

E: eyecare@gov.scot

Francesca Osowska OBE FRSE
Chief Executive
Scottish Funding Council
Apex 2
97 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HD

Email: ceo@sfc.ac.uk

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Dear Francesca

MASTER'S UNDERGRADUATE OPTOMETRY (MOptom) DEGREE – STUDENT INTAKRE NUMBERS FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2025-26

This letter is to advise the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) that the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health has, on 1 April 2025, agreed to: (i) support the proposed MOptom student intake numbers for Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) for Academic Year (AY) 2025-26 and (ii) support the proposed MOptom student intake numbers for the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) for Academic Year (AY) 2025-26.

GCU

The recommended intake target for the second cohort of students to be admitted to GCU for the MOptom degree in AY 2025-26 will be **60 Students Eligible for Funding (SEFF) and additionally GCU may recruit up to a maximum of 10 rest of UK (rUK) and International students.**

As has been previously agreed, the programme will be funded at the SFC's price group 2 for SEFF. The Scottish Government's Directorate for Primary Care (SGDPC) will transfer an amount per funded place equivalent to the difference between price group 2 and price group 3. SGDPC will transfer 62% of their agreed contribution of AY funding through the Autumn/Spring Budget Revision process for Financial Year (FY) 2025-26, with the balance to be transferred in FY 2026-27.

UHI

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 and additionally UHI may recruit up to a maximum of 10 rUK and International students.**

As has been previously agreed, the programme will be funded at the SFC's price group 2 for SEFF. SGDPC will transfer an amount per funded place equivalent to the difference between price group 5 and price group 3. SGDPC will transfer 62% of their agreed contribution of AY

funding through the Autumn/Spring Budget Revision process for FY 2025-26, with the balance to be transferred in FY 2026-27.

Specific Conditions attached to the funding provided by SGDPC

GCU and UHI must contract solely with NHS Education for Scotland (NES) in respect of the preparation and delivery of the Foundation Training Year (FTY), which comprises the fifth year of the MOptom degree.

In AY 2025-26 and thereafter, the SFC will model the required number of funded places for each new intake and for the continuing cohorts of eligible students. Subject to agreement over the number of funded places each year, SGDPC will transfer their agreed contribution of the funding for each financial year (the AY allocation will be split on a 62% / 38% basis).

The SFC should monitor the new MOptom degree through their annual Early and Final Statistics Returns, collecting information on both the annual intake and total number of students enrolled on the programme.

The SFC should recover funds for under-recruitment against funded student places and impose a penalty for over recruitment against the consolidation number in a similar manner to that used for the controlled subjects of medicine, dentistry, and pre-registration paramedics, nursing and midwifery. In doing so, the SFC should recover funds from GCU and UHI if they under-recruit eligible students against funded places by more than 3% and apply penalties if GCU and UHI exceed their consolidation number by more than 10%.

The recommended intake in this letter is for SEFF. Whilst GCU and UHI are at liberty to accept rUK and International students, this number 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 the intake cap which, if agreed, is likely to incur a percentage reimbursement of fees. The SFC should not provide funded places for ineligible students.

I would be grateful if the SFC would now make the necessary arrangements for the 2025-26 intake, including to continue to work closely with SGDPC officials and those within the Scottish Government's Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills.

For future years, modelling will need to be carried out to ensure that workforce planning requirements are taken into account.

This letter is copied to the Scottish Government's Director for Primary Care, Director for Health Workforce, Director General Health and Social Care and Director for Lifelong Learning and Skills, as well as GCU, UHI, NES and Student Awards Agency Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Mowat
Senior Policy Manager
Scottish Government Primary Care Optometry Team