

University intake targets for Optometry AY 2025-26



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Issue Date:	15 May 2025
Reference:	SFC/AN/12/2025
Summary:	Announcement of university intake targets for the Masters Undergraduate Optometry programme for Academic Year (AY) 2025-26.
FAO:	Principals / Chairs of Scotland's universities, and the general public.
Further Information:	<p>CONTACT: Duncan Condie</p> <p>JOB TITLE: Senior Funding Policy Officer</p> <p>DIRECTORATE: Finance</p> <p>TEL: 0131 313 6671</p> <p>EMAIL: dcondie@sfc.ac.uk</p>

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University intake targets for Optometry in AY 2025-26

Purpose

1. I am writing to announce the university intake targets for Masters Optometry with Independent Prescribing (MOptom) programmes for Academic Year (AY) 2025-26.

Background

2. In February 2024, SFC was advised that the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health agreed to make the new MOptom programmes a controlled subject. The MOptom programme was introduced following the publication of updated educational standards by the General Optical Council. Optometry is delivered by two Scottish universities; Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) and the University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI). GCU commenced their MOptom programme in AY 2024-25, with UHI commencing theirs in AY 2025-26.
3. In setting this intake target, SFC received guidance from the Scottish Government's Directorate for Primary Care (SGDPC), see Annex A.

Intake target for AY 2025-26

4. The overall university intake target for Optometry in AY 2025-26, as recommended by the SGDPC, is **80 students** with 'home fee' status.
5. The recommended intake target for the second cohort of students to be admitted to GCU for their MOptom degree in AY 2025-26 will be 60 Students Eligible for Funding (SEFF).
6. The recommended intake target for the first cohort of students to be admitted to UHI for their new MOptom degree in AY 2025-26 will be 20 SEFF.
7. The AY 2025-26 intake targets for both universities is set out in Table 1 below. SFC will confirm the funded student places and the associated funding with this programme in its final funding announcement for AY 2025-26 in May.

Rest of UK and international students

8. The intake targets in this announcement relate to SEFF. Whilst GCU and UHI can accept rUK and international students, the number of those students for AY 2025-26 is capped at a combined total of 10 for each university. GCU and UHI must discuss and obtain agreement from SGDPC for any potential recruitment above this cap which, if agreed, is likely to incur a percentage reimbursement of fees.

Monitoring

9. Universities should return information on students on their MOptom programmes to SFC through their annual Early Statistic Returns. Details of the information required will be published in the annual Early Statistic Return Notes of Guidance on the SFC website.

Under-recruitment policy

10. SFC will operate an under-recruitment policy for the MOptom programme in AY 2025-26 and we may recover funding if universities under-recruit against their funded student places, subject to a tolerance of 3%. This is subject to consideration of any mitigating evidence provided by universities.
11. If it is agreed that recovery should take place, we will recover Main Teaching Grant equivalent to that associated with the recruitment below the tolerance threshold.

Over-recruitment policy

12. SFC will operate an over-recruitment ('consolidation') policy for MOptom in AY 2025-26. Universities may be liable for a financial penalty if they exceed their 'consolidation number' by more than 10%. This is subject to consideration of any mitigating evidence provided by universities.
13. If it is agreed that any financial penalty should be applied, the penalty will reflect the additional tuition fee income associated with those students recruited above the tolerance threshold.

Further information

14. Please contact Duncan Condie, Senior Funding Policy Officer, Finance Directorate, tel: 0131 313 6671, email dcondie@sfc.ac.uk.

Tiffany Ritchie

Acting Director of Finance

Table 1: Breakdown of university intake targets for Optometry in AY 2025-26

University	Intake target for AY 2025-26
Glasgow Caledonian University	60
University of the Highlands & Islands	20
Total	80