

SFC Call For Evidence feedback - via ZOOM from Stuart McCabe (Student) to Lynne Raeside and Carina MacRitchie (10 August 2020)

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?

- As a student with a disability, widening access for students with disabilities in both college and universities has been improving over the last decade.
- Widening access for people from the most deprived backgrounds who wish to study at college and university should remain a priority focus for SFC

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?

- This depends on the protocols in differing institutions. Some Universities, for example, University of the West of Scotland, have always been inclusive for people from all backgrounds, including those with disabilities and international students.
- Anecdotally, not all universities are as inclusive as UWS.
- Not all students attend mainstream schools. More focus and processes should be in place by Universities to promote and consider a wider range of student backgrounds and context beyond academic attainment within their contextualised admissions processes
- More effort by all Universities to support the widening access agenda
- Recognise that the First Minister does understand the concerns around widening access but wider change is needed, more choice is needed and more voices need listened to. Processes need to be put in place to support students.
- The Scottish Government when launching any new WA policies or campaigns should use and recognise the Universities that are better at delivering Widening Access rather than focusing on more selective Universities - or use a neutral venue.

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

- Recognise the importance of International students and that they have a platform – but recognise that there is also lot of potential of students within Scotland to undertake MSc, PG, UG courses
- More funding for Universities to carry out research for coronavirus or generally – some universities receive less funding for research than others and these universities like UWS have the potential to expand their research capabilities but do not get the recognition

d) What opportunities and threats does the post-pandemic environment hold for colleges, universities and specialist institutions?

Threats

- Lack of funding
- The first semester/year of AY 2020-21 being fully online could be detrimental for all students, particularly first year students. Limited social interactions and rules unknown as yet about time allowed physically on campus may reduce the student experience
- Delays to the start of the semester and the difference in application processes for full-time and part-time students and accessing SAAS funding is causing additional delays in applications for part-time students
- The consequences of BREXIT where FE and HE institutions in Scotland may struggle to recruit international students after 31 December 2020, the political impact and the potential changes/cuts to the ERASMUS scheme for incoming/outgoing exchange students studying at Scottish Universities

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

- Partnerships between schools and Universities to help transitions. Potential for SFC to fund an initiative or national model for College and University students from deprived backgrounds or have a disability, who have gone through the educational experience, to help fund them to act as mentors or ambassadors and go into schools to run workshops to break down barriers and help encourage applications

- Put the tools and encouragement in place for people to see the opportunities that are available to them

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?

- More collaboration
- Unclear the different public funding allocations to Universities for differing policies
- Use the student voice and grass roots to allow others who have been through the system to support students and learn from their experiences. Remove red tape and barriers for securing funding and have more open and transparent conversations
- Allow more flexibility by Universities in their use of the funding provided within reason
- SFC should recognise the widening access work of all institutions, see them as equal partners and give them the tools to flourish
- Communication mechanisms to engage such as twitter or in-person contributions can help broaden the ways of interacting with SFC (rather than forms). Forums are helpful – but use different ways and opportunities to capture the views of widening access students
- Better partnerships between SFC and individual widening access students
- Visibility of the SFC senior team is important