

JUSTICE COMMITTEE
PROFESSIONAL LEGAL EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE
SUBMISSION FROM UNIVERSITIES SCOTLAND

Following the Justice Committee's evidence session on Tuesday 26 June 2018, we believe it to be worthwhile to draw to the committee's attention recent work undertaken to widen access to law degrees with some consideration of the issues of access to law undergraduate degrees as part of the Committee's wider consideration.

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funds two national schools programmes to help schools with few pupils going into higher education. One of these programmes, Access to High Demand Professions (AHDP) has a branch project called Reach, which focuses on access to economics, law, medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry. Four of our members (University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow) are project partners for REACH's work on access to law.

By the SFC's assessment "*the performance of the Reach programme was strong in 2016-17.*"¹

It is the ambition of the Reach programme to increase the applicant pools for each subject area, working in partnership with outreach in targeted schools, local authorities and professional bodies such as the Law Society of Scotland. However, it should be noted that universities undertake a great deal of outreach work that is not covered by the Reach programme.

The SFC's report notes that "*Law applicants increased from target schools and remained static from SIMD40 applicants. Despite the latter, increased offers to applicants via Reach HEIs' contextualised admissions policies, led to more offers being made and increased entrants from both SIMD40 areas and target schools.*"²

As Table 2 demonstrates in 2017, the offer percentage for SIMD20 applicants was 6.5%, which is very similar to the 6.6% application rate, whereas before the Reach scheme only 5.3% of applications being made were from SIMD20 but there was a much smaller offer percentage of 4.5%. There has also been an increase in acceptance rates (from 4.1% in 2012 to 7.8% in 2017) as well as students matriculating (from 4.2% in 2012 to 7.8% in 2017).

There has also been much success in work with targeted schools. The targeted schools are schools with low progression rates to positive destinations and pupils from a deprived background.³ There has been an increase of 3.9% and 4.2% respectively in application and offers respectively in these targeted schools. This biggest difference has been in acceptance and matriculation rates which have increased 7.4% and 8.0% respectively.

¹ Scottish Funding Council, Reach Scotland Annual Report, 2017

² Ibid

³ Scottish Funding Council, [Developing the School Engagement Framework](#), May 2017

All three tables would suggest that focussed interventions have been a success in widening access to law.

Table 1: Reach Programme National Entrants: SIMD40 and Target Secondary Schools (Law)

Measure (SIMD20/40 / target schools)	Pre-reach (2007-11)	Post-Reach (2012-2016)	2016-17	2016-17 progress
MD40	11.8%	16.2%	19.1%	+2.9%
Target Schools	22.7%	27.3%	30.7%	+3.4%

Table 2: Law entrants residing in SIMD20/40 postcode areas

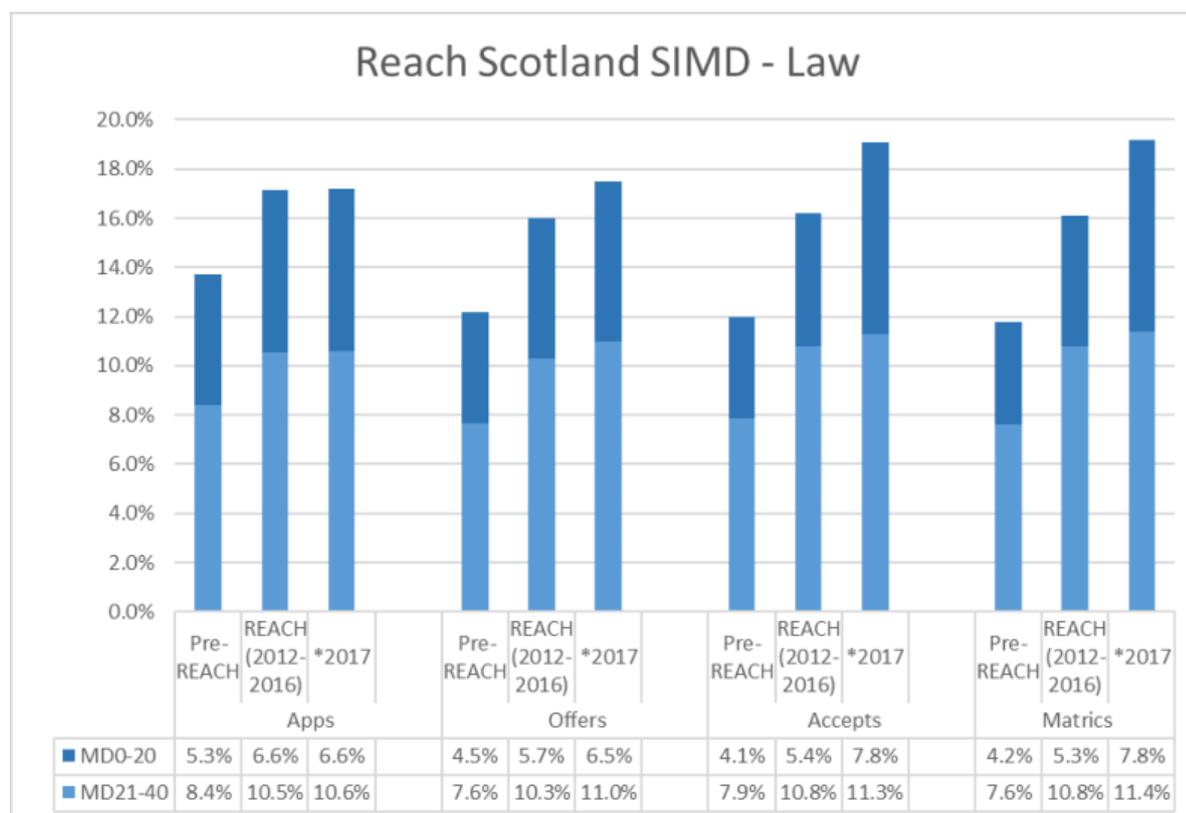


Table 3: Law entrants attending Reach target secondary schools

