

DESIGNATING COLLEGES AS REGIONAL COLLEGE AND ASSIGNING COLLEGES TO REGIONAL STRATEGIC BODIES



CONSULTATION PAPER QUESTIONS

Q1. We should welcome comments on Ministers' plans to designate the following incorporated colleges as regional colleges.

The Standards Council for Community Learning and Development for Scotland is the body responsible for the registration of Community Learning and Development (CLD) practitioners, the approval of training courses, and the continuing professional development of the CLD sector workforce. The Standards Council's interests in Ministers' plans for designation of regional colleges arise firstly from the role that colleges play in professional development of CLD practitioners, in particular through delivery of the HNC in Working with Communities, and secondly from the importance of partnership working between colleges and CLD providers in the local authority and third sectors in supporting progression for learners of all ages.

A key factor affecting the effectiveness of colleges in both these roles is their ability to respond in a flexible and strategic way to the needs and opportunities of the communities they serve. The new regional structure for colleges can be seen as presenting both risks and opportunities in relation to this kind of responsiveness.

Our comment on this is that the important role played by colleges in developing a skilled CLD workforce needs to be underpinned by responsiveness to the needs and opportunities of communities, and that this is also essential for the development of partnership working that supports community based learning and effective arrangements for learners to progress from learning in the community to college based learning. Responsiveness to the needs and opportunities of communities, supported by effective partnership working, is essential to ensuring wider access to college-based learning in particular for those individuals and communities who have had the least positive experience of formal learning and are furthest from the labour market.

A further key factor in ensuring strong links with community-based learning, effective support for progression from learning in the community to college-based learning and wider access is the development of a workforce in the college sector, as well as across CLD partners, with the required skills.

In that context, it is important that regional colleges ensure that they:

- Put arrangements in place to secure responsiveness to the needs and opportunities of communities, in particular through partnership working;
- Ensure that they do not lose sight of the needs of adults beyond the 16-19 age group;
- Promote discussion on links with community-based learning and the

- importance of the access and equalities agendas in that context; and
- Use their strategic role to develop workforce development programmes that reflect the needs of the skills agenda outlined above.

To support activity in these areas, they should be alert to:

- Developments in community planning, which provide opportunities for regional colleges to use their strategic role to link provision to the needs and opportunities of communities;
- The Scottish Government's legislative proposals for community empowerment;
- The statutory duty placed on local authorities, through the Requirements for CLD (Scotland) Regulations 2013, to work with partners to secure provision of CLD in their area; and
- The Scottish Government's Strategic Guidance to Community Planning Partnerships on CLD.

All of these developments are part of the emphasis on seeing the skills and assets of individuals, families and communities as the key resource, which it is important that regional colleges reflect in their provision of learning, workforce development and engagement with partners and communities.

Advice provided to regional colleges should include guidance on these issues.

Q2. Should the colleges in Table 1 be designated as regional colleges in March 2014?

Yes No

The Standards Council has no comments on this question.

Q3. We should welcome comments on whether the matters covered in questions 1 and 2 raise any equalities issues that require to be addressed with respect to age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Our comment is that the ability to respond in a flexible and strategic way to

the needs and opportunities of the communities that regional colleges serve, and the comments above on the importance of partnership working and for alertness to developments relating to this, are also relevant to ensuring that regional colleges address equalities issues effectively.

There is a risk that regional colleges become more remote from the communities that they serve, and in particular that as a result access for those in communities that experience disadvantage is reduced. This effect could in turn be exacerbated for people within any of the equalities groups referred to who live in geographical communities that are disadvantaged. In this context it is particularly important that regional colleges have strategies for widening access that pro-actively address the needs of equalities groups and of geographical areas that experience disadvantage.

As suggested above these strategies should include or be linked with appropriate workforce development programmes.