

Developing and supporting the curriculum

Engaging School Pupils in University Study

1	Your higher education institution: The University of Aberdeen
2	Name author(s), and contact details: Dr Sally Middleton, sally.middleton@abdn.ac.uk , 01224 273219 Dr Adelyn Wilson, adelyn.wilson@abdn.ac.uk , 01224 273441
3	Key words: School-University Transition, Part-time, Distance delivery, Widening Access.
4	Overview: In the current highly competitive Higher Education market the University of Aberdeen has set up two projects which aim to give school pupils a chance to experience their chosen field of study, increase their qualifications and prove their academic commitment prior to University entrance.
5	Background/context: The Flexible Science's S6@Uni programme was launched in 2009-10. It utilises lecture capture techniques to convert current undergraduate courses into online courses with a campus based practical element. The Law School, in 2010-2011, introduced a scheme which allows sixth-year pupils to attend a law course on campus. Both programmes allow the pupils not only to gain a valuable insight into University life whilst benefitting from the double support of their School and the University but also to experience subjects they may not have been exposed to within school.
6	Activities/example of practice (you might also like to include an account of activity to date): Flexible Science S6@Uni The University of Aberdeen has an established yet innovative part-time, flexible learning programme in the sciences. This programme utilises lecture capture techniques to convert current undergraduate courses into online courses with a campus based practical element. These courses are ideal for S6 pupils looking for further academic challenge. They can complement existing Advanced Higher choices or, when no Advanced Higher is offered, replace this provision with study at the same SCQF level and UCAS accreditation which is recognised by all UK Universities. Pupils can combine these courses with their Advanced Highers to gain advanced entry into the second year of a degree program. Pupils choose between a range of core science subjects to either complement their S6 portfolio or give them an experience of a new discipline. The project allows pupils to experience the different teaching and assessment styles which they will encounter at University whilst still in a "safe" school and "supported" University environment. In 2009 a tailored package of flexible science courses was first introduced into Ellon Academy. In 2011 the programme was opened up to allow Aberdeen Grammar pupils to participate and a total of 37 pupils started in September. Law School Pilot Scheme Law is not taught in schools. Initiatives across Britain thus aim to introduce pupils to the various careers within legal practice. ¹ However, these do not demonstrate the realities of studying law at university. Applicants to undergraduate law degrees are thus unable, before matriculation, to make informed decisions about whether legal study is suited to them. Consequently, Aberdeen's LL.B. programme has an annual drop-out rate of c.7%. Common reasons cited by leavers include that the programme did not match preconceived expectations and lack of enjoyment of the subject. The Law School thus introduced a scheme which aimed to allow pupils to experience legal study, helping them to decide whether law is an appropriate degree for them and to form realistic expectations.

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	<p>In 2010-11, the Law School admitted two pupils from a local secondary school, Robert Gordon's College. The pupils took one core Law course. They studied on-campus, attending lectures and tutorials with the first-year law students. Both pupils performed well and chose to study law after leaving school. In 2011-2012, the scheme expanded so that nine pupils participated from three schools (Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen Grammar School, and St Machar Academy). These schools were selected because they were within two miles of campus, a logistical necessity which ensured the pupils' school studies were not overly disrupted by travel.</p>
7	<p>Key points including challenges:</p> <p>Flexible Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupils performed better than on campus undergraduates reflecting the high calibre of applicants and their desire to succeed - Pupils find study in the first half session (Sept-Jan) easier than the second half session (Jan-June) due to clashes with Higher and Advanced Higher deadlines - School "October" holidays challenging as pupils tend to fall behind despite warnings - The individual guidance pupils are given about their futures is almost as valuable as the learning itself but is staff intensive especially at the start of the scheme - Low uptake of pupils applying for 2nd Year entry even after taking two, Level 1 courses <p>Law School Pilot Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupils performed on par with first-year law students - Scheme was found to be valuable for informing pupils' future degree intentions - Missed admissions application deadlines caused problems with University admissions; deadlines have been made earlier and stricter for 2012-13 - School holidays in October meant some pupils fell behind, despite warnings; new rules regarding assessment submission put in place - School timetabling did not always permit pupils to attend all 3 lectures per week, resulting in poor grades in formative assessment; new rules applied for 2012-13.
8	<p>Where to next:</p> <p>Flexible Science S6@Uni It is planned to roll out this project, now entitled S6@Uni, across all Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire schools in academic year 2012-13. In future years the project hopes to expand into other curriculum areas, as requested by Local Authority's and Secondary Schools, and other Local Authority areas.</p> <p>Law School Pilot Scheme It is intended to continue the scheme in 2012-13, with a small increase in the number of pupils being sent from the three schools currently participating. Further expansion is planned but this is limited by geographical location of the schools.</p>
9	<p>Additional information: For additional information (including a link to a recording of Dr Wilson's presentation at the University's Annual Learning & Teaching Symposium) please see http://www.abdn.ac.uk/clt/good-practice/et/dsc/</p>