

Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee - Action and Decision Log
Meeting No 38 – 10 November 2022

(Paper 1a)

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Reference	Details	Action Owner	Due Date	Action Decision	Open Complete Approved Declined
01/09/2022	Student Association Report	LTQ37: A01	Student President will forward details of the Joy Works Laughter workshops to the LTQ Committee Chair.	E Jamieson	02/09/2022	Action	Complete
01/09/2022	Ayrshire College Student Association Constitution Review	LTQ37: D01	The Committee recommended the Ayrshire College Student Association Constitution to the Board for approval, subject to further revisions.	NA	NA	Decision	Approved
01/09/2022	2022-23 Committee Terms of Reference and Workplan	LTQ37: D02	The Committee recommended the 2022-23 Committee Terms of Reference and Workplan to the Board for approval.	NA	NA	Decision	Approved
01/09/2022	2022-23 Corporate Risk Register (V1): LTQC Extract	LTQ37: A02	A 'risk heading' will be incorporated into the risk register.	J Thomson	02/09/2022	Action	Complete

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee**10 November 2022**

Subject:	Student Association Report
Purpose:	To update Committee Members on Student Association activity since the last meeting
Recommendation:	That Committee Members note the content of the report and feedback any recommendations they may have.

1. Background

The Student Association team for 2022 consists of two elected officers. The Student President, Ellie Jamieson, and Student Vice President, Robert Kean. The Student Association is governed by a Student Executive Committee within which students hold various volunteer officer roles. The work of the Student Association is supported by Student Association Advisor, Charlotte Mitchell and is overseen by Head of Quality Enhancement, Ann Heron.

2. Current Situation

Following on from the development of the new Student Association constitution which has undergone a rigorous review process, finally being signed off by the College Board of Management, the Student Association is delighted to have its new governing document in place.

3. Association ActivityEducation Scotland – Student Team Member

The Student President took the initiative and applied to Education Scotland for the position of Student Team Member. Following an interview, the Student President was able to secure a position with Education Scotland. The Student President has undergone training for the role and will be visiting colleges throughout Scotland to participate in annual reviews and progress visits.

Class Ambassadors

The Student Association is currently recruiting Class Ambassadors with a deadline of Friday 7 October, and hopes to have them in place and trained by the start of November. All registered Class Ambassadors will be added to a Class Ambassador Teams page where important information about training sessions and Class Ambassador meetings and support drop-ins will be shared.

This platform will also be used to exchange important information throughout the year from college teams and college management. Class Ambassadors will be invited to a one-hour training session to introduce them to the role and will receive ongoing support from the Student Association and their curriculum teams. The Student Association is re-instating on campus Class Ambassador meetings which will take place on a monthly basis throughout the academic year.

Halloween Event Planning

The Student President received numerous enquiries regarding hosting a Halloween event. A student planning group was established, and they are currently working with wider College teams such as the Estates Teams, Health, Safety and Wellbeing and the College refectories to arrange an event on each campus. This piece of work is being overseen by the Student President with the support of the Student Association Advisor. Plans will be shared with the SLT for approval.

Student Executive Committee

The Student Association is currently recruiting officers for our volunteer positions on the Student Executive Committee. The Student Executive Committee is the decision-making body within the Student Association. Positions available are; LGBT+ Students' Officer, Women's Officer, Student Carer's Officer, Care Experienced Students' Officer, Wellbeing Officer, as well as introducing three new volunteer roles; ESOL Students' Officer, Equalities Officer and Transgender Students' Officer. We hope to have filled all officer positions by Thursday 13 October with the first meeting of the Executive Committee taking place before the end of October.

Wear it on Your Sleeve

The Student Vice-President is collaborating with Michelle Morton, the Mental Health Liaison Officer, and Steven Connelly on Wear It on Your Sleeve to improve male mental health amongst our students. Development of the project is currently underway.

Student Association Constitution

The new Student Association Constitution is now in place following ratification from the College Board of Management.

Student Mental Health Agreement

The Student Mental Health Agreement has now been reviewed by the Promoting Wellbeing Group and the VIEW group, with final comments being accepted up until Friday 7 October. The final step in the process before the agreement goes live is that the final draft of the Student Mental Health Agreement will be presented to the Think Positive Student Mental Health Agreement panel at NUS Scotland.

Student Sustainability Group

The Student Association has recruited seven students to form a Student Sustainability Group which will feed into the College's Sustainability Group which is led by Head of Estates and Sustainability, Ken Blake. Throughout the year, the group will work on specific sustainability projects and will represent students with regards to the development of a College Sustainability Strategy.

Future Activity

Rockpool Podcasts

The Student Association has been working with John McBlain and Sara Turkington of Rockpool Podcasts to create a series of Podcasts about the Student Association and how to get involved, with the purpose of raising the profile of the Student Association. Following on from a podcast rehearsal the Student President will be recording their first Podcast on the 7 October 2022.

Scottish Career Week November 2022

The Student Association has been invited to the Scottish Career Week events, hosted by Skills Development Scotland in partnership with the College from the 7 to the 11 November. There will be a wide range of organisations attending, such as UWS, Open

University, Glasgow Caledonian University, and Strathclyde University, to provide information to students about progression to higher education, articulation, and course options. The Student Association will be there to offer advice on how students can build experience and skills for moving into HE or the jobs market by taking on one of the various roles available within the Student Association.

The events will be taking place on:

Ayr Campus - Monday 7 November
Kilmarnock Campus - Wednesday 9 November
Kilwinning Campus - Thursday 10 November

World Mental Health Day

The Student Association has been working with Health and Social Care Students on Kilwinning Campus to support them to host stalls on Mental Health Awareness Day on the 10 October. The Student Association will be encouraging students from across the College to have conversations about their mental health by placing laminated conversation cards and posters across all campuses.

College Chaplaincy Service

The multi-faith Chaplaincy service, which has been successful on the Kilmarnock campus will be extended to Kilwinning Campus following on from meetings with North Ayrshire minister, Lee Johnston. Upon the return of Minister Johnston's disclosure check, faith backed pastoral support and youth work will be offered to Kilwinning students. The Student Association is currently looking to develop a similar service on Ayr Campus following the previous Chaplaincy Team at Ayr leaving their positions with the church they represented.

4. Proposals

N/A

5. Risks

Due to the challenging issues dealt with within the SA there is a risk of reputational damage.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

Due to the nature of this paper an equality impact assessment has not been undertaken.

7. Conclusion

ACSA will continue to work alongside staff in order to best support and encourage students to work towards making the 2022/23 session both enjoyable and successful.

Ellie Jamieson
Student President
7 October 2022

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

10 November 2022

- Subject:** AY 2021-22 interim Performance Indicators
- Purpose:** To provide committee members with background information and technical guidance on learning and teaching performance indicators. Also, to provide members with information on the College's interim AY 2021-22 PIs.
- Recommendation:** Committee members are invited to note the contents of this paper

1. Background

Performance Indicators (PIs) support quality enhancement and improvement, in the College, by allowing curriculum teams to analyse and benchmark performance against subject specific and national trends. PI guidance is published annually by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

The College counts student activity in two distinct ways – headcount and enrolments. *Headcount* refers to an individual student and *enrolment* refers to the number of course enrolments generated by an individual student. In most cases, one student will generate one enrolment, but a student could enrol on a full-time course and a part-time evening class, therefore generating two enrolments.

The College records an outcome for every *enrolment* and this must be one of the options outlined in the table below.

Outcome	Description
Completed successful	students who completed the course and achieve the qualification that they were enrolled on
Partial success	students who completed the course but did not gain the qualification that they were enrolled on
Early withdrawal	students who withdrew before 25% of their course had elapsed
Further withdrawal	students who withdrew from their course after the 25% point

The College delivers a range of courses within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (Appendix 1) which is split into two categories – FE (Further Education) and HE (Higher Education) and students study on either a full-time or part-time basis.

The four main PIs reported are: FE full-time, FE part-time, HE full-time and HE part-time. It should be noted that part-time provision, particularly at FE level, is very diverse and includes school-college partnership courses, evening classes, commercial training and community-based employability courses.

PIs are also reported for specific groups, related to Scottish Government national priorities, and detailed in the College's Regional Outcome Agreement. Examples of specific groups include care experienced students, those from SIMD10 postcode areas and students with a declared disability receiving Extended Learning Support.

The timeline for auditing and publishing the PIs is detailed in the table below.

Date	Activity
August 2021 - July 2022	Course delivery
September 2022	External Audit
October 2022	Submission of PIs to SFC through FES (Further Education Statistics) return
November 2022 – January 2023	National PIs collated by SFC
February 2023	National PIs published by SFC

2. Current Situation

A high-level summary of the College's AY 2021-22 performance indicators is provided in appendix 2.

Further Education Full-Time – FE FT

Performance, with reference to successfully completed FE full-time programmes, remained at 58.6% and, therefore performance was still below pre-Covid-19 levels. The primary area of concern was higher early and further withdrawal rates. This corresponds with the evidence to suggest that students struggled with the continued disruption to learning during AY 2021-22 and the wider economic landscape which meant that many learners withdrew for financial reasons and to take up employment.

Further Education Part-Time – FE PT

FE PT completed successful improved by 5.0%. Further withdrawal and partial success rates decreased, though early withdrawal increased.

Higher Education Full-time – HE FT

Disappointingly, performance, with reference to successfully completed HE full-time programmes, declined by 9.0%. As with FE full-time programmes, early and further withdrawal rates were much higher than in previous years and students struggled with the continued disruption to learning and wider economic pressures.

Higher Education Part-time – HE PT

HE PT completed successful decreased by 13.4%. Early withdrawal, further withdrawal and partial success rates all decreased.

Education Scotland Subject Grouping

A performance comparison, by Education Scotland subject grouping, is also provided for information in appendix 3.

Eight FE FT subject areas performed below the AY 2021-22 Ayrshire College average of 58.5%. Overall, performance declined in six out of fifteen subject areas but increased in nine subject areas.

Seven HE FT subject areas performed below the AY 2021-22 Ayrshire College average of 62.2%. Overall, performance declined in eleven out of thirteen subject areas.

Success by protected characteristic

Table 1, below, shows successful outcomes for AY 2021-22 by age band. All age categories were less successful than in AY 2020-21 with the exception of those aged 18 and under.

Table 1 - Success by age

Age category	2020-21	2021-22	Difference
Under 18	58.6%	61.9%	+3.3%
18 – 20	69.3%	67.4%	-1.9%
21 – 24	71.5%	69.3%	-2.2%
25 – 40	71.8%	65.9%	-5.9%
41 and over	74.3%	67.2%	-7.1%

Table 2 below shows success by gender. There was a decrease in success in all categories except FE Males where there was a 5.4% increase in success. This corresponds with the fact that practical FE courses were prioritised for on campus learning and a significant number are male-dominated subject areas.

Table 2 - Success by Gender

Category	2020-21	2021-22	Difference
FE females	63.0%	58.1%	-4.9%
FE males	67.6%	73.0%	+5.4%
HE females	71.0%	63.7%	-6.5%
HE males	75.6%	66.8%	-6.0%

Success by groups of special interest

Table 3 shows success by SIMD, Disability and Care-Experienced status.

Statistically, the College has more students from SIMD areas 10 and 20 on FE FT programmes than it has on HE FT programmes. This is also the case for those declaring a disability and those identifying as care-experienced. Success increased very slightly across students from SIMD 10 areas. Success very slightly declined across students

from SIMD20 areas and those declaring a disability. Disappointingly, success for care-experienced students declined by 3.0%.

Table 3 - Success by SIMD, Disability and Care-Experienced

Category	2020-21	2021-22	Difference
SIMD10	59.6%	60.1%	+0.5%
SIMD20	62.7%	61.9%	-0.8%
Disability	63.3%	62.8%	-0.5%
Care experienced	62.7%	59.7%	-3.0%

A full analysis of performance indicators was undertaken through the area team evaluation sessions which took place throughout September. Teams will also review their areas against the national college sector data when it is published in February 2023.

Work is being done on ensuring the dissemination of good practice and the Head of Quality Enhancement is leading a short life working group on piloting a peer observation programme.

3. Conclusion

Committee members are asked to note that the information provided is an interim position. PIs will not be confirmed until after the FES return to SFC and the subsequent audit process is complete.

Further reports and presentations will be brought to Committee later in the academic year when the national sector PIs are published.

Anne Campbell
Vice Principal, Curriculum
12 October 2022

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website.

Ayrshire College # 484082
 03/11/2022 15:23:32

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (Paper 5 - Appendix 1)

This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.



SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications			Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Apprenticeships & SVQs
12				Doctoral Degree	Professional Apprenticeship
11				Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship SVQ
10				Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship
9			Professional Development Award	Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
8		Higher National Diploma		Diploma Of Higher Education	Higher Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
7	Advanced Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate		Certificate Of Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
6	Higher, Awards, Skills for Work Higher				Modern Apprenticeship Foundation Apprenticeship SVQ
5	National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5				Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
4	National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4	National Certificate	National Progression Award		SVQ
3	National 3, Awards, Skills for Work National 3				
2	National 2, Awards				
1	National 1, Awards				

2021-22 Performance Indicators

High-level summary

(Paper 5 – Appendix 2)

FE Full Time

2021-2022 Student Success %	2021-2022 Partial Success %	2021-2022 Early Withdrawn %	2021-2022 Further Withdrawn %	2021-2022 Withdrawn Total
1,751 (58.6%)	223 (7.5%)	409 (13.7%)	604 (20.2%)	1,013 (33.9%)
2020-2021 Student Success %	2020-2021 Partial Success %	2020-2021 Early Withdrawn %	2020-2021 Further Withdrawn %	2020-2021 Withdrawn Total
1,899 (58.6%)	345 (10.7%)	222 (6.9%)	777 (24.0%)	999 (30.9%)
2019-2020 Student Success %	2019-2020 Partial Success %	2019-2020 Early Withdrawn %	2019-2020 Further Withdrawn %	2019-2020 Withdrawn Total
2,539 (64.8%)	495 (12.6%)	404 (10.3%)	480 (12.2%)	885 (22.6%)
2018-2019 Student Success %	2018-2019 Partial Success %	2018-2019 Early Withdrawn %	2018-2019 Further Withdrawn %	2018-2019 Withdrawn Total
2,539 (66.2%)	333 (8.7%)	371 (9.7%)	595 (15.5%)	966 (25.2%)
2017-2018 Student Success %	2017-2018 Partial Success %	2017-2018 Early Withdrawn %	2017-2018 Further Withdrawn %	2017-2018 Withdrawn Total
2,801 (66.9%)	292 (7.0%)	490 (11.7%)	604 (14.4%)	1,094 (26.1%)

FE Part time

2021-2022 Student Success %	2021-2022 Partial Success %	2021-2022 Early Withdrawn %	2021-2022 Further Withdrawn %	2021-2022 Withdrawn Total
10,695 (86.1%)	711 (5.7%)	428 (3.4%)	589 (4.7%)	1,017 (8.2%)
2020-2021 Student Success %	2020-2021 Partial Success %	2020-2021 Early Withdrawn %	2020-2021 Further Withdrawn %	2020-2021 Withdrawn Total
6,909 (81.4%)	807 (9.6%)	224 (2.7%)	521 (6.2%)	776 (9.2%)
2019-2020 Student Success %	2019-2020 Partial Success %	2019-2020 Early Withdrawn %	2019-2020 Further Withdrawn %	2019-2020 Withdrawn Total
6,118 (76.5%)	716 (9.0%)	473 (5.9%)	680 (8.5%)	1,162 (14.5%)
2018-2019 Student Success %	2018-2019 Partial Success %	2018-2019 Early Withdrawn %	2018-2019 Further Withdrawn %	2018-2019 Withdrawn Total
8,223 (80.2%)	984 (9.6%)	468 (4.6%)	581 (5.7%)	1,051 (10.2%)
2017-2018 Student Success %	2017-2018 Partial Success %	2017-2018 Early Withdrawn %	2017-2018 Further Withdrawn %	2017-2018 Withdrawn Total
6,290 (79.2%)	691 (8.7%)	449 (5.7%)	485 (6.1%)	961 (12.1%)

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

HE Full Time

2021-2022 Student Success % 1,158 (62.5%)	2021-2022 Partial Success % 205 (11.1%)	2021-2022 Early Withdrawn % 161 (8.7%)	2021-2022 Further Withdrawn % 327 (17.7%)	2021-2022 Withdrawn Total 489 (26.4%)
2020-2021 Student Success % 1,478 (71.5%)	2020-2021 Partial Success % 193 (9.4%)	2020-2021 Early Withdrawn % 89 (4.3%)	2020-2021 Further Withdrawn % 308 (15.1%)	2020-2021 Withdrawn Total 397 (19.4%)
2019-2020 Student Success % 1,478 (68.7%)	2019-2020 Partial Success % 262 (12.2%)	2019-2020 Early Withdrawn % 157 (7.3%)	2019-2020 Further Withdrawn % 255 (11.8%)	2019-2020 Withdrawn Total 412 (19.1%)
2018-2019 Student Success % 1,478 (66.8%)	2018-2019 Partial Success % 265 (12.0%)	2018-2019 Early Withdrawn % 134 (6.1%)	2018-2019 Further Withdrawn % 334 (15.1%)	2018-2019 Withdrawn Total 468 (21.2%)
2017-2018 Student Success % 1,582 (67.3%)	2017-2018 Partial Success % 235 (10.0%)	2017-2018 Early Withdrawn % 194 (8.2%)	2017-2018 Further Withdrawn % 341 (14.5%)	2017-2018 Withdrawn Total 535 (22.7%)

HE Part Time

2021-2022 Student Success % 488 (76.5%)	2021-2022 Partial Success % 91 (14.3%)	2021-2022 Early Withdrawn % 23 (3.6%)	2021-2022 Further Withdrawn % 34 (5.3%)	2021-2022 Withdrawn Total 59 (9.2%)
2020-2021 Student Success % 518 (83.4%)	2020-2021 Partial Success % 63 (10.5%)	2020-2021 Early Withdrawn % 15 (2.5%)	2020-2021 Further Withdrawn % 25 (4.2%)	2020-2021 Withdrawn Total 40 (6.7%)
2019-2020 Student Success % 466 (78.6%)	2019-2020 Partial Success % 59 (9.9%)	2019-2020 Early Withdrawn % 32 (5.4%)	2019-2020 Further Withdrawn % 33 (5.6%)	2019-2020 Withdrawn Total 68 (11.5%)
2018-2019 Student Success % 563 (83.4%)	2018-2019 Partial Success % 69 (10.2%)	2018-2019 Early Withdrawn % 24 (3.6%)	2018-2019 Further Withdrawn % 19 (2.8%)	2018-2019 Withdrawn Total 43 (6.4%)
2017-2018 Student Success % 412 (75.7%)	2017-2018 Partial Success % 70 (12.9%)	2017-2018 Early Withdrawn % 35 (6.4%)	2017-2018 Further Withdrawn % 26 (4.8%)	2017-2018 Withdrawn Total 62 (11.4%)

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

FE Full Time	2021-22 Success %	
Special Programmes	86.2%	↑
Construction	67.2%	↑
Media	66.3%	↑
Land-based industries	65.9%	↑
Hospitality and tourism	65.5%	↓
Engineering	63.2%	↑
Sector Average (2020-21)	61.3%	
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies	61.2%	↑
Ayrshire College	58.5%	
Computing and ICT	57.7%	↓
Sport and leisure	56.8%	↑
Arts and design	56.2%	↑
Performing arts	55.8%	↓
Social subjects	51.2%	↓
Care	50.8%	↓
Business, management and administration	45.7%	↑
Science	43.2%	↓

FE Part Time	2021-22 Success %	
Sport and leisure	96.5%	↑
Computing and ICT	95.6%	↑
Media	94.8%	↑
Business, management and administration	93.9%	↓
Languages and ESOL	91.0%	↑
Land-based industries	90.5%	↑
Science	88.8%	↑
Arts and design	88.6%	↑
Construction	87.9%	↑
Ayrshire College	86.2%	
Engineering	83.8%	↑
Special Programmes	81.9%	↑
Care	81.7%	↑
Performing arts	81.2%	↑
Social subjects	79.7%	↓
Sector Average (2020-21)	76.3%	
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies	75.9%	↑
Education and training	71.3%	↓
Hospitality and tourism	68.4%	↑

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

HE Full Time	2021-22 Success %	
Sector Average (2020-21)	81.3%	
Sport and leisure	76.5%	↓
Performing arts	75.3%	↓
Arts and design	70.8%	↓
Computing and ICT	66.9%	↓
Media	63.6%	↓
Construction	63.2%	↓
Ayrshire College	62.5%	
Science	62.0%	↑
Business, management and administration	61.7%	↓
Care	59.4%	↓
Social subjects	57.3%	↓
Engineering	51.6%	↓
Hospitality and tourism	48.1%	↑
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies	45.5%	↓

HE Part Time	2021-22 Success %	
Arts and design	100.0%	→
Media	100.0%	→
Performing arts	100.0%	→
Engineering	86.7%	↓
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies	84.6%	↑
Construction	83.3%	↑
Computing and ICT	82.1%	↑
Social subjects	80.0%	↑
Science	75.0%	↑
Ayrshire College	73.1%	
Sector Average (2020-21)	72.1%	
Education and training	63.6%	↓
Care	63.1%	↓
Sport and leisure	60.8%	↓
Business, management and administration	50.0%	↓
Hospitality and tourism	50.0%	↓

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

10 November 2022

Subject: HMIE Engagement in Scotland's Colleges; Overview report AY 2021-22

Purpose: To inform the committee of Education Scotland's engagement in Scotland's Colleges and key findings in AY 2021-22

Recommendation: Members are invited to discuss and note the contents of the report

1. Background

The HMIE Engagement in Scotland's Colleges; Overview report AY 2021-22 is a summary of findings from the 27 Progress Visits conducted by Education Scotland during AY 2021-22. The report highlights areas of positive practice and areas of on-going challenge for the sector.

Ayrshire College is one of the 22 from 27 colleges who have made progress towards achieving its improvement targets.

Aspects identified for improvement which resonate with Ayrshire College's experience during AY2021-22 include:

- Pg 5 - In most colleges, learners on FE level programmes that are predominately practical, experienced challenges in maintaining motivation and engagement when delivery is not on campus and face-to face.
- Pg 5 - In some colleges, the number of school-age learners undertaking college provision has reduced significantly for a number of reasons, including pupils preferring in-school learning to online delivery of college programmes.
- Pg 9 - Attainment rates for learners on full-time FE programmes have declined overall. Managers and staff in almost all colleges recognise that FE learners are more likely to find remote learning challenging.
- Pg 9 - Rates of further withdrawal for learners of full-time FE programmes have increased.

8. Conclusion

Members are invited to discuss and note the contents of the report.

Anne Campbell
Vice Principal, Curriculum
31 October 2022

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website

(Paper 6 - Appendix 1)

HMIE engagement in Scotland's colleges

Overview report

Academic year 2021/22



Contents

Introduction	2
Background	3
1.Key findings from Progress Visits - AY 2021/22	3
1.1. Summary of Progress Visit outcomes	3
1.2. Curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment	4
1.3. Services to support learning	6
1.4. Learner engagement	7
1.5. Evaluation to facilitate improvement	8
1.6. Learner progress and outcomes	9
1.7. Summary of key findings	10
2. Analysis of learner outcome data, AY 2020/21 11	
2.1. Impact of the pandemic	12
2.2. Analysis	12
2.3. Variation between colleges	13
2.4. Full-time FE learner outcomes	13
2.5. Differences at programme SCQF level	14
2.6. Differences between subject areas	14
2.7. Differences between key learner groups	15
2.8. Aspects for further exploration	16
3. Analysis and next steps	17
Appendix 1 - SFC commentary on the impact of the pandemic	18



Introduction

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Education Scotland's HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) have continued to work closely with all colleges in Scotland to provide independent assurance, support and challenge as the sector continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This national overview report provides a summary of findings from Progress Visits (PV) carried out in all 27 colleges during academic year (AY) 2021/22 and of outcomes for learners in AY 20/21. It highlights aspects of positive practice and ongoing challenges faced by the sector. It is intended that the report be used by stakeholders including colleges, Scottish Government (SG), SFC, and Education Scotland to inform future arrangements to support improvement in the college sector in Scotland.

Ayrshire College #2535
03/11/2022 11:48:40

Background

HM Inspectors, worked collaboratively with colleges and SFC to plan and coordinate a schedule of progress visits (PVs) to colleges during AY 2021/22. Each PV was carried out by a team of HM Inspectors, Associate Assessors (AAs) and Student Team Members (STMs). During the PV, the team engaged in professional dialogue with college managers, staff, learners and other stakeholders to gather evidence on progress made towards achievement of improvement targets, and importantly how each college was dealing with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The team drew on evidence from these activities to evaluate how well a college was performing during this period and whether it had made satisfactory progress or not towards achieving improvement priorities. At the end of the PV, HM Inspectors produced a summary report of findings which was shared with the Principal and the college's Board of Management and/or the Regional Board.

The outcomes of PVs will inform HMI approaches to engagement in individual colleges during AY 2022/23.

During PVs, HM Inspectors explored the following five overarching themes:

- **Curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment;**
- **Services to support learning;**
- **Learner engagement;**
- **Evaluation to facilitate improvement; and**
- **Learner progress and outcomes.**





1. Key findings from Progress Visits AY 2021/22

1.1. Summary of Progress Visit outcomes

HM Inspectors found that twenty-two colleges/institutions have made progress towards achievement of their improvement targets. Five colleges have not yet made sufficient progress towards improving some aspects of provision and/or outcomes for learners and will require further engagement to monitor and assess the effectiveness of actions taken to address these.

1.2. Curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment

ASPECTS OF POSITIVE PRACTICE

- All colleges demonstrated resilience and resourcefulness in adopting new and innovative working practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. They reported a positive impact on learning and teaching using hybrid delivery models and that some online approaches may remain in place beyond the pandemic.
- Overall, colleges delivered online learning effectively. Teaching departments took account of COVID-19 restrictions, including social distancing, to carefully plan and prioritise a return to on-campus learning for practical-based subjects. This was particularly helpful to learners on further education (FE) level programmes who were experiencing frustration at the limited amount of face-to-face delivery.
- In most colleges, managers and teaching staff work well together to plan and adjust the curriculum to ensure that, overall, the needs of learners and stakeholders are met. They take good account of internal and external intelligence and feedback to make well-balanced decisions about the curriculum on offer.
- During periods of COVID-19 restrictions, some curriculum teams incorporated additional activities to help new learners develop a sense of belonging within the college community and overcome anxieties about learning in isolation. These included social events and opportunities to engage with staff and learners informally.
- Most colleges make productive use of local, regional, national and sector specific labour market information to inform their curriculum offer. Teaching departments draw effectively on feedback and intelligence from industry partners and regional stakeholders to respond to identified and projected skills requirements.
- All colleges have adapted their curriculum to accommodate the increasing demand for remote delivery and blended learning. They use a range of online platforms well to enable and support digital delivery of learning and teaching, including Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), online video-conferencing facilities and social media.
- Most teaching staff engage productively in professional learning activities to develop and enhance their digital skills to deliver effective online learning experiences.
- Learners identify the most effective aspect of digital learning is the accessibility of learning and teaching. They particularly value being able to access and revisit video recordings of lessons and practical demonstrations out with class times;

the use of simulation software within vocational specialisms; facilities to submit assessments electronically; and the ability to receive instant feedback on their work from staff.

- In most colleges, learners appreciate and value the commitment and support of teaching staff. They report that the openness and flexibility of teachers helps them to progress on their programme.
- All colleges work successfully with awarding bodies to implement alternative assessment arrangements. Learners engage well with new formative and summative assessment models and value the introduction of more holistic approaches to assessment, account of project and portfolio-based evidence, and the use of open book assignments.

ASPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

A few colleges do not have sufficient arrangements in place to assess the level of digital skills of learners prior to enrolment. As a result, some new learners do not have sufficient digital skills to be able to engage fully in learning activities at the start of their programme.

In a few colleges, curriculum teams use a variety of digital platforms to deliver online learning. This presents complexities and challenges for

learners who require to navigate and use a number of different digital platforms within their programme.

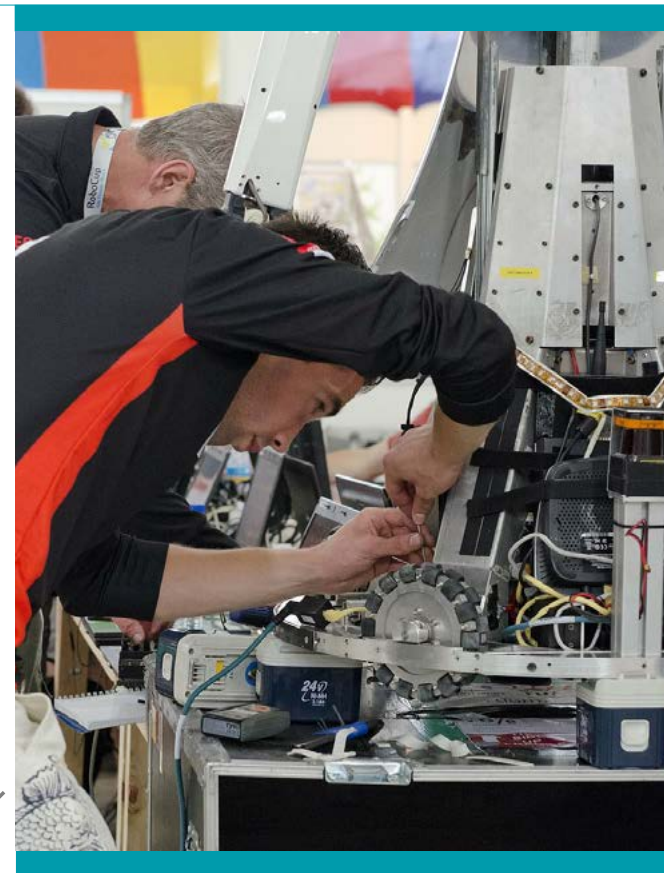
In a few colleges, some learners did not have access to an appropriate device to enable them to participate fully in remote learning, or access online college services.

In most colleges, learners on FE level programmes that are predominantly practical, experience challenges in maintaining motivation and engagement when delivery is not on campus and face-to-face.

Some colleges reported challenges in working with secondary schools to plan and deliver provision for young people in the senior phase. Access to practical programmes was particularly affected by periods of college closure.

In some colleges, the number of school-age learners undertaking college provision has reduced significantly for a number of reasons, including pupils preferring in-school learning to online delivery of college programmes. The breadth of college curriculum accessed by young people has narrowed as a result.

Some colleges are not taking sufficient action to monitor learner progress across programmes where learning and teaching is blended.



Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32



1.3. Services to support learning

ASPECTS OF POSITIVE PRACTICE

- From the start of the pandemic, curriculum and support staff worked collegiately to ensure continuity of service and provide learners and staff with equipment and resources learners to enable them to work off-campus.
- During the pandemic, almost all colleges made arrangements to enable learners requiring additional support to access services quickly and easily. Support teams provide options for learners to contact support services online, by phone or in person. Staff teams work together to tailor coordinated support and this has helped many learners to overcome challenges and engage productively in their learning. Early referral to support services is helping vulnerable learners to progress and remain on their programme.
- Most colleges use a range of approaches and resources to promote and support wellbeing and mental health. A significant number of learners have accessed counselling services and the number of learners seeking counselling is continuing to increase.
- In almost all colleges, support service managers and teams worked quickly to ensure pre-entry, admission and enrolment facilities were

available online and working well. Arrangements were streamlined to enable learners to access application and student funding services more easily. In-person appointments and phone and video calls were used well by staff to engage and communicate with learners. As a result, learners receive prompt responses to queries raised and fewer learners face financial hardship due to reduced waiting times for accessing support funds.

ASPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

In a few colleges, a reduction in the level of additional funding available to provide support for mental health is leading to uncertainty regarding continuity of provision and ability to meet demand.

In a few colleges, recruitment and induction arrangements do not provide learners with sufficient information about the range and type of support services available to them.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

1.4. Learner engagement

ASPECTS OF POSITIVE PRACTICE

- Almost all colleges work closely with their Students' Association (SA). Productive collaboration between college staff and the SA at operational and strategic levels is stimulating initiatives that improve and enhance the learner experience. These include delivery of short programmes to develop digital skills, roll-out of peer mentoring schemes, and arrangements for improving learner communication and retention.
- Almost all colleges have an effective class representative system in place. SAs host useful training events and meetings to assist class reps. to carry out their role successfully. This includes introducing class reps. to ways of gathering and conveying feedback from their peers to help shape improvements to the learner experience. However, class reps. report they feel less comfortable representing the views of other learners gathered through remote platforms.
- In most colleges, learners report that staff are flexible, enthusiastic and responsive to their needs. Teaching staff make good use of real-time learner feedback to make timeous adjustments. Most learners are confident that their opinions are respected by staff and that they can influence positive change.

- Most learners can articulate the benefits of hybrid delivery models. Many value and enjoy the flexibility of remote learning to accommodate family and work commitments and avoid travel costs.
- In some colleges, the increased use of online platforms and social media has enhanced engagement between teaching staff and learners.

ASPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

In a number of colleges, the number of class representatives has declined and some colleges do not have sufficient arrangements to ensure all class groups have a class representative in place.

In a few colleges, there is insufficient SA representation on college planning groups.

In some colleges, learner involvement and contribution to curriculum team review is not sufficient to fully support evaluation and planning for improvement.



Ayrshire College #484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32



1.5. Evaluation to facilitate improvement

ASPECTS OF POSITIVE PRACTICE

- Most colleges adjusted evaluation arrangements to help to manage the diverse range of challenges created by the pandemic. In a minority of colleges, evaluation arrangements were paused to enable staff to manage frequent unplanned disruptions and challenges.
- In most colleges, college managers draw on the findings from personal development review and evaluation processes to inform and plan professional learning activities. This has led to improvements to professional practice that has enhanced delivery of the curriculum.
- Within evaluative activities, teaching staff reflect well on the impact of hybrid delivery. They draw constructively on the findings to adjust programme schedules and timetables, and capture best practice.
- In some colleges, curriculum staff and support teams use a range of methods effectively to evaluate and improve the quality of provision and services. This includes arrangements for observing and evaluating learning and teaching, use of learner feedback, and peer mentoring of staff.
- Most colleges are in the process of adapting their approaches to evaluate the quality of learning and

teaching to reflect the emerging prevalence of hybrid and remote learning. Most curriculum managers are engaging teaching teams in discussing approaches and experiences of delivering learning in different ways and are drawing on the findings to shape future arrangements.

ASPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Overall, approaches to the evaluation of learning and teaching are not yet sufficiently systematic. Often college managers and staff rely on informal mechanisms, limiting their ability to evaluate and improve the quality of the learning experience.

In most colleges, some staff do not engage sufficiently in evaluative activities to inform planning for improvement.

In most colleges, some curriculum teams do not have sufficiently detailed improvement action plans to fully enable staff to set appropriate actions, monitor progress and measure improvement.

A minority of colleges do not share best practice approaches effectively across curriculum teams.

In some colleges, low response rates to learner surveys is reducing the ability of managers to identify cross-college issues that require improvement. Generally, learner participation in the national Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) is low with insufficient numbers of learners complete the survey to express their views.

Ayrshire College #464082
03/11/2022 15:23:52

1.6. Learner progress and outcomes

ASPECTS OF POSITIVE PRACTICE

- In most colleges, the majority of learners complete their college programme and achieve a successful outcome, leading to a certificated award.
- In AY 2020-21, the majority of colleges achieved better than sector average rates of learner successful completion at FE level.
- Attainment rates for full-time Higher Education (HE) learners have remained stable at around pre-pandemic levels overall.
- In almost all colleges, there are identifiable progression pathways for learners.
- In some colleges, staff make effective use of predictive software to support staff to identify and focus on learners that are at greatest risk of leaving their programme early. This facility helps staff to identify learners who require additional support and assess the effectiveness of any interventions put in place.

ASPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Attainment rates for learners on full-time FE programmes have declined overall. Managers and staff in almost all colleges recognise that FE learners are more likely to find remote learning challenging.

Rates of further withdrawal for learners on full-time FE programmes have increased.

In a number of colleges there are curriculum areas with persistently low rates of learner success, many of which pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of these colleges recognise that further work is required to identify and analyse the factors that contribute to learner withdrawal and low success rates.



Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

1.7. Summary of key findings

- All colleges responded well to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic by adapting delivery models to facilitate remote and blended learning. This allowed learners to continue their learning. All colleges worked well with respective awarding bodies to create alternative forms of summative and formative assessment.
- Most teaching staff have developed enhanced digital skills. This is leading to innovative and effective ways of working allowing learners to engage in a more flexible way. However, in a minority of colleges, learners enrol without sufficient assessment of their current digital competences. Some learners still experience barriers to engagement through a deficit of digital knowledge and/or a lack of access to digital hardware and software. These factors are likely to lead to increased rates of learner early or further withdrawal.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, self-evaluation arrangements in a minority of colleges were paused as staff managed frequent, unplanned challenges. Staff in most colleges made rapid change to their practice as situations unfolded to identify planned actions and potential improvements.
- Most colleges engaged well with industry and external stakeholders to identify potential barriers to recruitment, employment, and training. This allowed colleges to prioritise planning, address gaps in skills and capitalise on funding opportunities. In this way, colleges are continuing to contribute to wider regional economies.
- In all colleges, learners benefit from streamlined communications and services. Adjusted support services across all colleges are catering to a wide range of learner needs that include additional support needs, funding issues and learner counselling. This helps to promote successful retention and attainment.
- In most colleges, learners appreciate and value the commitment and support of teaching staff and comment that staff are flexible, enthusiastic and responsive to their needs. Learners feel listened to and that their feedback helps to shape curriculum. These approaches are promoting positive outcomes across most colleges. However, the arrangements for class representative recruitment in some colleges is inconsistent.
- In the majority of colleges, most learners complete their college programme and achieve a successful outcome, leading to a certificated award. However, a minority of colleges have seen consistently low rates of learner success within specific curriculum areas which pre-date the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Most colleges recognise that learners on full-time FE programmes are more likely to find remote learning challenging. Learners undertaking programmes with practical content have often been frustrated by the limited amount of face-to-face delivery available. This has influenced learner further withdrawal and attainment rates.
- Almost all colleges report that some blended delivery approaches adopted during the pandemic may remain in place in the future.

2. Analysis of learner outcome data, AY 2020/21

2.1. Background

The SFC produce college performance indicators (PIs) annually for the previous academic year. In addition, SFC produce an accompanying overview report which examines data patterns and trends over a number of years. The most recent documents are [AY 2020-21](#).

The purpose of this data and associated indicators is to inform stakeholders about the performance of the sector in relation to learner outcomes. The reported PIs support the evaluation of performance of learners by level of programme and hours of study, both over time and against other similar colleges. The PIs can be used, for example, to monitor and compare performance of groups of specific interest, such as those with protected characteristics or care-experienced learners, thereby supporting the wider college improvement agenda.



Currently SFC reports on three PIs, each expressed as a percentage of total enrolments:

Completed successful – the percentage of learners who successfully complete a programme within a specified timescale during the course year;

Completed with partial success – the percentage of learners completing the course year but not considered to be fully successful; and

Withdrawn – the percentage of learners who withdrew from the course after enrolment. This can also be examined further by **early withdrawal** (withdrawn before completing 25% of the programme) and **further withdrawal** (withdrawn after completing 25% of the programme but before the end of the programme).

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

2.2. Impact of the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the examination and assessment arrangements for learners during AY 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22. SFC commentary on the impact of the pandemic on college activity is provided in [Appendix 1](#).

In response to the pandemic, measures put in place to protect staff and students in AY 2020-21 were more restrictive and longer lasting than those experienced in AY 2019-20. This severely limited colleges' ability to deliver learning and teaching activities and student support services in person. This culminated in a reduction in overall enrolments and successful student outcomes in AY 2020-21. Those challenges notwithstanding, colleges continued to adapt, taking swift action to protect staff and students' wellbeing and contribute to the national effort to tackle the virus and support vulnerable communities.

Full consideration should be given to these exceptional circumstances when considering data and direct comparisons between AY 2019-20 and AY 2020-21 and earlier years cannot be made without careful consideration of this context.

2.3. Analysis

The current definition of learner attainment is the achievement of a recognised qualification or award, and this underpins the completed successful PI as a measure of learner success.

- There has been no overall significant improvement in attainment on full-time FE programmes in the last ten years. Rates of learner attainment have altered very little since AY 2012-13, when 65.5% of learners who enrolled on full-time Further Education (FE) programmes completed successfully. More recently, this trend has continued, with learner success rates hovering between 65% and 66% over a number of years, until the onset of the pandemic in AY 2019-20.
- The successful completion rate for full-time FE programmes in AY 2020-21 fell by 4.7 percentage points (pp) to 61.3% compared to the previous year. The rate for learners completing their programmes with partial success decreased 2.2 pp to 11.0%. These changes can largely be attributed to the increased rate of learner withdrawal rate for full-time FE programmes over the same period.
- Both SFC data and the findings of HM Inspectors highlight that most withdrawals in AY 2020-21 occurred towards the second half of the academic year. Some of the reasons given for increased student withdrawal rates are: learner fatigue with the blended

learning model, uncertainty around assessment methodologies, lack of time in-person for practical activities, reduction in work placement opportunities, childcare, caring and other commitments and the lack of opportunity to interact in-person with peers and lecturers. This concurs with the findings of HM Inspectors during PVs to colleges in AY 2021-22.

- Over the last ten years, successful outcomes for full-time HE learners shifted marginally from year to year between 70% and 71%. This is a similar pattern to the attainment rates for FE learners described previously. Successful outcomes for AY 2019-20 and AY 2020-21 have fluctuated and are slightly above previous levels, and again, should be interpreted with caution in light of the impact of the pandemic.
- The successful completion rate for full-time HE programmes in AY 2020-21 decreased slightly to 72.1% compared to the previous year. The rate for learners completing their programmes with partial success decreased by 10.2 pp. Again, these changes were due to the increased withdrawal rate for learners on full-time HE programmes over the same period.
- The withdrawal rate for full-time HE learners in AY 2020-21 increased from AY 2019-20, however the increase is not as significant as in FE full-time. This is likely to be as a result of resilience of HE full-time learners in coping with the increased digital and self-directed learning requirements in their courses during the pandemic.

2.4. Variation between colleges

There are significant variances between individual colleges in terms of levels of learner retention and attainment. These differences occur due to a wide range of issues, including the operating context of the college, the level and type of programmes and awarding body criteria, and mode of delivery.

- For AY 2020-21, these differences have been amplified by the impact on colleges of dealing with the pandemic.
- There are many factors influencing these additional variations in PIs, including different approaches by individual colleges to on-campus practical learning, and regional variations in coronavirus restrictions.
- A number of colleges (11 of 27) have persistently low rates of full-time FE learner attainment across multiple subject areas. Five colleges have persistently low rates of full-time HE learner attainment across multiple subject areas. Many of these pre-date the onset of the pandemic.

2.5. Full-time FE learner outcomes

There is widespread interest in the attainment of FE learners due to the volume of delivery this represents, and the demographic of the FE learner population, therefore the remaining analysis will focus on full-time FE programmes. It is important to examine trends for an individual college over time before drawing conclusions about performance, particularly as the majority of results for AY 2020-21 have been estimated. It is important to note that individual college retention and attainment rates will fluctuate, with minor differences from year to year.

- There is significant variance within the key FE PIs across the sector. The sector average for learners completing successfully is 6.3%, with a range of 20.9 pp.
- For learners completing with partial success, the sector average is 11.0%, with a range of 18.8 pp.
- Overall sector average for learner withdrawal is 27.7% with a range of 21.7 pp. This can be broken down to show an average early withdrawal rate of

7.5%, with a range of 6.3 pp and an average further withdrawal rate of 20.3%, with a range of 16.2 pp.

- Those colleges with the greatest number of learners completing successfully also have better than sector average performance in learner retention or partial success, or both.
- Small island or specialist colleges all have better than sector average retention rates. However, this ability to retain and encourage learners to complete successfully is not always reflected in attainment, with a number showing higher levels of learners completing with partial success compared with pre-pandemic figures.
- Larger colleges who have lower withdrawal rates or those with low levels of partial success have better than sector average attainment. Those colleges with the lowest rates of successful completion have either poorer than sector average performance for learner retention or partial success, or both.

Ayrshire College #484082
03/11/2022 15:25:32

2.6. Differences at programme SCQF level

- Most full-time FE enrolments (80%) are on programmes delivered at SCQF levels 5 and 6. A further 14% of enrolments are on access-level programmes at SCQF level 4.
- Level 6 programmes have higher successful completion rates (63.3%) and lower total withdrawal rates (26.2%) than level 4 and 5 programmes.
- SCQF levels 4 and 5 programmes have higher total withdrawal rates of around 3-4 percentage points greater than the sector average for all full-time FE programmes. This also translates into higher early and further withdrawal rates on these programme levels.
- Successful completion rates on SCQF level 5 programmes (56.3%) are the lowest 5.0 pp below the sector average for all programmes.

2.7. Differences between subject areas

Overall, some subject areas have much lower rates of learner success than others, and for some of these this pattern has continued over time.

- Learner outcomes for full-time FE business, management and administration and social subjects are below 60%.
- Only five of the eighteen subject areas have success rates above 70%.
- In full-time HE, overall attainment rates are higher, however in two subject areas are below 70% (hospitality and tourism, and computing and ICT).
- Some individual colleges have very low rates of attainment in some or all of the following subject areas: computing and ICT, hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies, hospitality and tourism, media, science, social subjects, and sport and leisure.
- Programmes such as SQA Highers are more likely to be incorporated into the social subjects and science subject areas. These pass rates can be influenced by changing priorities amongst

learners. For example, learners who initially enrol for a number of Highers, but elect not to continue with one or more if they are not a prerequisite for entry to a higher level college or university course.

- In subject areas such as nautical studies and construction, a much higher proportion of learners are employed and have their fees paid by their employer. These subject areas have relatively high success rates.

Ayrshire College #484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

2.8. Differences between key learner groups

2.8.1. Care experienced learners

It is a key Scottish Government ambition to increase the number of care experienced learners undertaking and successfully completing college programmes.

- In AY 2020-21, the proportion of care experienced learners increased by 1.4 pp from the previous year.
- Overall, care experienced learners are less likely to complete successfully and more likely to withdraw when compared to the other reported key interest groups.
- In AY 2020-21 the success rate for care experienced learners fell by 3.2 pp and the rate of withdrawal increased by 3.7 pp from the previous year.
- These changes in success and withdrawal rates are not dissimilar to those that seen in most of the other reported key groups.

2.8.2. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds

Learners from more deprived backgrounds are less likely to successfully complete and more likely to withdraw from their programme when compared with other key learner groups.

- In AY 2020-21, learner success rates on programmes lasting 160 hours or more for those from the 10% and 20% most deprived postcodes, were below the overall figure of 68.6% for all enrolments.
- This highlights a gap of around 5 pp in attainment between the most deprived learners and the rest of the learner population.
- The gap between the most and least deprived is wider still and varies between colleges.
- The gap in attainment between the most deprived and the rest of the learner population has widened in AY 2020-21.

- This increase in the attainment gap of around 2.0 pp can be attributed to increased FE learner withdrawal from college programmes during the pandemic.
- There is significant variation in the attainment rates of learners from the 10% and 20% most deprived postcode areas between colleges.
- The differences in learner profile and demographic are considerable across the college sector, and this is likely to be a contributory factor to varying attainment levels.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:25:32

2.9. Aspects for further exploration

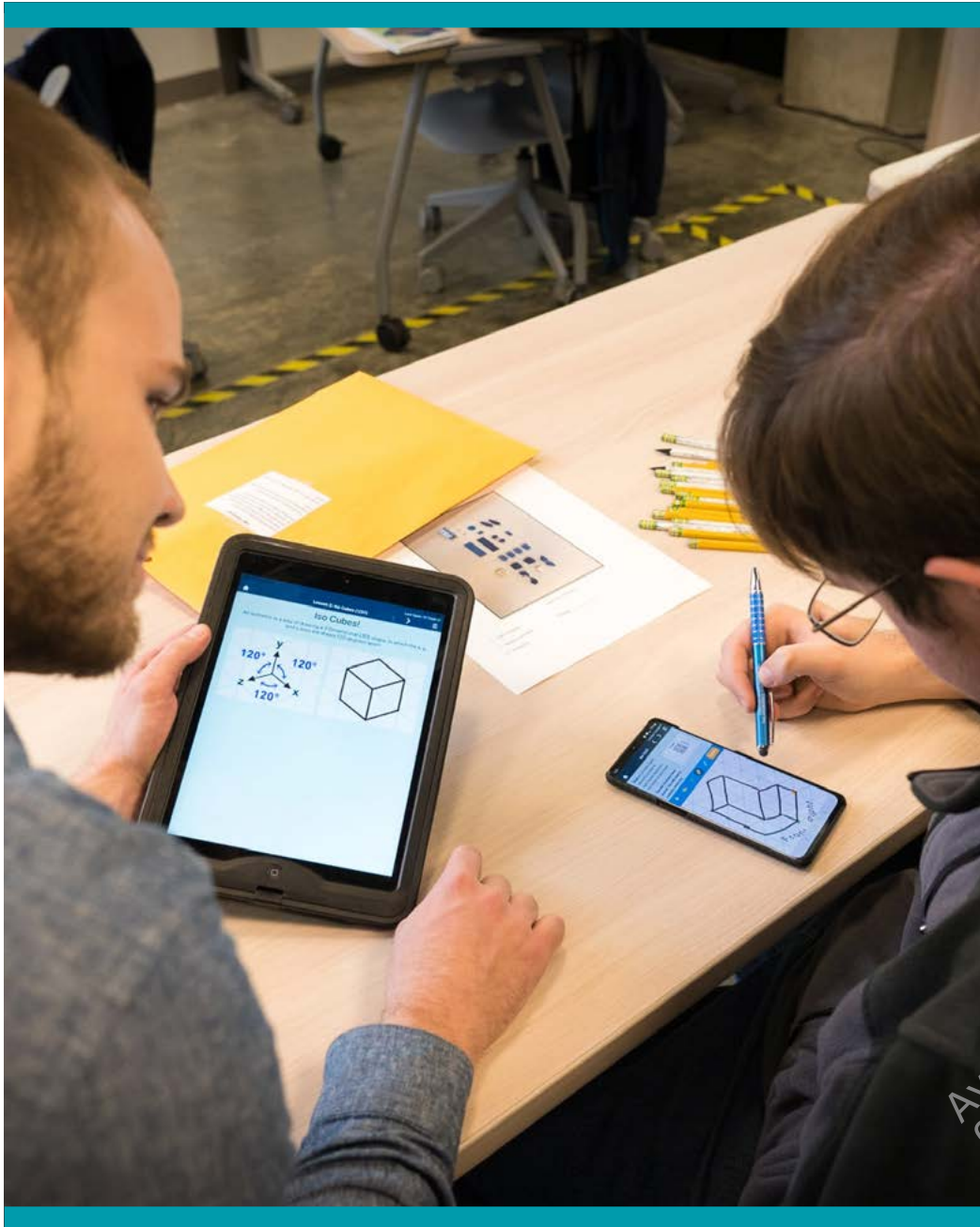
The most significant factor to take account of when interpreting the college sector PIs for AY 2020-21 is the continuing impact of the pandemic and resulting restrictions on learning and teaching and college attendance for different groups of learners.

Analysis of the data confirms that learner retention is the single biggest contributory factor impacting on attainment rates. On full-time FE programmes, prior to the pandemic, withdrawal rates had remained at around 25% for 10 years. Colleges have implemented a range of measures and interventions to try and reduce this withdrawal rate but even the highest performing colleges have withdrawal rates of around 20% for learners on full-time FE programmes.

The following are key aspects for consideration when seeking to address rates of learner withdrawal and improve outcomes for learners on full-time FE programmes:

- the need for a national, strategic conversation to consider why rates of learner withdrawal are so stubbornly high for full-time FE programmes. Learner drop out from college programmes and its impact on the Annual Participation Measure both locally and nationally, requires further exploration to support improvement in both pathway planning and successful outcomes for learners.
- The gap in attainment for learners from the most deprived backgrounds has widened and varies between individual colleges. This attainment gap requires further exploration to ensure equity and equality of outcome for all learners.
- The gap in attainment for care-experienced learners has widened and requires continued focus to secure improvement in outcomes for this key group.
- Rates of attainment across a number of individual colleges and in individual subjects areas vary and in some cases are very low. This requires focused attention to secure improvement in learner outcomes for key industry sectors or in individual colleges.
- The current measures of learner retention and attainment are important indicators of success. However, this provides only a partial view of the success of Scotland's FE learner population as a whole. These learners will also have made important gains in terms of skills and progress from previous learning.
- For many learners, particularly younger learners and those from the most deprived backgrounds, their success is often skills achievement and progress, even if they fail to complete or fully attain their intended qualification. Often for these learners the educational journey will take longer.
- There is a need to acknowledge the potential benefits gained by learners who remain on a programme but do not complete successfully as an indication of the impact of college study on their development.





3. Analysis and next steps

The following aspects require further consideration and exploration to support improvement in outcomes for learners in Scotland's colleges:

- The variability in learner outcomes across establishments, subjects, SCQF levels and for key learner groups including; care-experienced learners, learners from the most deprived backgrounds, learners on full-time FE programmes.
- Equity, equality and support for colleges to meet the needs of all learner groups, including the most vulnerable.
- The impact of digital poverty on the learning experience.
- The quality of learning and teaching across the sector, and the emergence and impact of digital learning as a key characteristic of a post-compulsory learning.
- The learner journey and pathway planning, and the impact of college drop out on the Annual Participation Measure, both locally and nationally.
- The impact of poverty and deprivation on college attainment and the linkages between the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the senior phase.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Appendix 1 - SFC commentary on the impact of the pandemic

1. The ongoing COVID pandemic and the requirement for public health control measures continued throughout 2020-21. The measures put in place to protect staff and students in 2020-21 were more strict and long-lasting than was experienced in 2019-20 and severely limited colleges' ability to deliver learning and teaching activities and student support services on campus.
 2. Students faced significant disruption as a consequence of the pandemic; for example, the academic year started with a mix of in-person and remote learning for most, then between the end of December to February 2021 college campuses were mostly closed and learning, teaching and support services were moved completely online. From February to April colleges operated under temporary lockdown restrictions with only 5% of students permitted on campus. It was only from April and for the last few months of term that
 3. Students could be back in-person in greater numbers. Even then, the majority of learning remained hybrid/blended. For many students
- this high level of disruption to learning throughout the academic year limited their ability to complete their course and qualification as planned.
- Furthermore, numerous issues impacted students' ability to complete their qualification:
 - Students may have been medically affected by the pandemic either directly or via their families and/or dependants.
 - Students with childcare or caring responsibilities may have found it more difficult to complete their course as originally intended.
 - Some students on courses containing a practical element or a work placement in subjects such as engineering, construction, hair, beauty, social care and childcare, were unable to complete their course as intended and therefore had to 'defer' completing their course and qualification to the following academic year.
- The entire student population was also affected by the 'softer' impacts of the pandemic on their education, such as losing access to peer support and in-person lecturer support. While institutions continued to take steps to address digital poverty, supported by additional funding, not all students had readily-available access to the necessary broadband and/or equipment to facilitate effective digital learning and assessment.
4. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses external exams did not take place for the second year running and lecturer estimated grades were used as the core element for certification.
 5. Throughout 2020-21 colleges continued to be responsive to developing digital platforms for learning and for innovative ways to engage with learners, together with the ongoing adaptation of assessment through the SQA and other awarding body alternative assessment arrangements.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Education Scotland
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T: +44 (0)131 244 4330

E: enquiries@educationscotland.gov.scot

WWW.EDUCATION.GOV.SCOT

© Crown Copyright, 2022

You may re-use this information (excluding images and logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence providing that it is reproduced accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Education Scotland copyright and the document title specified.

View this licence, visit <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

10 November 2022

- Subject:** SFC & Education Scotland Guidance on Quality Arrangements for AY 2022-23
- Purpose:** To update Committee members on Quality Arrangements for AY 2022-23
- Recommendation:** Members are invited to note the contents of this paper
-

1. Background

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Education Scotland have published quality arrangements for Colleges for AY 2022-23. Both publications are attached as appendices for more detailed information.

2. Current Situation

SFC expects a continued strategic approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement by all colleges. This should be done primarily through the Outcome Agreement process and through engagement with Education Scotland.

Outcome Agreements

SFC Outcome Agreement guidance asks colleges to set out their high level contributions, impact and outcomes with respect to securing high-quality learning, teaching and support for students. This provides assurance on, and accountability for, the use of SFC funding. Colleges should undertake a process of critical assessment and appraisal which will support both the Outcome Agreement self-evaluation reporting and Education Scotland engagement and review work.

Education Scotland

Education Scotland will plan and implement external quality reviews, public accountability and enhancement in Scotland's colleges in AY 2022-23 as follows:

1. On-going engagement with a link HM Inspector

Link HM Inspectors will continue to engage with all colleges to provide tailored support and challenge in the coming year. This may be undertaken either virtually or through in-person visits as required. Margaret Rose Livingstone is Ayrshire College's new link HM Inspector.

2. Annual Engagement Visits or Progress Visits

HM Inspectors will undertake an annual engagement visit (AEV) in colleges where, based on the outcomes of previous engagement, satisfactory progress is being made against improvement priorities, or where SFC and/or HM Inspectors have not identified any aspects of performance requiring further exploration. As Ayrshire College's AY 2021-22 Progress Visit was deemed satisfactory, the College will host an AEV during AY 2022-23.

3. Thematic reviews

In order to support improvement in aspects of college sector performance, HM Inspectors will undertake a programme of thematic reviews. These will evaluate the following:

- Education and training pathways
- Curriculum planning, support and delivery
- The impact of evaluation on improving outcomes for learners

3. Risks

There is a risk that the College fails to provide sufficient assurance on its high level, contributions, impact and outcomes with respect to securing high-quality learning, teaching and support for students.

4. Equality Impact Assessment

No formal equality impact assessment is required given the subject of this paper.

5. Conclusion

Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Anne Campbell
Vice Principal, Curriculum
20 September 2022

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32



Approach to external quality assurance, engagement and enhancement by HM Inspectors AY 2022-23

Please share this information with staff

This note contains the following information

Arrangements for external quality assurance, engagement and enhancement for AY 2022-23	2
1. On-going engagement with a link HM Inspector	2
2. Annual engagement Visits	2
3. Progress visits.....	3
4. Thematic reviews	5

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Arrangements for external quality assurance, engagement and enhancement for AY 2022-23

During AY 2022-23, HM Inspectors will undertake the following activities in colleges:

1. On-going engagement with a link HM Inspector

Link HM Inspectors will continue to engage with all colleges to provide tailored support and challenge in the coming year. This may be undertaken either virtually or through in-person visits as required.

2. Annual engagement Visits

HM Inspectors will undertake an annual engagement visit (AEV) in colleges where, based on the outcomes of previous engagement, satisfactory progress is being made against improvement priorities, or where SFC and/or HM Inspectors have not identified any aspects of performance requiring further exploration.

2.1 Approach to AEVs

AEVs will be short, light touch visits lasting typically one day. AEVs will be undertaken by the college link HM Inspector, supported by HM Inspectors colleagues, Associate Assessors (AAs), and Student Team Members (STMs) as appropriate.

2.2 What do HM Inspectors focus on during an AEV?

AEVs will explore the following themes;

- Learner progress and outcomes,
- Curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment,
- Evaluation to facilitate improvement, and
- Learner engagement.

2.3 Notification of the AEV

AEV dates will be planned collaboratively between the college and the link HM Inspector.

2.4 How do we share our findings?

On conclusion of the AEV, the team will provide a verbal report of their findings to the college. It will provide assurance of the quality of the learning experience, and may identify aspects requiring further improvement. For multi-college regions, a representative of the RSB will be invited to attend.

2.5 What happens after the AEV?

Following our internal quality assurance processes, a written report will be produced and shared with the college and SFC. The college will have the opportunity to check the report for factual accuracy within five working days. Three weeks after the AEV is

completed, a final written report will be provided to the college and the college link Inspector will make arrangements to share the report with the college Board. For multi-college regions the report will also be shared with the RSB. At this point, a short statement confirming the outcome of the AEV and any next steps will be published on Education Scotland's website. AEV outcomes will inform future engagement approaches with individual colleges.

3. Progress visits

HM Inspectors will undertake progress visits (PVs) in colleges where areas for improvement requiring further progress were identified during previous engagement, or where both SFC and HM Inspectors identify aspects of performance requiring further exploration. Each visit will evaluate the effectiveness of college approaches to self-evaluation and planning for improvement, and consider progress made against identified targets. HM Inspectors will identify what is working well and where further improvement may still be required. Visits will also consider key indicators of performance, and their impact on the learning experience. PVs will commence in autumn 2022.

3.1 Approach to PVs

PVs will be managed by a Lead HM Inspector (LI) who will be accompanied by HM Inspectors colleagues, one of whom will be the college link Inspector. AAs and STMs will be deployed to support PVs.

PV planning will be intelligence-led. Pre-visit planning discussions will be held with SFC and sparqs to establish aspects for exploration in particular colleges. A range of evidence sources will be considered including:

- Previous PV outcomes
- Performance Indicators (PIs)
- College self-evaluation and improvement plans
- SFC intelligence regarding performance
- Learner feedback/sparqs engagement
- Stakeholder feedback re: performance

This will inform the scale and scope for each visit, tailored to the specific circumstances of individual colleges.

Colleges will identify a senior manager to act as college nominee and liaise with HM Inspectors. A visit schedule will be agreed in advance, and will include meetings held with college senior leaders, managers, staff, learners and stakeholders. It is expected that colleges will evidence how stakeholders have been engaged in college arrangements for evaluation and improvement planning. PV teams will be on site to undertake meetings with staff and learners. Colleges will be required to provide a short written context statement in advance of their PV outlining their approach to quality improvement and evaluation along with copies of any relevant documentation, for example, self-evaluation reports and improvement plans. The PV team will meet at the end of each day to discuss their findings and these meetings will be attended by the college nominee.

3.2 What do HM Inspectors focus on during a PV?

PVs will focus on providing assurance of the quality of provision being delivered and of the learner experience. Other than a short context statement, there will be **no requirement** to complete and submit any new documentation in advance of a PV. However, the lead HM Inspector may find it helpful receive copies of existing documentation to help prepare for the visit. PVs will not routinely involve observation of learning and teaching approaches. However, colleges will be required to demonstrate the effectiveness of their arrangements to evaluate the quality of the learning experience including learning and teaching practice. To support this, HM Inspectors may include lesson observations if deemed appropriate. The approaches to improving outcomes for learners and the quality of the learning experience will be a core part of the PVs. The team will engage in professional dialogue and review relevant documentation.

Learner engagement is fundamental to the college's ability to identify areas for development. Colleges should view students as partners in supporting improvement and should have effective processes for engaging students in contributing to enhancement activities. During PVs, HM Inspectors and AAs and STMs will engage in conversations with groups of learners to identify the progress they are making and how effectively they engage in and influence their individual learning experiences. By focusing on outcomes and impact and observing practice and experiences directly, HM Inspectors support college staff to reflect on what is working well and what needs to improve.

HM Inspectors will encourage colleges to share examples of highly effective practice and, where identified, will disseminate these more widely to support improvement.

3.3 Who carries out PVs?

PVs will be led by HM Inspectors, AAs and an STM.

PVs will usually be carried out across two to three days. The size of team and duration of the visit will be adjusted to recognise the context of the college.

3.4 How will we carry out the PV?

PVs are planned collaboratively between the college, HM Inspectors and SFC. Prior to the visit, colleges will have the opportunity to provide relevant PV updates, identified through self-evaluation, to reflect the progress made and highlight any changes in circumstances. PVs are informed by the PRAISE framework which is used to help establish and maintain positive relationships with all involved. HM Inspectors recognise that all discussions and engagements are opportunities to share and develop thinking, and to learn from each other.

Throughout the visit, team members will involve managers and staff in professional dialogue, with the aim of supporting improvement. Through this approach, HM Inspectors will work with college staff and should ensure that the visit experience is a collaborative process.

3.5 Notification of the PV

Colleges will be informed in writing of the planned date for their PV six weeks in advance of commencement of the visit.

3.6 How do we share our findings?

On conclusion of the PV, the team will provide a verbal report of their findings to the college. This will include commentary on the accuracy and effectiveness of a college's self-evaluation approaches, progress made against improvement targets, and the experiences and outcomes of learners. It will provide assurance of the quality of the learning experience, and may identify aspects requiring further improvement. For multi-college regions, a representative of the RSB will be invited to attend.

3.7 What happens after the PV?

Following our internal quality assurance processes, a written report will be produced and shared with the college and SFC. The college will have the opportunity to comment if they wish within five working days. Three weeks after the PV is completed, a final written report will be provided to the college and the LI will make arrangements to share the report with the college Board. For multi-college regions, the report will also be shared with the RSB. At this point, a short statement confirming the outcomes of the PV and any next steps will be published on Education Scotland's website. PV outcomes will inform future engagement approaches with individual colleges.

4. Thematic reviews

In order to support improvement in aspects of college sector performance, HM Inspectors will undertake a programme of thematic reviews. These will evaluate the following;

- Education and training pathways;
- Curriculum planning, support and delivery, and
- The impact of evaluation on improving outcomes for learners.

Thematic reviews may be carried out at college, regional or national level. The footprint of each thematic review will be adjusted to take account of scale and reach of institutions. This will support the evaluation of approaches and impact, providing depth of intelligence about the individual organisations involved, along with providing information to inform capacity building and future approaches to improvement and enhancement. The thematic reviews will provide opportunities for collaborative working with partner quality bodies, for example QAA Scotland, in evaluating the quality of provision and capacity for improvement.

The symbiotic relationship between tertiary education providers in contributing to the education and skills pipeline is a key component of the proposed arrangements. Early implementation of the thematic assignments will support an incremental approach to strengthening arrangements between providers to avoid unnecessary duplication whilst building on existing strengths.

The proposed arrangements are designed to enable Post-16 providers and national bodies that have a focus in assuring and improving the quality of provision, to adjust and adapt to future arrangements.

The approach seeks to strengthen the collective knowledge of providers to meet current and projected economic priorities at local, regional and national levels. The findings of HM Inspectors and other bodies will be instrumental in developing the focus and scope of reviews. The approach also seeks to build, incrementally, the capacity of practitioners across tertiary organisations to engage collaboratively in implementing future arrangements to improve outcomes for learners. In the longer term, the approach will ensure a coherent and sustainable national approach that is founded on continuous improvement and avoidance of unnecessary duplication.

HM Inspectors will also seek to identify and share examples of highly effective practice, highlight what is working well and make recommendations about what needs to improve.

Aspects for exploration, timing and participation in thematic reviews will be agreed with SFC and colleges in advance.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Education Scotland

Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330
E enquiries@educationscotland.gov.scot

www.education.gov.scot

© Crown Copyright, 2022

You may re-use this information (excluding images and logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence providing that it is reproduced accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Education Scotland copyright and the document title specified.

To view this licence, visit <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

SFC GUIDANCE

REFERENCE: SFC/GD/22/2022

ISSUE DATE: 06/09/2022

(Paper 7 - Appendix 2)

SFC GUIDANCE TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ON QUALITY FOR AY 2022-23 AND AY 2023-24

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32



SFC GUIDANCE TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ON QUALITY FOR AY 2022-23 AND AY 2023-24

ISSUE DATE:	6 September 2022
REFERENCE:	SFC/GD/22/2022
SUMMARY:	The purpose of this guidance is to inform Scotland's colleges and universities on quality arrangements for Academic Year (AY) 2022-23 and AY 2023-24. The paper is in four sections. Section 1 provides overview and context. Section 2 outlines shared expectations for the period of the guidance. Section 3 provides an overview of arrangements for colleges, and Section 4 provides an overview of arrangements for universities.
FAO:	Principals and CEOs of Scotland's colleges and universities; Quality managers and practitioners at Scotland's colleges and universities; and the general public
FURTHER INFORMATION:	CONTACT: Derek Horsburgh JOB TITLE: Senior Policy/Analysis Officer, Quality and Learning DIRECTORATE: Access, Learning and Outcomes TEL: 0131 313 6649 EMAIL: dhorsburgh@sfc.ac.uk

CONTENTS

SFC GUIDANCE TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ON QUALITY AY 2022-23 AND AY 2023-24	5
Purpose.....	5
Section 1: introduction	6
Overview	6
Context - SFC Review of Coherence and Sustainability.....	6
Section 2: shared sector expectations for AY 2022-23 and 2023-24.....	8
QUALITY CULTURE	8
Student Partnership.....	8
Tertiary enhancement topic	9
Section 3: Arrangements for Colleges AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24.....	11
On-going engagement with a link HM Inspector	11
Annual engagement Visits (AEV)	11
Progress visits (PVs).....	12
Supporting enhancement and improvement - Thematic reviews.....	13
Outcome Agreements	14
CREDIT RATED PROVISION.....	14
Section 4: Arrangements for UNIVERSITIES AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24	15
EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW: Quality Enhancement and standards review (QESR) and Institutional Liaison MEETINGS (ILM)	15
Institution-led Review	16
ENHANCEMENT THEMES	21
Public information about quality and the student experience.....	21
Institutional reporting on quality for AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24	23
Content and scope of annual report and statement of assurance on institution-led review.....	23
Governing body provision of annual statement	24

How SFC and QAAS use annual reports 25

Reporting on the institution’s response to outcomes of external review..... 25

Issues of concern, action and reporting..... 25

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

SFC GUIDANCE TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ON QUALITY AY 2022-23 AND AY 2023-24

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this guidance is to inform Scotland's colleges and universities and other stakeholders of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) guidance on quality for AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24.
2. For colleges, the information set out in this Guidance is developed with Education Scotland (ES). This Guidance outlines arrangements for external institutional and thematic review. Full details of these arrangements will be published separately by Education Scotland on their website. Colleges also work to undertake reflection on curriculum and support services as part of quality arrangements. Separate arrangements exist for quality assurance processes required by awarding bodies.
3. For universities, the information set out in this Guidance outlines arrangements for external institutional review (Quality Enhancement and Standards Review and Institutional Liaison Meetings - outlined below), Institution-led Review (ILR), Enhancement Theme activity, public information on quality and the student experience and institutional reporting on quality. The arrangements for external institutional review have been developed by Quality Assurance Agency Scotland (QAAS) to be delivered across two phases (see paragraphs 53-57) to ensure continued compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (2015)¹. SFC has committed to ensuring compliance with ESG as part of its developing tertiary quality arrangements. Full details of arrangements for external institutional review (Phase 1 of QAA Scotland's arrangements) will be published separately by QAA Scotland on their website.

¹ [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#)

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

4. The Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 sets out the SFC's duty to secure coherent, high-quality fundable further and higher education, and to ensure provision is made for assessing and enhancing the quality of this provision.
5. The SFC meets this statutory obligation through the two current frameworks for quality in the college and university sectors. *How Good is our College* (HGIOC)² and the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF)³ are used to support self-assessment, improvement and enhancement, and the sharing of good practice in the college and university sectors, respectively, in Scotland. It is through these frameworks that SFC supports institutions to manage the quality of student learning experience and provide public confidence in academic quality and standards. Evidence from the quality arrangements contributes to broader SFC interactions with colleges and universities, in particular, Outcome Agreement discussions.
6. SFC has worked with ES and QAAS to develop quality arrangements for AY2022-3 and AY2023-4 that give our colleges and universities clarity and consistency while also allowing appropriate flexibility for continued development of a tertiary approach to quality outlined in SFC's Review (see paragraphs 8-11 below).
7. SFC will review this Guidance in advance of AY 2023-24 to consider any developments related to the proposed single tertiary quality framework and refresh as necessary for AY 2023-24.

CONTEXT - SFC REVIEW OF COHERENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

8. The final report of SFC's Review of Coherence and Sustainability⁴ published in June 2021 sets out our response to Scottish Ministers' request that we review how we might best fulfil our mission to secure coherent, good quality, and sustainable tertiary education

² [How Good is our College \(HGIOC\)](#)

³ [Quality Enhancement Framework \(QEF\)](#)

⁴ [Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability \(sfc.ac.uk\)](#)

and research.

9. The overarching ambition outlined in the review report is to make Scotland the best place to be a student at college or university. To support this ambition the review report makes a specific recommendation to:

‘develop a single quality assurance and enhancement framework for tertiary education, to uphold academic standards, and enhance the learning experience of all students’

10. SFC wishes to see a more coherent approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement across the college and university sectors that supports public level confidence and reflects our ambition for a more integrated tertiary system supporting seamless learner journeys. It is also our ambition to foster closer collaboration and joint working between and across partner agencies to support this.
11. The Scottish Government has welcomed SFC’s proposed development of a single quality framework that:
 - Strikes the appropriate balance between assuring and enhancing the quality of tertiary provision.
 - Recognises the distinct contribution as well as the interconnectedness of each part of the tertiary education system.
12. SFC has worked with Education Scotland and QAA Scotland to develop quality arrangements for AY 2022-23 and 2023-24 which will support quality assurance, improvement and enhancement while also allowing flexibility to work with stakeholders and the sectors to develop a new single tertiary approach over the same period. This will allow SFC and its partner quality agencies to co-create, test and adjust any new arrangements with the sector, and will provide sufficient lead-in time for colleges and universities to make the required preparations for the new approach.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

SECTION 2: SHARED SECTOR EXPECTATIONS FOR AY 2022-23 AND 2023-24

QUALITY CULTURE

13. Institutions should demonstrate a strategic approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement which has a clear focus on outcomes for students. This approach should be supported by a 'quality culture' throughout the institution where responsibility for provision and outcomes for students are not only the responsibility of staff with quality roles but is shared institution wide. A quality culture can further be defined as demonstrating clear alignment between strategy on quality assurance, improvement and enhancement and day-to-day practice, where buy-in across the institution from staff and students is evident and where this culture informs activity at all levels.
14. Institutions should reflect, at institutional level, on strategic issues arising from their regular quality processes and to make use of this information as part of their overall strategy and strategic approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement.
15. Institutions have flexibility in the precise manner of addressing this expectation, but it is expected that a culture of quality assurance, improvement and enhancement should be clearly evidenced across an institutions' policies and practices.
16. As part of their engagements with institutions, SFC has asked ES and QAAS to explicitly consider, through external institutional review and supporting activity, the ways in which institutions demonstrate a quality culture.
17. SFC expects each institution to engage with its quality agency partners in an open and transparent way. Institutions should share good practice and success and should also share and address challenge areas at the earliest opportunity within the quality review process, demonstrating a commitment to an effective quality assurance, improvement and enhancement approach.

STUDENT PARTNERSHIP

18. Student partnership and engagement in quality processes is a fundamental characteristic of our approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement in our colleges and universities in Scotland. *Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland*

(sparqs)⁵ assists and supports students, students' associations and institutions to improve the effectiveness of student engagement in quality assurance, improvement and enhancement across Scotland.

19. The Student Engagement Framework for Scotland⁶ is endorsed and owned by all the sector agencies and representative bodies in the college and university sectors. It sets out expectations and features of student engagement. SFC's expectation is that all institutions will work with the Framework in their own context and will develop their partnership approaches with students and student representatives to enhance student partnership. Institutions should ensure that there is a coherent and effective strategy in place for this activity. SFC encourages institutions to be ambitious in seeking opportunities for student partnership in the co-creation of learning; for empowering students to use evidence to enhance their own learning; for extending engagement to new groups of students; and developing the role and capacity of Student Association staff to build sustainability and maintain continuity of support for student officers.
20. SFC will seek assessment from sparqs, ES and QAAS on the effectiveness of how students and student representatives are engaged in quality arrangements for AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24.
21. SFC will also work with sparqs in AY 2022-23, in the context of our Review recommendation for quality, to strengthen student partnership in quality and to develop sector reference points with students for use within the new tertiary quality arrangements.

TERTIARY ENHANCEMENT TOPIC

22. SFC recognise that the college and university sectors undertake a variety of improvement and enhancement activity, both within institutions and at a sector-wide level. Arrangements for next year will continue to support these activities. However, based on review work from our quality agencies in AY2021-22, SFC recognises that there are also areas of commonality that would benefit from a joint approach and where the opportunity for collaboration is a chance to contribute to improvement and enhancement activity at a tertiary level. As a result, SFC has asked its quality agency

⁵ [Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland \(sparqs\)](#)

⁶ [sparqs Student Engagement Framework](#)

partners to lead on a Tertiary Enhancement Topic.

23. Based on the review work in AY2021-22, SFC's quality agency partners outlined aspects of the digital learning environment as continuing to require focus. In addition, Education Scotland highlighted links between aspects of digital learning and student outcomes, retention and attainment. There is also potential alignment with the work SFC has commissioned through Jisc on a Scottish level standard (or standards) for online and blended learning.
24. In AY 2022-23 and AY2023-24, QAAS, ES and sparqs will work closely with institutions, academic staff, support staff and students from across the college and university sectors on the topic, '**The future of learning and teaching: defining and delivering an effective and inclusive digital/blended offering**'. It is intended that this work, as well as having sector-wide benefit, will be of value to individual institutions, supporting enhancement and allowing for the development of a sector-wide evidence base to inform improvements to learning opportunities and to enhancement of the student experience. SFC's quality agency partners will develop a detailed project plan in Autumn 2022 and will be in touch with institutions about their contribution to this activity.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

SECTION 3: ARRANGEMENTS FOR COLLEGES AY 2022-23 AND AY 2023-24

25. This section outlines the approach to support quality assurance, improvement and enhancement in the college sector. It sets out how Education Scotland will plan and implement external quality reviews, public accountability, and enhancement in Scotland's colleges in AY 2022-23 and, subject to review, AY 2023-24.
26. SFC expects that colleges will continue to undertake appropriate quality monitoring processes required by the awarding bodies for the qualifications that they offer, and report on high-level commitments, impacts and outcomes around high-quality learning, teaching and support in their Outcome Agreements with SFC.

ON-GOING ENGAGEMENT WITH A LINK HM INSPECTOR

27. Education Scotland HM Inspectors (of Education) will continue to engage with all colleges to provide tailored support and challenge. This may be undertaken either virtually or through in-person visits as required. This engagement will also provide valuable insight into the challenges faced by the college sector, to development and capacity building needs of each college, and the nature of individual colleges' response to improvement and enhancement.

ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT VISITS (AEV)

28. Education Scotland HM Inspectors will undertake AEVs in colleges where, based on the outcomes of previous engagement with HM Inspectors, there is clear progress against priorities, or where SFC and/or HM Inspectors have not identified any aspects of performance requiring further exploration. AEVs will be short, light touch visits lasting typically one day on-site. AEVs will be undertaken by the college link HM Inspector, supported by HM Inspector colleagues, Associate Assessors (AA), and Student Team Members (STM) as appropriate.
29. AEV dates will be planned collaboratively between the college and the link HM Inspector.
30. On conclusion of the AEV, colleges will receive an initial verbal report. For multi-college regions, a representative of the Regional Strategic Body (RSB) will be invited to attend.
31. A subsequent written report will be produced and shared with the college and SFC. For multi-college regions the report will also be shared with the RSB. At this point, a short statement confirming the outcomes of the AEV and any next steps will be published.
32. AEV outcomes will inform future engagement approaches with individual colleges.

PROGRESS VISITS (PVS)

33. PVs will be undertaken in colleges where areas for improvement and enhancement requiring further progress were identified during previous engagement with HM Inspectors, or where both SFC and HM Inspectors identify aspects of performance requiring further exploration. PVs will identify what is working well and where further improvement may still be required. They will also consider key indicators of performance, and their impact on the learning experience. PVs will commence in Autumn 2022.
34. PVs will be managed by a lead HM Inspector accompanied by HM Inspector colleagues, one of whom will be the college link Inspector. AAs and STMs will also support PVs. The size of team and duration of the visit will be adjusted to recognise the context of the college.
35. PVs will usually be carried out across two to three days and a visit schedule will be agreed with colleges in advance.
36. PVs will be planned collaboratively between the college, HM Inspectors and SFC. Prior to the visit, colleges will have the opportunity to provide relevant PV updates, identified through self-evaluation, to reflect the progress made and highlight any changes in circumstances. PV planning will be intelligence-led. Pre-visit planning discussions will be held with SFC and sparqs and will consider a range of evidence.
37. Throughout the visit, team members will involve managers and staff in professional dialogue, with the aim of supporting improvement. Through this approach HM Inspectors will work with college staff and should ensure that the visit experience is a collaborative process.
38. On conclusion of the PV, the college will receive an initial verbal report of their findings. For multi-college regions, a representative of the RSB will be invited to attend.
39. A subsequent written report will be produced and shared with the college and SFC. For multi-college regions the report will also be shared with the RSB. At this point, a short statement confirming the outcomes of the PV and any next steps will be published. PV outcomes will inform future engagement approaches with individual colleges.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

SUPPORTING ENHANCEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT - THEMATIC REVIEWS

40. In order to support improvement in aspects of college sector performance, HM Inspectors will undertake a programme of thematic reviews. These will evaluate the following:
- Education and training pathways.
 - Curriculum planning, support and delivery.
 - The impact of evaluation on improving outcomes for learners.
41. Thematic reviews may be carried out at college, regional or national level. The footprint of each thematic review will be adjusted to take account of scale and reach of institutions. This will support the evaluation of approaches and impact, providing depth of intelligence about the individual organisations involved, along with providing information to inform capacity building and future approaches to improvement and enhancement. The thematic reviews will provide opportunities for collaborative working with partner quality bodies, for example QAA Scotland in evaluating the quality of provision and capacity for improvement.
42. The symbiotic relationship between tertiary education providers in contributing to the education and skills pipeline is a key component of the proposed arrangements. Early implementation of the thematic assignments will support an incremental approach to strengthening arrangements between providers to avoid unnecessary duplication whilst building on existing strengths.
43. The proposed arrangements are designed to enable post-16 providers and national bodies that have a locus in assuring and improving the quality of provision, to adjust and adapt to future arrangements.
44. The approach seeks to strengthen the collective knowledge of providers to meet current and projected economic priorities at local, regional and national levels. The findings of HM Inspectors and other bodies will be instrumental in developing the focus and scope of reviews. The approach also seeks to build incrementally the capacity of practitioners across tertiary organisations to engage collaboratively in implementing future arrangements to improve outcomes for learners. In the longer term, the approach will ensure a coherent and sustainable national approach that is founded on continuous improvement and avoidance of unnecessary duplication.
45. HM Inspectors will also seek to identify and share examples of highly effective practice, highlight what is working well and make recommendations about what needs to improve.
46. Aspects for exploration, timing and participation in thematic reviews will be agreed with SFC and colleges in advance.

OUTCOME AGREEMENTS

47. SFC Outcome Agreement guidance asks colleges to set out their high level, contributions, impact and outcomes with respect to securing high-quality learning, teaching and support for students. This provides assurance on and accountability for the use of SFC funding. Colleges should undertake a process of critical assessment and appraisal which will support both the Outcome Agreement self-evaluation reporting and Education Scotland engagement and review work.

CREDIT RATED PROVISION

48. For colleges with credit rated provision (credit rated programmes on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)⁷ database), the quality assurance of credit rating activities is carried out by SCQF Partnership through a four-year cycle of review work.

⁷ [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\)](#)

SECTION 4: ARRANGEMENTS FOR UNIVERSITIES AY 2022-23 AND AY 2023-24

49. This section outlines the approach to support quality assurance, improvement and enhancement in the university sector. It sets out how QAA Scotland (QAAS) will plan and implement external quality reviews, public accountability, and enhancement in Scotland's universities in AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24.
50. During AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24 QAAS will undertake the following activities in universities: Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) and Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILM) (see paragraphs 53-55). The full details of these arrangements will be made available on the QAA Scotland website⁸.
51. A summary report of each ILM will be shared with the institution and made available to SFC on request to provide context for any advice or assurance sought from QAA Scotland. As part of QAAS's formal in-year meetings with SFC, QAA Scotland will provide an update on the outcomes of recent QESRs and ILMs. In the case of either a QESR or an ILM indicating that there may be a serious issue that could impact on the university's ability to meet expectations on the management of academic quality and standards, the university will first be alerted to the need to report this to the SFC. QAA Scotland will also include reflections on QESR and ILM on an annual basis as part of formal reporting to SFC.
52. SFC also has expectations of universities in undertaking regular quality processes as part of their strategic approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement. These expectations are set out in paragraphs 58 to 82 below.

EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW: QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND STANDARDS REVIEW (QESR) AND INSTITUTIONAL LIAISON MEETINGS (ILM)

53. QAA Scotland is developing a new external institutional review method following the completion of the fourth cycle of Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR), delivered between 2018 to 2022. This includes as part of Phase 1 Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) which will look at each institution's strategic approach to

⁸ [QAA Scotland](#)

quality assurance, improvement and enhancement.

54. QESR and ILM in the period 2022-24 constitute Phase 1 of the next external institutional review cycle, in which activity will take place to inform a second stage, Phase 2, that will begin in AY2024-25 when new tertiary quality arrangements are anticipated to come into place.
55. Phase 1 is taking place across a period of two years, AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24. In each of the two years, approximately half of the institutions will undergo QESR with the remainder engaging in an ILM led by QAAS. QESR and ILM dates will be planned collaboratively between QAAS and universities.
56. Key features of Phase 1 will include:
 - Self-evaluation by each higher education institution.
 - Engagement informed by sector reference points.
 - The involvement of peer and student reviewers on at least one occasion, including a site visit. (Note, site visits can be conducted online or in person).
57. The outcome for Phase 1 will be presented as findings based on the evidence provided and consider the institution's ongoing approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement. The findings of Phase 1 will help inform the schedule for Phase 2 review activity, commencing in AY2024-25.

INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW

ANNUAL AND PERIODIC REVIEW

58. The primary mechanism by which institutions assure and enhance the quality of provision is through processes of institution-led evaluation and review, referred to generically as 'Institution-led Review' (ILR). It is a matter for each institution to determine how it organises its internal processes for reviewing and evaluating provision, provided it follows this SFC guidance and the UK Quality Code⁹.

⁹ <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>

59. SFC expects each institution to operate systems of annual monitoring and periodic ILR across the full range of its provision. ILR should consider the effectiveness of annual monitoring arrangements and the effectiveness of the follow-up actions arising from annual monitoring. Reporting at the course/module, programme, subject or departmental level should identify action to address any issues and activity to promote areas of strength for consideration at institutional level. The ILR method should be designed to allow constructive reflection on the effectiveness of an institution's annual monitoring and reporting procedures.
60. All aspects of provision are expected to be reviewed systematically and rigorously on a cycle of not more than six years to demonstrate that institutions meet the expectations set out in the UK Quality Code, and the standards set out in part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).
61. It is vital that ILRs continue to produce robust, comprehensive and credible evidence that the academic standards of awards are secure and that provision in Scottish institutions is of high quality and being enhanced. ILR should be designed to promote and support critical reflection on policy and practice. The method used should ensure that any shortcomings are addressed, and it should give a central role to quality enhancement by promoting dialogue on areas in which quality could be improved and identify good practice for dissemination within the institution and beyond.

SCOPE, FREQUENCY AND UNIT OF REVIEW

62. All credit bearing provision should be reviewed on a cycle of not more than six years, including all undergraduate and taught postgraduate awards, supervision of research students, provision delivered in collaboration with others, transnational education, work-based provision, and placements, online and distance learning, and provision which provides only small volumes of credit.
63. Each institution is expected to produce an ILR review schedule. However, the timetable is constructed, there should normally be some form of ILR activity taking place within each academic session.
64. There is flexibility for institutions to determine the precise order and aggregation of programmes and subjects in ways which provide coherence and fit the organisational structure, mode of delivery and enhancement-led approach. The unit of review in the ILR process should have sufficient granularity to allow adequate scrutiny of programmes and disciplines including ensuring there is adequate external scrutiny at the discipline level by the external panel member(s). Excessive aggregation should be avoided if it means the process cannot examine the 'fine structure' of provision and does not facilitate the identification of specific issues affecting programmes.

TEAM SIZE AND COMPOSITION

65. ILRs should provide an objective review of provision based on an understanding of national and international good practice and appropriate external reference points, including for example, subject benchmarks statements, professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements. Each review team should include a student and at least one member external to the institution with a relevant background. Such members may come from across the UK, from industry, professional practice or may have wider international experience and should be suitably trained in the institution's ILR process. Team size and composition must take account of the range and volume of provision to be reviewed and the balance between understanding of specific context and broader critical perspectives. It is good practice to ensure that review teams can bring a range of experience to the process and hence are able to act as 'critical friends' to the institution.
66. ILR should be designed to include an element of reflection on national and international good practice, such as a reflective statement from the institution on how its provision compares with similar practice outside the UK. Institutions are encouraged to consider how they can support such informal 'benchmarking'. SFC does not expect ILR teams to routinely include members from outside the UK although institutions are encouraged to actively consider the scope for this option.

CONTRIBUTION AND ROLE OF SUPPORT SERVICES

67. All services contributing to the student experience should be reviewed as part of an institution's approach. Support services are of crucial importance in determining the overall quality of the student learning experience and can impact significantly on student achievement and well-being. It is a matter for each institution to determine how this should be done. Whatever the approach taken, the evidence should allow the institution to reflect on the contribution of support services to the 'quality culture' within the institution (see paragraph 13), the ways in which the services engage with students to monitor and improve the quality of services, and the ways in which the services promote high quality learning and continuous quality enhancement. It is expected that students will be engaged throughout the review of support services. Resources to support the development of Professional Services Partnerships were developed by QAAS in the AY2021-22 Focus On project in AY2021-22 and are available

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

on the QAAS website¹⁰.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN ILR

68. Institutions are expected to continue extending student engagement and partnership in quality in line with the Student Engagement Framework for Scotland.¹¹ It is expected that students will be engaged at all stages of the ILR process including the development of the self-evaluation, as full members of ILR teams, and in follow-up activity.
69. ILR should gather additional specific information from students as part of the evidence base for reviews. Institutions have flexibility in deciding how to achieve this, taking account of the specific demographics of their student population and the characteristics of their provision. In line with previous guidance, it is good practice for ILR to:
- Generate holistic evidence about student views of provision and of their learning experience.
 - Differentiate between the views of different categories of students where these are likely to be significant (for example part-time and full-time, students from different levels of programme, entrants from school and entrants from further education etc).
 - Allow identification of distinctive characteristics of provision.
 - Take account of the views of recent graduates on the relevance of provision for their careers.

USE OF EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS

70. ILR should explore the use of specific aspects of the UK Quality Code, and especially how Subject Benchmark Statements, Characteristics Statements and Credit and Qualifications Frameworks – as represented by the SCQF¹² – are used in setting and maintaining academic standards. ILR should demonstrate that programme design and learning

¹⁰ [Professional Services Partnerships - QAA Focus On](#)

¹¹ [Student Engagement Framework for Scotland](#)

¹² [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#)

outcomes are consistent with them.

71. ILRs should continue to support effective learner pathways through higher education, including embedding and developing the use of the SCQF. ILR should be designed to promote scrutiny and discussion of the institution's approach to the SCQF. This should include consideration of strategies for articulation and advanced standing, for the recognition of prior learning and through flexible pathways to awards, including CPD and work-based learning.

USE OF DATA AND EVIDENCE

72. Both annual monitoring and ILR should consider: themes arising from and responses to external examiner reports; internal and external student survey data; performance data on recruitment, progression and achievement; and data trends. Data is likely to be benchmarked against other areas of the institution's activities as well as equivalent provision in other institutions.

RELATIONSHIP WITH PSRB ACCREDITATION

73. A significant volume of provision in Scottish universities is accredited by professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). SFC expects ILR to reflect on the outcomes of relevant PSRB accreditations. Institutions are encouraged to engage with PSRBs to explore appropriate ways of aligning PSRB activity with ILR. This might include the use of common documentation or joint processes which meet the needs of both ILR and external accreditation.

INTER-RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER ELEMENTS OF QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

74. An enhancement-led approach is a fundamental characteristic of our approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement in Scotland, and we encourage institutions to continue to develop ILR processes which also:
- Promote dialogue on areas in which quality might be improved and consider how developing the use of evidence can contribute to enhancing the student experience.
 - Identify good practice for dissemination within the institution and beyond including engagement in current and past national Enhancement Themes.
 - Encourage and support critical reflection.
75. ILR processes are subject to scrutiny through external institutional review. ILR should evidence the use of public information by institutions and how they seek to engage their students in quality and in their learning.

ENHANCEMENT THEMES

76. Enhancement Themes are part of the QEF. They aim to enhance the student learning experience in Scottish higher education by identifying specific areas for development, which are shared across all institutions. The Enhancement Themes are selected by the Scottish higher education sector, and they provide a means for institutions, academic staff, support staff and students to work together in enhancing the learning experience. The Themes encourage staff and students to share current good practice and collectively generate ideas and models for innovation in learning and teaching. The work of the Enhancement Themes is planned and directed by the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) and their operational delivery is managed by the Theme Leaders' Group (TLG).
77. SFC expects all institutions to continue to actively contribute to the Enhancement Themes at the national level, and to benefit from them by supporting enhancement within their own institutions and fully engaging with the evaluation of the work undertaken and its impact.

PUBLIC INFORMATION ABOUT QUALITY AND THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

78. Public information is one of the five elements of the QEF. It is SFC's intention to develop and enhance the use of data and evidence in how we account for public investment in Scotland to deliver high quality learning, and to consider this as a new tertiary approach is developed. The established guiding principles for Public Information about the quality of educational provision and the student experience are to provide:
- Assurances about the quality and standards of provision.
 - Information to inform student choice, and to assist employers and other stakeholders to clearly understand the nature of the Scottish university sector.
 - Information which helps current students to understand, engage with and make best use of institutional systems for quality improvement.
 - Information about the institution's educational processes which stimulates reflection on academic practice and the sharing of good practice within the institution and more widely.
79. Information should be:
- Accurate and honest.
 - Accessible and tailored to the needs of the intended user.

- Updateable on appropriate timescales (which may vary from annually to daily in different contexts).
 - Re-usable so that, ideally, information can be entered once and used in a range of contexts.
80. SFC expect institutions to continue to produce information that meets the needs of a range of stakeholders including:
- Prospective students and their families.
 - Current students.
 - Employers and employer organisations.
 - Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.
 - SFC, QAA, the National Union of Students, and other interested bodies or agencies, as proxies for Ministers, taxpayers, and the general public.
 - Competition and Markets Authority¹³.
81. The UK funding bodies continue to collect data at course-level and to publish this on Discover Uni¹⁴, the official source of information for students in the UK using official statistics about higher education courses taken from national surveys and data collected from universities and colleges about their students.
82. Universities are expected to continue to participate in the National Student Survey (NSS) as a condition of funding.

¹³ [Higher education: consumer law advice for providers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers)

¹⁴ [Discover Uni](https://www.discoveruni.org/)

INSTITUTIONAL REPORTING ON QUALITY FOR AY 2022-23 AND AY 2023-24

CONTENT AND SCOPE OF ANNUAL REPORT AND STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE ON INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW

83. SFC asks institutions to provide an annual report on ILR and enhancement activities, signed off by the governing body. QAA Scotland will continue to provide an annual summary of key themes from these reports to the SFC covering all fundable higher education institutions.
84. SFC does not publish these institutional annual reports, although under the terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 we may be obliged to consider releasing information in response to a request. SFC uses these reports to inform its overall understanding of how institutions are managing quality, and as evidence to provide assurance to Ministers on the effective use and impact of public investment in learning and teaching at the institutions we fund. It is our intention to strengthen this aspect of our quality arrangements and we will engage with institutions on the development of our approach.
85. Each institution should provide an annual report by 30 September in 2023 and 2024, endorsed by its governing body, which describes the scope, nature and outcomes of ILR activities, as well as of reviews by PSRBs, which have taken place in the previous academic year, including commentary on actions taken to address issues identified and highlighting good practice identified for dissemination.
86. The purpose of the report is to give a high level, concise analysis of activities, highlighting the key findings, institutional actions and the impacts of these, sufficient to provide assurance to SFC that the institution is effectively managing quality assurance and delivering on enhancement.
87. The format of the annual report is a matter for each institution to determine. We recommend that this should be a concise overview report, typically 6-10 pages, highlighting outcomes, impact and responses.
88. The annual report should:
 - Provide a summary of the ILR outcomes from the preceding AY including main themes, recommendations and/or commendations.
 - Indicate the ways in which support services were reviewed or included in review processes, with regard to their impact on teaching, learning and the quality of the student experience.

- Indicate the role and nature of student engagement in ILR including at the self-evaluation stage during the AY.
 - Provide a reflective overview, which highlights key findings from the reviews in the preceding year, comments on 'distance travelled' and identifies any significant outcomes or actions relating to development needs or to good practice resulting from ILR processes.
89. Across the full range of provision, the report should summarise:
- Relevant contextual information and key messages derived from monitoring and analysis of performance indicators, benchmarks and other collected data, particularly those relating to retention, progression, completion, attainment and achievement, and graduate destinations.
 - Reflection and key messages from qualitative and quantitative analysis of feedback from students (including the National Student Survey and external surveys of postgraduate students) and actions taken/planned as a result.
90. Institutions should provide an annex listing subject/programme areas which were reviewed by other bodies, for example, by PSRBs, during the academic year; and a copy of the institution's planned schedule of ILRs preferably for the full six-year cycle.

GOVERNING BODY PROVISION OF ANNUAL STATEMENT

91. The report should be considered by the governing body and include the formal annual statement of assurance to the SFC. The Chair of the governing body should sign off the statement of assurance and indicate when it was endorsed. The template for the statement of assurance statement is:

On behalf of the governing body of [name of institution], I confirm that we have considered the institution's arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of the learning experience for AY [year just elapsed], including the scope and impact of these. I further confirm that we are satisfied that the institution has effective arrangements to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision. We can therefore provide assurance to the Council that the academic standards and the quality of the learning provision at this institution continue to meet the requirements set by the Council.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

HOW SFC AND QAAS USE ANNUAL REPORTS

92. Annual reports on ILR are the main source of information on quality and learning and teaching in institutions provided to SFC, and SFC uses these reports principally to understand how institutions are managing quality. The reports also assist SFC to gain a more holistic understanding of how institutions are addressing policy priorities, such as widening access, progression and attainment. Institutions may therefore wish to draw on the information in their annual Quality Reports to inform their Outcome Agreements. QAA Scotland provides SFC with an analysis of these reports, and draws more broadly on them, alongside other evidence, as part of its annual reporting to Council. SFC uses this evidence as assurance and to inform broader discussions including Outcome Agreements. SFC will continue to ensure that the use of evidence from both processes is aligned, and that unnecessary reporting is avoided.
93. Institutions are expected to discuss their annual reports as part of QESR activity and during ILM meetings with QAA officers. In addition, institutions are encouraged to share information about current issues not only in the annual report, but also, where appropriate, through ad hoc briefings on a 'no surprises' basis. This might be particularly helpful where there is follow-up action to address any issues arising from an institution-led/PSRB review but might also deal with other issues which may emerge from time to time.

REPORTING ON THE INSTITUTION'S RESPONSE TO OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

94. The ELIR 4 cycle visits concluded during 2021. Institutional follow-up reporting from this cycle responding to the matters identified in the ELIR Outcome Report should be discussed with QAA Scotland officers and will be published on the QAA's website. The report, endorsed by the institution's governing body, should also be sent to SFC as confirmation of engagement with ELIR.

ISSUES OF CONCERN, ACTION AND REPORTING

95. Where external review and intelligence (including QESR, ILM, ELIR, and the Scottish

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Quality Concerns Scheme¹⁵) identifies issues of significant concern, the SFC will require institutions to prepare a detailed action plan to address the deficiency(ies) and to take urgent action, as necessary. Given the importance of governance and accountability in these cases, any such action plan should include commentary on how the governing body will be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the plan.

¹⁵ [Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme](#)

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

10 November 2022

- Subject:** 2022-23 Credit Report (position at 31 October 2022)
- Purpose:** To advise Members of the current 2022-23 credit activity target position and projection to the end of the academic year
- Recommendation:** Members are invited to note the contents of this paper

1. Background

A key strategic aim, of the College, is to meet the annual credit activity target agreed with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as part of the Regional Outcome Agreement process.

The activity target, agreed for AY 2022-23, is **123,867** credits. Table 1 provides a breakdown of credits.

Table 1

	2022-23
SFC Core credit target	123,867

For 2022-23, SFC has also allocated additional places to colleges to manage the transition for Foundation Apprenticeships. Table 2 provides a breakdown of these credits.

Table 2

	2022-23
Foundation apprenticeship credit target	1,344

2. Current Situation

Core credit activity

Appendix 1 provides a summary of the current position and the anticipated final position for AY 2022-23. It is estimated that the College will meet its core credit target of 123,867 credits. This is, however, contingent upon:

- Successful recruitment to planned and additional Winter Start programmes
- The same flexibility around credit claims as provided in AY 2021-22.

Foundation Apprenticeships

East Ayrshire Council has recruited more Hospitality L4/5 Foundation Apprentices than planned and SFC has indicated that this will count towards the overall Foundation Apprenticeship target. At this stage, therefore, it is estimated that the College's FA target will be met.

3. Resource Implications

Members should be aware that, ordinarily, the SFC reserves the right to clawback funding should the College not meet the agreed activity target.

4. Risks

The failure to meet the SFC credit activity target also presents a reputational risk to the College and may affect future activity levels. These risks are included in the corporate risk register.

5. Conclusion

Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Anne Campbell
Vice Principal, Curriculum
31 October 2022

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

2022-23 Credit Summary*(Paper 8 - Appendix 1)*

Core Target	Current position as at 31 Oct 2022	Remaining Provision	Total Projection	Over/under
123,867	98,635	25,490	124,125	258
FA Target	Current position as at 31 Oct 2022	Remaining Provision	Total Projection	Over/under
1,344	653	691	1,344	0

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Curriculum Area	2022-23 Baseline	Current position as at 31 Oct 2022	Remaining Provision	Total Projection
ACES, Computing, Games Development, Business including Travel & Tourism - Total	43,189	36,160	6,328	42,488
<i>ACES, Computing, Games Development, Business including Travel & Tourism</i>	42,115	35,672	6,328	42,000
<i>ACES, Computing, Games Development, Business including Travel & Tourism - Foundation Apprenticeships</i>	1,074	488	0	488
Creative, Social Science, Sport and Hospitality - Total	34,560	27,393	5,279	32,672
Care, Essential Skills, Supported Learning and ESOL - Total	33,882	26,504	7,150	33,654
<i>Care, Essential Skills, Supported Learning and ESOL</i>	33,610	26,439	7,086	33,525
<i>Care, Essential Skills, Supported Learning and ESOL - Foundation Apprenticeships</i>	272	65	64	129
Schools, Engagement and Widening Access - Total	4,588	3,092	1,963	5,055
<i>Schools, Engagement and Widening Access</i>	4,044	2,992	1,336	4,328
<i>Schools, Engagement and Widening Access - Foundation Apprenticeships</i>	544	100	627	727
Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning	3,600	5,050	450	5,500
Community	2,000	1,089	911	2,000
May/June school-college partnership activity	600	0	600	600
One-plus total	3,000	0	3,500	3,500
<i>One-plus - ACES</i>	1,000	0	1,000	1,000
<i>One-plus - Creative</i>	1,000	0	1,000	1,000
<i>One-plus - Care</i>	1,000	0	1,500	1,500
Sub-Total	125,419	99,288	26,181	125,469
Less UWS Articulation Agreement	-150			
Total	125,269	99,288	26,181	125,469
Summary	Total			
Current Position	99,288			
Remaining	26,181			
Total	125,469			
Total Projected Delivery	125,469			
Less UWS Credits	-150			
Credit target	123,867			
Over/Under Target	1,452			

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

10 November 2022

Subject: 2022-23 Student Support Funds Position as at 18 October 2022

Purpose: To update Members on the Student Support Funds position and projections as at 18 October 2022

Recommendation: Members are asked to note the contents of this paper.

1 Background

The College is responsible for administering student support funds on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Scottish Government and Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).

2 Current Situation

The following sections of this paper provide details of the position of each student support fund as at 18 October 2022.

Members should note that while projected expenditure figures are included within this report there are a significant number of variables still to be factored including student retention rates, actual awards still outstanding and January 2023 start courses.

Financial projections will continue to be refined throughout the year for reporting to both the Strategic Leadership Team and the Business, Resources and Infrastructure Committee. These projections will also be refined to reflect the information reported by curriculum on student numbers.

2.1 SFC Funds provided for Bursary Support

Total 2022-23 SFC Student Support Funds are £10,377,347. Table 1 below details the bursary support funds provided by SFC for 2022-23 together with projected expenditure figures as at 18 October 2022.

Table 1

Student Support Fund	Budget	Projected Expenditure	Difference
SFC Bursary	£8,890,118	£6,027,864	£2,862,254
FE Childcare	£403,157	£297,121	£106,036
HE Childcare	£217,084	£189,608	£27,476
FE Discretionary	£866,988	£1,880,599	£(1,013,611)
Total	£10,377,347	£8,395,192	£1,982,155

The figures The above figures are based on the most up to date information on student applicants based on all students continuing with the College.

Student Funding will continue to review and revise the numbers to take account of student withdrawals, once these have been confirmed by the curriculum areas. The figures also include initial projections for January 2023 start courses. These courses have however traditionally attracted students who would be EMA eligible rather than eligible for Bursary due to their expected age.

The figures set out in Table 1 include circa £2,307,036 which relates to 341 care experienced students. The College has actively promoted the additional support available to care experienced students and continues to do so. Therefore the level of support and the number of identified care experienced students may increase during AY2022-23.

In the current climate the ability to accurately forecast student withdrawals and levels of engagement (attendance) has been significantly compromised. Student Funding will continue to monitor student numbers and projected bursary support closely. Any significant changes or anomalies to withdrawals or engagement levels will be reported to members as part of the regular reporting arrangements.

2.2 Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

EMAs are provided by the Scottish Government to support eligible 16 to 18 year-old students. The College's allocation for AY2022-23 is £800,000. The College is currently projecting EMA spent of £519,270 at this time. Members are asked to note that this figure includes January 2023 courses.

There is no financial risk in this area as actual amounts paid out are reimbursed in full to the College a month in arrears.

2.3 SAAS Funds provided for Higher Education Discretionary support

The College is also allocated funding from SAAS for eligible students completing HE programmes. This budget is administered in line with SAAS guidance.

Table 2 below details the HE Discretionary Fund Budget made available by SAAS for 2022-23 together with expenditure as at 18 October 2022.

Table 2

Student Support Fund	Budget	Projected Expenditure	Difference
HE Discretionary Additional	£199,873	£172,666	£27,207
Total	£199,873	£172,666	£27,207

At this stage cannot allocate more than the original budget of £199,873. The College can submit a request for additional funding support to SAAS in January 2023 in line with its timescales, if additional funding is required. The level of

additional funding requested will be based on the level of student demand at that time. In addition, the College can however also provide financial support to our most vulnerable students for essential costs, for example travel costs, from other budgets.

3 Proposals

No further proposals are noted in this paper.

4 Consultation

No formal consultation is required given the subject of this paper.

5 Resource Implications

No further resource issues require to be noted in this paper.

6 Risks

The disbursement of student support funds and financial monitoring arrangements are key areas of financial risk for the College. In addition, issues arising from the management of the student support funds can impact significantly on the reputation of the College.

7 Equality Impact Assessment

An impact assessment was completed in respect of the 2021-22 Student Funding Policy and Procedures.

8 Conclusion

Members are asked to note the contents of this paper.

James Thomson
Vice Principal, Finance
1 November 2022

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

10 November 2022

Subject: Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning Report

Purpose: To advise Members of the in-year position of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning provision

Recommendation: Members are asked to note the contents of this paper

1. Background

Apprenticeships are a significant part of Scottish Government's work to address youth employment and develop Scotland's workforce.

Scotland's Apprenticeship Family consists of three strands, Modern Apprenticeships, Foundation Apprenticeships and Graduate Level Apprenticeships. Ayrshire College delivers the Modern and Foundation elements of this family.

In a Modern Apprenticeship, a paid employee, usually a young person, learns on the job and works towards a recognised qualification. The College supports and assesses this in-work learning and, in many industries, provides off-the-job courses to underpin this development.

Foundation Apprenticeships are designed to help young people in S5 and S6 gain valuable, real work experience and a recognised qualification while accessing work-based learning as part of the senior phase at school.

Alongside the apprenticeship programmes, the College also supports work-based learning for a significant number of Ayrshire's current and future workforce each year. These courses support registration for regulated industry sectors and help provide in-work skills and career development opportunities.

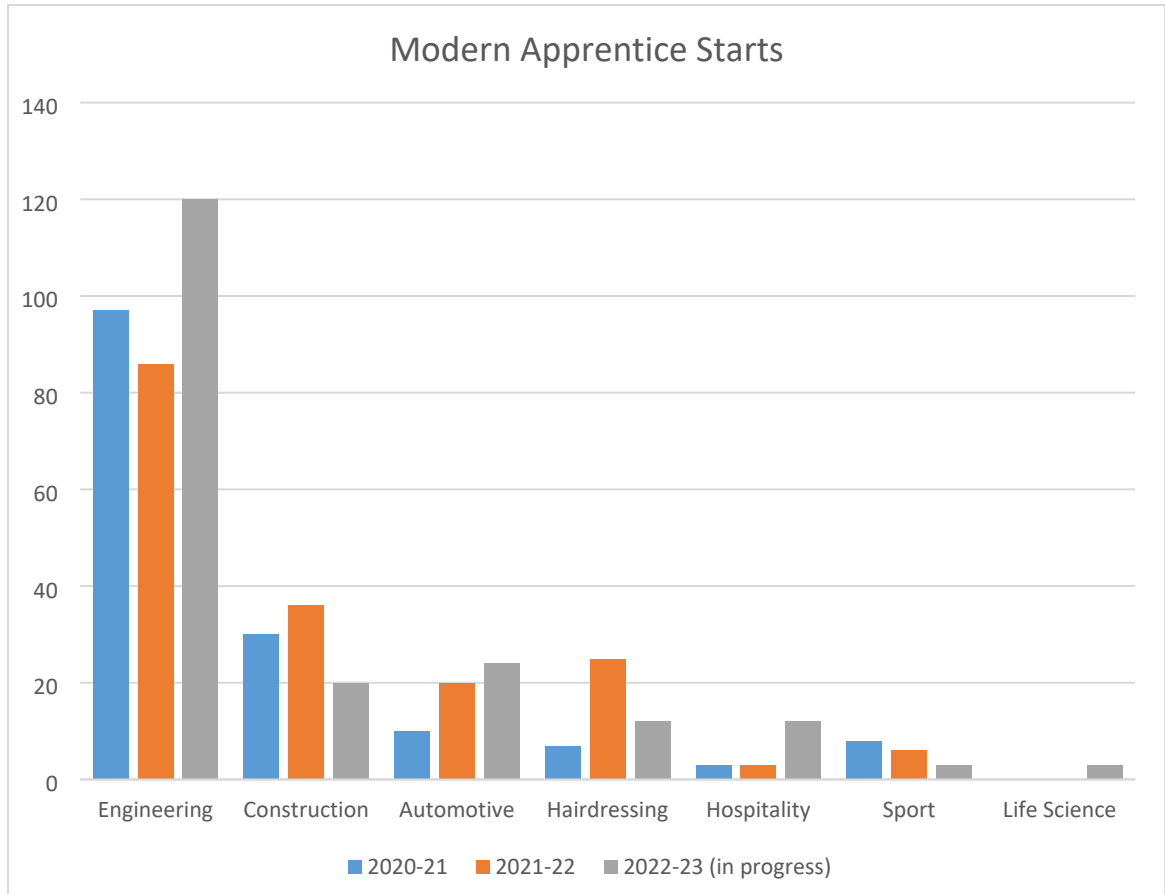
Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

2. Ayrshire College Apprenticeships Provision

Modern Apprenticeships (MAs)

The Modern Apprenticeship contract year runs from April to March each year. The volume of starts presented is in relation to the Skills Development Scotland contract year, while the financial targets and claim values are presented in relation to the College's academic year.

Recruitment



2020-21 Total Modern Apprentice Starts	- 155
2021-22 Total Modern Apprentice Starts	- 176
2022-23 In Progress	- 194

As highlighted in August 2022, the expectation is that 2022-23 will see overall growth compared to 2021-22, though will likely vary by sector.

Engineering recruitment has been very strong this year with growth seen in Aerospace and the wider engineering sector.

Construction recruitment has been generally in line with 2021-22 with the exception of plumbing where numbers have been very low. As plumbing is a multi-year apprenticeship and we have seen relatively strong numbers over the

last two years, this may be a result of a phase in the recruitment cycle. Further investigation will be undertaken on this.

Automotive has seen a positive year of recruitment.

Hairdressing and Hospitality continue recruiting through the year and are in a strong relative position.

Sport recruitment is reduced compared to previous years as only Ayr United are working with us this year.

We have seen demand in Life Science which we will look to build on for future growth.

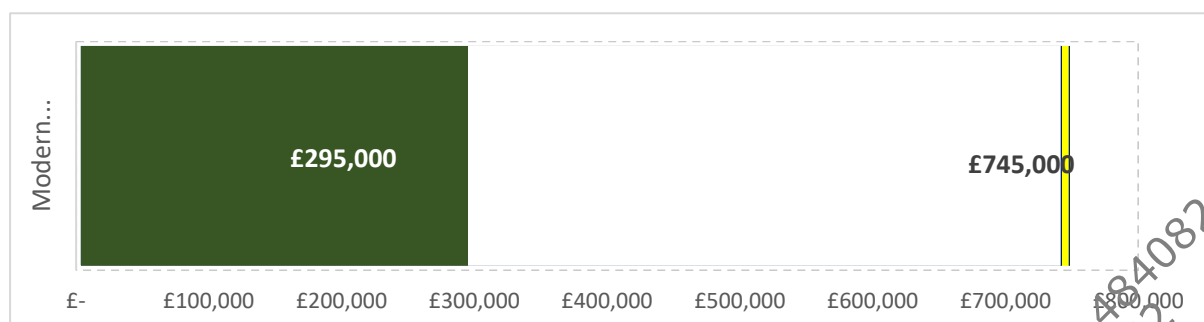
East Ayrshire Young Persons Guarantee Apprentice Employer Grant

In partnership with East Ayrshire Council, and funded by the Young Persons Guarantee, the College will be administering a £5000 grant to employers to incentivise them to recruit East Ayrshire young people into apprenticeship positions. This grant will be used to incentivise twenty apprenticeships for East Ayrshire residents.

All grants have been allocated and we are distributing funds in line with the apprentice sign-up process.

To date, seven grants have been distributed to SMEs in the Hospitality, Automotive and Hairdressing industries.

Income as of 30 Sep 2022



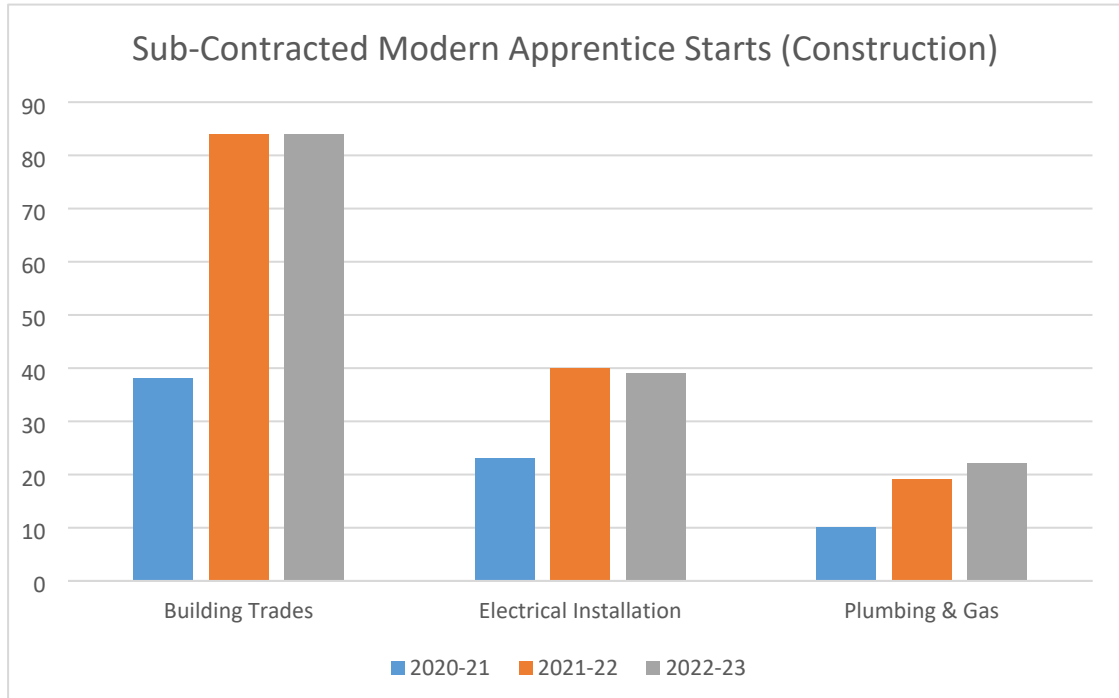
The 2022-23 target is £745,000 compared to £726,000 in 2021-22

Sub Contracted Modern Apprenticeships

Alongside the contract held directly with SDS, the College also delivers off-the-job training to significant numbers of Modern Apprentices via contracts held with other training providers such as trade bodies and local authorities. Normally, around 350 apprentices are supported by these contracts, with the majority being employed in construction trades.

Recruitment

The construction sector saw a significant increase in apprentice recruitment in 2021-22. This was reflected in our own Modern Apprentice contract as well as new starts recruited to trade body and local authority contracts. This increased level of recruitment is being seen in 2022-23 also.



The slight increase in Plumbing & Gas recruitment compared to 2021-22 is driven primarily by strong recruitment by Local Authorities to this trade in 2022-23.

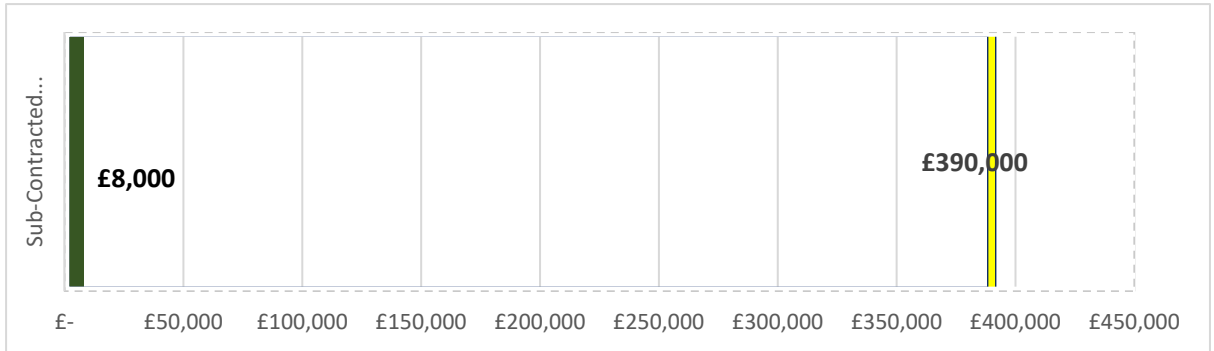
Classes in Building Trades have staggered starts and this process is ongoing until December 2022. The numbers in the table include expected starts in these upcoming classes.

Overall, current expectations are that there will be 153 sub-contracted MA starts in 2022-23. This may increase over the year if other contracts from local authorities can be achieved.

Income as of 30 Sep 2022

Sub-contract Modern Apprentice income is drawn down in line with specific contractual arrangements with each partner.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32



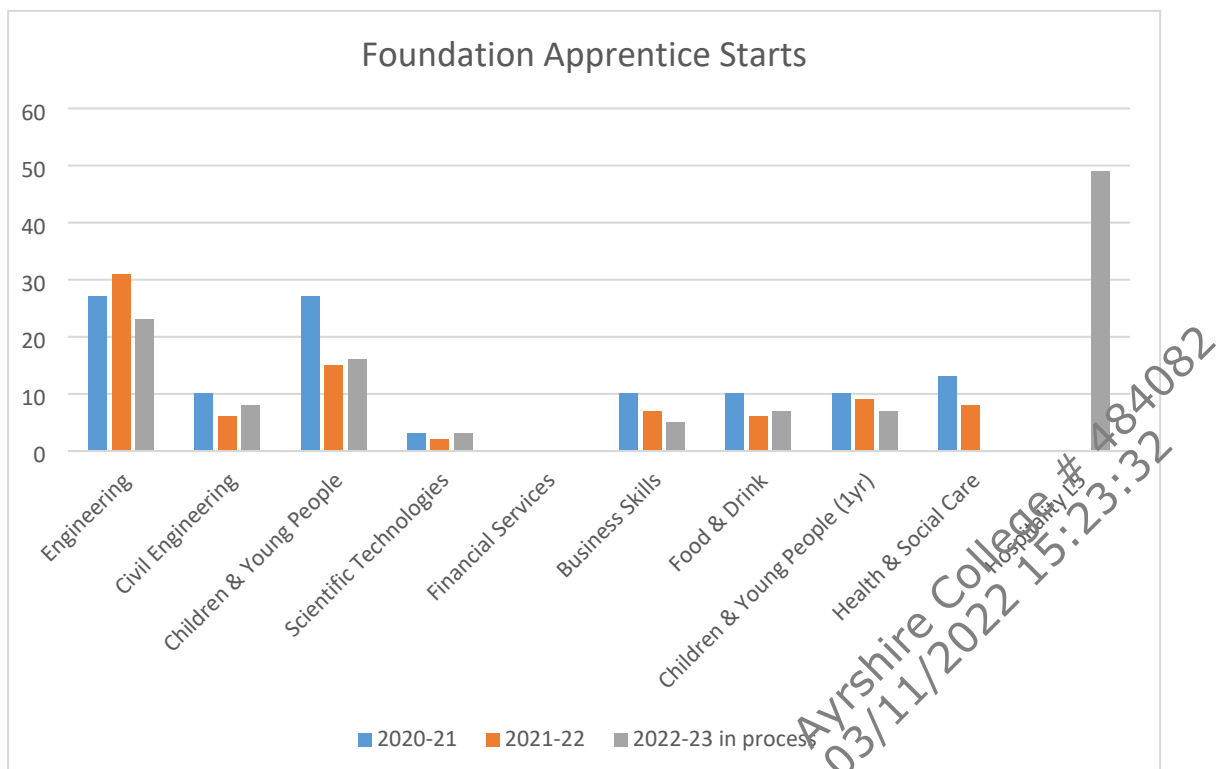
The Sub Contracted MA target is £390,000 in 2022-23 compared with £295,000 in 2021-22

Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs)

Foundation apprenticeships for 2021-22 are funded via a combination of additional, enhanced, credits from SFC and further income from SDS. SFC credits are drawn down in line with mainstream course funding, while SDS funding is claimed using their traditional milestone model.

Recruitment

Recruitment for the Foundation Apprenticeship Cohort is summarised in the graph below compared to the previous years:



2020-21 Foundation Apprentice Starts	- 110
2021-22 Foundation Apprentice Starts	- 91
2022-23 Foundation Apprentice Starts	- 118 (projection)

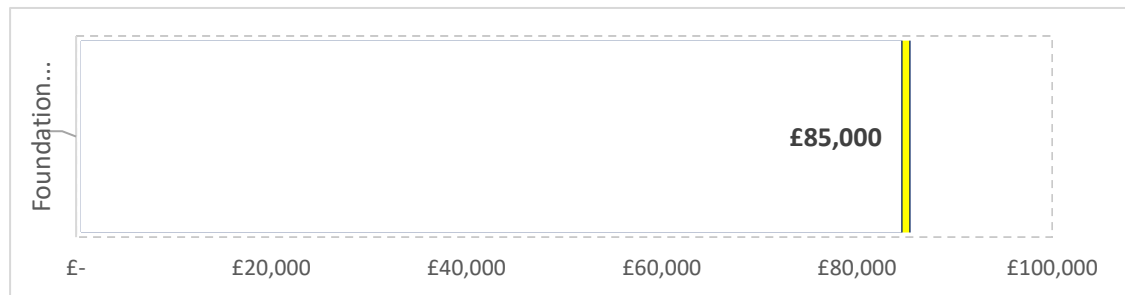
East Ayrshire Council has indicated high demand for Hospitality Level 5 Foundation Apprenticeships this year.

Income and Credit Position as of 30 Sep 2022

Due to a change in how Foundation Apprentice funds are distributed, the majority of funds associated will be through credits from SFC.

The credit target for 2022-23 for Foundation Apprenticeships is 1,344. Based on current recruitment levels, it is expected that the credit target will be achieved.

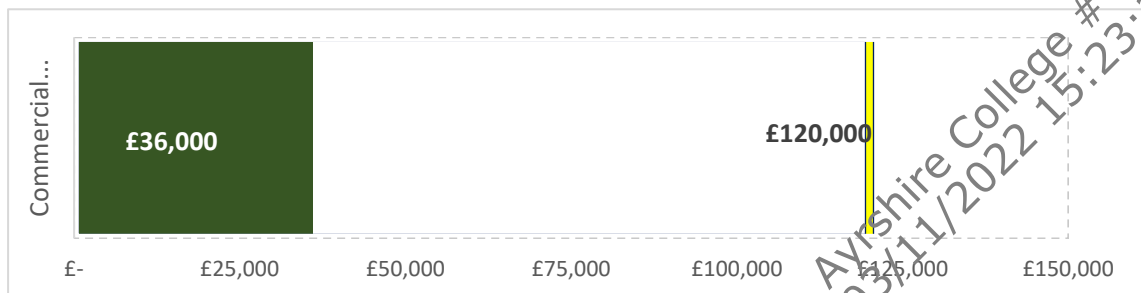
Additional income will be received from SDS reflecting other costs such as student travel. This will be drawn down in phases throughout the academic year. The forecast income from SDS is £85,000. This is a significant reduction from 2021-22 as all Foundation Apprenticeships are now following the credit model in 2022-23.



3. Commercial SVQs

Recruitment for commercial SVQ has begun for the year. It is expected that we will see a further contract from South Ayrshire Council for SVQs for home carers again this year.

Income as of 30 Sep 22



4. Conclusion

Members are invited to note the information contained in the report.

Gavin Murray
Assistant Principal, Curriculum
12 October 2022

(Stuart Millar - Head of Apprenticeships and Work-based Learning)

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32



STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-27

Building a connected, agile, sustainable tertiary education and research system for Scotland



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

Scotland's tertiary education and research authority

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

NOVEMBER 2022

ABOUT US

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is Scotland's tertiary education and research authority. We use the word tertiary to describe post-16 or post-secondary level education that is typically undertaken at college or university. Our ambition is to make Scotland an outstanding place to learn, educate, research and innovate – now and for the future. Our purpose is to sustain a world-leading system of tertiary education, research and innovation that enables students to flourish; changes lives for the better; and supports social, economic and environmental wellbeing and prosperity.

In pursuit of our purpose, we invest around £2 billion of public money to deliver:



- Tertiary learning and teaching.
- Skills and apprenticeships.
- Student support and participation.
- Discovery research.
- Innovation and knowledge exchange.
- Data collection and dissemination.
- National quality assurance and enhancement processes.
- New and upgraded physical buildings and campus estate.
- Essential digital infrastructure and collective procurement for the sector.
- Strategic change, responsive provision and research priorities.

We carry out the following activities to secure investment impact:



- Distribute money in a fair and accountable way to secure coherent tertiary provision and excellent research.
- Jointly plan and align funding with other partners to secure outcomes and collective impact.
- Share expert advice, intelligence and evidence with government, partners and the wider public.
- Ensure students' interests are promoted and protected.
- Develop national operational policy for tertiary education and skills, discovery research, innovation and knowledge exchange.
- Set expectations, targets and conditions for our funding; hold funded bodies to account; and secure improvement.
- Scrutinise the governance and financial health of institutions to secure public investment and a sustainable sector.
- Collect and disseminate authoritative data and analysis.



Through extensive partnership working (for example, with other funders, skills and enterprise agencies, qualification and data authorities) we secure mutually shared goals and outcomes, joined up impact and greater public value. More information about our partnership working can be found on page 22.

SFC is a non-departmental public body established by the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005. We are directly accountable to Scottish Government Ministers and the Scottish Parliament. We work across many government portfolios and are sponsored by the Advanced Learning and Science Directorate within the Scottish Government. We hold colleges, universities and other funded bodies to account for their delivery of required outcomes. We are the statistical authority for colleges, and work closely with the UK-wide Higher Education Statistical Authority (HESA), to provide insights about tertiary education and research for government, decision-makers, and the wider public.

Given the dual funding arrangements for universities in relation to research and innovation across the UK, we work closely with UKRI, other relevant funding bodies and governments, to support mutually beneficial priorities and are accountable for the distribution, from time to time, of specific UK government funds.

Our ambition is to make Scotland an outstanding place to learn, educate, research and innovate – now and for the future.



FOREWORD

by **Mike Cantlay**, Chair of SFC
and **Karen Watt**, Chief Executive of SFC

Scotland's colleges and universities are fundamental to social, economic and environmental wellbeing and prosperity. They are multiform and varied - major national, international and local assets, creating a pipeline of skilled and educated people across all levels of technical, vocational, and advanced critical thinking requirements and from all walks of life, including those furthest from the workforce; they help shape local places and communities through the jobs and opportunities they offer and the investments they make; they act as a lifeline for individuals, tackling inequality through widening participation in tertiary education; their excellent discovery research catalyses new ideas and innovation; and their global reach attracts talent, investment, collaboration and reputational gain as well as cultural diversity. Our investment in education, skills and research matters to the economy, employers and people seeking good jobs and career progression. And it enables students and researchers, as individuals, to fulfil a deep need to learn more about things that matter to them, to discover truths and to live more fulfilling lives as a result.

We are working through unprecedented and uncertain times. This creates both opportunity and challenge, with a fiscal environment and multi-year spending review that provides a backdrop for difficult decisions. As a major

distributor of public funds, everything we do aims to create the right environment for colleges and universities to thrive, individually and collectively, to capitalise on opportunities and weather uncertainty, and to continue to deliver these vital social, economic and environmental benefits. We will plan and work collectively with colleges, universities, students, funding partners, government and key stakeholders, to secure sustainable institutions, coherent tertiary education provision, excellent research and innovation, and good outcomes. This Strategic Plan sets out our approach and how we will work as an organisation. It will guide our activity over the next five years.

This Plan builds on the extraordinary strength of the sector we fund. It places colleges, universities and SFC at the heart of a knowledge-based and innovation-led economy and nation, supporting a connected, creative, sustainable and agile tertiary education, skills and research system that develops the full range of people, skills and talent; enables the exploration of new ideas and thinking through discovery research; diffuses knowledge and makes research useful; and improves Scotland's economic prosperity and wellbeing.

MIKE CANTLAY
Chair of SFC

KAREN WATT
Chief Executive of SFC

“Everything we do aims to create the right environment for colleges and universities to thrive, individually and collectively.”

CONTEXT

This Plan is set within a context of significant change and opportunity:

- The need to **TRANSITION TO A FAIRER, GREENER WORLD** requires us to develop and adopt green and associated technologies and smooth the path to new skills and lifelong education and training.
- The **PACE OF DISCOVERY AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCE** is significant and is leading to a new industrial revolution that will empower researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs to seek solutions, gain competitive advantage and unlock value; and will need the full range of talents and skills to power an innovation-led economy. It is also changing the world of work and the needs of business and industry – and their need to invest differently in skills for a changing world and to address an enduring productivity challenge.
- The impacts flowing from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the opportunity to capitalise on the **LESSONS OF RAPID RESPONSE AND SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY**, suggest we must use our research and tertiary education levers to develop interventions and care that improve our health and wellbeing.
- The **EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS ARE CHANGING**; blended and online learning options are becoming more sophisticated; and people will increasingly need to learn throughout their lives.
- The **POPULATION AND TALENT SUPPLY** challenge facing Scotland means that demographic change; shifts across communities, islands and rural areas; the lack of in-migration following the UK's exit from the European Union; and the effect of the pandemic have affected labour and skills supplies, employer demand, economic prospects and regional development.
- Tackling persistent poverty and inequality remains important in order to achieve a **FAIRER, MORE INCLUSIVE ECONOMY** – and colleges and universities will play a vital role in addressing these challenges.
- Inter-related **UK-WIDE POLICIES** on research, admissions and funding require constant attention to secure Scottish interests.
- **INTERNATIONAL TRENDS, POLICIES AND RELATIONSHIPS** affect our institutions and their ability to compete, collaborate, attract talent, enhance national reputational gain, and secure inward investment and exports.

In the nearer term, and as we drafted this Plan our context includes:

- The Scottish Government's ambition for potential changes in the constitutional relationship between Scotland and the rest of the UK which forms an important backdrop for UK-wide inter-governmental and funding relationships.
- Still operating in a COVID-19 pandemic.
- Widespread concerns in relation to economic prosperity, pressures on public funds, poverty and persistent inequalities, and a cost of living crisis.

As a non-departmental public body, we have a statutory mission and we align with Scottish Government priorities in fulfilling that mission and responding to the challenge and opportunities outlined in this contextual section of our Plan. Our longer-term direction of travel is framed by government policies, guidance and desired outcomes, as set out, for example, within:

- Climate Change Plan 2018-2032.
- Scotland's National Performance Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- The National Strategy for Economic Transformation, that emphasises the importance of entrepreneurship, regional economic development, a skilled workforce and public service reform, and is supported by a raft of other policies, including the Digital Strategy and Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review.
- Scotland's national Population Strategy.
- The government's response to our national Review of Tertiary Education and Research, including the government's development of purpose and principles for the sector and delivery of our agreed priorities, namely the delivery of tertiary education provision pathfinders; strengthening excellence in research and innovation; and the development of a national impact framework and associated accountability and quality assurance mechanisms.
- The tri-partite Shared Outcomes Framework for Skills between the Scottish Government, SFC and Skills Development Scotland; and a range of specific skills action plans.
- The independent review of the skills delivery landscape which will focus on the functions



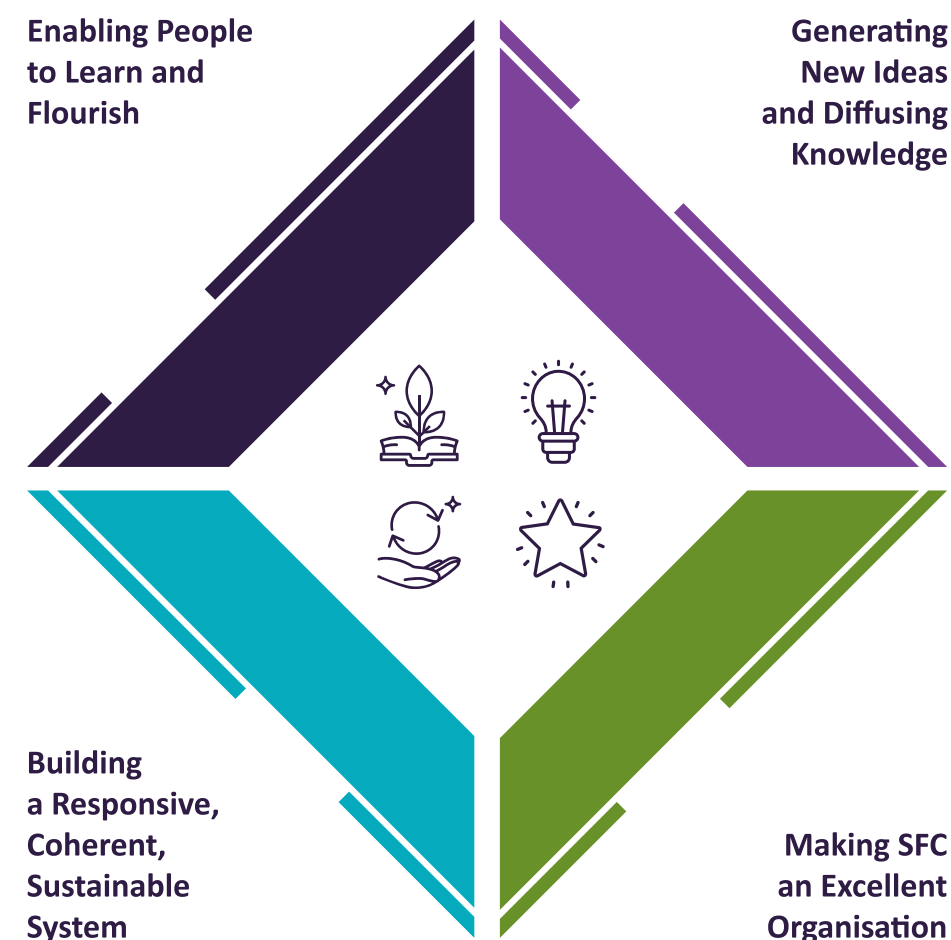
and remit of Skills Development Scotland and its interface with, and role within, the wider skills and education system

- The programme of reform of Scottish schools that will affect curriculum, senior phase qualifications and assessments, and the institutional landscape; alongside recommendations for the careers service, in particular the Muir Report and Hayward Review.
- COVID-19 related guidance to deal with the current pandemic.
- The Fair Work Framework, encouraging good and fair workplace practices.
- Annual letters of guidance to SFC, setting out Ministerial priorities.

The policy ambitions within strategies are influenced by the availability of public finances. The Scottish Government's Resource Spending Review, published in May 2022, sets out a challenging fiscal position for the delivery of this Plan for 2022-27. It focuses on child poverty; climate change; a stronger, fairer and greener economy; and public service reform; and it sets out a flat cash resource settlement for colleges and universities that will come into sharper focus at each annual budget settlement. Capital budgets (for research, estates maintenance and infrastructure) remain fairly flat over the period of this Plan.

OUR RESPONSE AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Our Strategic Plan is structured around four objectives that cover these broad areas:



These objectives will support the ambition for Scotland to be an outstanding place to learn, educate, research and innovate – now and for the future; and will keep us on track to fulfil our purpose of creating and sustaining a world-leading system of tertiary education and skills, research and innovation that enables students to flourish, changes lives for the better, and supports social, economic and environmental wellbeing.

Within each objective we have identified priority areas of focus. Over the next five years, we will work collaboratively with our partners and government to assess our progress, to understand where we can do better, and to adapt the focus of our priorities. We are developing a performance management system that will help us track that progress and achievements against these strategic objectives. This will be aligned with the more detailed activities set out in our annual Operating Plan.



Enabling people to learn and flourish

To invest in education that is accessible to learners from all backgrounds and throughout life; gives them a high-quality learning experience and supports them to succeed in their studies; provides opportunities to participate; and equips them to flourish in employment, further study and fulfilling lives.



PRIORITY 1.1

We will promote fair access, clear pathways and transitions, considering the way we measure and invest funds, set targets and track widening access; and we will work with students and institutions to secure efficient and successful learner journeys, while respecting institutional diversity.



PRIORITY 1.2

We will secure quality learning and teaching, protecting and enhancing the student learning experience, and sharing good practice across the tertiary system.



PRIORITY 1.3

We will ensure students are well prepared for the world of work and people have lifelong learning opportunities by supporting greater recognition of learning throughout life; through industry and business-focused upskilling and reskilling; and in the development of shorter, sharper courses over their working lives.



PRIORITY 1.4

We will ensure students are supported to participate in tertiary education, and have their voices heard and valued, including through the development of enhancement plans.



PRIORITY 1.5

We will promote equality and inclusion so that students are treated fairly and with respect, supporting colleges and universities to meet Public Sector Equality Duty Requirements and to tackle unlawful discrimination and persistent inequalities.



Generating new ideas and diffusing knowledge

To invest in excellent research and innovation that advances current knowledge; attracts and nurtures talent and entrepreneurship; mobilises collaboration and additional investment; enhances our international reputation; and delivers economic transformation and societal value.



PRIORITY 2.1

We will sustain excellent discovery research and cross-disciplinary collaborations, investing in research excellence wherever it is found while also supporting the development of targeted, purpose-driven collaborations across institutions.



PRIORITY 2.2

We will promote a supportive research culture for talented people and teams, including the co-design with the sector of relevant expectations.



PRIORITY 2.3

We will make knowledge useful through a connected, cutting-edge innovation eco-system, better integrating our knowledge exchange and innovation investment to enable and incentivise colleges and universities to contribute to national priorities, economic activity, and public service improvement.



PRIORITY 2.4

We will develop entrepreneurial education and commercial opportunities, embedding a culture of entrepreneurship across campuses and in the formation of new enterprises.



PRIORITY 2.5

We will deepen partnerships across the UK-wide dual funding system for research, supporting Scottish universities to seize opportunities, build on our world-class research standing and deliver impact for Scotland.



Building a responsive, coherent, sustainable system

To create the conditions for a responsive, coherent system of tertiary education and skills, research and innovation that transforms social and economic prosperity and wellbeing, and environmental sustainability, at national and regional levels and through place-based investment; secures international attractiveness and influence; and supports institutions to thrive individually and together.



PRIORITY 3.1

We will ensure institutions respond effectively to the climate emergency, embedding climate action and the just transition to net zero in our forward strategies, accountability frameworks and investments; and expecting colleges and universities to use their expertise and activities to deliver a prosperous, low-carbon future.



PRIORITY 3.2

We will support coherent provision, skills and qualification planning and alignment, with institutions, employers and partners, for example building on our Regional Tertiary Provision Pathfinders, to ensure provision adapts to changing needs, opportunity and the Scottish Government's priorities for the sector.



PRIORITY 3.3

We will ensure institutions enhance their financial health and good governance and will review our approach to assurance and engagement.



PRIORITY 3.4

We will incentivise collaboration between institutions and key partners, supporting the development of partnerships that secure better outcomes and public value, and enhance sustainability.



PRIORITY 3.5

We will adapt our investment priorities and distribution models to secure economic, social and environmental value, working with the Scottish Government, the sector and key stakeholders.



Making SFC an excellent organisation

To be an excellent public body that delivers impact through leadership, partnership, insight and wise investment.



PRIORITY 4.1

We will deliver our people and systems transformation programme, attracting and retaining diverse, empowered and thriving teams, and modernising our IT systems and platforms.



PRIORITY 4.2

We will act as a catalyst for positive change and impact through renewed partnership working and leadership, taking a proactive and collaborative approach to relationships with stakeholders critical to our ambition in order to secure better outcomes.



PRIORITY 4.3

We will develop a national impact framework and associated accountability and quality assurance mechanisms to align with the Scottish Government's priorities for the sector and to better inform our decision-making and improve public value.



PRIORITY 4.4

We will improve the collection, management and use of data, and create insights, to drive improvement within SFC and across the tertiary education, skills and research system.



PRIORITY 4.5

We will enhance our reputation and attractiveness as a high performing organisation – efficient, effective and agile.

THEMES THAT UNDERPIN OUR WORK

Embedded throughout these objectives and priorities are these critical themes and commitments:



- Responding to the **CLIMATE EMERGENCY** involves taking collective responsibility to address the ambitious target to reduce carbon emissions and deliver a just transition to net-zero by 2045. Alongside our own organisational contribution, we will support the bodies we fund to drive change through student education, research and innovation for a greener Scotland, scientific advice to inform policy, and through estates strategies.



- Protecting the **INTERESTS OF CURRENT AND FUTURE STUDENTS** in relation to their education, support needs, access and participation will form a more central part in our development over the lifetime of this plan, working in partnership with students and representatives.



- Responding to the **ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL NEEDS OF SCOTLAND** will be key to our approach to system change and strategic planning, in partnership with institutions, employers, governments and funders.



- Promoting **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION** with the institutions we fund can help address pressing and persistent inequalities, so we will set expected outcomes and track impact to strengthen and mainstream a focus on fulfilling our equality duties across all areas of our work, and in terms of our own organisational obligations.



- Supporting the ambitions of the **NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION**, working with Scottish Government and its agencies to shape delivery plans and maximise impact.



- Expecting continued progress towards **FAIR WORK** criteria and practices in the bodies we fund is part of our contribution to the Scottish Government's strategy for achieving a modern, high-value, inclusive economy, with employers and workers agreeing working practices that balance rights and responsibilities in ways that offer individuals effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect.



- Recognising the importance of **PLACE** and the diverse needs of Scotland's communities positions colleges and universities as anchor institutions, at the heart of towns, cities, islands, and regions. They are key to ensuring people, location and resources combine to create and sustain a sense of identity, purpose and better, fairer outcomes across Scotland.



- Understanding the wider **UK AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT** will be critical to influencing issues that affect the activities of the bodies we fund and student interests, and to recognising the international reach and activity of many of our institutions that are so important for Scotland's global standing, prosperity and connectedness.



PHOTO: FIFE COLLEGE

PRINCIPLES THAT WILL GUIDE OUR APPROACH

In 2021 we published a Review of Tertiary Education and Research that explored how we could collectively achieve a more connected, creative and agile tertiary education and research system that is sustainable and impactful now and for future generations. The Scottish Government welcomed our Review recommendations and is developing the Purpose and Principles for tertiary education and research as part of its response which will provide a framework for decision making across all aspects of the system, setting out clear roles and responsibilities. To fulfil our recommendations and to respond effectively to government strategies and policies, our approach to change and improvement will be guided by five general, inter-related principles.

WE WILL CHAMPION DIVERSITY

We believe that supporting diversity in all aspects – people, ideas, qualifications, research, pedagogy, international reach, types of institutions and collaborative approaches – is essential in developing the full repertoire of nuanced responses we will need to tackle the challenges we face and in order to build a better future for everyone. This means we will fund a broad range of provision at all levels, valuing the arts, humanities and social sciences, alongside the drive to improve the uptake of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects, while nurturing our ability to make sense of the world around us and blurring traditional disciplinary boundaries as we go. It means enabling people to re-skill throughout life; encouraging researchers to work across sectors, borders and disciplines to bring together different fields of knowledge; and building a greater appreciation of current and future approaches to work-based and profession-focused learning. As we develop our approach to coherent tertiary provision, and as we continue to evaluate

what we value in our research and knowledge exchange landscape, we will be keen to engage on how best to consider what constitutes the right balance of diversity.

Diversity also means recognising that individual colleges and universities come in different shapes and sizes, with different missions and ambitions. We will work with that differentiation and aim to unlock impact by considering the system as a whole, in terms of coherence, inter-connections and collaboration.

We must harness all our talents. Education changes lives – it develops people who are curious, open to ideas and able to interpret the world around us and our complex lives. It unlocks opportunities, not just for one person, but for future generations. Everyone should have those opportunities. This means tackling persistent inequalities, supporting learners to succeed, and ensuring our research community is diverse and open to all talents.

WE WILL SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP WORKING

We will engage and work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders across all aspects of our mission – it is fundamental to our ability to deliver impact and successful outcomes. Our partnership working encompasses a range of interests and will include institutions, students and other representative bodies, enterprise and skills agencies, local government, audit and regulatory or oversight bodies, other statistical authorities, trade unions, learned societies, and our UK counterparts. Co-design and joint working will be our hallmarks. In part, this will involve promoting a better understanding of the work and impact of colleges and universities.

The ability to demonstrate delivery and broad social, economic prosperity and environmental wellbeing benefits across all aspects of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and National Performance Framework will be vital to identifying and prioritising what generates impact about and how best to invest for the future. Making college and university direct and indirect impact visible and relevant will be a goal throughout the lifetime of this Strategic Plan, working with partners to enhance understanding and insights into what works well and where improvement is required.

WE WILL SUPPORT THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE SECTOR FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

We will continue to recognise that colleges and universities should be successful in their own right, but we will also increasingly focus on maximising opportunities for partnerships and collaboration within the sector. We believe collaboration is needed now more than ever to secure coherent

provision at a regional and national level and address the gaps in provision, to improve quality and outcomes for learning and teaching, to invest in industry and employer requirements, to support mission-driven research, to reduce costs and improve efficiencies through better procurement and joint arrangements, and to achieve financial sustainability over the longer term. We are keen to support further collaborations, whether through joint submissions for funding, partnership agreements and alliances, more integrated or connected models of tertiary education provision, or different models of collaboration that create value over the longer term.

While each institution is responsible for meeting its financial obligations we understand the symbiotic relationship between funders, lenders, government intentions, and institutions. We will work in partnership with governments, funding bodies and institutions to secure a funding environment that recognises the need to provide longer term, stable investment; build resilience and weather shocks in the system; enable institutions to plan and adapt provision, research and missions in a managed way within a tight fiscal environment; and to enable us all to have the flexibility and agility to face into new opportunities. Within the UK's dual funding system for research, we aim to provide reliable infrastructure investment that enables institutions to compete and collaborate for further funding to pursue new knowledge and ideas, alongside funding for scaling up knowledge exchange into commercial and business opportunity. We will need to work together and collaborate with stakeholders because we face difficult choices about priorities, the balance of investments over time, and the interventions and activities that will deliver best value and impact.

WE WILL ENHANCE EVIDENCE-BASED PLANNING

As a funder, with colleges and universities, we constantly mediate the demands of individuals, employers, emerging social issues, a challenging funding environment, and government policy. Evidence and good strategic planning will be key in responding to and influencing these demands, working with the Scottish Government, institutions and partners to align provision and research strategies with future needs. We aim to make better use of the data we collect and we will expect colleges and universities to do the same, to understand what information is needed to support a more responsive system and understand delivery, to influence other relevant data providers, to publish enhanced insights and evaluation, and to invest in digital collection and information systems that put intelligence into the hands of decision-makers, planners, agents of improvement, policy-thinkers and the wider public. Alongside enhanced data and analytics, we will develop our approach to assurance and evaluation processes in order to track delivery, support improvement and better articulate the impact of institutions both regionally and nationally.

WE WILL RESPECT AUTONOMY AND SUBSIDIARITY

We expect the institutions we fund to fulfil the obligations that come with public funding – for delivery and wider social and economic objectives. However, the institutions we fund operate with autonomy and academic freedom. This means they are often best placed to influence and decide the nature and type of provision and research that should be pursued. We will continue to set out our expectations for good governance, financial sustainability and the stewardship of public investment, and manage the balance between accountability and flexibility, national expectations and institutional missions.



PHOTO: CITY OF GLASGOW COLLEGE

DELIVERING OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

This Strategic Plan is all about making a difference for Scotland. We are a small organisation, with a large investment responsibility, and an ambitious mission. Our ability to deliver will be shaped by future budgets and resources, and the way governments and our partners frame their priorities.

We will monitor progress, manage our performance, and evaluate the wider actions we undertake to support our mission and deliver this strategy. As part of our people and systems transformation programme, we are re-developing our performance management framework, and key indicators of success, reinforcing full alignment with Scotland's National Performance Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We will also be creating a new evaluation function that will provide a mix of externally commissioned evaluations of major activities, alongside developing our in-house capabilities.

This five-year Strategic Plan will be underpinned by internal planning for near-term actions, including an annual Operating Plan, that will be refreshed over the course of this spending review period. To enable us to respond with agility to a rapidly changing environment, our Operating Plan will set out planned activities, performance measures and metrics that will enable us to show progress towards the achievement of the outcomes identified in this five-year Plan. Performance will be reviewed by senior leaders, the Board and its committees. We regularly publish official statistics. We will report progress and performance against this Plan primarily through our Annual Report and Accounts.

WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS

We will work with the Scottish Government and a range of partners, beyond local and central governments and the bodies we fund, to deliver our Plan – students, enterprise and skills agencies (Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland), regulatory and qualification bodies, oversight organisations and delivery mechanisms, representative bodies, trade unions, and UK counterparts.



PHOTO: ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

COLLABORATION IN PRACTICE

“The last three years have been the most challenging that the sector, its students and staff have ever experienced. One positive, amongst that tremendous challenge, was the way that stakeholders came together around a unifying purpose and demonstrated their agility to rise successfully to these unprecedented challenges. Looking ahead, we need to retain something of that spirit to address the major challenges we still face and to put universities at the centre of the nation’s recovery and transformation.

“We expect the Funding Council to challenge universities and hold the sector to account for using public funds to build the common good. We also need the Funding Council to champion the sector, to understand what makes Scotland’s higher education sector distinctive, successful on the world stage and to support it to deliver economically, socially and culturally for Scotland’s people. That’s where close partnership working is really important. We greatly value the Funding Council’s commitment to this approach.”

Alastair Sim,
Director of Universities Scotland

Innovation Centres

We launched the Innovation Centre programme in 2012, in partnership with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, to form a critical part of Scotland’s knowledge exchange and innovation ecosystem. Working with Scotland’s colleges, universities and research institutes, the seven Innovation Centres aim to enhance innovation and entrepreneurship across Scotland’s key economic sectors, create jobs and grow the economy.

“We are pleased to support the commitment to partnership working with the SFC’s Strategic Plan – it is increasingly important with all the challenges facing colleges that we work closely together to build a connected and agile tertiary sector.

“Colleges Scotland particularly welcomes the focus on enabling people to learn and flourish. This has a close alignment with our own strategic priorities and those of Scottish Government, showing again how important it is to work closely together. The SFC Strategic Plan also concentrates on how important the delivery of useful learning is for people in Scotland. We look forward to working closely with SFC to make sure colleges can help Scotland’s economy, communities and learners thrive.”

Shona Struthers,
CEO of Colleges Scotland

Tertiary Provision Pathfinders

We are working with local authorities, Skills Development Scotland, South of Scotland Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise and institutions to deliver Tertiary Provision Pathfinder projects (a key recommendation in our Review) which will seek to identify local skills needs and provide regionally tailored provision planning in the South of Scotland and the North-East.

“The SFC and SDS share a common mission to deliver a skills system that works for all of Scotland’s individuals and businesses. Collaboration has never been more important given the operating environment and the need to respond to the changing nature of work, energy security and climate challenges, poverty and inequality and the pressures on public finance. Only by working together can we ensure that the skills system is more agile and able to respond to rapidly changing economic and social needs, while building more sustainable and resilient provision.”

Frank Mitchell,
Chair of SDS

Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board

SFC and Skills Development Scotland support employer leadership of apprenticeships through the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB). The SAAB is an industry led board that ensures apprenticeships in Scotland are fit for purpose and adapt to the changing needs of Scotland’s employers and economy.

Shared Outcomes Framework

The Framework is the means by which SFC, Skills Development Scotland, and the Scottish Government will monitor and report on collaborative projects that contribute to overarching skills outcomes, set in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) and the missions of the Future Skills Action Plan, around the alignment of economic demand with current and future provision.

“We have a huge opportunity to build a research and innovation system for the UK to which everyone can contribute and from which everyone benefits.

“UK Research and Innovation shares the SFC’s ambition to create a connected, agile and sustainable system, as set out in their Strategic Plan. I look forward to working with SFC, and the exceptional research and innovation community in Scotland and across UK and internationally, to make the most of the opportunities ahead.”

Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser,
Chief Executive, UKRI

“After a difficult few years, students now face yet another crisis, one which will impact their income, wellbeing and opportunities.

“Amidst this crisis, I am encouraged by SFC’s continued commitment to fair access, equality, diversity and inclusion. It is vital that the tertiary sector works as one to ensure every student has the opportunity to flourish in education.

“I look forward to continuing to engage with SFC as they strengthen their commitment to working in partnership with students, ensuring the voice of students is always at the heart of our education system.”

Ellie Gomersall,
President, NUS Scotland

SFC'S STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

Our Ambition

To make Scotland an outstanding place to learn, educate, research and innovate - now and for the future

Our Purpose

To create and sustain a world-leading system of tertiary education, research and innovation that enables students to flourish, changes lives for the better, and supports social, economic and environmental wellbeing

Our guiding principles

- Championing diversity
- Working in partnership
- Supporting sustainability for future generations
- Enhancing evidence-based planning
- Respecting autonomy and subsidiarity

Underpinning themes

- Responding to the climate emergency
- Protecting the interests of current and future students
- Responding to the economic, social and environmental needs of Scotland
- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion
- Continuing progress towards Fair Work
- Recognising the importance of place
- Understanding the wider UK and international context



Enabling people to learn and flourish

Our Priorities

Promote fair access, clear pathways and transitions;
Secure quality learning and teaching, protecting and enhancing the student learning experience;
Ensure students are well prepared for the world of work and people have lifelong learning opportunities;
Ensure students are supported to participate in tertiary education, and have their voices heard and valued;
Promote equality and inclusion so that students are treated fairly and with respect.

Our Outcomes

Education is accessible to all learners from all backgrounds, and they are supported through successful pathways;
Quality assurance processes are robust and transparent and support confidence in standards;
Students are equipped to take up employment and succeed through their whole working lives;
Students are partners in institutional decision making and engagement is increased;
Persistent inequalities are being addressed and fairer outcomes can be demonstrated.

NSET themes: A Fairer More Equal Society



Generating new ideas and diffusing knowledge

Our Priorities

Sustain excellent discovery research and cross-disciplinary collaborations;
Promote a supportive research culture for talented people and teams;
Make knowledge useful through a connected, cutting-edge innovation eco-system;
Develop entrepreneurial education and commercial opportunities;
Deepen partnerships across the UK-wide dual funding system for research.

Our Outcomes

Scotland's reputation for research excellence is maintained and enhanced;
There is a clearer collective focus and recognition of the importance of research culture;
Investment in knowledge exchange and innovation mobilises economic growth and generates solutions to global challenges;
Talent and entrepreneurship are encouraged and nurtured;
Scotland is recognised as a key partner in the delivery of UK research and innovation strategies.

NSET themes: Entrepreneurial People & Culture New Market Opportunities



Building a responsive, coherent, sustainable system

Our Priorities

Ensure institutions respond effectively to the climate emergency;
Support coherent provision, skills and qualification planning;
Ensure institutions enhance their financial health and good governance;
Incentivise collaboration between institutions and key partners;
Adapt our investment priorities and distribution models to secure economic, social and environmental value.

Our Outcomes

Institutions' expertise drives climate action and just transition to net zero;
The system and institutions respond and adapt to a range of needs, including skills requirements, and shapes demand resulting in fewer skills gaps and shortages;
Institutions are sustainable and well governed, in their own right and collectively;
Best value of public investment is secured;
Better demonstration of how colleges and universities contribute to economic, social and wellbeing objectives individually and through collaboration.

NSET themes: Productive Businesses & Regions Skilled Workforce



Making SFC an excellent organisation

Our Priorities

Deliver our people and systems transformation programme;
Act as a catalyst for positive change and impact through renewed partnership working and leadership;
Develop evaluation and assurance processes;
Improve the collection, management and use of data, and create insights;
Enhance our reputation and attractiveness as a high performing organisation.

Our Outcomes

SFC has diverse, talented and competent teams who are empowered and supported to deliver efficiently and with impact;
Impactful and collaborative leadership;
SFC has a clear and developed view of an institution, region and the sector in the delivery of outcomes;
Improved use of data, analysis and evidence within SFC, the sector and government;
SFC is recognised as a valued partner and thought leader.

NSET themes: A Culture of Delivery

National Performance Framework



UN Sustainable Development Goals:



NSET= National Strategy for Economic Transformation

COVER PHOTOS:
NEWBATTLE ABBEY COLLEGE
AYRSHIRE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY



Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32



APEX 2 - 97 HAYMARKET TERRACE
EDINBURGH - EH12 5HD
T 0131 313 6500 - F 0131 313 6501
WWW.SFC.AC.UK

Skills for a Changing World

Strategic Plan
2022-27

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32



Foreword

In the three years since we published Skills Development Scotland's (SDS)'s last Strategic Plan, none of us could have predicted the seismic societal and economic changes that would occur in that time. Predicted changes in the labour market and workplace practices for 15 or 20 years in the future were catalysed by the pandemic and Brexit – the future became now.

The climate emergency has moved from a threat to a pressing reality, inequality and poverty have deepened and, against a backdrop of spiralling inflation and a cost of living crisis, economic growth will be hard fought for in the coming years.

Opportunity

We do not underestimate the challenges ahead for Scotland's businesses and individuals. As the national skills agency, we understand the need to act responsively, collaboratively, and sustainably, to meet the rapidly changing needs of our customers, and to maximise the combined impact of public sector resources.

In these unprecedented times of uncertainty and change, it has never been more important for Scotland's businesses and people to cultivate adaptive resilience and meta skills. Enhanced forms of work-based learning which can keep pace with this change, and experiential, person-focused careers services that build personal agency, will be critical to delivering these skills.

The National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) sets out an ambitious vision for the nation's future – for a fairer, wealthier, and greener Scotland. Scottish Government and its agencies are united in our commitment to deliver those aims.

This Plan sets out our vision, priorities, and direction of travel, outlining the areas we know we must focus on to deliver a more agile, responsive, resilient, and inclusive skills and careers system.

Achieving our vision through collaboration

But we cannot change the system alone. Partnership and collaboration have always been at the core of SDS's approach. We are grateful to all of our government and agency colleagues, and partners at national, regional, and local levels, for their ongoing commitment to finding more effective ways of working together with us to achieve our shared ambitions. The need for this will only strengthen going forwards.

We are committed to achieving a more cohesive and efficient public sector, and we look forward to working with new and existing partners to drive this forward. As a responsible public body, we understand the need to innovate and adapt to increase productivity, and deliver new, more efficient ways of working. It is also essential that our products and services continue to meet the evolving needs and ambitions of Scotland's people and employers.

Every aspect of what we do, and how we do it, will be considered afresh as we seek to unlock the potential of Scotland's people, employers, and economy, through investment in skills.

Delivering change

Over the past year we have consulted extensively with colleagues, partners, and stakeholders, as we have sought to understand the shape and nature of the challenge ahead, and the response

needed. The result of that work, this Strategic Plan, is a framework for achieving our vision and shaping our transformation over the next five years.

The success of this Plan will be in the hands of our colleagues at SDS. We have no doubt that, despite trying times ahead, their passion and commitment will continue to provide Scotland's people, businesses, and economy with access to the skills they need.



Frank Mitchell
Chair, Skills Development Scotland



Damien Yeates
Chief Executive, Skills Development Scotland

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Contents

Foreword	2
Introduction	5
Context: A Changing World	6
Our response	13
Our Corporate Goals 2022-27	16
Our Strategy Map 2022-27	17
Industry-focused skills	18
Inclusive talent pool	20
Invested employers	22
Intelligence-led system	24
Impactful organisation	26
Our Customer Commitments 2022-27	28
Delivering in collaboration	29
Measuring progress	31

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Introduction

About Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills agency.

Our ambition is that skills contribute to a thriving, productive and inclusive Scotland. The key to Scotland's future prosperity is to ensure that its people and businesses are inspired and enabled to develop the right **skills for a changing world**. SDS collaborates across the skills ecosystem to make this happen.

We achieve this through intelligence-led delivery of Scotland's Career Service, Apprenticeships, and other learning and skills interventions in support of Scottish Government ambitions. Through the sharing of expertise, intelligence, and extensive partnership working, particularly with our agency colleagues, we enable the development and delivery of innovative solutions to Scotland's skills and labour market challenges.

In August 2022, the Scottish Government announced that it would be initiating an Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape which will make recommendations on the future of the public body and advisory group landscape. The Independent Adviser to the Review, James Withers, will report his recommendations to Scottish Ministers in Spring 2023. We welcome the Review and acknowledge that the content of this Plan may need to be adjusted in the light of the Review's recommendations.

About this Plan

Our world is changing fast. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) and other global drivers, such as the need to develop greener and more sustainable ways of living and working, were accelerating the pace of change dramatically. The world of work is being reshaped, and the length of time skills remain relevant is reducing quickly. For most people, the prospects of a linear career and job-for-life are no longer an option.

Skills will play an essential role in how we all respond to these societal and economic shifts. With change increasingly unpredictable and rapid, Scotland's future success will be reliant on the ability of its people and businesses to adapt quickly and positively to disruption in the world around them. However, change brings possibilities. Scotland has the opportunity to capitalise on its potential, and create a society that is thriving across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, delivering prosperity for all areas of the economy, and the people and places that support them.

We are ambitious for Scotland. With our agency and other partners, our role is to facilitate and support the evolution of Scotland's approach to education and skills, enabling a more dynamic response to the rapid changes taking place within the labour market, society, and the economy.

Context: A changing world

The world is experiencing a historic transformation in how people work, where they work and even why they work. The skills we each need to enter and progress in work are changing too. As we face an unpredictable and rapidly evolving future, continuing to develop the right skills in response to this change will be critical for us all. The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly impacted the economy, labour market and society and, at the time of writing, new economic challenges are emerging. Our strategic operating context continues to be shaped by these and a wider range of interconnected drivers of change, as explored in this section.

Industry 4.0

As advancing technologies change how we work and the type of work people do, the skills system must be able to respond. While industrial revolutions are characterised by disruptive change, in the past jobs still remained well defined, standardised, and specific, with clear skills and tasks linked to them.

In contrast, today we are experiencing a rapid increase in the number of job types, coupled with a lack of job standardisation, making the change far more complex to predict and respond to. As technologies and jobs continue to change throughout people's careers, workers will need to continuously develop adaptive resilience and a diverse skillset, including baseline digital skills, to remain competitive in the labour market. Similarly, as technology replaces routine tasks, people will need to adapt, developing related, uniquely human skills which continue to add value in the workplace. Where technology is responsible for jobs being created, refocused, or replaced, the skills system must be ready to retrain and upskill workers so they can adapt and access the good, new jobs of the future.

In this context, it is essential that Scotland's workers have lifelong opportunities to acquire and use new knowledge and skills which allow them to remain competitive in the labour market and support a growing Scottish economy. This will require a more balanced portfolio of learning provision in future, combining the best of traditional academic routes with greater investment in work-based learning, and new forms of rapid upskilling and retraining.

Climate change

The urgent need to decarbonise major industries across Scotland will also put new demands on Scotland's skills system, as whole sections of the workforce may need support to transition into new or altered job roles. New green industries are emerging, but the green economy needs to grow faster to meet ambitions for a 'just transition' to net zero. Having the right skills will help us smooth the transition to a green economy. Despite 'green jobs' accounting for less than 1% of 2021 hiring activity, LinkedIn highlight that recruitment in this category of the global workforce is rising faster than any other. They project that demand for green jobs will outstrip supply of adequately skilled people in just five years' time¹. Policies and actions facilitating transitions to new skills are therefore fundamental for labour market resilience in both the short and long term.

The National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) highlights the opportunity for Scotland to strengthen its position in new markets and industries, generating new, well-paid jobs from a just transition to net zero². Scotland already occupies a position of global leadership in the design, development, and operationalisation of a range of current and future key industries including financial services,

¹ [LinkedIn, An Action Plan for Climate Change: LinkedIn's Global Green Skills Report 2022](#)

² [Scottish Government, Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, 2022](#)

eco-tourism, and emerging enabling photonics and quantum technologies³. Significant opportunities for the Scottish economy also exist in energy transition, construction, transport, manufacturing, and agriculture⁴. Realising these opportunities, and the higher-skilled, higher wage jobs they create, will require support for lifelong training which helps people and employers have the skills they will need to be competitive and grow.

Inflation and the cost of living crisis

Scotland, like the rest of the UK, is experiencing sharp increases in the cost of living. Inflation reached 10.1% in July 2022⁵ and is expected to reach over 13% in the final quarter of 2022-23⁶. The UK also reported negative growth in June 2022⁷, and is projected to enter a lengthy recession⁸.

The main drivers of consumer price inflation – energy, transport and food – make up a large part of essential spending for most households and are therefore likely to have a disproportionate effect on lower income households as they have less disposable income that can be used to cover necessities⁹.

One of the major contributors is the rising cost of energy, with warnings that a typical household is predicted to pay the equivalent of £4,266 a year¹⁰. Furthermore, the war in Ukraine has caused a considerable shock to the global economy by disrupting supply chains, including for energy, contributing to rising domestic inflation and cost of living for individual households.

- 3 [Ibid.](#)
- 4 [Skills Development Scotland, Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan, December 2020](#)
- 5 [Office for National Statistics, Consumer price inflation, UK: July 2022, August 2022](#)
- 6 [Bank of England, Monetary Policy Summary, August 2022, August 2022](#)
- 7 [Office for National Statistics, GDP monthly estimate, UK: June 2022, August 2022](#)
- 8 [Bank of England, Monetary Policy Summary, August 2022, August 2022](#)
- 9 [Office for National Statistics, Inflation and the cost of living for UK households, overview: June 2022, June 2022](#)
- 10 [Cornwall Insight, Price cap forecasts for January rise to over £4,200 as wholesale prices surge again and Ofgem revises cap methodology, August 2022](#)

While wages continue to grow – by 4.7% between April and June 2022 – they have not kept pace with inflation meaning a record drop of 3% in pay in real terms¹¹.

An anticipated 600,000 more people, a quarter of them children, will be pulled into poverty by the cost of living crisis¹². The number of children living in poverty in Scotland ranges from one in eight to almost one in three across local authorities¹³. Provisional analysis from The Resolution Foundation estimates that, without action, relative child poverty in Scotland could reach over 29% by 2023/24¹⁴, however, tackling child poverty is a clear priority across Scottish Government activity¹⁵.

Productivity

Pre-pandemic, Scottish productivity was recognised as being over 20% lower than the top performing Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries¹⁶. While there are both short- and long-term signs of improvement, Scotland still lags behind other parts of the UK and international competitors in nine of the thirteen comparable productivity indicators including exporting and innovation¹⁷. The Scottish Government set out their ambition to drive an increase in productivity in Scotland by building an internationally competitive economy founded on entrepreneurship and innovation¹⁸.

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and beyond, particularly the use of lockdowns, impacted Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While initially showing signs of recovery, the economy is now being impacted by rising inflation. Fraser of Allander Institute forecasted GDP growth of just 3.8% in 2022 and 0.5% in 2023,

- 11 [Office for National Statistics, Average weekly earnings in Great Britain: August 2022, August 2022](#)
- 12 [Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Analysis of UK Spring Budget Statement, March 2022](#)
- 13 [Loughborough University, 1-in-4 children living in poverty set to worsen during cost of living crisis, July 2022](#)
- 14 [Resolution Foundation, The Living Standards Outlook 2022, March 2022](#)
- 15 [Scottish Government, Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, 2022](#)
- 16 [Fraser of Allander Institute, How relevant are targets for Scottish productivity?, March 2018](#)
- 17 [Confederation of British Industries, 2021 Scottish Productivity Index, December 2021](#)
- 18 [Scottish Government, Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, 2022](#)

reflecting the impact of this higher inflation on households and businesses¹⁹, although at the time of writing the UK economy is contracting.

NSET recognises that productivity is driven by a multitude of factors, including quality of jobs, skills, entrepreneurship, levels of investment and innovation, and quality of infrastructure and connectivity.

Through collaboration, the enterprise and skills agencies can work together, and with Scottish Government, to drive progress in each of these areas, leading to greater business productivity and economic prosperity.

Population and talent supply

Scotland's people are its greatest asset and essential to the future prosperity of the country, but the overall population is ageing and predicted to decline. As Scotland grows older, people are more likely to work for longer, with multiple employers and in multiple careers. This results in a greater need for in-work engagement with the skills system to reskill or upskill in line with changing work demands. National Records of Scotland projections suggest that by 2045, Scotland's population will decline to 5.39 million²⁰, with 200,000 fewer children and 300,000 more people over the age of 65²¹.

The potential for in-migration to counter natural population decline is, however, impacted by the UK's exit from the European Union (Brexit). Scotland is predicted to face an estimated 50-80% reduction in net European Union (EU) migration following 2020, and an overall reduction in overseas net migration of 30-50%²². In the UK, there are nearly 90,000 fewer people in the workforce than there would have been had the pre-pandemic trend continued²³. It is estimated

that between 500,000 and 1.3 million people born overseas left the UK between the first and third quarters of 2020²⁴ suggesting that the pandemic also impacted the supply of migrant workers. Demographic change, Brexit, and the pandemic have exacerbated the scale of labour and skills shortages across the UK and will continue to do so, causing increased fiscal pressure on the working age population.

Employer demand for workers continues to increase while the supply of permanent and temporary workers is falling²⁵, bringing new challenges for industries and employers across Scotland. Over a third (34.9%) of businesses in Scotland report a shortage of workers. Businesses that are experiencing a shortage of workers report that it has resulted in employees working increased hours and many being unable to meet demands²⁶. This is experienced more acutely in the rural areas of the South of Scotland and Highlands and Islands, which experience lower levels of population growth, higher outward migration of young people, and a more dispersed population.

While there is significant geographical variation, sectoral variation is also evident. Similarly, in-demand skills in fields such as data, digital, and cyber are attracting increased wages as employers compete to secure and retain the scarce available talent²⁷. As a result of these labour and skills shortages, we can expect a continued tightening of the labour market and growing demand for adult learning opportunities, from both employers and individuals, in order to address unmet skills demand.

Scotland has a higher proportion of its people educated to tertiary level than in any EU country²⁸, with 37.2% of 25-64 year olds being graduates²⁹. Despite this, employers are still struggling to recruit

¹⁹ [Fraser of Allander Institute, FAI Economic Commentary 2022 Q2, June 2022](#)

²⁰ [National Records of Scotland, Population Statistics, January 2022](#)

²¹ [Ibid.](#)

²² [Scottish Government, A Scotland for the future: opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population, March 2022](#)

²³ [Institute for Employment Studies, Labour Market Statistics, July 2022](#)

²⁴ [Resolution Foundation, Migration during the Pandemic, 2021](#)

²⁵ [Royal Bank of Scotland, Report on Jobs, August 2022](#)

²⁶ [Business Insights and Conditions Survey, BICS weighted Scotland estimates: data to wave 61, August 2022](#)

²⁷ [Burning Glass Technologies, No Longer Optional: Employer Demand for Digital Skills, June 2019](#)

²⁸ [OECD, Strengthening Skills in Scotland: OECD Review Of The Apprenticeship System In Scotland, 2020](#)

²⁹ [Scottish Government, Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places, and Regions - Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2019, 2020](#)

people with the skills they need to their available roles. One in three employers in Scotland is reporting under-use of skills, and nearly three-quarters recognise an upskilling requirement within their organisation³⁰, demonstrating the current misalignment of skills within the labour market.

Skills shortages fall into two categories: technical and practical skills which are specific to the job, and people and personal skills needed in the workplace³¹. The biggest deficits in technical and practical skills amongst staff with skills gaps are in specific skills or knowledge required for a role, complex analytical skills, and operational knowledge, followed by digital skills³². The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) highlights that the second category of softer skills, such as customer-handling and problem-solving, are especially lacking in those hired directly from school, college, or higher education. They also report that these young people are not considered well prepared for work by employers³³, although this may reflect the currently low number of employers engaging in schools³⁴.

Scottish Government figures show that employers in Scotland identify having meta-skills as the most 'critical or significant' factor looked for in recruitment, followed by work experience³⁵. However, KPMG has warned that these types of meta-skills are currently under-prioritised in the education system³⁶. Current moves towards educational reform in Scotland aim to create closer ties between learning and the realities of work, and close the gap between the skills of education leavers and the needs of employers.

These considerations also point to Scotland's related need to expand its available talent pool, at all skills levels, to meet replacement demand and mitigate the labour shortages and skills gaps that exist, particularly in our remote and rural communities. Achieving this will

³⁰ [Scottish Government, Scottish Employer Skills Survey 2020, 2022](#)

³¹ [Ibid.](#)

³² [Ibid.](#)

³³ [CIPD, Gaps and Opportunities: Employer views on skills policy in Scotland, 2022](#)

³⁴ [Scottish Government, Scottish Employer Skills Survey 2021, May 2022](#)

³⁵ [Ibid.](#)

require innovative solutions to both developing and retaining skilled Scottish workers, including through employer investment in skills, and attracting workers from the rest of the UK and beyond. Designing solutions and approaches will require careful consideration for the place-based dimensions to these challenges, such as the cluster building approach and Talent Attraction programme both identified in NSET³⁷.

Poverty and inequality in the labour market

Alongside changes to the economy and the landscape of work, social inequality is continuing to widen. The COVID-19 pandemic had an unequal effect on the population, with women, young people, lone parents, older and disabled workers, minority ethnic people and those with no or low qualifications, all disproportionately impacted³⁸.

Significant financial pressures exist, especially for those who are underemployed, unemployed or on low incomes, including young people who more often work in sectors characterised as offering low skilled, low paid and insecure employment. These pressures are exacerbated by rising inflation and other cost of living increases. Pre-pandemic concerns remain around the quality of work, in-work poverty, underemployment and the rise of the gig economy, and the role each of these factors plays in compounding poverty and inequality in Scotland. Workers in Professional, Associate Professional and Technical occupations account for around 41% of jobs in Scotland, and command 1.5 times the Scottish median hourly wage. In contrast, those in occupations and sectors affected the most by the pandemic, such as sales and retail staff, attract median hourly wages one third lower than the Scottish average, contributing to issues of in-work poverty. If Scotland's productivity matched that of the OECD top quartile, average annual wages would be almost 10% higher³⁹.

³⁶ [KPMG, Meta-Skills will be key to winning war for talent, 2021](#)

³⁷ [Scottish Government, Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, 2022](#)

³⁸ [Scottish Government, The Impacts of COVID-19 on Equality in Scotland, 2020](#)

³⁹ [Scottish Government, National Strategy for Economic Transformation, 2022](#)

A “hollowing-out” of mid-level jobs has left the labour market more polarised across nearly all OECD countries and this trend is forecast to continue, with consequences for in-work progression and social mobility. In Scotland, mid-level occupations represented 31% of jobs in 2019 but are forecast to decline to 24% of all jobs by 2029, with most of the relative growth occurring in lower-level, lower paid occupations⁴⁰. We are also seeing the rise of precarious work and in-work poverty. The proportion of workers employed on a zero-hours contract almost quadrupled between 2012 and 2020, from 0.7% to 3.3%⁴¹. Women account for 55% of workers on zero-hour contracts⁴² with a resulting impact on child poverty.

In 2022, the Chartered Institute of Management found that more than 80% of firms had adopted hybrid working – most since the pandemic⁴³. The rise in remote working creates both opportunities and competition for employers and workers in the labour market by challenging the need for these groups to be geographically close. However, as yet these opportunities are concentrated in higher salary bands, with 15% of jobs with salaries of £60,000-£79,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) offering home working, compared with just 3% of jobs with salaries under £20,000 FTE⁴⁴.

While Scotland’s unemployment rate did not reach the levels forecast early in the pandemic period, economic inactivity amongst the working age population increased to around one in five workers aged 16-64⁴⁵, potentially masking some of that anticipated impact. For example, Scotland has been outperforming the rest of the UK in both youth participation and youth unemployment⁴⁶, however, this is contextualised by record-high levels of young people choosing to remain in full-time education during the pandemic.

40 [OECD, Strengthening Skills in Scotland: OECD Review of the Apprenticeship System, 2020](#)

41 [Fair Work Convention, Fair Work in Scotland, 2020](#)

42 [Ibid.](#)

43 [Chartered Management Institute, Employer Survey, February 2022.](#)

44 [Timewise, The Timewise Scottish Flexible Jobs Index, 2021](#)

45 [Office for National Statistics, Labour market overview, UK: August 2022, August 2022.](#)

46 [PWC, Youth Employment Index, 2022](#)

A tight labour market, and ‘war for talent’ can provide increased opportunities for those further from the labour market. NSET contains an ambition for individuals not just to be in work, but to be aiming for rewarding careers that contribute to Scotland’s economic, social, and environmental needs. The strategy highlights that this can be achieved through creating a fairer and more inclusive economy, and by helping people to have the skills and capabilities they need to access good jobs⁴⁷.

Scottish Government’s policy response

The Scottish Government faces a significant challenge in delivering an economic recovery that addresses known inequality in society and supports a transition to a greener, fairer, and more productive economic model for the future. This must be done in a way that acknowledges the disproportionate impact the previously explored factors, including rising inflation, are having on people, places, and sectors, as well as current uncertainty in the geopolitical climate.

In its National Strategy for Economic Transformation⁴⁸, published on 1 March 2022, the Scottish Government makes an ambitious commitment to building a green recovery, with an emphasis on building a wellbeing economy. The ten-year Strategy acknowledges the need for an education and learning system which is focused on delivering the country’s skills needs, and establishing Scotland as a more entrepreneurial nation, in the context of an ever-changing economy and society. With the ambition of NSET set out (shown on page 12), Scottish Government and its agencies, including SDS, must collaborate effectively to establish and implement how that ambition will be achieved. Cross-agency work also continues to deliver the ambitions of the Inward Investment Plan⁴⁹, securing investment in Scotland’s sectors, regions, and digital skills to support the transformation of our economy in response to Industry 4.0.

47 [Scottish Government, Scotland’s National Strategy for Economic Transformation, 2022](#)

48 [Ibid.](#)

49 [Scottish Government, Shaping Scotland’s economy: inward investment plan, 2020](#)

Delivery of NSET is of paramount importance to Scotland. However, Scottish Government is responsible for a wider range of education, skills, and economic development policy which will also shape the forward direction of its enterprise and skills agencies.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government policy renewed its focus on employability in the face of an anticipated rapid increase in unemployment. This included the Young Person's Guarantee⁵⁰, designed to ensure young people had access to learning and employment opportunities, and the No-one Left Behind Action Plan⁵¹, which promised to deliver a flexible, joined-up and responsive employability system in Scotland.

In response to the known issues around Scotland's ageing population and the need for inward migration, in 2021 the Scottish Government also published Scotland's first national population strategy⁵², setting out how the future need for workers could be met through talent attraction and retention. Additionally, documents such as Scotland's digital strategy⁵³, and the Skills Action Plans for both Rural Scotland⁵⁴ and the Climate Emergency⁵⁵ have set out the urgent need to develop the skills of the workforce.

Scottish Government maintains a strong focus on encouraging good and fair workplace practices, with a refreshed Fair Work Action Plan expected in 2022. Supporting more people into these opportunities is seen as a primary means to delivering greater equality and social justice, and to tackling child poverty⁵⁶.

Concurrently, a programme of reform is also taking place across Scotland's schools, through the Scottish Government's response to, and implementation of, recommendations made by Professor Ken Muir in the review of Scotland's curriculum. During 2022/23, Professor Louise Hayward is due to report on her review of senior phase qualifications and assessments which may look to introduce changes to the design and delivery of school curricula in the coming years.

Building on the recommendations of the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability, Scottish Government is now developing the Purpose and Principles for Scotland's post-school education, skills and research ecosystem. This will be evidence-led and provide clear direction to support decision making across the ecosystem for the next generation.

The recommendations of the recent Career Review⁵⁷, which seek to ensure that individuals can access the best career intelligence, experiential career education, and person-centred advice and guidance at any stage of their lives have also been accepted by Scottish Government.

Skills development is a positive and consistent theme across Scottish Government's response to the current economic, social, and environmental challenges faced. SDS welcomes the independent review of the skills delivery landscape and the opportunity it offers to help realise the policy ambitions we share with Scottish Government and our partners.

50 [Young Person's Guarantee](#)

51 [Scottish Government, No-one Left Behind: delivery plan, 2020](#)

52 [Scottish Government, A Scotland for the future: opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population, 2021](#)

53 [Scottish Government, Realising Scotland's full potential in a digital world: a digital strategy for Scotland, 2017](#)

54 [Scottish Government and SDS, Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland, 2019](#)

55 [Scottish Government and SDS, Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan 2020-2025, 2020](#)

56 [Scottish Government, Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, 2022](#)

57 [Career Review Programme Board, Careers by Design, 2022](#)

Figure 1: The vision, ambition, and programmes of action for Scotland's economy by 2032 as set out in the NSET

Vision

A Wellbeing Economy
 Thriving across economic, social and environmental dimensions

Ambition

<p>Fairer</p> <p>Ensuring that work pays for everyone through better wages and fair work, reducing poverty and improving life chances.</p>	<p>Wealthier</p> <p>Driving an increase in productivity by building an internationally competitive economy founded on entrepreneurship and innovation.</p>	<p>Greener</p> <p>Demonstrating global leadership in delivering a just transition to a net zero, nature-positive economy, and rebuilding natural capital.</p>
---	---	--

Programmes of Action

 Entrepreneurial People and Culture	 New Market Opportunities	 Productive Business and Regions	 Skilled Workforce	 A Fairer and More Equal Society
--	--	---	---	---

 **A Culture of Delivery**

Public finances

These policy ambitions sit in the context of existing constraints to public finances. In the 2021/22 financial year the budget deficit in Scotland was £23.7 billion. While this is a substantial drop from £35.8 billion recorded in the previous year – the largest budget deficit on record since the 1998/99 financial year, largely due to the pandemic – it remains considerably higher than the 2019/20 figure of £15.9 billion. For the first time since income tax powers were devolved in 2017/18, the Scottish Fiscal Commission forecasts made at the time of the 2022/23 budget are lower than the equivalent Block Grant Adjustment (BGA).

Over the period 1998/99 to 2019/20 on average each year Scotland spent £9.7 billion more than it generated. Over time the net fiscal deficit has grown, increasing from £2.6 billion in 1998/99 to £15.9 billion in 2019/20. Scottish income tax revenues are expected to grow more slowly than in the rest of the UK, with implications for public spending⁵⁸.

The Scottish Government's Resource Spending Review, published in May 2022, set out a challenging fiscal position for the lifetime of this Plan. It included a clear call on all public sector agencies to improve value for money, better manage assets and bring benefit to the public purse⁵⁹. Achieving this will be more complex in the face of rising inflation.

⁵⁸ Scottish Fiscal Commission, *Scotland's Economic and Fiscal Forecasts, May 2022*

⁵⁹ Scottish Government, *Investing in Scotland's Future: Resource Spending Review, 2022*

Our response

Scotland's changing demographics, reduced inward migration, increased economic inactivity, and entrenched structural inequality, all present significant challenges to the current and future supply of labour in the economy, with implications for fiscal sustainability. The inter-play between all these drivers is impacting on both productivity and the labour market in Scotland.

Against this challenging backdrop, the Scottish skills system must act urgently to ensure it maximises its contribution to **generating inclusive growth, driving productivity, building prosperity, achieving a just transition to net zero and tackling social inequality.**

Facilitating the right change is essential to delivering on the ambitions of NSET, and to ensuring the future prosperity of Scotland's people, its businesses, and its economy.

At SDS we are committed to generating the change that will lead to inclusive growth, greater productivity, a more prosperous and skilled workforce, and a fairer, more equal society. Our vision is that:

Scotland has an agile, dynamic, and employer-led skills and careers ecosystem which enables all people to develop the skills, adaptive resilience, and personal agency to thrive in a vibrant and inclusive labour market.

This vision is one for Scotland and cannot be achieved by SDS alone. We recommit to working with Scottish Government, agency colleagues, and partners across the whole of the skills and careers ecosystem to generate real change and achieve shared outcomes.

⁶⁰ Further detail on our Equality Outcomes and the work we do to achieve them, is available in our [Equality and Diversity Mainstreaming Report](#).

Our new corporate goals, shown on page 16, reflect this vision:

- **Industry-focused Skills: People develop skills and competencies that drive productive businesses and regions, and help create a fairer, more equal society**
- **Inclusive Talent Pool: Talent is diverse and resilient, with people who can all adapt and thrive in the changing world of work**
- **Invested Employers: Employers invest in Scotland's workforce through job opportunities, skills development, and fair work**
- **Intelligence-led System: An agile, responsive, resilient, and inclusive skills ecosystem consistently delivers the skills the Scottish economy needs**

As a responsible public body, we will also ensure that we are an:

- **Impactful Organisation: Team SDS maximises return on investment, collaborating to deliver better outcomes and experiences for our customers, colleagues, and the economy.**

Embedded throughout all our goals are actions which reflect our commitments to equality, diversity, and inclusion⁶⁰, tackling poverty, and to supporting a just transition to net zero. We understand these themes must run across all we do, rather than being treated as standalone issues.

By collaborating across the whole of the skills and careers ecosystem we aim to generate real change which supports thriving businesses and prosperous people, places, and communities.

Figure 2: SFC and SDS: responding together to a changing world

<p>“Both we and SDS know that collaboration is the route to deliver the change required to meet the challenges we face. The pressing demands of the changing nature of work, net zero, the productivity challenge, an ageing population, and the enduring need to tackle poverty and inequality are only heightened by the pressures on public finances.</p> <p>“By continuing to work in partnership I am certain our two organisations will deliver the education and skills system that Scotland’s people and businesses need to thrive in the years ahead.”</p> <p>Mike Cantlay Chair, Scottish Funding Council</p>	Change theme	SG policy response	SFC-SDS shared priorities
	Technological revolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSET – Skilled Workforce, New Market Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsive, coherent and sustainable skills system
	Climate emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Change Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in Energy Skills Partnership Delivery of Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan (CESAP) and development of green skills
	Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSET – Skilled Workforce, Productive Businesses and Regions, Entrepreneurial People and Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting and nurturing entrepreneurship; adapting the system to make it more agile and responsive Investing in apprenticeships and supporting work-based learning Delivery of the Entrepreneurial Campus Strategy
	Demographic and population changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population Strategy International Education Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracting and retaining talent from outside Scotland Supporting economically inactive to reskill and re-enter the workforce
	Poverty and inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSET – Fairer and More Equal Society Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan Commission on Widening Access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tackling inequality and poverty Promoting and demonstrating fair work practices to organisations and individuals Widening access to learning and securing positive outcomes
	Pressure on public finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource Spending Review Purpose and principles for post-16 education, skills and research system Public sector reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing our organisational capability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continued digital enablement of services enhanced data and insight to deliver greater impact leveraging joint resources and capabilities

Our unique contribution

As the national skills agency, SDS clearly has a distinct role to play within this ecosystem, and a unique contribution to make to achieving this change.

Fundamental to achieving our corporate goals and the ambitions of NSET, **over the next five years SDS will focus on work which supports:**

- **Apprenticeship Innovation:** An ambitious development of Modern Apprenticeships to reflect the changing world of work, which delivers greater flexibility and customisation of modularised content
- **Future Career Services:** Reimagined all-age, person-centered career services which build the skills and habits required to negotiate the rapidly changing labour market

and informs:

- **Lifelong Training:** An innovative rebalancing of learning provision towards upskilling and retraining activity, in support of Scotland's current workforce and new markets, including the development of digital skills and the green economy

In support of these, we also need to prioritise achieving:

- **Employer Centricity:** A continued, significant and enhanced role for employers in the design, delivery, and assessment of skills and careers provision
- **Digital Capability:** Transformed data and digital capability within SDS, driving the reach and user experience of our person-centred services, and increasing efficiency and sustainability across the organisation
- **Integrated Intelligence:** Enhanced use of data and intelligence to inform collaboration and learning provision, creating a more agile and responsive skills system
- **Organisational Agility:** Improved capability and agility within Team SDS to flexibly align the right resources and people in response to business and economic need

We believe these cross-cutting and substantial actions will each unlock aspects of the future we are working to achieve and make substantial contributions towards achieving a fairer, wealthier, and greener Scotland. Actions towards achieving these are identified against all five of our goals in this plan.

Ayrshire College # 482400
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Our Corporate Goals 2022-27

In this section we introduce each of these goals and describe, at a high level, the action we intend to take to deliver them.

For each of our goals we have identified a corresponding customer commitment. These aim to explain how, by achieving our goals, we will be helping Scotland's people to build the future they want. The customer commitments are shown together on page 28.

Our Strategy Map on page 17 and our Performance Framework on page 32, demonstrate the contribution these goals will make to Scottish Government ambitions, including those defined by NSET and the National Performance Framework.



Our Strategy Map 2022-27



Industry-focused Skills



Our goal

People develop skills and competencies that drive productive businesses and regions, and help create a fairer, more equal society

Our customer commitment

We will create learning opportunities that help you get into and progress in rewarding work

The outcomes we want to achieve

- People have more skills which are relevant to the Scottish economy
- Apprentices progress in employment
- Under-represented groups and people in poverty have improved apprenticeship participation and achievement rates
- More working-age people access upskilling and retraining opportunities in priority sectors and occupations

Delivering this goal

Lifelong learning in and for the workplace is integral to delivering the skills that the economy needs.

Over the coming years, SDS will continue to ensure the provision of high quality apprenticeships across Scotland. Through a balanced portfolio of provision, we will support individuals to enter, sustain and progress in rewarding and productive employment and/or pursue entrepreneurial opportunities. More than ever, we understand the importance of ensuring this provision is responsive to the needs of economy and drives productivity. We will enhance our approach to meeting the needs of priority sectors and occupations through our contracting, recognising that these skills needs may differ by region. We will also continue to work with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), education institutions and employers in the continued delivery of Graduate Apprenticeships.

The future demand on workers to upskill and reskill in order to remain competitive in the labour market, and to support new and emerging sectors will be great. New forms of flexible, accredited and work-focused micro learning will be essential to supporting business growth, and to developing prosperous people, places, and communities. We will work with Scottish Government, the SFC and other partners to develop innovative, sustainable, and evidence-led approaches to developing the skills people and businesses need.

Scotland's people are at the heart of achieving this goal. Building on the progress achieved so far, we will continue to work with partners to ensure SDS learning provision champions equality of opportunity and supports a fairer, greener economy. We will keep the lived experience, needs and aspirations of Scotland's disadvantaged families and communities at the heart of developing our approaches to delivering industry-focused skills.

To achieve this goal, by 2027 we will:

a) Maximise delivery of apprenticeships in priority sectors and occupations, contributing to a skilled and productive Scottish workforce

- Continue to manage the delivery of high quality Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland, which support the needs of the economy
- Work with the SFC and other partners to support the delivery of Graduate Apprenticeships
- Evolve our approach to ensuring dynamic alignment of Modern Apprenticeship contracting with priority sectors and occupations

b) Improve access to rewarding work through apprenticeships and other training opportunities for people who often face barriers to employment

- Work with customers, learning providers and equality partners to increase demand for, and equal access to, work-based learning opportunities amongst under-represented groups and those living in poverty
- Seek to understand and actively reduce the achievement gap for apprentices from under-represented groups

c) Help people understand the need to continue developing their skills throughout their careers

- Develop understanding of the motivations towards, demand for and barriers to, lifelong learning
- Based on strong customer insight, build a marketing programme which positively promotes the benefits of lifelong upskilling and retraining, and the support available to do this
- Through adult career information, advice and guidance (CIAG) services, help people to identify the lifelong training that will support them to further or change their careers

d) Develop industry-critical skills among the workforce through upskilling and retraining initiatives

- Deliver initiatives designed to support the upskilling and retraining of workers aligned to the changing needs of Scotland's employers and the economy, including digital skills
- Develop approaches to help adults identify and access relevant high quality and flexible upskilling and retraining opportunities, including digital and green skills

Ayrshire College #4824082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Inclusive Talent Pool



Our goal

Talent is diverse and resilient, with people who can all adapt and thrive in the changing world of work

Our customer commitment

We will help you navigate the changing world of work throughout your life

The outcomes we want to achieve

- **Young people have improved participation and smoother post-school transitions**
- **People facing redundancy remain in, or secure alternative, employment**
- **More working-age people living in Scotland participate in the labour market**
- **The working-age population in Scotland increases through the attraction and retention of talent**
- **Scotland's workforce better reflects the full diversity of the population**

Delivering this goal

In line with a stated aim in the Skilled Workforce pillar of NSET, we are dedicated to ensuring that all people have the skills they need, at every stage of their lives, to have a rewarding career.

To make this goal a reality, the importance of all-age, person-centred CIAG, cannot be underestimated. As the provider of Scotland's Career Service, we will continue to support our customers to develop the skills and habits they need to make decisions about learning and work. Our future careers provision must be shaped by the ambitions of the Career Review, NSET and ongoing educational reform. Throughout this Plan period we will reimagine our multi-channel delivery, including digital and community-based approaches, to ensure we are reaching all of our customers in ways that are convenient and accessible to them.

We will work with educators, agency colleagues, employers, and other partners to embed work-based experiences, such as Foundation Apprenticeships, and other experiential career education across the curriculum. We recognise the need for this to be delivered at both an earlier and later stage, providing coherent messaging and support from primary school through secondary, further, and higher education and into the workplace. Achieving greater equality, diversity and inclusion is of fundamental importance to SDS. We recognise that structural barriers make it more difficult for some of our customers to participate in learning and work and understand the important role we play in helping to address these, so that all of Scotland's people can reach their full potential.

In addition, we will support Scottish Government and cross-agency efforts to attract, retain and grow talent for Scotland's workforce and to establish Scotland as a world-class entrepreneurial nation.

To achieve this goal, by 2027 we will:

a) Equip people with the skills they need to prepare for, plan and manage rewarding careers throughout their lives

- Continue to deliver Scotland's Career Service through person-centred coaching guidance, digital and telephone services
- Reimagine our approach to CIAG delivery, including through our digital services, aligned to a new career development model and changes in customer needs and preferences
- Work with strategic partners to provide a simplified and coherent digital user experience

b) Provide engaging and relevant career intelligence, education and experiences that help inform individual learning and career choices

- Work with partners to expand and embed work-integrated experiences at earlier stages of the curriculum, including career education and Foundation Apprenticeships, providing students with an enriched exposure to the world of work
- Work with partners to enhance and share career intelligence that enables a personalised and curated approach to supporting people when making decisions
- Equip parents, carers and teachers, as key influencers, to support their young people in making intelligence-based learning and career choices

c) Address known barriers to participation and deliver person-centred services which support all customers to pursue the learning and work they choose

- Enhance our approaches to ensuring all SDS customers receive person-centred career services
- Work with regional, local and community partners to ensure people have access to consistent national career services, with community-integrated delivery and clear alignment to social justice values
- Continue to work with a wide range of equality partners, including the third sector, to understand and address barriers to participation in learning and work, such as poverty, discrimination, and intersectional impact

d) Contribute to Scotland's ambition to grow the size and diversity of the available talent pool

- With Scottish Government, the enterprise agencies, and our regional economic partners, support the implementation of NSET actions to attract and retain talent, including the development and implementation of a Talent Attraction and Migration Service for Scotland
- Work with LEPs and other partners to help economically inactive individuals who wish to return to work to do so, including through 'No-one Left Behind' provision
- Support people to create their own employment opportunities through the development of entrepreneurial skills,

Invested Employers



Our goal

Employers invest in Scotland's workforce through job opportunities, skills development, and fair work

Our customer commitment

We will work with employers to make sure you get the best opportunities they can offer

The outcomes we want to achieve

- **Employers create more jobs in Scotland**
- **Employers provide more in-work training to their staff**
- **Employers adopt and further develop fair work practices**
- **Employers receive more coherent, aligned and streamlined support from Scotland's enterprise and skills agencies**

⁶¹ The core Business Support Partnership partners are Business Gateway, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise and SDS. There are over 90 other partners also involved, including a range of public sector, third sector and business organisations.

Delivering this goal

Employers are central to achieving the ambitions laid out in this Plan. Meaningful and effective engagement with employers of all sizes, and their representative bodies, will be critical to the achievement of our other goals. We want to encourage employer ownership, through co-design and co-delivery of work-integrated training and experiential career education. Critically, we will work in partnership with the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board to expand the reach of its membership and amplify the voice of its members.

Our employer-facing teams will continue to work with businesses to help them recognise and plan for their future skills needs, including digital and green skills, particularly by maximising demand for apprenticeships in priority sectors and occupations. In line with NSET, this will also consider the best approaches to supporting micro-businesses and business start-ups to offer apprenticeship opportunities, including those in rural and island communities.

Importantly, we want to drive the quality of learning and employer experience that apprentices receive, aligned to fair work principles. To facilitate this, we will continue to promote the business case for workplace diversity and inclusion, and share understanding of what best practice looks like through the development of a new employer standard. This standard will allow employers to recognise their current strengths and identify the best next steps on their journey to realising the full benefits of cultivating inclusive and fair workplaces.

Since 2019, the Business Support Partnership⁶¹ and other cross-agency approaches have demonstrated the potential to streamline and enhance employer support through collaboration. We remain committed to utilising our combined strength to deliver a coherent and effective package of skills support to Scotland's employers.

To achieve this goal, by 2027 we will:

a) Increase employer participation in apprenticeships, including micro- and small businesses and those in priority sectors and occupations

- Work with the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) to increase employer reach and participation by expanding and strengthening its membership model
- Consider best approaches to increasing access to apprenticeships for business start-ups, micro- and small businesses
- Continue to provide targeted support to employers in priority sectors and occupations to enable them to participate in Scottish apprenticeships

b) Encourage employers to become more invested in the development of their current and future workforce

- Encourage employers to upskill and reskill their workforce through skills planning to identify their skills needs and the promotion of available support to meet those needs, including leadership and entrepreneurial skills
- Provide intelligence and digital resources that help employers to identify and plan for their skills needs, through building a greater understanding of the skills system
- With DYW and education partners, encourage employers to engage in the co-design and co-delivery of curricula and experiential career education

c) Inspire employers to adopt and demonstrate equality, inclusion, and fair work practices, and to drive quality in their delivery of apprenticeships

- Co-design and implement a new Employer Standard for apprenticeship employers, helping organisations to progressively adopt and enhance their fair work practices and drive the quality of experience and learning for apprentices
- Promote examples of employer best practice to inspire and build confidence in others
- Continue to work with employers, learning providers and equality partners to promote inclusion and diversity in apprenticeship recruitment and delivery, contributing to a reduction in under-representation and occupational segregation

d) Ensure a 'collaboration-first' approach to delivering cross-agency products and services to employers

- Collaborate with strategic partners, including the Business Support Partnership, to continue developing and delivering cohesive and integrated cross-agency employer services

Ayrshire College #484082
03/11/2022 15:27

Intelligence-led Skills System



Our goal

An agile, responsive, resilient, and inclusive skills ecosystem consistently delivers the skills the Scottish economy needs

Our customer commitment

We will work with our partners across Scotland to make sure the learning you do prepares you for rewarding work

The outcomes we want to achieve

- **Scotland's employers experience fewer skills gaps and skills shortages**
- **Upskilling and retraining opportunities are more flexible and accessible in Scotland**
- **Partners and stakeholders increasingly use career and labour market intelligence to inform decisions on learning provision and other service delivery**
- **The ambition of the Shared Outcomes Framework between SDS and the SFC is delivered**

Delivering this goal

Scotland needs a learning and skills ecosystem which has the insight and agility to adapt in response to the ever-changing external environment and realities of work. This has direct implications for the way we design and deliver products and services, and the way we support our partners and stakeholders to do the same.

During this Plan period, we will work to transform the delivery model for Modern Apprenticeships, ensuring it is fit for purpose in the new world of work.

As the need for upskilling and retraining increases, so will the need for flexible and accessible learning options which are responsive to the needs of the economy and ensure increased productivity for Scotland. We will collaborate with Scottish Government and the SFC to enhance approaches to strategic provision and skills planning as set out in NSET to enable a more responsive, coherent education and skills system, including innovative new ways for people to develop the skills they need. Linked to this, we will explore options for allowing people to digitally record and evidence the learning they have completed.

Intelligence will be at the heart of our approach to ensuring skills provision aligns to the changing needs of employers and the economy. We will continue to work intensively with national, regional, local, and sectoral partners to share intelligence, insight and analysis of skills demand and supply, and lead the co-creation of effective solutions to meeting Scotland's skills needs, including promoting opportunities for entrepreneurs.

Following the Career Review recommendations, we will also work with the education agencies, and a wide range of partners across education provision and the third sector, to drive quality, coherence, and consistency in the delivery of career services in Scotland.

To achieve this goal, by 2027 we will:

a) Work to ensure that Scottish Apprenticeships remain agile, flexible and fit for the future

- Work closely with the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB), to ensure all apprenticeships are based on employer-led industry standards and reflect the evolving reality of work
- Utilising employer-led occupational standards and new technology, introduce flexibility within work-based learning which enables modular micro-learning for all, and allows the aggregation of more diverse learning towards certification
- Work with the SFC to maintain the integrity of the Scottish Apprenticeship family, ensuring the alignment of standards and frameworks so people can make frictionless transitions across Foundation, Modern and Graduate apprenticeships

b) Collaborate extensively at a national, regional, and sectoral level to shape intelligence-led skills investment and delivery

- Collaborate with Scottish Government, the enterprise and skills agencies and others, to deliver the skills ambitions of NSET
- With the SFC, deliver against the Shared Outcomes Framework, supporting enhanced alignment of provision with economic and business need, and resulting in a more balanced portfolio of provision across an agile, coherent, and responsive system
- Continue to work closely with Regional Economic Partnerships, enterprise agencies, and regional education and skills partners, providing evidence, insight, and analysis, and helping to ensure a coordinated regional response to skills challenges and opportunities
- Engage with sector and industry representatives, including Industry Leadership Groups, to develop and implement collaborative responses to identified and emerging skills issues

c) Together with customers and partners, support the design and delivery of approaches to meeting current and future skills demand

- Work with Scottish Government to develop a new Lifetime Skills Offer
- Building on international best practice, develop and pilot an approach to continuous professional development which enables experienced individuals to reach deeper levels of learning, and builds employer capacity for supporting future generations of apprentices
- Develop Skills and Technology Route-maps to support people and their employers to invest in skills and training throughout their working lives, with a focus on sustainability and the use of digital technology
- Work with strategic partners to develop improved mechanisms for tracking and recording individual learning

d) Collaborate across the careers ecosystem to deliver more consistency in Scotland's career services, and improve customer outcomes

- Form a Career Services Collaborative comprising key partners and stakeholders from the education agencies, third sector organisations, and across higher, further, and secondary education
- Work with members of the Collaborative to implement the recommendations of the Career Review, ensuring greater accountability for, and coherence and integration of, careers services across Scotland
- Monitor and evaluate the strategic impact and lifelong outcomes for career services delivered in Scotland to sustain future orientation amongst the Collaborative and create strategies for further change

Impactful Organisation



Our goal

Team SDS maximises return on investment, collaborating to deliver better outcomes and experiences for our customers, colleagues, and the economy

Our customer commitment

We will be clear on how we're using public money, and make sure it's delivering for you

The outcomes we want to achieve

- **SDS uses data to effectively drive decisions**
- **SDS has increased productivity**
- **SDS has a diverse workforce and inclusive workplace culture**
- **SDS remains an employer of choice, attracting, developing and retaining talent**
- **SDS demonstrates improved public value and return on investment**

Delivering this goal

SDS has always sought to lead by example, demonstrating the organisational behaviours we understand lead to high performing workplaces. To achieve our ambitions in the current climate, we will need to transform our ways of working to enhance our organisational effectiveness and leverage more from our resources.

A focus on 'Team SDS', having the right people with the right skills, will be critical to delivering our goals. A sustained focus on employee wellbeing, fair work and inclusion will help ensure we remain an employer of choice, attract and retain the talent we need, and help all our people to achieve to the best of their capability.

As a responsible public agency, we commit to ensuring we retain robust and efficient stewardship of our resources, demonstrating best value for the public purse. By reviewing our organisational capability, we will work to ensure our ways of working are optimised to achieve our goals. The voice and lived experience of our customers will be amplified in our service design and development work, ensuring we increasingly align our products and services with the evidenced needs and preferences of our customers.

Data and intelligence are widely recognised as critically important across all spheres of work. Our information is one of our biggest assets, and over the Plan period we will seek to further enhance the way we integrate, analyse, and share what we know to work smarter, and drive improvements throughout SDS and the wider skills system. This will rely on continued enhancement of our data architecture and systems, and investment in the skills of our people to use them.

We will also continue to focus on areas essential to our business resilience and sustainability, such as cyber security, carbon management, integrated business planning and continuous improvement.

To achieve this goal, by 2027 we will:

a) Attract, nurture, and retain a diverse team of people that share and achieve our ambitions, demonstrating fair work practices

- Ensure that SDS is able to attract and retain the best talent, by maintaining attractive employee terms and conditions, and continuing to enhance our employee experience, including lessons learned from working through the pandemic
- Develop leadership capability at all levels of the organisation, with a continued focus on inspiring and sustaining employee engagement and productivity
- Implement a skills development framework to enable retraining and upskilling across a range of SDS career pathways with a particular focus on data and digital skills
- Sustain our focus and commitment on building a culture of fair work, inclusion, and wellbeing, including specific action to become an anti-racist organisation⁶²

b) Transform our use of system-wide data, intelligence, and customer voice to deliver better customer outcomes

- Further enhance and integrate our insight and intelligence capability to better inform our services, customers, and partners
- Build and strengthen a common evidence base to inform dynamic skills planning provision
- Further develop our outcome and impact measures to support effective evaluation and continuous improvement of our services
- Develop an approach to the co-design of products and services which amplifies and embeds the voice and lived experience of our customers

⁶² We are committed to monitoring, reporting and, where necessary, addressing pay and employment gaps for women, disabled people and those from minority ethnic communities in our organisation. Further detail on this is available in our [Equality and Diversity Mainstreaming Report](#).

c) Continue to enhance our digital capability in ways which drive organisational productivity and customer experience

- Work with public sector partners to adopt innovative ways of using shared technology across the sector to drive productivity
- Adopt best in class data architecture, systems and storage capability to support our ambitions for data-led, person-centred service delivery
- Continue to enhance our digital capability to support innovation in working practices, including the streamlining and automation of business processes

d) Steward our resources efficiently and effectively, ensuring that SDS is a resilient and sustainable organisation

- Review, align and transform our organisational capability to deliver against our strategic ambitions
- Introduce an integrated approach to portfolio prioritisation and annual planning to ensure a sustained focus on strategic priorities
- Retain high levels of business resilience and adaptability, including key areas such as cyber security
- Demonstrate propriety and value for money in the management of public finances, including the management of the SDS estate
- Further evolve our approaches to change management, continuous improvement, quality, and business excellence
- Transition towards becoming a net-zero organisation, through delivery of the SDS Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030

Our Customer Commitments 2022-27



Delivering in collaboration

Collaboration has always been at the heart of our approach to meeting the needs of Scotland's people, places, and economy. The nature and complexity of the current challenges Scotland faces will require a further intensification of active collaboration and partnership working between national and regional partners to help Scotland become fairer, wealthier, and greener.

In the development of this Plan, SDS engaged with our enterprise and skills agency colleagues to identify ongoing and future opportunities for cross-agency collaboration.

Collaboration for skills

As Scotland's two skills agencies, SDS and the SFC must work particularly closely to deliver Scottish Government's ambitions for a skilled workforce. Within this Plan are multiple opportunities for cross-agency collaboration, including work related to our key areas of focus, apprenticeships and lifelong training. We are already working together to deliver the Shared Outcomes Agreement effectively and will continue to proactively identify ways of jointly building greater coherence, agility, and responsiveness into the skills ecosystem.

Collaboration for businesses

The Business Support Partnership (BSP) has demonstrated how the public sector and other key stakeholders can join together to reduce duplication and create more streamlined and holistic services for industry and employers. We are committed to this partnership and will continue to work with the other BSP partners to help Scotland's businesses thrive through skills. With Scottish Enterprise (SE) and other agency colleagues, we will also continue to play our role in

the 'Team Scotland' approaches to attracting inward investment and talent, and supporting business growth, ensuring Scotland has the skills and good jobs it needs.

Collaboration for regions

As has been highlighted in this Plan, the challenges Scotland faces over the coming years differ across its regions, and as such, the importance of place-based solutions is paramount. As a national agency, we commit to collaborating with partners at the right level. Working closely with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Regional Economic Partnerships, Community Planning Partnerships, and other stakeholders, we will ensure skills are at the heart of economic development plans and actions around population and talent attraction.

Collaboration for equality, diversity, and inclusion

At the heart of all our work is a commitment to achieving greater equality of opportunity, and of outcomes, for everyone in Scotland. We recognise the very real challenges that some people face in achieving their full potential in the labour market, including structural inequality, discrimination, and the impact of poverty. The equality outcomes in our Equality and Diversity Mainstreaming Report were informed by a range of equality partners and are ambitious and challenging. We will continue to collaborate to improve our understanding and activity in relation to these outcomes, informed by the lived experience of our customers and their advocates.

Collaboration for the public sector

As a provider of cross-agency services, including Enterprise Information Services (EIS), the shared ICT function for SDS, SE, HIE and SOSE, we understand the public value that can be generated by collaborating across organisational boundaries in the delivery of back-office processes. We recognise the potential for more of this activity and will work with Scottish Government and others to explore these opportunities.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Measuring progress

Throughout this Plan, we have highlighted our commitment to achieving Scottish Government's ambitions as articulated through NSET and other policy, as well as identifying additional areas of focus where achieving change will be essential to delivering Scotland's future prosperity.

As a responsible public body, and recognising the challenges the public sector is facing, we are determined in our efforts to maximise our return on investment. To deliver on this requires clear articulation of the outcomes we intend to achieve, and the measures we will use to monitor and report progress towards them.

Our Corporate Performance Framework

SDS has a comprehensive Corporate Performance Framework, aligned to both our corporate goals and directorate work plans supporting transparency and accountability. This Framework identifies the performance measures that best demonstrate achievement of our strategic goals. Our Corporate Performance Framework is fully aligned to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, as shown on page 32.

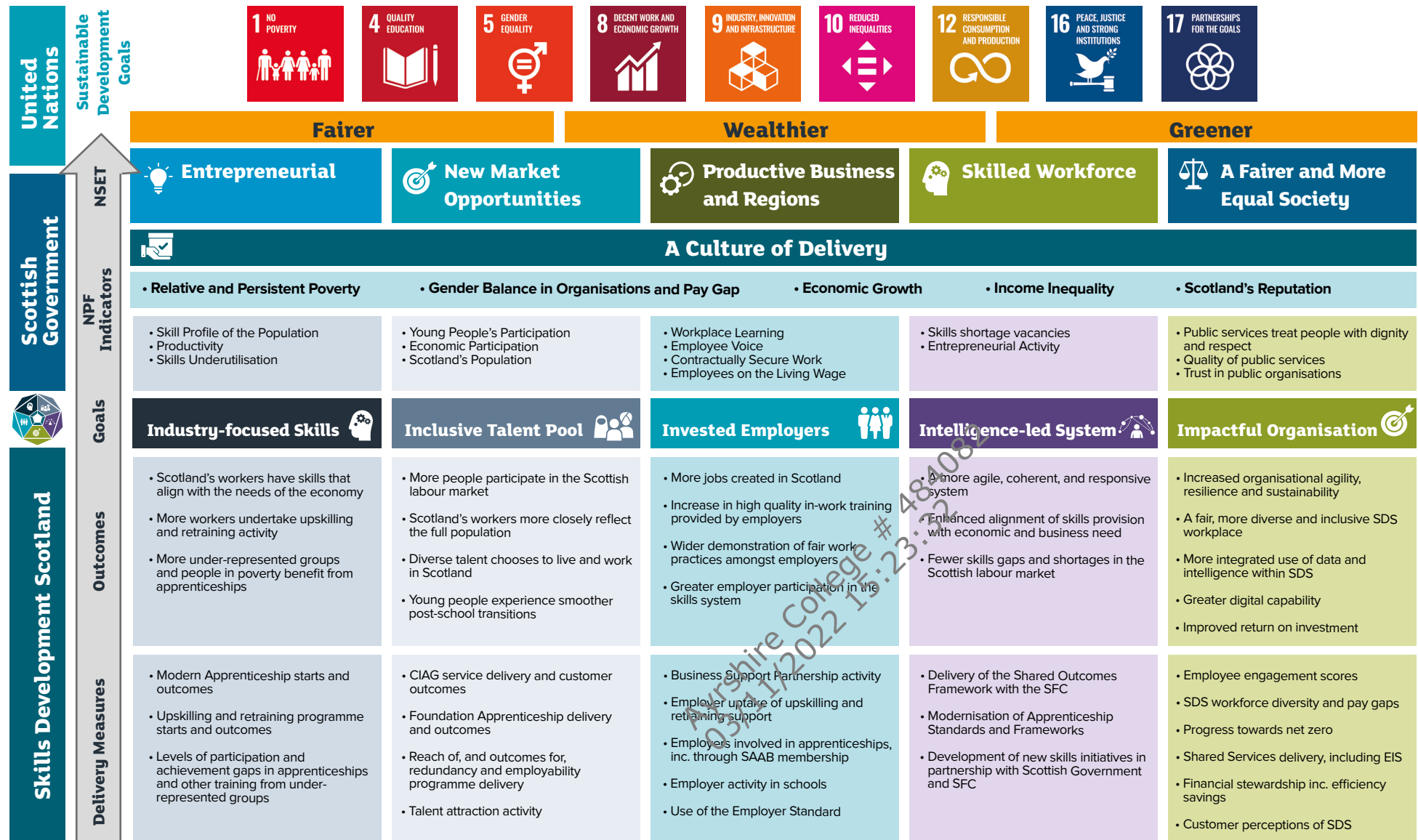
Performance across the business is reviewed by directors and senior leaders every month and by the Board and its sub-committees every quarter. We are transparent in our reporting and provide regular external performance reports, including an annual performance review, official statistics, and annual accounts. As a provider of official statistics, we ensure the integrity and quality of the data which underpins our systems and performance reporting.

Annual planning and performance review

Throughout the life of this Strategic Plan, we will publish an Annual Operating Plan that will reflect on changes in our strategic context and set out more specific milestones and targets towards our strategic ambition. We will also publish an Annual Review reporting on progress against our targets each year.

Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Figure 3: Mapping our performance to national and international ambitions



Ayrshire College # 484082
03/11/2022 15:23:32

Skills Development Scotland

Monteith House
11 George Square
Glasgow G2 1DY

www.sds.co.uk

