



T: 0131-244 9251  
E: [DeputyDirectorofLeadershipCultureandWellbeing@gov.scot](mailto:DeputyDirectorofLeadershipCultureandWellbeing@gov.scot)

Karen Watt  
Chief Executive  
Scottish Funding Council  
Apex 2  
97 Haymarket Terrace  
EDINBURGH  
EH12 5HD

15 March 2021

Dear Karen,

## **2021-22 MEDICAL UNDERGRADUATE INTAKE**

The Scottish Government writes to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) annually regarding intake numbers for medical schools in Scotland. This follows careful consideration by Scottish Ministers of the relevant factors, taking into account the advice of the Medical Undergraduate Group (MUG) regarding supply and demand.

Scottish Ministers are committed to ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of medical students coming through the system to meet projected medical workforce numbers to ensure a sustainable medical workforce for the future. The significant achievements made in recent years continue to progress despite the ongoing pressures of Covid-19. Nonetheless, it remains clear that work still needs to be done in relation to supply factors and we need to continue working together to identify measures to retain more of our Scottish medical school graduates in NHS Scotland. Widening access to, and participation in, medical education and training to everyone in Scotland is key to this and remains a priority.

Consideration of medical undergraduate numbers for 2021-22 has taken place against a complex background consisting of factors such as the ongoing delivery of Widening Access, ScotGEM and Scots.dom commitments as well as the changes resulting from the United Kingdom's (UK) departure from the European Union (EU).

As you are aware, due to the impacts of Covid-19 in academic year (AY) 2020-21, the agreed intake target of 1,038 was exceeded by 100 places. This was due to the 2020 exam results being regraded and followed the Deputy First Minister's commitment that the Scottish Government would "make provision for enough places in universities and colleges to ensure that no one is crowded out of a place they would otherwise have been awarded". These 100 extra places and the circumstances surrounding them were unique to 2020-21 only and will not be factored into future years' intakes. These extra medical students will be funded by the Scottish Government for each year of their study within their respective Medical Schools.

Following the unprecedented nature of 2020-21, there were a number of requests (32) from applicants who wished to defer their place to the intake of 2021-22. There are also some applicants (23) who appealed their grades from last year who, if successful, will be entitled to a place at a Scottish Medical School. After due consideration of these circumstances, these 55 places have been taken into account for 2021-22 intake number, so that this year's applicants are not disadvantaged.

As you are aware, the Scottish Government introduced the 'ScotsDom' policy in AY 2019-20 in order to increase the number of Scottish domiciled students studying medicine in Scotland. In light of the extraordinary circumstances of 2020-21 and the over-recruitment of students, implementation of the Scots.dom policy was not possible. Therefore, 2021-22 will be the second year in which this policy is applied, with full implementation now expected in the intake for 2022-23 (rather than this year being the final year of this policy). In practice, this means that for the total intake for AY 2021-22 and AY 2022-23, 33 more places should be allocated to Scottish domiciled applicants while the number of rUK places should be decreased by the same number.

Due to the UK leaving the EU, students from the EU, who were included in the same category as Scottish students, will now be included within the International intake figure. However, it is expected that if an EU student already has settled or pre-settled status, they will be competing for a Scottish or rUK place, depending on the country they live in. It should also be noted that students applying from the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and Gibraltar are to be included within the overall rUK student intake.

The Scottish Government expects the Scottish Medical Schools to meet all of the agreed intake targets. The 7.5% ratio will be applied for the International student intake which increases these places by 14, rising from 64 to 78. If this target is exceeded by the medical schools, this could be detrimental to financial sustainability and sufficient clinical placement capacity. Our expectation is that the normal tolerance penalties will apply, however should the medical schools foresee any difficulties in meeting these targets (particularly on the number of Scots.dom students) they should make this apparent at the earliest opportunity so that any potential flexibilities could be explored outwith normal tolerance levels.

Following the meeting of the MUG on 18 January 2021, and taking account of the recommendations of that Group, Ministers recommend that the medical undergraduate intake for 2021-22 should be as follows:

Scots/rUK/RoI/Gibraltar – 1,039 (of which 790 must be Scottish domiciled)  
International (incl. EU) – 78

**Overall Intake – 1,117**

This intake represents an increase of 79 places compared with last year's baseline target. This consists of:

32 deferrals;  
23 appeals;  
10 WA Places (1% growth); and  
14 extra International places

Should any of the places reserved for deferrals or appeals become vacant, these places should only be made available and allocated to applicants who meet the criteria for Widening Access (WA). A further 10 WA places (1% growth) are to be reserved for students who meet

the WA criteria. This brings the total number of WA places to 60 across the five Medical Schools. In order to meet this criteria, students must be from a SIMD20 background only and this should not be extended to those from a SIMD 40 background to meet Ministerial aims and aspirations on widening access and participation, and in line with the recommendations from the Fair Access Commissioner Report published last Summer.

I should be grateful if the SFC would now make the necessary arrangements for the 2021-22 intake. Scottish Ministers continue to welcome efforts towards achieving a more sustainable medical workforce and we will look to the SFC to continue the monitoring and evaluation arrangements set out in the Memorandum of Understanding for the Medical Education Package and as part of your wider Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability.

I would be happy to discuss the contents of this letter with you or, alternatively, you can contact Michelle Campbell in the Health Workforce Division on 07760-990951, or by e-mail at Michelle.Campbell@gov.scot.

Yours sincerely,

*Cat McMeeken*

Catherine McMeeken, Deputy Director of Leadership, Culture and Wellbeing

**ADDITIONAL NOTE:** In light of the policy decision that AY 2021-22 should be considered the second year of implementing the policy to increase the number of medical graduates who would progress to join the Scottish NHS workforce the minimum target of 790 Scottish domiciled students referenced in the letter has been adjusted to 757. The minimum intake target of 757 students is comprised as follows:

- A minimum of 612 students in the 'core' intake must be eligible to pay 'Home Fees'.
- 60 additional students from an SIMD 20 area.
- 85 additional students recruited to the new routes that were introduced in AY 2019-20 and AY 2020-21.