ANNEX A

RESPONSE FORM

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Are you responding on behalf of this organisation? (Yes/No): Yes (CR&DALL)

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Please provide evidence and views in relation to the questions and strategic themes on the next page.

Evidence should relate to widening access specifically for those from **socio-economically** deprived backgrounds.

Responses **should not exceed 1500 words**.

1. The identification and removal of barriers to access and retention

Submissions addressing the following questions are of particular interest to the Commission:

- What are the main barriers to accessing university and higher education in colleges for people from socio-economically deprived backgrounds and those with care experience, and how can these be overcome?

- What more can be done specifically by colleges and universities, including institutions with the highest entry requirements, to generate a greater volume of successful applications from people from socio-economically deprived backgrounds?

- What actions can be taken to support people from socio-economically deprived backgrounds who enter higher education to successfully complete their course?

I have recently written an overview of initiatives to widen access to Higher Education based on over 25 years of experience in the field within Scotland, and prior to that 10 years of experience in London within the ILEA, during which time I developed some of the very earliest Access courses. I am most concerned with second chance education for adults, and the evidence suggests that, whilst this was the basis for the earliest Access work, opportunities have declined over the years with the demise of provision in both FE and HE, which have increasingly been orientated to school-leavers. In the context of adult access to HE, one extract from my chapter in Scottish Education (Osborne 2013) may be informative to the Commission in relation to barriers.

The biggest challenge still appears to be to create true flexibility within the system. The paucity of provision in either full-time or part-time mode offered at times and locations that suit the needs of adults, including via the use of information and communications technology, and the lack of routes based on accreditation of learning achieved other than through formal qualifications, is evident despite notable exceptions ...

In short, institutions themselves do not on the whole offer flexibility in terms of timing, location or through structural arrangements that might accommodate the needs of 21st century lives. There is a paucity of part-time and mixed mode provision, and little by way of imaginative programme planning to accommodate students within mainstream provision.

It is true that increasing applications by those from socio-economically deprived backgrounds is important especially to the most elite institutions, but that is not the only issue. We also know that young people from such backgrounds are still less likely to be offered places than those from the highest socio-economic groups even when they achieve the necessary tariffs (Thomas *et al.* 2005) and that simply attending a public school confers advantage that is independent of grades achieved (Houston, Osborne and Rimmer 2015). This implies that HEIs need to give further attention of processes of selection especially in high demand subjects.

2. The identification and scaling up of best practice

Submissions addressing the following questions are of particular interest to the Commission:

- What can be learned from Scottish access programmes, across the education system and early years, about best practice in relation to improving access, retention and successful completion?
- What new programmes might be introduced in Scotland, drawing on experiences in the rest of the UK and other countries, that have had proven success in improving access, retention and successful completion for people from socio-economically deprived backgrounds?
- Which widening access programmes, initiatives and curriculum components, with a proven record of success, have the potential to be scaled up nationally?

There have been plenty of examples of successful access provision over the years. We mapped out the nature of many of these within a report for the Scottish Executive over a decade ago (Murphy *et al.* 2001) conceptualising these as *in-reach* (Second chance courses for Adults, Summer Schools), *out-reach* (School, Work and Community-based initiatives) and *flexibility* (FE/HE links, part-time and distance learning). However, whilst most of these forms of access still exist, they have not expanded in proportion to the expansion of the overall system over the last two decades. For example, links between FE colleges and HEIs through SWAP or via articulation arrangements through HN courses are a continuing feature of the system, but in terms of volume of activity, have in both cases plateaued, and indeed declined. Articulation with advanced standing is largely a feature of the post-1992 universities with scarcely any penetration into the ancients. Partly this is due to a lack of confidence from many universities in the curriculum fit of programmes based on SQA vocational provision, especially in selecting institutions where there are plenty of qualified young people coming through a traditional academic route. There is, however, potential for the scaling up of efforts by the FE sector, but it would have to be based on a quite different model of provision, with much closer co-operation with the HE sector. There is nothing in Scotland that is really comparable to the North American 2+2 model, where the first two years of HE taken in a Community College are broadly comparable to that of the first two years in university or of the dual sector institutions of Australia where the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and HE sectors are contained in one institution. Such structural models provide greater prospects of successful transition and retention, although they are not a panacea.

An improvement to these models might be based on shared teaching between FE and HE with two-thirds in FE and one-third in HE in year 1 progressing to one-third in FE and two-thirds in HE in year 2. This would combine desirable features: locally available provision; jointly designed and integrated provision across sectors; and gradual transition into the teaching and learning approaches of HE. Such a model could easily be scaled up nationally.

It should also be noted that many Scottish universities run efficiently and effectively at a low cost their own part-time Access courses. These provide a university offer in microcosm and they could also be scaled up in collaboration with FE to provide a greater supply.

Perhaps consideration might be also given to quite different ways to stimulate a widespread awareness of the value of learning in our communities through systematic nationwide campaigns under the aegis, for example, of the 'learning city' model, which has been so successful in countries such as Korea. The pre-eminent perception amongst non-participant groups that that HE is 'not for the likes of us', and perhaps only when learning opportunity becomes ubiquitous will HE will regarded as something possible for everyone.

3. The data and measures needed to support access and retention

Submissions addressing the following questions are of particular interest to the Commission:

- What evidence or data is required to effectively measure Scotland's progress on widening access to higher education at both a national and institutional level?

- What evidence or data should be considered as part of the admissions process for students from socio-economically deprived backgrounds?

- Do we have enough evidence on the effectiveness of existing widening access programmes and initiatives and, if not, what else do we need to do to build a robust evidence base in this area?

At the University of Glasgow, we are currently gathering all datasets relevant to the field of education, linking these to other datasets concerned with housing, transport and a range of other urban indicators within our ESRC-funded, Urban Big Data Centre (see http://www.ubdc.ac.uk) Essentially we (Keith Kintrea, Mike Osborne and Catherine Lido) are using these multiple intersecting data sets, to better understand the relationship between place and educational disadvantage in the Glasgow City Region, in order to identify the drivers of disadvantage, as well as lifelong success, and to inform policy options for narrowing the gap in educational attainment experienced by young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. We know that school-level educational outcomes are linked with geographic place, neighbourhood space, school choice and transport, but the exact relationship between these variables is not clear. Linked data of this sort for Glasgow, which will freely accessible, might be considered by the Commission to be necessary across Scotland as a whole to explore in some depth the factors that impinge on application and admission to HE.

Widening access provision comes in many forms, and it is not simply a matter of Access programmes, but a variety of forms of initiative. Much of the effort in recent years has been about awareness-raising amongst school pupils that higher education is a realistic goal. This has included a number of interventions that have even included work with children of primary school age. Since there has been such a focus on early intervention, it would be important to systematically gather evidence as to whether such a strategy has been effective. A recent report to OFFA and HEFCE for England (Moore, Sanders and Higham 2013) argues that there is no evidence to support or challenge whether very early intervention has any impact. I am not aware of a systematic study in Scotland of the relative impact of comparable interventions, or whether sufficient systematic data has been collected. However, I know that organisations such as Focus West and SWAP West have data that potentially could be analysed alongside secondary analysis of data held by the SFC, HESA and UCAS.

More generally data should be systematically gathered over a longer timespan on all forms publicly funded interventions to widen access. There have been a plethora of funding initiatives over the years, but little attention to their sustainability. A good example of this are the many projects funded within the Flexibility in Teaching and Learning Scheme (FITLS) in the 1990s, which supported significant access initiatives, a number of which no longer exist.

4. Any other comments

Here are some references to work cited from researchers within CR&DALL. We have much more material that can be made available to the Commission.

Houston, M., Osborne, M. and Rimmer, R. (2015) Private schooling and admission to medicine: a case study using matched samples and causal mediation analysis. *BMC Medical Education* (In press)
Murphy, M., Morgan-Klein, B., Osborne, M. and Gallacher, J. (2001) *Widening Participation to Higher Education*. Report to Scottish Executive. Stirling/Glasgow; Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning.
Osborne, M. (2013) 'Access and retention'. In: Bryce, T.G.K., Humes, W.M., Gillies, D. and Kennedy, A. (eds.) *Scottish Education*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Thomas, L, May, H., Harrop, H., Houston, M., Knox, H., Lee, M. F., Osborne, M., Pudner, H. and Trotman, C. (2005) *From the Margins to the Mainstream*. London: UUK/SCOP

The closing date for responses to this call for evidence is 20 July 2015

Please provide your response in Microsoft Word format. **Responses should not exceed 1500 words.**

Is there any part of your response which you would prefer not to be made public? [YES/NO]

If yes please indicate in the box below:

Please email or post the completed response form to:

Email: Wideningaccess@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Postal Address:

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The Commission thanks you for your response.