

**FOI RE:- Removal of £46 million funding for colleges and universities -
202300357204**

1) All correspondence between the Scottish government and Ross Greer regarding this funding between December 2022 and the date of this FOI. [17 May 2023]

1. Email from Ross Greer MSP to Jamie Hepburn MSP

[redacted s38(1)(b)]

Private Secretary – Minister for Higher/Further Education, Youth Employment and Training – Jamie Hepburn MSP

St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG - 0131 244 2553, [redacted]

Email: MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot

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From: Greer R (Ross), MSP <Ross.Greer.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 08 March 2023 10:22

To: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training

<MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted s38(1)(b)@gov.scot]

[redacted s38(1)(b)@gov.scot]

Subject: SFC allocation of additional college funding

Hello,

I've received some correspondence from colleges frustrated by the length of time it is taking to confirm their allocation of the additional £26 million for 2023/24. As I understand it, allocations and associated conditions will be confirmed on 23rd March, days before the start of the 23/24 financial year.

Given that the draft budget was published on 15th December, I am unsure why it would take three months for the SFC to confirm allocations. Whilst that £26 million could in theory have changed during the budget's passage through the parliamentary process, work could and presumably did begin before the Stage Three vote. Late confirmation of allocation and associated conditions has significant knock-on effects for colleges' own budget-setting processes.

I would appreciate if the Minister or the SFC could provide some information on the allocation process and the timescales involved, reflecting on the points above.

Thanks, Ross

2. Letter from Jamie Hepburn MSP to Ross Greer MSP 23/3/23

Minister for Higher/Further Education, Youth

Employment & Training
Ministear airson Foghlam Àrd-ìre agus Foghlam
Adhartach, Cosnadh Òigridh agus Trèanadh
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Ross Greer MSP
Ross.Greer.msp@parliament.scot

Our Reference: 202300346933

Your Reference: SFC allocation of additional college funding

23 March 2023

Dear Ross,

Thank you for your email of 8 March regarding the allocation of funding to colleges. The 2023-24 budget increases the resource allocation for colleges by £26 million, which will support strategic change.

The Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) board approved funding for strategic change at its meeting on 10th March alongside the draft funding allocations for individual institutions. I have asked for advice from the SFC on how best to use this additional money to enable change. Building on early discussions SFC has already had with the colleges, more detailed work will be undertaken at pace to consider the best use of this funding. This will involve work with the sector, Scottish Government officials and other key stakeholders.

The funding allocations are for academic year 2023-24 and SFC are following a similar timetable as previous years to progress the funding allocations through their standard governance process. Indicative institutional allocations are due to be published shortly with final allocations likely to be confirmed by late spring.

Yours Sincerely,

JAMIE HEPBURN

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Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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3. Letter from Ross Greer MSP to Graeme Dey MSP 1/5/23

Graeme Dey
Minister for Higher and Further Education
By Email

1st May 2023

Dear Graeme,

Congratulations on your appointment as Further and Higher Education Minister. I look forward to working with you to deliver on our shared aspirations for the sector.

In the process of developing the 2023/24 budget I was pleased to secure a £26 million increase in funding for colleges. While this was a very welcome increase on plans previously set out in the Resource Spending Review, the sector still faces major challenges. Colleges have seen nationwide strike action in seven of the last eight years and another dispute over lecturer pay is ongoing. This is a stark illustration of the extent to which industrial relations in the sector are broken and in need of a significant reset.

For as long as Westminster continues to underfund the Scottish Government we will be forced to make difficult spending decisions. However, lecturing and support staff are understandably angered by the erosion of the value of their pay and repeated rounds of redundancies while principals (a number of whom are on larger salaries than the First Minister) and their senior management teams seem largely insulated from the consequences of their own budgetary choices.

It is clear that urgent change is required within the college sector. The first opportunity to begin delivering this change will be in response to the latest 'lessons learned' exercise regarding industrial action and the NJNC. I look forward to engaging with you on the Scottish Government's response to that report.

Best wishes,

Ross Greer MSP for the West of Scotland
Scottish Green Party

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4. Letter from Graeme Dey to Ross Greer 24/5/23

Minister for Higher and Further Education; and
Minister for Veterans
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Ross Greer MSP
Cameron.Garrett@Parliament.scot

Our Reference: 202300356091
Your Reference: -

24 May 2023

Dear Ross,

Thank you for your letter of 1 May regarding the challenges facing the college sector, which we discussed during our meeting on 3 May.

The future financial position remains challenging and consequently, colleges should consider the steps that they must take in order to ensure their financial viability and sustainability. It is for each individual college to determine how best to secure its sustainability while continuing to deliver provision to meet regional needs. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has been working with both the college and university sectors to identify the best split of the available resources, taking into account Government priorities and each sector's needs.

We are in the most difficult public spending environment since devolution. As a government we have to make tough decisions about our priorities and to manage new pressures on the portfolio since the 2023-24 budget announcement. Unfortunately, this has resulted in the additional £26 million uplift for colleges announced in the 2023/24 budget no longer being available. Despite this we continue to spend nearly £2 billion a year on Scotland's universities and colleges through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

There has been no cut to the college sector's core funding allocations, which are the same as in 2022-23. Colleges are responsible for their own operational decisions, including around provision, as they are best placed to respond flexibly to emerging challenges at the local level. The additional £26 million was intended to support strategic change in the sector, however there is now a greater degree of flexibility in the funding for colleges, and we continue to explore further flexibilities to ensure colleges remain sustainable.

I understand that this is disappointing news for colleges and we are engaging with the Scottish Funding Council as well as the college and university sectors. We are committed to supporting colleges in their delivery of an offering to learners that is rooted in a robust understanding of the local, as well as regional and national priorities and we understand the need for flexibility in college sector funding from academic year 2023-24. That is why colleges who underdeliver on credit targets, will be allowed to keep 20% of the funding for those credits in recognition of the semi-fixed costs that colleges incur.

As regards pay in the colleges, this is a matter for colleges to determine and pay, terms and conditions are for employers and trade unions to negotiate through the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC). I do however expect that senior pay packages should be in step with the salaries and terms and conditions that are offered to other college staff, and institutions must ensure that they have the highest standards of transparency in setting senior pay awards.

I am grateful to both the employers and trade unions for taking part in the lessons learned exercise and their desire to work collaboratively to find solutions that work for all parties. The Scottish Government is currently awaiting a formal response to the report from some campus trade unions and from College Employers Scotland, before it responds.

Yours sincerely

GRAEME DEY