

**Scotland Policy Conferences:
Next steps for skills and apprenticeships in Scotland**

Timing: Morning, Monday, 26th October 2026

*****Taking Place Online*****

Draft agenda subject to change



**SCOTLAND POLICY
CONFERENCES**

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Duncan Dunlop MSP
- 9.05 **The Scottish skills ecosystem and the role of accreditation and quality assurance**
Dr Liz Barron-Majerik, Chief Accreditation Officer, Qualifications Scotland
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.35 **Funding reform, institutional capacity and sustainability of the skills system**
implications of Scottish Budget allocations / options for simplifying post-16 skills funding / financial pressures across further and higher education and training provision / long-term sustainability and certainty for colleges, training providers and employers / scope for multi-year planning / funding for higher-cost technical and work-based provision / continuity of contracts and payments as responsibilities transfer / transparency and accountability in public funding / alignment with learner pathways, sector needs and regional priorities / implications for access, choice and delivery capacity
Ciaran Donaghy, Lead Policy Officer, Devolved Nations, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Lorna Trainer, Director, L&G Learning
Audrey Cumberford, Principal, Edinburgh College
Senior representative, employer
Senior commentator
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.25 **Implementing skills system reform - governance, accountability and delivery**
Jacqui Brasted, Director, Access, Learning and Outcomes, Scottish Funding Council
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.55 **Chair's closing remarks**
Duncan Dunlop MSP
- 11.00 Break
- 11.10 **Chair's opening remarks**
Gary Bouse MSP
- 11.15 **Apprenticeship and qualification priorities - participation, investment and progression pathways**
delivery of the 150,000-apprenticeship commitment / annual, sectoral and regional priorities / balance between Modern, Foundation and Graduate Apprenticeships / implications of the Review of Modern Apprenticeship Contribution Rates / provider viability and employer participation / potential role of an Apprenticeship Accelerator Grant / measuring starts, completion, progression and sustained employment / role of Qualifications Scotland in work-based and vocational qualifications / employer and provider involvement in qualification design / clear progression between vocational, technical and academic routes / widening participation and maintaining learner support
Colin McMurray, Vice Principal, Business and Innovation, Forth Valley College
Claire McPherson, Director, Universities Scotland
Senior representative, employer
Senior representative, training provider
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.00 **Workforce planning, regional delivery and labour market alignment**
alignment of provision with economic, sectoral and employer needs / workforce shortages in priority sectors / labour-market intelligence, data sharing and workforce forecasting / reconciling national priorities with regional and local needs / place-based planning and regional partnerships / collaboration between employers, providers, local authorities and public agencies / institutional capacity to adapt provision within appropriate timescales / flexibility for differing economic circumstances, including rural and island communities / lifelong learning, reskilling and upskilling for changing workforce needs
Ian Hughes, Engagement Director, Scotland, Construction Industry Training Board
Ruth Cooper, Economic Development Manager, Renfrewshire Council
Senior representative, employer
Senior representative, union
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.45 **Policy priorities and next steps for skills and apprenticeships in Scotland**
Diane Greenlees, Director, National Training Programmes, Skills Development Scotland
Questions and comments from the floor
- 13.15 **Chair's and Scotland Policy Conferences closing remarks**
Gary Bouse MSP
Sean Cudmore, Scotland Policy Conferences