



**Scottish Youth Parliament**  
**Education & Lifelong Learning Committee**

***Response to SE Consultation on the Merger of SHEFC and SFEFC***

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) welcomes this consultation as an important step towards the recognition that education takes many forms, with no one superior to the other. Education knows no boundaries and nor should its funding.

The SYP believes firmly in the principle of developing a Scotland of healthy, happy well-educated young people and sees any move which advances this as a sign of positive progress. Tertiary education is a major part of the lives of an increasing percentage of young Scots and the final stage of many years of hard work and dedication, before they move on to contribute so much to the nation's economy as tax-paying citizens. Scotland's decision-makers would do well to ensure that the best interests of these young people are at the forefront of their minds when designing services which affect them.

In considering the draft Bill, the SYP's Education & Lifelong Learning Committee has taken this as its main guidance, believing that a merger of the SHEFC and the SFEFC has the potential, in principle, to be of benefit to all of Scotland's young people. The Committee is particularly pleased to note the opportunities which the new overarching category, STEPS, offers to increase and diversify the learning available for education. Though some concerns have been raised by others about the affect this will have on the distinct identity



of Universities and Colleges, the E&LL committee is satisfied that the re-branding is designed to enhance commonality for the purposes of funding, not to destabilise these institutions' individuality.

Until the new funding guidelines are operational, the E&LL Committee cannot assess how these will impact on the tertiary education system, however, it recognises that care must be given to ensure that significant resources are reserved for research within the re-organised body. Different priorities for this do, and will continue to, exist within the two main sectors who will be covered by the body and it is important that the strong reputation Scotland has acquired in research is not allowed to fall by the wayside. A successful Scotland is a Scotland at the forefront of commercially useful research.

If there is to be a new body, it must operate in an open and transparent manner, always with interests of learners at its heart. The education system exists to benefit learners and their communities... not learning institutions or public bodies.