



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

Additional university places in 2020-21 following 2020 SQA results

SFC Announcement

Issue Date: 26 August 2020

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Summary: Guidance on additional funded student places that will be allocated to universities in Academic Year 2020-21 following the Scottish Government's statement regarding 2020 SQA results.

FAO: Principals and Chairs of Scotland's universities

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Additional university places in 2020-21 following 2020 SQA results

Introduction

1. I am writing to announce guidance on the additional funded student places that the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) will allocate to universities in Academic Year (AY) 2020-21 following the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) results. This follows the Deputy First Minister's (DFM) statement to the Scottish Parliament on 11 August 2020.

Background/Context

2. Following the closure of schools on 20 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SQA 2019-20 examinations were cancelled and the Scottish Government asked the SQA to develop an alternative approach to certification to ensure students would receive their awards. The SQA developed an alternative certification model based on teacher/lecturer estimates (and a moderation of some of those estimates). The results were issued on 4 August 2020 and showed an increase in the Higher pass rate to 78.9% (4.1% higher than 2019) and an Advanced Higher pass rate of 84.9% (5.5% higher than 2019).
3. As a result of the agreed SQA moderation process around 134,000 individual results were adjusted from the estimates of grades that were submitted by teachers/lecturers. Just under 76,000 candidates had one or more of their grades lowered, when compared to those estimates.
4. On 11 August the DFM asked the SQA to re-issue those awards based solely on teacher or lecturer judgement. It was also confirmed that in those cases where moderation led to an increased grade, candidates would not lose that award.
5. The initial analysis of this change is that the Higher pass rate is now 89.2% (14.4% higher than 2019) and the Advanced Higher pass rate is now 93.1% (13.7% higher than 2019). The final new headline results have now been published by the SQA.
6. Due to the unique circumstances of the situation, the DFM gave a commitment that the Scottish Government would "this year make provision for enough places in universities and colleges to ensure that no one is crowded out of a place they would otherwise have been awarded".

Student number controls - monitoring and controlling university places

7. At the start of the current admissions cycle, offers for university places would have been made in the context of the Scottish Government's over-recruitment ('consolidation') policy, which limits the number of full-time Scottish/European Union (EU) undergraduates.

8. There are however a significant number of students who would have applied for a university place and were rejected on the basis of the initial results they received on 4 August. A reasonable proportion of these students will have had their results upgraded and will therefore now meet the relevant course entry requirements. This will mean that many institutions will have recruited more students than they had originally intended.
9. This announcement therefore sets out how SFC will meet the commitment given from the DFM that there will be sufficient student places at university to cater for these students.

Additional funded student places in AY 2020-21

10. The Scottish Government's over-recruitment ('consolidation') policy for AY 2020-21 has been removed so that there will be no financial penalty for over-recruitment of full-time Scottish/EU undergraduate students.
11. Provided universities fill their existing funded places for AY 2020-21:
 - SFC will fund the increase in Scottish school and college leavers (with Highers and Advanced Highers from the 2020 SQA examinations diet) enrolled on full-time undergraduate courses between AY 2019-20 and AY 2020-21, through the allocation of additional funded places in AY 2020-21.
 - If this increase in leaver enrolments is more than the number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) students above a university's funded places, any additional funding will be reduced accordingly. (This is to avoid any double-counting, i.e. funding places that are already included in the [University Outcome Agreement Funding allocations for AY 2020-21](#) announced in April and updated in June this year).
12. The above scenario is one of three provided in an Annex to this announcement which show how the allocation of additional funded places would be determined.

Calculation of additional funding

13. Using the latest school/college leaver data, SFC will calculate the increase in leavers with Highers and Advanced Highers enrolled at university between AY 2019-20 and AY 2020-21. Using our teaching subject price groups (and SAAS tuition fee assumptions) we will then estimate the additional teaching funding for each university.
14. Once the increase is known, universities will be allocated additional funded places through a formal offer of grant letter. The corresponding additional teaching grant will be paid to universities in-year. SFC may adjust this allocation of funding, if necessary, when the university's FTE number of students eligible

for funding compared to funded places is known, and also when the number of entrants from schools and colleges (with Highers and Advanced Highers) can be compared with corresponding information derived from the HESA student returns in December 2021.

Future years

15. Additional funded places will be allocated to continue to support this larger AY 2020-21 student cohort moving through the system until AY 2023-24/2024-25 (based on a four/five year degree programme), taking account of any change in the unit of teaching resource and progression rates.
16. Whilst our immediate concern and the focus of this announcement is on arrangements for the increased demand for entry in AY 2020-21 from school/college leavers, SFC is aware that there is likely to be a similar increased demand for entry in AY 2021-22 from current S5 pupils with improved results moving to S6 this year. SFC will therefore have further discussions with the Scottish Government and the sector in due course with regards to AY 2021-22 entry.

Recruitment cycles

17. SFC is aware that not all institutions are likely to receive additional funding, even if they fill or exceed their existing funded places. This would happen if the number of SQA Higher/Advanced Higher candidates reduced and they were replaced with students holding alternative qualifications.
18. We understand that some universities may have taken decisions on admissions well in advance of 11 August to manage their overall student number targets and levels of 'fees-only' students. Having made these decisions, some universities may feel that they will be disadvantaged by this announcement to fund an increase in school and college leavers. In these, and other exceptional circumstances, individual universities may wish to provide evidence of their particular situation to SFC, in order to protect the interests of students. That evidence may include lower intake decisions taken earlier in the recruitment/admissions cycle, along with the higher intake evidence as a result of the SQA result change.

Entry requirements

19. Universities must ensure that any additional school leavers have the minimum entry standards for courses, taking account of any contextualised admission criteria for access students.

Student enrolment data

20. Given the unique circumstances, there is obviously some uncertainty in relation to potential student numbers. In order to gain more robust evidence:
- UCAS will provide SFC with individual institutional data throughout the clearing process.
 - Universities must also provide regular enrolment updates broken down by domicile - Scottish, rest of UK, EU and international (non-EU) - to SFC through until December 2020. (To that end, SFC will create an online pro forma for universities.)

Controlled subjects

21. For Health-related controlled subjects, the consolidation cap also applies to students from the rest of the UK (rUK). I can advise, therefore, that the cap on Scottish/EU and rUK students for controlled subjects will be removed to allow all students who have met their conditional offers to take up their places. Any remaining places can be filled through clearing. Where there are any particularly acute challenges around capacity or placements, SFC and SG officials will work with institutions to address these, recognising that deferrals may be part of the solution.

Conditions of additional funding

22. The following conditions will apply to the allocation of any additional funded places in AY 2020-21:
- Universities must fill their existing funded places as set out in the published University Outcome Agreement Funding allocations for AY 2020-21.
 - Additional funded places are limited to school and college leavers with Highers and Advanced Highers from the 2020 SQA examinations diet.
 - Additional funded places are for school/college leavers that possess the minimum entry standards, taking account of any contextualised admission criteria for access students.
 - Universities must provide SFC with regular data on enrolments up to, and including, their Early Statistics Return in December 2020.

Further information

23. I fully understand the unique circumstances of this situation and acknowledge the many uncertainties you are managing. This announcement aims to provide greater clarity about how best to proceed. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that young people are able to pursue their higher education goals.

24. Should you have any queries, please contact Martin Smith, Chief Funding and Information Officer, tel: 0131 313 6528, email: msmith@sfc.ac.uk; or Gordon Anderson, Senior Policy/Analysis Officer, tel: 0131 313 6551, email: ganderson@sfc.ac.uk.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "KWatt". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Karen Watt
Chief Executive

Examples of additional funded student places in AY 2020-21 under different scenarios

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
AY 2019-20 entrants (school/college leavers) ¹	250	250	250
AY 2020-21 entrants (school/college leavers) ²	275	275	275
Additional AY 2020-21 entrants	25	25	25
AY 2020-21 funded places	10,000	10,000	10,000
AY 2020-21 students eligible for funding	10,025	10,020	10,050
FTEs above funded places	25	20	50
Additional funded places for AY 2020-21³	25	20	25

1. Scottish school and college leavers (with Highers and Advanced Highers from the 2019 SQA examinations diet) enrolled on full-time undergraduate courses.
2. Scottish school and college leavers (with Highers and Advanced Highers from the 2020 SQA examinations diet) enrolled on full-time undergraduate courses.
3. Scottish Government through SFC will fund the minimum between the increase in entrants (school and college leavers), and the Students Eligible for Funding (FTEs) above the funded places for AY 2020-21.