



# SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

## WIDENING HORIZONS THROUGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

**Scotland's 43 Colleges of Further and Higher Education are spread across Scotland, with 90% of people living within 30 minutes of a College or a College outreach centre.**

Colleges offer a wide range of opportunities where individuals can learn new skills or advance their knowledge. About 1 in 10 people currently enrol in a College each year. Colleges are working to make that 1 in 5 because the education offered by colleges will help ensure that Scotland grows into a nation engaged in lifelong learning, ready and able to support a 21st Century knowledge economy.

Since Colleges became independent incorporated bodies in 1992, they have developed a huge range of activities in partnership with schools. **These are aimed at:**

- > broadening the range of learning opportunities available to students, both those below and above the school leaving age, to include subjects not normally available in school. This includes vocational subjects (such as construction, hairdressing, financial services and care) and specialist academic courses (such as psychology or sociology);
- > giving school students access to facilities and equipment not normally available in schools;
- > enhancing the work of teachers in raising pupils' employability skills; and,
- > letting school-aged students experience an adult environment, which is focussed on supporting learning opportunities for those in Scotland's industrial, commercial and public sectors.

The work Colleges are doing in partnership with schools was acknowledged when Scotland's Government included these aims in its Partnership Agreement of May 2003 and launched a Review to expand and formalise School/Colleges Partnerships.

**Funding was also provided to:**

- > support the development of new 'Skills for Work' qualifications at levels from Intermediate to Higher;
- > compensate Scotland's Colleges for the subsidies they had been providing for school pupils to come to College;
- > expand school/college partnerships to include all colleges and schools; and,
- > fund Careers Scotland for additional work in schools advising on the new opportunities.

In total about £41 million will have been spent across 2005/8 supporting the more than 40,000 school students who attend Colleges each year. As with all work of both Colleges and Schools, Schools / College partnerships are quality assured by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education.

As word gets around about the successful experiences school pupils are having in Colleges, a new issue is emerging – there are not enough places for interested pupils. As Colleges have a primary focus on providing a full range of learning opportunities to the adults who make up 90% of their learners, there are limits to the number of places any particular College can provide to school pupils.

However, Scotland's Colleges are working with their partner schools to address the space and resource issues. Available places in Colleges go, as far as possible, to those who can benefit most from them. College lecturers are also going into schools to teach specialist classes and a number of education authorities have invested in new facilities to support this work.

A message emerging from those who have experienced College while at school is that learning in the work-related context of a vocational subject helps them become better learners. In fact, many who have a College opportunity go on to study more advanced qualifications later. With the diversity of qualifications offered through Colleges, students may choose to pursue part-time or full-time studies, through classes taught conventionally or by distance learning while in work. This in turn opens doors leading to University or to higher level professional qualifications.

With the goal of offering more learners the diverse opportunities available through Colleges, Scotland's Colleges call on the Scotland's Qualifications Framework (the SCQF) to make their offering more flexible and, most importantly, allow all students to gain credit not only from whole qualifications but also from smaller learning opportunities. With further Skills for Work Qualifications in development, and a new approach to learning in schools being developed through the Curriculum for Excellence, it could not be a more exciting time to be a learner in school!