

## **Scotland Excel**

**To: Executive Sub-Committee**

**On: 19 April 2024**

**Report by:  
The Chief Executive of Scotland Excel**

### **Academy Strategy**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Executive Sub Committee of the new strategy for the Scotland Excel Academy for 2024 to 2026. The Academy Strategy and Action Plan have been developed in response to commitments made within Scotland Excel's Corporate Strategy 2023-28 and Operating Plan, approved by the Joint Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023.
- 1.2 The Strategy (Appendix 1) has been developed following consultation with Councils and outlines Scotland Excel's vision of, and approach to, maximising the value the Academy can deliver to Councils whilst continuing to adapt to changing needs within the sector.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 As a Centre of Procurement Expertise for local government in Scotland, Scotland Excel must adapt to the changing needs of its member organisations and public services. The public sector continues to face an increasingly challenging and complex decision-making environment. Scotland Excel recognises the importance of support for people development and organisational development.
- 2.2 Since its creation, The Academy has developed a range of accredited and non-accredited training and development courses, workshops and sessions across Procurement and also in leadership development to support the local government community.
- 2.3 In developing this strategy, it is recognised that there will be difficult choices facing members as they balance affordability with other drivers such as the need to develop a professional procurement community fit to serve the public sector of the future.

### **3. Adapting and Growing the Academy**

- 3.1 While the new strategy places the developmental requirements of member organisations at its heart, it is also based around strategic growth of the academy and diversifying the range of learning and development opportunities it delivers whilst remaining mindful of the financial landscape in which it operates.
- 3.2 Over the next two years The Academy will continue to deliver its existing comprehensive range of learning and development packages whilst looking at opportunities to diversify and grow.
- 3.3 The academy will launch and deliver a free of charge Commercial Improvement training package specifically designed to help the local government community to make a shift into a more commercial mindset.
- 3.4 In addition, the academy is investigating a social care commissioning training option. Whilst this is the start of a process to satisfy what member organisations suggest is a significant requirement, it will be approached in an incremental manner in partnership with the sector.

### **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1 Members are asked to provide input and note the Scotland Excel Academy Strategy 2024 – 2026.



# **Academy Strategy**

**01 April 2024 – 31 March 2026**

## Introduction

The Scotland Excel Academy was created in 2016 to support people development and organisational development across the Scottish public-sector.

Since its creation The Academy has developed a range of accredited and non-accredited training and development courses, workshops and sessions across the Procurement profession and in management and leadership, to support local government.

When the current strategy was developed, it set out to support local government members further by flexing the approach to learning and skills development. This required further adjustment with the onset of the Covid pandemic with the introduction of shorter online workshops and sessions delivered free of charge.

To provide ongoing learning opportunities during the pandemic, the Academy launched 'Stay Connected', a programme of free online seminars covering a variety of procurement and business topics. The programme now forms part of the Academy's core offering, and more than 1,500 delegates have participated in sessions.

In January 2022, as a result of Scotland Excel's successful bid to deliver the Scottish Government's procurement and commercial training framework, the Academy launched a programme of short courses for procurement practitioners. The programme has been welcomed by members as a cost-effective skills development route for existing practitioners and new entrants to the profession.

The Academy also received funding from the Scottish Government to develop a new course to help procurement professionals identify and manage risks arising from the involvement of serious and organised crime groups in public sector tendering. This course was launched at a free seminar in October 2022 attended by more than 200 delegates, this was then followed up in March 2024 with updated webinar with 250 attendees.

However, there will always be a need for the academy to change and adapt considering the financial challenges the sector faces and following extensive engagement with stakeholders, the focus of this strategy is on the need to develop and deliver more cost-effective development packages which, in the long term, achieve the same development needs. In developing this strategy, the Academy has recognised that there will be difficult choices facing members as they balance affordability with other drivers such as the need to develop a community fit to serve the public sector of the future.

The Academy's vision over the term of this strategy is:

***The Academy will be the centre for Learning and Development for the local government sector, becoming the thought leaders for procurement in the public sector. It will seek to become the leading provider of work-based-learning nationally across the Scottish public sector, enabling our people to tackle the opportunities and challenges of today and tomorrow.***

## **Strategy**

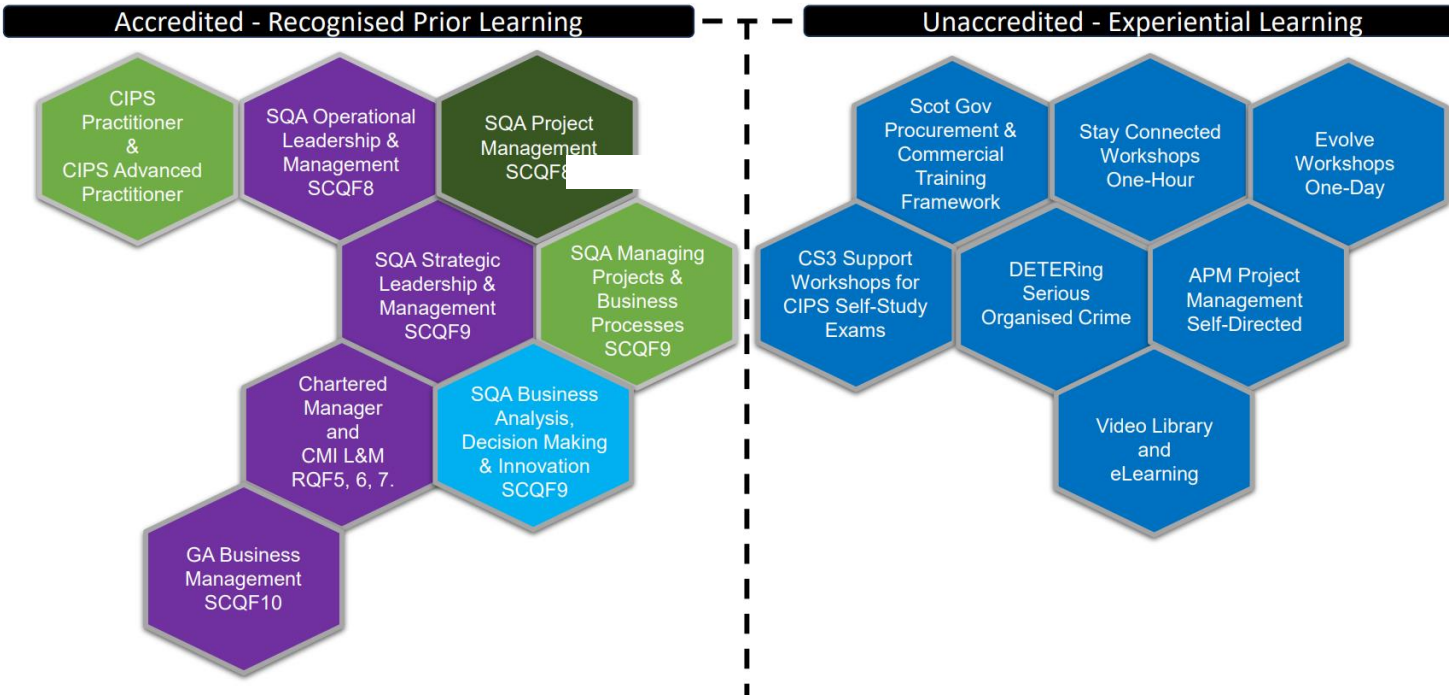
While the strategy places the developmental requirements of members at its heart, it has also been based around strategic growth of the Academy and diversifying the range of learning and development opportunities it delivers whilst always remaining mindful of the financial landscape in which it operates.

Over the next two years the Academy will continue to deliver its existing comprehensive range of learning and development packages whilst looking at opportunities to diversify and grow.

Initially in year one of this strategy the Academy will launch and deliver a free of charge to local authorities Commercial Improvement training package. This will be specifically designed to help the community make a shift into a more commercial mindset to understand the drivers within its supply base and where maximum value can be driven through supply chain engagement and strategic contract & supplier management.

In addition, the Academy is investigating a social care commissioning training option. Whilst this is the start of a process to satisfy what appears to be a significant requirement, Scotland Excel will approach this in an incremental manner whilst continuing to design the full package in partnership with the sector whilst working to fully understand demand, costs and funding.

# Current Academy Portfolio



The current full list of training courses and support the Academy offers includes:

### **Procurement**

- Scottish Government Procurement and Commercial Training Framework
- CIPS self-study support Workshops for CIPS Level 4 modules 1-8.
- DETERing Serious Organised Crime workshops, as a 1-day workshop.

### **Project Management**

- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Professional Development Award (PDA) Project Management Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework SCQF8.
- Support Licensed APM content learning journey.

### **Business Analysis, Decision Making and Innovation**

- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Business Analysis unit Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework SCQF8.
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Professional Development Award (PDA) Decision Making and Innovation Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework SCQF9.

### **Leadership and Management**

- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Professional Development Award (PDA) Strategic Leadership and Management SCQF9.
- Design, write and deliver Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Professional Development Award (PDA) Operational Leadership and Management Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework SCQF8.
- Assessment of Chartered Manager (old route)
- Graduate Apprenticeship Business Management Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework SCQF10.

### **All Disciplines**

- Stay Connected workshops.
- Evolve workshops.
- eLearning projects.



## **Commitments**

With local government and other public sector bodies facing unprecedented challenges, Scotland Excel remains committed to developing solutions that help members secure affordable frontline services.

While it is too early to say what the future services may look like, it is clear that there may need to be some bold thinking and radical change in how the sector delivers procurement at a national and local level. As the centre of expertise, Scotland Excel will lead the sector in evaluating options, and will be guided by members as to what is appropriate for them at a local level.

The new Academy strategy will be implemented and developed in close consultation with stakeholders to ensure that they are fully designed around their skills needs. Work will continue with the Scottish Government and other partners to develop new co-branded procurement programmes aligned to the national procurement development framework, and which respond to identified skills gaps across the procurement community.

The Academy will also develop and implement procurement and commissioning training programmes for key sectors, such as construction and care, to improve the knowledge and skills of buyers involved in the specification, purchase and delivery of these high value projects and services.

In response to member requests for alternative accredited learning programmes, the Academy will continue to work with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to develop programmes which offer high quality, tailored learning opportunities at significantly lower price points than other professional qualifications.

Work will continue to explore opportunities to build a pipeline of public procurement talent. As well as considering the existing Graduate Programme as a pathway for developing new entrants to the sector, work will be undertaken with University Partners on the potential for a new Graduate Apprenticeship (GA) programme in Business Management with Procurement and Supply Chain Management. If implemented, this initiative would offer a free degree development programme to members funded through the Apprenticeship Levy.

In addition to this already comprehensive and well received suite of courses and support, over the term of this two years strategy the academy will look to adapt and grow to ensure it responds to the changing needs of Scotland Excel members and the wider public sector community.

## **Procurement and Commercial**

It is becoming clear that, as a sector, there is a need to become more commercial in ways of working and in dealings with the supply base. This is an area that requires a strategic mindset shift, as well as being supported by tools and templates, how organisations deal with suppliers will help the sector unlock many benefits and innovative practices to further improve and enhance services.

To support this the Academy will also survey as wide a group of stakeholders to determine whether or not the current topics are relevant to the sector. Part of this work will also look to understand the potential market size and look to improve communication and marketing channels to ensure that everything that the Academy does is based on empirical data from members.

In the first year of this strategy the Academy will design and deliver, free of charge to the local authority Procurement community, a suite of people development programmes designed to start the journey to being more commercial as a sector.

In addition to this the Academy will also continue to design and deliver more cost-effective, fit for purpose, work-based-learning programmes contextualised to the Scottish public-sector, codesigned by the Academy, Scottish Procurement and Property Directorate (SPPD) and wider stakeholders. Practitioner and Expert Practitioner will be nationally accredited qualifications and will include the following:

- Design, write and credit rate Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Practitioner Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework SCQF8 PDF3 – target launch September 2024.
- Design, write and credit rate Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Expert Practitioner Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework SCQF9 PDF4 – target launch September 2024.
- Design, write and deliver unaccredited Foundation Practitioner Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework SCQF7 PDF1/2. Commitment and timeline to be confirmed.

## **Procurement Graduate Support**

Identifying and supporting the Procurement talent of the future is critical. Scotland Excel has a long and successful track record in supporting new entrants into the profession and will continue this with a new suite of training courses and support over the term of this strategy.

- Teach on cohort 1 GA Procurement SCQF10 (Business Management with Procurement and Supply Chain Management) – target launch September 2024.
- Deliver an Academy Apprentice Roadshow including a focus on Graduates.
- Design and deliver CIPS self-study support Workshops for CIPS Level 5 modules 1-8 FY2024/25
- Support CIPS Self Study Support
- Placeholder: Design and deliver CIPS self-study support Workshops for CIPS Level 6 modules 1-7 FY2025/26

## **Social Care Commissioning**

For some time the social care community has been suggesting that specifically tailored training and support is required to support skills and experience enhancement. Scotland Excel has a long term successful and important relationships with both the commissioning sector and the social care provider network so is perfectly placed to help design and deliver tailored social care commissioning training and support courses.

Work has already commenced on scoping what this suite of courses may look like and the Academy is currently working to develop a fully costed business case into a Social Care Professional Development Award (PDA) which could, if demand and funding can be assured, begin to be delivered over the second year of this strategy.

However, in the interim, the Academy is looking into the delivery of shorter subject matter specific sessions for the social care commissioning community by working with external experts to deliver these sessions.

To date consultation with 9 councils has identified demand of around 50 places for Social Care PDA and demand was also indicated for Stay Connected and Evolve workshops.

## **Credit Rating Body**

This area has long been identified as another potential benefit and growth area for Scotland Excel, it's members and the wider public sector community. Over the term of this strategy Scotland Excel will scope out whether pursuing becoming a credit rating body is feasible and achievable within existing budget constraints. There is a recognition that this route holds many potential benefits both to the Academy and to its members through being able to fully design, deliver and approve courses and support learners through the entire learning journey without having to use external credit rating bodies that add cost and time to the learning journey.

Over the first year of this strategy a fully costed business case will be developed to understand the entire process, the full costs, including internal staff costs, the timeline, what's involved in maintaining credit rating body status and the full potential benefits of this strategic aim.

### **Project Management**

The Academy will prepare to bid for Scottish Government Project Training Framework for financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28.

### **Change Management**

It is the intention is to add the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Professional Development award in planning and lead change. The Professional Development Award will offer many benefits for the upskilling of the community including:

- Improving communications around change
- Increased awareness of stakeholder engagement
- Increased awareness of the importance of data in making evidence-based decisions.
- Supporting people through organisational change.

### **Strategic Approach to Academy Growth**

The Scotland Excel Academy will continue to evolve based on the people development needs of the sector. All options will be considered to support the development of public sector procurement talent, from new entrants to seasoned professionals, including accredited learning, short courses, graduate programmes, and apprenticeships.

This strategy has been developed both to deliver on the Scotland Excel Corporate Goal of “Advancement of skills to deliver Scotland’s economic transformation” and to identify how the Academy can achieve growth both in terms of its size and in terms of the range of courses and support it offers. Scotland Excel fully recognises the Academy should not simply be about delivering successful and well received training courses it should be about changing mindsets and, going forward, needs to be flexible to meet current landscape.