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College Development Network

INTERNATIONAL AMBITIONS

AN ANALYSIS OF
INTERNATIONALISATION
ACROSS THE SCOTTISH
COLLEGE SECTOR



In partnership with:



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1. FOREWORD

***International Ambitions - An Analysis of Internationalisation across the Scottish College Sector* was commissioned by CDN with the support of the Scottish Government, Scottish Development International and British Council Scotland.**

This research is the first of its kind for colleges in the UK. It provides an evidence base of national-level assets that tell a powerful story about Scotland's college sector overseas, and the areas where the sector has a unique and distinctive contribution to make.

I am delighted to introduce this important piece of work at a time when colleges are poised to make a major contribution to Scotland's economic revival.

The outputs of the research and analysis, contained within this report, also explore the international opportunities that could be available through collaborative working and the sharing of assets across the sector.

This work follows on from the Cumberford-Little Report, which articulated the need to interrogate the opportunities and challenges for colleges to further internationalise and play a role in Scotland's exporting ambitions, as part of Scotland's post-crisis economic revival.

I would like to extend a special note of thanks to Emma Meredith and Mary Kent from the Association of Colleges for undertaking this research on our behalf. This is valuable work, undertaken during a period of huge uncertainty.

We would also like to thank the many participants and contributors to this analysis, including:

- The participating Scottish colleges, representing nine of the 13 regions. Particular thanks go to the many college principals who gave their time to contribute during a period of significant disruption

- The members of the CDN International Development Network
- British Council
- British Council Scotland
- Colleges Scotland
- Department for International Trade
- Education Scotland
- Independent Commission on the College of the Future
- Scottish Government
- Scottish Development International
- Scottish Qualifications Authority
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership
- VTCT

The contribution made by so many colleges and stakeholders has allowed this report to capture the breadth and depth of the international footprint of colleges in Scotland.

The report's recommendations are significant, and we believe they indicate the enormous potential to do more, both as individual colleges, and through a systems-wide collaborative approach.



Jim Metcalfe, Chief Executive, CDN
August 2020

In partnership with:



2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This analysis is the first national research of its kind. It was commissioned to tell the story of what, where, why and how Scotland's colleges work internationally.

From the Highlands and Islands to the Borders, Scottish colleges already successfully export, engage and excel overseas. They welcome students from over 130 countries, hold partnerships from Azerbaijan to Vietnam and have attracted more Erasmus+ funding per capita for their staff and students than the rest of the UK. This report explores college strengths, opportunities for growth and as the *Cumberford-Little Report*¹ notes, how much more the sector could do if the conditions were right.

Written several years after college regionalisation and compiled as the Covid-19 pandemic caused global lockdown, this analysis reviews the context in which Scotland's colleges operate internationally. It draws on key publications including *Scotland – A Trading Nation*² and the *Cumberford-Little Report*, and current policy including Brexit and immigration policies. Interviews with college leaders, the CDN international group and external stakeholders informed the research. Their considered and well-informed thoughts provide a compelling rationale for the role of colleges in the continued achievement of Scotland's economic and international ambitions.

Through colleges' wealth of subject expertise, the quality of the student experience and their place in a single tertiary system, there was consensus that colleges are agile, distinctive and ambitious; an attractive proposition to international governments and inward investment.

1 Cumberford, A., Little, P. (2020) *The Cumberford-Little report: One tertiary system: Agile, collaborative, inclusive*. <http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/535975>

2 Government (2019) *Scotland: A Trading Nation – a plan for growing Scotland's exports*. <https://tradingnation.mygov.scot>

As 'anchor' institutions, colleges act as 'enablers' of internationalisation given their responsibility to reflect the needs of industry, government, and internationally competitive skills. Systemic limitations (procedure, people, payments and perceptions), and policy reform were key messages, but a shared approach to risk, a collective vision for internationalisation and a greater understanding of the opportunities available in a new future can help colleges to approach the change, challenge and complexity of internationalisation.

“AS SCOTLAND ASKS, ‘WHAT IS OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD?’ THERE IS A HUGE OPPORTUNITY FOR COLLEGES TO ALIGN STRATEGICALLY WITH THAT.”

LEWIS COOPER, INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON THE COLLEGE OF THE FUTURE

International activity will be disrupted by Covid-19, but the role of Scotland's colleges and their orientation to internationalisation remains highly relevant as countries around the world seek to upskill and reskill their workforce.

The ambition from all participants in this research was to see Scotland's colleges fulfil their international potential. Colleges were keen to see more support from key agencies, and made it clear that policy and structures should align to unlock their potential.

This report concludes with a series of reflections on how to take forward the international agenda and makes the following five recommendations:

➤ RECOMMENDATION 1



The establishment of a strategic level group to represent internationalisation in colleges

➤ RECOMMENDATION 2



The inclusion of Scotland's colleges in the internationalisation agenda and ongoing system reforms

➤ RECOMMENDATION 3



The development of sector-wide data sharing, marketing and communications

➤ RECOMMENDATION 4



The exploration of a collective approach to college commercial international opportunities

➤ RECOMMENDATION 5



The engagement of colleges within Scotland's International Alumni Plan

3. SCOTLAND'S DISTINCTIVE ASSETS

3.1 A track record of success

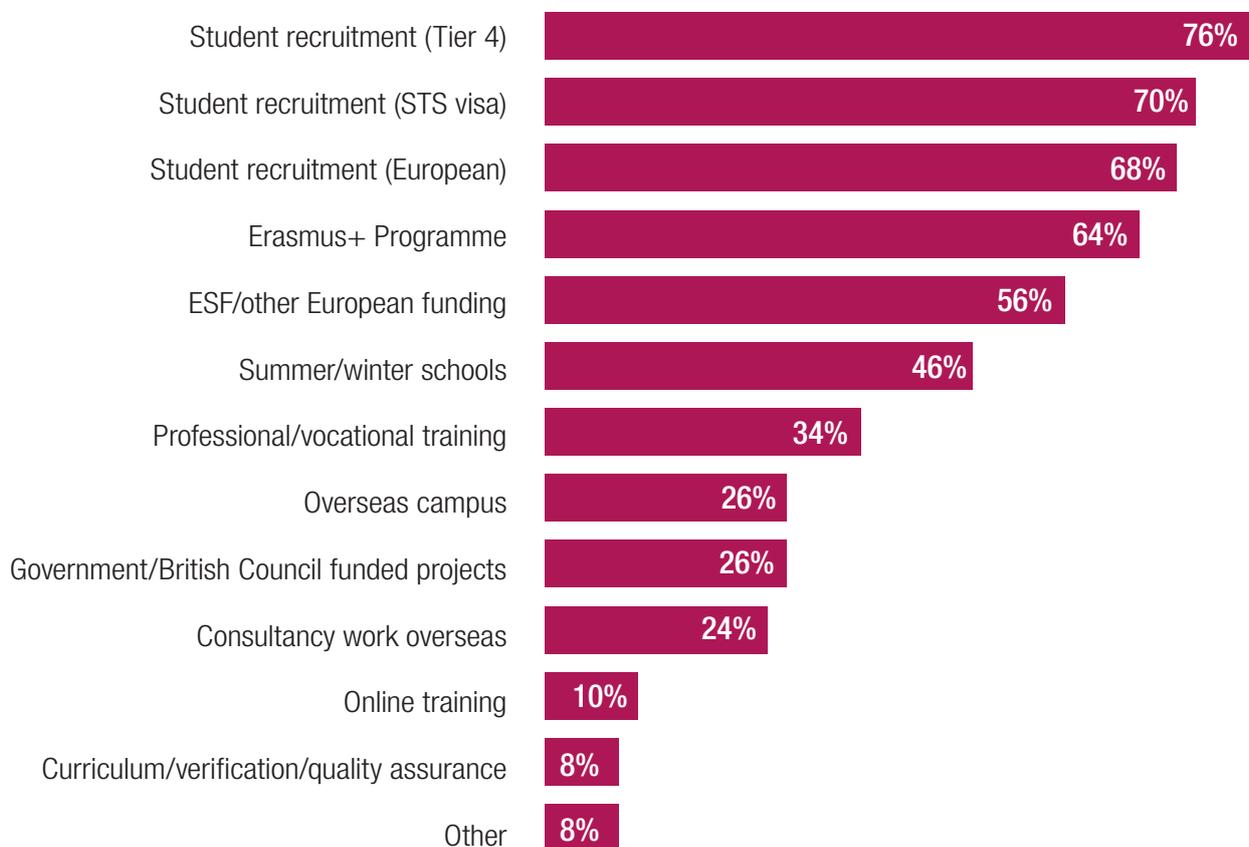
Scotland's colleges have a history of internationalisation and export success. From exchanges to campuses overseas, all the colleges interviewed for this research already work internationally in some way. Each college has a unique approach and scale to their international work based on history, opportunity and strategy. Conversations with principals highlighted international work as a balance between commercial income and enrichment benefits to students and the wider organisation.

The Association of Colleges' 2019 survey of college international activity³ (which included some Scottish colleges) recorded more than 15 different types of international engagement activity undertaken by UK colleges. Scotland's colleges deliver all of these (see Figure 3.1 below):

The biggest international student recruiters are City of Glasgow College and Edinburgh College. City of Glasgow College has 130 nationalities attending

3 Association of Colleges (2019) *International Activity in Colleges – The 2019 Association of Colleges Survey* <https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/AoC%20International%20Survey%20Report%202019.pdf>

FIG 3.1: TYPES OF INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY IN UK COLLEGES



the college, close to 2,000 international enrolments per year, with full time international students (non-EU students, Tier 4) numbering about 250. ASET International Oil & Gas Training Academy, a wholly owned subsidiary of North East Scotland College (NESCol), delivers training to 250 commercial delegates a day from over 80 countries. Edinburgh College has a very different profile, with smaller numbers of non-EU students, but over 20% of the student body (some 5,500 individuals) coming from EU countries.

Most of the colleges interviewed for this research hold a Tier 4 licence, permitting the recruitment of full time international (non-EU students). However, unlike the UK trend shown in fig 3.1, student recruitment is not the main focus for Scottish colleges. Many respondents reported that they no longer actively targeted international recruitment and only attract candidates through college website hits or word of mouth.

There has clearly been a significant reduction in international student recruitment to Scottish colleges over the last decade, in line with the tightening of UK immigration policy. As immigration is not a devolved matter, regulations relating to student visas apply across the four nations of the UK. Three colleges spoke of attracting several hundred international (non-EU) students prior to the changes in regulation but had only single figures now. Eight colleges (in six of the college regions) do not currently hold Tier 4 licences⁴.

College international development activities focus instead on projects delivered ‘in-country’ or which operate through established institutional partnerships. ‘In-country’ examples include Glasgow Kelvin College’s UKIERI funded project in India, and Edinburgh College’s training of more than 400 English language teachers from Panama.

Examples of the institutional partnerships include:

- Dundee and Angus College partnership with North Virginia Community College which has facilitated staff and student exchanges for a number of years
- Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI’s undergraduate student placement partnerships in Ireland and Nova Scotia
- Research into renewable energy in rural areas conducted through Lews Castle College UHI’s partnership with universities across Iceland, Finland, Norway and Ireland

Transnational programmes (Scottish college courses delivered in other countries) are also an established model within the sector. Examples include:

- City of Glasgow College offering HND programmes in Marine Engineering or Nautical Science through three partner institutions in India and one in Pakistan
- Moray College UHI’s whisky tasting courses delivered by a partner in Hong Kong
- Perth College UHI programmes delivered at the Hunan Institute of Engineering and the Henan University of Urban Construction in China
- New College Lanarkshire’s joint delivery partnerships in Dental Nursing across three institutions in China and one in Inner Mongolia

Several colleges (including all three in the Glasgow region), Edinburgh and Dundee and Angus report large and vibrant ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) departments. Student and staff mobility opportunities funded by the Erasmus+ Programme are significant international features in many colleges. Scotland typically has attracted more Erasmus+ funding per capita than England, Wales or Northern Ireland (13.3% of funding total vs 8.2% population)⁵. One college estimated that as many as 10% of its staff have experienced travel and CPD through Erasmus funding. New College Lanarkshire is the largest provider of TVET mobility in Scotland, and in 2018-19 supported 350 students and 93 staff in mobility.

4 HM Government (2020) *Register of Sponsors (Tier 4)*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884719/2020-05-13_Tier_4_Register_of_Sponsors.pdf

5 Erasmusplus (2018) *Results and Statistics*. <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/results-and-statistics>

 **CASE STUDY**

GLASGOW KELVIN COLLEGE, UK-INDIA EDUCATION AND RESEARCH INITIATIVE, WORKING WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

This collaboration with the Skill Council for Persons with Disability in India aims to share and develop knowledge around work-based learning for additional support needs. Indian partners include Lemon Tree Hotels, a large Indian hotel group and global leader in inclusive employment practices; an organisation called Make Love Not Scars, which supports acid attack survivors; and Project Tres, which is a scheme to employ and promote economic development opportunities for women who have suffered domestic violence.

“ We initially thought that our system in Scotland would have a great deal to offer through its work-based learning infrastructure and embedded values of inclusion, equality and diversity; but as it transpired, we also had a great deal to learn from our partners in India.”

ALASTAIR MCGHEE, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

The Indian workforce across its 80 hotels includes staff with hearing and speech impairments, autism, Down’s syndrome, wheelchair users and amputees. Their model includes redesigning job descriptions and providing additional training for fully-able staff in order to integrate working practices with the ambition that 50% of their workforce will be either someone with additional support needs, or an ‘opportunity deprived Indian’ – a term which includes young people from deeply disadvantaged economic and social backgrounds.

The college has introduced Lemon Tree hotels to the Scottish Tourism Alliance Conference and is now working closely with employers and other partners to run two new apprenticeship frameworks, designed specifically for people with additional support needs to work in the hospitality sector. Locally, both Hilton and Marriott groups have already indicated their support for the apprenticeship.

John Swinney, Deputy First Minister, who has visited the partnership in India on two occasions, has commented that learnings from employers like Lemon Tree Hotels will help Scotland toward its objective of halving the disability employment gap⁶.

⁶ Scottish Government (2018) *Helping disabled people into employment*. Available: <https://news.gov.scot/news/helping-disabled-people-into-employment>

➤ CASE STUDY

NEW COLLEGE LANARKSHIRE TRANSNATIONAL DENTAL NURSING PROGRAMMES, CHINA AND INNER MONGOLIA

New College Lanarkshire have established partnerships delivering online training designed to support the skills gaps faced by the development of the Chinese dental health sector. As quality of life has risen in China, so has the dental industry, but while there are large numbers of dentists, dental nurses have been in short supply as the profession has not been recognised as a stand-alone speciality.

The courses and learning materials have been written specifically for the needs of the Chinese market and are now embedded into the Chinese partners' general nursing curriculum. On completion of the two-year programme, successful students graduate with a qualification from their own institution and an additional certificate from New College Lanarkshire.

Lecturers from the Chinese institutions undertake an annual eight-week training programme delivered in Scotland, and each year college staff travel to China to deliver bespoke lectures and programme guidance.

26 Chinese lecturers have been trained at New College Lanarkshire since 2013, and approximately 600 Dental Nurses have completed the programme in China.

3.2 Internationalisation tools

The extent of Erasmus+ funding in Scottish colleges highlights the importance of internationalisation and global citizenship as part of the student – and staff – experience. Participation in WorldSkills competitions was mentioned widely and proudly by both college and non-college stakeholders alike. In the 2019 UK finals, 82 of the 547 finalists (almost 15% of the UK's total) came from Scotland⁷. 13 Scottish colleges were represented in the finals, and the two colleges with the largest number of finalists in the UK were New College Lanarkshire and City of Glasgow College – both with over 20 finalists.

Fig 3.2 shows the regions and colleges currently holding a Tier 4 licence for international full-time student recruitment, the colleges running Erasmus+, and the colleges who were represented in the 2019 WorldSkills UK finals.

This is not intended to be a comprehensive representation of all international activities, as many commercial, funded and exchange partnerships exist outside these categories; but the chart does show how internationalisation activity is embedded in Scottish colleges, and the range of emphasis across the sector.

The WorldSkills finalist categories are just one way of shining a light on the distinctive strengths of Scottish colleges and demonstrating the areas in which provision is truly competing at world-class standards.

⁷ WorldSkills (2019) *National Finalists 2019*. <https://www.worldskillsuk.org/champions/national-skills-competitions/national-finalists-2019>

FIG 3.2: TIER 4 LICENCES, ERASMUS + PROJECTS AND WORLDSKILLS FINALISTS

Region	College	Tier 4 licence	Current Erasmus + projects	WorldSkills finalists 2019
Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire	North East Scotland College	YES		
Ayrshire	Ayrshire College	NO		Beauty Therapist
Borders	Borders College	NO	YES	
Dumfries and Galloway	Dumfries & Galloway College	YES		
Edinburgh and Lothians	Edinburgh College	YES		Roofing: Slating & Tiling
Fife	Fife College	YES		IT Support Technician, 2x Cyber Security
Forth Valley	Forth Valley College	YES		3 x Stonemasonry
Glasgow	City of Glasgow College	YES	YES	4 x Digital Media Production, 3 x Fine Jewellery Making, 2 x IT Software Solutions for Business, 3 x Network Infrastructure Technician, Web Design, Inclusive Skills: Catering, Restaurant Service, 3x Visual Merchandising, Digital Media, Inclusive Skills: Horticulture, Wall & Floor Tiling, 2x 3D Digital Game Art
	Glasgow Clyde College	NO	YES	Network Infrastructure Technician, Network Systems Administrator, Web design, 2 x Cyber Security
	Glasgow Kelvin College	NO	YES	
Highlands and Islands	Argyll College UHI	YES, AS UHI	YES	
	Inverness College UHI			Plumbing, 2 x Stonemasonry
	Lews Castle College UHI			
	Moray College UHI			Electrical Installation, Plumbing
	North Highland College UHI			
	Orkney College UHI			
	Perth College UHI			Plumbing
	Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI			
	Shetland College UHI			
	West Highland College UHI			
Lanarkshire	New College Lanarkshire	NO	YES	7x Building Information Modelling, Laboratory Technician, Mechanical Engineering: CAD, 3 x Software Solutions for Business, 2x IT Support Technician, Construction MetalWork, 3x Mechanical Engineering: CAD, Network Infrastructure Technician, 2x Network Systems Administrator, Commercial Make-Up, 2x Creative Media Make Up
	South Lanarkshire College	YES		2x Roofing: Slating & Tiling
Tayside	Dundee & Angus College	YES	YES	Joinery, Plumbing
West	West College Scotland	NO		2x Commercial Make-up, Beauty Therapy Practitioner, Hairdressing
West Lothian	West Lothian College	NO	YES	
n/a	Newbattle Abbey College	NO		
n/a	Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)	YES		

➤ CASE STUDY

WORLDSKILLS AT NEW COLLEGE LANARKSHIRE

New College Lanarkshire routinely sees more of its students in the WorldSkills UK finals than any other college in the UK. WorldSkills is fully integrated into the college curriculum with all students exposed to the standards and content involved.

Over the years the college has witnessed the positive impact on its students with increased engagement across all skill areas in which they compete. Barry Skea, Assistant Head of Faculty cites the journey of one HNC mechanical engineering student, Betsy Crosbie, as an example:

“ She came to us as a young girl who had very little interaction with staff in class, or with other students. Betsy entered the CAD Competitions, reached the National Final and came 10th out of 10. She competed the following year and secured a Silver Medal. She went on to compete as a member of Team UK at EuroSkills Gothenburg 2016 – the only female in the competition and represented Team UK again at WorldSkills Abu Dhabi 2017. It’s not just the skill level, it’s the personal development and increased confidence. I’ve seen it in every cycle of competitions we’ve been in, from regional to international.”

Participation in competitions has a powerful impact on staff:

“ They get to see the standard across the UK, and benchmark across the country. Visiting the National Finals of the WorldSkills UK Competitions at the Skills Show really boosted college involvement – staff could see that the whole movement is driven by industry.”

3.3 Sectoral expertise

A *Trading Nation* used an evidence-based approach to link Scotland’s sectoral strengths with future export growth opportunity. It identifies sectoral export priorities of:

- Engineering and advanced manufacturing
- Food and drink
- Technology
- Digital and media
- Energy
- Financial and business services
- Chemical services and life sciences

These sectors are supported by the three ‘enabling sectors’ of education, tourism and creative industries.

All of these sectors are well-served by Scottish colleges, and colleges are well placed to act as ‘enablers’ of Scotland’s international strategy; both in terms of their ability to provide world-class training in these subject areas, and in the implicit message that Scotland has a responsive, industry-aligned skills base, which is a powerful attraction for inward investors.

FIG 3.3: SUPPORTING SECTORAL EXPERTISE

Scotland's sectoral strengths as listed by <i>A Trading Nation</i>	Examples of expertise within the Scottish college sector
Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil and Gas, Engineering and Construction, ASET, North East College Scotland • Water operations management, Glasgow Clyde College • Space and Aerospace, Ayrshire College • Aircraft Engineering, Perth College UHI
Food and Drink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whisky courses, including up to post graduate level, Moray College UHI
Technology, Digital and Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital games development, Dundee and Angus College • Applied software development, Moray College UHI • Cyber security and cyber resilience, West College Scotland
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable energy and energy engineering, Lews Castle College UHI • Engineering and renewable energy, West College Scotland
Financial and Business Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and Finance, City of Glasgow College • Logistics, City of Glasgow College
Chemical Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil and gas process engineering, Forth Valley College
Life Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrative health (Batchelor's degree in the use of complimentary therapies alongside conventional care, fully delivered online), Moray College UHI • Professional Development Award (PDA) in Rehabilitation Technologies (Prosthetics and Orthotics), Glasgow Clyde College
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance learning and use of technology (psychology and pedagogy of using various teaching tools in combination), Lews Castle College UHI • English language, train the trainer, VET system development, Edinburgh College
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culinary and hospitality, City of Glasgow College • Golf management, SRUC
Creative Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish School of Contemporary Dance, Dundee and Angus College • Moray School of Art • Audio Engineering, Perth College UHI • Centre for Rural Creativity, Shetland College UHI
Scottish Culture & Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaelic language and culture, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI, Newbattle Abbey College • Island studies as a specialism, Shetland College UHI • North Atlantic Fisheries College • Marine at City of Glasgow College

CASE STUDY

FORTH VALLEY COLLEGE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY MENG CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

This five-year programme prepares students for careers in chemical and process engineering, such as those associated with the petrochemical processing industry. Students begin on the HND Chemical Process Technology course, they have 'associate' university status from day one, and on successful completion progression is guaranteed to the top up degree programme.

With the Grangemouth Refinery complex virtually on the doorstep of the college's Falkirk Campus, course delivery takes place in a state of the art chemical processing facility, which features the Distillation Plant Laboratory with five-meter high glass distillation columns and a System Control room, all of which feature industry leading software.

The industrial expertise and learning facilities have enhanced relationships with both employers and partner universities, whilst enabling students to benefit from site visits and industrial placements.

“ As well as their expertise in understanding the skills we need, Forth Valley College understands the business that we are in and that's important. We see the college as a partner and their approach to doing business with us smacks of professionalism.”

IAN FYFE, INEOS

“ The opportunity to gain access to this degree programme through the partnership programme has been the right option for me in terms of the structure of learning at the college. The practical experience I gained at college, along with the pastoral support has enabled me to enter university better prepared, and with a broader experience of chemical engineering than if I had entered university in year one. The opportunity to work on the college's equipment and plant has given me skills I would not have gained otherwise.”

ALEX MORRISON, 4TH YEAR CHEMICAL ENGINEERING STUDENT, HERIOT – WATT UNIVERSITY

➤ CASE STUDY

CITY OF GLASGOW COLLEGE, MARINE ENGINEERING AND NAUTICAL SCIENCE

City of Glasgow College has world-class facilities on the River Clyde and a reputation as one of the best maritime training centres worldwide.

The College has established a partnership with three institutions in India and one in Pakistan. The first year of the HND in nautical science or marine engineering is delivered in-country under the supervision of the College.

College staff conduct regular monitoring visits to these institutions to undertake quality checks and external verification. As a further part of the verification process, all examination scripts are returned to the college for sampling.

The entire second year of the HND programme is delivered in Glasgow.

The training scheme followed by all trainees is UK designed and is approved by the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) and the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).

Many alumni return to their studies at City of Glasgow College several times during their maritime careers in order to update skills and support career progression.

The College supports one in five of all UK maritime jobs, works with the top ten shipping companies in the world and is responsible for training one third of all UK Merchant Navy Officers, from Chief Engineers to Captains.

3.4 Global profile

Scottish colleges have operations and partnerships spread across six continents, from Shetland College UHI, which hosted the Relate North 2016 Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design international symposium and exhibition, to City of Glasgow College's advisory role in the development of a multi-million pound marine college in Angola.

The locations where colleges **operate tend to follow trends based on the type of activity rather than institutional focuses on specific geographies:**

- Erasmus+ mobility funding is European, so the vast majority of student mobility is in Europe
- Transnational models are common in China and India
- TVET development projects are common in South East Asia and the Middle East
- Gaelic language and culture strengths link with Ireland, Northern Ireland and diaspora communities in the US and Canada
- The colleges in the Highlands and Islands have strong Nordic relationships
- Specialisms according to profile e.g. Indonesia, which has 18,000 islands and strong links with City of Glasgow College (Maritime) and Shetland College UHI (Island Studies)



Europe, Russia and Central Asia

Multiple countries

- Lews Castle College UHI partnership with Universities in Iceland, Finland, Norway and Ireland on energy usage in traditional rural homes
- Shetland College UHI has Centre for Nordic Studies and links with Arctic policy areas
- West Lothian College produced comparative reports on work-based learning in Germany, Scotland and Sweden
- West Lothian College Erasmus+ project on quality systems with partners in Austria, Portugal, Germany and Netherlands
- Inverness College UHI hosted the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2018

France

- New College Lanarkshire Erasmus + opportunities in Grenoble and Lyon
- Dundee and Angus College Erasmus+ mobility for sports students
- SCQF D'Ahoy Erasmus+ funded programme with IMT Atlantique, Ecole Navale and FREREF (Lifelong Learning Foundation)

Spain

- SCQF D'Ahoy Erasmus+ funded programme with the University Business Foundation of the Balearic Islands
- Edinburgh College trained over 500 ESOL teachers
- New College Lanarkshire Erasmus + opportunities

Netherlands

- Dundee and Angus College project on student associations and learner engagement

Austria

- New College Lanarkshire Erasmus + opportunities

Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh College English language teacher training • Perth College UHI Erasmus + student exchanges in business and management, engineering systems and aircraft engineering
Czech Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee and Angus College Erasmus + mobility for travel and tourism students
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee and Angus College Erasmus + mobility programmes for support staff • Perth College UHI Erasmus + student exchanges in music management
Iceland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCQF D'Ahoy Erasmus+ funded programme with Reykjavik University • Perth College UHI Erasmus+ exchanges in engineering systems and aircraft engineering
Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shetland College UHI Erasmus + mobility
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New College Lanarkshire Erasmus + mobility • Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI working in partnership with partners in Ireland to celebrate 1,500 years since the birth of St Columba
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh College English language training for teachers • West Highland College UHI working on Erasmus+ project to develop an audit tool for teaching and learning • New College Lanarkshire Erasmus + opportunities
Cyprus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New College Lanarkshire Erasmus + opportunities
Malta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCQF active partnership • New College Lanarkshire Erasmus + opportunities • Dundee and Angus College Erasmus + mobility for hospitality and professional cookery students
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SQA assisted Agency for Vocational Education and Training to improve capacity of adult education institutions
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SQA capacity building project for vocational training in environmental protection and sustainable development • SQA create resource centre for social services sector training
Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh College with British Council master mentor training for 22 English teachers
Kazakhstan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SQA benchmarks pre-foundation qualification courses
Uzbekistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh College programme with British Council to deliver English language training and train the trainer programmes for military staff
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh College summer schools for Russian groups • Glasgow Kelvin College student and staff exchanges
Azerbaijan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh College with British Council deliver early years training



Asia

China

- New College Lanarkshire joint delivery programmes in nursing and dental nursing in Guangxi, Shandong, and Hebei
- New College Lanarkshire shortlisted for Innovation in Education and Education Partnership of the Year for Chinese partnerships
- City of Glasgow College (CoGC) delivery of certificate in supply chain and logistics (11 modules) in country (three times per year)
- Edinburgh College has trained over 1,000 English language teachers from China
- Edinburgh College delivers English for early years and English for teacher training programmes funded by the Guangzhou Education Department
- CoGC Teacher training and student exchange
- Edinburgh College, early years and English language training, Guangzhou
- Dundee and Angus College student partnership with a Medical University in Ganzhou to deliver dementia training
- Perth College UHI has Chinese Ministry of Education approved transnational programmes at Hunan Institute of Engineering, Zhengzhou University of Aeronautics and Henan University of Urban Construction

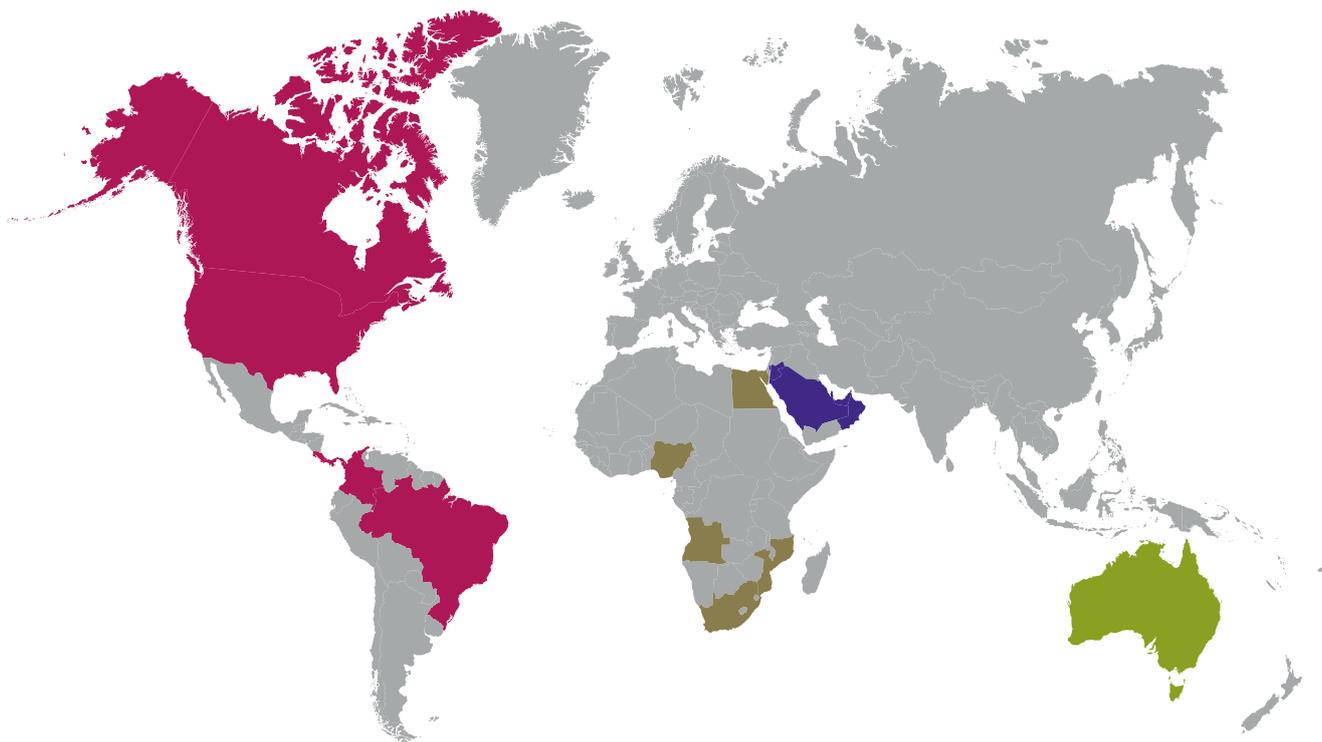
Taiwan

- Edinburgh College hosts Taiwanese summer school groups

Hong Kong

- SCQF have mapped qualification frameworks in Hong Kong
- Moray College UHI has partnership delivering whisky tasting programmes in Hong Kong

Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh College run airline operations and English language training for a vocational college in Kagoshima • Edinburgh College attracts Japanese summer schools
Inner Mongolia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New College Lanarkshire joint delivery programmes in nursing and dental nursing, and cultural exchange programmes in Chifeng
Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoGC Dementia care staff professional training delivered in country
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoGC partnerships in Maritime Engineering and Nautical Science based in Chennai and Mumbai • CoGC study tours, leadership, management and productivity • CoGC Advanced Diplomas in Professional Cookery and Hospitality delivered in country • Glasgow Kelvin College, UKIERI projects in engineering, 'persons with disability' and fashion • New College Lanarkshire joint delivery programmes in nursing and dental nursing in Coimbatore • Edinburgh College delivered UKIERI projects in digital skills and fashion textiles
Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoGC partnerships in Maritime Engineering and Nautical Science based in Karachi
Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lews Castle College UHI has a research project linked with Bhutan on the development of distance learning technologies and pedagogy
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New College Lanarkshire UK-China Belt and Road Initiative funded project with Chinese, Mongolian and Philippines partners • CoGC, Hospitality and culinary training
Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoGC delivered a programme of workshops showcasing Scotland's social security system, for officials as part of their review of the Vietnamese social security system • CoGC HR in the Digital World, short course • West College Scotland delivers engineering, creative and hair and beauty training
Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh College training for college directors
Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West College Scotland delivers engineering, creative and hair and beauty training
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Glasgow College (CoGC) Palliative Care and Healthcare Teacher Training in country • CoGC Entrepreneurship Student Workshops in country • CoGC Fashion Design Programmes in country • CoGC Supply Chain Management Teacher Training and Government training in country • CoGC Diploma in English with hospitality & tourism in country, and guest culinary lectures



Middle East

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- Edinburgh College trained over 500 Saudi teachers in engineering and ESOL
- SQA developed suite of diploma-level qualifications

United Arab Emirates

- CoGC deliver maritime consultancy

Bahrain

- SCQF have mapped qualification frameworks in Bahrain

Jordan

- SQA support TVET reform

Oman

- SQA implement national qualifications framework

Qatar

- SQA worked with the Supreme Education Council to establish a vocational education and training system

Palestine

- Glasgow Clyde College supporting development of technical schools and an orphanage school

Australasia

Australia

- CoGC educational consultancy

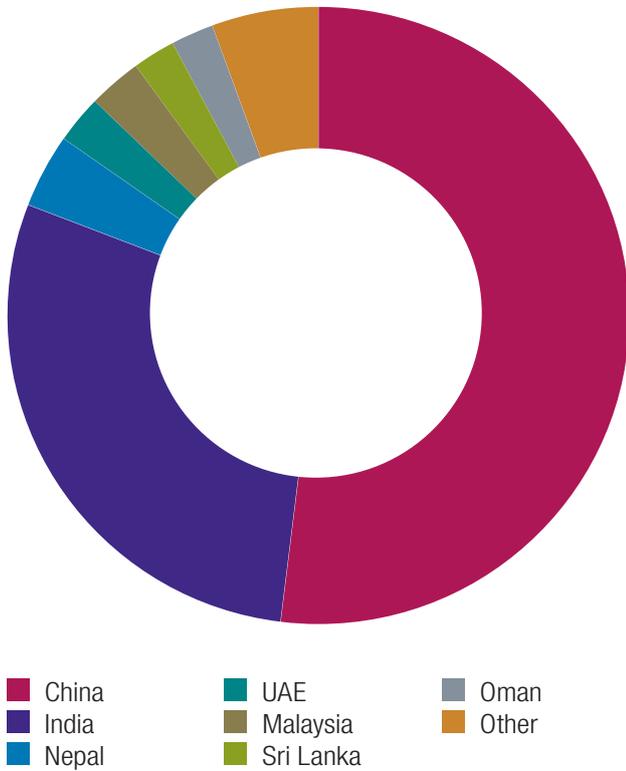
The Americas

USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ayrshire College, Mission Discovery programme partnership with International Space School Educational Training (ISSET) • CoGC Staff and student exchange and recruitment • CoGC students win the Atlantic Cup culinary competition in Maryland four years in a row • New College Lanarkshire partnerships with colleges in Wisconsin • Dundee and Angus student and staff exchanges in North Virginia • Lews Castle College UHI has links with Northeastern University Boston where there is academic interest in bilingualism • CoGC staff plans to meet 40 alumni and diaspora in New York
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI student placement partnerships in Nova Scotia • CoGC Staff and student exchange and recruitment
Panama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh College trained over 400 English language teachers from Panama • Edinburgh College supported the development of Panama's first ever tertiary education technical college (the Instituto Técnico Superior Especializado-ITSE) • Edinburgh College and SRUC delivery curriculum and teacher training consultancy
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoGC Master classes • Edinburgh College deliver English language and performing arts
Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoGC Staff and student exchange • CoGC English teacher training
Costa Rica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh College delivering remote teacher training programme with Ministry of Education

Africa

Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh College delivered customer care and green hotel sustainability Train the Trainer programmes for government department • SQA endorsement of vocational qualifications
Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoGC, marine management training and hospitality leadership and management consultancy training
Angola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoGC supported the development of a £110m maritime training facility
Mozambique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SQA developed training and qualification system for infrastructure management
South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New College Lanarkshire with British Council Advanced Skills Partnership project with Johannesburg and Gauteng • New College Lanarkshire awarded AoC Beacon Award for partnerships in South Africa

FIG 3.4: SQA CERTIFICATES AWARDED INTERNATIONALLY 2014 – PRESENT



An indication of colleges' international footprint would be the SQA data for certificates awarded overseas.

Fig 3.4 represents the 33,000 SQA certificates awarded internationally since 2014, showing the countries with the largest numbers of certificates awarded. As might be expected, the well-established international markets of China and India dominate. The chart shows the crossover between the countries identified as export priorities in *A Trading Nation* and the largest country markets for the SQA.

Country	Export priority rank	Share of current exports	Share of SQA certificates awarded internationally
China	9th	1.9%	52.1%
India	20th	0.7%	29%
UAE	22nd	2%	2.7%

Countries that enter candidates for SQA qualifications already have an affinity with the Scottish brand of education. Adding in college representation to China, India and UAE trade missions will strengthen Scotland's overall export proposition.

Looking further at the 15 priority markets identified in *A Trading Nation*, aside from China, these included USA and Canada and 12 European countries.

The USA, Scotland's largest export market, demonstrated strong relationship for colleges too, although typically not commercial relationships. In addition to Dundee and Angus College's exchange partnership and Ayrshire College's relationship with NASA scientists through the Mission Discovery programme mentioned in this report, further examples include strong research relationships in linguistics and marine science for Lews College Castle UHI and Shetland College UHI. Strong cultural links are present through the work of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI and others with communities of Scottish heritage in North America and Nova Scotia.

Scotland's National Chef, City of Glasgow College's Gary Maclean is the College's ambassador and first point of contact for new relationships in the US and Canada. His work raises the profile of Scotland's culinary skills, for example through the live broadcast 'Atlantic Cup chef's challenge', where four of the College's student chefs compete in Anne Arundel Community College, considered one of the best culinary schools in the US.

The 12 European countries prioritised in *A Trading Nation* were all referenced in interviews for this research. The profile and relationships that Scotland's colleges hold across Europe are significant and more work could be done to increase

the available data on market penetration. In 2016-17 there were an estimated 16,000 students non-UK EU nationals studying in Scottish colleges and almost 14,000 students taking part in mobility or partnership experiences through Erasmus+ funding (2014-18, includes all institution types). There was an informal pattern between certain nationalities choosing certain course types, such as French, German and Swiss students attending environmental engineering courses. There are stronger links between some colleges and specific countries with Nordic and Celtic countries through the UHI group, but further analysis would be needed to achieve a comprehensive mapping of the Scottish college footprint in Europe.



CASE STUDY

GLASGOW CLYDE COLLEGE, ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME ACROSS WATER INDUSTRY IN EUROPE

Glasgow Clyde College is one of 12 organisations taking part in a vocational skills pilot project for the Water Industry in Europe, funded under the Erasmus+ programme to a value of €998,000. The project unites vocational colleges and higher education institutions, the water industry, research centres, (semi-) governmental institutions and water sector representatives from the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Latvia, Malta and the Czech Republic that share a common interest in developing the full potential of vocational education institutions to play a proactive role in the support of growth, competitiveness and innovation of the water sector.

The transnational project draws on existing and emerging vocational competences and skills needs in the water sector, translating them into an approach of vocational excellence. The project intends to create the infrastructure necessary to embed vocational excellence in the water sector in Europe, thus laying the grounds for vocational curriculum development and consequently competence development of vocational education students.

➤ CASE STUDY

AYRSHIRE COLLEGE MISSION DISCOVERY SUMMER SCHOOL

Ayrshire College partners with its three local authorities, industry and the International Space School Educational Training (ISSET) to host Mission Discovery Summer School.

Each year, 200 students from the College and secondary schools in the region come together in mixed groups to take part in NASA-inspired workshops and a competition to design an experiment that can be carried out by astronauts on board the International Space Station. Running through the programme are inspirational presentations from astronauts and senior scientists in the fields of astrophysics, robotics and pharmacology amongst other disciplines.

The College launched the programme to complement Glasgow Prestwick Airport's bid to become the first commercial spaceport in the UK and Europe. From its Aeronautical Centre of Excellence, the College already plays a key role in supporting the region's 4,000 aerospace related jobs, delivering apprenticeships employed by multi-national companies such as Spirit AeroSystems, GE Caledonian, Collins Aerospace and British Airways Maintenance Glasgow.

The programme seeks to engage young learners and inspire interest in STEM subjects and careers to support the region's ambitions for growth in the sector.

“Every time we host Mission Discovery I have to pinch myself when you see such prominent and inspirational people from NASA, ISSET and Academia leading such an event here in Ayrshire! It is a unique opportunity for participants to work at first hand with people who have led such inspirational work both on Earth and in Space!”

GAVIN MURRAY, DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM

3.5 Systemic strengths

Whilst there is clearly a great deal about the Scottish college sector that makes it distinctive and competitive in an international context, as one principal points out **“strengths are not necessarily subject areas.”** Individual relationships, innovative solutions and speed of response are sometimes more critical factors in establishing a market presence. Respondents thought that the place of colleges within the highly attractive Scottish education system is the primary distinctive asset that colleges offer internationally.

“In the past the Government has talked about the exporting power of universities, and we would like to see colleges and the skills agenda included in this offer. The majority of countries that we're speaking to have an emphasis on developing inclusive economic growth and responding to the challenges of a shifting skills base. This runs through our veins as colleges – this is what we do, so we have something very strong to export both in terms of services and products.”

**AUDREY CUMBERFORD MBE, PRINCIPAL
AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDINBURGH COLLEGE**

3.5.1 The qualifications framework

Scotland's education policy landscape is integrated in a way that it is not in other parts of the UK.

There is a single tertiary sector and a coherent national qualification framework which spans all age learning across academic, vocational and professional education. Its qualification framework is a specific asset in an international context, promoting parity of esteem and progression between academic, vocational and professional education and training. It maps to the European Qualifications Framework, which in turn facilitates a well understood learner journey into and out of the system for international learners.

This level of integration of a single education and training system has yet to be achieved by most countries, where highly fragmented vocational systems with hundreds of unrelated qualification types are not untypical.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government responsible for delivering exams and the accreditation of educational awards. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), provides a comprehensive 12-level structure through which all qualifications can be mapped. This is also referenced to the European Qualifications Framework, which ensures the framework is easily understood by European partners.

SQA and the SCQF Partnership provide the college sector with distinct advantages internationally. SQA is well-established and highly regarded overseas, having provided consultancy services in numerous countries, often directly contracted by government organisations. SQA qualifications have been approved and implemented in Egypt, Saudi Arabia

and Mozambique; and have supported capacity building and standards development in South Africa, Turkey, Malawi, Romania, Qatar and Ghana⁸.

The fact that the Scottish Qualifications Framework can recognise all types of learning is attractive and highly applicable in international contexts. There is currently active engagement between the SCQF Partnership and Malta, Hong Kong and Bahrain. In 2018-19, the partnership hosted international visiting delegations from nine different countries.

Where countries have engaged with SQA or SCQF, there is a natural advantage for Scottish colleges to follow this lead. The qualification framework is familiar and can be easily mapped to the college curriculum which, as highlighted in section 3.3., is broad-ranging. Colleges in the Scottish system are also 'credit rating bodies' which means they can credit-rate qualifications on behalf of SCQF. This gives Scottish colleges the ability to create, accredit and deliver qualifications internationally, which is unique within the UK.

Both organisations regularly partner with colleges, providing a compelling collaborative proposition where qualifications and frameworks can be developed, rated and delivered in any subject, at any level and any country internationally. The credibility of this well-established, and highly regarded coherent system provides an agile dimension to Scotland's already formidable education reputation. This is highly relevant to the many governments seeking to modernise their education and skills systems. This will also be relevant in the international response to Covid-19, as the need for new skills and training programmes emerges in the recovery phases.

8 SQA (2019) *SQA Track Record*. https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/sqa-international-consultancy-services-track-record.pdf

➤ CASE STUDY

SCQF PARTNERSHIP AND CITY OF GLASGOW COLLEGE, D'AHoy ERASMUS+ PROJECT

SCQF Partnership and City of Glasgow College teamed up with partners from France, Iceland and Spain to develop a 'Decision Skills Framework', in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) contexts, designed to be integrated into higher education and vocational education settings in Europe.

The opportunity came about after staff from IMT Atlantique attended an SCQF Partnership study visit, the partnership was then extended to include City of Glasgow College, Ecole Navale and FREREF (Lifelong Learning Foundation in France; Reykjavik University, and the University-Business Foundation of the Balearic Islands.

The SCQF Partnership along with City of Glasgow College have contributed their expertise in the use of learning outcomes and developing programmes for inclusion in national frameworks, and the project has utilised SCQF level descriptors and SCQF employer levelling tool, amongst other resources during the project.

This funded project has promoted the Scottish education system and demonstrates the flexibility and applicability of the national framework across specialist settings and international borders.

3.5.2 Culture, community and industry

Scotland has made its size an asset through its ability to collaborate. The multi-organisational approach taken through the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board demonstrates Scotland's ability to bring sectors together to articulate and advance a vision.

The interviews revealed many good working relationships across the sector and its stakeholders. The ability to pick up the phone to or go and see government, agencies and even ministers was seen as an advantage of working in the Scottish context. Regionalisation has also supported the building of relationships between colleges, albeit whilst retaining a respectful sense of competition in some areas.

The Scottish sector's manageable size makes it attractive to international delegations seeking to comprehend education and particularly vocational education 'as a system':

“ When colleges of potential partners come from overseas to see what we do, the common observation is that the Scottish system seems to operate at a scale and in a way that others can relate to. It seems to be an ecosystem that makes sense to partners in other countries.”

JIM METCALFE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CDN

The Scottish skills system is imbued with values which, whilst accepted as standard in Scotland, make for powerful propositions that international governments without such a cohesive system are keen to emulate.

The following were among the many distinctive assets that are particularly attractive in the sphere of education system development and reform:

- Colleges as 'anchor institutions' with a regionalised curriculum offer that reflects the industries and communities it represents
- Emphasis on life-long learning, and return to education for career development – the community college model
- Well-trained staff, robust quality assurance and strong careers advice and guidance
- Proactive and continuous industry engagement and a reputation for innovation
- Articulation agreements and partnerships with universities
- A welcoming, safe and supportive learning culture
- A deeply embedded promotion of inclusion supporting learners with additional needs and reaching out to the most disadvantaged communities

- Technology-enhanced and virtual learning capabilities
- Collaborative culture, and a scale that encourages dialogue between colleges ministers, government and other actors across the sector

These qualities are relevant for governments, and also offer a richness of learning experience that is distinct and compelling: **“We aren’t just offering expertise; we are exporting the Scottish value-set: Our heritage, geography, the Scottish attitude to social justice and inclusivity. For international students, these things can transcend the learning experience.”**

Colleges already cooperate on a sub-regional and national level. Brought together as a group of partners and collaborators underpinned by a strong tertiary system, colleges can directly support Scotland’s international and economic ambitions.

➤ CASE STUDY

EDINBURGH COLLEGE PARTNER WITH SCOTLAND’S RURAL COLLEGE (SRUC) TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE IN PANAMA

Edinburgh College was the lead partner in a consortium to advise the Panamanian Ministry of Agriculture on the establishment of the *Instituto Tecnico Superior de Agricultura (ITSA)*. *The consortium also included a partnership with Sunderland College in England.*

The project involved a feasibility study on curriculum development, skills analysis, teacher training and the learner journey from high school to the college (ITSA) and university.

The resulting report analysed the current and future skills requirements for land-based industries in Panama, in order to ensure that the institution was focused on meeting the skills needs of industry; and proposed recommendations for the development of the new curriculum.

The final report provided the foundation for the establishment of the ITSA.

4 WHY INTERNATIONALISE?

4.1 Spotlight on Scotland

Scotland's education and skills system punches above its weight both at home and abroad. A progressive and cohesive system, it is based on values of inclusion and life-long learning and has resulted in "one of the highest percentages of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education among the nations and regions of the EU."⁹

Internationally, Scotland's system enjoys a well-founded and formidable reputation. Education, alongside enterprise and digital strengths are considered as Scotland's most compelling soft-power assets¹⁰. Scotland's education exports grew to £805m in 2018, rising 3% on the previous year¹¹.

Export or commercial income is not shared proportionally across the tertiary sector. Colleges attract far less international income than universities. For example, although colleges provide 26% of higher education in Scotland, they attract less than 3.5% of the total international students¹².

But these headlines are not the story. Scotland's tertiary education system has a far wider relevance and role in internationalisation than headline export or student recruitment data suggest. A closer look is needed in order to identify the value that colleges currently contribute in this context and the central role that they need to play in Scotland's international ambitions.

A Trading Nation differentiates between the role of education as an export sector in its own right and the role of education as one of the 'enabling sectors' **'through the innate value they add to Scotland's overarching offer'**.

The *Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board Strategic Plan*¹³ seeks to raise Scotland's position in the OECD rankings for productivity, equality, wellbeing and sustainability. It sets the ambition to: **"Encourage a global mindset, with the aims of Scotland being viewed globally as a progressive country with positive attitudes to migration, appreciation of the value of learning a foreign language, and significantly increasing the number of Scottish students who gain international experience."**

This is a very broad and integrated conceptualisation of internationalisation.

Scotland's National Performance Framework, the guiding principles of government policy, sets out that **"We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy"** and that **"we are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally."** Scottish college success in WorldSkills, participation

9 Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board (2018) *Working collaboratively for a better Scotland: Outline Strategic Plan*. Available: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/corporate-report/2018/06/enterprise-and-skills-strategic-board-outline-plan/documents/essb-outline-strategic-plan-june-2018-single-page-version-pdf/essb-outline-strategic-plan-june-2018-single-page-version-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/ESSB%2BOutline%2BStrategic%2BPlan%2BJune%2B2018%2B-%2Bsingle%2Bpage%2Bversion.pdf>

10 British Council (2020) *Gauging International Perceptions: Scotland and Soft Power*. https://scotland.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/t0026_scottish_soft_power_doc_s1_v20.pdf

11 Scottish Government (2020) *Export Statistics Scotland 2018*. <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2020/01/export-statistics-scotland-2018/documents/export-statistics-scotland-2018---publication/export-statistics-scotland-2018--publication/govscot%3Adocument/Export%2BStatistics%2BScotland%2B2018%2B-%2BPublication.pdf>

12 Calculated with data taken from: Scottish Government (2018) *The Impact of International Students in Scotland*. <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/corporate-report/2018/03/impact-international-students-scotland-scottish-government-response-migration-advisory-committees/documents/00532586-pdf/00532586-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00532586.pdf>

13 Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board (2018) *Working collaboratively for a better Scotland: Outline Strategic Plan*. <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/corporate-report/2018/06/enterprise-and-skills-strategic-board-outline-plan/documents/essb-outline-strategic-plan-june-2018-single-page-version-pdf/essb-outline-strategic-plan-june-2018-single-page-version-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/ESSB%2BOutline%2BStrategic%2BPlan%2BJune%2B2018%2B-%2Bsingle%2Bpage%2Bversion.pdf>

in Erasmus+ and a history of welcoming refugee communities all exemplify this.

The *Cumberford-Little Report* considers the role of internationalisation in colleges through two outward-looking lenses: The first seeks to benchmark and compete with ‘the best skills nations worldwide’ and the second, in reference to *A Trading Nation*, to unlock the sector’s export potential.

“ Scottish Government are promoting Scotland as a destination to ‘live, work and study’. This is an opportunity to shape how the work of colleges contributes to the National Performance Framework, and it’s important that colleges embrace this.”

**AUDREY CUMBERFORD MBE, PRINCIPAL
AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDINBURGH COLLEGE**

CASE STUDY

FROM STUDENT TO STAFF – AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE FROM DUNDEE AND ANGUS COLLEGE

Tatiana Zorina joined Dundee and Angus College in 2010 as a full time ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) student. A Russian citizen who had achieved a Masters degree in Economics in her home country, she started the course to improve her English following the birth of her son. After going on to further qualifications with the college, and a period of voluntary work, she secured a role as a Learner Engagement Officer at the college in 2014. She strongly believes that her experiences have helped her improve the student journey for others.

“ I have different experiences and views on life to other members of staff, and I know how it feels to join the college as a non-native English speaker”.

Her experiences have led her to improve advice and guidance for students progressing from ESOL courses. She has now implemented taster sessions for these students, so they can join potential classes of interest and make a more informed decision. She supported the Principal as the Project Manager for the Good to Great Project in 2017, and continues to run regular multicultural parties where students bring and share food from their native countries; and run arts and crafts markets that celebrate international traditions. The Principal commented that ESOL is now one of the most vibrant and social areas of the College.

Tatiana also delivers a training course for students called RESPECT, in which she explores attitudes to protected characteristics, and is always happy to put herself forward as a case study for discussion. “Some students say that they wouldn’t want to live near someone from another country or culture, when I remind them that I am from Russia, they quickly say – ‘oh, but I didn’t mean you!’ They soon realise that we’re all individuals deserving respect. We have fun with discussing scenarios, and we make great progress in these sessions.” Tatiana is ambitious and hopes to progress her career with the college.

“ I’m grateful to the College, the staff here have helped me through my journey, and I want to improve the experience for our current and future students.”

CASE STUDY

FROM STUDENT TO STAFF – AN INTERNATIONALISATION EXPERIENCE IGNITES A NEW CAREER AT NEW COLLEGE LANARKSHIRE

After facing redundancy, having worked for the same company for 28 years, Frances Morris joined the college to gain qualifications to support her return to employment.

Whilst studying, she gained a place on the Leonardo project and undertook a two-week mobility programme in Grenoble, France.

“ The placement had such an impact on me, I returned to college to further my education, firstly HNC, HND and then completed a degree programme the College runs in partnership with University of the West of Scotland.”

After completing her degree, she returned to the College having secured a position within the Business Development Team, and now supports outbound Erasmus+ mobility projects as an accompanying adult.

She has supported several student mobility activities, including one group of eight hospitality students, four of whom had additional needs.

“ This was particularly challenging, but it was the most enjoyable experience. It was most rewarding seeing the students growing in confidence and undertaking new challenges.”

Her passion for mobility programmes is founded on her own experience:

“ I am a massive supporter of this programme. For me, taking part in the project gave me the confidence to continue with my education, helped me overcome barriers that I faced and I remember fondly the people we met, the relationships formed and the new skills and knowledge gained. Also at the age of 49, the programme has led me to secure employment in a job that I love which is a massive career change as I previously worked in retail. Working as an accompanying adult is equally rewarding – seeing the students grow in confidence, tackling challenges and emerging as assertive adults is an immense pleasure to see.”

4.2 Concept and consensus

For the purposes of this research, the term ‘internationalisation’ was defined as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”¹⁴. This broad definition reflects the College sector’s multi-faceted role in internationalisation encompassing:

- The ambitious and innovative commercial partnerships, in which some colleges excel
- The integration of internationalised perspectives which are relevant for all colleges. This is exemplified by the ‘looking outwards’ and ‘looking forwards’ elements of the ‘virtuous cycle of improvement’ (fig.4.2) underpinning the quality framework for colleges in Scotland
- The celebration of diversity and culture of inclusion that is deeply embedded and embraced throughout the Scottish college sector

Internationalisation is part of the fabric of Scotland’s colleges, but the critical next step is an articulation or shared sense of agreement on the importance

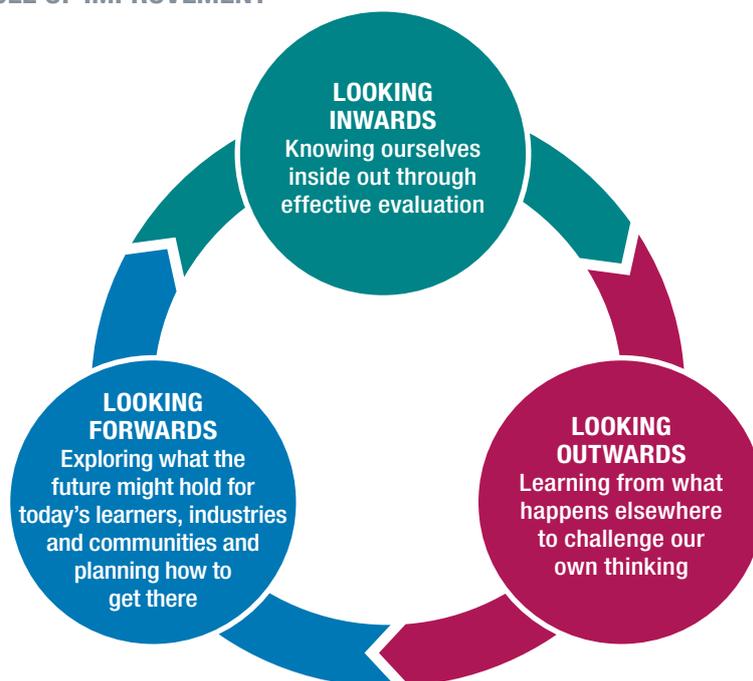
¹⁴ Knight, J. (2004) *Internationalization Remodelled: Definition, Approaches and Rationales*. Association for Studies in International Education

and nature of internationalisation in colleges, and a coherent vision for how this should evolve as the sector looks forward.

The reasons given for internationalisation by contributors fell into a number of categories. Approximately half gave an immediate response relating to income, commenting that generating additional income was essential to their ongoing operations. Many expected that this need would become more acute as public funding came under increased pressure in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

The second largest response related to the standards, quality and relevance of education which was promoted through internationalisation. One principal commented, **“We need to keep being challenged to move forward – maintain the impetus for continued professional curiosity and professional development.”** Another said: **“Internationalisation activity gives us the opportunity to innovate through international relationships and learning from partners – you only get this where there is staff exchange and student exchange.”**

FIG 4.2: VIRTUOUS CYCLE OF IMPROVEMENT



“ We operate in a global context, so the experience of staff working internationally can only be a good thing.”

AUDREY CUMBERFORD MBE, PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDINBURGH COLLEGE

Another common theme was the creation of a multinational and inclusive learning environment: **“We are a community-based college, but it doesn’t mean we should be insular.”**

“ We feel strongly that local students benefit from the opportunity to mix with students from other countries, and the resultant diversity also provides a welcoming and encouraging environment for a diverse range of students from our communities too.”

ANGUS ALLAN, DEPUTE PRINCIPAL, SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COLLEGE

Individual student opportunities were a persuasive motivation for many colleges. **“Student exchange changes students’ lives”**, said one principal. **“Many people in deprived communities get to adulthood without leaving their communities, never mind going abroad. There is also a capillary effect – students speak to students; families speak to families and individuals are inspired to come to the college. Word of mouth is essential. It encourages school children to raise their aspirations; it encourages workers to return to education during their careers.”**

A small number of contributors made the point that international recognition magnifies recognition at home, sharing examples where international activities and visiting delegations had gained the support of Scottish ministers. These themes were explored and tested with college representatives through three questions, which show results below.

FIG 4.2.1: TO WHAT EXTENT WOULD YOU AGREE THAT INTERNATIONALISATION IS A HIGH PRIORITY FOR THE SCOTTISH COLLEGE SECTOR?

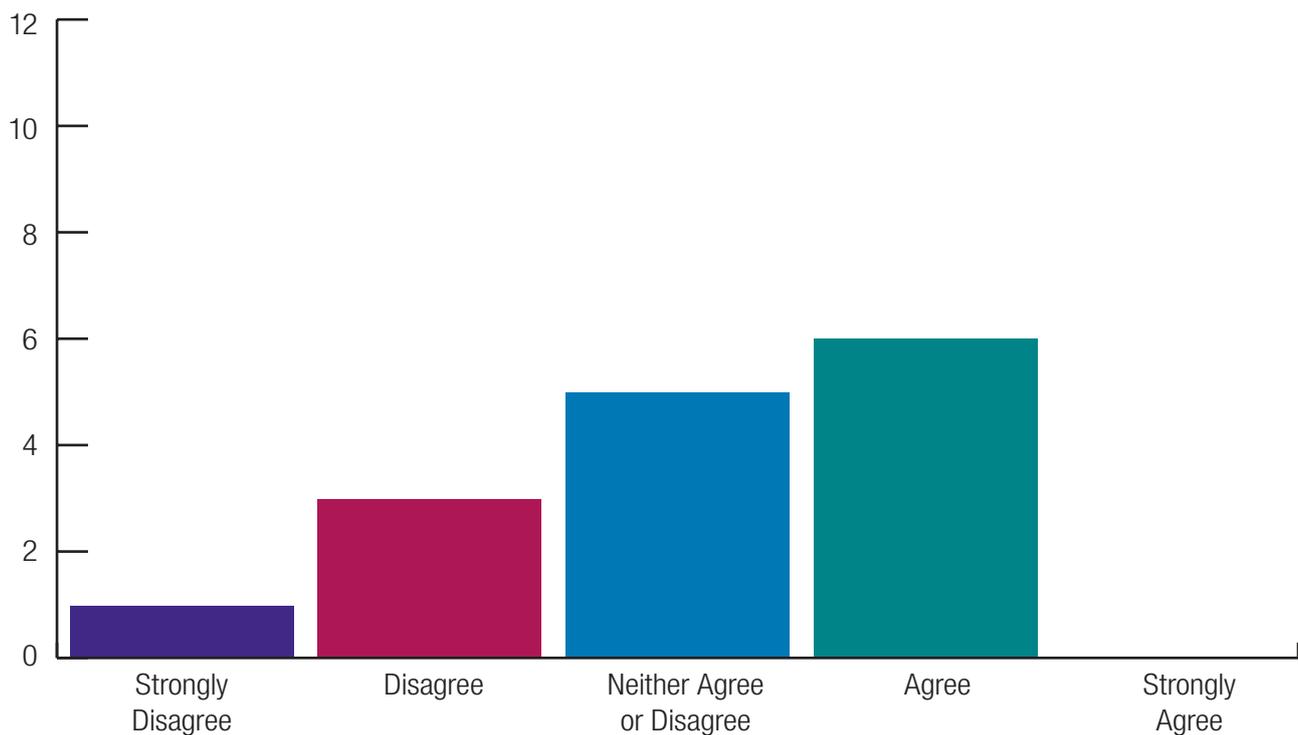
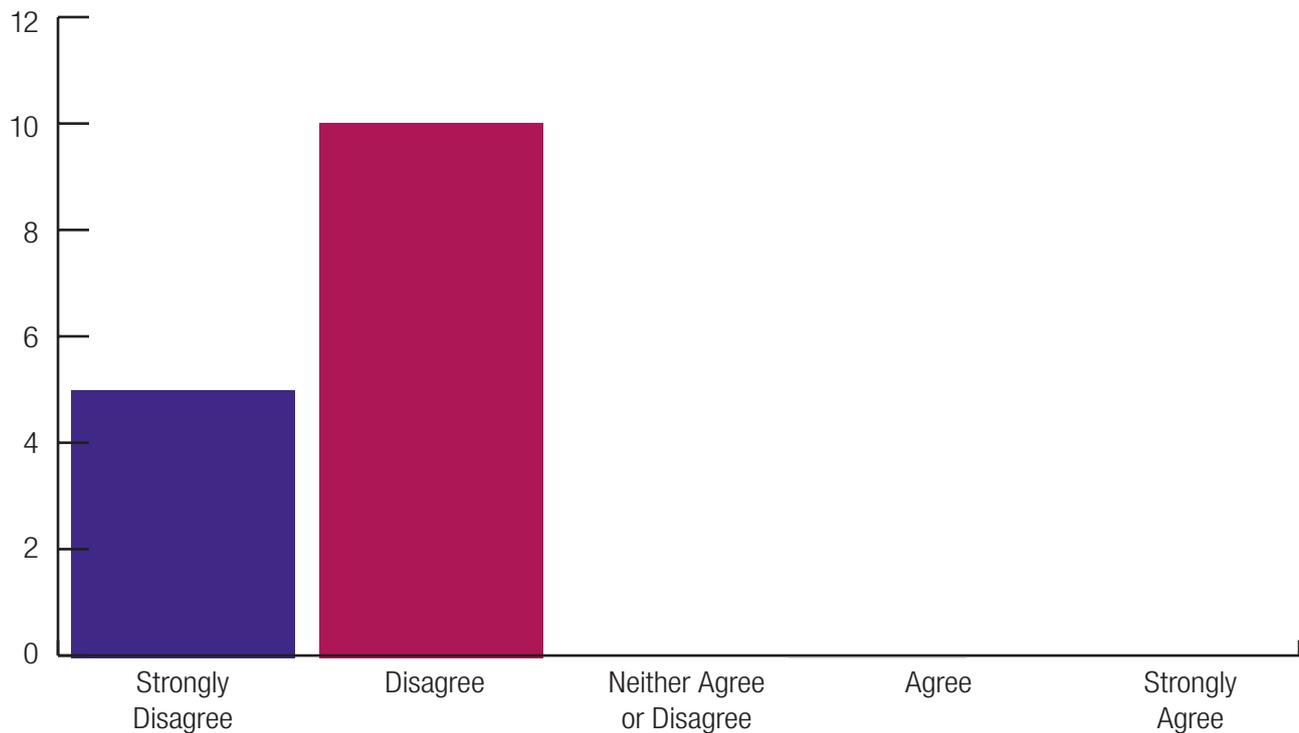


FIG 4.2.2: TO WHAT EXTENT WOULD YOU AGREE THAT THE COLLEGE SECTOR IN SCOTLAND FULFILS ITS INTERNATIONAL POTENTIAL?



The range of responses in fig 4.2.1 was indicative of differing views across college leadership and a sense that there was no clear benchmark or reference against which to assess; a logical outcome given the different meanings of ‘internationalisation’. Some contributors commented, **“it is important for us, but I don’t know how important it is for other colleges,”** suggesting a lack of visibility of international activity amongst the college community. Two principals commented that WorldSkills competitions were an activity that was committed to comprehensively. One principal commented that internationalisation, **“should be a priority but it doesn’t fit with the system”**, and another volunteered that, **“internationalisation is important for the Scottish college sector because it is important to the Scottish Government.”**

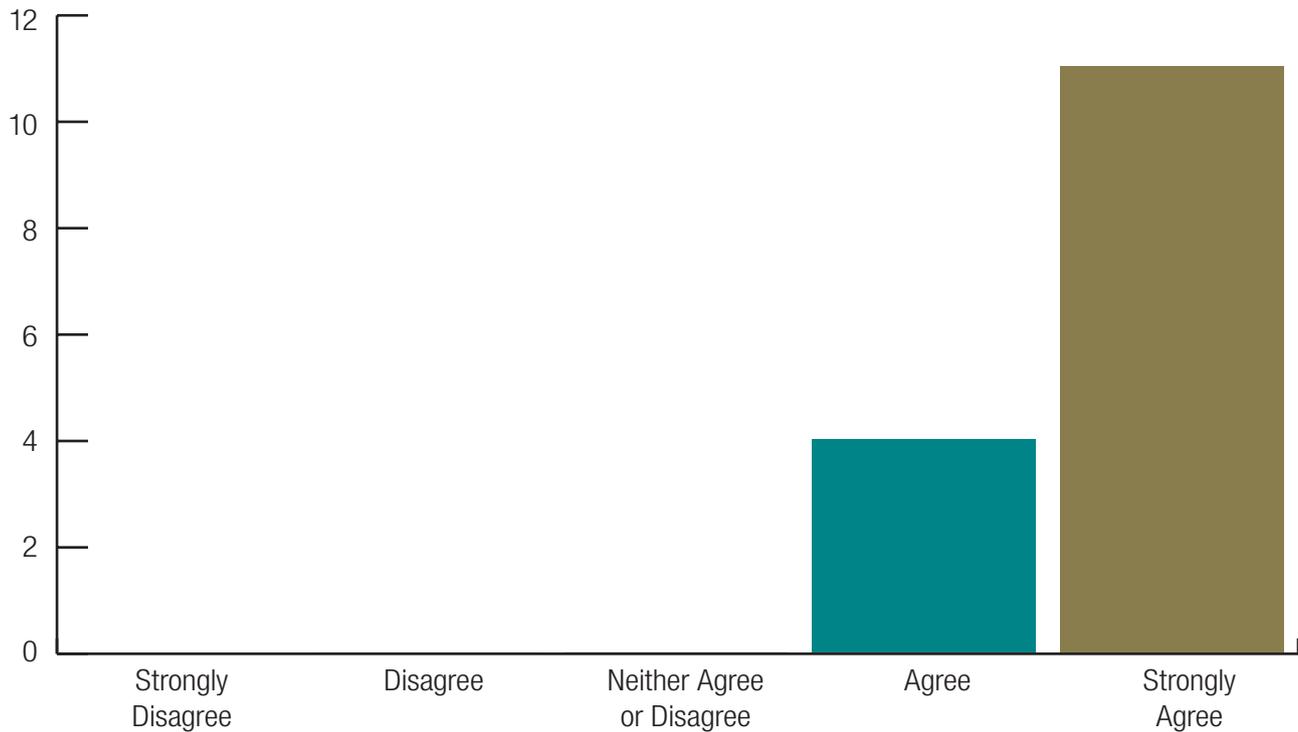
This question was answered more easily and there was clear consensus that the sector is currently punching below its weight. There was a recognition that there was room for growth, and that the sector was under-represented in terms of overseas

students. **“There is so much more we could be doing, even within the existing offer.”** A lack of stability in the sector and restrictive funding regulations were commonly cited as barriers; immigration regulations were also widely perceived to disproportionately disadvantage international recruitment for the college sector.

This question related to the role of college education put forward in *A Trading Nation* and builds on the emerging and strengthening conceptualisation of colleges as civic anchors in their regions and important actors within the national infrastructure. The *Cumberford-Little Report* puts forward that colleges, **“can and must play an even more pivotal role in developing our economy.”**

The response to the question shown in fig 4.2.3 was given with unified conviction across all respondents: **“This is really important for Scotland, and particularly important for rural communities.”** **“Colleges are well-placed to support industry growth, full stop.”**

FIG 4.2.3: TO WHAT EXTENT WOULD YOU AGREE THAT THE SCOTTISH COLLEGE SECTOR SHOULD PLAY AN 'ENABLING' ROLE IN SCOTLAND'S INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY?



As participants expanded their answers, many felt that the college sector had been overlooked, and that the Scottish Government and other agencies more readily worked with and engaged universities when it came to international promotion and collaboration.

There was also an appetite to address and improve these relationships: **“Colleges should be involved in Trade Missions, supporting inward investment through the skills offer. Colleges should promote the whole economy of Scotland.”**

“Structural deficits, lack of productivity, innovation and internationalisation. Colleges need to be part of that discussion.”

There were numerous mentions of a ‘Team Scotland’ approach, and some suggestions that an intermediary function was needed:

“The college system should be enabling, but it needs a middle person – a skilled conduit who understands both the college sector and the international market.”

4.3 International Alumni

Most Scottish colleges do not currently have an established model of alumni activity. Data from the CDN International Network workshop conducted as part of this research showed that about half the colleges represented don’t have a formal approach to working with international alumni or that they collected some data, but this was unlikely to be complete. Principals echoed this response, with the majority having no alumni office or function for international or home learners.

One stakeholder from the wider sector felt that the development of international alumni should be part of a sector-wide co-ordinated approach to encouraging ongoing relationships with all ex-students, which would also support the improved capture of progression data.

“Alumni will be a slow burn. Colleges have never tracked alumni. It should be a priority for other reasons, not least in tracking employment outcomes in our own country.”

If we only [developed alumni relationships] for international students, this would be an underuse.”

Part of the reason that alumni models are relatively underdeveloped in the sector is due to the low numbers of full time international (non-EU) students recruited by most colleges. College international activities are more likely to include exchanges or mobility programmes, short and professional courses, and transnational activity. The variety of activities that take place in colleges makes the process of alumni engagement challenging. For example, not all students physically attend the college and not all have a graduation experience. In some (though by no means all) instances, students who experience short or remote interactions with colleges may not acquire the same institutional affiliation that might be experienced over a full-time programme spanning several years.

It is also noteworthy that many of the international professional courses run by colleges attract groups of considerable seniority and potential influence. For example, Edinburgh College’s workshops for international groups of college principals and City of Glasgow College’s training for Vietnamese government officials reviewing their social security legislation. These professional ‘alumni’ together with the large numbers of visiting ministerial delegations that colleges can receive could present an opportunity to leverage more senior influence internationally, provided the data can be captured and shared appropriately.

The notable exception with regard to international alumni strategy was City of Glasgow College, which offers international students the opportunity to register as an alumnus at the point of their graduation (see case study on following page).

“ There is an opportunity for colleges to benefit from increased alumni engagement to support both internationalisation and tracking student outcomes. In co-creating a plan that spans both the university and college sectors, there is further opportunity for collaboration between universities and colleges on alumni engagement, including sharing best practice. Developing this plan is particularly important in light of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL,
TRADE AND INVESTMENT DELIVERY
DIVISION, SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT**

“We are different to universities so we need to create an approach that works for the college. Again, this requires upfront investment, and we would need to be confident that this is the best investment at this time.”



➤ CASE STUDY

CITY OF GLASGOW COLLEGE ALUMNI

City of Glasgow College invites international students to join the College's alumni database at their point of graduation. In 2019, a total of 385 international students, from 38 different nationalities joined the alumni database.

The College has a dedicated alumni officer who maintains accurate records and sends regular communications. The alumni select their preferences when they join the database, for example by opting in to receiving regular communications, or confirming whether they would be prepared to appear in a case study or support a future graduation ceremony.

Alumni, as well as international Scottish diaspora (i.e. Scottish alumni, now living abroad), often return to the College to give presentations to selected student groups, which can be a huge source of inspiration and a way of raising the aspirations of existing students.

“ Our strategy has evolved from just keeping in touch with alumni to seeking some kind of influence or benefit from them for the current student cohort. For example, we have senior alumni in JP Morgan in New York, who can offer invaluable insights and advice for our students pursuing a career in business and finance. We think of alumni as our ‘Away team’ – opening doors, offering wise counsel and possibly even providing jobs.”

DR PAUL LITTLE, PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CITY OF GLASGOW COLLEGE

The College had recently planned to bring a group of 40 alumni and diaspora together to meet in New York, though this has been postponed due to Covid-19 until it is safe to do so.



5 FACTORS LIMITING INTERNATIONALISATION IN COLLEGES

5.1 National policy alignment

While colleges were unanimously positive about the role they could and should be playing in internationalisation, there was strong sentiment that educational policy and systems could be better aligned with this agenda.

“There is [international] skill and talent in the system, but the current structures are not conducive.”

Many contributors commented that internationalisation was not suitably reflected in regional outcome agreements.

“International activity doesn’t really feature in regional outcome agreements, so there is no incentive for colleges to explore internationalisation unless they feel that it brings a specific benefit. This is quite at odds with Scottish Government agenda, which is very much around internationalisation.”

Several contributors commented that the funding structure discouraged colleges’ international ambitions, observing that volume-based funding incentivised short-term decision making. The majority of participants with experience in developing international relationships, emphasised the importance of needing to develop relationships and maintain a consistent market presence over a number of years in order to deliver worthwhile and valuable outcomes. Most pointed out that it was not realistic to expect a financial return in the first year of working with a new international partner. The

facility to invest in a return for the longer term would broaden the international development opportunities available.

“We need to reintroduce the concept of strategic projects supported by strategic funding.”

“The current classification restricts the activities colleges are able to undertake, and the strategic contribution they are able to make.”

It was suggested that **“SFC could broaden their use of the flexible workforce development fund to working with international companies or companies that export internationally.”**

Several contributors called for a deeper systemic review:

“ The sector needs to know that it is stable and financially sustainable in order to establish a collective position on its role internationally. International partnerships and collaborations take time to nurture. Internationalisation of our vocational and technical ‘offer’ is a key ambition for many colleges in Scotland and is consistent with the Scottish Government’s priority to see Scotland as a strong trading nation.”

**AUDREY CUMBERFORD MBE, PRINCIPAL
AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDINBURGH COLLEGE**

5.2 Brexit and student visa restrictions

The UK's withdrawal from the EU remains a concern for colleges. Some spoke of a sudden decline in European student applications following the Brexit vote, and others described a fading of previously vibrant European partnerships during the uncertainty that followed the UK's EU membership vote in 2016. A number of contributors were most concerned about the future of Erasmus+ mobility funding, with one commenting that **“Losing Erasmus+ [mobility funding] would be one of the biggest threats to student experience at this college.”**

In the main, Scotland's colleges do not depend on Tier 4 recruitment for their international work. The short-term study visa is widely used for teacher-training, summer schools and short professional courses. However, UK student visa restrictions over the last 10 years have left colleges without some of the marketing assets that other areas of UK education currently enjoy e.g. visa extensions and part-time working rights. The discontinuation of the Fresh Talent Scheme in Scotland for post-study work left colleges (and universities) without a key selling point for the international marketplace. Student visa policy for colleges has subsequently changed little since 2015. No new restrictions have been introduced and there has been some relaxation of policy around the edges. Some commented that: **“The recent flexibility with regard to Tier 4 regulations has inspired us to re-energise our international work.”**

In January 2021 freedom of movement will end and the UK's new immigration system will come into effect. This will mean that **any college wishing to recruit new students or staff from within the EU will need to hold Tier 4 and 2 licences**. The immigration regime provoked strong responses:

“What is holding us back is the Home Office's out of date attitude towards large colleges with international students and in particular the restrictions on our students who do not have the same opportunities to work or stay on after completing their qualifications like peers in universities enjoy. It puts colleges like my own – the 5th biggest in the UK and bigger than many universities – at a distinct disadvantage and is the major limiting factor in what we can offer our students, both now and in the future.”

**DR PAUL LITTLE, PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
CITY OF GLASGOW COLLEGE**

5.3 Practical challenges

College structures are not necessarily aligned with or designed for the task of competing in international markets and delivering overseas. The annual planning cycle for example was not conducive to winning business in a competitive environment. Although there is a wealth of subject expertise across colleges, releasing it can be a challenge. One member of the CDN International Network commented that, **“Curriculum staff are likely to be timetabled for their 23 + 1 hours. There is little slack in the system to respond to new business at the development stage for things like contributing to bids or curriculum mapping”**.

Several smaller colleges commented that they were not able to justify a role or budget for international development. Even in larger colleges there was a sense that internationalisation was precarious in the pecking order of priorities. Business development teams tend to cover both international and employer-facing development roles, hence it would be these teams who would be drawn on to

stimulate employer engagement for things like the Flexible Workforce Development programme. This was thought to be a potential risk in the Covid-19 recovery period, as local development and shorter-term wins may be prioritised over typically longer-term international business cycles.

For most colleges, the combination of the annual planning cycle and the lack of dedicated or consistent resource severely limits the adoption of a planned strategic approach.

The logic of such an approach might be to identify core products and target markets and to invest a modest budget and time commitment to researching, marketing and the development of a customer base. However, the prevailing commercial reality for most colleges is one of responding to potential opportunities that arrive through bid portals, UK agencies or any number of external approaches; and these require swift decision-making, knowledge of effective bid-writing and co-ordinated responses from across the organisation.

Finally, the perception and assessment of risk across colleges was a feature of the landscape, but not one that was approached with consistency across the sector. Many contributors were uncomfortable with the risk / reward balance inherent in holding a Tier 4 licence for low student numbers. There was also a sense of aversion to international work from some governing boards; due to a general, but unclearly defined sense of 'risk'. Colleges were also inconsistent in their decision-making with regard to the countries they would and would not associate with. Saudi Arabia was the country that was mentioned most frequently in this context.

Colleges need **'official space and permission to move forward, and a good evidence base of what works well.'**



6 OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Scottish colleges have already achieved significant internationalisation and export success. For the most globally-active colleges, the benefits of internationalisation translate back into the college community and college finances. For the rest, the benefits are perhaps less clear and the risks more daunting. If the Scottish college international offer was coordinated, promoted and supported at a national level, Scottish Technical and Vocational Training, or 'TVET' could accelerate its international export standing.

6.1 Opportunities

“ As we look at how Covid-19 has changed the sector, it is an opportunity for us to reimagine our role in supporting economic recovery and growth, and therefore reimagine how internationalisation could support this.”

VICTORIA UNDERWOOD, HEAD OF LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE, CDN

Global population and labour market trends are shifting. More than four in 10 people (42% of the world's population) are aged under 25¹⁵. Of all world regions, Sub Saharan Africa and parts of Asia are experiencing the most rapid expansion in their youth populations. The focus of economic as well as demographic growth is forecast to take place outwith Europe: 90% of global growth in the next 10 to 15 years is expected to originate in countries outside the EU¹⁶. Competition in

international education has become more intense. Countries such as Australia, Canada and Germany have significantly increased their share of the global student recruitment market and are strong competitors in the vocational sector too¹⁷.

Scotland's colleges have a right to their share of this market and as this report has outlined, some Scottish colleges are already heavily involved in international development. However, it is more likely – and certainly whilst Covid-19 limits international travel – that the export potential for Scottish colleges lies in a consortium approach. This could be as a single consortium, as a number of smaller consortia, in partnering with the UK Skills Partnership or with colleges in other parts of the UK and with local university partners in order to seek larger capacity-building and consultancy opportunities that exploit sectorial strengths. Opportunities for colleges in international student recruitment are fairly static, Erasmus+ may continue or be replaced by a UK alternative and engagement in other types of activity such as summer schools is a decision for individual colleges. Scotland's colleges bidding together for business could be a game changer.

Scottish colleges are uniquely positioned to support education and skills system reform through a highly cohesive national skills framework. As already discussed in this report, they are well-aligned to support the industries prioritised in *A Trading Nation* and can demonstrate that their provision across many of these sectors is world-class. As the demand for TVET grows, the World Economic Forum estimates

15 World Economic Forum (2018) *What you need to know about the world's youth, in 7 charts*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/08/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-worlds-young-people-in-7-charts/>

16 Department for International Trade (2018) *Britain's Trading Future*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/britains-trading-future>

17 ICEF Monitor (2018) *Up and down the table: Growth trends across major international study destinations*. <https://monitor.icef.com/2018/08/up-and-down-the-table-growth-trends-across-major-international-study-destinations/>

that more than one billion people will need to reskill by 2030¹⁸. The fastest growing professions will be in care, engineering, cloud computing, AI and green jobs. Many governments and countries are working to reform their TVET systems and capacity with the dual objective of providing inclusive employability for growing populations and to drive national productivity in the labour force. The opportunities for Scottish colleges are considerable. However, the UK 2019 International Education Strategy estimates that further education accounts for only 1.5% of the UK's education export totals, whilst universities account for 67% (although the report admits that data collection requires improvement)¹⁹. The same report echoes the growing demand for TVET, referencing that the Department for International Trade (DIT) receives approaches from overseas administrations seeking government-to-government expertise in this area on a regular basis:

“ UK colleges and the wider education system have a powerful story to tell. Colleges in Scotland need to build on their successes – there are many more opportunities that could be accessed through collaborative efforts.”

JONATHAN LEDGER, DIT

The UK Government is currently administering its £1.2bn cross-government Prosperity Fund which includes several programmes dedicated to skills: the £75m Skills for Prosperity Fund, which offers market access to nine middle-income countries; the Skills for Jobs India, which seeks to develop capacity across the Indian skills sector²⁰. The UK is not the only funder supporting access to education and skills projects. International governments and

NGOs frequently invite tenders from skills providers through open global competition. Budgets are large, and policies are agile in their response to changing global factors. For example, in response to Covid-19, the World Bank announced funding of \$14bn²¹, and the Asian Development Bank has allocated \$20bn for its member countries, a proportion of which will be allocated to upskilling and reskilling activities²².

As the coronavirus pandemic has shown, the way people learn is changing. The continuing demand to upskill and reskill through new technology paradigms has brought a renewed focus on adult and work-based learning. In April 2020, 59% of the global population is online²³, and over 45% have smartphones²⁴. 'TVET' was a term that was used to refer to entry-level skills, however in the 'fourth industrial revolution', TVET now more frequently includes higher level skills – an area of expertise in Scotland's colleges. In the same way that online delivery may become the new norm for a short while at least, in recent years, transnational education (TNE) programmes have grown more rapidly than traditional international student recruitment. This opens up a large new market for international students for whom international study wasn't affordable, for example in China's rapidly expanding middle classes.

However, if Scottish colleges are to compete successfully for such contracts, some steps towards change will be needed.

18 World Economic Forum (2020) *We need a global reskilling revolution – here's why*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/reskilling-revolution-jobs-future-skills/>

19 HM Government (2019) *International Education Strategy: Global Potential, Global Growth*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799349/International_Education_Strategy_Accessible.pdf

20 UK Government (2020) *Cross-Government Prosperity Fund*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cross-government-prosperity-fund-programme>

21 World Bank (2020) *World Bank Group Increases Covid-19 Response to \$14 Billion To Help Sustain Economies, Protect Jobs*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/03/17/world-bank-group-increases-covid-19-response-to-14-billion-to-help-sustain-economies-protect-jobs>

22 Reuters (2020) *Asian Development Bank triples coronavirus rescue package to \$20 billion*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-ADB/asian-development-bank-triples-coronavirus-rescue-package-to-20-billion-idUSKCN21V0M5>

23 Statista (2020) *Global digital population as of April 2020*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/>

24 Bankmycall (2020) *How many smartphones are in the world? May 2020 mobile user statistics*. <https://www.bankmycall.com/blog/how-many-phones-are-in-the-world>

6.2 Recommendations

“It is important that the sector doesn’t work in isolation. A collaborative approach, working with Scottish Government, Scottish Development International and the UK Government networks will be essential.”

SHONA STRUTHERS,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, COLLEGES SCOTLAND

The research interviews that underpin this report generated a richness of comments, ideas and delivery models to help colleges develop their export potential. From those conversations, a clear set of college strengths and a rationale for internationalisation in colleges emerge:

- To support Scotland’s international ambitions
- To diversify income and reduce reliance on core funding
- To encourage the international aspects of the curriculum (including WorldSkills and mobility activities such as Erasmus+), an inherent strength in the Scottish system

In terms of next steps, the most consistent themes are:

- A need for the collective articulation of the international mission of colleges – the voice and argument to drive further coherence in policy strategy
- A forward-looking discussion on the alignment of regional outcome agreements, quality inspection frameworks, funding methodology and potentially the reclassification of colleges in the context of international work
- A collaborative operating model and a firm place within ‘Team Scotland’
- A ‘seat at the table’ with regard to Scotland and the UK’s international strategies
- A preparedness for the challenges of the post-Brexit international market

Based on the research conversations and their alignment with current policy and practice, a set of recommendations are proposed.

“There is something about being part of an international innovative system. The Team Scotland idea – the philosophy of us being part of the wider world and a progressive player internationally is a really important social driver. There is a moral reason that colleges in Scotland should be working with other education systems that want to develop. It fits with the landscape of our society. We can help some people to develop and there are some things we can learn too.”

JIM METCALFE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CDN

RECOMMENDATION 1



The establishment of a strategic level group to represent internationalisation

This recommendation underpins all others. A senior-level group should be created to champion a compelling narrative for internationalisation on behalf of Scottish colleges. This should not seek to change any individual college’s approach to its internationalisation activities, but rather to ensure that a strategic perspective is maintained within the sector and to act as the key interface and designated representative in policy dialogue.

This supports the recommendation by Enterprise and Skills Board, **“to encourage more inclusive student mobility post-Brexit; and build a collective focus to support and champion the re-introduction of the post-study work visa to allow international students to extend their stay and work.”** (Exp (R1) *Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board Strategic Plan*)

RECOMMENDATION 2



The inclusion of Scotland's colleges in the internationalisation agenda and ongoing system reforms

The *Cumberford-Little Report* calls on government to support closer college alignment with Scotland's Enterprise Agencies, and increased participation with SDI in supporting the Scottish college sector to develop its export potential. This recommendation calls for a re-energised commitment to ensure colleges are included at policy-making level, within national economic coherence and are supported to fulfil their international potential.

The Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board adds, **“There may now be additional value in SFC [the Scottish Funding Council] adopting a stronger interest in the international dimension of colleges’ and universities’ export earnings, international activity and soft power of international alumni networks.”**

RECOMMENDATION 3



The development of sector-wide data sharing, marketing and communications

This recommendation proposes the routine capture, monitoring and sharing of basic internationalisation data across the college sector.

This links with the recommendation of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board Strategic Plan to, **“explore the full potential of the international dimension of colleges’ and universities’ export earnings, international activity and international alumni networks in supporting economic growth.”** (Exp (R4) *Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board Strategic Plan*)

This is vital, as collective approaches and strategies will be limited in their impact unless there is some formal capture and monitoring of international activities across the sector. Colleges would benefit from knowledge about other activities and good practice in the sector – this desire was apparent in interviews with principals; and regular updates on key partnerships in the sector would better enable international development activity by agencies outside of the sector and greater inclusion of colleges in the ‘Team Scotland’ proposition.

Improving the quality and volume of international export data is also an objective within the *2019 UK Education International Strategy*. This is an area in which Scotland has an opportunity to lead the field. Whilst a sophisticated data strategy may not be practical at the current time, a basic commitment to collate and distribute key activities and data such as that included in this report on an annual basis – particularly to map activity by country and type – would represent a step change for the sector. *A Trading Nation* commits to working with partners to develop a performance monitoring framework. Perhaps this could support a regular data collection exercise.

Practical actions to address communication and marketing messages could be:

- The assimilation of the college export assets listed in this report and their incorporation into promotional material for potential international partners and inward investors
- A college element to be included in current and future Scottish international education campaigns, ministerial delegations and trade missions
- The production of a basic guide for colleges to tendering, developing and delivering international business
- The celebration of internationalisation in college and education awards to highlight innovation and celebrate good practice in this area
- The facilitation of training for college board members and (some) college leaders on working internationally

RECOMMENDATION 4



The exploration of a collective approach to commercial international opportunities

This recommendation supports Scottish colleges in the goal of developing a globally competitive position.

Although there is exceptional work already taking place in the sector, the current mechanisms do not support large collaborative bids, which is where a collective approach could have the most impact. Facilitating this approach would require a collective strategy, resource allocation, agreement of risk appetite across the sector, and potentially a separate entity with the purpose of hosting legal agreements between collaborations and providing authorised investment.

This does not necessarily need to be at additional cost to colleges, it could take the form of ‘pooling’ or a commitment of resource to access new or bigger opportunities.

There may also be an opportunity to review the flexible workforce development fund in this light. A broadened use of the fund could permit partnerships with international companies or companies that export internationally.

The sector – ideally supported by CDN and Colleges Scotland, SDI and Scottish Government, should establish a process to explore supporting structures that are relevant to the sector’s appetite. This could take several forms, for example:

- A ‘coalition of the willing’ – an initial collaboration of colleges focused on key activities or markets, supported by stakeholders outside the sector
- The exploration of a college sector response to the ‘Connected Scotland’ agenda
- A partnership organisation forged between the sector, government and other stakeholders

RECOMMENDATION 5



The engagement of colleges within Scotland’s International Alumni Plan

Scotland’s International Alumni Action Plan could be strengthened by college international graduates. An exploratory study of college international alumni conducted as part of the plan would help to identify:

- Geographical trends amongst college international graduates
- The professional links and assets of college international graduates
- The USPs of the Scottish college experience as seen by their international graduates
- The appropriate communication and engagement tools to help colleges develop and maintain an international alumni network
- An approach to college international alumni that fits the diverse profile of college graduates

A workshop with alumni officers from other parts of the Scottish education sector together with colleges would help to share best practice and build a ‘Team Scotland’ approach to alumni.

7 ANNEXES

7.1 Research brief and methodology

The research was designed to capture qualitative data and insights from a range of actors from across the Scottish college sector. This included college and non-college stakeholders. The majority of stakeholders were based in Scotland, with the exceptions of Department for International Trade, the Independent Commission on the College of the Future and the British Council, all of whom work across the four nations.

The context was informed by desk-based review of three key repositories of research and policy:

- Scotland: A Trading Nation – a plan for growing Scotland's exports (2019)
- The Cumberland-Little Report: One tertiary system: Agile, Collaborative, Inclusive (2020)
- The ongoing work of the Independent Commission on the College of the Future

The scope was agreed to include:

- A summary and analysis of Scotland's comparative strengths through colleges
- An overview of potential opportunities that are accessible to colleges
- A set of recommendations on leveraging assets and effective working in the sector

The national lockdown in response to the coronavirus pandemic was announced shortly after the project was initiated. This meant that some of the planned written questionnaires and all face-to-face interviews were conducted through video conferencing or by telephone.

The amended research methodology was agreed and proceeded as follows:

1. Interviews with principals

The standard interview was semi-structured to allow principals the scope to share the insights they felt were most relevant.

The interview proceeded in two parts:

1. An exploration of internationalisation in the college, in terms of key activities, limiting factors and distinctive assets.
2. A discussion in the context of the wider college sector. This included questions about the role of the Scottish college sector with regard to internationalisation activities and explored the changes that need to take place across the sector in order to realise a fuller potential.

Response summary: Across Scotland's 26 Colleges, 18 interviews took place. This included 13 principals, one governing body representative and four deputed or other senior delegated representatives. The sample represented nine of the 13 regions in Scotland and included a range of city and rural locations; and both large and small colleges.

2. Interviews with non-college stakeholders

An initial list of 25 non-college stakeholders across 13 organisations were identified on the basis of their involvement or knowledge of internationalisation and/or the Scottish college sector. The standard interview format was semi-structured to allow the participant to expand on areas of relevance.

The interviews proceeded in three parts:

1. An introduction to the organisation and a description of the relationship and interactions with regard to internationalisation in the Scottish college sector.
2. Exploration of the distinctive strengths and limiting factors within the system.
3. Exploration of what future opportunities might be, and what changes would need to take place within the sector in order to realise a fuller potential.

Response summary: 16 participants were interviewed, and this represented 11 of the 13 organisations initially invited to contribute.

3. Interactive online workshop with the CDN International Development Network

CDN's International Development Network is a community of practice group that includes representatives from colleges and the wider system. All members were invited to join an online webinar which included a combination of anonymous surveys and open discussion.

Response summary: 14 participants attended from 10 organisations.

Research protocol and principles

The following protocol and principles apply to all three data collection methods listed above.

- All participants were given the research protocol in advance of their interviews and confirmed their consent via email or verbally

- The majority of interviews were recorded, with permission, in order to ensure the accuracy of data and comments collected
- Interviews were scheduled to last for between 20 and 60 minutes
- Interviews were written up in note form, and thematic analysis was undertaken on qualitative data
- Quotations and case studies are used with permission, or are taken from the most up to date versions of publicly accessible information
- The draft report was shared with commissioning stakeholders for discussion and input before the final draft was confirmed

Note on the selection of material for the final report

- All information, case studies and quotes shared with researchers have contributed to the overall research project, though all may not be included in the final report.
- The report content is largely based on the interviews that took place, and referrals from these conversations. Examples and references to college activities are intended to be illustrative of the range and diversity of internationalisation activity across the sector and should not be taken as a comprehensive audit of activity or a comparison between institutions.

7.2 List of resources and contacts

The following links were shared during the course of the report, and may be helpful for colleges and the wider sector seeking to increase internationalisation.

- British Council education services: <https://education-services.britishcouncil.org/>
- Market guides for the education sector: <https://www.great.gov.uk/markets/?sector=Education>
- Events and Missions (including Tradeshow Access Programme): <https://www.events.great.gov.uk/>
- Sign up for DIT Education E-bulletin: DIT-Education@trade.gov.uk

7.3 References and publications

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