

Karen Watt

Karen is Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), whose mission is to make Scotland the best place in the world to educate, research and innovate, investing around £1.8 billion of public money each year in colleges and universities to provide life-changing opportunities and contribute to our economic prosperity. She joined SFC from the Scottish Government where, as Director of External Affairs, she led the government's international relations and response to the EU referendum. Her previous policy roles include UK relations, enterprise and tourism, sponsorship of key enterprise agencies, culture and arts funding, historic environment and creative industries. As the first Chief Executive of the Scottish Housing Regulator she provided leadership in governance and financial sustainability, improved housing and homelessness services and secured private sector investment into new and improved affordable homes. Having held the position of Principal Private Secretary to the First Minister and Head of Ministerial Offices, Karen has a deep understanding of the wider policy context that impacts on further and higher education sectors, alongside the workings of central government at Scottish, UK and international levels.

Carol Hunter

Carol is currently President of Education and Representation at Fife College. She returned to college at the age of 33, because she wanted to do something she was passionate about, but didn't have the necessary qualifications. After completing an HNC Social Care, she embarked – while nine-months' pregnant – upon the two-year HND Social Sciences, which she completed in June 2018. Carol has been involved with the students' association in a number of roles – first, as Women's Officer and then as the college's first Care-Experienced Students' Officer, as well as delivering a Heroes Mentoring Scheme for care-experienced students. Carol feels that it is important to engage the diverse range of students – partly as a means of providing them with support, but also as a way of educating staff and students about the barriers these students face on a daily basis.

Maxine Jolly

Originally from a primary teaching background, Maxine has recently been employed as a senior manager in education in a local authority. She is currently employed as a Senior Education Officer with Education Scotland, where her role is very focused on children's rights and participation. Building on her long-term interest in and commitment to children's rights, Maxine is developing a Young Inspectors' Programme which enables children and young people to participate meaningfully in school improvement. She is passionate about ensuring that the voice of more vulnerable children is heard – very often, these marginalised young people give the most insightful and perceptive insights into where decision-makers' priorities should lie.

Rob McDermott

Rob is the Quality Manager at Forth Valley College, a role in which he has been developing and expanding support to ensure the college's apprentices are meaningfully engaged. Initially graduating from Bell College of Technology with an HND in Biological Sciences, he later returned to study as a mature student, graduating from University of Stirling with a BA (Hons) Media Studies and a Dip Ed. He started teaching at Falkirk College of Technology before moving to West Lothian College, where he eventually led a range of teams across the Media and Core Skills disciplines. On returning to Forth Valley College, he taught on a range of Media programmes before moving into a Learning and Quality role. In his role as Quality Manager, he has worked closely with the students' association encouraging engagement with a range of quality-related issues.

Dr Aileen McGuigan

Aileen is a Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Dundee, where she works on a range of distance learning programmes, including the Teaching Qualification in Further Education, the MSc Leadership and Innovation and the School of Education and Social Work's doctoral programmes. She is Co-Convenor of University of Dundee's Distance Learning Forum, a cross-university network comprised of a wide mix of academics, administrative/executive staff and students, all of whom are committed to promoting the interests of the distance learning student body. Aileen's research interests are in the fields of design for online learning and social media tools in learning contexts; she has published various articles and presented at national and international conferences on these topics.

Ciaran Stewart

Ciaran is an actor, theatre maker and writer who is a graduate of the BA Performance in BSL/English at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS). This course is unique as it is the only course in the UK that trains actors who happen to be deaf. During his time at the RCS, Ciaran was the course rep for his course and, being deaf, he was passionate about integrating his fellow classmates into the RCS. In addition, he led his own project, called Humans of Deaf People, which had students from the RCS and external people to collaborate with his classmates. Ciaran's role was to make sure that they felt welcomed and a part of the drama school experience.

Sir Andrew Cubie

Sir Andrew has wealth of experience, from both within and outwith the higher and further education sectors. Most notably, he acted as Convenor of the Independent Committee of Inquiry into Student Finances in Scotland – known as the 'Cubie committee' – which led to the abolition of tuition fees in Scotland in 2000. Andrew has previously held positions as Chairman of the Court of Napier University, Chairman of the Committee of University Chairmen for the UK, and Chairman of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, as well as acting as a member of the Management Board of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Education Scotland.

Liam McCabe

Liam has been NUS Scotland President since July 2018, having previously been Vice President of Volunteering and Development at the University of Strathclyde Students' Association. Liam graduated from Glasgow Caledonian University with a BA in Social Science, and is currently on a sabbatical from an MSc Public Policy at the University of Strathclyde. Liam is a member of the Unite the Union Scotland Youth Committee and a trustee of BETA Scotland, Bringing Europeans Together Association, a pan European organisation advancing cultural and political education about the EU.

Dr Pauline Hanesworth

Pauline is a Senior Adviser at Advance HE (formerly Higher Education Academy). She joined the HEA in 2013 and, whilst there, has led the 2013-2017 SFC-funded 'Embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum' project; supported a variety of institutions and individual academics to develop inclusive practice; produced a range of research and resources on inclusive practice, such as the 'Embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum programme standard'; and has acted as critical friend and/or contributor to wider sector initiatives, such as UUK/GuildHE's Disabled students sector leadership group and the Erasmus+-funded Enhance IDM project on developing programme leaders' capacity in inclusive teaching and assessment. She has a particular interest in mental health and wellbeing.