

FACE Chair's Report 2015/16

Introduction and Context

Welcome to the 2015/16 Chairs report. This year there is a revised structure for the report and I have done my best to keep it as much as possible to summary form.

However, I will be more than happy to answer any specific comments or omissions or additions that you would like to forward to me and will include these in the revised version of the report.

FACE has had a very busy and productive year and I am pleased to report it continues to flourish as a member-led national network with growing international partnerships and links. We have invested considerable time and funding in bringing on stream this year a new member database. I am pleased to say that the introduction of the salesforce database has already resulted in significant improvements to member services.

We live in a period of significant and profound changes in higher and further education. These changes are indeed wide-ranging and will continue to impact on FACE members and their institutions as well as the learners they serve. So for example the recent White Paper on HE in England signals a further drive towards a fully blown market led HE system. Although the changes and reforms being introduced by the White Paper apply to England in the first instance, it is very clear that these changes will impact on all parts of UK. One important response by FACE to this changing context has been the preparation of a new four year strategic plan for 2016-20 which will position FACE to both build on its great strengths, as well as to be able to meet the contextual changes and challenges that lay ahead. The Executive believe that having this new strategic plan in place will enable FACE to be in a stronger position to support members in a variety of ways and to manage and respond to the challenges that I have referred signalled in the White Paper and elsewhere.

Over this year I have represented FACE at various national level meetings working closely with the Vice-chairs and members of the Executive Committee. These meetings have included contact with funders, policy makers and politicians as well as working with sister networks and organisations such as Action on Access, UUK, Learning and Work Institute, OFFA, HEFCE, NUS to name just a few.

As a national network it is vitally important that FACE benefits from and contributes to the various debates and policy developments being pursued in different parts of the UK. We do this in a number of ways including for example ensuring that the annual conference is hosted in a different part of the UK each year. This provides an opportunity for conference delegates to engage with the changing HE agenda in different parts of the UK. Last year for instance the conference was hosted in Wales, this year the 2016 conference it will be in Northern Ireland and in 2017 the conference is in Scotland. We shall be looking for host institution in England for 2018 so please contact me if you would like to explore this possibility further.

The Executive work closely with members from all parts of the UK throughout the year and this brings great strength to FACE as a network. I am grateful to Executive members for the following short summaries which provide a very insightful set of snapshots from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

Scotland (Bernadette Sanderson)

Scottish Government's Commission for Widening Access, chaired by Dame Ruth Silver, produced its final report in March 2016, resulting in 34 major policy recommendations. A key recommendation is the appointment of a Commissioner for Fair Access, which is expected to happen by the end of 2016. Another major recommendation is that the Commissioner, working with experts, should publish a Scottish Framework for Fair Access. This framework is intended to be authoritative and evidence-based and should identify the most impactful forms of access activity at each stage of the learner journey, from early learning through to higher education. It should also provide best practice guidelines on its delivery and evaluation. All public funding for access programmes should then focus on programmes that are consistent with the Scottish Framework for Fair Access.

FACE Chair's Report 2015/16

Regarding Scotland's commitment to the work of FACE, Dr Stephanie McKendry, Head of Access at the University of Strathclyde, joined the Executive Committee in 2015 and will bring expertise in access and research. Dr McKendry supported Executive representation of FACE at the NADE Annual Conference in Anaheim, California, in March 2016 and presented a paper on widening access to higher education in the U.K.

Following the success of the 2nd Scotland Social Mobility Conference in 2014, it is hoped that the University of Edinburgh will continue this theme with a seminar event in 2016. Due to a change in senior staff at the University, this will likely take place in Autumn 2016.

A further positive development is the award of the hosting of the FACE Conference 2017 to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, based in Glasgow. Work began in earnest in the 2015/16 cycle to begin planning the event and it is hoped that this conference will boost the profile of FACE in Scotland and create positive collaborations, both in the UK and internationally, so that work in widening access to HE can continue to move forward in a positive direction.

(Contributions from Wales, Northern Ireland and England will be added following the FACE conference)

Executive committee

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere thanks and gratitude to each and every member of the Executive for the enormous contribution made during the year. This year as I mentioned the Executive has been working hard on producing our 2016-20 Strategic plan which will be available at the AGM. Particular thanks to Vice-Chair Ross Renton for coordinating this so expertly. The new strategic plan will provide an important focus for Executive meetings with progress against specific targets being reviewed on a regular basis over the coming year. Our executive meetings are hosted through Executive member Paul Granger at the UCL IOE. Many thanks to Paul for supporting Executive in this way.

In the course of the year we have had four extremely well attended meetings. Each meeting has had an Executive briefing session for the first hour which is then followed by a two hour business agenda including working lunch. Items and areas covered in the Executive Agenda have included:

- Strategic plan 2016-20
- Annual conference
- Financial and Business Planning
- Marketing and promotion
- Member services and systems
- External relations and cooperation (National/International)
- Building networking capacity
- Social media use and developments
- Website/e-bulletin feedback and analytics

Executive Secretary Mike Hill had done a great job producing excellent minutes and preparing and circulating the agenda for each Executive meeting. Thanks also to Mike for his management and support for the Annual General Meeting which takes place as part of the annual conference.

The outstanding work done by the FACE Executive is a major reason for the ongoing success of FACE. So a big thank you to every member of the Executive for the amazing contributions made.

Website/ monthly e-bulletin/ social media

This year has been a transitional year with Dr Jamie Mackay moving on from his role as web editor and Dr Stephane Farenga taking over this role. Special thanks indeed to Jamie for the enormous

FACE Chair's Report 2015/16

contribution he has made to FACE over the years he leaves behind an important legacy in all the areas he has been supporting FACE. A very warm welcome as the new web editor to Stephane Farenga who presented an excellent development paper to the last Executive and which included a new domain name for the FACE website. The new website will be formally launched at the 2016 conference, the new domain will be www.face.ac.uk. This is a great improvement on the existing one and I am sure will make a big difference making FACE more accessible to both current and prospective members alike.

The monthly e-bulletin for May was produced by Stephane and he did an excellent job and looking forward there are a number of ideas for further developing the e-bulletins style and content.

Stephane is very experienced with social media platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn both which are vital tools for engaging with the communities of practice FACE serves. I am sure you will join with me in wishing Stephane every success in his new role for FACE. Let me add that I am sure he will be delighted to receive any members news and views for the e-bulletin.

Finance

I am delighted to report that the FACE financial position continues to be very positive indeed under the watchful eye of our diligent Treasurer Simon Collins. Many thanks therefore to Simon for all his support and input in maintaining such a strong financial position. Simon will present his Treasurer's report as part of the 2015-2016 AGM and will pick up any questions members may have.

Membership Administration

As I noted in my report to members last year we intended to put in place a new membership database this year. I am pleased to report this has now been done. Coordinated by FACE Administrator Aga Spytowska the new database is now fully operational and although it was only introduced half way through the membership year there has already been a qualitative shift in membership services. This in turn has improved communications with members as well as improving the information flowing to the Executive to inform their decision making processes. The fact that we have grown our membership this year is I believe in no small part due to the improvements made to the database. Retaining existing members and ensuring they have easy access to all the services that FACE offers is equally important and here again the introduction of the new database has substantially improved FACE's capability in this respect. So a big thank you to Aga for all her work on the database and managing its introduction in such a careful and effective way.

External relations - UK:

Over the year our external links and networking in the UK has continued to grow. Executive members continued to be active through both their committee work but also in their institutional roles in promoting and building links with FACE. Below is a summary list of just a few of the stakeholder, funding and governmental bodies and others FACE engaged with during the course of the year:

- Parliamentary contacts both HOC and HOL's
- Funding and regulatory bodies (HEFCE, SFA, SLC, SFC, DEL, HEFCW)
- Downing St, Social Mobility Roundtable event with the PM and Minister for HE
- Stakeholders and representative organisations (UUK, ECU, OFFA, AoC, AonA, Learning and Working Institute, EU, BIS)
- Third sector and not for profit organisations
- Commercial sector (HE alternative providers)

FACE Chair's Report 2015/16

This area of FACE's work has grown notably over the year and is expected to continue to do so in the coming year. Our hugely successful conferences and partnership events also add significantly to developing our external relations and also have led to wider and deeper collaboration and cooperation.

External relations- International:

Links with our two sister networks in the USA and Sweden have been greatly enhanced as result of contacts by the Executive. We have formal partnership arrangements in place with both Include(Sweden) and NADE (USA) with reciprocal fee waivers for representatives to attend conferences. We were delighted to have had reps from both networks at our annual conference at the University of South Wales. Recognising the valuable contribution that our international partners make the Executive has formally established an International Committee which met for the first time during this year's annual conference. All international delegates attending the annual conference are be invited to participate in the International Committee which takes place during the annual conference each year. I was delighted to accept an invitation to give a keynote input at the Include conference which took place in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Executive member Stephanie McKendry represented FACE at the NADE annual conference in the USA and we are most grateful to Stephanie for doing such an excellent job and providing a full report to the Executive. During the year, I have been active in my role on the Bologna working group promoting FACE and also identifying future partnership opportunities. The development of international networks and links forms a key part of the new strategic plan.

Annual Conference

Our 22nd annual conference was hosted by the University of South Wales and was highly successful attracting high numbers of delegates from across the UK as well international delegates and it included a great line up of keynote speakers. On behalf of all delegates and the Executive I would like to sincerely thank the entire conference team at USW for organizing such a memorable conference. The reputation and appeal of the conference is such that I am pleased to report that the Executive has signed agreements with host universities for the next two years 2016, 2017. Furthermore, I am currently in discussion with a possible host for the 2018 annual conference. Having three future conferences agreed up to 2018 would be a fantastic achievement and illustrates the value the HE sector attaches to FACE as a conference partner.

Annual Publication

The 2014 Annual Conference provided a impressive collection of papers for our annual publication. The title for this publication was 'Collaborate to Widen Participation: to, through and beyond higher education'. The book was launched at the 2015 conference at USW and can be ordered through the web site. Sales of the book have been very strong and there has been excellent reader feedback. Thanks to Tom Ward, Tony Hudson and all the editorial team for their work. Also a big thank you to all the authors who contributed to this important publication.

Concluding comments

As this report indicates FACE continues to develop and flourish as a member led national network. This year the Executive have produced an innovative and forward looking strategic plan which will help guide the development of the network until 2020. Membership is strong and has grown further this year and through the successful introduction of the new database we have significantly improved and added value to various services to members. As reported by the treasurer our finances are very healthy and we have as a consequence been able to invest in the new database and have funded the

FACE Chair's Report 2015/16

development of our new website which will be launched at the 2016 AGM with the domain name www.face.ac.uk

In ending I would like to thank again each and every member of our fantastic Executive committee for their tremendous support and input throughout the year. I would also like to thank our wonderful FACE support colleagues Aga, Stephane and Jamie for all their work in their respective areas of FACE's services to members. FACE is an extraordinary network in so many ways and I have been delighted as chair to contribute to another successful year.

Professor John Storan – Chair