Item 10b
For Noting

GLASGOW KELVIN COLLEGE

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING OF 31 AUGUST 2020

SFC REVIEW OF COHERENT PROVISION AND SUSTAINABILITY

REPORT BY VICE PRINCIPAL CURRICULUM AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

1. Introduction

This report provides and update on the SFC Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability and provides for information to members the submissions from Glasgow Kelvin College and Colleges Scotland.

2. SFC Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability

On the 3rd of June 2020, Richard Lochhead MSP, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, wrote to SFC Chair, Mike Cantlay, to commission SFC to undertake a review of coherent provision and sustainability across Colleges and Universities. On 30

On the 30th June 2020, the SFC published a Review Briefing which provided detail on the scope, nature and timing of the review. This was followed on the 20th July with a Call for Evidence to all interested individuals and organisations to submit evidence to help inform the SFC review of coherent provision and sustainability in Further and Higher Education.

This Call for Evidence sought views to the following six prompts:

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?

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.)

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

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?

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

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
- Particular areas of collaboration between agencies that would best support the sectors' contributions
- Adaptations to SFC's funding and accountability frameworks to promote agile and collaborative action by the sectors to build Scotland's recovery
- 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
- What support SFC and government could give institutions to adapt to a changed environment

The College response to these six questions is attached as appendix 1, with the submission from Colleges Scotland attached as appendix 2.

3. Resource Implications

There are no resource implications arising directly from this report. However, the outcome of the SFC review could have a profound and long-lasting impact on College governance and funding.

4. Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

5. Risk and Assurance

There is a risk that the SFC review leads to changes which impact negatively on College strategic and operational aims. The attached College submission to the review seeks to mitigate the risk that the review fails to take appropriate account of College views and objectives.

6. Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising directly from this report.

7. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

i) note the contents of this report.

8. Further Information

Members can obtain additional information on the contents of this report from Robin Ashton, Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Enhancement (rashton@glasgowkelvin.ac.uk).

Glasgow Kelvin College
RA, 23/08/2020

Appendix 1

Glasgow Kelvin College

Transforming lives through education

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Call for Evidence:
A Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in Further and Higher Education

Glasgow Kelvin College Response

2020

SFC Call for Evidence - Summary Mind Map of Glasgow Kelvin College Response

Glasgow Kelvin College Responses to SFC Call for Evidence Prompts

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?

Glasgow Kelvin College Board of Management and Senior Management Team believe there is significant evidence that the following aspects of our service delivery work extremely well:

- **Responsiveness to meeting local, regional and national needs:**

  Glasgow Kelvin College's mission is to '*Transform Lives through Education.'* We do this through an inclusive community-based approach which nurtures especially strong links with learners, employers and stakeholders across our Region and by delivering vocationally relevant education and training which meets local, regional and national employment needs.

  The location of the college campus buildings within our most deprived communities gives excellent local opportunities for residents to access learning which provides the skills for sustainable employment. In addition, partnership with Community Planning and local community enterprises and groups enable access to college learning opportunities across an area-wide Learning Network based in multiple community-based learning centres. A distinctive curriculum offer is necessary to meet the needs of local communities which ranges from significant youth and adult access community, an extensive Senior Phase offer (Glasgow Kelvin provides Glasgow's largest), through to a wide-ranging mainstream portfolio offering study opportunities in a number of vocational areas closely aligned to local employment needs. In addition, Glasgow Kelvin College is also recognised as national centre of excellence in specialisms such as Civil Engineering, HVAC, Renewables, Science, and Creative Industries and this should be capitalised on to support Scotland's inclusive, green and education-led recovery.

  We must continue to work directly with a large number of local, regional and national employers to provide a very extensive apprenticeship offer over regionally and nationally significant trades. Glasgow Kelvin leads on the Glasgow Regional Foundation Apprenticeship Programme providing Senior Phase learners across Glasgow access to all FA frameworks, and the College also works very closely with apprenticeship managing bodies such as BESA, SECTT and the CITB.

  Colleges must therefore continue to be extremely well placed to engage with communities and local residents, from some of the most disadvantaged postcodes in Scotland, who will undoubtedly have been very negatively affected, many disproportionately so, by the pandemic and who can benefit most from college learning.

- **Success in promoting inclusion and widening access to lifelong learning:**

  With nearly 85% of our 18,000 enrolments studying on a part-time basis, Glasgow Kelvin's distinctive curriculum offer has been highly successful in supporting inclusion and promoting the participation of learners from a range of backgrounds.

  Colleges must continue to engage extensively with local communities. Glasgow Kelvin achieves this through a range of mechanisms, including jointly funded 'community connectors' and a large team of Community Learning and Development staff. As such, colleges must continue to be viewed as valued and trusted providers of learning programmes to particularly 'challenging' groups. This includes care experienced young people, people on Community Service orders through the justice system, individuals with mental health issues and those with addiction problems. These programmes assist students to re-engage with the learning process and gain qualifications while benefiting from the continued support of their referring agencies.

  As a result of this approach to community engagement and inclusive curriculum design, Glasgow Kelvin has ensured that nearly half of our enrolments are resident in Scotland's most deprived postcodes, the highest of any institution in Scotland. The fact that this is achieved with only a very limited allowance made for the funding of smaller class sizes or additional student support services, which are integral to this type of delivery, is a testament to the effective work of the College.

  Glasgow Kelvin College therefore contributes significantly to the Scottish Government's priority of, "widening access and participation in further & higher education for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and promoting equality & inclusion". As an evidenced based review, it is important that the SFC recognise this unique position in terms of learner demographics. There is a real danger of this demographic being left behind as a consequence of the pandemic and therefore local colleges serving such a purpose will have a key role to play in the economic recovery and the development of local skills.

- **High levels of learner satisfaction, attainment and positive post course progression:**

  Whilst Glasgow Kelvin continues to prioritise engaging with learners most at risk of withdrawing, or those furthest from the labour market, our approach to learner engagement, individual support and quality enhancement has supported extremely high levels of learner satisfaction and overall attainment which means that over 75% of all Glasgow Kelvin College starts successfully complete their course of study.

  It must be recognised however, that achieving these high learner outputs is extremely challenging for the college sector given the current approach to funding allocation, and particularly the very limited recognition given to engaging and supporting learners from deprived backgrounds, who often have a range of additional support needs. We would therefore strongly urge the SFC to consider how funding can be prioritised to provide the level of support this type of learner often requires. Whilst the 'input' cost may be more significant, the 'output' value in terms of supporting local residents to gain employment and

contribute to the inclusive social and economic growth of Scotland more than outweighs any initial investment. This approach greatly assists in preventing generation after generation relying on government unemployment and other support.

- **Effectiveness in working in partnership to deliver efficient and joined-up public services:**

  College strategy should continue to place a priority on decentralisation and development of outreach services in partnership with community stakeholders. This joint approach helps deliver an improved programme of community learning at community outreach locations and works with a wide variety of stakeholders including third sector organisations, local employers, schools and local authorities.

  Through the John Wheatley Learning Network, Glasgow Kelvin is the key provider of community-based learning in the North East of the city and has been a pioneer in the delivery of ICT skills and digital inclusion, working in partnership with a range of organisations including Wheatley Group, Glasgow City Council Community Planning Partnership and other community organisations. We have also developed a joint library service delivered with Glasgow Life, co-leadership of the Glasgow City Council flagship 'Thriving Places' initiative in Easterhouse, and joint nursery provision and training with Jobs and Business Glasgow.

  Glasgow Kelvin also does significant work in partnership with local schools, providing a progressive route for young people from 12-18, especially 16 onwards. We lead the regional Foundation Apprenticeship Programme, delivering a joined-up and efficient, single regional service to 7 local authorities and around 70 secondary schools, providing Senior Phase learners across the Glasgow region access to all FA frameworks

  The Enhanced Vocational Inclusion Programme (EVIP) which Glasgow Kelvin co-deliver with Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Clyde College has been a life transforming programme for young people who were at serious risk of disengaging from education and becoming socially excluded. These kinds of programmes targeted at people in most need should continue to be part of the offer from colleges and, in fact, something which the sector looks to extend. The SFC should therefore prioritise funding for these kinds of programmes which provide a service to the most disadvantaged in our society.

The Board and Senior Management Team at Glasgow Kelvin College are extremely proud of the strengths highlighted above and are confident that these can play a significant role in the inclusive social and economic recovery from the current pandemic. However, the following actions are needed to ensure that we can preserve and strengthen these aspects:

- **The SFC should fully recognise both the value and cost of delivering inclusive growth:**

  In order to fulfil its vital mission of "transforming lives through education", the College needs to be appropriately funded. The Glasgow College Region receives one of the lowest rates of funding per Credit across the sector, despite the fact that the demographic served requires

significant additional support. The College is proud of its success in reaching out to its local communities and the high levels of participation by local residents, many of who reside in deprived postcodes. However, this is achieved through a delivery model which focusses on meeting individual needs, and necessitates small class sizes and significant levels of tutor support. The vital role that the Glasgow Kelvin and other community-based colleges play in the economic recovery of deprived areas is therefore going to be seriously threatened without appropriate funding. Put simply, Glasgow Kelvin and other community-based colleges could do more to support its communities but without appropriately focussed and distributed funding it will have to reduce its staffing complement and therefore may have to reduce the service it provides, potentially lessening our contribution to the inclusive growth of Glasgow and Scotland.

- **The SFC should allow institutions greater autonomy in their use of funding to meet local and regional needs:**

  Whilst Glasgow Kelvin has had significant success in flexing its resources to meet local and regional needs, it is often constrained by national guidance which enforces a uniformity on what it possible, and this risks local needs not being met. Recent examples of this include the priority given to achieving Credit volumes over outcomes of learning activity, constraints on hours per learner (one plus), student support rules on cost of course and the apportionment of funds allocated for inclusion within a regional grant.

  SFC should therefore move away from a national 'formula-based' approach to funding and outcomes dominating any future funding model, and empower regions to better differentiate on how they allocate their funds, with a stronger focus on using funds to meet identified regional and local needs. As underpinned by the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act this would strengthen the role of colleges as anchor institutions and give greater weight to the aims and priorities of local community planning partnerships, resulting in a stronger focus on the regional impact of college activity.

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?

- **We should stop unnecessary duplication and strengthen institutional specialisms:**

  As resources become ever more constrained, we should avoid unnecessary duplication of provision across the tertiary education sector. Within the Glasgow region, each college has long and well-established areas of expertise with significant staff complements and dedicated teaching facilities and resources aligned to local and national employment needs. At Glasgow Kelvin College we have a strong track record in deliver specialisms within Engineering, Science, Health and Social Care and the Creative Industries. We need to strengthen these specialisms working more collaboratively across groups of colleges to avoid competing unnecessarily for the same cohorts of learners. This will improve levels of efficiency across the sector and strengthen the depth and range of learning pathways on offer to learners.

- **We should prioritise technical and vocational training which supports learners to upskill to progress their careers, rebalancing the focus on entering university degree provision:**

  Whilst the recent emphasis on articulation to degree programmes has been a positive development, economic recovery will depend on having a skilled technically qualified workforce, and college-based qualifications can provide an efficient and effective direct route to employment for many. We therefore need to continue to ensure that college level qualifications offer robust vocational pathways to employment without necessarily requiring Degree level study prior to employment. Within the Glasgow region, we already have substantial degree provision across the five local universities and there is no evidence to support college funding being allocated to further additional degree provision.

  Colleges have a unique strength in delivering work-based learning qualifications, ranging from Level 4 Senior Phase through to Modern Apprenticeships. This strength comes from the relationship that colleges have with the principal stakeholders. For Level 4 and Foundation Apprenticeships, colleges have well established partnerships with local authority education departments, ensuring a co-ordinated approach to schools and young learners. The wide network for employers that colleges have established means that the critical employer role, at all levels of work-based learning, is managed effectively, meaning a high-quality experience for learners and employers.

  There also needs to be a greater focus on progression for students and greater clarity on their learning journey and how this ultimately this can lead to employment and careers.

- **We need to significantly enhance our blended learning offer, where appropriate, by investing more in digital skills development and infrastructure:**

  If social distancing continues to be necessary then there will need to be more reliance on blended and digital learning, where this is conducive to effective learning. To achieve this, we will need to make a step change in the level of staff skills and infrastructure required to deliver high quality and engaging learning experiences using digital approaches. New software packages such as MS Teams provide the potential to transfer face to face teaching approaches and techniques into the digital sphere, ensuring that online learning maintains many of the social and personal development aspects of traditional College-based study. However, the scale and speed of the digital transformation required is substantial and additional financial support will be required by colleges to ensure that the necessary resources are available to support the full range of staff, student and curricular needs.

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

- **We need to continue to have an open outlook and forge mutually beneficial international learning partnerships:**

We should be looking to get ahead of the curve on key areas of growth and look to become international/global leaders in identified areas. We also need our staff to be more outward looking in terms of sharing expertise and exchanges with other countries to learn from best global practice. For example, Glasgow Kelvin College is working on a programme, supported by the Scottish Government, designed to share knowledge and best practice on gender equality between Scotland and India. By sharing this best practice between countries with very different societal structures, we will bring new perspectives to equality polices in Scotland and India.

More than ever, we also need a highly educated and highly skilled population. We therefore need to be joined up in our approach to supporting people from all communities to stay in education as a progression into employment and career development. We also need to protect the international qualification equivalences fostered through EU membership, particularly SCQF accreditation.

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?

- **There is an opportunity to develop a more digitally enhanced and flexible learning offer, but this also risks creating a digital divide**:

  In a more socially distanced world, digital learning and skills development will be even more critical. The current situation will therefore provide a basis to fast forward the digital transformation of the college sector, mainstreaming online and blended learning approaches to education and service delivery.

  For many learners this will enhance their learning experience and provide a more flexible basis to engage with College study. However, in the communities Glasgow Kelvin College serves, it also increases the threat of digital poverty in areas of deprivation, which could have a negative impact on widening access and the economic recover of local and regional communities. Additional funding is required to avoid this and as a College, we are seeking to reprioritise resources to support digital skills development for all so that those individuals least able to afford or cope with digital approaches are not disadvantaged. We must remain cognisant of the fact that digital / blended approaches may not be appropriate for many of our community-based programmes in the long term. Such programmes will engage through digital / blended approaches until face to face learning can resume again.

  A key challenge is ensuring digital teaching approaches do not have a negative impact on learning outcomes or the student experience. An important part of going into Further Education is the growth of social, citizenship and personal skills as well as academic learning, and the threat of isolation and lack of real-life engagement among students and staff may result in higher dropout rates. It is therefore critical that the drive for digital transformation is tempered with a focus on maintaining an engaging and inclusive learning experience which continues to provide opportunities for direct personal interaction and development. Glasgow Kelvin College's major strength lies in it being a community College with the

delivery of face to face, vocational education and citizenship skills key aspects of the study experience and essential to our success in widening access and supporting the economic development of the Glasgow region. Therefore, the enhancement and deployment of blended learning should be measured and appropriate.

- **There is a very significant threat to college financial sustainability:**
  COVID-19 has both increased college expenditure (for example, through required additional digital resources, reduced volume of students in each physical classroom, the enhanced cleaning regime) and reduced income streams across both commercial and public funds (for example, through less commercial course provision and lower apprenticeship volumes). As a result, consolidated sector wide mid-year returns show that the College Sector and Glasgow Kelvin College are projecting very significant deficits, with a Sector impact in AY 2019/20 of c £25m. The impact in AY 2020/21 is expected to be even more severe and without transition funding, many institutions will be unsustainable.
  Prior to COVID-19, Glasgow Kelvin College was implementing a business transformation plan and it will continue to progress this within our new context. However, it is critical that the SFC recognise the full scale of challenges faced and provide appropriate funding to ensure we can continue to operate and provide a vital service to our communities including Scotland's most deprived. The College recognises that resources are scarce but believe that there is an indisputable case for more resources to be targeted at responding to poverty and mitigating the impacts of deprivation on communities. Inclusive growth sits at the heart of the Scottish Government's economic strategies and this can only be achieved by ensuring that we prioritise widening access and helping those who can benefit most from college learning.

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

- **Colleges, schools and universities need to continue to strengthen alignment and integration of learning pathways:**

  Collaboration must always have, at its heart, the best interests of the students and there has been substantial recent progress made in strengthening vocational pathways from school to college and from college to university. This has been extremely positive in terms of enhancing experience and knowledge of the world of work for Senior Phase pupils, and also in terms of enabling large numbers of college students to progress to university degree level study with full recognition of prior achievement. It is therefore very important that this progress is not reversed due to the impact of coronavirus. This is particularly the case in terms of Senior Phase and Foundation Apprenticeship delivery and funding streams which support this need to be flexible and adaptable to a changed context for delivery.

- **New areas / structures should have greater influence on curriculum alignment and planning which aligns with natural economic, employer and learner need and movement:**

  For example, we could make more use of City-Region structures to align curriculum funding and delivery to meet identified economic needs. The Glasgow City Region is a highly integrated labour market in travel to work terms. Almost 95% of all jobs in the city region are filled by residents of the city region. This means that many of those who gain their skills and qualifications within the college region will move into employment across the city region, and many people will be travelling into Glasgow to access their education and training in the first place. Greater collaboration across a "greater" City Region / area would therefore have the potential to strengthen the alignment of skills training supply and demand within a very coherent labour market area based on travel to work patterns.

- **There should be stronger collaboration and more coherence in the use of the joint SFC/SDS resource:**

  Whilst it is recognised that SFC and SDS are autonomous bodies, the overlap in areas of responsibility cause challenges for colleges in delivering coherent provision. For example, Foundation Apprenticeships were initially funded by the SFC through Credits but now colleges need to compete in the open market for funding to deliver these awards. This risks creating unnecessary complexity and instability in an area of educational provision in which colleges are well positioned to deliver through direct grant funding. In addition, there are significant overheads involved in managing and reporting on these commercial contracts and only very limited use made of existing assurances such as those provided by Education Scotland reviews.

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?

- **We should focus more on the outputs and impacts of funding used rather than prioritising inputs:**

  Current SFC funding approaches tend to focus on identifying large numbers of input targets (such as enrolment levels, study hours, age, gender, disability and deprivation profiles, etc) with much less emphasis on the social and economic impact of learning activity. We believe that there should be a shift in focus to prioritise these wider impacts of funded activity with a focus on what we want to achieve, rather than what we will do. In doing this, the SFC should enter more meaningful direct negotiation with colleges on the expected return from their grant funding, with greater allowance in how funds can be used to meet local and regional needs.

- **Funding and governance arrangements should provide greater support for institutional financial sustainability:**

  In recent years, the SFC have provided annual percentage increments in funding levels, often with relatively late notice and this makes planning for longer term institutional financial sustainability very challenging. Furthermore, the inability to carry forward surplus funds adds further constraints on college financial planning. We would therefore ask the SFC to develop arrangements which more effectively support longer term institutional financial sustainability.

  As part of this, SFC should review their approach towards assessing value for money in colleges. Current practices focus on reducing the cost base year on year and with the main costs for colleges being staffing (c70%/80%), a continued focus on cost reduction is not sustainable and could indeed be counterproductive in supporting economic recovery. We would therefore suggest a stronger focus on improved effectiveness of a college and how it adds value in the services that it provides, rather than focussing solely on continued cost reductions and efficiencies.

- **Sector change should be focussed on the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of education:**

  Recent educational reforms have focussed primarily on structural changes such as college mergers and the introduction of national bargaining. Whilst this has undoubtedly had some positive benefits, there is limited evidence that this has significantly improved the overall efficiency or effectiveness of college provision. Therefore, any future sectoral changes focus more on considering and sharpening our collective understanding of why institutions exist and for what purpose, so that there is greater clarity on priorities for action and less risk of unnecessary duplication. Thereafter, we need to jointly consider how best the parts individually and collectively should work together, to drive an inclusive, green and education-led recovery to the benefit of Scotland as a whole.

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Appendix 2

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Call for Evidence: A Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in Further and Higher Education – Colleges Scotland Response

Introduction

Colleges Scotland is pleased to provide input to Phase 1 of the SFC's review on behalf of the college sector. Part 1 of our response sets out some general comments on the critical role of colleges in the economic recovery. Part 2 of our response provides comments in reply to each of the specific areas sought by the SFC review.

Part 1 – General Comments

Delivering Scotland's Economic Recovery: Connecting – Collaborating – Creating

Background

The college sector is ready to play its full part in the education and skills-led economic recovery.

Colleges act as anchor points of local communities, supporting individuals of all ages and backgrounds to gain skills and qualifications, helping the most disadvantaged and furthest from the labour market, and powering regional economies by delivering the skilled workforce that businesses need.

This dynamic sector – consisting of 26 colleges across 13 college regions – is the largest skills and training provider in Scotland. Colleges invest in the futures of approximately 265,000 students and are significant employers within their respective regions, employing more than 11,000 staff.

As an agile, collaborative, and inclusive national asset, colleges play a vital role in driving Scotland's economic, social and educational recovery by:

- playing a vital role in building back better
- supporting the requirements of the changed economy that will emerge
- improving employability of our citizens
- supporting businesses, large and small, to rebuild and re-engage their workforce
- supporting social cohesion, positive and resilient mental health and wellbeing of our communities
- seeking an inclusive and green recovery
- contributing to the Four Capitals: economic, social, human, and natural
- supporting delivery of the National Performance Framework.

Colleges Scotland looks forward to discussing the topics raised in this Call for Evidence.

Colleges Crucial Role in Economic Recovery

Colleges have a critical role to play in Scotland's recovery, supporting Scotland's future, getting our citizens back to work, ensuring an absolute focus on both social and economic recovery, and

contributing to the success of the changed economy of the Scotland of the future - in other words playing a vital role in helping us build back better. Colleges are critical to the capacity to re-build.

Collaborative Working
We will work with partners across the tertiary ecosystem, with schools, local government, colleagues in Community and Learning Development (CLD), Voluntary Sector, Social Enterprises and national agencies to support hard-hit communities (both urban and rural), industry sectors and employers in a post-COVID revival. However, the opportunity we have is to design and develop a collective leadership and systems approach that delivers not only a short-term recovery, but one that is engrained, to ensure that the structures and skills offer that is redefined from this point is one that will underpin Scotland's economy in the years to come and to increase the nation's productivity. This system change can build on the economies of scale of our colleges following regionalisation and can be part of a wider redefining of the public sector.

Ensuring Future Capacity
One of the key elements is to ensure that the college sector can maximise its impact, that it has the necessary resources and support to deliver the support upskilling and retraining required. Maximum flexibility is needed to help quickly address the local and regional skill shortages, unemployment, and to tailor support for industry and business. Colleges have a key role in building and maximising the social capital of Scotland, one that contributes to inclusive economic growth and takes a learner-led approach.

Commonality of Approach

Recent reports such as the Cumberford-Little, Advisory Group on Economic Recovery, and Enterprise and Skills Sub-Group have outlined key themes around the need for an education and skills-led recovery (both economic and social) and to build resilience through reskilling quickly and recognising the different regional requirements.

The reports have also highlighted:
- the importance of place, ensuring enhanced regional planning and partnerships
- the need for improved digital infrastructure
- the role of strategic public investment through a collective and cohesive endeavour.

Colleges now have a strength and economy of scale at a regional level and are well positioned to enable delivery of the shift to growth through a regional approach to economic development, and to ensure a successful new structure can be implemented that will deliver for people, places and the economy. A focus on regional planning is essential going forward, proving the necessary local flexibility within a national framework.

Colleges: Delivering for People

Delivering Skills and Opportunities for All
Colleges already play an important role in supporting learning for life, providing coherent, adaptive, flexible learning pathways through face-to-face, full-time, part-time, distance and online methods to suit the needs of individuals, including those in both schools and employment-based settings. Reaffirming the sector as a key contributor, colleges across Scotland have the flexibility and agility to quickly refocus their curriculum offer to deliver employability and digital skills, upskilling and reskilling opportunities for individuals facing unemployment or uncertainty in the job market, for individuals looking to return to the workforce, and for businesses seeking to retrain existing employees to meet changing business needs.

- Through the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF), colleges supported upskilling and reskilling programmes for 823 employers in 2018
- 146,240 enrolments in 2018-19 were by students aged 25 or over, representing 44.5% of all enrolments.

Delivering for the Most Vulnerable in our Society
The college sector has a long-established and successful track record of social inclusion and widening access to education, including those groups identified as likely to be the hardest hit through COVID-19 such as women, black people, the disabled, those from some minority ethnic backgrounds and those socio-economically disadvantaged. Colleges ensure that those who wish to do so can progress onto higher levels of study, and work closely with other training and education providers, voluntary sector agencies, local authorities and other public agencies together with universities to provide pathways on to courses.

- 32% of full-time students are from Scotland's lowest socio-economic backgrounds
- 41.8% of First Degree university entrants from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds arrived via the HNC / HND college route
- 14% of students have a recorded disability
- 9% of students are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds
- 3,650 students in colleges declared themselves to be care experienced – 1.7% of the college population, against 1.4% of the Scottish population.

Delivering for Young People
Colleges play an essential role in providing opportunities for young people and are fundamental to tackling youth unemployment. In partnership with local authorities and schools through the school curriculum, colleges offer clear vocational pathways for Senior Phase pupils, preparing them for employment and helping reduce national skills gaps. The college sector has contributed significantly to the success of the Scottish Government's Developing Young Workforce (DYW) ambitions which ensured that youth unemployment reached a historic low and it can build on this success to address the current risks.

- Colleges deliver DYW programmes to 99.2.% of Scotland's state secondary schools, supporting 6,406 Senior Phase pupils
- Colleges support work-based learning for a further 27,027 senior phase pupils, bringing the total of Senior Phase pupils engaged in qualifications delivered in partnership to 33,433.

Apprenticeships
Colleges have the agility, flexibility, capacity, and expertise to continue the delivery training of apprenticeships in a challenging labour market. Colleges adaptability has been a core characteristic through regionalisation, where scaled up institutions have been able to more flexibly deploy staff to shape new models of provision. This allows the creation of opportunities to simulate relevant work-based experiences for learners and by developing new pathways to apprenticeships through, for example, school – college collaborations. Such pathways will provide opportunities for young people to learn new and appropriate skills in preparation for when more apprenticeship opportunities arise. In addition to providing training, colleges work closely with both schools and employers in the delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships and to provide extensive wrap-around support to trainees.

- Colleges support the delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships for 1,532 Senior Phase pupils across 23 colleges and 12 industry sectors
- Colleges support 10,650 Modern Apprenticeships.

DYW
The COVID-19 pandemic risks triggering the sharpest rise in unemployment since the Great Depression. The economic recession we are about to enter will be like no other and the impact of this risks deepening inequalities, the creation of a pandemic generation and of a catastrophic impact on the prospects of an entire generation of young people, affected both by disrupted education and by poorer labour market prospects. Its scale requires a major effort from all key players to have a Team Scotland approach and to work together, to co-create solutions, to support transitions for both young people and adult returners and to rebuild and reinvigorate our communities.

There is an urgent need to protect the DYW agenda – for many young people, staying in education and training will be the right answer. The DYW agenda offers a national 'prospectus' which already has both national and local visibility and which employs a strength-based approach. We should seek to maximise the value of this in terms of reducing some of our national skills gaps. The regional intelligence of colleges and other partners will support this ambition.

Training Guarantee
The work commissioned by Scottish Government through Sandy Begbie's consideration of a Job Guarantee is important, especially for young people. The college sector would like to see this initiative used to also sustain learners into employment and therefore seeks to ensure that any scheme includes a guarantee not just for jobs, but also a guarantee around free access to learning. This will assist the longer-term picture and help ensure delivery of an engrained recovery.

Colleges: Delivering for Communities

Colleges act as civic anchors which help bind communities together by providing local hubs for people to meet and access services, and offering campus amenities such as digital access, sports facilities, hair salons, beauty services, and restaurants that are affordable for the people within the local area.

Colleges have become very adept at responding successfully to stakeholder need and have been central – as lead partners – to many essential and progressive regional initiatives. As key partners within Community Planning Partnerships, Regional Economic Partnerships, City and Regional Deals, the sector's scale following regionalisation, as well as its experience and responsiveness places it in an excellent position to play a vital role in the successful delivery of initiatives, and support future economic recovery and reform.

- Colleges have addressed digital poverty by delivering digital equipment and by enabling connectivity to students suffering hardship.
- With a predicted increase in the need for mental health counselling services, colleges are investing in new models of mental health provision, supporting prevention and early intervention
- Colleges have been central to the Scottish Government commitment to expand childcare places, increasing enrolments on HNC Childcare programmes by 43.6% and supporting 2,569 students.

Regional Strength
It is likely that there will be an uneven impact on regions across Scotland, which risks deepening pre-existing regional inequalities. Responding to this will require genuine cross-system collaboration to rebuild to the changed economy and society, and to create sustainable success for our communities. Colleges, at the heart of communities and with a reach into many of the SMEs who are the bedrock of a community and the economy, as well as the larger industrial players, are ideally placed to bring the social recovery that will be vital to help Scotland at this time and into the future, to build back better and to engrain the benefits of the recovery.

Colleges: Delivering for the Economy

Economic Value
In September 2017, Colleges Scotland commissioned the Fraser of Allander Institute to prepare a report on the contribution of college graduates to Scotland's economy. This study showed that the Scottish economy (as measured by GDP) will be better off by over £20 billion over the long term, which corresponds to around an additional £55,000 boost to productivity for the Scottish economy for each college graduate.

A summary of the results from this report is provided below and highlights the significant, positive impact the college sector has on Scotland's economy:

The Scottish economy (as measured by GDP) will be better off by over £20 billion in present value term (i.e. with future benefits discounted) over the long-term.

This corresponds to around an additional £55,000 boost to productivity for the Scottish economy per graduate.

The investment is estimated to support nearly 14,000 FTE jobs in present value terms.

Delivering for a Green Economy
Colleges are contributing to tackling the climate emergency, both in terms of their own estates and by delivering initiatives to address the climate emergency, for example:

- The carbon footprint of the college sector has reduced by 18% in the last two years
- Development of cleaner transport initiatives
- Training of the existing workforce, students and apprentices in renewable energy and energy transition
- There were 1,685 enrolments in green economy courses in 2018-19
- Tackling gender imbalance within the energy sector, e.g. Girls into Energy Programmes
- Partnership working in relation to hydrogen-based infrastructures.

Delivering for a Digital Economy
The college sector is determined to develop and enhance the learning experience to ensure it encapsulates the full range of technology, such as artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality learning, with the best available equipment to maximise the potential of colleges to deliver work-based learning, contribute to increased economic productivity, inward investment and meet the changing needs of users. A Digital Ambition and roadmap are being developed by the sector which will enable it to support the full range of learners accessing college-based learning platforms across Scotland. It will also ensure that colleges can quickly respond to the changing needs of the labour market and deliver skills for the new economy 4.0.

Delivering for Employers

Colleges make a fundamental contribution to Scotland's labour market, helping to meet employers' needs and ensuring that students have the right skills and training to succeed in the workplace. College education contributes to boosting the quality as well as quantity of employment options for graduating students, with 96% of all learning hours leading to a recognised qualification. Colleges work closely with both SMEs and large employers in their local regions, shaping their curriculum offer to meet the skills needs of the local economy, and providing retraining and upskilling opportunities. These are key areas where colleges will increasingly contribute going forward.

The sector has a substantial role in responding to:

- growing unemployment levels – expected to rise sharply once the UK Government's Job Retention Scheme ends
- supporting the Scottish Government's PACE activity which will become vital in responding to redundancy and company closure.

Developed in partnership with industry, colleges' agility has shown a track record of allowing them to focus provision on speedy, short, sharp courses to enable those unemployed to quickly transition from declining sectors into jobs in growth areas, such as construction, digital, automation, health and social care, green economy, early years, artificial intelligence, and STEM.

The college sector's flexibility enables them to support:

- 238,111 (72.4%) part-time enrolments in 2018-19
- 49,386 students studying health and social care courses in 2018-19 (14.9% at higher education (HE))
- 21,138 construction course enrolments in 2018-19 (11.9% at HE)
- 23,868 digital skills enrolments in 2018-19 (16.9% at HE), and 98,516 STEM enrolments in 2018-19 (14.9% at HE)
- 95,637 students while they are in employment,

Colleges are also flexing their course offering to address skills shortages in high participation sectors such as logistics, transport, hospitality and childcare, as well as having the flexibility to input when and where other specific areas are identified as requiring a response.

The sector is encouraging and supporting an innovative economy, working closely with Innovation Centres, providing business incubator space, ensuring access to resources to aid start-up ventures, and developing strategic partnerships with businesses and universities to drive global investment opportunities into manufacturing, technology and innovation hubs, which will drive growth in the Scottish economy for decades to come.

Part 2 – Response to Specific Questions

In the response to the specific questions raised in the SFC review document, please read these in the context of the general comments made in Part 1 and the key role that colleges will need to play in order to support individuals, communities, and business in the national response to the economic recovery.

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 and innovation in Scotland that we most prize, in a very challenging funding environment?

The college sector in Scotland has a rich history of responding quickly and effectively and adapting to the impact of economic crises by mobilising its collective resources to provide impactful, cost effective solutions to skills needs. Colleges are part of a national sector but are also individual organisations which are best placed to respond proactively to the needs and direction of local communities within an overarching framework for the sector. This is a valuable approach that should not be lost. If there is to be a further focus on regionalisation, this may need a better alignment of boundaries and/or mechanisms established to coordinate larger regional responses in larger geographical areas.

Individual
Greater collaboration within the education and skills system has emerged through the principle of putting learners at the centre. Colleges offer much more than a learning and teaching experience, they enhance the learner experience by providing a 'wrap around' service which supports the learners throughout their journey and helps them to gain confidence and the wider skills needed for today's society. Colleges also contribute to addressing complex social issues such as child poverty, equality and diversity, employability, gender inequality, care experienced and other underrepresented groups, increasing their valuable contribution to society and our regional and national economy.

A focus on accessibility for all stages has been a key feature of college provision and should be key to future development, however, this must encompass upskilling and reskilling across all age groups.

Community
Colleges are a fundamental part of their region and the communities they serve: promoting economic growth alongside social inclusion and supporting learners from a diverse range of ages, backgrounds and educational levels; offering multiple opportunities to engage in learning for life through a collection of different subjects, study options and modes of delivery.

Economy
Colleges help to increase productivity by providing upskilling, training and retraining opportunities. Colleges across Scotland work in close partnership with employers of all types, providing the skills, learning opportunities and experiences to learners to enable them to deliver fundamental and essential services to operate, strengthen and deliver a robust wellbeing economy. Furthermore, coherence across the skills landscape will create an even greater opportunity to match ambition to the offer, drawing on expertise and building on synergies across institutions aligned to economic growth.

Staff
Colleges have a staff body with a wide range of skillsets and expertise. This is important when it comes to new opportunities/projects and allows colleges to be able to respond quickly and effectively to changing demands and needs.

Colleges should retain the ability to assess holistically (following robust internal QA processes) as well as the flexibility to modify assessment evidence criteria to suit remote/online delivery.

Partnerships
Regional partnerships with local authorities, schools, universities and employers are fundamental to providing a range of clear and distinct pathways. The growth of the senior phase provision provides more options and choices for a wide range of age groups. Colleges will continue to work closely with Community Planning Partnerships.

At a regional level, colleges have the connections and partnerships with local charities, voluntary and community groups to reach the most disadvantaged within our communities. By pooling and making best use of the wide range of resources that are available through these partnerships to encourage, nurture and support those learners going through, often the most challenging of circumstances, this changes lives through learning. This could include aligning provision of learning opportunities within key strategies e.g. drug and alcohol services, homelessness and looking for opportunities to contribute to service delivery through joined up commissioning to specialist providers in the voluntary sector.

The sector's requests are:

- Prioritise greater flexibility within delivery and funding models to better support colleges to increase the economic, social, natural and human capital (as referenced by the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery report, published 2020) of the regions they serve, through maximising regional opportunities and minimising and addressing regional challenges. This would by necessity need to include a parity of funding across the tertiary ecosystem.
- Explore a more joined up approach to funding instead of the current multiple funding pots.
- Focus more on measuring outputs of social and economic impacts, and less on a single volume target.
- Reduce competition between schools/colleges/universities by removing duplication to increase efficiency and allow more effective use of current resources across the whole system, including avoiding duplication at SCQF level 7.
- Create equity for learners by taking a national approach to articulation, for example, exploring a standard '2+2' model for appropriate subjects.
- Funding to organisations by bodies such as Skills Development Scotland should also be urgently reviewed in terms of value for money and focussed investment of public funds.

B). What do you think colleges should stop doing, or do differently, in order to contribute effectively to an inclusive social and economic recovery?

Colleges should be given more flexibility in the delivery of their courses, moving away from the traditional on-campus delivery model where this does not meet the needs of the learners or employers. This will also support ongoing ambitions in terms of learning for life with seamless entry and exit of education at stages that meet learner needs, as well as clear progression pathways to HE. There could be tax incentives for employers to create links through colleges.

To support this, there is a need to focus on the digital capacity of the sector, households and Scotland to not only continue to deliver teaching and skills development during the pandemic period, but to also introduce the flexibility of provision needed.

Colleges are keen to see stronger collaboration and integration of curriculum with schools and universities and undertake regional strategic planning across the education sector to meet local, regional and national needs.

The contribution colleges make to innovation and knowledge exchange should be recognised, supported by specific funding to create an innovative, creative and dynamic environment for learning, skills and training.

The recently published Cumberford-Little report identified the need to enhance the use of college certified qualifications, and more use of 'micro-credentials' to support a new college purpose. This need is greater than ever in supporting the recovery. A degree of inflexibility and lack of currency within the existing post-16 accredited qualifications portfolio, particularly within the Higher National suite of awards, has not provided the flexibility that the college sector seeks. This process of qualifications development and subsequent commissioning needs reviewed to be more closely linked to sector need.

Colleges must be allowed to retain their focus on social inclusion, enhancing opportunities in disadvantaged communities which will be hit hard by the downturn. Campus-based delivery will be essential to meet the needs of many learners, including those from disadvantaged communities, those with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Colleges must be sufficiently resourced to enable them to invest in staff development to assist in developing and enhancing skills to deliver effective learning online (including provision for vulnerable groups in regard to improving quality of life) and more efficient business infrastructure. This should include a more flexible workforce beyond the current structure so helping to accelerate the aspirations of 'the work force of the future'.

The sector's requests are:

- Seek a national framework which provides greater flexibility in the delivery of courses and which allows for a focus on regional planning and partnership in order to deliver stronger collaboration and integration around curriculum.
- A system that strengthens and supports the college sector's focus on social inclusion.
- A focus on digital capacity of colleges to support the flexibility of learning required.
- The Job Guarantee scheme to include access to free training as well as to employment, to help sustain learners into jobs.
- A new Apprenticeship Pathway Programme as a valuable way of developing skills in key sectors for people who are not yet in employment.
- An expanded FWDF should assist employers of all sizes, including SMEs and microbusinesses, in upskilling and reskilling their staff.
- Additional support should be targeted at Transitional Training, to help unemployed people enhance their skills while seeking new employment.

C). How can colleges best support Scotland's international connectedness and competitiveness in the post-pandemic, post-EU membership environment?

Colleges are committed to a Team Scotland approach and collaboratively utilise Scotland's advantages i.e. rich history, culture and educational excellence, when promoting the country as a study destination.

The connectedness of colleges internationally will be improved through continued involvement or a robust replacement for ERASMUS+ type activities. In terms of competitiveness, the quality of our learners as they enter international markets is the most significant demonstration of the quality of Scottish education.

Collaboration between universities and colleges should be promoted and supported by Government to ensure that Scotland is exploiting fully its tertiary sector assets.

The sector's requests are:

- A system that allows collaboration to take a Team Scotland approach and supports an increase in capacity.
- Ensure ability for Scotland's college to fully participate in ERASMUS+.

D). What opportunities and threats does the post-pandemic environment hold for colleges?

Opportunities

Opportunities include:

- The creation of a more responsive and digitally skilled workforce
- A wider range of online/blended provision
- A wider range of ways in which learners can engage with the college
- A review of services and systems to make them user-centred, efficient, more effective, and less bureaucratic
- Enhanced learning platforms
- Opportunities to work closer with other colleges, universities and WorldSkills
- Enhance more strategic partnerships
- Raise the profile of the college sector and its ability to respond
- Opportunities to drive much needed streamlining of qualifications and awarding bodies processes
- Capitalising on the opportunities that COVID-19 has brought to the connectedness of everyone as a community to drive positive change, with agility and removing barriers to change
- Increased regional engagement with potential learners especially those facing unemployment.

Threats

The threats are primarily funding related to ensure that colleges have the capacity to meet demand and have the necessary flexibility and funding to build the capabilities to meet the evolving (and as yet unpredictable) needs of the recovery to the new economy. Prior to the pandemic, colleges were already facing significant financial challenges and were actively considering how to plan effectively for the future in a climate of annual funding allocations. Consideration should be given to multi-year funding and guidance.

Other threats include:

- Managing the ongoing pandemic has the potential to limit the ability of the sector to focus on longer term projects
- Financial instability due to reduced income/funding

- Digital Poverty – connectivity, hardware, environment
- Digital capability of staff.

The sector's requests are:

- A response in keeping with the scale of the economic challenge and which supports the requirement of a major effort from all key players and to have a Team Scotland approach and to work together, to co-create solutions.
- Provide a framework and finance model to allow colleges across Scotland to have the flexibility and agility to quickly refocus their curriculum offer to deliver employability and digital skills, upskilling and reskilling opportunities for individuals to response to, and to support the economic recovery.
- Ensure opportunities to allow streamlining of qualifications and awarding bodies processes.
- Support in delivery of the identified digital priorities around access, development of course content and staff capabilities.

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

Standardising the articulation routes by moving to a '2+2' or a '2+1' model of delivery of an honours or ordinary degree, respectively. This would ensure that all institutions give the same recognition for the same qualification when the learner is applying to the same or similar course at the same SCQF level. These would assist in shortening the learner journey, without reducing its benefits for learners, thus helping to produce a workforce of greater productivity and skill, allowing more people from all backgrounds to participate in the labour market more quickly and bringing greater economic benefit. The work started by the National Articulation Forum should be continued.

Colleges and universities must establish closer strategic alignment to ensure the provision and pathways are student focused and not institution focused, with a more holistic regional approach to planning taken to ensure pathways are clear, well planned and seamless for learners, and to avoid duplication around SCQF level 7 through joint planning for demand led regional provision (e.g. through the Regional Improvement Collaboratives).

The sector's requests are:

- A system that has full recognition of previously gained qualification when the learner is applying to the same or similar course at the same SCQF level and build on the work of the recently published report from the National Articulation Forum.
- A rationalisation of the existing examinations and assessment landscape.

F). How can SFC, alongside government and other enterprise, skills and education-focused agencies, best support colleges to make their full contribution to Scotland's inclusive, green and education-led recovery?

How scarce public resources should be prioritised to drive recovery
Public resources should be directed to public institutions and not toward private training organisations who factor profit margins into their activity. A review of all resources available to meet the needs of each region should be undertaken and allocated based on impact for individuals and the community rather than on established bureaucratic and outdated funding models.

Particular areas of collaboration between agencies that would best support the sectors' contributions
We believe that innovation and productivity will be improved through a more strategic and dynamic control environment for the college sector, that supports the required flexibilities sought, reduces bureaucracy, and brings rationalisation.

A focus on regional economic clusters of employers would help develop regional specialisms for the economy. Matching support for business start-up, skills development and FE/HE provision could foster the sense of regional economic specialisms.

The current SFC/Education Scotland model for Evaluative Reports and Enhancement Plan has created a system whereby targets are reviewed with the aim of complementing SFC monitoring and reflecting on the quality indicators in 'How Good is Our College'. Whilst the system has created collaboration between college's, SFC and Education Scotland it has led to a system that does not best drive enhancement.

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

SFC's funding and accountability frameworks require a review to ensure they promote agile and collaborative action, to ensure that equality and wide access to educational opportunity are promoted as key elements of the recovery for younger people and adults.

For colleges to be able to respond agilely to developing challenges, there needs to be increased flexibility in the model within which the sector operates and more support for emerging best practice. The Outcome Agreement process, for example, whilst successful in aligning college strategic priorities with Government policy, has in recent times restricted the ambition of colleges to respond to local need.

Freedom for colleges to generate and use surpluses would create a more creative and agile sector, which would allow colleges to exercise effective stewardship and manage resources to best effect.

The production of an SFC capital investment plan which sets out a medium/longer term investment plan for colleges' physical and digital infrastructure needs would also be vital.

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

Promotion of equality and widening access is and will continue to be a key priority for all organisations involved in the tertiary sector. The outcome agreement model has enshrined targets for institutions and a similar more dynamic model that places responsibility and accountability on individual organisations would be preferred.

Specific access targets within a ROA could be considered where these targets are relevant to local demographics.

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

The SFC and Scottish Government should recognise the wealth of experience within the college sector and allow the flexibility for individual institutions to respond and be proactive in response to the particular needs of their local communities, employers, and students.

The SFC and other agencies (SDS, SQA, Scottish Enterprise etc.) must work together better and look at a more holistic, joined-up approach to ensure systems are designed around the user, to be more flexible, agile and effective.

The existing funding models for universities and colleges should be reviewed. The significantly lower resources provided to colleges compared to universities is unfair and unjustified and inevitably impacts on the relative student experience. With continued downward pressure on SFC's resources, a fundamental overhaul of the funding landscape is required as a matter of urgency.

The Scottish Government and SFC should work together to create clearer and more flexible planned funding for institutions, moving away from year to year funding to better support the longer term planning needed, which will address low educational attainment, low productivity and poor economic wellbeing.

Introduce a smaller set of ROA targets that are more realistic and impact focused. This includes reviewing Education Scotland's role in the ROA process and what impact/value they bring to the enhancement of the learner experience.

The current models of funding with DYW in schools, colleges and universities do not allow for the most cost-effective route. There is a need to streamline routes from schools to further and higher education which make it attractive for students and employers. There is often little incentive for employers to collaborate in the development of skills and current models of education, meaning it takes longer for students to enter their labour market. If companies were given tax incentives to work with schools, college and universities on industry ready students, and, in addition, if the delivery of qualifications were compressed and funding models adjusted, this would give opportunity to create routes through the current school DYW, college and university that would achieve a more effective throughput of students to the workplace.

The impact of COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of outdoor learning in supporting sustainability and promoting the health and wellbeing of people of all ages. Additional support from the SFC would allow colleges to focus efforts on building on existing outdoor learning opportunities.

The sector's requests are:

- Review SFC's funding and accountability frameworks to ensure promotion of agile and collaborative action, to ensure that equality and wide access to educational opportunity are promoted as key elements of the recovery.
- The existing funding model for colleges should be reviewed, ensuring the provision of equity of resources across the tertiary education landscape.
- Delivery of a more strategic and dynamic control environment for the college sector, that supports the required flexibilities sought, reduces bureaucracy, and brings rationalisation.
- Work towards a system that provides freedom for colleges to generate and use surpluses.
- The production of an SFC capital investment plan which sets out a medium/longer term investment plan for colleges' physical and digital infrastructure.
- Investing in improved guidance services for learners of all ages to help them identify relevant opportunities and the benefits of participating in education.
- Continue to work with the sector to significantly rationalise credit guidance rules to support increased innovation and productivity.

Colleges Scotland
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