

**STEP
FORWARD**



ENHANCING LEARNING TOGETHER

Introducing the new enhancement programme from the CDN Research and Enhancement Centre

Step Forward is the CDN Research and Enhancement Centre's new action research programme. Its purpose is to enhance practice across our colleges and develop the action research skills of college staff.

Through the Step Forward programme we will develop key themes from CDN's research to transform ideas into actions that will allow college staff to develop their practice and enhance the impact of their courses and services.

Enhancing learning together is our guiding principle. Working together, as a sector, as a system, is at the heart of this programme and we will be supporting projects that bring together teams, colleges and partners right across Scotland and beyond.

The Step Forward programme will be launched in March 2022 and will develop projects for development and delivery over the 2022-23 and 2023-24 sessions. Each strand will include the creation of a peer learning and support group who will be given training in practitioner-led research and support to write up and disseminate their work.

The Step Forward Programme 2022-23

Step Forward will consist of three initial strands:

Strand 1

School-College Partnership Projects

Based on the outputs of the 'Co-creating the Learner Journey' report, this strand will consist of projects that deliver new and innovative school-college partnership provision, develop and expand existing school-college pathways and explore effective provision across different curriculum areas.

Strand 2

Pathways from Poverty

Developing the themes in the 'Pathways From Poverty' report, this strand will support colleges working closely with their communities to address the complex challenges caused by poverty.

Strand 3

Delivering the Climate Change Commitment

This strand will build on the college climate change commitment by supporting projects that embed sustainability in the curriculum.

What is Action Research?

Action research involves practitioners investigating their own practice (that's the 'research') and then using what they find out to make improvements (that's the 'action'). Engaging in action research will help participants to improve their practice, and sharing what they discover will help their colleagues develop approaches they can use to help their learners too.

At the core of Step Forward is the desire to develop rigorous, transferable action research approaches that inspire practitioners in the sector as well as delivering exemplar projects that will support the practical application of CDN research and provide new opportunities for learners.

What do we need for a Step Forward project?

To participate in Step Forward colleges need to be able to resource the delivery of the learning and teaching activity or service provision at the heart of the project. They also need to be able to release staff time to participate in the action research process, which will be supported by CDN and our partners. This will include regular project meetings and time to undertake research work related to the project.

Step Forward projects will be innovative and deliver new provision or build on current provision that will enhance our colleges and deliver for our learners and the communities we serve.

Projects must be collaborative at their heart and span across teams/colleges/partners or sectors and have the potential to have wider regional and/or national impact.

Participants in Step Forward projects will be encouraged to share their learning and research outputs via events, blogs and other media and will feed into case studies that will allow CDN to share the research outputs more widely.

The benefits for participants

Participation in Step Forward will support staff with:

- Co-creation of sector-leading services/high impact learning approaches and materials with colleagues from across colleges and beyond.
- Working together to find innovative ways to solve some of the key challenges that our learners face.
- Making a sustainable difference to your area of work not just in your own college but across the whole sector.
- Support and training to develop your research skills and take an action research approach to your professional practice.
- Becoming part of Scotland's network of emerging college researchers.

What's next?

For each strand there will be a process to identify participating colleges and staff. This process may vary between strands and details will be provided when each strand is launched. Our aim is that every college that wishes to participate in a strand is able to do so in some form.

Once projects have been identified the college project teams will attend a scoping workshop to help them develop their plans and ensure that they are effective as action research projects. They will then develop a more detailed project plan that will be reported on quarterly for the duration of the project.

Key stories and learning flagged by the quarterly reports will be developed into blog posts and other media to maintain interest in the projects as they develop. At the end of each strand a formal dissemination event will be held supported by the publication of case studies and any other materials arising out of the work of the projects via the CDN Research and Enhancement Centre website.

 To find out more about
Step Forward contact our
team on research@cdn.ac.uk

