ULSTER UNIVERSITY **CPF/21/02**

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FORUM **Agenda Item: 10**

27 January 2021

ATTRITION ON ACCESS PROGRAMMES

To consider a report on Attrition on Access Programmes.

ACTION:

For consideration.

**Paper: CPF/21/02**

**Agenda Item: 10**

**Ulster University Collaborative Forum Access Course Sub-Group**

**Update on progress**

11th Jan 2021

**Sub-Group membership:**

Paula Brogan, FPM (Chair)

Carol Reid, FPM

Alastair McCarley (SWC)

Paul Torley(SRC)

Ian Jinks (NRC)

Niki McDade (BMC)

Galvin Dobson (NWRC)

The first meeting of the Access Course Sub-Group was held on the 19 November 2019 in Ulster University Belfast Campus. Chaired by Paula Brogan and facilitated by Carol Reid – the meeting was attended by representation from each college delivering Ulster validated Access programmes - Alastair McCarley (SWC), Paul Torley(SRC), Ian Jinks (NRC) and Niki McDade (BMC). Apologies received from Galvin Dobson (NWRC)

The meeting focused on three key areas: **1. Current Performance, 2. Insights into key drivers for attrition, success and progression, 3. Possible responses, interventions and planning**

1. **Performance:** Key attrition, success and progression figures for Access courses were discussed, noting that >50% of courses had attrition rates of between 26 and 49%, with 16% of courses having attrition >50%.
2. **Key drivers for attritions, success and progression:** The following drivers were discussed and responses identified.

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|  | **Key driver** | **Response** | **Completed** |
| A. | **Cohort characteristics. H**igh 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 | 1) Consensus agreed that the complexity of this group require significant time investment and additional staff resources in-college, in order to recruit, deliver and provide the additional support to students.  2) Professional development of staff also important to underpin quality of student experience. **Responsibility: Each HoS to discuss with College management.** | Action delayed due to Covid implications |
| 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. | Given the cohort, consideration of a review of the metrics and the expected rates is suggested. **Responsibility CR and PB to discuss with Ulster.** | Evidence base for review of metrics needs to be established to support discussion with QE Dept or justification of any softening away from the current 20% rate. Links to items E and H. |
| 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. | 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).** | To be addressed in revalidation documents in November 2021 |
| E | **Accuracy of metrics:** Generally a consistent pattern is not evident across colleges – other than the persistently high attrition rates over several years.  Questions were raised about the accuracy of metrics, data tracking between FE and HE and clarity of process of communication and processing of information. It was suggested that a census date could be set by which all early leavers might be recorded across College and communicated to Ulster, so genuine EAL’s would not affect metrics. | Ulster team to clarify the process of data movement and consider a date for completion of Early Leaver data, in line with processes followed for Ulster home campus students  **(CR and PB)** | In process |
| 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.  It was clear that there was limited application of blended learning approach. | Planned meetings for Revalidation 2020 about to commence. **(HoS)** | Revalidation postponed due to Covid – rescheduled November 2021  **Revalidation Workshop** designed and delivered by FPMs in collaboration with the CHERP dept Ulster – **Friday 13th November 2020.** |
| 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. | **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 | **A Series of 3 Access Webinars** were designed and delivered by the FPM team for Access students interested in progression to courses at Magee, Coleraine and Belfast. **These events were held on 23rd, 25th and 26th November 2020**. |
| 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. | 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. HOS  **PB and CR** to draft and circulate for comment, a short survey to be applied in person or by post. | Questionnaire drafted but circulation postponed due to Covid 19. |

**Implications of Covid 19 and plan:**

Although a follow-up meeting was envisaged to progress this review, the implications of the Covid19 pandemic has delayed specific areas of work. Currently there are no plans for a meeting in relation to the work of the sub-group. This will be reviewed when conditions permit.

The revalidation of the Access programmes run by NRC, SWC, NWRC and SRC is due in November 2021 having been postponed in 2020 due to Covid. Work is ongoing in relation to this.

**Note of appreciation:** Thanks to the college representatives for their ongoing commitment to enhancing the quality of the Access provision and participation in the work of this sub-group. Thank you also to Carol Reid, for her ongoing support, expertise and industry in the delivery of agreed actions.

**Report compiled by**: Dr Paula Brogan (Chair), 11/1/2021