reputation of institution in their chosen subject may outweigh a poorer reputation overall or vice versa); cost; parental and peer influence and likelihood of acceptance.
- 50 We have not sought to identify the relative weight of each of these factors in making our assumptions about the increased levels of advanced entry but we have assumed that a similar proportion of Scottish students achieving 3+ Advanced Highers will continue to pursue university study in England.

***Direct entry to first year from fifth year is less likely to offer significant growth potential***

- 51 The numbers currently leaving fifth year and entering full-time university study are low. This has been the trend for the past three years.
- 52 SFC considers there to be greater potential in encouraging more students to stay on at school for a sixth year and pursue Advanced Highers and then enter 2nd year of university rather than leaving at the end of fifth year and entering 1st year. The former approach is more compatible in age terms with RUK students and those from overseas coming to Scotland to study.

***Accelerated degrees will continue to cater for a small proportion of the market offering scope for greater integration between colleges and universities***

- 53 The case study below demonstrates how a college is moving forward in terms of delivering HE and working with a university to validate its degrees. This model could be rolled out more widely in subjects where a technical / professional degree is required by the market and students are have very clear employment opportunities following qualification.

## **Motherwell College BA Musical Theatre**

The BA (Hons) Musical Theatre is one of several degree programmes offered at Motherwell College. The degree option is a one year programme undertaken on completion of the HND Musical Theatre (making up a three year programme in total). It is validated by Northumbria University.

The college admits between 18 and 20 students to the degree programme each year. 2009-10 was the first year of the programme; it is now in its third year. Entry is competitive (with around five applicants for every place) and involves a rigorous selection process including a practical audition. While many of the college's own HND students are successful in gaining entry to the degree, it is also open to external applicants to apply. The programme attracts students not only from the college's own area but also from other parts of Scotland. The programme does not stand alone from the other provision in the section but rather enhances and informs the rest of the further and higher education portfolio.

This is a highly vocational degree, with a large practical element. The programme is designed to produce multi-skilled, triple threat performers who will meet the demands of current professional practice in the musical theatre industry. Students showcase their performance in both Glasgow and Edinburgh several times throughout the year, and then in London towards the end of the year. This acts as a very positive incentive for the other student groups who see and aspire to a very worthwhile and natural progression in their studies and ultimately in their professional success. The students on the programme are highly motivated, and this is borne out through very high retention and achievement rates. In 2010-11, the vast majority graduated with 2:1 and one student achieved a First Class award. The college's experience is that 90-95% of its students are

successful in signing up with an agent before they graduate: this being one of the purposes of the London experience. The college has also seen its graduates achieve big successes on shows including Britain's Got Talent, the X Factor and Over the Rainbow. Given the nature of the training ethos, learners leave the course motivated, disciplined and with a highly developed sense of independence which serves them well in a variety of employment situations from interview to job performance. Employment destinations to date include teaching and directing as well as performance contracts.

The college believes that key to the success of this programme is its team of dedicated and hard-working teaching staff, who are well connected and bring real practical experience of working within the industry. The size of the class means that students can be well supported by the staff and will quickly build up a rapport with one another. It is not unusual for the group to use the college's rehearsal space well into the night. Students are connected with the validating university, too, and the college arranges for the students to visit the university during the first term of the degree year.

The degree level year is funded through the standard college funding mechanism and, from the college's perspective, does not come at a disproportionate cost compared with other programmes. This is one of several degrees offered by the college in partnership with both Scottish and English higher education institutions, and the college envisages that it will continue to offer such opportunities where there is evidence of demand.

This model has been extended in the last academic year to include a BA Honours Acting degree which has already delivered a 100% successful cohort, resulting in 4 First Classes, one 2.2 and the rest of the 16 strong class achieving 2:1.

***However, the real gains in shortening the time taken to achieve a degree will come from advanced entry***































