



 Scotland's Colleges

Strategic Plan
2010 - 2012

Scotland's Colleges

Key Purpose

Scotland's Colleges exists to support, represent and promote Scotland's college sector.

Through our work we will:

- seek to prepare and assist the sector deliver its vital contribution to the economic and social needs of Scotland
- serve the ambitions of Scotland's learners and the demands of Scotland's employers
- enhance the sector's national and international reputation.

Introduction

Scotland's Colleges has been established through merger of sector support functions. It has embarked on a process to establish a clear sense of purpose and firm direction for the next planning period. A broad set of expectations have emerged through activities with the constituent parts of previous organisations, within general discussion groups of senior managers, through engagement with all staff and through a series of strategic conversations with sector leaders and stakeholders. These expectations were reflected in a first draft of this strategic plan.

The draft plan was circulated for consultation and subject to independent research. All comments have been considered and have influenced this final version. These processes have also indicated a willingness for continuing engagement with Scotland's Colleges in shaping further plans and delivering strategic intent.

Context

The college sector in Scotland has been described as being at the hub of lifelong learning, education and skills development. Colleges support individuals, communities and businesses to realise their potential and maximise their contribution.

The next three years present particular and significant challenges for colleges. This represents an excellent opportunity for Scotland's Colleges to support the sector in addressing these challenges and continuing to serve Scotland's needs. The main features of the context in which we will operate are listed below.

- New financial challenges for learners, institutions and funding bodies
- Need for stronger, more effective partnership/collaborative working
- Increased sector and institutional ownership of quality enhancement processes
- Changing learner demands and employer needs
- Using learning and information technologies more effectively in enhancing the learner experience and in college operations
- Stronger contribution of colleges to community development
- Stronger contribution of colleges to economic development
- Continuing pressures for structural change within the college sector
- Need for effective succession planning processes to sustain progress
- Stronger international dimension in college activity, student recruitment, quality enhancement processes and learner experience.

Uniquely, we provide:

- Sectoral leadership in developing practice to enhance the learner experience
- Information, guidance and support to enable next practice developments
- Valued services at multiple levels across the sector to achieve sustainable change
- A single source of authoritative information and intelligence about the college sector in Scotland
- A straightforward means to engage with the college sector in Scotland.

Structure of the Draft Plan

In addition to a key purpose for Scotland's Colleges, there is a statement of commitments. These statements reflect the strong desire within Scotland's Colleges to provide service to our members and they deserve expression in the plan. These statements act both as an expansion of our key purpose and a summary of our actions against each outcome.

We have expressed our intentions in the form of outcomes to which we will contribute through working with the college sector and its stakeholders. This reflects our desire to shift from the customer/supplier relationship of previous organisations to one which is characterised by partnership with member colleges and stakeholders. We wish to be OF the sector as well as FOR the sector and these outcomes reflect common purpose.

For each outcome, a short context is provided and the role of Scotland's Colleges is articulated. A set of actions to which Scotland's Colleges commits is provided with linkages to the outcomes of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Corporate Plan identified.

Statement of Commitments

We will:

- Work in partnership with the Scottish Funding Council for Further and Higher Education and contribute to achievement of outcomes in the SFC Corporate Plan.
- Promote and sustain creative and innovative practices in learning, teaching and curriculum to ensure college learners are successful in learning, life and work.
- Promote and sustain effective governance, leadership and management to develop our colleges' strong strategic direction, to enhance leadership at all levels and to empower staff across the sector.
- Promote and sustain the sector's position as a vital component of Scotland's learning system by developing national and international representation and a knowledge base of relevant research to inform sector perspectives, national policy and college practice.
- Maintain key partnerships and we will always focus on the needs of the college sector in Scotland and the learners it serves.
- Strengthen our international perspectives to reinforce the global reputation of our colleges, to benchmark sector activities and to identify opportunities.
- Create and maintain a sustainable, effective and respected organisation that has deep engagement with the wider college sector.
- Relentlessly pursue maximum benefit for the public funding for which we are responsible.

Outcome 1

Successful College Learners

Context

Colleges accept ownership of the quality of learner experience and learner success. According to baseline reports from the Scottish Funding Council and, as measured by qualifications attained and progression routes followed, learners in Scotland's colleges are successful. Sustaining that success in a dynamic environment with changing learner profiles, broader skills demands and qualifications structures is a major challenge.

Role

The role of Scotland's Colleges will be to provide infrastructure to enable access to information, support resources, practice and trends which prepare colleges and their staff for the future. Working in partnership with its support agency and other mechanisms, institutional practice moves forward with coherence across the sector.

Actions

Scotland's Colleges will:

- Provide a subject-based infrastructure which supports quality enhancement of learning and teaching
- Shift practice to realise the aims of major curriculum reforms such as Curriculum for Excellence and National Qualifications
- Enable practice development to meet specific policy intentions
- Interpret policy requirements and promote good practice in implementation
- Enhance understanding of key aspects of learning and teaching to underpin next practice.

SFC Outcomes

Outcome 1: Employability and skills

Outcome 2: Access, inclusion and progression

- Provide information, support and learning resources which enable practitioners to adopt next practice;
- Lead debate, discussion and development activity on key pedagogic issues (eg. assessment, personalised learning, use of ICT)
- Work with partners such as Scottish Government, SQA, HMIE and Skills Development Scotland to inform future curriculum needs
- Support institutional-led review processes.

SFC Outcomes

Outcome 1: Employability and skills

Outcome 2: Access, inclusion and progression

Outcome 3: Knowledge exchange

Outcome 3

Strong Management, Leadership and Governance

Context

Scotland benefits from a college sector which is effective, responsive and accountable. The quality of management, leadership and governance has been instrumental in achieving this goal as evidenced, for example, in Audit Scotland's *Financial overview of Scotland's colleges 2006/07* published in April 2008. The challenges of the future are to sustain this position through good succession planning processes and to move up to the next level as required by contemporary demands on public services.

Role

There is collective interest in the quality of management, leadership and governance arrangements. The role of Scotland's Colleges will be, through challenging development activities based on authoritative future perspectives, to raise the quality of management, leadership and governance.

Action

Scotland's Colleges will:

- Produce and maintain an authoritative perspective of next generation governance, leadership and management to influence future development programmes
- Deliver support and development experiences for management, leadership and governance which reflects best practice in public service
- Support the continuing work of colleges in promoting equality and diversity
- Develop practitioner networks further to achieve greater impact on practice in colleges
- Support colleges implement effective processes of talent management and succession planning.

SFC Outcomes

Outcome 3: Knowledge exchange

Outcome 4: Specialism and diversity

Outcome 5: Collaboration

Outcome 7: Effective Colleges and Universities

Outcome 2

Modern, Relevant and Vital College Curriculum

Context

Colleges are autonomous institutions which determine their curriculum offer through sound analysis of local needs and national policy demands. Given reports on employer satisfaction concerning the work readiness of college graduates HMIE's positive summary in *Improving Scottish Education* (January 2009) and views of graduates themselves determined through the On-Track surveys, the college curriculum is fit for purpose. It has achieved that through a high degree of responsiveness to the changing environment.

Role

The role of Scotland's Colleges will be to work with colleges in sustaining the necessary capacity which reduces the lead time between future need and current provision.

Action

Scotland's Colleges will:

- Support processes in which contemporary issues (eg. equality, sustainability, employability, enterprise) are embedded in curriculum design, planning and delivery
- Promote innovation and creativity in curriculum design, planning and delivery

Outcome 4

Confident Contribution to the Nation's Economic and Social Life

Context

Scotland's Government vision is for a coherent system in which learners move seamlessly through constituent parts of that system and where constituent parts give full consideration to system perspectives in their planning processes. Colleges are acknowledged as a key element within that system. College influence is directed through various mechanisms; for example, community planning processes. Colleges make an increasingly valued contribution to the economy through strengthening employer relationships. The outputs from our system are increasingly being judged using international comparisons. This global context affords opportunities for the sector given its relative maturity.

Role

The role of Scotland's Colleges will be to ensure the sector's practice and interests are represented at national level and support the development of key aspects of systems development.

Action

Scotland's Colleges will:

- Provide strategic advice, information and support to the Chairs' Congress and Principals' Convention to ensure they achieve their goals
- Influence activities of other elements of the learning system and Scotland's public services to reflect the work and aspirations of colleges
- Develop methodologies to identify college contribution in public value terms and encourage public value approaches to accountability
- Promote the sector's achievements and potential nationally and internationally
- Facilitate sector responses to relevant national workforce development needs and support development of college practices to meet these needs
- Represent practice of Scotland's colleges to all key national stakeholders
- Build a knowledge base of relevant research to inform sector perspectives, national policy, institutional planning and college practice
- Develop international practice to support benchmarking and development activity
- Build the Scotland's Colleges International brand and support college consortia make international contributions to vocational education provision.

SFC Outcomes

Outcome 3: Knowledge exchange

Outcome 4: Specialism and diversity

Outcome 5: Collaboration

Outcome 7: Effective Colleges and Universities

Outcome 5

Excellent Support Agency

Context

College services, like many public services, are best delivered through well-resourced autonomous institutions with strong links both to employers and to the local communities which they serve. The college sector is a national service with a local delivery focus. Like many such services, colleges value collective activity through its own strategic development agency to provide a range of services tailored to their specific needs.

Role

The work undertaken through recent merger processes has created the foundations in Scotland's Colleges for strengthened support to the sector. The sector has high expectations of its support agency in terms of quality of service and the business processes which it operates. The challenge for the Scotland's Colleges is to model excellent practice.

Action

Scotland's Colleges will:

- Secure sustainable funding streams
- Achieve high standards of strategic leadership through effective governance arrangements and a strong executive team
- Implement planning processes based on sound environmental analysis and deep engagement with the sector
- Operate management processes to ensure demanding goals are met
- Provide a healthy and stimulating environment for staff to deliver to high quality and develop their own skills and expertise
- Ensure effective skills utilisation
- Establish a robust performance framework to report on its work to its members and stakeholders.

SFC Outcomes

Outcome 1: Employability and skills

Outcome 2: Access, inclusion and progression

Outcome 3: Knowledge exchange

Outcome 4: Specialism and diversity

Outcome 5: Collaboration

Outcome 7: Effective Colleges and Universities



Scotland's Colleges is a trading name of both the Scottish Further Education Unit and the Association of Scotland's Colleges.

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