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## Outcome Agreements 2023-24

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### Purpose

1. This paper is to inform the SEAL Committee of the proposed arrangements for the development of AY 2023-24 Outcome Agreements (OAs) and the subsequent development of the OA guidance.
2. The remit and arrangements for the OAs during in 2023-24 will provide for a transitional year of OAs ahead of the development of a new assurance and accountability approach for 2024-25 onwards, a broader National Impact Framework and the Government's Principles and Purpose for post-secondary education alongside other key recommendations flowing from the SFC Review.
3. The OA itself will focus on key priority areas where SFC is seeking assurance for 2023-24, and will be accompanied by a self-evaluation, case studies, and a completed table of national measures. The timescales for publication of the guidance, and submission and publication of the Outcome Agreements will be earlier than the last few cycles, to bring the process back earlier in the calendar so that they become more forward-looking documents, as originally intended.
4. We published the [OA Guidance 2023-24](#) on 11 May with the proviso that it may be subject to change depending on content in the Ministerial letter of guidance.

### Background

5. OAs were introduced to capture for each university, college or college region, at a high level, contributions, impact and outcomes, and to provide assurance on and accountability for the use of allocated funding in the academic year. In the early years, the OAs were negotiated and agreed in the academic year before that to which the funding related (i.e., the 2016-17 OA was negotiated and agreed in the AY 2015-16).
6. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the timings were amended and the OA scope drawn much tighter to reflect: (a) the pressures on institutions in dealing with the impact of the pandemic; and (b) and transitional nature of the arrangements to future approaches to accountability as signaled in SFC's national review.
7. We had previously hoped that a new approach to assurance and accountability ('AAA') could be in place for the beginning of the 2023-24 academic year to reflect then-expected timings for Scottish Government's 'Purpose and Principles', but we now expect the AAA to be in place for the academic year 2024-25, following the finalisation of the government's work on Purpose and Principles. Consequently, we will need another year for OAs to provide continuity of assurance.
8. The [2022-23 academic year](#) is a transition year for colleges and universities with respect to their OAs and the Assurance and Outcome team is currently reviewing and feeding back on institutions' draft OAs, with final sign-off from institutions due in Spring 2023.

Following internal review and approval processes, these will be signed off by the SFC Chief Executive and published in late Spring 2023. Current OA requirements include:

- OA (expected by SFC to be no more than 15 pages, but commonly much longer) that includes a review of activities in the prior year (2021-22) and plans for the current year (2022-23) in the following areas:
  - Outcomes for students
  - Outcomes for research
  - Outcomes for economic recovery and social renewal.

The OAs will be published once finalised and approved by the SFC Chief Executive.

- National measures tables with projections for 2022-23 – these primarily include quantitative measures for the ‘outcomes for students’ aspects of the OA.
- Self-evaluation, that is not published.
- Case studies from those institutions in receipt of Research Excellence Grant (REG) funding, with the number of case studies varying from two to 16, depending on the amount of REG received.

## Approach for AY 2023-24

9. For 2023-24, to allow time to develop the new AAA and for institutions to prepare for new requirements, we will have a final transitional OA process that is earlier and more focused than in previous years. This also reflects that, with an earlier timetable to allow for engagement with and preparation for the new AAA, the 2022-23 OAs will just be signed off when we start negotiations for the 2023-24 OAs. We note that it was always inevitable that there would be an earlier process running close to or overlapping with the prior year, given the necessary slippage in timings during pandemic response – this occurred as part of emergency years flexibilities to enable institutions to deal with the pandemic. This move to an earlier timing, although inevitably challenging when it occurred, would be needed to ensure outcomes are agreed ahead of the year to which they relate.
10. In developing the proposed approach set out below we have received informal feedback from SFC staff and institutional representatives, and have amended the proposals accordingly to reflect their comments.
11. For the 2023-24 OA process, we will include four aspects to the OAs:
  - A short Outcome agreement that focuses on the institution's context (including financial sustainability) and what commitments institutions are making in priority areas. The OA will be published in line with previous years to ensure transparency over the commitments that institutions are making in return for the public funding that they receive. Priority areas are:
    - Fair Access and transitions

- Quality learning and teaching
  - Coherent learning provision
  - Work-based learning and skills
  - Net zero and environmental sustainability response
  - High-quality research and innovation (universities only)
  - University Innovation Fund (universities only).
- National measures table to be completed as forward looking and essentially an update of the 2022-23 table that is extended for 2023-24. To support institutions, we have maintained a pared back set of national measures, with a limited number of additions, and the focus on key priorities.
    - For colleges the national measures are (the bullets in bold are reinstated from the pre-pandemic table or new for 2023-24):
      - Activity - Credits delivered
      - 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.
      - **Proportion of enrolled care-experienced students successfully achieving a recognised qualification.**
      - **Proportion of enrolled SIMD10 students successfully achieving a recognised qualification (FT & PT).**
      - **Number and proportion of FT FE learners aged 16-19 successfully completing courses.**

- **Current total greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs).**
- For universities the national measures are (the bullets in bold are reinstated from the pre-pandemic table or new for 2023-24):
  - 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 (i.e. the COWA target measure)
  - 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.
  - Satisfaction – the percentage of respondents to the National Student Survey satisfied with the overall quality of their course.
  - 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.
  - **The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled entrants from the 20% most deprived backgrounds and from care experienced backgrounds returning to study in year two.**
  - **The number and proportion of Scotland domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% and 40% most deprived backgrounds.**
  - **Current total greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs).**
- Self-evaluation (up to six pages) against previous OA commitments – this will provide accountability for 2022-23 OA commitments (not to be published).
- Two (institutions not in receipt of REG) or three/four (institutions in receipt of REG, amount determined by size of REG allocation) case studies from each institution to demonstrate how funding has been used (to be published as part ‘OA achievements report’ and, in future, within database of case studies for public use).

## Key dates

SFC Outcome Agreement AY 2023-24		
	What is required?	Purpose
<b>11 May 2023</b>	OA Guidance for AY 2023-24 published.	Setting our guidance and priorities for AY 2023-24.
<b>May-September 2023</b>	OA drafting process by institutions. Institutions should share initial drafts with SFC OAMs in order to receive feedback, before institutions provide signoff.	Allows for time to fine-tune submitted OAs before signoff by institution Board or equivalent.
<b>By end October 2023</b>	Self-evaluation for AY 2022-23 submitted. Case studies submitted. OA submitted. National measures tables submitted. <b>Requires sign-off by Board or equivalent.</b>	Provides SFC with data and commentary on delivery in AY 2022-23 and notes any early signs for AY 2023-24. Provides SFC with line of accountability for use of funding in AY 2023-24.
<b>November 2023</b>	Engagement between SFC and institutions to provide feedback on case studies where necessary for amendment.	To ensure case studies are ready for collation into report.
<b>December 2023</b>	OAs for AY 2023-24 published along with final report including case studies.	

## Future development of assurance and accountability approaches

12. As detailed in our [Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability](#), SFC is developing a National Impact Framework and an associated Assurance and Accountability Approach. These will replace the current OA process. SFC will begin engaging with universities, colleges, regional strategic bodies and other stakeholders in the near-term and will publish further information in due course.

## Recommendations

13. The SEAL Committee is invited to note the paper.

## Publication

14. This paper will be published on the SFC website.

## Further information

15. Dr Jacqui Brasted, Deputy Director, Assurance and Outcomes, email: [jbrasted@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:jbrasted@sfc.ac.uk).