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College Staffing Return Guidance 2025–26



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Issue Date: 9 July 2026

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Deadline: 9 October 2026

Summary: Guidance notes for the completion of the aggregate Staffing Return:
Academic Year 2025–26

FAO: Principals of Scotland’s colleges and HR contacts, and the general public

Further
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Revisions to the College Student Staffing Return

1. Apart from the adjusted College Student Staffing return date, there is no change in the 2025–26 guidance from 2024–25.

Introduction

2. This document contains guidance notes for completing the aggregate Staffing Return for academic year 2025–26.

About the Staffing Return

3. The data is to be based on number of employees who are being paid by the college, rather than the number of jobs / posts.
4. There are two sections for completion - one for headcount and another for full-time equivalents (FTEs).
5. An error checker is available in the top right-hand corner of each sheet and has been set up to detect possible errors in data entry. An error will highlight the cells in question which colleges can then check and amend accordingly.
6. A downloadable Excel file for completion is available from the SFC website. The deadline for returning the data is **Friday 9 October 2026**.
7. All tables must be completed, otherwise the return will not be accepted and returned to the college.

Coverage and timing of the Staffing Return

8. Data (both headcount and FTE) should be returned for all college payroll staff employed for at least 10% FTE at some point in the academic session (1 August 2025 to 31 July 2026).

Colleges should include:

- Employees on secondment or loan ONLY if the college is paying for the majority (50% or more) or all their wages. If costs are split equally, the sending rather than the receiving college should count the employee. Employees seconded in from the private sector should be included if your organisation is paying for the majority or all their wages. However, please exclude employees seconded out to the private sector.
- Employees who work only part of the year, at any point during the academic year. Where a certain person employed by the college works part of the year on more than one occasion (for example, August to October, then January to May) count them once and return in relation to their contract with the most hours.

- Employees on paid maternity / paternity leave (for the purpose of calculating FTEs, contracted hours of those on maternity / paternity leave should be those they were working before they left).
- Employees on paid sick leave or special leave.
- Employees on short-term unpaid leave (e.g. bereavement or parental leave) with FTEs calculated for the period during which the employee was working / paid (see [Appendix 1](#) for details).

Colleges should exclude:

9. Self-employed, contract workers and agency workers not paid directly from the payroll.

Notes for completion of the Staffing Return

General definitions

10. **Teaching Staff** – Teaching staff are defined as staff whose primary contractual responsibility is teaching and / or who spend at least 10% of their time in teaching activity. These staff may also have other responsibilities including organizational line management (e.g. Head of Department etc.) responsibilities. A member of staff whose main activity is teaching but does not hold a contract as a lecturer and above should be returned as an ‘Instructor or equivalent,’ only if they spend at least 10% of their time in teaching activity. INCLUDE trainers and workplace assessors as teaching staff if involved in the direct provision of learning related to a student course / programme for at least 10% of their contracted time.
11. **Non-Teaching (support) Staff** – No staff that are defined as ‘teaching staff’ (see above) should be included in the ‘non-teaching (support) category.
12. **All senior management / management and support staff** (including technicians, administrative / clerical, estates, maintenance, research assistants and instructors, who spend less than 10% of their time in teaching activity) should be defined as ‘non-teaching (support)’ unless they are directly involved in teaching for at least 10% of their time.
13. **Full-time** – Those who work standard contracted hours, that is, the college's normal weekly hours over the normal contracted working year.
14. **Part-time** – Those who work less than standard contracted hours, that is, less than the college's normal weekly hours and / or less than the college's normal contracted working year.
15. **Permanent Staff** – Staff employed on permanent contracts (not a fixed term) should be classified as permanent staff.

16. **Temporary Staff** – Staff employed on contracts which specify an end date (other than retirement age) or otherwise limits the duration of the contract should be classified as temporary staff.

Headcount definitions

17. **Headcount** – The number of staff employed in the college during the academic year (a standard working year is assumed to comprise 230 working days or about 36 working weeks. Standard contracted hours are assumed to be 35 hours per week).

Each member of staff should be counted once, regardless of the amount of time for which they are employed. If a member of staff holds two unrelated contracts, they should only be counted once and returned in relation to their contract with the most hours. A member of staff on more than one successive temporary contract during the year should also be counted only once. If the terms of a member of staff's contract changes (temporary / permanent, full-time / part-time), then record the staff member only once with the type of contract held at the end of the academic year (31 July 2026) or, for those staff who have left during the year, the type of contract on leaving.

18. **Age** – Age is as at 31 July 2026.
19. **Sex** – following the latest recommended guidance for public bodies from the Chief Statistician on the collection and publication of equalities data on Sex, this should be reported as 'Male', 'Female', 'Prefer not to say' or 'Unknown'.
20. **Senior Management** – staff in senior management roles that spend less than 10% of their time on teaching activity.
21. **Other Staff** – Staff that spend less than 10% of their time on teaching activity and are not considered senior management.
22. **Ethnic Origin** – It is compulsory for colleges to collect details of ethnicity of staff. Colleges have a specific duty under the Equality Act 2010 to monitor staff recruitment and career progress by racial group. To meet this specific duty, colleges need to collect data on staff by ethnicity.
23. In addition, to meet its general duty to eliminate racial discrimination, promote equal opportunities and good relations between different groups, SFC plans to monitor staff by racial groups at a sector level. We are therefore encouraging all colleges that have returned any staff as 'information refused / not known' as their ethnicity to take effective steps to improve the proportion of staff with meaningful codes. Please refer to [Appendix 2](#) for definitions.
24. **Salary** - Salary should be recorded as the full-time equivalent salary.

25. **Disability** - Disability should be recorded as self-disclosed disability. It is understood that some members of staff may not disclose their disability. If no disability is disclosed, the staff member should be recorded as 'No disclosed disability.'
26. **Qualifications** - Formal qualifications include any qualifications which are relevant or essential to the post held. See below for further details. You should put all teaching staff in one of the teaching qualification categories.
27. If a member of staff has achieved more than one level of qualification, use the highest qualification achieved (e.g. where a member of staff has a 'Certificate: Introduction to Teaching in FE,' and a 'TQ Secondary,' then count that member of staff once under 'TQ FE, TQ Secondary, TQ Primary, PGDE (adult literacies) or Equivalent,' as it is higher than 'Other TQ not equivalent to TQFE/Secondary/Primary/PGDE (adult literacies)').
28. The Teaching Qualification field should reflect the highest qualification of staff at the end of the academic year (31 July 2026) or, for members of staff that have left during the year, should reflect the highest qualification on leaving.
29. TQFE, TQ Secondary, TQ Primary, PGDE (adult literacies) or Equivalent - You should include in this category teaching staff who hold:
 - The TQ Further Education (FE).
 - The TQ Secondary Education (SE).
 - The TQ Primary Education (PE).
 - The PGDE (Adult Literacies).
 - Any other teaching qualification that is equivalent to the TQ (FE) according to any further guidance issued by SFC. See the Professional Learning & Development Forum (PLDF Scotland) website for more information on qualifications.
30. **Other TQ not equivalent to TQFE/Secondary/Primary/ PGDE (adult literacies)** - Teaching staff with a teaching qualification other than those listed above should be included in this category.
31. Other teaching qualifications currently counted as 'Other TQ,' include:
 - Certificate: Introduction to Teaching Further Education.
 - Advanced Certificate: Teaching in Further Education.
 - Diploma: Teaching in Further Education.
 - Advanced Diploma: Introduction to Teaching in Further Education.
 - Advanced Diploma: Teaching in Further Education.
 - ESOL Literacy: Teaching Adults Reading, Writing and Numeracy.

- Advanced Diploma: Quality Improvement.
 - Advanced Diploma: Teaching Children and Young People.
 - TEFL, DELTA/CELTA, Diploma/Certificate in TESOL.
 - Assessor or Verifier Awards.
 - L & D qualifications/PDA in assessment and verification.
 - City and Guilds teaching qualifications.
 - Other qualifications for skills trainers and assessors.
32. **Formal Qualification but not Teacher Trained** – The normal entry requirements for a TQFE are specified by the Scottish Government and more information can be found at Professional Learning & Development Forum (PLDF Scotland) website. Teaching staff that do not hold a TQ or equivalent but hold the minimum entry requirements to train for a TQ should be included in this category.
33. **No Formal Qualification** – Teaching staff who do not hold a TQ or equivalent and without the minimum entry requirements to train for a TQ (see link in above paragraph) should be classed as having no formal qualification.
34. **Country of nationality** – If country of nationality is not spilt i.e. Scotland, England, Wales/Cymru, Northern Ireland we will accept British.

FTEs definitions

35. **Number of staff (FTE)** – The number of staff (FTE) should cover the number of full-time equivalent staff employed by the college. Contracted hours should be used as the basis for calculating FTEs. A full-time member of staff employed for the year would normally have an FTE of 1 (but cannot be greater than 1).
36. Exclude overtime and holidays (see paragraph below).
37. [Appendix 1](#) provides further guidance on the calculation of FTE, including various examples.
38. **Overtime and holidays** – Overtime and holidays should be EXCLUDED. If staff undertake regular overtime, then their contract should be amended.

Completion of the return and data validation

39. Please use the Excel file provided on the website.
40. Put the data in the white cells in the tables. The other cells in the file are protected and should not be changed. Please also do not attempt to enter any data in the shaded cells. All shaded cells are protected and will not accept data entry.

41. Please do not try to add columns or rows to the spreadsheet. The spreadsheet is protected.
42. Please insert zero ('0') rather than leaving a cell blank.
43. If you wish to copy data into the file from another source, highlight the cells to be copied and use the '**paste special**' / '**values**' option in Excel.
44. The staff headcount and FTE should agree between different tables and **FTE** must not be greater than **headcount**.
45. An error checker is located in the top right-hand corner of each sheet. This will highlight the nature and location of any errors. In addition, the error cells will be highlighted red. Please note that, on first entering data, several errors will probably appear. The number of errors should decrease as more data is entered. If there is a small number of errors for numbers of FTEs that are; unknown/refused age/ethnicity these should be regarded as warnings, so it would be acceptable to submit the return with errors that are actually warnings. However, in such circumstances, colleges should look at ways of improving the quality of data returned. Returns must be free of all other errors.
46. Please send the completed form to datareturns@sfc.ac.uk by **Friday 9 October 2026**.
47. Any queries or correspondence relating to the Staffing Return Data Collection should be addressed to datareturns@sfc.ac.uk also.

Steve McDonald
Chief Information Officer

Appendix 1 – Examples of FTE

Please note these examples are intended as a guide to working out FTE only and the standard contracted hours / working weeks given may not be appropriate to your college. If the standard hours / working weeks differ in your college then please use those to calculate your FTE.

- FTE of Teaching staff: a standard working year is assumed to comprise 201 working days or about 40 working weeks. Standard contracted hours are assumed to be 35 hours per week.
- FTE of Non-teaching (support) staff: a standard working year is assumed to comprise 230 working days or about 46 working weeks. Standard contracted hours are assumed to be 35 hours per week.

No	Example	Description	Formula	FTE
1	A member of the teaching staff works full-time for one term of 16 weeks.	The staff member works full-time (35 hours) for 16 weeks compared with a 40-week standard for a full year's work.	$16 \div 40$	0.4
2	A full-time member of the teaching staff, who leaves part-way through the year.	If the number of weeks worked since the start of the academic session is x, then the FTE represented by that member of staff is $x/40$. Similarly, if a member of staff works for only part of an academic year such that the number of weeks worked between their start date (after the beginning of the year) and their leaving date is y, this represents an FTE of $y/40$. Use this formula for staff on short-term unpaid leave, calculating FTE for the period of time during which the employee worked.	$x \div 40$ or $y \div 40$	

No	Example	Description	Formula	FTE
3	A member of the teaching staff works 3 sessions (half days) a week throughout the year.	Assuming leave entitlement is proportionate, the member of staff has 40 working weeks per year and works for one and a half days per week, thereby working 60 days a year expressed as a proportion of the standard 201 days.	$60 \div 201$	0.3
4	A member of the teaching staff working 3 sessions (half days) a week leaves part-way through the year.	If the number of weeks worked between the beginning of the academic year (or the start date of the member of staff, if later) and the date the member of staff leaves is x weeks, the member of staff working one and a half days a week is deemed to have worked 1.5x days.	$1.5x \div 201$	
5	A member of non-teaching (support) staff working 20 hours a week throughout the year.	Assuming leave entitlement is proportionate, the member of staff has 46 working weeks per year and works for 20 hours each week expressed as a proportion of the standard 35 contracted hours per week.	$20 \div 35$	0.6
6	A member of non-teaching (support) staff working 20 hours a week leaves part-way through the year.	If the number of weeks worked between the beginning of the academic year (or the start date of the member of staff, if later) and the date the member of staff leaves is x weeks, the member of staff working 20 hours a week is deemed to have worked 20x hours. [35 hours a week for 46 weeks = 1610 hours] Use this formula for staff on short-term unpaid leave, calculating FTE for the period of time during which the employee worked.	$20x \div 1610$	

No	Example	Description	Formula	FTE
7	One way to calculate the total FTE for all teaching staff in a college.	A particular college has 45 full-time staff and 52 part-time staff. A full-time member of the teaching staff in this college has a standard contract of 35 hours per week. The total weekly contract hours for all of the part-time teaching staff amounts to 980 hours.	$(980 \div 35) + 45$	73

Appendix 2 – Ethnicity in the Staffing Data Return

Description	Group	
Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	Black and ethnic minority	
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British		
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British		
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British		
Any other Asian background		
African, African Scottish or African British		
Other African background		
Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British		
Other Caribbean or black background		
Black, Black Scottish or Black British		
Arab, Arab Scottish, or Arab British		
White British		Other ethnicity
White English		
White Gypsy/Traveller		
White Irish		
White Northern Irish		
White Polish		
White Scottish		
White Welsh		

Any other White ethnic group

Not stated

Appendix 3 – Notes for UHI partner colleges and SRUC

The notes in Appendix 3 apply to UHI partner colleges and SRUC.

1. It is only mandatory for UHI partner colleges and SRUC to provide staffing data for FE activity.
2. Since 2001-02, UHI partner colleges have supplied data on FE student activity only to SFC (and HE activity to HESA) and are required to do the same for their staffing data. This now also applies to SRUC.
3. Please use whichever method you find easier to identify the FE activity only -the following is a suggested guide:
 - Exclude any member of staff working entirely on HE work.
 - Teaching staff hours taken from staff timetables can be used to calculate a FE FTE and HE FTE for each member of staff and then report only the FE FTE.
 - For cross-college staff base the FE FTE and HE FTE on the relative volume of activity at each of these levels in the college, and again then report only the FE FTE.
4. For colleges using a different method than shown above please provide details.

Appendix 4 – Nationality in the Staffing Data Return

British	
England	Isle of Man
Northern Ireland	Channel Islands
Scotland	
Wales	
Other EU country nationals	
Austria	Belgium
Bulgaria	Croatia
Cyprus	Denmark
Czech Republic	Finland
Estonia	Germany
France	Hungary
Greece	Italy
Ireland, Republic of	Lithuania
Latvia	Malta
Luxembourg	Poland
Netherlands	Romania
Portugal	Slovenia
Slovakia	Sweden
Spain	

Other Non-EU world country nationals

Afghanistan	Africa, not otherwise specified
Åland Islands {Ahvenamaa}	Albania
Algeria	American Samoa
Andorra	Angola
Anguilla	Antarctica and Oceania, not otherwise specified
Antigua and Barbuda	Argentina
Armenia	Aruba
Asia (Except Middle East), not otherwise specified	Australia
Austria	Azerbaijan
Bahamas, The	Bahrain
Bangladesh	Barbados
Belarus	Belgium
Belize	Benin
Bermuda	Bhutan
Bolivia	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Botswana	Brazil
British Virgin Islands [Virgin Islands, British]	Brunei [Brunei Darussalam]
Bulgaria	Burkina [Burkina Faso]
Burma [Myanmar]	Burundi
Cambodia	Cameroon
Canada	Canary Islands

Other Non-EU world country nationals

Cape Verde	Caribbean, not otherwise specified
Cayman Islands	Central African Republic
Central America, not otherwise specified	Chad
Channel Islands, not otherwise specified	Chile
China	China (Taiwan) [Taiwan, Province Of China]
Christmas Island	Cocos (Keeling) Islands
Colombia	Comoros
Congo	Congo (Democratic Republic) [Congo (The Democratic Republic of the)] {Formerly Zaire}
Cook Islands	Costa Rica
Cyprus (European Union)	Cuba
Cyprus, not otherwise specified	Cyprus (Non-European Union)
Czechoslovakia not otherwise specified	Czech Republic
Djibouti	Denmark
Dominican Republic	Dominica
Ecuador	East Timor [Timor Leste]
El Salvador	Egypt
Eritrea	Equatorial Guinea
Ethiopia	Estonia
European Union, not otherwise specified	Europe, not otherwise specified
Faroe Islands	Falkland Islands [Falkland Islands (Malvinas)]
Finland	Fiji

Other Non-EU world country nationals

French Guiana	France {includes Corsica}
Gabon	French Polynesia
Georgia	Gambia, The
Ghana	Germany
Greece	Gibraltar
Grenada	Greenland
Guam	Guadeloupe {includes St Martin (North)}
Guernsey	Guatemala
Guinea-Bissau	Guinea
Haiti	Guyana
Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China) [Hong Kong]	Honduras
Hungary	Iceland
Italy {Includes Sardinia, Sicily}	Israel
Jamaica	Ivory Coast [Côte D'ivoire]
Jersey	Japan
Kazakhstan	Jordan
Kiribati	Kenya
Korea (South) [Korea, Republic of]	Korea (North) [Korea, Democratic People's Republic of]
Kuwait	Kosovo
Laos [Lao People's Democratic Republic]	Kyrgyzstan
Lebanon	Latvia

Other Non-EU world country nationals

Liberia	Lesotho
Liechtenstein	Libya [Libyan Arab Jamahiriya]
Luxembourg	Lithuania
Macedonia [Macedonia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of]	Macao (Special Administrative Region of China) [Macao]
Malawi	Madagascar
Maldives	Malaysia
Malta	Mali
Martinique	Marshall Islands
Mauritius	Mauritania
Mexico	Mayotte
Middle East, not otherwise specified	Micronesia [Micronesia, Federated States of]
Monaco	Moldova [Moldova, Republic of]
Montserrat	Mongolia
Mozambique	Morocco
Norfolk Island	Niue
Northern Mariana Islands	North America, not otherwise specified
Oman	Norway
Palau	Pakistan
Paraguay	Papua New Guinea
Philippines	Peru
Poland	Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie And Oeno Islands [Pitcairn]

Other Non-EU world country nationals

Puerto Rico	Portugal {Includes Madeira, Azores}
Réunion	Qatar
Russia [Russian Federation]	Romania
Samoa	Rwanda
Sao Tome And Principe	San Marino
Senegal	Saudi Arabia
Serbia And Montenegro	Seychelles
Sierra Leone	Slovakia
Singapore	Solomon Islands
Slovenia	South Africa
Somalia	South Georgia And The South Sandwich Islands
South America, not otherwise specified	Spain {includes CEUTA, MELILLA}
Spain (Except Canary Islands)	Sri Lanka
Spain, not otherwise specified	St Kitts And Nevis
St Helena	St Pierre And Miquelon
St Lucia	Sudan
St Vincent And The Grenadines	Svalbard And Jan Mayen
Surinam [Suriname]	Sweden
Swaziland	Syria [Syrian Arab Republic]
Switzerland	Tanzania [Tanzania, United Republic of]
Tajikistan	Togo
Thailand	Tonga

Other Non-EU world country nationals

Tokelau	Tunisia
Trinidad and Tobago	Turkmenistan
Turkey	Tuvalu
Turks and Caicos Islands	Ukraine
Uganda	United Arab Emirates
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics not otherwise specified	United States Virgin Islands [Virgin Islands, U. S.]
United States	Uzbekistan
Uruguay	Vatican City [Holy See (Vatican City State)]
Vanuatu	Vietnam [Viet Nam]
Venezuela	West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip [Palestinian Territory, Occupied]
Wallis and Futuna	Yemen
Western Sahara	Zambia
Yugoslavia not otherwise specified	Not Known
Zimbabwe	