



Scottish funding councils
for further & higher education

Consultation on the draft joint corporate plan 2003-06

Response form

This response is submitted on behalf of:

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I wish this response to remain confidential

You can post this response, or a response before Friday 30 May to:

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OR you can email your organisation's response to:

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Thank you



Consultation questions

1 Do you agree with our vision for post-school education in Scotland and our four key aims?
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Yes: but note that the vision is sometimes local in its discourse and presentation of the aims. There is a little mention of Europe (EU appears as a funder), Bologna, and international contexts or partnerships and exchanges. Where comparisons are made they are made with the rest of the UK. It would be easy to expand some sections to include overseas considerations.

2 Are the assumptions underlying our strategic aims correct?

Broadly yes. It is however not clear that the Scotland, or the UK, has a good methodology for progressing start up research areas such as research into elearning, preferring instead a more static approach to defining and rewarding quality that benefits declining areas of interest where there is a supply of good researchers beyond that that is sustainable from the student or the industrial base. The areas identified by the strategy as key to Scotland's economic prosperity should also be treated more selectively.
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3 Have we identified the right objectives for the period of the plan in pursuit of each aim? Are the objectives realistic and achievable?
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To the aim 1 objectives should be added something on informing better student choice (following assumption 2). Students rarely make informed choices as the amount of data is very high and informed comparisons are not easy. This could tie in with the publishing agenda. Technology has a role to play here. It is precisely because learner numbers are expanding and links between sectors made that such data must be presented in a fashion that allows informed choice.
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Add to third objective under aim 2 something about technology. Elearning can provide key links when a student is moving from FE to HE or from school to FE or HE. Support is crucial at this time if retention is to be maximised. Disjunctions can be effectively managed by continuity of practice. Elearning and management of learning through technology have an important role to play here. It is part of the flexibility agenda.
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Add a clause about international to the last objective in aim 3



4 Overall, will the aims and objectives that we have identified allow us to move significantly towards achievement of our vision for post-school education?

Yes once properly filled out and the risk analysis added

5 What are the main risks to achievement of our objectives?

Failure to take stakeholders with you by not informing/involving them enough

- Employers
- Students
- Putative students/parents etc

Failure to support research in key emerging areas such as those identified and then ducked in the targets.

Failure to put in place modern methods of helping partnerships gel, and proper support for students across important disjunctions in their learning.

Failure to secure funding to support the new activities, whilst failing to discontinue old ones.

Failure to see the international community as something to be part of rather as something with which to compete.

6 We have identified four key principles that the Councils and their joint executive should follow in carrying out their functions. What are your views on these principles?

Providing that the first principle does not assert uniqueness, they are fine except that the scope of “ and beyond” in the third principle is possibly ambiguous and might only apply to stakeholders (a comma may solve the problem).



7 Are the targets appropriate and will they allow us adequately to demonstrate and measure progress on, and achievement of, our objectives?

Target 9. It should be 85% of those studying at any point during the year; it is vital to catch drop out data and include it (and possibly lower 85 to account for this). This might be related to target 11.

Target 13 is rather weak and perhaps under emphasises its importance. Consider splitting between student needs and employer needs and not just flexibility.

Target 25: this is a long way out. Surely you can do better

Targets 29 and 30: what happened to the key economic sectors of the document.(eg CIT) . There is a failure to match targets and text here.

8 Are there other targets that should be included?

See 7.

9 Where we have suggested targets that include a process for the measurement of progress, have we proposed the right process and have we set the rate of progress appropriately?

See above. Many of the information targets should be speeded up



10 Where we have not identified a measurement of progress, what measurement systems should we adopt? And what rate of progress do you believe we should adopt?

See above

11 What do you consider to be the main risks that could affect whether or not we achieve our objectives and how should we manage these risks?

See above for main risks to achieving objectives. In addition, in the case of trans-sectoral work it is vital that there be appropriate convergence between HE and FE. In the area of learning technology, there is little difference in the roles of staff and in their staff development requirements. Accordingly, the councils will need to encourage bodies that are cross sectoral and discourage developments in working practice that keep sectors apart. ALT is working for example on a cross sectoral accreditation scheme for learning technologists.

12 Are the key performance indicators that we have set out to measure our own performance as an organisation appropriate? Are there other performance measures that we should consider adopting?

Yes – they look open and clear. It would be nice if institutions were to be as clear in their plans – perhaps that could be a target as part of informing stakeholders.

13 Do you have any other comments on our draft corporate plan?

There is an assumption that the system of institutions will be static. One way for an institution to be on a sound financial footing is for it not to exist! Partnerships between institutions could go as far as mergers and closures, replacing sites by virtual structures. It is a little surprising that this possibility does not appear explicitly and that the councils' strategy does not specifically cover support for efficient restructuring with an associated target.