



Circular

Employability:
Implementation Plan for
Learning to Work

3 March 2006


SFC/12/2006



Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

Comhairle Maoinachaidh na h-Alba
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Employability: Implementation Plan for *Learning to Work*

3 March 2006

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This circular provides information about the actions the Council will take to support the implementation of the ideas presented in *Learning to Work*

FAO: Principals and directors of Scotland's colleges and universities

Contact: Helen Gibson, Learning & Teaching
hgibson@sfc.ac.uk
0131 313 6685

Recent SFC circulars

3 March 2006

SFC/11/2006

Change to the Requirement to make a Mid-Year Return (MYR) and Financial Forecast Update (FFU)

This circular is to inform you that institutions will no longer be asked to return routinely an MYR/FFU. Instead, we are asking institutions to report their mid year forecast for the current year on an exceptions basis.

24 February 2006

SFC/10/2006

Strategic Research Development Grant: Call for Proposals

This circular is to announce the third call for proposals under the periodic competition element of the Council's Strategic Research Development Grant (SRDG), 'emerging opportunities and challenges'.

24 February 2006

SFC/09/2006

Fee Waiver Grant Compensation Scheme: Final Fee Waiver Grant 2004-05

This circular provides details of the final fee waiver grant claims for academic year (AY) 2004-05, allocates an additional fee waiver grant payment to colleges to meet their 2005-06 fee waivers and informs colleges to the payment of 2006-07 fee waiver grant.

24 February 2006

SFC/08/2006

College Sector Student Support and Fee Waiver Grant Policies: 2006-07

This circular notifies colleges of the publication for 2006-07 of the national policies for financial support of non-advanced students and for fee waiver grant eligibility for all college students.

24 February 2006

SFC/07/2006

Addressing Equality Legislation in Colleges and Universities: A Good Practice Guide

This circular announces the publication on the Council's web site of a good practice guide to addressing equality legislation.

17 February 2006

SFC/06/2006

Intake Targets for the Controlled Subjects for Academic Year 2006-07

3 February 2006

SFC/05/2006

In-year Management of Bursary Funds: 2005-06

Employability: Implementation Plan for *Learning to Work*

- 1 This circular provides information about the actions the Council will take to support the implementation of the ideas presented in *Learning to Work*.

Background

- 2 In October 2004, the Council's predecessor bodies SHEFC and SFEFC published *Learning to Work*, a paper which set out a range of principles and ideas about what colleges and universities can do to support the development of learners' employability.¹ One of the things this paper did was to capture the widespread consensus that enhancing employability is not a discrete activity to be undertaken in isolation of the rest of the learning experience, but rather it should be one of the outcomes of effective learning and teaching.
- 3 Improving how we contribute to people's employability is a vital task for our education system because, according to learners, a key reason for studying is to further their career and/or life prospects. Employers are increasingly saying that they value applicants with relevant experience and well-developed 'soft' skills – the second of these being consistently identified by employers as a key priority for development in the workforce. It follows that if we are to meet learners' needs effectively, it is crucial that we pay attention to what employers are telling us; and that we help prepare our learners to steer a successful path through the ever-changing labour market.
- 4 We believe this can only be achieved through a three-way partnership involving learners, educators (i.e. all those who work with learners in colleges and universities) and employers. This is a long-term agenda, to be pursued steadily and consistently over a long period.
- 5 *Learning to Work* was developed through extensive discussion and consultation with a range of individuals and groups, as well as a review of the literature available. We have since used the paper as a basis for discussion and debate with the key stakeholders. All of these stakeholders have responded positively to the ideas presented in the paper, and to the principle of working together to further these ideas. The evidence for this is already apparent: for example, the quality enhancement theme on employability, in the university sector, and the 'Focus on Learning 2' project, in the college sector, are both

¹ See: www.sfc.ac.uk/publications/pubs_other_sfcarchive.htm

illustrations of ways in which the ideas which surfaced in *Learning to Work* have been developed at sector-wide level in recent months.

Summary of the Council's implementation plan

- 6 The Council intends to support this agenda in the medium to long term by:
- supporting and influencing institutional development: in our strategic dialogue with individual institutions; through our role in supporting quality assurance and quality enhancement in the sectors; through our relationships with sector development agencies; by creating links to other developments through our relationships with other bodies including the Scottish Executive; and by considering the employability implications for policy development and implementation in other related areas;
 - encouraging greater learner participation and engagement: through our support for *sparqs*, the development body for student representatives; and by playing a part in encouraging learners to engage effectively in their own learning (learner engagement is a key element in the quality frameworks in both sectors);
 - encouraging greater employer participation in the learning process (for example, in providing work-related experience, mentoring learners and providing input into the curriculum/delivery where appropriate). We have begun a dialogue with the Enterprise Network, to establish where there may be scope for joint activity. We will also seek to influence the development of the Skills for Business Network's Sector Skills Agreements (to ensure they consider the potential for employers in their sectors to work in partnership with institutions) and the design of Futureskills Scotland's employers' surveys (to help ensure that the type of feedback being sought from employers is useful to providers);
 - investing in sector development programmes. We have invited tenders for a baseline study of employability-related activity in Scotland's colleges, to provide a basis for a strategic focus on employability in the sector from 2006-07. We will also initiate and support a programme of collaborative development projects in the HE sector (with the involvement of other external partners as appropriate), beginning in 2007-08, to help the sector build on the progress made through the quality enhancement theme on employability; and

- monitoring and evaluating progress in the sectors, drawing on available information such as evidence from quality assurance and enhancement processes and development projects, information gathered from networks (such as the HE employability contacts network), strategic dialogue with individual institutions, surveys of learners (such as *On Track*), surveys of employers and econometric and employment evidence.

7 These actions are presented in summary form at Annex A.

Timing

8 Many of the actions summarised above are ongoing and embedded in wider activities. However, specific timescales are attached to the following:

- the baseline study of employability-related practice in colleges: invitations to tender are invited by 3 March 2006, with the outcomes to be reported in mid November 2006. This will include a period of testing the initial findings with groups of stakeholders;
- the national development programme focused on the HE sector. The process of creating partnerships and developing project proposals will take place over the coming academic year, with projects to begin in AY 2007-08. We will provide further information on this shortly; and
- monitoring and evaluating progress. This will be an annual activity. (We do not anticipate collecting additional information from institutions for this purpose.)

Further information

9 Contact Helen Gibson, Senior Policy Officer, Learning and Teaching.
Tel: 0131 313 6685; email: hgibson@sfc.ac.uk.



Roger McClure

Chief Executive

Annex A: SFC implementation plan for *Learning to Work*

	Dialogue	Provision of information	Quality assurance and enhancement	Development agencies	Development projects
Support and influence institutional development	Strategic dialogue with individual institutions; dialogue with Scottish Executive and other stakeholders to investigate possible links with wider developments such as <i>Determined to Succeed</i>		Continue to ensure employability is appropriately embedded in quality assurance (QA) and quality enhancement (QE); build on outcomes from QE theme on employability in HE; support strategic focus on employability in colleges from 2006	Promote co-ordinated approaches to employability development through key development agencies including SFEU, HE Academy and Scottish Institute for Enterprise; and QAA and HMfE	Embed employability concepts within actions arising from Council's review of supply and demand in FE and other relevant policy areas
Encourage greater learner participation			Continue to encourage effective means for student participation in QA/QE	Continue to support development of student representation through support for <i>sparys</i>	
Encourage greater employer participation	Dialogue with Scottish Enterprise/HIE (and through them, LECs), Sector Skills Councils and other employer bodies	Ensure institutions have access to robust labour market information from Future Skills Scotland, Sector Skills Councils and others		Seek to build employability explicitly into the Sector Skills Councils' Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs)	
Invest in development programmes			Commission a baseline study of practice in colleges, to inform further development	Key agencies to be involved as partners in development programmes	Initiate and support a national development programme for the HE sector, with projects commencing in 2007-08
Monitor and evaluate progress		Input into design of future FSS surveys of employers			
Monitor and evaluate progress annually, using evidence from all of the above					



Scottish Funding Council
Donaldson House
97 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh EH12 5HD

t 0131 313 6500
f 0131 313 6501
www.sfc.ac.uk