

Review of the Regional Strategic Bodies within the Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions

June 2024

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this consultation is to ask your views on our plans to change the college regionalisation arrangements in Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions.

Background

The college sector was restructured in 2014 to create 13 college regions, 10 of which are served by one single college and three of which are served by more than one college. The three multi-college regions are Glasgow, Lanarkshire and Highlands and Islands.

The aims of college regionalisation were to reduce duplication of provision, streamline quality learner pathways and ensure closer alignment to regional economies.

In the single college regions, new statutory duties were placed on the colleges to ensure they fulfilled these aims.

In the multi-college regions, it was recognised that fulfilling these aims would require individual colleges to collaborate. They would need to jointly plan and provide for the needs of learners and businesses in the region, as well as the needs of their specific college. To ensure this, a new statutory body was introduced called a Regional Strategic Body (RSB). The RSB is governed by a Board with a Ministerially appointed and remunerated Chair and is responsible for securing coherent provision of fundable further and higher education across the colleges in its region.

There are three multi-college regions: Glasgow, Lanarkshire and Highlands and Islands. For the purposes of this consultation, the focus is on the Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions.

2. About this consultation

On 16 May 2024, the Minister for Higher and Further Education and Minister for Veterans announced in Scottish Parliament that he wished to reform the RSBs for Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions with his preferred option being to dissolve both.

We would like to hear your views on whether you agree with this decision or not, as well as your views on what arrangements should be put in place to ensure coherent provision of education and skills for the regions in the future.

3. Responding to this consultation

We are inviting responses to this consultation by 20 September 2024.

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government online consultation platform, Citizen Space. You can view and respond to this consultation online at [Review of the regional strategic bodies within the Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions](#).

You can save and return to your response while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date of 20 September 2024.

If you are unable to respond online, the Scottish Government will by exception accept email or postal responses. Please complete the Respondent Information Form (see 'Handling your response' below), and send this along with your response to:

Email: ScotGov_Colleges_Mailbox@gov.scot

Or write to us at:

Institutional Governance & Reform Team
5 Atlantic Quay
150 Broomielaw
Glasgow
G2 8LU

4. Handling your response

If you respond using Citizen Space [Review of the regional strategic bodies within the Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions](#), you will be directed to the Respondent Information Form. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be published.

If you are unable to respond via Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form included in this document. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

Please note that responses will not be accepted without a Respondent Information Form.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

5. Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at [Review of the regional strategic bodies within the Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions](#). If you use Citizen Space to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us reach a decision.

6. Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please contact us using the contact details below:

Email: ScotGov_Colleges_Mailbox@gov.scot

Or write to us at:

Institutional Governance & Reform Team
5 Atlantic Quay
150 Broomielaw
Glasgow
G2 8LU

Setting the Scene - Background to college regionalisation

The original intentions of college regionalisation were to reduce duplication of provision, streamline quality learner pathways and ensure closer alignment to regional economies. This was to be fulfilled through establishing and placing duties on a small number of single college regions, each governed through a board of management led by a Ministerially appointed Chair.

In 2014, college regionalisation led to significant reform across the college landscape with the formation of 13 college regions; 10 regions with a single regional college and three multi-college regions. As a result of college regionalisation and subsequent college mergers the total number of colleges reduced from 41 in 2011 to 24 at the time of publication of this consultation.

Each of the 10 regional colleges were given the power and control to receive and be accountable for public funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC); to decide how to manage the resources it had at its disposal; as well as to plan and provide education and skills curriculum for the benefit of the learner, regional economy and community.

In the multi-college regions, it was recognised that fulfilling the aims of regionalisation would require individual colleges to work together. To support this, a new statutory body was introduced called a Regional Strategic Body (RSB). Each RSB is governed by a Board led by a Ministerially appointed and remunerated Chair and is responsible for securing coherent provision of fundable further and higher education in its region.

Measures to introduce RSBs, establish and place new duties on regional colleges in the single college regions, improve how colleges are managed, and increase their accountability and effectiveness, were put in place by the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013.

While regional colleges have a direct funding and accountability relationship with the SFC bound by a financial memorandum, this is not the case for colleges in multi-college regions. In this case the RSBs have the funding and accountability relationship with the SFC and are bound by a financial memorandum which sets out the relationships, expectations and accountabilities between SFC and the institutions it funds. A regional outcome agreement sets out what the region will deliver in return for the SFC core funding, and the RSB is accountable for that delivery.

In the multi-college regions, colleges which are assigned to the RSB (known as assigned colleges) are funded by the RSB and in turn are bound by a financial memorandum between the RSB and themselves which sets conditions on the funding. The RSB decides how its funding should be allocated among its assigned colleges and monitors the assigned colleges' financial performance and progress towards delivery of activity targets.

Assigned colleges are governed through their own board of management, the Chair of which is appointed by the RSB.

There are three multi-college regions: Glasgow, Lanarkshire and Highlands and Islands.

This consultation is focussed on the Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions.

Glasgow region

The RSB for the Glasgow region, known as the Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board (GCRB), was established by the 2013 Act, by way of amendment to the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005. From August 2014, GCRB assumed responsibility for the planning and delivery of coherent, high quality further and higher education in the Glasgow region via its three assigned colleges. At the same time, a statutory instrument assigned the three existing colleges in Glasgow (City of Glasgow College, Glasgow Clyde College and Glasgow Kelvin College) to GCRB as the RSB.

Lanarkshire region

In 2014 the Lanarkshire Colleges Order 2014 designated the board of management of New College Lanarkshire (NCL) as a regional college as well as making it the RSB with overarching responsibility for the planning and delivery of coherent, high quality further and higher education via the two colleges in the region (New College Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire College). The Lanarkshire Colleges Order 2014 also assigned South Lanarkshire College (SLC) to NCL as the RSB and made bespoke provision for the board of management of NCL to reflect the relationship with SLC.

The Case for Change - Recent reports and recommendations

In 2020, the Scottish Government asked the SFC to undertake a review of coherent provision and sustainability of Scotland's tertiary education and research sector. In 2020, the SFC completed their Phase 1 report of their [Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability](#) in the Tertiary sector. Further to this, the SFC also published their review into Regional Strategic Bodies in 2020, with detailed reports on [Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board](#), [Lanarkshire Board](#) and [University of the Highlands and Islands Court](#).

In general, the SFC noted that each RSB had achieved its objectives of regionalisation, collaboration and integration to different degrees concluding that the "status quo is not tenable for reasons that are particular to each RSB, but often involves tensions in governance and accountability structures, contested costs and funding authority, and unclear outcome gains for students and taxpayers."

The SFC's detailed reports in 2020 provided clear evidence that RSBs, and particularly GCRB, successfully and consistently delivered on regional outcomes and the expected benefits of regionalisation. The good work of the GCRB was noted as it developed a strategic and responsive 'one-door' approach to its many stakeholders and also worked on skills alignment and progress in addressing students' attainment and progression aspirations.

In March 2023, the Education, Children and Young People Committee of the Scottish Parliament concluded their [review of college regionalisation](#). It concluded that while single college regions provided a good basis for continuous improvement, further reform of regional strategic bodies was required to improve regional planning, performance and governance processes. Key issues included ambiguous and confused governance processes, decisions on provision separated from the delivery body and confusion for employers on the right door for collaboration.

Proposed Way Forward

The Scottish Government has considered the evidence provided by the SFC report and the committee review and while recognising the strengths of the RSB approach in driving forward aspects of regional collaboration over the last decade, has concluded that reform is needed, particularly to remove the cumbersome governance arrangements and improve college accountability.

It is clear that any new strategic approach must be in line with the new direction set out in the [Purpose and Principles](#) and support the original aims of regionalisation to ensure effective regional skills planning and provision and collaboration opportunities across the Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions. It is imperative that colleges can provide a high quality streamlined learning offer that is rooted in a robust understanding of local needs, as well as regional and national priorities. It is also critical that appropriate accountability and assurance processes are in place to hold colleges to account.

It is the view of the Scottish Government that if the RSBs are dissolved there is a need for continued regional collaboration to meet the intention of the college regionalisation legislation and to ensure each new single college region can fulfil its new duties.

With this in mind, the Scottish Government proposals are set out below.

The Lanarkshire RSB

The Scottish Government has considered the evidence on reform of the Lanarkshire RSB and would welcome views on their proposal to dissolve the Lanarkshire RSB and allow both colleges to manage themselves as separate regional entities. With this in mind, the Scottish Government would ask you to consider the following questions.

Q1. Should the Lanarkshire RSB be dissolved and both Lanarkshire colleges become regional colleges?

Yes/No

Q2. Please explain your views.

If the Lanarkshire RSB is dissolved Scottish Ministers will wish to be assured that appropriate collaborative arrangements are in place.

As part of this consultation, the Scottish Ministers welcome views on collaborative arrangements that could be put in place to ensure robust planning and provision across the Lanarkshire region and beyond, as appropriate. Respondents are encouraged to think creatively about the best collaborative arrangements to meet the aims of college regionalisation. Collaboration could be limited to the Lanarkshire regions, extended to the broader Glasgow college regions and/or linked to other education and skills providers or businesses.

Whilst a formal proposal is not being put forward at this stage, initial thinking is that any such arrangements will not be underpinned by any statutory requirements but will be underpinned by the SFC's conditions of funding to ensure proactive collaboration.

The proposal to dissolve the Lanarkshire RSB will allow each college to individually review and consider the new duties that will be placed on them as individual regional colleges, and to ensure that any future mechanisms are tailored to create a better opportunity to collaborate on regional skills planning and provision and streamlined learner pathways across the region. With this in mind, the Scottish Government would ask you to consider the following questions.

Q3. Should South Lanarkshire College and New College Lanarkshire enter into formal collaborative arrangements?

Yes – and just between New College Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire College.

Yes – but not necessarily just with each other.

No.

Q4. If yes, please describe how you would see collaborative arrangements working for each of the Lanarkshire colleges and who should be involved.

Q5. If no, please describe how you think the colleges could ensure that they fulfil their new duties (to plan and provide education and skills curriculum for the benefit of the learner, regional economy and community).

The Glasgow RSB

The Scottish Government has considered the evidence on reform of the Glasgow RSB and would welcome views on the proposal to dissolve the Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board and allow all three Glasgow colleges to manage themselves as regional entities. With this in mind, the Scottish Government would ask you to consider the following questions.

Q6. Should the Glasgow RSB be dissolved and the three Glasgow colleges become regional colleges?

Yes/No

Q7. Please explain your views.

In line with the Scottish Government's proposal to dissolve the Glasgow Colleges Regional Board, this will in turn mean that the three Glasgow colleges will be designated as regional colleges under the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005.

The Scottish Government is clear that a suitable collaborative arrangement needs to be put in place to ensure effective regional collaboration for Glasgow.

One option would be to establish a collaborative forum for the three Glasgow colleges. The aim of the collaborative forum would be to give colleges equal status within the forum and to provide the most practical way to meet the needs of the sector and learners in this region, creating a 'single front door' for regional stakeholders. It is the Scottish Government's view that such a collaborative forum should be formally but not legislatively constituted and be underpinned by the SFC's conditions of funding. Details of the role, remit and function of a collaborative forum will be subject to development between its partners and we welcome views on these points.

Scottish Government would also be open to either or both of the Lanarkshire colleges joining this forum if that was felt to be beneficial to all.

Other options might seek broader collaboration with other providers (colleges or universities), and/or employers or other partners.

With this in mind, the Scottish Government would ask you to consider the following questions.

Q8. Should City of Glasgow College, Glasgow Clyde College and Glasgow Kelvin College enter into formal collaborative arrangements?

Yes – and just between the three Glasgow colleges.

Yes – and including a wider range of partners.

No.

Q9. If yes, please describe how you would see collaborative arrangements working in Glasgow and who should be involved.

Q10. If no, please describe how you think the colleges could ensure that they fulfil their duties (to plan and provide education and skills curriculum for the benefit of the learner, regional economy and community).

Implications of Proposed Way Forward

The abolition of the RSBs within the Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions would require subordinate legislation to remove the existing structures, designate the individual colleges as regional colleges and address any connected ancillary matters.

Dissolving the RSBs will have significant implications for the staff of the bodies and for the individual assigned colleges. This section sets out those implications.

Assigned Colleges become Regional Colleges

If the proposal is implemented each assigned college will become designated as a regional college. This will require each board of management to be led by a Ministerially appointed Chair and will require a new direct relationship of funding and accountability with the SFC.

It will also place a range of new statutory duties on the college, under the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005, to plan and secure coherent provision of a high quality of fundable further and higher education in the locality of the regional college with due regard to issues such as local skills needs, social and cultural issues, sustainable development, educational and related needs of students or prospective students and widening access to education from socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

Change to Governance

As a result of the dissolution of the RSBs, each of the five colleges within the Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions would be governed by an individual board of management. Each of the five college boards will require a ministerially appointed Chair, which will result in three additional remunerated Chairs. Should Scottish Ministers proceed with the proposal, transitional arrangements will be put in place.

Regional planning

In the multi-college regions, RSBs have provided a central point of contact for employers and other stakeholders (e.g. Community Planning Partnerships, Local

Authorities, Skills Development Scotland) to engage at a regional level, rather than with individual colleges, thereby ensuring a coherent offering via a regionally responsive curriculum. Much of this has been good practice and could be at risk if suitable collaborative arrangements are not put in place.

The evolving post-16 education landscape aims to promote smoother learner journeys, collaborative working and ongoing proactive engagement with other institutions and employers, all of which are in line with the current aims of college regionalisation. It is our understanding that single college regions are a strong basis for moving forward and the range of duties placed on them remain appropriate, but we welcome your views.

This reform also provides a significant opportunity to build on the recommendations of the Withers Report [Fit for the Future](#) and think carefully about how strategic collaboration can lead to excellent place based skills planning and provision which builds on the strengths and diverse missions of individual colleges. Optimal collaborative arrangements will be in line with the Purpose and Principles, meet the aims of college regionalisation, provide for learners and businesses and ensure there is no duplication of efforts across the college region.

We would welcome creative and constructive views on suitable collaborative arrangements to ensure that regional planning will remain core to college business.

Impact on existing Boards and Staff

College boards of management and other management structures within the Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions will be primarily impacted by any changes.

The Scottish Government is keen to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of staff and Boards in driving forward regional collaboration over the last decade.

The Scottish Government is aware that this proposal will impact staff and we expect employers to ensure that staff are suitably supported throughout this transition period. Fair Work should be central to all decisions on staffing, the Scottish Government expects every effort to be made to protect jobs and that staff are treated fairly.

We welcome your views on the wider impacts of these proposals and ask you to consider the following questions.

The Lanarkshire Region

Q11. Do you think the implementation of the proposal delivers benefits in the Lanarkshire college region?

Yes – for both the learner and the regional economy.

Yes – for learners but not for the regional economy.

Yes – for the regional economy but not for learners.

No.

Don't know.

Q12. Please explain your answer.

Q13. What impact, if any, will the proposals have on your own organisation, and your service users, staff and potential employees? Please particularly consider any implications for people who are socio-economically disadvantaged or from the protected equality groups.

The Glasgow Region

Q14. Do you think the implementation of the proposal delivers benefits in the Glasgow college region?

Yes – for both the learner and the regional economy.

Yes – for learners but not for the regional economy.

Yes – for the regional economy but not for learners.

No.

Don't know.

Q15. Please explain your answer.

Q16. What impact, if any, will the proposals have on your own organisation, and your service users, staff and potential employees? Please particularly consider any implications for people who are socio-economically disadvantaged or from the protected equality groups.

8. Terminology Explainer Guide

Term	Definition	Sector/Organisation/ Specific Information/Further Reading	Associated Term
Single College Region	Where there is one college for the region. These colleges are “regional colleges” under the 2005 Act. The constitution of their boards of management is set out in the 1992 Act.	Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 (the 2005 Act) Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 (the 1992 Act)	Regional college
Multi-College Region	This is where more than one college exists within the region. Colleges in these regions will be “assigned” to a regional strategic body by order (a piece of subordinate legislation). Regional and assigned colleges are all colleges which were incorporated under the 1992 Act, referred to as “incorporated colleges”. Their constitution of their boards of management is set out in the 1992 Act.	The 2005 Act The 1992 Act The Assigned Colleges (Scotland) Order 2014 The Lanarkshire Colleges Order 2014	Assigned colleges, Incorporated colleges
Regional Strategic Body	Regional strategic bodies have colleges assigned to them by subordinate legislation. They have obligations and functions set out in the 2005 Act. There is a category of RSB which is a “regional board” which has its board constitution and governance arrangements set out in the 2005 Act.	The 2005 Act	Regional Board
Regional Board	This is a regional strategic body of a type that has its constitution set out in the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005.	Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 & Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013	Regional Strategic Body

9. Respondent Information Form

Consultation on the review of the Regional Strategic Bodies within the Glasgow and Lanarkshire college regions.

This form must be completed and returned with responses by email.

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?
(Please add 'X' to relevant option).

Individual:

Organisation:

Full name or organisation's name: (please complete box below)

Phone number: (please complete box below)

Address, including post code: (please complete box below)

Email: (please complete box below)

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:
(Please add 'X' to relevant option)

Publish response with name:

Publish response only (anonymous):

Do not publish response:

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?
(Please add 'X' to relevant option)

Yes:

No:

10. Consultation Questions

The Lanarkshire RSB

Q1. Should the Lanarkshire RSB be dissolved and both Lanarkshire colleges become regional colleges?

Yes/No

Q2. Please explain your views.

Q3. Do you think there is a need for South Lanarkshire College and New College Lanarkshire to enter into formal collaborative arrangements?

Yes – and just between New College Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire College.

Yes – but not necessarily just with each other.

No.

Q4. If yes, please describe how you would see collaborative arrangements working for each of the Lanarkshire colleges and who should be involved.

Q5. If no, please describe how you think the colleges could ensure that they fulfil their duties (to plan and provide education and skills curriculum for the benefit of the learner, regional economy and community).

The Glasgow RSB

Q6. Should the Glasgow RSB be dissolved and the three Glasgow colleges become regional colleges?

Yes/No

Q7. Please explain your views.

Q8. Do you think there is a need for City of Glasgow College, Glasgow Clyde College and Glasgow Kelvin College to enter into formal collaborative arrangements?

Yes – and just between the three Glasgow colleges.

Yes – and including a wider range of partners.

No.

Q9. If yes, please describe how you would see collaborative arrangements working in Glasgow and who should be involved.

Q10. If no, please describe how you think the colleges could ensure that they fulfil their duties (to plan and provide education and skills curriculum for the benefit of the learner, regional economy and community).

The Lanarkshire Region

Q11. Do you think the implementation of the proposal delivers benefits in the Lanarkshire college region?

Yes – for both the learner and the regional economy.

Yes – for learners but not for the regional economy.

Yes – for the regional economy but not for learners.

No.

Don't know.

Q12. Please explain your answer.

Q13. What impact, if any, will the proposals have on your own organisation, and your service users, staff and potential employees? Please particularly consider any implications for people who are socio-economically disadvantaged or from the protected equality groups.

The Glasgow Region

Q14. Do you think the implementation of the proposal delivers benefits in the Glasgow college region?

Yes – for both the learner and the regional economy.

Yes – for learners but not for the regional economy.

Yes – for the regional economy but not for learners.

No.

Don't know.

Q15. Please explain your answer.

Q16. What impact, if any, will the proposals have on your own organisation, and your service users, staff and potential employees? Please particularly consider any implications for people who are socio-economically disadvantaged or from the protected equality groups.



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