

SFC review of coherent provision – phase-two

- The first phase of the SFC review of coherent provision and sustainability in further and higher education has concluded. The second phase of the review features the work on the future support for research and innovation as a major component.
- This paper and the presentation which will support it will draw on the phase 1 report and seek advice from the Committee on both the near-term response to the emergency years to 2022 and the longer term.

Recommendations

- Discuss and suggest:
 - a. The positioning of the planned review of research and innovation support in the context of the wider review – including but not limited to consideration of institutional sustainability, approaches to accountability frameworks and the evolving structures of skills development.
 - b. Evidence gathering methodologies and constituencies they recommend the executive uses and consults respectively.
 - c. Sources of international advice and expertise – an external view of the UK and Scottish environment (also welcomed by email).
 - d. Potential short-term responses to the emergency years – we expect to look at the role of UIF, Innovation Centres, Interface, the support for research – how else do we help universities and colleges make a difference to the social, public health and economic challenge.

Financial implications

- There are no financial implications of the advice of the Committee resulting from this paper. As the Review proceeds, the Committee will be invited to make recommendations which will contribute to Board decisions on funding.

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Purpose

2. This paper invites RKEC to note progress with SFC's review of coherent provision and sustainability of FE and HE (the review) and to provide advice on the research and innovation work stream as we enter phase-two.

Background

3. At its meeting on 14 July 2020 (RKEC/20/09) RKEC was invited to note the SFC's published, and current, comprehensive briefing on the review and to provide input to the research and innovation aspects of phase-one.
4. SFC's Board met on 24 September at which it discussed the draft phase-one progress report. SFC's Chair and CEO subsequently met the Scottish Government's Deputy First Minister and Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science on 1 October. At time of writing the phase-one report is in development and expected to be published in October. The next progress report (phase-two) is expected to be completed at the end of the year.
5. In phase-one SFC ran a call for evidence over 20 July to 10 August which invited input from any interested party on a focussed set of questions. The results of this first call have been used to inform the phase one report and to help illustrate themes emerging from SFC's analysis of relevant available evidence.
6. The Research and Innovation work stream has reviewed evidence in the form of relevant published reports and advice including as a baseline:
 - Muscatelli (pre-COVID).
 - Cumberford and Little (pre-COVID).
 - Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (AGER) and SG response to AGER.
 - SFC review first call for evidence.
 - SFC review phase one report (in development).
 - UIF review (pre-COVID).
 - Logan review.
 - Heathwaite (pre-COVID).

Phase two

7. As we transition to phase-two we have two parallel tasks ahead of us:
 - Ensuring our investments, policies and accountability frameworks are contributing to Scotland's recovery over AY2020/21 and 2021/22 (the emergency years).
 - Building a robust evidence base for our longer term options for change.
8. It is not possible to go into great detail in this paper on the conclusions and recommendations in the phase-one report as this is in development and may not have been published by the time of the Committee's October meeting.`
9. In summary, we do expect the progress report to open up a discussion on the choices we foresee as we create a coherent system for Scotland which is:
 - Resilient for the future.
 - Affordable in the short and long-term.
 - Effective: capable of delivering new insights, high quality provision, employable graduates, excellent research, innovation and enterprise, and tackling inequality.
 - Efficient: it operates at the right scale, and with others to minimise waste and duplication, optimised digital technology, and is 'green'.
 - Able to deliver at world-class level with global impact.
 - Doing the right things for Scotland and our communities.
10. We expect the Phase 1 report to prioritise examination of the following for Research and Innovation:

Research

- Dual support and the opportunity for partnership with UK developments.
- Tackling grand challenges and the role of mission funding.
- Nurturing talent and the development of research culture.
- The role of collaboration.
- The purpose and structure of the Research Excellence Grant.

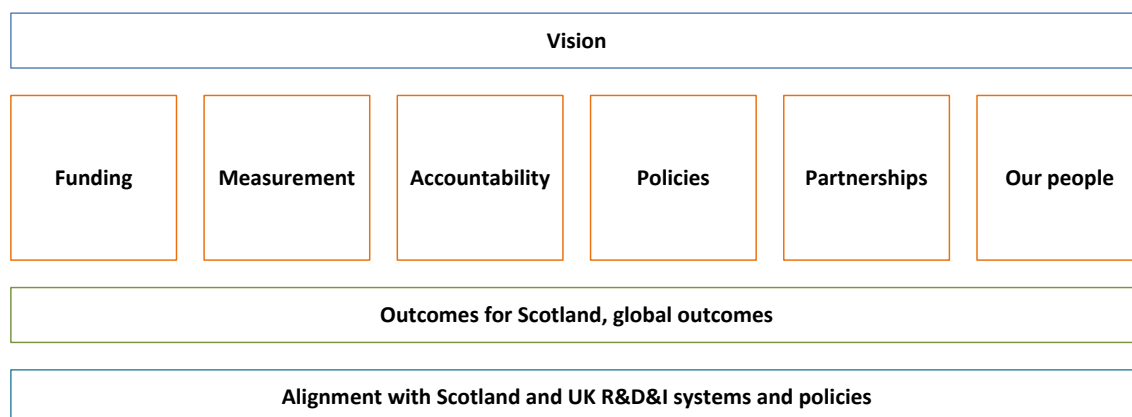
Innovation

- The importance of place and interaction with UK strategy for place.
- An innovation-led green recovery.
- The importance of colleges and tertiary partnerships.
- The evolution of key infrastructure, including Innovation Centres and Interface.

Early questions

11. As per the objectives of the whole review we are seeking to ensure our funding and other support for research and innovation is both sustainable and useful to Scotland's low carbon, economic and social recovery and future.
12. We are not seeking at this stage to develop the answers or design new funding structures and policies. We are seeking to dive deeper into the themes identified from phase one to **develop a sound evidence base from which to consider our options and likely scenarios**. However, we do need some end goal/visual aid to work towards and Figure 1 is one way we are framing things so that we can be focused and strategic in our next steps.
13. The committee, **following a presentation from the executive**, are invited to discuss and suggest:
 - a. The positioning of the planned review of research and innovation support in the context of the wider review – including but not limited to consideration of institutional sustainability, approaches to accountability frameworks and the evolving structures of skills development.
 - b. Evidence gathering methodologies and constituencies they recommend the executive uses and consults respectively.
 - c. Sources of international advice and expertise – an external view of the UK and Scottish environment (also welcomed by email)
 - d. Potential short-term responses to the emergency years – we expect to look at the role of UIF, Innovation Centres, Interface, the support for research – how else do we help universities and colleges make a difference to the social, public health and economic challenge.
14. Any other comments the Committee wish to make will be welcomed.
15. The next scheduled meeting of the Committee is in December. It may be helpful for the executive to engage individual committee members in the interim. Any member for whom that might be inconvenient is invited to let the Chair of the Committee know privately.

Figure 1 – framework



Risk assessment

16. The risks to be considered at this early stage of policy development in the Committee’s remit include:
- The risks to the sustainability and excellence of Scotland’s research base, as a result of international competition, COVID-19 and Brexit.
 - The immediate risk to Scotland’s economic and social wellbeing of the combination of COVID-19 and Brexit.
 - The risk of Scotland’s universities and colleges not being well positioned to contribute to a just transition to a net-zero carbon economy in the medium term.
17. The Review has been commissioned to seek mitigations to these risks which can be achieved by Government, SFC, the colleges and universities working together.

Equality and diversity assessment

18. At this stage of the review, SFC is not yet considering changes to policy, or resulting funding, in the areas of the Committee’s remit and so no assessment is, yet, required. Policy is expected to be changed by the review. Equality and Diversity assessment is being considered early, and will be included as proposals are brought to the Committee for advice.

Financial implications

19. There are no financial implications of the advice of the Committee resulting from this paper. As the Review proceeds, the Committee will be invited to make recommendations which will contribute to Board decisions on funding.

Recommendations

20. The Committee is invited to invited to discuss and suggest:
- a. The positioning of the planned review of research and innovation support in the context of the wider review – including but not limited to consideration of institutional sustainability, approaches to accountability frameworks and the evolving structures of skills development.
 - b. Evidence gathering methodologies and constituencies they recommend the executive uses and consults respectively.
 - c. Sources of international advice and expertise – an external view of the UK and Scottish environment (also welcomed by email).
 - d. Potentially short-term responses to the emergency years – we will potentially look at the role of UIF, Innovation Centres, Interface, the support for research – how else do we help universities and colleges make a difference to the social, public health and economic challenge.

Publication

21. This paper will be published on the Council website.

Further information

22. Contact: Keith McDonald, Assistant Director, tel: 0131 313 6674, email: kmcdonald@sfc.ac.uk.