Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

Guidance for Outcome Agreements for Colleges and Universities AY 2021-22

SFC Guidance

Issue Date: 31 August 2021

Guidance for Outcome Agreements for Colleges and Universities AY 2021-22

Issue date: 31 August 2021

Reference: SFC/GD/22/2021

Summary: This guidance outlines the steps required to ensure an agreement is in place between SFC and each university, college or college region during this transition year which captures, at a high level, contributions, impact and outcomes and provides assurance on use of allocated funding in AY 2021-22.

FAO: Principals and Chairs of Scotland's colleges and universities and regional strategic bodies

Further information:
Contact: Linda McLeod
Job title: Assistant Director
Department: Access, Learning and Outcomes
Tel: 0131 313 6694
Email: lmcleod@sfc.ac.uk

Contents

Guidance for Outcome Agreements for Colleges and Universities AY 2021-22

Foreword

1.   This guidance outlines the steps required to ensure a transitional year Outcome Agreement is in place between SFC and each university[1], college or college region which captures, at a high level, contributions, impact and outcomes, and provides assurance on use of allocated funding in AY 2021-22. It follows the recent publication of the SFC report Coherent Provision and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research[2].

2.   We recognise that colleges and universities are working towards recovery following the emergency period and that institutions are continuing to deliver a responsive learning approach, ensuring the well-being of students and staff, and delivering an education-led economic recovery for Scotland. Through this approach to the Outcome Agreements we are taking steps to support all our institutions during extraordinary times.

3.   As set out in the [Coherent Provision and Sustainability Report](), we have recommended that we work collaboratively with the sector and key stakeholders to develop a new overarching National Impact Framework (NIF) to ensure greater alignment with Scotland's National Performance Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This would be relevant to future agreements. This guidance and the associated priorities outlined below cover Outcome Agreements for AY 2021-22.

4.   The Framework for the Outcome Agreements for AY 2021-22 seeks to:

   - Focus on the delivery of outcomes and impact for students.
   - Ensure colleges and universities outline their contributions to a more focused set of priority issues.
   - Promote and reflect individual and collective responses to recovery with narrative on commitments, deliverables, and expected impact.
   - Ensure transparency and clear accountability for public funding.

5.   This Framework represents a commitment to align priorities with what will be needed to support economic recovery, to support those already in the education system (at schools, colleges and universities), those who may need upskilling or reskilling opportunities and those who may be looking to re-enter employment.

---

[1] We are using University in the guidance to refer to all institutions in the university sector.
[2] Also referred to as the Coherent Provision and Sustainability Report. Available here: http://www.sfc.ac.uk/review/review.aspx

6. At the same time we expect colleges and universities to continue with commitments to widen access, deliver high quality research and ensure a high quality learning experience for all students that will in most cases be different in shape, structure and mode to previous years. Ensuring clear plans are in place to protect the quality of the student learning experience will be particularly important, as will ensuring support is available to students who may be graduating from college or university into a challenging labour market.

7. We are particularly aware of the need to maintain volumes of provision this year when the economy will be in a recovery period, to allow students to continue to access the learning and employability skills that will ensure a pathway to employment when jobs become available, or a route back into employment for those who may now be out of work, or returning to work, through upskilling or reskilling.

Outcome Agreement arrangements for AY 2021-22 at a glance

- Aims to capture – at a high level – deliverables, impact and outcomes, and to give assurance on the use of allocated funding in AY 2021-22.
- Seeks contributions to a re-focused set of priorities, with an emphasis on continuing to safeguard student health and wellbeing, and support an education-led economic recovery for Scotland.
- Signals a move to improve and streamline reporting, particularly if the information is available elsewhere, reducing bureaucracy and duplication.
- Reflects an ongoing commitment to fair access and transitions; enhanced focus on quality learning and teaching, the student experience; student engagement; equalities and inclusion; and impactful research and innovation.
- Enables institutions to demonstrate their impact in terms that are relevant to their particular situation and mission.
- Is no more than 15 pages in length.

8. To support this, SFC will issue a bespoke measures table to each institution with AY 2019-20 data, which will also be used to populate projections for AY 2021-22. In keeping with Interim Year guidance, institutions will be asked to provide one year of projections for AY 2021-22.

Discuss with your Outcome Agreement Manager

9. Institutions should liaise with their dedicated Outcome Agreement Manager on any issues or requests. Contact details are available on our website.

Key dates

SFC Outcome Agreement AY 2021-22		
	What is required	**Purpose**
August 2021	**Outcome Agreement Guidance for AY 2021-22 published.**	Setting our guidance and priorities for AY 2021-22.
By 30 November 2021	Self-evaluation for AY 2020-21 submitted – outlining impact of COVID-19 on delivery and targets. To be appended to your Outcome Agreement. Refer to Annex A for details. **Requires sign-off by Board/ Senior Executive Group or similar. If the date proves difficult discuss with your Outcome Manager.**	Provides SFC with data and commentary on impact of COVID-19 on delivery in AY 2020-21 and notes implications for AY 2021-22. We will factor this in to future discussions for AY 2021-22.
By 30 November 2021	Outcome Agreement for AY 2021-22 submitted. **Requires sign-off by Board/ Senior Executive Group or similar. If the date proves difficult discuss with your Outcome Manager.** Refer to Annex C for Universities Technical Guidance and Annex D for Colleges Technical Guidance.	Provides SFC with line of accountability for use of funding in AY 2021-22.
January 2022	Outcome Agreements for AY 2021-22 – final sign off.	Confirms institutional plans and commitments for AY 2021-22.
By 31 January 2022	Outcome Agreements for AY 2021-22 published.	Confirms institutional plans and commitments for AY 2021-22.

Arrangements for AY 2021-22

Outcome agreements focused on key priorities and commitments

10. SFC is aware of the competing demands that are impacting on institutions and wants to ensure Outcome Agreement reporting is appropriately focused, impactful and proportionate. We have therefore, informed by our Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability, restricted the key policy priorities we expect to be covered in the OA for this year.

11. We are seeking an ongoing commitment and statement of intent from colleges and universities to deliver on key sector priorities and outcomes for students, for research, and for economic recovery and social renewal. The priority list is pared back and includes:

    - Fair access and transitions.
    - Quality learning and teaching.
    - Learning with impact – students are equipped and ready to take up appropriate employment in the future.
    - Student participation and engagement in their educational experience.
    - Equalities and inclusion.
    - High quality research and innovation.
    - Meeting future skills needs, skills alignment and including upskilling and reskilling.
    - Responding to the climate emergency.

Appropriate measures to assess impact

12. The **SFC Outcome and Impact Framework** (OIF) on page 12 outlines the priority outcomes and policy expectations which we expect OAs to cover. The Framework sets out policy priorities for AY 2021-22 with the associated indicators for success or national measures for each priority where appropriate.

13. Our approach this year recognises the extraordinary circumstances we are operating within and the challenges facing institutions. To support institutions we have pared back the national measures and focused on key priorities. Nevertheless we recognise that the current situation means there may be other matters where we will require additional statements of intent around your commitments, and occasionally separate reporting, but we will give you appropriate notice of requirements throughout the year. For example, reporting on the use of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund, Young Persons Guarantee, Gaelic – where relevant, National Transition Training Fund or the Upskilling allocations.

14. For colleges the national measures are:

- Activity - Credits delivered (Core / ESF / Core + ESF).
- Widening Access -Volume and proportion of Credits delivered to learners in the most deprived 10% postcode areas (SIMD10).
- The volume and proportion of Credits delivered to care-experienced learners.
- Senior Phase - number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges.
- Achievement - proportion of enrolled students successfully achieving a recognised qualification (FT & PT).
- Articulation - the number and proportion of successful learners who have achieved HNC or HND qualifications articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing.
- In work/destination - the number and proportion of full-time college qualifiers in work, training and/or further study 3-6 months after qualifying.
- Satisfaction – using the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey - the percentage of students overall, satisfied with their college experience.

15. For Universities the national measures are:

- Total number of Scottish domiciled undergraduate entrants.
- The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled learners articulating from college to degree level courses with advanced standing.
- The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes.
- The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants that are care-experienced.
- The number and proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants returning to study in year two.
- The difference (+/-) from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey.
- The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers entering positive destinations.
- The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled full-time first degree graduates entering professional occupations.
- The number of Scotland-domiciled qualifiers at undergraduate level.

16. Outcome Agreement Managers will issue a national measures table to each college, college region and university with key data, including AY 2019-20 baselines. Only those national measures outlined will continue to be a priority however, SFC will, as a matter of course, continue to monitor all performance measures we currently have in addition to those identified as priority.

17. The Technical guidance is attached at Annex C and D and provides updates on the measures relevant for this year.

Target setting for AY 2021-22

18. For this Transition Year we are asking institutions to submit one year of projections for the revised list of measures, for AY 2021-22.

19. These projections should simultaneously be ambitious yet realistic, accounting for the additional challenges facing institutions as we pivot from the pandemic toward economic recovery.

20. We will expect institutions to review and understand how protected characteristics and special interest groups (eg care experience) impact on core measures. In particular within institutional self-evaluations and outcome agreements we would expect institutions' to account for any variance of outcomes by protected characteristic or special interest group (eg care experience or deprivation) with any accompanying plan for improvement. SFC engagement through Outcome Agreement Managers will have particular interest on overall outcomes and outcomes by care experience, deprivation and protected characteristics.

Contribution to economic recovery and social renewal

21. **The other sections in the Framework** invite a narrative that both describes the contribution colleges and universities will make to support economic recovery and social renewal in AY 2021-22 and the expected impact of these contributions.

22. This transition year will require continued flexibility and applied ways of learning, so students can access opportunities at a time that suits them and lays strong foundations for moving into the job market. There also needs to be a focus on upskilling and reskilling to allow routes to new and changing industries and jobs as they emerge.

23. We also want to know how colleges and universities are responding to ensure the health and well-being of students and staff as they progress through this challenging year.

24. In responding to this section of the Framework we expect a brief narrative in your Outcome Agreement summarising how you have responded to the immediate challenges of the COVID-19 emergency. How as an institution you are continuing to deliver high quality learning and teaching and ensuring the health and wellbeing of staff and students in the face of ongoing pressures ensuing from COVID-19. Specifically we would like to better understand your commitments and contribution to economic and social recovery. We request a short, focused response in line with your own institution's particular mission, strategy, and context responding to the points below, alongside any other relevant information.

Research Excellence Grant

25. Universities are required to provide case studies showing how SFC research excellence grant funding is being used to achieve/work towards greater excellence, but with additional emphasis on the sustainability and resilience of the institution's research base; and on the contribution to broader recovery.

University Innovation Fund

26. For universities, we also require an updated **University Innovation Fund plan for AY 2021-22**, further details on this are provided in Annex B.

Climate Emergency

27. Universities and College regions should outline their response to the Climate emergency including any specific strategies and work linked to COP26.

Prompt questions

28. The following list is not intended to be proscriptive - use as a guide:

- Which stakeholders are you working with to ensure that course provision remains responsive to shifting needs of employers/industry?
- What specific needs have employers/industry identified, both short-term and longer-term, and how are you adapting or shifting your provision in response? (with particular reference to courses starting in January/February)
- How have you utilised additional funding for economic recovery to mitigate the projected rise in unemployment and support individuals who have been made unemployed, are facing unemployment, or whose jobs are at risk as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and/or EU Exit?
- Which groups, or issues, are you particularly seeking to respond to e.g. those recently becoming unemployed, young people entering the workplace for the first time, those who have previously been furthest from the job market, upskilling, reskilling, retraining, net zero and climate emergency?
- How you are managing the work-based learning and practical aspects of course provision and ensuring students are prepared for the workplace given ongoing constraints?
- How do you understand, value and respond to the lived student experience, particularly those most impacted by the pandemic, in your institution? How do you support their transition, their well-being and achievements and progression?
- How are you working with students and their representative bodies to develop both short term and future plans to secure and enhance the quality of the student experience?
- How will you support the sector's achievement of the Blueprint for Fairness's targets?

- How you are evolving your strategy for knowledge exchange and innovation and working with others in the system, for example the enterprise agencies, in the context of the pandemic?

Self-evaluation reports on delivery of AY 2020-21 Outcome Agreement commitments, including impact of COVID-19

29. The date for submitting self-evaluations is 30 November 2021. You should submit your self-evaluation as an annex to your Outcome Agreement. If you have any queries about this timeline please contact your Outcome Agreement Manager. We expect that you will have already prepared this information for internal reporting requirements and can be flexible with regard to the format of these reports.

30. Annex A describes the self-evaluation reporting requirements for colleges and for universities.

Further information

31. In addition to this guidance document, the following annexes are also available to support this process:

- Annex A: Self-evaluation reporting for AY 2020-21.
- Annex B: University Innovation Fund Plans for AY 2021-22.
- Annex C: University Technical Guidance on SFC's measures of progress.
- Annex D: College Technical Guidance on SFC's measures of progress.

32. Any queries/requests for further information should be directed to Linda McLeod, Assistant Director, Outcomes, e-mail: lmcleod@sfc.ac.uk.

James Dunphy
Director, Access, Learning and Outcomes

Outcome and Impact Framework AY 2021-22

Outcomes for Students		
Outcome	**Expectations**	**Measures and indicators of success**
Fair access and transitions Education is accessible to students from all backgrounds and students at all levels are supported through successful pathways.	• People from deprived areas have fair access and are supported to succeed. • People with experience of care have fair access and are supported to succeed. • Prior learning is considered and students are offered the best pathway for them. • Transitions and pathways for students are supported and signposted. • Institutions work with schools, SFC funded programmes and local communities to support successful pathways and effective transitions for students.	**Core national measures for universities:** • **Total number of Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants (SDUEs).** • **Scottish domiciled FT first degree entrants from SIMD20 (i.e. the COWA measure).** • **No. of SDUEs with care experience.** • **Articulation – advanced standing from college level to degree level study.** **Core national measures for colleges:** • **Credits delivered.** • **Proportion of credits delivered to SIMD10.** • **Proportion of credits delivered to care-experienced students.** • **DYW- No. of senior phase age pupils on vocational qualifications delivered by colleges.** • **Articulation – advanced standing from college level to degree level study.**

Outcomes for Students		
Outcome	**Expectations**	**Measures and indicators of success**
High quality, learning, teaching and support Students at all levels experience a high-quality, safe and supportive learning experience that enables them to succeed in their studies and they find it easy to participate and engage in their educational experience.	• The student experience of learning, teaching and support is protected in the ongoing public health context. • There is rigour and quality in learning and teaching processes. • Arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement support standards expected by students. • Enhancement and improvement of learning, teaching and support is informed by data and evidence – including the outcomes of quality assurance. • Well-developed strategies and approaches for digital and blended learning are in place. • Staff have the skills and support to deliver a high quality learning, teaching and support experience for students. • Students have good experiences of transitions into and through tertiary level learning. • Students are supported in their mental health and wellbeing.	**Core national measures and indicators for universities:** • **Retention.** • **Articulation.** • **Number of Scottish domiciled qualifiers at undergraduate level.** • **Overall student satisfaction (NSS).** • Outcomes of QAAS engagement and review work commissioned by SFC. • Institutional ILR annual reports. **Core national measures and indicators for colleges:** • **Success FE (FT & PT), HE (FT & PT).** • **Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey.** • Retention (FT &PT HE and FE). • Progression. • Outcomes of Education Scotland engagement and review work commissioned by SFC.

Outcomes for Students		
Outcome	**Expectations**	**Measures and indicators of success**
Partnership, participation and student experience Students find it easy to participate, have their voice heard and valued, and influence their educational and student experience.	• Students have their voice heard and valued, and are able to influence their educational experience. • Effective partnership arrangements exist between institutional leadership teams and student bodies. • Student partnership is valued across the institution and plays a key role in enhancing the student experience.	• Outline approaches to enhance student engagement and experience including partnership agreements with Students' Associations. • Arrangements exist for training Student officers.
Learning with impact Students at all levels are equipped to flourish in employment, further study and to lead fulfilling lives.	• Students are supported to successfully complete their courses in the ongoing public health context. • Students are supported to progress to positive next destinations. • Institutions implement appropriate support arrangements for graduating cohorts who will experience a challenging labour market in coming months/years. • Institutions ensure their curriculum and pedagogical offer remains fit for purpose and is responsive to changed need and demand • There is a good understanding of the needs of business and industry; and Scotland's economic recovery needs.	**Core national measure for Universities:** • **Graduate Outcomes** (Scottish Domiciled qualifiers in positive destinations and FT Scottish-domiciled qualifiers employed at 'professional' level). **Core national measure for colleges:** • **College Leaver Destinations.**

Outcomes for Students

Outcome	Expectations	Measures and indicators of success
Public health emergency Institutions are responsive, have assurance mechanisms in place to comply with guidance, communicate well with students, staff and communities, and remedy situations as they arise.	• Institutions take steps to ensure the health and well- being and best interests of their students and staff during the emergency period.	• Clear plans exist as to how learning and teaching will be managed through the emergency period and these are regularly reviewed taking account of SG Guidance. • There is appropriate and successful use of blended and online learning.
Equalities and inclusion Every student has their individual needs recognised in terms of protected characteristics; and everyone is treated fairly and with respect.	• All students are supported to achieve their full potential.	• Colleges and universities comply with relevant legislation and commit to prioritising action to tackle inequalities. • Equality Impact Assessments are published. • Action is taken to improve management information (protected characteristic data) with regard to equalities priorities (e.g. harassment, mental health). • Universities and Colleges to understand how protected characteristics impact on core measures.

Outcomes for Research		
Outcome	**Expectations**	**Measures and indicators of success**
Research excellence	• Institutions produce excellent research outputs. • The research impact reaches beyond academia. • The research environment supports excellence and impact.	• **Case studies** showing use of SFC research excellence grant funding to achieve/ work towards greater excellence but with additional emphasis on sustainability/ resilience of HEI's research base; and on contribution to broader recovery. These will contribute to impact reporting. • REF2021 results to be published in April 2022.
Research sustainability (incorporates collaboration) Institutions ensure they protect their world-leading research programmes against the impact of COVID-19.	• The research environment supports excellence and impact. • Institutions implement the Research Integrity and Researcher Development concordats. • Support for PhD students, who are the pipeline of talent for future research and who have been adversely affected by the instability created by the pandemic.	• SFC will receive regular reporting from each university on the use of their allocation of the one-off £75m and £20m increase in funding to help secure the jobs and training needed to support ongoing and future research work. • We will seek evidence of compliance with the Researcher Development Concordat through the Outcome and Investment Agreement process and Research Integrity Concordat through engagement with Universities UK.

Outcomes for Economic Recovery and Social Renewal		
Outcome	**Expectations**	**Measures and indicators of success**
Responsive institutions Institutions are responsive to employer and industry needs and to current and future skills requirements.	• Institutions make use of labour market intelligence and employer / industry engagement to align provision. • Institutions play their part in upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce. • People have the necessary meta skills and attributes to succeed. • There is appropriate provision to help people upskill and reskill. • Institutions help find pathways for people without work to study and move into employment.	• Institutions are actively engaged in regular review and appraisal of provision to ensure this continues to meet, and changes to support, the range of learner, community and employer need. • In support of economic recovery to provide provision that delivers impact and successful outcomes for learners, communities and employers. (i.e. Flexible Workforce Development Fund (colleges), NTTF, YPG and Upskilling Funding (universities)). • SFC receives regular reporting from each institution on the use of additional funding to mitigate the projected rise in unemployment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and/or EU Exit, ensuring individuals can access training which will increase their chances of gaining employment.

Outcomes for Economic Recovery and Social Renewal		
Outcome	**Expectations**	**Measures and indicators of success**
Confident and highly capable - work-ready - graduates Work-ready graduates are confident and ready to secure success in their career, meeting employer needs and making a positive contribution to our economy and society: Students are equipped to take up employment and succeed when the job market opens up.	• There is a pipeline of technically skilled people for key industries where skills gaps identified. • Programmes should equip graduates with the skills, knowledge and capabilities to be successful in their chosen career. • Effective support should be in place to enable students to understand their careers options, to self-assess and to undertake career planning. • Wherever relevant or beneficial, students should have opportunities to engage in work-informed or work-based learning.	• Graduates are able to utilise the skills and qualifications they have gained to access opportunities within the labour market. • **College Leaver Destinations** survey. • **Graduate Outcomes - Universities**
Knowledge Exchange and Innovation	• Colleges and HEIs are focusing and prioritising their knowledge exchange and innovation activity on Scotland's economic and social recovery.	• Universities submit an updated **UIF plan** with their Outcome Agreement. **Detailed guidance is provided at Annex B**. • Completion of the HESA HE-Business and Community Interaction survey and the SFC KE data return will remain conditions of grant for institutions to receive the UIF.

Outcomes for Economic Recovery and Social Renewal		
Outcome	**Expectations**	**Measures and indicators of success**
Collaboration There is active collaboration with other SFC funded institutions and across the education and skills system.	• Institutions consider and pursue meaningful opportunities for collaboration which fit with their mission and vision and supports the delivery of coherent, sustainable provision and research. • Institutions consider collaboration on estates assets that could: improve local coherence and sustainability of provision; reduce carbon emissions and be a part of place-based approach to economic recovery.	• Specific details of new collaborative arrangements, or plans for collaboration, and what they will achieve in terms of impact for all stakeholders.
Climate emergency Institutions take urgent action to help reduce or halt climate change, avoid irreversible damage, and support environmental sustainability measures.	• Colleges and universities demonstrate innovative approaches in their response to the climate emergency. Evidence of transformative leadership and the empowerment of sector communities, building capacity in institutional structures across the sectors, developing a placed-based approach to the climate emergency. • Colleges and universities outline how they are engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals.	• Institutions take urgent action to help reduce or halt climate change, avoid irreversible damage, and support environmental sustainability measures and a pathway to net zero.