



## **SMP Further and Higher Education Forum Minutes**

29<sup>th</sup> November 2018  
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

### **Attendee List**

Mostafa Almosallami	DFID
Janey Andrews	University of Strathclyde
Douglas Bertram	University of Strathclyde
Stuart Brown	SMP
Gemma Burnside	SMP
Nicola Cogan	Scottish Government
David Crawford	University of Strathclyde
Heather Cubie	University of Edinburgh
Alhagi Manta Drammeh	Al-Maktoum College of Higher Education
Paul Garside	University of Glasgow
Simon Guild	University of Glasgow
Rose Mary Harley	Graduates Association
Mohammed Huq	University of Strathclyde
Kenneth Jeffrey	University of Aberdeen
Akay Khan	Creative Freelance
Jessie Khungwa	University of Glasgow
Donnie MacLeod	Dochas Education Trust
Yonah Matemba	University of West of Scotland
Martha Mballah	AMS
Peter Mtika	University of Aberdeen
Lillian Nseula	University of Strathclyde
Tawachi Nyasulu	University of Strathclyde
Siobhan O'Connor	University of Edinburgh
Grace O'Donovan	SMP
Mindy Panulo	Student
Scott Strachan	University of Strathclyde
Josephine Zimba	University of Strathclyde

Janey Andrews, former Chair of the SMP Further and Higher Education Forum (FEHE Forum) thanked everyone for attending and welcomed them to the University of Strathclyde, who was hosting the Forum in their facilities. She introduced Yonah Matemba who agreed to adopt the position of Chair of the FEHE Forum.

Yonah thanked everyone for attending and for Janey's warm welcome. He explained that he would be Chairing the Forum for 18 months until 2020, and thanked Janey for having held this position for the past 18 months. He then opened the room to introductions and read apologies. Following introductions, Yonah explained that this would be a time for us to reflect on what can be realistically achieved in the time frame, and that the Forum would be eager to move forward on a few things. Yonah presented the Forum with a consultation document on goals for the Forum and invited members to later have a conversation on things they'd like to see in the coming 18 months, including ambitions and achievements. The consultation document was co-drafted with the SMP, and is now being opened to input from the Forum.

Input comments were as follows:

- Providing an as exhaustive a list as possible of UKRI contacts and information on funding around GCRF.
- Working on drawing together relevant contacts across the universities as possible, which includes those who are now working in areas that the GCRF funding has since expanded to, such as research collaborations, student engagement and recruitment.
- Looking at how the report can be made valuable to different audiences.
- Considering hosting an event to bring together those working in the relevant areas across university institutions, rather than having one named person champion these links within each institution.
- Relevant contacts need to be updated with the correct information as many in those roles have since left their positions.

Yonah then invited Janey to introduce two Malawian students who had recently began their studies at the University of Strathclyde. Janey explained that the students would describe their experience of coming to Scotland for university and what drew them here.

The students explained that they were first inspired to study in Scotland after hearing about David Livingstone, and after receiving scholarships, they decided to attend the University of Strathclyde. They both spoke of the warm welcome they received after first arriving, and of the reputation of Scots as being friendly prior to arrival. They both praised the bonds with people they have made in Scotland, and of the rich support they've received.

Janey asked if they had any advice for other Malawians looking to come to Scotland. One student explained that she was the recipient of a Commonwealth Scholarship, and she is trying to encourage her friends in Malawi to similarly apply for this scholarship.

Janey thanked the students for speaking, and noted how they are already outstanding scholars for having won the support to be here. She explained that she was trying to find out in which departments the applications from Malawian students are received. Recruitment stated that most were in civil engineering as they have two big research projects in Malawi and a high profile in Malawi. They are looking at how the benefits of the Malawi research programme are shared,

where the funding is coming from and how it is financially benefitting the university (apart from the global citizenship angle) as it is drawing international students of the highest calibre.

David Hope-Jones, SMP, asked the students whether they had any ideas as to how the SMP can be doing more as a network to support Malawian students in Scotland, for example, free membership or connecting them with the Association for Malawians in Scotland.

The students noted that most of their classes are theoretical, and they would love to have industry experience alongside their studies. They asked whether the SMP could support scholars who are hoping to have internships after graduating so that they can take this hands-on knowledge back to Malawi. Another useful output could support mentorship in Scotland to undertake mock interviews, and support their applications and CV's. Greater links with the SMP could help identify mentors for those who don't find them through their own departments in Malawi.

Other issues raised were visa-related. On student visas, they are given 18 months to be in Scotland. On the Commonwealth Scholarship, they are mandated to leave within one month of finishing their studies. The conditions for remaining in the UK are purely for academia, and internships are not classed as academia. The SMP could help support these internships and visas, and could help to integrate students and mentors better in Scotland.

Yonah then introduced a report that he had put together alongside Peter Mtika on degree certification and NARIC. He explained that some UK universities downgrade the degrees offered by Malawian universities. Post-1992 universities tend to go through NARIC to assess undergraduate degrees from institutions throughout the world. NARIC tends to find that Malawian degrees are not of the same standard as UK degrees. They'll downgrade them to national diplomas. In some established universities, such as the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, they don't tend to consult NARIC and they make an independent decision. There is an issue of parity, and we have highlighted this issue to Government as well. Yonah invited Peter to speak more on this issue.

Peter explained that this issue also relates to visas, where universities advise applicants that they would also be ineligible for a visa because of the failure to meet entry requirements. They take so long to look at their applications, only to find them not eligible, that it prevents them from applying elsewhere because they've run out of time. It doesn't just happen at post-1992 universities, it happens at the older institutions as well.

Paul Garside of the University of Glasgow noted that the University also refers to NARIC and that Malawi is not the only country to suffer ineligibility in degree classifications. He explained that one way to deal with this issue is speak to the admissions office and to the applicants and make sure that if there is an issue, they get in touch with you personally, because in most cases the student has gone through a further selection process, ie. Applying for scholarships, and you

can let your university know that there is another level of selection and therefore you are confident that they would excel and that there is an equivalence. It works for the interim. He emphasised the need for lobbying and for finding out more about what their criteria for downgrading actually is.

Heather Cubie of the University of Edinburgh also noted that the Scottish Creditation Framework is used across Europe, and that rather than looking at the 'unfairness' of it, we should be focusing on how Scotland and Malawi can work together on this.

Yonah explained that the report he and Peter Mtika published was on the desk of the Minister of Education last year. Peter has been talking about this issue since 2012 and we are now in 2018. If we are proactive from this Forum, we can help to address this problem as part of a wider discussion. There are 21 private universities in Malawi and more popping up. This problem might get worse in the future.

Janey noted, however, that it would be worth bearing in mind the difference between subject areas. In the Sciences, there has been almost no lab experience in certain countries so they couldn't come to study here and use the labs. There needs to be a focus on undergraduate degrees setting the students up for further education.

Peter West, Hon. Consul to Malawi High Commission, noted that the Council for Higher Education in Malawi had the role of looking at the standard of universities and coming up with a common standard for accreditation. They should be dealing with this. There is also the recognition of school qualifications in Malawi. The University of Edinburgh has been having issues with their Mastercard Scholarships because the level of schooling is not deemed acceptable.

David Hope-Jones offered to write to NARIC and flag this as a registered issue, as alongside the support of MaSP.

Mostafa Al-Mossallami of DFID also joined the Forum remotely to update the group on DFID's SPHEIR programme. SPHEIR was set up with express objectives of transforming across Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Now, there is a complete portfolio of 9 multi-partner projects, most of whom are multi-countries. It spans 16 countries, 13 in Sub-Saharan Africa, while none are in Malawi. It engages in 60 organisations including universities, accreditation bodies, private sector firms and stakeholders. They are all working together in partnership to create a positive sustainable impact on further and higher education. Many of the 9 projects draw on the UK's world-leading capability and expertise and innovation. Some projects work entirely without their involvement. Some are African-led. I'd recommend visiting the partner profile page and you can get a flavour of the projects, including where they operate, how long they're operating for, who makes up the partnership, etc. It's a diverse group with different thematic focus areas. The SMP was one of the highest ranking projects. We've tested this model and seen the constituencies that have come together and we have decided to proceed to a second level. Should there be more funding, there are projects

ready. Through our process of evaluating and assessing, we'll try to make a commitment to extending the programme, or introduce a new phase and communicate that as early as possible. The next phase won't start before 2022 because in order to achieve the system level impact that we'd like to see, we need to allow projects as long as possible to deliver. Some go for four and a half years, and it doesn't make sense for there to be an overlap. Spending review comes into play around 2021 so to get a commitment for large funding before then is tricky.

David Hope-Jones asked what other opportunities there may be for the SMP network to work with DFID, ie with DFID Malawi. Mostafa explained that DFID Malawi has their own budget and programme of work which is separate from the centrally managed programme. There are opportunities that aren't necessarily funding operated.

Yonah thanked Mostafa for contributing to the discussions, and introduced three separate presentation updates from Forum members, including Dr David H. Crawford and Tawachi Nyasulu from White Space Communications, Prof Heather Cubie from the University of Edinburgh, Rev Dr Kenneth Jeffrey from the University of Aberdeen and Prof Paul Garside from the University of Glasgow. **Each of these presentations will be made available on the SMP website soon.**

Yonah thanked the presenters and opened the room to comments and final questions. David advertised the two new SMP Forums on Renewable Energy and Governance, which will be meeting for the first time in January 2019.