

Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Research and Skills

June 2023

Scotland's people and their unique, skills, talents and abilities underpin every part of what makes Scotland a successful nation and enables us to play our full role as a good global citizen.

At the heart of that is having a lifelong education, research and skills system that fosters curiosity, nurtures talent, encourages ambition and enables everyone to fulfil their potential.

As Minister for Higher and Further Education, I am privileged to be responsible for ensuring that this critical piece of our national infrastructure is equipped to deliver against our core missions.

Equality

That opportunities are available to all based on their ability to learn and that learning presents a pathway out of poverty. That learners who need it most are financially supported to complete their chosen pathway. That we work hard so that those who face the greatest barriers to accessing opportunities are supported and encouraged to do so, based on a genuine understanding of what they need to succeed and, that we use the strength of our social research on poverty and society to further support this work.

Opportunity

That we maintain and strengthen the world leading Scottish research that makes a global impact, drives inward investment to our shores, underpins our innovation ambitions and will be so critical to tackling the climate emergency and delivering the transition to net zero. That we continue to develop the skilled, creative and entrepreneurial people our economy and society needs to build a wellbeing economy.

Community

That we recognise and strengthen the incredible difference that our institutions, employers, third sector partners, schools and local authorities can make when they all work together - making the most of our shared assets to deliver for the people of Scotland.

There is much to celebrate about where we are now – not least the perseverance and agility of our learners, employers, researchers,

lecturers, support staff, providers and institutions through what continues to be an uncertain and challenging time. Despite this changing environment, our lifelong education, skills and research system has continued to deliver.

Maintaining this performance is made more challenging by a growing set of social and economic factors that mean we have to question traditional assumptions, structures and delivery models. Globalisation; the need to transition to a fairer, greener world; the pace of discovery and technological advancement; the impact of the pandemic including the lessons of rapid response and scientific discovery; demographic changes and the changing expectations of students and of employers – all of these factors point towards the need for reform.

In addition, independent reviews of our lifelong education and skills system made a compelling case for change and point to the need to reflect on lessons learned as we rebuild and reshape the ways in which this system works – putting people and employers firmly at the centre and demonstrating better value and benefit for people, for the economy and for society.

Over half a million people are participating in our education, research and skills system every year underpinned by over £3 billion of Scottish Government investment.

Only by having a diverse lifelong education, research and skills system can we provide the opportunities needed by Scotland's people. Through the Purpose and Principles we want to make the system fit the needs of the people of Scotland so that everyone can fulfil their potential and contribute to our society, economy and place in the wider world.

A cohesive system that can deliver for the future; where everyone plays their part and is supported to achieve their full potential.



Minister for Higher and Further
Education; and Minister for Veterans

Graeme Dey MSP

Purpose & Principles

Our intent in developing the Purpose and Principles is that it will stand the test of time, providing a constant in times of change and something to work towards as we re-imagine and reform the system. For that reason, the Purpose and Principles themselves remain succinct and acts as a framework that sets the policy direction and shapes delivery priorities.

What underpins them is a suite of more detailed documents that will adapt and evolve over time. These are designed to bring our shared understanding of what the system is, how it functions and what it currently delivers to a common starting point, set strategic outcomes for the system in the short, medium and longer terms. This framework will be added to over time as detailed delivery plans, and measurement and evaluation tools evolve.

Purpose: To develop new thinking, products and systems through research and to ensure that people, at every stage in life, have the opportunity and means to develop the skills, knowledge, values and attributes to fulfil their potential and to make a meaningful contribution to society.

Principles & Outcomes

Transparent, Resilient and Trusted: The system is financially and environmentally resilient; trusted to deliver, and subject to effective governance.

System Outcomes

- Public funding models for education, skills and research are fair, transparent, and maximise value.
- All parts of the post-school system are trusted to deliver, environmentally and financially resilient and held to account for their impacts on learners, practitioners, local communities, and the wellbeing economy.
- Collaboration across the post-school system is pursued proactively with shared values and a common purpose.

Supportive and Equitable: People are supported throughout their learning journey, particularly those who need it most.

System Outcomes

- The public funding system for student support is perceived as fair, transparent and accessible by learners, providers and employers.

- Learners have access to holistic, person-centred support, empowering them to access, sustain and complete their learning.

High Quality: High quality opportunities are available for people to enhance their knowledge and skills at the time and place that is right for them.

System Outcomes

- A motivated and valued workforce of practitioners are empowered to deliver consistent high-quality learning opportunities.
- Learners have the skills and knowledge they need to secure or progress in sustained employment that is well-aligned to local, national and international economic and social need.
- The system supports a culture of lifelong learning with a ‘no wrong door’ approach, where learners have equity of access and opportunity to fulfil their interests and potential.

Globally Respected: Research, teaching, innovation and knowledge exchange undertaken by Scotland, must make a difference; enhance and contribute to global wellbeing, addressing 21st Century challenges such as the climate emergency and attracting inward investment and talent to study, live and work in Scotland.

System Outcomes

- Scotland’s post-school system is internationally recognised for research, teaching, and innovation, leveraging substantial funding from international and domestic sources.
- Providers attract and retain a highly trained teaching, innovation, and research workforce with global reach and impact.
- Scotland’s internationally competitive economy is underpinned by world-leading research, teaching, innovation and knowledge exchange, driving inward investment and productivity.

Agile and Responsive: Everybody in the system collaborates to deliver in the best interests of Scotland’s wellbeing economy.

System Outcomes

- Collaboration between policymakers, employers and providers produces a supply of talent and innovation to help drive Scotland’s wellbeing economy.
- Learners, no matter their background or prior attainment, can develop skills to enter and progress in good quality employment and/or realise their potential.
- Scotland has an aligned and responsive regional skills delivery system fuelling a suitably skilled and motivated workforce, increasing productivity and business success at local, regional and national level.



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