

UCU submission to the Scottish Funding Council review of coherent provision and sustainability in further and higher education

The University and College Union (UCU) is the largest trade union in the post-16 education sector in the UK, representing over 120,000 academic and related members across the UK, and is the largest union in the higher education sector in Scotland.

Introduction

UCU welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the review. We recognise the immediacy and uniqueness of the current situation; the Scottish Government's request to SFC to conduct the review as a matter of urgency; and accept assurances that this is not the final opportunity to submit evidence, but we also think it critical that whatever conclusions the review reaches have wide support within the tertiary education sector. Any changes made will potentially have a long-term fundamental impact and should not be made simply in response to an immediate crisis. The short three week timescale of the initial call for evidence occurring during the Scottish school holiday period is unfortunate. We note the Scottish Government's advice that a 12 week consultation period is best practice. The three week length of this consultation effectively negates membership organisations being able to properly consult with and reflect the views of members.

This submission highlights a number of key points UCU would want the SFC to consider. We have tried to identify areas in the order of the questions set out in the call for evidence, however a number of areas cross over more than one question so we have not considered the questions one by one. Finally, in Scotland, UCU is predominantly a higher education union and while the scope of the review necessitates comment on all post-school forms of education, the bulk of our response concentrates on higher education.

Benefits of higher education

UCU believes that higher education delivers many benefits both for those who access it, for society, the economy and for the communities in which our universities are based. These range from the sector being a prime economic driver; preparing and developing the skills of tomorrow's workers, and providing

opportunities for development and reskilling for those at the sharp end of economic downturn and recession; developing the critical thinking essential to functioning democracies; through to building on and developing knowledge and scholarship through research, the need for which has never been more to the fore than in this current crisis.

Our universities provide significant economic benefit for the communities to which they belong. Research¹ carried out for UCU shows the number of directly employed jobs each institution has along with the number of associated jobs (through supply chains and the expenditure of staff and students). In all, for each job created directly working for a university there is another associated job created. The research also looked at the value to the economy of universities by looking at the gross value added, a key measure of economic contribution.

The research focussed on cities, and while the methodology is different between cities and regions or countries, a simple approach of collating the impact of Scotland's universities found an economic impact of the sector of at least 36,850 directly employed people; an additional associated 36,050 jobs; and the economy boosted by at least £4.6 billion. A prominent example of this is the role of the Dundee universities in the decision of the V&A in coming to Dundee and driving economic regeneration.

This is hugely important but it is not the entirety of the higher education sector's contribution. Higher education cannot be viewed solely as economic transaction with the amount of money put in considered against the value of return. There are other important benefits to universities that should be equally valued, around the development of critical thought, essential to a functioning democracy and civilised society. One of the more positive consequences of the current Covid-19 crisis has been the return to prominence of the expert voice in public life. Given the "dumbing down" of political discourse during and post Brexit, the sight of credible, evidenced based academic expertise being sought out and given a platform, has been welcome. There is also a value in education in itself, and increasing individual and society's knowledge.

The review should not feel constrained into adopting a perspective of only seeing universities' worth through their financial and economic contribution and return, indeed it would be deeply damaging to the sector and to society to do so.

Funding and the teaching grant

To continue to get these benefits from higher education, the sector needs to be properly funded. Clearly, the anticipated loss of income: from commercial activity and loss in international student fee income is and will continue to have

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10924/Study-shows-Scotlands-universities-support-tens-of-thousands-of-jobs-and-generate-billions-for-the-country?list=1676>

a damaging impact. There have been a range of estimates on the loss of income the sector is likely to see in the coming financial year, ranging from £435m² to £651m³. UCU's own research⁴ estimated a loss of £251m in Scotland. These are all estimates and we will not know the full picture until the beginning of the academic year- or possibly later – when we know the numbers of students who turn up, along with more detail on the other financial constraints. Whichever, if any, is nearest the truth, the fact is that universities in Scotland are facing an unprecedented financial challenge.

UCU welcomed the minister's commitment in July 2020 to retaining the money currently funding tuition costs for EU students in the sector from 2021 onwards to increase the number of Scottish domiciled students. UCU is calling for this resource to be used to fully fund the teaching grant in universities. The full costs of delivering university tuition to Scottish domiciled is not currently met by public funding. The 2019 report⁵ into university finances from Audit Scotland found that for 2015/16 universities, on average, recovered only 93.4% of the full cost of teaching from public funds. Universities Scotland in its submission⁶ ahead of the draft budget consideration states that universities received £130m less in real terms in 2019/20 than was available in 2014/15.

UCU wholly supports the concept of free tuition and the Scottish Government's determination that access to higher education should be based on your academic ability and not your ability to pay. It does, however need to be properly funded. Money available from the decision not to continue paying the costs of EU students' tuition post Brexit is an opportunity to address this funding gap.

Benefits of diversity and breadth

We see real benefit in the current diversity and range of the Scottish higher education sector. From the OU in Scotland, to the practical focus of many of our post-92 institutions and our research intensive universities there is a breadth and depth to the opportunities for students, across the sector. Put simply each of our universities provides a unique education and has a distinct offer to students and the wider community. This is demonstrably true for the small specialist institutions but equally so with our larger ancient universities that have served their communities for centuries. Taking Glasgow as an example, from the Conservatoire, to the Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow Caledonian University,

² <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-HE-finances-v1.0.pdf>

³ http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/covid-19/SFC_briefing_note_-_COVID-19_Further_and_Higher_Education_Financial_Impacts.pdf

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https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10871/LE_report_on_covid19_and_university_finances/pdf/Lereportoncovid19anduniversityfinances

⁵ https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr_190919_finances_universities.pdf

⁶ <http://universities-scotland-ac-uk.preview1.cp247.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Briefing-to-Education-and-Skills-Committee-January-2019-v-1.0.pdf>

Strathclyde and Glasgow universities, they all have distinct histories, offers and student makeup. Students are not a homogenous population, rather a diverse collection of people. The degree programmes available across institutions are designed to meet the changing student, economy and society needs. The union is also strongly supportive of the breadth of discipline and subject matter for teaching, research and knowledge exchange that is delivered by the sector in Scotland. While the Scottish Funding Council has statutory duties to ensure coherent provision of higher education across Scotland, there is a balance to be struck between overt interference over decisions properly left to institutions and ensuring co-ordination across the sector. The key word in this is 'coherent'. Universities provide vital vocational skills in science, technology, engineering - and medical science in particular - that are crucial to get us through this pandemic. However we also need to invest in teaching provision, and in supporting arts, humanities and social science disciplines which help us to understand the world in which we live. It is fundamentally important that universities can and do offer diversity too, so as undergraduates can, for example be proficient scientists as well as competent in modern languages; or combine disciplines such as mathematics and music. Whatever outcomes are delivered by this review, our union strongly warns against change that limits or restricts the offer in Scotland's universities. It is deeply problematic where marketisation has put a price on different subjects with winners and losers. This failure in the market, and the imbalance in funding creates incoherence in the sector.

UCU is clear that any proposals to attempt to make savings from mergers or takeovers in the sector would be futile and damaging. Analysis of past mergers in higher education, and indeed in other sectors, including colleges, fire and police services, would evidence that anticipated synergies all too often fail to appear in reality, and actual savings are not made.

Writing⁷ in Research Professional, Jill Jones, professor of production economics at Huddersfield university says:

"... evidence from UK higher education is not particularly supportive of merging as a solution for failing institutions. Estimates of empirical cost functions for universities suggest that economies of scale and scope are largely exhausted for average-sized universities in England. So while there might be some gains from merging for smaller institutions, mergers are unlikely to deliver large cost savings."

Andrew McGettigan's *The Great University Gamble*, on marketisation also addresses some of these issues.

Widening and fair access

⁷ <https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-he-views-2020-5-no-better-together/>

The maintenance of the breadth of the sector is particularly important when we come to consider institutions' responsiveness on widening access. For too long Scotland had a disappointing record. In 2014 UCU published evidence⁸ showing that of all the UK nations in 2011/12, Scotland had the poorest record in university attendance among students from poorer backgrounds both by socio-economic background and by attendance at either state or non-state schools. Thankfully, we have made significant progress in the last ten years. The work of the commission on widening access has been significant, as has been the work of the Fair Access commissioner. We cannot risk going backwards. It is no coincidence that the commission's targets were tailored with interim goals coming before the more challenging ones. We have already met the initial target of 16% of university entrants coming from the 20% most deprived communities by 2021 early but it is worth bearing in mind that that target is sector wide and masks significant variation between different institutions. In his most recent report the commissioner set a warning for future progress and it is hard to see that widespread disruption in the sectors, or reduced funding to this important work within institutions would help to advance the fair access agenda. It is absolutely vital that Scotland retains focus on the need to support those further away from higher education to access and progress through university, and ensuring sufficient resources – particularly in terms of staff time – is fundamental. We are clear that this review needs to ensure that its outcomes are assessed for their socio-economic impact, as well as their impact on equality. The fair access agenda is very much about breaking down traditional class divisions and providing opportunity and potential to all. We should not allow the pandemic to set the progress that has been made on fair access back.

Lifelong learning in an economic recession

Along with the social-economic background of university entrants, it is worth mentioning other characteristics, specifically the need to ramp up provision in higher education for older learners and returners to education. This is particularly important as we move into an economic downturn, furloughing ends and increasing numbers of people are made redundant. As had been detailed many times, the Covid-19 crisis has led to a crisis in higher education driven largely by the expected decrease in international students and possible deferrals from other students unsure of the experience they will receive in the coming academic year. As indicated earlier, we will not know the actual figures until the start of the new term. While this in no way covers the loss in fee income we do know, and believe it to be a consensus view, that the coming recession will lead to an increase in home domiciled students comprising an increase in full time

⁸ https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/6237/The-funding-of-further-and-higher-education-May-14/pdf/ucu_HEFEfunding_May14.pdf

study and decrease in part time. Research⁹ carried out for UCU looked the impact of recession on higher education numbers:

"... using information from the UK Quarterly Labour Force Survey (between Q1 2005 and Q1 2018), we analysed the historic correlation between UK higher education participation and GDP growth. Theoretically, we would expect to see: 'A countercyclical relationship between full-time HE participation and economic growth. Specifically, as an economic slowdown occurs, the labour market options available to prospective full-time students decline, resulting in lower opportunity costs (in terms of labour market earnings) associated with higher education participation (effectively the 'price' of participation). This would result in an expected increase in full-time HE participation..."

Meeting the demand

Scottish higher education needs to be ready to meet this demand. Now is not the time to be scaling back provision of higher education, the number of universities or their offer and range of provision. If anything we should be increasing the numbers of places available. We are already seeing proposed job losses through voluntary severance schemes at Edinburgh, Napier and Heriot Watt universities, the loss of staff on casualised and non-permanent contracts in the majority of institutions, and courses being cut – for example the proposed loss of the German modern language degrees at Dundee university. The Scottish Government's independent advisory group on economic recovery's recent strategy paper 'Towards a robust, resilient wellbeing economy for Scotland' talks of an education-led recovery. An education-led recovery cannot be achieved if the very institutions tasked with powering the renewal are themselves cutting provision and cutting jobs. UCU fully supports the role of higher education in the recovery, this but it is obvious that the infrastructure needs to be in place for such a recovery and Scotland's existing universities, properly resourced and staffed.

Fair work – valuing staff

The review should reinforce institutions' requirements to meet the Scottish Government's fair work agenda. Higher education is a key public service in Scotland and receives over a billion pounds of public money. UCU is calling for additional financial and other support from the Scottish and UK governments, to enable the sector to be effective. However, there needs to be fair work conditionality to all government financial support, and for workers to be treated in line with basic principles of fairness as set out by government. Fair work is

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https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10871/LE_report_on_covid19_and_university_finances/pdf/LEreportoncovid19anduniversityfinances

important as it also delivers better outcomes for employers, students, staff and overall productivity too.

UCU, along with other campus unions, has been trying to engage with universities to agree a joint fair work statement and would ask that the review encourage progress on this work. University staff have kept universities running during the pandemic, continuing to provide high quality teaching for students, and maintained critical research including that directly related to COVID-19.

At the very start of the crisis, and again in July 2020, the Scottish Government and STUC signed up to a statement outlining their commitment to fair work and the pandemic not being an excuse to cost cut and row back on workers' rights. The statement acknowledged that economic success is built on a shared endeavour between workers, unions and employers and that this partnership approach was required to get through the current crisis. This is equally true of higher education as any other sector, and the current lobbying from university leaders to both the Scottish and UK governments for funding and support, while necessary, would be more convincing if they were, as employers, willing to commit publically to treating their workforce fairly.

Meeting the demand from students means that the staff need to be in place. Sadly, before even we know the scale of the challenge the sector faces, and before the funding council finish their review, we are already seeing universities put in place plans for job losses in a number of institutions, in some instances setting up voluntary severance schemes. This is on top of the already substantial loss of positions for staff on short-term and casualised contracts, despite the fact that the UK government's furloughing scheme allowed for staff to be kept on and employed. We know too that women are disproportionately employed on these contracts. UCU's own data collection is showing that out of the number of fixed term or other casualised contracts, women are more at risk of losing their jobs this summer. In the data the union currently holds on the number of fixed term and other casual contracts which are due to expire in the period 1 June – 31 August 2020, 54% of those at risk were women workers, 46% were men. UCU has been negotiating and campaigning for some time with university employers to reduce and limit the numbers of staff on precarious fixed term and temporary contracts, and are clear that this manner of employing workers needs to be changed for the better.

We know too that women and people with other protected characteristics including Black and Minority Ethnic workers are less likely to be found in senior positions and are this more at risk if the sector is subject to any contraction. Likewise, other measures universities are considering, for example Edinburgh university's suggested extension of the working day, will have differential impacts on students and staff, with a concern that it will be those in more precarious roles who feel they are obliged to work outside of traditional working hours. It is clearly those with caring responsibilities – and all too often this will be predominantly women – who are left trying to juggle incompatible demands.

It is not good enough that, once again, the hard end of a crisis falls disproportionately on those more vulnerable workers. Individual universities need to undertake equality impact assessments on any proposals they make around redundancies, changes to terms and conditions, and organisational change. So too the SFC and Scottish Government need to understand and equality impact assess the implications of policy proposals made and take measures to prevent inequality and discrimination.

The SFC review also offers an opportunity to acknowledge the current and past poor practice in some institutions in regards to precarious employment, and a chance to do things differently in future ensuring that workers in the sector do have security in employment, which will deliver positive outcomes for the research, teaching and student support they provide.

Automation

As universities rush to move teaching online in response to the Covid-19 pandemic we need to understand the role automation plays in our universities more than ever. UCU recently published research¹⁰ on the impact of automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in our institutions. The report considers the impact of data and automation in universities alongside its prevalence. It concludes that there is an urgent need for a public debate and greater consideration on the impact and unintended consequences of new technology in universities. While automation includes well known activities like recording lectures to be played back to students later and the use of technology to detect plagiarism and cheating by students in essays, it also refers to less well understood areas like the use of algorithms in recruiting students and the use of technology to track students' engagement levels and attendance and possible career paths. Often it is private third-party organisations, not the institutions themselves, with the software and technological access to this data.

It is important that students and staff know and understand what is being done with their personal data, and the potential ramifications for them now and in the future. Staff also need assurances on what happens to the lectures, information and research they put online, as well as understanding how artificial intelligence and automation can help deliver education more effectively. The funding council and governments have roles in developing understanding and ensuring technology is used reasonably and fairly. This review is an opportunity to highlight the role automation and AI are playing in the sector, and to take steps to shape it for our own purposes.

Outcome agreements

¹⁰ <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10827/New-UCU-Scotland-report-explores-impact-of-automation-in-universities>

The Post 16 Education Act 2013 required universities to consult with trade unions, amongst other bodies including students, on widening access agreements. While much of the focus on fair access moved on with the work of the commission on fair access and the role of the commissioner, UCU believes that the principle of consultation remains. In a 2015 submission¹¹ to the parliament's education and skills committee we argued that as widening access agreements were part of an institution's outcome agreement, then it is sensible that consultation include not only widening access but also other areas the outcome agreement considered.

As in 2015, it is still the case sector that universities have a mixed record with regard to how well they consult on outcome agreements with trade unions and other partners. We still have some good examples of universities discussing draft outcome agreements on joint negotiating committees but believe that all institutions should be engaging meaningfully with campus unions on developing their outcome agreement objectives.

The TEF and REF

The second question in the call for evidence asked for examples of what universities could do differently, and UCU sees TEF and REF as prime areas to address here. Universities become embroiled, often at the behest of the UK government, in unnecessary bureaucracy. The teaching excellence framework (TEF) fulfils no important function in Scottish higher education other than being a marketing opportunity for universities which participate, to allow them to compete for status they can then use for marketing purposes. When the UK government introduced the measure UCU argued that the Scottish government should reject the legislative consent motion on the basis that it did nothing other than open up another measure of unnecessary competition and did not actually improve the quality of teaching in Scottish universities. Scotland already has a functional and effective quality assurance process on teaching, and since the introduction of the TEF we have seen nothing to persuade us that it is anything other than a waste of money, time and resource. If the review is looking for areas to scale back on then we would suggest the TEF as a suitable candidate.

Likewise the Research Excellence Framework (REF) which takes up a disproportionate amount of time and resource for academic and professional services staff relative to any benefit. UCU welcomed the decision to postpone the REF in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we believe further that in the current crisis an elaborate, time and resource consuming, high stakes competition for basic research funding is wasteful and unproductive. In the post Covid-19 university sector the SFC and this review should be pushing colleagues at UK level on this and recommending a simpler and fairer system for allocating research funding from 2022/23 onwards.

¹¹ http://www.parliament.scot/S4_EducationandCultureCommittee/Inquiries/SFCUCU.pdf

White elephants and senior pay

We also believe that if universities are looking for savings then there are many steps they can look at before cutting jobs and staff. Universities need to take a hard look at the pay of their senior management and principals. While we are clearly not arguing that changes to salaries in those positions would in themselves necessarily be enough to close any funding gap, but moving to a pay ratio between principals' salaries and those that staff receive could be an important signal that senior management and staff are part of the same enterprise.

For most university academic and academic related-staff, up to but not including professorial level and above, their grading and pay spine is set out in the framework agreement. UCU believes that all university staff including professors and principals should be included in this single pay system, so the pay of all staff is relative to all. Indeed, this was one of the key recommendations of 2012's von Prondzynski review of higher education governance. A recommendation that has not yet been implemented and is worthy of consideration and inclusion in this review. This could be a fairer and straightforward way to relate and determine pay of everyone in the sector. As well as in all likelihood limiting the propensity for 33% pay increases this would have the effect of the issue of pay in higher education being determined in a more collegiate manner rather than the current adversarial approach with principals in UCEA seeking to drive staff pay down while maximising their own income. The process of bringing senior staff, including principals, into the framework agreement would require measurement and evaluation of the roles that those at the very top carry out in a similar way as is done for other staff. The process of doing so would ensure that financial differences and differentials between roles are transparent, fair and that there is consistency across the sector. Indeed, while the current voluntary steps being taken by some senior management to take pay cuts for fixed periods are welcome, analysis of the impact this has on pay underlines that in some cases by freezing increments ordinary staff are losing out on a greater proportion of their income than those at the top.

We also believe that universities should focus on their core functions and that those with existing overseas campuses should review their status. It is not lost on the union that many of those institutions now seeking to make redundancies, have expensive overseas campuses spread across the globe. We appreciate institutions want to be open, inclusive and outwards facing in a modern global world, however, it appears that in all too many instances, campuses in UAE, New York, and other parts of south east Asia, are not serving the educational needs of Scotland or indeed their overseas location. The history of many of these involvements, which are well publicised, are a blight on the sector's reputation. Likewise in UAE, where there are additional questions around both human rights and trade union rights. This review should be clear that Scottish institutions need sound educational, social as well as economic rationale, before branching

out around the globe. Institutions should also be required to undertake robust health and well being, and equality and human rights impact assessments prior to opening up campuses.

Cumberford-Little

UCU noted the Minister, Richard Lochhead MSP's reference to the Cumberford-Little report in his announcement of this review. We wish to put on record the union's deep concerns with the conclusions of the Cumberford-Little report. We are concerned that the report focuses too much on supporting business growth rather than getting people into college and supporting them into employment at the other end. Given the predictions and the evidence of growing unemployment in the UK, colleges and universities have critical roles in supporting people into skills development and education which supports their transition into employment. This needs to incorporate school leavers, 18-24 year olds, as well as older learners and workers of all ages who are now finding themselves out of work.

The second concern with the report is the manner in which it pits further education against higher education in an imagined battle for support and funding. It is damaging for the colleges to present their case in this way, and we believe that all sections of the public education system need to be appropriately funded. Trade unions do not want to set worker against worker, learner against learner in the way the Cumberford-Little report appears to do. It is hard to see the report as a more than a land grab into one sector by another. UCU argues for and fully support a properly resourced and thriving FE sector, but the way to lobby for that is not to try and undermine another sector.

Cumberford-Little reaches interesting conclusions on qualifications, courses and degree programmes, all of these need careful consideration. UCU is clear that now is not the time for an in-depth review or any form of transformation of qualifications and awarding mechanisms in Scotland. We do support exploring and delivering bite-sized learning, agile learning, greater collaboration with employers, a comprehensive apprenticeship programme, including graduate apprentices, and ensuring that tertiary education is delivering learning that is meaningful and needed in workplaces. However, we are opposed to the proposals for "2 year college degrees", and believe there is a real danger this devalues undergraduate study, and the unique value of the Scottish four year undergraduate degree with all its guises (entry at second or third year, part time study, 2+2 articulation).

Much of the focus of Cumberford-Little is about privatisation, commercialisation, and the marketisation of education. UCU is clear that these solutions are not fit for the current challenges we face, where the floor has fallen out of the market in commercial funding, international students and the private sector. There are

real dangers in moving the sector in this direction in the current climate – which is no doubt going to be with us and have repercussions for at least a decade.

We were further disappointed to see the Scottish Government recruiting for a position to 'deliver the recommendations of the Cumberford-Little report' in March 2020 when we do not believe that the recommendations have been sufficiently considered or subject to proper consultation with the sector, including trade unions, to be acted upon.

Governance

The 2016 Higher Education Government Act made a number of significant steps to make the governance of the sector more democratic and accountable. While the provisions of the act are still being implemented, in some places more enthusiastically than others, we are clear that the trade union nominees now on university courts are playing a significant and important role, and increasing the range of views and voices heard on governing bodies before they make important decisions. Likewise the elections for chairs have gone largely smoothly and the new chairs in place are carrying out their roles in the knowledge that they have the support of the staff and student body in their institution. It is important that this review is not used by those who opposed the passing of the act to seek any diminution in the small progress toward transparency the provisions of the act have brought in. In fact, if anything the review would be well placed to revisit the von Prondzynski review recommendations and consider the outstanding recommendations that were not taken forward by the 2016 act. The recent failures in governance around unwarranted pay-offs to former principals at both RGU and Aberdeen universities (which the SFC reviewed) point towards more reform on higher education governance not less.

Climate change

This review asked in question 5(d) how universities can best be supported to contribute to a green recovery. UCU believe that the climate emergency remains one the most significant challenges facing the world and that we must commit to building a more sustainable world as we move on from the Covid-19 lockdown.

We want to see the higher education sector join UCU and the other campus trade unions in:

- Declaring a climate emergency
- Pledge net zero emissions in higher education by 2030.

- Transition from fossil fuels in line with Just Transition principles of decent, fair and high value work which does not negatively affect the current workforce.
- Agree to establishing institution-wide steering groups involving management, unions, students to review and update climate change strategy, and devise and implement actions for change.
- Embed sustainable development goals into education (including the curricula), research, leadership, operations, administration, engagement and knowledge exchange.
- Lobbying government on the issue.
- Collaborate with partners in the locality and globally to make progress on climate change.
- Upholding academic freedom for all during the climate change transition.
- Institutions to report annually on progress on sustainability and climate change strategy.
- Calling on the Scottish Government to help fund the transition.

The review is the ideal opportunity to encourage the sectors to refocus their roles in combatting the climate emergency and supporting a green renewal.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that this is a difficult time for Scottish higher education. The marketised model with an over-reliance on fee income from international students and the Covid-19 crisis makes the SFC's job in conducting this review both difficult, given the number of uncertainties, but also hugely important to get right, if the recovery is truly to be education-led. It is essential that we do not make bad, possible irrevocable, decisions in haste and the SFC should take the necessary time to carry out the review and importantly to properly engage with the sector, the students who study in our universities, and the staff who work there.

We know that in the coming recession there will be increased demand for university places, and for workers facing the need to reskill and retrain as the economy restructures. We need to meet this demand and government needs to be scaling up university provision and the ability to meet demand now, or a generation of students and workers will miss out. To do this the sector needs to be valuing and retaining its staff to deliver the much needed learning, teaching and research, not shedding staff and contributing to the growing numbers of unemployed.

The climate emergency is one the most significant and immediate dangers we face and the need for a more sustainable future never more urgent. Universities have a key role in this. UCU along with the other campus trade unions have agreed a series of measures we believe universities should pursue and which are set out in this consultation response. In facing up to the financial pressures the

tertiary education sector faces, this can't be at the expense of climate changes. The sector, and the funding council through this review need to acknowledge this and use their pivotal role to push for change.

We believe in considering the evidence put in front of it, the funding council should not feel constrained to only consider the economic value of education. We have evidenced that the economic benefit of universities is considerable, but we should also value positive difference education delivers to individuals, to our cultural heritage, and to our wider society. At a time when misinformation, "fake news", and polarisation in society is rife, education informs, empowers and has life-changing consequences for so many. We should not lose the transformational powers of education, and its ability to tackle inequalities and to enable people to reach their potential.

To do so our educational system needs to be appropriately resourced, and UCU is clear that this should be publicly funded through progressive taxation with those at the top, along with employers contributing their fair share. The marketised approach to education has been woefully exposed during this pandemic. This is an opportunity to move away from the commercialised, marketised model.

This review is an opportunity to change some of the bureaucratic inefficiencies that are the TEF and the REF, and to reinforce the good practice and Fair Work employers that institutions should be. It is also an opportunity to fully implement the recommendations from the 2012 review of HE governance, to ensure the systems are fair, transparent and open to all.

UCU hopes this submission is helpful to the SFC in the review. We look forward to contributing further as the review progresses. We would also be pleased to expand further on any issue referred to in our submission.

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