



STEP

Scotland's Tertiary
Enhancement Programme

STEP Bulletin June 2025

Welcome to your fourth STEP Bulletin. We plan to produce these after each of our Discovery Days and at other key points as STEP progresses. They are intended to be short, accessible and engaging updates on STEP to support dissemination of our collective work. We would encourage you to share as widely as possible within your institution. Please do also bring your colleagues' attention to our [website](https://step.ac.uk) – step.ac.uk – and encourage them to sign up to our [mailing list](#).

Reflections on STEP Four: How will we deliver?

Our first STEP topic, which will run until 2028, is **Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys**. During session 2024-25, staff and students from Scotland's colleges and universities have come together for a series of Discovery Days – spread geographically across Scotland – to establish collaborative partnerships and design projects that will form the core of the programme.

On 28 May, we were delighted to welcome over 60 students and staff from Scotland's colleges, universities and sector agencies to the fourth and last of our Discovery Days. **STEP Four: How will we deliver?** took place at The Apex Hotel in Dundee.

Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys: reflections on recent findings from Education Scotland and CDN

We were joined in the morning by Karen Stevenson and Dr John Laird from Education Scotland. Dr Paula Christie from CDN chaired a session in which she, Karen and John each presented on recent work that has relevance to our STEP topic.

Karen presented on Education Scotland's College Sector Overview Report 2023-24, a comprehensive analysis based on engagement with colleges by HM Inspectors of Education. There are five recommendations for the sector (improve learner outcomes; strengthen staff engagement; enhance curriculum design; support learner representation; foster collaboration and professional development). John then presented findings from the 2025 national thematic inspection report, exploring college support systems and delivery implications for learners with disabilities and additional needs. There are four further recommendations for the sector (improve the early disclosure of additional needs; support for mental health; improve information sharing on transition; improve learner outcomes for key groups).

Paula's presentation focused on CDN's report *The Changing Learner: Supporting evolving and diverse journeys*. Based on the findings of this report, CDN has launched its Changing Learner programme, which has four pillars (Promoting Positive Behaviour and Resolving Conflict; The Trauma-Informed College; Culture and Community; Staff wellbeing and Safeguarding).

Project writing clinics

The bulk of the day was dedicated to giving project teams time to work together on their proposals. Each team was allocated support from a member of staff from QAA or CDN (apart from the Student Engagement project for which the first line of support is sparqs). In a plenary session towards the end of the day – chaired expertly by Adelayo Adebayo – each of the project teams updated the wider Network on what they had achieved in these sessions.

Feedback and reflections

Steve Tucker chaired our final session, offering STEP Network members a chance to reflect on the year. We were delighted with the high level of positive feedback, especially from our student members. Colleagues praised the collaborative nature of the programme, with students reporting that they felt they were part of a partnership. People have valued the opportunity to connect with their peers at other institutions, taking away practical ideas they could implement locally, as well as a sense of reassurance that they were not facing challenges alone. We also took away some practical suggestions about how we can improve the programme in future years and STEP cycles.

Our Topic Leads closed the day with their own reflections before those who were able to stay for a photograph headed down to the RRS Discovery.



What happens next?

At the time of writing, the seven project proposals we were expecting have been received and we are preparing for the final meeting of the Steering Group at which they will be considered. We will be communicating decisions to project teams in the coming weeks, along with dates for session 2025-26 and requests for updates about each institution's membership of the STEP Network. In the meantime, QAA and CDN would like to thank all members of the STEP Network for their commitment and engagement during what we hope has been an exciting and positive first year. To those of you who are moving on to other roles, we wish you all the best.

Have a wonderful summer!