Student Progression Priorities

Summary

This paper sets out proposed changes to ensure that we are able to achieve our new KPI for progression. The proposals include arrangements to oversee improvements to student progression with a clear focus on the first year experience in the medium term and changes to personal tutoring policy as a primary means of achieving success. In addition to personal tutoring requirements, the paper provides information on the intention to introduce fully developed and supported attendance monitoring for 2018-19. Finally it outlines options that are being considered for inclusion in our medium to long term progression improvement programme.

The priorities as outlined in this paper were approved by ExCo at its meeting on 27 February 2017.

Two actions required.

Recommended action

Senate is asked to note the two priority actions agreed by ExCo which will initially form the direction of this work: the creation of a Working Group and the focus on the first year experience.

Senate is asked to comment on any additional items which should be added to the ‘long list’ of options City could introduce at institutional, School or programme level (pages 5-6 of attached paper).

Publication: Open
**Student Progression Priorities**

To achieve our new KPI for progression we need to improve the total number of students eligible to progress to the second year by an average of at least 6%. A series of meetings have taken place to consider actions to systematically address student progression rates, including discussion in Schools and at Education and Student Committee. A data gathering and analysis exercise has also been undertaken (summarised below) to inform prioritisation. ExCo has approved proposals to take forward initial work on progression set out in this paper.

The proposals include governance arrangements to oversee developments to improve student progression with a clear focus on the first year experience in the medium term and work on changes to personal tutoring required as a primary means of achieving success. This will include ensuring full implementation of and support for the current Personal Tutoring Policy and scoping of any necessary changes required. Any changes to the Personal Tutoring Policy would come to Senate for approval. In addition to personal tutoring requirements, the paper provides information on the intention to introduce fully developed and supported attendance monitoring for 2018/19. It also outlines options that are being considered for inclusion in our medium to long term progression improvement programme.

ExCo agreed the following:

1. Establishment of a Working Group, initially reporting to Education & Student Committee and ExCo, tasked with oversight of a Progression Improvement Programme with a focus on the first year experience in the medium term.
2. Focus for 2017/18 on personal tutoring as a principal means of supporting students and identifying support needs, particularly for first years.
3. Working Group to propose adjustments to the personal tutoring policy to support the first year experience. Copy of personal tutoring policy attached for reference.
4. ExCo to be provided with assurance in 2017/18 by monitoring student attendance at personal tutorials.
5. Focus for 2017-18 to ensure launch of overarching attendance monitoring and student engagement policy above and beyond personal tutorial attendance by 2018/19.

This paper outlines the preliminary plans to develop personal tutoring with consultation on the Student Participation and Attendance Policy to be initiated shortly. The consultation phase and implementation will be overseen by the proposed Progression Improvement Working Group which will include Boards of Study and Senate.

**Data**

Analysis of student progression data across programmes suggests that an initial targeted approach to improving progression rates should focus on the first year. Data about our progression rates across time are provided in the Appendices. The data appended is for academic year 2014/15 but the patterns and conclusions also hold for 2012/13 and 2013/14 academic years. An initial review of the data for 2016/17 indicates that the trend has persisted and previous findings are still current.
Key points arising are:

1. No correlation between higher rates of withdrawal for students with lower tariff. (Appendix 1 – 2015/16 data using internal KPI for progression).

2. Overall, 10.1% of students in the 2014/15 records withdrew from their studies or achieved a lower award than intended. (Appendix 2 – cross-section analysis of all undergraduate students whose records were returned to HESA in 2014/15, includes range across Schools).

3. Over half of students who withdrew or left with a lower award did so within their first year 520 of 921 students). A further 27% left during the second year. (See Appendix 2, Section 2 for range by School). The 520 first year students who withdrew/left with a lower award represent 14.5% of the first year population (3,587 students).

4. Overall, academic failure or leaving with a lower award than intended was recorded for about two thirds of those who left early or without achieving their intended award. (Appendix 2, Tables 2 and 3).

5. Home students were more likely to withdraw or leave with a lower award than EU or Overseas students. Men were more likely to withdraw or leave with a lower award than women and mature students more likely Young students. White, Chinese and Asian-Indian students were the least likely to withdraw or leave with a lower award. Black or Black British, Mixed and Other ethnic background had higher rates of non-progression. (Appendix 2, Table 4. Tables 5-8 provide analysis according to additional characteristics).

The data indicates that measures to improve retention should focus on the following groups:

- First year students – 57% students who withdraw or leave with a lower award leave within their first year (Appendix 2, Table 1)

- Home students – 11.6% Home students withdrew or left with a lower award compared to 7.3% EU students and 8.7% Overseas students. (Appendix 2, Table 4)

- Male students – the rate of withdrawing or leaving with a lower award is around 50% higher in men than women. 12.5% male students withdrew or left with a lower award compared to 8.6% female students. (Appendix 2, Table 4)

- We may also wish to consider its approach to “high risk” students (HEFCE assigns students retention risk codes according to their qualifications on entry). (Appendix 2, Table 8)

Student characteristics vary considerably between Schools. In addition to an institution-level report, we have a set of corresponding reports by School to provide more tailored analysis. These will be used to support School-specific action-planning. Some detail from these reports is provided in Appendix 2. Institutional progression data from the previous strategic plan is included in Appendix 3. This is for the purpose of illustrating long-term trends.

**Governance for Progression Improvement – Progression Improvement Working Group**

A Working Group of Education and Student Committee will oversee work on progression. Assurance reports will be presented to ExCo and Senate as required. The draft Terms of
Reference for this group are set out in Appendix 6. Membership will include Deans’ nominees with responsibility in each School for progression, Students Union, and LEaD.

**Personal Tutoring**
During programme-level meetings held with the Deputy President and Provost in the Autumn Term, each programme confirmed they had a way of identifying students who they considered to be disengaging. The most common mechanism was said to be via the Personal Tutor.

At an ExCo away day, it was agreed that personal tutoring was a core component of supporting students’ success. Senate approved a revised Personal Tutoring Policy (Appendix 5) in 2015/16. Informal evidence suggests that not all aspects of this policy are implemented systematically across City meaning that some students are not receiving academically-led individual support. We do not have evidence to suggest a correlation between high quality personal tutoring interactions (or number of meetings) and student progression. However, there is a widely held view, confirmed in School meetings and at Education and Student Committee that access to this type of support makes a difference.

There are no City-wide regular reporting processes (such as for module evaluation and assessment feedback turnaround) that provide assurances on the effectiveness of the personal tutorial system including whether meetings have taken place. In supporting our work to improve student progression, the Progression Improvement Working Group will:

1. Focus on personal tutoring as one of the principal means of supporting students’ progression and identifying where Schools and tutors may need additional support.

2. Review proposals for adjustments to the personal tutoring policy to support first year experience. ExCo will be provided with assurance in 2017/18 by monitoring student attendance at personal tutorials. We expect the Progression Improvement Working Group to work with Schools to implement effective attendance monitoring and follow-up mechanisms in the event of non-attendance or apparent disengagement of individual students.

On record-keeping, the Modernising Administration for Students Board (MAFS) in collaboration with The City Law School will report on the interim solution it has been piloting this year as part of the Personal Tutorial Record project and whether this could be rolled out City-wide. This report will be presented to the Progression Improvement Working Group for consideration. In line with the recommendations from the Working Group, work will continue on the Personal Tutorials Record project to procure and implement a more robust solution.

Agreeing amendments to this policy and more consistent implementation may require adjustment for people in many parts of the institution. This may include changes to the focus of work for each member of academic and professional staff who delivers or supports aspects of the policy. This will be a critical element of supporting students to succeed. The Progression Improvement Working Group will undertake appropriate consideration of the impact of the proposed approach and the support required so that this can be delivered most effectively.

**Attendance/participation monitoring policy and student engagement**

---

4
As ExCo agreed to prioritise the development of personal tutoring in the immediate term, consultation on the separate Student Participation and Attendance Policy will be initiated shortly. The consultation phase and implementation will be overseen by the proposed Progression Improvement Working Group.

After undertaking the priority work on personal tutoring, the first task for the Progression Improvement Working Group would be to make recommendations to ExCo that clearly define what student activities should be monitored from 2018/19 as part of a broader attendance monitoring system. This will provide scope for the MAFS Board taking forward the implementation, including through new technology.

Focus for 2018/19 will be to launch overarching attendance monitoring above and beyond personal tutorial attendance.

### Draft Overall Plan and Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Tutoring Policy</th>
<th>Personal Tutoring Policy revised and submitted to Senate</th>
<th>March-May 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PI Group to make recommendations to ExCo for monitoring and assurance (ExCo and Senate, and School level)</td>
<td>PI Group to make recommendations to ExCo for monitoring and assurance (ExCo and Senate, and School level)</td>
<td>April 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI Group to take oversight of implementation planning including possible role out of technical solution (noting already being piloted in Law)</td>
<td>PI Group to take oversight of implementation planning including possible role out of technical solution (noting already being piloted in Law)</td>
<td>March-September 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoping and roll-out of process change, training and support requirements overseen by PI Group</td>
<td>Scoping and roll-out of process change, training and support requirements overseen by PI Group</td>
<td>March-September 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoping of technical solution. Submission of business case either for roll out of pilot system or implementation of a different system.</td>
<td>Scoping of technical solution. Submission of business case either for roll out of pilot system or implementation of a different system.</td>
<td>March-June 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedding of personal tutoring policy overseen by PI group with regular reports to ExCo according to agreed schedule</td>
<td>Embedding of personal tutoring policy overseen by PI group with regular reports to ExCo according to agreed schedule</td>
<td>September 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation on draft Attendance/ Participation Policy (attached)</td>
<td>Consultation on draft Attendance/ Participation Policy (attached)</td>
<td>TBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation plan for attendance/ participation policy developed and launched with reference to interconnected work and broader aspirations for student engagement (e.g. learning analytics)</td>
<td>Implementation plan for attendance/ participation policy developed and launched with reference to interconnected work and broader aspirations for student engagement (e.g. learning analytics)</td>
<td>Ready for launch 2018-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI Group oversee shortlisting of institutional, School and programme level actions based on data and discussions with programme leads</td>
<td>PI Group oversee shortlisting of institutional, School and programme level actions based on data and discussions with programme leads</td>
<td>March-April 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI Group oversee roll out of Buddy scheme for undergraduates</td>
<td>PI Group oversee roll out of Buddy scheme for undergraduates</td>
<td>September 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other things we can do

Arising from the data presented in the earlier part of the report, there are further actions that might also be taken that could impact positively on student progression. Examples include:

#### University action

1. **What:** Expand CityBuddies peer mentoring scheme, including offering buddy relationship to every first year as standard (possibly by making scheme opt out) – this is planned.
**Why:** Induction and transition to university identified as crucial, particularly given data on when students withdraw and need for targeted activity over the first six months of study. Part of overhaul of approach to welcome week, first year induction and first year student experience. An enhanced intervention to enhance confidence, student wellbeing and community that guides students through the majority of the first year (as opposed to ‘one week at start of term’ approach).

2. **What:** Assessment Strategies review – already planned to start this term (see Education and Student Committee paper, meeting 14, paper 14.2a).
   **Why:** Poor strategy across a programme and its modules leads to students needing to pass high numbers of discrete assessment components.

3. **What:** Progression Improvement toolkit – pull together existing activities, interventions and initiatives, to provide a specific, clear and accessible hub for both students and staff to access.
   **Why:** Providing better access to activity, information and guidance already in place for staff and students but which is not optimised. City is not necessarily behind the sector in terms of a deficit in what it does or activity going on to support progression. However, we should improve the way this is communicated, targeted and accessed.

**University/School action**

1. **What:** Roll out of Peer Assisted Study Support scheme. Second and third year students provide guidance to first year students in programme/School context and with specific academic focus.
   **Why:** Enhance first year student experience and provide academic support over first year, particularly in relation to reason for withdrawal (academic failure). Would be possible to target and prioritise by programme/module.

**School action**

1. **What:** Provide summer revision sessions for students taking resits.
   **Why:** Current practice to address specific need in SASS and Law. Possible to extend to City-wide standard practice (e.g. for all first year students), or to roll out to specific programmes (e.g. programmes with large cohorts and high level of withdrawal due to academic failure).

2. **What:** Schools to publish plans for all activities, interventions and communications for first year students. To cover what is offered, when and why. Schools could then work with Services (and other Schools) to collaborate, identify gaps and develop new work.
   **Why:** Better understanding of activity already in place to improve progression and enhance the first year student experience. Will then enable Schools to identify what more they would like to do and what support they need from Services.

3. **What:** More rigour in identifying and taking action on modules where cohorts have been disadvantaged by poor assessment practice. For example, documentation of reasons for modules not providing assessment suitable to 'spread' the cohort, and for modules with high failure rates, and in cases of potential disadvantage, consideration of appropriate scaling of module marks ahead of Assessment Boards. Boards of
Studies to be routinely responsible for changes to the module and assessments for the next cohort.
**Why:** Evidence that practice is variable across City and spreading good practice and rigour should lead to improved progression.

4. **What:** Specific multi-day pre-induction event to provide incoming students to specific programmes with early guidance, study skills and university experience in an academic setting. Possible to target to specific students’ needs and Schools’ contexts.  
**Why:** Benefits of early intervention to improve transition and induction experience and ensure needs are identified early in a given cohort.

Professor David Bolton, Susannah Marsden and Michael Bennett  
March 2017