
ON TRACK PROGRAMME

2009-10 STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS



INTRODUCTION

ON TRACK: SUPPORTING COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TRANSITIONS

Every year, increasing numbers of college students progress to degree-level study at a university or other Higher Education Institution. College students arrive at university with a wide range of skills that enable them to succeed at degree level, but the transition poses certain challenges.

Since its inception in January 2002, On Track has addressed these challenges and enabled students to enhance their success. Over the seven years of its lifetime, the programme has developed a wealth of transition support material and study skills resources as well as a bank of experienced tutors. Taken together, these tools allow us to offer a customised model of support to learners.

The 2009-10 session ushers in a period of change for On Track. In what follows we outline how On Track will respond to the stimulating challenges of the present context, recognising them as opportunities for constructive development and diversification.

PAPER STRUCTURE

We begin by outlining ten strategic principles that will guide our operations in the future, before identifying priority areas for work in the 2009-10 session. The paper then explains the evolution of On Track's programme structure and method of delivery, before ending with an overview of the programme content and a preview of two new areas of classroom activity developed for the 2009-10 session.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ON TRACK WILL:

- Deliver on the West of Scotland Wider Access Forum's strategic objectives for its work with adult learners and communities, particularly in the area of college-to-degree transitions;
- Enable students to enhance their success at degree-level by providing high-quality transition support, study skills resources and realistic information on university life before they progress to study at an HEI;
- Engage with college staff and learners to customise provision around the specific needs and priorities of each cohort;
- Complement and enhance the infrastructural capacity-building work of the three Regional Articulation Hubs active in the west of Scotland, namely the Greater Glasgow Articulation Partnership, the South West Cluster and the Open University in Scotland;
- Complement, enhance and where possible join-up HEI pre-entry provision in the west of Scotland, in partnership with the College Articulation Project, HEI Summer Schools and other providers;
- Continue to be institutionally neutral;
- Respond constructively to changing sectoral priorities and policy contexts;
- Share resources and, where possible, embed the provision within the sector;
- Contribute where appropriate to learner aftercare, in liaison with receiving HEIs; and
- Evaluate robustly all activities, in partnership with and under the direction of the West Forum.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR 2009-10 DELIVERY

STRATEGIC TARGET GROUP	PRIORITY AREAS OR SUB-GROUPS	PROGRAMME PARTNERS	RATIONALE	AIMS
HNC, HND AND ACCESS STUDENTS CONSIDERING OR INTENDING TO PROGRESS TO DEGREE-LEVEL STUDY		21 west of Scotland colleges	Continue programme core business	<p>Activity within all 21 colleges, including John Wheatley College (no previous activity) and Cumbernauld College (new to our geographical area)</p> <p>Activity in the widest range of subject disciplines</p> <p>Increase on previous volume of delivery: 2008-09: 711 registered learners 6426 learning hours</p> <p>2007-08: 355 registered learners completed the programme 130 learners participated in part of the programme Approximately 3949 learning hours</p>
	Male learners	<p>College departments in subjects with higher-than-average male enrolments</p> <p>Innovative Routes to Learning at University of Strathclyde (pedagogy review)</p>	<p>Scottish Funding Council priority group.</p> <p>On Track has a high and growing proportion of female participants.</p>	<p>Maximise number of male beneficiaries and reduce the proportionate gender imbalance</p> <p>Ensure programme materials and delivery formats do not disadvantage or dissuade male participants</p>

	Health-related subject groups	College and HEI health and care departments	Priority area for Regional Articulation Hubs	Offer support to all college students on health-related progression routes, including new routes brokered by RAHs
	Part-time students	Open University in Scotland Lifelong learning departments in HEIs College departments as part of core business	No tradition of part-time engagement in the past Engagement with Open University in Scotland as West Forum partner and Regional Articulation Hub institution.	Ensure programme materials and delivery are appropriate to part-time and distance learners Ensure the programme is promoted within college departments to part-time and well as full-time students Promote On Track workshops to Open University students and part-time learners at HEIs Bespoke provision for college students considering OU study
STRATEGIC TARGET GROUP	PRIORITY AREAS OR SUB-GROUPS	PROGRAMME PARTNERS	RATIONALE	AIMS
ADULTS NOT PRESENTLY AT COLLEGE BUT WHO ARE CONSIDERING DEGREE-LEVEL STUDY		Webstar Design (ontrackonline.co.uk) Plus partners named below	On Track's resource (materials and tutors) could be utilised by adults not presently in study but with a history of learning behind them (i.e. community learning is not appropriate to their level)	Establish ontrackonline.co.uk as high-quality web resource centre for adults considering return to study at degree level Promote programme beyond established parameters Hold regular On Track workshops Deliver 50-100 learning hours
	Recently	JobCentre Plus	Redundancy can spark	Promote online materials and On

	unemployed adults with potential for degree-level study	Public libraries	life-changing return to learning. Many affected by current economic downturn may have significant educational experience, but lack information or confidence.	Track workshops in public libraries Follow up referrals from JobCentre Plus
	Adults studying formally or informally with lifelong learning departments within HEIs	<p>Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Glasgow</p> <p>Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Strathclyde</p> <p>Senior Studies Institute, University of Strathclyde</p> <p>Lifelong Learning Academy, University of the West of Scotland</p>	<p>Older learners are a priority group for the SFC</p> <p>On Track has traditionally been well-received by older learners within colleges and the benefits of the programme can be shared more widely</p> <p>Adults studying isolated modules may lack information or confidence to seek degree accreditation.</p>	<p>Promote online materials and On Track workshops through lifelong learning departments</p> <p>Deliver bespoke provision where demand exists</p>
	Workplace learners considering progression to degree-level study	<p>Scottish Union Learning Fund</p> <p>Clyde Union Academy</p> <p>Scottish Power Learning</p>	97% of SULF-supported workplace learners report a desire to progress with their learning.	<p>Promote online materials and On Track workshops through named partners</p> <p>Bespoke delivery within workplaces where demand exists</p>

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The structure of the programme has altered over the last seven years as we have learned more about what works for the learners we engage with.

THE ON TRACK PROJECT 2002-08

In the early years of On Track, a ten-hour programme was delivered to college cohorts in weekly two-hour sessions.

THE ON TRACK PROGRAMME 2008-09

Responding to findings from evaluation and the Subject Specific Articulation Bridging Project, as well as feedback from tutors and students, the programme shifted to a two-stage model.

Stage one took place in the autumn term and consisted of three two-hour sessions of decision-making support and an introduction to university life. Stage two took place in the spring after university choices had been made and consisted of a further three two-hour sessions of subject-specific study skills.

THE ON TRACK PROGRAMME 2009-10

Following a review of the programme at the end of the 2008-09 session, On Track will be offered to colleges in the 2009-10 session in a variety of formats. We are keen to work with college staff and students to design programme content and delivery around their particular requirements.

Options include:

- *The classic model:* The full ten-hour programme delivered in weekly two-hour sessions;
- *The two-stage model:* decision-making support and an introduction to university life in the autumn term, with subject-specific study skills in the spring after university choices have been made;
- *The fast-track model:* the full twelve-hour programme delivered over two days;
- *The customised model:* A reduced programme delivering selected sessions identified as priorities by college staff and learners ;
- *On Track workshops:* one-off sessions on specific themes (e.g. essay writing) open to any college students.

The 2009-10 programme will therefore be guided by the following principles:

- **CUSTOMISATION AND BESPOKE PROVISION**
- **PLURALITY OF DELIVERY MODELS**
- **SUBJECT SPECIFICITY**

PROGRAMME CONTENT

The content of the programme has been developed over the seven years of On Track's existence and is a high-quality, widely-respected resource. The following topics are covered in the core programme (with content tailored to each group's subject area):

- Introduction to university life and study;
- Lectures, tutorials and labs;
- Presentations and group work;
- Critical thinking;
- Written assignments and exams;
- Referencing; and
- Library resources, Virtual Learning Environments and reading lists.

2009-10 INNOVATIONS

VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

In recent years the use of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) has become central to the student experience at university. While some colleges also require their students to use VLE resources this is not universal. As such, most students will progress to university without having used a Virtual Learning Environment or even knowing what they are. On Track will address this issue in two ways:

- By providing information resources about VLEs to all participants; and
- By holding a session in class where students can use the VLE built into the On Track website.

The On Track website has been overhauled to make it central to classroom delivery, and the resources within it are publicly-available so participants can return to them at their leisure. The mock-VLE has been designed to give students an insight into the types of material hosted on VLEs within universities and the principles underlying their use, namely:

- Distance access to learning relates to all students;
- 24/7 access to learning;
- The need for a central repository of materials and announcements;
- The provision is developmental, not static; and
- The provision is collaborative.

INTERVIEW SKILLS/ EMPLOYABILITY

On Track has to-date offered a presentation skills session as part of the core programme. In the 2009-10 session this will be adapted to address more general employability skills in addition to the presentation skills relevant to university assessment. The rationale for addressing employability is threefold:

- This will draw together and enhance several other skills addressed in the programme and highlight their transferability;
- Employability is a key enhancement theme in HEIs; and
- Students in certain disciplines will be interviewed in the course of their academic as well as professional careers, with students in widening access categories perceived to be at a disadvantage in relation to students from more affluent backgrounds.

On Track will address this issue in two ways:

- By providing information resources about employability skills to all participants and identifying HEI employability contacts; and
- By augmenting the presentation skills component of the programme with a practical interview skills exercise.

The resources developed for this programme component will be shared with other West Forum-funded activities and made available to a wider audience via the On Track website.