



Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education



Comhairle Maoinachaidh na h-Alba
A' brosnachadh foghlam adhartach agus àrd ìre

21 October 2019

Jenny Marra MSP
Convener
Public Audit & Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Dear Ms Marra

Audit Scotland Report on Scotland's Colleges 2019

Further to my recent attendance at the Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee, I am writing, as promised, to respond to the Committee's questions regarding the ethnicity of college Board members and Scottish Funding Council staff.

The Committee asked specifically about the proportion of college Board members from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background. Currently, there is no centrally held record of college Board members' ethnicity. So, we will consider how best to collect this information in future.

In the meantime, I can confirm that data is collected for college staffing. The most recent staff data for Scotland's colleges (2017-18) reports that 2.1% of staff at Scotland's colleges were from a BME background (this compares with 4% of the general population in Scotland as measured by the Scotland Census 2011).

The Scottish Funding Council is committed to promoting diversity and equality but we recognise there is more we could do to support colleges make improvements. Through our outcome agreements we expect institutions to take forward action and demonstrate progress against a broad range of equality, diversity and inclusion policies. More specifically, however, in order to build equality, diversity and inclusion capacity in the college and university sectors we have provided long term funding to Advance HE to take forward discrete projects on our behalf. Examples of this activity include the following:

Scottish Funding Council
Apex 2
97 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HD
T 0131 313 6500
F 0131 313 6501
www.sfc.ac.uk

- **Scottish diversity in governance project** - focused support to ensure that governing bodies in both sectors are able to demonstrate an effective understanding of equality issues in their work and to ensure that plans are in place for board appointment processes to encourage and support interest from a diverse range of applicants, with a particular focus on disability and race.
- **Strategic mainstreaming: developing strategic Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)** - collaboration with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and colleges to develop good practice guidance on strategic EIAs.
- **Scottish race equality project** - supporting the Scottish race network, and HEIs and colleges to meaningfully engage with race equality.

More recently, in line with an increased focus on equality and diversity within SFC, we have been working closely with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to reflect on the findings of its forthcoming report on racial harassment in the university sector. We are considering how to better align our equality work with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and we aim to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the EHRC in the near future.

Looking specifically within SFC itself, the proportion of staff from a BME background is currently below reporting levels (less than 5%). However, we recognise that we could do more to benefit from the experience and talent of the communities we serve. We will therefore be reviewing our approach to recruitment and assessment. In addition, our induction sessions for new SFC Board members will include training on the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Committee also asked me to meet Ayrshire College and Dundee and Angus College to discuss the points raised in relation to harmonisation. I can confirm that arrangements for those meetings are in hand.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely



Karen Watt
Chief Executive