



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

SFC ANNOUNCEMENT

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Early Years Masters Funding AY 2025–26



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Issue Date: 19 January 2026

Reference: SFC/AN/01/2026

Summary: Announcement of funding for Early Years Masters in Academic Year (AY) 2025–26, and the general public.

FAO: Principals / Finance Directors of Scotland's universities

Further Information: **CONTACT:** Hazel McCartney

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Early Years Masters Funding for AY 2025–26

Summary

1. I am writing to announce funding for Early Years Masters in Academic Year (AY) 2025-26.

Purpose of funding

2. The Early Years Masters is designed to provide valuable learning for the early years sector, particularly in view of early years and childcare expansion and the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. The Scottish Government has committed to fund 90 students per year for Early Years Masters through the University of Aberdeen and University of Strathclyde.
4. Funding for this has been planned for three years from AY 2023-24 to AY 2025-26. The universities will be aware that Scottish Government is evaluating options for future funding and how they can best support programmes that enhance quality in the childcare sector as a whole. There are, therefore, no guarantees of funding beyond AY 2025-26. Universities should therefore factor this into their recruitment plans, including transparency with students about future funding arrangements.

Funding for AY 2025-26

5. Enrolment rates have been calculated across a three-year period and, again for AY 2025-26, taken annual fluctuations into account.
6. Funding comprises i) teaching grant costs and ii) additional funding to cover additional running costs, which will take the University of Aberdeen and the University of Strathclyde to the amount of funding that they previously received directly from the Scottish Government.

7. A total of £200k will be allocated in AY 2025-26 only. The table below sets out the funding for each university (for both teaching grant costs and additional running costs). This is based on the estimated number of FTE places for AY 2025-26 as agreed with the universities.

Institution	AY 2025-26
University of Aberdeen – Teaching Funding	£13,720
University of Aberdeen – Additional	£79,381
University of Strathclyde – Teaching Funding	£17,150
University of Strathclyde – Additional	£89,749
Total	£200,000

Conditions of grant

8. This funding must only be used for the purpose(s) for which it is being allocated, as outlined above. Conditions of funding, as set out in the published [University Final Funding Allocations for AY 2025-26](#) (Annex C), apply.

Future years funding and monitoring

9. The University of Aberdeen and University of Strathclyde should provide the Scottish Government with a high-level annual report, including enrolment and completion data, by **Friday 11 September 2026**. Reports should be submitted to Sandra Aitken, Early Learning and Childcare Division, email: Sandra.Aitken@gov.scot.

10. SFC will treat and monitor this provision (through Early Statistics Returns) as a controlled subject. As with other controlled subjects, we will apply a tolerance threshold of 3% for under-recruitment and 10% for over-recruitment. SFC will consider the recovery of funding for both under- and over-recruitment at the end of the period of funding, based on the number of students eligible for funding on the course compared to the number of funded student places allocated. Therefore, universities can continue to make up any reduced intake, in recognition of annual fluctuations, and will be given the opportunity to present any mitigating circumstances.

11. As set out above, funding beyond AY 2025-26 is not guaranteed. Scottish Government will continue to work with the universities to ensure that knowledge and learning from the programmes is disseminated in a variety of ways, including the development of case studies and online content for inclusion on the CPL portal hosted by the Scottish Social Services Council.

Payment of funds

12. Payments will be made in monthly instalments, in line with the payment profile set out in the published [University Final Funding Allocations for AY 2025-26](#) (Annex D), with the instalments from August 2025 to February 2026 paid in February 2026.
13. Payment of additional funding will be dependent on the condition that it is used for the development and delivery of Early Years Masters provision.

Acceptance of grant

14. We cannot process any payments until you have accepted this offer of grant in writing. Please email your acceptance to Farhana Haque, Budgeting and Reporting Officer, email: grantacceptance@sfc.ac.uk by **Friday 30 January 2026**.

Further information

15. If you have any queries or require any further information, please contact Hazel McCartney, Senior Funding Policy Officer, email: hmcartney@sfc.ac.uk.

Tiffany Ritchie

Acting Director of Finance