

Dear

Training for Employment: The Role of Scotland's Colleges

The paper identifies three policy priorities for Scotland's Colleges:

Growth – college education provision has not expanded for eight years and in that same period the economy has grown by almost fifteen per cent. Students, businesses and communities are demanding more from their colleges.

Business Bursaries – these would, if introduced, increase the incentive for businesses to release employees for study. The key focus is to support businesses that lack the capacity to manage a Modern Apprenticeship.

Business bursaries would provide a weekly allowance for businesses to release employees for study. The amount would cover legal minimum pay, travel and equipment and the college fees for those students would be waived. The scheme would run alongside the Modern Apprenticeship programme and would enable training and assessment to take place in college through day release. ASC believes such a scheme would be welcomed by micro and small businesses in Scotland.

Extend current college bursaries to include HNCs & HNDs – currently higher education students at Scotland's Colleges are able to access student loans for living costs. We want to extend the current bursary arrangements for further education students to all College students. This would widen access to individuals re-entering or progressing in the labour market and increase skills in the economy at a very important level. Colleges know that funding is often a barrier to student participation in learning. Students at college are best supported at a local and personal level by dedicated staff who understand the interactions between the student support and benefits system.

Training for employment is a high profile policy area. Two new organisations – Skills Development Scotland and the UK Commission for Employment and Skills – were launched on 1 April. It is against this background that Scotland's Colleges have produced the attached paper which defines the strategy and role of our Colleges within the changing landscape of training for employment or skills development.

The Scottish Government's Economic Strategy identifies Learning, Skills and Well-being as one of five strategic priority areas. The strategy seeks to establish: *A supply of education and skills which is responsive to, and aligned with, actions to boost demand.* This paper goes some way to demonstrating how Scotland's Colleges – as delivery agents for much of the training for employment in Scotland – can help this to be achieved.

This paper is work in progress and we hope to continue to develop our policy focus in the months to come. My policy team and I will be discussing details further with spokespersons from all the political parties. If any of you have comments or want to speak with me about this direct I would be very happy to hear from you.

Lastly you will be aware that Scotland's Colleges are holding their Parliamentary Reception in the Garden Lobby on the evening of 11 June. I know a number of MSPs have already advised they will be attending this event. I am pleased to say that the evening will feature music from students currently studying at Stevenson College Edinburgh and my own college Jewel & Esk. This event will also offer an opportunity to hear more about the strategic priorities for Scotland's Colleges in skills development and training.

Yours sincerely,

Howard McKenzie

Acting Chief Executive, Association of Scotland's Colleges
Principal, Jewel and Esk College, Edinburgh and Dalkeith