



Membership Services



colleges
Scotland

About Us

The Voice of the Sector

Colleges Scotland supports the sector by ensuring that its views are heard and interests represented.

We do this by:

- Campaigning for colleges, their staff and learners to key stakeholders
- Shaping the public policy debate
- Influencing funders to secure the best possible outcome for the sector
- Securing strong parliamentary and media representation
- Building future governance and leadership capacity
- Providing analysis, information and professional advice to our members on relevant, current and emerging issues.

Our Members

Colleges Scotland is funded through membership subscriptions and exists to represent its members' interests. Our members are the publicly funded colleges in Scotland.

Collectively colleges deliver more than 77 million hours of further and higher education to 257,000 students across Scotland every year, employ around 20,000 people and will contribute £1.2 billion to the Scottish economy by 2020. By working together, through Colleges

Scotland, the strength of the collective is heard and represented nationally.

We work closely with key partners in Scotland for the benefit of the sector including College Development Network, Scottish Funding Council, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Council for Development and Industry and National Union of Students, as well as counterpart organisations throughout the UK.

Benefits of Membership

As a membership organisation, a key priority is to maintain and enhance our relationship with colleges; we listen to our members and respond to their needs.

Colleges Scotland understands the real issues facing colleges. Our reputation is grounded in 18 years of providing policy and public affairs support to our member colleges in Scotland for the benefit of current and future learners. We use our expertise and experience to work with governments of Scotland and Westminster, political parties, media, stakeholders and partners to develop the sector and advance the public interest.

We champion the unique and vital services that colleges provide for learners, communities and businesses across Scotland. We promote the college sector at a national level to ensure that the reputation and profile of our member colleges is visibly enhanced.

Creating Policy

Principals' Forum

The principals of member colleges meet bi-monthly at the Principals' Forum, facilitated by Colleges Scotland, to discuss issues of strategic importance to the sector. They also have regular bi-monthly joint meetings with the chairs of member colleges to discuss issues of importance to the sector such as funding, legislation and policy.

The Principals' Forum continues to develop successfully and is increasingly taking the initiative to shape and lead the strategic direction of the college sector through regionalisation and a number of key initiatives including policy formulation, political lobbying and the Principals' Leading and Learning CPD Programme.

Chairs' Forum

The Chairs' Forum is the representative body for the chairs of member colleges. It is a unified body, facilitated by Colleges Scotland, which encompasses all member colleges. As such it reflects the diversity of our member colleges and is increasingly involved in the regionalisation of the college sector.

The Chairs' Forum also seeks to address strategic issues such as legislation, funding and policy matters. It engages with a wide range of stakeholders, and holds bi-monthly joint meetings with the Principals' Forum with which it has a close relationship.

Regional Leads

Colleges Scotland is committed to supporting the regional leads in their vital role of providing leadership to merging colleges and the establishment of federations, whilst supporting complex change management. Equally, in their role as college leaders – ensuring that strategies reflect both the Scottish Government's priorities, including the education and learning outcomes it expects, and demands from learners and employers in their region – Colleges Scotland strives to provide strategic advice and support every step of the way.

Raising Awareness

Representation

Colleges Scotland has direct links to key influencers and policy-makers to ensure that the sector's interests are represented at the highest level. We continually influence and challenge policy-makers on our members' behalf and our briefing papers regularly feature in public debate.

Colleges Scotland regularly meets with Ministers and MSPs from all parties to discuss and propose amendments to legislation and produce timely policy papers that contribute to wider debates. A testament to our dedication is the results of the 2012 Ipsos Mori annual survey of MSPs which indicated that 81% knew the organisation well or very well and 70% held a favourable opinion.

Key priorities include making a case for improved funding leading up to the Spending Review 2014, voicing strong views on the Post 16 Education (Scotland) Bill, advancing the regionalisation agenda, and contributing to the shared services debate.

We ensure that all of our members have the opportunity to contribute their views on current and emerging issues through various means including forums, surveys, consultations, debates, meetings and events.

Research and Analysis

Colleges Scotland is a credible contributor to the policy debate. Through undertaking detailed environmental scanning, research and analysis, we can effectively develop clear positions on policy to enable responses on behalf of our members that are thoughtful, timely and influential.

This is an ongoing process involving regular input and feedback from members via surveys, consultations, and other requests for information. We strive to ensure that every member has the opportunity to contribute.

Our research has highlighted key issues including funding, college waiting lists, cash reserves and staffing levels, and informed wider studies

including those of Audit Scotland and The David Hume Institute.

Briefings and Publications

We keep members informed of emerging policy issues and key developments affecting the sector through our regular policy briefing notes. This fortnightly email ensures that colleges are kept up-to-date with news on key topics such as funding, government activity, consultations and upcoming events.

A key publication is our Key Facts booklet which is an invaluable source of relevant information and statistics displayed in an impactful way. Produced annually, it is freely available for use by members and is distributed to government and other influencers to reinforce key messages.

Colleges Scotland regularly produces relevant briefings and reports which are publicly available. In addition, there is a designated 'members area' on the Colleges Scotland website which provides members with exclusive access to private papers, briefings and meeting notes.

We have briefed members on the complex funding issues which have affected the sector and produced detailed briefings on the draft legislation for the Post 16 Education (Scotland) Bill.

Media

Colleges Scotland represents members' interests publicly by regularly engaging with the media on education issues. As the voice of the sector, we have established effective working relationships with key journalists and liaise with them on emerging issues to release statements and briefings that are impactful.

We closely monitor the media to keep abreast of key issues and work hard to ensure that colleges are represented fairly. As part of this service, we deliver the latest media and parliamentary news relating to the sector straight to our members' inbox every weekday via our Daily Monitoring Report.

Building Capacity

Sector Support

Colleges Scotland provides ongoing support to member colleges throughout the year. This includes providing specialist strategic advice and tailored support specific to each college and region.

We engage with members through regular visits to colleges and ongoing contact by telephone, email and various other means. Throughout the regionalisation process we have been engaging with regional leads and regional boards, providing support to various working groups and seeking advice from industry experts.

In addition, Colleges Scotland provides ongoing facilitation services for various projects and initiatives including WorldSkills, Copyright, Freedom of Information, and Commonwealth 2014.

Learning and Development Opportunities

Members have full access to Colleges Scotland events, seminars, workshops and conferences designed to help them keep abreast of the latest thinking and respond quickly to the changing sector. Expert speakers and case study presenters from a range of organisations share

their knowledge and experience with the sector. Members also benefit from the invaluable networking opportunities that these events provide.

A key event in the calendar is our annual Parliamentary Reception which takes place in March at the Scottish Parliament. This event aims to raise the profile of the sector and provides opportunities for members to network with MSPs from across the political spectrum.

In addition, our Annual Dinner and Conference/Seminar takes place in June. These events provide a central platform for the sector to come together and consider recent developments and influence future direction. With inspirational speakers and key policy-makers in attendance, this event provides members with opportunities to meet, update, enhance reputation and spark debate.

Resources and Facilities

Colleges Scotland, situated in the prime location of Stirling, provides members with a base in central Scotland and access to state-of-the-art facilities, free parking, Wi-Fi, and unlimited refreshments.

Members also benefit from free meeting space for up to three guests and exclusive discounts on room hire for larger meetings and events. Our fully trained events and ICT teams are always on hand throughout the day to offer full support.

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Please feel free to drop in and see us when you are next in Stirling.