

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO THE
FUTURE OVERSIGHT OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY
FOR ALL COLLEGE STAFF**

**A publication arising from Recommendation 4 of 'Promoting Excellence', the
Ministerial response to the Review of Scotland's Colleges**

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Executive summary

Study background

1. Tribal Consulting was commissioned by the Scottish Government in February 2008 to undertake an independent review into the oversight of staff development within Scotland's 43 colleges. This review was intended to meet the fourth recommendation made by the original Review of Scotland's Colleges 'Staffing, Learners and Learning Environments Report' (the 'SLALE report') of June 2007, which was endorsed by the Education and Lifelong Learning Cabinet Secretary, Fiona Hyslop, in October 2007.
2. The recommendation contained in the SLALE report, and to which this report relates, was:

"We recommend that the Scottish Government should commission an independent review into the future oversight of staff development activity for all college staff, with a view to taking forward its findings by Spring 2008. The review should consider:

 - *How this oversight might best be delivered;*
 - *What, if any, alternative arrangements might need to be put in place; and*
 - *Appropriate linkages to other professional and membership bodies."*
3. The methodology took the form of a short and tightly focused consultation with key stakeholders across the sector.

Study context

4. A large number of organisations are involved in policy, oversight, monitoring, accreditation and delivery of staff development activities in the college sector. As part of its review, the SLALE group considered options for delivering the oversight of continuing professional development (CPD) in Scotland's colleges but was unable to reconcile the divergent views of the stakeholder group at that time. Options that were discussed were the widening of the remit of the Professional Development Forum (PDF) which currently has a remit over teaching qualifications but no remit over support or administrative roles, as well as involving other agencies (including the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) and Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK)).¹
5. The PDF was created in 1998 on the back of the 1997 'National Guidelines on Provision Leading to the Teaching Qualification (Further Education) and Related Professional Development'. The overarching purpose of the forum is to "enhance the training and continuing professional development of further education lecturers in Scotland through the approval of the provision of high quality units of initial teacher training and continuing professional development which meet the needs of the individual and the profession."²

Study findings

6. The consultations identified a number of common themes which guided the development of our recommendations. These can be summarised as follows:
 - The current model for strategic oversight of staff development activity needs to change

¹ Review of Scotland's Colleges: Inspiring Achievement: Staffing, Learners and Learning Environments, p22

² <http://www.fepdfscotland.co.uk/whatwedo.htm>

- Any new model should cover all college staff and should promote parity of esteem both within the sector and with other lifelong learning sectors
 - Any approach should be college-led and reflect the unique characteristics of the sector
 - There is no need for a new body and, where possible, efficiencies should be gained through better sharing of knowledge and resources across the lifelong learning sector
 - The remit should be for strategic overview and should allow for the autonomy of individual colleges in determining the best approach for their particular institution
 - The focus must be on achieving improved outcomes for learners and improved learning experiences, rather than focusing on numerical targets for CPD
 - The audit burden is already heavy and further audit requirements would not be welcome
7. In seeking to identify an appropriate model for future oversight, it was clear that achieving buy-in and consensus between stakeholder bodies would be critical to success. This was our primary concern, although factors such as cost, flexibility, functionality and remit were also important considerations.
8. On this basis, we were able to rule out a number of the options due to a lack of consensus. The following options received very little or no support from those taking part in the consultation:
- Do nothing i.e. retain the current model
 - Make minor adjustments to the current model
 - Disband the PDF and devolve oversight of staff development activity entirely to colleges
 - Set up a parallel body to mirror the PDF but with a remit for other college staff
 - Set up an entirely new organisation
9. There was a clear preference for the expansion of an existing organisation to oversee staff development activity in the college sector. Two options received the support of the majority of stakeholders, namely:
- An expansion to the role and remit of the existing PDF; or
 - An expansion to the role and remit of the SFEU (or, in practical terms post-merger, the new colleges support agency).

Study recommendations

10. On the basis of our findings, we recommend the introduction of a hybrid model, which we believe will secure the greatest consensus between stakeholders and offer the best oversight model for the future of staff development. We would advise that:
- the existing PDF is expanded and rebranded, maintaining the PDF's core functions but within a forum with a much broader remit
 - the secretariat function for the expanded and rebranded body should lie with the new college support agency rather than with the Scottish Government
 - strong and positive links are maintained with the Scottish Government to ensure that Government policy and the strategic direction of staff development remain closely aligned.

11. Any concerns regarding potential conflicts of interest resulting from the college support agency's role as a provider of staff development tools and activities, and in supporting the forum which has oversight of staff development in the sector could be addressed through a suitably worded Service Level Agreement (SLA) or other administrative arrangements.
12. This proposed hybrid option would:
 - leverage the strengths of both the existing PDF and the SFEU (or successor organisation)
 - achieve the required consensus
 - build on the credibility and reputation of both the PDF and SFEU
 - present a model that is perceived to be objective, inclusive, and flexible
 - avoid overcrowding of the organisational landscape
 - maintain the autonomy of individual colleges
 - offer a relatively low cost, practical solution (see below)
13. For these reasons, we consider it to be the most appropriate solution to managing the future oversight of staff development activity in Scotland's colleges.

Future remit and linkages

14. Our findings suggest that the current remit of the PDF remains pertinent, and that the following objectives should form part of the remit of the new forum:
 - to oversee the arrangements for updating the Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's colleges
 - to approve, according to agreed criteria, applications from universities, colleges/consortia or other training providers to become 'approved providers' of units, and
 - to consider applications from 'approved providers' for individual units of Initial Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development (ITT & CPD) units to be included in the National Index
15. We would also recommend that the new forum should be specifically tasked with the following:
 - Overseeing the strategic direction for staff development activity
 - Maintaining effective links with the Scottish Government and ensuring that policy and strategic direction remain closely aligned
 - Advising and making recommendations to Scottish Government on policy developments that have a bearing on staff development activity in Scotland's colleges
 - Maintaining effective links with UK bodies with an interest in staff development, including relevant Sector Skills Councils, and ensuring that the Scottish dimension is appropriately reflected at a UK level
 - Promoting the benefits of participating in staff development in Scottish colleges
 - Ensuring that any applicable National Occupational Standards are effectively translated into staff development activities

- Maintaining the National Index of units which contribute to PDAs for initial teacher training and CPD
 - Maintaining an overview of the fitness for purpose of all PDAs and other qualifications and courses, including awareness of the TQFE, in the light of emerging policy and developments in workforce planning and curriculum development
 - Ensuring that staff development activities support the current and future needs of learners and of the Scottish economy
 - Encouraging economies of scale and collaborative working in provision of staff development activities within Scotland's colleges, and where appropriate, beyond
 - Maintaining and encouraging participation within a framework for staff development in Scotland's colleges, but not controlling how individual colleges apply that framework
 - Ensuring an appropriate balance between the need to maintain accountability for public funds received and the need to minimise the existing audit burden on colleges
 - Ensuring that the focus of staff development activity remains concentrated on improving outcomes for learners through enhancing their overall learning experience
16. The current membership of the PDF leaves some gaps in representation and irrespective of whether or not the oversight model recommended in this report is adopted, we would recommend that formal or quasi-formal links are established with the following organisations:
- SQA – as a full member of the forum
 - The new colleges support agency – as a full member of the forum
 - LLUK – full membership may not be required, but attendance at meetings as appropriate
 - NUS Scotland – again, full membership may not be appropriate, but closer links and attendance at meetings when appropriate
17. In order to ensure ongoing strategic fit with other sectors it may also be appropriate to establish a less formal line of communication between the new body and:
- The Association of University Administrators
 - The Standards Council for Community Learning and Development
 - The HE Academy (and Academy Scotland)
 - The Institute for Learning

Other issues

18. The SLA between the PDF and the SQA dates back to 2002/2003 and will need to be revisited in due course, particularly if the nature of the PDF changes as a result of this consultation.
19. The development of a detailed costing for the proposed solution was beyond the scope of this study, although we do not anticipate that the costs would be prohibitive. The Scottish Government may wish to consider preparing a costed business case to support the transition to the new Scottish Colleges Staff Development Forum in due course.

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Tribal Consulting was commissioned by the Scottish Government in February 2008 to undertake an independent review into the oversight of staff development within Scotland's Colleges. This review was intended to meet the fourth recommendation made by the original Review of Scotland's Colleges 'Staffing, Learners and Learning Environments Report' (the 'SLALE report') of June 2007, which was endorsed by the Education and Lifelong Learning Cabinet Secretary, Fiona Hyslop, in October 2007.

1.1.2 The recommendation contained in the SLALE report, and to which this report relates, was:

"We recommend that the Scottish Government should commission an independent review into the future oversight of staff development activity for all college staff, with a view to taking forward its findings by Spring 2008. The review should consider:

- *How this oversight might best be delivered;*
- *What, if any, alternative arrangements might need to be put in place; and*
- *Appropriate linkages to other professional and membership bodies."*

1.1.3 This report sets out the findings and recommendations from our review. The remainder of section 1 sets out the background to the study and describes the present arrangements for oversight of staff development activity in Scotland's Colleges. Section 2 describes the methodology we applied during the consultation; our findings are set out in section 3 and our recommendations are summarised in section 4.

1.1.4 Before going on to describe the method used to achieve the above objectives of the study and to present our findings and recommendations, it is important to set out briefly the background to the study and some of the factors affecting the policy environment within which staff development activity in Scottish colleges is being delivered. For clarity, and to establish the 'base case' against which other conceptual models have been considered during the consultation, this will include a high level overview of the current position in terms of which bodies are responsible for which functions in the current institutional landscape.

1.2 Background to the study

1.2.1 There are 43 colleges in Scotland delivering a broad range of academic and vocational educational opportunities to a diverse body of students through a diverse range of staff with wide-ranging professional experience in their chosen fields. Around 70% of their income comes from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).³ According to the SFC's recent report "Scotland's Colleges; A Baseline Report" [Feb 2007], the sector is in a strong and healthy state. Key findings of the report included:

- In 2005-06 there were 350,019 students undertaking courses in the colleges and hours of learning increased by 3% between 2004-05 and 2005-06.
- 94% of all activity in the colleges is for programmes leading to nationally recognised qualifications or for students with learning difficulties.

³ Scottish Government 'Review of Scotland's Colleges: Unlocking Opportunity' 2006

- 6% of activity in 2005-06 was attributable to programmes leading to a college validated qualification, 30% less than in 2001-02.
- 35% of 17 year olds study in Scotland's colleges.
- Scotland's Colleges contribute significantly to the lifelong learning agenda with substantial enrolments across the working age population.
- 8.8% of the Scottish people of working age participated in courses in 2005-06 and at least 40% of working age student enrolments have a direct link to business, rising to 59% if training funded by businesses is included.
- Students from the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland are well represented at Scotland's Colleges with 26% of all activity compared to 14% being delivered to students from the 20% most affluent areas.
- Students with a disability or requiring extended learning support accounted for 14% of all students in 2005-06 and 22% of activity.

1.2.2 The health of the sector will provide a strong basis on which to move forward into the future. There is also much evidence that a substantial concentration of experience and expertise within the sector has been built up since incorporation in the early 1990s, including a core of able and experienced staff at senior management level.

1.2.3 However, the policy context within which the sector is working is changing rapidly and there are a range of factors which suggest a need for greater collaboration and integration within the sector and with other education providers; adopting a unified and cohesive approach to oversight (and in many cases provision) of staff development activity for college staff would appear to be one way of contributing to this agenda. For example:

- The establishment of the single Funding Council for further and higher education in Scotland in 2005. This is widely seen as a major step forward, and contrasts starkly with the situation, for instance in England, but increases the pressure on Scotland's colleges to 'punch their weight' particularly in relation to the universities which have traditionally been very effective at promoting their views and interests. Achieving recognition of the sector's unique nature and working toward achieving 'parity of esteem' with the universities is a widely shared goal.
- The growing recognition of the contribution that Scotland's colleges make to the Scottish economy, and to meeting aspirations outlined in national skills-based policy agendas. Analysis undertaken as part of the Review of Scotland's Colleges estimated the net value of the outputs of Scotland's colleges to be some £1.3bn per annum.⁴
- Financial imperatives resulting from a tighter funding environment which is likely to be a feature of the medium term, as well as inducement from the SFC for colleges to collaborate to ensure that public funding is used effectively to achieve stated priorities.
- Pressures to achieve economies of scale to overcome these financial constraints and achieve efficiencies have manifested themselves in a variety of forms, including the establishment of staff development networks in both the east and west of Scotland, working collaboratively around the development of learning resources through COLEG, as well as bilateral and multilateral partnerships and

⁴ ibid

consortia between colleges in other areas.

- Opportunities for shared services in areas such as procurement, market research, staff and board member training and professional development were specifically identified in the RoSCo 'Accountability and Governance' report.
- The merger of SFEU, ASC, COLEG and SCI into one single support agency for Scotland's colleges is a key development in the sector which will have implications for the provision of staff development activity.
- The growing recognition of the potential role of colleges in the international education market, a market in which the universities have traditionally been more active and successful than colleges. The formation of Scotland's Colleges International in 2006 was a response to this. It also recognised that a collaborative approach under the 'Scotland's Colleges' brand will be more likely to succeed than individual college initiatives.
- Growing links with universities are also an important strategic factor. The growing policy emphasis on enhanced progression between further and higher education and growing involvement of universities in traditional further education market segments, have led to increased collaboration between colleges and universities including joint delivery of degree programmes and shared sites and services. This would appear to suggest the potential for collaboration in providing staff development activities across the wider lifelong learning sector.

Review of Scotland's Colleges

1.2.4 The Review of Scotland's Colleges ('RoSCo') was announced in 2005 with a view to providing Scottish Ministers with *"a robust evidence base, and where appropriate, informed recommendations for change, upon which sound decisions can be taken on how to fund and equip Scotland's colleges to meet future challenges and demands"*, and was the most comprehensive review of the sector since incorporation in 1993.

1.2.5 The review used four stakeholder-led working groups to investigate key aspects of the college sector: the 'Differences Colleges Make' workstream investigated the differences colleges make to individual learners as well as to the economy and wider society, while the 'Staffing, Learners and Learning Environments' group investigated the three key elements of people who learn, people who teach and support learning and teaching, and the environment in which learning occurs. The 'Accountability and Governance' workstream undertook a review of governance and accountability arrangements within the sector, and the 'Colleges' Strategic Future' group investigated the future strategic direction of colleges and how they might best achieve sustainability and effectiveness in the long term.

1.2.6 RoSCo published a series of reports in these topic areas between 2005 and 2007, culminating in the publication of the overview report 'Transforming Lives, Transforming Scotland' in June 2007. This report officially endorsed the recommendations of the workstream reports, and commended them to the Cabinet Secretary for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning.

Inspiring Achievement – report of the Staffing, Learners and Learning Environments Group

1.2.7 Of the reports published under the RoSCo banner, the report of the Staffing, Learners and Learning Environments workstream ('SLALE') addressed the issues surrounding Continuing Professional Development among college staff.

- 1.2.8 Their report recognised that it is *“of vital importance that all staff in colleges are appropriately trained and qualified and have the opportunity to continually update and expand their knowledge and skills. Not only will this benefit the learners and the college organisation; it will substantially increase the satisfaction of the staff members themselves”*⁵ It went on to recommend that:
- All staff in Scotland’s Colleges engage in systematic reflection of how they contribute to the work of colleges in supporting learners;
 - All Colleges provide appropriate opportunities for all members of staff to upgrade or improve their professional skills; and
 - All Colleges provide opportunities for members of staff to gain appropriate qualifications relevant for their professional role.⁶
- 1.2.9 It also recommended that “all full-time staff in colleges should fulfil, as a minimum expectation, six days of CPD a year, and that colleges should determine and implement appropriate proportionate expectations for part-time, fixed-term and temporary staff.”⁷
- 1.2.10 These key recommendations were agreed in ‘Promoting Excellence’, the Scottish Government’s response to the report. Work is underway or proposed to implement these recommendations.
- 1.2.11 The SLALE group considered options for delivering the oversight of continuing professional development (CPD) in Scotland’s colleges but was unable to reconcile the divergent views of the stakeholder group at that time. Options that were discussed among the stakeholder group were the widening of the remit of the Professional Development Forum (PDF) which currently has a remit over teaching qualifications but no remit over support or administrative roles, as well as the involvement of other agencies (including the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) and Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK).⁸ The discussions held at that time *“revealed a wide range of views on what organisational structure would best address the need to provide oversight, monitoring and strategic development of CPD for all staff in Scotland’s colleges over the next few years”*.
- 1.2.12 However, positive consensus was achieved around the need for high quality, adequately resourced and managed staff development activity.⁹ This consensus on key general principles is the foundation on which the new model for oversight of staff development must be built.

1.3 The current position

- 1.3.1 The diagram on the following page provides a broad illustration of the complexity of the current institutional landscape within which staff development activity is delivered.
- 1.3.2 It is clear from this analysis that there are already a large number of organisations involved in the policy, oversight, monitoring, accreditation and delivery of staff development activities in the college sector. It is important that any new model for

⁵ Review of Scotland’s Colleges: Inspiring Achievement: Staffing, Learners and Learning Environments accessed online at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/06/27154841/0> p7

⁶ Ibid. p9

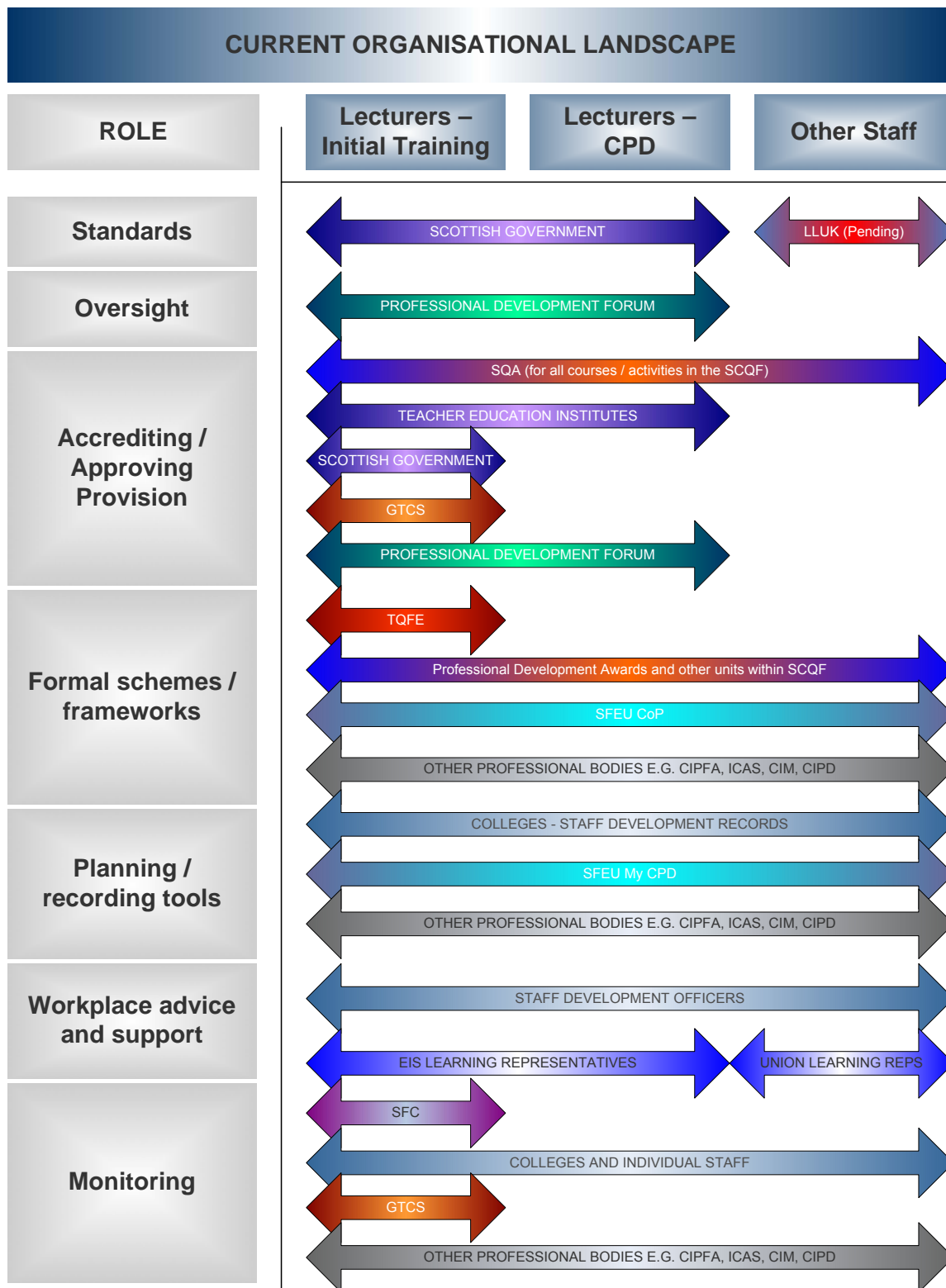
⁷ Ibid. p9

⁸ Ibid. p22

⁹ Ibid.p22

oversight does not further complicate this already crowded landscape. We have used this one of our key guiding criteria when considering our recommendations

Figure 1 - The current organisational landscape



1.3.3 This diagram also illustrates the breadth of remit of the PDF, over which there has been some confusion in the past among consultees. For clarity, the following paragraphs will describe more fully the current role and remit of the PDF.

The Professional Development Forum

1.3.4 The PDF was created in 1998 on the back of the 1997 'National Guidelines on Provision Leading to the Teaching Qualification (Further Education) and Related Professional Development'. The overarching purpose of the forum is to "enhance the training and continuing professional development of further education lecturers in Scotland through the approval of the provision of high quality units of initial teacher training and continuing professional development which meet the needs of the individual and the profession."¹⁰ This has been translated into three specific objectives:

- to oversee the arrangements for updating the Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges.
- to approve, according to agreed criteria, applications from higher education institutions, further education colleges/consortia or other training providers to become 'approved providers' of units, and
- to consider applications from 'approved providers' for individual units of Initial Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development (ITT & CPD) to be included in the National Index.

1.3.5 The forum therefore has a formal approval role in relation to professional development courses for teachers in Scotland's colleges and has the authority, via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), to approve colleges and other appropriate bodies as providers of Units within the National Index.

1.3.6 The SLA which governs the relationship between the PDF and SQA in respect of the approval process for Units and Awards relating to college teaching staff dates back to 2002/2003. It will need to be revisited in due course, particularly if the nature of the PDF changes as a result of this review.

1.3.7 The forum also plays a more strategic role in relation to teachers within Scotland's colleges, in monitoring and promoting accredited Initial Teacher Training and CPD Awards and Units, and acting as the main advisory group to the Scottish Government on all matters pertaining to the professional learning of college lecturers in Scotland.

1.3.8 Current membership of the PDF includes representation from the Scottish Government, HMIE, GTCS, a Teaching Qualification (Further Education) provider, and the SFC, as well as College Principals and senior managers, and staff learning and development managers. The SQA is not officially a member of the PDF, nor is the SFEU. There is no official linkage with LLUK (the UK Sector Skills Council for the lifelong learning sector).

1.3.9 The role and powers held by the PDF are perhaps less fixed than many stakeholders imagine. But there is clearly a need for greater clarity. Its existence is not a legislative or statutory requirement and its core 'delivery approval' role is dependent on the SLA with the SQA. It also has no formal role in relation to the TQFE. As things stand, therefore, the value that is attached to the PDF by stakeholders appears to arise largely from the sector's perception of its powers, and on the currency of the information and advice it can provide the sector through the experience of its members. It has achieved a good reputation through establishing an effective style of operation within the sector.

¹⁰ <http://www.fepdfscotland.co.uk/whatwedo.htm>

2 Methodology

2.1 Objectives

2.1.1 Three formal research questions were set in the project brief. We were tasked with considering and making recommendations on the following, through a short and tightly focused consultation with stakeholders.

- How future oversight of staff development activity in Scottish Colleges might best be delivered (including the advantages and disadvantages of current arrangements, and discussion of which groups of staff should be covered)
- What, if any, alternative arrangements to the status quo may need to be put in place; and
- Recommendations regarding what linkages it may be appropriate to establish (where they do not already exist) to other professional and membership bodies.

2.2 Project management framework and methods applied

2.2.1 We undertook this project within a controlled PRINCE2™ project management framework. Within that framework we undertook the research in three stages: Inception, Fieldwork, and Reporting.

Stage 1: Inception

2.2.2 We met with the Advisory Group on 11 February and obtained all of the necessary contact details and agreed the background documentation that we would need to review in the early stages of the project. We also agreed our project management arrangements and progress reporting schedule, and the date of our options generation and Shortlisting workshop with the Advisory Group. We documented the outcome of the inception meeting in a Project Initiation Document, and agreed the contents with the Scottish Government's Project Manager.

Stage 2 - Fieldwork

2.2.3 To enhance our existing understanding of the Scottish Colleges sector and staff development issues therein, we undertook a short period of structured desk-based research before we began our consultation. We used a two-pronged approach to this work; following up references to literature included in the publications:

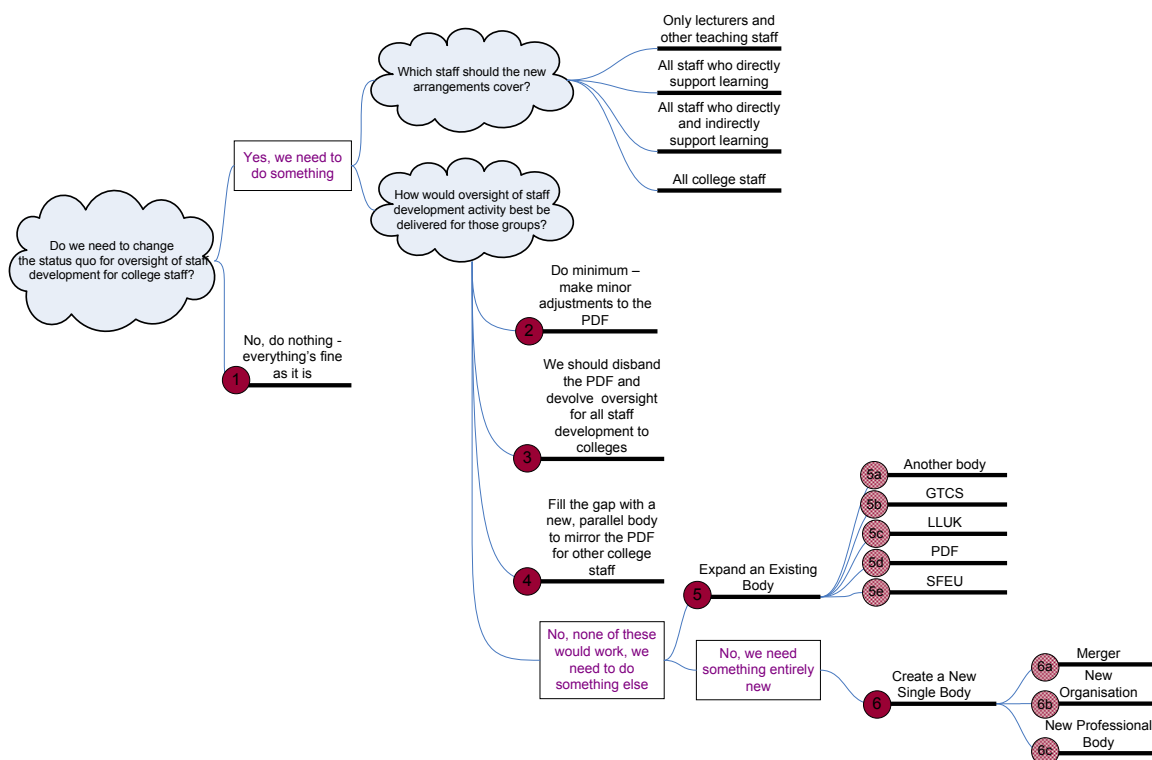
- Review of Scotland's Colleges: Transforming Lives, Transforming Scotland
- Review of Scotland's Colleges: Inspiring Achievement: Staffing, Learners and Learning Environments
- Review of Scotland's Colleges: Promoting Excellence: The Scottish Government's Response to the Review

2.2.4 We also undertook a short and highly focused literature review using a subscription-based online library of published academic and professional literature, covering staff development in Scottish Colleges, as well as a high level review of the setup in England & Wales and in Northern Ireland.

2.2.5 We used the information we gained from this desk research to inform our consultation with stakeholders. More importantly, we used this information to develop a list of success

criteria for use in our evaluation, and a long list of potential models for the oversight of CPD within Scottish Colleges, which – in consultation with the Advisory Group – we developed into the following discussion framework¹¹:

Figure 2 - Consultation framework



2.2.6 During our options generation and shortlisting meeting with the Advisory Group on 26th February, we agreed that we would not shortlist the options before presenting them to stakeholders and undertake a formal multi-criteria decision analysis assessment; rather, we would use the above framework to guide as full and frank a discussion as possible around the need for change, and how oversight of staff development in Scotland’s colleges would best be delivered in future.

2.2.7 We undertook a short and focused consultation with key stakeholders in the Scottish College and Lifelong Learning community, including representatives from (in alphabetical order):

- Association of Scotland’s Colleges (ASC)
- College Principals
- CoSLA
- Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)

¹¹ Some minor changes to the layout of this diagram and some of the terminology used in it have been amended at the request of the Advisory Group after our consultations began; this version therefore differs slightly from the original framework as presented to consultees during our discussions. The changes made do not affect the substance of the different options presented to the consultees or the substance of our discussion with them, only the order and manner in which they are represented in the diagram.

- General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE)
- Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK)
- NUS Scotland
- Principals' Forum Co-ordinating Group (PFCG)
- Professional Development Forum (PDF)
- Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU)
- Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
- Scottish Government (SG)
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
- Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC)
- Unison

2.2.8 We have considered all of the responses provided by the consultees during this research, and have mapped the preferred options of each body using a matrix format. The findings from this part of the research are presented in section 3.3.1¹². We have also analysed the recurring themes from our discussions with stakeholders, and these are outlined in section 3.2. We have presented these thematically in this report in order to present a fuller and clearer picture of the issues that need to be addressed.

Stage 3 – Reporting

2.2.9 We agreed the broad structure and thematic approach to this report with the Scottish Government's project manager on 10th March. We met with the Advisory Group on 19th March to discuss our emerging findings and recommendations. This report was submitted to the Scottish Government on 15th April 2008.

¹² This is a minor change to the methodology set out in our proposal for this research, but was agreed with the Advisory Group on 26th February in order to provide stakeholders with the opportunity to comment on all possible options rather than asking them to rank a maximum of five in order of preference according to pre-specified criteria.

3 Findings

3.1 Views on the current position

3.1.1 There was consensus among all stakeholder bodies interviewed that the current model for strategic oversight of staff development needed to change. However, this was not as a result of specific concerns about the effectiveness of the PDF within its current remit, but rather was an acknowledgement of shifts in the context of staff development and in the college sector more generally, and out of a desire to broaden the coverage of staff development throughout the sector and through doing so to enhance the quality of students' learning experiences.

3.1.2 Those concerns which were raised about the fitness for purpose of the PDF were strongly related to concerns with the fitness for purpose of the TQFE qualification rather than with the operation of the body per se. Most consultees believed that the PDF discharged its responsibilities well within its current restricted remit, although one did raise a concern that the forum had been too 'anonymous' in the past within the sector. Overall, this consultation was seen as a catalyst for change, and an opportunity that should not be missed to improve staff development in Scotland's colleges for the better.

3.2 Key themes for improvement

The need to include all college staff

3.2.1 There was also broad consensus among consultees that any new arrangements that are put in place should cover all college staff, in so far as it should not just oversee arrangements for teaching staff. There was less clear agreement on exactly which groups of staff should be covered, although most agreed that all college employees should be covered to the extent that they are not already participating in other professional development schemes (such as those operated by professional bodies).

The need for a college-led approach

3.2.2 It was clear that the consensual nature of the PDF's operation was perceived as a key strength, and that this would need to continue in any new arrangements. Strong views were expressed that there should be greater involvement from colleges themselves, and perhaps even that the group should be college-led (rather than being perceived as led by the Scottish Government). This – if achieved – would give any new body the greatest chance of operating effectively and successfully.

The need to signal that the sector is serious about staff development

3.2.3 Many of the consultees were also keen to stress that any new arrangements that are put in place should act as a clear signal that the sector as a whole is serious about developing its staff, and that they deserve parity of esteem with other teaching, lecturing and professionally qualified staff employed in other sectors.

The need to recognise and preserve the unique nature of the sector

3.2.4 We have already described in section 1.2 some aspects of the unique policy context within which the colleges operate. Among some consultees there was a clear desire to carve a path for staff development in Scotland's colleges that would recognise the unique and distinctive nature of the sector, and not just borrow a model from either the school or university sectors. There was a perception in some quarters that past models of staff development were borrowed, or too strongly linked, with the model in place for schools, and that these were clearly not appropriate for staff in colleges.

The need to maintain professionalism (but not necessarily via a professional body)

- 3.2.5 During the consultation, we presented participants with the option of creating a new professional body to represent college staff and have oversight of staff development. No consultees saw any merit in this course of action. However, a number cautioned that there was a need to maintain and further enhance the perceived professionalism of college staff (teaching and otherwise), but that this did not necessarily require the introduction of a new professional body, or the extension of an existing one.

The need to avoid overcrowding the institutional landscape

- 3.2.6 The current institutional landscape is outlined in section 1.3.1 of this report. Most consultees were keen not to introduce any further complexity into this landscape by creating a new organisation to undertake responsibilities that could easily be undertaken by an existing body with an enhanced remit.

To TQFE or not to TQFE?

- 3.2.7 A number of participants noted concerns about the fitness for purpose of the current TQFE qualification for college teachers. In many ways, this concern is linked to issues of how to maintain and demonstrate the professionalism of college teachers, and achieve parity of esteem compared to teachers in schools. While the issue of fitness for purpose of the TQFE is beyond the scope of the current study there is clearly a concern about the qualification that we feel should be addressed.

The need to leverage economies of scale

- 3.2.8 Many participants also pointed to the cost to colleges of developing their own staff development materials and courses, while many other colleges were likely to be developing similar materials and courses. This has to some extent been addressed by participation in staff development consortia in both the east and west of Scotland. However, some consultees saw the clear potential to further leverage economies of scale for developing staff development materials and courses, particularly in relation to Professional Development Awards (PDAs), by developing them at a national level. SFEU in particular are currently seeking accreditation as an SQA delivery centre with this specific purpose in mind.

The need to maintain a broad and high level strategic overview

- 3.2.9 Consultees also accepted that there was a need for a body to maintain a high level strategic overview of staff development needs within the sector, bearing in mind information that is available on curriculum development, the demographics and skills of the current staff population, existing and emerging National Occupational Standards, and current and future Scottish Government policy. While the PDF was perceived as achieving this goal in relation to teaching staff, consultees also felt a need to broaden this strategic view to other groups of college staff to ensure that the sector was best placed to meet future learners' needs and support the wider implications of policy changes.

Oversight v control

- 3.2.10 While there was a clear support for widening the scope of oversight of staff development, many consultees were concerned that any new body would seek to exercise centralised control over how individual colleges achieve their staff development needs. While consultees accepted that they should be held accountable for their use of public funds, it was felt to be inappropriate that direction and control over staff development within individual colleges should be exercised by a central body. This level of decision-making would better be left to the discretion of individual colleges, albeit within a centrally

organised and managed framework. Reference was made to the diversity of the sector and the need to link staff development activity to individual college strategies. Both of these factors suggest that a high degree of autonomy needs to be maintained when deciding the exact nature of activity within an individual college. Moreover, the successful operation of the PDF to date is held in part to be due to its 'light touch' approach.

The need for learner-focused outcomes

- 3.2.11 The overwhelming majority of consultees stressed the need for staff development activity to be refocused on achieving improved outcomes for learners through enhancing their learning experience. Some felt that the current model was too tightly focused on the number of teachers who are professionally qualified via the TQFE, and that this aspect of staff development had become little more than a box-ticking exercise.

The audit burden

- 3.2.12 Linked to concerns about the potential for increased exercise of central control, many consultees expressed concern about any increase to the existing audit burden that might be placed on colleges through any new arrangements. Most were content that existing monitoring arrangements as exercised by HMIE during their college reviews, and by other bodies such as the SFC and Audit Scotland, were sufficient already or could be slightly refocused with regard to how they cover best practice in staff development arrangements if further assurance were required.

3.3 Analysis of stakeholder preferences

- 3.3.1 Irrespective of the advantages that each option offered in terms of cost, flexibility, functionality and remit, it was clear that the capacity to achieve buy-in from stakeholder bodies was likely to either make or break any new arrangements. Finding a model that would achieve stakeholder consensus was therefore our primary concern during our analysis of the consultation responses.

- 3.3.2 On this basis, we were able to rule out a number of the options due to a lack of consensus (or, in some cases, a complete absence of support from any individual stakeholder). The following options were ruled out:

- Do nothing i.e. retain the current model
- Make minor adjustments to the current model
- Disband the PDF and devolve oversight of staff development activity entirely to colleges
- Set up a parallel body to mirror the functions of the PDF but with a remit for other college staff
- Set up an entirely new organisation

- 3.3.3 The consultation process identified that there was a clear preference for the expansion of an existing organisation to oversee staff development activity in the college sector. Within this, two conceptual models received the support of the overwhelming majority of stakeholders, namely:

- An expansion to the role and remit of the existing PDF; or

- An expansion to the role and remit of the SFEU (or, in practical terms post-merger, the new colleges support agency).

3.3.4 However, these two models are not mutually exclusive; indeed we believe that there is scope for functional growth for both the PDF and SFEU in relation to the oversight of staff development in Scotland's colleges. This affects the fundamental nature of the decision that needs to be made; it is no longer an 'either/or' choice, but a decision regarding how to achieve an acceptable balance between these two options.

3.3.5 We would therefore recommend the introduction of a hybrid model, which we believe will secure the greatest consensus between stakeholders and offer the best oversight model for the future of staff development. We would advise that the existing PDF is **expanded and rebranded** into a '**Scottish Colleges Staff Development Forum**', maintaining the PDF's core functions but transplanting the existing body into a forum with a much broader remit. We would also recommend that the secretariat function for the expanded and rebranded body should lie with the new college support agency rather than with the Scottish Government – this will help minimise perceptions that the new forum is too closely linked to the Government. We feel that it is important to rebrand the new forum, in order to create a more inclusive and distinct 'identity' for staff development in Scotland's colleges. This is also an ideal opportunity to establish greater clarity over the precise role and remit of any expanded body¹³.

3.3.6 We do not, however, go as far as proposing that the new forum should be completely independent of the Scottish Government – it is critical that strong and positive links are maintained in order to ensure that Government policy and the strategic direction that staff development will take in the sector remain closely aligned.

3.3.7 Neither do we think that too much weight should be placed on any potential conflict of interest that might be seen to arise as a result of the college support agency's role as a provider of staff development tools and activities, and their role in supporting the forum which has oversight of the strategic direction of staff development in the sector. Many other bodies (particularly professional Institutes) undertake both roles without any such conflict arising, and if this were to continue to be a concern in this case, we feel that a suitably worded Service Level Agreement or other administrative arrangements could be put in place to ensure an effective 'Chinese wall' between their provider and strategic support roles.

3.3.8 This proposed hybrid option would offer a number of benefits and strengths. Specifically, this model would:

- leverage the strengths of both the existing PDF and the SFEU (or successor organisation)
- achieve the required consensus
- build on the credibility and reputation of both the PDF and SFEU
- present a model that is perceived to be objective, inclusive, and flexible
- avoid overcrowding of the organisational landscape
- maintain the autonomy of individual colleges

¹³ It should be noted that consultees were not explicitly asked about their views on this option, since it was developed in response to the outcome of the consultation.

- offer a relatively low cost, practical solution (see below)

3.3.9 For these reasons, we consider it to be the most appropriate solution to managing the future oversight of staff development activity in Scotland's colleges.

Scale of magnitude of setup and running costs

3.3.10 The development of a detailed costing for the proposed solution is outwith the scope of this current research, and will depend to a large extent on detailed decisions which are yet to be made in respect of the modus operandi of the new forum. The Scottish Government may wish to consider undertaking a detailed costing of the solution and develop a more complete business case to support the transition in due course. However, in terms of the likely order of magnitude of setup costs compared to the other options we presented to stakeholders, we believe that the proposed 'Expand and Rebrand' solution is at the lower end of the cost scale between the lowest cost option ('do nothing') and the highest cost options which involve setting up an entirely new body from scratch. Indeed, much of the infrastructure that the new forum will need is already in place within the SFEU.

3.3.11 We do not believe that the additional running costs of the proposed body will be substantially higher than at present; participation in the forum will remain unpaid, and while there will inevitably be more meetings per year than at present – and membership may be wider – there is no reason to suspect that the marginal increase in cost of running the secretariat function would be significant. Indeed, there may be scope to leverage economies of scale and achieve cost savings within the sector through closer working with the new college support agency, and through enhancements to collaborations and joint ventures in staff development activities that the new agency is ideally placed to support.

Remit

3.3.12 Our findings suggest that the current remit of the PDF remains pertinent, and that the following objectives should form part of the remit of the new forum:

- to oversee the arrangements for updating the Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's colleges
- to approve, according to agreed criteria, applications from universities, colleges/consortia or other training providers to become 'approved providers' of units, and
- to consider applications from 'approved providers' for individual units of Initial Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development (ITT & CPD) units to be included in the National Index

3.3.13 On the basis of the consultation responses, we would recommend that, in addition to the current remit of the PDF, the new forum should be specifically tasked with the following:

- Overseeing the strategic direction for staff development activity
- Maintaining effective links with the Scottish Government and ensuring that policy and strategic direction remain closely aligned
- Advising and making recommendations to Scottish Government on policy developments that have a bearing on staff development activity in Scotland's colleges

- Maintaining effective links with UK bodies with an interest in staff development, including relevant Sector Skills Councils, and ensuring that the Scottish dimension is appropriately reflected at a UK level
- Promoting the benefits of participating in staff development in Scottish colleges
- Ensuring that any applicable National Occupational Standards are effectively translated into staff development activities
- Maintaining the National Index of units which contribute to PDAs for initial teacher training and CPD
- Maintaining an overview of the fitness for purpose of all PDAs and other qualifications and courses, including awareness of the TQFE, in the light of emerging policy and developments in workforce planning and curriculum development
- Ensuring that staff development activities support the current and future needs of learners and of the Scottish economy
- Encouraging economies of scale and collaborative working in provision of staff development activities within Scotland's colleges, and where appropriate, beyond
- Maintaining and encouraging participation in the overarching framework for staff development in Scotland's colleges, but not seeking to control how individual colleges apply that framework locally
- Ensuring an appropriate balance is maintained between the need to maintain accountability for public funds received and the need to minimise the existing audit burden on colleges
- Ensuring that the focus of staff development activity remains concentrated on improving outcomes for learners through enhancing their overall learning experience

3.4 Appropriate linkages

3.4.1

The current membership of the PDF is outlined in section 1.3.8 of this report. It is clear both from our desk research and from the views expressed by stakeholders that there are some gaps in representation and this review presents an opportunity to reconsider the membership of the forum. Irrespective of whether or not the oversight model recommended in this report is adopted, we would recommend that formal or quasi-formal links should be established with the following organisations:

- SQA – we recommend that SQA is invited to become a full member of the forum so that their knowledge and experience in the development and accreditation of qualifications can be better brought to bear in the sector
- The new colleges support agency in their role as provider of staff development – we also feel that full membership is an appropriate in this case
- LLUK – in order to facilitate two-way sharing of best practice between Scotland's colleges and the rest of the UK. While full membership of the forum may not be required in this case, we believe that they should be invited to attend meetings as appropriate

- NUS Scotland – again, full membership may not be appropriate, but we feel that it is important that the ‘end user’ (students) should be represented as and when it is appropriate or necessary to do so

3.4.2

In order to ensure ongoing strategic fit with other sectors it may also be appropriate to establish a less formal line of communication between the new body and:

- The Association of University Administrators (as providers of staff development activities and materials that are widely used in universities)
- The Standards Council for Community Learning and Development (in order to ensure that any appropriate best practice can be shared between the CLD and Scotland’s colleges)
- The HE Academy (and Academy Scotland) which provides support to institutions in achieving the best possible learning experience for students
- The Institute for Learning (the professional body for teachers, trainers, tutors and student teachers in the learning and skills sector in England)

4 Summary of recommendations

4.1 Future oversight of staff development in Scotland's colleges

4.1.1 We propose that the best way forward would be to expand and rebrand the existing PDF into a '**Scottish Colleges Staff Development Forum**', maintaining the core functions of the PDF in relation to the TQFE but transplanting the existing body into a forum with a much broader remit. We also propose that the secretariat function for the expanded and rebranded body should lie with the new college support agency rather than with the Scottish Government.

4.1.2 A number of core principles should be adopted by the new forum, including:

- The inclusion of all college staff within its remit
- Its overall approach should be college-led and consensus-based
- It should seek to adopt a 'light touch' approach and avoid being overly prescriptive
- It should recognise and preserve the unique nature of Scotland's colleges

4.1.3 In addition to the PDF's current remit, we recommend an enhanced remit for the new forum, covering:

- Overseeing the strategic direction for staff development activity
- Maintaining effective links with the Scottish Government and ensuring that policy and strategic direction remain closely aligned
- Advising and making recommendations to Scottish Government on policy developments that have a bearing on staff development activity in Scotland's colleges
- Maintaining effective links with UK bodies with an interest in staff development, including relevant Sector Skills Councils, and ensuring that the Scottish dimension is appropriately reflected at a UK level
- Promoting the benefits of participating in staff development in Scottish colleges
- Ensuring that any applicable National Occupational Standards are effectively translated into staff development activities
- Maintaining the National Index of units which contribute to PDAs for initial teacher training and CPD
- Maintaining an overview of the fitness for purpose of all PDAs and other qualifications and courses, including awareness of the TQFE, in the light of emerging policy and developments in workforce planning and curriculum development
- Ensuring that staff development activities support the current and future needs of learners and of the Scottish economy
- Encouraging economies of scale and collaborative working in provision of staff development activities within Scotland's colleges, and where appropriate, beyond

- Maintaining and encouraging participation in the overarching framework for staff development in Scotland's colleges, but not seeking to control how individual colleges apply that framework locally
- Ensuring an appropriate balance is maintained between the need to maintain accountability for public funds received and the need to minimise the existing audit burden on colleges
- Ensuring that the focus of staff development activity remains concentrated on improving outcomes for learners through enhancing their overall learning experience

4.2 Links with other organisations

4.2.1 Irrespective of whether or not the oversight model recommended in this report is adopted, we recommend that formal or quasi-formal links should be established with the SQA, the new colleges support agency, Lifelong Learning UK, and NUS Scotland.

4.2.2 It may also be appropriate to establish a less formal line of communication between the new body and the Association of University Administrators, the Community Learning Directorate Standards Council, the HE Academy and the Institute for Learning.

4.3 Other issues

4.3.1 The Service Level Agreement between the PDF and the SQA dates back to 2002/2003 and will need to be revisited in due course, particularly if the nature of the PDF changes as a result of this consultation.

4.3.2 The Scottish Government may wish to consider preparing a costed business case to support the transition to the new Scottish Colleges Staff Development Forum in due course.