

Assignment of Argyll College to the Regional Strategic Body for the Highlands and Islands, the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)

Consultation Analysis

September 2018

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SECTION 1: CONSULTATION PROCESS

1. In March 2018 the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) wrote a letter to the then Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science proposing that Argyll College be assigned to UHI.
2. On 28 May 2018 the Scottish Government published a consultation paper on the Assignment of Argyll College to the Regional Strategic Body for the Highlands and Islands, the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI). This follows on from the SFC's letter. The consultation closed on 25 June 2018.

SECTION 2: ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

3. The consultation consisted of 3 questions, 1 of which was a closed question. The Scottish Government received 7 responses to the consultation. All respondents identified themselves as organisations. A full list of respondents is in Annex 1.
4. The majority of responses were from colleges. Other respondents included Unions and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

Q1. Should Argyll College be assigned to the Regional Strategic Body for the Highlands and Islands, the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)? Yes/No (closed question)

5. 100% of the respondents supported the proposal to assign Argyll College to the University of Highlands and Islands.

Q2. Do you have any comments on Ministers' plans to assign Argyll College to the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) as the regional strategic body for the Highlands and Islands?

6. The Regional Strategic Body strongly supports the plans and that it is long overdue.
7. Argyll College hopes to grow their student numbers at both FE and HE levels, believing there is scope for modest but sustained growth from many parts of Argyll and Bute and Arran. As part of this growth the college do not wish to see student numbers constrained with the other UHI partners but believe we should be addressing historic trends which has seen students from Argyll leaving the area.
8. The structure of the region continues to be federal in nature with shared services and decision making being out-sourced and distributed amongst the partner colleges and institutions. Argyll College observes that there is a need to retain focus on successes and weaknesses of individual partners rather than seeing Regional statistics masking good or bad outcomes.

9. North Highland College (NHC) believe the close working relationship between Argyll College and NHC staff should and will continue in the future regardless of any changes in governance through assignation to UHI. NHC are confident that Argyll is in a good position to take full responsibility for the quality of its own provision after devolving many aspects of quality management over a number of years.

West Highland College on collaboration, geography

10. West Highland College UHI welcomes Argyll College gaining assigned status, noting the similarities between the two institutions including social, economic and cultural context, organisation of operations through distributed college centre networks; complementarity of curriculum and delivery mechanisms to remote communities in relative geographic proximity in the West Highlands and inner Hebridean islands.

11. Based on this, West Highland College hold themselves ready for closer operational and strategic collaboration in future, willing to examine any strategic options that may arise in this context.

EIS- FELA Concerns about non incorporated status

12. EIS-FELA expressed that non incorporated colleges are not public bodies and do not have the same level of accountability enshrined in statute as incorporated bodies. This does not provide the security of regulatory provision which would appear to have been envisaged by Scottish Ministers at the time of reclassification.

13. The EIS-FELA believes that the delivery of FE in the Highlands and Islands region deserves the same level of public accountability, security and Parliamentary oversight as is applicable to the incorporated bodies throughout the rest of Scotland. It sees no reason why only Highlands and Islands students and staff should have FE provision delivered by private companies limited by guarantee whilst other regions have incorporated bodies which are wholly and directly accountable to Scottish Ministers.

EIS concerns about Trade Union recognition

14. Whilst a number of teaching staff at Argyll college are EIS members, at present there is no formal Recognition and Procedures Agreement (RPA) at a local level, or do any staff receive remission for trade union facility time.

EIS on National Bargaining

15. Argyll College is not a signatory to the National Recognition and Procedure Agreement (NRPA) and is current only 'shadowing' the agreements of the National Joint Negotiation Committee (NJNC).

16. EIS-FELA has concerns about how these shadowing arrangements are being implemented in practice in absence of a formal recognition agreement, particularly

with regard to the lack of local engagement on changes to terms and conditions. In moving to assigned status, EIS-FELA believes that Argyll college should become a signatory of the NRPA and engage fully with the national bargaining process.

17. EIS-FELA states that effective management should include investment in staff. If the qualitative standards of teaching and learning are to be maintained then staff must have security of employment and time to engage in professional development and dialogue.

SECTION 3: EQUALITY IMPACT

Q3. We would welcome comments on whether the assignation of Argyll College to UHI may raise any equalities issues that require to be addressed with respect to age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

18. Argyll College believe that this decision will have positive impacts on Equality issues. The development and assignment of the college to UHI will lead to greater localisation, better opportunities for learning and personal development for everyone currently living in Argyll. Geography has a significant impact on the lives of people in the area and attracting more people, from a range of backgrounds, to come and study and hopefully settle will strengthen the society.

No other respondents commented on this question.

Annex 1: Respondents

Total respondents = 7

Colleges = 3

Argyll College

West Highland College UHI

North Highland College UHI

College Boards = 1

University of the Highlands and Islands (Regional Strategic Body)

Unions and Students Associations = 2

EIS Further Education Lecturer's Association

UNISON

Non-ministerial Government Departments = 1

Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator



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This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-78781-272-7 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, September 2018

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS475226 (09/18)

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