

# TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT

## THE ROLE OF SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This paper attempts to define the strategy and role of Scotland's Colleges within the landscape of training for employment.
- 1.2. Colleges see no distinction between adult and young learners; this paper relates to all wishing to enter a trade or profession.
- 1.3. This paper covers those studying as part of an apprenticeship, individuals, returners to the labour market and those upskilling.

### 2. Background

- 2.1. Scotland's Colleges provide training for 360,000 people each year through 43 colleges in Scotland which have around 4000 community and campus based outlets.
- 2.2. 24% of college students come from deprived backgrounds
- 2.3. The average age of a student at Scotland's colleges is 32. 28% are under 18, 20% are 18 -24 and 52% are 25 and over.
- 2.4. 86% of college students complete their course of study with 80% achieving their qualification aim.
- 2.5. The majority of employers served by colleges are micro and small businesses with local communities. Colleges have excellent contacts with employers in terms of placements, knowledge transfer and technical updating.
- 2.6. There are 175,000 part time day and 8,000 block release students studying in Scotland's colleges.
- 2.7. 15% of individuals study full time and 85% study part time.
- 2.8. The validation and moderation process operated by SQA and City and Guilds provides a platform for standardisation of levels of achievement and the sharing of best practice.
- 2.9. Provision in Scotland's Colleges has been capped and they have, therefore, not grown for eight years. This is against a background of a growing economy, rising levels of economic activity and record levels of employment

### 3. Policy ideas

- 3.1. Scotland's Colleges serve a highly diverse range of needs and as such are aware that there are different ways to satisfy those requirements. We therefore advocate a variety of processes to support business and individual training needs. The span must encompass:
  - Modern Apprenticeships – programmes that combine paid employment and practical training in a trade or skill<sup>1</sup>
  - Business Bursaries – see annex overleaf
  - Fee Waiver – policy through which college course fees are paid by the Scottish Funding Council for eligible students on eligible courses<sup>2</sup>
  - College Bursaries (Further and Higher education) – payments made to students by a college and at a college's discretion to help meet study, travel, and associated living costs<sup>3</sup>
  - Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) – a means-tested grant from the Scottish Government that can be used to help pay for a variety of learning opportunities<sup>4</sup>
  - College Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) - means-tested financial support for 16-19 year olds at school or college and are most-effective<sup>5</sup>
- 3.2. Scotland's Colleges believe that these factors working together will enable employers and individuals to make informed investment choices on training.
- 3.3. We believe the present number of 12,400 modern apprenticeships is broadly correct but should be regarded within flexible totals. However, we seek more flexibility on qualification aims at SCQF levels 5 and 6
- 3.4. We consider that business bursaries should be introduced whereby an employer contracting with a college or private provider receives a weekly allowance for releasing a worker for study. The amount would cover legal minimum pay rates, travel and equipment. Fees would be waived.
- 3.5. The current means tested fee waiver system supports and enables the poorest individuals to access training. The current system should be retained.
- 3.6. College bursaries (and other support funding) for non-advanced students should be extended to cover advanced (HNC/HND) students. This would enable wider access to individuals re-entering or progressing in the labour market.

<sup>1</sup> [www.scottish-enterprise.com/modernapprenticeships](http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/modernapprenticeships)

<sup>2</sup> [www.sfc.ac.uk/information/info\\_circulars/sfc/2007/sfc1407/sfc142007.html](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/information/info_circulars/sfc/2007/sfc1407/sfc142007.html)

<sup>3</sup> [www.careers-scotland.org.uk/Education/Funding/CollegeBursaries.asp](http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk/Education/Funding/CollegeBursaries.asp)

<sup>4</sup> [www.ilascotland.org.uk/What+is+ILA+Scotland/Overview.htm](http://www.ilascotland.org.uk/What+is+ILA+Scotland/Overview.htm)

<sup>5</sup> [www.emascotland.com](http://www.emascotland.com)

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### 4. Summary

4.1. Scotland's Colleges believe that the current mix of funding available to industry can be better focused to instil variation and flexibility. Scotland's Colleges are aware that growth in the economy differs between regions and all the suggested support processes can encourage businesses and individuals to acquire and upgrade skills.

### Annex A

#### 5. Business bursaries - Invigorating training in micro and small businesses

- 5.1. Under our proposed business bursary programme, students would sign a 2 year contract which would involve day or block release study while working, leading to S/NVQ level 2 (SCQF level 5).
- 5.2. A business would have access to the scheme if its annual turnover was less than £250,000 (with accounts for the previous year assessed by the college). 65% of small businesses in Scotland have a sales turnover of less than £250,000<sup>6</sup>. Fees would be paid through the existing fee waiver process, with colleges claiming fees via SFC. A Business Bursary would be paid monthly by direct debit by the college to the business, subject to the student's attendance. For businesses not registered for VAT (turnover below £64,000 in the previous 12 months), the payment would be £75 per week. For those with a turnover up to £250,000 per annum, the payment would be £50 per week. Funds for this would come through colleges' existing Bursary Scheme. (This would require an increase in college bursary funds for this additional activity.)
- 5.3. In return, the business would provide travel allowances, personal protection equipment (PPE) and wages to the student employee.
- 5.4. All would be audited as per the financial memorandum with SFC.
- 5.5. The remainder of funding would be converted to additional SUMs distributed by formula across the sector. We estimate 5000 business bursaries per annum, at 6 WSUMs for a total of 30000 additional WSUMs.
- 5.6. Private provider contracts would be administered via Skills Development Scotland Ltd.

Association of Scotland's Colleges  
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<sup>6</sup> Source: FSB Scotland Biennial Membership Survey, 2006.