
SEAL Committee forward agenda

Purpose

1. This paper sets out some background to a discussion on the forward agenda for the Skills, Enhancement, Access and Learning (SEAL) Committee. This Committee meeting marks Dr Paul Little's final meeting as the Chair. The discussions will help the executive plan the Committee's forward agenda with the incoming Chair.

Remit

2. The Committee has a role to recommend and advise SFC on the development and strengthening of the student and employer experience of the tertiary system, with broad areas of advice including but not limited to:
 - The student lived experience including learning and teaching pedagogy and quality and how learners' access, complete and progress from tertiary education. This should include understanding of the range of learners - and how their experiences are being protected and enhanced - within our tertiary system.
 - The maximisation of the tertiary sector's impact on the economy, including the coherence of SFC funded provision, the development of strategic and impactful partnerships with employers across the system and work to address employers' and learner needs.
 - Providing advice on the future development of the tertiary system by understanding and being alerted to changing student expectations and needs and future societal and economic issues. This should include learning from policy and system development elsewhere in the UK and globally.

Context

3. The SFC Review, published in June 2021, and the Scottish Government's response to the Review, published in October 2021, provides important context for the work of the Committee, particularly in relation to the role of SFC as the national, strategic body for further/higher education and research in Scotland.
4. One of the recommendations from the SFC Review was the development of a clear strategic, longer-term vision for colleges and universities. Since this work was originally proposed, the scope has evolved considerably, and the Scottish Government has been undertaking educational reform activity including:

- James Withers' independent review of the skills delivery landscape.
 - Professor Hayward's Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment.
 - Professor Ken Muir's Report: 'Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education' that recommended significant reform of both Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority
 - National Discussion on Education led by Professor Carol Campbell and Professor Alma Harris.
 - Scottish Government's Purpose and Principles for post-school education, skills, and research.
5. The Scottish Government's reform activity will influence the Committee's long-term agenda, in particular the James Withers review as the recommendations address long-standing issues around a responsive and connected education and skills system and provides focus on the needs of learners and employers.

Previous discussions

6. At the SEAL Committee in November 2022 there was a discussion on the areas the Committee would like to explore, in an advisory capacity, over the forthcoming period.
7. In discussion the Committee:
- Advised the forward agenda should be dynamic and flexible, able to adapt to the SFC and Scottish Government policy priorities. The focus should be on enhancing the student learning experience and responding to the outcomes of the reviews, key themes and recommendations.
 - Suggested themes could be on:
 - Skills and qualification planning
 - Digital education and how delivery needs to adapt
 - Green skills
 - WorldSkills
 - Student support, including how to support specific groups of students.
 - Encouraged a deep dive on other specific policy areas for example:
 - Tertiary Provision Pathfinders
 - Health and Social Care
 - National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET).

- Agreed experts could be invited, as required, to give a different perspective to discussions, for example, the Commissioner for Fair Access or the Chief Entrepreneur.
8. At the following two SEAL Committee meetings in January and May the policy update paper included updates on green skills through CESAP, WorldSkills UK, tertiary provision pathfinders, and SFC work on health and social care. The focus at the last Committee was on access and the promotion of student interests. The Commissioner for Fair Access attended to discuss his role and future plans and there followed a discussion on SFC's work in the Student Interests, Access, and Pathways team.

Forward agenda items

9. At the last SEAL Committee, it was suggested that we should:
- Hold a discussion on Health at the next meeting (November/December 2023).
 - Invite the Commissioner for Fair Access to a meeting once a year (May/June).
 - Include a paper from the Student Interests, Access and Pathways team at every other meeting.

Recommendations

10. The SEAL Committee is invited to note the paper and provide suggestions to the executive on its forward agenda.

Publication

11. This paper will be published on the SFC website following the meeting.

Further information

12. Contact: Nick Stansfeld, Clerk to the Committee, email: nstansfeld@sfc.ac.uk.