
Review of the skills delivery landscape

Introduction

1. This paper will provide the Committee with an overview of the Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape including the purpose and scope, terms of reference, timescales and SFC engagement.

Background

2. The Scottish Government (SG) announced an Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape in Scotland in late September. The review has been initiated to ensure that the public body landscape for skills is fit to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future and the ambitions of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET).
3. The review will be led by an independent advisor, James Withers, formerly CEO of Scotland Food and Drink, who will be supported by a secretariate from Fair Work, Employability and Skills in SG.
4. The advisor is independent and is accountable to the Scottish Ministers for their actions and decisions. Advice will be provided directly to Scottish Ministers and the final report will be published by the SG.
5. The review comes at a time of significant change in the skills landscape and a challenging fiscal environment. There is increasing recognition of the need to embed technical, professional and work-based learning pathways more systematically within the education and skills system to ensure provision meets the needs of learners and employers and serves the economy and wider society, now and in the future.
6. This change requires greater collaboration on skills planning, work-based learning and training programme delivery, including careers services and apprenticeships across agencies and institutions in the wider skills and education ecosystem.

Timelines and activity

7. The review will commence in September 2022 and will conclude by Spring 2023.

Dates	Activity
September to end October 2022	Developing an understanding of existing landscape – structures, roles, functions; desk research available evidence

October to end of 2022	Broad engagement with range of stakeholders including learners, delivery partners and user groups; call for evidence exercise
Early 2023	More targeted engagement
Spring 2023	Publication of recommendations

Purpose

8. The purpose of the review is to make recommendations on how the skills delivery public body and advisory landscape could be adapted to drive forward the objectives and outcomes of NSET and the SG response to the SFC review.
9. It seeks to ensure that Scotland's workforce can support the just transition to net zero and that all learners have the opportunities to develop the skills they need to equip them for rewarding careers by: enabling further embedding of careers guidance, work-based learning pathways and apprenticeships within the senior phase and wider post-school education system; optimising the system for upskilling and reskilling; and enhancing the role of industry and government priorities in projecting and articulating anticipated future skills requirements and informing and shaping provision.

Scope

10. The review will:
 - focus on the functions and remit of Skills Development Scotland (SDS), its role within the wider skills system, and its interface with other agencies, in particular the SFC, the enterprise agencies, and the new education and qualifications bodies.
 - make specific recommendations about agency and advisory body roles with respect to:
 - the governance and operation of apprenticeship programmes including the funding and contracting of apprenticeships
 - the design, development and approval of apprenticeship frameworks including the role and status of the Apprenticeship Approvals Group (AAG)
 - the development and management of National Occupational Standards (NOS) and the commissioning of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)
 - contracting and quality assurance of skills provision through independent training providers, particularly to support upskilling and retraining
 - sector and regional skills planning including producing and communicating labour market research and insights and measuring whether planning leads to improved alignment and better outcomes

- ways to work with the proposed Careers Coalition to embed itself as part of the skills system and enable the recommendations of the Careers Review to be taken forward
 - how to support young people to develop their skills and experience to prepare them for the world of work and ensure that every young person has the option of a positive post-school destination
 - support for employers and industry with workforce planning and talent attraction and retention for future skills needs
 - supporting employers to shape, inform, encourage, and invest in skills and education provision, including the role and status of the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) and the employer led Developing the Young Workforce regional groups to best enable them to continue their roles as part of the skills system
- make recommendations on the future functions, remit and status of SDS within the wider public body landscape.

11. The review will not:

- duplicate, wider reform recommendations and review work that is underway including the outcomes of the Muir Report, the Hayward Review and the steps previously set out for taking forward the recommendations of the SFC Review and the Careers Review.
- report on the performance to date of SDS or other skills delivery bodies. It will, however, take account of Strategic Plans and associated performance frameworks, and the work undertaken by SDS and the SFC in relation to organisational effectiveness and transformation.
- be driven by a pursuit of cost efficiencies, however its recommendations should align with those priorities set out in the Resource Spending Review (RSR), published on 31 May, and should not present options which will be more costly for the public purse or diminish the service to those people and organisations in whose interests the body exists in the first place.
- SFC welcomes this Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape and the opportunity to engage with the independent advisor. The scope aligns with our own Review of Tertiary Education and Research which recommended a more systematic way to how we collectively plan coherent tertiary education, skills provision and investment, so that it responds better to current and future needs of pupils, students, employers, and broader economic and social drivers.

Alignment with SFC's Review of Tertiary Education and Research and Strategic Plan

12. The key purpose of the review of the skills delivery landscape aligns to the recommendations of SFC's review that have been endorsed by SG Ministers and to the aims and objectives outlined in our new Strategic Plan.
13. Our review:
 - recommended a more systematic way to how we collectively plan coherent tertiary education, skills provision and investment, so that it responds better to current and future needs of pupils, students, employers and broader economic and social drivers.
 - acknowledged the importance of apprenticeships and committed to work with SDS, the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) and providers to assess demand in the system, evaluate effective practice, equity of provision, pedagogy, the development of future provision and delivery, whilst further embedding in the wider education and skills offer.
 - recommended developing a single quality assurance and enhancement framework for tertiary education, to uphold academic standards, and enhance the learning experience of all students. The new tertiary quality framework will cover SFC fundable work-based provision including Foundation and Graduate Apprenticeships delivered by colleges and universities. Our work on the framework will ensure our review mechanisms appropriately explore, assure and enhance the experience and outcomes for learners on work-based learning. We are also looking to develop the model of student engagement in quality so that it covers students on apprenticeships.
14. In addition the scope is reflective of the aim and objectives of our forthcoming Strategic Plan which aims to **Build a connected, agile, sustainable tertiary education and research system for Scotland** through enabling people to learn and flourish and by building a responsive, coherent, sustainable system

SFC engagement

15. Mike Cantlay, Chair SFC, and Karen Watt, CEO SFC, met with James Withers on the 6th October. The purpose of this initial meeting was to provide the Independent Advisor with a broad understanding of SFC's mission. We are in discussions with the secretariat regarding future meetings and stakeholder engagement.

Recommendations

16. The SEAL Committee is invited to note the content of this paper.

Publication

17. This paper will be published on the SFC website.

Further information

18. Contact: Sharon Drysdale, Deputy Director, Work Based Learning and Skills Programmes
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