



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoinachaidh na h-Alba

Call for Evidence: A Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in Further and Higher Education

SFC Call for Information

Issue Date: 20 July 2020

A Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in Further and Higher Education: Call for Evidence

A response from SGSAH (the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities). SGSAH is the world's first national graduate school in the Arts and Humanities, with a mission to work in partnership to offer training and support to doctoral researchers across Scotland. Our 16 HEI members cover the whole of Scotland, from the Highlands and Islands to the Scottish Borders. SGSAH is home to the AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership for Scotland, and is funded by the SFC and the AHRC, as well as member HEIs.

1. We are interested in your views on these six areas in particular:

- 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?**

From SGSAH's perspective, sustainable investment in collaborative doctoral training provision is a nationally and internationally important activity that can support social, cultural and economic recovery from the pandemic. Such investment encourages and nurtures creativity and ongoing innovation in world-leading research, supporting the future of research in arts and humanities across Scotland and beyond. It also provides a strategic focus for Scottish HEIs to connect their arts and humanities research with relevant economic sectors, leveraging expertise, and nurturing industry-linked provision for education and innovation-led approaches resulting in workforce development, future leaders and world changers equipped to deal with challenges.

Arts and humanities subject areas include: heritage, literature, philosophy, history, art and design, museums and culture, law, linguistics, media, film and TV, theatre, modern languages and theology. Engagement in the arts and humanities allows people to experiment, explore, reflect, engage, participate, communicate and connect. There is extensive research and evidence to support the value of participation in the arts and humanities on physical and mental wellbeing, and investing in and promoting engagement at a local, national and international level, in conjunction with meaningful cross-sectoral collaboration will support civic, emotional and economic recovery.

HEIs have a key role to play in supporting national recovery, but are also placed in position of severe financial risk because of the pandemic, and will

require both public investment to secure their futures, and also flexible approaches, in order not to create further inequalities (between demographic and regional groupings, between subject areas) in provision for education.

Sustained investment in postgraduate and doctoral education for home and international students would reduce inequalities, increase access and inclusivity, equipping graduates with essential skills and mobility required to succeed in key sectors that deliver maximum benefits. Failure to invest in arts and humanities, culture and heritage would greatly impact creativity and expression and the meaning that it brings to our lives.

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? (You may wish to comment on teaching and skills development, sectoral and employer needs and employability, research, innovation and knowledge exchange, widening access and equalities issues.)

We would suggest the importance of digital equality and skills development for staff and students, widening access and equalities issues, as well as enhanced mobility programmes; business case development predicated upon widening access and flexible, environmentally and socially responsible, internationalisation. Such activities would provide opportunities for digital engagement and learning, as well as accessibility and student/staff mobility, as well as enhancing employability and innovation through transferable skills. It is important to embed equalities, the environment and health and wellbeing in the long term, not just quick fixes or green washes.

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

Through a demonstration that we can react in response to the global changes instigated by the pandemic, and the challenge of Brexit, e.g. by upskilling/reskilling, supporting and promoting exchanges and physical and virtual mobility programmes to help researchers develop a range of skills, contacts and networks abroad. Through internationalisation, e.g. sustaining and developing international education provision and reputation, and by re-examining operating systems and research potential to help build, support and create a green economic recovery and inclusive economic growth.

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?

Opportunities include the capacity to develop responsive online global education, with interconnected physical and virtual research and learning spaces and processes; partnerships with external organisations (including businesses) and wider communities to use HE's research base to accelerate transition into innovation and inclusive economic growth; the strengthening of place-based collaboration; and new training pathways to meet developing needs and access.

Threats include a return to 'business as usual', including damaging impacts on staff and student health and wellbeing and the environment; diminishing HE funding and inequality of opportunity; limited physical mobility affecting research outputs and opportunities. Although short-term funding support has been made available for cultural and heritage sectors, there is harmful potential for reduced investment and funding restrictions for arts and humanities subject areas, and a reduction in strategic partnership opportunities as external organisations struggle themselves to survive and refocus.

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

From SGSAH's perspective, a furtherance of inter-institutional and external collaborations, alongside multidisciplinary approaches to research and education to shape society and shift culture. Such approaches are already underway but could be further extended to include collaborative governance across public, private and third sector, both locally and internationally in order to problem solve often complex issues and enable creativity and capacity for ongoing development and sustainable practices.

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? In particular, you may wish to draw out:

- **How scarce public resources should be prioritised to drive recovery**
This should begin with a definition of what public resources are (cultural, social, environmental, economic), and move towards a strategic rather than

reactionary approach which connects and invests in culture, wellbeing, inclusivity and sustainability. Specifically, with regards to SGSAH, in terms of supporting an inclusive, green and education-led recovery, by investing in research into arts and humanities-related sectors, and strategic partnership opportunities.

- **Particular areas of collaboration between agencies that would best support the sectors' contributions**

From SGSAH's perspective, areas of collaboration should include cultural innovation and creative education to generate new opportunities and benefit society, foster cultural, social and environmental responsibility, and the role and relevance of the civic university, and wider, public and sectoral impact and knowledge exchange both within Scotland, across the UK and internationally.

- **Adaptations to SFC's funding and accountability frameworks to promote agile and collaborative action by the sectors to build Scotland's recovery**

Enable localised decision-making.

- **How SFC's funding and accountability frameworks should ensure that equality and wide access to educational opportunity are promoted as key elements of the recovery for younger people and adults**

Increase investment, review equality of access, giving consideration of pipeline issues both for staff (recruitment, training, profile-realising opportunities) and students (recruitment, admissions, attainment, articulation into postgraduate-level study, health and wellbeing). Ongoing review of strategic priorities in light of risk assessments, particularly in terms of the impact of the pandemic and Brexit.

- **What support SFC and government could give institutions to adapt to a changed environment**

Such support should be built around consistency, support and funding, and underpinned by shared vision, including the co-development of strategies across the HE sector to respond to the challenges collectively.

6. Please send your response or any queries to reviewsecretariat@sfc.ac.uk by **10 August 2020**. We look forward to receiving your views.

SFC Review Secretariat
July 2020

Call for Evidence: A Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in Further and Higher Education

Issue date: 20 July 2020

Deadline: 10 August 2020

Reference: SFC/CE/01/2020

Summary: This publication invites all interested individuals and organisations to submit evidences to help inform the SFC review of coherent provision and sustainability in Further and Higher Education.

FAO: Colleges and universities, students and learners, graduates, industry and employers, local government, equalities interest groups, unions, quality assessors, other SFC funded bodies, professional representative bodies and academies

Further information: **Contact:** Review Secretariat
Email: reviewsecretariat@sfc.ac.uk