

BRIEFING - 15-24 LEARNER JOURNEY REVIEW

Background:

- The Government has concluded the Education Delivery Plan commitment to “*review the learning journey for all 16-24 year olds to ensure that education provision for young people is as effective and efficient as possible and provides more stepping stones for those needing most support.*” DFM launched a final report following the Review on May 10.
- This commitment was recast into a 15-24 learner journey review, to encompass all young people in the senior phase.
- The Review commenced in 2016 and considered how best to increase the efficiency of the learning system while enhancing quality and access for learners, acknowledging the importance of learner personalisation and choice alongside system efficiency.
- The Review has now concluded and the report was published on 10 May, 2018.
- The report sets out our ambition for all our young people to be equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to reach their full potential, in both their careers and their wider lives.
- The Education and Skills Committee launched a related inquiry on 10 May: on senior phase vocational pathways; and preparing young people for the world of work.

Top Lines

- The report sets out the Scottish Government’s ambition for a world class education and skills system.
- This system aims to deliver the best value to the learner, so all learners are on the right route to the right job
- The report recognizes;
 - The strengths of the Scottish education and skills system
 - Continuing to deliver excellence and equity for so many of our young people
 - Sets out priorities for further improvements to ensure all young people to get as much as possible from that system.
- The report also provides an opportunity to be absolutely clear about how we best align our system to deliver more choices; and to ensure that we value those choices equally - be they academic or vocational.
- In taking the Review recommendations forward, we are committed to improving the experience for the learner and setting a clear expectation for more purposeful collaboration between
 - schools,
 - colleges,
 - universities
 - and employers.
- The report considers the important issues identified by the Education and Skills Committee and offers some recommendations for action.

Approach

- The Review created a shared evidence base of young people’s experience of and outcomes from their learner journeys.
- This was used to inform the recommendations of the final report.
- The review specifically focused on the 15-24 stage of learning.
- This is in recognition that this is a critical point for young people in their journey, being the point of greatest choice – and potentially, therefore, overlap - in provision.

- The Review was undertaken through 5 workstreams: careers advice; access; provision; transitions & progression; and funding.
- An external 15-24 Learner Journey Review Group was established to oversee this work.
- This acted as a short life advisory group to assist the discussions around the emerging policy propositions.

Engagement

- As part of the Review, we commissioned research, undertaken by SQW Consultancy in partnership with Young Scot, into young people's experience of the education and training system in Scotland.
- The findings of this work was published on the Scottish Government website in early 2017.
- We also published interim reports and the output from extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including with employers.
- This can be found on the Scottish Government's Learner Journey Review website.

Findings

The Review has focused on:

- informed **decision making** by the learner;
- the **quality**, value and reach of the **provision** on offer to learners;
- straightforward, seamless efficient **connections** between different parts of the system, including recognition of prior learning;
- **equality** of access to these opportunities, including consideration of learner **funding**.

The report establishes five key priorities, with 17 recommendations for improvement:

1. Make it easier for young people to understand their subject and career choices at the earliest stage and providing long-term person-centred support for the young people who need this most;
2. Broaden our approach to education and reframing our offer; do more for those who get the least out of the system; ensure all young people access the high level work-based skills Scotland's economy needs;
3. Make the best use of our four year degree to give greater flexibility for more learners to move from S5 to year one of a degree, more from S6 to year 2, and more from college into years 2 and 3 of a degree, where appropriate;
4. Build collective leadership across the education and skills system;
5. Know how well our education and skills system is performing.

Redacted

BRIEFING FOR MINISTER FOR FURTHER EDUCATION, HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

13 SEPTEMBER 2018

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| When | 13 September 2018, 16:00-17:00 |
| What | Meeting between SG Officials and Minister to provide briefing on Industrial Relations issues in Further Education and Higher Education Sectors |
| Who | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [REDACTED] (HE Governance Team Leader, Advanced Learning and Science)• [REDACTED] (Head of College Policy, Advanced Learning and Science) |
| Where | Minister's Room (T4.07), Parliament |
| Media | N/A |
| Supporting official | N/A |
| Briefing contents | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annex A: FE Industrial Relations (DFM Briefing from 23 August 2018)• Annex B: Pam Currie opinion piece in Times Educational Supplement on FE national bargaining and pay (07 September 2018)• Annex C: HE Industrial Relations |

FURTHER EDUCATION INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (BRIEFING PROVIDED TO DFM ON 23 AUGUST 2018)**Lecturers dispute**

1. Officials arranged meetings with employers and support staff representatives (17 August) and a phone call with the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) lecturing staff representatives (21 August). The purpose of these communications was to ascertain the perspectives of all parties prior to the beginning of the new academic year.
2. Officials spoke with the EIS on 21 August. The EIS informed SG officials that they would be shortly seeking a meeting with the Deputy First Minister to discuss national bargaining – they were concerned about a lack of progress and willingness to negotiate from the employers. Officials advised DFM to accept the meeting request and make an equivalent offer to employers and support staff unions ahead of the new academic year.
3. **EIS previously requested a meeting with Ms Somerville who indicated - in June 2018 - that she would be willing to meet to hear the EIS perspective on the current dispute.**
4. A final pay offer was given to the EIS at the National Joint Negotiating Committee meeting of 19 April 2018. A follow up meeting was held on 21 June.
5. [REDACTED].
6. [REDACTED].
7. [REDACTED].
8. [REDACTED].
9. [REDACTED]

| Positions | Current Status |
|------------|--|
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] |

Support Staff

10. Support staff are close to a deal with employers for pay (cost of living) and terms and conditions for 2018/19 and 2019/20. This is positive news after a protracted set of negotiations. [REDACTED].

11. [REDACTED]

| Pay | Current status |
|------------|----------------|
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] |

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] |
| Conditions of Service | Current Status |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| Core Terms and Conditions | Current Status |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] |
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| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |

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|------------|--------------------------|
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [REDACTED] |
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] |

12. [REDACTED].

13. [REDACTED].

| Job Evaluation | Current Status |
|----------------|---|
| [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [REDACTED]• [REDACTED]• [REDACTED]• [REDACTED]• [REDACTED] |
|--|--|

Top lines:

- [REDACTED].
- [REDACTED].
- [REDACTED].
- [REDACTED].
- [REDACTED].
- [REDACTED].

Pam Currie (President of the EIS Further Education Lecturers' Association) opinion piece in Times Educational Supplement (TES) on FE national bargaining and pay - 'FE is simply not a priority for government' (07 September 2018)

Richard Lochhead's appointment as Scotland's minister for further and higher education is a welcome development for the Scottish FE sector at (another) critical juncture. His predecessors have overseen the difficult birth of national bargaining, with national strike action under both Angela Constance and Shirley-Anne Somerville, and if Mr Lochhead hopes for a quieter initiation, he may be disappointed.

Pay negotiations in the sector reached stalemate before the summer break and the EIS Further Education Lecturers' Association (EIS-FELA) opens a consultative ballot next week with a recommendation to reject management's offer. The offer conflates the issues of equal pay, covered in the March 2016 National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) Agreement, and the wholly separate matter of annual cost-of-living increases.

The 2016 agreement delivered a three-year plan for equal pay across the sector, with all lecturers on a new national scale point by April 2019. While this represented an increase for some lecturers, others stood still and some promoted lecturers faced salary conservation. No lecturer, promoted or unpromoted, has received a cost-of-living rise since 2016, and widely publicised rises awarded to principals have been met with anger and frustration in staffrooms.

'Derisory' college pay offer

Management's "final offer" is a mish-mash of unconsolidated payments across the sector for 2017 and 2018, with unpromoted staff at North East Scotland College (Nescol) receiving the maximum £600 and £1,000 and most unpromoted lecturers gaining nothing, followed by a 2.5 per cent consolidated increase in 2019. This, in effect, is a 2.5 per cent cost-of-living rise over a three-year period, well below the rate of inflation and in defiance of the government's commitment to lift the public sector pay cap.

The offer becomes derisory when you work out that for lecturers at Nescol it represents a £1 pay increase in 2019!

While the ballot question will focus on pay, the roots of this dispute reach beyond an annual cost-of-living rise. Lecturers in Scottish FE are rapidly losing patience with a management side which has sought to thwart national bargaining since its inception, from the refusal to honour the 2016 deal to the myriad local frustrations in implementing the 2017 agreements on core terms and conditions.

Lecturer workload and adequate time for preparation, marking and student guidance have long been key issues for EIS-FELA and were a focal point in the strike action which brought the sector to a halt last year. The agreement sets out a weekly timetabled maximum class contact of 23 hours, with provision for an additional hour to be used for cover or internal verification to a maximum of eight weeks in any consecutive 12 teaching weeks. Local managements have tied themselves in knots in their attempts to undermine this, with suggestions ranging from cutting five minutes from every class to removing breaks.

Colleges 'not committed to national bargaining'

Such efforts reinforce lecturers' belief that colleges are not committed to national bargaining, and previous government-led efforts to "learn the lessons" and take a broader view of the future of the

sector have come to nought around the negotiating table. The chaotic non-appointment of Gillian Martin and subsequent delay in appointing a new minister have given the impression once again that further education – and further education learners – are simply not a priority for the government until strike action looms.

Further education is central to the government's hopes of widening participation and closing the attainment gap, particularly in Stem and other skills-shortage areas. Colleges play a pivotal role in the Scottish economy and in our wider society, and we do so while working with learners from working-class backgrounds who face multiple barriers to accessing education.

It's high time that the government recognised this and invested accordingly – for without high-quality, qualified, experienced teaching staff, colleges are empty shells in which no learner can fulfil their potential.

National bargaining has brought the sector together after a quarter-century in our incorporated college silos, and it has done this on a truly national basis, from the City of Glasgow super-college to a six-person picket line on Benbecula. It has engaged FE lecturers in discussions in staffrooms, on social media and on the streets – not only about pay and conditions but also about what it means to be a lecturer, about teaching qualifications and CPD, and about the role and future of our sector. For many college principals, in contrast, national bargaining represents only a threat to their power and ego, the dismantling of their local empire.

The return to national bargaining has long been an aspiration of both EIS-FELA and the Scottish government, and it will not be delivered until all agreed elements on equal pay and conditions have been implemented. No one wants further strike action in the sector, but until management get around the negotiating table – and there is the political will to force this – no progress will be made.

HIGHER EDUCATION INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Universities Superannuation Scheme

1. Members of the University and College Union (UCU) undertook 14 days of strike action from late February to mid-March at the 9 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) whose staff are members of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). UCU represents a range of employees including academics, lecturers, researchers, managers and administrators. The dispute was over proposed changes to the USS which would remove members' guaranteed retirement income by moving USS to become a defined contribution scheme.
2. In April UCU members voted to accept a proposal from Universities UK (UUK), which is the employers' negotiating body, to create a Joint Expert Panel (JEP) of independent experts, to address the assumptions underlying the valuation of the USS which identified a deficit and led to the proposed changes. Both UUK and UCU agreed to this approach, nominated members, agreed on the independent Chair and are represented on the JEP.
3. UUK's aim has been to build common understanding with UCU on the scale of the problem through the JEP, then agree jointly a package of reforms to take to the Joint Negotiating Committee in the autumn or winter. They are, however, mindful that achieving a lasting resolution will not be straightforward and are carefully considering possible scenarios and potential risks for the coming academic year.
4. The JEP has been meeting over the summer, and we understand will submit a report to UUK and UCU towards the end of September.
5. Alongside this, USS launched a consultation on plans to increase contributions from both scheme members and employers. This is necessary to ensure USS can meet its legal obligation to address the identified financial deficit if UCU and UUK are not able to reach agreement. If adopted, these changes would take effect in April 2019 and would be challenging for both employers and scheme members. This underlines the importance of UCU and UUK reaching an agreement following the publication of the findings of the JEP.
6. During the course of the dispute, some students sought compensation in respect of the perceived impact on their education. A significant issue for fee-paying students in England, the matter never gained significant traction in Scotland but could emerge again if we experience further industrial action in the future.

Pay Ballot

7. UCU and other unions are currently balloting members seeking support for industrial action over pay. The ballot opened on Thursday 30 August and closes on Friday 19 October.
8. The University and Colleges' Employers Association (UCEA) made a final offer of 2% in May. UCU argues that:
 - The offer does not address the falling value of higher education pay, which it says has declined in real terms by 21% since 2010;
 - Employers are prioritising capital spending over expenditure on staff; and
 - Members are frustrated by the employers' refusal to commit to meaningful action to tackle the pay gap and insecure employment practices.

9. Fifteen Scottish HE institutions currently participate in the New JNCHES (Joint Negotiating Committee) negotiations. The ballot is being run on a disaggregated basis, meaning that the results will be considered on an individual institution basis. For each institution balloted a threshold 50% response rate must be reached, of which a majority must be in favour of action. UCU advise that one Scottish HEI has made an additional offer to its staff in an effort to avoid action this year. The result could therefore mean strikes taking place at some, but not all HEIs.
10. With their pay claim, UCU raised a set of other issues, including casual work, the gender pay gap and workload.

Role of Scottish Government

11. HEIs are – and are protective of their status as – autonomous bodies. As such they have responsibility for making decisions on staff pay and conditions, meaning that there is limited scope for Ministers to intervene.
12. In respect of pensions, as USS is a trust-based funded scheme it does not fall within the devolved responsibilities of Scottish Ministers. Officials at the Scottish Public Pensions Agency have also stressed the importance of respecting the independence of the Pensions Regulator.
13. We must also have regard to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) classification of HEIs. The ONS is required to classify bodies in order to ensure that the UK's submissions to the EU comply with the European System of accounts (ESA 2010). Key classification decisions include whether a body is public or private, and whether a public body is part of government or a publicly owned company. The classification decision can have budgetary implications for the Scottish Government.
14. In classifying bodies as either public or private, the fundamental question for ONS is “does government exercise significant control over the general corporate policy of the unit?” The key difference between the public and private sectors is determined by where control over the organisation lies, rather than where ownership itself sits. Whether or not such government control exists is assessed by considering a number of “indicators of government control” set out in the published ESA 2010 guidance. While public sector control is not under active assessment, should ONS come across anything during their work that would throw doubt on the current private sector classification, they will follow that up.

Top lines:

General

- As autonomous institutions, staff pay and conditions are matters for universities to determine.
- So it is not for this Government to intervene directly; however the Scottish Government is monitoring the situation closely and is in close contact with both the UCU and universities.
- Industrial action in the future would not be in anyone's interest, least of all students.

USS

- The USS is not a Government-funded pension scheme. Therefore it does not fall within the devolved responsibilities of Scottish Ministers.
- The Pensions Regulator is an independent body and Scottish Ministers will continue to respect that independence.

- Welcome the fact that Universities UK and the University and College Union have been able to work together over the summer on the Joint Expert Panel (JEP), to try to find a longer-term solution to this issue.
- I look forward to seeing the findings of the JEP later this month. And I hope that agreement can be reached which will bring an end to this dispute.

National Bargaining – Lecturers and Support Staff

National bargaining

1.As a result of National Bargaining, Trade Unions now expect to achieve harmonised terms and conditions of service and pay; employers recognise that commitment, but want a new flexible contract to deliver a sustainable workforce for the future.

National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) – Scope

2.The National Joint Negotiation Committee (NJNC) was established to jointly agree terms on issues, such as pay and terms and conditions of employment in Scotland’s colleges in partnership with the trade unions (EIS, GMB, UNISON and UNITE).

3.The NJNC covers negotiations for both teaching and non-teaching staff. It does not cover senior college staff. **Redacted** The NJNC is deciding which staff are in scope of the bargaining agreements, ensuring that college sector pay is dealt with in an open,transparent and equitable manner.

Colleges Scotland Employers' Association

4.The Employers’ Association is the forum through which National Bargaining is being implemented by the employers, in partnership with the trade unions, in the college sector. The Employers’ Association is jointly responsible for implementing National Bargaining in partnership with the trade unions.

5.Colleges Scotland was awarded funding from the Scottish Funding Council’s Strategic Funds, as at 1 August 2016 to establish the Colleges Scotland Employers’ Association in order to support activities related to the implementation of National Bargaining across the college sector. Funding of £460,000 will be paid each academic year: 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Latest Positions

Lecturers

6.[REDACTED].7.[REDACTED].8.[REDACTED].

National Bargaining – Lecturers and Support Staff

Support Staff

9.[REDACTED].10.[REDACTED].11.[REDACTED].

[REDACTED]

| Name | Organisation | Key responsibilities | Immediacy |
|---|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Mike Cantlay | Scottish Funding Council | Chair SFC Strategic Board Member | ASAP/early |
| John Kemp | Scottish Funding Council | Interim Chief Executive, SFC | ASAP/early – with Mike Cantlay |
| Andrea Nolan | Universities Scotland | Convener | Early |
| Ken Milroy | Colleges Scotland | Chair Colleges Scotland Chair North East Scotland College | Early |
| Luke Humberstone or successor Liam McCabe (dependant on timing) | NUS Scotland | NUS Scotland President | Early |
| David Belsey/Anne Keenan | EIS FELA, College (Lecturers) | Assistant Secretary EIS/National Officer F&HE EIS | Early (due to ongoing college lecturers' dispute) – request for meeting already being considered. |
| John Gallacher | Colleges Support Staff Unions | Head of Bargaining Unison Secretary, Colleges Support Staff Unions | Early (due to ongoing college support staff dispute) |
| Mary Senior | University and College Union (UCU) | UCU Scotland Official | Early (due to ongoing college support staff dispute) |
| Alex Linkston | Colleges Employers Association | Chair Colleges EA Chair West Lothian College | Early (due to ongoing disputes) |
| Prof Paul Boyle | Scottish Science Advisory Council | Chair | Medium |
| Sam Giymah | UK Government Minister of State | Universities and Science | Medium (Ms Somerville requested meeting in letter Feb 2018) |
| Sir John Kingman and/or Sir Mark Walport | UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) | Chair / Chief Executive | Medium (opportunity to meet Sir John over dinner with Board in Edinburgh 2 July) |
| | | | |

SCIENCE ADVICE IN SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

“We recognise science’s contribution to a sustainable economy, and its potential to benefit our economy, people and environment. We value science and the expert scientific advice provided by the CSA Scotland and other specialist science advisers, including the SSAC.”

1. Professor Sheila Rowan, the Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) for Scotland, has been in post since June 2016. This is a part-time, three-days-a-week secondment for three years. Professor Rowan also remains Director of the Institute for Gravitational Research at Glasgow University.

2. As CSA, Professor Rowan champions the use of science to inform policy development, across all policy areas. She is also a keen advocate – across Scotland and further afield – of our **world-leading science base**. She therefore also has an interest ‘**science policy**’, or the system of SG support for science (funding and policy, including STEM Education and Training Strategy, further and higher education, science centres/festivals).

4. The CSA sits at the top of the SG’s science advice structure working with the CSA for Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, and the Chief Scientist (Health). Like them, the CSA is an ex officio member of, and is supported by, the **Scottish Science Advisory Council (SSAC)**.

5. The SSAC provides independent advice (usually on a longer-term or horizon-scanning basis) through its Chair, to the CSA and to Scottish Ministers. The CSA and SSAC are expected to use their networks to develop advice, for example calling on the expertise of the Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Current issues: as the CSA is two years into a three year term as CSA, **Redacted**. An early meeting with the CSA before moving to catch-ups every 6 weeks or so would be helpful to discuss current issues and priorities. Annual meetings with the SSAC Chair and attending one of their quarterly meetings would also be helpful to strengthen the relationship between the SSAC and Ministers.

SCIENCE ENGAGEMENT POLICY AND FUNDING

“With £3.025m funding in 2018-19 we support a range of initiatives that make science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) accessible to a wide public audience. This funding supports science learning, promotes careers in STEM and helps inspire our next generation of scientists. No other part of the UK has such a comprehensive package of support in place for science engagement activities.”

7. In 2018-19 a budget of £3.025m supports annual, discretionary funding (ie not grant-in-aid) to the **four science centres in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, around a dozen science festivals** in cities, towns and regions across Scotland, **and two national initiatives aimed at engaging pupils with STEM**, through primary shows and workshops, and a network of Young Engineers and Science Clubs in primary/secondary schools. These initiatives reach a **combined annual audience of 900k-1million people**.

Current issues: funding for science centres has already been announced, but the allocations for science festivals and school initiatives will be coming to Ministers for approval over the summer. We expect that all four science centres will invite the Minister to visit; this will provide good opportunities to meet key personnel and see their activities at first hand.

ADVANCED LEARNING AND SCIENCE

Contribution to National Outcomes and Indicators

The policies which Advanced Learning and science impact on 7 of the 11 National outcomes. Our critical outcome is 'We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society.'

- We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential
- We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy

Our work can impact on the following National indicators

- Child wellbeing and happiness
- Children's voices
- Children have positive relationships
- Children's material deprivation
- Growth in cultural economy
- People working in arts and culture
- Productivity
- International exporting
- Economic growth
- Spend on research and development
- Income inequalities
- Entrepreneurial activity
- Educational attainment
- Confidence of children and young people
- Resilience of children and young people
- Work place learning
- Engagement in extra-curricular activities
- Young people's participation
- Skill profile of the population
- Skill shortage vacancies
- Skills under-utilisation
- Innovative businesses
- Economic participation
- Employees on the living wage
- Pay gap
- Contractually secure work
- Employee voice
- Gender balance in organisations
- Mental wellbeing
- Physical activity
- Public services treat people with dignity and respect
- Quality of public services
- A positive experience for people coming to Scotland
- Scotland's reputation
- Trust in public organisations

- International networks
- Contribution of development support to other nations
- Wealth inequalities
- Persistent poverty

TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK – CONDITION OF OFS REGISTRATION

Issue: English HE institutions will now be required to take part in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) as a condition of registration with OfS.

Background: The Office for Students (OfS) is the new regulator for English higher education. It has been created under the provisions of the Higher Education Research Act 2017 (HERA) and has inherited the responsibility of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Office for Fair Access. Sam Gyimah, UK Minister for Higher Education, has now formally launched the OfS and its regulatory framework has been published. The OfS' regulatory framework's remit is restricted to England only. The key elements of the new system are:

- Creation of a register which covers the majority of the higher education providers in England
- Single entry route to the higher education system for providers and ensuring consistency of regulatory approach for all providers
- Focusing on requirements of students and seeking to remove regulatory burden on providers where this is not specifically linked to risks to student outcomes and value for money for students and the taxpayer
- Ensuring that the interests of students are protected in the event of provider failure, but without an expectation that providers will be protected from failure
- Incentivising the market to deliver and innovate itself rather than using regulatory tools to require individual providers to continuously improve.

Under these proposals, English HE institutions will be required to take part in the TEF as a condition of registration with OfS. While TEF will be mandatory in England, it is not a Scottish Government policy.

Officials continue to engage with colleagues in DfE on issues such as TEF, the designation of Alternative Providers and eligibility for Tier 4 Licence to ensure Scottish interests are fully recognised despite the regulatory changes going on in England.

TOP LINES

The decision to participate in TEF, including the subject level pilots, is a matter for autonomous institutions to make.

- Scottish Ministers have responded positively to the Scottish HE sector's desire to take part in TEF by enabling their voluntary participation in years 1,2 and 3
- However, Ministers have been clear that the Quality Enhancement Framework approach to quality in Scotland to remain the key determinant of assessing the provision of quality learning in Scottish higher education institutions.

The Quality Enhancement Framework approach to quality in Scotland is the key determinant of assessing the provision of quality learning in Scottish higher education institutions

- Our distinct approach to quality assurance and enhancement in higher education has been developed through close partnerships within our sector and is underlined by the three principles of student engagement, quality culture and high quality learning.
- TEF is not, and will not be, the key measure of quality in higher education in Scotland.
- The sector in Scotland has again reaffirmed its commitment to the QEF, which will continue to be our main framework for quality assurance, following the revised UK Quality Code.

ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

Issue: The University's decision to replace the current principal (Professor von Prondzynski) with the current deputy (Professor John Harper) – has attracted criticism, most notably from the University and College Union, due to the lack of an open recruitment process. The Scottish Funding Council have concluded that since the appointment is on a 2 year fixed term basis the approach taken was reasonable in the circumstances.

Issue: [REDACTED]

Issue: Professor von Prondzynski's resignation was prompted by an investigation into a conflict of interest in the appointment of a business associate. Professor von Prondzynski's report on University Governance led to the introduction of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

Issue: [REDACTED]

Top lines

- The events leading up to Professor von Prondzynski's decision caused substantial public concern. I therefore understand and respect his decision to step down.
- Universities are expected to adhere to clear, inclusive and transparent governance processes. Within that requirement, they rightly have clear, statutory autonomy and the appointment of Professor John Harper is a matter for RGU.
- RGU has an international reputation for excellence and I hope the Board will now be able to focus on delivering excellent teaching and learning in the coming year.

I expect university Courts and senior staff to adhere to the highest standards of governance and transparency.

- The Scottish Funding Council have concluded that the approach taken was reasonable in the circumstances, but will consider whether lessons can be learned.

I expect universities to exercise restraint in setting senior pay

- Senior pay packages should be in step with the salary, terms and conditions offered to other university staff.

Implementation of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 will strengthen the voice of staff and students.

- The Act ensures trades unions and student representatives are on every university governing body.
- Universities are working to amend their governing instruments to comply with the terms of the Act. RGU has commenced the process of looking at what changes need to be made to its governing instruments.

Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science

STUDENT AWARDS AGENCY SCOTLAND - OVERVIEW

Purpose

1. To provide you with background briefing and an overview of the work of Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS).

Priority

2. Routine. This note is provided for information.

Background

3. SAAS was established in 1996 as an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government (SG) under the terms of the Scotland Act 1998. The Agency operates independently and impartially while remaining directly accountable to Scottish Ministers.
4. The Agency receives its funding from the Scottish Government and its annual operating budget is approved and published each year, as part of the Scottish Government's budget, by the Scottish Parliament.
5. We provide information and advice, along with financial support to eligible full-time and part-time students in higher education. Our key funding activities are:



We also provide resources to the Student Loans Company Limited for both loan funding and administration costs. Full information on the types of student support available is included in Annex B.

Governance Structure

6. Paul Lowe, SAAS Chief Executive, is the Agency's Accountable Officer, responsible to the Government's Principal Accountable Officer and Scottish Ministers.
7. The Chief Executive is supported in the operation of the Agency by the SAAS Board. This is a Management Advisory Board, comprising of a number of Non-Executive Board Members and the Agency's Executive Team.
8. The activities of the SAAS Board are supported by a number of corporate governance committees. These include the SAAS Advisory Committee, which is a strategic forum that engages with Scottish Government Higher Education and Health Policy interest at a senior level, an Audit and Risk Committee and Portfolio Management Committee, which considers strategic change initiatives. The SAAS Advisory Committee and Audit and Risk Committee are chaired by Non-Executive Directors.
9. The organisation structure has five business areas and four directors - please see annex A.

Strategic Goals

10. The SAAS Corporate Plan 2017-2020 details the Agency's contribution to Programme for Government ambitions through our Vision, Mission and Values. The SAAS Corporate Plan outlines our 5 strategic goals, which can be reviewed in Annex C.
 - **Strategic Goal 1:** Place the customer at the centre of everything we do to deliver an excellent personalised student experience.
 - **Strategic Goal 2:** Develop a highly skilled workforce and enhance organisational capacity and capability.
 - **Strategic Goal 3:** Building stronger strategic alliances to deliver optimum social, economic and community impact.
 - **Strategic Goal 4:** Improve quality, organisational efficiency, productivity and deliver best value.
 - **Strategic Goal 5:** Develop digital solutions for the future.

Student Outreach And Communications

11. SAAS proactively focuses on positioning Higher Education (HE) as a viable option for all, focusing on key government priorities, including widening access . This is achieved through targeted provision of information through a raft of engagement and communication tools, including Social media and Digital channels to our wide range of customers and stakeholders. The Agency works in close partnership with key organisations committed to driving this agenda.

12. Through our SAAS Connex Strategy, customer and stakeholder engagement strategy, we have developed a series of support approaches to ensure our customers are aware of funding policies and application process in a customer focused way. We deliver information face-to-face, during events, and digitally, through the use of our website, video platforms and social media.
13. In 2017/18 we attended over 320 events across Scotland which included college and university open days, parents' evenings, school talks and Universities and Colleges Admission Services (UCAS) conventions.
14. Through this strategy, we provide a specific focus on supporting the aims of the Widening Access to Higher Education agenda to support government aims of 20% of university places being filled by students from the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland (SIMD20).

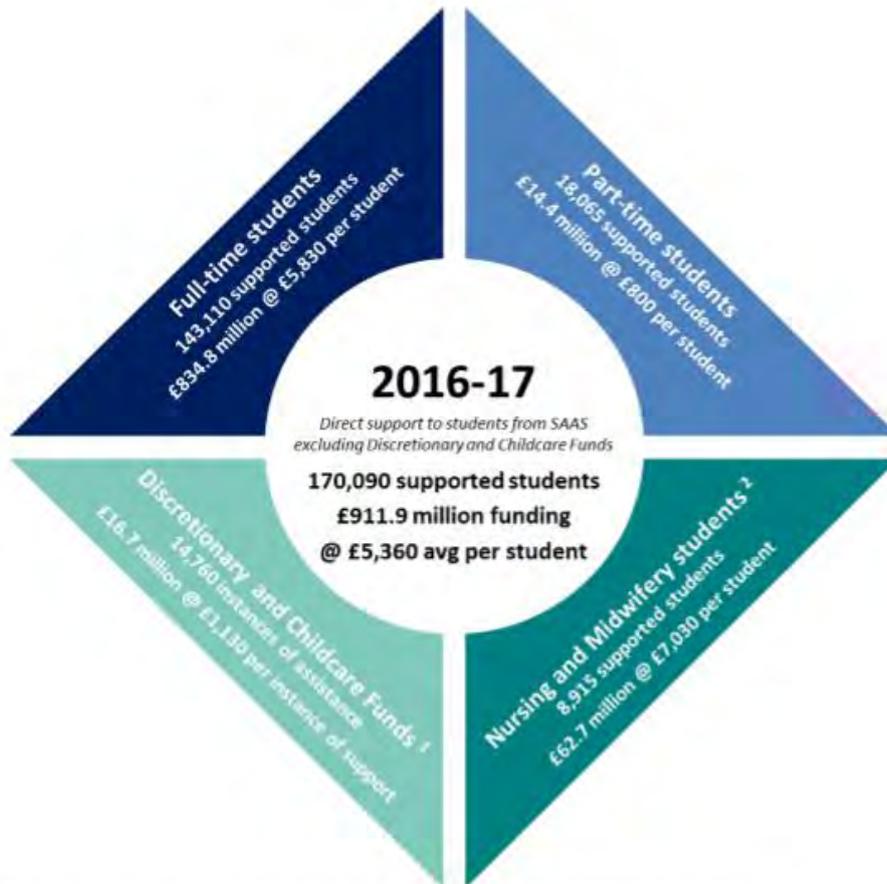
Funding And Budget Management

15. SAAS administers significant expenditure as part of the Higher Education Student Support (HESS) budget and the Nursing and Midwifery Bursary Scheme budget. The largest budget we administer is on behalf of HESS. The HESS budget provides financial support to Scottish domiciled and EU students undertaking higher education courses in Scotland, and Scottish domiciled students studying in the rest of the UK. This includes the provision of free tuition in higher education.
16. The Agency receives its funding from the Scottish Government and its annual operating budget is approved and published each year, as part of the Scottish Government's budget. The Agency's operating costs are provided as part of the HESS budget. In 2018/19, an operating budget of £13.7m (£12.1m resource and £1.6m capital) was allocated to SAAS. The Chief Executive is the Accountable Officer in relation to the SAAS operating budget, answerable to the Scottish Government's Principal Accountable Officer and Scottish Ministers.

Delivering The Core Business



In 2017/18, SAAS received and processed **over 190,000** applications for student support



1 Discretionary and Discretionary Childcare Fund schemes: assessment of applications and issuing of amounts as administered by institutions, 2015-16 results
 2 Nursing and Midwifery Bursary Scheme - provisional data 2016-17
 @ indicates the average amount of support per student or instances of support

Figure 1 Overview of SAAS schemes of support

17. The above infographics highlight our operational performance for 2017/18. Our annual statistical publication is due to be published at the end of October 2018 and will provide further information and narrative on our statistical data for session 2017/18.

18. We launched the new SAAS Account in April 2017, a student application and communications portal, improvements modernised and tailored our HE funding application process for our students. Feedback from over 23,000 students illustrates the positive perception of the SAAS Account with 9/10 students positively responding.



Figure 2 Results from the SAAS Account feedback

Delivering Government Policy

19. As part of our core business SAAS are responsible for implementing SG policy changes. Session 2017/18 saw significant changes to the Postgraduate Student Allowances Scheme (PSAS); support was extended to include full masters level courses and the maximum student funding package was increased to £10k. In session 2018/19 Postgraduate course eligibility has been further expanded to include part time distance learning courses. We anticipate that our annual statistical publication will show an increase in postgraduate student numbers as a result of these changes.
20. As a recommendation of the Commission on Widening Access (COWA) report, SG introduced The Care Experienced Student Bursary. In Session 2017/18 SAAS successfully delivered this bursary and continue to promote this scheme. We have also published the SAAS Corporate Parenting Plan which underpins our ongoing commitment to supporting care experienced students and widening access.
21. We are also a named delivery agency for the Child Poverty Action Plan as part of Programme for Government, to increase understanding of funding support, through expanding the SAAS Outreach Program, which proactively provides face-to-face, digital and published student information. £150,000 funding is helping expand this successful model to reach children and young people from our priority families, making sure they can access the funding support available. This includes engagement with DWP, Local Authorities, Citizens Advice Bureaus and ethnic minority groups.

Future Work

22. Our future focus will continue to be improving service delivery for our customers in both the short term and longer term, taking account of improvement activities already underway so as to forge a clear and sustainable path towards a modern service. Through our Student Funding Delivery (SFD) project we successfully deliver policy changes and Programme for Government commitments. SFD is our annual project to implement and deliver student support changes for the forthcoming academic year.
23. SAAS were key participants in the Student Support Review (SSR) and will form an integral part of the internal SG SSR Programme Team to support the delivery of commitments in response to the Social Contract Publication.
24. In particular, SAAS will lead the development of a new Information, Guidance, Advice and Financial Literacy portal for FE and HE students in Scotland to deliver the sector wide aims of providing consistent information, advice and guidance, in an accessible way, to ALL students, and improving the financial awareness, understanding and literacy of students in Scotland.
25. We continue to look at digital enhancements and innovation and are in the process of making significant improvements to the SAAS website and considering how best to deliver the student funding message digitally to our range of stakeholders.

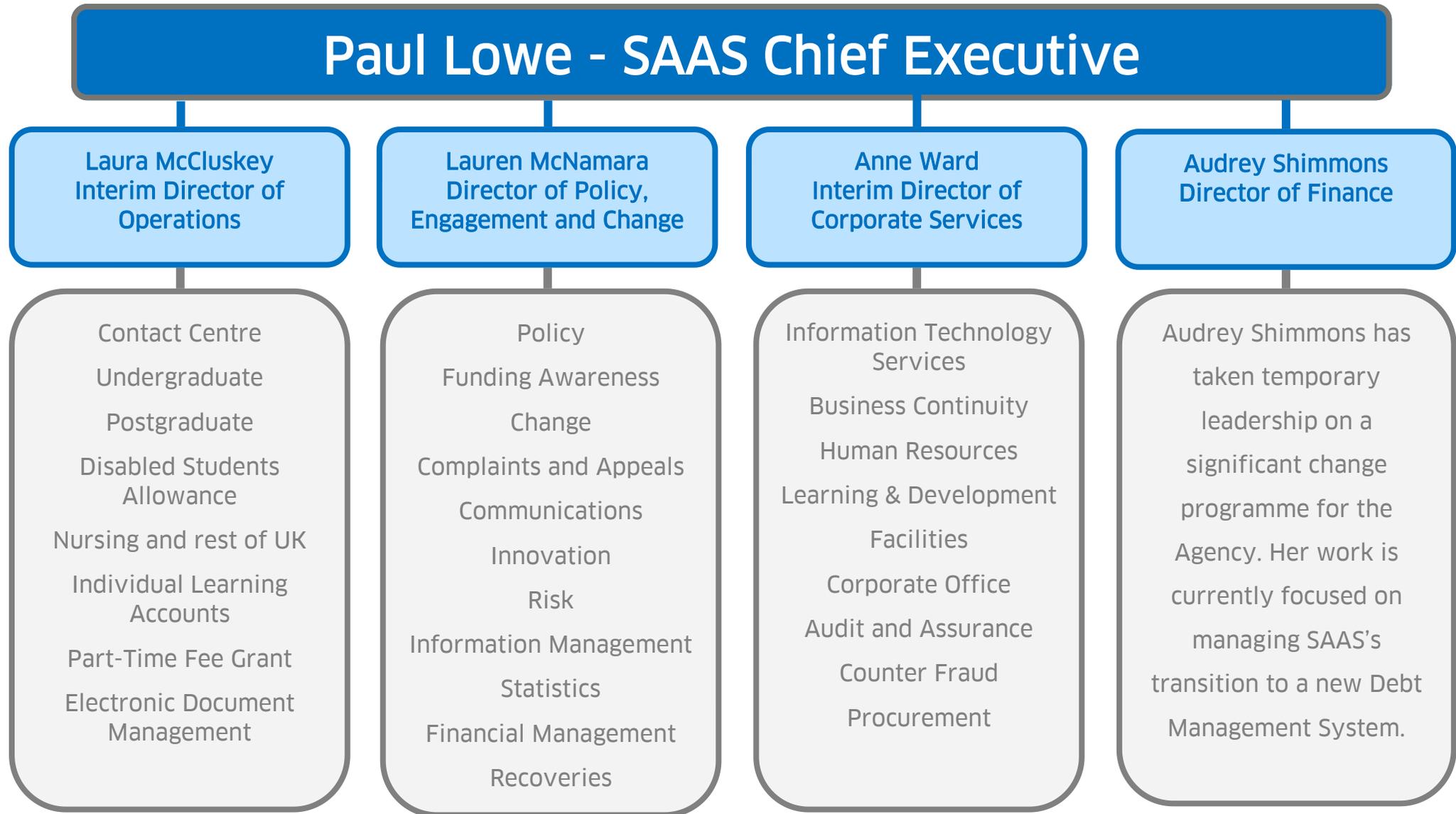
Recommendations

26. The Minister is invited to note the contents of the submission.

Policy Lead
Student Awards Agency Scotland

| Copy List: | For Action | For Comments | For Information | | |
|--|------------|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| | | | Portfolio Interest | Constituent Interest | General Awareness |
| Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills | | | x | | |
| ----- | | | | | |

Annex A: SAAS Organisational Chart



Annex B – Student Support Schemes

Types of funding available

Since 2001/02, support for new entrants has typically consisted of up to three elements, depending on the scheme type:

- Non-repayable bursaries and grants which are targeted to certain groups of students (for example, students from low income backgrounds, care-experienced students, students with disabilities and students with dependents);
- Tuition fees paid by SAAS on behalf of all eligible undergraduate students (direct to the college or university) as well as tuition fee loans to help postgraduate students and Scottish domiciled students studying in the rest of the UK;
- Living cost support through a loan assessed by SAAS and paid by the Student Loans Company.

Schemes administered by SAAS

We provide support to students studying a course of Higher Education which are at Higher National Certificate (HNC) or above. These can be taken either at college or at university.

Students studying at Further Education can ask for support from the college itself, if they are studying at a college in Scotland, or the education department of their local council, if they are studying outside of Scotland. They do not apply to SAAS.

We administer a number of student support schemes, each detailed below.

Undergraduate

The Scottish Government firmly believes that access to Higher Education should be based on the ability to learn and not the ability to pay. For this reason, eligible undergraduate students undertaking their first degree can apply to SAAS for an award which covers the cost of tuition fees.

The majority of the students we fund are undertaking an undergraduate course which is a Higher National Certificate or Diploma, degree or equivalent course. The funding package available to eligible undergraduate students, in addition to tuition fees, consists of a combination of bursaries and living cost loans, subject to household income.

The total number of students supported has been increasing gradually over the past decade, which is in line with trends seen in the number of full-time students in Higher Education generally.

Postgraduate

Eligible students undertaking a taught Postgraduate Diploma or MSc, through the Postgraduate Students' Allowances Scheme (PSAS), can apply for a tuition fee loan towards the costs of their tuition fees, in addition to a living cost loan.

Nursing and Midwifery Bursary

SAAS administers the Nursing and Midwifery Bursary (NMSB) scheme on behalf of the Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorate. This includes students undertaking courses in pre-registration nursing and midwifery leading to an award of a degree or diploma in Higher Education.

The bursary and grant support is made up of a non-income assessed bursary and additional allowances based on the circumstances of the student. These include support such as a Dependent's Allowance or Childcare Allowance.

NHS Dental Bursary Scheme

The existing NHS Dental Bursary Scheme that SAAS administers will not be available to new Dentistry students from 2017-18. Those who commenced their degree in 2016-17, or earlier, continue to be eligible for a £4,000 bursary for the duration of their degree at Glasgow, Dundee or Aberdeen. Students have to complete a commitment to work with NHS Scotland after graduation.

Those starting their degree from 2017-18 may be eligible for a new Dental Student Support Grant (DSSG), which Scottish Government are introducing. The DSSG will provide £4,000 per year, subject to eligibility, to those students who have an annual household income of less than £34,000 in return for a commitment to work in NHS Dentistry in Scotland following graduation.

Part-time Fee Grant

Students who are undertaking an undergraduate level course or a Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) on a part-time or part-time distance learning basis may be eligible for payment of their tuition fees under the Part-time Fee Grant (PTFG) scheme.

Discretionary and Childcare Funds

The Discretionary Fund provides a financial support to students if they have difficulty entering Higher Education (HE) for financial reasons or have financial difficulties while they study. This scheme is administered by the universities and colleges in Scotland. SAAS determines the initial allocations of funds to the institutions and in turn collates returns from each institution which evidences how the funds have been used. As such, universities and colleges are responsible for deciding who they make payments to and how much is paid.

A separate Discretionary Childcare Fund is also available for students to apply for help towards the cost of registered or formal childcare costs. In 2011-12, the Discretionary Childcare Fund for HE students studying at colleges was passed to the Scottish Funding Council for them to distribute and administer the funds for the first time.

Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA)

Eligible HE students who, as a direct result of their disability, incur additional expenditure on their course of study can apply to SAAS for help with these costs under the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

DSA contributes to equal opportunities policy providing essential support which enables disabled students to study on a level playing field with other students.

DSA is not income-assessed: the amount a student is awarded is dependent upon their needs. It comprises of three elements:

- Large items of equipment – up to £5,160 per course.
- Non-Medical Personal Help – up to £20,520 per year.
- Basic items – up to £1,725 per year.

Annex C- SAAS Strategic Goals, Corporate Strategy 2017-2020



STUDENT AWARDS AGENCY SCOTLAND - BRIEFING NOTE

FUNCTION

- The Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government (SG). The Agency operates independently and impartially while remaining directly accountable to Scottish Ministers.
- SAAS administer the Higher Education Student Support budget on behalf of the Advanced Learning and Science Directorate. This includes provision of free tuition to Higher Education.
- We provide financial support to approximately 200,000 full-time and part-time students in Higher Education, studying in Scotland the rest of the UK and Europe.
- The financial support is provided under:
 - Students' Allowances Scheme
 - Postgraduate Students' Allowances Scheme
 - Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursaries Scheme
 - Dental Bursary Scheme
- We also:
 - administer the Part-Time Fee Grant and the Disabled Students Allowance;
 - distribute Discretionary Funds and Discretionary Childcare Funds to Scottish universities and Scottish colleges;
 - assess Student Loan applications for Scottish domiciled students on behalf of the Student Loans Company;
 - lead the provision of Higher Education funding information guidance and support across a variety of digital, published and face to face channels;
 - lead marketing and communication activities to promote student funding and increase participation in Higher Education; and
 - are actively involved in widening access and child poverty reduction through our outreach work.

OPERATION AND GOVERNANCE

- To deliver our core functions SAAS has a total operating cost budget of £13.7m.
- Paul Lowe, SAAS Chief Executive (CE), is the Agency's Accountable Officer, responsible to the Government's Principal Accountable Officer and Scottish Ministers.
- The CE is supported in the operation of the Agency by the SAAS Management Board. This comprises Non-Executive Board Members (NEBM) and internal Executive Team:
- The SAAS Corporate Plan 2017-2020 details the Agency's contribution to Programme for Government ambitions through our Vision, Mission and Values:
- *Our Vision* – To be recognised as national experts providing high quality student centred funding services
- *Our Mission* – To deliver an efficient, student centred and responsive service that provides the right advice and student support first time, every time, to a diverse and vibrant student population

- *Our Values* – People First, Quality and Excellence, Inclusive and Enabling

SG STUDENT SUPPORT REVIEW (SSR)

- SAAS are key participants in the Student Support Review and subsequent programme to implement Government commitments in response to the Independent Review of Student Support published in Autumn 2017.
- On 12 June Ms Somerville announced that SAAS will lead on the development and implementation of a '*single, centralised online portal*' via a new Information, Advice, Guidance and Financial Literacy tool that meets the needs of Further and Higher Education students and stakeholders in Scotland, to be delivered during the 2019/20 academic session.

SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL (SFC) - BACKGROUND NOTE

FUNCTION

- The SFC is the national, strategic body responsible for investing around £1.8 billion each year in teaching and learning provision, research and other activities in Scotland's 25 colleges and 19 universities and higher education institutions.
- The SFC is central to this government's primary purpose of achieving sustainable economic growth through its funding and support of colleges and universities in Scotland to provide life-changing opportunities for over half a million people.
- The SFC:
 - allocates public funding to colleges and HEIs for teaching and research, building and equipment, and for specific initiatives and strategic developments;
 - promotes high standards of governance and administration;
 - assesses and enhances the quality of learning programmes;
 - develops strategies for improving knowledge and skills, strengthening the Scottish research base and encouraging knowledge exchange with – and innovation in – the public and private sectors.

BUDGET

- With an annual total budget of over £1.8 billion, SFC is a major public body. The breakdown of its 2018-19 budget is as follows:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Running Costs | £7.2m |
| FE Programme | £588.2m |
| HE Programme | £1,024.9m |
| FE Capital | £76.7m |
| HE Capital | £41.2m |
| NPD Expenditure | £29.3m |
| Financial Transactions | £40m |

SFC BOARD

- The SFC Board currently has 11 full board members, as well as the Chair and Chief Executive (biographies can be provided if required):

-

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Dr Mike Cantlay OBE (Chair) | Douglas Mundie (Deputy Chair) |
| Dr John Kemp Interim Chief Executive) | Prof. Sir Anton Muscatelli |
| David Alexander | Dr Keith Nicholson |
| Mhari Harrington OBE | Dr Veena O'Halloran |
| Prof. Maggie Kinloch | Caroline Stuart |
| Paul Little | Marlene Wood (Deputy Chair) |
| | Prof Lesley Yellowlees CBE |

- SFC is working towards the First Minister's target of 50:50 on Boards by 2020. (the Board currently has six female and seven male members (including interim Chief Executive John Kemp).
- June 2018 – the SFC Board approved the appointment of Douglas Mundie and Marlene Wood as Deputy Chairs. As such, they will deputise for the Chair as necessary and facilitate the Chair appraisal process.

SFC CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- John Kemp is the interim Chief Executive at the SFC and the process to recruit a substantive CEO is currently underway.
- Ministers have expressed their wish to see the appointment progressed swiftly. The current target is to appoint this year. Officials and the SFC are working to finalise the remuneration business case which once agreed will allow the advert to issue.

STRATEGIC PLAN

- The SFC Board has approved the extension of the SFC's current Strategic Plan (2015-18) to 2018-19. This will allow them to produce a new three-year Corporate Plan in 2019-20 which is informed by the priorities of the Strategic Board and aligns with the planning cycles of the other enterprise and skills agencies.
- The Strategic Board was created in November 2017 in response to the Enterprise and Skills Review. Its objective is to align and co-ordinate the activities of Scotland's enterprise and skills agencies: Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council.

MINISTERIAL GUIDANCE

- The most recent Ministerial Letter of Guidance issued to the SFC on 4 April 2018.
- Further Ministerial Guidance to inform the Outcome Agreement process for 2019-20 will issue in the autumn.

SCOTLAND'S RURAL COLLEGE – SOUTH WEST ESTATES

ISSUE: The Scottish Rural College (SRUC) Board has concluded that a single main campus for the South and West Faculty should be located at their existing site at Barony near Dumfries. As a result SRUC would withdraw from the Riverside Campus in Ayr, which it shares with the University of the West of Scotland.

SRUC is pursuing discussions with a range of partners – including in Ayrshire – to ensure their reach across the region without the need to maintain estate.

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science met SRUC on 20th June. Ms Somerville asked SRUC for further detail on the case for change and options appraisal, including the impact of the various options.

Although the Board is aware that their plans must be kept strictly confidential for the time being, there appears to be speculation about the plans locally.

[REDACTED]

Top Lines

- The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science met SRUC and has asked them for further detailed impact assessments
- Scottish Higher Education Institutions are autonomous bodies and as such they have responsibility for their own strategic decision making – including decisions on the location of their resources.
- We would, however, expect that priority is given to providing the high quality educational provision which meets the skills needs in the local area.

SRUC has been awarded more than £26m of government funding in academic year 2018/19 to support learning and teaching alone.

- £17,704,711– from SFC for HE teaching, research, and capital, strategic grants and a small specialist institution grant in AY 2017/18
- £9,211,973– from SFC for FE teaching and capital maintainance in AY 2017/18

SRUC will also receive up to £13.5m this year to help deliver for the rural economy.

- £3,646,000 – 2018/19 grant-in-aid funding for “Veterinary and advisory services”. This includes veterinary surveillance, biosecurity, health planning and bee health.
- This year SRUC is expected to deliver efficiencies by moving laboratory testing services to a central laboratory.
- £7m - 2018/19 to undertake research to support agriculture and rural industries. Up to

SCOTLAND'S RURAL COLLEGE – SOUTH WEST ESTATES

- £2.9m – 2018/19 funding to jointly deliver Scotland's Farm Advisory Services. The value of the contract is up to £13.5m over the contract period (2016 to end 2020).

SFC Funding to SRUC: 2015-16 to 2018-19

| | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Funding For: | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Teaching | 10,369,099 | 9,674,489 | 9,594,256 | 9,863,459 |
| Research | 2,935,000 | 3,467,000 | 4,524,000 | 4,630,000 |
| Small Specialist Institution Grant | 1,014,000 | 1,014,000 | 1,014,000 | 1,032,000 |
| Strategic Grants | 502,000 | 659,302 | 406,568 | 95,681 |
| Capital | 260,530 | 238,998 | 235,955 | 2,083,571 |
| Total | 15,080,629 | 15,053,789 | 15,774,779 | 17,704,711 |

(Source: SFC Funding Allocations - There was a large change between 2015-16 and 2016-17 as a result of a transfer of places from Edinburgh and North East Colleges.)

Further Education Budget: 2015-16 to 2018-19

| | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Funding for: | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Teaching | £8,384,067 | £8,384,067 | £8,980,193 | £9,041,679 |
| Capital Maintenance Grant | £407,009 | £213,357 | £281,861 | £170,294 |
| Total | £8,791,076 | £8,597,424 | £9,262,054 | £9,211,973 |

(Source: SFC Funding Allocations)

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF STUDENT SUPPORT

Background (October 2016 – November 2017)

- SG commissioned an independent review of further (FE) and higher education (HE) student support (the SSR), in October 2016, following Manifesto and Programme for Government commitments.
- The Review was independently chaired by Jayne-Anne Gadhia, CEO Virgin Money and Review Group membership included; NUS Scotland, Colleges Scotland, Young Scot, UNISON, Universities Scotland, Child Poverty Action Group, Money Advice Scotland, Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) and a former Headteacher and current student.
- The **SSR** published on **20th November 2017**. The main recommendations included;
 - a **social contract model** for FE/HE at £8,100 made up of bursaries and loans;
 - **increased FE bursaries** immediately at a cost of **£16m**;
 - aspiration that 50% of £8,100 should be bursary (FE/HE) costing an extra **£123m**;
 - introduction of **loans in FE** for first time which would be written off for those who progress from FE to HE;
 - **FE national entitlement** to replace current college discretionary funding;
 - **'Special Support'** system for students claiming social security benefits;
 - **Improvements to HE loans** repayment term (35-30 years) and increase to repayment threshold (to £22,000).

SG Response (June 2018)

- On 9th June, the First Minister (FM) announced that the £5.2m additional funding committed for SSR in 2018/19 Budget would **increase FE/HE care-experience bursaries to £8,100**. (From current levels of £7,625 in HE and £4,185 in FE).
- FM also committed additional **£16m** per year from 2019/20 to **improve FE/HE bursaries** (details below) bringing **total increased investment** for student support to **over £21m** per year by the end of this Parliamentary term.
- FM committed to raise the **HE student loan repayment threshold to £25,000** from 2021 and reduce repayment term from 35 to 30 years (from 2018).
- On 12th June, the Minister for FE/HE made a statement outlining in 2019/20;
 - The lowest **HE bursary income threshold** will rise from £19,000 to **£21,000**;
 - **HE bursary** for **young** students to rise from **£1,875 to £2,000** per year;
 - **HE bursary** for **independent** students to rise from **£875 to £1,000** per year;
 - **FE bursary** to rise from **£4,185 to £4,500** per year;
 - **FE 'guarantee' system** to be introduced to ensure payment of FE bursary (£97 per week) to eligible 18/19 year old's rather than the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) £30 per week.
- **Ministers said that these announcements were a first step towards realising the ambitions of the 'social contract model' (£8,100) across FE/HE.**

Additional Commitments

- Additional funding of £1.5m committed to SAAS over 18/19 and 19/20 to take forward the improvements the SSR recommended on **Information, Advice and Guidance**

(IAG) and Financial Literacy. The main aim of that project is an **online portal** for FE/HE student finance information during the 19/20 academic year (AY).

- Improvements to FE **attendance criteria** for 2018/19 to promote **student engagement** and move away from the previous 100% attendance criteria, deemed unfair and punitive by key stakeholders NUS Scotland. This has been updated in policy guidance for the coming AY.
- That **local support from sector staff** is valued and should continue.
- Commitment that SG will work with the **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to explore the recommendation for a ‘Special Support’** system that means students eligible for social security benefits should be able to continue receiving those whilst studying full-time. **Redacted**
- SG will conduct an **internal review of all non-core and discretionary support** that the SSR did not consider. This will take account of significant investment SG already provides and consider support for protected characteristic groups and part-time students. A consultation is planned for later this year to support this work.
- SG will further consider the recommendation that **loans should be introduced to FE** for the first time. **External focus group research** is planned for the start of the coming AY to report by the end of this year. **Redacted**
- SG will consider the recommendation that students should have **more choice on the timing of their payments**, particularly in HE. This work is longer-term as will require updates also to loan payments which are made by the Student Loans Company (UKG) rather than by SAAS.

Redacted

Reactions to SG Response on SSR

- **Redacted** - NUS Scotland stating, ***“It is great to see the Scottish Government will take the first steps to delivering on the ambition of the independent student support review...”***
- **Redacted**

University of the Highlands and Islands

Background to integration proposal – prepared by UHI Integration Board

1. The University of the Highlands and Islands court and representatives from the boards of the colleges and research institutions which make up the partnership had agreed in principle to create a more integrated institution. Initially, Inverness College UHI, Lews Castle College UHI, Moray College UHI, North Highland College UHI and the university itself led this initiative and formed an integration board to investigate the possibilities of forming a single legal entity. Other academic partners are welcome to join the process to any degree at any stage.

Developing UHI

2. The then Minister for Further Education Higher Education and Science attend a meeting on 18 May which set out the Integration Board's proposal for changes to the governance of UHI, Inverness, Moray, North Highland and Lews Castle Colleges. At the meeting the view was that the account of the challenges faced by staff and students was compelling and underlined the case for change Redacted

3. Since that meeting the Minister has written to the Chair of Court at UHI to note that there has been a significant and welcome developments of a new, wider look at the options for change.

4. The Integration Board has been replaced with a new structure and a more partnership approach. There is clearly a wide range of views on the best way forward and the new partnership approach should enable those views to be properly articulated and considered as options are developed.

5. At the meeting on 18 May the then Minister was struck by the compelling accounts given by students and staff which underlined the case for change. A recent communication from UHI appreciates the call from students and staff "for improvements and simplifications of processes and procedures, so all students, no matter where they study, have parity of experience and staff can develop their careers to the highest level".

6. There will be full consultation on options with all interested parties and the then Minister offered support where that would be helpful, and officials will keep in close touch with UHI and the SFC.

Widening Access to Higher Education in Scotland

“The Scottish Government remains firmly committed to widening access to university for people from our most deprived communities. Every child, no matter their background, should have an equal chance of going to university and accessing the learning that will provide them with the skills and qualifications to succeed in life.”

1. In 2015 the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) was established to advise on the steps necessary to achieve the First Minister's ambition that “a child born today in one of our most deprived communities will, by the time he or she leaves school, have the same chance of entering university as a child born in one of our least deprived communities”. The Commission's Final report, ['A Blueprint for Fairness'](#), was published in March 2016 making 34 recommendations.

Commissioner for Fair Access

2. The first recommendation implemented was the appointment of Scotland's first [Commissioner for Fair Access](#), Professor Sir Peter Scott, in December 2016. **Redacted**. He is supported in his role by members of the HE Access Team

3. The Commissioner is independent and provides impartial advice and commentary to the Scottish Government and other organisations on widening access. He also works across the education system to; develop best practice; improve the evidence base and hold to account all those with a role in advancing fair access to higher education. To date he has published discussion papers on admissions; contextual admissions; league tables; and retention, outcomes, and destinations. His first annual report was published in December 2017. The Scottish Government's response to the Commissioner's annual report was given in a statement to Parliament in March.

Implementation and Access Delivery Group

4. On 30 May 2017 the then Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science delivered a Parliamentary Statement setting out the Scottish Government's expectations for progress on implementation of the recommendations in the next 12 months. This was accompanied by the publication of the report ['Implementing a 'Blueprint for Fairness' - A report on progress with recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access'](#).

5. Within the statement the Minister committed to establishing and chairing a delivery group to co-ordinate and monitor progress of implementation across all parts of the education system. The [Access Delivery Group](#) (ADG) meets quarterly and brings together all those with a responsibility for implementation of the CoWA recommendations, those leading delivery projects and other key stakeholders. It also provides a forum for strategic discussion with the sector on widening access. It is central to achieving the whole system approach to change CoWA recommended. Through chairing this group the Minister has a central role with regard to maintaining the pace and priority of the access agenda with both the sector and the Scottish Funding Council.

6. To date four meetings have been held. These have focused on establishing the Group, coordinating and monitoring delivery of implementation, Universities Scotland's report 'Working to Widen Access', the Commissioners discussion papers and annual report, data and retention.

7. An [Access Data Working Group](#) has also been established. The primary purpose of the Group is to address Recommendation 31 of the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA): “develop a consistent and robust set of measures to identify access students by

2018". The working group includes several university practitioners and representatives from the Scottish Government, the Scottish Funding Council, Universities Scotland and the National Union of Students Scotland and is chaired by Scottish Government officials.

Immediate Priorities

8. The next meeting of the Access Delivery Group is scheduled to take place on 25 September.