

**THIS PAPER IS FOR DISCUSSION/INFORMATION****INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATION ADVISERS****PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES FOR POST SCHOOL EDUCATION, SKILLS AND RESEARCH****Background**

In Scotland, post school education, skills development and research is delivered through higher education provided by 17 universities and 26 colleges, along with further education and skills development provided by colleges, community learning, private and third sector providers as well as employers and representative bodies (see Annex B for more detail).

Through post school education, skills development and research there are a number of pathways open to those who are looking to pursue opportunities for the pursuit of new knowledge and skills, whether for personal fulfilment or to leverage this learning into economic opportunities. This is true for those immediately leaving compulsory education and for learners throughout their adult lifetimes. Providing for both learner choice and economy relevant pathways are key drivers for the system which currently exists in Scotland.

We are cognisant that this balance must also recognise equality of opportunity; for some people the structure of a college course on adult literacy may be the start of a long journey to better outcomes for them with consequent implications for addressing potential 'failure demand' in health, justice and welfare budgets. The Scottish Government is committed to driving continued reduction in attainment and opportunity gaps by widening access to higher education.

Our ambition for a purpose and principles that encompasses the post school education, skills development and research system in its entirety will require further work to map and understand how to best ensure system alignment between future economic needs and lifelong educational and skills development both for our more immediate and our future aspirations in this space. We also want to continue work to support those from disadvantaged backgrounds into higher education. As such, we are interested to learn from international best practice both in this system, and in its linkages with primary and secondary education systems.

**Background - Development of the Purpose and Principles**

In June 2021 the Scottish Funding Council published a review of the coherence and sustainability of the tertiary sector in Scotland. One of the key recommendations of this review, which Scottish Government accepted, was to set out a strategic intent for the tertiary sector of colleges and universities in Scotland. Considering university and college provision without setting this in the wider context of skills alignment

(including apprenticeships, employability training, community learning and development) would not be able to fully showcase the strengths of the whole system, nor help with identifying weaknesses and unnecessary duplication and complexity. As a result a commitment was made to develop a [Purpose and Principles for the whole post school education, skills and research ecosystem](#).

The Purpose and Principles will be developed through a wide programme of engagement including with people who have not traditionally participated in the tertiary system. Through this engagement we will:

- develop a clear purpose and set of principles for the post school education, research, and skills ecosystem in Scotland. This will be evidence led and provide clear direction to support decision making across the ecosystem for the next generation
- map and reflect the current and complex ecosystems involved and how they relate to what our economy and society need now and in future
- explore the balance of responsibility and the role(s) that we expect everyone – including individuals, agencies, institutions, national and local decision makers, employers from the self-employed microbusiness to the multinational, public and third sector and all points in between – to play in the ecosystem

**Annex A** provides a pre-engagement draft of the Purpose and Principles. This draft is being tested with key agencies and stakeholders before being published prior to wider public engagement. Subsequent engagement will focus on the implications of the principles for different players and learners in the system. As part of this work we are taking a user research approach to trace the paths of different learner journeys through the ecosystem.

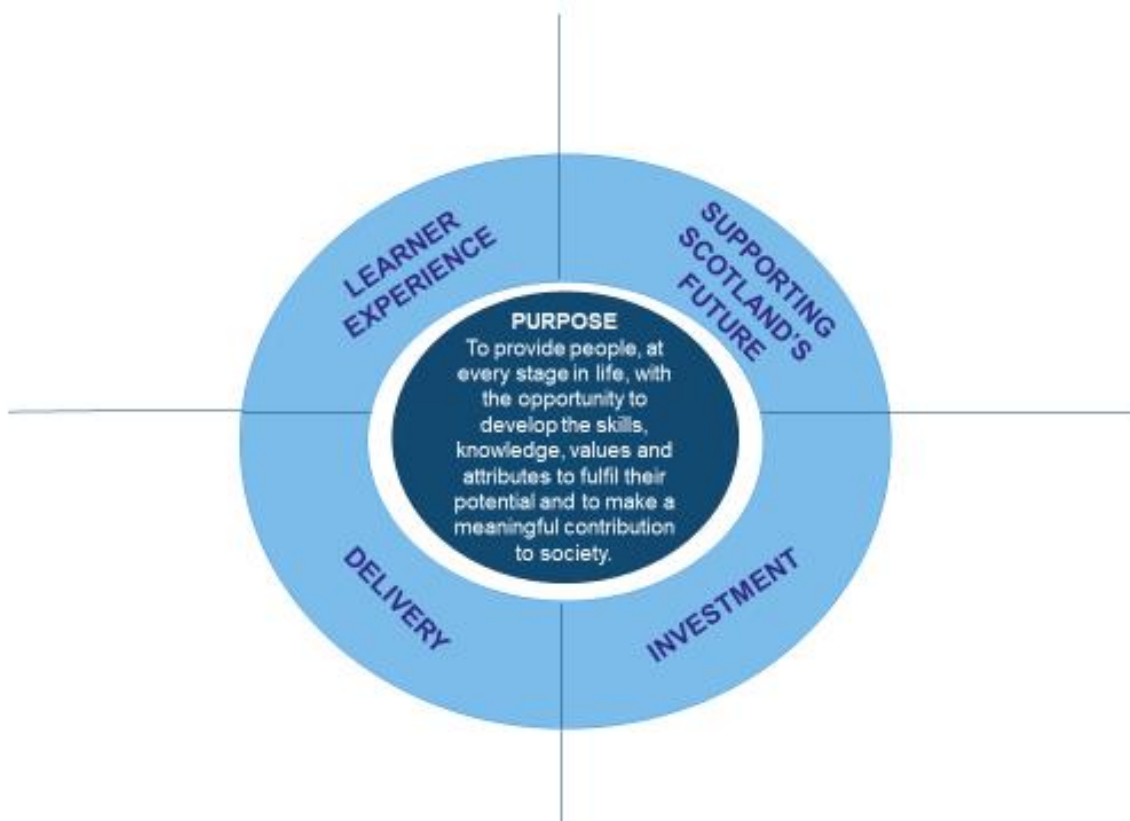
There are two areas that we are really keen to explore as part of our engagement and work to build the evidence base.

- What works in successfully widening access to education and lifelong learning to people from more disadvantaged backgrounds, whether in terms of socio-economic disadvantage or protected characteristics such as age, race, disability. This is an area where Scotland has [performed well](#) but there is still progress to be made, including making sure that the right financial incentives are in the system for learner and provider.
- What works in improving partnerships between industry strategy and employers and universities and colleges. Again Scotland has been [progressing](#) with a very flexible system, but the system is complex, primarily aimed at school leavers and primarily public funded. We would be interested to learn how other countries approach this challenge including exploring models of incentives and support to grow business and employer investment in upskilling and reskilling.

By Spring 2023 our aim is to deliver:

- a succinct and easy to understand purpose and principles that can guide decision making across government at national, regional and local level, across our agencies and within institutions
- a source of dependable evidence looking across all of the related ecosystems and identifying where further work needs to be done
- a plan for implementation, connected to the Scottish Funding Council's developing National Impact Framework

The purpose sitting at the heart of the purpose and principles is focussed on learners. We believe that Scotland's system has to be focussed on what it delivers for the people of Scotland, with the support of institutions, delivery partners and employers.



### Discussion points

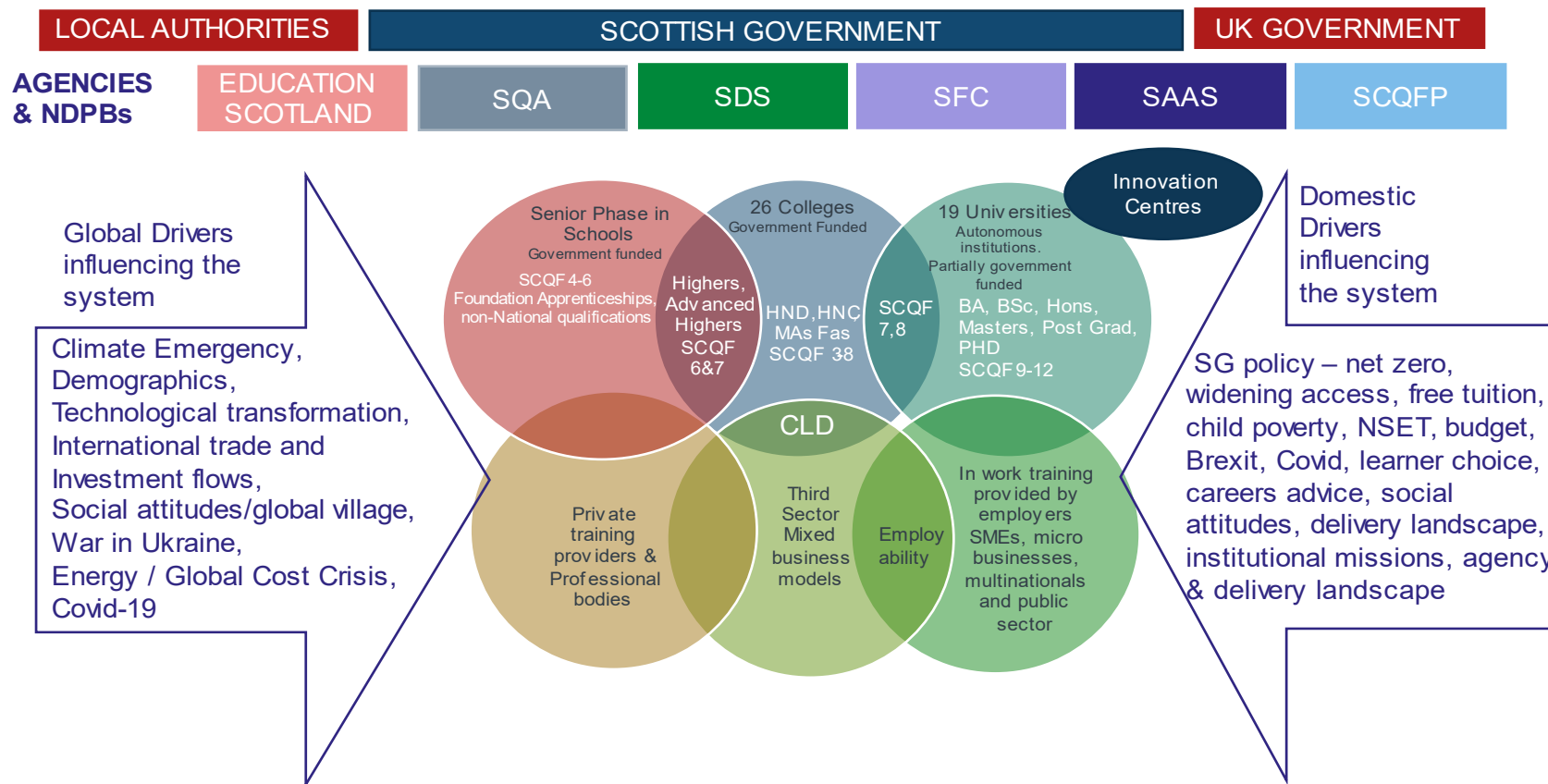
1. To what extent does the draft Purpose and Principles (Annex A) offer us a robust decision making framework for sectoral transformation in the next ten plus years?
2. From your experience and knowledge, where do you think there are good examples of ensuring good system alignment between future economic needs and lifelong educational and skills development. Is there any evidence you can point us to?
3. From your experience and knowledge where do you think there is good practice in helping people from more disadvantaged backgrounds into higher education. Is there any evidence you can point us to?

**Annex A**

**Draft Purpose and Principles for Post School Education, Skills Development and Research**

<b>Purpose of post school education, skills development and research</b>	
<b>To provide people, at every stage in life, with the opportunity to develop the skills, knowledge, values and attributes to fulfil their potential and to make a meaningful contribution to society.</b>	
<b>Principles of post school education, skills development and research</b>	
<i>Learner experience</i>	
<b>High quality opportunities</b>	Opportunities are available for people to further develop their knowledge and skills at the time and place that is right for them.
<b>Supported Learners</b>	Learners are supported throughout their learning journey, targeting those who need it most.
<i>Delivery</i>	
<b>A system that delivers for Scotland's economy</b>	While institutions, employers and agencies have distinctive missions, they act, collaborate and share knowledge in the best interests of Scotland's wellbeing economy.
<b>Trust and governance</b>	Agencies, institutions and providers are well governed, resilient and trusted to deliver.
<i>Investment</i>	
<b>Investing in our system</b>	Public investment is streamlined and transparent, targeted to ensure ongoing continual improvement and complementing wider investment in a changing environment.
<i>Supporting our future</i>	
<b>Responding to the climate emergency</b>	The ecosystem supports Scotland's response to the climate emergency including the transition to Net Zero and Scotland's biodiversity objectives.
<b>A global Scotland</b>	Scotland's post school education, skills development and research strengthens Scotland's global brand, supporting inward investment, global wellbeing and attracting people to study, live and work in Scotland.
<b>All learners are successful learners</b>	All learning pathways are valued equally for the contribution they make to our economy and society.

**Annex B**  
**Post-school ecosystem and its drivers**



**Annex C**  
**Wider Education Reform across Scottish Government**

## Reform and continuous improvement across education and skills

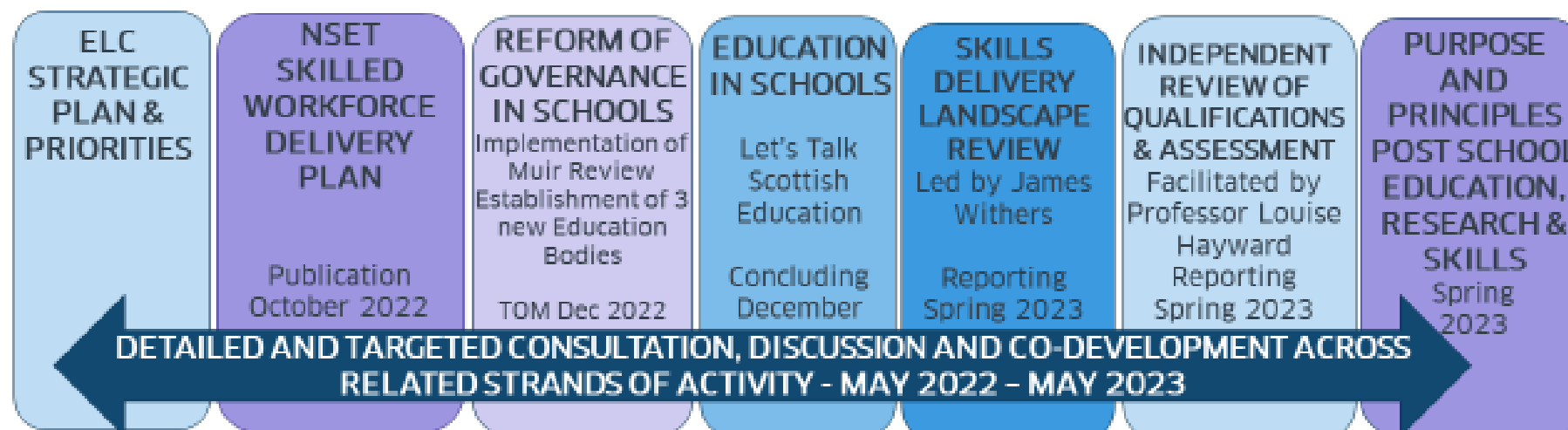
Developing a Purpose and Principles for Post School Education, Research and Skills ecosystem

**SHARED  
ELEMENTS  
COMMON TO  
ALL  
PROGRAMMES**

**COMMON HIGH LEVEL NARRATIVE ON THE VALUE AND PURPOSE OF LEARNING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT LIFE (NPF, UNCRC, NSET)**

**DEVELOPMENT OF SHARED EVIDENCE BASE ON THE VALUE OF LEARNING THROUGHOUT LIFE TO SCOTLAND'S COLLECTIVE WELLBEING**

**CLEAR ARTICULATION OF WHAT THE CURRENT ECOSYSTEM IS AND WHAT IT DELIVERS (LINKED TO EVIDENCE BASE ABOVE)**



**Annex D  
Scotland's Economy**

