

Our vision for Scottish higher education in 2030

Universities
Scotland



What we do matters to the
people we serve.

We want higher education to
exceed expectations
and to play a central part in creating a
better future.

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People make it happen.
It depends on what we
choose to do now.

Our vision is that in 2030 higher education is:

- A world leader in education, research and innovation.
- A vital source of Scotland's strength in a competitive, connected and collaborative world.
- A core part of Scotland's identity as a prosperous, inclusive and outward-looking nation.

Where we're starting from

We start from a position of strength: strength in what we are, and strength in what we contribute. Scottish higher education looks to the future with a resilience built from centuries of academic excellence and a commitment to being at the forefront of innovation in ideas and practice.

Our existing strength as a higher education sector is built on strong and distinctive values:

- We are committed to creating opportunities for every learner with the potential to benefit from a university education, whatever their background.
- We are committed to our universities as a power for the common good. This ranges from our commitment to making a difference to the local communities we serve, to our role in addressing global challenges.
- We are committed to the role of staff and students as partners in their learning and co-creators of knowledge.
- We are committed to the development and wellbeing of our staff as a highly motivated workforce and as a key constituent in high standards of governance.
- We are collaborative; working together as universities and with partners at regional, national and international level to advance the frontiers of knowledge and promote the common good.
- We celebrate institutional diversity as a key strength, enabling us to meet diverse needs.
- We are committed to the openness of universities to international talent, and to building our nation's network of soft power across the world.
- We are committed to both excellence and inclusion: we recognise that excellence in teaching, research and innovation relies on equality and diversity.

Where we're going

We will take these values with us into the future.

Our vision sets out our ambitions – working together with learners, staff, employers, governments and the wider education system – for the better future we can create.

The disruptive forces of technology, demographics and globalisation are changing teaching, learning and research in decisive and dramatic ways. We can expect this rapid pace of change to increase. Predicting what this landscape will look like by 2030 is a challenge and whilst we are interested in projections of change we won't be constrained by them. We want higher education to continue to break beyond the imaginable, to exceed expectations and to play a central part in creating a better future. The future doesn't just happen. People make it happen. It depends on what we choose to do now.

Scotland's 19 higher education institutions share a vision for higher education in 2030. Getting there will take energy, resilience and clarity of purpose – from the sector and from governments. We will need a wide range of stakeholders to be with us as higher education crafts the best future we can.

What we do matters to the people we serve. So our vision sets out where we want to be and a direction for what we can do:

- for learners,
- for society,
- for the economy,
- for Scotland's place in the world.

Diverse institutions will make diverse contributions – all within a shared commitment to building a better future that serves the common good.



HE for learners

Drivers of change will include:



- Increased employer demand for high-level skills.
- Increased need for people to re-skill during their careers.
- High-skill workers will need a wide variety of aptitudes that reach beyond subject knowledge.
- Increased demand for learning in ways that meet diverse individual needs.
- Accelerated progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
- Technological advances in how learning can take place.
- Increased focus on the wellbeing of every learner.

Building the future we want. By 2030:



- Every university will be open and responsive to learners' diverse backgrounds, aspirations and needs.
- The four year degree is a flexible spine, with multiple entry and exit points.
- Learning is highly individualised, with learners progressing through school, college and university at the pace and in the place that meets their needs.
- Full-time and part-time learning are redundant concepts, as learners progress at the intensity that meets their needs.
- Technology and people work seamlessly together to create new, inspiring and highly connected learning environments.
- Learners routinely learn from multiple academic disciplines to develop the broad attributes and knowledge they need to succeed in multiple careers throughout their life.
- Higher level learning is truly lifelong as learners join higher education communities at different stages of their lives and careers.
- Learners from every part of society have equal access to higher education.
- Every learner knows that their wellbeing is a priority for the university community.

HE for society

Drivers of change will include:



- The demographic challenge of growing our high-skill working-age population.
- Sustained emphasis on achieving social justice and equality.
- The need to address the social precariousness of people caught in the 'gig economy'.
- Dignified social security for people unable to work, and fair work for those who can.
- Addressing the needs, and harnessing the talents, of an increased 'third age' population.
- Accelerated progression to a low-carbon society.
- Our engagement with social trends including worldwide migration trends and the need to balance the population with available resources.

Building the future we want. By 2030:



- Higher education is at the heart of addressing the demographic challenge of growing our high-skill working-age population, through up-skilling our existing population and attracting new talent to Scotland.
- Every person in disadvantaged communities knows that university is an option for them.
- Universities are anchor institutions in regeneration of communities, both through research expertise and through creation of jobs and opportunities.
- University facilities are open to all, with inclusive spaces for the communities around us.
- Universities are exemplars of fair and satisfying work and have fully tackled legacy issues of gender inequality.
- We are leaders in the progress to a low-carbon society, both through our expertise and through management of our own environmental impact.
- We are leading research and practice to tackle the major 21st century challenges facing society, from child development to healthy ageing.
- We are a key part of the fabric of democracy, providing a space for reasoned debate that draws on our expertise and insights and those of the communities we serve.

HE for the economy

This vision is written at a time of acute uncertainty about the future economy. However, we hope for a Brexit outcome that sustains economic growth.

If so, drivers of change will include:



- Increased global competition.
- Addressing Scotland's productivity challenge.
- Building on Scotland's unique strength as a research powerhouse and generator of ideas.
- The challenges and opportunities of automation and artificial intelligence.
- Enabling more SMEs to become innovative and scale-up.
- Enabling the growth of 'unicorn' businesses in Scotland.
- Increased attraction of foreign direct investment.
- Developing the skills base to meet the needs of high-growth businesses.
- The need for economic growth to generate Scottish tax revenue for public services.

Building the future we want. By 2030:



- Scottish higher education has further strengthened its position as a concentration of world-class excellence in research, education and knowledge exchange.
- Universities make Scotland the 'go to' nation for businesses globally who seek talent and creativity.
- Scotland is Europe's leading success story in attracting inward investment, based on the excellence of our research, our graduate talent, and the ease of doing business with us.
- Our research excellence is at the centre of new clusters of innovative businesses – both home-grown and inward investors – driving prosperity in our cities and regions.
- Universities, government and business are working together on research and action to address key socio-economic challenges, making Scotland a leader in issues such as how artificial intelligence can enhance productivity and happiness.
- Multiple cohorts of entrepreneurially-minded graduates have entered the Scottish economy, driving business productivity, innovation and growth.
- Universities are the obvious choice for businesses looking for help to innovate.
- Our business schools are deeply connected with SMEs to develop leadership and innovation capacity.
- University facilities – our labs, studios and estates – are well utilised by business.
- Universities are fully agile in meeting re-skilling needs of people in the workforce, through degrees, work-based learning and tailored professional development.

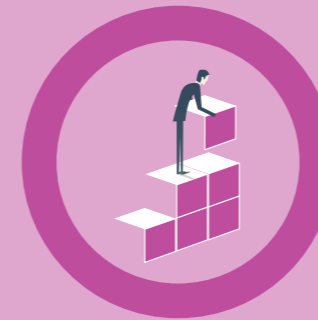
HE for Scotland's place in the world

Drivers of change will include:



- Commitment to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals on issues as immense as food security, health, the elimination of severe poverty, clean water and living within the environmental capacity of our planet.
- Increased ambition by people around the world for living conditions and opportunities that match what is available in the most privileged nations.
- Migration policies; and whether or not they support the free mobility of talent.
- Emergent economies becoming competitive with the developed world on high workforce skills and research excellence.
- Realignment of Scotland and the UK's key international relationships in the aftermath of Brexit.
- Increased Scottish exports as a key part of economic growth.
- Changed patterns in where people choose to study; with distance learning and improved in-country provision decelerating the growth in demand for UK-based education of international students.

Building the future we want. By 2030:



- Research and education by Scottish universities has made a crucial contribution to addressing worldwide sustainability challenges.
- Scotland's universities have maintained close research and educational links with our European partners, while also deepening our worldwide relationships.
- University research and education is a key export industry, as synonymous with Scotland as whisky and salmon.
- We are leaders in offering higher education in partner nations, based on the Scottish traditions of excellence and inclusion.
- We are Scotland's critical nexus of soft power, through our deep relationships with universities, business and government worldwide.
- Our worldwide network of alumni is a key national asset, giving Scotland 'ambassadors' in every nation and opening doors to business, cultural and philanthropic opportunities.
- We develop confident and respectful global citizens, able to make their way in different contexts and cultures.

Conclusion

Scottish higher education has strong shared values and a vision for the future that builds on these values. We believe we can help build a bright future for our nation.

We will work in close partnership with government, students, staff, business and the wider community to achieve it.

University of Aberdeen
Abertay University
University of Dundee
University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh Napier University
University of Glasgow
Glasgow Caledonian University
Glasgow School of Art
Heriot-Watt University
University of the Highlands and Islands
Open University in Scotland
Queen Margaret University
Robert Gordon University
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
Scotland's Rural College
University of St Andrews
University of Stirling
University of Strathclyde
University of the West of Scotland

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