



**Glasgow
Kelvin
College**

**Transforming lives
through education**



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

Glasgow Kelvin College Response

2020

SFC Call for Evidence - Summary Mind Map of Glasgow Kelvin College Response



Glasgow Kelvin College Responses to SFC Call for Evidence Prompts

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, research and innovation in Scotland that we most prize, in a very challenging funding environment?

Glasgow Kelvin College Board of Management and Senior Management Team believe there is significant evidence that the following aspects of our service delivery work extremely well:

- **Responsiveness to meeting local, regional and national needs:**

Glasgow Kelvin College's mission is to '*Transform Lives through Education.*' We do this through an inclusive community-based approach which nurtures especially strong links with learners, employers and stakeholders across our Region and by delivering vocationally relevant education and training which meets local, regional and national employment needs.

The location of the college campus buildings within our most deprived communities gives excellent local opportunities for residents to access learning which provides the skills for sustainable employment. In addition, partnership with Community Planning and local community enterprises and groups enable access to college learning opportunities across an area-wide Learning Network based in multiple community-based learning centres. A distinctive curriculum offer is necessary to meet the needs of local communities which ranges from significant youth and adult access community, an extensive Senior Phase offer (Glasgow Kelvin provides Glasgow's largest), through to a wide-ranging mainstream portfolio offering study opportunities in a number of vocational areas closely aligned to local employment needs. In addition, Glasgow Kelvin College is also recognised as national centre of excellence in specialisms such as Civil Engineering, HVAC, Renewables, Science, and Creative Industries and this should be capitalised on to support Scotland's inclusive, green and education-led recovery.

We must continue to work directly with a large number of local, regional and national employers to provide a very extensive apprenticeship offer over regionally and nationally significant trades. Glasgow Kelvin leads on the Glasgow Regional Foundation Apprenticeship Programme providing Senior Phase learners across Glasgow access to all FA frameworks, and the College also works very closely with apprenticeship managing bodies such as BESA, SECTT and the CITB.

Colleges must therefore continue to be extremely well placed to engage with communities and local residents, from some of the most disadvantaged postcodes in Scotland, who will undoubtedly have been very negatively affected, many disproportionately so, by the pandemic and who can benefit most from college learning.

- **Success in promoting inclusion and widening access to lifelong learning:**

With nearly 85% of our 18,000 enrolments studying on a part-time basis, Glasgow Kelvin's distinctive curriculum offer has been highly successful in supporting inclusion and promoting the participation of learners from a range of backgrounds.

Colleges must continue to engage extensively with local communities. Glasgow Kelvin achieves this through a range of mechanisms, including jointly funded 'community connectors' and a large team of Community Learning and Development staff. As such, colleges must continue to be viewed as valued and trusted providers of learning programmes to particularly 'challenging' groups. This includes care experienced young people, people on Community Service orders through the justice system, individuals with mental health issues and those with addiction problems. These programmes assist students to re-engage with the learning process and gain qualifications while benefiting from the continued support of their referring agencies.

As a result of this approach to community engagement and inclusive curriculum design, Glasgow Kelvin has ensured that nearly half of our enrolments are resident in Scotland's most deprived postcodes, the highest of any institution in Scotland. The fact that this is achieved with only a very limited allowance made for the funding of smaller class sizes or additional student support services, which are integral to this type of delivery, is a testament to the effective work of the College.

Glasgow Kelvin College therefore contributes significantly to the Scottish Government's priority of, "widening access and participation in further & higher education for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and promoting equality & inclusion". As an evidenced based review, it is important that the SFC recognise this unique position in terms of learner demographics. There is a real danger of this demographic being left behind as a consequence of the pandemic and therefore local colleges serving such a purpose will have a key role to play in the economic recovery and the development of local skills.

- **High levels of learner satisfaction, attainment and positive post course progression:**

Whilst Glasgow Kelvin continues to prioritise engaging with learners most at risk of withdrawing, or those furthest from the labour market, our approach to learner engagement, individual support and quality enhancement has supported extremely high levels of learner satisfaction and overall attainment which means that over 75% of all Glasgow Kelvin College starts successfully complete their course of study.

It must be recognised however, that achieving these high learner outputs is extremely challenging for the college sector given the current approach to funding allocation, and particularly the very limited recognition given to engaging and supporting learners from deprived backgrounds, who often have a range of additional support needs. We would therefore strongly urge the SFC to consider how funding can be prioritised to provide the level of support this type of learner often requires. Whilst the 'input' cost may be more significant, the 'output' value in terms of supporting local residents to gain employment and

contribute to the inclusive social and economic growth of Scotland more than outweighs any initial investment. This approach greatly assists in preventing generation after generation relying on government unemployment and other support.

- **Effectiveness in working in partnership to deliver efficient and joined-up public services:**

College strategy should continue to place a priority on decentralisation and development of outreach services in partnership with community stakeholders. This joint approach helps deliver an improved programme of community learning at community outreach locations and works with a wide variety of stakeholders including third sector organisations, local employers, schools and local authorities.

Through the John Wheatley Learning Network, Glasgow Kelvin is the key provider of community-based learning in the North East of the city and has been a pioneer in the delivery of ICT skills and digital inclusion, working in partnership with a range of organisations including Wheatley Group, Glasgow City Council Community Planning Partnership and other community organisations. We have also developed a joint library service delivered with Glasgow Life, co-leadership of the Glasgow City Council flagship 'Thriving Places' initiative in Easterhouse, and joint nursery provision and training with Jobs and Business Glasgow.

Glasgow Kelvin also does significant work in partnership with local schools, providing a progressive route for young people from 12-18, especially 16 onwards. We lead the regional Foundation Apprenticeship Programme, delivering a joined-up and efficient, single regional service to 7 local authorities and around 70 secondary schools, providing Senior Phase learners across the Glasgow region access to all FA frameworks

The Enhanced Vocational Inclusion Programme (EVIP) which Glasgow Kelvin co-deliver with Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Clyde College has been a life transforming programme for young people who were at serious risk of disengaging from education and becoming socially excluded. These kinds of programmes targeted at people in most need should continue to be part of the offer from colleges and, in fact, something which the sector looks to extend. The SFC should therefore prioritise funding for these kinds of programmes which provide a service to the most disadvantaged in our society.

The Board and Senior Management Team at Glasgow Kelvin College are extremely proud of the strengths highlighted above and are confident that these can play a significant role in the inclusive social and economic recovery from the current pandemic. However, the following actions are needed to ensure that we can preserve and strengthen these aspects:

- **The SFC should fully recognise both the value and cost of delivering inclusive growth:**

In order to fulfil its vital mission of "transforming lives through education", the College needs to be appropriately funded. The Glasgow College Region receives one of the lowest rates of funding per Credit across the sector, despite the fact that the demographic served requires

significant additional support. The College is proud of its success in reaching out to its local communities and the high levels of participation by local residents, many of who reside in deprived postcodes. However, this is achieved through a delivery model which focusses on meeting individual needs, and necessitates small class sizes and significant levels of tutor support. The vital role that the Glasgow Kelvin and other community-based colleges play in the economic recovery of deprived areas is therefore going to be seriously threatened without appropriate funding. Put simply, Glasgow Kelvin and other community-based colleges could do more to support its communities but without appropriately focussed and distributed funding it will have to reduce its staffing complement and therefore may have to reduce the service it provides, potentially lessening our contribution to the inclusive growth of Glasgow and Scotland.

- **The SFC should allow institutions greater autonomy in their use of funding to meet local and regional needs:**

Whilst Glasgow Kelvin has had significant success in flexing its resources to meet local and regional needs, it is often constrained by national guidance which enforces a uniformity on what it possible, and this risks local needs not being met. Recent examples of this include the priority given to achieving Credit volumes over outcomes of learning activity, constraints on hours per learner (one plus), student support rules on cost of course and the apportionment of funds allocated for inclusion within a regional grant.

SFC should therefore move away from a national ‘formula-based’ approach to funding and outcomes dominating any future funding model, and empower regions to better differentiate on how they allocate their funds, with a stronger focus on using funds to meet identified regional and local needs. As underpinned by the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act this would strengthen the role of colleges as anchor institutions and give greater weight to the aims and priorities of local community planning partnerships, resulting in a stronger focus on the regional impact of college activity.

B) What do you think colleges, universities and specialist institutions should stop doing, or do differently, in order to contribute effectively to an inclusive social and economic recovery?

- **We should stop unnecessary duplication and strengthen institutional specialisms:**

As resources become ever more constrained, we should avoid unnecessary duplication of provision across the tertiary education sector. Within the Glasgow region, each college has long and well-established areas of expertise with significant staff complements and dedicated teaching facilities and resources aligned to local and national employment needs. At Glasgow Kelvin College we have a strong track record in deliver specialisms within Engineering, Science, Health and Social Care and the Creative Industries. We need to strengthen these specialisms working more collaboratively across groups of colleges to avoid competing unnecessarily for the same cohorts of learners. This will improve levels of efficiency across the sector and strengthen the depth and range of learning pathways on offer to learners.

- **We should prioritise technical and vocational training which supports learners to upskill to progress their careers, rebalancing the focus on entering university degree provision:**

Whilst the recent emphasis on articulation to degree programmes has been a positive development, economic recovery will depend on having a skilled technically qualified workforce, and college-based qualifications can provide an efficient and effective direct route to employment for many. We therefore need to continue to ensure that college level qualifications offer robust vocational pathways to employment without necessarily requiring Degree level study prior to employment. Within the Glasgow region, we already have substantial degree provision across the five local universities and there is no evidence to support college funding being allocated to further additional degree provision.

Colleges have a unique strength in delivering work-based learning qualifications, ranging from Level 4 Senior Phase through to Modern Apprenticeships. This strength comes from the relationship that colleges have with the principal stakeholders. For Level 4 and Foundation Apprenticeships, colleges have well established partnerships with local authority education departments, ensuring a co-ordinated approach to schools and young learners. The wide network for employers that colleges have established means that the critical employer role, at all levels of work-based learning, is managed effectively, meaning a high-quality experience for learners and employers.

There also needs to be a greater focus on progression for students and greater clarity on their learning journey and how this ultimately this can lead to employment and careers.

- **We need to significantly enhance our blended learning offer, where appropriate, by investing more in digital skills development and infrastructure:**

If social distancing continues to be necessary then there will need to be more reliance on blended and digital learning, where this is conducive to effective learning. To achieve this, we will need to make a step change in the level of staff skills and infrastructure required to deliver high quality and engaging learning experiences using digital approaches. New software packages such as MS Teams provide the potential to transfer face to face teaching approaches and techniques into the digital sphere, ensuring that online learning maintains many of the social and personal development aspects of traditional College-based study. However, the scale and speed of the digital transformation required is substantial and additional financial support will be required by colleges to ensure that the necessary resources are available to support the full range of staff, student and curricular needs.

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

- **We need to continue to have an open outlook and forge mutually beneficial international learning partnerships:**

We should be looking to get ahead of the curve on key areas of growth and look to become international/global leaders in identified areas. We also need our staff to be more outward looking in terms of sharing expertise and exchanges with other countries to learn from best global practice. For example, Glasgow Kelvin College is working on a programme, supported by the Scottish Government, designed to share knowledge and best practice on gender equality between Scotland and India. By sharing this best practice between countries with very different societal structures, we will bring new perspectives to equality policies in Scotland and India.

More than ever, we also need a highly educated and highly skilled population. We therefore need to be joined up in our approach to supporting people from all communities to stay in education as a progression into employment and career development. We also need to protect the international qualification equivalences fostered through EU membership, particularly SCQF accreditation.

D) What opportunities and threats does the post-pandemic environment hold for colleges, universities and specialist institutions? For institutional leaders, how are you planning to address these challenges and opportunities?

- **There is an opportunity to develop a more digitally enhanced and flexible learning offer, but this also risks creating a digital divide:**

In a more socially distanced world, digital learning and skills development will be even more critical. The current situation will therefore provide a basis to fast forward the digital transformation of the college sector, mainstreaming online and blended learning approaches to education and service delivery.

For many learners this will enhance their learning experience and provide a more flexible basis to engage with College study. However, in the communities Glasgow Kelvin College serves, it also increases the threat of digital poverty in areas of deprivation, which could have a negative impact on widening access and the economic recovery of local and regional communities. Additional funding is required to avoid this and as a College, we are seeking to reprioritise resources to support digital skills development for all so that those individuals least able to afford or cope with digital approaches are not disadvantaged. We must remain cognisant of the fact that digital / blended approaches may not be appropriate for many of our community-based programmes in the long term. Such programmes will engage through digital / blended approaches until face to face learning can resume again.

A key challenge is ensuring digital teaching approaches do not have a negative impact on learning outcomes or the student experience. An important part of going into Further Education is the growth of social, citizenship and personal skills as well as academic learning, and the threat of isolation and lack of real-life engagement among students and staff may result in higher dropout rates. It is therefore critical that the drive for digital transformation is tempered with a focus on maintaining an engaging and inclusive learning experience which continues to provide opportunities for direct personal interaction and development. Glasgow Kelvin College's major strength lies in it being a community College with the

delivery of face to face, vocational education and citizenship skills key aspects of the study experience and essential to our success in widening access and supporting the economic development of the Glasgow region. Therefore, the enhancement and deployment of blended learning should be measured and appropriate.

- **There is a very significant threat to college financial sustainability:**

COVID-19 has both increased college expenditure (for example, through required additional digital resources, reduced volume of students in each physical classroom, the enhanced cleaning regime) and reduced income streams across both commercial and public funds (for example, through less commercial course provision and lower apprenticeship volumes). As a result, consolidated sector wide mid-year returns show that the College Sector and Glasgow Kelvin College are projecting very significant deficits, with a Sector impact in AY 2019/20 of c £25m. The impact in AY 2020/21 is expected to be even more severe and without transition funding, many institutions will be unsustainable.

Prior to COVID-19, Glasgow Kelvin College was implementing a business transformation plan and it will continue to progress this within our new context. However, it is critical that the SFC recognise the full scale of challenges faced and provide appropriate funding to ensure we can continue to operate and provide a vital service to our communities including Scotland's most deprived. The College recognises that resources are scarce but believe that there is an indisputable case for more resources to be targeted at responding to poverty and mitigating the impacts of deprivation on communities. Inclusive growth sits at the heart of the Scottish Government's economic strategies and this can only be achieved by ensuring that we prioritise widening access and helping those who can benefit most from college learning.

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

- **Colleges, schools and universities need to continue to strengthen alignment and integration of learning pathways:**

Collaboration must always have, at its heart, the best interests of the students and there has been substantial recent progress made in strengthening vocational pathways from school to college and from college to university. This has been extremely positive in terms of enhancing experience and knowledge of the world of work for Senior Phase pupils, and also in terms of enabling large numbers of college students to progress to university degree level study with full recognition of prior achievement. It is therefore very important that this progress is not reversed due to the impact of coronavirus. This is particularly the case in terms of Senior Phase and Foundation Apprenticeship delivery and funding streams which support this need to be flexible and adaptable to a changed context for delivery.

- **New areas / structures should have greater influence on curriculum alignment and planning which aligns with natural economic, employer and learner need and movement:**

For example, we could make more use of City-Region structures to align curriculum funding and delivery to meet identified economic needs. The Glasgow City Region is a highly integrated labour market in travel to work terms. Almost 95% of all jobs in the city region are filled by residents of the city region. This means that many of those who gain their skills and qualifications within the college region will move into employment across the city region, and many people will be travelling into Glasgow to access their education and training in the first place. Greater collaboration across a “greater” City Region / area would therefore have the potential to strengthen the alignment of skills training supply and demand within a very coherent labour market area based on travel to work patterns.

- **There should be stronger collaboration and more coherence in the use of the joint SFC/SDS resource:**

Whilst it is recognised that SFC and SDS are autonomous bodies, the overlap in areas of responsibility cause challenges for colleges in delivering coherent provision. For example, Foundation Apprenticeships were initially funded by the SFC through Credits but now colleges need to compete in the open market for funding to deliver these awards. This risks creating unnecessary complexity and instability in an area of educational provision in which colleges are well positioned to deliver through direct grant funding. In addition, there are significant overheads involved in managing and reporting on these commercial contracts and only very limited use made of existing assurances such as those provided by Education Scotland reviews.

F) How can SFC, alongside government and other enterprise, skills and education-focused agencies, best support colleges, universities and specialist institutions to make their full contribution to Scotland’s inclusive, green and education-led recovery?

- **We should focus more on the outputs and impacts of funding used rather than prioritising inputs:**

Current SFC funding approaches tend to focus on identifying large numbers of input targets (such as enrolment levels, study hours, age, gender, disability and deprivation profiles, etc) with much less emphasis on the social and economic impact of learning activity. We believe that there should be a shift in focus to prioritise these wider impacts of funded activity with a focus on what we want to achieve, rather than what we will do. In doing this, the SFC should enter more meaningful direct negotiation with colleges on the expected return from their grant funding, with greater allowance in how funds can be used to meet local and regional needs.

- **Funding and governance arrangements should provide greater support for institutional financial sustainability:**

In recent years, the SFC have provided annual percentage increments in funding levels, often with relatively late notice and this makes planning for longer term institutional financial sustainability very challenging. Furthermore, the inability to carry forward surplus funds adds further constraints on college financial planning. We would therefore ask the SFC to develop arrangements which more effectively support longer term institutional financial sustainability.

As part of this, SFC should review their approach towards assessing value for money in colleges. Current practices focus on reducing the cost base year on year and with the main costs for colleges being staffing (c70%/80%), a continued focus on cost reduction is not sustainable and could indeed be counterproductive in supporting economic recovery. We would therefore suggest a stronger focus on improved effectiveness of a college and how it adds value in the services that it provides, rather than focussing solely on continued cost reductions and efficiencies.

- **Sector change should be focussed on the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of education:**

Recent educational reforms have focussed primarily on structural changes such as college mergers and the introduction of national bargaining. Whilst this has undoubtedly had some positive benefits, there is limited evidence that this has significantly improved the overall efficiency or effectiveness of college provision. Therefore, any future sectoral changes focus more on considering and sharpening our collective understanding of why institutions exist and for what purpose, so that there is greater clarity on priorities for action and less risk of unnecessary duplication. Thereafter, we need to jointly consider how best the parts individually and collectively should work together, to drive an inclusive, green and education-led recovery to the benefit of Scotland as a whole.



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