

Association of Scotland's Colleges (ASC) response to the interim report of the Joint Future Thinking Taskforce

ASC was pleased to send representatives to the New Horizons event at Glasgow Caledonian University on Wednesday 20 August. We are also grateful to have the chance to provide this written response to the report.

ASC's objective is to continue to work for parity of treatment and parity of esteem for vocational education in Scotland. We consider establishment of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) in 2005 was a major step towards achievement of this goal. ASC will oppose any measure which undermines the current arrangements for equal treatment of colleges and universities in Scotland.

ASC believes SFC has delivered for Scotland and for Scotland's colleges. We look forward to all Scotland's colleges being fully consulted before any substantive changes are made to the relationship that institutions have with SFC.

Scotland's colleges provide almost one quarter of higher education in Scotland. Effective progression arrangements mean that for some Higher Education Institutions almost one third of their undergraduate students have come from college. Links between universities and colleges are strong and Scotland's colleges will support any joint initiatives that further strengthen this. ASC supports fully the continuation of tertiary education funding by the Scottish Funding Council.

We regard the proposed horizon fund for universities as a positive policy option, particularly in allowing higher education institutions the flexibility to take the risks necessary for future success. Greater alignment of university funding with the government's objectives is to be welcomed, as a measure proposed by both Universities Scotland the Scottish Government.

In addition, ASC supports the measures the funding council has taken since 2005 to fully engage with students. We hope that any proposed changes to current engagements would have the full support of students and would expect their representative bodies to be fully engaged in any consultation.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the positive position that colleges are regarded by the Scottish Government, and we look forward to this continuing into the future once the outcomes of the taskforce have been implemented.

ASC Executive
September 2008