Argyll College UHI
Access and Inclusion Strategy
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Introduction

Argyll College UHI is one of the 13 partner institutions of the University of the Highlands and Islands, and is Argyll's largest provider of further and higher education. The college was established in 1997 and since then has grown rapidly, now fulfilling the needs of more than 1600 students across a network of local learning centres located throughout the region. The rurality of the region can be challenging when trying to deliver and support learning across the college. In some areas the local infrastructure can lead to additional complications with poor broadband access, or sparse public transport services. The learning and teaching is delivered across 9 staffed Learning Centres throughout Argyll in the towns of Campbeltown, Dunoon, Lochgilphead (2 centres) and Oban, and the islands of Arran, Bute, Islay and Mull. The College also provides access to further and higher education in collaboration with partners in the communities of Helensburgh, Coll and Tiree. The College works closely with the regions' schools, giving over 200 school pupils access to college courses as an integral part of their school curriculum. The majority of our full time students (65%) are young people aged between 16 and 24 years old: 72% of FE students are in this age range and 58% of HE students fit this profile.

Vision, aims and values

This Access and Inclusion strategy is based on Argyll College UHI's mission, which is to provide high quality innovative education opportunities, contributing to the development of the Argyll economy and enhancing the quality of life for the communities the college serves. To achieve this the College has the following values:

- To be inclusive – giving an opportunity of education for all
- Of our Community – be engaged and responsive
- Providing individualised learning – be innovative
- Student centred – respect for the whole student (nurturing, supporting, personalisation)
- A valued contributor to education and economic development in Argyll and the Isles
- Good partners – to widen opportunities

College commitment to access and inclusion

Argyll College UHI is committed to ensuring the college culture is one that encourages access and inclusion at all levels. The college recognises that the staff, facilities, curriculum, and processes all are key to this being effective.

Learning Centres
The College Learning Centres vary in size with the smallest being just a couple of rooms, and our largest one (located in Oban) having a number of general teaching rooms as well as specialist facilities – a training kitchen, hairdressing salon, sound production studio etc.

In each location the Centre Managers and their assistants provide a high level of individualised pastoral support and guidance to all students, from schools link courses through to postgraduate level.

Each Learning centre is equipped with computers, internet access, video conferencing facilities and student study areas. Therefore students can access the same level of support and technology regardless of which centre they attend.

Curriculum, learning and teaching

Over 30 individual full and part time Further Education (FE) courses (up to SCQF level 6) are available at Argyll College UHI. The curriculum is designed to support the economic growth and the infrastructure of Argyll and Arran, with subjects ranging from Hospitality and Tourism, to Construction and Engineering, Horticulture and Agriculture to Sport and Maritime as well as Administration, Business, Computing, Childcare and Health and Social Care. The student success rates for Hospitality, Land-based Industries and Performing Arts students are higher than the national average for these subjects. The college delivers a wide range of Higher Education (HE) courses (SCQF level 7 and above) including HNCs, HNDs and SVQs, across a curriculum which reflects the FE provision and offers clear progression routes for students.

More than half of FE students progress into Higher Education whilst almost a third go directly into employment.

The college offers a flexible approach to learning, allowing study by open and online learning as well as through face to face and video conferencing (VC) teaching. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of students from level 2 right up to degree level with appropriate progression available where ever possible. This allows students to begin their study at the right level for them and then to progress as appropriate.

Small class sizes mean that the teaching staff are able to work closely with students, giving a high level of individual support. This often greatly benefits students who have poorer study skills and would otherwise need to seek additional study skills support outwith class time.

Some courses are delivered by a blend of face to face teaching and VC delivery. This enables students to access their course from their local centre where low student numbers, or lack of suitable teaching staff could make fully face to face teaching non-viable. An example of this was an NC Childcare class where students based in two of our island centres were able to VC into another centre for their theory classes, but still attend placement in their local community. The local centre staff are instrumental in providing extra support to these students who are working remotely from their tutors.

Access level classes (Price Group 5)

Argyll College UHI has been working hard to develop the college provision in this area. For a number of years now the college has worked successfully with local resource centres to deliver individualised short programmes. However this current academic year (2016/17) has seen the launch of our first full time course, "Education 4 Life". This course is highly flexible to accommodate the individual needs of these students.

Student Support Services

Argyll College has a small student services team who are there to provide more in depth or specific support to individual students. This team also offers support to centre staff and tutors to enable them to provide the right information and guidance to students if they are the main point of contact for that student. Student Support covers a wide range of matters that can impact on a student's ability to engage with study – notably providing advice and support / signposting for funding and financial matters, benefits and housing issues, health and mental health, care leaver and carers support. This is in addition to any specific learning or physical difficulties that a student may have. The team recognise that students may often experience several different issues that can be interlinked, however a distinct advantage of being a small team with a wide remit is that it can be easier to work holistically with the student with a clearer understanding of all the different issues a student is experiencing in their college life.

As well as the generalised study support and day to day pastoral support provided by the centre staff and tutors, students with any additional support need or issue (whether long term or temporary) are encouraged to disclose these needs. At application and enrolment students have the opportunity to declare a support need and request a meeting with the Student Services Manager. A tick box on the enrolment form will generate an email to the Student Support Services alerting them to the disclosure and the request for a meeting. At Induction students are reminded again that if they feel that they may have a support need that they have not already disclosed, they can still do so at any point during their course. Students are then given information on the different ways they can do this. The Student Services Manager has the Facilitating Inclusive Learning Strategies (vFILS) qualification which allows for needs assessments at FE level, the development of PLSPS and dyslexia screening.

Once a student is identified with a support need or has disclosed one themselves then the Student Services Manager will meet with them to carry out a needs assessment and if appropriate develop a PLSP. Specialised targeted support is then put in place as required using a range of support measures. All students are given this opportunity, regardless of whether they are part time or full time, undertaking online or open learning, studying at HE or FE level. However at HE level if the support need is likely to be greater than that which can be met by additional study skills support, then a qualified Needs Assessor from one of the other UHI academic partners will carry out this assessment so that the appropriate support can be put into place.

Student Support Assistants work with students either on a one-to-one basis in class and in individual study time, or sometimes with a group of students as additional in-class support. The Support Assistants work closely with the course tutors to ensure that the support is well targeted and complements the work and support carried out within the class.

The Student Services Manager is responsible for identifying and agreeing relevant alternative assessment arrangements with students, in line with any awarding body requirements and legislation, then ensuring that this information is passed onto the relevant departments for both internal and external assessments.

ICT and Assistive technologies

Argyll College UHI provides PC access in almost all of its class rooms and students are also encouraged to bring their own devices if they prefer.   The College also offers a range of different technologies to assist students with their studies, such as screen readers, dyslexia specific software

etc. Owing to the complexities of the network system (delivering access across multiple sites) site licences are usually not financially viable for most assistive software. However use is made of freeware, such as the MyStudyBar suite (EduApps, supported by JISC) to support the students. Where specific software is identified as required this is usually loaded onto laptops which are then provided as long term loans to students for the duration of their course. This gives a more seamless experience for students when moving from room to room for different classes, or carrying on with their self-study at home. To allow for more flexible class room space the College is increasing the stock of laptops, and this includes the number of long term loan laptops available for students who have been identified with particular specialist IT requirements. Some of the short loan laptops now also carry some assistive technology software that can be available to students who have not necessarily declared a learning need or disability.

The College does not have a wide range of adaptive hardware (alternative mice etc) routinely held in stock as the relatively small student numbers mean that a specific item may not be needed for several years and can become obsolete or incompatible with newer IT systems. Therefore this type of equipment is usually sourced on an individual basis, depending on a student's exact requirement rather than on a future possible need basis.

Partnership working

Argyll College UHI works closely with local agencies such as the local councils (Argyll and Bute Council, North Ayrshire Council), Skills Development Scotland teams, Community Learning teams, businesses, third sector organisations, etc. Each centre has a close relationship with the local community in which it is based, and these links allow a great deal of flexibility to allow the College to respond quickly to local needs.

The College works closely with all 11 secondary schools within the region, both in the schools link courses that are provided and also in enhanced transitions for students that may require extra support when moving forward into college study.

Staff Development

Argyll College UHI has a comprehensive Staff Development process, with time given at set points throughout the year for any relevant training and updating required to core staff and / or teaching staff. These events are helpful for providing training in specific areas such as autism awareness and classroom strategy, mental health awareness, shared practice for creating accessible materials etc.

The need for specialist staff development and training is also constantly assessed so that any development sought is targeted. The Student Services Manager undertook the vFILS qualification in 2013, and in due course will complete the Needs Assessment Practice module which will enable the completion of Needs Assessments for HE level learners, as well as for FE learners.

Financial Commitment

The following table provides a high level overview of how the funds have been used in 2015/16 to support access and inclusion within Argyll College UHI.

Access and Inclusion costs 2015-16		
Pay costs (including overheads)	Student Services Manager and student funding administrator	£51,660
	Admissions & registry support	£9840
	Curriculum / course team leader support	£7,200
	Centre staff guidance / support	£27,675
	Student Support Assistants	£33,000
	Supported Learning (Price Gp 5)	£63,950
	Staff development	£3,000
Pay total		**£196,325**
Non-Pay costs	Supplies / hardware	£3,950
	Software, licences	£900
Non-pay total		**£4,850**
Total		**£201,175**
SFC FE Grant		£2,377,000
% spend on Access and Inclusion		**8.5%**

Effectiveness and impact of Access and Inclusion Strategy

Argyll College UHI has always achieved its recruitment targets however retention and success figures have sometimes been disappointing. The following table gives the retention and success rates for full time FE enrolments in 2014-15 and 2015-16.

	2015-16		2014-15	
	Argyll (FE FT)	Sector (FE FT)	Argyll (FE FT)	Sector (FE FT)
Early withdrawal	7.7%	7.2%	9.4%	8.6%
Late withdrawal	17.4%	15%	18.3%	16.8%
Partial success*	2.6%	9.6%	8%	10.6%
Successful completion	72.3%	68.1%	64.3%	64%

*completed the course but did not gain the award

2015-16 saw an improvement from the previous year in the retention rates for FE students engaged in full time study. However these figures were still above the sector norm with 0.5% (early withdrawal) and 2.4% (later withdrawals). The successful completion rate for 2015-16 was 4.2% above the sector norm. These figures are further analysed in light of the student characteristics so that areas of weakness in access and inclusion can be identified. 2015-16 showed an improved retention and success rate against 2014-15 for FE FT students who declared a disability, bringing

these figures closer to the overall rates for the College. For further detail see Appendix 1, Student Characteristics Table Performance Indicators 2015-16 and 2014-15.

Care leaver and care experienced data is now collected, allowing for the opportunity to monitor and act upon the information this provides. In 2015-16 10 FT FE Care Leavers enrolled, but only 40% completed their course, highlighting the need for better processes to support this particular group. In the current academic year 2016-17 the retention rate so far has been 70%.

As the Access and Inclusion strategy becomes further embedded it would be expected that retention and completion rates are likely to improve at least to the sector norm if they are below this. As the reporting of performance indicators against student characteristics are now more robust areas of weakness can be identified more quickly, giving the opportunity to address any issues or modify approaches.

Argyll College UHI access and inclusion – going forward

One of the core values of Argyll College UHI is to be inclusive – giving an opportunity for education for all. Although the College has already made progress towards embedding processes to encourage accessibility and inclusivity it is recognised that more can still be achieved.

The following table on page 9 outlines the actions that the College will be taking to further increase the access and inclusion strategy within the college.

Related Documents

- Argyll College UHI Equality and Diversity Policy
- Argyll College UHI Student Disciplinary Policy
- Argyll College UHI Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Argyll College UHI Extended Learning Support Policy
- Argyll College UHI Assessment and Verification Policy and Procedures

Access and Inclusion actions

Action	Method	Rationale	Responsibility
Analysis of PIs against student characteristics	Improved reporting facility now enables this data to be accessed more readily from student records	This evidence can help to identify areas where particular groups may not be being recruited, or are not achieving in line with national levels. Once weak areas are identified progress can be made to strengthen them	Registry can gather and then disseminate this information to Student Services, Curriculum and Course Teams for further action
Pre-entry guidance	Clear information to potential students on website and via Centre Staff concerning support available (financial / learning etc), especially for care experienced / carers / students with learning needs	Potential students may not know how much help they can get to access college services so information needs to be easily available to begin with	Marketing and Web manager to create web content and give information to frontline staff, in conjunction with Student Services Manager
Student Inductions	Clear information given to students at inductions to ensure that they are aware of the support available, to encourage disclosure of any known support needs		Student Services Manager to work with centre staff and course teams to ensure relevant information delivered at induction
Staff Inductions	Clear information provided to all staff, particularly frontline staff and teaching staff concerning access and inclusion ethos, support available to students etc. This to be included in staff handbooks	Teaching staff are often the main point of contact for students so it is important that they know how to signpost students to the right information, and that staff processes are as inclusive and accessible as possible	Curriculum Managers with Student Services Manager
Individualised support plans	When a support need is declared or later identified then a tailored PLSP will be developed with the student to ensure the needs are supported.	Although a PLSP is no longer a requirement it is still felt to be the most useful document to record and then through which to pass the relevant information on to other staff	Student Services Manager to develop PLSP with student.

Staff Development – teaching staff and frontline centre staff	Relevant staff development activities to increase awareness of issues and impacts of conditions such as mental health, ADHD, ASD, dyslexia	A greater understanding of some of these conditions, the importance of suitably designed accessible materials etc can impact on the class room experience	Student Services Manager to work with the Staff Development committee to identify these training needs
Staff development – student support assistants	Training to work with specific assistive technologies / learning needs	Requirement to remain up to date with current practices / technologies	Student support assistants and Student Services Manager encouraged to identify specific needs at appraisal.
ICT Review		The routine availability of software (such as My Study Bar) with simple help instructions can assist students who may not wish to declare a learning need, or who prefer to use other learning styles such as text to voice software.	IT Manager, in conjunctions with Student Services and student consultation
Enhanced transitions from school to college	Closer links with schools guidance teachers identify students who may struggle more when moving into college environment	Early identification allows for the relevant support processes to be in place from the start	Schools Link Manager and local Centre Managers to work with the local schools to ensure that support needs are identified early on in the process

Appendix 1

Student Characteristics Table Performance Indicators 2015-16 and 2014-15

Student Characteristics	Enrolled (count)	Early W/D %	Later W/D %	Partial Success %	Successful Completion %
2015-16					
Argyll	195	9.2 %	15.9 %	2.6 %	72.3 %
Female	114	7.0 %	18.4 %	1.8 %	72.8 %
Male	81	12.3 %	12.3 %	3.7 %	71.6 %
Under 16	7	-	28.6 %	-	71.4 %
16-19	105	8.6 %	18.1 %	2.9 %	70.5 %
20-25	43	18.6 %	18.6 %	-	62.8 %
26-40	35	2.9 %	2.9 %	-	94.3 %
Over 40	5	-	20.0 %	40.0 %	40.0 %
Declared Disability	41	14.6 %	12.2 %	2.4 %	70.7 %
No Disability	153	7.8 %	17.0 %	2.6 %	72.5 %
Majority Ethnicity	189	9.5 %	16.4 %	2.1 %	72.0 %
Minority Ethnicity	6	-	-	16.7 %	83.3 %
2014-15					
Argyll	213	10.8 %	16.9 %	8.0 %	64.3 %
Female	128	8.6 %	15.6 %	7.0 %	68.8 %
Male	85	14.1 %	18.8 %	9.4 %	57.6 %
Under 16	14	21.4 %	35.7 %	14.3 %	28.6 %
16-19	108	5.6 %	17.6 %	9.3 %	67.6 %
20-25	37	18.9 %	8.1 %	8.1 %	64.9 %
26-40	33	15.2 %	21.2 %	6.1 %	57.6 %
Over 40	21	9.5 %	9.5 %	-	81.0
Declared Disability	44	4.5 %	25.0 %	13.6 %	56.8 %
No Disability	169	12.4 %	14.8 %	6.5 %	66.3 %
Majority Ethnicity	206	11.2 %	17.0 %	8.3 %	63.6 %
Minority Ethnicity	7	-	14.3 %	-	85.7 %