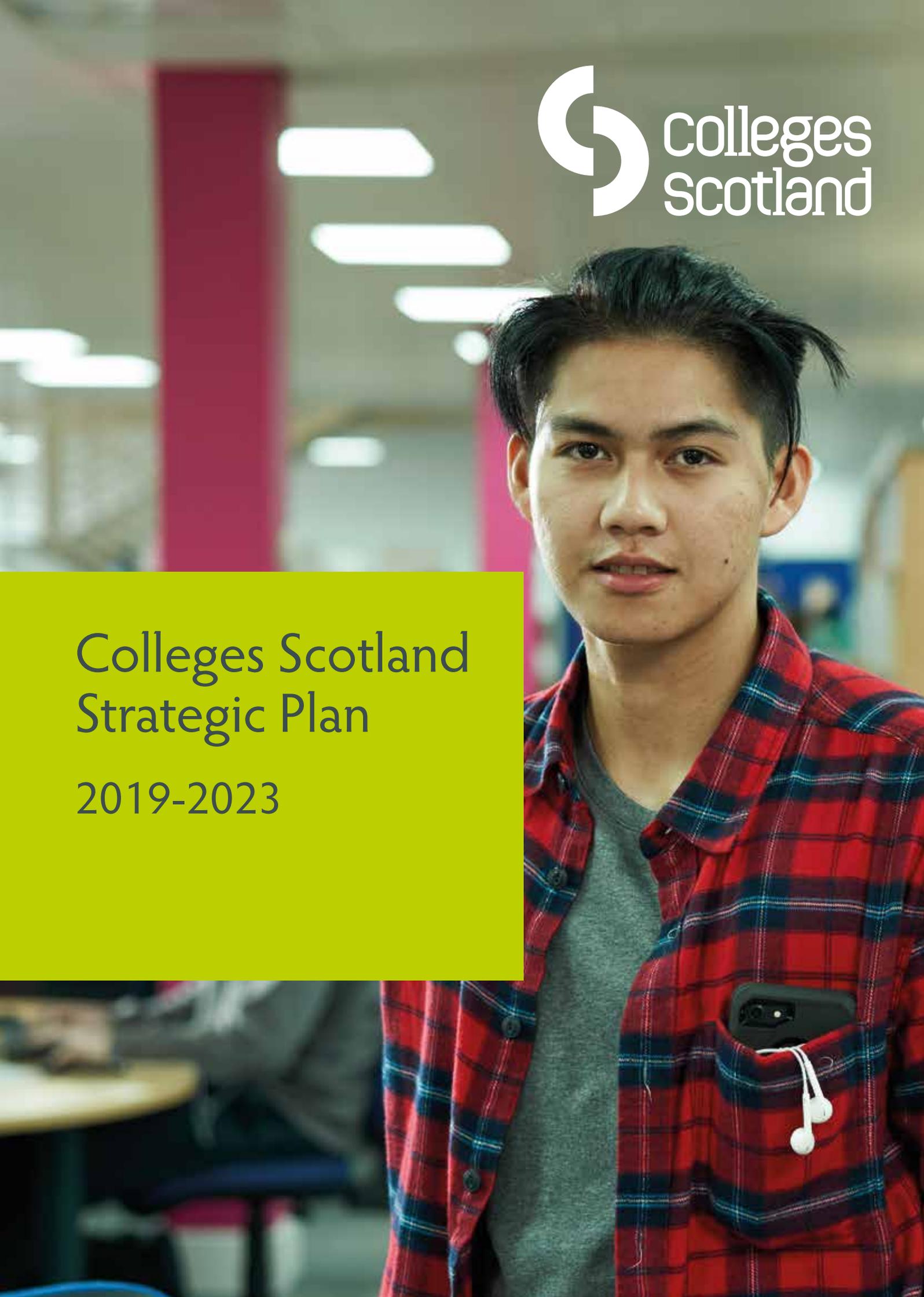


Colleges Scotland Strategic Plan

2019-2023



Overview

Colleges are fundamental in equipping people with the capacity and training to improve their life chances and to succeed in highly-skilled jobs now and in the future. Whether through providing learning routes from school to work or university, further training or continuous skills-development – often in conjunction with employers – or retraining for new opportunities emerging from innovative technologies, the sector has an integral role in developing people and the positive outcomes for Scotland's economy.

By being flexible and able to adapt and respond appropriately, to help individuals and communities thrive, assisting businesses to keep pace with changes in the labour market, and meeting government priorities, colleges are critical to delivering inclusive, sustainable economic growth, and raising productivity levels in Scotland.

There are over 235,000 students studying in Scotland's colleges each year from all backgrounds with over 95% who achieve their qualifications moving onto positive destinations of further study, training, or employment. As well as providing professional, technical, and vocational qualifications, colleges also assist those requiring a more supportive learning environment, including those who want to study part-time to fit around home life and people who are benefitting from work-based learning.

The [College Sector Statement of Ambition](#), published in December 2018, sets out a five-year vision for *“a dynamic, collaborative, and innovative sector delivering high-quality lifelong learning, widening access to education, and promoting social inclusion that enables people to thrive in life, in their communities, and in work”*. As the college sector's representative body, Colleges Scotland has a crucial responsibility in helping the sector achieve its vision and deliver on its ambitions.

Introduction

Colleges Scotland is the voice of the college sector in Scotland. 26 colleges operate in 13 regions across Scotland, allowing them to plan nationally and regionally, as well as deliver locally, and there are three regional strategic bodies co-ordinating approaches for colleges in the Highlands and Islands, Glasgow, and Lanarkshire regions.

Our primary role is to support colleges and regional strategic bodies in achieving their aims and objectives, and to cultivate the strength of the college sector in Scotland. This is achieved through policy development, advocating and campaigning on behalf of the college sector, co-ordinating sector-wide engagement on major issues, and maintaining strong and proactive relationships with government, sector agencies, and industry bodies.

This strategic plan sets out the organisation's key aims and priorities for the next five years.

Context and Environment

The college sector has gone through changes to structures and governance and is now in a better position to contribute more regionally and shape pertinent national policies which can benefit learners, communities, businesses, and Scotland's economy.

Strong policy and advocacy have allowed us to effectively respond to key developments, such as the national review programme around the enterprise and skills landscape, student support, the learner journey, and changes in ministerial leadership. There has also been an increased focus on effective communications and stakeholder engagement.

An Employers' Association has been established to deliver on the Scottish Government's policy for National Bargaining, which is now fully embedded within the sector, and we will continue working closely with colleges and trade unions.

Uncertainties around Brexit and the post-Brexit landscape pose a risk to colleges, threatening the ability to attract and retain EU staff and students as well as investment into the sector. It is vital to ensure that whilst leaving the EU, colleges can maintain the skilled workforce required to increase Scotland's productivity now and in the future. College students have gained enormously from EU-run programmes such as Erasmus+ and we will work closely with both the UK and Scottish Governments to ensure similar opportunities continue post-Brexit.

Our Vision

Colleges Scotland to be at the heart of a world-class college sector that is recognised, valued, and available to all.

Our Mission

Colleges Scotland is the collective voice of the college sector. We will support and champion the sector by leading and influencing policy, enhancing and maintaining strong partnerships, and demonstrating the positive impacts of the sector.

Our Values

- **Respect** – we will act with respect, integrity, openness, and honesty.
- **Support** – we will strive for excellence, provide effective leadership, understand and respond to the needs of colleges and regional strategic bodies.
- **Trust** – we will use truthfulness as the guiding principle for everything we do and it is essential to our success.
- **Inclusivity** – we will advocate diversity and equality.

Strategic Aims

Colleges Scotland will focus its work and resources around four overarching aims to help deliver the college sector's ambitions, as set out in the College Sector Statement of Ambition 2018-23. These ambitions are:

- Developing our People and Partnerships
- Supporting a Successful Economy
- Helping Communities Thrive.

The strategic aims for Colleges Scotland over the next five years are:

Aim 1: Strengthen the college sector's position as a key deliverer of professional, technical, and skills education as well as training opportunities for both learners and businesses

We will achieve this by:

- Representing and articulating the college sector's position on key issues.
- Developing and delivering on the sector's priorities.
- Fostering clear positions on policy and influencing the policy agenda for the benefit of colleges and regional strategic bodies.
- Working with colleges and regional strategic bodies to improve vocational skill levels to capitalise on the opportunities of Industry 4.0. by properly equipping learners to benefit from new and emerging technologies.
- Advocating for equitable access to a consistent and coherent learner journey throughout life.
- Campaigning to secure the best possible funding outcomes for the sector.

- Assisting our institutions in cultivating a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship that will help the sector grow, diversify Scotland's business base, increase Scotland's productivity, and contribute to delivering inclusive, sustainable economic growth.

Aim 2: Enhance sustainable partnerships and communicate with a single sector voice

We will achieve this by:

- Providing effective communications and political engagement to promote and represent the college sector.
- Working in partnership with key decision makers and partners to enhance the college sector's reputation and maximise opportunities to ensure greater recognition of the sector's achievements.
- Attaining a parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes by promoting colleges as a path to high-quality job opportunities.
- Working with colleges and regional strategic bodies to strengthen engagement with local, regional, and national industry partners to ensure the sector is sufficiently agile to meet their requirements and provide a skilled workforce for the future in a changing environment.
- Developing appropriate and effectual collaborations with colleges, regional strategic bodies, and external partners for the benefit of the sector.

Aim 3: Implement National Bargaining objectives

We will achieve this by:

- Delivering national pay agreements, in partnership with trade unions and stakeholders.
- Implementing strategies to develop the sector's workforce of the future by enhancing skills and expertise.
- Providing support and advice through Colleges Scotland Employers' Association.
- Maintaining effective communications and stakeholder engagement.

Aim 4: Demonstrate Colleges Scotland is effective, efficient, and sustainable

We will achieve this by:

- Recruiting, retaining, and developing staff.
- Providing specialist, professional advice related to sector policy, employment relations, and communications.
- Ensuring processes and procedures remain robust.
- Demonstrating usefulness and reliability to our institutions, students, and key stakeholders.
- Being a financially sustainable organisation.