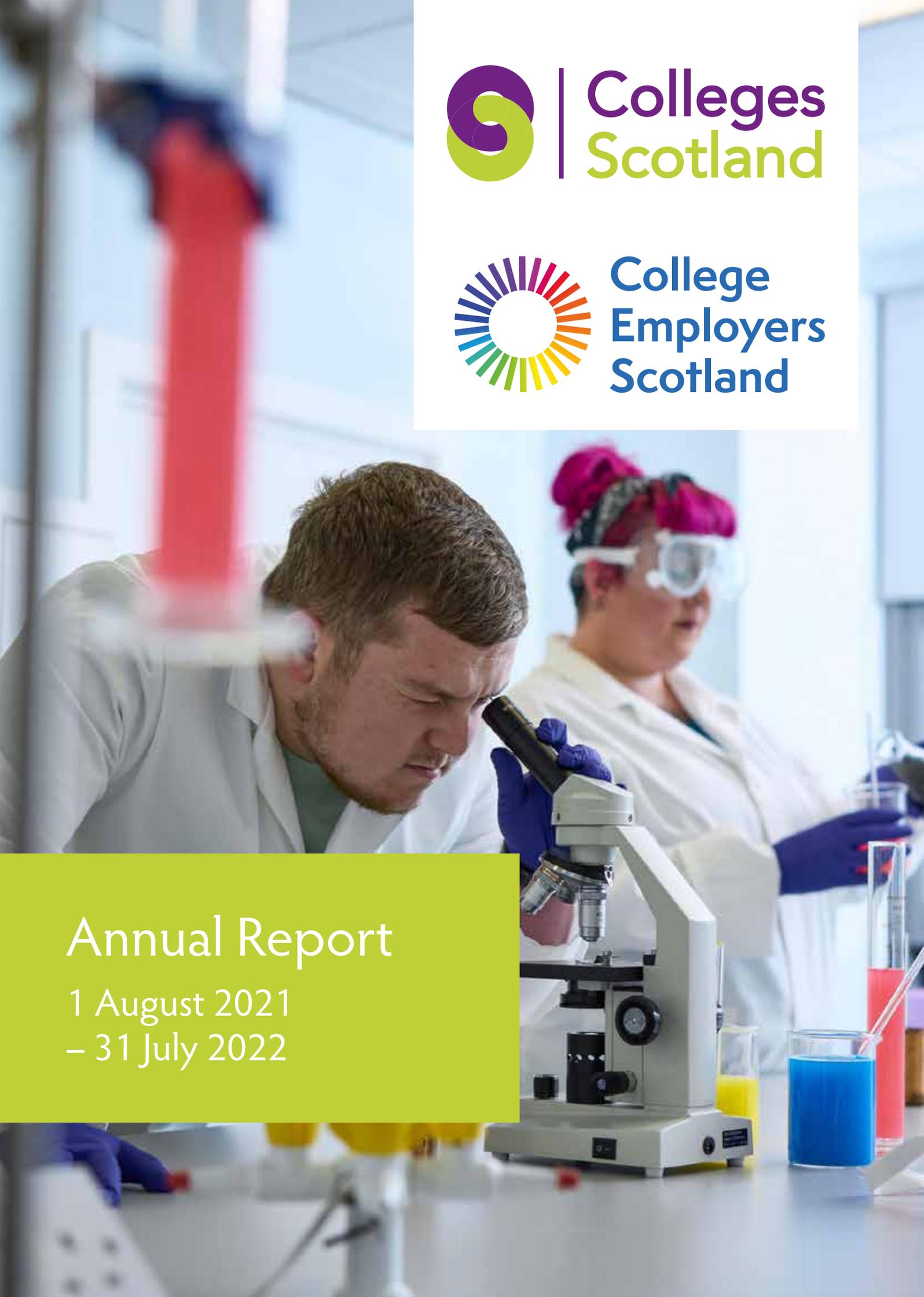




Annual Report

1 August 2021
– 31 July 2022



Introduction



The past year was one which threw up so many challenges as we transitioned from lockdown to our new normality.

Here at Colleges

Scotland our staff showed the adaptability, resilience, and ingenuity we saw throughout the pandemic to support the sector in a rapidly changing world.

As the country yo-yoed between a safe partial re-opening, back into lockdown and, finally, into an end to restrictions, we ensured the nation's colleges and their students were kept informed and received guidance to protect and support them throughout.

But, as this report highlights, despite so much change and uncertainty along with increasingly restricted budgets, we have still worked relentlessly and successfully to deliver the best possible outcomes for the entire college sector.

Colleges Scotland has collaborated with Ministers, civil servants, Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and other key partners, such as Skills Development Scotland, training agencies and College Development Network, to ensure the sector is best placed to continue to provide world-class and inclusive learning opportunities for everyone.

We have also significantly increased awareness of the importance of colleges and the leading role they have played and continue to play in delivering the government's key goals of economic transformation, delivering a green revolution and eradicating child poverty.

The many successes across the sector, which we have highlighted in increased volume and improved impact across mainstream and social media, are testament to the incredible work done by the leaders and staff at each of the 26 colleges and regional strategic bodies we represent.

During the year we saw the creation of College Employers Scotland, which will ensure greater focus on negotiations with trade unions while allowing Colleges Scotland to more effectively lead and influence policy, improve and strengthen partnerships and demonstrate the positive impacts of the sector within communities and in the wider economy.

Despite the end of lockdown restrictions, the coming year will have many different but equally difficult challenges. However, I am confident that, with the strengths and qualities shown over the past two years by everyone within the sector, and in our own small but effective Colleges Scotland team, we will overcome them and put colleges at the very heart of Scotland's skills-led recovery. When colleges thrive, Scotland thrives.

Finally, I would like to thank the senior leadership teams and boards within each of our colleges and regional strategic bodies for their continued support and I look forward to working closely with each of you over the next 12 months.

Shona Struthers
Chief Executive

Corporate



Colleges Scotland welcomed a new Chair in January 2022. Dr Waiyin Hatton, who succeeds Ken Milroy MBE following his retirement, has been a board

member for two years and is also Chair of West College Scotland.

Colleges Scotland is a small organisation, employing **14 members of staff** (as at 31 July 2022) – 12 full-time and 2 part-time – working in policy (3 FTE), communications, public affairs and corporate services and CEO (5.3 FTE), College Employers Scotland (5 FTE).

Colleges Scotland continues to be an accredited **Living Wage Employer**.

Throughout 2021/22, Colleges Scotland staff continued working remotely, supporting the sector, and inevitably there have been some staff absences due to Covid-19. A phased return to the office for all staff began in Spring 2022.

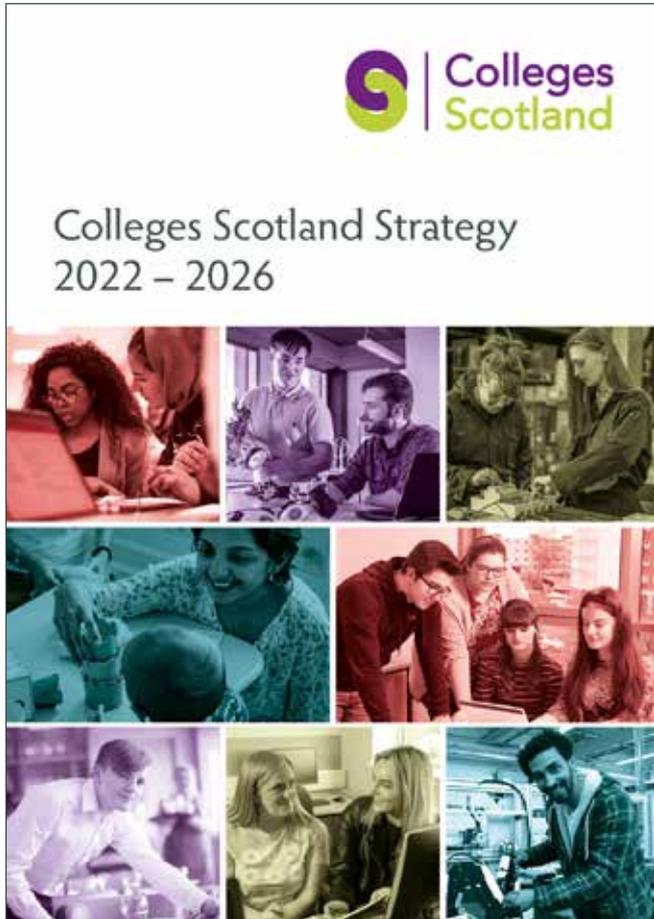
At our Argyll Court base in Stirling we are able to offer modern, digitally connected meeting rooms for our members to use as a Hub, and for non-members to use commercially, and began actively promoting this at the end of 2021/22. We also provide accommodation for two sub-tenants – ESP (Energy Skills Partnership) and WorldSkills UK Scotland.



The Colleges Scotland board met **five** times during 2021/22 with the March meeting being incorporated into an away day which allowed for more in-depth discussions and strategic dialogue with key stakeholders as well as the Annual General Meeting. The Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training, Jamie Hepburn MSP, attended for a Q&A session with sector leaders.



The board concluded its review of Colleges Scotland and published a refreshed **College Sector Statement of Ambition** in December 2021 and published a new **Strategy** for the organisation in June 2022.



Colleges Scotland Funding

Colleges Scotland funding comes from two sources – sector subscriptions for the Policy and Communications function, and funding from the SFC for College Employers Scotland.

In 2021/22, income from sector subscriptions was £893k for Policy, Communications, Public Affairs and Corporate activity.

Income from the SFC for College Employers Scotland for 2021/22 was £450k, with a small proportion for Corporate service support.

Colleges Scotland achieved a successful audit for Year End 31 July 2021.



Response to Covid-19



Colleges Scotland's chair, chief executive, and sector leaders, regularly participated in key meetings in regard to the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 on the sector. This

included the **Advanced Learning Covid Recovery Group** and the **College Sector Covid Leads**. These meetings allowed for high level strategic advocacy and engagement for the college sector with Ministers and senior civil servants. Colleges Scotland also secured a place for the sector at the **Scottish Government Expert Advisory Group**.

Colleges Scotland worked hard to ensure that the continuing fallout and impact on the college sector from Covid-19 was not forgotten, and to ensure adequate mitigations were put in place. This included working with SQA around arrangements for the **alternative assessment model** for qualifications for 2021/22.

Our policy experts worked with the Scottish Government and sector representatives to draft and review sector guidance for college operations during the pandemic, including working with representatives from across the sector to ensure the **safe reopening of campuses** in line with public health guidance and mitigate impacts of further lockdown restrictions for students and staff.

College Principals' Group meetings were held monthly throughout 2021/22. These meetings were critical forums for working together across the sector to keep students and staff safe, ensure learning was delivered, and courses could be completed. The role of Colleges Scotland, as the facilitator of the College Principals' Group, was appreciated by members during an exceptionally difficult time and with challenging circumstances.



Policy Activity

Following additional Covid-19 monies provided to the college sector in 2021/22, this was not forthcoming in the budget settlement for 2022/23, resulting in an overall reduction in revenue income. Colleges Scotland advocated on behalf of the sector which resulted in an **increase of 1%** across the sector in Teaching grant to colleges and an **additional £8.8m** for Foundation Apprenticeships.



The team actively engaged with the Scottish Government, SFC, and other key stakeholders, including holding meetings with Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers, to maximise the benefits to the college sector.

Young Person's Guarantee

Colleges Scotland also engaged closely with the Scottish Government and Sandy Begbie CBE, Scottish Financial Enterprise, in relation to the **Young Person's Guarantee**, which resulted in securing the continuation of **£10m** of funding for the college sector for another year to support young people into further study or jobs.

In addition, we have worked to successfully secure considerable **flexibilities** with SFC in how colleges can operate and utilise their scarce resource. Further work is required in this area and discussions are continuing with the SFC.

Having worked closely with colleges and the SFC as the **SFC Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability** was developed, Colleges Scotland then engaged further to ensure implementation of sector priorities were taken forward. Many of the recommendations in the Review, if enacted, would support economic recovery and allow colleges to realise their potential to deliver world-class education, working more effectively with business and industry, and to address the key areas of poverty and climate change.

One key workstream for the policy team has been the work around developing the strategic **Statement of Intent** for the college sector, due to be set out in a series of statements around principles and purpose. Engagement with Scottish Government Ministers and officials has already started, and this work will continue as this key programme is taken forward.

Our input also delivered the continuation of provision of **flexible additional funding for supported learners** for a five-year period, up from the three years previously agreed. This was implemented for the commencement of academic year 2022/23.

Colleges Scotland also secured access for **Asylum Seekers** to the Higher Education Discretionary Fund. This commenced at the beginning of Academic Year 2022/23. Asylum Seekers previously did not have access to this funding in order to support learning and teaching activity.

We developed a **Cross-Portfolio Working Document** to support high-level strategic engagement for the college sector across Scottish Government Cabinet Secretaries Portfolios, to aid in maximising the understanding of the role of colleges to assist in delivering priorities across different portfolios in Scottish Government, and thereby seeking to maximise financial resource into the sector.

Worked with the sector and other stakeholders through both the **Student Support Task Force** and the Advisory Group to secure additional support funding for students, including emergency access to further support for Ukrainian learners.

Worked with the SFC and the Business Development Directors Group to secure additional funding and flexibilities for the delivery of **Flexible Workforce Development Fund** activity in response to the economic challenges of Covid-19, including access to SMEs.

Worked with sector representatives to outline college sector expectations of the reforms and evolution in regard to how **assessments** should be delivered, and the qualifications and inspectorate bodies.

Worked in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation to oversee the largest independent survey of college student mental health and wellbeing ever conducted in Scotland over the Spring of 2022, with results due to be published in the Autumn of 2022. Also worked collaboratively with Universities Scotland and NUS Scotland in relation to funding for mental health support services and the Scottish Government's **Student Mental Health Action Plan**.

Worked with the Lead Principals for Digital to develop a **Business Case for Strategic Investment** from the Scottish Government for a Future Technology Partnership, whilst representing the sector on the Scottish Government Computing Science Working Group.

Worked in partnership with the SFC to develop an **Infrastructure Strategy** for the college sector to be published in 2022, incorporating a programme of sector engagement workshops and a sector survey of current levels of Infrastructure related requirements.

Engaged with Skills Development Scotland around current **Modern Apprenticeship** arrangements and reached agreement with Construction Industry Training Board to progress a proposal around potential single, national contract model for the college sector in Scotland.

Worked with the **Career Review** Programme Board around the launch of the Career Review in February 2022 and the implementation of the Review recommendations in the college sector, establishing a college sector framework across practitioner-level and Vice Principal Groups.

Worked closely with the WorldSkills UK Director for Scotland, Martin McGuire, to develop and submit a proposal paper for strategic investment in a **WorldSkills Centre of Excellence for Scotland** from the Scottish Government.

Engaged with **sportscotland** around strategic investment in the college sector to support health and wellbeing and employability initiatives, whilst taking forward work around a strategy for college sport and wellbeing.

And more widely, Colleges Scotland has facilitated Strategic Dialogue between the college sector and a wide range of key stakeholders.

Provided sector responses to the following consultations:

- Education, Children and Young People Committee – College Regionalisation – April 2022
- SFC Knowledge Exchange and Innovation – March 2022
- The Scottish Social Services Council – March 2022
- The Scottish Government Resource Spending Review Framework – March 2022
- The Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill – February 2022
- Education Children and Young People Committee – The Scottish Attainment Challenge – February 2022
- Net Zero Energy and Transport Committee – The role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net zero Scotland – January 2022
- Finance and Public Administration Committee – Framework for the Resource Spending Review – January 2022
- Skills Development Scotland Strategic Plan 2022-25 – December 2021
- Reform of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Education Scotland – November 2021
- The Scottish Government – National Care Service – November 2021
- Data: A New Direction – November 2021
- Colleges and Economic Recovery – Advisory Council – August 2021

Provided attendance and support to the following meetings:

30 Covid-19 related meetings	22 National Transition Training Fund and Young Person's Guarantee meetings	15 Mental Health related meetings
11 College Principals' Group meetings	10 Digital meetings	9 Capital and Infrastructure meetings (including college sector workshops)
7 Modern Apprenticeship Working Group/sub-group meetings	7 Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland meetings	4 College Funding Group meetings
4 Foundation Apprenticeship meetings	4 Equity Short Life Working Group meetings	3 Skills Development Scotland Growth and Inward Investment meetings
3 Adult Learning Strategic Forum for Scotland meetings	2 PACE related meetings	1 Funding Model Review Focus Group meeting

Colleges Scotland also supports additional short life working groups that the sector is involved with.



"Throughout the whole year our focus has been to ensure that the needs of learners, staff and colleges were at the forefront of the minds of Scottish Ministers, Scottish Government, and other stakeholders. With the impact of Covid-19 still being felt within the college sector, we worked hard to ensure the best possible policy and funding environment was available to the colleges, to both continue to mitigate against the consequences of the last two years and to try to position colleges towards a sustainable future." – Andy Witty, Director of Sector Policy

Communications and Public Affairs Activity

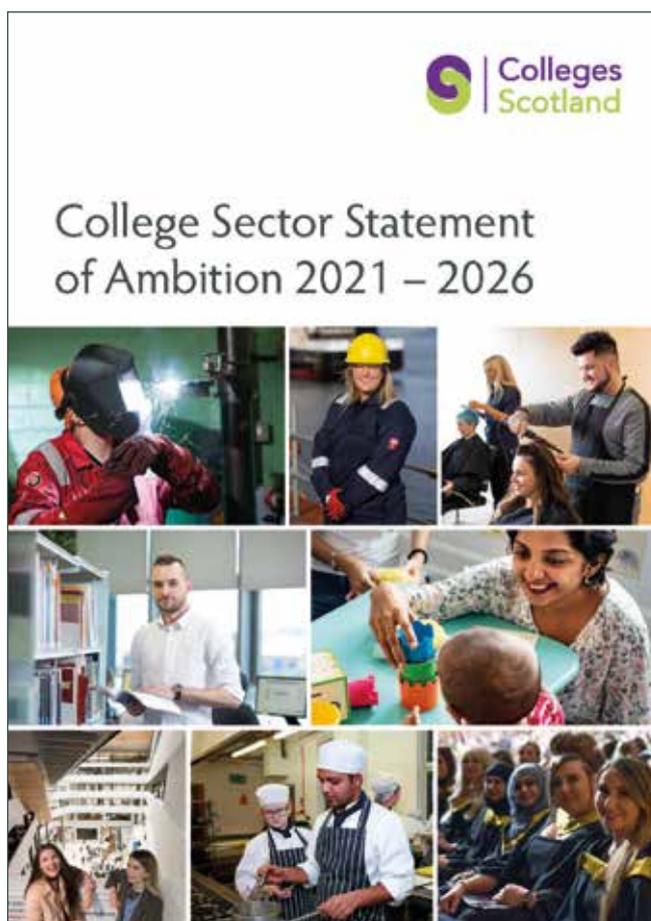
Throughout 2021/22, political engagement continued to be exceptionally high with MPs, MSPs, civil servants and government Ministers. Colleges Scotland in this period held **22 meetings** with Scottish Ministers and MSPs to discuss the college sector.

The Colleges Scotland **brand was refreshed** in December 2021. The updated branding builds on the corporate identity which has been in place since 2012 with a more modern look and feel as we move forward with our advocacy work into the future.



The Colleges Scotland **website was refreshed** in December 2021 to not only complement the new branding but to improve content, navigation, and accessibility.

Worked closely with the Colleges Scotland board to publish the **College Sector Statement of Ambition** which was officially launched by the Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training, Jamie Hepburn MSP, at North East Scotland College in Aberdeen in December 2021. The Statement was created with input from all colleges, setting out the conditions and commitments needed for success for students, staff, and for colleges as organisations.



Held a successful **stakeholder dinner** in March 2022 which was the first in-person event Colleges Scotland had held since the pandemic began. The dinner was attended by a range of key stakeholders and MSPs with a keynote address provided by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP.



Worked closely with the Colleges Scotland board to launch the new **Strategy for Colleges Scotland** in June 2022.

Keyfacts was published in June 2022. The booklet was distributed to colleges, parliamentarians, and key stakeholders, and promoted via a social media campaign.



Colleges Scotland continued to work closely with the Marketing and Communications network throughout 2021/22. This included joint working with CDN on a stakeholder mapping project as well as the annual #ChooseCollege sector marketing campaign.

The fortnightly Policy Briefing Note was revamped and is now a monthly **Policy Update** which keeps members abreast of the latest policy developments.

Participated in and arranged speakers from the sector for six parliamentary **Cross Party Groups** in 2021/22 and provided the secretariat to the Cross Party Group on Skills.

244

Daily Monitoring Reports issued to colleges

68

media statements, articles, and interviews with the media

10

Policy Briefing Notes issued to colleges

5

Policy Updates issued to colleges



"We have worked tirelessly to shape government policy while also significantly increasing and improving the profile of Scotland's colleges over the past 12 months by highlighting their many successes, their inclusivity, and their value within their communities and to the national economy. And we have plans for even more effective messaging in the coming year."

– Jenifer Johnston, Head of Communications and Public Affairs

College Employers Scotland Activity

A **business case**, with a top-sliced funding model, was approved by College Employers Scotland in February 2022 to enhance delivery of employment relations activity for the benefit of the sector.

The Employers' Association rebranded to **College Employers Scotland (CES)** in March 2022 and now has its own visual identity, website, and social media presence.



Gavin Donoghue started as the **new Director** for College Employers Scotland in April 2022.

23 colleges are fully signed to the National Recognition and Procedure Agreement (NRPA) with one college signed up to Lecturing only.

All NRPA signatory colleges are now **Living Wage accredited**.

A **lecturing staff Pay Agreement** was reached for 2021/22 and an implementation note was produced and issued, as well as a joint communication from CES and EIS-FELA welcoming the agreement.

A **support staff Pay Agreement** was reached for 2021/22 and an implementation note was produced and issued, as well as a joint communication from CES and the support staff unions (UNISON, GMB and Unite) welcoming the agreement.

Work on the Job Evaluation project, as part of the **National Job Evaluation Scheme**, continued throughout 2021/22. The evaluation process for around 2,500 roles across 22 colleges concluded in December 2021, subject to several roles which are still being finalised as part of the College Failure to Agree process. The final quality assurance checks commenced in January 2022 and, as part of the verification process, the project team will present and discuss the outcomes with college HR departments.

Work around pay and grading as part of the job evaluation project has continued and once verified scores are available, the Pay Working Group will use them to assist with the development and costing of pay and grading options.

College Employers Scotland held **two virtual events** instead of the usual residentials in November 2021 and May 2022.



Provided attendance and support to the following meetings:

46 Management Side Meetings and Briefing Sessions	8 College Employers Scotland Executive Group meetings	5 College Employers Scotland meetings
18 NJNC Side Table (Lecturing) meetings	13 NJNC Side Table (Support) meetings	4 Secretariat meetings – Side Table (Lecturing)
4 Secretariat meetings – Side Table (Support)	5 Joint Secretary meetings – Job Evaluation	2 NJNC Support Staff Job Evaluation Working Group meetings
5 Support Staff Pay Working Group meetings	5 NJNC Support Staff Terms and Conditions Working Group meetings	1 NJNC Support Staff Four-Day Working Week Working Group meeting
2 Fair Work Working Group meetings	3 National Policies Working Group meetings	2 NJNC Central Committee meetings



54 Communications, briefings and email updates were provided to members (Updates following Side Table and Central Committees (33), Circulars issued to the sector (5), Strike days (8), Industrial Action Guides (4), Job Evaluation updates (1), Job Evaluation joint sector comms (3)).

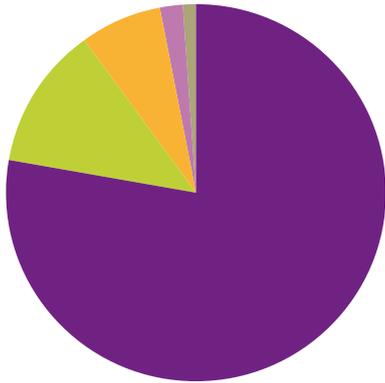
8 meetings were held with MSPs (5) and Ministers (3) and consultation responses on TQFE (1) and the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) proposed new Registration Rules (1) which were submitted to the Scottish Government and GTCS respectively.



"The last year presented the sector with significant challenges, yet the commitment and resilience of the College Employers Scotland team helped colleges to rise to those challenges. With a new brand identity in place, additional resources forthcoming and the strong backing of the sector, we are committed to making National Bargaining work for Scotland's colleges" – Gavin Donoghue, Director of College Employers Scotland

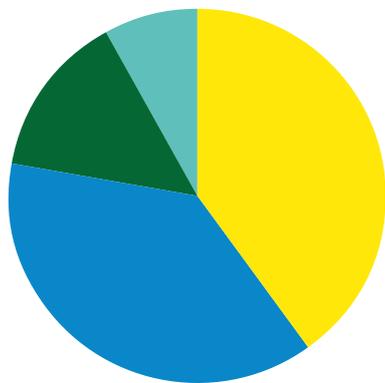
Spend and Activity Breakdown

A breakdown of spend and analysis of key activities is outlined below:



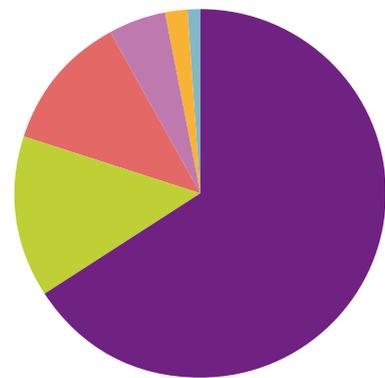
Colleges Scotland Spend

- Staffing = 78%
- Service Level Agreement and Office Facilities = 12%
- Communications, Hospitality and Consumables = 7%
- Depreciation = 2%
- Professional Fees = 1%



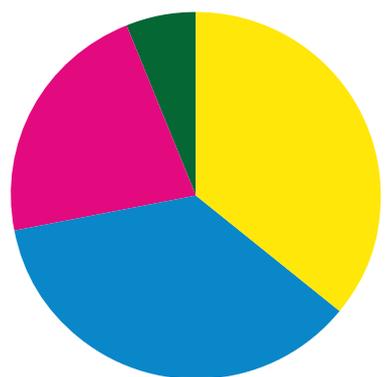
Colleges Scotland Activity

- Policy and Advocacy Activity = 40%
- Colleges Scotland Board and Committees = 38%
- Communications, Parliamentary and Stakeholder Engagement = 14%
- Servicing National Bargaining = 8%



College Employers Scotland Spend

- Staffing 66%
- Other Staffing and Professional Fees 14%
- Service Level Agreement and Office Facilities 12%
- Communications, Hospitality and Consumables 5%
- Depreciation 2%
- Other 1%



College Employers Scotland Activity

- Supporting the NJNC = 36%
- Supporting the Employers' Association = 36%
- Delivering Job Evaluation = 22%
- Communications, Parliamentary and Stakeholder Engagement = 6%



policy@collegesscotland.ac.uk
www.collegesscotland.ac.uk
@CollegesScot



ces@collegeemployersscotland.ac.uk
www.collegeemployersscotland.ac.uk
@CollEmployScot

Argyll Court, Castle Business Park, Stirling, FK9 4TY

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