

## PAPER 6/3

Dear Minister,

I'm pleased to report that we have made significant progress on one of the key actions set out in *Working to Widen Access*, our response to the final report of the Commission on Widening Access.

We said that universities would use simple, consistent and inclusive language in their admissions processes so that prospective students, and their advisers, could access clear information no matter where they wished to study. Given the length of the application cycle, we committed to doing this in 2018 so that it would benefit students starting university in 2020/21.

Institutions will deliver on our ambition by, for the first time ever, adopting common text in their prospectuses that explains why they are committed to widening access. The text aims to ensure consistent use of terms such as "minimum" and "standard" entry requirements, will provide a simple and concise explanation of what an applicant needs in order to apply, and will clearly set out entry requirements, with a particular focus on widening access applicants.

Our universities offer more than 4,500 courses in over 150 subjects at undergraduate and postgraduate level and, while some tailored information will also be provided in prospectuses, this represents a significant collaborative effort.

Agreeing common text is a simple but important change. Our research suggested that changes to the admissions process, made with the aim of widening access, had inadvertently generated a raft of terms like "contextualised admissions" that meant little to the people they were intended to benefit. Our aim is to help as many learners as possible to succeed and to remove obstacles to getting into university. Our use of language should not be one of those obstacles.

In developing common text for prospectuses, we committed to working with prospective students and had really constructive input from a group of S5 pupils, college students, adult returners and guidance teachers. Their feedback was helpful in shaping the final advice and guidance on common text that has been issued to all institutions.

This is the latest action to be delivered from our set of 15 in *Working to Widen Access* and I am really pleased to say that we are hitting our deadlines. This continues the recent, positive trajectory on widening access reflected in this summer's UCAS data showing the number of students from the poorest 20 per cent of neighbourhoods getting a place at university at a 10-year high, and in the University of Edinburgh's recent announcement that it has exceeded its 10 per cent target for SIMD20 entrants three years early.

The prospectuses in question, for undergraduate entry in 2020, will be published in the new year. We have sent more detailed information on the guidance to the secretariat of the Access Delivery Group and have asked them to inform other members.



I look forward to the next meeting of the Group, where I will be happy to provide an update on our other Working to Widen Access commitments on articulation, bridging programmes and admissions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alastair Sim'.

Alastair Sim  
Director, Universities Scotland