

10 August 2020

The Scottish Funding Council
Apex 2
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Delivered Electronically

**Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in Further & Higher Education:
CDN submission to the call for evidence**

CDN is pleased to have been named in Annex A as an expert development body within the stakeholder scope of the Review. CDN has worked closely with the SFC as a key strategic partner over many years and was delighted to agree a new 2020-23 Strategic Framework with the Funding Council to deliver key development services for the college and skills system.

The Board and Senior Leadership Team of CDN have agreed the following key points in response to the review questions. We hope that they are useful and look forward to contributing more substantively to the Review in the coming months.

QUESTION 5a)

How can we best preserve and strengthen those features of education, research and innovation in Scotland that we most prize...?

RESPONSE

CDN is currently expanding its capacity to support **collaborative practical research and enquiry projects** within the college sector. We know from consulting our stakeholders that empowering college staff and students to research and tackle challenges – together, and within the sector – can create strong support for transformational change and enhancing success. We would recommend that colleges are supported to find time and resources to participate in national enquiry programmes, that pool research and thought leadership to drive continual improvement.

QUESTION 5b)

What do you think colleges should...do differently...in order to contribute effectively to an inclusive social and economic recovery?

RESPONSE

CDN is the college sector's lead agency for workforce innovation and excellence. This includes delivering a coherent personal development pathway for leadership colleagues in all positions across Scotland's colleges, both executive and non-executive.

CDN is currently building an extensive course offering to develop **systems leadership skills** as part of this CPD pathway – focusing on the competencies required to help leaders and institutions collaborate, grow collective impact, and continue to be agile and student-focused in times of challenge and change.

We would recommend that leadership colleagues from across education – whether leading institutions, support agencies, or statutory bodies – should receive systems change development opportunities as a priority for Scottish education and skills. This common opportunity and understanding will help leaders better collaborate in building a recovery-centred strategy for the future.

QUESTION 5c)

How can colleges, universities and specialist institutions best support Scotland's international connectedness and competitiveness in the post-pandemic, post-EU membership environment?

RESPONSE

Later this month, CDN will launch its latest research publication '**International Ambitions: An analysis of Internationalisation across the college sector.**' This work, commissioned by the Scottish Government and British Council Scotland, undertook consultation across the college sector, government and beyond to identify the role and opportunities for Scotland's colleges on the international stage.

CDN will ensure that the full research report is presented to the SFC Review upon its publication in the coming weeks. Some of the key findings from the report, pertinent to the Review, include recommendations that:

- The college sector establish a strategic level group to maximise its international engagement and impact, and amplify its voice as a partner in wider national efforts to build a Team Scotland approach
 - Colleges develop a more coherent collective approach to identifying commercial and other opportunities on the international stage, and also to collecting and presenting data on the scale and value of this work
 - That the college international alumni network is further developed and integrated into Scotland's alumni strategy, as an important pillar of global influence and economic interconnectedness
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QUESTION 5e)

What forms of collaboration within the tertiary education eco-system would best enable a coherent and effective response to these challenges and opportunities?

RESPONSE

CDN is the college and skills system's expert facilitator of networks and partnerships. The organisation manages dozens of critical thematic networks, forums and working groups that bring together educational practitioners, government, agencies and communities to achieve innovative practice.

We believe that even **greater alignment and partnership is possible between the eco-system of agencies and organisations** tasked with supporting the education and skills system. We would support efforts to ensure duplications of responsibility and effort are addressed across this eco-system, that agencies are tasked to work in a more transparently collaborative way to deliver systemic priorities, and that the impact of the eco-system's work is intelligently evaluated and reported.

Ensuring that agencies' efforts deliver value for money, and are centred on the needs of our students

and communities, will play a critical role in helping the wider college, university and skills system to collaborate, adapt and succeed in the years ahead.

QUESTION 5f)

How can SFC, alongside government and other enterprise, skills and education-focused agencies, best support colleges...to make their full contribution to Scotland's inclusive, green and education-led recovery?

RESPONSE

CDN hosts and facilitates the College Sector Climate Emergency Expert Group and works closely with our partners EAUC-Scotland and Learning for Sustainability Scotland to embed sustainability champions capacity training across the sector.

We believe that it is critical that the college sector continues to bear down on the climate challenge, reducing its own carbon impact nationally and ensuring students are skilled to contribute to a carbon neutral future economy. The sector's role in helping Scotland to 'build back better' in a green recovery from the Covid-19 emergency will be pivotal.

We recommend that the college sector, through its leadership groups and in partnership with the SFC and Scottish Government, builds **a clear national Climate Emergency response strategy** as part of the Covid-19 recovery planning process. This collaborative and ambitious strategy, built with the support of the Expert Group and partner agencies, should be supported with appropriate capital and human resources into the future and aligned to both the National Performance Framework and UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We hope that these initial contributions are useful and constructive, and we look forward to future discussions and input to the Review process. CDN, building on its expertise and aligned to the objectives and priorities of its Strategic Framework, would be delighted to support the Review further by organising research activities, events and workshops where that would be appropriate and helpful.

Yours sincerely



Jim Metcalfe
Chief Executive