ULSTER UNIVERSITY **CPF/20/01**

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FORUM **Agenda Item: 4**

22 January 2020

ATTRITION ON ACCESS PROGRAMMES

To receive a report on from the Working Group looking at the causes of poor retention on Access programmes.

ACTION:

For information.

**CPF/20/01**

**Agenda Item: 4**

Ulster University

**Collaborative Forum**

**Access Course Working Group**

Held 19th November 2019 at 2.30-4.30, Ulster University Belfast Rm BA-02-010

**Present:** Dr Paula Brogan (Chair), Carol Reid, Dr Alaistair McCarley (SWC), Paul Torley(SRC), Ian Jenks (NRC), and Niki McDade (BMC)

**Apologies:** Galvin Dobson (NWRC)

**Minutes of meeting**

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|  | **Agenda item** | **Points** | **Action** |
| **1** | **Welcome and introductions** | PB welcomed the group and outlined the purpose of the meeting. |  |
| **2** | **Current performance** | CR outlined key attrition, success and progression figures for Access courses, noting that >50% of courses had attrition rates of between 26 and 49%, with 16% of courses having attrition >50%.  |  |
| **3** | **Insights, key drivers for attrition, success and progression, and suggested interventions**  | The following were discussed**A) Cohort characteristics** (high levels of students with complex needs in relation to stage of study, socio/cultural context, physical and mental health) – which impacts attendance, engagement and completion rate. It may also impact staff. **B) Strength of team needed to deliver** (given complex cohort needs)**C) Demographic change within student cohorts –** now frequently younger, with more recent experience in education system.**D)Recruitment policy.** It was felt by FE reps that recruitment process was robust – often with several contacts with candidates prior to enrolment. Advertising materials were accurate – and generally the course was recruiting its target population.However, consensus was that effort was required to select out those not currently fit to study. **E) Accuracy of metrics**Generally a consistent pattern is not evident across colleges – other than the persistently high attrition rates over several years. Questions raised about the accuracy of metrics, data tracking between FE and HE and clarity of process of communication and processing of information. Suggested that a census date could be set by which all early leavers recorded across College and communicated to Ulster, so genuine EAL’s would not affect metrics.**F)** **Curriculum (mode, time and delivery)**Discussed that frequently courses and module teams had been operating unchanged for several years. The upcoming revalidation would provide an opportunity to refresh the course content and assessment structure. It was noted that currently the course is over-assessed, that the use of 15 credit modules was common – and that the introduction of 20 credit modules might reduce assessment load for students. It was suggested that the course would benefit from “added value” in relation to tutorial support, PAPHr etc. and that a creative approach to tutorial support (perhaps using online approach) might be useful. Limited application of blended learning approach. **G) Ulster Identity**It was suggested that a lack of understanding about their status asUlster Associate students, and lack of awareness about the potential progression routes may be contributing to lack of motivation. The use of guest speakers was suggested as a means to improve profile and market courses.Also an early Access specific progression event (before end of October of the first semester) at Ulster to promote the various Ulster HE opportunities and to help give Access students a more visible goal that might help to support continuing engagement with the programme.**H) Follow-up on leavers.** Across colleges information about why students leave, what support would have helped them stay etc. is needed to support a within and across college reflection on attrition.  | A & B) Consensus that the complexity of this group require significant time investment – and additional staff resources by college, in order to recruit, deliver and provide the additional support to students. Staff training and support also important. **(HoS to discuss with College management).**Given the cohort, consideration of the expected rates is required. **CR and PB to discuss with Ulster.** C) Consider a cross College consensus that marketing should require candidates to “be out of formal education for more than 2 years.” **(HoS to discuss with FE Management).****E)** Ulster team to clarify the process of data movement and consider a date for completion of Early Leaver data **(CR and PB)****F)** Planned meetings for Revalidation 2020 about to commence. **(HoS)****G) CR** to consider with teams a student event to promote awareness of Ulster and options for future.**HoS** to contact Marketing dept. for Ulster CCU and explain the need for improved profile of Ulster courses**H) PB and CR** to draft and circulate for comment, a short survey to be applied in person or by post.  |
|  | **DONM and close** | To maintain a focus, it is likely that another meeting will be held in Semester 2 to feedback on actions and developments. Date and venue to be confirmed. | **PB** |