

Our ref: AGH/JMK/FC-MERGER RESP1207

12 July 2004

MTS Batho  
Merger of the Funding Councils Team  
Enterprise Transport and Lifelong Learning Department  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Europa Building  
450 Argyle Street  
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Dear Mark

**CONSULTATION ON THE MERGER OF THE SCOTTISH FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL AND THE SCOTTISH HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL**

As Principal of Langside College in Glasgow I welcome the opportunity to submit comments to you on the merger consultation paper and the proposed legislation.

The Board of Management and I have contributed to and fully support the position taken by the Association of Scottish Colleges on the merger and, therefore, it will be possible to keep specific comments brief and to the point. I imagine that, given the welter of responses that you are likely to receive and will require to analyse, you will appreciate this approach. I have included five specific recommendations in section 3 of this response.

Langside College fully supports the Scottish Executive's commitment to achieve parity of value for different types of learning and learning providers. We have included the term 'tertiary education' in our Mission and Vision for many years and, therefore, welcome its inclusion in the Bill.

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Likewise, we welcome the opportunity which the Bill facilitates to modernise the funding body's accountability and communication structures. Our one criticism of the Scottish Further Education Funding Council since its inception has been that its decision making and decision taking processes have been less transparent than they might have been. The legislation is an opportunity to rectify this.

Our specific comments are as follows:

### **1. Proposals which we welcome**

- the provision of safeguards for diversity and college autonomy;
- formal requirements on the new body to promote skills needs, equal opportunities and knowledge transfer;
- the duty to enhance as well as assess quality; and
- the duty placed upon other public agencies (particularly local authorities and local public spending bodies) to work with the new body.

### **2. 'Possibilities' which we would welcome**

- the convergence of funding between HEIs and colleges, perhaps by SCQF level;
- funding by level rather than by type of institution;
- the termination of the post-1992 binary divide;
- funding for cross sectoral provision;
- funding incentives for more responsive providers;
- more students seeing college as their entry route to university;
- more students studying in small chunks at various institutions; and
- formal commitment to SCQF as a condition of grant funding.



### 3. Outstanding Questions/Issues which require clarification

- the possibility that new providers (eg voluntary organisations who provide learning opportunities) might receive funding from the new body - **recommendation** - the College suggests that further consultation is required on this issue;
- the re-emergence of top sliced funds (which remain prevalent in HEI funding) and 'earmarking' for particular specialist skills areas such as health or care - **recommendation** - the College contends that this approach should be restricted to very specific and specifically funded initiatives as a matter of principle;
- the possibility that economic 'determinism' may occur and accentuate occupational skills as a priority for funding over core/key skills - **recommendation** - the College contends that this would be detrimental to both Scotland's economic and social needs and to the role which community colleges play in lifelong learning;
- the introduction for the new body of 'interventionist' powers (to call and attend meetings, to require merger discussions etc) - **recommendation** - the College contends that further consultation will be required on how this range of proposals is implemented; and
- the manner in which appointment to the new body will be managed - **recommendation** - the College contends that it would be excellent practice and in the public interest that all posts for employment and all positions on the new body are made openly by public advertisement.

I trust you find these comments of use and I look forward to hearing of the outcome of the consultation process.

I have no difficulty in this response being placed in the public domain.

Should you require further information about these comments please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely



A Graeme Hyslop  
Principal

