

Stephen Kerr MSP and Kaukab Stewart MSP,
Education, Children and Young People Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Friday, 06 May 2022

Dear Convener and Deputy Convener,

Colleges regionalisation inquiry

I am writing to you regarding your inquiry on college regionalisation which NUS Scotland believes is important and timely.

I have attached a letter which I have sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Economy. This sets out the 'perfect storm' that we believe college students currently face as a result of government cuts, strikes and the cost-of-living crisis.

As a result of the Scottish Government's budget for 2022-23, the college sector faces a total reduction in their budget for 2022-23 of £51.9million. This includes a real-terms cut of £23.9 million in their core budget and a loss of £28 million that was provided in 2021-22 to support them through the pandemic.

Cuts to college budgets not only put at risk the goal of college regionalisation – to ensure there are opportunities for all young to people to gain skills and knowledge – but put at risk key support services and the future of students' associations.

The role of college students' associations was greatly enhanced by the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013, embedding a requirement on colleges to ensure students are represented through students' associations. There is no doubt that college students' associations in Scotland have made remarkable developmental progress over the past 10 years, particularly through NUS Scotland's Developing College Students' Associations Project (funded by the Scottish Government). Nonetheless, we still have a long way to go to achieve the strong sustainable, autonomous and appropriately funded students' associations that are needed in our colleges. Indeed, cuts to college budgets put all of the progress already made at risk.

I hope this short note (and attached letter) assists you in your inquiry. I know that the NUS Scotland team have been in touch with your clerks to secure student officers and students' association staff to give evidence to the committee.

Matt Crilly
President, NUS Scotland