



Spring 2016

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Highlights

Northern Lights campus visit

Northfield Academy pupils participating in the Northern Lights programme visited the Communication, Marketing and Media Department in January. Tasked with developing a media campaign to tackle gender imbalance, pupils presented talk shows, created stop motion animations and designed a poster campaign. The posters designed by the pupils will be on display in Northfield Academy as part of a new project addressing gender imbalance. The Northern Lights participants will be visiting the campus again in May to engage in workshops focusing on Health Sciences.



'Access To' graduations

Around 170 pupils successfully completed Access To programmes this December. Parents, teachers and representatives from RGU partner organisations gathered to celebrate the achievements of the pupils across seven

'Access To' subject areas. A further 25 pupils are expected to complete the ACES programme on the 16th of March. The programme will conclude with a showcase event exhibiting the work of the budding artists and architects.



Access RGU team supports RGU applicants

Access RGU team supports applicants from underrepresented groups throughout their application process.

The friendly team of Access RGU Student Ambassadors are currently calling all the applicants in our target areas around Scotland offering financial support towards their



travel costs to visit the campus during the Applicants' Days and Selection Interviews. In addition the applicants from our target schools are supported throughout their transition from school to university in an Applicant Support programme focusing on key study skills for university.

Care Experienced Student Award launch

North-east students in Higher and Further Education who have experience of being looked after or in care will be recognised through a new awards scheme to celebrate their achievements.

The Care Experienced Students Awards was launched by Robert Gordon University, North East Scotland College and the University of Aberdeen to highlight each organisation's responsibility as Corporate Parents to share best practice and work together to benefit care experienced students.



Access RGU - Tackling Gender Imbalance

All too often an individual's gender determines their life's course, with sociocultural factors impacting differently on boys and girls from birth. Gender imbalances in the study of particular subjects first emerge at school and carry on into college and university education. These choices have a significant effect on subsequent career choices and the resulting impact is that occupational segregation and the gender pay gap persist and girls and boys continue to make gendered choices.

The Access RGU team has recently secured funding to address gender imbalances amongst students and to help meet the ambitions of Government policy, such as in Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. Our analysis highlights that the most extreme gender imbalances for undergraduate entrants to RGU are in Nursing and Midwifery, where more than 80% of students are female, and in Engineering and Computing Science and Digital Media, where more than 80% of students are male.

In line with the patterns identified at RGU, Education Scotland's research briefing 'Looking at Gender Balance in STEM subjects at School' identifies under-representation of girls in physics and technological subjects and under-representation of boys in the biological sciences. In 2014, girls represented:

- ◆ 7% of entries for Higher in Technological Studies
- ◆ 20% of entries for Higher Computing
- ◆ 28% of entries for Higher Physics

36% of entries for Higher Biology in 2014 were boys.

The team has undertaken some early qualitative research via focus groups to gather evidence from S2 and S5/6 pupils who are currently engaging in our initiatives. The overarching finding was that gender stereotypes prevail and pupils subscribe to traditional gender roles, suggesting that attitudes and perceptions of 'women's jobs' and 'men's jobs' are already formed as a result of early socialisation experiences. Both S2 and senior phase pupils suggest significant gender imbalance emerges at initial subject choice stage and they identified a need for more support at this time. Their ideas included sessions in school to challenge stereotypes, positive messages from subject teachers and inviting role models to speak to pupils about their experiences.

RGU is committed to developing a targeted approach to tackling under-representation at subject level; however progress will only be made if the university works in partnership with stakeholders at all levels. We invite our partner schools to join us by engaging in the challenge and creating more equal opportunities for our young people regardless of gender.

Over the spring and summer terms Access RGU will be offering targeted workshops and events to pupils and would also be keen to gather views from parents and teachers. If your school would like to get involved, please contact [Rhona McComiskie](mailto:r.mccomiskie@rgu.ac.uk) r.mccomiskie@rgu.ac.uk, tel. 01224 263 095 to find out more.



Degree Link Route to RGU

Degree Link is the partnership between RGU and North East Scotland College that offers guaranteed progression to students from an eligible HNC/D into year 2/3 of a degree-linked course*. With similar agreements in place with Dundee and Angus College, over 400 students each year take advantage of over 50 routes to gain access to degree-level study.

College can be a great stepping stone to further study at university and can offer a range of additional benefits to traditional academic study at university; students can take advantage of smaller class sizes, and gain practical experience, often in a work-like environment. Degree Link also provides a second opportunity for students who haven't met the entry requirements for a degree course, or are perhaps returning to education.

Degree Link allows students to have the best of both worlds, to study first at college, and then to complete a degree without any time loss. Typically, Degree Link is offered on a 2+2 basis – a two year HND at college, followed by two years at university. 1+3 routes, however, are also available for certain courses, where a HNC leads into the second year of university.

Students studying on degree-linked courses have access to a wide range of support and information whilst at college to help them decide if degree-level study is for them and can take advantage of reciprocal visits, allowing them to meet the staff and current students, and view the facilities at RGU.

"I feel that the university does a great job of integrating students into university life."

As well as guidance from course leaders and Student Services, college students studying degree-linked HNs can join RGU's Associate Student Scheme which provides them with access to university resources and facilities and helps them

to feel part of RGU's learning community. Associate Students have access to RGU's Library resources and the university's virtual learning environment Moodle, which provides access to the university's online Study Support resources, including the new essay Toolkit; the online Careers and Employability Centre, including the Career Toolkit; and the dedicated page for students *Coming from College*. Associate Students can also take advantage of discounted rates at RGU: Sport, or join one of the university's student or professional societies.

Support for Degree Link students continues throughout the application stage with an invitation to attend Applicant Days and, dependent on the course, an invitation to attend a DegreePrep Programme. DegreePrep Programmes offer applicants the opportunity to: meet with their course leader as well as other students who will be joining the course; learn more about the course and the expectations; receive valuable study skills sessions which help prepare them for study at university level; and familiarise themselves with the campus and student services available to them.

"... All lecturers have been extremely helpful and supportive on both the transition between college and university, and on the run-up to hand ins and exams."

Details of the Degree Link routes currently in place with North East Scotland College are available on the Degree Link website <http://www.degree-link.org.uk/>, and details of the routes available with Dundee and Angus College are available on the RGU website.

* In some cases, course-specific conditions, such as taking specified options or achieving a specified grade, may exist.

RGU Work placements

by Sarah Smith, Brechin High

Following on from a successful week of work placements in May 2015, RGU was delighted to welcome ten more work experience pupils to the university in November. This group consisted of seven S4 pupils from Torry Academy and three pupils from Brechin High. These pupils carried out their placements across a range of the university departments including the Student Union, Communications Department, RGU Sport, DELTA, Academic Affairs and The Research and Enterprise Department.

Due to her interest in teaching, Sarah Smith, a 5th year pupil at Brechin High, chose to carry out her placement with the Wider Access Team. Sarah was involved in a number of projects within the team and carried out a great deal of research for this article. Sarah also supported the team to deliver a one day Engineering workshop to S2 pupils from Northfield Academy.

"I have enjoyed my experience at RGU. I enjoyed working with the team and I feel this placement has let me experience the opportunities that a university can offer."

As part of her work placement Sarah interviewed pupils carrying out their work placements at RGU and wrote the following article about their experiences.

Javed and Kamilla, from Torry Academy worked together at RGU Sport as both are interested in a career within the field when they leave school. Both, Javed and Kamilla had heard of RGU's sports facilities and that the university itself has a good reputation.

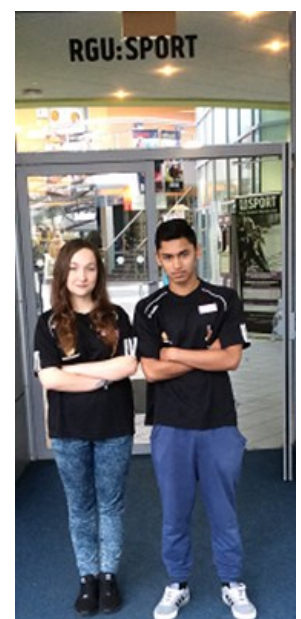
During their placement, they worked at reception. While doing this they booked classes, welcomed



Sarah carried out her placement with the Wider Access Team at RGU

customers and took tickets. They also took part in activities like rock climbing, which was their favourite part of the placement. Kamilla said *"I wasn't sure about being a sports coach but after this placement I'm sure that's what I want to be."*

Because of Javed's placement at RGU, he wants to pursue a career in sports coaching. Kamilla would also like to become a student at RGU after she has left school. *"The people here are really nice and I enjoyed working with the team."* Kamilla has thoroughly enjoyed her time at RGU because of the support from the staff she was working with.



Continued

RGU Work placements

Nadia, from Brechin High, carried out her work placement at RGU'S Student Union. During her placement, Nadia promoted 'Go Green' by posting events on their Facebook page. She also designed badges for the 'Go Green' team. Nadia made a Christmas sustainable quiz which she really enjoyed. Nadia said that her placement was useful as she learnt some things about politics which is what she wants to pursue her career in. *"I would recommend this placement to others because the staff and students are very welcoming and polite."* Nadia feels that her time here has been enjoyable and other students should try it out too.



Campus Events

March

14th - 18th British Science Week: S1 - S3 pupil workshops

16th ACES End of Course Celebration

23rd Aspire North S3 pupil workshops

April

8th Aspire North S4 pupils workshops

27th Visit Afternoon for undergraduate degree programme applicants

May

4th Northern Lights campus visit: Health Professions

25th Visit Afternoon for undergraduate degree programme applicants

June

18th Open Day for undergraduate degree programme applicants

29th Visit Afternoon for undergraduate degree programme applicants