

CROSS PARTY GROUP (CPG) ON SCOTLAND'S UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

12.30-14.00 on Thursday 23 April 2015, Committee Room 2, Scottish Parliament

Note of Meeting

Present:

Elizabeth Smith MSP	Scottish Parliament	CPG Convener
Iain Gray MSP	Scottish Parliament	CPG Deputy Convener
Mary Scanlon MSP	Scottish Parliament	
Anne McTaggart MSP	Scottish Parliament	
Hanzala Malik MSP	Scottish Parliament	
Rosemary Allford	Higher Education Academy Scotland	
Genevieve Bateman	Scottish Parliament	
Sara Carter	University of Strathclyde	
Jonathan Clark	Skills Development Scotland	
Tony Coultas	Skills Development Scotland	
Joanne Buchan	Colleges Scotland	
Diane Greenlees	Skills Development Scotland	
Caroline Henderson	Bellenden	
Murray Hope	Higher Education Academy Scotland	
Colette Filippi	Forth Valley College	
Jodie Gordon	Bellenden	
Grant Jarvie	University of Edinburgh	
Susannah Lane	Universities Scotland	
Eve Lewis	sparqs	
Finlay MacCorquodale	Edinburgh Napier University	
Callum Macdonald	Skills Development Scotland	
Matthew MacIver	University of the Highlands and Islands	
Phil McGuinness	sparqs	
Megan McHaney	NUS Scotland	
David Moroney	Skills Development Scotland	
Walter Patterson	Colleges Scotland	
Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland	
Heather Sloan	Universities Scotland	
Kenny Stewart	Open University in Scotland	
Andrew Watson	Skills Development Scotland	
Eoin Welsh	West College Scotland	
Emma Whitelock	Lead Scotland	
James Wilson	Universities Scotland	

Apologies:

David Anderson	UCU Scotland
Terry Brotherstone	University of Aberdeen
Moir Gibson	University of Edinburgh
Paul Little	City of Glasgow College
Malcolm McLeod	University of Stirling
Jane Scott	Queen Margaret University
Richard Simpson MSP	Scottish Parliament

1. Welcome and Introduction from the Convenor

The Convenor, welcomed everyone to the twenty-first meeting of the Cross Party Group. The Convenor thanked Skills Development Scotland for sponsoring the lunch for the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted.

3. Introduction to the topic of Diverse Learning Opportunities

The Convenor introduced the speakers on the topic of Diverse Learning Opportunities, noting that a breadth of learning opportunities is top of the agenda right across Scotland. The Convenor said that today's speakers come from similar backgrounds but will be talking about a variety of interests within the skills and employability agendas.

Tony Coultas, Head of Service Innovation; Jonathan Clark, Service Design & Innovation Director; and Diane Greenlees, Head of Foundation & Advanced Apprenticeships and European Funds, Skills Development Scotland

Mr Coultas presented to the CPG on the development of work-based learning, foundation apprenticeships and wider development. Mr Coultas said a change in approach was needed in Scotland due to the high levels of youth unemployment; it was recognised that better engagement between employers and learners would make learners better prepared for work. Low levels of employer engagement with education was recognised as were emerging skills shortages, whilst clear lessons can be identified from other countries with examples of work-based learning in Europe and further afield.

Mr Coultas said that there is a good basis to build on in Scotland with the establishment of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and the new regional college structure. There is an opportunity to deliver work-based learning in the senior stage at school – an important point at which young people start to thinking about the world of work. Foundation apprenticeships are a blended learning

approach combining a work-based qualification with academic learning and industry involvement. Foundation Apprenticeships are offered to pupils in S4-S6. Industry bodies own Foundation Apprenticeships, which are on a par with other learning in the senior phase at SCQF level 6. Importantly, Foundation Apprenticeships are not “pre-apprenticeships”. Three different elements are involved, namely knowledge, skills and capability and work-based learning is essential.

Mr Coultas said that the Scottish Government’s strategy is currently in its development phase and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is working towards a series of aims. SDS aims to have set up 28 pathfinders across 5 sectors by August 2015 by building local partnership with schools, colleges, learning and training providers, and employers to benefit 28 cohorts of pupils. One example of a local pathfinder partnership already underway is the engineering pathfinders in West Lothian and Fife with around 80 pupils starting foundation apprenticeships. The aim is to involve all local authorities and colleges by August 2016.

SDS is also working to introduce work-based learning across the rest of the learning experience of young people. This includes increasing opportunities in Broad General Education between Primaries 1-3 in order to progressively build young people’s understanding of the world of work and how learning associates to it. Advanced Apprenticeships are being developed in order to deliver higher level technical skills through a combination of higher education in colleges and universities and work-based learning. The Advanced Apprenticeship approach involves a longer development cycle, and will include different models, and the first programme to be delivered is in engineering.

As part of the presentation, the CPG viewed a short film on Foundation Apprenticeships. The film can be viewed here: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/our-services/foundation-apprenticeships/>

David Moroney, External Communications Executive, Skills Development Scotland

Mr Moroney provided the CPG with an update on Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2015, which runs from 18 -22 May. More information can be found at www.scottishapprenticeshipweek.com.

Mr Moroney explained that the themes of the 2015 campaign are: Modern Apprenticeships providing opportunities in equality and diversity; Modern Apprenticeships work for businesses of all sizes; and that more Modern Apprenticeships are available than ever before.

The 2015 campaign’s aims include delivering targeted events involving more partners, press, broadcast and social media; targeted growth of Modern Apprenticeships; a call on employers to recruit more apprentices; promotion of the Modern Apprenticeship Employer Pledge; increased equality and diversity in Modern Apprenticeships; and the promotion of the Skills Development Scotland role and services.

The 2015 campaign will engage a wide audience including business and industry, young people and their influences such as parents, training providers, Scottish Government and MSPs and other stakeholders. Key messages will be the value of Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) to business, individuals and the economy; how businesses can benefit from MAs, including Skills Development

Scotland support; and highlighting the positive career paths open for all, including under-represented groups.

Mr Moroney told the CPG that there will be several benefits from Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2015, including raising awareness of MAs and of SDS, engagement with employers and partners, encouraging new and existing employers to take on more MAs, and promoting [Our Skillsforce](#) (offering a wide range of skills related support for businesses) and [My World of Work](#), Scotland's national careers advice website.

Colette Filippi, Associate Principal - Business Development, Forth Valley College

Ms Filippi presented to the CPG on how Forth Valley College is making learning work for Modern Apprenticeships. Ms Filippi explained that colleges are engaged in delivery throughout the pipeline of skills in Scotland. Colleges engage with schools, students, employers and universities to deliver skills through a variety of means.

Ms Filippi said Forth Valley College engaged a broad student body, including 200 school pupils within the School College Opportunities to Succeed (SCOTS) programme, 200 associate students, 500 employers, 1,000 modern apprentices, and 3,300 full-time students and 94 per cent of students go on to positive destinations.

Forth Valley College has developed a number of innovative partnerships with employers in order to deliver training and skills. For example, the College has partnered with Scottish Power and its subcontractors in order to deliver modern apprenticeships with both young people (at craft and advanced levels) and adults as well as training to local unemployed people as overhead electrical lines technicians. The College has also partnered with Historic Scotland to co-deliver a conservation skills centre to ensure Scotland has training to protect its unique historic landscape. The College also delivers an INEOS Modern Apprenticeship Scheme offering quality, in-depth training in one of three engineering disciplines – Mechanical, Instrument/Electrical and Process. The college also offers transition training for people to gain access into Ineos and therefore the sector.

Ms Filippi explained to the CPG that Forth Valley College is involved in the School-College Opportunities to Succeed (SCOTS) programme, which promotes college as a positive destination to learners. The programme has engaged 200 S4 pupils from over 14 secondary schools, offering taster experiences in eight subjects and contributes to building the skills pipeline. Ms Filippi also highlighted the Foundation Apprenticeships being delivered by the College, including Pathfinders in 2015/16 for Health and Social Care and Early Years and Engineering in 2016/17

The CPG heard that Forth Valley College is partnering with universities to deliver Advanced Apprenticeships. The work has led to the development of Engineers of the Future and is responding to employer needs. The College is connecting with Heriot-Watt University and is also engaged with the Engineering Academy at the University of Strathclyde. Forth Valley College has particular expertise in the chemicals side. Ms Filippi noted that the Engineers of the Future model is expensive for employers as students are employed from day one of the course, and said other ways of working

are being explored to ensure the practical hand skills and vocational qualifications can be delivered together with the academic elements.

Ms Filippi concluded her presentation by highlighting Forth Valley College's Beacon Awards 2014 win in the Innovation in Further Education category, beating competition from across the UK.

Professor Sara Carter, Associate Deputy Principal (Education) at the University of Strathclyde

Professor Carter presented to the CPG on the University of Strathclyde's innovative Engineering Academy Model.

Professor Carter explained that the Engineering Academy was launched for three reasons, namely to provide access to the University for people from the widest possible background range including SIMD 20/40; to support employers in recruiting graduates with practical skills and appropriate work experience; and ensure better alignment between further and higher education.

The first intake began the programme in August 2013, however, the Engineering Academy was formally launched by Michael Russell MSP at the University on 13 November 2013.

The Engineering Academy was formally launched by Michael Russell MSP at the University on 13 November 2013. The first intake began the programme in August 2013. Support from the Scottish Funding Council enabled the collaboration of the University with an initial five college partners to develop and implement the Engineering Academy. More college partners have since joined. The Scottish Funding Council provided funding for 80 additional places.

Professor Carter said that the innovative design of the Engineering Academy has a number of advantages, including widening access and participation for students with joined-up learner journey, transition support and enhancements including associate university student status whilst at college. Students have improved career opportunities with work-based sponsorships and paid internships. There are improved relationships between industry, academia, and organisations such as the Scottish Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland. College students who successfully pass the 'enhanced HNC' in their first year are guaranteed a place in one of 12 degrees accredited by professional institutions, 10 of which are available for entry into the second year. Industry gains graduates who are ready to contribute much earlier improving efficiency, reducing costs and employee turnover, and adding to GDP.

The traditional entry route to an MEng degree course at the University of Strathclyde is for an applicant to have 4/5 Higher As and apply for entry into the first year of the course. Entry to the Engineering Academy is 4 Higher Bs (in line with the University's admissions policy, SIMD 20/40 students can access with 3 Bs and C though Maths and Physics/Chemistry must be at B) and students study an enhanced HNC and practical skills units course at a partner college in the first year. In addition to their studies, students can apply for industry-sponsored internships which take place between years 2-3 and 3-4 of the BEng degree programme. In their fourth year, students complete an academic project with their business sponsor.

Professor Carter observed that students require a degree of support in the programme as they make a significant step up from HNC to the second year of a university degree. The University has developed a bespoke programme of support to assist with the transition from college to university and this includes the delivery of additional activities and classes at the University during the first year. Student recruitment to the Engineering Academy requires the partnership approach with colleges. In its first year, 43 out of 60 students involved in the programme at a college articulated to Strathclyde, and the other 17 found alternative routes. The Engineering Academy has 105 students for entry in 2015. An Associate Director has been appointed by the University to manage the partnership with the College partners and to oversee the curriculum design and integration with the University's degree programmes. The member of staff appointed has vast experience of the college sector, having worked in that area for a number of years.

4. Discussion

The Group participated in a lively discussion on issues including how academic and vocational education has become a lot more integrated and should no longer be seen in opposition to each other; and the importance of involving students in shaping the content of apprenticeship and work experience opportunities.

In response to a question from Mr Gray about the role of industry sponsors and what employer involvement in the Engineering Academy means for students, Professor Carter said that this is a key feature of the Engineering Academy and graduates gain a pattern of work experience and skills. Professor Carter said that big employers and small and medium-sized enterprises are involved. Students need to compete for internships with firms, but they do so on a much more level playing field because of their learning experience in the Engineering Academy.

Mr Sim noted that today's session had focussed on young learners but providers also need to give opportunities to lifelong learners as people come to institutions at different stages of their lives to learn.

Mr Malik made the point that young people from ethnic minorities are less likely to engage through social media channels, and asked Skills Development Scotland to look at what further action they can take to promote Modern Apprenticeship opportunities to these learners.

5. Date and topic of next meeting

The Convener advised the Group that the CPG will next meet in 2015 after the Scottish Parliament's summer recess. The next two meeting dates are:

- Thursday 17 September 2015, 12.30 – 2.00 pm in Committee Room 4
- Thursday 3 December 2015, 12.30 – 2.00 pm in Committee Room 4

The Convener welcomed suggestions for future meeting topics from Group members.

The Convenor thanked all of the speakers and attendees for their contributions.

Meeting closed.