

Tuesday, 29 June 2021

Response to SFC Review – Colleges Scotland

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has today (Tuesday, 29 June 2021) published its final report on Coherence and Sustainability: A review of Tertiary Education and Research, which began in June 2020 at the request of Scottish Government Ministers. The Review was conducted in three phases and Colleges Scotland has worked closely with colleges and the SFC to put forward the views of the sector at every step in the process.

We are pleased to see that the Report calls for multi-year funding and longer-term planning - the sector has been campaigning for sustainable funding for some time to enable colleges to plan and invest more strategically for our students and staff. The recommendation for a strategic vision for tertiary education will also ensure that the ambitions of the sector are realised. 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, be anchor institutions in communities, and work more effectively with local, regional and national businesses.

The recommendation to set up a Micro-Credential Framework and Delivery Plan for Scotland is welcome - this would build on the work that colleges already do in terms of training, upskilling, and reskilling to meet the needs of the labour market and technological changes, enabling people to future-proof their careers and learn in a way that suits them. We look forward to working with SFC and the Scottish Government to take forward the recommendations.

Shona Struthers, Chief Executive of Colleges Scotland, said: “The Review is welcome and we could see some real change delivered for colleges if it’s recommendations are taken forward. This lies principally with Scottish Government to deliver but also with colleges themselves, with agencies, and there are actions SFC could take forwards as the funding body. I was pleased to see the breadth and depth of the Review which recognises the many ways in which colleges are an essential part of tertiary education in Scotland.

“The recommendation on moving colleges to a multi-year funding model is essential - the one-year funding model we have today should be consigned to the past, colleges need financial stability going forwards. Colleges want to plan and invest, work with local and regional partners, and most importantly provide a really great experience for our students which on one-year funding is becoming ever more challenging. Financial stability is critical to the success of colleges now and in the future.

“The Review is right to consider the impact of the pandemic on the college sector and, again if it’s recommendations are enacted, there is a great opportunity for the delivery of new ways of learning such as micro-credentials and making the most of the digital learning and working environment that we’ve all had to pivot to.

“The Review also notes how important collaboration is, and we would agree more collaboration is essential for colleges to truly thrive – colleges want to work with each other, with universities, with schools and with the businesses around them to deliver education, skills and training to people across their lives.”

ENDS

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