



Scottish Funding Council  
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

SFC Announcement

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# University intake targets for Optometry AY 2026–27



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## University intake targets for Optometry AY 2026–27

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Issue Date:	23 April 2026
Reference:	SFC/AN/10/2026
Summary:	Announcement of university intake targets for the Masters Undergraduate Optometry programme for Academic Year 2026–27.
FAO:	Principals / Chairs of Scotland’s universities, and the general public.
Further Information:	<b>CONTACT:</b> Funding <b>DIRECTORATE:</b> Investment & Research <b>TEL:</b> 0131 313 6500 <b>EMAIL:</b> <a href="mailto:funding@sfc.ac.uk">funding@sfc.ac.uk</a>

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## University intake targets for Optometry in AY 2026–27

### Purpose

1. I am writing to announce the university intake targets for Masters Optometry with Independent Prescribing (MOptom) programmes for Academic Year (AY) 2026–27.

### 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 targets for AY 2026–27

4. **The overall university intake target for Optometry in AY 2026-27, as recommended by the SGDPC, is 80 students with ‘home fee’ status.** This represents the same target that was set in AY 2025-26.
5. The recommended intake target to be admitted to GCU for their MOptom degree in AY 2026-27 will be 60 Students Eligible for Funding (SEFF).
6. The recommended intake target to be admitted to UHI for their MOptom degree in AY 2026-27 will be 20 SEFF.
7. The AY 2026-27 intake targets for both universities are 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 2026-27 in May.

### Rest of UK and international students

8. The intake targets in this announcement relate to Students Eligible For Funding (SEFF). Whilst GCU and UHI can accept rUK and international students, the number of those students for AY 2026-27 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.

9. For international students, both GCU and UHI will need to pay a total of £15,000 per student to Public Services Delivery Scotland prior to the start of the Foundation Training Year. This will apply to international students who enrol in AY 2026-27 and any enrolled thereafter.

## Monitoring

10. 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

11. SFC will operate an under-recruitment policy for the MOptom programme in AY 2026-27 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.
12. If it is agreed that any funding recovery should take place, we will recover Main Teaching Grant equivalent to that associated with the recruitment below the tolerance threshold.

## Over-recruitment policy

13. SFC will operate an over-recruitment ('consolidation') policy for MOptom in AY 2026-27. 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.
14. 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

15. Please contact the Funding team, Investment & Research Directorate, email: [funding@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:funding@sfc.ac.uk).

### **Helen Cross**

Director, Investment & Research

Table 1: Breakdown of university intake targets for Optometry in AY 2026–27

University	Intake target for AY 2026–27
Glasgow Caledonian University	60
University of the Highlands & Islands	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>