



College Development Network



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

CDN REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2024

➤ INTRODUCTION

MARIE HENDRY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

As we reflect on 2024, we are incredibly proud of the significant strides CDN has made in supporting Scotland's colleges, their staff, governing bodies and students.



This year, despite the challenging environment we collectively operate in, CDN has continued to drive forward our strategic mission to improve best practice and enhance the quality and impact of further and higher education across the country.

Through our various leadership development initiatives, innovative programmes like the Ideation Programme, and our commitment to trauma-informed practices, we have worked tirelessly to empower staff and support colleges in their ongoing development. We've travelled the length and breadth of the country, engaging with colleges to ensure our programmes and support meets the needs of each college, the sector and its people. My sincere thanks to all who have taken the time to meet with us and for your valuable feedback and ongoing support.

The numbers in this review speak to the dedication and enthusiasm of the thousands of college staff who have engaged with CDN's offerings, which in turn help improve student outcomes and contribute to the wider community.

On behalf of the team at CDN, thank you. We all look forward to working with you in 2025 and beyond.

DR KEN THOMSON OBE, CHAIR OF THE CDN BOARD



The year 2024 has been one of growth, resilience, and adaptation, as we've navigated new challenges and embraced opportunities for progress within the college sector.

CDN's efforts to foster leadership development, support innovative curriculum design, and promote inclusive practices continue to lay a solid foundation for the future of Scotland's colleges.

As we move forward, our collaborative work with sector partners and stakeholders remains central to ensuring that Scotland's colleges can thrive and continue to be a vital part of developing the workforce of tomorrow. This review highlights not only our achievements but also the collective efforts that have made this progress possible, positioning us for continued success in the years to come.

As Chair of the CDN Board of Management I would like to put on record my thanks to all CDN staff who have worked tirelessly in a difficult financial environment which has seen colleagues leave the organisation and yet they have still provided a high-class sector leading professional service. We will build on this success in the years to come.

» OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

160+

board members were supported through the National Governance Development Programme.

50

college leads were trained in the Trauma-Informed College Programme.

1,000+

staff were reached through the Ideation Programme for innovative curriculum development.

84

staff engaged in leadership development pathways.

1,900+

staff engaged in the trauma-informed college programme, supported by **22 colleges**.

1,577

colleagues from across the sector responded to the second biennial **CDN Workforce Survey**.

100+

staff engaged in the Researcher Development Programme through monthly workshops.

163

record-breaking submissions from colleges across Scotland for the **CDN College Awards 2024**.

➤ LEARNING AND TEACHING

A key development this year has been our **Ideation Programme**, a powerful tool for fostering innovation, cultivating creative habits, and encouraging new ways of thinking. Colleges engaging in the programme have not only re-imagined curriculum practices but also fostered cultures of trust and agency across teams and institutions.

Reaching over 1000 staff across multiple colleges, the programme promotes continuous improvement and adaptability - essential for staying competitive in today's fast-paced world.

This major new **programme** continues to expand in 2024-25.

As a result of the feedback from CDN's **Workforce Survey** we expanded our online resources to include our **Professional Learning Mini-Bites** videos, our **Pedagogy Matters** podcasts and the **Digital Capability Hub**, to support staff

development. Workshops on artificial intelligence, the most requested area for support, were conducted, including an AI expo at New College Lanarkshire in May 2024.

CDN continued delivering core teaching programmes like Teaching in Colleges Today (TiCT) to ensure high standards for new lecturers.

73

new or recently appointed college lecturers achieved the TiCT units during the year.

483

users in total have accessed our TiCT SCQF level 7 online materials **10905** times, since the new units were launched in 2021.



I'm incredibly proud to reflect on the fact that, by the end of 2024, 246 new or recently appointed college lecturers have taken their first steps in their professional development journeys by successfully completing CDN's updated Teaching in Colleges Today units. These units, accredited by Fife College in 2021, are designed to raise awareness of and support early engagement with the Professional Standards expected of lecturers in Scotland's colleges. It's been truly rewarding to see so many colleagues embrace these opportunities for growth, with the units available at both SCQF levels 7 and 8, helping them build a strong foundation for their teaching careers. This is one of the moments in 2024 that has made me feel proud of the tangible impact we're having on the sector."



Sandra-Jane Grier

CDN Delivery and Engagement Partner

DEVELOPING LEADERS OF THE FUTURE

CDN's inspirational **Management and Leadership Programmes** support our college leaders at all levels.

The heart of our leadership provision, led by CDN's leadership expert Valerie Jackman, continues to be our **leadership development pathway**, made up of the Emerging Leaders and Strategic Leaders CMI courses, the Coaching Skills for Managers course, and the innovative Executive Leadership Series.

Valerie continues to deliver bespoke leadership sessions to senior and executive teams as part of our mission to support our leaders to be the best that they can be, and is also a valued 'critical friend', supporting colleges to develop their provision using the latest leadership approaches.

Participants said:

“ I received glowing feedback from a colleague who took the course last year, and I've been equally impressed. It's been a delightful mix of hands-on learning and thought-provoking content. The course created a trusted space for sharing experiences and stepping out of our comfort zones.”

Lee Lappin

Director of Curriculum and Partnerships,
Dundee and Angus College

“ The Executive Leadership Series provides valuable time with leaders who excel in their field, offering new insights, knowledge exchange and discussion to help participants grow and thrive. I would have no hesitation in recommending this development as it is both visionary but with practical application.”

Angela Pignatelli

Vice Principal Learning, Teaching and Student
Experience, South Lanarkshire College

“ Through 2024 it's been great to get out and meet the senior teams of almost all our colleges, to get their thoughts on how CDN can continue to expand our support for the staff in their colleges and to hear about the challenges they face and the impact they're having on their students and communities. It really helps us to understand how we can target our support and we look forward to using that knowledge as we launch our new programmes in 2025 and beyond.”

Victoria Underwood CDN Director of Operations and Strategic Planning



➤ LEARNER SUPPORT

In response to practitioner requests, we launched the monthly **Equality Matters Digest, which provides access to key resources on a themed basis for practitioners.**

This year saw the full rollout of CDN's **Trauma-Informed College Programme**, now embedded with our Changing Learner Programme, based on our **Pathways from Poverty** best practice reports.

The programme trains trauma-informed leads in colleges to conduct diagnostics and create action plans for fostering a trauma-informed culture. This initiative aligns with the 2024 theme of the **Scottish Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)**, supported by findings from the **2024 College Workforce Survey** and **Education Scotland's 2022-23 report**.

In addition, we delivered two projects at Forth Valley College and Fife College focused on school-college partnerships and transitions, with findings to be detailed in the recently launched report, **The Changing Learner**, in 2024-25.

Additionally, CDN continues to support communities of practice for staff working in access and inclusion, particularly for care-experienced and estranged students, enhancing collaboration and expertise sharing to improve student outcomes.

“**2024 marks my second year with CDN and it has been incredibly rewarding. Some of the key highlights include hosting a powerful event on Sextortion and Human Trafficking, collaborating with Valerie Jackman on CMI courses and bespoke training for colleges, and working with QAA to enhance quality through the STEP programme.**

Additionally, delivering workshops for Fife College's School of Care, Health, Science, and Wellbeing was an energising experience, as was engaging with CDN's networks, particularly the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion network, which inspires me with its collective impact.

Building strong relationships with external stakeholders, such as Emily Test, and contributing to the Scottish Government's Zero Tolerance Event reinforced my commitment to safeguarding and protection from gender-based violence.”

Gail Toms CDN Delivery and Engagement Partner



REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

The Researcher Development Programme offers monthly workshops on basic research skills for over 100 staff across the sector. The programme will focus on action research projects in 2024-25 to support best practices.

CDN also relaunched the **College Action Inquiry Research Network (CAIRN) Journal** with issue 2 launching in November, promoting research by and about college practices in Scotland. The Journal will be the primary publication route for staff undertaking action research through the programme, supporting lecturers in their TQFE projects and professional standards.

In collaboration with the University of Aberdeen, CDN secured a Nuffield Foundation grant for a **two-year research project** on school-to-college transitions, beginning in September 2024. The research aims to improve school-college pathways and support student engagement.

Additionally, we maintained our pool of research associates and completed a project for SFC on the development of Regional Pathfinders.



➤ TERTIARY ENHANCEMENT THEMES

CDN's work to support quality enhancement in the tertiary sector in 2024 focused mainly on preparation for the roll out of the TQEF in 2024-25 and its associated activities.

The following activities were delivered in support of the Tertiary Enhancement Topic:

- **Tertiary Enhancement Project Report:** CDN and QAA Scotland, with support from sparqs and Education Scotland, researched and authored **The Future of Learning & Teaching report**, published in February 2024. This report underpins CDN's work in digital pedagogy improvement, and will form the basis of CDN's core delivery of improvement pathways in digital pedagogy in 2024 and beyond.

- **Digital Delivery Case Studies:** Released in February 2024, with ongoing development through the **Scottish Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)** in partnership with QAA Scotland.
- **STEP Programme:** A national initiative co-delivered by CDN and QAA Scotland to enhance teaching, learning, and student experience across colleges and universities. It fosters innovation, curriculum development, and inclusivity through key projects.

CDN hosted the **Our Tertiary Future** conference in September, facilitating discussions on **digital pedagogy, student well-being, and inclusivity**. In November, the **STEP website** launched as a central hub for resources and updates. December marked the first **STEP Discovery Day**, bringing together educators and students to explore focus areas and share best practices.

TQEF and Quality Enhancement

CDN plays a central role in the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Programme (TQEF), as outlined in a **Scottish Funding Council (SFC) report**.

The framework promotes collaboration across colleges, universities, and sector agencies to enhance educational standards and student experience. CDN supports quality improvement initiatives, professional development, and best practice sharing, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

By aligning activities with the TQEF, CDN helps to ensure that Scotland's tertiary institutions are equipped to deliver high-quality learning, respond to evolving student and employer needs, and contribute to economic and social development.



Scotland's Tertiary
Quality Enhancement
Framework

➤ HIGHLIGHTING COLLEGE IMPACT

Celebrating Talent, Innovation, and Success

The CDN College Awards took place on Thursday 14 November, at the Radisson Blu in Glasgow, with over 270 guests in attendance – making it the largest Scottish College Awards to date. The evening celebrated the exceptional talent, innovation, and success of Scotland's colleges, their staff, and their students.

This year's event truly reflected the ambition and excellence within the sector, with a record-breaking 163 submissions from colleges across Scotland. You can explore the inspiring projects and testimonials in our interactive guide [here](#).



We were thrilled to welcome back the fantastic Amy Irons as our host for the evening. Our guest speaker, Graeme Dey MSP, Minister for Higher and Further Education and Minister for Veterans, addressed the audience, highlighting the vital role colleges play in shaping Scotland's future.

In addition to the presentation of 14 prestigious awards, the evening featured outstanding entertainment from UHI Perth students, showcasing the diverse talent nurtured within Scotland's colleges.

This year was particularly meaningful as we marked the 25th anniversary of the CDN College Awards, celebrating the lasting



impact Scotland's colleges have on learners and communities across the country.

A heartfelt thank you to our amazing sponsors for their continued support. Congratulations to our amazing winners, view [here](#).

“ My highlight of 2024 was our 25th annual College Awards, which saw a record number of entries showcasing the incredible talent and innovation in our colleges. While there are many awards ceremonies out there, this one stands apart by focusing solely on the remarkable impact that colleges and their staff have. It's always a joy to witness colleagues from across the sector come together to celebrate each other's successes and the vital role they play in Scotland.”



Gordon Hunt

CDN Head of Insight, Planning and Impact

➤ IMPROVING COLLEGE GOVERNANCE

CDN's National Governance Development Programme supported over 160 board members, with a focus on key topics like quality assurance (delivered in partnership with Education Scotland), finance, and governance issues.



This year we launched two new face-to-face training sessions for individual boards: Governing in High Stakes and Conflict Resolution (delivered in partnership with Scottish Mediation). Three colleges took up this offer this year and it is being further developed for future years.

“ I had the pleasure of welcoming Gordon Hunt from CDN to our Finance Committee at West Lothian College where he delivered governance training for us. Governance is crucial and is the backbone of an organisation and ensures transparency, accountability, and strategic alignment driving our college towards continued success. I'm looking forward to welcoming Gordon back to explore generative governance.”

Sue Cook

Chair of West Lothian College

We continue to offer our services to deliver the Externally Facilitated Effectiveness Reviews to college boards.

We have also revised our online training offer and introduced a new online board member induction module and in person board briefing sessions.

In September 2024 we published our latest **governance report** on the recruitment and retention of college board members.



College Development Network

www.cdn.ac.uk

