

## Board Meeting

Date of Meeting	Monday 11 August
Paper Title	Ministerial Letter of Guidance to the Scottish Funding Council
Agenda Item	13
Paper Number	BM2-M
Responsible Officer	Julia Henderson, Advisor to the Board
Status	Disclosable
Action	For Information

### 1. Report Purpose

- 1.1** To provide the Board with a copy of the Ministerial Letter of Guidance to the Scottish Funding Council dated 31 July 2014 for information.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1** No recommendations required

### 3. Scottish Governments high level strategic objectives

- Highly efficient and effective regional structures for colleges, including structures in multi-college regions;
- High-quality, effective learning;
- Access to education for people from the widest range of backgrounds;
- Learning which prepares people well for the world of work and successful long-term careers, and in doing so supports our ambitions for economic growth;
- Internationally competitive and impactful research;
- Effective knowledge exchange and innovation including excellent university/industry collaboration;
- Developing our young workforce (response to Wood's report); and
- Addressing gender balance in governing bodies.

The last two objectives have been added as of 2015-16.

### 4. Funding Settlement

- 4.1** The settlement sum is as expected though clearly it is a tough settlement at a time when the sector is facing a number of challenges in responding to the Wood's Commission, embedding new structures post mergers and meeting the challenges of regional governance etc.

## 5. Other key themes of relevance to the College Sector

- Enhanced partnership working for universities with schools, colleges, regional strategic bodies and others to underpin the effort on widening access and articulation
- What role colleges could play in supporting the development of language skills
- Programme of reform should be largely complete by 2015-16
- Assurances on the quality of mergers and the outcomes including leadership, governance, staff and student communications and engagement, and systems development and integration
- Scope to enhance provision with funding from the 2014-20 European funding programme through collaboration with SFC, Government, SDS and other partners
- Outcome Agreement should be taken to the next level with robust use of data about supply, demand and performance and stretching targets for access, retention and progression
- SFC to maintain funding levels for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in 2015-16
- The need to address gender segregation amongst student intakes in key subject areas
- Review of arrangements between SFC and Education Scotland for quality assurance and enhancement
- No region which is meeting its targets should lose more than 1% of funding year on year and
- Full implementation of the new funding system in 2015-16.

Professor Alice Brown CBE FRSE  
Chair  
Scottish Funding Council  
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In 2014 Scotland Welcomes the World



31<sup>st</sup> July 2014

Dear Alice,

## **SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL (SFC) – LETTER OF GUIDANCE 2015-16**

### **Ministerial Letter of Guidance to the Scottish Funding Council**

#### **Introduction**

1. This letter of guidance to the Scottish Funding Council issues at a different point in the year to which the Council will have become accustomed. I write now, because I recognise the importance of setting out my expectations to inform your outcome agreement negotiations with institutions for the 2015-16 academic year.
2. I welcome the progress you have made with outcome agreements. As these enter their fourth year, they demonstrate clearly how our universities and colleges are improving the quality and inclusiveness of their offering, and the relevance of that offer both to learners and the wider economy. By focusing on outcomes, I expect you to make funding decisions that will enable and encourage institutions to challenge themselves to deliver learning, research and knowledge exchange in a way that will support our national priorities. This letter will help you and the institutions you fund to consider fully how your plans will support these expectations.
3. Scotland is, of course, approaching a momentous decision. If the people of Scotland vote for independence in September's Referendum, I expect the SFC to play a key role with my officials in securing continuity of funding for research and supporting negotiations for new arrangements with the Research Councils. Independence would also provide new opportunities to extend Scotland's global reach and I would wish SFC to be proactive in establishing new relationships

within these islands and overseas, seeking to further enhance the international excellence and reputation of our HE and FE systems.

4. The SFC and the higher and further education sectors have already shown their capacity for reform and improvement. I am delighted that the college sector is demonstrating the positive results for learners of our unprecedented efforts to regionalise and restructure. I expect you to build on this with a further improvement in positive outcomes for students. Meanwhile, our universities are renowned for the excellence of their teaching and research, and their prominent position in world rankings bears this out. You should enable them to continue this success, which contributes to the growth of Scotland's economy and our international reputation, while ensuring that access is widened further.

### **Funding and high-level objectives**

5. A strong and effective higher and further education sector, delivering social and economic benefit for Scotland, is a key overarching objective for the Scottish Government. That is why, notwithstanding financial constraints and pressures, funding levels have been maintained as set out in indicative spending plans for financial year 2015-16.
6. I expect to grant £525.7m of college programme funding, £1,062.5m of university programme funding and £36m of college and university capital funding in 2015-16. These indicative figures will be finalised in due course in the 2015-16 Budget. And while I have increased funding for both colleges and universities for the next financial year, I expect you to continue efforts to find efficiencies - specifically, and as indicated in last year's letter for 2014-15, it remains essential that the SFC works with the university sector to ensure a minimum 1% real terms efficiency saving in 2015-16.
7. Since many of your agreements with institutions now span three years, it is important that I reiterate my high-level strategic objectives from last year, namely for:
  - Highly efficient and effective regional structures for colleges, including structures in multi-college regions
  - High-quality, effective learning
  - Access to education for people from the widest range of backgrounds
  - Learning which prepares people well for the world of work and successful long-term careers, and in doing so supports our ambitions for economic growth
  - Internationally competitive and impactful research, and
  - Effective knowledge exchange and innovation including excellent university/industry collaboration.

### **Strategic objectives – developing our young workforce and addressing gender balance in governing bodies**

8. In addition to these, I have two new strategic objectives that will cut across the activities you fund. You should make it an immediate priority to consider how to play your part in the extensive programme of activity which the Scottish Government will drive in order to meet the challenges set out in Sir Ian Wood's report on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. The second strategic objective is to encourage action through outcome agreement dialogue with colleges and universities that addresses the underrepresentation of women on the governing bodies of colleges and universities, at senior levels and gender balance among student intakes for some key subjects.

### Wood Report

9. The final report from Sir Ian Wood's Commission was issued on 3 June. The ambition here is no less than to create a world-class system of vocational education in Scotland, contributing to a significant reduction in youth unemployment. The report calls for an education system that is better integrated across schools, colleges, and workplaces, and which offers choices that allow young people fully to realise their potential, contributing to Scotland's economic growth. I know the SFC has already begun to work with partners to consider implementation. I welcome that effort, which should be reflected in clear, costed and time bound implementation plans, developed, tested and delivered with partners at a regional and national level. You are aware of the programme management arrangements my officials are establishing: it goes without saying that your efforts must be anchored in that process.

### Gender balance

10. I look to you to consider how the SFC can support practical action to improve the gender balance on governing bodies in both sectors. For regional colleges and regional strategic bodies, as an immediate priority ahead of the 2015-16 academic year, I want you to take the opportunity presented by the ending of the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013 transitional arrangements for incorporated colleges, to address the current underrepresentation of women on college boards. In the HE sector, I want you to discuss with the sector how women's representation on governing bodies and in senior positions can be improved. I also want a renewed focus on reducing gender segregation in participation: too many college and university courses are dominated by either men or women. I refer later in the guidance to the specific Wood Commission recommendation on this for colleges which I support. But I want the SFC to use the outcome agreements negotiations in both colleges and universities to contribute to improvement.

### **Outcome agreement process**

11. As indicated earlier, I expect the developing Outcome Agreement process to provide a mechanism for ensuring that Scotland's further and higher education institutions are contributing to sustained progress on our national priorities. It is important that these Agreements are informed by the entire community of a

college and university including staff, students and unions. At the same time, while focused on what will be delivered for SFC investment, there should also be scope for institutions that wish to do so, to situate their outcome agreements within the wider context of what they are seeking to achieve as expressed in their institutional strategies and missions.

### **Institutional governance**

12. The SFC should support regional strategic bodies in the three multi-college regions to discharge their funding and other responsibilities efficiently and effectively. In addition, as a result of the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013, I would ask you to ensure that colleges and universities have suitable arrangements for ensuring student interests are represented by a students' association.
  
13. In terms of the higher education sector, the SFC has a pivotal role to play in working with universities and representatives on the University Sector Advisory Forum to enhance HE governance. Refinement of governance arrangements in our Higher Education Institutions will help embed a modern, democratic and accountable higher education sector. I look forward to hearing more about how the SFC will work with the sector to maximise the impact of the new powers available through the 2013 Act.

### **Higher Education Institutions**

14. The higher education sector has a significant impact on the economy and on the prosperity and well-being of Scotland's people. In the coming year I would like to see further efforts to support access to learning, skills, research and innovation.

### **Access and Learning**

15. I am encouraged by an increased focus in the university sector on widening access. However, mindful of the duties and opportunity afforded by new legislation in the 2013 Act, the SFC should continue to drive further progress on widening access to university, particularly for students from more disadvantaged backgrounds and areas, and in relation to medicine. I expect that the number of additional funded places to support widening access, articulation from college to university and key sector skills to be maintained at current levels. However, these additional places must act as a catalyst for further action by universities to mainstream widening access in their recruitment practices and outcomes, opening their doors to a student body that is representative of all of Scotland's communities. Underpinning the effort on access must be enhanced partnership working with schools, colleges, regional strategic bodies and others. I expect the SFC to work with all stakeholders to make productive connections in this area.
  
16. At the same time, I am keen that we maintain and continue to improve retention rates particularly among those universities performing less well. As part of an improved learner journey for everyone engaged in study in Scotland, I want to see an improvement in the level and quality of support for students who need more

assistance to successfully complete their course. In developing your work on access and retention I expect SFC to work with the sectors to make more effective use of 'in year' data to track progress more effectively.

17. The SFC and universities need to be alert to the opportunities and implications of new technologies and new ways of learning. Looking ahead, I think that the potential of open educational resources must be capitalised upon. I'm excited by the new Open Educational Practices project led by the Open University in partnership with the Universities of Strathclyde, Edinburgh, Glasgow and UHI and look forward to hearing of early progress made. I would like the SFC to consider how activity in this area can be further encouraged to enable a blended learning experience involving online materials and other, more traditional, forms of teaching.
18. Access to online learning is an important issue for rural areas of Scotland. Higher education institutions have an important role to play in the cohesion of often fragile rural communities. I would like the SFC to continue its work with my officials to address the developmental requirements of universities working in rural and remote parts of the country. As part of an overall commitment to removing barriers to learning, geographical location should not act as an inhibiting factor affecting the learning journey.

## Skills

19. One of the key outcomes from higher education is producing skilled graduates who are well-placed to make a contribution to Scotland's economy and society. I want the SFC to continue to engage universities in helping to drive forward progress with Scotland's Skills Investment Plans (SIPs). The range of SIPs, including key growth areas such as ICT, identify a need for a steady flow of high quality graduates as essential to sustainable economic growth. In the coming year, I would like the SFC to explore where targeted relaxation of current consolidation limits might assist increased undergraduate recruitment by universities to meet key skills needs, including ICT, and in support of widening access priorities. I do not want universities to be penalised when they respond well to helping deliver key priorities.
20. Universities also have a key role in training students for our multi-lingual world. Scottish Ministers have made a commitment to create the conditions to enable all children to learn two languages in addition to their mother tongue by 2020. In support of this commitment I would like the Funding Council to consider the relevant recommendations in the SG Language Working Group Report and develop with the sector a strategy for growing the number of graduates with practical language skills. In developing this strategy I would also like you to consider the role that the college sector might play in supporting the development of language skills.

21. I recognise the increasing premium being placed on postgraduate qualifications and in summer 2014, the Scottish Government will communicate initial findings from our review of support for taught postgraduate study. I view increased opportunity to take up postgraduate study as a key contribution to making Scotland more competitive. As part of this endeavour, I want the SFC to work with my officials to support efforts for increasing the uptake of post-graduate study to the benefit of students, institutions and the economy.

## Research

22. I expect the SFC to continue to focus its core funding on internationally competitive and impactful research. I look forward to the outcome of the latest UK-wide Research Excellence Framework (REF) at the end of this year which will provide an important and internationally recognised benchmark of quality, influencing future funding decisions. I fully expect to see that our universities will have at least maintained, and potentially improved, their competitive position within the UK in the 2014 REF.

23. I welcome the SFC's review of its funding model for distributing core research funding and supporting research postgraduates in partnership with the sector. This should continue to support a focus on research excellence wherever it exists.

24. At the same time, if we are to ensure that every university is a research as well as a teaching university we need to think about new and creative ways of supporting research across the sector. In that context, I would also like SFC to consider, in collaboration with my officials, how it might support universities which are currently less research active but where there is evidence of emerging excellence and where Scotland might develop a competitive edge. For example, a scheme that supports mentoring by world-leading researchers and placements into leading research groups in research-intensive institutions would have considerable merit. This would allow those researchers with the potential to develop internationally competitive bids for funding to benefit from the knowledge and experience of those who do this on a regular basis and would assist emerging research talent wherever it is found in Scotland. I would also like SFC to explore how, over the next few years, new and emerging areas of research excellence might best be funded.

25. The SFC should continue to consider how best the collaborations and networks established through the research pools are sustained and developed. This should include working with Scottish Government, Scottish Development International, Universities Scotland and its HEI members, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the British Council as part of Connected Scotland. The new Connected Scotland initiative will mean Scotland can target its carefully aligned, strategic, evidence based and market-facing offer and ask to the world, enhancing further the value and impact of our research, transnational education and staff/student mobility. Connected Scotland will explore and exploit opportunities to enhance the global value of higher education as an economic growth sector within the Scottish



Government's International Framework priority nations and regions. I look to the SFC to continue to demonstrate leadership, particularly in promoting Scotland's research opportunities, by participating fully in the Connected Scotland partnership to maximise international connections and collaborations.

### Knowledge Exchange and Innovation

26. It remains critically important that our world class research is translated into economic growth and public good. I recognise that this can only be achieved by effective collaboration with partners working together towards common aims.
27. I particularly welcome the SFC's support of Innovation Scotland and developments that promote academia-industry interactions in support of Scotland's economy, including Easy Access IP, Interface, and the Innovation Centres. Our universities perform well on a number of performance indicators when measured as a function of research expenditure including spin outs, patents and licenses. However, I am keen that we consider additional and innovative approaches to exploitation of the academic research base. Our underpinning model for spinning-out companies from universities, our approaches to IP ownership and equity share, and our mechanisms for rewarding academics that operate in this space are similar to those in use in many other countries. However, I am not yet convinced that the benefits for academics, universities, businesses, the economy and the people of Scotland are being fully realised.
28. I believe it is time for us to review the approach. We should consider if the model we are using is the most effective for the extremely competitive and global business environment in which we operate. Working with my officials, the Innovation Scotland Policy Forum, Enterprise Agencies, Industry Leadership Groups, universities and key stakeholders, SFC should seek innovative new approaches to exploiting our research base and incentivising those who adopt them. Our goal must be securing a level of performance that places Scotland ahead of our international competitors, and reinforces our reputation as an innovative nation that nurtures entrepreneurial academics and facilitates company creation, company growth and international competitiveness.
29. I would encourage the SFC to focus the Innovation Scotland Policy Forum on actions that contribute to economic growth through the interactions of business and academia, and to use resources that support knowledge exchange to support institutions that are most effective in this endeavour.
30. Scotland CAN DO is our national statement of intent towards becoming a world-leading entrepreneurial and innovative nation. I know SFC is already actively engaged with partners in delivering this, with initiatives such as the Converge Challenge, the Scottish Institute for Enterprise and the more recent Bridge2Business. While entering into enterprise may not be appropriate for all, I welcome actions to promote an entrepreneurial mind-set in all students. I look to SFC to continue to work with our universities – as well as our colleges – in this area.

31. The development of new innovation centres is a ground-breaking and exciting initiative which builds on the experience of collaboration across Scotland while responding to the demands of businesses. Continuing to monitor and evaluate the development and impact of the first innovation centres will be critical, ensuring that the approach continues to be demand-led. SFC should support cross-sectoral collaboration among the first eight innovation centres and be ready to respond to opportunities to develop additional innovation centres where there are demand-led opportunities that will benefit Scottish industry and the economy. I recognise that there are some key sectors where the innovation centre model cannot be applied directly, such as in textiles, and I welcome alternative approaches to stimulating innovation in these areas.
32. The development of both research pools and innovation centres provides Scotland with a sound platform for engagement in Horizon 2020. I look to the SFC to work with Scotland Europa and other stakeholders to harness the opportunities Horizon 2020 offers as well as elsewhere in Europe.
33. Exploiting the outcomes of university research is also a key opportunity for the public sector. We recognise the need to ensure that Scotland has capability and capacity to respond to challenges such as the impact of natural phenomena. I would like the SFC to consider how a Scottish resilience centre of excellence might be established, harnessing the capacity of the research community and other partners across Scotland.
34. Lastly, I recognise and value the diversity of our HEIs and wider research community and want the SFC to make the most of the collaborative opportunities open to it by working with all of the HEIs. SFC should continue to recognise the particular strengths and needs of small specialist institutions such as the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Glasgow School of Art and the impact they have on culture, both within Scotland and internationally. Similarly, the Royal Society of Edinburgh can bring added value to partnership working across a wide range of areas and SFC should continue to support the RSE in its contribution to the priorities set out above.

## Colleges

35. As I acknowledge elsewhere, the SFC has been at the forefront of very considerable change across the sector over the last two years. Given the rate of progress, I expect the programme of reform to be largely complete by 2015-16, with every college in Scotland in a strong position to meet the needs of learners and employers in their region, consistent with SG priorities. In particular, I will be seeking regular assurances about the quality of mergers and your role in offering appropriate challenge and support to help colleges fully embed the changes underpinning the highest quality learning experience for students. These should be consistent with the critical success factors on which SFC post-merger

evaluation is focussed – including leadership and governance, staff and student communications and engagement, and systems development and integration.

36. Delivering the Government's commitment to maintain student numbers, deliver Opportunities for All and increase youth employment remain top priorities in 2015-16. In doing so, SFC should work with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to ensure employability provision improves outcomes for unemployed people by delivering high quality training which responds to their needs, adapts to local employer demand and complements the activities of employability partners. In negotiating the outcomes necessary to achieve this, you should pay particularly close attention to colleges' plans in response to the Wood Commission and delivery of new activity and targets, while maintaining a broad and balanced skills offer to meet regional needs. Early adopter and wider activity in 2014-15 will provide the basis on which I expect colleges to scale up and broaden delivery. Success will depend on a set of mature partnerships - and I would therefore ask the SFC, with SDS, to consider the strategic role it might play in this respect, in particular ensuring that Skills Investment Plans and Regional Skills Assessments inform the development of Outcome Agreements.
37. In addition to the funding in 2015-16, as set out in paragraph 5, there is scope significantly to enhance the range of provision colleges deliver through the 2014-20 European funding programme. You should therefore continue to collaborate with the Scottish Government, colleges, SDS and relevant partners to maximise the funding available in order to respond to Scottish Government priorities and complement other funded provision.

#### Learner outcomes: continuous improvement

38. Given progress to date, my expectation is that outcome agreements will continue to drive improvement, the alignment of college delivery to SG priorities and greater efficiencies. You should therefore ensure that the SFC, and colleges themselves, have the capacity and capability to take outcome agreements to the next level: robust use of intelligence – about supply, demand and performance - and a process providing appropriate challenge and support to institutions will be essential.
39. Building on improvements so far, through your negotiations, I want you to ensure colleges continue to set stretching targets for access, retention and progression – including to university. On the latter, we continue to place a high priority on articulation from college to university, particularly by learners from more disadvantaged backgrounds and areas. But better outcomes for all learners with protected characteristics are also important. You should therefore ensure that, consistent with their statutory duties, colleges have robust equality impact assessments and that they use these to identify priority areas for improvement. I expect such areas to be explicit in 15-16 outcome agreements. Recognising the needs of specific learner groups, I want you to maintain the funding model and funding levels for provision for English for Speakers of Other Languages in 2015-

16, working with Education Scotland, COSLA and other relevant stakeholders over the course of the year to ensure its sustainability in the medium and long terms.

40. As I said earlier, with reference to Sir Ian Wood's Report, I want you proactively to address with colleges and their partners the issue of gender segregation. While I fully recognise this is a complex, systemic challenge, demanding focused and sustained effort, I believe there is scope for change and improvement in the short and medium terms. Using the Wood report and the focus on STEM as a catalyst, I would ask that, with the sector, you consider evidence of imbalances and best practice, and develop plans for redressing these, where it is clearly in the interests of learners and employers to do so.

41. In support of better outcomes, I would ask you to improve the distribution of further education student support in order to minimise the need for in-year reallocations. Additionally to assist people wanting to stay in, or return to, education or to study part-time, I would ask you to again deliver inflationary increases to college bursaries and childcare support.

### Quality assurance

42. Given the priority I attach to high quality learner experiences and outcomes, I would ask you to work with the sector and Education Scotland to review arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement. In doing so, I would like you to consider the relevance of validated self-evaluation, moving quickly to co-design, develop and test new models. Any new approach should ensure closer integration between relevant ES and SFC teams and the systems and processes that inform and support continuous improvement. And it should ensure the proportionate elements of independent, external quality assurance to ensure the appropriate degree of accountability for colleges as public bodies.

### Funding and accountability

43. The principle and practice of focusing funding on the regions with the highest need, whilst providing stability is already well established. For that reason, and as in previous years, you should ensure that no region that is currently meeting its targets loses more than 1 per cent of its funding year on year. Additionally, you are making progress in making the funding system simpler and more transparent, shifting from measuring delivery in wSUMs to credits – with a parallel running exercise in several regions in 2014-15. Subject to the evaluation of this exercise, I would like to see this fully implemented in 2015-16. The new system should ensure that funding for students with additional support needs is properly targeted and flexible.

44. I note the valuable work the SFC has done with colleges to mitigate the effects of ONS reclassification of incorporated colleges as public bodies. I expect you to ensure there are appropriate management and monitoring arrangements in place

and specifically to continue to monitor transfer of funds between colleges and Arms-Length Foundations.

## Corporate expectations

45. I am delighted that you have appointed a new Chief Executive to lead the organisation through this critical stage of internal and external reform and inspire performance at the highest standards. I expect you will give your senior management a clear mandate to challenge the status quo and effect the changes needed to build strategies and partnerships that deliver your corporate aims.
46. More generally, your Chief Executive's role as accountable officer for the public funds granted to colleges and universities is a crucial one. I expect you to use your powers fully to ensure institutions adhere to the guidelines you set for high standards of stewardship, reporting and accountability for that funding. Equally, you should ensure the SFC has the necessary capacity and capability to plan, manage and monitor change at a time when the public rightly expects the highest standards of propriety from publicly funded institutions and those who lead and manage them.
47. Part of your corporate challenge is to demonstrate success. In this your work to become a producer of Official Statistics (OS) is paramount. You should intensify your efforts to rationalise and align your statistical outputs and improve analytical capacity and capability within the organisation allowing stronger analysis of progress against outcome agreements and supporting effective, evidence-based decision making. Equally, in your communications, I urge you to be attuned to the wider context of our national reforms and use your publications and engagements to demonstrate how you are helping to deliver national outcomes.
48. The Scottish Government has set clear and ambitious targets for carbon emissions reductions in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act. I note the commitments made by both colleges and universities towards these targets, in the form of the Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland. I welcome the investment made recently by SFC to help reduce the carbon footprint in the university sector. However given the Government's ambitions in this area, as set out most recently in 'Climate Ready Scotland: Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme' which was laid before Parliament in May 2014, I expect SFC to make further progress to reduce the carbon footprint of both sectors, including working with the newly merged colleges.
49. In 2015-16 my expectation is for broader and more purposeful partnerships as we explore how we build the right educational choices around all our learners with further and higher education at the centre. I want you to use and create opportunities to work with the Strategic Forum partners (Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and Visit Scotland) and other partners such as Education Scotland, COSLA, local authorities, employers and my officials, to coordinate your initiatives to maximise impact and

efficiencies. In building closer partnerships, I expect you to find ways to remove barriers to student success and help make our education system work for all and contribute to Scotland's economic growth.

## Conclusion

50. This has been an important year that has clearly established the foundation for action and the range of my ambition. To meet this challenge, you and other partners should work with my officials and generate tangible progress for learners. I must reiterate my thanks to the SFC for its work to implement my strategic objectives and I look forward to making considerable progress in 2015-16 on the key issues I have identified. I am copying as below.



**MICHAEL RUSSELL**

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

### Copies:

Stewart Maxwell MSP, Convener of Scottish Parliament Education and Culture Committee  
Henry McLeish, Chair, Colleges Scotland  
Shona Struthers, Acting Chief Executive of Colleges Scotland  
Liz McIntyre, Convener of Scotland's Colleges' Principals' Convention  
Professor Peter Downes, Convener, Universities Scotland  
Alastair Sim, Director, Universities Scotland  
Rory Mair, Chief Executive, COSLA  
Bill Maxwell, Chief Executive, Education Scotland  
Damien Yeates, Chief Executive, Skills Development Scotland  
Grahame Smith, General Secretary, Scottish Trades Union Congress  
Mary Senior, Scottish Official, University and College Union  
Larry Flanagan, General Secretary, Education Institute for Scotland  
Dave Prentis, General Secretary, UNISON Scotland  
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Harry Donaldson, General Secretary, GMB Scotland  
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