

## Project scope

# Scotland's colleges 2017



AUDITOR GENERAL 

Prepared by Audit Scotland  
February 2017

Scotland's colleges help to achieve sustainable economic growth by contributing to the development of a highly educated and skilled workforce. They provide both further and higher education courses to around 227,000 students. These courses provide people with a variety of skills and experiences to take forward into the workplace or onto further training or education. In total, colleges delivered over 70 million hours of learning activity in 2015-16 across a wide range of courses, and employed around 11,000 full-time equivalent staff.

Scotland's colleges have experienced a period of extensive reform in recent years. This includes the introduction of college regions and associated regional outcome agreements, and an extensive programme of mergers. The Office for National Statistics reclassified colleges as public sector bodies with effect from 2014, which changed how colleges manage and report their finances.

## What is the scope of the audit?

Audit Scotland's recent overview reports have provided extensive coverage on the process of reform and its associated impact, whilst also commenting on the financial health of colleges. The merged colleges have now been in place for three years and two of the three regional bodies are now fully operational. As such, the primary focus of this year's overview will be college finances, along with some high-level analysis of student participation and activity levels.

The audit will:

- review how colleges performed (in terms of learning provision)
- assess the state of college finances
- identify any emerging issues and future challenges for the sector, and assess how colleges prepare for these.

## How will we carry out this audit?

We will primarily draw information from colleges' annual accounts and audit reports. We will also use information held by relevant organisations including individual colleges, the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government. We will interview senior officials in the sector and consult with other significant stakeholders, including staff and student unions.


## What impact will the audit have?

Our report will comment on the sector's performance both from a financial and non-financial perspective. We will also highlight any future challenges the sector faces. Based on this, we will make recommendations for colleges, the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government as appropriate, to support the ongoing performance and financial sustainability of the sector.

## Audit timetable

We aim to publish a report in June 2017. Following publication, the Auditor General for Scotland will present the findings to the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee.

## Contact

If you have any questions about this audit, please get in touch with Stuart Nugent, Audit Manager, on 0131 625 1938 or by email at [snugent@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:snugent@audit-scotland.gov.uk) 



Audit Scotland, 4th Floor, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN  
T: 0131 625 1500 E: [info@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:info@audit-scotland.gov.uk)   
[www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk) 

For the latest news, reports and updates, follow us on:

