



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

Sfc Call for Information

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In-Year Management of College Student Support Funding Allocations 2024-25

ISSUE DATE:	19 November 2024
REFERENCE:	SFC/CI/07/2024
SUMMARY:	Invitation to colleges to relinquish unspent student support funds or request an increase to their student support funding allocations for AY 2024-25.
FAO:	Principals, Finance Directors, and Student Support contacts at Scotland's colleges.
FURTHER INFORMATION:	CONTACT: SFC Student Support Team DIRECTORATE: Finance EMAIL: studentsupport@sfc.ac.uk

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In-Year Management of College Student Support Funding Allocations For 2024-25

Purpose

1. This Call for Information invites colleges to relinquish unspent student support funds or request an increase to their student support funding allocations for Academic Year (AY) 2024-25.

Background

2. The in-year management and redistribution of student support funds is an ongoing feature of SFC's annual student support funding cycle.

In-year redistribution exercise for AY 2024-25

3. Instructions for completion of the redistribution request form are set out in [Annex A](#) to this letter. Colleges should particularly note the guidance on estimating demand for student support. SFC will email forms pre-filled with student support data to colleges on an individual basis following publication of this letter. As in previous years, these forms will include sections for colleges to:
 - Confirm the data on their student support spend and Care-Experienced students supported in AY 2023-24, as returned to SFC through their Further Education Statistics (FES) returns.
 - Confirm details of the student support funding paid to each college during AY 2023-24, so that colleges can reconcile the information they are returning with their drawdown and payment details.
 - Provide any contextual and supporting information.
4. Colleges should note that, for the purpose of the AY 2024-25 in-year redistribution exercise, student support data is defined as 'core' student support funding allocations only. Specifically, this includes:
 - Core student support funding for AY 2024-25, as announced in the [College Final Funding Allocations for AY 2024-25 \(Table 3 - Student Support Funding\)](#).
 - Funding requested/relinquished/allocated following the 2023-24 in-year redistribution exercise (Annex A in the [In-year Redistribution of Student Support Funds 2023-24 announcement](#)).

5. As in previous years, SFC will also be asking for additional, separate information on the costs to colleges of implementing changes to student support funding as a result of the Scottish Government's response to the Independent Review of Student Support. Therefore, colleges are also asked to return information on the costs associated with the expansion of the higher rate Care-Experienced Student Bursary, including to those aged 26 and over. Further details are set out in [Annex A](#).

Management of payment of AY 2024-25 funds

6. SFC's Finance team will contact colleges in Spring 2025 to seek clarification of their near-final position on student support spend in AY 2024-25 and whether any colleges are forecasting an underspend against their budget. Monthly profiled student support payments will then be adjusted accordingly to reflect any underspend, rather than waiting until the AY 2025-26 redistribution exercise in Autumn 2025.

Next steps and further information

7. Colleges should complete the request form and email it to SFC's Student Support team, email: studentsupport@sfc.ac.uk by **Wednesday 4 December 2024**.
8. Colleges will be individually notified of SFC's decision on any requests for additional funding in December 2024. We will announce the sector outcome of the AY 2024-25 in-year redistribution exercise in early 2025.
9. For further information please contact: studentsupport@sfc.ac.uk.



Richard Maconachie FCCA
Director of Finance

Annex A: Instructions For Completion Of Request Form

Estimating demand for student support

10. Colleges are reminded of the need to provide accurate bids for student support funding, based on realistic predictions of student demand.
11. The starting point for determining the level of need for student support funding should be based on colleges' existing commitments to support students already enrolled for AY 2024-25.
12. SFC is aware that colleges can still be receiving and processing applications for student support at the point where we ask for the in-year redistribution submission. In addition, most colleges will expect to enroll additional students later in the AY. Colleges therefore need to calculate the volume of additional student support funding applications they expect to receive for the remainder of the AY.
13. Colleges then need to estimate the likely level of support required by the additional students. In performing this calculation, colleges should take into account historic data on the differential spend patterns at course/subject level, for different types of students (e.g. full-time/part-time, by gender, by age group, including Care-Experienced). For example, colleges should be aware of the following factors that will have a bearing on the resources required:
 - Some subjects will have a higher level of demand for SFC student support funding than others.
 - Female students are more likely to require childcare funding than male students.
 - Any move from Further Education (FE) to Higher Education (HE) level provision, or from full-time to part-time provision, will reduce demand for SFC student support funding.
14. All these factors will have a bearing on the quantum of resources required in the coming year. SFC strongly recommends that colleges build in assumptions for these factors when predicting need, rather than basing their requests on historic average levels of funding. Colleges should not assume that all their additional students will require the maximum level of funding.
15. After the college has calculated the predicted level of additional student support funding required, it is essential that they make a reduction to the overall requirement to take account of the impact of student withdrawals. This should be based on a realistic assumption of the expected level of withdrawals, based on historic data at the college.

16. **Colleges should not build large and unrealistic contingencies into their bids for funding.** This results in inflated claims and creates a false impression of the level of unmet demand for student support which will result in recovery of these monies. More importantly, it limits SFC's ability to move funds to where they are currently needed.

Discretionary funding in AY 2024-25

17. Some students continue to face cost-of-living pressures and there are still flexibilities in place which colleges can use when allocating Discretionary Funds to students:
 - In AY 2023-24, the cap was reintroduced at the higher rate of £5,000 pa, in recognition of the ongoing cost-of-living pressures.
 - Discretionary Funds can be used to make payments to students who need it (for example, a winter fuel allowance or a cost-of-living allowance).
 - To minimise administrative burden on both the college and the students, funds can be allocated in this way to groups of students who the college know to be from low-income households, based on evidence previously submitted along with a short confirmation from the student that they are continuing to face hardship because of increased costs.
18. Colleges are reminded that they cannot use their Discretionary Funds for communal support – for example, to provide open breakfast or lunch facilities which would be available to all students. The legislation relating to Discretionary funding states that these funds should be paid to individual students who meet the residency requirements and are on FE level courses which are SFC-fundable. On this basis, the SFC policy on Discretionary funding sets the expectation that funds should be allocated directly to individual students and specifies that they should not be used for general purposes such as communal facilities or staff costs.

In-year redistribution form for AY 2024-25

19. As in previous years, the in-year redistribution form will be pre-filled with the following information:
 - Colleges' core student support funding allocations for AY 2023-24 (as detailed at paragraph 4).
 - The funds that colleges have been paid for student support in AY 2023-24, so that colleges can reconcile the information they are returning with their drawdown and payment details.
 - Colleges' core student support funding allocations for AY 2024-25 (as detailed at paragraph 4).
20. Colleges will then be asked to complete the following information:

- A split of the AY 2024-25 student support funding allocation by FE Bursary, Childcare and FE Discretionary.
- The amount of student support funding being requested or relinquished for AY 2024-25.
- If additional funds are being requested, a breakdown of the amount associated with students already enrolled and the amount required for students not already enrolled (e.g. January start students).
- If additional funds are being requested, details of the proportion required by the college up until the end of March 2025 and end of July 2025 respectively.
- Any contextual or supporting information.

Additional information required in AY 2024-25

21. This year, SFC will again be asking for additional, separate information on the costs to colleges of implementing some of the changes to student support funding as a result of the Scottish Government's response to the Independent Review of Student Support.
22. In order for SFC to quantify the additional resource required for the expanded Care-Experienced (CE) Bursary, we have included an additional section in the in-year redistribution form. This section will be pre-filled with the number of CE Bursary students that colleges reported that they supported in AY 2023-24 and the amount of bursary (maintenance) funding allocated to these students (as per the FES returns). It will then ask colleges to provide details of:
 - The number of CE students (headcount) who have enrolled up to that point.
 - The committed bursary (maintenance) funding associated with these enrolments, based on the weekly rate of £225.
 - A forward projection of numbers of CE students (headcount) who will enrol later in the AY and an estimate of the bursary (maintenance) funding associated with these enrolments.
 - A reduction to take account of the impact of projected withdrawals of CE students.
 - Estimated numbers of CE students (headcount) who are better off on benefits than bursary.
23. In quantifying the additional cost of the expanded CE Bursary for AY 2024-25, SFC will assess the increases in colleges' spend on maintenance for CE students arising from the increase in the number of such students attending college. We would expect that the take-up of FE by CE students will increase because of the wider awareness of the new higher rate funding package available for them, as well as the removal of the age cap

and the inclusion of students who were in informal care arrangements.

Multi-college regions

24. Multi-college regions should complete one request form as a single region. Any transfers of funding between colleges, agreed by the colleges within the region, prior to the form being submitted should be included. An additional tab is included in the form to provide a breakdown by each individual college in the region.

General conditions

25. The return date for the form is **Wednesday 4 December 2024**. If the amounts of funding that colleges require for student support change by mid-December 2024 because of changing circumstances, colleges should inform SFC of this as soon as possible.
26. SFC will endeavour to meet, in full, college student support funding requests. However, as with previous years, there may be a shortfall in available funds at a sector level. This will mean that the amount of funding going to individual colleges may be capped.
27. SFC reiterates that colleges should adhere to the guidance set out in paragraphs 10-16 when estimating demand. Colleges should not inflate their bids for funding. This ensures that we can redistribute the additional funding available in as fair and equitable a way as possible.
28. It is the responsibility of colleges to ensure the accuracy of the data included in their IYR submission to the SFC. Any issue identified with the accuracy of the data submitted in the IYR form should be reported by the college to the SFC's Student Support team at the earliest possible opportunity.

Next steps

29. SFC will email the pre-filled forms directly to college student support contacts following publication of this letter.
30. Colleges should complete the request form and email it to SFC's Student Support team mailbox, email: studentsupport@sfc.ac.uk by **Wednesday 4 December 2024**.
31. Colleges will be individually notified of the decision on their bids for additional student support funding in December 2024.
32. SFC will announce the sector outcome of the AY 2024-25 in-year redistribution exercise in early 2025.