



AGCAS

The Association of Graduate
Careers Advisory Services

Response to the Scottish Funding Council Call for Evidence: A Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in Further and Higher Education

The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) is providing a general response to the call for evidence rather than answering the specific questions posed. Our response is primarily through an employability lens and skills development in this context. We would welcome further opportunities to contribute to future calls for evidence.

We are concerned about the understanding of the learner journey in Scotland; that there may be an assumption of a standardised learner journey and that educational provision may map too closely to local labour market needs. Our recent [Scottish Labour Markets report](#) found that graduate careers are not fixed or necessarily determined by degree studied, and that within Scotland there is significant movement between regions so that an overly localised or sector-based approach does not suit all.

We recommend supporting and building on programmes which responds to local and institutional contexts and not reinvent the wheel.

Supporting students and graduates to develop the skills needed by future leaders, such as being able to work across boundaries, communicate effectively in multi-disciplinary environments, harness the power of data to tackle complex issues and confidently navigate the digital space. These programmes should support students to avoid working in discipline silos and also embrace the concept that knowledge transfer can work in multiple directions (among staff, students, organisations and local communities). They can have impact worldwide, with international students taking their skills and ideas home.

It is important that to recognise that the long-term skills needs of the future (and current) economy as articulated in Skills Development Scotland (SDS) meta-skills are fundamental to a contemporary higher education (HE) experience. These can be developed across all subject disciplines and are the higher order skills, which, along with good career management capability, enable graduates to navigate an ever-changing work landscape. Good career management is a vital for graduates in their career journey.

Whilst participation in higher education (HE) has widened since 2006, successful progression and high quality outcomes for non-traditional students (NTS) have been more stubborn measures to shift. The 2017 AGCAS Graduate Labour Market Survey identified that nearly three quarters of UK university careers services delivered targeted initiatives for widening participation (WP) students in the 2016/17 academic year, and that most are now using data more widely to better understand students' career readiness, to target resources and to provide more personalised support. We feel strongly that continuing to fund programmes that support widening access to, participation in and progression from higher education are vital. AGCAS Phoenix, February 2018 – Social Mobility (appendix 1).

We would recommend dedicated funding to encourage collaborative cross sector projects that support students and graduates. Scotgrad, a collaboration between Scottish

Government-funded agencies and HE institutions was successful in supporting graduates transition into work. Until 2019, AGCAS collaborated with Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland on this project. In 2018/19, the project delivered:

- over 3000 applications and 115 placements
- placements in all regions of Scotland
- applications were received from all but one of Scotland's Universities
- employer referrals came from a range of sources

In total, 43% of all referrals to the scheme came via HE careers services

We would recommend funding for projects such as Scotgrad that have a cross sector, cross-region reach.

About AGCAS

AGCAS is the expert membership organisation for higher education student career development and graduate employment professionals. We have almost 4,000 individual members from 161 higher education institutions (HEIs), representing 84% of all UK HEIs.

AGCAS Scotland [represents 15 universities](#) and collaborates to support the enhancement of HE careers services in Scotland and the strategic priorities of AGCAS nationally.

Through the expertise of our members, we influence policy at both an institutional and national level to support the best possible career outcomes from higher education for individuals, institutions, society and the economy.