

Minister for Higher Education, Further Education,  
Youth Employment and Training

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Our ref: Publication of the Interim Purpose and Principles for Post School Education,  
Research and Skills Development

9 December 2022

Dear Convener,

I am writing to advise the Education, Children and Young People Committee that the Scottish Government has today published the [Interim Purpose and Principles for Post School Education, Research and Skills](#). I have also written to the Convener of the Economy and Fair Work Committee to advise them of the publication.

Scotland's post-school education, research and skills ecosystem sits at a crossroads. In Scotland, just as in much of the world, education is valued as a fundamental human right and public good, bringing benefits to society and individuals. In terms of educational outcomes; quality of research; globally recognised institutions – we have a strong story to tell. Yet we recognise that the post school education, research and skills system is at a key transition point as traditional assumptions and structures are being challenged by an ever growing set of social and economic factors such as globalisation, technological advancement and demographic changes. These factors and more are placing growing pressures on education, skills, community learning and development and research to deliver and demonstrate better value and benefit for people, for the economy and for society.

The [Scottish Government's response to the SFC review](#) recognised that the future that our post-school education, research and skills ecosystem would be facing into would look different to today, requiring all of us to think differently about what we need and want it to deliver. The development of the Purpose and Principles will fulfil the Scottish Government's commitment to publish a statement of strategic intent.

The Scottish Government's [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#), published in March this year also set out how critical this ecosystem is to deliver our vision for Scotland's economy of shared economic prosperity, built on the foundations of strong public sector and employer investment in developing the knowledge and skills of our workforce alongside the research, innovation, knowledge exchange and entrepreneurship that is essential in tackling 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges and supporting people out of poverty.

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The Interim Purpose and Principles are therefore being published at a significant juncture. The social and economic challenges facing our people, our public services and our economy are far reaching. At the same time, the financial situation facing the Scottish Government is, by far, the most challenging since devolution. As set out in the [Emergency Budget Review](#), the Scottish budget is at the absolute limit of affordability. Within this context, the government's overriding priorities are to support public services, tackle child poverty, build a prosperous economy and achieve net zero by 2045.

In a post-school education, skills and research context, that means that we must reimagine and reform the entirety of our ecosystem. To do this we will work alongside employers, institutions, learners and other partners, through the lens of the priorities set out above, to ensure long term sustainability and to improve outcomes for learners, employers and for Scotland as a whole. The imperative for far-reaching change is now acute.

Today's publication follows the previously published [Scope and Approach](#) which outlines the approach that we are taking to develop and publish the Purpose and Principles and Implementation Plan in Spring 2023. In developing the Interim Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Research and Skills Development, officials have engaged with a range of stakeholders seeking their views including Universities Scotland, Colleges Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, Developing the Young Workforce and Unions.

We have published our [stakeholder engagement plan](#) alongside the Interim Purpose and Principles. Further targeted engagement with a range of stakeholders on the Interim Purpose and Principles will take place until early spring 2023. We will engage with those who have the greatest stake in the system, including learners and employers and those who traditionally struggle to access the system. We have also published a [discussion guide](#) to help stakeholders with facilitating their own sessions on the Interim Purpose and Principles. This is also available in [Gaelic](#) and [easy read](#) formats.

The development of the Purpose and Principles represents the start of a wider process of reform to ensure that our post-school education, research and skills system is sustainable and fit for the future. This connects to the other aspects of Education Reform that are underway including the National Discussion on Education, the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment and the Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape.

I will be happy to discuss the development and progress of this work with you further and I would welcome the Committee's views.

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**JAMIE HEPBURN MSP**

Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training

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