REGIONAL PATHFINDERS

Regional Tertiary Pathfinders: Curriculum Thematic Report

Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

Contents

Executive Summary

Scotland's colleges and universities are key delivery agents of education and skills and are required to make decisions on an ongoing basis about their course and portfolio offer, curriculum and pedagogy and to adapt and shape this in response to demand and need.

The key role of the Pathfinder pilot projects was to bring regional partners together and for institutions to jointly plan, shape and deliver appropriate course provision and education pathways that align with, and respond to, identified regional economic and skills priorities, meet employer needs and which will also be attractive to learners, secure a significant uptake (pipeline) and provide a smooth learner journey.

We have seen from our early work across the two Pathfinder regions that colleges and universities must balance a range of issues when making decisions on courses, curriculum offers and pathways. In addition to responding to regional and national skills needs, they must also take account of learner needs and choices, respond to specific industry sectors, consider more local, community-based needs, ensure alignment with their strategic priorities (which for universities will include their international/global offer) and take account of funding considerations (sustainability).

The Pilot Projects

The SFC Pathfinders in the North East (NE) and South of Scotland have been exploring the potential for enhanced strategic planning and decision making at a regional level. Seven colleges and universities across the two regions have been collaborating, along with other regional partners, on pilot projects to deliver coherent, attractive and sustainable education pathways and provision that align with current and emerging regional skills priorities and needs of the economy.

This report focuses specifically on how colleges and universities in the two regions review, plan and jointly deliver new curriculum/course provision and/ or smoother more efficient pathways in response to identified regional needs.

In the North East of Scotland

- North East Scotland College (NESCol)
- Robert Gordon University (RGU)
- The University of Aberdeen

In the South of Scotland

- Borders College
- Dumfries and Galloway College
- SRUC
- University of the West of Scotland

The aims of all seven pilot projects were consistent with the aim of the Pathfinders Programme.

Align provision to societal and employer needs

Enhance coherence and sustainability across provision

Provide simpler pathways and better outcomes for learners

The collaborative approach to curriculum review and planning taken by each of the seven Pathfinder pilot projects has established innovative and creative ways for regional partners to work together. The pilot projects have shown flexibility in how new provision and pathways are agreed and assured and are responsive to regional needs.

This report highlights the benefits for all stakeholders when colleges, universities and other regional partners work in partnership to consider educational responses to current and emerging skills needs. It considers the enablers to make this happen but also the emerging issues and challenges and how partners have worked to address them.

Key Messages

Responsive, innovative and flexible

The collaborative approach to curriculum review and planning taken by each of the seven pilot projects has established innovative and creative ways for regional partners to work together. The pilot projects have shown responsiveness to regional needs and flexibility in how new provision and pathways are agreed and assured.

A shared aim

Change is enabled when staff are brought together with focus and purpose around a shared agenda and a joint endeavour, in this case to enhance and shift courses to align with regional needs and build smoother pathways for learners.

Sharing expertise and insights

Working together to share expertise and insights was evident not just in curriculum development but across other key functions such as marketing, data sharing and communications. The feedback from the cross-institution groups working together demonstrated growing trust, commitment, enthusiasm and an appetite to build on the practices established.

Collaborating and coming together to plan regionally for greater coherence and impact

The evidence suggests that this is a firm foundation for future regional, tertiary partnership working within the two regions. It has been for the institutions to express what tertiary means in their region, and in the context of their experience of collaboration. Tertiary oversight of curriculum planning and responses as seen through the work of the Pathfinders projects has the potential to more effectively align provision with emerging skills needs and facilitate more coherent pathways.

Some institutions who have worked together to deliver pilot projects have expressed a desire to enhance their "tertiary-ness" as a result of recent successful curriculum collaboration and to consider their joint role within a regional system. Others consider they already have an institutional and regional approach to tertiary provision that works for them and their region.

Introduction

Through its ongoing work on assurance, outcomes and quality, SFC has a good understanding and knowledge of the portfolio and course offer of institutions and the decisions they make to prioritise provision and to meet the needs of all stakeholders. We know that this is a dynamic process because the environment in which colleges, universities and stakeholders, including employers, are operating evolves and shifts all the time.

Curriculum planning

Curriculum planning is as much about the pedagogical approach as it is the academic subject area of study. For the purposes of this work, we use curriculum in the first instance in relation to the knowledge and skills specific to an academic or subject/course area. However, we will also refer to pedagogy, as this was raised by sector colleagues in relation to course delivery and opportunities for the development of meta-skills, competencies, and attributes that prepare learners for the workplace, and to realise their future potential.

In a discussion paper on Skills Alignment in 2022, Professor Ewart Keep notes that alignment of course provision to meet regional skills priorities can be thought of in two main ways:

1. Adjusting the pattern of course provision to bring the output of the skills supply system more closely in line with demands from employers in the labour market (over a variety of time frames) eg number of courses, where/when delivery.
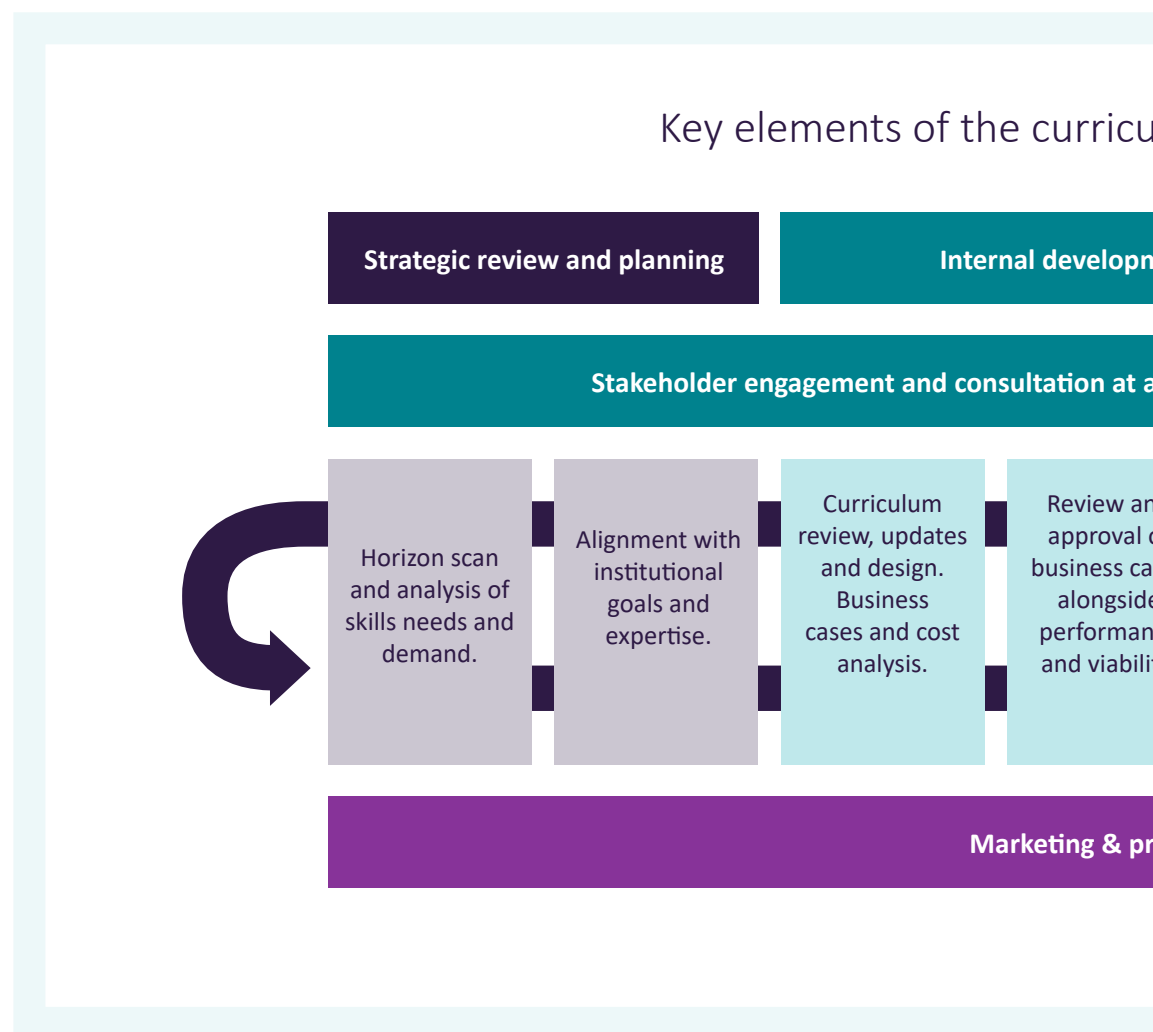
2. Adjusting the curricula and pedagogy of courses to ensure that they match the needs of employers and the labour market (now and the future).

Photo: Dumfries and Galloway College

Previous thinking about skills alignment has tended to focus on the first of these. This might lead some observers to think that only short-term interventions and initiatives by colleges and universities are about responses to skills needs. Although this has its place, looking at alignment of education and skills through the adjustment described at the second is equally important, particularly in ensuring delivery of the vision for the longer-term system change described in the SFC Review.

The vision of a responsive, coherent system that best meets the needs of learners, employers and Scotland as a whole requires a planning process that enables institutions to assess how the regional and national skills and education system is functioning; to set and review their own objectives and mission; to assess their current and future provision and offer in terms of courses and volume, to identify priorities for new or different provision or to adapt existing provision.

Key elements of the curricu

Strategic review and planning	Internal developm

Stakeholder engagement and consultation at a

Horizon scan and analysis of skills needs and demand.

Alignment with institutional goals and expertise.

Curriculum review, updates and design. Business cases and cost analysis.

Review an approval o business ca alongside performan and viabili
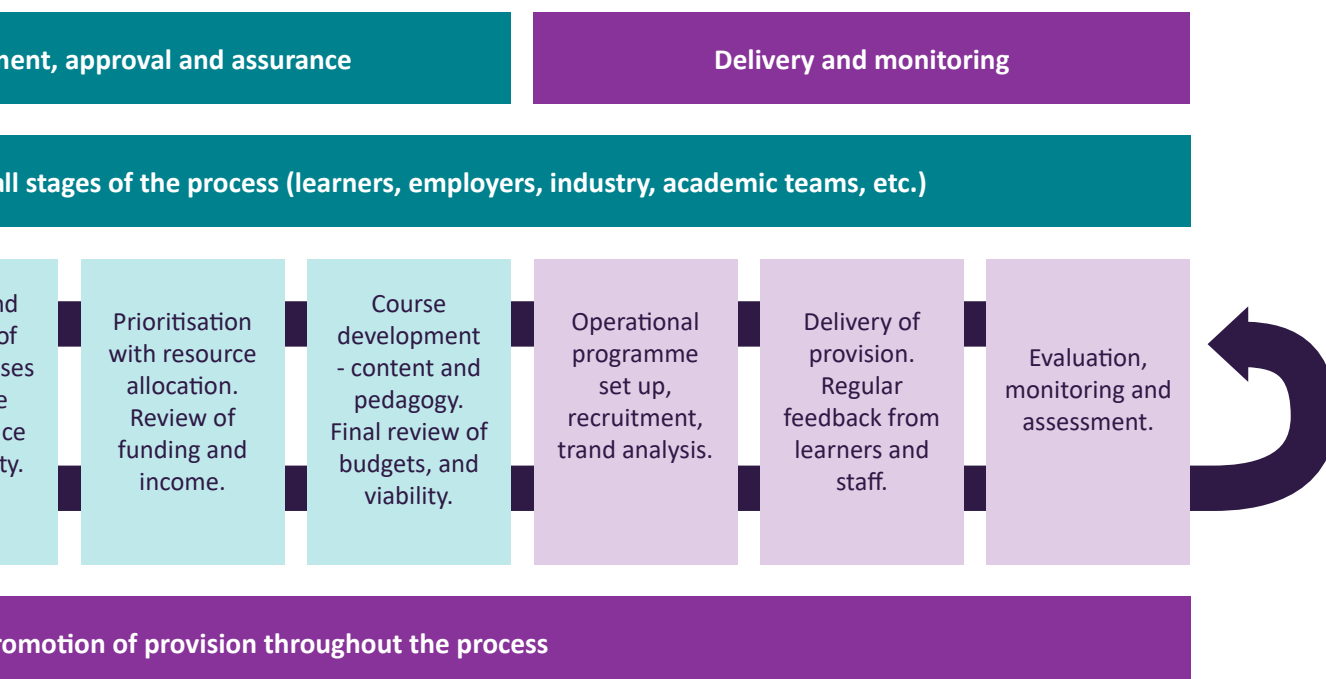
Marketing & pr

The curriculum review and planning process

From our early work to better understand the curriculum review and planning process work, we produced a diagram of the generic stages and elements of work involved in curriculum planning and review in colleges and universities, presented as three phases. Although there were differences at a granular level across institutions, it was recognised by all partners as representing the curriculum review and planning process at a high level in both colleges and universities. The diagram created a shared understanding and was a good starting point for the study and engagement with the sector. (more detail on this in our report on the Curriculum Review and Planning Process in Colleges and Universities)

The diagram below highlights the key elements of the curriculum review, planning and development process, adapted from the Department of Education, A Practical guide to effective practice in curriculum planning 2023.

lum review, planning and development process

| nt, approval and assurance | Delivery and monitoring |

ll stages of the process (learners, employers, industry, academic teams, etc.)

| nd of ses e ce ty. | Prioritisation with resource allocation. Review of funding and income. | Course development - content and pedagogy. Final review of budgets, and viability. | Operational programme set up, recruitment, trand analysis. | Delivery of provision. Regular feedback from learners and staff. | Evaluation, monitoring and assessment. |

romotion of provision throughout the process

The diagram above was adapted from the Department for Education, A Practical guide to effective practice in curriculum planning 2023

This work illustrated the following:

Evidence based strategic review

Evidence from the study suggests there has been a shift in the approach taken by colleges and universities to curriculum review and planning, with even more emphasis on horizon scanning and evidence-based decision-making balanced with institutional insight, purpose and mission. This approach is referred to by institutions as 'top-down and bottom-up'. The shift has been evident over the last 5-10 years and is ongoing.

Responsive and flexible

Colleges and universities work closely with all key stakeholders and ensure they are well-placed to respond to current and emerging skills need through their curriculum planning process. We heard many examples of this partnership working on curriculum and course provision during the covid-19 pandemic and beyond, through upskilling, reskilling and the development of Micro Credentials.

Engagement with Employers

Colleges and universities are increasingly working with employers in the review, design, delivery and evaluation of courses and programmes of study and it is clear that their input helps to ensure students have the appropriate knowledge and skills to meet employer needs and are "workplace ready". The focus is to understand the skills and competencies required for both current workforce needs and emerging jobs of the future. This is reflected in changes to the curriculum.

Collaborative – Local Authorities and Schools

Colleges, and universities, work with schools and local authorities to "influence the influencers" and ensure wider understanding and take up of new course provision and pathways that lead to jobs. This is particularly effective where colleges and universities work in partnership.

Photo: Borders College

Preparing students to thrive in the future

All the institutions in our study were keen to share details with us about how they prioritised the integration of meta-skills or graduate attributes into the curriculum design and pedagogical approaches. Their focus is on developing a holistic offer to develop a wider set of skills, competencies and attributes for learners, preparing them to thrive in their future endeavours, particularly as they move into the workplace.

An understanding of the processes that individual institutions have in place was a precursor to then understanding how more intensive collaboration at a regional level, as illustrated through the seven pilot projects delivered within the two Pathfinder regions, might lead to the delivery of more coherent, well communicated and sustainable education provision and pathways that align with regional, and national, economic and skills priorities. This regional, tertiary collaboration included colleges, universities, local authorities, skills and enterprise agencies and other key stakeholders.

A place-based approach

Taking a place-based approach, our priority in the Pathfinders Programme was to understand how institutions and other stakeholders working collaboratively to review and plan for changes to their curriculum can more effectively meet regional skills needs. However, we understand that when taking strategic curriculum decisions, regional priorities co-exist with national priorities (and sometimes international/global), and alongside the needs of the learner, the community and industry sectors, and the future sustainability of the institution. We identified the six lenses of coherent learning provision, included at Annex 1, to further understand and contextualise these often-competing demands.

Focusing on the learning from the collaborative Pathfinder pilot projects, we wanted to consider and learn how approaches had worked at a regional level, and how the education and skills system functions and responds in partnership to develop and deliver curriculum responses to meet skills needs and to enhance the learner journey.

Overall, we look to identify what is considered good practice in collaborative curriculum planning and design, what could be enhanced in the future, and, drawing on the experience of the seven Pathfinder pilots, the impact of place-based, collaborative approaches, that place a priority on coherent provision that aligns with skills and education priorities.

This report shares the learning from the Pathfinders work.

Learning from the Pathfinder Pilot Projects

In this report we focus on the seven pilot projects from the two Pathfinder regions to highlight how colleges, universities and key partners have worked together to develop new curriculum/course provision and pathways to qualifications and jobs in response to regional needs. We focus on how they have collaboratively approached the challenging aspects around curriculum review and planning referred to earlier, and the difference this has made to getting it right for the region, for learners and for partners.

It is important to recognise that the ethos of the Pathfinder Programme was 'learning by doing'. All seven pilot projects had a different starting point, and a different focus based on evidence of regional need, although there were similarities across some initiatives. All had a different set of existing relationships to build on and all had different expertise and resources to bring to the table.

We look at each project individually, focusing on the key aspects of their curriculum planning, development and delivery which contributed to success and then collate key learning.

Finally, we summarise emerging good practice in collaborative, regional provision planning from the seven projects and consider the presenting evidence that suggests an appetite across institutions and partners to grow and enhance this approach in both regions within delineated boundaries.

Photo: University of the West of Scotland

National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA):
Energy Transition Skills Interactive Pathway

Project partners involved: Robert Gordon University (RGU), the University of Aberdeen (UoA) and North East Scotland College (NESCol), supported by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Energy Transition Zone Ltd (ETZ)

Synopsis

This project responded to recommendations from NESA's Just Transition Fund work and also aligns with RGU's Making the Switch Report on the need for skills and capability development of the workforce, upskilling opportunities, transferability of skills, and to urgently fill the gaps across the low carbon energy industry.

Poor information and lack of awareness on education pathways and careers in the energy sector was seen as a critical barrier to future growth. The aim of the project was to develop an interactive pathway tool which mapped and clearly communicated the specific low-carbon energy jobs emerging in the region, qualifications and skills required, the pathways/education routes to get there and to attract a pipeline of talent for the future.

The tool would also seek to address some of the issues surrounding the perceived poor information about jobs in the energy industry and help address the negative connotations and perceived lack of attractiveness of an energy related career. It would be accessible and engaging and reach out to individuals looking to join, re-enter, transition into new roles or progress their careers within the sector.

This project was delivered via NESA, a not-for-profit organisation, which provides a single point of contact for the energy industry to access a wide range of training and skills programmes and R&D capabilities across institutions in the North East of Scotland. All three education institutions were key partners, with support from SDS and ETZ.

NESA and partners announced the launch of the pilot tool in spring 2024 and put in place a clear evaluation strategy to inform future developments.

Delivery approach

• The project tapped into NESA's established industry partnerships to leverage knowledge and expertise to identify specific skills needs and demands for future low carbon energy jobs. Dedicated workshops, part of the Just Transition work, brought employers, academics and teaching staff together to share and understand data and intelligence around current and future skills needs.

• NESA partners delivery/working groups utilised the wider data available on trends for the energy sector, information from the employer and industry engagement, and their own local/regional knowledge of the industry to prioritise the job roles to be included in the toolkit and the qualifications and skills required. This top-down, bottom up approach to planning for curriculum and pathways identified current skills provision and gaps and how to address them.

Photo: Robert Gordon University

- Cross institution curriculum groups were set up to review, validate and map the relevant course pathways linked to the priority areas - focusing on the entry, exit and transition points between partners, the modes of delivery, and details around credits and industry accreditation. This mapping identified where specific courses were delivered, and where accelerated pathways might be possible.

- Engagement with potential learners through youth group workshops, and community group meetings, helped inform priorities and the format of the tool.

Key learning

The project demonstrated the advantages of delivery via NESA, an established collaborative third party. NESA provided a ready-made governance structure to support the project development and delivery of the curriculum and pathways. NESA partners built on established connections and mutual trust across partner education institutions, skills bodies, sector employers and industry development. There was no obvious conflict of interest and a win/win relationship was established. This established an open working environment and the support and authorisation to innovate.

> **"NESA and its partners have demonstrated their ability to deliver skills programmes that support the regional economic requirements of the North East of Scotland, while responding to critical barriers to growth in the energy sector." (Senior Officer, NESA partnership, Final Project Report)**

Industry engagement was critical in prioritising the specific job roles and outlining the future workforce needs of the low carbon energy sector. This was possible through the dedicated workshops, part of the Just Transition work

> **"It took considerable time and effort to establish the industry engagement... this work has been beneficial and provided the basis for fruitful on-going industry relationships for NESA. These relationships are leveraged on a daily basis to expand NESA's reach and impact." (Senior Officer, NESA partnership, Final Project Report)**

All partners were clearly signed up to jointly meet the future needs of the energy sector. They worked to ensure sustainability of the industry, building on priority curriculum areas, highlighting qualifications and skills and mapping dedicated pathways into jobs.

Although initially the tool covers only six low carbon energy jobs/roles, the early evaluation has shown that it has been well received and there is scope to extend the job roles should funding be available and also to duplicate the approach in other subject/industry areas.

Enhancing the Senior Phase

Project partners involved: NESCol, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, RGU, University of Aberdeen

Synopsis

This project set out to enhance the senior phase across the NE to better meet the needs of learners and the regional economy. The key partners made a commitment to work together to develop meaningful and engaging course options with clear support and pathways from school to college and school to university into positive destinations.

Recognising and building on the strength of the existing partnership working in the NE, established over many years, the focus of the pilot activity was on three specific tests of change. The project set out to develop, pilot and evaluate the impact of the following:

- a meaningful alternative to S4 at school for winter leavers, providing opportunities for young people to access a positive destination – such as a higher-level College course or employment;

- HNC Level 7 opportunities to appropriate senior phase S6 pupils, with articulation options on completion, with the pupil able to continue as part of a school community;

- a regional strategic working group involving all key partners, to authorise and drive a more cohesive, innovative approach to senior phase in the future, enhancing outcomes for learners and for the NE economy.

Delivering curriculum responses and smoother pathways

- A focus on evidence-based decision making, with data sharing agreements agreed across partners to facilitate joint analysis and understanding of data.

- Key stakeholder engagement, and involvement from other partners, such as DYW NE and SDS, provided insight and data to inform NESCol's offer.

- Short life working groups/staff teams with the right skills and experience were established to plan, develop, pilot and evaluate the new course initiatives.

- Partners looked for pragmatic, constructive solutions to challenges that arose. They were able to align timetables across the region to support access and ensure the right learners were identified, engaged and supported.

- Joint communication and marketing approaches to reach young people and those that influence their decisions. This has involved marketing teams from the institutions working together to deliver joint messaging and a coordinated approach.

Key learning

This project built on existing partnerships established over many years and brought partners together to work towards a shared goal – to improve pathways from school to college, school to university and on to a job.

Throughout this project partners acknowledged that one of the biggest challenges to senior phase provision is a lack of awareness of options and pathways across a key group of staff who influence the choices students make during this phase of their learning. This lack of awareness is not unique to one specific group of stakeholders, but is true of teachers, parents/carers and pupils.

A key focus of the project has been to raise awareness of the new and exciting pathways that have been developed alongside the established and comprehensive offer and to influence the influencers. This has included all partners.

> **"Through this work, effective methods of awareness raising have been identified: in-person and virtual information sessions; social media; digital marketing; promotional material; joint approaches to reinforce messaging."**

The College and its university partners delivered a pathways information event for guidance teachers in autumn 2024 – some of the most important influencers for school leavers. They plan to build on this and make it an annual event.

Despite the wide range of awareness raising approaches identified and trialled, this is an ongoing challenge. All partners have committed to continue to work together to raise awareness of all senior phase and post-school progression pathways within the region.

The experience of those students engaged in the pilots means they have an enhanced leaver portfolio that will be beneficial to them as they move on to the next stage of learning or work. Whether they are HNC learners progressing to College or university study, or winter leavers entering the world of work, they will be more prepared for these next steps because of their College experience. Ongoing evaluation is looking at what has worked well and what might need to change for future delivery.

> **"Though the tangible success of our tests of change remain to be seen, we can view the rollout of an enhanced S6 HNC offer and the creation of an ambitious Winter Leaver Programme as legacies of this project. These offers (curriculum and pathways) have been established through thorough planning, research and collaboration."**
> **(Senior Manager, Final Project Report)**

The Strategic Working Group will be instrumental in authorising and enabling the future senior phase development work and for agreeing a more coordinated and equitable approach across the region, based on sound knowledge and understanding of educational opportunities and impact.

Photo: North East Scotland College

Enhancing and Coordinating the Region's Simulation Infrastructure for Health and Social Care Education

Project partners involved: RGU, University of Aberdeen, NESCol with NHS Grampian and Social Care partners

Synopsis

Simulation-based learning used effectively and proportionately can support learning and assessment, contribute to address insufficient placement opportunities for students (in line with regulatory requirements) and to support an increase in the volume of students entering and qualifying across the span of the workforce, from healthcare workers through to advanced practitioners.

The overall aim of this project was to address the lack of coherent planning and provision to meet the health and social care simulation needs across the region.

The Regional Simulation Infrastructure Working Group, with membership across the three institutions in the North East, Moray University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), NHS Grampian and local health and social care partnerships, worked together to build a baseline of existing simulation provision and consider and plan future requirements.

This information was critical to inform coherent regional planning and provision of simulation infrastructure in the region and simplify the simulation landscape. The data base created included an overview of the provision, resources available, needs for simulation education in the region, gaps and opportunities to support existing and incoming staff in the region to have access to the simulation infrastructure throughout their learning and career pathways.

Delivering curriculum responses and smoother pathways

• The Regional Simulation Infrastructure Group was responsible for joint data collection and resource mapping, to identify the simulation resources available across the region and gather qualitative data on their utilisation, including which students were receiving some of their education through simulation and where the providers thought there was unmet need.

- A Simulation Strategic Plan (Road Map) was developed by partners to outline and agree the vision and strategic objectives for simulation education in the region.

- Initiatives and events to communicate and promote health and social care careers and pathways in the region using the simulation resources available was key. This included routes straight from school to university and articulation routes via college courses.

- Curriculum teams came together from Nursing, Pharmacy and Life Sciences and Sports Science to deliver joint initiatives and events to enhance and promote articulation agreements in place for students looking to progress from college to university advanced entry.

- The Grampian Interprofessional Simulation Group was set up to improve outcomes for learners and institutions through the enhanced co-ordination of resources (physical or teaching) across the region and improve the efficiency for institutions. It is expected that through ongoing collaboration, this Group will help to delivery coherent planning and provision of simulation needs for the region in the future.

Key learning

Simulation provides a crucial learning environment and experience in preparing the health and social care workforce of the future and upskilling them. It is also an expensive part of health education and skills development because it requires facilitation, time and trained educators. The collaborative approach to collecting and analysing data on health care education simulation has enabled a common understanding of the resources and provision available across the region. It provides the evidence and understanding for more effective utilisation.

> **"Data collection showed that training using simulation is very active for many professions both in education institutions and within employment settings. However, partners assessed the amount of unmet need as very high with potentially thousands of students per year likely to benefit from more simulation education if there was the capacity to deliver it. " (Senior Manager, Final project report)**

Bringing the right health and social care partners and professionals together to identify the learning and teaching opportunities through simulation facilitated a collaborative approach to developing the future skills for the region.

Information events organised by the joint working groups were hugely successful. The Careers in Health event raised awareness of the varied job roles available in the region for individuals interested in a career in healthcare and the Foundation Apprenticeship Simulation Day was a great success and will be built on in future.

> **"It provided a showcase for different professions and a rich opportunity for school students to 'experience' different health and social care professions." (Senior Manager, Final Project Report)**

Partners will continue to collaborate in how they reach out and communicate to learners, and those that influence their career choices, to raise awareness on health and care opportunities and pathways.

The Grampian Interprofessional Simulation Group was set up to enable professionals in this field to prioritise the coordination of resources and enable a joint approach to improvement and efficiency of learning opportunities and resources in simulation education. It is a key legacy of this project.

Developing demand-led, aligned and sustainable pathways

Project partners involved: NESCol and RGU

Synopsis

This Project set out to intensify the existing partnership arrangements between North East Scotland College (NESCol) and The Robert Gordon University (RGU), to establish an industry-informed and student-centred sustainable education and skills infrastructure within the North East of Scotland that would be agile and responsive to both the challenges currently facing the region, and the opportunities of the future.

The priority was the development of a more relevant, shared course portfolio to respond to regional and national skills needs, and learner pathways in key strategic areas that would enable learners to transition seamlessly from college to university and into the workplace. At the same time to increase their community reach and produce a more effective and efficient approach to widening access and participation.

The Project has stimulated new collaborative practice, between teams who have previously not been connected, and the introduction of new course initiatives to support the student learning experience and journey. The college and university can already evidence a broader portfolio of progression pathways, as a result of the work carried out by the project teams. The project has seen the introduction of a number of new courses, modules and articulation routes which have been mapped and approved by senior colleagues at both institutions.

Delivering curriculum responses and smoother pathways

- NESCol and RGU signed a data sharing agreement that allowed them to jointly analyse and make sense of their institutional data, identify learner trends, articulation opportunities, and subject choices.

- The Strategic Working Group (SWG) for this Pathfinder Project comprising of key members of staff from both NESCol and RGU brought expertise in regional planning and provided governance oversight and authorisation.

- Joint working groups across a number of functions, including curriculum, marketing and insights, and recruitment met to progress the key project areas. The project ensured that dialogue was taking place across both institutions with colleagues with different levels of responsibilities, including members of the Executive, Heads of Sector and Deans of School.

- Joint identification and development of course provision and coherent pathways and routes from the college to the university and into work. This required the two institutions to be agile and responsive in meeting regional needs and student demands, and flexible in modifying and adapting provision.

- Joint marketing approaches and recruitment.

Key learning

Building on a history of collaboration, with established relationships and articulation agreements and progression pathways in place, this was an ambitious project in the scope and scale of the development and level of change required across partners.

The Project has encouraged new and innovative conversations between curriculum teams at NESCol and RGU. Starting from a review of existing pathway arrangements, they identified gaps in existing provision and pathways, and where new course provision was required to more effectively meet the needs of the regional economy. This trust and willingness to jointly develop and deliver has been mirrored across both institutions and across colleagues with different levels of responsibility and across professional service teams, including student recruitment, admission and marketing.

> **"On reflection, the impact and successes to date can largely be attributed to an openness to innovative practice by all colleagues involved with the project, for the benefit of regional economic growth, improved student recruitment and more aligned learner pathways." (Senior Manager, Project Final Report)**

One specific doubt was raised by the partners in this project relating to the availability of future, smooth pathways. This is the potential rigidity of the SQA, and the need to produce more flexible frameworks that could be adapted to suit the interests and subsequent progression opportunities of each individual learner. This will be an area for future review.

Shared data, analysis, and insights allowed the joint teams to discuss key performance indicator data, regional/sectorial challenges, potential new areas to collaborate and recent trends that have impacted college and university recruitment in the region. This was made possible by the data sharing agreement in place between the two institutions.

Robust governance and oversight was provided by a joint senior level Steering Group and a Strategic Working Group with expertise in planning and academic development. Jointly they were able to deliver pathways that are employment focused, respond to skills needs, efficient in delivery, inclusive in design and provide a positive student experience.

A shared approach to pathway promotion and awareness raising with potential students and those that influence choice was essential. The Project reviewed the branding for with the current articulation pathways and engaged with students on their perceptions.

> **"The ambition is that these pathways are recognised, understood and promoted by internal stakeholders at NESCol and RGU and external parties such as teachers, parents/carers, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)." (Senior Manager, Final Project Report)**

South of Scotland Digital Pathfinder

Project partners involved: Dumfries and Galloway College (DGC) and Borders College (BC)

Synopsis

The South of Scotland Digital Pathfinder Project built on the foundation of the South of Scotland Digital Skills Hub, established in 2020. This pilot aimed to help align provision, programmes and curriculum offerings to the current and emerging digital skills needs of students and employers across the region.

A collaboration between the two colleges, and other key regional stakeholders, it focused on developing a highly skilled, adaptable digital workforce by equipping learners in core college courses with the digital skills required by regional employers. It also aimed to increase the number of post-16 learners on digital courses, thereby supporting the region's long-term competitiveness in an increasingly digitised economy.

The proposed initiative was based upon regional evidence and linked to key regional and national strategies. Employer engagement was critical at all stages and was facilitated by regional stakeholders and partners. This helped to strengthen employer connections, reinforce digital skill pipelines and strengthen the capacity and capability of college staff.

Phase 1 focused on meeting immediate sectoral needs by embedding employer-led digital skills into existing curricula. Phase 2 expanded digital provision across a broader range of curriculum areas, with enhancements informed by employer engagement. By March 2023, digital content was integrated into curriculum areas such as business, computing, health, and social care, expanding post-16 digital learning opportunities. This led to increased enrolment in key areas like data literacy, cyber security, and digital safety, aligning the curriculum with industry needs and making digital education more accessible to learners across the region.

Continued monitoring of participation rates in digital qualifications across the region will help identify if more students are choosing subjects related to the digital economy.

Delivering curriculum responses and smoother pathways

- Joint mapping of the existing digital provision across both colleges. This joint exercise helped to identify gaps in digital skills education, particularly in areas such as business, computing, and health & social care.

- Joint working groups with senior academic and management from both colleges, along with industry experts, were set up to develop and deliver collaborative curriculum initiatives in digital skills to align with regional priorities.

- Joint decision-making processes ensured that the new curriculum could be delivered effectively across both institutions.

- New approaches to engaging with learners and key advice and guidance staff to inform and raise awareness of the digital course offer.

- Joined up Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions provided for lecturers at both colleges. These sessions helped upskill staff to deliver the updated digital curriculum effectively. Lecturers developed skills in data literacy and digital technologies, which they integrated into their teaching.

Key learning

Robust data and intelligence was critical to understand the challenges faced by the region, map the region's digital skills needs and shape the new course offer.

The curriculum developments have acted as a catalyst, helping the staff teams who participated in the initiative to reflect on what digital means in the industry sector and this has changed their practice and enabled the colleges' provision to move in new and innovative directions. The impact of this will be continue long after the end of the project.

> **"The project established a sustainable model for joint curriculum planning and collaboration between the two colleges. Moving forward, both institutions plan to expand digital learning offerings and continue professional development for lecturers to keep pace with evolving digital trends." (Senior Manager, Final Project Report)**

Reaching out to students to raise awareness of opportunities for careers in digital was essential. The project developed an online events programme, 'Meet the Learner', where a diverse range of school, college and university learners discussed their learner journeys in computing science and cyber security in order to encourage others to move into digital technology roles. Each event focused on a different stage of the learning journey.

> **"The Meet the Learner online events programme has provided the region's schools, colleges and universities with a new way to market their digital courses to young people. This successful, new programme uses peer advocacy as an approach to encourage learners at school and college to consider moving into digital technology roles." (Senior Manager, Final Project Report)**

Following the success of theses online events, DYW Dumfries & Galloway has become the new lead partner and will work closely with DYW Borders to manage the programme moving forward. This innovative product has the potential to be applied beyond the regional and sectoral context.

Working with employers at various stages was key to success, encouraging employer input on emerging skills needs and informing new curriculum developments. Continued partnerships will prove vital in helping to ensure that digital skills provision aligns with the needs of the region's workforce and economy. A key output of the project was a Digital Skills Provision Map to inform employers across the South of Scotland of the digital skills provision provided by the main providers across the region. This product will be updated on an annual basis by the colleges and will be a lasting legacy of the project.

These two innovative products/outputs described, 'Meet the Learner' events and the Digital Skills Provision Map have the potential to be applied successfully beyond the regional and sectoral context.

West of Scotland Educational Pathways

Project partners involved: University of the West of Scotland (UWS) and Dumfries and Galloway College (DGC)

Synopsis

The purpose of this project was to develop an extended portfolio of course provision at SCQF level 7 and enhance educational pathways for learners in the region. The two institutions already had formal articulation arrangements in place but acknowledged that it was a fragmented and sometime inefficient system and somewhat challenging for students transitioning from college to university. The new approach sought to build on the existing partnership and take it to a new level of collaboration through developing a higher level course offer and seamless pathways to meet regional skills needs.

The need for dedicated pathways supporting entry at SCQF level 7 was a recurring theme in strategic meetings with regional stakeholders. This was driven by concerns over more young people leaving the area for higher education provision elsewhere and unmet local demand from employers in the region for a workforce with higher level education and skills.

The project set out to provide senior phase school students with clear and smooth pathways into degree-level study in relevant subject areas in response to identified regional skills needs. The partners were able to build on a longstanding partnership arrangement with the Local Authority, previous collaboration on curriculum and pathways and a commitment to share resources.

The project has reported positive uptake of the new courses on offer. The ambition remains to increase the number / percentage of young people in Dumfries and Galloway having access to degree pathways that are attractive to the applicant and that meet regional skills requirements. The success of this pilot and its seamless approach to progression has led to discussion on what other subjects should be introduced – and has seen significant input from regional employers to help shape that next stage – with both institutions committed to extending their collaboration on regional tertiary provision.

Delivering curriculum responses and smoother pathways

• Joint Employer Skills Reference groups in key sectors, such as business and computing, to ensure the curriculum aligned with regional skills needs.

• Clear and consistent engagement with Dumfries and Galloway Council, local schools, and

employers was key to identifying both student demand and employer need and then to rapidly develop pilot programmes to address those

- A joint governance process brought academic and professional services teams from both institutions together to monitor progress, address challenges and ensure alignment.

- It was important to ensure that the new provision would be attractive to learners, meet perceived needs and offer pathways to employment. They prioritised production of joint marketing and promotional materials to guide and inform pupils and influence those providing them with guidance and advice.

- Joint development and delivery of the FA programme to prepare Senior Phase pupils for progression and support their journey.

- Integrating DGC teaching staff as integral to the programme ensured a seamless learning experience for students.

- Following UWS's quality assurance procedures provided rigour.

Key learning

The partner institutions had a strong history of collaboration on curriculum and shared aspirations for their learners and the region. They had established partnerships with the Local Authority, with schools and local and regional employers. The Pathfinder pilot provided an opportunity to take this to a deeper level.

> **"A key learning from this project is that if there are willing partners with a shared strategic ambition and approach it is more likely that a timeous response to changing market needs can be achieved. (Senior Manager, Final Project Report)"**

They had taken time to research and evidence the presenting skills and education needs in the region through scanning the environment, accessing a range of data and intelligence but also through discussions with key stakeholders. The evidence base was extensive. They had a clear understanding of the presenting challenges in the region which contributed to a lack of opportunity for learners to progress seamlessly on to courses at level 7.

They recognised the strengths that they each brought to the project development. UWS recognised the College's strong links with their local community, including employers and industry in the region, and a good understanding of their skills and education needs. This was critical in tailoring their proposed degree provision to the needs and aspirations of the region. The College recognised the well-developed curriculum planning in place at UWS and understood the need for academic approval being taken through the standard UWS quality assurance processes.

Early in the development phase there was a clear message from the Local Authority, schools and other stakeholders that stability is a key requirement for new programmes and pathways. New course provision should be explained and promoted to learners and their place in the overall offer made clear.

> **"If new developments are perceived as being somewhat temporary or programmes that may not have a long-term place in the overall skills landscape, it is highly likely that they will not prove attractive to applicants... It is essential to ensure that applicants, and their influencers, understood the currency of the offer and why it had a place in the skills / tertiary landscape." (Senior Manager, Final Project Report)**

Developing a Joint Prospectus for Learning and Innovation in the Land-based Sector

Project partners involved: SRUC and Borders College

Synopsis

Both SRUC and Borders College serve the land-based sector in the South of Scotland. Prior to the collaboration they had separately identified challenges in making the scale of their individual offer viable, while at the same time being unclear if there were potential gaps in subject areas and levels of provision in the land-based sector.

The two institutions had a shared interest in ensuring that the upskilling needs of those already in employment in the region were met through flexible, high level, short course provision and practise-based innovation. To address this, the institutions came together in this Pathfinder project to produce a map of existing provision and develop a joint prospectus and through this to create clearer pathways for learners and align provision with local and national priorities.

In 2023/24, following close collaboration across curriculum teams and other areas such as marketing, the institutions launched a joint rural skills prospectus. This enhanced collaboration and realignment also facilitated the development of new curriculum offerings aimed at addressing regional skills gaps. This Pathfinder project triggered a realignment of both institutions' curriculum offer from SCQF Level 4-12, offering enhanced opportunities in education, research and innovation within the region.

Delivering curriculum responses and smoother pathways

- From the outset staff in each institution took the initiative to reach out to their counterparts. Joint working groups were formed, bringing together academic experts from both institutions to map the existing provision and identify gaps.

- The project team developed a joint marketing approach, producing a joint prospectus that was available on both institutions' websites and promoted at sector-specific events like the Royal Highland Show. This helped to raise awareness among learners about the land-based provisions in the region.

- A joint governance process formalised and supported the collaboration, ensuring decision-making aligned with regional priorities and strategic intent. Teams were given the autonomy and freedom to collaborate, while reporting to senior managers regularly.

- Through ongoing engagement with employers they were also able to identify and incorporate practical skills into the curriculum that were directly relevant to the regional workforce.

- The partners prioritised new curriculum/course offer including the Countryside Skills Award and the PDA in Therapeutic Horticulture to provide opportunities and pathways for learners in the region to progress from entry-level qualifications. Their collaborative approach was further evidenced in the sharing of course provision in Animal Care and Drone Training and the development of pathways and learning in Equine, Arable and Dairy.

- All these developments support regional upskilling for the industry and make a key contribution to economic growth.

Key learning

This pilot project started with a clearly defined deliverable in the form of the Joint Prospectus. The Project acknowledged the time required from staff to deliver this project. At the outset a project team was formed and resource requested from relevant departments. Senior management gave their support by backfilling any teaching commitments and also by aligning this to CPD time. This was kept under constant review.

This structured collaboration and mutual trust and respect which quickly emerged allowed both institutions to share resources, expertise, and data to successfully deliver the Joint Prospectus and support further developments. The commitment of the staff to work collaboratively, and their passion to deliver, created a strong foundation for the development of joint curriculum and enhanced pathways, with additional joint projects already underway and more in the pipeline.

> **"The collaboration of the team, cross fertilisation of ideas and shared resources is by far the greatest achievement. This brings the most benefit not only for students but also for the staff delivering the tertiary education and skills." (Senior Manager, Final Project Report)**

Through the collaboration on curriculum and course offer, Borders College and SRUC have been able to address the skills needs of the region while enhancing their capacity to deliver high-quality education that supports both learners and the local economy. By the end of the pilot project they had already progressed to an enhanced level of strategic collaboration and a stronger tertiary offer.

> **"The SFC funded Rural Pathfinder project has enabled Borders College and SRUC to realise a cost-effective integrated vision that combines tertiary provision from school to post-graduate, coupled with world class research and innovation to drive green growth and 'just transition' within a prosperous and sustainable economy." (Senior Manager, Final Project Report)**

A strategic statement of intent, signed by the principals of both BC and SRUC, formalised their ongoing collaboration beyond the scope of the initial project, including a commitment to a shared staffing resource model for commercial delivery.

Photo: SRUC

Photo: Borders College

Key messages

The synopses from the seven projects outline the common building blocks that were in place for successful joint planning and curriculum development across many or all of the pilots, as well as some more individual approaches specific to particular projects, institutions or places.

Enablers

Building on established relationships

Most of the pilot projects started from a position of having established relationships with key partners and this was crucial in allowing a foundation for the pilot projects to develop.

Drawing on existing curriculum review and planning processes and expert practice

In particular, the projects had the benefit of drawing on curriculum planning, practice and processes, already in place across their institutional and regional partners and access to a broader range of expertise and resources which all contributed to ensuring a coherent, regional response to an identified skills need.

Sharing data

- Pilot projects accessed, analysed and reached a shared understanding of a broad range of data and intelligence, this included both external input and their own institutional data and information. Decisions were based on both a top-down (external evidence) and bottom-up (knowing and expertise of their own staff) approach to meet the needs of the region and learners.

For example: Enhancing and Coordinating the Region's Simulation Infrastructure for Health and Social Care Education established a joint data collection and resource mapping exercise led by the Regional Simulation Infrastructure Group, to identify the simulation resources available across the region and gather qualitative data on their utilisation.

Engaging with employers

- Projects consulted with, and gathered insights from employers and industry, which influenced evidence-based decisions about curriculum, pathways and other changes. Employers were involved in testing and evaluating curriculum proposals to ensure they were delivering the education and skills required.

For example: close engagement with employers and industry advised on the job roles of the future and prioritised the qualifications and skills required for low carbon energy jobs- the National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA) - Energy Transition Skills Interactive Pathway

Established joint curriculum planning groups

- They brought teaching and academic staff (those experts in their subject) from partner institutions together to jointly create new curriculum content and pathways and in some cases to agree seamless teaching opportunities.

For example:

- the joint working groups established by the Digital Skills Pathfinder included senior academic and management from both colleges, along with industry experts, were set up to support coordinated curriculum developments.

- joint working groups were formed by Developing a Joint Prospectus for Learning and Innovation in the Land-based Sector, bringing together academic experts from both institutions to collaboratively map the existing provision and identify gaps.

Established joint specialist groups

- Projects established working groups and strategic groups to bring together their respective expertise in areas such as Marketing and Insights, Data Collection, Schools Liaison and Access.

For example: Developing demand-led, aligned and sustainable pathways brought Marketing and Insight staff from each institution together to understand needs and agree a coordinated approach to reaching learners, teachers and other influencers.

Ensured appropriate leadership, oversight and governance

- Projects established Strategic Delivery Groups or equivalent, involving all institutions and key stakeholders, to ensure senior oversight to endorse and authorise the work and ensure appropriate and timely delivery. This was supported by a Project Lead with on-the-ground knowledge coupled with the authority to make decisions.

For example: Enhancing the Senior Phase established a Strategic Working Group which was central to enabling agreement and collaboration on initiatives for Senior Phase provision, and for a coordinated approach across the region

Engagement with Local Authorities, schools and pupils

- Working in tandem with Local Authorities and schools has been key to success across all the projects to ensure a shared understanding of courses and pathways that will provide the right skills and qualifications for pupils, and link to future jobs. Also, to influence pupil choice and ensure interest and take up of courses on offer which align with regional skills needs.

For example: West of Scotland Educational Pathways, established a structured partnership model with the local authority and headteachers to focus on identifying needs, development of course provision, marketing and recruitment.

Responsive, innovative and flexible

Change is enabled when staff are brought together with focus and purpose around a shared agenda and a joint endeavour, in this case to enhance and shift courses to align with regional needs and build smoother pathways for learners. The collaborative work of each of the seven pilot projects around curriculum review and planning has established innovative and creative ways for regional partners to work together. The pilot projects have shown responsiveness to regional needs and flexibility in how new provision and pathways are agreed and assured.

The evidence suggests that this is a firm foundation for future regional, tertiary partnership working within the two regions. It has been for the institutions to express what tertiary means in their region and relevant to their experience of collaboration. Tertiary oversight of provision and curriculum responses as seen through the work of the Pathfinders projects can work to align provision with emerging skills needs and facilitate more coherent pathways. Some institutions have expressed a desire to enhance their "tertiary-ness" as a result of recent successful curriculum collaboration and to consider their joint role within a regional system. Others consider they already have an institutional approach to tertiary provision that works for them and their region.

SUMMARY OF JOINT CURRICULUM PLANNING AND REVIEW ACTIVITIES IN PLACE ACROSS THE PATHFINDER PILOT PROJECTS (TAKING A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH)

Sharing and interpreting data, insights and intelligence to inform decision-making Bottom-up and top-down approach	Ongoing engagement with employers and industry during each phase of planning and aligning course provision with need	Joint Senior Phase and pathway planning with Local Authorities and Schools and actions to influence pupil choice and ensure a flow of pupils to the course offer
Bringing curriculum teams together to jointly develop and shape new course provision, agree pathways and joint delivery	Bringing specialist joint teams together across institutions – for example Marketing and Recruitment	Joined up leadership and partnership arrangements and oversight of delivery (governance)

Photo: University of the West of Scotland

Key messages

The collaborative approach to curriculum review and planning taken by each of the seven pilot projects has established innovative and creative ways for regional partners to work together. The pilot projects have shown responsiveness to regional needs and flexibility in how new provision and pathways are agreed and assured.

Change is enabled when staff are brought together with focus and purpose around a shared agenda and a joint endeavour, in this case to enhance and shift courses to align with regional needs and build smoother pathways for learners.

Working together to share expertise and insights was evident not just in curriculum development but across other key functions such as marketing, data sharing and communications. The feedback from the cross-institution groups working together demonstrated growing trust, commitment, enthusiasm and an appetite to build on the practices established.

The evidence suggests that there is a firm foundation for future regional, tertiary partnership working within the two regions. It has been for the institutions to express what tertiary means in their region, and in the context of their experience of collaboration. Tertiary oversight of curriculum planning and responses as seen through the work of the Pathfinders projects has the potential to more effectively align provision with emerging skills needs and facilitate more coherent pathways.

Some institutions who have worked together to deliver pilot projects have expressed a desire to enhance their "tertiary-ness" as a result of recent successful curriculum collaboration and to consider their joint role within a regional system. Others consider they already have an institutional and regional approach to tertiary provision that works for them and their region.

Final thoughts

We have evidence of innovation and responsive practice across the Pathfinder Pilots. At the same time, we recognise there are also challenges in collaborative, regional working that we can collectively work to address. The Enablers and the Challenges across the Pathfinders work are summarised at Annex 2.

Our focus on the collaborative practice of institutions across two Pathfinder regions in this study illustrates the importance of place-based responses. Through the work of the Pathfinder Pilot Projects, we can see how collaborative approaches to curriculum change mirror the existing curriculum planning process within institutions, whilst building in flexibility to processes to respond to needs and particular circumstances. These developments illustrate the responsiveness of institutions and an appetite for future place-based planning of coherent provision.

Scotland's Wellbeing Economy

Coherent Learning Provision: Six Lenses

NSET

RUK, International/Global

Annex 1 - Six Lenses of Coherent Learning Provision

RUK, International and Global context:

Funding

World Skills

Foreign Policy

Global Climate Emergency

Research and Innovation

NSET Ecological ceiling:

Scotland's nature is protected and restored, and we make a positive contribution to planetary protection

NSET Social Foundation:

Sustainable Development Goals / National Performance Framework

Six Lenses

🌐	Regional	⚛	Sectoral
🌹	National	🌳	Socio-cultural/ Community
👥	Learner	🏛	Institutional

NSET - National Strategy for Economic Transformation | RUK - Rest of the UK

Regional

- Clear approaches to skills and provision planning to meet regional need.
- Engagement with City Regions, Local Authorities and other regional stakeholders.
- Schools, colleges, and universities as partners and providers to meet regional need.
- Ensure skills & education provision aligns with regional demographic challenges, including rural depopulation, urban growth, and ageing populations.

National

- National priorities for the provision of learning and research opportunities are met.
- Systems level governance and funding.
- Engagement with national organisations.
- Impactful continuation to national recovery.
- Mission orientated research.

Learner

- Clarity of opportunity for learners of all ages and stages.
- Clear, coherent and flexible pathways.
- Engagement with learners and a voice in the enhancement of their learner journey.
- An understanding of well-being and support needs and resources

Sectoral

- Employer involvement
- Coherent planning for key sectors of the economy and public services
- Sectoral curriculum planning which makes sense at a national, regional and institutional level.
- Opportunity for work-based learning
- Research/knowledge exchange to support innovation and development.

Socio-cultural / Community

• Socio-cultural role of learning provision for thriving communities

• Alignment with CPPs on place-based policies, and health and socio-economic priorities. Colleges are statutory partners.

• Develop skills and employability strategies alongside Local Employability Partnerships to address regional and local priorities and maximise funding opportunities.

• Support for underrepresented and vulnerable groups through Community Learning and Development partnerships in lifelong skills development.

• Cognisance of community wealth building activity to retain local wealth and reduce inequalities (legislation planned in 2024-2025).

• Utilise role as anchor organisations to leverage local assets to drive economic growth and tackle inequalities.

• Contribution to resilient and sustainable communities through National Planning Framework's 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Institutional

• Institutional sustainability.

• Staff and students as stakeholders.

• Tertiary sector development.

• Schools, colleges, and universities (institutional interests).

• Institutional agency.

• Balance and quality of provision.

• Research and Inovation

Photo: University of Aberdeen

Annex 2 - Enablers and challenges for achieving pathfinder aims

The Pathfinder Programme was designed to address key regional and national priorities by focusing on three main aims:

1. Simpler pathways and improved outcomes for learners.

2. Alignment of regional provision with societal and employer needs.

3. Enhanced coherence and sustainability across provision through regional collaboration.

The enablers and challenges encountered during Pathfinders are summarised below, outlining the conditions that supported or hindered progress.

Alignment of Regional Provision with Societal and Employer Needs

There were pre-existing and emerging enablers that supported alignment efforts, as well as the challenges that institutions and regional partners faced:

Pre-existing and emerging enablers

- Robust curriculum review and planning processes across individual institutions

- Good practice on joint curriculum planning via the Pathfinder pilots

- Evidenced-based decision making across institutions on provision / aligned with mission

- Wide-ranging employer engagement at all stages of the curriculum planning process

- Close working with schools and LAs to better understand/influence student demand/ needs

- Close working with regional partners/existing fora to align skills provision with need

Challenges

- Planning processes in institutions not seen

- Competing demands influence decisions

- Range of data and evidence used is vast and comes from local/regional/national sources

- Shared understanding of robust/timely data

- Forecasting needs active employer engagement

- Employer involvement appears uncoordinated

- Requires local/regional/national approaches

- Aligning student choice with employer need

- Regional/local partnership landscape is busy

- Institutions viewed as responders to emerging regional needs rather than key partners.

Photo: SRUC

Simpler Pathways and Improved Outcomes for Learners

The key enablers that facilitated the creation of simpler pathways and improved outcomes for learners during Pathfinders, as well as the challenges encountered are outlined below:

Enablers

- Pilots developed with learner at the centre

- Joint mapping of existing provision/ pathways

- Joint data collection, data analysis and resource mapping

- Joint development of articulation pathways, joint planning with cross institution curriculum teams, joint decision making

- Joint stakeholder engagement and marketing

- Co-ordinated approach with schools, industry and employers

- Sharing risk to achieve sustainability / value for money

Challenges

- Learner engagement required at all stages

- Timelines for gathering, sharing and making sense of data

- Collaboration takes time and authorisation

- Need to follow curriculum planning processes

- Requires close link with quality arrangements

- Responding to 'big ticket' issues more complex

- Working with schools is resource intensive

- A duty to learners to ensure that pathways/ provision remain in place once projects end

- Evidence for improved outcomes for learners from pilots may not be available immediately

Enhanced Coherence and Sustainability Across Provision

There were key enablers that supported enhanced coherence and sustainability across provision, as well as challenges faced:

Enablers

- Pilot projects built on existing relationships and developed new, innovative partnerships

- A spectrum of approaches to collaboration - varying governance/operational arrangements

- Formal agreements provided stability, while informal partnerships allowed flexibility and adaptability to emerging demands

- Mainstreaming of new, collaborative, processes for future sustainability

- Pre-existing fiscal environment

- Geography as well as institutional fit important to emerging partnerships

Challenges

- Partnership work takes place at many levels – the wider authorising environment needs to support and recognise time/resource needed

- No one model of collaboration was promoted

- Discussions can be challenging when different dynamics across individual institutions and takes times to work around barriers

- Mainstreaming requires commitment from leadership

- Pre-existing fiscal environment

- Essential to determine the most appropriate geography on which to plan/offer provision

While the Pathfinders demonstrated the potential of regional collaborative approaches, participants also outlined the challenges that they have addressed during the pilots, and will continue to address in the future, to ensure long-term impact and progress within the broader skills planning system.

Photo: North East Scotland College

Scottish Funding Council
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