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College Development Network

CDN STRATEGY 2023-26

Developing colleges of the future

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INTRODUCING OUR STRATEGY AND SETTING THE CONTEXT

We are delighted to introduce College Development Network's new three-year strategy, which sets our course for the ways we will contribute to the ongoing improvement of college provision and practice for all staff.



This strategy is designed to drive change. It was devised and tested in collaboration with our staff, board members, college partners and stakeholders. We are very grateful to everyone who contributed to the shaping of this strategy, the aims of which reflect how CDN will meet the needs and ambitions of the sector.

Our fast-evolving world means the needs of learners are ever-changing. To meet those needs, our colleges and their people must improve their practice continuously, and CDN plays a vital role in developing our people. That is why innovation and collaboration lie at the heart of this strategy.

CDN will embrace emerging technologies and embed pedagogical best practice to ensure that college provision is of the highest quality, and that college learning, teaching and support enables all learners to reach their full potential.

We will provide college staff with high quality professional learning pathways designed to transform their practice. That in turn will ensure learners acquire the skills they need to thrive, enrich their communities, and contribute to Scotland's economic renewal.

CDN will affirm our position as sectoral leaders and innovators in leadership development and governance, so that our colleges continue to be well governed and provide the strong leadership needed to deliver transformational change.

All this will see an evolution in CDN's way of working. We will drive and demonstrate impactful results and outcomes for the college sector. Our services will be people-focused, data-driven and informed by innovation, insight and emerging practice.

The next three years will be exciting and challenging. We look forward to building on existing partnerships and forging new relationships as we harness our innovative thinking and creative energy to create the momentum required to realise our ambitions.

We, the CDN Board and all of the CDN team look forward to working with all of our partners and friends over the next three years as we harness this momentum to impact change.

**Professor Ken Thomson OBE,
Interim Chair, CDN**

**Marie Hendry, Chief Executive,
College Development Network (CDN)**



OUR PURPOSE

As Scotland changes,
so do the needs of our learners.

To meet those needs, the tertiary system,
our colleges and their people will need to
continuously improve their practice.

As the improvement agency for Scotland’s
colleges, CDN will deliver the professional
learning pathways to support and enable
that improvement.



OUR FOCUS 2023-26

**We will equip our colleges and
their people with the knowledge
and skills to transform their practice.**

**CDN will drive this transformation
through the five focus areas below:**



OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Ensuring that all we do is for the
ultimate benefit of learners.

Driving collaboration and co-creation
to deliver transformational change.

Living the values of equality,
diversity and inclusion.

Supporting the tertiary
system’s transition to net zero.

PEOPLE

CDN will empower and
equip the workforce to
**transform learning
and teaching and the
student experience**

SYSTEM

Play a key role in the
development of a **coherent,
responsive and sustainable
tertiary system** based on
effective practice.

KNOWLEDGE

CDN services provide
insight and knowledge as
a **catalyst for change**

IMPACT

Highlight and share
the impact of colleges
within the wider
tertiary system

ORGANISATION

Be a **sustainable and
well-governed
organisation**

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

CDN is the national improvement agency for the Scottish college and post-school skills sector. We work with colleges to develop their people, share their great work, and enhance student success. An influential convening power, we facilitate collaboration within the college sector.

CDN improves the institutional performance and workforce capability of Scotland's colleges and their people through practice-led professional learning pathways. This is supported by evidence-based collaborative enhancement programmes and professional networks.

CDN is the leading expert on college governance in Scotland and runs the National Board Development Programme for College Boards. Through our leadership programmes for college staff at all levels, we develop college leaders of the future.

CDN works with colleges to provide research and insight to improve sector-wide practice. Through our learning and teaching programmes, CDN provides support for the design and delivery of the curriculum of the future.

Over the next three years, our work will be structured around the delivery of the following core practice-led professional learning pathways:

- **Governance** (The National College Board Development Programme)
- **Leadership** (Developing the College Leaders of the Future)
- **Learning and Teaching** (Designing and Delivering the Curriculum of the Future)
- **Learner Support** (Service Delivery for Successful Learners)
- **Reflective Practice** (The College Researcher Development Programme).

Our approach to delivery

Each pathway will have its own set of evidence-based provision, and to deliver them we will use a range of activities and interventions. This will include a mix of the following:

Core Programme: Learning materials, workshops and network facilitation to support continuing professional development.

Accredited Training: Courses leading to a recognised award in an area of professional development.

Bespoke Training: Tailored sessions for teams in a specific area of practice in support of college staff development plans.

Expo Events: Practice-sharing conferences and seminars both online and in-person to propagate innovative approaches.

Step Forward: Bespoke consultancy to assist with developing solutions to practical challenges in service and curriculum delivery.

Insight: Practice-based action research projects that examine or highlight college practice to support the creation of evidence-based improvement activities. Research outputs will inform and underpin the development and delivery of CDN's suite of professional learning pathways. Outputs will also be disseminated in partnership with colleges and via blogs, podcasts, articles, case studies and events.

1. PEOPLE

People Focus

CDN will empower and equip the college workforce to transform learning and teaching and the student experience.

People Outcome

With CDN's support, the college workforce is more able to meet the needs of learners.

We will be...


Designing and delivering CDN professional development pathways for all college staff.


Expanding the CDN Digital Capability Hub's services to accelerate the digital capabilities of the college workforce.


Delivering training that enables the learning and teaching workforce to reimagine and enhance pedagogy, course design and delivery in the evolving tertiary system.


Supporting our expert communities of practice to play a leading role in the developing tertiary quality framework and its application to practice improvement across tertiary education.

So that...

 Everyone who works in colleges has the opportunity to follow a CDN professional development pathway.

 The workforce is supported by CDN to utilise appropriate technology in their practice.

 CDN is the catalyst for a re-imagined curriculum that better meets the needs of learners.

 CDN supports the successful delivery of the tertiary quality framework.

Linking to...

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

SDG 4 Quality Education / SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Strategic Objective:

Enabling people to learn and flourish

National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET):

Skilled Workforce / A Fairer More Equal Society

Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF) Outcomes:

Education / Fair Work and Business

2. SYSTEM

System Focus

Play a key role in the development of a coherent, responsive and sustainable tertiary system based on effective practice.

System Outcome

Practice in the emerging tertiary system is supported by CDN to continuously improve.

We will be...

Supporting collaborative curriculum development by college regions in response to national priorities, learner needs, business needs and technological advances, working in partnership with our communities of practice and national partners.

Developing the expertise of senior leaders, board members and governance professionals to deliver effective and impactful leadership and governance across our colleges.

Working with the Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Government and tertiary partner agencies to support collaborative approaches to tertiary education and research, and the sharing of resources and expertise.

So that...

CDN supports colleges to deliver a curriculum offer that better meets the needs of learners in their region and nationally.

CDN programmes support senior leaders and board members to deliver more effective and impactful leadership and governance.

CDN collaborates effectively with partner agencies.

Linking to...

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

SDG 1 No Poverty / SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Strategic Objective:

Building a responsive, coherent, sustainable system

National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET):

Productive Businesses and Regions / A Fairer More Equal Society

Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF) Outcomes:

Education / Fair Work and Business / Economy

3. KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge Focus

CDN services deliver insight and knowledge as a catalyst for change.

Knowledge Outcome

CDN ensures the tertiary sector has better access to the information it needs to improve.


We will be...


Delivering a national research and insights service that provides a shared understanding of national and international innovative practice in the tertiary sector, and cultivates future thinking and new approaches.


Building an insights and research community for college practitioners which develops their research skills, shares learning and supports innovative practice.

Working with our partners to share knowledge and effective practice and undertaking collaborative project activity across the UK and internationally.

So that...

 Through CDN insights the tertiary sector is better able to use a shared understanding of good practice to improve.

 CDN-supported research practice is more embedded in college activity.

 CDN's national and international research partnerships support innovative practice.

Linking to...

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

SDG 1 No Poverty / SDG 4 Quality Education / SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Strategic Objective:

Generating new ideas and diffusing knowledge

National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET):

Productive Businesses and Regions / A Fairer More Equal Society / Entrepreneurial People and Culture

Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF) Outcomes:

Economy / Education / International / Poverty

4. IMPACT

Impact Focus

Highlight and share the impact of colleges within the wider tertiary system.

Impact Outcome

Through CDN activities colleges are better able to demonstrate their impact.

We will be...


Telling the stories of the people that enhance and make a difference to our colleges, through publications and media.


Celebrating the success and sharing the quality of the work of our colleges, through national events.


Highlighting the impact of colleges at regional, national and international level in order to raise awareness of the contribution colleges make to tertiary education, society and the economy.


Facilitating national campaigns that promote colleges to learners right across Scotland helping them make the right choice.

So that...

 CDN helps people in Scotland to have a better understanding of what colleges offer.

 CDN delivers increased publicity for college successes.

 CDN insights are used by decision-makers to inform their understanding.

 Potential students are better able to make informed decisions about their education.

Linking to...

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

SDG 4 Quality Education / SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth / SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Strategic Objective:

Enabling people to learn and flourish

National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) Vision:

A Wellbeing Economy

Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF) Outcomes:

Communities / Economy / Education / International

5. ORGANISATION

Organisation Focus

Be a valued, sustainable and well-governed organisation.

Organisation Outcome

CDN is better resourced.

We will be...

Developing a range of non-core income streams in partnership with our colleges and key partners that delivers best value.

Investing in and developing our staff to attract, engage, and retain the very best and ensure we have great people doing great things.

Ensuring CDN has robust and supportive governance so our team stays agile and can focus on delivery.

So that...

➤ A greater proportion of CDN's income comes from non-core funding sources.

➤ CDN is delivering more commercial activities in partnership with colleges and others.

➤ CDN staff continue to be supported to do their best work.

Linking to...

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Strategic Objective:

Building a responsible, coherent, sustainable system

National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET):

Skilled Workforce / A Fairer and More Equal Society

Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF) Outcomes:

Education / Fair Work and Business



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