



Response from Dundee and Angus College to the Scottish Funding Council Call for Evidence in respect of the Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in Further and Higher Education

Dundee and Angus College welcomes the opportunity to contribute initial information in respect of this review, and is keen to be engaged further in the provision of evidence, information and good practice to support the development of review activities and outcomes.

As a highly successful deliverer of further and higher education, Dundee and Angus College believes that there are a number of fundamental policy and structural barriers within the current tertiary education system which disadvantage college learners. These can lead to unnecessary duplication within the educational journey for a significant range of learners (particularly at SCQF levels 7 and 8). These also result in the significant undervaluing of college learning and college learners, educationally and financially.

Dundee and Angus College would wish to see the opportunity of this review used to help to address these issues and to create a more streamlined and equal tertiary education system that meets fully the local and national economic recovery, social inclusion and economic wellbeing needs within our post COVID 19 society.

In respect of the specific themes outlines within the call for evidence, Dundee and Angus College notes the following key points.

<p>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?</p>	<p><u>What works well:</u></p> <p><i>“Anchor Institutions”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee and Angus College (D&A) is a fundamental part of our region and the communities we serve. We promote and deliver economic growth alongside social inclusion and support learners from a diverse range of ages, backgrounds and educational levels. Like other colleges, we offer multiple opportunities to engage in lifelong learning to enhance employability and develop careers that are critical to national economic success through a collection of different subjects, study options and modes of delivery that are not available through any other part of the education sector. • Colleges across Scotland work in close partnership with employers of all types, providing the skills, learning and experiences to learners to enable them to deliver fundamental and essential services to operate, strengthen and deliver a robust wellbeing economy such as; care homes, nurseries, construction, engineering, tourism sector, digital and renewables. At D&A we have active employer stakeholder groups engaged in our curriculum planning, delivery and development in all subject areas. This is an effective model that should be more widespread across all tertiary education providers.
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- Colleges like D&A offer much more than a learning and teaching experience, they enhance the learner experience by providing a 'wrap around' service which supports the learners throughout their journey and helps them to gain confidence and the wider skills needed for today's complex society. D&A believes that this critical role within the tertiary education sector is not fully recognised or understood and as a result is significantly underfunded.
- D&A is integrated fully into our local business community, helping to increase productivity by providing upskilling, training and retraining opportunities. We play a significant role in both leading and contributing to regional planning groups, including community planning partnerships and health and social care partnerships.
- We have extensive experience of tackling complex social issues such as child poverty, equality and diversity, employability, gender inequality, care experienced and underrepresented groups, increasing the valuable contribution that individuals can make to society and our regional and national economy.

“Agile, Responsive, Innovative & Creative”

- Staff at D&A have a very wide range of skillsets and expertise underpinned by a strong culture of excellence, innovation and responsiveness. This is extremely important when it comes to new opportunities/projects and allows colleges to be able to respond quickly and effectively to changing demands and needs. In developing the review of tertiary education, due care should be taken of the need to support and enhance the innovative culture and ability of institutions to respond to changing needs.
- All colleges have the ability to respond quickly and effectively to what is needed both regionally and nationally through a range of innovative and creative solutions, this has been demonstrated in the rapid, innovative and successful response to Covid-19

“Partnerships”

- Close and effective partnership working with schools, universities and employers are fundamental to providing a range of clear and distinct pathways for learners and employers. The growth at D&A of senior phase provision provides more options and choices for a wide range of age groups.
- Partnerships with local businesses and universities, as well as partners within local authorities, third sector and private sector, ensure that the College plays a key role within the region.
- Through European and International projects, we provide excellent opportunities and impact beyond the bounds of Angus and Dundee.
- At Regional levels colleges have the connections and partnerships with local charities, voluntary and community

	<p>groups to reach the most disadvantaged within our communities, pool and make best use of the wide range of resources that are available to encourage, nurture and support those going through, often the most challenging of circumstances, to change lives through learning.</p> <p><u>How to preserve:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise greater flexibility within delivery and funding models to better support colleges to increase the economic, social, natural and human capital of the region through maximising regional opportunities and minimising and addressing regional challenges. • Explore a more joined up approach to funding instead of the current 'silo approach' to multiple funding pots. • Focus more on regional social and economic impacts and less on targets • Reduce competition between schools/colleges/universities by reducing duplication at SCQF levels 7 and 8, this will increase efficiency and allow more effective use of current resources across the whole system. • Create equity for learners by taking a national approach to articulation. At present a learner within D&A can obtain a HND qualification but, depending on the university they apply to, they might go into year 1, year 2 or year 3 of a similar degree. This is not in the best interests of learners and does not support the creation of clear learning pathways or financial sustainability. • Promote colleges (and vocational learning) nationally as a national asset so that colleges have genuine parity within the education system.
<p>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.)</p>	<p><u>Stop doing/do differently:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At present, through the Outcome Agreement process, colleges are expected to deliver on an unrealistic range of strategies, initiatives, policies and agendas. As the OA process has developed, these seem to have moved further and further away from core learning and teaching. This leads to a lack of focus on core activities and a drain on resources. Priorities need to be simplified and more focused to ensure there is maximum impact on learning, teaching and support for students. • Colleges need to be supported better to remove provision that doesn't meet the needs of the region/learners or where there has been a prolonged period of poor performance. Changes of this type can, however, increase financial risk and longer term financial planning would support better curriculum planning. Provision should be reviewed in partnership with local industry representatives and employability providers. • Within each region, schools, colleges, universities and employers should work in partnership to agree a coherent approach to addressing changing regional and national labour market needs. • Colleges must be funded to meet the needs of local

communities for reskilling, upskilling and ensuring no-one is left behind. This would allow Colleges to take a more strategic approach to meet regional needs of its local community and businesses.

- Colleges need to have deeper collaboration and integration of curriculum with schools and universities and undertake regional strategic planning across the educational sector to meet regional and national needs.
- There should be a national innovation fund that colleges can bid in to, to create an innovation, creative and dynamic environment for learning, skills and training.
- Colleges are perfect vehicles to deliver National Outcomes and tackle systemic challenges faced by Scottish society such as child poverty, drug use, gender and ethnic inequality, care-experienced, food poverty and obesity, Fair Work, youth unemployment, digital poverty. Long-term, reliable sources of funding that was focused on the whole individual would enable colleges to plan for and deliver robust, long-term wrap-around programmes that achieve the outcomes needed to support greater numbers into employment and economic and social wellbeing. As per the Higgins Report, the recovery must be 'Education-led': there must be enhanced support for training as well as for employment.
 - The 16-25 'Scottish Guarantee' should embrace access to training as well as to employment.
 - A new Apprenticeship Pathway Programme would be a valuable way of developing skills in key sectors for people who are not yet in employment.
 - An expanded Flexible Workforce Development Fund should assist employers, including SMEs and microbusinesses, in upskilling and reskilling their staff.
 - Additional support should be targeted at Transitional Training, to help unemployed people enhance their skills while seeking new employment.
 - Colleges must retain their focus on social inclusion, enhancing opportunities in disadvantaged communities which will be hit hard by the downturn.
 - Campus-based delivery will be essential to meet the needs of many learners, including those from disadvantaged communities, those with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
 - Colleges should expand blended and on-line courses, meeting the needs of learners unable to participate in campus study, offering programmes that would not be economically viable on campus and enhancing the learning experience by preparing students for employment/further study that will involve remote working.
 - Colleges must invest in staff development to assist lecturers in developing and enhancing skills to deliver effective learning online.
 - Additional funding is needed to help learners' access

	<p>suitable digital resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In support of blended learning, among other things, priority should be given to improving the national digital infrastructure (broadband and mobile). 				
<p>C). How can colleges best support Scotland's international connectedness and competitiveness in the post-pandemic, post-EU membership environment?</p>	<p><u>Enhanced Partnerships:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through schemes such as Erasmus, colleges like D&A have already established a wide range of European and International partners. As Brexit develops, the tertiary education sector will require support to develop new and innovative ways of continuing these partnerships from the point of view of enhancing the learner/learning experience. • Colleges should work more closely with universities to promote the whole 'educational package' to potential international students. This makes a more exciting proposition and will help colleges and universities better understand the USPs within each institution. 				
<p>D). What opportunities and threats does the post-pandemic environment hold for colleges? How are you planning to address these challenges and opportunities?</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="604 824 1442 2020"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="604 824 1026 882">Opportunities</th> <th data-bbox="1026 824 1442 882">Threats</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="604 882 1026 2020"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of a more responsive and digitally skilled workforce • A wider range of online/blended provision • A wider range of ways in which learners can engage with the college • A review of services and systems to make them more user-centred, efficient, and effective • Enhanced use of learning platforms • Opportunities to work closer with other colleges and universities • Enhanced local and strategic partnerships • Raise the profile of the college sector and its ability to respond • Opportunities to drive much needed streamlining of qualifications and awarding bodies processes • Maximising on the opportunities that Covid-19 has brought to the </td> <td data-bbox="1026 882 1442 2020"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing the on-going pandemic will limit capacity to focus on longer term focus/projects • Financial instability due to reduced income/funding • Digital Poverty – connectivity; hardware; environment • Digital Skills of staff/ ability to provide engaging courses on-line • The ability to meet the needs of the region, as there will not be the funding to meet all needs – how to prioritise – importance of collaborative working within the region • Significant regional economic decline. • Tertiary education review focusses on narrow structure issues/outcomes </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Opportunities	Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of a more responsive and digitally skilled workforce • A wider range of online/blended provision • A wider range of ways in which learners can engage with the college • A review of services and systems to make them more user-centred, efficient, and effective • Enhanced use of learning platforms • Opportunities to work closer with other colleges and universities • Enhanced local and strategic partnerships • Raise the profile of the college sector and its ability to respond • Opportunities to drive much needed streamlining of qualifications and awarding bodies processes • Maximising on the opportunities that Covid-19 has brought to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing the on-going pandemic will limit capacity to focus on longer term focus/projects • Financial instability due to reduced income/funding • Digital Poverty – connectivity; hardware; environment • Digital Skills of staff/ ability to provide engaging courses on-line • The ability to meet the needs of the region, as there will not be the funding to meet all needs – how to prioritise – importance of collaborative working within the region • Significant regional economic decline. • Tertiary education review focusses on narrow structure issues/outcomes
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	<p>connectedness of everyone as a community to drive positive change, with agility and removing barriers to change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tertiary education review supports opportunities to address/rectify current barriers/issues 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will respond by undertaking the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Playing a key and dynamic role in regional economic and social recovery by ensuring we are represented in the discussions and action planning. ○ Play a leading role nationally by contributing to discussions and providing ideas and solutions through a range of forums, for example CPG, VP Network, Quality Network, H&S Group, Finance Directors Group and Business Development Directors Group, Digital SLWG. ○ Undertake robust financial planning to support delivery of the outcomes that are most important and focussed on supporting economic recovery ○ Work closely with university and school partners to jointly review the learner journey and ensure pathways are seamless, effective and efficient ○ Robust performance management monitoring and action planning ○ Work closely with local industry and the Chamber of Commerce to ensure our portfolio meets their needs 	

<p>E). What forms of collaboration within the tertiary education eco-system would best enable a coherent and effective response to these challenges and opportunities?</p>	<p><u>Tertiary Education Eco-System:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key current challenges we see at D&A within the wider tertiary education eco-system are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Duplication of learning, qualifications and funding at SCQF level 7/8 ○ Individual institutional approach to articulation which leads to the devaluation of HNC/D qualifications ○ A funding model that encourages universities to recruit more students into years 1 and 2 ○ A lack of institutional joint strategic planning (very departmental focused) ○ A lack of parity in educational and resourcing terms between academic and vocational learning and between different SCQF levels. • Colleges and universities must establish closer strategic alignment to ensure the provision and pathways are student focused and not institution focused. • A more holistic national and regional approach to planning should be taken to ensure pathways are clear, well planned and seamless for learners. This should include national entitlements in respect of articulation agreements and providing equity of entry for specific qualifications. • National policy, practices and outcomes should support genuine parity between college and university learning. • A review of opportunities and funding should aim to create greater equality for institutions and learners across the range of SCQF levels.
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How scarce public resources should be prioritised to drive recovery • Particular areas of collaboration between agencies that would best support the sectors' contributions • Adaptations to SFC's funding and accountability frameworks to promote agile 	<p><u>Education-led Recovery:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collaboratively and collectively as a sector on national ideas and initiatives that can be put forward and prioritised for additional investment, i.e. Investable Propositions • SFC and other agencies (SDS, SQA, SE etc.) must work together better and look at a simpler more holistic, joined up approach to ensure systems are designed around the user, and are more flexible, agile, efficient and effective. • The Scottish Government and SFC should work together to create clearer planned funding for institutions, moving away from year to year funding to better support the longer term planning needed to address low educational attainment, low productivity and poor economic wellbeing. • Use this as an opportunity to review existing practices. For example, the move to holistic assessment was welcomed by lecturing staff as it gave more autonomy, reduced duplication of assessment and increased flexibility to be creative whilst still maintaining standards. It is imperative that national agencies listen to and learn from the feedback. • There must be more flexibility around the funding to allow

<p>and collaborative action by the sectors to build Scotland's recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • What support SFC and government could give institutions to adapt to a changed environment? 	<p>colleges to be more innovative and respond quicker to regional need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFC's accountability requirements must be simplified to support flexibility and innovation designed to maximise the regional economic and social impact of colleges. • Completely review and reinvent the ROA process. Have a smaller set of ROA targets that are more realistic and impact focused. This includes reviewing Education Scotland's role and what impact/value they bring to the enhancement of the learner experience. • Look at flexibilities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allowing students to repeat credits that they were not able to finish during lockdown ○ Earn credits for increasing levels of Careers Information Advice and Guidance ○ Claim full credit value rather than half a credit for work experience activity ○ Reduce the accepted 40 hour credit rule to 30 hours ○ Return to 20 credit non-advanced programmes to acknowledge the increasing levels of essential support and guidance whilst still delivering 16 credits of teaching activity ○ Remove the 25% rule in recognition of the fact that the 2020 college cohort is unlikely to consist primarily of full time learners but will be a mix of short programmes, upskilling programmes, employability work, and returning learners • Responding to Covid-19 within the College has really focused attention on what is important, our students, and what really matters to them. This has resulted in seismic changes to how we work, how deliver our services, what needs measured and reported. Alongside the reference to the ROA (above), it would be helpful if SFC could review the levels of reporting, measuring and reconciling, with the aim of reducing the burden placed on institutions by measuring only what really is important. • Colleges such as D&A are mature, effective and successful institutions and outcome, monitoring and support arrangements should be adapted to reflect this.
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