



# Annual Report

1 August 2020  
– 31 July 2021



# Introduction



2020/21 has been another extraordinary year as we have continued to live and work throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Our small team of dedicated staff

at Colleges Scotland have worked incredibly hard and shown resilience as we continued to support the college sector from our kitchens, dining tables and living rooms. Despite pandemic challenges, we have achieved success in many areas, and this report highlights just some of these.

I believe that we, at Colleges Scotland, have lived up to our purpose as we fought hard to ensure that colleges had the necessary guidance, resources, and support to continue to deliver education and training in these unprecedented times. We helped our colleagues in colleges to navigate the ever-changing circumstances, and we encouraged and facilitated cohesive and collaborative working to assist the sector and ensure the safety and welfare of students and staff. Helping colleges to achieve the best possible outcomes for students has been front and centre throughout this pandemic.

I pay tribute to our sector leaders and all staff in colleges who have put their heart and soul into delivering outcomes for students. All of us at Colleges Scotland are proud to be part of the college sector – a sector which transforms lives for so many people, and has continued to do so despite several lockdowns, social distancing rules and public health guidelines in place.

As we move into 2021/22, Colleges Scotland looks forward to taking on board the recommendations of an organisational review to ensure that we are stronger and can continue to meet the needs of the sector in the most effective way. Key priorities for the sector will be sustainable funding and economic recovery, and Colleges Scotland will continue to support and promote the critical role that colleges will play as we emerge from the pandemic.

I'm confident that Colleges Scotland and the sector will rise to any challenges that lie ahead in the coming year.

Shona Struthers  
Chief Executive



# Corporate

Colleges Scotland staff have performed exceptionally well again in a year of difficult circumstances. All staff have been working remotely throughout 2020/21, dealing with a wide range of governance, strategic and operational issues on behalf of colleges in Scotland.

There are **16 members of staff** across the organisation – 14 full-time and 3 part-time – working in policy (5), employment services (6), communications and public affairs (2.5), and CEO and corporate services (2.5).

Colleges Scotland achieved a successful audit for Year End 31 July 2020.

The organisation became an accredited **Living Wage Employer** in November 2020.

The Colleges Scotland board met **6** times during 2020/21 due to increased activity because of the ongoing global pandemic. The board began a review of the governance of Colleges Scotland which is due to conclude in late 2021, including a refreshed College Sector Statement of Ambition which is scheduled for publication in autumn 2021.



## Colleges Scotland Funding

Colleges Scotland funding comes from two sources – sector subscriptions, and funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for the Employment Services Team to service the Employers' Association.

In 2020/21, income from sector subscriptions was £875k for corporate, policy, communications and public affairs activity. Income from the SFC for the Employment Services Team was £435k, and a small proportion is for corporate service support.

Colleges Scotland achieved another increase in real terms funding for the sector for academic year 2021/22, with total revenue teaching funding for colleges up 8.2% (from £487m to £527m), which includes an inflationary uplift of £11.6m or 2.4%. Subscriptions for Members increased by 2%.

# Response to Covid-19

Our chair, chief executive, and sector leaders regularly participated in the Further and Higher Education Covid-19 **Ministerial Leadership Group** as part of the Covid-19 response, which met from summer 2020 until March 2021. From January to June 2021, two additional Taskforces were also established with considerable Colleges Scotland engagement – the Learner Journey Taskforce and the Student Hardship Taskforce. Since June 2021, the Advanced Learning Covid Recovery Group has absorbed the work of the two aforementioned taskforces, again with high engagement from Colleges Scotland and the sector. These meetings allowed for high level strategic advocacy and engagement for the college sector with Ministers and senior civil servants.

Colleges Scotland and sector representatives worked extensively with SQA around arrangements for the **alternative assessment model** for qualifications for 2020/21.

Our policy experts worked with the Scottish Government and sector representatives to draft and review **sector guidance** for college operations during the pandemic, for the Route Map, Strategic Framework and the level system, as well as consulting on all subsequent updates to the guidance.

Worked with representatives from across the sector to ensure the **safe reopening of campuses** in line with public health guidance and mitigate impacts of further lockdown restrictions for students and staff.



Successfully campaigned for an additional **£4.4m** funding to colleges to develop mental health and resilience packages and support students and staff struggling to cope with the mental health impacts of Covid-19.

As part of Covid-19 consequential funding, College Scotland successfully engaged with the SFC to ensure that an additional **£5m** of funding was secured for the sector to support digital learning in colleges.

Advocated to ensure asymptomatic testing was made available for students in term time accommodation and, from Easter 2021 onwards, self-testing for all staff and students attending campuses in person. Over **100,000 rapid flow test kits** were distributed to colleges.

**College Principals' Group** meetings were held fortnightly throughout 2020/21. These meetings were critical forums for working together across the sector to keep students and staff safe, ensure learning was delivered, and courses could be completed. The role of Colleges Scotland, as the facilitator of the College Principals' Group, was appreciated by members during an exceptionally difficult time and with challenging circumstances.

# Policy Activity

Actively engaged with the Scottish Government and SFC, including meetings with the Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers, to maximise the benefit to the college sector of the Budget for 2021/22. This resulted in the SFC setting a college revenue budget for academic year 2021/22 of £711.8 million, which represents an **increase of £60.1 million (9.2%)** compared with academic year 2020/21. A further **£10 million** has been set aside for short skills-based courses under the Young Person's Guarantee.

“Our focus across the whole year has been about co-ordinating and negotiating the sector policy response as a result of the huge impact of the pandemic on all aspects of college operations, ensuring the learner was at the centre in all decisions. A great deal of time has also been spent gaining a robust settlement for colleges to allow them to move towards a sustainable base operating position and to ensure additional costs related to Covid-19 were covered. Colleges Scotland has successfully overseen 11% real terms increase to the college sector through advocacy since 2015/16”.

– Andy Witty,  
Director of Sector Policy

Worked closely with colleges and the SFC to put forward the views of the sector at every step in the SFC **Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability**. 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.

Worked closely with the Independent Commission on the College of the Future in developing and delivering both the College of the Future UK report in October 2020 and the **Scottish College of the Future** report in December 2020.

Launched the **Digital Ambition for Scotland's Colleges** in October 2020, in partnership with College Development Network (CDN) and Jisc, following consultation with the sector and key partners in the digital industry.

Convened a College Sector Infrastructure (ICT and Estates) workshop in June 2021 to analyse and identify the estate needs of the sector around core themes of “bricks and mortar”, digital and net-zero commitment. In addition, a Digital Service Design session was held in June 2021 to explore how the college sector will work alongside key partners and stakeholders to deliver the relevant digital education, skills and training needed to support the ever-increasing demand in digital skills.

Worked with CDN, ESP and other stakeholders to create a college sector **Statement of Commitment on the Climate Emergency** and secured commitment from all colleges to sign up to EAUC Race to Zero.

Engaged with Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI) in the development of the **SCDI Blueprint** ahead of publication in June 2021 to ensure the college sector features prominently in the 10-year vision for Scotland and associated recommendations for action.

Established a Strategic Dialogue meeting between the Chairs and CEOs of Colleges Scotland and Skills Development Scotland, as well as setting up a regular Liaison Meeting, in order to facilitate regular discussions on key topics.

Participated in an Advance HE Working Group for tackling the under representation of staff from minority ethnic groups in colleges. The focus of the group culminated in a comprehensive report and variety of resources for colleges to utilise to assist in tackling the issues.

As part of the **National Articulation Forum**, Colleges Scotland worked with Universities Scotland and key stakeholders to listen to student views, review progress and to put together a report – published in August 2020 – with a set of 14 recommendations which are intended to promote progress with articulation. This work builds on, and from, the Commission on Widening Access.

Colleges Scotland has worked closely with the Scottish Government on the **Young Person's Guarantee** since its launch in autumn 2020, participating in the Implementation Planning Group with sector representatives to ensure that colleges are fully involved in this initiative. This is complemented by Colleges Scotland's participation in the Colleges and Universities Strategic Group.

Provided sector responses to the following consultations:

- Climate Change Net Zero Nation – Draft Public Engagement Strategy
- Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 Update and Phase 1 Recommendations Report
- Scottish Affairs Committee – Scotland and the Shared Prosperity Fund
- National Planning Framework Position Statement
- Strengthening Scottish Charity Law
- Proposed Amendments to the Model Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies
- Digital Strategy for Scotland
- Draft Infrastructure Investment Plan
- Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland
- SCDI's Scotland's Clean Growth Future
- Education and Skills Committee – Covid-19
- Economy Energy and Fair Work Committee – Economic Impact on Young People

Provided attendance and support to the following meetings:

<b>133</b> Covid-19 related meetings	<b>8</b> Funding and Finance Committee meetings	<b>23</b> Managing Agents' Working Group/Sub-group meetings
<b>20</b> College Principals' Group meetings	<b>22</b> Digital Ambition/Digital Short Life Working Group/Sub-group meetings (including a college sector workshop)	<b>14</b> PACE related meetings
<b>11</b> Mental Health related meetings		<b>7</b> Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland meetings
<b>3</b> Capital and Infrastructure meetings (including college sector workshop)	<b>3</b> Skills Development Scotland Growth and Inward Investment meetings	<b>1</b> College Funding Group meeting

Colleges Scotland also supports additional short life working groups that the sector is involved with.

"I'm proud of the very small team at Colleges Scotland for their excellent response during a global pandemic. Partnership working and strategic dialogue have been essential during the crisis and the impact of our work is clearly felt by students, staff and colleges as organisations." – Shona Struthers, Chief Executive



# Communications and Public Affairs Activity



Throughout 2020/21, political engagement has been exceptionally high with MPs, MSPs, civil servants and government Ministers. Colleges Scotland in this period held **23** meetings with Scottish Ministers and MSPs to discuss the college sector in addition to the Ministerial taskforce sessions.

Worked constructively with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy, Kate Forbes MSP, in two sector specific meetings ahead of the **Scottish Budget**.

Colleges Scotland met with MSPs and political parties to discuss **party manifestos** ahead of the Scottish Election in May 2021.

Following the appointment of the new government, introductory meetings were held with the new Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills,

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, and the new Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training, Jamie Hepburn MSP.

Colleges Scotland wrote to all newly-elected MSPs in May 2021 with key sector information and an invitation to engage on current issues.

**Keyfacts** was published in June 2021. The booklet was distributed to colleges, parliamentarians and key stakeholders, and promoted via a month-long social media campaign.

Colleges Scotland worked with the CDN Marketing and Communications Network and participated in a working group to deliver the **#ChooseCollege** marketing campaign and sponsored the **Virtual College Showcase** event in May 2021.

“It’s exciting to have joined Colleges Scotland at this critical time. Having been a college board member, I am acutely aware and hugely impressed by the work that goes on within the sector and look forward to making an impact and benefitting current and future students”

– Jenifer Johnston, Head of Communications and Public Affairs

Worked with the Marketing Department at West College Scotland to produce an **animated video** to promote the sector's involvement in the PACE Partnership.

Engaged with the CDN Marketing and Communications Network which has been meeting fortnightly during the pandemic.

The chief executive provided a **keynote speech** at the CDN Governance and Leadership Summit in June 2021.

Colleges Scotland staff delivered **4** presentations to new college board members as part of the regular CDN Board Induction programme.

Colleges Scotland is a member of the Scottish Government's **Young Person's Guarantee MarComms Group** which is leading on promotion of the Guarantee along with key stakeholders.

Participated in International Women's Day with video content from the chief executive and college principals on social media.



Participated in **4** parliamentary Cross Party Groups in 2020/21 and provided the secretariat to the Cross Party Group on Skills.



# Employment Services Activity

**22** colleges are fully signed to the National Recognition and Procedure Agreement (NRPA), with one college signed up for lecturers only.

A **Support Staff Pay and Terms and Conditions Agreement** was reached for 2020/21 and an implementation note was produced.

A **Lecturing Staff Pay Agreement** was reached for 2020/21 and an implementation note was produced.

Reached a **resolution** with the EIS-FELA on the lecturing staff national dispute which concluded that there is no national plan to replace lecturers with tutor/assessor/instructor roles, and a circular was agreed in June 2021.

Work on the Job Evaluation project continued at pace during 2020/21 with 21 colleges being evaluated as part of the **National Job Evaluation Scheme**. First scoring has been completed, and second scoring is scheduled to finish by the end of December 2021. Work around pay and grading has begun, with regular dialogue taking place between both the support staff and management sides to start forming the development and costing of revised pay and grade options.

Work is progressing with the General Teaching Council for Scotland on **professional registration** for lecturing staff. A pilot project with three colleges – Dundee and Angus, Forth Valley and Glasgow Kelvin – began in November 2020 with approximately 400 lecturers now registered. The national roll out began in August 2021.

Held two virtual Employers' Association events instead of the usual residentials in November 2020 and May 2021.

22 colleges are **Living Wage** accredited, with the remaining colleges working towards accreditation.

Consulted, engaged, and participated in various forums including the College Principals' Group, HR Strategic Group, HR Practitioners Group, Professional Development Network, and Finance Development Network.

Serviced and participated in a number of working groups including the College Lecturer Registration Group, Job Evaluation Working Group, Pay Working Group, Policies Working Group, NRPA Working Group, and Technical Working Group.



“The last year has presented yet more testing challenges for National Bargaining and the employment services team. Resilience and commitment to partnership working has led to achieving a number of national agreements along with significant progress on major projects.”

– Heather Stevenson, Director of Employment Services

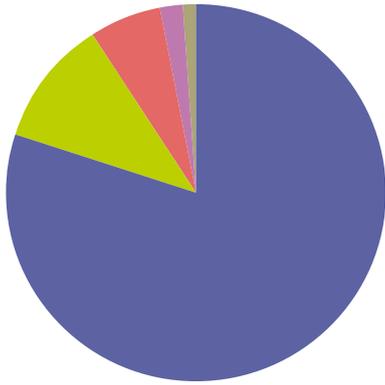
Provided attendance and support to the following meetings:

30 Management Side meetings and briefing sessions	8 Employers' Association Executive Group meetings
6 Employers' Association meetings	5 NJNC Side Table Lecturing meetings
5 NJNC Side Table Support meetings	5 NJNC Support Staff Job Evaluation Working Group meetings
	
5 Support Staff Pay Working Group meetings	4 NJNC Support Staff Terms and Conditions Working Group meetings
3 NRPA Working Group meetings	3 NJNC Central Committee meetings

**46** briefings and email updates were provided to members (Updates following Side Table and Central Committees (6), Circulars issued to the sector (3), Strike days (5), Industrial Action Guides (5), Job Evaluation updates (24), Job Evaluation joint sector comms (3)).

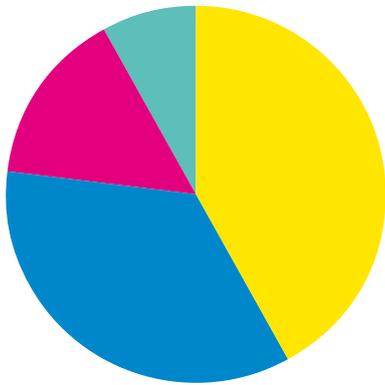
## Spend and Activity Breakdown

A breakdown of spend and analysis of key activities is outlined below:



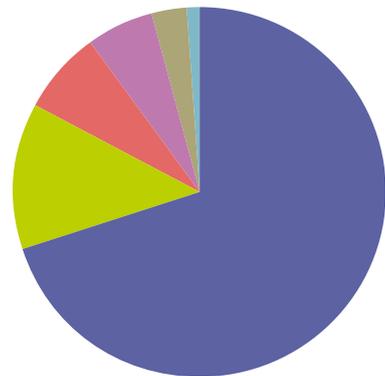
### Policy, Corporate, Communications and Public Affairs Spend (subscription funding)

- Staffing = 80%
- Service Level Agreement and Office Facilities = 11%
- Communications, Hospitality and Consumables = 6%
- Depreciation = 2%
- Professional Fees = 1%



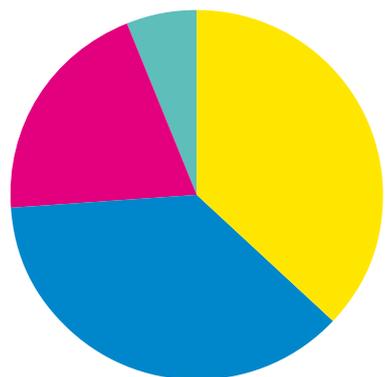
### Policy, Corporate, Communications and Public Affairs Activity

- Policy and Advocacy Activity = 42%
- Colleges Scotland Board and Committees = 35%
- Communications, Parliamentary and Stakeholder Engagement = 15%
- Servicing National Bargaining = 8%



### Employment Services Spend (SFC funding)

- Staffing = 70%
- Service Level Agreement and Office Facilities = 13%
- Communications, Hospitality and Consumables = 7%
- Facilities Time = 6%
- Depreciation = 3%
- Professional Fees = 1%



### Employment Services Activity

- Supporting the NJNC = 37%
- Supporting the Employers' Association = 37%
- Delivering Job Evaluation = 20%
- Communications, Parliamentary and Stakeholder Engagement = 6%



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