

The 119th meeting of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council was held on Thursday 4 June 2020 at 2.00pm, by video-conferencing.

- Present:** Mike Cantlay (Chair)
Karen Watt (Chief Executive)
Douglas Mundie (Deputy Chair)
David Alexander
Sheila Duncan
Mhairi Harrington
Lorna Jack (item 20/31 to item 20/37)
Professor Ewart Keep
Andy Kerr
Dr Paul Little
Professor Peter Mathieson
Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam
Dr Veena O'Halloran
Caroline Stuart
Professor John Wallace
Professor Lesley Yellowlees
- Officers:** Martin Fairbairn (Secretary)
Dr Stuart Fancey
Lorna MacDonald
Dr Donna MacKinnon
Martin Boyle
- Angela Seymour (Clerk)
- Scottish Government:** Dr Linda Pooley
- Observers:** Andrew Youngson (union-nominated observer)
Liam McCabe (President of NUS (Scotland))
- Apologies:** None

20/31 Welcome

The Chair welcomed all Board members, Dr Linda Pooley of the Scottish Government, new Director of Policy, Insights and Analytics, Martin Boyle and Andrew Youngson, union-nominated observer. The Chair thanked Liam McCabe, President of NUS Scotland, for his time as an observer, and wished him good luck in his future career.

20/32 Chair's business: papers for discussion and declarations of interest

The Chair commented on the extraordinary circumstances the meeting was being held under and outlined how the meeting would proceed.

The Chair invited members to indicate if they wished to discuss any of the starred items on the agenda. The recommendations contained within papers SFC/20/26, SFC/20/27 and SFC/20/28 were **agreed** without discussion.

The Chair reminded Council board members of their responsibility to indicate if they had, or may be perceived to have, a conflict of interest under any item.

The following members noted a potential conflict of interest:

- David Alexander in relation to West College Scotland
- Douglas Mundie in relation to the University of St Andrews and the Institute of Directors
- Professor Ewart Keep in relation to his role as an Associate Fellow of the Scottish Centre for Employment Research, University of Strathclyde.
- Andy Kerr in relation to South Lanarkshire College and New College Lanarkshire
- Dr Paul Little in relation to City of Glasgow College, the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and as co-author of the Cumberland-Little report
- Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam in relation to Glasgow School of Art
- Professor Peter Mathieson in relation to the University of Edinburgh
- Dr Veena O'Halloran in relation to the University of Strathclyde
- Professor Lesley Yellowlees in relation to Edinburgh Napier University

20/33 Minute of the 2 April 2020 meeting (SFC/20/Min02)

The minute of the 2 April 2020 meeting was **confirmed** as a true record of the meeting.

20/34 Action tracker (SFC/20/21)

The Council received an update on the actions from previous meetings of the Board and noted that the items on innovation centres and research pooling would now be encompassed in the review of coherent provision and sustainability

20/35 Chair's report (SFC/20/22)

The Council received and noted a paper providing a report from the Chair on his recent external engagements.

In discussion the Council noted that the most significant item in this report was the clear mandate that the Government had given SFC to carry out the review of coherent provision and sustainability.

20/36 Chief Executive's Report (SFC/20/23)

The Council received and noted a paper providing a report from the Chief Executive on matters of current interest.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the current situation is stretching the resources of SFC and that measures are being taken to address this.

20/37 Additional research fund allocation (SFC/20/24)

The Council received a paper requesting it to agree the distribution of an additional £75 million of capital for university research provided by Scottish Government to mitigate the effects of COVID-19.

The following members noted a direct conflict of interest and left the meeting during the formal discussion and decision:

- Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam in relation to Glasgow School of Art
- Professor Peter Mathieson in relation to the University of Edinburgh
- Dr Veena O'Halloran in relation to the University of Strathclyde

- Professor Lesley Yellowlees in relation to Edinburgh Napier University
- Caroline Stuart in relation to The Data Lab

In discussion, the Council:

- Welcomed and acknowledged the hard work, under unprecedented circumstances, that had gone into the production of the paper.
- Recognised that these options had been considered by the Finance Committee at its previous meeting. The Finance Committee's recommendation was to approve option 2.
- Noted that this was a one-off payment.
- Recognised that this would support PHD students and Early Career Researcher as well as support staff.

The Council Board **agreed**:

- To **approve** option 2 for distribution of the £75 million additional investment (that is, using the academic year 2020-21 research and innovation grants – REG, RPG and UIF allocations - as the basis for the allocation).
- To **approve** the proposed use of conditions of grant to reinforce the expectation of delivery against the outcomes.
- To **delegate** authority to the Chief Executive to finalise the details, including conditions, of the distribution.

20/38 Review of coherent provision and sustainability (SFC/20/25)

The Council received a paper setting out the request from Scottish Ministers that SFC review the coherent provision and sustainability of further and higher education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Council welcomed the opportunity this paper represented and covered the following matters in discussion:

- The timetable is very short and most institutions, as well as SFC, would be stretched, therefore the process must be focused to ensure optimum results.
- Noted that the establishment of other committees and groups meant there was a need to consider where resources were best deployed.
- Noted the review would have a number of phases and timescales, from the immediate to the medium term, and would

consider the transition needed to implement any fundamental, systemic changes to bring long-term sustainability to the further and higher education system.

- Acknowledged the need to build from the recent Muscatelli (Report Driving Innovation in Scotland) and Cumberford-Little (One Tertiary System: agile, connected, inclusive) reports.

The Council **considered** Scottish Ministers' request that it review provision and sustainability in the further and higher education sectors, and **endorsed** the initial proposals for taking it forward.

20/39 Remuneration Committee minutes (SFC/20/26)

The Council **noted** the unconfirmed minutes of the Remuneration Committee meeting of 17 March 2020.

20/40 Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee minutes (SFC/20/27)

The Council noted the unconfirmed minutes of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee meeting of 5 March 2020.

20/41 Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee minutes (SFC/20/28)

The Council noted the unconfirmed minutes of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee meeting of 29 April 2020.

20/42 Long-term agenda (SFC/20/29)

The Council received a paper informing members of substantive agenda items proposed for future meetings.

The Council **agreed** that:

- The next Board meeting should be rescheduled to 20 August to handle the annual accounts
- Given the swift moving requirements of the review there might be a need to meet before the 20 August formal board meeting.

20/43 Any other business (Oral)

There was no other business.

20/44 Next meeting: 20 August 2020