

## Scotland's Recovery – Universities' Role

Post-pandemic the university sector will be a key part of Scotland's recovery. The world-leading research and teaching that we offer will be strategically deployed to accelerate the recovery.

Scotland will face severe challenges as we look beyond the coronavirus emergency. Its universities will co-develop an agile response with government, agencies, business and wider partners across society to respond to those challenges, and to seize opportunities to 'build back better'. We share the Benny Higgins' review's vision of an education-led national renewal.

We can see the shape of some of the challenges already.

We expect a severe shock to the labour market, with redundancies across many sectors, reduced opportunities for people leaving education and a very large rise in unemployment. We will work with partners across education, the public sector and industry to ensure that we use this crisis as a time when peoples' skills and aptitudes are developed so they can succeed in a changed economy. We will do all we can to play a pivotal role in avoiding the injustice of a 'lost generation' of people who become distant from the world of work during the recession.

We see risks to Scotland's hard-won progress in social inclusion and access to higher education. The recession is likely to hit the most-disadvantaged hardest. In an increasingly digital workplace, digital poverty will reinforce disadvantage. So, as well as sustaining our overall commitment to widen access to higher education, we will act to address learners' digital disadvantages.

We also see opportunities.

Scottish universities and businesses have given our nation a worldwide reputation for inventiveness. We will apply that to our re-invention of routes to renewed inclusive growth. We have an outstanding research base and can accelerate its translation into business innovation and economic growth. We can leverage universities' international connectedness further as a key asset for Scotland. We can help develop the people and ideas that will drive the green transformation of the post-crisis economy.

As 'anchor institutions' we will sustain high-quality employment and learning opportunities for the communities we are part of throughout Scotland. We will engage with our communities to promote cultural opportunities and will develop people and ideas so that Scotland's outstanding creative industries can be a key strength in the nation's recovery.

The commitments we set out here give us a platform for conversation with our partners – we do not have all the answers and we will value co-development of ideas with government, business and wider society. A new scale of challenge requires intensification of partnerships for the common good.

**Scotland's recovery must be social & cultural  
as well as economic**

## Our commitments

We are committed to doing everything within our power to meet the needs of individuals, society and the economy. We will do so by building on the best of what we already provide and by pivoting to meet peoples' changed needs.

Here are some of the ways we are committed to making our contribution.

### A common endeavour to 'build back better'

We will be a strong contributor to building a better economy, society and environment after the pandemic. We will:

- Undertake collaborative and interdisciplinary research to find solutions to the critical post-pandemic social, economic and environmental challenges.
- Intensify our work to improve environmental impact.

### Resilient communities

We will support the resilience of our communities, recognising that the recession will have the hardest impact on the socio-economically disadvantaged and the digitally-excluded. We will:

- Maintain a relentless commitment to widening access to higher education for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Reach out to communities and schools with access to cultural opportunities.
- Promote digital inclusion and make more of our resources digitally accessible to communities.
- Use City and Region deals as forces for social inclusion and to strengthen place-based collaboration.

### Skills and attributes for a changed economy

We will make sure that individuals are supported through the post-pandemic recession and that they are equipped with the knowledge and attributes to drive Scotland's recovery as a high-skill, high-productivity economy. We will:

Create new pathways into and through higher education to meet learners' changed needs including:

- Design of short, flexible courses to meet peoples' up-skilling and re-skilling needs
- Create widened pathways from college to university.
- Create diverse postgraduate opportunities – from short courses to meet learners' immediate high-level skills development needs, through Masters-level courses and apprenticeships targeted at growth areas in the economy, to development of top-level executive skills at professional doctorate level.

Work closely with business to understand changed needs and design provision to meet these, including:

- Listen to businesses as they articulate changed requirements and ambitions to ensure courses meet their specific needs.
- Adapt graduate apprenticeships to meet the changed needs of business.
- Provide pathways for modern apprentices to articulate to graduate level learning.

- Create internship opportunities that benefit business and students/graduates.
- Executive development that meets business leaders' increased challenges.
- Working closely with the NHS and wider public services to understand and meet the changed needs of the health and social care workforce.

### Business recovery and reinvention

We will support the post-pandemic re-invention and recovery of businesses in ways that include:

- Acceleration of the translation of research into business-facing innovation.
- Consultancy about the innovation and digitisation of business processes, as well as products.
- Incubation of new high-growth businesses in campus-based incubators.
- Scaling-up accredited entrepreneurship education.
- Helping SMEs out of post-lockdown recession through strategic use of internships.

### An internationally connected recovery

We will use our breadth of international relationships to help rebuild Scotland's connectedness after its temporary setback by the coronavirus emergency: developing Scotland's connections with our European neighbours and the wider world. We will:

- Increase collaboration between universities and with wider partners, to promote Scotland internationally.
- Build on our alumni networks as a force for Scottish exports and soft power.
- Use our wide international network, reputation and research partnerships to generate leads for foreign direct investment.

### A collaborative recovery

We will do whatever is necessary, in close collaboration with partners across government and wider society to enable Scotland to adapt and prosper. Some of our commitments will require close partnership with government and its agencies to develop ways of implementing them. Others will require close partnerships with businesses and the third sector.

The challenges we face will act as a stimulus to new and deeper partnerships between higher education institutions as we work together for the common good.

