



Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

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

Circular

Teaching funding subject price groups for higher education institutions

12 March 2010

SFC/10/2010

http://www.sfc.ac.uk/news_events_circulars/Circulars/circulars_page.aspx

This circular sets out the way forward following our consultation of teaching funding subject price groups for higher education institutions.

FAO: Principals and directors of Scotland's universities

Contact: Gordon Craig, Assistant Director of Skills and Funding Policy, Tel: 0131 313 6618, email: gcrraig@sfc.ac.uk

Recent SFC documents

12 March 2010

SFC/09/2010

Final Fee Waiver Grant 2008-09

5 March 2010

SFC/08/2010

Strategic funding for employability for higher education institutions from 2007 to 2010

5 March 2010

SFC/07/2010

Formula capital funding for higher education institutions 2009-10 and 2010-11

19 February 2010

SFC/06/2010

Intake targets for the controlled subjects of nursing and midwifery pre-registration education for academic year 2010-11

8 February 2010

SFC/05/2010

Intake targets for the controlled subjects in higher education institutions for academic year 2010-11

22 January 2010

SFC/04/2010

Review of Widening Access and Retention Premium for HEIs

22 January 2010

SFC/03/2010

Guidance on the audit requirements for Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) for the period 1 April 2009 to 31 July 2010

22 January 2010

SFC/02/2010

Allocation of variable element of the college sector knowledge transfer grant

15 January 2010

SFC/01/2010

Further guidance on PACE-related funding

Teaching funding subject price groups for higher education institutions

Purpose

- 1 I am writing to let you know that following consultation with our stakeholders we will be delaying implementation of the new set of subject price groups until academic year (AY) 2011-12, which will extend the lead time for institutions to plan for any changes.

Introduction

- 2 In September 2009 we published a consultation paper on the development of new subject price groups and prices ([SFC/05/2009 C](#), *Teaching funding subject price groups for higher education institutions*).
- 3 The consultation proposed a new system of four subject price groups and prices to replace the existing system of 12 subject price groups and 23 prices. The proposals were informed by the Transparent Approach to Costing for Teaching (TRAC(T)) return for AY 2007-08. This data shows what institutions spend on publicly funded teaching in different subject areas.
- 4 The deadline for responses was 4 December 2009. All responses are now up on the web on our consultation page at: http://www.sfc.ac.uk/news_events_circulars/Consultations/2009/SFC0509C.aspx

Responses overview

- 5 **Annex A** contains an overview of the responses received to the consultation.

Way forward

- 6 The main concerns expressed in consultation responses are to do with the robustness of the underlying data. There was concern also that the proposals would result in some significant impacts on the current system which the sector would find difficult to manage for implementation in 2010-11.
- 7 The current set of subject price groups are not backed up by any up to date evidence. The data used for the proposals for a new set of subject price groups is a significant improvement on this situation. However, given the significance of the impacts on individual

institutions, we recognise that full implementation in 2010-11 may cause problems for some institutions.

- 8 Therefore we have decided to make no changes to higher education institution (HEI) teaching funding subject price groups for 2010-11 and delay this until 2011-12, which will extend the lead time for institutions to plan for any changes.
- 9 The TRAC(T) data for 2008-09 was due in on 26 February 2010 and the return is now mandatory. Delaying implementation will also provide the opportunity for us to analyse this data to gauge if it has a material impact on the current proposals. Additionally, it will allow for further investigation of the subject specific concerns raised in consultation responses.
- 10 Following this analysis we will set out further detailed plans on our HEI teaching funding subject price groups by summer 2010.

Further information

- 11 Contact: Gordon Craig, Assistant Director of Skills and Funding Policy, Tel: 0131 313 6618, email: gcraig@sfc.ac.uk.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MTS Batho', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

MTS Batho
Chief Executive

Annex A: Overview of responses to consultation SFC/05/2009 C, *Teaching funding subject price groups for higher education institutions*

All responses are now up on the web on the consultation page at:
[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/news_events_circulars/Consultations/2009/
SFC0509C.aspx](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/news_events_circulars/Consultations/2009/SFC0509C.aspx)

We received responses from HEIs, individuals, our key stakeholders and other organisations.

The vast majority of HEIs that responded said we should be looking to develop a system of subject price groups based on evidence but that the data upon which our proposals are based are not robust. The main concerns highlighted are:

- only one year's worth of data;
- it does not give full sector coverage (70 per cent);
- the large ranges in spend shown in subject areas from different institutions do not give confidence; and
- underlying issues with time allocation between research and teaching for academic staff cause problems with the data.

The sensitivity of impact to the number of subject price groups had also been highlighted. This was often coupled with a query on the justification for four subject prices as opposed to other numbers. Some respondents have suggested a different number of groupings whereas others simply state that the rationale for proposing four subject price groups is unclear.

On implementation virtually all who addressed it said that we should not implement from 2010-11. Opinion is divided as to whether we should gather another year's worth of data or more before finalising proposals.

Subject impact

Regarding subject impact the main concerns are as follows:

Architecture and built environment

Major concerns have been expressed about the impact of the proposed subject price for this area compared to the current system. We have

received representations from architecture students across Scotland, architecture and planning representative organisations and individual architecture firms. Many consider that the underlying data does not properly reflect costs in this area. Some respondents think that the costs of sessional part-time staff may not have been included in the TRAC(T) data. Also there is concern that professionally accredited architecture courses demand a higher resource than classroom based planning and built environment courses. However, as the costs centre data only goes to the level of architecture, built environment and planning combined, this will not be shown in the TRAC(T) data.

Computing science

Apart from the concern on impact there is also a concern regarding the separation of computer engineering and computer software engineering in Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) coding. Academics in this area consider that there is no real distinction between the two subjects and to imply that computer engineering sits more within engineering than computer software engineering undervalues computing departments.

Archaeology

Responses highlighting archaeology have stated that it is not cognate with other groups in subject price group D.

Education

There has been no specific response from subject specific groups but institutions with education provision have expressed concern regarding the subject price impact coupled with reduction in funded places.

Nursing

The response from the Scottish Academic Heads of Nursing and Allied Health Professions (AHP) states that we should take into account the JM Consulting review of Benchmark Prices in Nursing, Midwifery and AHP. This piece of work was carried out for the Department of Health (DoH) in England in 2002 and updated in 2008.

Sciences in subject price group C

We have had at least one comment in each case that the current subjects in our science funding subject groups which have been put into in subject price group C in our proposals (geography, psychology and sports science) should be in subject price groups B along with other science subjects.

Scottish Funding Council
Donaldson House
97 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HD

t 0131 313 6500
f 0131 313 6501
www.sfc.ac.uk