

PO/ Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science

Read out from today's call below,

Call with the university sector 17.08.20

- Minister outlined purpose of meeting was to take stock post SQA results following the DMF's announcement.
- Thanked the sector for responding positively.
- Keen to capture what sector think are the key issues for university sector and HE.

Principals made the following points

- Three headings – firstly capacity, can we take the numbers, secondly is funding and third retention – not only to make sure students get in but succeed when they get there.
- Over recruitment to medicine is already significant – it is now likely this will be even more. This has implications not only for universities but also NHS and is not just a one year issue.
- Delay between schools and universities knowing students results is a disaster waiting to happen – Roddy noted this is being discussed between UCAS and SQA at the moment.
- Resolution over controlled numbers would be extremely helpful however there will be additional numbers over lots of courses not just these. Not just physical capacity but accreditation
- Implications of additional numbers as well as initial expected numbers needs to be looked at and taken into account.
- Certainty about how numbers and funding for this year is urgent however would be good to know how this will look for the next academic year. Both should be a priority.
- Admissions offices will be looking at updated results from Scottish students and UK students – This will be very important.
- Timescales for taking students who's grades have been amended are unknown at the moment.
- This will include students who were initially rejected from their first choice. Students revised offers will be honoured. There is possibly a cross border issue here.
- Concerned around timetable of when results will be provided, and principals would be keep to know this timetable as soon as available.
- Universities need to know results as soon as possible to support with planning.
- The issue adding in A Level grades could go on for some time and could also roll into next year.
- Minister advised SG have already commenced work on the health related courses and these are being looked at by NHS, Education Scotland and officials.
- UCAS and SQA are having a meeting this afternoon and we would be looking to confirm the timeline at some point this week to also advise students what

will happen. SFC and SG then need to look at timeline of updating you on how this will work in practice.

- Universities are likely to have more students one way or another who need more support. Retention will likely be a medium term consequence. How can we make sure these people not only get to university but also succeed?
- Mental health services are likely to be stretched and it would be useful to keep an eye on this.
- SFC noted they are looking at what is the quantum of funding needed but also about additional requirements of institutions as well as colleges and articulation as not just about school leaves. Financial sustainability is also at play here.

Principals made the following points

- Additional funding shouldn't be carved from existing budget it should be from new money – recognising the pressure on the public purse.
- SFC Board members are excited by the potential of the commissioned review.
- This isn't a one year problem. It needs additional money into the system.
- We need to ensure as little harm done to the young people living through this considering the degree of uncertainty.

Assurances from Government required now given the situation which has now unravelled in England and Wales considering the cap.