

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

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A). What do you think works well in the current further and higher education arrangements that we should keep in order to secure Scotland's inclusive social and economic recovery from the current pandemic? How can we best preserve and strengthen those features of education and innovation in Scotland that we most prize, in a very challenging funding environment?

The college sector in Scotland has a rich history of responding quickly and effectively, adapting to the impact of economic crises by mobilising its collective resources to provide impactful, cost effective solutions to skills needs. In the Dumfries and Galloway region and more broadly the South of Scotland, the new South of Scotland Agency (SOSE) has provided a much needed boost to capitalise and build on the offer in the South matched to existing and emerging sectors.

Dumfries and Galloway is a civic anchor within the communities it services and one of the main employers and providers of learning across the region, with programmes ranging from senior phase to degree programmes.

At the point of lockdown, the college had just begun a two-year transformation programme. The pandemic has accelerated the need for change and we have effectively been able to bring forward some of the changes we had planned further in the future. We are now looking at a more efficient business model as a result and wish to harness the opportunity to build a sustainable post-16 educational offer in collaboration with a range of suitable partners.

Greater collaboration within the education and skills system has emerged through the regionalisation process since "Putting Learners at the Centre". In the Dumfries and Galloway region we have been able to make significant progress through our collaboration with stakeholders and education partners, most recently through our DYW Board and Sector Advisory Groups, where we have made impactful changes by expanding the range and volume of pathways for pupils in the senior phase.

Furthermore, coherence across the skills landscape will create an even greater opportunity to match the ambition to the offer, drawing on expertise and building on synergies across institutions aligned to economic growth. Having previously been directly involved in a number of projects that sought to build on a collaborative approaches to delivering work ready graduates, where skills shortages exist and having been able to demonstrate value for the public purse and economic impact, there needs to be more of these types of collaborative approaches to ensure the offer in the South of Scotland meets the ambition of Scottish Government in providing the graduate skills and attributes required to support inclusive economic growth.

The range of provision on offer in colleges should be reflected in the allocation of funding resource.

With some 26% of university entrants articulating from colleges (and 40% of those from a lower socio economic background), there is disequilibrium in the allocation of teaching resource when we consider the aforementioned statistic pertaining to the volume of articulating students. There needs to be further consideration of the unit costs and the value of resourcing higher education provision in the college sector versus the universities. Given the success of some recent work based learning undergraduate programmes (e.g. Skills programmes at University of Stirling) there is an opportunity to expand these, including the expertise which colleges have in work based learning into any future provision would be prudent. Furthermore, accelerated routes to creating graduates with the skills and attributes to succeed and contribute to the economic recovery needs to be considered too. The four year honours degree may no longer be the solution required in order to respond quickly to areas where the shock of COVID-19 and the pivoting of the economic sectors require a more responsive approach.

Dumfries and Galloway College are the largest academic partner of the Crichton Campus Leadership Group (CCLG) and see real opportunities to enhance the volume and scope of provision within The Crichton to improve the learner journey and increase positive student outcomes, thus supporting routes to the labour market and the supply of skills to support economic growth within the region.

The Crichton Campus, and the partners within the CCLG, have made a significant impact within the Dumfries and Galloway region, however, there is a lack of suitable coherent provision to attract students and similarly there are limited articulation opportunities for those students who study at Dumfries and Galloway College. The student experience is variable depending on which institution a student is enrolled within and by applying joint services funding to individual institutions this diminishes the ability to create economies of scale within the collective Crichton institutions, therefore creating disequilibrium. The need to modernise the estate, although given the age of the Dumfries Campus, we do not fall into this category, means that the universities are required to make significant investment in order to harmonise their facilities with their campuses elsewhere. The joint services funding provided to academic partners on Crichton should be reviewed to provide a more efficient and coherent offer. Discussions have been ongoing with the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) to formalise this type of arrangement through a federated model with shared services between the two institutions based on synergy. The two institutions have explored the possibility of co-locating on the Dumfries campus of the college and utilising the Learning and Skills Network to link in with UWS provision elsewhere.

The academic offer on The Crichton needs to be rebalanced to focus on the existing and emerging labour market need, an enhanced offer with a greater range of workbased programmes, i.e. graduate apprenticeships could provide opportunities for employers within the region to grow and attract much needed inward investment. Dupont is an example of a local employer who spend significant monies on travel and accommodation sending their apprentices to a college in the central belt because there has not been the investment in facilities within the region to accommodate the type of provision they require to support workforce needs.

Future Skills Data suggests that the demand for skills in the South of Scotland points to those most sought after being qualified to Higher Education level (so HNC level upwards), whereas the demographic data from the region highlights that the actual qualifications of available labour is most predominantly qualified at SCQF level 5/Nat 5/NC. There is a real need for the college to respond to this and we are currently transitioning our offer to encompass more at HE level where as traditionally only 12% of our courses have been at this level. By doing this we can meet future skills requirements in the South of Scotland and support inclusive economic growth.

The economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic has presented a real challenge to the rural economy in terms of resilience, with the challenges in the Dumfries and Galloway region exacerbated by issues around digital connectivity and the economic diversity and prevalence of mostly micro businesses/SMEs rather than large industries/employers.

In the region, the hospitality and tourism sector has been particularly affected. This all compounded by an already challenging economic climate – we have a reduced working age population, reduced spread of skills and productivity levels that are slightly lower than the Scottish average.

Investment from the South of Scotland Enterprise Partnership to develop the learning and skills network has been most welcome and has facilitated the opportunity to extend the range and reach of educational programmes across the South of Scotland.

B). What do you think colleges should stop doing, or do differently, in order to contribute effectively to an inclusive social and economic recovery? (SFC suggest that you may wish to comment on teaching and skills development, sectoral and employer needs and employability, research, innovation and knowledge exchange, widening access and equalities issues.)

Dumfries and Galloway College has just launched Ambition 2025, the college's new 5-year strategic plan. The implementation of this will be very much aligned to what is now the new normal therefore reimagining a college education in a post COVID world.

The recently published Cumberford Little report identified the need to enhance the use of college certified qualifications, and more use of 'micro-credentials' to support a new college purpose. This need is greater than ever in supporting the recovery. A degree of inflexibility and lack of currency within the existing post-16 accredited qualifications portfolio, particularly within the Higher National suite of awards, has not provided the flexibility that the college sector seeks. This process of qualifications development and subsequent commissioning needs reviewed to be more closely linked to sector need.

Current intelligence suggests the labour market will experience a downturn of 25-30%, with the under 25s most at risk. As the recruitment of apprenticeships declines there will be a greater need for colleges places to address expected high levels of youth unemployment. An increase in demand for employability type provision to support unemployed and upskilling/reskilling, especially in new emerging sectors and those where digital skills and expertise are seen as an enabler to recovery from the economic crisis. The college sector is well placed to offer a range of programmes.

To respond to this and to support the economic recovery, Dumfries and Galloway College along with colleagues at Borders College, are working collaboratively with SDS, SOSE and the respective two local authorities to offer a range of training packages to address the immediate and future skills needs in responses to the labour market shock from COVID-19.

Most recently Dumfries and Galloway College and Borders College have participated in a skills alignment project which has identified the need to broaden the curriculum portfolio to encompass emerging skills required to support economic growth; health and social care, digital, enterprise and leadership and the skills required to transition to a net zero economy and support a green recovery being the most pertinent.

SDS have worked very closely with colleges to share intelligence on any potential redundancies or immediate steps which need to be taken to support the labour market particularly through PACE initiatives.

We are seeing a decline in recruitment of apprenticeships, which will result in high levels of youth unemployment, therefore, we are looking to increase our range of gateway and work based learning programmes to prepare school leavers for an increase in opportunities when we start to recover the economy.

Dumfries and Galloway College is also preparing for an increase in demand for employability type programmes to support the unemployed and upskilling/reskilling especially in new emerging sectors and those where digital skills and expertise are seen as an enabler to recovery from the economic crisis. We have been able to use our FWDF to offer a range of these programmes and are currently working with SDS to match these to where the demand is greatest.

The college has also adjusted our range of courses for 2020/21 to accommodate these new training programmes. Main themes here will be focusing on retraining opportunities in the sectors where there is a downturn e.g. tourism and hospitality and then increasing our programmes where there are opportunities to do more - green energy, health and social care, digital, enterprise and leadership being the most obvious.

Recent investment in Advanced Manufacturing, through the Advanced Manufacturing Challenge Fund, provides an opportunity to support the work of NMIS in supporting the growth of manufacturing within the South of Scotland. Dumfries and Galloway College are working with the National Manufacturing Institute of Scotland (NMIS) and Strathclyde University to explore joint working, to capitalise on the opportunities that this will present for skills development linked to a green led recovery.

We are an agile college, we are poised to deliver to these areas now and are ready to develop new courses and subject areas to support the recovery. We have carried out extensive consultation with businesses in Dumfries and Galloway throughout COVID through SCDI, the local Chamber of Commerce and through our existing relationships and have reacted quickly with the provision of free online courses. Initial interest in these courses has been overwhelming. These courses, along with the range of short courses and custom designed courses that cause business to keep returning to college, has allowed positive inclusive growth for businesses within the region.

The way Dumfries and Galloway College works with local businesses has had a positive impact upon their growth and the services they provide. From the very small enterprises through the FWDF to larger businesses, we are a college who are agile enough to give a tailored course quickly to a client, to provide extensive and long term development to businesses in the region. Examples of basic digital training to clients like the NHS, who identified a skills gap in their staff as they quickly moved to becoming more digital, to offering online certificated courses for hospitality industry staff, when large numbers of staff were on furlough. We are a college that supports the full range of our region's training and educational requirements.

We have also supported a range of social enterprise organisations and see this as a huge opportunity for the region. Student input and college expertise has been provided to assist in a wide range of community projects ranging from food banks to community zero carbon projects.

In Dumfries and Galloway and more generally the South of Scotland, there is an even greater need to reflect on changes to the way we live, learn and engage with the businesses which then provides the college with a great opportunity for new ways of working and learning from the opportunities that this has presented. The need is greater than ever to provide a digital offering, which the college is proud to have accelerated via our integrated delivery model to address and are well sighted on this. However, this also needs to extend to the needs for digital as a catalyst to drive new business models and growth.

There is a greater need for collaboration and systems leadership across industry and academia, to support a cohesive learner journey, with an emphasis on post COVID-19 growth and addressing unemployment.

C). How can colleges best support Scotland's international connectedness and competitiveness in the post-pandemic, post-EU membership environment?

The college has demonstrated that the Learning and Skills Network provides effective routes to learning within a geographically dispersed Region. This network can be easily extended nationally and internationally to provide a digital offer to learners and to companies to develop new and existing skills. This arrangement can create partnership working with existing VET organisations to complement their offer, e.g. a VET organisation which provides hospitality partnering to offer management training.

We have considerable experience in the origination, development and implementation of curriculum. This provides an opportunity internationally to develop qualifications which are accredited and recognised throughout the world. This may mean that the college works to accredit a new of range of existing qualifications for a company or training partner within the Scottish Credit Qualification Framework. Examples may be the accreditation of an internal staff development training programme or a vocational hospitality course.

We have the infrastructure and expertise to support a co-location of Innovation Centres to support the recovery and growth in the South West of Scotland. We recently built Innovation Centres based on Digital Health Care, Engineering and Green Energy. We have the flexibility to develop more of these and this can be used as demonstrators for industry. We can develop and support innovators in our region and requests from industry, such as those around Carbon Measuring, which are occurring more frequently. We work closely with the Energy Skills Partnership to show case innovation and share these digitally. In recent weeks the zero carbon communities tool launched by SPEN was developed by one of our staff members and is an example of how we are working in partnership with key sectors to support innovation.

We are also aware of investible opportunities in relation to the work of the Innovation Centres, particularly in relation to data analytics, to support healthcare and the circular economy. Furthermore, we are currently in discussion with Censis and the Digital Healthcare Innovation Centre to look at linking innovation to economic growth for the South of Scotland through the Learning and Skills Network. The Reid Review identified the need for colleges to enhance their involvement with the work of the Innovation Centres. Whilst funding in this area had been welcome it has not been substantial enough to be able to measure significant impact. The current arrangement for funding is not conducive to collaboration and therefore SFC need to reflect an approach that will facilitate greater college and Innovation Centre collaboration.

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

At Dumfries and Galloway College we welcome the opportunity to help inform and shape the outcome of the SFC review of coherent and sustainable provision. This provides an opportunity to build on the work that has already begun in developing a more substantial tertiary education model in the South of Scotland and therefore support the strategic objectives of the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency in creating sustainable and inclusive growth.

Future Skills Data suggests that the demand for skills in the South of Scotland points to those most sought after being qualified to SCQF level upwards whereas the demographic data from the region highlights that the actual qualifications of available labour is most predominantly qualified at SCQF level 5. There is a real need for Dumfries and Galloway College, along with Borders College, to respond to this and we are currently transitioning our offer to encompass more at HE level where as traditionally only 12% of our courses have been at this level. By doing this we can meet future skills requirements in the South of Scotland and support inclusive economic growth.

There is also the need to reflect on the recently published review of articulation and any such recommendations will be a key influencer in shaping an increased tertiary offer in the region.

Discussions on scenario planning for the future were held at a Board of Management meeting in March 2020. There was support for exploring a West of Scotland educational collaborative, through building on existing and established college/university partnerships with a view to improving subject choice and streamlining the learner journey from all areas of the region and surrounding areas. In addition to this, it was recognised that there is a need to create skills within areas such as green energy, health and social care, digital, enterprise and leadership, these being pivotal to the economic growth within the region. At the time of lockdown, a skills alignment programme was underway, and the outcome of its work would inform the shape of any subsequent tertiary model.

Dumfries and Galloway College Board of Management were in broad agreement that a pan South of Scotland approach encompassing Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders, whilst not insurmountable, was not an obvious route to creating progression opportunities for students in the South of Scotland, due to each college having well established university partners and articulation routes already in place, co-terminus institutions (albeit some adaptations may be required), the strength of transportation arteries up the East and West Coast compared to those from East to West across the South of Scotland and, a nuanced economic offer from East to West of the regions. Dumfries and Galloway College and Borders College are instrumental in supporting skills and have worked collaboratively on a number of projects, e.g. Learning and Skills Network and there could be other collaborations with, for example, LEPs worth exploring to galvanise this joint approach without the need to change existing Governance arrangements.

Both colleges are committed to continuing to formalise areas of future collaboration, along with other college partners where there are synergies, and would envisage such an approach operating through a federal model. Dumfries and Galloway College along with Borders College and South Lanarkshire Colleges' are seeking to formalise a relationship that will deliver partnership outcomes, improved outcomes for students and readiness for the emerging opportunities around Green Energy, Digital Technologies and Sustainable Construction.

South of Scotland Tertiary Skills Model

Dumfries and Galloway and Borders College interim College Chairs and the two Principals have discussed the creation of an enhanced tertiary model to provide an increased offer from senior phase to postgraduate level. This is based on increasing the offer and range of educational institutions, closely aligned to the work of all agencies involved in skills planning and commissioning (SDS, SOSE, Local Authorities) to support key industries in the South of Scotland. Acknowledging that each college's uniqueness and ability to act as an anchor institution within each region and that there is a great opportunity to take a place based approach to supporting the work of the SOSE. This would be on the proviso that the academic offer and funding model as it currently stands urgently needs to be reviewed to meet the future skills needs and aspirations of SOSE to support economic recovery and growth.

West of Scotland Educational Pathways

Dumfries and Galloway College are engaged in exploratory discussions with the University of the West of Scotland to establish an extended model of provision that creates opportunities for organisational efficiencies (through services alignment and co-location of Dumfries provision into the college's Dumfries campus) and a coherent range of provision that provides learner choice and outcomes therefore supporting inclusive economic growth. The West of the region is a particular issue and therefore given adjacencies to Ayrshire, as well as South of Scotland growth (including Borderlands) and the Ayrshire growth deal, it makes sense to create progression routes around this notion. Four areas for further analysis have been identified; academic offer - including qualifications mapping and future skills; governance (using a federated approach); estate footprint and suitability (particularly Crichton); and support services alignment. There is also an opportunity to look at accelerated degree provision with multiple entry and exit points and some innovative approaches to work based learning graduate programmes.

- A short life working group from the Board of Management will be established to explore the range of opportunities with links to key policy.
- Ongoing discussions with current and potential partners for the two scenarios with a view to scoping options appraisal for these in line with SFC review timelines.
- Efficiency gains from joint services funding at the Crichton Campus should be encompassed into future scenario planning.

F). 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? SFC suggest that in particular, you may wish to draw out:

• How scarce public resources should be prioritised to drive recovery

Dumfries and Galloway College has just launched Ambition 2025, the colleges new 5-year strategic plan, and the implementation of this will be very much aligned to what is now the new normal therefore the need to reimagine a college education in a post COVID world. The labour market inactive, current predictions state the economy could contract by 33% with rural economies and those under 25 most at risk.

Dumfries and Galloway College has adjusted its range of courses for 2020/21 to accommodate a full suite of new training programmes (as identified in section B) in the areas where it believes there will be the most demand. The main aspects will be focusing on retraining opportunities in the sectors where there is a downturn e.g. tourism and hospitality and then increasing our programmes where there are opportunities to do more green energy, advanced manufacturing, healthcare and digital areas being the most obvious.

Realising Scotland's full potential in a Digital World outlines a plan for ensuring that “digital” underpins all aspects of delivering inclusive economic growth, delivery of public services and readiness for the future of learning and work. It also accepts that through collaboration nobody will be left behind and will ensure that everyone remains safe, secure and confident about the future.

Furthermore, the ***STEM Education and Training Strategy (2017)***, sets out the Scottish Government’s vision of a Scotland where everyone is encouraged and supported to develop their STEM capability through the key themes of excellence, equity, inspiration and connection. Digital skills are referenced in the strategy and acknowledgement given on the significant and ever-growing role they play in society and the economy, as well as enabling the other STEM disciplines. It is also noted the breadth of the spectrum of “digital” skills ranging from the use and creation of digital material, from basic digital literacy, through data handling and quantitative reasoning, problem solving and computational thinking to the application of more specialist computing science knowledge and skills that are needed in data science, cyber security and coding.

Colleges in Scotland have developed Digital Ambition 2030 to outline the future infrastructure needs of the college sector. Scotland’s IS developed the Digital Skills Partnership (DSP) in 2017, funded jointly by SDS and SFC, with an initial remit to address the skills and talent pipeline as identified through the Digital and ICT Skills Investment Plan. The DSP has had a great deal of success in programmes such as “Graduate Mentor” and “Graduate Project” schemes. It is now looking to transition to deal not only with skills in Computer Science disciplines but encompassing the broader “Digital” skills agenda.

There has never been a more important time to adopt a collaborative approach to tackling the challenges that we all face. Borders College and Dumfries and Galloway College are committed to continuing to deliver learning, skills and opportunities to the communities they serve. In doing so, we want to play our part in protecting employment and promoting productivity, in rebuilding the South of Scotland economy and supporting our communities to adapt and adjust to a significantly changed educational landscape.

The two colleges have been agile in adapting to the challenges of the COVID-19 outbreak, moving swiftly to remote learning and teaching and to on-line working. There is much more that can be achieved by building on the investment of £6.7 million pounds already provided to initiate the South of Scotland Learning and Skills Network. This therefore provides the ideal opportunity to further enhance the network through the creation of a Digital Skills Hub in collaboration with Scotland’s IS and the College Development Network. This is a cost effective way in which public resource can be flexed in an innovative way to support the recovery in the South of Scotland.

It should also be noted that investment in “digital” initiatives, or accelerated routes to industry, outwith the college sector has been a missed opportunity and there needs to be more awareness of the valuable contribution and credible track record colleges are able to make to support this critical aspect of the recovery.

Sustainability has been embedded into Dumfries and Galloway College’s ethos and way of life since 2014, we live in a clean and beautiful part of Scotland with an abundance of natural assets. For the last 5 years the college has had its own climate emergency action plan, achieving a 30% reduction in carbon emissions over those 5 years.

We have a climate emergency leadership group consisting of staff and students who oversee the implementation of the action plan. The action plan is built around four pillars, Education and Skills, Innovation, Operations and Funding. It is embedded into our new college strategy, Ambition 2025, therefore ensuring the highest level of commitment to achieving meaningful long term change.

We also work closely with employers and key partners in the region to respond to the future skills needs to support the move to a net zero economy. The college has a lot of experience in the green energy field, most recently through the work we have been doing to support renewables training, and currently we are working in collaboration with Ayrshire College and Vattenfall to support their future wind farm development plans. We are also involved in the Chapelcross Energy Park development as part of the Borderlands growth deal.

We are proud to have been given the opportunity to share the good practice we have been leading on in a recently published report by the Independent Commission on the College of the Future.

We lend our skills and expertise to the college's wider community too. The local Economic Leadership Group have worked with us on a number of projects in recent years, with the college playing a leading role in utilising our network of people, who have the sustainability skills and knowledge to provide strategic advice to our business partners. Most recently one of our staff worked with SPEN to create an online hub to support local community renewable energy projects.

• Particular areas of collaboration between agencies that would best support the sectors' contributions

The current SFC/Education Scotland model for Evaluative Reports and Enhancement Plans has created a system whereby targets are reviewed with the aim of complimenting SFC monitoring and reflecting on the quality indicators in 'How Good is Our College'. Whilst the system has created collaboration between colleges, SFC and Education Scotland, it has led to a system that does not best drive enhancement. The current system has created a bureaucracy of reporting that places considerable burden, ignores good practice and does not work in an agile manner.

There is a need to create a system that creates appropriate scrutiny, measures progress and focuses on good practice. There is opportunity to develop a scrutiny model that brings together the SFC, Education Scotland and College's Development Network experiences of good practice dissemination.

In the development of college qualifications SQA provide assessment development and Education Scotland provide resources to support assessment. SDS provide overviews of skills, careers planning and access to apprenticeships. A merging of these organisations could result in cost saving, more focused, shorter routes to market for qualifications and reduced duplication of activity in areas such as scrutiny. This would mean that there would be fewer interactions but more focus leading to greater impact at regional level.

• Adaptations to SFC's funding and accountability frameworks to promote agile and collaborative action by the sectors to build Scotland's recovery.

The Outcome Agreement process, whilst successful in aligning college strategic priorities with Government policy, has in recent times restricted the ambition of colleges to respond to local need. Dumfries and Galloway College has been successful in meeting its teaching volumes but there has been little scope to flex this as demand increases within the region and in response to an increase in specific interventions in situations where there is an immediate skills crisis. The process of setting and reviewing outcome agreements needs to be simplified. It is overly prescriptive and needs to measure funding impact.

As a college, we are sighted on the need to create a financially sustainable offer – do more for less. We are looking at adopting new business models that allow us to flex the way in which we deliver within the existing funding envelope. Given the aforementioned composition of the rural economy, there are less opportunities for Dumfries and Galloway to generate additional revenue streams than there are in the urban colleges. There are many individuals who live and work remotely in the region supporting larger business organisations and perhaps there are opportunities to explore a decentralised approach to training to reflect the increased adoption of digital pedagogy post COVID and harness local expertise.

Post 16 education funding should be reviewed to create parity across institutions, e.g. the simplified funding model should provide greater parity for HE funding and similarly the overheads associated with rural provision should be reconsidered in any such revision to the funding model. This is particularly acute in Stranraer, where the overheads of running a campus with very low recruitment levels, but with a very definite need given the dispersed geography of the region, has put a strain on college resource. Staffing costs continue to challenge institutional sustainability and the nationalised approach has compounded this even further.

Each college runs a number of services where there could be opportunities to achieve greater economies of scale and productivity gains. The most obvious ones pertain to college systems such as; student records, information management and business intelligence systems, virtual learning platforms. A small group of colleges, including Dumfries and Galloway, are currently in dialogue with SFC, undertaking some work to assess the feasibility around this idea with a view to creating improved efficiencies.

• How SFC’s funding and accountability frameworks should ensure that equality and wide access to educational opportunity are promoted as key elements of the recovery for younger people and adults

As mentioned previously the need to respond to the recommendations from the Seaton Review on Widening Access needs to be factored into skills planning across the whole of the South of Scotland. The lack of articulation opportunities and range of undergraduate programmes in Dumfries and Galloway is similarly replicated in the Borders too. That is why both colleges have identified the need to create an improved tertiary offer for the South of Scotland, however, the funding will need to be rebalanced to support this.

With regards to Community Learning and Development, our college has a long history and strong track record of working in partnership with our community and plays a central role in the region’s sense of community. From working with, and winning joint awards with “The Usual Place”, to working with smaller community groups that play a vital role in the most remote parts of our region, we are able to offer opportunities to learn and develop for everyone. With the introduction of the South of Scotland Digital Learning, we have the infrastructure in place to build on this in the future.

• What support SFC and government could give institutions to adapt to a changed environment.

There are a number of organisations, enterprise agencies, awarding bodies, SDS, education providers, within the skills arena all with the same objective in ensuring that current and future skills are aligned to the offer. There is a need to declutter this landscape to ensure that there is effective support from identification of opportunities through to the implementation of these. This model would require revision of the existing architecture to simplify the commissioning and managing of propositions. This would enable the propositions to be aligned and to support regeneration.

The current models of funding with DYW in schools, colleges and universities does not allow for the most cost effective route. There is a need to streamline routes from schools to further and higher education which make it attractive for students and employers. There is often little incentive for employers to collaborate in the development of skills and current models of education, meaning it takes longer for students to enter their labour market. If companies were given tax incentives to work with schools, college and universities on industry ready students, in addition, if the delivery of qualifications were compressed, and funding models adjusted, this would give opportunity to create routes through the current school DYW, college and university that achieved more effective throughput of students to the workplace.