1. The Chairs and Principals of Scotland’s 43 colleges are pleased to provide written evidence to the Equal Opportunities Committee’s inquiry into migration and trafficking.

BACKGROUND

2. Scotland’s 43 colleges are the backbone of the country’s efforts to develop a workforce equipped with relevant skills needed by employers. Scotland’s colleges will play a crucial role in developing the skilled workforce that will bring Scotland out of recession and back into economic growth.

3. Every year, colleges teach more than 360,000 students across Scotland. Often students come from the most deprived areas of Scotland. With an average age of 31, many students have childcare and other caring responsibilities.

4. Colleges provide flexible learning to ensure more people can take advantage of the opportunities offered in colleges and run courses from basic numeracy and literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) through to apprenticeships and higher education courses.

INQUIRY INTO MIGRATION AND TRAFFICKING

5. Scottish colleges welcome the opportunity to input into the work of the Equal Opportunities Committee’s Equal inquiry into migration and trafficking. Colleges work closely with migrant populations within Scottish society to help ensure they make a positive contribution to the country’s economic and social life.

6. A cluster of colleges around the greater Glasgow area in particular have frequent dealings with prospective students who are seeking – or have sought leave – to enter or remain in the UK as an asylum seeker or part of an asylum seeking family. However colleges across Scotland are likely to have students who have come to study in this country from overseas.

7. Financial support is available for asylum seekers to study part-time advanced (HE) or non-advanced (FE) level or full or part-time English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at college. Asylum seekers also eligible to apply for support from the Discretionary (Hardship) Funds for help with travel and study costs.

8. Students who have been awarded refugee status or some other form of leave to remain in the UK (eg. Humanitarian Protection, Limited Leave,
Indefinite Leave) are eligible to apply for fee and student support in Higher Education or fee waiver and discretionary bursary support in Further Education.

9. Children of asylum seekers and young asylum seekers satisfying the following criteria:
   - resident in Scotland on the relevant date
   - resident in Scotland for the last 3 years
   - were under 18 at the time of the application
   - application made prior to 01 December 2006
   - under 25 years old on the relevant date.

10. Are eligible for the ‘home’ rate level of fees and fee support ie. the same as Scottish students.

11. In February 2008 around 370 students at college studying either part-time HNC/HND courses; or part-time non-ESOL FE courses were able to apply for full-time courses/support because of changes introduced by the Scottish Government on 03 August 2007.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

What is the contribution of migration to the Scottish economy? What is the contribution of migrant communities to Scottish culture, society and civic society?

12. Scottish colleges welcome the contribution of migrants to the Scottish economy and to culture, society and civic society. A diverse student body enriches the experience for all learners at colleges.

What is the degree of alignment of Scottish public services with migrant populations?

13. As detailed above the Scottish Government has put in place specific measures to align further and higher education provision with the needs of migrant populations in Scotland. Scottish colleges support these measures.

What is the effectiveness of public sector responses to changing migration patterns?

14. The college sector aims to be closely aligned with the Scottish Government’s strategic priorities and those of the Scottish Funding Council. These priorities change from time to time and require flexibility from the college sector to respond appropriately. The needs of migrant populations are considered along with those of other sections of the communities colleges seek to serve.

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