

General Election Manifesto



**When colleges thrive,
Scotland thrives.**

**Colleges are supporting
Scotland's economic recovery
with climate-mitigating
innovation, excellent education
and teaching, skills training,
and smart investments in
people and places.**

Colleges unlock the potential of **students and **communities**. **Industry** gains and productivity increases through strong colleges. We make an impact beyond our walls.**

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Supporting and innovating

Supporting a green economic recovery with innovation, excellent education and teaching, skills training, and smart investments.



Supporting communities

Anchoring institutions in our communities and being resilient partners for the stakeholders around us.



Supporting students

Fully supporting students to participate in education; delivering excellent education, teaching and skills training, available locally.

**WHEN
COLLEGES
THRIVE,
SCOTLAND
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Supporting industry

The first-choice delivery partner for work-based skills and training.



Supporting Scotland

Unlocking the untapped potential of a stronger and more empowered college sector.

Ambitions for Scotland

Across Scotland, colleges are equipping students from every background with the education and skills they need to achieve their ambitions and maximise their potential – enabling Scotland and the UK to thrive. College is a positive choice for students to receive excellent learning, teaching and assessment; it is the destination for students with aspiration, turning potential into qualifications and delivering skills that lead to careers.

Every college in Scotland has close links to industry and their local communities, with 24 colleges across 13 regions.

Colleges are inclusive and offer opportunities to everyone, building community wealth through education and training with a hugely diverse course offering.

Advancing social inclusion and delivering equality are a vital part of the impact colleges make. Every year, almost a quarter of a million students benefit from a total of 71 million hours of teaching, with 19 in every 20 students who complete their studies going on to a job, training or continuing in education as positive destinations.

Our ambition is to unlock the untapped potential of a more empowered college sector, making a strong and positive impact on lives, our environment, our economy and in our communities.

Scotland's colleges can deliver excellence. By building even closer links with industry now and for the future, strengthening our role as anchor institutions in local communities and leveraging the energy and innovative spirit of the sector into success, colleges can deliver a game changing amount of good for Scotland.

Not only that, but the innovation and expertise held within Scotland's colleges community can – and should – be drawn upon more than ever before to address major issues facing society, most pressingly climate change, through joint research and collaboration with industry and government.

Students are at the heart of everything colleges do and they are at the heart of our ambitions for the future. The next UK Government should maximise the opportunities for colleges to thrive as organisations, and support college students to succeed.



**Supporting
and innovating –
Green Skills**



**Supporting
communities –
Levelling Up**



**Supporting
students –
Cost of Learning**

**WHEN
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**Supporting
industry –
Apprenticeship
Levy**



**Supporting
Scotland –
International**

Colleges Scotland is asking the UK Government to commit to:

Supporting and innovating – green skills

The next UK Government should recognise the crucial role of colleges in supporting the Just Transition to Net Zero. This should include the provision of funding to support upskilling and reskilling activity which develops the workforce of the future, while training the workforce of today.

Ask – All political parties should consider a specific commitment to make colleges, as part of the public sector in Scotland, the leading delivery providers of skills for the Green Industrial Revolution.

Supporting students – cost of learning

The financial impacts of the pandemic, Brexit, and the cost-of-living crisis mean many college students learn in poverty, and have to rely heavily on earning while learning.

Ask – There should be a review of wage rates for apprentices across the UK.

Ask – Extend Universal Credit to Further Education learners by changing the rules for social security benefits reserved to Westminster to ensure they do not impact on the student maintenance loans / grants.

Supporting Scotland – international

Colleges have three asks around their international role.

Ask – Scotland's colleges would benefit from an extension in the number of Tier 4 visas available. This would allow colleges to expand the number of international students coming to Scotland for technical and vocational training and education, moving towards parity of esteem with universities.

Ask – College students and staff should have more opportunities to learn abroad, or improve professional practice by learning from other countries. There should be a commitment to widening access to international opportunities for Scotland's college students and staff, ensuring that colleges are assisted to participate in international schemes. The next UK Government should review the Turing Scheme which to date has not provided the same level of opportunities to Scotland's college students and staff as the previous Erasmus+ scheme.

Ask – The next UK Government should consider a differentiated immigration policy which takes into account Scotland's needs and ambitions. This would expand the number of visas available regionally to attract international students who in turn would be able to stay for longer in Scotland after their course of study, aiding demographic and labour shortage issues in some parts of the country.

Supporting industry – Apprenticeship Levy reform

There is an ongoing lack of transparency over Apprenticeship Levy funding which comes back to Scotland. What is not in doubt however is that Scotland needs more high-quality apprenticeships, and that industry needs access to local, value for money and sector specific training opportunities for employees.

Ask – The Treasury currently top slices the £3.6 billion revenue generated by the Apprenticeship Levy by approximately £500million. This should end.

Ask – Levy-payers in Scotland should be able to directly access the funds they pay as part of the Levy.

Ask – In addition to restoring funding to colleges to provide high quality opportunities to employers, Scotland’s colleges should have access to a development fund so that colleges are able to keep pace with industry training needs.

Supporting communities – Levelling Up

Scotland’s colleges should have defined and recognised access to utilise community, regional, and national funding provided by the next UK Government which would support the delivery of policy priorities.

Ask – There should be a defined route for Scotland’s colleges to bid directly in to UK ‘Levelling Up’ funding pots given their critical place in responding to the climate emergency and role in upskilling and reskilling, and the pressing need for capital and infrastructure improvements at some colleges in Scotland.

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