



Scottish Funding Council  
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

## Guidance for Interim Outcome Agreements for Colleges and Universities AY 2020-21

**SFC Guidance**

Issue Date: 1 December 2020

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Reference: This guidance outlines the steps required to ensure an agreement is in place between SFC and each university, college or college region during this emergency period which captures, at a high level, contributions, impact and outcomes and provides assurance on use of allocated funding in AY 2020-21.

Summary: Principals and Chairs of Scotland's colleges and universities and regional strategic bodies

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## Contents

Guidance for Interim Outcome Agreements for Colleges and Universities AY 2020-21 .....	4
Foreword .....	4
Arrangements for AY 2020-21 at a glance .....	5
Discuss with your Outcome Agreement Manager .....	5
Key dates.....	6
Arrangements for AY 2020-21 .....	8
Shorter outcome agreements focused on key priorities and commitments.....	8
Appropriate measures to assess impact .....	8
No target setting for AY 2020-21.....	10
Contribution to economic recovery and social renewal .....	10
Prompt questions .....	11
Self-evaluation reports on delivery of AY 2019-20 Outcome Agreement commitments including impact of COVID-19.....	11
Outcome and Impact Framework AY 2020-21 .....	12
Outcomes for Students.....	12
Outcomes for Research .....	15
Outcomes for Economic Recovery and Social Renewal .....	16
Responsive and Collaborative .....	17

# Guidance for Interim Outcome Agreements for Colleges and Universities AY 2020-21

## Foreword

1. This guidance outlines the steps required to ensure an interim agreement is in place between SFC and each university<sup>1</sup>, college or college region which captures, at a high level, contributions, impact and outcomes, and provides assurance on use of allocated funding in AY 2020-21. It follows the recent publication of the report from the first phase of the SFC Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability<sup>2</sup>.
2. We recognise that colleges and universities are working under emergency conditions as they continue to respond to the COVID crisis, deliver a blended learning approach, ensure the well-being of students and staff, and deliver an education-led economic recovery for Scotland. Through this approach to the interim Outcome Agreements we are taking steps to support all our institutions during extraordinary times.
3. We worked with sector representatives during phase one of SFC's Review of Coherent Provision to jointly establish and agree an **Outcome and Impact Framework** for this year. A key message we heard was for a more meaningful, outcome focused, streamlined approach to accountability and reporting in future. We will pursue these discussions during phase two of the review.
4. The Framework for the interim Outcome Agreements for AY2020-21 seeks to:
  - Focus on the delivery of outcomes and impact for students.
  - Ensure colleges and universities outline their contributions to a more focused set of priority issues.
  - Promote and reflect individual and collective responses to recovery with narrative on commitments, deliverables, and expected impact.
  - Ensure transparency and clear accountability for public funding.
5. This Framework represents a commitment to realign priorities with what will be needed to support economic recovery, to support those already in the education system (at schools, colleges and universities) during the crisis period, those who may need upskilling or reskilling opportunities and those who may

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<sup>1</sup> We are using University in the guidance to refer to all institutions in the university sector.

<sup>2</sup>

[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/corporatepublications\\_sfccp052020/Review\\_of\\_Coherent\\_Provision\\_and\\_Sustainability\\_Phase\\_1\\_Report.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/corporatepublications_sfccp052020/Review_of_Coherent_Provision_and_Sustainability_Phase_1_Report.pdf)

be looking to re-enter employment. At the same time we expect colleges and universities to continue to widen access, deliver high quality research and ensure a high quality learning experience for all students that will in most cases be different in shape, structure and mode to previous years.

6. We are particularly aware of the need to maintain volumes of provision this year when the economy will be in a recovery period, to allow students to continue to access the learning and employability skills that will ensure a pathway to employment when jobs become available, or a route back into employment for those who may now be out of work, or returning to work, through upskilling or reskilling. At the same time SFC seeks to promote and support a diverse and sustainable education sector.

### **Arrangements for AY 2020-21 at a glance**

- Introduces a new Outcome and Impact Framework which aims to capture – at a high level – deliverables, impact and outcomes, and to give assurance on the use of allocated funding in AY 2020-21.
- Seeks contributions to a re-focused set of priorities, with an emphasis on continuing to safeguard student health and wellbeing, and support an education-led economic recovery for Scotland.
- Signals a move away from excessive reporting, particularly if the information is available elsewhere.
- Reflects an ongoing commitment to fair access and transitions; quality learning and teaching; student engagement; equalities and inclusion; and impactful research and innovation.
- A focus on maintaining baselines where this is possible.
- SFC will issue a bespoke measures table to each institution with AY 2018-19 baselines.
- Enables institutions to demonstrate their impact in terms that are relevant to their particular situation and mission.
- Is no more than 15 pages in length.

### **Discuss with your Outcome Agreement Manager**

7. Institutions should liaise with their dedicated Outcome Agreement Manager on any issues or requests for flexibility in responding to deadlines. [Contact details are available on our website.](#)

## Key dates

<b>SFC Outcome and Impact Framework AY 2020-21</b>		
	<b>What is required</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>20 January 2021</b>	<p>Self-evaluation for AY 2019-20 submitted – outlining impact of COVID-19 on delivery and targets. Refer to Annex A for details.</p> <p><b>Requires sign-off by Board/ Senior Executive Group or similar. If the date proves difficult discuss with your Outcome Manager.</b></p>	<p>Provides SFC with data and commentary on impact of COVID-19 on delivery in AY 2019-20 and notes implications for AY 2020-21. We will factor this in to future discussions for AY 2021-22.</p> <p>SFC to report to SFC Board in spring 2021.</p>
<b>29 January 2021</b>	<p>Interim Outcome Agreement for AY 2020-21 submitted.</p> <p><b>Requires sign-off by Board/ Senior Executive Group or similar. If the date proves difficult discuss with your Outcome Manager.</b></p> <p>Refer to Annex B for Universities Technical Guidance and Annex C for Colleges Technical Guidance</p>	<p>Provides SFC with line of accountability for use of funding in AY 2020-21.</p> <p>SFC to report to SFC Board in spring 2021.</p>
<p>From here, dates are provisional as they will be influenced by the outcome of phase two of the SFC Review. We will provide an update early in 2021.</p>		
<b>March 2021</b>	<b>Interim Outcome Agreements published</b>	
<b>March 2021</b>	Interim reporting in-year on delivery in AY 2020-21.	Provides a look at ongoing impact of the pandemic and an update on changing provision and new starts. SFC to report to SFC Board in April 2021
<b>March 2021</b>	SFC publishes Outcome and Impact Framework for AY 2021-22.	Setting our Framework and priorities for AY 2021-22.
<b>May 2021</b>	Draft Outcome and Impact Agreement for AY 2021-22 submitted.	Opportunity for feedback and amendments.
<b>June 2021</b>	Final Outcome and Impact Agreement for AY 2021-22 submitted.	Confirms institutional plans and commitments for AY 2021-22.

<b>July 2021</b>	Outcome and Impact Agreement - final sign off.	Sign off and reporting to SFC Board in summer 2021.
<b>July 2021</b>	Outcome and Impact Agreements for AY 2021-22 published.	Sharing of information for planning purposes.
<b>Autumn 2021</b>	<b>Impact Reports for AY 2020-21 submitted and published.</b>	SFC will prepare an insight and performance report in autumn 2021. This will cover national and sectoral achievements and areas for improvement, based on contributions, performance data, case studies and impact statements.

## **Arrangements for AY 2020-21**

### ***Shorter outcome agreements focused on key priorities and commitments***

8. SFC is aware of the competing demands that are impacting on institutions and want to ensure the Outcome Agreement reporting requirement is a proportionate request. We have therefore restricted the key policy priorities we expect to be covered in the interim OA for this year.
9. We are seeking an ongoing commitment/statement of intent from colleges and universities to deliver on key sector priorities and outcomes for students, for research, for economic recovery and social renewal and for responsive and collaborative institutions. The priority list is pared back and includes:
  - Fair access and transitions.
  - Quality learning and teaching.
  - Learning with impact – students are equipped and ready to take up appropriate employment in the future.
  - Student participation and engagement in their educational experience.
  - Equalities and inclusion.
  - High quality research and innovation.
  - Meeting future skills needs, including upskilling and reskilling.
  - Responding to the climate emergency.

### ***Appropriate measures to assess impact***

10. The SFC Outcome and Impact Framework refers to the expectations and the national measures related to each priority outcome.
11. For colleges the national measures are:
  - Activity - Credits delivered (Core / ESF / Core + ESF).
  - Widening Access -Volume and proportion of Credits delivered to learners in the most deprived 10% postcode areas (SIMD10).
  - The volume and proportion of Credits delivered to care-experienced learners.
  - Senior Phase - number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges.



- Achievement - proportion of enrolled students successfully achieving a recognised qualification (FT & PT).
- Articulation - the number and proportion of successful learners who have achieved HNC or HND qualifications articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing.
- In work/destination - the number and proportion of full-time college qualifiers in work, training and/or further study 3-6 months after qualifying.
- Satisfaction – using the SSES Survey - the percentage of students overall, satisfied with their college experience.

12. For Universities the national measures are:

- Total number of Scottish domiciled undergraduate entrants.
- The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled learners articulating from college to degree level courses with advanced standing.
- The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes.
- The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants that are care-experienced.
- The number and proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants returning to study in year two.
- The difference (+/-) from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey.
- The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled graduates entering positive destinations.
- The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled full-time first degree graduates entering professional occupations.
- The number of Scotland-domiciled qualifiers at undergraduate level.

13. Our approach in this year recognises the extraordinary circumstances we are operating within. To support institutions we have pared back the national measures and focused on key priorities. Nevertheless recognising the current situation means there may be other matters where we will require additional statements of intent around your commitments, and occasionally separate reporting, but we will give you appropriate notice of requirements throughout the year. For example reporting on the use of the Flexible Workforce

Development Fund or the Upskilling allocations.

14. Outcome Agreement Managers will issue a national measures table to each college, college region and university with key data, including AY 2018-19 baselines. We will also issue updated tables to include AY 2019-20 baselines early in 2021. Only those national measures outlined will continue to be a priority however. SFC will, as a matter of course, continue to monitor all performance measures we currently have in addition to those identified as priority.
15. The Technical guidance is attached at Annex B and provides updates on the measures relevant for this year.

***No target setting for AY 2020-21***

16. We confirmed earlier in the year that SFC would not require targets for this emergency year, in recognising the likely impact of the pandemic.
17. We are still asking for a commitment from colleges and universities to maintain, wherever possible, the levels of performance as in the AY 2018-19 baselines.

***Contribution to economic recovery and social renewal***

18. **The other sections in the Framework** invite a narrative that both describes the contribution colleges and universities will make to support economic recovery and social renewal in AY 2020-21 and the expected impact of these contributions.
19. This emergency year will require flexibility and applied ways of learning, so students can access opportunities at a time that suits them and to lay strong foundations for moving into the job market when this opens up. There also needs to be a focus on upskilling and reskilling to allow routes to new and changing industries and jobs as they emerge.
20. We also want to know how colleges and universities are responding to ensure the health and well-being of students and staff as they progress through this challenging year.
21. In responding to this section of the Framework we expect a brief narrative in your Outcome Agreement summarising how you have responded to the immediate challenges of the current emergency. Specifically we would like to better understand your commitments and contribution to economic recovery. We request a short, focused response in line with your own institution's particular mission, strategy, and context responding to the points below, alongside any other relevant information. We are particularly interested in new collaborative and innovative approaches you have developed during the period since March 2020. We have prepared a set of prompt questions to guide

responses in this section.

### **Prompt questions**

22. Use the following as a guide:

- Which stakeholders are you working with to ensure that course provision remains responsive to shifting needs of employers/industry?
- What specific needs employers/industry have identified, both short-term and longer-term, and how you are adapting or shifting your provision in response? (with particular reference to courses starting in January/February)
- Which groups, or issues, are you particularly seeking to respond to e.g. those recently becoming unemployed, young people entering the workplace for the first time, those who have previously been furthest from the job market, upskilling, reskilling, retraining?
- How you are managing the work-based learning and practical aspects of course provision and ensuring students are prepared for the workplace given ongoing constraints during this year.
- How are you maintaining the quality of the student learning experience and how are you monitoring student engagement with their programme of study with the college or university?

### ***Self-evaluation reports on delivery of AY 2019-20 Outcome Agreement commitments including impact of COVID-19***

23. In a normal year, colleges and universities would submit an annual self-evaluation report to the SFC by the end of October. This year Universities had a submission date of 30 October 2020, while colleges paused this work as it was embedded within the Quality Framework requirements.
24. We recognise that these self-evaluation reports provide helpful information to SFC and to the SFC Board and we have, therefore, decided to ask both colleges and universities to submit a self-evaluation report this year.
25. The date for submitting self-evaluations is now 20 January 2021. We can also apply further flexibility to these timelines if needed. These requests should be routed via your Outcome Agreement Manager. We expect that you will have already prepared this information for internal reporting requirements and we will also be flexible with regard to the format of these reports.
26. Annex A describes the self-evaluation reporting requirements for colleges and for universities.

## Outcome and Impact Framework AY 2020-21

Outcomes for Students		
Outcome	Expectations	Measures and indicators of success
<p><b>Fair access and transitions</b></p> <p>Education is accessible to students from all backgrounds and students are supported through successful pathways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People from deprived areas are supported to have fair access.</li> <li>• People with experience of care are supported to have fair access.</li> <li>• Prior learning is taken into account in the student's journey.</li> <li>• Transitions and pathways for students are supported and signposted.</li> <li>• Institutions work with schools and local communities to support successful pathways for students.</li> <li>• This work is equality impact assessed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Core national measures for universities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants.</li> <li>• Scottish domiciled FT first degree entrants from SIMD20 (i.e. the COWA measure).</li> <li>• No. of SDUEs with care experience.</li> <li>• Articulation.</li> </ul>
		<p><b>Core national measures for colleges:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credits delivered.</li> <li>• Proportion of credits delivered to SIMD10.</li> <li>• Proportion of credits delivered to care-experienced students.</li> <li>• DYW.</li> <li>• Articulation.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Quality, learning, teaching and participation</b></p> <p>Students get a high-quality, safe and supportive learning experience that enables them to succeed in their studies and they find it easy to participate and engage in their educational experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People have the necessary meta skills and attributes to succeed.</li> <li>• There is quality online and repurposed blended learning.</li> <li>• Students are supported in their mental health and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Students have their voice heard and valued, and influence their educational experience.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Core national measures for universities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retention.</li> <li>• No. of Scottish domiciled qualifiers at undergraduate level.</li> <li>• National Student Survey.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning with impact</b></p> <p>Students are equipped to flourish in employment, further study and to lead fulfilling lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis and engagement: There is a good understanding of the needs of business and industry; and Scotland’s economic recovery needs.</li> <li>• Delivering the right skills: There is a pipeline of appropriately skilled people for the labour market.</li> <li>• There is appropriate provision to help people upskill and reskill.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Core national measures for universities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate Outcomes (Scottish Domiciled qualifiers in positive destinations, and FT Scottish-domiciled qualifiers employed at ‘professional’ level).</li> </ul>
		<p><b>Core national measures for colleges:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College Leaver Destinations.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Equalities and inclusion</b></p> <p>Institutions ensure through effective equality impact assessment that the needs of the diverse student body are considered in every aspect of the student experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students are supported to achieve their full potential.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colleges and universities comply with relevant legislation and commit to prioritising action to tackle inequalities.</li> <li>• Measurable equality outcomes are set (April 2021).</li> <li>• Equality Impact Assessments are published.</li> <li>• Action is taken to improve management information (protected characteristic data) with regard to equalities priorities (e.g. harassment, mental health).</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities to explore how <i>protected</i> characteristics impact on core measures.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colleges to explore how protected characteristics impact on core measures.</li> </ul>

Outcomes for Research		
Outcome	Expectations	Measures and indicators of success
<b>Research excellence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions produce excellent research outputs.</li> <li>• The research impact reaches beyond academia.</li> <li>• The research environment supports excellence and impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case studies showing use of SFC research funding to achieve/ work towards greater excellence but with additional emphasis on sustainability/ resilience of HEI's research base; and on contribution to broader recovery. These will be requested at the end of the academic year and will contribute to impact reporting.</li> </ul>
<b>Research Sustainability (incorporates Collaboration)</b> Institutions ensure they protect their world-leading research programmes against the impact of COVID-19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research environment supports excellence and impact.</li> <li>• Institutions implement the researcher development concordant.</li> <li>• Support for PhD students, who are the pipeline of talent for future research and who have been adversely affected by the instability created by the pandemic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SFC will receive regular reporting from each university on the use of their allocation of the one-off £75 million increase in funding to help secure the jobs and training needed to support ongoing and future research work.</li> </ul>

<b>Outcomes for Economic Recovery and Social Renewal</b>		
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Measures and indicators of success</b>
<p><b>Responsive institutions</b></p> <p>Institutions are responsive to employer and industry needs and to current and future skills requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions use labour market intelligence to align provision.</li> <li>• Institutions play their part in upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce.</li> <li>• Institutions help find pathways for people without work to study and move into employment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful utilisation of funding such as Flexible Workforce Development Fund (colleges) and Upskilling Funding (universities) and others that become available. Separate reporting is in place for AY2020-21.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work-ready</b></p> <p>Work-ready graduates are ready to meet employer needs: Students are equipped to take up employment and succeed when the job market opens up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a pipeline of technically skilled people for key industries where skills gaps identified.</li> <li>• This recognises that the job market will be severely impacted by COVID-19.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students find suitable work and thrive when the jobs become available.</li> <li>• Results from CLD survey.</li> <li>• Results from University Graduate Outcomes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Innovation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions are focussing and prioritising their knowledge exchange and innovation activity on Scotland's recovery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities submit an updated UIF plan with their Outcome Agreement.</li> </ul>



<b>Responsive and Collaborative</b>		
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Measures and indicators of success</b>
<p><b>Public health emergency:</b> Institutions are responsive, have assurance mechanisms in place to comply with guidance, communicate well with students, staff and communities, and remedy situations as they arise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions take steps to ensure the health and well-being and best interests of their students during the emergency period.</li> <li>• Appropriate mental health support is available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited on campus provision.</li> <li>• Blended learning.</li> <li>• Restricted blended learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Collaboration:</b> There is active collaboration with other institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions find new ways of working together to support coherent, sustainable provision, research and financially viable institutions in Scotland.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific details of new collaborative arrangements, or plans for collaboration, and what they will achieve in terms of impact for all stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Climate emergency:</b> Institutions take urgent action to help reduce or halt climate change, avoid irreversible damage, and support environmental sustainability measures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colleges and universities demonstrate innovative approaches in their response to the climate emergency. Evidence of transformative leadership and the empowerment of sector communities, building capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions take urgent action to help reduce or halt climate change, avoid irreversible damage, and support environmental sustainability measures.</li> </ul>

	<p>in institutional structures across the sectors, developing a place-based response to the climate emergency.</p>	
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