

PRESS RELEASE

29 December 2016

2017 will be a pivotal year for Scotland's colleges

- **Enhanced budget acknowledges achievements and enables next steps for student and staff improvements**

In a New Year message, Colleges Scotland set out its priorities for next year, following a Scottish Budget settlement in December which saw the sector receive increased funding to improve facilities and deliver on key priorities.

Priorities for 2017 include driving forward the vision for a more joined up learner experience for post-16 education, assisting with government policies such as reducing inequalities, gender balance, Developing the Young Workforce and continuing to make progress with National Bargaining for the staff in Scotland's colleges. Colleges Scotland will continue to urge the Scottish Government to hold a full review into making the system more learner-centric and to reduce duplication and inefficiencies in the learner journey.

These commitments follow a year that has seen many challenges for the college sector as it moved forward with the reintroduction of National Bargaining, where significant progress has been made.

Both the college employers and trade unions have agreed to a significant transformation programme, including a review of the future workforce requirements of the sector. The aim is to deliver improved working conditions for staff while ensuring that the college sector can continue to provide the highest quality of learning for students.

Shona Struthers, Chief Executive of Colleges Scotland, said:

"2016 was a year with many challenges for the college sector but we also saw key successes and achievements. We were delighted to secure an increase in funding in the Scottish Budget – it is a strong recognition of the value of colleges and enables the sector to continue delivering a skilled workforce and improve opportunities for people across Scotland. It also means we are confident that the sector will maintain the current provision of places for students, which is good news in challenging times.

"We have also successfully overseen the implementation of National Bargaining. While there have been delays along the way, both sides have agreed to a deal which will bring benefits for both staff and students in the future.

"2017 is set to be a pivotal year for the college sector. Colleges Scotland will prioritise pressing for a review of the learner journey to encourage a much more joined up approach between schools, colleges, universities and employers, so that we make the system more consistent and effective across Scotland."

ENDS

For further information, please contact Joanne Buchan, Public Affairs and Communications Officer:

Tel: 01786 892012

Mobile: 07590 229 707

Email: joanne.buchan@collegesscotland.ac.uk