

# Outcome Agreement Achievement Report

**College and University case studies  
2022-23 and 2023-24**



Scottish Funding Council  
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

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## Introduction

This report highlights and showcases the work that Scotland's colleges and universities have undertaken in Academic Years 2022-23 and 2023-24, supported by SFC funding. The case studies included in this report - submitted by institutions as part of their Outcome Agreements - demonstrate the broad range of activity across the sector, supporting SFC's key priorities related to outcomes for students, outcomes for economic recovery and social renewal and outcomes for research and innovation.

## Outcomes for Students

This section outlines the work undertaken by colleges and universities to continue to support positive outcomes and learning experiences for their students.

Case studies demonstrate how institutions support fair access and supported transitions and pathways, which recognise the diversity of learners and provide a bridge between school and further and higher education, particularly for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or communities. This includes through engagement with SFC supported Widening Access programmes.

Colleges and universities have also continued to deliver and enhance high quality learning and teaching for their students, which prepares them for future employment and the development of essential meta-skills. To support quality provision, SFC continues to fund QAA (Quality Assurance Agency), which develops and undertakes quality assurance and enhancement activities to reflect the needs of higher education in Scotland, and work closely with Education Scotland, which supports quality and improvement in colleges.

Case studies from the sector also showcase how institutions have developed safe and supportive learning environments that support the mental health and wellbeing of learners. SFC continues to recognise that institutions play a vital role in mental health and wellbeing support for students. Following the completion of the Programme for Government commitment to fund an additional 80 mental health counsellors, in 2023-24 we distributed transitional funding of £3.21 million on behalf of Scottish Government.

We also see how institutions are working in partnership with their students, championing the student voice and ensuring that learners are engaged and actively participating in their educational experience. To support this, SFC has continued to fund sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland), which works with institutions and students to support enhancement of student experience and partnership.

### High Quality Learning



#### Animating Meta skills North East Scotland College

North East Scotland College (NESCol) is committed to providing students with a high-quality education that prepares them for the workplace. As part of this commitment, students are often afforded the opportunity to gain industry experience through their learning. A recent example of this allowed students from a range of creative industries courses to work together on a live brief from Aberdeen City Council: to produce animations that would be used as a resource for pupils and teachers in local authority schools.

The project aimed to seamlessly integrate qualification evidence requirements across various subject areas within the creative industries. All students involved are on SFC credit funded courses, including 3D Computer Animation, Music, Acting and Performance, and Sound Production, while fulfilling the demands of a live brief. The end result was the creation of narrated animated videos communicating the meaning of meta-skills and visually explaining the importance and impact of Skills Development Scotland's Skills 4.0 to teachers and pupils across the region.

Through creating content about Meta skills, students involved in the project also developed core and Meta skills of their own. Working to a live client brief, and with students from other disciplines, learners gained invaluable real-world experiences, enhancing problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and adaptable thinking skills. The project is also a valuable addition to the CV of all involved.

There have been great mutual benefits for both NESCol and Aberdeen City Council, demonstrating strong partnerships between education and industry.

High Quality Learning



Photo: South Lanarkshire College



### HNC Next Generation Childhood Practice South Lanarkshire College

2022-23 proved a successful pilot year of South Lanarkshire College's HNC Next Generation: Childhood Practice qualification, funded through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). All students on the new course achieved their qualification and every student who completed the Next Generation programme progressed to a positive destination in June 2023.

The Childhood Practice Lecturers placed a huge focus on meta skills throughout the year. Placement providers are an essential element of the delivery of Childhood programmes, and provide the space for students to gain experience, link theory with practice and gain the opportunity to reflect on their practice and the practice of their more experienced colleagues. Feedback from placement providers was excellent and all shared a common theme that students were more prepared for placement, had deeper knowledge and were both more reflective and more confident than students they had provided placements for in the past.

Students were positioned at the centre of the learning process. Learning was dialectic, problem posing, active, and responsive to student needs and interests.

Feedback from students evidenced that the learning experience was much more accessible than a traditional classroom experience, and the delivery of this course was seen as inclusive by the learners. Students have shared their experiences:

- [Katie explains how she was able to keep up her Gaelic Medium Education by being able to attend a Gaelic school placement.](#)
- [Maura talks about the inclusivity of the course.](#)

High Quality Learning



Photo: Dumfries and Galloway College



### Digital Care Hub Dumfries and Galloway College

At the heart of Dumfries and Galloway College lies a cutting-edge initiative that has redefined the way it approaches teaching and learning within its Health and Social Care department. The College's Digital Care Hub, originally designed as a nurturing home environment for students, is revolutionising education. It boasts a wide range of features that could reshape the way care at home could be delivered in the future. This has reshaped the learning landscape for health and social care students in Dumfries and Galloway.

Central to the Hub's innovation are Learning Pods – collaborative spaces where students can engage in group work while seamlessly sharing their work with another member of the group who could be anywhere else. This fosters dynamic interaction and enhances the collaborative spirit among students.

The easily adaptable spaces ensure that Dumfries and Galloway College can meet the evolving demands of modern education, even in the face of challenging scheduling constraints. Incorporating technology to its fullest extent, the College has the capacity to record live lessons and capture students' practical demonstrations of their skills.

The impact on student retention has been significant, as the Hub has eliminated the barriers of distance and time. Students can easily catch up on missed lessons due to shift work or caregiving responsibilities, thereby ensuring their uninterrupted educational journey.

Collaboration with the National Health Service (NHS) has been pivotal in shaping the Hub, infusing it with clinical expertise and insights. Clinical educators now share this space, enriching the learning experience for students with staff providing them with real-world perspectives.



### Digital Technology Use Across the Portfolio Fife College

At Fife College, the Digital Readiness initiative is being deployed across the portfolio to support preparedness and positive outcomes for learners. The programme equips learners to navigate and harness digital tools and technologies to support their studies, and provides them with the knowledge, skills and self-reflective capabilities required for successful transition to further study or employment.

All learners are invited to undertake the Digital Familiarisation course, as part of the Digital Readiness programme, on enrolment of their main course of study.

Learners are introduced to the digital tools used throughout their course, learn how to make use of technology in a safe and positive way including understanding their digital footprint, potential online dangers and how to protect themselves, and self-assess their own digital capabilities: [Discovery tool building digital capability](#). Question sets are divided into New Students or Current Students, both focusing on the [Further Education \(FE\) learner profile](#). Learners are presented with a personalised report detailing their strengths and areas for improvement, with signposting to resources to support building capabilities.

As part of Digital Readiness, MyPortfolio, a bespoke Digital Portfolio tool to support learners to showcase their digital skills, capabilities, understanding, awareness, certificates etc is in the process of being deployed. The learner will be able to 'pack-up-and-go' at the end of their academic studies and demonstrate the content of their portfolio to prospective employers or other chosen individuals/organisations.

The impact has been enhanced learner preparedness demonstrated by an increase in confidence and the ability to navigate the digital landscape.



### Revolutionising Gaelic Learning Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's [SpeakGaelic project](#) has revolutionised Gaelic learning, giving learners opportunities to direct their learning through a comprehensive suite of multi-platform, multi-media, learning resources. The project is promoting more online and face-to-face classes, creating social media content, as well as television and radio series. The partnership between Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, BBC ALBA, and MG ALBA improves the image of Gaelic learning and adds to the attractiveness of the language itself, renewing and enriching the learning pathway for our own students and adult learners all over the world.

The SpeakGaelic project provides a solid foundation for adult learning of Gaelic throughout the country, supporting organisations that deliver Gaelic classes in the community, such as local councils and Community Trusts. This expands the number of people who could go on to do another course at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, whether that is a short course at Easter or in the summer, or a distance-learning course, or indeed a full-time degree course.

The SpeakGaelic teaching resources encourage the SMO students to teach Gaelic classes themselves in the community, increasing their knowledge and ability to teach. This strengthens our students' own Gaelic skills, encourages their interest in teaching, and strengthens the links between Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the local community.

The project has also established an international framework for Gaelic language learning. SpeakGaelic is based on the CEFR learning framework 'The Common European Framework of Reference for Language', or FICE in Gaelic 'Frèam Iomraidh Cumanta Eòrpach'. This development gives Gaelic teaching organisations the opportunity to adapt their courses to a recognised international learning scale. There are also assessments linked to FICE, and the SpeakGaelic course materials, giving learners and teachers the opportunity to measure and confirm the progress made in classes.

High Quality Learning



Photo: City of Glasgow College



### Supporting Career Pathways- Financial Services Conference City of Glasgow College

City of Glasgow College's Faculty of Education & Humanities organised and delivered a three-day Financial Services conference in December 2022. The primary aims of the conference were to:

- Inspire students to consider the attractiveness of a career in financial services.
- Learn about the variety of job roles and routes into the sector.
- Encourage students to develop networking skills and begin to grow their own network.
- Showcase to employers the capable and diverse talent pipeline available at the College.

These aims directly complement the three elements of the Scottish Financial Enterprise Skills Action Plan for Financial and Professional Services: Skills, Pathways and Promotion. Each day had a specific focus, including 'Skills', 'Investment and Regulation' and 'Women in Finance'.

The conference enabled students to experience learning outwith the formal curriculum, developing interpersonal and career management skills. Over 850 students engaged in activities, from Access learners studying at SCQF levels 4/5 to HND learners at SCQF Level 8. Learners not only participated in the formal activities in the conference agenda but were also encouraged to network with industry partners to consider the various pathways into the sector. Reflective sessions in classes following the conference supported learners to articulate how they had benefited from these experiences in a way that will support their career aspirations.

The conference also demonstrated the College's connectedness with employers, with over 50 industry partners contributing. The requests from employers to participate exceeded capacity, which highlights the strong appetite in the sector to engage with the talent pipeline. The event was also praised for the gender balance of industry participants, with diversity and inclusion being a key priority in the sector.

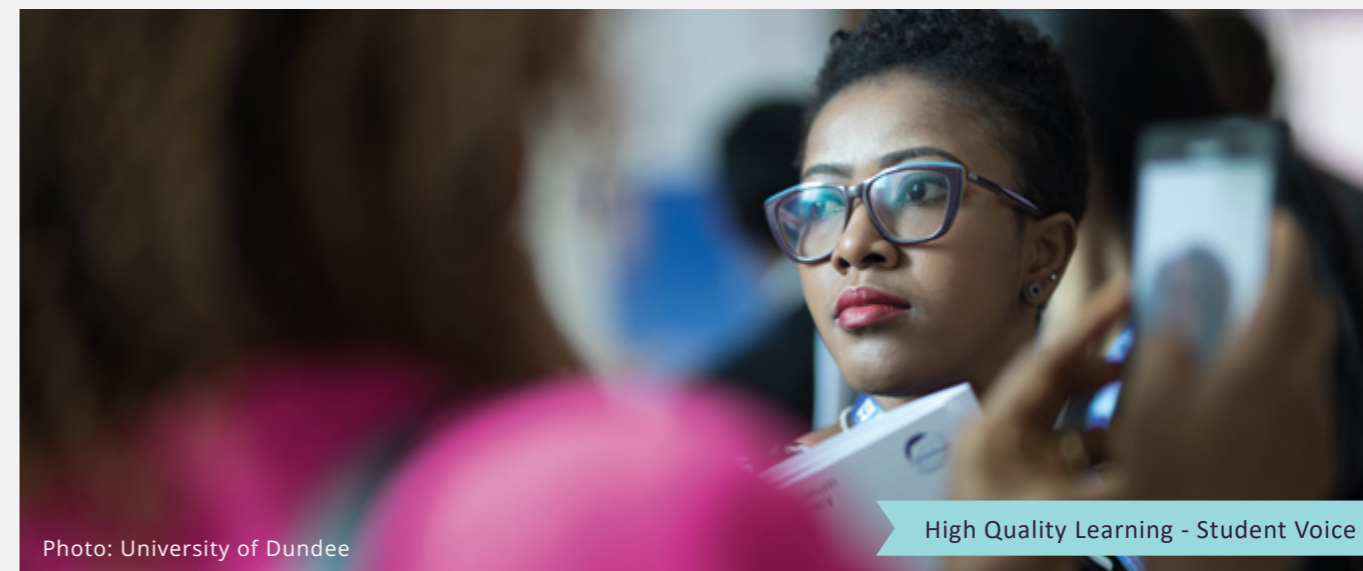


Photo: University of Dundee

High Quality Learning - Student Voice



### Student Partnership Agreement University of Dundee

In 2022-23 the University of Dundee signed a new three-year Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) with Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA).

Both organisations have experienced significant change since the last SPA was developed. The pandemic brought significant organisational challenges and impacted the local community in many ways, both personally and professionally.

The priorities included in the SPA are aligned to the University Strategy, the DUSA Strategic plan and the manifesto of the DUSA Executive team. They have been identified following a series of workshops and discussions that explored a wide range of activities and priorities, and three were selected to be taken forward during 2022-25:

- **Engaging our Community:** The University recognises that its community, the well-being of students and staff, and the experiences they have form an important part of the identity at the University of Dundee.
- **Student Learning & Research Experience:** The experiences of students, across the undergraduate, postgraduate and research communities are at the heart of what the University does.
- **The Student Voice:** Students and staff are co-architects. The success of this model is rooted in working in partnership.

In 2022-23, the University prioritised redeveloping its approach to supporting students and staff to work together to support academic success, reinforcing the equity of recognition of the degree programmes, and working together to support the [School President system](#) to be a success. School Presidents lead student representation in each academic school and are in place to represent all students regardless of course or level. The University has developed a clear set of SMART indicators that will be used to measure success in achieving each objective. The university will build on this progress, co-developing further actions across each priority for delivery in 2023-24 and 2024-25.

## High Quality Learning – Student Safety



Photo: University of St Andrews



### Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre (FRASAC) Support Worker University of St Andrews

Safe and supportive learning environments, which protect students' health and well-being, are a key aspect of high-quality learning provision.

One of the aims of the work of the University of St Andrews' Equally Safe committee is to improve institutional responses to and support for students and staff who disclose experience of gender-based and sexual violence. The University identified the need for specialist, on-site, crisis support for students affected by any form of sexual violence to complement and expand existing support and wellbeing services available within the University. The University approached local specialist agency, FRASAC, to employ a FRASAC Sexual Violence Support Worker to provide this support which includes: one to one crisis and early intervention support services to survivors of sexual violence within the University of St Andrews, support to friends and other supporters, and information and support to access advocacy, sexual health, forensics, and information on a need-led basis.

The service can be delivered in person or remotely via video, telephone or email and students can be referred to FRASAC by Student Services or may self-refer if they do not wish to involve the University.

In the University's feedback survey, all respondents reported that FRASAC helped with 'managing difficult emotions'. Other student feedback included comments that FRASAC provided expert advice, including legal advice, high quality counselling support, useful help to process trauma, a safe, non-judgemental, and comforting environment, and an easy to access location on university premises. Comments included:

**'I am able to recognise things that upset/trigger me and am able to find ways that will make me feel better in these situations. I am kinder to myself. I recognise that I am allowed to take up some space - I am not taking this opportunity away from someone who needs it 'more'.**

**'It has completely changed my mindset around all aspects of my life and has allowed me to support myself. Allowed me to process difficult events as I have been able to understand them better.'**

## High Quality Learning - Mental Health



### Supporting student success through mental health support

#### Edinburgh Napier University

During the past year, students have faced additional challenges due to the lingering impact of the pandemic and more recently from the cost-of-living crisis. As several reports have identified, these crises have significantly impacted student mental health, leading to a growth in demand for student mental health services. Over the last three years, student registrations to use Edinburgh Napier University's Counselling and Mental Wellbeing service grew from 840 in 2020-21 to 1,129 in 2021-22 and were 1,093 in 2022-23. In addition, the number of referrals to the University Safeguarding register increased year on year, and 295 students were added in 2022-23 (a 13% increase on the previous year), compared with 261 in 2021-22 and 144 in 2020-21.

The cost-of-living increase resulted in many students considering withdrawal from their studies for financial reasons. Supported by the SFC's Widening Access and Retention Fund (WARF) and the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Transition Fund, the University established several initiatives to ensure students were supported to remain in higher education and achieve successful outcomes.

Recognising the particularly acute financial situation faced by some of our students, the University and its Student Union took action to directly address food poverty. The University provided free breakfasts to our students on weekdays whilst the Edinburgh Napier Student Association launched a Community Pantry. With the help of the University, and donations from students and staff, the Community Pantry provided easy access to food for students who were struggling financially, enabling them to continue their studies.



Photo: Edinburgh Napier University

## High Quality Learning - Mental Health



Photo: Newbattle Abbey College



### Supporting Wellbeing through *Prescribe Nature* Newbattle Abbey College

Lee Ryan's first interaction with Newbattle Abbey College was as a participant on the Prescribe Nature Programme, funded by the Community Based Adult Learning fund and delivered by the College's Forest College team. As a 45-year-old single parent, Lee needed to find something to boost her wellbeing and self-esteem. In Lee's words, "I wasn't able to get out of the front door other than to take my bairn to school. I'd come home and go straight back to bed. That's all I could do. I just wasn't in a place where I could let the world in, I needed to shut it all out." The Prescribe Nature programme was aimed at utilising the power of person-centred forest delivery to support adults to enhance their well-being, improve their mental health, reduce social isolation and to enhance learning and employability. As part of the course, Lee had the opportunity to experience forest bathing, natural crafts and woodcraft, nature discovery and conservation. Using a Learning Journal to reflect on the experience, Lee was supported by the college team to gain an Adult Achievement Award at SCQF level 6, which gave a tangible outcome for the experience.

Whilst undertaking Prescribe Nature, Lee's self-confidence grew. Lee was encouraged to visit the Rural Skills unit and as a result, decided to enrol on the full-time course. Lee thrived within the full-time learning environment and quickly became involved in all aspects of college life. Having had a boost in confidence with her successful completion of the Adult Achievement Award, Lee successfully completed the Rural Skills course and has won the class prize for 2022-23.

Lee is passionate about improving the lives of parents and boosting their confidence and self-esteem. Together with two of her friends, she founded Improving Midlothian Parents and Caregivers Time (IMPACT). In 2023, their outstanding dedication and commitment to the community earned them the "Outstanding New Volunteer" award at the Volunteer Midlothian awards, hosted by Newbattle Abbey College. The commendable work of the IMPACT team has not only resonated within the local community but has also reached the national level, with an Early Day Motion supported by nine signatories in the UK Parliament, applauding their transformative efforts in empowering and supporting parents across Midlothian.

## Fair Access and Transitions



Photo: University of Strathclyde



### Young Strathclyder University of Strathclyde

Run by the Access, Equality & Inclusion team at the University of Strathclyde, Young Strathclyder is a distinctive and new widening access programme designed to raise awareness of higher education, support attainment, and offer learning opportunities through long-term sustained contact and support for pupils throughout their compulsory schooling.

Supported by Strathclyde student mentors, pupils participate in a range of engaging and interactive educational activities, helping them to build a sense of belonging and confidence within a higher education setting and to maintain a focus on their post-school goals through advice and guidance on subject choices and career opportunities. There are three main phases of the Young Strathclyder programme: Young Strathclyder Primary, Young Strathclyder S2, Young Strathclyder Accelerate (S5 and S6).

A range of other online and remote activities will be offered to pupils as they progress through school, including activities based on Sport, Sustainability & Entrepreneurship.

Accelerate, the senior phase of the Young Strathclyder programme, aims to provide S5 and S6 school pupils with a targeted focus on their chosen area of potential university study. Participants choose from seven one-week subject-specific Challenge programmes, representing all four of Strathclyde's Faculties: Business; Chemistry; Chemical Engineering; Computer Science; Electronic & Electrical; Engineering; Education, and Product Design. In 2023/24, the Accelerate programme will expand to 10 subject areas.

Ten Glasgow City Council primary schools participated in the pilot year of the Young Strathclyder Primary programme in 2022-23. In 2023/24, 15 primary schools will take part in the Young Strathclyder programme and eight high schools will join the new S2 programme.



Photo: Borders College

## Fair Access and Transitions



## Quiet Induction and Quiet Introduction to College

## Borders College

Throughout summer, Borders College hosted a series of Quiet Introduction sessions. The aim of Quiet Introduction was to create an inclusive and accessible welcome for students who typically experience barriers to education, including students with Additional Support Needs.

The College's key objectives were to increase awareness of the support available, provide opportunities to become more familiar with the college through student-led tours, develop early positive relationships with key staff, and provide 1-1 sessions for students to enrol and access funding and learning support.

Crucial to the success of the project was the involvement of those with lived experience and their representatives. This was a feature of all aspects of our planning, delivery, and design. Autistic staff, students and local disability partners played an invaluable role in shaping supported enrolment through their input and feedback.

A team of student ambassadors, all of whom had lived experience of disability, provided quiet campus tours for all visitors. This was particularly beneficial for disabled visitors, who were able to spend time navigating the campus and learning about its accessibility.

97% of attendees said that the event made them more confident about coming to college.

"Coming along has made me excited to study here." "It felt welcoming and made me more comfortable starting in August." "As an anxiety sufferer, this was the boost I needed!"

[This video](#) documents the reflections of the College's student ambassadors who volunteered during the supported enrolment sessions. Both students have lived experience of a disability.



Photo: Julie Howden (The Open University in Scotland)

## Fair Access and Transitions



## Gaining a New Career in Social Work

## The Open University in Scotland

Studying with The Open University (OU) in Scotland has enabled Zimbabwean refugee Vitalis Mumbure to gain a new career in social work, helping to improve the lives of others.

Vitalis worked as a high school teacher in Zimbabwe but had to flee his home country to avoid persecution. Aged 43 and now living in Paisley, Vitalis decided when he gained UK citizenship in 2021 that he wanted a professional qualification that would set a good example to his children and other refugees.

**"I wanted to change people's lives by contributing positively to them, and I saw social work as a way of giving back to the community. I am a refugee and I wanted to be a better citizen in my new home,"** he explains.

**"My experience of being a refugee inspired me to study to become a social worker,"** Vitalis says. **"I worked part-time at the Refugee Council alongside social workers. I loved how they played a pivotal role in transforming lives of many families in a positive way."**

He says: **"Part-time OU study fitted well with my family life. I could study in my own time and pay for my fees in instalments via the [Open University Student Budget Account](#), ensuring that I completed my studies with little or no debt."**

**"The OU is the best place to study if you have a lot of other commitments. Academic staff are there to support you all the time and are committed to ensuring that you get the best education ever,"** he highlights.

Now a newly qualified social worker in Glasgow City Council's Older People with Physical Disabilities Team, Vitalis works to empower and enhance the lives of care services users and their families, through identifying and providing practical and emotional support. He says:

**"My studies have changed me as an individual and it has offered me so many opportunities."**



Fair Access and Transitions



Photo: Edinburgh College



Aspire Programme  
Edinburgh College

Edinburgh College, East Lothian Council (ELC) and East Lothian Works (ELW) worked together to plan and deliver the Aspire programme. Aspire aims to support young people who are at risk of disengagement, helping them to re-engage in learning, develop their meta-skills, to ultimately improve their own personal achievement and career opportunities.

ELC and ELW selected S2 pupils from two East Lothian schools for a variety of project and skills-based experiences at College, aligned to labour market intelligence. The programme aimed to build an understanding of skills, training and qualifications needed to validate their career aspirations, and to explore careers that they did not know existed. The programme also built the personal and transferable skills that will help them succeed throughout their learning journey.

Alongside their usual school studies, the 26 pupils attended College each Monday for eight-week block rotations, trying a range of different skills-based and industry-themed taster sessions, to help them develop their aspirations, and give them an insight into where these skills are valuable in the employment market.

Feedback from young people, staff and families was overwhelmingly positive: 84% of pupils felt more confident about what they want to do when they leave school and 100% of families reported that the programme has had a positive effect upon their child. Pupils reported that Aspire has allowed them to find an area of the curriculum that they are 'good at', whilst also improving their meta skills and the way they build positive relationships with others. The programme has continued in 2023-24.

The programme was funded by the SFC, specifically through credit funding and the Young Person's Guarantee.



Photo: University of Edinburgh

Fair Access and Transitions



Edinburgh Cares  
University of Edinburgh

In 2022, the University of Edinburgh welcomed its largest ever cohort of care-experienced students as a result of its ongoing commitment to widening access and participation for this underrepresented group. Core SFC funding supports all of the University's widening participation activities and is key to its work in this space.

As a corporate parent, the University has legislative duties to support care-experienced students to make the most of their time at university. The University's vision is that each of its care-experienced and estranged students flourish during their time at the University, and it is important that they feel part of the University community and are supported to participate fully in university life.

The University has a wealth of arrangements in place to advise current or prospective students to guide them through the application process, as well as supporting them through their studies.

Edinburgh Cares offers a range of specific support to applicants and students with care-experience, estranged students, and student carers. The programme also supports students throughout the duration of their studies by providing financial assistance, year-round access to University accommodation and support to take part in activities outside of the learning environment. Processes to help new care-experienced students to become established within the University include a named contact within the Widening Participation team plus a staff or student mentor to support students throughout their time at the University.

The mentoring relationship focuses upon supporting the student to engage with the wider University, academically and non-academically. Mentors commit to working with their student for at least one academic year, although mentors and mentees are encouraged to continue with the programme for the duration of a mentee's degree.

Photo: West College Scotland



## Fair Access and Transitions



A vital contributor to social renewal in the West of Scotland

**West College Scotland**

West College Scotland (WCS) serves some of Scotland's most deprived communities and in doing so plays a vital role in providing and enhancing access to high quality learning, teaching and skills provision. The 400+ courses and programmes on offer, aligned to the current and future needs of local and national employers, help support people to stay in the region should they choose and provide a positive social and economic impact.

College is often viewed as a place for school leavers, but it also provides vital retraining opportunities and second chances which impact on the lives of individuals, their families and social renewal. The following case studies are two of many examples of how a first step into college changed the life of a more mature student.

Leaving school Sheree had been interested in nursing, but did not feel she had the confidence, and subsequently became a busy mum raising her six children. After attending a West College Scotland Open Day, and discussing her options, Sheree took the first step and started studying Level 5 Health and Social Care at the College's Clydebank Campus.

On top of balancing college work and childcare, Sheree's dyslexia initially made her studies difficult, but with additional support and provisions implemented by the College's Enabling Services team, Sheree quickly started to progress.

Sheree excelled during her 12-week work experience placement in the Neurological Rehabilitation Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital where her mentor described her as a professional, person-centred individual. She is now progressing onto Glasgow Caledonian University, to study Paediatric Child Nursing.

**HNC Health Practice Graduate – Sheree McNeil (35-years-old)**

Clydebank student Abbie Donati is profoundly deaf. Abbie chose to study at WCS to gain new skills and experience as well as learn different academic theories. With British Sign Language (BSL) as Abbie's first language, she was supported through college by a small team of interpreters and scribes, before going on to graduate with a HNC Counselling. Abbie has been able to continue her studies and is now attending the University of the West of Scotland where she is in her second year of a BSc Hons Psychology course.

While focusing on her studies, Abbie also took the time to help support her fellow and future BSL students by translating the College's newly produced Digital Etiquette video for BSL users. The video helps to outline guidance and behaviours for students and staff to work and learn in a hybrid learning environment.

**HNC Counselling Graduate – Abbie Donati (22-years-old)**

Fair Access and Transitions



Photo: University of Stirling



### Careers support for Care Experienced students and graduates University of Stirling

As part of the Careers Service's commitment to provide equitable opportunity to all students, the Service contributes to the work of the University of Stirling's Corporate Parenting Steering Group and to the University strategy in this area. The Corporate Parenting Plan is based on a core principle: the University wants its students with care experience to feel supported to access all that the University has to offer, in a way that works for them, so that their time at Stirling is as fulfilling and enriching as any other student.

As part of that work, it became apparent that care experienced students face a unique set of barriers in relation to careers support, needs and aspirations, and an action was established to "provide enhanced exit support".

In Spring 2022 the Careers Service created two internships exclusively for care experienced students and graduates of the University to explore the careers needs and ambitions of care experienced Stirling students. They were able to bring their lived experience to lead this project looking at care experienced students' career needs, and how the University supports them. The interns produced a report and a set of proposals, and the University has used the findings to work internally with colleagues, and externally with partners across the sector to create meaningful and long-lasting programmes of support.

The report was showcased by the interns at the Association for Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) National Conference 2023. Feedback from the conference presentation was outstanding. It was described as "brilliant", "excellent", "inspiring" and "the best presentation of the conference".

Following this piece of work and recommendations for more dedicated support, the University is now offering the Stirling Cares Programme, a three-year pilot project which started in autumn 2022, part-funded by Santander. This programme provides work experience with local employers along with one-to-one support and self-confidence and careers skills workshops. This has opened the students up to networks they may have struggled navigating on their own, raising their social capital.

Fair Access and Transitions



Photo: Newbattle Abbey College



### Early Screening for Student Success Newbattle Abbey College

To effectively support students in their learning journey, the Support for Learning (SFL) team at Newbattle Abbey College has implemented a practice of early screening on or prior to course induction day. This practice addresses the challenge of identifying and addressing students' diverse needs. During the screening process, each student undergoes a brief session, where a series of questions are asked, which include IT access and support needs, general learning challenges, and mental health. Students are also given the opportunity to officially disclose any pertinent information.

Within 48 hours, the data is shared with the relevant guidance tutors and services to ensure that support options are implemented from the beginning of the academic term. This includes the IT services team and the Support for Learning Assistant for an initial 45-minute dyslexia assessment for students flagged as potentially having dyslexia. Students identified as having a high likelihood of dyslexia are then referred to an Educational Psychologist for a formal diagnosis and the formulation of a personalised learning support plan. Students who disclose mental health challenges receive follow-up meetings with a member of the SFL team before the end of the first month of classes.

The practice of early screening reflects a student-centred approach and contributes to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The College intends to develop the practice by incorporating student self-report measures throughout the year, that allow students to express their own perceptions of their learning strengths, challenges, and well-being. This can provide valuable insights into their experiences and help tailor support accordingly.

## Fair Access and Transitions



## Supporting Women Returners through Community Learning

### West Lothian College

In collaboration with West Lothian Council's Community Learning team, West Lothian College is delivering early years training at the Blackburn Partnership Centre for local women to develop the confidence and skills to equip them to build a career.

Two cohorts of women have taken part since October 2022, completing Child Development, Play in Early Learning and Childcare, and Contemporary Families units.

The local authority provided a morning and afternoon crèche to support attendance and, to support positive progression, the lecturer works with the council's employability officer to enable the women to strengthen their CV-writing and interview skills.

Most of the women taking part in these courses did not have previous positive experiences of education and it was important that this step back into education took place in an environment where they felt safe, and confident that their young children were well cared for in the creche provided. Providing a welcoming and safe space for parents and their children ensures maximum attendance and positive engagement with the course.

These have been very successful courses delivered in the community and the women said that they would never have had the confidence to apply to college without engaging in them first. Despite believing they could never go to college, 56% of the first cohort of women enrolled on a full-time PDA Education Assistance Support course in August 2023, 33% onto Education Assistance Support or Counselling evening courses, and 11% continued their learning in the community.

**"I applied for the community course in child development as I had been out of work through ill health for a few years and had lost a lot of confidence in myself and my abilities. The course coordinator from the council and the college tutor were so approachable and very understanding of individual needs."**



Photo: Dundee and Angus College



## Supporting Transitions- DFN Project SEARCH

### Dundee and Angus College

Jonathan is a student at Dundee and Angus College who was plagued in his early years by overwhelming anxiety. He is a neurodiverse person who was diagnosed with Autism and learning disabilities, became a selective mute and removed himself from any form of social interaction outwith of the comfort of his own home. Despite his academic abilities and willingness to learn, his inability to communicate created barriers to his journey through education and social progress.

In 2022, Jonathan, with the support of his mother Maxine, enrolled in the DFN Project SEARCH programme in collaboration with Dundee and Angus College and healthcare partnerships. DFN Project SEARCH is a business-led initiative that supports a one-year transition programme to employment for adults with learning disabilities and/or Autism spectrum conditions.

The collaborative efforts between Dundee and Angus College and Dundee Health & Social Care Partnership have provided the right environment for Jonathan to grow, break down barriers, and thrive. His college experience has provided Jonathan with a new sense of purpose and a place within a community. After 22 years of silence, Jonathan spoke for the first time in an educational context and has continued to develop his verbal skills throughout his college learning journey. He proudly displayed his confidence by volunteering to speak in front of a large audience at his DFN Project SEARCH graduation.

Jonathan did not stop there though; he went on to secure a placement at the Nursing Bank at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee where he has flourished. Jonathan has found a passion for working at the Nursing Bank and through his work placement he secured employment in April 2023, where he confidently answers phone calls and handles reception duties as part of his role. His remarkable progress and growth have not gone unnoticed- he has been nominated and won several awards including the NHS STAR Award for Young Achiever, two awards at the Dundee and Angus College Prizegiving ceremony, The Armistead Prize for Personal Achievement, and the Ede & Ravenscroft Prize for Outstanding Achievement. His remarkable journey stands as a testament to the role that Dundee and Angus College plays in shaping the lives of individuals across our region and is a reminder of the potential for growth and achievement that lies within each individual, given the right opportunities.

Fair Access



Photo: New College Lanarkshire



### The Braw Wee Shop New College Lanarkshire

The Braw Wee Shop is a retail environment established within the Motherwell Campus of New College Lanarkshire which offers adults with learning disabilities the opportunity to develop real work experience. The students have been learning about skills for customer care and service and working collaboratively with staff on the launch plan for the shop opening, were able to hone these key skills within a real working environment.

The shop is stocked with a range of unique hand-made products which are crafted by students within all the Supported Learning courses in the Motherwell campus. These are made within specific enterprise or art activities. Sustainability plays a key part in the products that the students make and sell, which is aligned with New College Lanarkshire's core value of 'giving more than we take'.

The Braw Wee Shop has had a positive impact on both the students involved and the wider community. For the students, it has provided them with a real-world opportunity to develop their skills and confidence in a retail environment. They have also had the chance to meet new people and make friends. Confidence amongst the students involved has increased, along with ambition amidst the realisation of genuine future career opportunities within the retail sector.

The Braw Wee shop received a commendation at the Herald Higher Education awards and was also nominated for a 'Diversity in Education' award at the Herald Diversity Awards. It also [featured on STV](#).

The Braw Wee Shop has been such a success that the College is now looking to open additional shops on its Cumbernauld and Coatbridge Campuses.

Stephen Cotter, Head of New College Lanarkshire's Supported Learning department said **'We believe that The Braw Wee Shop can be a catalyst to help promote the amazing things people with learning disabilities can achieve when they are given the chance. We hope that our small venture can play a big part in helping to redress the issue of lack of employment opportunities and poor employment rate for people with learning disabilities which is around 4% within the Lanarkshire area'**.

## Outcomes for Social Recovery and Economic Renewal

Scotland's colleges and universities play a key role in helping to meet our future skills needs and in supporting crucial emerging industries, such as the green economy and the just transition to net zero, which further supports economic recovery.

Case studies in this section demonstrate how work-based learning and skills form a key element of our institutions' curriculum offer, ensuring that graduates are work-ready and employable, with pathways into their chosen careers. Work-based learning includes short, flexible provision to support people living and working in Scotland to upskill or reskill in strategically important areas. SFC continues to support this through our [Upskilling Fund](#), with £6.97 million allocated in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Colleges have also demonstrated activity utilising SFC's [Flexible Workforce Development Fund \(FWDF\)](#), which provides an opportunity for colleges and independent training providers to engage with local employers and develop a deeper understanding of the skills needs in their regional economies. In 2022-23, SFC allocated £9.9 million of FWDF funds to colleges and the Open University in Scotland.

Also highlighted are examples of institutions working in partnership with local employers and industries to help identify regional skills gaps and ensure that their curriculum addresses these. SFC continues to support Foundation Apprenticeships, Graduate Apprenticeships, and Modern Apprenticeships as a key route for increasing work-based learning pathways.

Case studies also demonstrate how institutions are supporting coherent learning provision within and across regions. This includes understanding and supporting the alignment of provision against societal and employer needs, enhancing coherence and sustainability across provision and supporting simpler pathways and improved outcomes for learners. Through the [Regional Tertiary Pathfinders programme](#), SFC works with colleges, universities and skills partners in the North East and South of Scotland, supporting [seven innovative pilot projects](#). Case studies from pilot institutions outline the collaborative work that has been progressed to support this programme.

Scotland's colleges and universities play an essential role in supporting our route to net zero, creating just transition opportunities for Scotland's people and communities, and in navigating our path towards net zero emissions by 2045. Through ground-breaking research and innovation, adaption of colleges' and universities' estates and activities, teaching and learning, and collaborative partnerships with green industries, our institutions have demonstrated a range of activities to support Scotland's climate emergency response and net zero transition. In 2022-23 and 2023-24, SFC has continued with our Financial Transactions programme, offering low interest loans available to universities, totalling up to £57 million, to advance their carbon management and net zero plans.



Photo: Forth Valley College



Photo: Heriot-Watt University

## Work Based Learning and Skills



## Investing in Graduate Apprenticeships

Heriot-Watt University

Fatima Asif is enrolled on the Engineering: Design and Manufacture Graduate Apprenticeship at Heriot-Watt University, while working full-time as a Continuous Improvement Engineer at Plexus, an electronic manufacturing business. Plexus engages with Graduate Apprenticeships because the programmes allow them to develop early careers employees through learning while working, which means they get a highly qualified person with in-depth company knowledge and experience at the end of the programme. Plexus use Graduate Apprenticeships to fill identified skills gaps and currently has seven Graduate Apprentices with Heriot-Watt University.

Fatima, who also acts as a mentor to other apprentices, says that the Graduate Apprenticeship has given her a real focus because she can see a clear path ahead of her, which she finds motivating. Fatima spends her time collaborating across many groups in the organisation and devising and implementing process improvements. As part of her work, Fatima promoted and deployed a new process for recording process improvement opportunities which has led to significant annual savings to the business. Fatima's achievements were recognised in the Scottish Apprenticeship Awards, in the Graduate Apprentice of the Year category sponsored by the SFC. She hopes that after completing the Graduate Apprenticeship she can go on to become a Chartered Engineer.

Fatima says "I will be forever grateful for this opportunity and truly believe that this apprenticeship programme has shaped my future in a way nothing else could have. This apprenticeship has provided me with all the skills and confidence to believe that I have what it takes to achieve all my goals."



Photo: Edinburgh College

## Work Based Learning and Skills



## Software Development Bootcamp – Codespace and 2i testing

Edinburgh College

Edinburgh College and software development company 2i Testing collaborated in 2022-23 to create the Codespace programme. Codespace is a unique kind of bootcamp course that enables students from underrepresented backgrounds to build their digital skills and find routes into the tech industry, with the prospect of gaining employment directly after their studies.

Students at Edinburgh College can undertake an introductory coding course, covering the basics around HTML, CSS, web development, Python programming and SQL, to allow students to gain an opportunity to experience a coding course completely free in their own time and see if tech is for them.

Upon completion of the introductory course, students moved on to the more challenging six-week Software Development Bootcamp jointly developed and delivered by the College and 2i. This blended together front and back-end development modules including programming, software testing, SQL and more, with career support to get students into work upon completion of their course.

Over 200 students undertook the introductory course and two cohorts of students have gone on to complete the bootcamp, with participants coming from all backgrounds and industries. Some students are now working in full-time roles following completion of Codespace.

SFC supported the funding for this programme through credits, in the induction phase and software development phases, with the bootcamp directly supported by the City Region Deal, DDI programme and 2i.

Economic transformation and social renewal



Photo: Dumfries and Galloway College



### Developing Future Skills Solutions- Wind Power Dumfries and Galloway College

Wind power has emerged as a critical component of the sustainable energy transition and the need for appropriately skilled workers in the wind energy sector is growing rapidly. To address this demand Dumfries and Galloway College has partnered with Natural Power, a leading renewable energy firm, to co-create new solutions for future skills needs.

The success of the College's NQ Wind Turbine and Technician Trainee programme has rested on the collaborative co-design process and development of provision. Educational experts, alongside Natural Power's technical experts, worked together to co-design and re-purpose existing provision to incorporate the latest skills and technologies demanded by the sector ensuring that it is fit for purpose now whilst ensuring the partnership will help evolve curriculum so its relevance can evolve and produce the workforce needed for the future. This has led to further development of a new wind turbine technician placement scheme in partnership with the College to proactively plug local skills gaps. By addressing the skills gaps in the wind energy sector and creating effective pathways to employment, this programme is not only transforming the region's workforce but is also contributing to sustainable energy production and economic growth.

As part of the work with Natural Power, three of Dumfries and Galloway College's students completed a six-month placement at Windy Standard Wind Farm, receiving on-the-job, enhanced training and putting them in good stead to work in the ever-growing, ever-important renewable energy sector.

Work Based Learning and Skills



Photo: Survival Systems International



### Survival Systems International The Open University in Scotland

Global lifeboat manufacturer Survival Systems International has been able to integrate learning with the needs of its business due to the funded skills development opportunities offered through the Flexible Workforce Development Fund.

Survival Systems International first began partnering with The Open University (OU) in Scotland in October 2021, after being attracted to the funded courses the distance-learning provider had to offer through the FWDF.

Staff working at Survival Systems International's base at Montrose in Angus have benefited from access to the FWDF to support their professional development.

The Human Resources Manager for Survival Systems International, Tina Simpson, explains: 'Access to the relevant courses offered by the OU has allowed us to support the development of our workforce. By choosing courses that we can integrate into our company requirements and by receiving funding, this has supported external learning and reduced the burden on our training budget. Without access to this funding, the availability of this type of professional development to the workforce would have been limited due to cost.'

Tina also highlights that the flexibility provided by the OU in Scotland has been welcome when operational needs have had to take precedence at times. As an employer, she also recommends to businesses: 'Allowing time and resources for employees to complete the training within their defined training programme.'

As a result of studying with the OU in Scotland, the HR Manager shares that the benefits to the workforce have included: "Promotion of staff that completed their training, increased knowledge, continuous professional development, and opportunities to progress within the company."

## Work Based Learning and Skills



Photo: Glasgow Caledonian University



Supporting economic development and meeting industry needs through Graduate Apprenticeships

**Glasgow Caledonian University**

Glasgow Caledonian University is Scotland's leading provider of Graduate Apprenticeships, delivering nine apprenticeship frameworks. Working from a baseline of over 300 employers in Scotland, the University has collaborated with technical, human capital and strategic leaders to build a dynamic view of forecast demand for participation in apprenticeships.

The University's partnership with ID Systems (IDS) is an exemplar of the positive impact of Graduate Apprenticeship education for employers. IDS is part of M Group Services' Water Division and is an integrated mechanical, electrical, instrumentation, control, automation, and telemetry specialist business. With an awareness of engineering skills shortages, IDS is choosing to invest in building skills in a young workforce and through discussions with Glasgow Caledonian University found a partner that can facilitate identification of candidates and a method for developing a sustainable pipeline of engineering talent. IDS brings the significant asset of highly experienced, chartered engineers keen to mentor and be a part of the tacit and applied knowledge transfer and engineering capacity building process that is so critical to a successful Graduate Apprenticeship experience.

IDS's talent strategy seeks to attract, develop and retain the next generation of young people to work and study towards a BEng (Hons) Engineering (Design and Manufacture) in partnership with the University. This year IDS has guaranteed a minimum of four new Graduate Apprenticeship jobs, with the added potential to create other GA routes and further build on this partnership to wider knowledge transfer and collaboration activities.

## Work Based Learning and Skills



NMIS Advanced Manufacturing Centre  
- building a regional skills hub for  
Manufacturing 4.0

**West College Scotland**

The Critical Engineer programme offered by West College Scotland provides a regional skills hub connecting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) on their skills journey to Manufacturing 4.0. It was set up with funding from the SFC, the European Regional Development Fund and Renfrewshire Council.

The hub helps SMEs advance their capabilities in Manufacturing 4.0. It trains their staff in areas such as computer numerical control, programmable logic control, and 3D printing and scanning. By addressing the skills gap and fostering innovation, the programme also enhances SMEs' competitiveness. Companies received training from the College's suite of free advanced and digital manufacturing skills courses. The initial programme ran from 2021 to June 2023, with progression and legacy support continuing after the training phase.

Managing the Critical Engineer Programme gave the College valuable insights into the challenges SMEs face as they upskill in advanced and digital manufacturing. These included the ability to release staff for training and finding time for future workforce planning. West College Scotland focused the training on SMEs who had not yet engaged with the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS) and were struggling to recognise the potential of advanced and digital manufacturing and how to benefit from the support available to them.

As a pan-Scotland centre of excellence, West College Scotland's ambition was to provide a regional hub with a national footprint. This was measured by SME participation across different geographic areas and associated training clusters with analysis of the reach and effectiveness of the programme in different regions. This showed 40% of participating SMEs were from Renfrewshire, the host local authority for the NMIS campus. A further 23% came from across the West College Scotland region, and 37% from elsewhere in Scotland.

The Critical Engineer programme achieved significant milestones, including supporting the Scottish Government's ambition for inclusive growth by targeting under-represented areas. Following training, some companies have gone on to invest in Computerised Numerical Control automation. The project also facilitated access to additional training and funding opportunities, further supporting SME growth.



## Work Based Learning and Skills

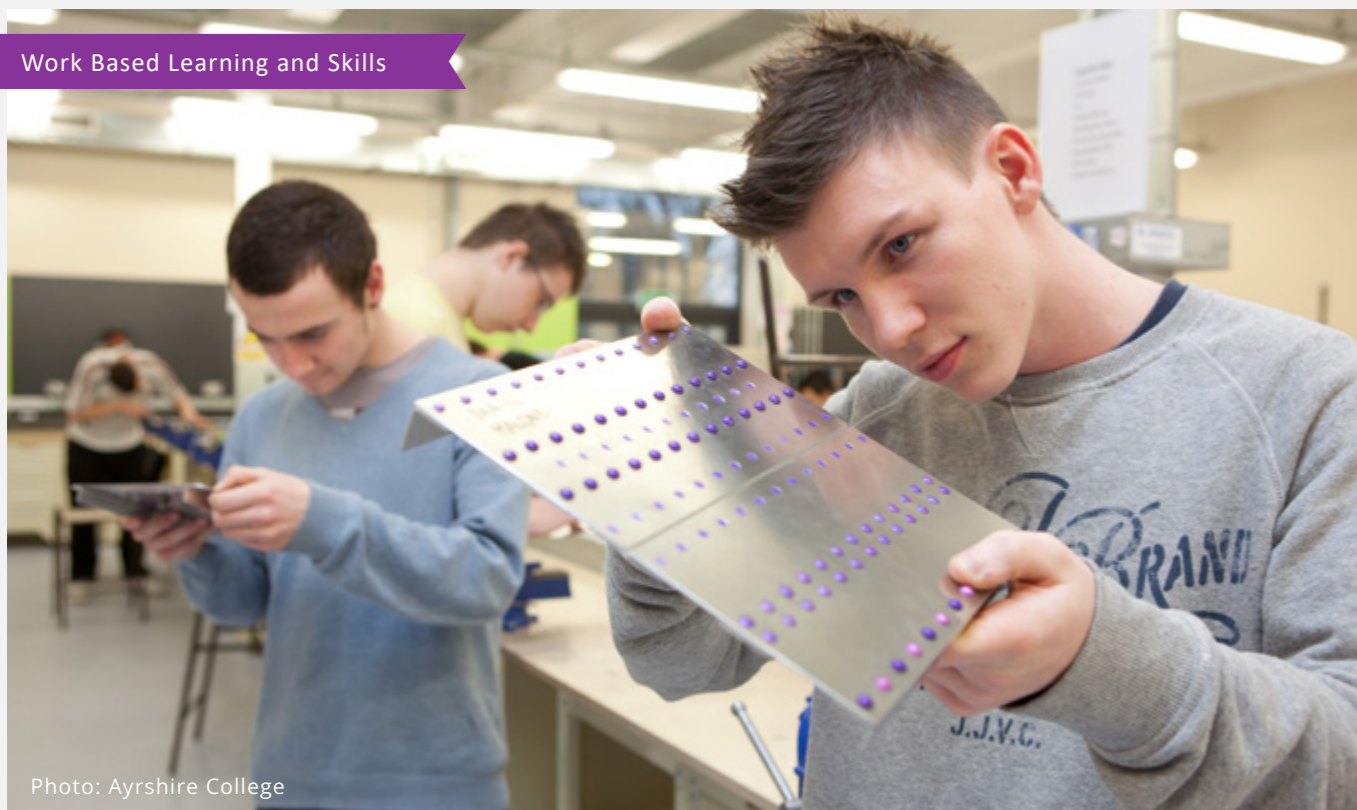


Photo: Ayrshire College



### The Willie Mackie Skills Hub Ayrshire College

Ayrshire College, North Ayrshire Council, the Magnox Socio Economic Panel, the SFC and the Ayrshire College Foundation collaborated to provide funding for The Willie Mackie Skills Hub which opened in August 2023.

The Future Skills Hub is equipped with the latest industry standard tools and equipment that will provide students with an outstanding learning experience. Resources include Ground Source and Air Source Heat Pump Technology, Robotics and SMART technologies alongside new construction training facilities.

Moreover, this partnership approach has created the opportunity for the first time for North Ayrshire communities to access Modern Apprenticeships, firstly in Carpentry and Joinery. In 2023-24, the College is delivering to 10 apprentices from Ayrshire company James Frew LTD and to three apprentices from North Ayrshire Council.

Moving forward, this state-of-the-art facility will enable the College to offer apprenticeships in plumbing and electrical engineering and will enable the delivery of an innovative curriculum in Engineering, Construction and SMART Technologies to primary and secondary school pupils, employers and their workforce, and North Ayrshire residents seeking employment.

By providing a range of skills provision from employability skills through to higher level skills, the College will create the opportunity for North Ayrshire communities to access entry level jobs and to progress to higher level occupations in sectors which are of higher value to the economy and workforce. This will help create a virtuous cycle of increasing productivity and prosperity in the area.



Photo: Fife College

## Work Based Learning and Skills



### The Academy Bistro Fife College

The Academy Bistro is the new student-designed training restaurant at Fife College's Kirkcaldy campus.

Research on the previous facility revealed members of the public were unaware of its existence; and those who did visit, felt it lacked the atmosphere of a high street restaurant. The resulting low customer numbers were compromising the restaurant's learning potential. Consequently, the College decided to refurbish and rebrand the restaurant.

Work began in 2021 to turn it into a modern and inviting cafe during the day, and a lively, upmarket restaurant at night. The design concept came from the College's own design students who successfully created the look and feel of a high-end city centre establishment. College students also provided the new name.

Students and the community are now at the heart of The Academy which uses locally sourced and fresh seasonal ingredients to create high quality lunch and dinner menus. The benefits extend to the College's School-College Partnership, and school pupils learn barista skills and provide afternoon teas at the restaurant.

In 2022, The Academy welcomed Gordon Brown and Dame Joanna Lumley to a private dinner as part of the Adam Smith Festival of Ideas. It has also hosted wine tastings; graduation celebrations; events for the Adam Smith 300 festival; and the Fife Food Fayre.

As well as benefitting 199 full and part-time students and 48 learners on the World Host programme, in 2022-23 the new restaurant had over 1,700 bookings and a healthy walk-in trade. Income has increased by more than two and a half times, and the College has introduced a new reservation system to better manage its booking and ordering processes.

A recent TripAdvisor review described the Academy as 'outstanding!' and the quality of food as '10 out of 10', adding it was excellent value for money. Other reviews enthuse about the helpful service and recommend it as a dining experience.

The new Academy rivals any high-end eatery for the quality of its food and dining experience while providing students with practical culinary and hospitality experience in a controlled and supportive environment.



Photo: Borders College

## Coherent Learning Provision



South of Scotland  
Pathfinder  
SRUC/Borders College

In 2022-23, SRUC led collaborative work on the South of Scotland pathfinder, partnering with Borders College to achieve the following three key objectives:

- Production of a joint prospectus
- Investigation of collaboration, progression and articulation
- Innovation as a means of promoting joint activity.

SRUC are already seeing evidence of pathway progression, with NC agriculture students from Borders College progressing to HNC agriculture; and animal care students to veterinary nursing at SRUC's Barony campus. There are also outline plans for wildlife and conservation students from SRUC to benefit from learning opportunities within the specialist gamekeeping department at Borders College.



Photo: SRUC

SRUC developed the joint South of Scotland prospectus highlighting study pathways for dissemination at summer 2023 events across the region, including the Border Union Show. At the launch event a statement of strategic intent was also signed by the Principals of both institutions to cement this exciting new initiative and ongoing partnership.

On innovation as a means of promoting joint activity, during the project SRUC identified new areas for joint development, including horticulture and care and rural tourism.

In summer 2023, SRUC developed a bespoke rural business and enterprise summer school, delivered using a blended approach to ensure accessibility across the South of Scotland.

There are wider benefits to students and the region's communities and businesses including:

- Agreeing joint working on school provision, continuing professional development and training through signposting, double badging and sharing resources.
- SRUC veterinary services St Boswells hosted Borders College HND animal care students for an immersive learning experience with SRUC's expert veterinary diagnostic and surveillance team and an opportunity to learn more about career opportunities such as laboratory technician or postmortem support officer.

As SRUC progresses with induction of its newly appointed joint business development officer, the pathfinder work will underpin their future work with regional businesses and stakeholders to progress innovative joint activities and explore wider opportunities for collaboration across the South of Scotland.

## Partnerships &amp; Collaboration



Photo: University of the West of Scotland



### Maximising Impact: UWS and SAFEA Partnership University of the West of Scotland

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) secured accreditation as an Overseas Training and Collaborative Organisation (OTCO) by the State Administration for Foreign Expert Affairs (SAFEA) in 2018 – the Chinese government agency responsible for certifying foreign experts and organising overseas training for Chinese professionals. This collaboration is creating opportunities for diverse groups of delegates and supporting Scotland's economic and social renewal agenda.

UWS has successfully trained over 600 senior management professionals from the public sector and private sector, spanning varied disciplines, positioning Scotland as a premier destination for overseas training.

Building on this success, UWS has taken bold steps in establishing the Zhejiang Innovation Base (ZIB) in collaboration with Zhejiang Provincial Science and Technology. ZIB's mission revolves around supporting SMEs in both Zhejiang and Scotland through training and exchange activities, thereby fostering international networks and knowledge sharing.

Looking ahead, UWS has exciting prospects, including an SME delegation visit and training in 2023/24, and is forging another significant partnership, with the Shandong Provincial Human Resource and Social Security (HRSS) Department. Leveraging UWS's pedigree in industry collaboration, the University is aiding Shandong HRSS in the development of a pioneering model to develop young talent in both Scottish and Shandong enterprises.

UWS's accreditation as an OTCO by SAFEA has not only elevated Scotland's profile on the worldwide stage but has also established invaluable partnerships, enhanced the University's economic standing, and created a transformative impact on education and industry. These initiatives exemplify UWS's commitment to fostering international collaboration and driving Scotland's growth and success on a global scale.

## Coherent Learning Provision



Aligning the learning and skills offer to the needs of employers

### Ayrshire College

The new [Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy \(RES\)](#) was launched on 19 June 2023 and was developed by the Regional Strategy Working Group of the Ayrshire Economic Partnership Board, of which the Ayrshire College Principal and Vice Principal Skills and Enterprise are members. Recently the Vice Principal Skills and Enterprise has become the Chair of the Skills workstream of the RES. This group will determine the priorities for the Growth Deal skills investment and act as a catalyst for future funding bid opportunities.

The College is leading the development of a coherent approach to ensure employers have the skilled workforce required in aerospace and space; clean growth; visitor economy; food and drink: life sciences, and advanced manufacturing. This involves working in partnership with schools, third sector and universities to develop a pipeline of talent.

The College has established an employer advisory group and is leading the skills pathway response by increasing its school-college partnership senior phase offer, introducing accelerated learning pathways and increasing its apprentice provision alongside a portfolio of upskilling programmes. The College is also progressing its application with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to become a Part 147 Approved Maintenance Training Organisation. The application is being developed in partnership with industrial partners around the airfield at Glasgow Prestwick Airport and throughout Scotland.

The College is also working with a range of partners including innovation centres, employers developing sustainable aviation materials, satellite manufacturers and supply chain businesses to ensure Prestwick realises its ambition to be the National Aerospace Hub for Scotland.



Photo: Ayrshire College

Photo: Forth Valley College

# Forth Valley University College NHS Partnership

ch - Innovation careers



## Partnerships and Collaboration



Forth Valley University College NHS Partnership

**Forth Valley College/  
University of Stirling**

Forth Valley College is at the forefront of a new partnership that is driving innovation and improving skills in the National Health Service.

The college has joined up with the University of Stirling and NHS Forth Valley to improve patient care and treatments, and boost health research and staff learning across the region.

All three partners enjoy a strong history and excellent relationship in delivering world-class training, teaching and learning experiences for students undertaking a wide range of health and social care courses and qualifications.

Together the partners are striving to improve the health and wellbeing of society and make a difference to the lives of individuals, patients, carers and communities across Forth Valley.

Forth Valley College offers a wide range of courses and apprenticeships for individuals interested in working within the health and



Photo: Forth Valley College

care sectors. These cover areas such as social care, early education and childcare, introduction to nursing, healthcare and working with communities.

The College offers a total of 25 courses in this sector, ranging from a Skills for Work course preparing school pupils for a career in the emergency services to continuing development courses for established care professionals.

The partnership is working on four priority areas: learning, careers, research, and innovation with an initial focus on:

- The development of a skills boost scheme to more closely meet the needs of local employers and businesses with a focus on health and care.
- Work to attract more people to work in health and social care in partnership with the NHS Youth Academy.
- Identification of funding streams to support the delivery of new training and learning opportunities which will help meet future workforce needs with an initial focus on physiotherapy.
- Promotion of learning and career pathways for school pupils to employment within NHS Forth Valley.

The partnership will ensure that the College is at the forefront of developing a skills pipeline to fill future workforce requirements within NHS Forth Valley.

More information about the partnership at [fnhsuniversitycollege.org](https://fnhsuniversitycollege.org).



Partnerships &amp; Collaboration

Photo: Royal Conservatoire of Scotland



International collaboration at the heart of core curriculum and professional training

**Royal Conservatoire of Scotland**

During 2022-23, a significant collaboration took place between the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS). It was a complex project that involved three international visits, culminating in a major performance with students from the Sibelius Academy joining the RCS Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Mahler's 5th Symphony and Beethoven's 3rd Piano Concerto, under the direction of RCS visiting Professor, Martyn Brabbins. The opportunity to work under the direction of one of the world's most respected and experienced conductors provided an unparalleled learning experience, so crucial in the development of young musicians training for professional careers.

The constituent phases of the project comprised RCS's brass students performing in Finland; Sibelius Academy conducting students directing the RCS Symphony; and the combined forces of these two international conservatories performing in Glasgow.

The build-up to the main output of this international exchange involved Sibelius Academy conducting students directing the RCS Symphony Orchestra, all under the tutelage of Martyn Brabbins. This was an opportunity for RCS students to work with and learn from emerging international conductors, enhancing musical understanding as well as expanding the flexibility of RCS students to adapt and learn new, nuanced musical approaches.

The culmination of this international partnership took place on 1 May 2023 in Glasgow's City Halls. Nineteen students from the Sibelius Academy joined the RCS Symphony for this concert. The RCS' educational approach of curating experiences that nurture the "proto-professional" environment was resoundingly confirmed on this occasion.



Economic transformation and social renewal

Photo: Queen Margaret University



Partnership in the Community - Connecting Craigmillar

**Queen Margaret University**

In 2023, in partnership with the community organisation Connecting Craigmillar, staff and students of Queen Margaret University (QMU) have been using art as a route to build the personal aspirations of people in 'hard to reach' groups in these communities, encouraging them to engage with tertiary education and to develop their awareness of viable career paths into the creative and cultural industries.

Led by QMU's Dr Anthony Schrag, selected students of the University's MA Applied Arts and Social Practice and BA Events and Festival Management were matched with selected participants from Craigmillar and Niddrie, to create and implement creative activities. The practice-based learning activities were used as a means to motivate students at risk of withdrawal.

Targeted students were provided not only with paid work on the project, but tangible industry-based activities that could enhance their learning and employability. The students had full creative control of the showcase event and exhibition space, and event marketing.

The outputs of the project included two community-based arts projects, a collection of artworks and documentations for the local community, and an on-campus showcase of the outputs of the creative activities for participants, their families and the wider community. A secondary output was creation of a new exhibition space on campus which will in turn enable more art exhibitions.

The project helped to demystify QMU for the community by showing the campus - and its staff and students - in a productive, accessible light.

Plans are in place for the two organisations to work together on the Craigmillar Festival in coming years.

## Net Zero and Environmental Sustainability Response



Photo: North East Scotland College



### Supporting a Just Transition through Curriculum

#### North East Scotland College

North East Scotland College (NESCol) has introduced many changes across its curriculum to support the transition to green energy, introducing new courses and content that focus on giving students the skills and knowledge they need to join the green energy sector. Examples of these courses, which fall across the College's portfolio and are all made possible by SFC core credit funding, include:

**OPITO All Energy Apprenticeships (AEAs):** The AEA project is one of the key components of the North Sea Transition Deal being led by [OPITO](#). NESCol was involved in piloting the new AEA units and is now working with OPITO to develop and deliver these to apprentices. Apprentices will be equipped with a broad range of skills, applicable across the energy industry. The qualifications will also be available as standalone courses for current professionals interested in upskilling to transfer to alternate sectors in the energy industry.

**ECITB Wind Turbine Technician Scholarship:** The Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) Wind Turbine Technician Scholarship provides technical training for young engineers starting their careers in the energy sector. It was created to address workforce shortages in key engineering roles and will equip learners with essential engineering knowledge and skills, and an understanding of the new technologies essential to the successful delivery of net zero.

**VESTAS Wind Technical Programme:** Developed in conjunction with VESTAS, a bespoke wind technician trainee programme is being delivered at NESCol's Fraserburgh Campus. Candidates complete an intensive multi-disciplinary two-year training programme to prepare them for immediate deployment to offshore or onshore windfarms.



Photo: University of the Highlands and Islands

## Net Zero and Environmental Sustainability Response



### Partnership initiative to support the offshore wind sector

#### University of the Highlands and Islands

Following the Scottish Government's announcement of the ScotWind offshore wind leasing round, the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) has been working in collaboration with developers to harness their commitments to invest in the Scottish supply chain and provide opportunities for high quality employment. The shared aim of this partnership is to produce an appropriately educated, future-proofed, locally based workforce for this rapidly growing industry sector.

The most significant initiative to date has been the investment from a group of developers in the UHI Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) outreach programme, which had been working with primary schools in the Highland region for several years. The programme developed a successful outreach model called 'lend a lab' which contains lesson plans, equipment and material for STEM themed activities. Working with the ScotWind developers the aim was to increase the scale and impact of this programme.

The group, including West of Orkney Windfarm, Ossian, Thistle Wind Partners and Buchan Offshore Wind, is contributing £900,000 to the programme over the next three years. This has allowed substantial expansion to schools across UHI's operating area, reaching over 400 schools.

The programme was launched in January 2023 by the then First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, who welcomed this partnership in helping the next generation of our energy workforce to develop the skills they need to embrace our net zero future.

The 'lend a lab' approach will be extended across the region, and the programme will also enhance coordination of local STEM partnerships across UHI regions. This partnership will benefit students through increased scholarships, internships, mentoring and graduate employment opportunities, and from sector involvement in curriculum development especially looking ahead to skills of the future workforce.

## Net Zero and Environmental Sustainability Response



Photo: West Lothian College



### Embedding UN Sustainable Development Goals across the curriculum and in primary schools

#### West Lothian College

West Lothian College childhood practice lecturer Caroline Jarvis, winner of the College Development Network Lecturer of the Year award, leads on embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the curriculum, in particular through an annual Teach-In involving an increasing number of subject teams in the College and primary schools.

In partnership with West Lothian Council's Education Wellbeing team, all College faculties deliver workshops to local school children to promote the SDGs in a meaningful and interactive way.

In 2023, during a sustainability week, 554 primary school children took part in 37 workshops that captured all 17 SDG goals. The workshops were facilitated by 210 students, staff from all College faculties and a wide range of external partners. The experience of supporting the event enabled all students taking part to achieve unit assessments as well as gaining experience and knowledge of sustainability and the application to practice for their course and subject.

Examples of the workshops delivered included:

- Sustainable cooking planned and facilitated by Level 4/5 Professional Cookery students who offered children the opportunity to learn about seasonal plant-based cooking and put this into practice by cooking themselves.
- Level 6 Business students planned and delivered five workshops over two days, including upcycling t-shirts into tote bags, building bug hotels and piggy banks from recycled plastic, seed planting and cube art.
- Uniformed Public Services students worked with The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to run four workshops with a focus on gender equality within the service and the impact of hoax calls on the environment and wider community.

All workshops were mapped to SDGs and captured assessment evidence.



Photo: Dundee and Angus College

## Net Zero and Environmental Sustainability Response



### The D&A Electric Vehicle School

#### Dundee and Angus College

The D&A Electric Vehicle School, Dundee and Angus College's innovative Electric Vehicle School, has set the standard in the field of sustainable transportation through an established collaboration with industry partner Robert Lawson & Sons Ltd. This first-of-its-kind programme has not only accelerated the shift towards a more sustainable economy but has also set new standards in equipping individuals with the necessary skills and infrastructure to support this transformative change.

Through a commitment to sustainable transportation, the College has highlighted its dedication to creating a greener future through immersive cutting-edge technology and hands-on learning. The hands-on learning experiences, in a real-life garage, have ensured that courses are of the highest quality, preparing adult learners for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

One of the key highlights of the programme is the comprehensive range of courses offered, from IMI (Institute of the Motor Industry) level 1 to 3, for both light and heavy electric vehicles, to the College's First Response Course, aimed at those attending the scene of an accident that can involve an electric vehicle. Approved by the awarding body and then enhanced and tailored with input from the Transportation Industry Advisory Board, the College's curriculum caters for electric vehicle enthusiasts to seasoned technicians seeking expertise in the intricate workings of electric vehicles.

As part of its commitment to inspiring others on their own sustainable journeys, the College has had the opportunity to train and equip key workers, including emergency services personnel and public transport operators.



Photo: University of Aberdeen

## Net Zero and Environmental Sustainability Response



### Sustainable Heating University of Aberdeen

The University of Aberdeen has established a Sustainable Heating Programme Board, which will consider the long-term and more immediate approaches to how the University can decarbonise its heating sources. Alongside this, the University has initiated a programme of heat centre upgrades, which will improve the level of control it has over heating systems and will help prepare the institution's heat distribution network for a lower temperature future.

The district heating network upgrade at the University's Hillhead student village is also ongoing. This work will improve the stability of the network, whilst also preparing the site for the transition to a low carbon heat source, which is still to be determined.



### Collaborating to drive net zero

**Forth Valley College, Borders College and West Lothian College**

Forth Valley College, in collaboration with the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education, West Lothian College and Borders College, has won an International Green Apple Environmental Award. They competed against more than 500 other nominations to win the coveted prize.

The collaborative partnership was formed in response to the 2021 challenge from Scotland's Colleges to commit to achieving Net Zero by 2040. As a result, Forth Valley College, Borders College and West Lothian College formed the Central and South Scotland College Partnership, supported by EAUC Scotland.

With restricted resources, a barrier to having staff dedicated exclusively to sustainability, the three colleges appointed a Sustainability Project Manager, sharing the costs between them.

By providing additional resource and knowledge, the new appointment has helped guide sustainability practice and policy at the colleges. This has included securing funding for campus decarbonisation projects through the Scottish Green Public Sector Estate Decarbonisation Scheme and developing updated Net Zero Plans that identify what needs to be done to achieve the 2040 target.

The partnership's work across multiple institutions has allowed experience and knowledge to be shared, making best use of available resources.

The Green Apple Awards are run by The Green Organisation - an international, independent, non-profit, non-political environment group that began in 1994 to recognise, reward and promote environmental best practice around the world.

The collaboration project has also been named as a finalist in the 'Creating Impact' category at the Green Gown UK and Ireland Awards 2023. The awards recognise sustainability excellence in further education.



## Economic transformation and social renewal



Photo: Glasgow Clyde College



### Workforce Support in Health and Social Care

#### Glasgow Clyde College

Glasgow Clyde College has developed shorter, sharper learning in adult social care, including paid placements, to address the challenge of a limited pipeline.

Adult social care is an area which finds it difficult to recruit, and care homes struggle to fill vacancies. Creating shorter courses, with the opportunity to 'earn whilst you learn', will help to incentivise students to study and work in this essential sector.

The College worked with Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to find out what the workforce requirements would be for adult social care. Curriculum Managers worked on what would be the best content and model of delivery and settled on an 18-week SFC credit-funded programme at SCQF level 5 which, uniquely, included two days of paid work with Glasgow City Council per week.

HSCP selected three council care homes which provided all the placements and identified staff who could act as mentors. The College helped train those staff in what would be required in a mentoring role with students.

The first cohort found 15 adults returners, which included both males and females and a notable proportion of settled asylum seekers who were looking to enter the world of employment.

Feedback from the first cohort was positive, an a full evaluation will be conducted. Students value the 'earn while you learn' nature of the delivery and all are guaranteed an interview for permanent work on completion. A second cohort began in 2024.

## Partnerships and Collaboration



### On track to success - supporting direct employment in the rail industry

#### Glasgow Kelvin College

In 2022-23, Glasgow Kelvin College jointly developed a programme with SWGR, a Glasgow employer which provides track maintenance services to the rail industry. Employment demand from the rail industry was higher than supply, and the College and SWGR agreed to work together on a course that would give students an opportunity in this key industry.

The project developed a course in conjunction with SWGR to equip students with the relevant skills, experience, and qualifications for employment in the rail industry in track maintenance and repair. In addition, SWGR, on successful completion, interviewed students with a view to providing employment routes.

Students that successfully achieved the college qualification, and those looking to enter the rail industry, were put forward for rail industry specific qualifications. These qualifications are essential to work within the rail industry and were included in the course.

The programme enrolled 28 students and, of the students enrolled, 70% successfully completed the course and the majority of these students have now gained employment with SWGR as Track Maintenance and Repair Operatives.

The College is currently recruiting for a new cohort and keen to extend this type of delivery. Providing industry recognised, mandatory qualifications has provided students with a real chance of gaining long-lasting employment, with career progression opportunities within the rail industry.



Photo: Glasgow Kelvin College

Economic transformation and social renewal



Photo: Glasgow School of Art



### Sculpture and Environmental Art Partnership with Midton Glasgow School of Art

A key focus of discovery for Midton, industry leading specialists in cast acrylic and the production of custom materials, has been the need to reduce their own factory waste and increase their sustainable options. Extensive research and development was carried out to give this 'waste' a new life and Remade was created – a new sustainable product, providing a unique and eco- friendly alternative to virgin acrylic. This material is produced onsite at the factory, representing localised plastic recycling, and remanufacturing at its best.

Even with this high recycled content, Remade preserves its material purity, and Midton wanted to explore further its use as a sculpting material. As a company they already had a firm understanding of virgin cast acrylic within sculpture, with optical clarity and strength in shape and form. With Remade, however, the possibilities opened further, especially for texture and depth and Midton were keen to work with different project partners to see what they could do with this new material.

In partnership with the Department of Sculpture and Environment Art (SEA), Glasgow School of Art, a year -long project was developed, focusing on the use of recycled plastics through:

- Work experience through site visits,
- Pre-production sampling and prototyping,
- Production: fully funded material costs, labour, and the support of the Midton team in the making of their pieces,
- An exhibition to showcase their final work alongside other renowned artists.

Following applications, Midton worked with a group of six SEA students, each bringing their own artistic edge to Remade producing a collection which demonstrates the wide range of abilities that using recycled materials brings to the world of art and design. From encapsulation of mixed materials, to creating a sculpture exclusively from recycled shards, to heat-bending strips of the material – the process has been one of invaluable learning for both the students, and Midton. See more at [Materials Matter – Remade](#)



Photo: Borders College

Economic transformation and social renewal



### Supporting Employee Development Borders College

Borders College Department of Enterprise and Business Innovation recently worked with Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) employees who undertook the SCQF Level 6 Professional Development Award in Introductory Leadership and Management. Funded through the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF), the course was delivered through a mix of online learning and workplace assessment. The course aimed to provide new and aspiring managers to develop their skills and knowledge and support them to become effective leaders within their organisation.

Kirsty Summers, the SWA's Head of Workforce and Skills, said of the initiative: 'The Scotch Whisky Association was delighted to work with Borders College to use the FWDF to support our employees' development. We identified employees who would get benefit from the qualification and enjoy their experience and learning journey. I'm really happy to see how everyone is progressing with their qualification, and I was pleased to be able to work with Borders College.'

The SWA team, all of whom are at different stages in their careers and with very different specialisms, all had their own reasons for enrolling on the course.

Rosie Willmott, Communications Manager at SWA, said: 'For me, the course was about career development. I feel more confident in my role knowing that I have solid training to support me in the decisions I make and the thought process behind them. The course has really helped me to consider how I interact with my colleagues, what their priorities are and what motivates us as a team, which helps me to be a more empathetic and supportive colleague and manager.'

Economic transformation and social renewal



Photo: Abertay University



Abertay cyberQuarter  
Abertay University

The Abertay cyberQuarter project is funded by UK and Scottish Governments through the Tay Cities Deal and is designed to drive inclusive economic growth as part of Scotland's cyber cluster, aligning with the Scottish Government's priority of economic development.

The Abertay cyberQuarter is a regional hub for technology-based innovation and plays a key role in the federated network of hubs which make up the Scottish cyber cluster. As well as kickstart research, innovation, and knowledge exchange activities in the digital technology sector, and in other sectors experiencing digital transformation, it will contribute to inclusive growth by supporting the development of digital skills, and through business start-up and scale-up in both cybersecurity and companies in other sectors.

There is currently a skills shortage and demand for people with these high-level digital skills is increasing. However, the cyber sector workforce is not diverse and regional challenges in school attainment and progression disproportionately impact on career pathways into computing science and cyber security. As a leader in enabling access to university for students from disadvantaged backgrounds in Scotland, the University's ethos and expertise in widening participation have heavily informed the strategy and operational delivery of this major capital project.

Abertay University's unique approach to teaching and research in cyber security and ethical hacking has been supported by SFC funding and it is using its globally recognised gold standard centre for excellence to create a new home for cyber security and digital economy companies in Dundee, based on the supply of talent in the region.

The University's contribution to tackling the skills shortage within the cyber security industry in Scotland and the rest of the UK was recognised in [Taking Stock](#), a report on progress towards a cyber resilient Scotland published in October 2023.

Economic transformation and social renewal



Photo: Robert Gordon University



Women in Business  
Robert Gordon University

The Women in Business programme directly correlates with Robert Gordon University's (RGU) strategic purpose of being innovative and inclusive to create a prosperous future for all by contributing to social, cultural and economic development regionally, nationally and internationally.

RGU's Entrepreneurship and Innovation Group (EIG) worked closely with Aberdeenshire Council to identify groups that would benefit from entrepreneurial and business support, with women in the region identified as priority.

The seven-week online programme deliberately brings motherhood to the fore, frequently encouraging mothers to feel comfortable having their children involved in meetings or tending to them when needed.

Programme funding was secured through the Scottish Government's Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) administered through Aberdeenshire Council, enabling RGU to focus its support on mothers or women with caring responsibilities. This has so far consisted of £14,000 per cohort, £70,000 in total having successfully completed five cohorts. Two further cohorts are due to be delivered during 2023 at an additional £14,000 each.

Across all cohorts of Women in Business there have so far been 60 participating women, all of whom are mothers, and all of whom have received full funding support through PESF. There are two further cohorts confirmed for 2023 with another two standalone workshops planned thereafter into 2024.

One participant, who launched her own ethical clothing business, said the course 'approaches entrepreneurship from a different perspective, taking on board the unique challenges faced by mums', citing the importance of belief, confidence, and inspiration, while hailing the 'amazing level of support'.

There was further recognition for Women in Business when it won the Outstanding Business Engagement in Universities category at the Herald Higher Education Awards in June 2023.

## Economic transformation and social renewal



Photo: University of Glasgow



### The Glasgow Riverside Innovation District University of Glasgow

Launched in March 2023, the Glasgow Riverside Innovation District (GRID) is an ambitious partnership between the University of Glasgow (UoG), Glasgow City Council and Scottish Enterprise to accelerate an inclusive approach to innovation. The district runs from the University Campus to the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, encompassing the community of Govan.

With the support of SFC funding, the University is placing its teaching and research expertise and resource at the heart of the GRID partnership to deliver tangible economic and social renewal in some of the most deprived areas in Scotland.

The University is taking a whole-systems approach to economic development within GRID, driving innovation through the UoG's research expertise and convening power to support entrepreneurship and attract high-value industry to develop opportunities for local jobs in Govan.

The University is also committed to delivering opportunities to support access to education within the area, developing opportunities for upskilling and re-skilling, and understanding how the socioeconomic inequalities within Govan and the wider city can be further addressed. Within GRID, there are world-leading educational (UoG), medical (Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, Imaging Centre of Excellence) and cultural assets (BBC, Glasgow Science Centre, SWG3), with the potential to grow and expand.

GRID Discovery will serve as Scotland's first whole-system innovation demonstrator. By identifying collaborative research and innovation projects, partners will work together to remove barriers and ensure that the benefits of innovation impact positively on our place, society and deliver sustainable growth for Scotland's economy.

## Economic transformation and social renewal



### Kilbeg Village Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig continues to act as a major stimulus for inward investment in Skye through the continuing development of Kilbeg Village, of which Phase 2, with all the associated services and infrastructure, has commenced. This will bring further inward investment to the area of more than £5million and will provide an initial 18 new units of 'affordable housing', with more to follow shortly and all achieved through an innovative and creative investment partnership featuring both public and private investors, all initiated, brokered and facilitated, by Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

The new Kilbeg Village is an exemplar of sustainable rural development, creating an economically active community with Gaelic language 'at its heart'. Additionally, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is also working in partnership with Sleat Community Trust, Sportscotland, Highland Council, Highlife Highland and Highland Health Board, to deliver badly needed sports, health, fitness, recreation and well-being facilities for its students and staff and for the local and visitor community alike. This exemplifies the extent to which Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has a critical socio-economic impact in the area and is an educational institution truly 'embedded' in the life and well-being of the community.

Photo: Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

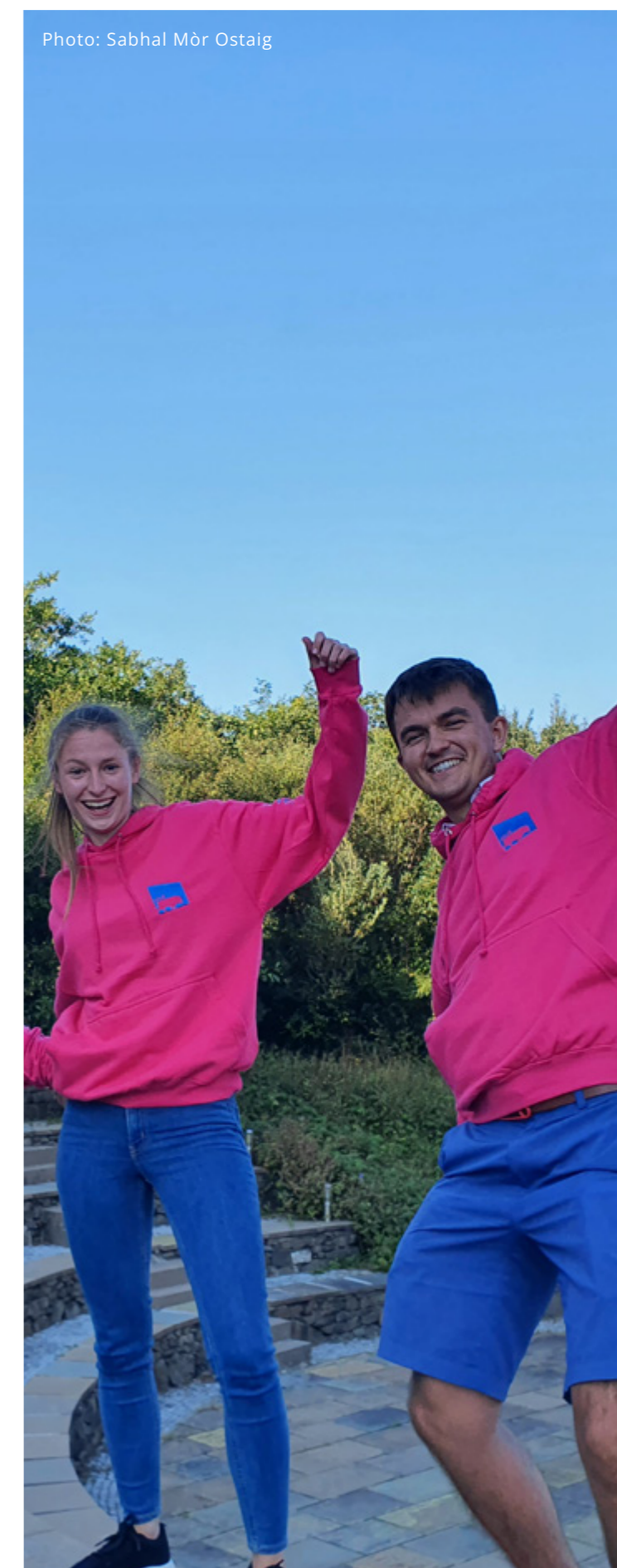




Photo: Heriot-Watt University

## Outcomes for Research and Innovation

Our universities continue to maintain Scotland's world-leading position in research. Through innovative use of research funding, they are developing and sustaining a dynamic and internationally competitive research sector that makes a major contribution to economic prosperity, national wellbeing and the expansion of knowledge.

Case studies in this section demonstrate the wide range of research activity taking place in universities, supported by the Research Excellence Grant.

Across 2022-23 and 2023-24, SFC provided a total of £493.8 million through the Research Excellence Grant (REG) to support world leading research. A further £73.9 million has been allocated through the Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG) to invest in the environment needed for high quality research training and to support postgraduate research students. We also support innovative university-business interactions through the University Innovation Fund (UIF). A total of £20.8 million of UIF funding was awarded in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Case studies also show how Universities promote supportive cultures for researchers and teams in Scotland, demonstrating how positive research cultures are being developed, supported and embedded.

In November 2023, we published our [SFC Research Impact report](#), which uses case studies from every university in Scotland to illustrate the uses of its Research Excellence Grant (REG) and the grant's unique role and value within the overall research system. Case studies in this report further illustrate how universities utilise their REG funding, and its resulting research impact.



Photo: University of Highlands and Islands



### Ensuring safe seafood through harmful algal bloom forecasting University of Highlands and Islands

Scotland's aquaculture industry contributes around £620 million a year to the Scottish economy and supports over 12,000 jobs, many of them in remote rural areas.

But this industry faces environmental challenges, not least from naturally occurring harmful algal blooms (HABs) which can form quickly and become toxic. These toxins are taken up by commercially harvested shellfish, including mussels, scallops, and oysters. As well as posing a potentially fatal threat to human health, this contamination has severe economic effects, including the closure of shellfish farms. Other HAB species can kill farmed fish, adding further significant economic impact.

The University of the Highlands and Islands' (UHI) research on predicting where and when such HABs will occur has minimised the serious risks to the economic sustainability of the aquaculture industry and the health of consumers.

In addition, forecasting HABs that are harmful to fish directly benefits the finfish aquaculture industry and enables the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Marine Scotland to maximise fish welfare.

UHI's research, led by Professor Keith Davidson at The Scottish Association for Marine Science, has examined the ecology of HAB events and the conditions that contribute to the development and movement of the most important harmful algae in UK and other temperate waters: shellfish-biotoxin-producing *Alexandrium*, *Pseudo-nitzschia*, *Dinophysis*, and ichthyotoxic *Karenia*.

The Research Excellence Grant supplemented grants won through Research Councils UK. This included Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council/National Environment Research Council awards on satellite-based water quality bulletins for shellfish farms, to support management decisions and evaluating environmental conditions required for developing offshore aquaculture.

Research



Photo: University of the West of Scotland



### Long COVID Research University of the West of Scotland

The University of the West of Scotland's Long COVID research focuses on improving the understanding of Long COVID. In collaboration with international partners and clinical specialists, the team studies ways of improving symptom management for people with the condition.

As part of the research, which has been funded by the Chief Scientific Officer and supported via the Research Excellence Grant (c. £60,000), the team published the first scoping review of the condition, identifying more than 100 commonly reported symptoms and finding regional differences in how common specific symptoms were. As a follow-up, the group undertook a national survey to better understand the difficulties experienced by Scottish people with Long COVID. As a final part of this work, the group undertook pioneering work tracking people's symptoms immediately after a COVID-19 infection to identify and understand the natural history of recovery and the development of Long COVID.

People with Long COVID often experience relapses, causing symptoms to get much worse. To avoid this, an approach called "pacing" helps prevent them from excessive exertion. However, pacing can be difficult to implement, and the group now also examines the role technology can have to address these challenges.

In a project funded by the National Institute for Health Research and supported via the Research Excellence Grant (c. £80,000), the research provides people who have Long COVID with a mobile app and a wearable activity tracker. They are used to continually and remotely track individuals' activity, sending alerts and advice when they are at risk of excessive exertion. Results from this research are expected at the end of 2023, with the research group's focus on translating the technological solution to other conditions.

Research



### Partnership with the Salvation Army University of Stirling

The University of Stirling and The Salvation Army (TSA) established the [Salvation Army Centre for Addiction Services and Research](#) in February 2017, to take forward a range of activities including collaborative research projects on drug and alcohol use and knowledge exchange / education programmes with TSA staff. The partnership builds on the internationally recognised work carried out in the Faculty of Social Sciences by a team of academics, including the Director, Co-Director and research staff, who are supported by continued funding from the REG.

Key outcomes being delivered by the Centre include:

- New, interdisciplinary research on addictions and interventions that can prevent problems for individuals, families and communities.
- Research on the impact of TSA services.
- Research synthesis through literature reviews, practice reviews and knowledge exchange activities.
- Dissemination of new and synthesized research through publication, including on-line publication.
- Policy analysis and policy briefing to inform the work of TSA.
- Education through accredited university programmes.
- Training for front line TSA workers through cascaded training, short courses, workshops and stand-alone accredited modules.

The partnership is now moving into Phase 3, with continued support from REG for the core academic team, who have recently secured a significant external grant from National Institute for Health and Care Research with additional match funding from TSA. The external grant will enable the team to continue and expand their work on the evaluation of peer-delivered interventions for people experiencing homelessness and substance use problems. The partnership group is very actively involved in the Scottish Drugs Forum, and this work directly links with national performance outcomes relating to health.

Research

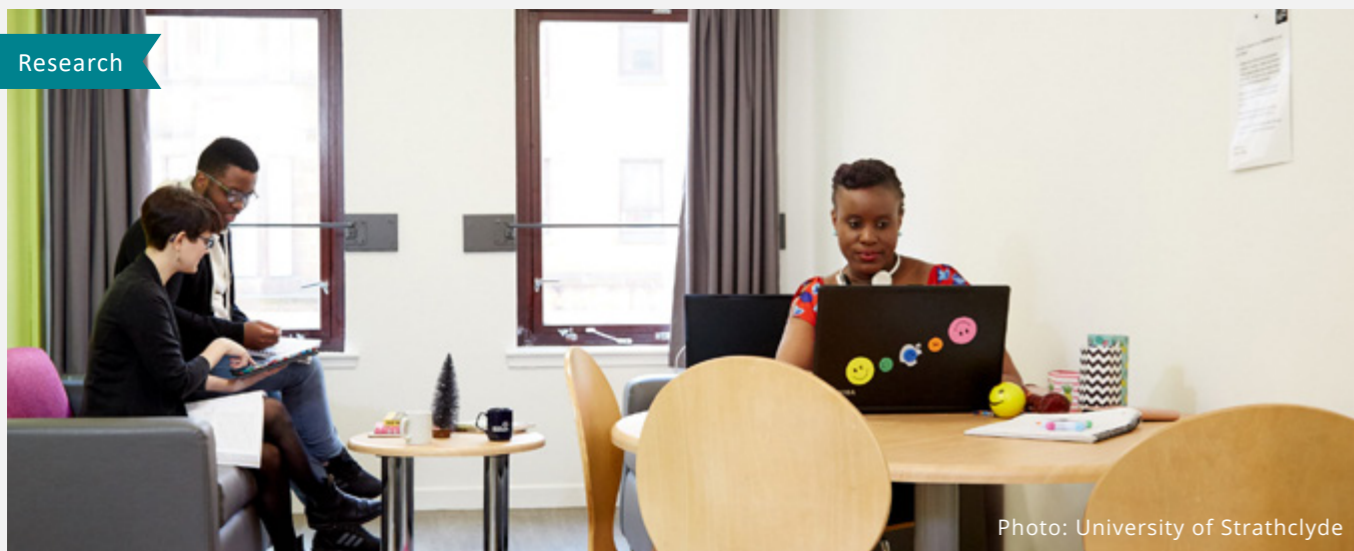


Photo: University of Strathclyde



Wellcome Research Culture  
University of Strathclyde

In 2023, the Wellcome Trust launched its first call for proposals for a new Institutional Funding for Research Culture scheme. This was an invitation only scheme to which Strathclyde University was invited to apply and has subsequently been awarded.

The project is currently being set up for a start date of spring 2024, but the University has taken the approach of exploring the values and cultures of collaborative research in a socially progressive technological university. Creating significant impacts from research for the economy and society is a vital role for universities and requires collaboration and co-creation with a wide range of organisations. At the same time there is an increasing emphasis on the cultures of research in UK research organisations. Therefore, through this funding the University has challenged itself to address the following:

1. How the University can work with industry, the public and third sector to co-produce inclusive research cultures as well as other desired outcomes.
2. Within its approaches to delivering our strategy, how the University values and recognises the breadth and depth of all contributions which sustain thriving collaborative research cultures.

In identifying these themes, the University conducted a series of consultation and focus groups open to all staff. It cross-referenced these findings with the institutional data generated for research culture-related initiatives. The University defines its institutional research community as those who deliver, lead, and enable research. This includes staff within academic, research and knowledge exchange job families, doctoral students, research technical professionals, and professional services staff.

Through collaborative sub-projects, primary data collection from surveys or focus groups and network creations the University will investigate aspects of access, reward, and recognition in collaborative research environments. By recognising that research cultures are not the sole domain of universities, the approach will provide a distinct and innovative background for investigating pathways to a more collaborative, connected, and sustainable research communities.

Research



Post-graduate research with potential benefits to the Scottish whisky and drinks industry

University of St Andrews

The Fraud Advisory Panel recently reported that counterfeit alcoholic beverages cost UK industry over £200 million in lost sales annually, and 25% of global alcohol supply is believed to be illicit and possibly dangerous. While numerous methods can chemically profile a sample of alcohol, only optical means can be utilised without needing to breach the bottle.

In the University of St. Andrews' School of Physics and Astronomy, a through-bottle Raman spectroscopy of alcohols project employing a Postdoctoral Research Associate – whose salary is part-funded by REG – is a pilot study to carry out industry-identified key demonstrations of the capability to identify alcoholic beverages through their unopened bottles. This would fulfil a long-standing need of the alcohol industry to ensure the contents of a bottle are a genuine product, and to apply technology to anti-counterfeiting and quality control measures. This work, spearheaded by Professor Kishan Dholakia and Dr Graham Bruce, is supported by Scottish whisky companies as well as other European drinks companies.

The aim is to demonstrate the identification capabilities over a range of genuine alcoholic products, showing the discrimination capability between suppliers, brands, blends, ages, alcohol strengths and even batches, to test the device with actual and lab-prepared counterfeits and to demonstrate that the product is not damaged by such measurements.

This project is translating advanced photonic research to provide industry with new techniques and technology to increase profitability, reduce counterfeiting and, for wider society, to reduce the damage caused by contaminated drinks products.



Photo: University of St Andrews

Research



Photo: University of Glasgow



Supporting complex chemistry and digital chemistry

**University of Glasgow**

REG funding supports the development of strategic research infrastructure projects at the University of Glasgow, including some of the University's highest profile research and innovation groups. This includes research into complex chemistry and digital chemistry which are the focus of [The Cronin Group](#), led by Professor Lee Cronin.

The School of Chemistry affiliated research group is one of the largest multidisciplinary chemistry-based research teams in the world, working at the forefront of developing cutting edge synthetic and analytical techniques for the study of complex inorganic chemical systems. The group is currently undertaking research to understand the potential of complex chemical systems derived from non-biological building blocks, with the aim of revolutionising modern technologies. The group aims to understand the emergence of chemical complexity and has developed new technologies for the digitisation of chemistry to help control and understand chemical complexity.

The team has recently moved to a purpose-built facility within the recently opened Mazumdar-Shaw Advanced Research Centre (ARC). The ARC is also home to Professor Cronin's spin-out, Chemify. Founded in 2019, Chemify is based on the decades of chemistry research, robotics, artificial intelligence, and conceptual advancements from Professor Cronin's Digital Chemistry Laboratory at the University of Glasgow.

Chemify was spun out from the University of Glasgow in March 2022 and has built a world class team to commercialise the digitisation of chemistry, making use of the underlying technology developed by the Cronin Group team. Chemify is looking to expand in Glasgow in 2025 with a factory-HQ that will employ more than 150 people and be used to springboard the company to build chemical-giga factories worldwide.

The long-term nature of REG funding supports the University to develop and sustain the infrastructure necessary to allow world-class research to be undertaken and incubated in Scotland.



Photo: University of Edinburgh

Research



Supporting Healthy Ageing at Work

**University of Edinburgh**

Professor Wendy Loretto of the University of Edinburgh Business School leads research into the challenges and opportunities associated with an ageing workforce, where older workers often experience labour market disadvantage in recruitment, retention and retraining.

A key contribution of the research has been to reveal how older workers' employment experiences are shaped by complex interactions between individual domestic circumstances, employer policies and practices, cultural perceptions of older workers, and wider structural conditions such as the welfare state. Many older workers face multiple intersecting barriers to employment, and a lack of tailored support.

The 'silencing' of conversation around later life employment means that there is often inadequate communication between employers and employees about issues such as later-life career progression and skills development, flexible work arrangements and retirement planning.

This work is influencing policy and practice in Scotland. It spurred the Scottish Government to include age in its £5 million investment into the Workplace Equality Fund and was influential in developing Scotland's Older People's Framework and Gender Pay Action Plan. Professor Loretto has also worked with Age Scotland to create a new age-inclusion HR consultancy service, the Age Inclusive Matrix, to enable organisations to implement policies and practical support for over 5,000 employees working into later life.

Professor Loretto is now furthering the work through leading the Supporting Healthy Ageing at Work programme funded by the UKRI Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (£2m), focusing on how hidden health issues such as menopause, cognitive decline, financial wellbeing and the needs of people caring for relatives, which are often overlooked in the workplace, impact older workers. Getting into its final stage, this programme will further inform policy and practice in businesses and governments across Scotland and the UK.



Research



Photo: University of Dundee



## Neglected Tropical Diseases

**University of Dundee**

The University of Dundee's School of Life Sciences is using REG funding to develop new diagnostic tools and drug treatments to help eradicate neglected tropical diseases such as malaria.

The REG provides undirected core funds that are used to support the salaries of scientific researchers, and which help the University to meet the full economic costs of externally funded research projects. This enables the advancement of fundamental research to a stage where it becomes a viable investment option for clinical development in partnership with pharmaceutical companies and non-profit organisations.

For example, Dundee-based research identified new screening tools for the diagnosis of Human African Trypanosomiasis (HAT) or sleeping sickness. Working in partnership with both private and non-profit organisation, the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics, and the private sector (Abbott, now Standard Diagnostics Inc.), a new Rapid Diagnostic Test for HAT was developed that has been used with over 57,000 people, benefitting those diagnosed and treated as well as the collaborating partners.

Other research has resulted in new 'gold-standard' screening platforms that are now widely used by the pharmaceutical industry. The screening platforms decrease the time and costs associated with the development of new drugs, reducing the risk for pharmaceutical companies and encouraging sustained investment, which is particularly important for neglected tropical diseases that have a high prevalence in developing countries where it is harder for drug companies to recoup development costs.

The REG has been used by the School to support fundamental research in this area for over a decade, contributing towards progress on shared goals of eradication of neglected tropical diseases, estimated by The World Health Organisation to affect more than 1 billion people worldwide.

Research



Photo: University of Aberdeen



## HABIT and Water on Mars

**University of Aberdeen**

The University of Aberdeen's Planetary Sciences group is focused on the study of Earth and planetary sciences and the development of instruments for Earth and planetary exploration. The group is renowned as having discovered the first evidence of transient liquid water and other molecules on Mars and has been involved in the majority of discoveries made by NASA's Mars Curiosity Rover.

REG funding was pivotal in the recruitment of the Planetary Sciences group in 2019, as part of the University's 2040 strategy, which seeks to enhance its status as a world leader in research. REG funding has contributed to the group's research activities, including the publication in reputed journals and the communication of its research to the public and policy makers.

The Planetary Sciences group, led by Professor Javier Martin-Torres, has built the HABIT instrument which will be included in a forthcoming Japanese mission to Mars through collaboration with the UK Space Agency. HABIT will monitor the formation of brines and the conditions in which it takes place. HABIT uses the expertise that the team has developed through years of research and development on devices for planetary exploration. HABIT has also inspired the concept of water farms for extreme conditions.

REG funding has aided the development of the HABIT instrument, from idea to hardware development, including calibration, operations, and data analysis and has also made possible the development of a Mars simulation chamber (unique in Scotland). The funding has also allowed for collaborations around the world including Japan, United States of America, United Arab Emirates and Canada. The quest about the habitability of present-day Mars is still an open challenge and a crucial aspect for future human space exploration, and the continuity afforded by REG is critical in facilitating this research.

Research



Photo: SRUC



## PhD Agriculture, Rural and Environmental Studies SRUC

During the academic year 2022-23 SRUC designed a PhD Programme, to be validated by a degree awarding partner, which ran for the first time in academic year 2023-24.

The programme aims to be a world-class interdisciplinary PhD Programme for the academic year 2023-24. This initiative is aimed at nurturing the next generation of leaders in sectors like agriculture, animal science, environmental science, and rural affairs.

**Interdisciplinary Research:** The programme's challenge-driven approach spans multiple disciplines, offering candidates a unique lens through which to view and solve critical global issues such as food security, one health, and climate change.

**Knowledge Exchange Ethos:** The programme is woven into SRUC's broader commitment to the Natural Economy. This multi-disciplinary approach is geared towards solving real-world problems through innovative methodologies and collaboration with academic and commercial research partners.

**Advanced Facilities:** The programme will take advantage of SRUC's extensive research facilities, ranging from livestock and crop production setups to cutting-edge digital and computing infrastructures.

**Holistic Training:** Beyond research, doctoral candidates will be exposed to a wide array of training opportunities to develop a comprehensive skill set, preparing them for roles in academia and industry alike.

Digital Learning will be used to underpin the delivery of the PhD training including Online Training and Virtual Supervision, and Community Building.

This ambitious programme is fully backed by SRUC's world leading research facilities and links to commercial and academic partners. Its introduction represents a significant milestone in SRUC's ongoing dedication to research excellence and training.

Research



Photo: Royal Conservatoire of Scotland



## The Voice of the Child Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

In a collaboration between the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) and Starcatchers, Scotland's arts and early years organisation, Dr Rachel Drury's research project, "The Voice of the Child," exemplifies the significance of undirected core university research funding. This initiative, supported by Innovation Voucher investment and support from Cattanach, was further supported by RCS through its REG, and is an example of how small allocations from the REG can produce outcomes that closely align with Scottish Government priorities.

"The Voice of the Child" is a pioneering project exploring how the participatory rights of pre- and non-verbal children, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), can be realised through the arts. Outputs so far include an [initial report](#), [seminar](#), [podcasts](#) and a research report and reflective guide for use by other organisations.

The investment of small allocations of REG over the past two academic years has supplemented the specific support awarded to this project by other sources by permitting Dr Drury to develop the work beyond the original remit of the Innovation Voucher work; it has not only contributed to advancing our understanding of communication and rights-based approaches in the arts with pre- and non-verbal children but also aligns very closely with national priorities outlined in the National Performance Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals and the incorporation into domestic Scots law of the UNCRC.

This case study not only demonstrates the transformative potential of core funding but also underlines the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's commitment to advancing impactful research that aligns with national priorities and fosters clear societal benefits.

Research



Photo: Robert Gordon University



### Deploying REG funding to improve online safety for young people

**Robert Gordon University**

Direct investment of £79,000 of REG allocation to Robert Gordon University's School of Creative and Cultural Business has enabled creative research projects such as Maddie is Online to be developed.

Maddie is Online is an innovative educational project that uses creative storytelling to produce learning and teaching material for children's education, support and safeguarding (aged 9-13 years old). It focuses on the development of young people's online information, digital and media literacy skills through digital cartoon animated stories.

The material has been developed with the creative input of more than 50 stakeholders including young people, librarians, academics, university students and the general public. It focuses on the digital citizenship skills that young people need to navigate their online environment safely, effectively and ethically. At the centre of the project is co-creation, opening dialogue and building resilient and healthy digital communities of young people.

Currently there are four available series, developed in dialogue with school pupils in Scotland and abroad – Online Resilience, Misinformation, Copyright and The Ethics of Online Safety and Security (which follows the Scottish Government Ethical Digital Nation strategy). Maddie is Online also offered six online safety and security workshops and two career talks on online gaming and ethical hacking with total engagement of 502 participants from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Greece, New Zealand, Brazil, the United States of America, Canada, India and beyond.

Maddie is Online also received funding from the Scottish Government (and supported by Digital Xtra Fund), the Scottish Library and Information Council, and the Robert Gordon Innovation Accelerator. The value of the Maddie is Online series lies with the flexibility and online accessibility of the resources that engage children in critical dialogue and activities. Young people are also co-creators of content which means that they directly engage with the themes, develop knowledge and exercise their creativity.

Research



Photo: Glasgow School of Art



### Augmented Reality Patient Leaflets - making patient information leaflets accessible to everyone

**Glasgow School of Art**

The traditional approach to patient education in cleft lip is the patient information leaflet. However, written patient information leaflets often fail to convey information to the most vulnerable in society, with 10% of the UK population affected by dyslexia and 20% having the lowest level of literacy. "Health literacy" – the ability to understand, act on and communicate health information – is even poorer at 40%.

This work looks to resolve this through entirely visual means of communication - Augmented Reality (AR) – to create a life-sized 3D model of a child with cleft lip. One of the key goals of the Cleft Lip AR Leaflet was to "Leave nobody behind" in a digital world and it can be used with smartphones and tablets.

The project began as a national collaboration between The Glasgow School of Art, Cleft Care Scotland, The National Cleft Service, and West of Scotland NHS Innovations Hub, placing patients and families at the heart of the development process.

A pilot randomized trial took place in 2021, comparing the Cleft Lip AR leaflet with the traditional written leaflet given to all parents in Scotland. This found overwhelming positive feedback from parents, and significant superiority of the AR patient leaflet in helping parents understand their child's operation, reduction in anxiety, and higher satisfaction. This research was published in the world's leading Cleft Lip journal in 2022.

The Cleft AR patient leaflet is currently being rolled out nationally via The National Cleft Service and will have the greatest impact on families that need this the most – those with lower literacy, geographic deprivation, dyslexia, and learning difficulties – thereby reducing inequalities.

Research



Photo: Abertay University



### The Creative Industries Cluster in Dundee Abertay University

The Creative Industries sector in Dundee forms a larger percentage of the local economy than any other UK city of comparable size. The Dundee creative industries cluster is dominated by an established computer games development sector, recognized in the [Bazalgette report](#) for its dynamism. Graduates from local universities anchor a growing number of digital agencies and applications developers resulting in a total of 3,571 jobs in digital tech industries.

Abertay University has invested REG and Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG) funding (through PhD Studentships and research development support) into its computer games research, knowledge exchange and innovation (RKEI) over a number of years. This investment has helped build the University's research excellence and impact track record which has resulted in leveraged funding from other sources such as UKRI, and supported the development of a more globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and sustainable economy.

Abertay University's research on computer games has been used by end users including games companies, museums, and cultural organisations to increase their income and public engagement.

Building on the RKEI approach, Abertay University has recently achieved further success within the UK Government's Convergent Screen Technologies and performance in Realtime (CoSTAR) funding scheme. This six-year capital programme to host national research and development (R&D) facilities to drive innovation and creativity to underpin the long-term competitiveness in the UK's screen and performance industries, will provide a highly capable R&D infrastructure that enables researchers, companies and institutions across the UK access to the facilities, capabilities and insight necessary to ensure that they can conduct world class R&D in the application of current and future waves of advanced computing technologies. These technologies will transform the means of production across the screen, performance, and allied sectors of the creative industries.

Research



Photo: Queen Margaret University



### Effective use of SFC core research grants in 2023-24 Queen Margaret University

Queen Margaret University's REG allocation is distributed directly to the academic divisions in which the members of its Research and Knowledge Exchange (KE) Centres are located. This enables complete financial transparency and helps support and drive research activity directly. This funding is primarily used by Research and KE Centres to:

- Support staff who are new to research or who are re-engaging with research to develop initial research projects and funding applications;
- Employ research assistants to work on projects with staff;
- Support staff to attend and present at international conferences; and
- Support research dissemination and impact development.

A proportion of that allocation is then allocated to the University's central infrastructure for research and KE support, specifically to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Development Unit (RKEDU), Research Grants and Contract Unit (RGCU), and Graduate School.

RKEDU supports:

- The University's research policy and strategy development and implementation;
- REF preparation and research assessment;
- Researcher development and training;
- Research culture development and UKRI concordat engagement, implementation and associated staff development;
- Public and civic engagement;
- Innovation and enterprise;
- Research governance, integrity and NHS ethics;
- Research impact;
- Research investments and statutory returns; and
- Place-based research initiatives.

RGCU provides support for all aspects of applying for and managing research grants and other externally funded project income including project costing and pricing, funding applications, negotiating funder contracts and collaborative agreements, intellectual property protection, and post-award financial management and reporting.

Research



Photo: Heriot-Watt University



Research Support helps land a major new study which aims to help underrepresented groups

**Heriot-Watt University**

Heriot-Watt University's research development team were integral in supporting the development and submission of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Caucus. This new three-year project will focus on underrepresented groups employed within the research and innovation sector. The EDI Caucus will be overseen by a multidisciplinary team of researchers and practitioners from across the UK who will deliver on a series of projects underpinned by high-quality research.

They will identify, assess, and share existing evidence on the effectiveness of current practices within the research and innovation sector, while also establishing where pre-existing evidence is lacking.

This involves mapping all current programmes aimed at encouraging equity in the workplace, evaluating the effectiveness of current EDI training, and creating an enabling workplace by using virtual reality to form interactive laboratories and offices where users can trial inclusive workplaces.

Kate Sang, Professor of Gender and Employment Studies at Heriot-Watt University's Edinburgh Business School, is the Caucus lead. She said: 'The recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce is essential to robust and impactful research and innovation. The barriers faced by underrepresented groups pursuing careers in research and innovation are well established, but there is an urgent need for an evidence base of what enables marginalised researchers and innovators to thrive in their careers'.

The findings will be used to support UK Research and Innovation and the British Academy to test and evaluate new EDI initiatives, leading to a stronger, more diverse research and innovation sector.



Research  
Commercialisation

**Edinburgh Napier University**

Research

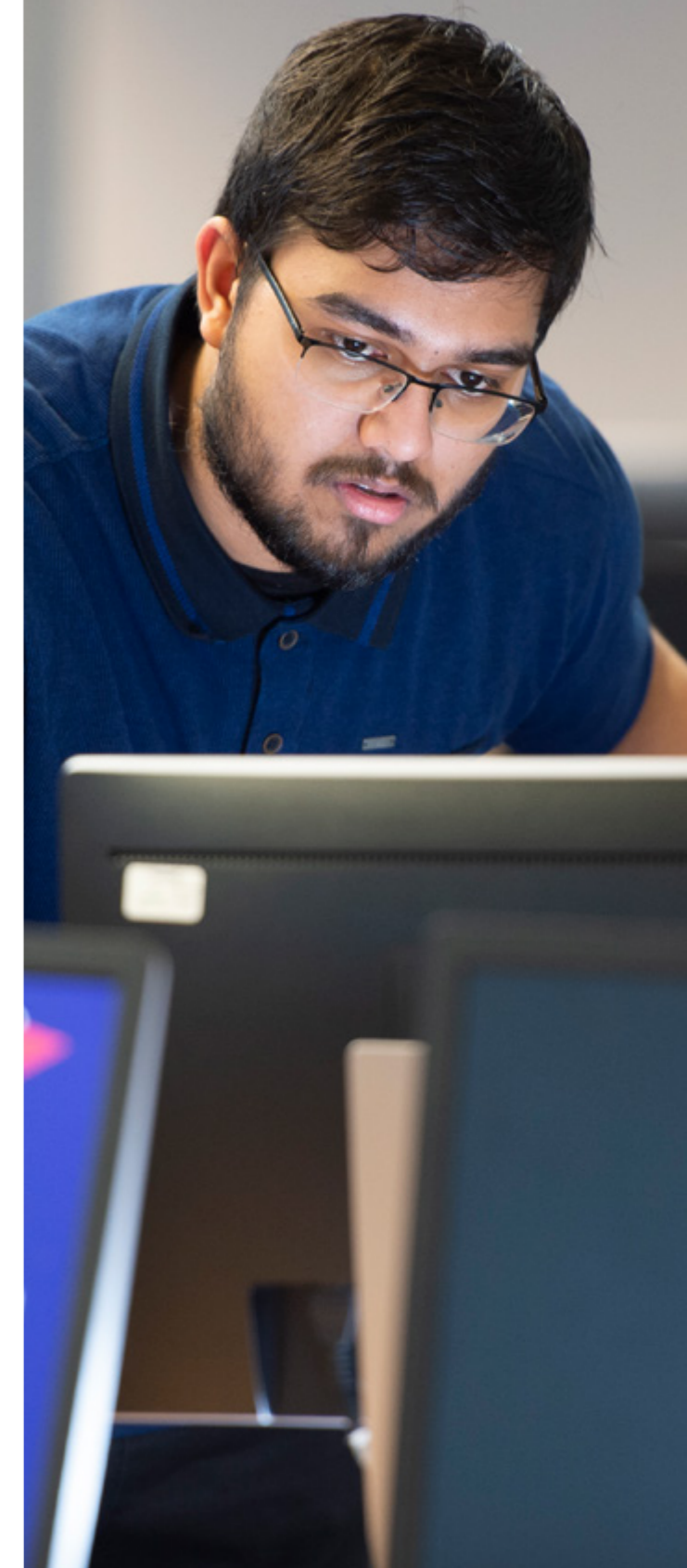
Supporting Edinburgh Napier University's innovation infrastructure and environment, the SFC's REG and University Innovation Fund have been crucial in enabling the University to nurture research through its stage-gated commercialisation process.

This includes the ability to carry out market assessments which are essential to develop ideas into commercial ventures. Delivered by the University's Research, Innovation and Enterprise team, the commercialisation process helps researchers to realise the potential of their university research and either take their innovations to market or undertake further research – translating into research impact. This includes the following spinouts to date: ZoneFox (acquired by Fortinet in 2018), Symphonic Software (acquired by Ping in 2020), Cyan Forensics (now Cyacomb), 3finery and MemCrypt.

They have already successfully made the leap from the research lab to market. Indeed, the University's spinouts have contributed to the delivery of high-value jobs and increasing Scottish international trade. For example, Cyacomb now employs more than 40 people and has expanded rapidly into international markets.

Developing research ideas into spinouts requires talent and expertise, as well as a supportive and nurturing environment. Three of the University's talented people and projects were recognised at the 2022 Scottish Cyber Awards for their work and innovations in this area. The University also had two finalists in the 2023 Converge Challenge, with one of the projects, Lasting Asset, winning the Cisco sponsored "Future Tech Award".

Photo: Edinburgh Napier University



## Research



Photo: Glasgow Caledonian University



Research Centre for Health (ReaCH)

Glasgow Caledonian University

Glasgow Caledonian University has research intensity and excellence in the area of health, and SFC REG funding has been used to support the Research Centre for Health (ReaCH).

ReaCH incorporates the Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research Unit, which is jointly hosted by Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Stirling. Over £200,000 of REG funding was used to contribute to project development and recruitment / talent attraction, match-funding projects, contributing to the full economic costs and paying salary costs of the Unit's staff.

The remit of the Unit is to develop a high-quality research agenda which is useful and relevant to direct patient care; provide a strong national focus for patient care research, and to involve nurses and other direct care staff where appropriate in its research.

The Unit collaborates with academic and clinical colleagues nationally and internationally to maximise the outputs and impact. It works to increase the capacity and capability of its researchers at all levels. It has acclaimed expertise in the design and delivery of large trials of complex interventions, and systematic reviews.

Notable is the research programme leading to improvements in evidence-based clinical assessment and treatment of pelvic organ prolapse. High-quality, internationally relevant trials of the effectiveness of Pelvic Floor Muscle Training has led to improvements in the clinical interventions delivered for prolapse, making a real difference to the lives of many.

In 2023-24, investment into the Unit has successfully culminated in the attainment of £1m as part of a £2.5m grant from the National Institute for Health and Care Research to establish an Evidence Synthesis Group across four universities to include the University of Edinburgh (as lead institution), Glasgow Caledonian University, the University of Stirling and Newcastle University. The Group will produce and disseminate timely, high-quality and impactful evidence syntheses across a wide range of topics relevant to health care, public health and social care, applicable to end users across the UK.



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