



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability

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Introduction

1. In June 2020, Scottish Ministers commissioned the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to review how best we can fulfil our mission of securing coherent provision by post-16 education bodies, and the undertaking of research and innovation, in these changing times.
2. Our Phase 1 Review Report, published in October 2020, distilled over 100 responses to an initial call for evidence, and was informed by round-table discussions, advisory groups and relevant sector-specific and economic recovery reports. We reflected back a clear expression of immense pride in our world-leading education and research, an appetite for debate about the future, an ambition for change, and the need to take a whole-system view of change, working across the education and skills system. That said, we remain clear that:
 - We are working at **two speeds**: responding to the pandemic and the consequences of restrictions, alongside considering future change.
 - Colleges and universities continue to make **rapid adjustments** to deal with this emergency. More profound changes that may affect students, curriculum delivery, financial and business models, or physical estates in different states of adaptability will need **longer term transition and adaptation**.
 - We will get the best outcomes if we **collaborate for change** iteratively, to shape the conversation and bring forward and explore options for the future.
3. This update captures the work undertaken in the last four months to respond to the consequences of the pandemic in these emergency years, and, to keep policy development momentum in play. It outlines our internal and consultative work against each priority theme so we can develop our engagement into Phase 3.

Priorities for Phase 2

4. In our Phase 1 report we identified the following priorities for Phase 2:
 - A continued focused response to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the areas of health and safety; supporting students to succeed; economic and social recovery; and financial sustainability.
 - Making sure student views are threaded through our considerations.
 - Assessing the feasibility and prioritisation of options outlined under theme three in moving towards an integrated, connected tertiary and skills ecosystem for learners and employers.
 - Development, with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and stakeholders, of skills alignment, and the funding, planning and delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) and Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs).

- Engagement with employers and industry to ensure their views and expertise help inform and improve student outcomes.
- Engagement with multi-college regions on next steps.
- Working with UK partners to protect and enable investment in research and innovation and ensure its outcomes are aligned to future requirements such as health, societal changes and the economy.
- Exploring how we can collectively enhance and support digital and blended learning options.
- Developing further SFC's Outcome and Impact Framework, funding methodologies, quality assurance arrangements, targets and measures, and a Transformation Fund.

Dealing with an evolving situation

5. We are still aiming to provide a final report and recommendations in summer 2021. Phase 2, and our engagement with partners and stakeholders, has been significantly affected by the external environment and the need to respond to the current crisis:
 - By the end of 2020 and as we entered 2021, Scotland was once again in lockdown, with renewed restrictions impacting us all.
 - We, along with the Scottish Government, partners, stakeholders and institutions, focused on responding to the immediate priorities of supporting students, researchers and staff; ensuring learners could complete qualifications; securing employer-led, work-based skills requirements; and bringing stability at a time of great uncertainty.
 - The Scottish Government has announced its 2021-22 budget and additional funding for tertiary education and research. SFC has, therefore, had a welcome, if unusually complex, budget settlement and new funding streams to administer within compressed deadlines. We were also asked by Scottish Government Ministers to reprioritise our analytical work to assess the support needed for students with practical and placement requirements so that they could complete their qualifications or progress to further study or employment.
 - Many stakeholders told us they had limited capacity to engage in helping to shape longer term strategic options for change, but were equally concerned about missing an opportunity to work with us.
6. We recognise the tension between the appetite to shape options for change and reduced capacity to engage.
7. As our work has progressed we have grouped priorities under three broad headings:
 - **Emergency Years:** Areas of our work where our priority has been on the urgent requirements linked to surviving and thriving during this pandemic.

- **Ongoing Policy Development:** Those areas of policy development and improvement identified in Phase 1 and already in train. For example: skills alignment work through the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board (ESSB); working with Regional Strategic Bodies (RSBs) and multi-college regions; and improving our approach to assessing financial sustainability.
- **Developing Future Frameworks:** These are the significant high impact reforms that we think will bring long-term change to the sectors, including long-term sustainability for teaching, research and innovation. For example: a connected tertiary education and skills system supported by a more coherent funding model; the development of research and innovation; and a new and comprehensive SFC accountability framework.

EMERGENCY YEARS - A continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Supporting students and sustaining research in 2020-21

8. We received an additional non-recurring £60 million of Scottish Government funding for the Financial Year (FY) 2020-21. Our priority is to distribute this funding to support students, sustain research, protect jobs, and mitigate the effects of the pandemic on institutional sustainability. This extra funding works alongside an additional £30 million package of support specifically to address student hardship and to compensate institutions for income lost in providing rent rebates. We have also provided additional funding for Students' Associations to amplify students' voices and representation.
9. Below is a more detailed breakdown of additional funding for academic year (AY) 2020-21 since we published our Phase 1 Review Report in October and includes the additional £60 million referred to above:
 - £0.7 million for college and university students' associations and unions.
 - £17 million of additional student support discretionary funding, allocated by Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS), for HE students at universities and colleges.
 - £3 million of additional student support discretionary funding allocated by SFC for FE students alongside meeting college requests for additional funding in AY 2020-21 (£1.6 million) as part of our annual student support redistribution exercise, and repurposing £5 million unspent funds to enable additional discretionary funding to be available to colleges for COVID-19 related student support (with a focus on supporting digital poverty).
 - £20 million capital funding for universities to support research and knowledge exchange; and to support early career researchers.
 - £35 million for universities to maintain research activity, protect jobs and help students, recognising the impact the pandemic has had on reduced income, additional costs and a general strain on sustainability.
 - £15 million for colleges to support students to complete qualifications or progress to further study or employment, to support sustainability and protect jobs, and to maximise skills alignment and provision.
 - £10 million to support institutions manage income losses as a result of student accommodation refunds and rebates.

Sustainability and stability for students, researchers and institutions in 2021-22

10. The Scottish Government has published a budget for FY 2021-22 and has committed further COVID-19 consequentialities to support colleges and universities. In total, this represents an increase of £69.1 million (10.8%) for colleges and an increase of £52 million (7.0%) for universities. There is also a £4.5 million (1.3%) increase in

university capital funding, of which £4.4 million is for research. While it should be noted that a significant proportion of this funding constitutes one-off programme funding, this budget settlement recognises the importance of education and skills to our economic and social recovery and it should provide a more stable environment in which to consider future change and reform.

11. We are aiming to provide indicative budget allocations by 25 March, to enable institutions to plan efficiently for the coming AY. The policy objectives we hope to achieve through these funding allocations include:
 - To provide additional funded places for Scottish students to support productive learning opportunities at a time of significant economic and social turmoil, and to sustain a pipeline of skilled people for our recovery, while contributing to the upskilling of the existing workforce. While there is an inevitably uneven distribution of additional places, we will ensure all universities have at least a 4% increase in funded places.
 - To enable students to complete qualifications and minimise deferrals, particularly college students with practical and placement requirements. We will support college students through a combination of one-off funds, bringing forward allocations, increased credit targets and flexibility in credit guidance.
 - To recognise the sustainability challenges facing institutions through a general uplift in core teaching funding (2.5% for colleges and 2% for universities).
 - To protect and promote FAs and GAs and, for the first time, deliver these programmes through SFC funding lines, working closely with SDS.
 - To secure wider socio-economic impacts through (i) specific widening access funding and objectives; (ii) our support for small specialist institutions; and (iii) our programmes for minority cohorts of students with particular needs.
 - To protect the university research base through specific funding and, indirectly, through the increase in teaching grants, given the level of cross-subsidisation within the higher education system.
12. The opportunity for longer-term reforms to our funding distribution methodology was raised in our Phase 1 Review Report. As a first step within these reforms, we intend to remove the complex validation process included in our funding model when distributing funds for AY 2021-22. This has been discussed with the sectors over a number of years and it will help move towards a simpler, more transparent and fairer approach to funding distribution. You can read more about the validation process in our Phase 1 Review Report.

Supporting economic recovery

13. The role of colleges and universities in supporting Scotland's economic recovery was recognised by the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery, which noted: "the central importance of the role of education in the reconstruction of the economy is unarguable".

14. During Phase 2, we worked closely with Scottish Government and the sectors to ensure colleges and universities were recognised as key delivery agents for supporting economic recovery, through initiatives such as the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) and the National Transition Training Fund (NTTF). We also engaged with SAAS to ensure student support systems could support students taking up YPG and NTTF opportunities.
15. Together with SAAS, we are distributing almost £10 million of YPG funding to enable colleges to offer new, innovative courses to around 5,000 students in engineering, computing, digital, education and care. These courses will be linked to employers and developed with industry partners to ensure they deliver the skills that each sector requires.
16. Through the NTTF, we are distributing £6.4 million to provide around 5,000 upskilling and reskilling places to individuals who have lost their jobs or are at risk of redundancy in the sectors key to economic recovery. This funding is being distributed through colleges and universities but we also worked with partners such as Innovation Centres, the Energy Skills Partnership (ESP) and the National Manufacturing Institute for Scotland (NMIS) to develop industry based proposals that will meet future skills needs.

ONGOING POLICY DEVELOPMENT - Delivering for Scotland: students, skills and employers

17. In Phase 1, we recognised that collaborative planning across institutions, employers, skills agencies and regional bodies is key, not only to developing the learner journey, but to economic recovery in Scotland. Central to this is the need for education and skills stakeholders to work together and align their resources to overcome challenges presented by the pandemic and to develop strategic interventions to secure a coherent tertiary education and skills system for learners and employers.
18. In Phase 2, SFC focused on policy development in a range of areas including: funding, planning and delivery of FAs and GAs, the digital learning experience, regional development, and access and inequalities. In Phase 3 and beyond, we will develop and continually evolve policy in these areas while also expanding our engagement with stakeholders more widely to shape our thinking and plans for further activity.

Skills alignment

19. Ensuring the provision offered by colleges and universities meets the range of learner needs, and continues to be responsive, is crucial to ensuring that Scotland's people, businesses and employers are equipped with the right skills to prosper. The significance of our work in this area has been brought into sharp focus in light of the ongoing response to COVID-19. While many of the economic impacts are still to be realised, a feature of the unprecedented economic shock has been the differential impact of the pandemic on different sectors. As a consequence, we can anticipate emerging regional skills disparities and demands. Understanding local and regional economic needs - and ensuring these are being analysed and factored into responses within and across colleges and universities - has therefore never been more important.
20. We know that increased collaboration will enable colleges and universities to respond with maximum flexibility, to provide high quality learning and skills opportunities, and to further stimulate the investment in skills by both individuals and employers.
21. Between September and November 2020, SDS and SFC jointly led a series of regional workshops across Scotland to support regional economic recovery. The workshops provided a valuable opportunity for partners, including universities and colleges, to combine their expertise, institutional and regional knowledge and labour market intelligence to address the requirements for regional economic recovery.
22. We acknowledge that a great deal of collaboration exists in most regions, however, more collaborative planning will maximise the impact for learners, communities and employers. Central to the development of our accountability framework will be an enhanced approach to supporting institutional collaborations, encouraging the development of long-term relationships with industry, and a focus on learning with impact - ensuring students are equipped to flourish in employment.

Foundation and Graduate Apprenticeships

23. In line with our commitment to work-based learning as part of the wider curriculum offer, we have worked closely with SDS to embed both FAs and GAs within the core further and higher education curriculum offer from AY 2021-22, representing a change from the commissioning model operated by SDS. The commitment by SFC to embed FAs and GAs in core funding will safeguard the qualifications following the cessation of European Structural Funds and will bring greater cohesion to regional curriculum delivery, protect student choice and address regional economic and employer needs.
24. Significant work has taken place since Phase 1. Engagement with stakeholders, delivery partners and institutions has been fundamental to understanding the implications of embedding FAs and GAs within institutions' core curriculum, as well as to achieving the right outcome for students, employers and institutions. In addition to meeting with sector bodies and strategic partners, such as the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB), Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland, we met with all colleges and RSBs, universities, local authorities and Independent Learning Providers.
25. As we move into Phase 3, we will provide further advice on the delivery model and develop performance and accountability processes. We will also continue to work with SDS and other partners to further develop and promote the relevance and value of Scotland's apprenticeship offer.

Employer engagement

26. During Phase 2, we carried out informal testing of the findings from Phase 1, through existing relationships with the main SAAB, its Employer Engagement Group, the Chairs of the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Groups, and the Scottish Chambers of Commerce. More broadly, we undertook a mapping exercise to better understand our employer relationships and to identify gaps. We will use the findings to develop an engagement framework that will enable us to strengthen and formalise our relationships with employers and facilitate better engagement between them and our colleges and universities at a more strategic level. We will also bring the student voice into these discussions given student interest in work based learning.

Engagement with multi-college regions

27. SFC, working closely with Scottish Government, has made tailored recommendations to RSBs of multi-college regions in an attempt to address existing concerns around issues such as governance and accountability structures, contested costs and funding authority, and unclear outcomes for students. These recommendations emphasise that RSBs should continue to keep the needs of students, employer partners and the regional economy at the forefront of thinking around reform.
28. In Phase 3, we will work closely with RSBs to support them to make the necessary reforms. We recognise that the scale of change required to deliver greater value, regional effectiveness and satisfaction for all stakeholders will require a long-term approach, and in some cases, legislative change.

Investing in digital

29. SFC recognises the importance of online and blended learning and teaching delivery as a core part of institutional strategies, and we are committed to continuing to support this digital revolution through our funding. We have reviewed our investments to date, which have been directed towards alleviating digital poverty, and looking ahead, we are considering the role of digital technologies as a means of enhancing the learning, teaching and student experience. Online learning presents an opportunity to be innovative, agile and environmentally friendly.
30. We have started to shape a stakeholder consultation to be co-led with JISC and informed by the following themes:
- **Resource:** exploring the support necessary to ensure a high quality learning experience for learners that is co-designed specifically for digital delivery.
 - **Infrastructure and estates:** the digital technology ecosystem and physical requirements of the sectors.
 - **Skills and training:** being ambitious about and supporting digital literacy and skills for students and staff.
 - **Efficiencies:** digital as a driver for change to the time and cost of delivering post-16 education.
 - **Assurance:** to ensure quality and consistency of the online learning experience.
31. Supporting a digital revolution requires a collaborative and holistic approach - we are keen to listen to and learn from students, institutions and stakeholders, and from recent work conducted in the sector. The consultation approach through JISC will also allow us to explore how to fully exploit the potential of digital technologies to enhance the student experience and work as drivers of change in the climate agenda and as contributors to Scotland's journey to net zero.

Fair access and transitions

32. The pandemic has highlighted and further entrenched existing inequalities. We considered our approach to access and inclusion through the emergency and recovery years, and the importance of delivering a system for students that is open, fair and accessible. As part of the emergency years' Outcome Agreement Framework for institutions, we required colleges and universities to set measurable, evidence-based equality outcomes. Our priorities continue to be:
- A whole system approach that widens access, impacts positively on student mental health and wellbeing, and is underpinned by equality considerations.
 - A focus on current and potential students who are impacted by poverty and financial hardship.

- A focus on current and future Senior Phase pupils impacted by COVID-19 to ensure fair access to pathways for progressing their educational ambitions.
33. In addition, SFC and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have established a working group to discuss and tackle persistent inequalities in Scotland's colleges and universities. Membership of this group includes representatives from colleges, universities, the National Equality Forum, NUS and Scottish Government. The group is taking an intersectional approach and ensuring wider inclusion issues, such as socio-economic disadvantage, care experience and caring responsibilities, are considered. In addition, we have undertaken significant work on anti-racism, making practical resources available for all to use, and setting up further work strands in curriculum development.

Student voice

34. We are committed to making sure student views are threaded through our considerations.
35. We set up a Student Engagement Advisory Group (SEAG) which began meeting in November. It has covered discussion topics that have informed other areas of our Phase 2 considerations, especially around digital learning. SEAG also facilitated further engagement with the National Education Officers Network and NUS Scotland Student Presidents and Vice Presidents, and with the CEOs of Student Associations. Working with sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland), two publications were issued to help facilitate student engagement: a briefing note to students on the Review, with information about how to get involved through their institution, and a guide for institutions on how they could support student engagement in the review.
36. As we move into Phase 3, we will continue to ensure that students feed into future engagement activities as equal partners.

DEVELOPING FUTURE FRAMEWORKS

A coherent, connected tertiary and skills ecosystem

37. The Scottish further and higher education sector is diverse and heterogeneous. This reflects not only the development of the sector over many decades, but also its significance at local, national and global levels. Its diversity continues to provide an important context for considerations of differentiation and integration within the sector, and how best to recognise the specific contributions of colleges and universities, and individual missions within this ecosystem.
38. Many stakeholders want colleges and universities to work even more collaboratively than at present, for example, on access, learner pathways, efficiencies, regional skills and education planning, coherent provision and economic recovery.
39. The progress and success of regionalisation and place-based, collaborative developments were viewed as critical building blocks in the development of a future tertiary system. In Phase 2 we focused on understanding the drivers, hallmarks and shared ambition at the heart of successful regional collaborations.
40. In addition to improvements that could be made in the way that colleges and universities work collaboratively, we have also been considering the Senior Phase activity that is supported by SFC.
41. We understand that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Independent Review of the Curriculum for Excellence will be published in summer 2021 and this will be important for SFC given the scale of Senior Phase provision we support.
42. Our work is developing under five broad themes that should support future engagement on the improvements we can make together to achieve a more coherent, connected tertiary education and skills system:
 - **Support, advice and guidance:** ensuring all pathways and articulation routes are communicated and understood through careers advice, information and guidance.
 - **Reducing duplication:** supporting recognition of prior learning to remove barriers and improve participation.
 - **Data and performance:** improving data sharing to increase understanding of performance and support learners' progress and better understand student and employer demand for pathways.
 - **Quality:** exploring how our ambitions for quality assurance and enhancement can support both improvements to the student experience and the development of a more coherent tertiary system.
 - **Funding:** how future funding arrangements can enable increased access, improved learner pathways and achieve greater efficiencies.

43. As part of our considerations around a more coherent system, initial scoping work also began on how we might develop a new funding model. We value differentiation and variety in the sector. Our key question remains how we achieve coherent provision within this differentiated model, and how to ensure the system works to best effect for learners, businesses, and Scottish interests. We are seeking to achieve a simpler and more transparent model across colleges and universities while ensuring institutional sustainability.
44. Our position will evolve as the Review progresses and we take forward detailed engagement with colleges and universities. We have identified initial policy drivers that we hope will help stimulate that engagement:
- The need to recognise the distinctive roles of colleges and universities and the differentiation needed in the system, while (i) incentivising closer collaboration that will benefit learners; and(ii) securing equitable approaches to funding.
 - Learning the lessons from the COVID-19 experience – of blended and digital advances, and the need many people will have to engage in reskilling to find future opportunities.
 - Ensuring provision can adjust to student demand, and local, regional and national economic needs.

Research and Innovation

45. Throughout Phase 2, we engaged widely on research and innovation, including with UKRI, and we continued to explore our longer-term strategic direction, particularly in relation to research funding, excellence and sustainability. Our activities have laid the foundations for further stakeholder engagement as part of Phase 3. In addition, as we move into Phase 3, we anticipate remaining close to research policy developments around ‘places’ and ‘missions’ based approaches, as well as exploring ways of enhancing Scotland’s research culture and supporting the researchers within the system.
46. Innovation secures wide-reaching economic, social and cultural value for Scotland. As part of our Phase 2 activities, we continued to review our knowledge exchange support, delivered via the University Innovation Fund (UIF), and we considered how to evolve our Innovation Centre programme. We are also exploring how to drive closer integration between academic innovation and commercialisation, as well as capitalising on the contribution of our college sector more effectively.
47. We recognise the role entrepreneurship will play in our future economy, especially where a shift towards a net-zero carbon society drives new jobs, business opportunities and export potential. Learning from the Logan report, and other inputs, our Phase 3 work will review the potential for SFC to engage further in entrepreneurial support for colleges and universities, aligned with our overall innovation mission.

48. We remain close to innovation policy developments in liaison with UKRI, Innovate UK and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) at the UK level, and with Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise in Scotland.

Developing further SFC's accountability framework

49. Phase 1 highlighted a number of prompts for SFC to consider its overall operating framework including our approach to championing, challenging and supporting colleges and universities. Considering a new approach informed by Phase 1 and our role as the national strategic organisation for further and higher education we have:
- Considered a range of ways in which the accountability framework could be strengthened and improved.
 - Explored other regulatory approaches within the rest of the UK and internationally.
 - Considered the strengths of Scotland's quality framework and the features of the different UK nations' quality frameworks.
 - Initiated conversations informally with institutions through Outcome Agreement (OA) engagement.
 - Implemented interim OA arrangements flowing from Phase 1.
 - Begun to reflect on learning from AY 2019-20 Self Evaluations and the interim OA AY 2020-21 process.
50. We have considered how an Outcome and Impact Framework might develop and integrate into a wider approach to accountability that is:
- **Forward-looking:** Thinking about our role within the system over medium-long timescales, 10-15 years and beyond. An agile, anticipatory, forward-looking approach is likely to become increasingly important.
 - **Outcome focused:** Introducing an Outcome and Impact Framework that supports the delivery of National Outcomes would provide a clear focus on key outcomes and set more transparent expectations for all stakeholders and for all institutions. As our organisational focus shifts more consistently towards outcomes, so too should our corporate systems. Our operating model and the broader accountability framework must support and enable this approach.
 - **Comprehensive:** Considering holistically the investments made by SFC across our portfolio of teaching, research, innovation, capital and strategic support.
 - **Evidence and data-led:** Data and evidence are vital if we are to achieve greater impact and influence. Strong data and evidence can also increase public confidence in the sectors, including in relation to quality.

- **Strategic:** We will want to recalibrate our use of non-core funds to fund investments in the sector: collaborations; 'invest to save'; and strategic research areas.
- **Collaborative:** Working with our partner agencies, particularly around skills planning, regional collaboration, with UK counterparts and to enhance collective funding decisions, and to clarify lines of responsibility.

Conclusion and next steps

51. During Phase 2 we have developed our thinking across the themes outlined in the Phase 1 Review Report, focusing particularly on addressing the immediate challenges presented by COVID-19 and expanding on feedback from our call for evidence. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, there continues to be a significant appetite for debate about the future and an ambition for change. We are keen to maintain momentum and capitalise on this shared ambition for the future.
52. As we move into Phase 3 key areas for development will include:

Emergency Years

In the emergency years, we will continue to:

- Work closely with Scottish Government, universities, colleges and partners in responding to COVID-19 related challenges - working flexibly and at pace to stabilise and protect the quality of the student experience.
- Monitor the financial health of institutions and distribute the recently allocated additional funding.
- Deliver and support FAs and GAs, the NTTF and the YPG.

Ongoing Policy Development

In Phase 3 and beyond, as part of our commitment to developing and continuously evolving policy, we will continue to:

- Champion universities and colleges as regional, national and global assets, with important roles in realising economic recovery.
- Work closely with partners and stakeholders to drive greater skills alignment.
- Set out a new ambition for digital, including how it supports excellence in learning, teaching and the student experience.
- Engage in policy development around the Senior Phase.
- Work closely with RSBs and the Scottish Government on the recommendations arising from our Phase 1 report.
- Further define our role in responding to the climate crisis and consider how our investments, and our influence in the system, can be best brought to bear to achieve Scotland's net zero target for 2045.
- Enable and drive Scotland's approach to access into and through the tertiary ecosystem, monitoring the impact of our investment.

Developing Future Frameworks

By the end of phase three we will:

- Explore how we best continue to keep students at the heart of our developments, frameworks and funding models.
- Further develop our thinking around SFC's accountability framework including how we drive performance, quality and impact, and demonstrate greater alignment with national priority outcomes.
- Continue to evolve our role in supporting the financial sustainability of both sectors and in identifying opportunities for this to be delivered through increased efficiency, coherence and collaboration.
- Consider how we make the most of the sector's global connections, to drive increased internationalisation, global collaboration and inward investment for the benefit of Scotland.
- Further develop our approach to a new funding model, and explore and consult on the challenges and opportunities of a more coherent and connected tertiary system.
- Continue exploring our longer-term strategic direction for research and innovation, particularly in relation to research funding, excellence and sustainability and support for entrepreneurship.

53. We are grateful to those who have helped shape this phase of reflection and activity.
54. As we move into Phase 3, while mindful of the possibility of further disruption due to COVID-19, we are hopeful that as restrictions ease, stakeholders will have increasing capacity to engage. We remain committed to collaborating in an inclusive and iterative way that shapes the conversation collectively and translates the ambition for change into more comprehensive recommendations.
55. Phase 3 will see more detailed consideration of some of the key themes. We will explore a number of different channels and approaches to engagement, including workshops and facilitated roundtable discussions, to ensure that we hear from as wide a range of stakeholders as possible and to allow for deeper consideration of ideas and options for change. Central to all that we do will be a commitment to ensure that the views of students and employers are threaded through all our considerations.