



STEP

Scotland's Tertiary
Enhancement Programme

STEP Bulletin March 2026

Welcome to the latest STEP Bulletin. We produce these after each in-person meeting of the STEP Network and at other key points as STEP progresses. They are intended to be short, accessible and engaging updates on STEP to support dissemination of our collective work. We would encourage you to share as widely as possible within your institution. Please do also bring your colleagues' attention to our website – step.ac.uk – and encourage them to sign up to our mailing list.

Reflections on STEP Seven

At-a-glance:

- Over 60 staff and students joined us for our third in-person meeting of 2025-26
- The Language Accessibility Promise officially launched
- The Staff Development project team ran an activity to build links with other project teams
- Members took part in a Speed Networking event to make connections between projects
- Teams had opportunities to work on their projects

Our third in-person meeting of the year took place in Falkirk on Wednesday 25 March. Over sixty staff and students from across Scotland's colleges and universities joined us on a mostly sunny day at Forth Valley College. We were delighted to be joined for the first time by members of one of our new project teams – **Supporting Neurodivergent Students with Professional Dialogue in Work-Based Learning Settings**. As at the January meeting, we supported one project team to run their meetings in a hybrid format, which allowed two additional colleagues to join us.

Exploring staff development across all STEP projects

The team for the project **Understanding the Staff Development Landscape Required to Support Diverse Learner Journeys in the Tertiary Sector** had circulated a short video in advance of the meeting in order to bring members up to date on project progress. This allowed them to use their slot to run an activity encouraging other teams to consider staff development in relation to their own projects. Delegates reflected on how staff development features within their own projects and shared insights with peers, reinforcing the vital role of workforce capability and professional learning in supporting increasingly diverse student pathways.

Launching the Language Accessibility Promise



The Language Accessibility Promise project has been different from other STEP projects in a couple of significant ways. First, it has run on a shorter timescale. More importantly, it has been student-led and its team has been comprised entirely of students.

The team, led by Xander McDade from the University of the Highlands and Islands, presented on the project, explaining its development from an initial idea about supporting students for whom English was a second language to something broader, recognising that accessible language benefits all students – and also staff. We were delighted to be joined by Dounia Allaiouti from Abertay University, who had led the project in its first year.

Excitingly, this presentation constituted the official launch of the Language Accessibility Promise, the first significant STEP output. At the time of the meeting, four institutions had already committed to the Promise. The team have secured the support of the STEP Steering Group to monitor institutions' progress at key points in the current STEP cycle and beyond. The Language Accessibility Promise logo was designed by a student at UHI North, West, & Hebrides.

By signing the Promise, institutions commit to using clear, simple and accessible language in student-facing communications and embedding these principles across organisational practice. The Promise has been designed to be light touch and to become part of business as usual rather than create additional work. Participating institutions commit to reviewing 20 per cent of student-facing documents within two years of signing and 50 per cent within five years.



Language Accessibility Promise

All institutions are encouraged to consider signing the Language Accessibility Promise. Please email info@STEP.ac.uk for information.

Making connections

After lunch, Gail Toms from College Development Network led all teams in Project Speed Networking – a fast-paced, interactive session designed to spark new connections across the Network. Delegates exchanged ideas, discovered synergies between projects, and built relationships in an energising format that injected fresh momentum into cross-sector collaboration.

Progressing our projects

Throughout the day, project teams worked together to progress their initiatives, sharing expertise and tackling common challenges in a supportive, solutions-focused environment.

Our next STEP Network meetings are Online Support Session 7 (28 April, MS Teams) and STEP 8 (26 May, Glasgow Caledonian University).

Online Support Session 7 will be hosted by CDN and led by sparqs on the topic of **Sustaining and Enhancing Student Partnership in Your STEP Project**. This will cover principles of student partnership; empowering and strengthening student partnership; and continuity across academic years. We hope to see lots of you there.