

Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee - Action and Decision Log
Meeting No 41 – 28 September 2023

(Paper 1a)

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Reference	Details	Action Owner	Due Date	Action Decision	Open Complete Approved Declined
25/05/2023	2022-23 SFC Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey	LTQ40: A01	A Campbell to meet with B Clelland to discuss possible methods of increasing participation rates.	A Campbell	26/05/2023	Action	It was not possible to meet with Beth prior to her resignation from B of M
25/05/2023	W&B Internal Audit Report 2022-23 – Safeguarding and Child Protection	LTQ40: A02	A Cox and D Davidson to work with the Board Office to explore the possibility of including Safeguarding training for members as part of the Board induction process.	A Cox / D Davidson	26/05/2023	Action	Complete
25/05/2023	2023-24 Curriculum Delivery Plan (CDP) and Student Recruitment	LTQ40: D01	The Committee approved the final 2023-24 Curriculum Delivery Plan (CDP)	NA	NA	Decision	Approved
25/05/2023	2022-23 Corporate Risk Register (V4): LTQC Extract	LTQ40: D02	The Committee approved the Risk Register – LTQC Extract at May 2023 for submission to ARC.	NA	NA	Decision	Approved

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

28 September 2023

Strategic Objective Reference: (delete as appropriate)

SO1	An inspirational college experience
SO2	Embedding diversity and inclusion
SO5	High performing college underpinned by excellence in stewardship and governance
SO7	Developing staff and students to enable excellence

Subject/Purpose: Student Association Report

Action Required: To note

Appendices: No
(yes/no)

1. Summary/Key Points

The Student Association team for 2023 consists of two elected officers. The Student President, Linda Corbett, and Student Vice President, Tim Chan. The Student Association is governed by a Student Executive Committee within which students hold various volunteer officer roles. The work of the Student Association is supported by a Student Association Advisor and is overseen by Head of Quality Enhancement, Ann Heron. The Student Association Advisor post is currently vacant following Charlotte Mitchell's appointment to Equality and Diversity Performance lead.

2. Proposals and Recommendations

The Student Association proposes to look at ways in which to increase the visibility of the association across all three campuses and will work with various other departments to implement any agreed plans in the coming year.

The Student Association recommends the timely recruitment of a new Student Association Adviser.

3. Associated Risks

None identified.

4. Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (if applicable)

None

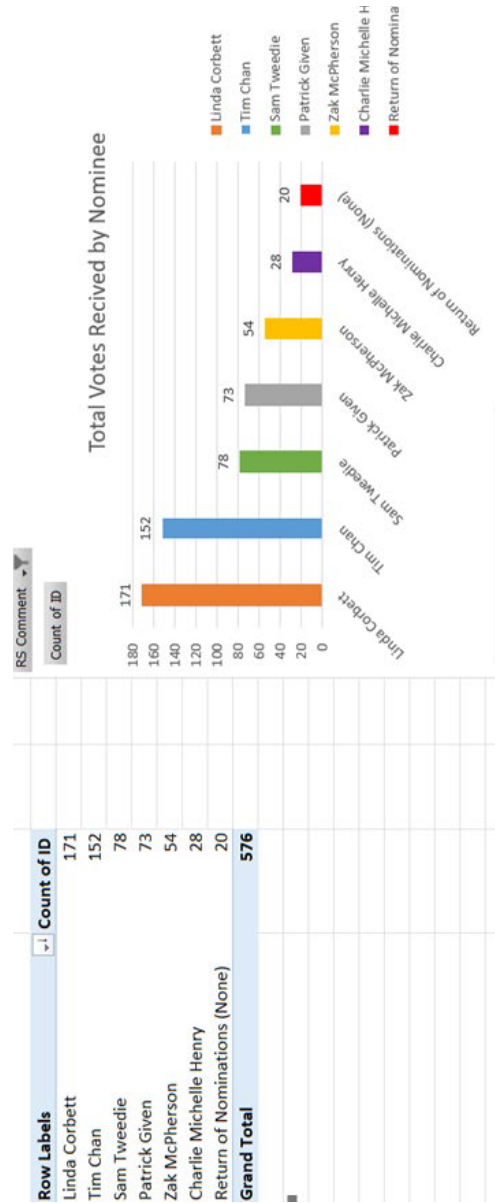
Current Situation

Following a successful Student President Election, the Student Association has welcomed its Sabbatical Officers and has been working on its operational plan for 2023/24. The summer has been a period of evaluation, planning, training and development.

Student Association Activity

Student President Elections

The Student Association elections took place from Monday 8 May to Friday 12 May 2023 following a week of campaigning from the candidates. There were six candidates standing in the election for two sabbatical positions, Student President and Student Vice President. Upon close of voting on Friday 12 May, the Student Association announced that candidate Linda Corbett was the Student President Elect and Tim Chan was the Student Vice President Elect. The successful candidates took up their positions on 1 July 2023. There was a total of 576 votes cast in the 2023 Student Elections. Initial evaluation of the election process is that the Student Association will work with both the Marketing Team and Business Systems to explore ways in which we can brand and promote the elections better to students. This activity will be included in the Student Association's operation and enhancement plan.



Student Association Operational Enhancement Plan 2023/24

The Student Association has been working on its operation plan for 2023/24 and has a formal first draft which the Student President will take to the first Executive Committee meeting in September for approval.

Freshers Planning

Freshers planning is underway. The theme for this year's Freshers is 'Get Connected'. The Student Association is organising an Information Village on each campus on the following days:

12 September Kilmarnock Campus
13 September Kilwinning Campus
14 September Ayr Campus

These marketplace events will be complimented by a range of activities such as sports challenges and taster activities as well as sign-ups for clubs, societies and volunteering opportunities.

College Lead & Change

The Student President attended the NUS College Lead and Change event in early July, which consisted of both face to face and online training. The training's goal is to provide sabbatical officers with the opportunity to network and develop the skills they will need for the coming year, as well as to assist officers in identifying what they will need to achieve their manifesto goals and to share knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm to help them thrive in their roles.

That's Quality! College Event

On Monday 7 August and Tuesday 8 August, the Student Vice President participated in sparqs That's Quality! training which comprises of a two day residential event following an online self-study module that provides sabbatical officers with a more detailed overview of quality in Scotland.

Prepare for College Programme

The Student Association took part in the College's Prepare for College Programme during the summer break with attendance at sessions being divided between the Student Association Team. The delivery of the programme lent itself better to teams who have more capacity on each campus and we will work with the College on the feedback with regards to this. The Student Association have been thinking of ways in which new students could receive all the information they need for coming to College in an alternative format and will be organising a programme of class visits for the beginning of the new academic year.

Student Association Visibility

The Student Association is working with the marketing Team to re-invigorate the SA Brand to help to make the SA as recognisable as possible. Following positive feedback from the last Education Scotland visit and an increase in the number of students reporting to know what the SA is from the SFA Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey 2023, we will build upon this to ensure that the SA is front and centre of the College. This work also includes a review of the Student Executive Committee and the member roles which will include a stronger emphasis on promoting the SA. We will also be working with our Class Ambassadors to ensure that a consistent, positive SA message is conveyed via all SA channels.

Future Activity

Class Ambassadors

The Student Association in partnership with the Quality Enhancement Team is planning the roll out of this year's Class Ambassador Model of Feedback. An evaluation of the delivery of the programme during the last year has shown that the SA needs to work more closely with curriculum areas to help them support their Class Ambassadors and to ensure there is a consistent message with regards to what Class Ambassadors exist to do and how they can undertake their roles effectively and in partnership with their curriculum teams. We will be going out to Curriculum staff upon their return in August to prepare for the selection, registration, training and support of the Class Ambassadors. The Student Association will work with the curriculum teams with regards to feedback received from the Class Ambassadors and Education Scotland to ensure that all Class Ambassadors are fully supported. An area of focus will be apprenticeship students as a priority group.

Conclusion

ACSA will continue to work alongside staff in order to best support and encourage students to work towards making the 2023/24 session both enjoyable and successful.

**Linda Corbett
Student President
August 2023**

*This paper will be published on the College website

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee Terms of Reference 2023-24

Introduction

The Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee is identified as a Committee of the Ayrshire College Board of Management. The approved Terms of Reference and information on the composition and frequency of the Committee will be considered as an integral part of the College Standing Orders.

The Committee will be a Standing Committee of the Board of Management. For the purposes of the Terms of Reference, unless otherwise indicated, ‘the Board’ means the Ayrshire College Board of Management.

Remit

The Committee will be responsible for overseeing all matters related to the strategic development and delivery of learning, teaching and the student experience, including monitoring and reporting on the associated quality and performance.

Committee Membership

The Committee membership shall consist of a minimum of six members from the Board, which should include at least one staff representative and at least one student representative.

The Committee Chair and remaining members will be appointed by the Board. Committee membership will be reviewed annually by the Board, taking account of the remaining terms of office of the Committee members. The Board will seek to ensure that all members will normally serve at least one year as a member of the Committee during their period of appointment.

Quorum

50% of the total membership of the Committee will constitute a quorum.

Attendance

The Committee may co-opt individuals as appropriate. Details of proposed co-opted individuals will be notified to the Chair of the Board in advance. The role, remit and term of membership of co-opted individuals will be determined by the Committee.

Attendance is open to all Vice Principals, and, where appropriate, other staff may be invited to attend meetings of the Committee to provide information and reports as appropriate.

Meetings

The Committee shall normally meet on a quarterly basis but shall meet on a minimum of three occasions per annum.

Any member of the Committee may request to convene additional meetings of the Committee as and when required by giving a minimum of ten working days' notice to the Board Governance Professional to call a meeting.

The Committee Chair will instruct the Board Governance Professional to call meetings of the Committee. The agenda and supporting papers will be **sent made available** to members at least five working days before the day of the meeting.

Duties

- To review and agree strategies within the Committee's overall remit and recommend for approval by the Board of Management.
- To seek assurance that the Curriculum Delivery Plan is in alignment with **regional and national economic** government priorities, the strategic direction of the College and meets the requirements of the Ayrshire College **National-Outcome Agreement** and Impact Framework.
- **To review and monitor the progress against curriculum development and delivery including new areas of skills delivery and adoption of technology and digital learning.**
- To review and scrutinise key performance indicators (KPIs) as a requirement of the **National Outcome Agreement** and **Impact Framework** in relation to, for example, student success including, but not limited to, student retention, student outcome data, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and post course destinations. Consider action to be taken to improve performance where the KPIs fall below national benchmarks.
- To review and monitor the progress and outcomes of the **College's-Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan--Engagement with Education Scotland**
- To review and monitor plans and processes to **support enhance** learning, teaching and assessment and the student experience.
- To review and monitor all College services which are provided to support the student journey, including the quality of learning and teaching and student satisfaction.
- To review and monitor equality and diversity outcomes, scrutinise data and receive reports on learner profiles and interventions.
- **To review and monitor the use of student funds including bursaries, educational maintenance allowance (EMA) childcare and discretionary funds. BRIC instead?**
- To receive and review student feedback on their college experience using a range of methods and monitor actions for improvement.

- To receive and consider an annual report on services to support the student experience which will incorporate safeguarding.
- To receive and consider a Student Satisfaction Annual Report.
- To receive and consider the Committee's extract from the current version of the Corporate Risk Register and to advise the Audit Committee accordingly.
- To receive and consider Internal Audit reports as they relate to the remit of the Committee.
- To receive and consider reports on apprenticeship and work-based learning programmes.
- To celebrate success with staff and students.

Authority

The Committee is authorised to investigate any matters which fall within its Terms of Reference.

The Committee is authorised to seek and obtain any information it requires from any senior manager or employee of the College, its advisors or member of the Ayrshire College Board of Management whilst taking account of policy and legal rights and responsibilities.

Reporting Arrangements

At the end of each meeting, the Committee may further decide on the business of the meeting that will be fully published on the College website, should this differ from that recorded on the meeting agenda. Unless otherwise recorded, it would be expected that complete minutes and papers will be published: except where the exclusions listed in paragraph 2.8 of these Standing Orders apply.

Minutes will be kept of the proceedings of the Committee by the Board Governance Professional. These will be circulated, in draft form normally within ten working days to the appropriate executive management representative for checking and then to the Chair of the Committee for consideration. It is expected that minutes will be checked timeously and any amendments advised to the Board Governance Professional.

The Chair of the Committee shall report on the work and recommendations of the Committee to the next scheduled Board meeting for information/approval and submit confirmed Committee minutes to the first meeting of the Board immediately following their approval.

Learning and Teaching Committee Work Plan 2023-24

September 2023	November 2023	March 2024	June 2024
Reports to this meeting			
2023-24 Terms of Reference & Work Plan	2024-25 Draft Curriculum Delivery Plan	2022-23 College Sector KPIs*	
2022-23 Self Evaluation Report 2023-24 Draft Outcome Agreement	2022-23 Interim Ayrshire College Performance Indicator Report*		
	2023-24 Draft National Outcome and Impact Framework*	2023-24 Draft National Outcome and Impact Framework*	2023-24 Final National Outcome and Impact Framework*
Education Scotland Safeguarding Report 2022-23 Education Scotland Annual Engagement Report	2021-22 SFC College Leaver Destination Survey College Sector Benchmarking Report	2023-24 Semester 1 Student Satisfaction Survey outcome	2023-24 SFC Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey
2023-24 Student Recruitment Report (verbal)	2022-23 SFC Student Satisfaction and Engagement College Sector Benchmarking Report		
2022-23 External Verification Report			
Reports to each meeting			
Student Association Report Q1	Student Association Report Q2	Student Association Report Q3	Student Association Report Q4
2023-24 Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan – Progress Report**	2023-24 Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan – Progress Report**	2023-24 Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan – Progress Report**	2023-24 Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan – Progress Report**
2022-23 Final Credit Position Report at 11 September 2023	2023-24 Credit Activity Target Progress Report & Early Withdrawals Position	2023-24 Credit Activity Target & Early Withdrawals Position	2023-24 Credit Activity Target Progress Report
2022-23 Student Support Funds: Final Position at 31 July 2023	2023-24 Student Support Funds position update	2023-24 Student Support Funds position update	2023-24 Student Support Funds position update
2022-23 Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning Report: Final Position at 31 August 2023	2023-24 Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning Report	2023-24 Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning Report	2023-24 Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning Report

2023-24 Corporate Risk Register (V1): LTC Extract	2023-24 Corporate Risk Register (V2): LTC Extract	2023-24 Corporate Risk Register (V3): LTC Extract	2023-24 Corporate Risk Register (V4): LTC Extract
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**2022-23 KPIs unlikely to be available for 2022-23 due to ASOS*

DRAFT

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

28 September 2023

Strategic Objective SO1 An inspirational college experience
Reference: SO5 High performing college underpinned by excellence in
(delete as stewardship and governance
appropriate) SO7 Developing staff and students to enable excellence

Subject/Purpose: To inform the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee of
the overall results of external verification activity during 2022-
23

Action Required: Note the contents of this paper and provide feedback.

Appendices: None

1. Summary/Key Points

External Verification Activity 2022-23

In 2022-23, the College hosted 71 External Verification activities for a number of Awarding Bodies and submitted materials to the SQA for 1 central Quality Assurance activity. This was an increase of 26 external verification activities from 2021-22 as Awarding Bodies continued to scale up their quality assurance activities.

2. Proposals and Recommendations

Continue to embrace the opportunity to work in partnership with our Awarding Bodies.

3. Associated Risks

N/A

4. Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (if applicable)

EqIA not required.

External Verification Activity 2022-23

In 2022-23, the College hosted 71 External Verification activities for a number of Awarding Bodies and submitted materials to the SQA for 1 central Quality Assurance activity. This was an increase of 26 external verification activities from 2021-22 as Awarding Bodies continued to scale up their quality assurance activities.

The activities that were hosted in 2022-23 included:

- 57 SQA visits (34 in 2021-22)
- 1 SQA central verifications (1 in 2021-22)
- 13 visits from other Awarding Bodies (10 in 2021-22)

Of the 71 external verification activities which were carried out, 67 were deemed Successful/High Confidence at the first visit. Of those which required some further actions, 2 were SQA Awards and 2 were EAL Awards. One of the SQA Awards required some further evidence to be provided and this was completed very quickly. The other SQA Award is still outstanding as there have been issues connecting with the EV. This has now been resolved and we await confirmation of a successful outcome. The EAL Awards were delayed due to a suspected maladministration issue which had to be investigated. This has now concluded and candidate certification can now take place.

Actions from EV activities inform actions in Team Operating and Enhancement Plans and are monitored by the Quality Enhancement Team.

Many External Verifiers recorded examples of good practice including:

- On discussion with candidates, they gave excellent responses to questions and described the support they have been given with praise, displayed through the communications assessors have with their students.
- At cross-campus team meetings, the centre regularly discusses new documents and publications which have recently been published. This highlights staff awareness of documents and also enables candidates to be aware of recent publications in the sector in providing a standardised approach.
- A student concern log is also in place to ensure that concerns are noted, and action taken to support candidates. Action plans are a working document which detail outstanding curriculum work, being mindful of the whole picture to enable students to be supported holistically.
- The post-IV meeting records, along with the documentation of assessor comments in the suggestions/reflections section of the master pack, demonstrate thorough evaluation of the delivery and assessment process, allowing identification of possible changes, good practice, or improvements. This shows a commitment to maintaining high standards and continuous quality improvement.
- It is positive to hear the flexibility of assessors with their candidates to help support them and provide guidance as and when required.
- The centre has made good use of planning and sampling feedback to assessment team members.
- Staff provide clear feedback to students in relation to what needs to be improved to meet standards but with excellent use of praise as well.

- There is evidence that the internal verification process adopted by the centre is thorough, detailed and highly effective. Detailed notes by the internal verifier were included and clearly demonstrated how assessment judgements had been made.
- The candidate Logbook is excellent, recording the practical activities shows the development of techniques and skills of the candidates. The inclusion of the candidate comments in conjunction with those of the assessor is enlightening and provides honest feedback to the assessor and Centre.
- It was lovely to see such comprehensive feedback from assessors to candidates which not only focusses on their practical work but strives to improve on life skills also.

External Verification activities were scaled up by most Awarding Bodies during 2022-23. However, there remained concern about the continuing negative impact of the Pandemic on Learning, Teaching and Assessment and the opportunities available for students to complete their course and attain their qualifications. Therefore, most Awarding Bodies agreed to continue with the mitigations and adaptations to Assessment that had been followed in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

To comply with this approach the College continued to conduct Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Panels, where appropriate, to consider the objectivity, fairness and accuracy of Course Team assessment judgements made using the SQA/Ayrshire College Assessment of Student Evidence guidance. The main objective of the IQA was to assure the quality of assessment and certification decisions made by course teams and internal verifiers particularly where new or adapted assessment practice/s was employed.

External Verification activities provide robust evidence and confirmation that the College is maintaining high standards and continuing to develop good practice in inspiring and innovative ways. The sector showed, through its continuing response to the challenges in the delivery of learning, teaching and assessment throughout 2022-23, that Colleges are able to adapt and respond quickly to change while maintaining academic standards. The College will continue to embrace and welcome the opportunity to work with our Awarding Bodies.

Doreen Wales
Assistant Principal, Student Experience and Quality Enhancement
11 September 2023

(Ann Heron, Head of Quality Enhancement)

*This paper will be published on the College website

Learning, Teaching and Committee

28 September 2023

Strategic Objective SO1 An inspirational college experience
Reference: SO5 High performing college underpinned by excellence in
(delete as stewardship and governance
appropriate)

Subject/Purpose: 2022-23 Credit Activity Target Final Position at 11 September
2023

Action Required: To note

Appendices: No
(yes/no)

1. Summary/Key Points

As of 11 September 2023:

- The SFC Core credit target is under target by 2,007 credits.
- The Foundation Apprenticeship target has been exceeded by 226 credits.
- Although under-target, the College is 696 credits within the 2% tolerance level permitted by SFC during AY 2022-23.
- It is expected that there will be slight variations to the figures presented as the College completes the final stages of the Further Education Statistics (FES) return.

2. Proposals and Recommendations

N/A

3. Associated Risks

As well as a financial risk to the College, the failure to meet the SFC credit activity target also presents a reputational risk to the College and may affect future activity levels. These risks are included in the corporate risk register. LTQ1.

4. Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (if applicable)

An impact assessment is not applicable given the subject of this paper.

Background

A key strategic aim, of the College, is to meet the annual credit activity target agreed with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as part of the Regional Outcome Agreement process.

The SFC credit activity target, agreed for AY 2022-23, is **123,867**. Table 1 provides a breakdown of credits.

Table 1

	2022-23
SFC Core credit target	122,523

For AY 2022-23, SFC has also allocated additional places to colleges to manage the transition for Foundation Apprenticeships. Table 2 provides a breakdown of these credits.

Table 2

	2022-23
Foundation apprenticeship credit target	1,344

Assessment

The table below provides a summary of the projected final position for AY 2022-23. As of 11 September 2023, the SFC Core credit target is under target by 2,007 credits. It is, however, 696 credits within the 2% tolerance level permitted by SFC during AY 2022-23. The Foundation Apprenticeship target has been exceeded by 226 credits. It is expected that there will be slight variations to the figures presented as the College completes the final stages of the Further Education Statistics (FES) return.

	Target	Projected final position as 11 September 2023	Over/under
SFC Core Credit target	122,523	120,516	(2,007)
SFC Foundation Apprenticeship target	1,344	1,570	226
Total	123,867	122,086	(1,781)

Anne Campbell
Vice Principal, Skills and Enterprise
11 September 2023

*This paper will be published on the College website

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

28 September 2023

Strategic Objective Reference: SO5 High performing college underpinned by excellence in stewardship and governance.

Subject / Purpose: 2022-23 Student Support Funds Position as at 31 July 2023

Action Required: Members are asked to note the contents of this paper.

Appendices: No

1. Summary/Key Points

The College is responsible for administering student support funds on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Scottish Government and Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).

2. Proposals and Recommendations

No further proposals are noted in this paper.

3. Associated Risks

The disbursement of student support funds and financial monitoring arrangements are key areas of financial risk for the College. In addition, issues arising from the management of the student support funds can impact significantly on the reputation of the College.

4. Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (if applicable)

An impact assessment was completed in respect of the 2022-23 Student Funding Policy and Procedures.

SFC Funds provided for Bursary, FE/HE Childcare and FE Discretionary Support

The initial 2022-23 SFC Student Support Funds allocation was £10,377,347 with an additional £461,215 FE Discretionary funding allocated in November 2022, through the in-year redistribution process. This resulted in a total SFC Student Support Funds allocation of £10,838,562. Table 1 below details the breakdown of student support funds provided by SFC for 2022-23 together with actual expenditure figures as at 31 July 2023.

Table 1

Student Support Fund	Budget	Actual Expenditure	Difference
SFC Bursary	£8,890,118	£7,229,539	£1,660,579
FE Childcare	£403,157	£244,162	£158,995
HE Childcare	£217,084	£147,711	£69,373
FE Discretionary	£1,328,203	£2,616,578	£(1,288,375)
Total	£10,838,562	£10,237,991	£600,571

The Bursary figures set out in Table 1 include circa £2,588,627 which relates to 435 care experienced students.

Members are asked to note that the College can amend these budgets within the year to reflect actual spend for audit purposes. The underspend in SFC Bursary was therefore used to offset the overspend in FE Discretionary.

Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

EMA funding is provided by the Scottish Government to support eligible 16 to 17 year-old students. The College does not receive an allocated amount but are reimbursed through a reclaim system each month. Total EMA spend during 2022-23 was **£433,740**.

SAAS Funds Provided for Higher Education Discretionary Support

The College is also allocated funding from SAAS for eligible students completing HE programmes. This budget is administered in line with SAAS guidance.

Table 2 below details the HE Discretionary Fund Budget made available by SAAS for 2022-23 together with funding received for FE/HE International Discretionary funds received 2021-22 that were unspent and carried forward to 2022-23, together with expenditure as at 31 July 2023.

Table 2

Student Support Fund	Budget	Actual Expenditure	Difference
HE Discretionary	£199,873	£199,873	£0
FE/HE International Discretionary	£7,678	£7,678	£0
Total	£207,551	£207,551	£0

Anne Campbell
Vice Principal, Skills and Enterprise
7 September 2023

(Louise Park, Head of Student Funding)

*This paper will be published on the College website

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

28 September 2023

Strategic Objective Reference: (delete as appropriate)

SO4	Working with partners and businesses
SO5	High performing college underpinned by excellence in stewardship and governance
SO7	Developing staff and students to enable excellence

Subject/Purpose: 2022-23 Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning Report: Final Position at 31 August 2023

Action Required: To note

Appendices: (yes/no) Yes

1. Summary/Key Points

The final overall Income & Expenditure position for Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning was positive and is summarised below:

Total income was £1,705,000 against an original target of £1,340,000; a favourable position of £365,000.

The end of year surplus shows a favourable position of £380,000 compared to the original budget.

Credit targets for Work Based Learning and Foundation Apprenticeships were exceeded.

2. Proposals and Recommendations

Members are asked to note the final position

3. Associated Risks

N/A

4. Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (if applicable)

N/A

Appendix 1: Ayrshire College Apprenticeships Provision

Apprenticeships are a significant part of Scottish Government's work to address youth employment and develop Scotland's workforce.

Scotland's Apprenticeship Family consists of three strands, Modern Apprenticeships, Foundation Apprenticeships and Graduate Level Apprenticeships. Ayrshire College delivers the Modern and Foundation elements of this family.

In a Modern Apprenticeship, a paid employee, usually a young person, learns on the job and works towards a recognised qualification. The College supports and assesses this in-work learning and, in many industries, provides off-the-job courses to underpin this development.

Foundation Apprenticeships are designed to help young people in S5 and S6 gain valuable, real work experience and a recognised qualification while accessing work-based learning as part of the senior phase at school.

Alongside the apprenticeship programmes, the College also supports work-based learning for a significant number of Ayrshire's current and future workforce each year. These courses support registration for regulated industry sectors and help provide in-work skills and career development opportunities.

2022-23 End of Year Position

The final overall Income & Expenditure position for Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning was positive and is summarised below:

Total income was £1,705,000 against an original target of £1,340,000; a favourable position of £365,000.

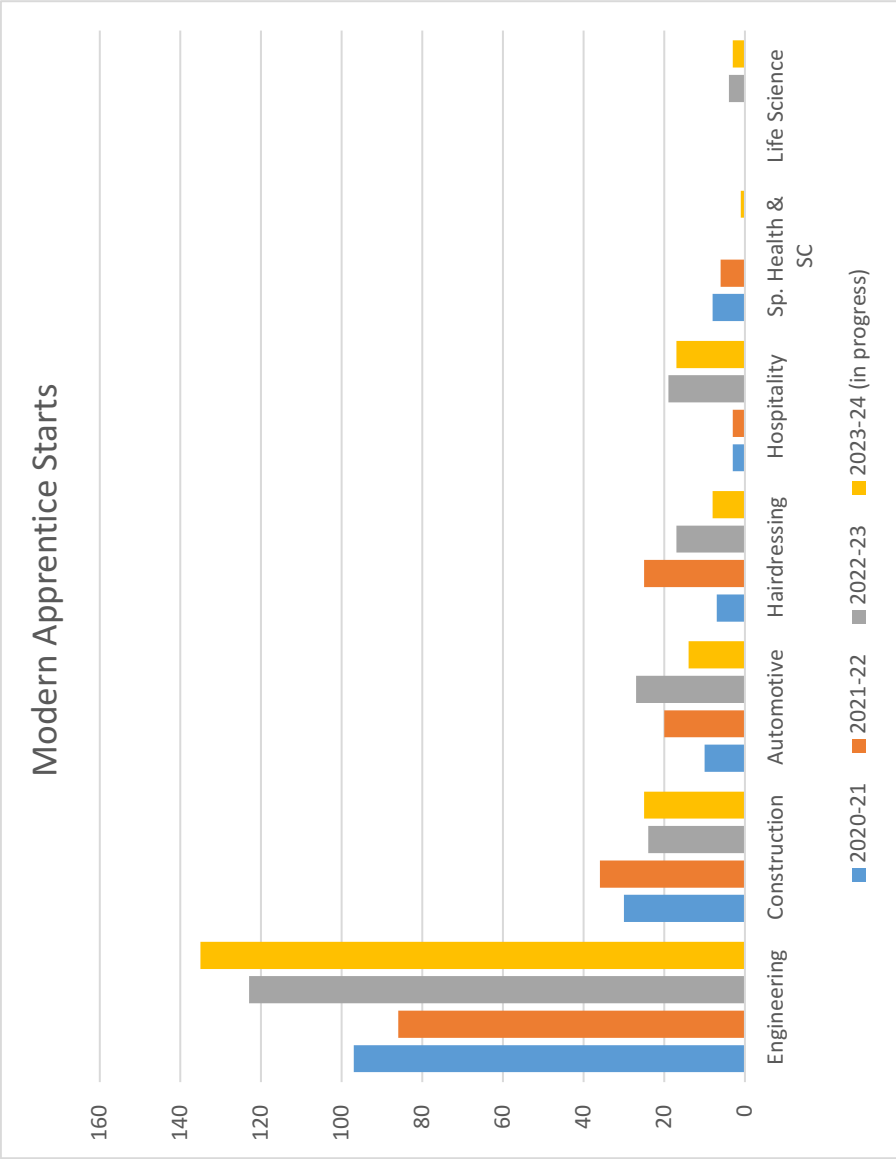
The end of year surplus shows a favourable position of £380,000 compared to the original budget.

Credit targets for Work Based Learning and Foundation Apprenticeships were exceeded.

Modern Apprenticeships (MAs)

The Modern Apprenticeship contract year runs from April to March each year. The volume of starts presented is in relation to the Skills Development Scotland contract year, while the financial targets and claim values are presented in relation to the College's academic year.

Recruitment



2020-21 Total Modern Apprentice Starts	- 155
2021-22 Total Modern Apprentice Starts	- 176
2022-23 Total Modern Apprentice Starts	- 214
2023-24 Modern Apprentice Starts in progress	- 203
2023-24 Modern Apprentice Contract Award	- 252

Modern Apprentice starts are showing a continued trend of growth and current signs are that this will continue in 2023-24. For comparison, the number of starts in progress in August 2022 was 169.

Engineering new starts are looking particularly strong this year. A request has been sent to Skills Development Scotland to re-distribute places to reflect this increase in demand.

Hospitality recruitment is also showing positive signs and will continue to recruit throughout the year. A request has been made to re-distribute places to support this sector also.

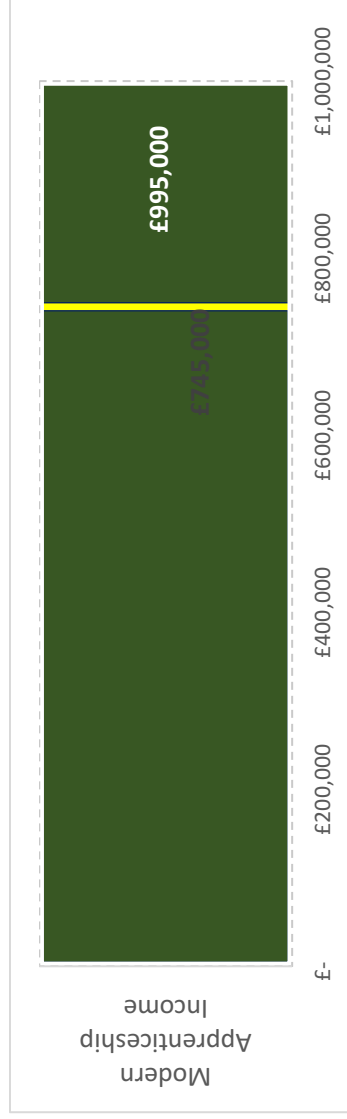
East Ayrshire Young Persons Guarantee Apprentice Employer Grant

In partnership with East Ayrshire Council, and funded by the Young Persons Guarantee, the College administered a £5000 grant to employers to incentivise them to recruit East Ayrshire young people into apprenticeship positions. This grant was used to incentivise twenty apprenticeships for East Ayrshire residents.

The industry sectors of grant recipients are summarised below:

Hair & Beauty	-	9
Engineering	-	6
Construction	-	2
Motor Vehicle	-	2
Hospitality	-	1

Income and Credit Position as of 31 Jul 2023



The 2022-23 target was £745,000 compared to £726,000 in 2021-22. Income levels exceeded the 2022-23 target by £250,000.

Qlikview is currently reporting 6598 work-based credits in 2022-23. This exceeds the original projection of 5500 credits.

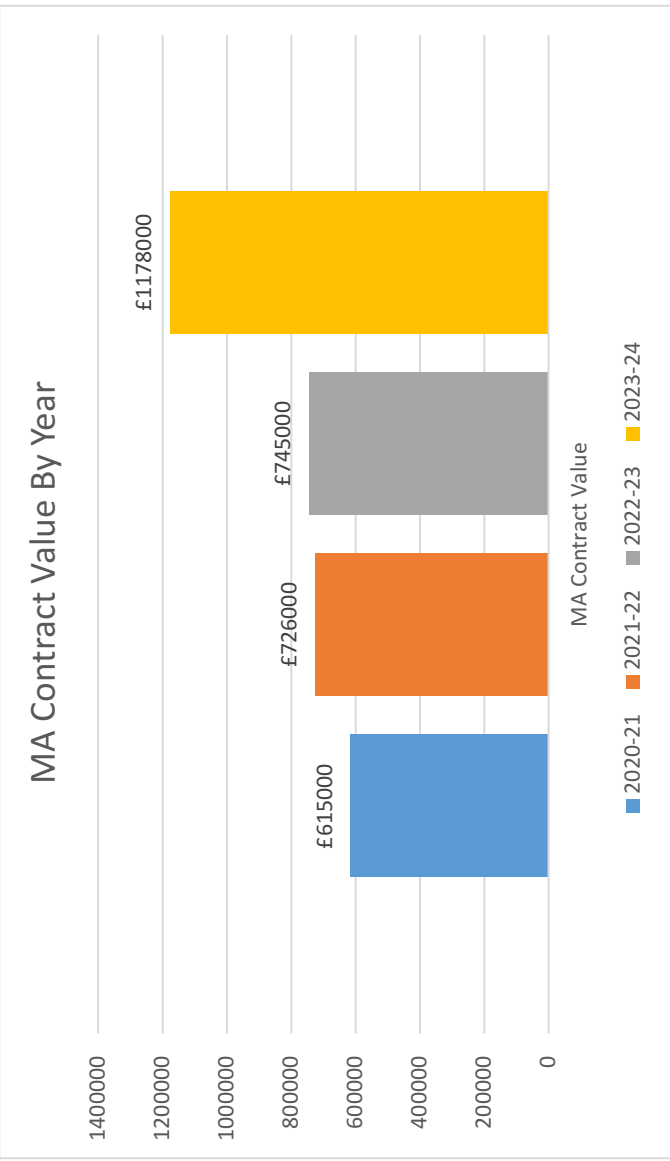
2023-24 Modern Apprenticeship Contract

As previously reported, the College has received its Modern Apprenticeship 2023-24 contract from Skills Development Scotland. SDS exercised the option of a second +1 year extension of the contract originally awarded for the 2021-22 contract year. The contract is split into two components – Value and Volume of new Starts.

Value

Despite pressures on public finances, the College has seen a significant increase in the value of its Modern Apprenticeship contract from £745,000 in 2022-23 to £1,178,000 in 2023-24.

This increase in value is primarily due to a sustained increase in the number of high-value, multi-year apprentices, such as engineering and construction, recruited by the College's industry partners over the last few years.



Volume

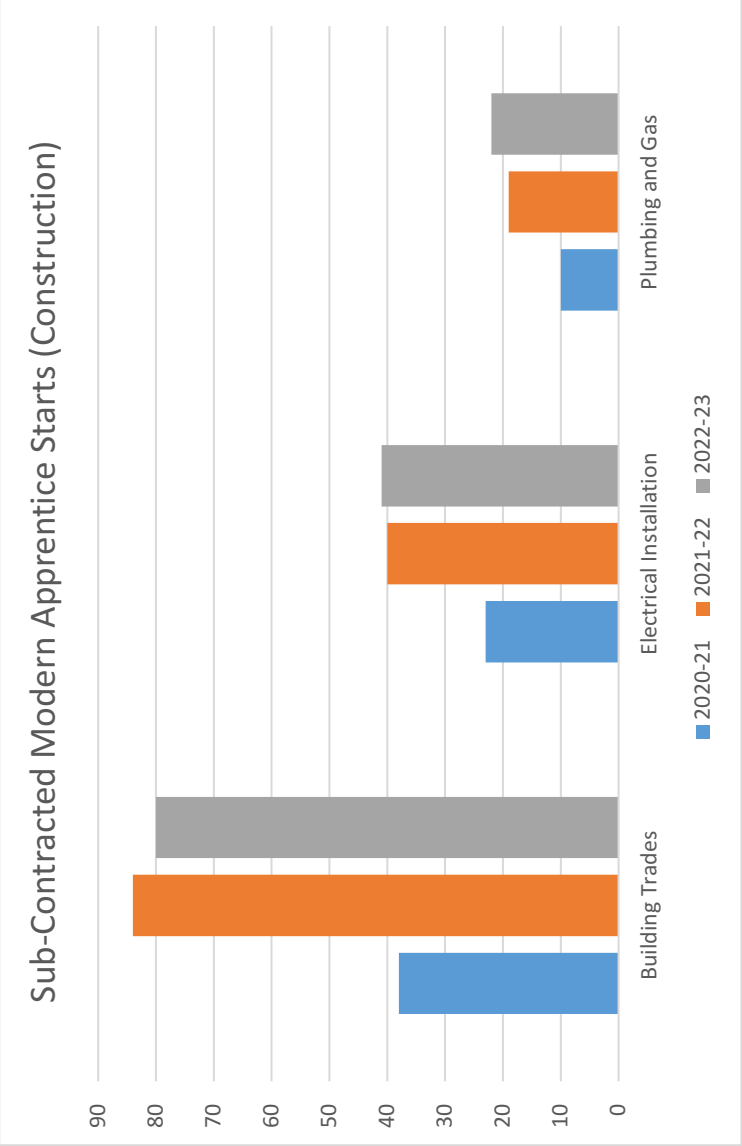
Despite pressures on public finances, the College has an opportunity to continue to grow Modern Apprenticeship provision, with the award of 252 new start places for 2023-24

Sub Contracted Modern Apprenticeships

Alongside the contract held directly with SDS, the College also delivers off-the-job training to significant numbers of Modern Apprentices via contracts held with other training providers such as trade bodies and local authorities. Recent growth has seen this provision increase to over 500 apprentices being supported by these contracts, with the majority being employed in construction trades.

2022-23 Recruitment

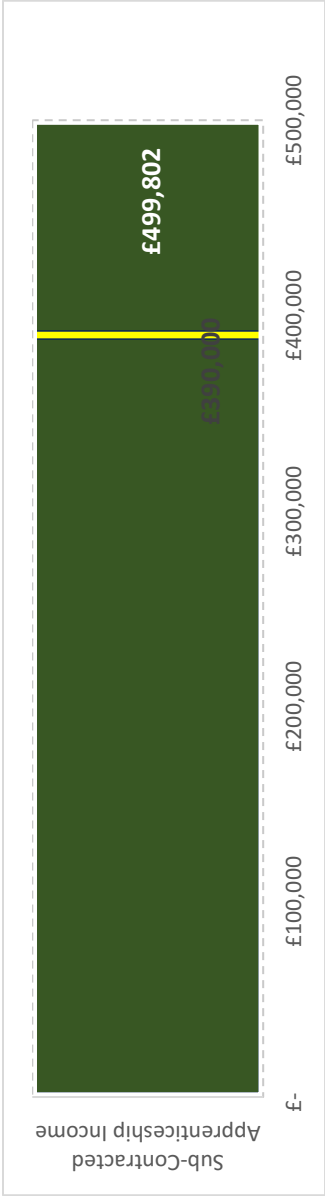
The construction sector saw a significant increase in apprentice recruitment in 2021-22. This was reflected in our own Modern Apprentice contract as well as new starts recruited to trade body and local authority contracts. This increased level of recruitment was seen in 2022-23 also.



Current projections suggest continued strength in Electrical Installation recruitment in 2023-24. Building Trades and Plumbing & Gas recruitment seems in line with 2022-23 with a potential of being slightly reduced. Recruitment for these courses is ongoing and will be confirmed in subsequent papers.

Income as of 31 Jul 2023

Sub-contract Modern Apprentice income is drawn down in line with specific contractual arrangements with each partner.



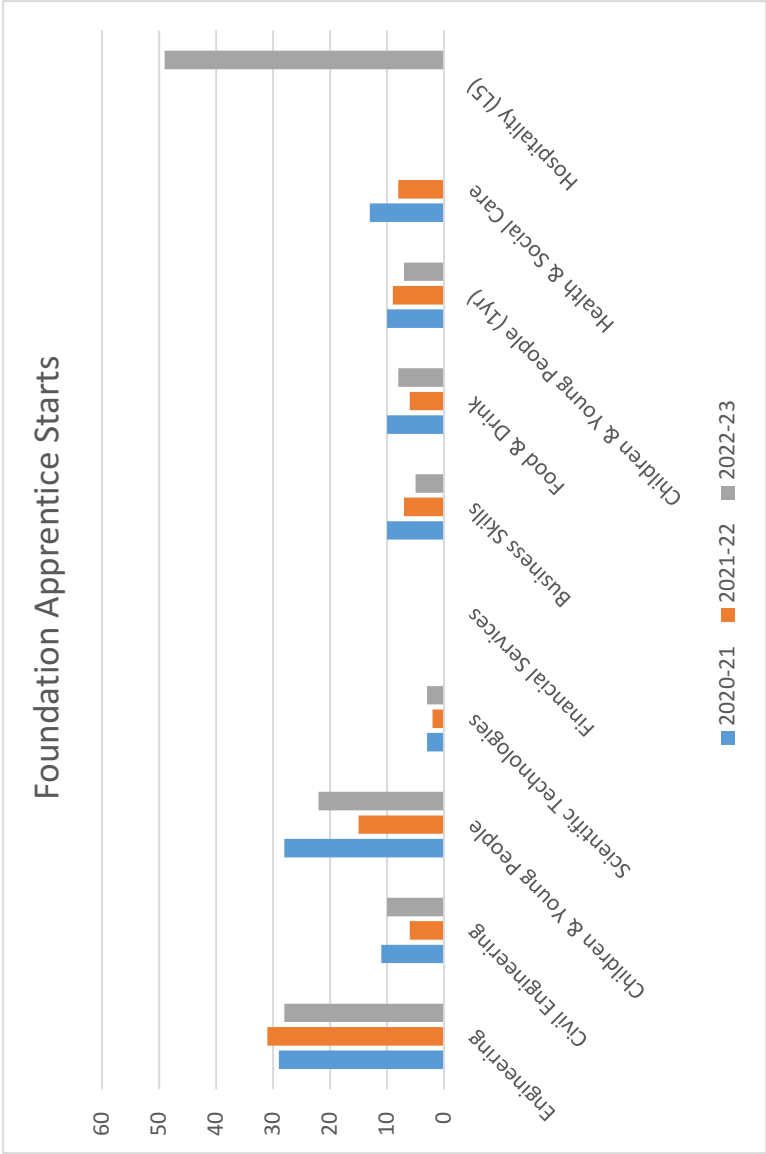
The Sub Contracted MA target was £390,000 in 2022-23 compared with £295,000 in 2021-22. The annual target for sub-contracted MA's was exceeded with income of £499,000 achieved.

Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs)

Foundation apprenticeships for 2022-23 were funded via a combination of additional, enhanced, credits from SFC and further income from SDS to cover travel costs. SFC credits are drawn down in line with mainstream course funding, while SDS funding is claimed using their traditional milestone model.

Recruitment

Recruitment for the Foundation Apprenticeship Cohort for 2022-23 is summarised in the graph below compared to the previous years:



2020-21 Foundation Apprentice Starts	- 110
2021-22 Foundation Apprentice Starts	- 91
2022-23 Foundation Apprentice Starts	- 132

East Ayrshire Council has introduced the Hospitality L5 FA in 2022-23 and this proved to be popular, seeing high levels of recruitment.

Recruitment to the 2023-24 programme remains to be confirmed. South Ayrshire Council will not run the Business Skills FA in 2023-24.

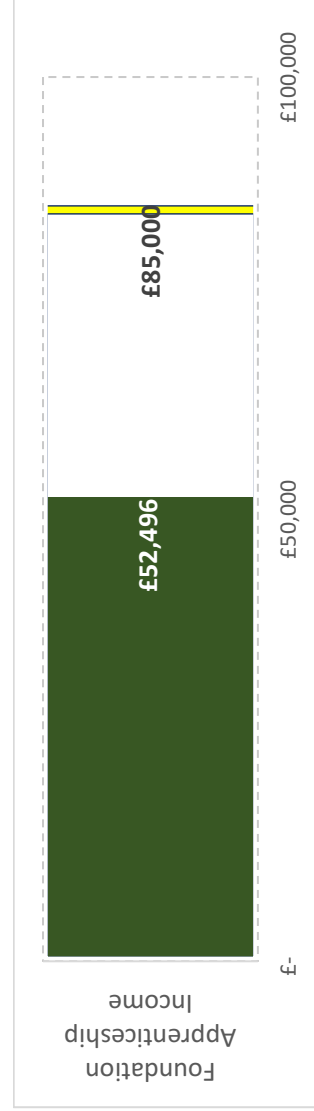
Income and Credit Position as of 31 Jul 2023

Due to a change in how Foundation Apprentice funds are distributed, the majority of funds associated are through credits from SFC.

Qlikview is currently reporting 1638 Foundation Apprenticeship credits in 2022-23. This exceeds the original projection of 1344 credits.

Additional income has been received from SDS reflecting other costs such as student travel. SDS income for the 2022-23 starts was delayed due to a delay between SDS and SFC agreeing a data sharing agreement and the late issue of guidance. A provisional DSA has been agreed between both organisations and discussions continue in order to free up payment for the first year cohorts.

Payment for the cohorts in their second year of learning was received in line with expectations.



2023-24 Update

Recent communication from SFC and SDS has confirmed that the split funding model will continue in 2023-24

Discussions have been ongoing with SFC to find a solution for funding the portion of Foundation Apprenticeships delivered fully by local authorities. SFC have requested that funds attributed to East Ayrshire Council's FA programme continue to be distributed through college credits for 2023-24.

SDS have undertaken a review of travel costs and will introduce a new methodology of distribution in 2023-24. This is also intended to consider free bus travel available to students.

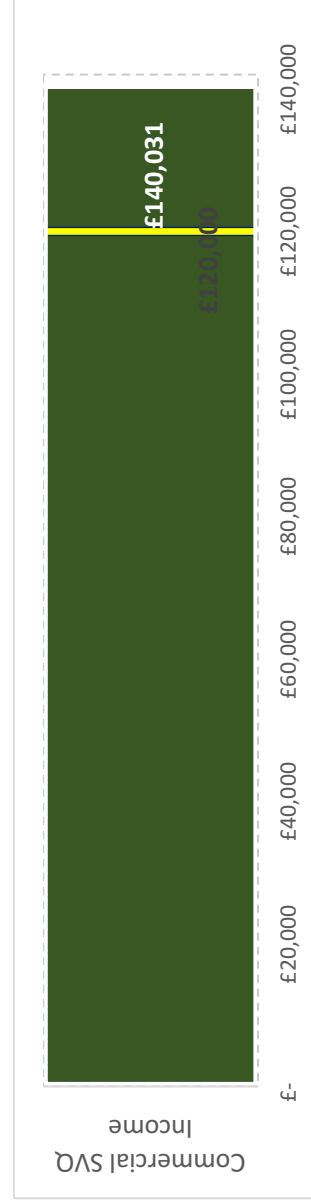
Webinars are planned through August to inform colleges of the changes and any implications will be reported in future papers.

Commercial SVQs

Recruitment for commercial SVQ is ongoing throughout the academic year. A significant contract was agreed with South Ayrshire Council to deliver Health & Social Care SVQs to home care staff. Ongoing demand was also experienced for individual SVQs in Health & Social Care as well as aeronautical engineering SVQs.

Income as of 31 Jul 2023

The Commercial SVQ target was £120,000 in 2022-23, comparable with the 2021-22 target. The annual target was exceeded.



Gavin Murray
Assistant Principal, Learning and Skills
5 September 2023

(Stuart Millar – Head of Apprenticeship and Work-based Learning)

*This paper will be published on the College website



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

(Paper 10)

SFC GUIDANCE REFERENCE:

SFC/GD/25/2023 ISSUE

DATE: 17/08/2023

SFC Guidance to Colleges and Universities on Quality AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24: Refresh



SFC Guidance to Colleges and Universities on Quality AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24: Refresh

Issue Date:

17 August 2023

Reference:

SFC/GD/25/2023

Summary:

This guidance is to inform Scotland’s colleges and universities of refreshed quality arrangements for AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24.

FAO:

Principals of Scotland’s colleges and universities, Quality managers and practitioners at Scotland’s colleges and universities, and the general public.

**Further
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SFC Guidance to Colleges and Universities on Quality AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24: Refresh

Purpose

1. The purpose of this refreshed guidance is to inform Scotland's colleges and universities and other stakeholders of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) guidance on quality for AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24.
2. For colleges, the information set out in this Guidance is developed with Education Scotland (ES). This Guidance outlines arrangements for external institutional review and thematic review. Full details of these arrangements will be published separately by Education Scotland. Colleges are also expected to consider curriculum developments and the contribution of support services to the student experience as part of their own self-reflection on quality. Separate arrangements exist for quality assurance processes required by awarding bodies. We have also set out information on engagement with the Tertiary Enhancement Topic and scoping for future enhancement activity from AY 2024-25.
3. For universities, the information set out in this Guidance outlines arrangements for external institutional review, QESR (Quality Enhancement and Standards Review and Institutional Liaison Meetings, outlined below), Institution-led Review (ILR), engagement with the Tertiary Enhancement Topic and scoping for future enhancement activity from AY 2024-25, public information on quality and the student experience and institutional reporting on quality. The arrangements for external institutional review have been developed by Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to be delivered across two phases (from paragraphs 60) to ensure continued compliance with [European Standards and Guidelines](#) (2015). SFC has committed to ensuring compliance with ESG as part of its developing tertiary quality arrangements. Full details of arrangements for external institutional review (Phase 1 of QAA Scotland's arrangements) are available on the [QAA Scotland website](#).

New for AY 2023-24

4. SFC has reviewed and updated this guidance in advance of AY 2023-24 to reflect and respond to the development of new tertiary arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement to be implemented from AY 2024-25. Recognising that this Guidance covers a period of transition for both sectors, we have made only a small number of necessary changes and clarifications for AY 2023-24. These are highlighted below for ease of reference:

- Update on progress with developing student partnership models and reference points, [paragraphs 20-23](#).
 - Expectations around engaging with the design and delivery of a new approach to external review and a new approach to impactful enhancement activity across the tertiary system, [paragraph 27](#).
 - Ad hoc requests on information about the way institutions are securing academic standards and the student learning experience, [paragraph 28](#).
 - Updated guidance for colleges and universities on reporting on quality for AY 2023-24, [paragraph 29](#).
 - Update on revised Outcome Agreement guidance for AY 2023-24, [paragraph 31](#).
 - New guidance for universities on external institutional review of transnational education, (TNE) for AY 2023-24, from [paragraph 65](#).
 - Clarification around SFC's expectations for professional support services review as part of institutional-led review in the university sector for AY 2023-24, [paragraph 79](#).
5. Regular updates on progress with the development of the Tertiary Quality Project will be provided on the Tertiary Quality Project [website](#) throughout the coming year.

Section 1: Introduction

Overview

6. The Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 sets out SFC's duty to secure coherent, high-quality fundable further and higher education, and to ensure provision is made for assessing and enhancing the quality of this provision.
7. Up until 2022 the SFC met this statutory duty through two frameworks for quality in the college and university sectors. *How Good is our College* ([HGIOC](#)) and the *Quality Enhancement Framework* ([QEF](#)) supported self-assessment, improvement and enhancement, and the sharing of good practice in the college and university sectors, respectively, in Scotland. It is through these frameworks that SFC supported institutions to manage the quality of student learning experience and uphold public confidence in academic quality and standards. Evidence from the quality arrangements contributed to broader SFC interactions with colleges and universities, in particular, Outcome Agreement discussions.
8. This guidance outlines interim quality arrangements for AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24, developed in partnership with ES and QAAs, and gives our colleges and universities clarity and consistency while also allowing appropriate flexibility for continued development of a tertiary approach to quality outlined in SFC's Review.

Context: SFC Review of Coherence and Sustainability

9. The final report of SFC's [Review of Coherence and Sustainability](#) published in June 2021 sets out our response to Scottish Ministers' request that we review how we might best fulfil our mission to secure coherent, good quality, and sustainable tertiary education and research.
10. The overarching ambition outlined in the review report is to make Scotland the best place to be a student at college or university. To support this ambition the review report makes a specific recommendation to:

'develop a single quality assurance and enhancement framework for tertiary education, to uphold academic standards, and enhance the learning experience of all students'
11. SFC wishes to see a more coherent approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement across the college and university sectors that supports public confidence and reflects our ambition for a more integrated tertiary system supporting seamless learner journeys. It is also our ambition to foster closer collaboration and joint working between and across partner agencies to support this.

12. The Scottish Government has welcomed SFC's proposed development of a single quality framework that:
- Strikes the appropriate balance between assuring and enhancing the quality of tertiary provision.
 - Recognises the distinct contribution as well as the interconnectedness of each part of the tertiary education system.
13. SFC has worked with ES and QAAS to develop quality arrangements for AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24 which will support quality assurance, improvement and enhancement while also allowing flexibility to work with stakeholders and the sectors to develop a new single tertiary approach over the same period. This will allow SFC and its partner quality agencies to co-create, test and adjust any new arrangements with the sector, and will provide sufficient lead-in time for colleges and universities to make the required preparations for the new approach.
14. New arrangements for a common approach to quality assurance and enhancement across colleges and universities are expected to commence in AY 2024-5.

Section 2: shared sector expectations for AY 2023-24

Quality culture

15. Institutions should demonstrate a strategic approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement which has a clear focus on outcomes for students. This approach should be supported by a ‘quality culture’ throughout the institution where responsibility for provision and outcomes for students is not only the responsibility of staff with quality roles but is shared institution-wide. A quality culture can further be defined as demonstrating clear alignment between the institution’s strategy on quality assurance, improvement and enhancement and day-to-day practice, where buy-in across the institution from staff and students is evident and where this culture informs activity at all levels.
16. Institutions should reflect, at institutional level, on strategic issues arising from their regular quality processes and make use of this information as part of their overall strategy and strategic approach to quality assurance and enhancement.
17. Institutions have flexibility in the precise manner of addressing this expectation, but it is expected that a culture of quality assurance, improvement and enhancement should be clearly evidenced across an institutions’ policies and practices.
18. As part of their engagements with institutions, SFC has asked ES and QAAS to explicitly consider, through external institutional review and supporting activity, the ways in which institutions demonstrate a quality culture.
19. SFC expects each institution to engage with its quality agency partners in an open and transparent way. Institutions should share good practice and success and should also share and address challenge areas at the earliest opportunity within the quality review process, demonstrating a commitment to an effective quality assurance, improvement and enhancement approach.

Student partnership

20. Student partnership and engagement in quality processes is a fundamental characteristic of our approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement in our colleges and universities in Scotland. *Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland* ([sparqs](#)) assists and supports students, students’ associations and institutions to improve the effectiveness of student engagement in quality assurance, improvement, and enhancement across Scotland.

21. The sparqs [Student Engagement Framework for Scotland](#) is endorsed and owned by all the sector agencies and representative bodies in the college and university sectors. It sets out expectations and features of student engagement. SFC's expectation is that all institutions will work with the Framework in their own context and will develop their partnership approaches with students and student representatives to enhance student partnership. Institutions should ensure that there is a coherent and effective strategy in place for this activity. SFC expects institutions to be ambitious in seeking opportunities for student partnership in the co-creation of learning; to empower students to use evidence to enhance their own learning; to extend engagement to new groups of students; and to support and develop the role and capacity of Student Association staff to build sustainability and maintain continuity of support for student officers.
22. SFC will seek assessments from sparqs, ES and QAAS on the effectiveness of how students and student representatives are engaged in quality arrangements for AY 2023-24.
23. SFC will also work with sparqs in AY 2023-24, in the context of our Review recommendation for quality, to strengthen student partnership in quality and to develop sector reference points with students for use within the new tertiary quality arrangements. In AY 2022-23, SFC commissioned sparqs to refresh its Student Learning Experience and Student Partnership models with a view to these being integral to the tertiary quality arrangements being implemented from AY 2024-5. During AY 2023-24, sparqs will test these models across the tertiary sector and work with the quality agencies to consider how best to integrate these within the new common approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

Tertiary Enhancement Topic continuation in AY 2023-24

24. SFC recognises that the college and university sectors undertake a variety of improvement and enhancement activity, both within institutions and at a sector-wide level. Arrangements for next year will continue to support these activities.
25. Based on review work in AY 2021-22, in AY 2022-23, SFC's quality agency partners outlined aspects of the digital learning environment as continuing to require focus. In addition, Education Scotland highlighted links between aspects of digital learning and student outcomes, retention, and attainment.
26. During AY 2023-4, institutions will be expected to continue to engage in the Tertiary Enhancement Topic, '*The future of learning and teaching: defining and delivering an effective and inclusive digital/blended offering*', that commenced in AY 2022-23. It is intended that this work, as well as having sector-wide benefit, will be of value to individual institutions, supporting enhancement and allowing for the development of a

sector-wide evidence base to inform improvements to learning opportunities and to enhancement of the student experience. QAAS, ES and sparqs will continue to work closely with institutions, academic staff, support staff and students from across the college and university sectors on the Tertiary Enhancement Topic.

Tertiary external review method and enhancement approach

27. SFC has commissioned QAA (working closely with Education Scotland) to lead on the development of a multi-year quality cycle involving peer-led external review of colleges and universities, and the development of effective ways of designing and delivering impactful enhancement activity across the tertiary system. Colleges and universities will be expected to proactively engage with this work to help shape how external review and tertiary enhancement are delivered within the new tertiary quality arrangements from AY 2024-25. These new arrangements will be outlined in the SFC Guidance to colleges and universities on quality published in AY 2024.

Ad hoc requests on information about the way institutions are securing academic standards and the student learning experience

28. Exceptional circumstances arise that have the potential to significantly impact on the way institutions are securing academic standards or the student learning experience, for example the marking and assessment boycott. In such cases SFC may request, either directly, or through the quality agencies, such information from institutions necessary to meet its statutory duties as set out in paragraph 6, or to respond to requests for advice from the Scottish Government. In these cases, the SFC will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that requests are proportionate and timely.

College and university reporting on quality for AY 2023-24

29. As part of the development of the new common approach to quality assurance and enhancement, all colleges and universities will be expected to complete a Self-evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) for submission to SFC and the quality agency by the 30 November 2024. The specific detail of these reports and an associated template is under development and is being led by the respective Chairs of The Quality Forum (university) and CDN Quality Network (college). They are, however, likely to include a summary of institutional quality assurance and enhancement activities; an evaluation of key data and evidence; and a strategic action plan identifying areas for improvement and enhancement. It is intended that the SEAP will replace some other forms of reporting to SFC and so reduce the reporting burden on institutions. It is also intended that they will be used to facilitate annual engagements between institutions and the quality agency and form part of the documentary evidence for the periodic external peer reviews.

30. Following an initial pilot with volunteer institutions in Autumn 2023, the final template and guidance will be shared in Spring 2024. For university reporting on quality in the current academic year (2022-23) please see guidance at Section 5 of this document.

Outcome Agreements

31. SFC's revised [Outcome Agreement guidance for AY 2023-24](#) asks colleges and universities to provide a summary on how they will demonstrate that students at all levels experience a high-quality, safe, and supportive learning experience that enables them to succeed. This should include information on student participation and engagement in their educational experience and their plans to enhance the student experience, considering the evidence for enhancement.

Section 3: Arrangements for Colleges AY 2023-24

32. This section outlines the approach to support quality assurance, improvement and enhancement in the college sector. It sets out how Education Scotland will plan and implement external quality reviews, public accountability, and enhancement in Scotland's colleges in AY 2023-24.
 33. SFC expects that colleges will continue to undertake appropriate quality monitoring processes required by the awarding bodies for the qualifications that they offer, and report on high-level commitments, impacts and outcomes around high-quality learning, teaching and support in their Outcome Agreements with SFC.
- On-going engagement with a link HM Inspector**
34. Education Scotland HM Inspectors (of Education) will continue to engage with all colleges to provide tailored support and challenge. This may be undertaken either virtually or through in-person visits as required. This engagement will also provide valuable insight into the challenges faced by the college sector, the development and capacity building needs of each college, and the nature of individual colleges' response to improvement and enhancement.

Annual Engagement Visits (AEV)

35. Education Scotland HM Inspectors will undertake AEVs in colleges where, based on the outcomes of previous engagement with HM Inspectors, there is clear progress against priorities, or where SFC and/or HM Inspectors have not identified any aspects of performance requiring further exploration. AEVs will be short visits lasting typically one day on-site. AEVs will be undertaken by the college link HM Inspector, supported by HM Inspector colleagues, Associate Assessors (AA), and Student Team Members (STM) as appropriate.
36. AEV dates will be planned collaboratively between the college and the link HM Inspector.
37. On conclusion of the AEV, colleges will receive an initial verbal report. For multi-college regions, a representative of the Regional Strategic Body (RSB) will be invited to attend.
38. A subsequent written report will be produced and shared with the college and SFC. For multi-college regions the report will also be shared with the RSB. At this point, a short statement confirming the outcomes of the AEV and any next steps will be published.

39. AEV outcomes will inform future engagement approaches with individual colleges.

Progress Visits (PVs)

40. PVs will be undertaken in colleges where areas for improvement and enhancement requiring further progress were identified during previous engagement with HM Inspectors, or where both SFC and HM Inspectors identify aspects of performance requiring further exploration. PVs will identify what is working well and where further improvement may still be required. They will also consider key indicators of performance, and their impact on the learning experience. PVs will commence in Autumn 2023.
41. PVs will be managed by a lead HM Inspector accompanied by HM Inspector colleagues, one of whom will be the college link Inspector. AAs and STMs will also support PVs. The size of team and duration of the visit will be adjusted to recognise the context of the college.
42. PVs will usually be carried out across two to three days and a visit schedule will be agreed with colleges in advance.
43. PVs will be planned collaboratively between the college, HM Inspectors and SFC. Prior to the visit, colleges will have the opportunity to provide relevant PV updates, identified through self-evaluation, to reflect the progress made and highlight any changes in circumstances. PV planning will be intelligence-led. Pre-visit planning discussions will be held with SFC and sparqs and will consider a range of evidence.
44. Throughout the visit, team members will involve managers and staff in professional dialogue, with the aim of supporting improvement. Through this approach HM Inspectors will work with college staff and should ensure that the visit experience is a collaborative process.
45. On conclusion of the PV, the college will receive an initial verbal report of their findings. For multi-college regions, a representative of the RSB will be invited to attend.
46. A subsequent written report will be produced and shared with the college and SFC. For multi-college regions the report will also be shared with the RSB. At this point, a short statement confirming the outcomes of the PV and any next steps will be published. PV outcomes will inform future engagement approaches with individual colleges.

Supporting enhancement and improvement: Thematic reviews

47. In order to support improvement in aspects of college sector performance, HM Inspectors will undertake a programme of thematic reviews.

48. Thematic reviews may be carried out at college, regional or national level. The footprint of each thematic review will be adjusted to take account of the scale and reach of institutions. This will support the evaluation of approaches and impact, providing depth of intelligence about the individual organisations involved, along with providing information to inform capacity building and future approaches to improvement and enhancement. The thematic reviews will provide opportunities for collaborative working with partner quality bodies, for example QAA Scotland in evaluating the quality of provision and capacity for improvement.
49. The symbiotic relationship between tertiary education providers in contributing to the education and skills pipeline is a key component of the proposed arrangements. Early implementation of the thematic assignments will support an incremental approach to strengthening arrangements between providers to avoid unnecessary duplication while building on existing strengths.
50. The proposed arrangements are designed to enable post-16 providers and national bodies that have a locus in assuring and improving the quality of provision, to adjust and adapt to future arrangements.
51. The approach seeks to strengthen the collective knowledge of institutions to meet current and projected economic priorities at local, regional and national levels. The findings of HM Inspectors and other bodies will be instrumental in developing the focus and scope of reviews. The approach also seeks to build incrementally the capacity of practitioners across tertiary organisations to engage collaboratively in implementing future arrangements to improve outcomes for learners. In the longer term, the approach will ensure a coherent and sustainable national approach that is founded on continuous improvement and avoidance of unnecessary duplication.
52. HM Inspectors will also seek to identify and share examples of highly effective practice, highlight what is working well and make recommendations about what needs to improve.
53. Aspects for exploration, timing and participation in thematic reviews will be agreed with SFC and colleges in advance.
54. A written report will be produced for each thematic review and shared with the college(s) and SFC. National thematic review reports will be published on Education Scotland's website.

Credit rated provision

55. For colleges with credit rated provision (credit rated programmes on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework ([SCQF](#)) database), the quality assurance of credit rating activities is carried out by SCQF Partnership through a four-year cycle of review work.

Section 4: Arrangements for Universities AY 2023-24

56. This section outlines the approach to support quality assurance, improvement and enhancement in the university sector. It sets out how QAA Scotland (QAAS) will plan and implement external quality reviews, public accountability, and enhancement in Scotland's universities in AY 2023-24.
57. During AY 2023-24 QAAS will undertake the following activities in universities: Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) and Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILM) (see paragraphs 53-55). The full details of these arrangements will be made available on the [QAA Scotland website](#).
58. A summary report of each ILM will be shared with the institution and made available to SFC to provide context for any advice or assurance sought from QAA Scotland. As part of QAAS's formal in-year meetings with SFC, QAA Scotland will provide an update on the outcomes of recent QESRs and ILMs. In the case of either a QESR or an ILM indicating that there may be a serious issue that could impact on the university's ability to meet expectations on the management of academic quality and standards, the university will first be alerted to the need to report this to the SFC. QAA Scotland will also include reflections on QESR and ILM on an annual basis as part of formal reporting to SFC. QESR reports are published on the [QAA website](#).
59. SFC also has expectations of universities in undertaking regular quality processes as part of their strategic approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement. These expectations are set out below.

External institutional review: Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) and Institutional Liaison meetings (ILM)

60. QAA Scotland developed a new external institutional review method following the completion of the fourth cycle of Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR), delivered between 2018 to 2022. This includes, as part of Phase 1, Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) which looks at each institution's strategic approach to quality assurance, improvement, and enhancement.
61. QESR and ILM in the period AY 2022-24 constitute Phase 1 of the next external institutional review cycle, in which activity will take place to inform a second stage, Phase 2, that will begin in AY 2024-25 when new tertiary quality arrangements are expected to commence.
62. Phase 1 is taking place across a period of two years, AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24. In each of the two years, approximately half of the institutions will undergo QESR with

the remainder engaging in an ILM led by QAAS. QESR and ILM dates will be planned collaboratively between QAAS and universities.

63. Key features of Phase 1 will include:
 - Self-evaluation by each higher education institution.
 - Engagement informed by sector reference points.
 - The involvement of peer and student reviewers on at least one occasion, including a site visit. (Note, site visits can be conducted online or in person).
64. The outcomes for Phase 1 will include published reporting on QESR based on the institution's ongoing approach to quality assurance, improvement, and enhancement. A summary of key themes and action points will be shared by QAA with the institution after each ILM. The findings of Phase 1 will help inform the schedule for Phase 2 review activity, commencing in AY 2024-25.

External institutional review: Transnational Education (TNE)

65. In July 2020, Universities UK (UUK) and GuildHE commissioned QAA to develop a new approach to reviewing and enhancing the quality of UK TNE. In consultation with the sector, QAA developed its new method for the Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK transnational education ([QE-TNE](#)). The method is a UK-wide enhancement-led approach.
66. The process is designed to provide confidence for the wide range of international stakeholders, showing the care the UK has for the quality of the student experience and consistent standards of UK awards.
67. The review programme consists of a published schedule of country-specific activity, while the quality enhancement approach is designed to identify shared challenges, areas for development and effective solutions, through highlighting innovative and effective practice. This approach will complement internal and external quality assurance within the UK and provide confidence for the wide range of stakeholders, both in the UK and internationally.
68. Universities participating in QE-TNE will also be listed on the QAA website as participants of the Scheme, and they, and their international TNE partners, will be eligible to use QAA's QE-TNE Kite Mark as a public statement of their commitment to quality.
69. SFC encourages all Scottish degree awarding bodies engaging in TNE to participate in QE-TNE from AY 2023-24. SFC will make participation in QE-TNE a requirement for

Scottish degree awarding bodies engaging in TNE from AY 2024-25. The cost of participation should be met by institutions.

Institution-led Review

Annual and periodic review

70. The primary mechanism by which institutions assure and enhance the quality of provision is through processes of institution-led evaluation and review, referred to generically as ‘Institution-led Review’ (ILR). It is a matter for each institution to determine how it organises its internal processes for reviewing and evaluating provision, provided it follows this SFC guidance and the [UK Quality Code](#).
71. SFC expects each institution to operate systems of annual monitoring and periodic ILR across the full range of its provision. ILR should consider the effectiveness of annual monitoring arrangements and the effectiveness of the follow-up actions arising from annual monitoring. Reporting at the course/module, programme, subject or departmental level should identify action to address any issues and activity to promote areas of strength for consideration at institutional level. The ILR method should be designed to allow constructive reflection on the effectiveness of an institution’s annual monitoring and reporting procedures.
72. All aspects of provision are expected to be reviewed systematically and rigorously on a cycle of not more than six years to demonstrate that institutions meet the expectations set out in the UK Quality Code, and the standards set out in part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).
73. It is vital that ILRs continue to produce robust, comprehensive and credible evidence that the academic standards of awards are secure and that provision in Scottish institutions is of high quality and being enhanced. ILR should be designed to promote and support critical reflection on policy and practice. The method used should ensure that any shortcomings are addressed, and it should give a central role to quality enhancement by promoting dialogue on areas in which quality could be improved and identify good practice for dissemination within the institution and beyond.

Scope, frequency and unit of review

74. All credit bearing provision should be reviewed on a cycle of not more than six years, including all undergraduate and taught postgraduate awards, supervision of research students, provision delivered in collaboration with others, transnational education, work-based provision, and placements, online and distance learning, and provision which provides only small volumes of credit.

75. Each institution is expected to produce an ILR review schedule. However, the timetable is constructed, there should normally be some form of ILR activity taking place within each academic session.
76. There is flexibility for institutions to determine the precise order and aggregation of programmes and subjects in ways which provide coherence and fit the organisational structure, mode of delivery and enhancement-led approach. The unit of review in the ILR process should have sufficient granularity to allow adequate scrutiny of programmes and disciplines including ensuring there is adequate external scrutiny at the discipline level by the external panel member(s). Excessive aggregation should be avoided if it means the process cannot examine the 'fine structure' of provision and does not facilitate the identification of specific issues affecting programmes.

Team size and composition

77. ILRs should provide an objective review of provision based on an understanding of national and international good practice and appropriate external reference points, including for example, subject benchmarks statements, professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements. Each review team should include a student and at least one member external to the institution with a relevant background. Such members may come from across the UK, from industry, professional practice or may have wider international experience and should be suitably trained in the institution's ILR process. Team size and composition must take account of the range and volume of provision to be reviewed and the balance between understanding of specific context and broader critical perspectives. It is good practice to ensure that review teams can bring a range of experience to the process and hence are able to act as 'critical friends' to the institution.

78. ILR should be designed to include an element of reflection on national and international good practice, such as a reflective statement from the institution on how its provision compares with similar practice outside the UK. Institutions are encouraged to consider how they can support such informal 'benchmarking'. SFC does not expect ILR teams to routinely include members from outside the UK although institutions are encouraged to actively consider the scope for this option.

Contribution and role of support services

79. All services contributing to the student experience should be reviewed as part of an institution's approach. Support services are of crucial importance in determining the overall quality of the student learning experience and can impact significantly on student achievement and well-being. It is a matter for each institution to determine how this should be done. Nevertheless, SFC expects that institutions' approaches to the review of professional support services should be systematic, planned and timely, covering all non-academic services or departments that contribute to the overall

student learning experience and considering their effectiveness and interactions with academic units. The arrangements for reviewing professional support services should have sufficient granularity to allow for adequate scrutiny of each aspect of the services provision and include sufficient scrutiny by external panel members. Whatever the approach taken, the evidence should allow the institution to reflect on the contribution of support services to the ‘quality culture’ within the institution (see section at page 9), the ways in which the services engage with students to monitor and improve the quality of services, and the ways in which the services promote high quality learning and continuous quality enhancement. It is expected that students will be engaged throughout the review of support services. Resources to support the development of Professional Services Partnerships were developed by QAAS in the AY 2021-22 Focus On project in AY 2021-22 and are available on the [QAAS website](#).

Student engagement in ILR

80. Institutions are expected to continue extending student engagement and partnership in quality in line with the [Student Engagement Framework for Scotland](#). It is expected that students will be engaged at all stages of the ILR process including the development of the self-evaluation, as full members of ILR teams, and in follow-up activity.

81. ILR should gather additional specific information from students as part of the evidence base for reviews. Institutions have flexibility in deciding how to achieve this, taking account of the specific demographics of their student population and the characteristics of their provision. In line with previous guidance, it is good practice for ILR to:

- Generate holistic evidence about student views of provision and of their learning experience.
- Differentiate between the views of different categories of students where these are likely to be significant (for example part-time and full-time, students from different levels of programme, entrants from school and entrants from further education, and consider issues relating to equality and diversity, etc).
- Allow identification of distinctive characteristics of provision.
- Take account of the views of recent graduates on the relevance of provision for their careers.

Use of external reference points

82. ILR should explore the use of specific aspects of the UK Quality Code, and especially how Subject Benchmark Statements, Characteristics Statements and Credit and Qualifications Frameworks – as represented by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework ([SCQF](#)) – are used in setting and maintaining academic standards. ILR

should demonstrate that programme design and learning outcomes are consistent with them.

83. ILRs should continue to support effective learner pathways through higher education, including embedding and developing the use of the SCQF. ILR should be designed to promote scrutiny and discussion of the institution's approach to the SCQF. This should include consideration of strategies for articulation and advanced standing, for the recognition of prior learning and through flexible pathways to awards, including CPD and work-based learning.

Use of data and evidence

84. Both annual monitoring and ILR should consider: themes arising from, and responses to, external examiner reports; internal and external student survey data; performance data on recruitment, progression and achievement; and data trends. Data is likely to be benchmarked against other areas of the institution's activities as well as equivalent provision in other institutions.

Relationship with PSRB accreditation

85. A significant volume of provision in Scottish universities is accredited by professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). SFC expects ILR to reflect on the outcomes of relevant PSRB accreditations. Institutions are encouraged to engage with PSRBs to explore appropriate ways of aligning PSRB activity with ILR. This might include the use of common documentation or joint processes which meet the needs of both ILR and external accreditation.

Inter-relationship with other elements of quality and enhancement arrangements

86. An enhancement-led approach is a fundamental characteristic of our approach to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement in Scotland, and we encourage institutions to continue to develop ILR processes which also:
- Promote dialogue on areas in which quality might be improved and consider how developing the use of evidence can contribute to enhancing the student experience.
 - Identify good practice for dissemination within the institution and beyond.
 - Encourage and support critical reflection.
87. ILR processes are subject to scrutiny through external institutional review. ILR should evidence the use of public information by institutions and how they seek to engage their students in quality and in their learning.

Public information about quality and the student experience

88. It is SFC's intention to develop and enhance the use of data and evidence in how we account for public investment in Scotland to deliver high quality learning, and to consider this as a new tertiary approach is developed. The established guiding principles for Public Information about the quality of educational provision and the student experience are to provide:
 - Assurances about the quality and standards of provision.
 - Information to inform student choice, and to assist employers and other stakeholders to clearly understand the nature of the Scottish university sector.
 - Information which helps current students to understand, engage with and make best use of institutional systems for quality improvement.
 - Information about the institution's educational processes which stimulates reflection on academic practice and the sharing of good practice within the institution and more widely.
89. Information should be:
 - Accurate and honest.
 - Accessible and tailored to the needs of the intended user.
 - Updateable on appropriate timescales (which may vary from annually to daily in different contexts).
 - Re-usable so that, ideally, information can be entered once and used in a range of contexts.
90. SFC expects institutions to continue to produce information that meets the needs of a range of stakeholders including:
 - Prospective students and their families.
 - Current students.
 - Employers and employer organisations.
 - Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.
 - SFC, QAA, the National Union of Students, and other interested bodies or agencies, as proxies for Ministers, taxpayers, and the general public.
 - [Competition and Markets Authority](#).
91. The UK funding bodies continue to collect data at course-level and to publish this on [Discover Uni](#), the official source of information for students in the UK using official statistics about higher education courses taken from national surveys and data collected from universities and colleges about their students.

92. Universities are expected to continue to participate in the National Student Survey (NSS) as a condition of funding.

Section 5: Universities reporting on quality for AY 2022-23

Content and scope of annual report and statement of assurance on institution-led review (ILR)

93. SFC asks institutions to provide an annual report on ILR and enhancement activities, signed off by the governing body. QAA Scotland will continue to provide an annual summary of key themes from these reports to the SFC, covering all fundable education institutions.
94. SFC does not publish annual ILR reports, although under the terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 we may be obliged to consider releasing information in response to a request. SFC uses ILR reports to inform its overall understanding of how institutions are managing quality, and as evidence to provide assurance to Ministers on the effective use and impact of public investment in learning and teaching at the institutions we fund. It is our intention to strengthen this aspect of our quality arrangements and we will engage with institutions on the development of our approach.
95. Each institution should provide an annual ILR report by 30 September 2023, endorsed by its governing body, which describes the scope, nature and outcomes of ILR activities, as well as of reviews by PSRBs, which have taken place in the previous academic year, including commentary on actions taken to address issues identified and highlighting good practice identified for dissemination.
96. The purpose of the ILR report is to give a high level, concise analysis of activities, highlighting the key findings, institutional actions and the impacts of these, sufficient to provide assurance to SFC that the institution is effectively managing quality assurance and delivering on enhancement.
97. The format of the annual ILR report is a matter for each institution to determine. We recommend that this should be a concise overview report, typically 6-10 pages, highlighting outcomes, impact and responses.
98. The annual ILR report should:
 - Provide a summary of the ILR outcomes from the preceding AY including main themes, recommendations and/or commendations.
 - Indicate the ways in which support services were reviewed or included in review processes, with regard to their impact on teaching, learning and the quality of the student experience.

- Indicate the role and nature of student engagement in ILR including at the self-evaluation stage during the AY.
 - Provide a reflective overview, which highlights key findings from the reviews in the preceding year, comments on ‘distance travelled’ and identifies any significant outcomes or actions relating to development needs or to good practice resulting from ILR processes.
99. Across the full range of provision, the ILR report should summarise:
- Relevant contextual information and key messages derived from monitoring and analysis of performance indicators, benchmarks and other collected data, particularly those relating to retention, progression, completion, attainment and achievement, graduate destinations, and equality, diversity and inclusion.
 - Reflection and key messages from qualitative and quantitative analysis of feedback from students (including the National Student Survey and external surveys of postgraduate students) and actions taken/planned as a result.
100. Institutions should provide an annex listing subject/programme areas which were reviewed by other bodies, for example, by PSRBs, during the academic year; and a copy of the institution’s planned schedule of ILRs preferably for the full six-year cycle.

Governing body provision of annual statement

101. The ILR report should be considered by the governing body and include the formal annual statement of assurance to the SFC. The Chair of the governing body should sign off the statement of assurance and indicate when it was endorsed. The template for the statement of assurance statement is:

On behalf of the governing body of [name of institution], I confirm that we have considered the institution’s arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of the learning experience for AY [year just elapsed], including the scope and impact of these. I further confirm that we are satisfied that the institution has effective arrangements to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision. We can therefore provide assurance to SFC that the academic standards and the quality of the learning provision at this institution continue to meet the requirements set by SFC.

How SFC and QAAS use annual reports

102. Annual reports on ILR are the main source of information on quality and learning and teaching in institutions provided to SFC, and SFC uses these reports principally to understand how institutions are managing quality. The ILR reports also assist SFC to

gain a more holistic understanding of how institutions are addressing policy priorities, such as widening access, progression and attainment. Institutions may therefore wish to draw on the information in their annual Quality Reports to inform their Outcome Agreements. QAA Scotland provides SFC with an analysis of these reports, and draws more broadly on them, alongside other evidence, as part of its annual reporting to Council. SFC uses this evidence as assurance and to inform broader discussions including Outcome Agreements. SFC will continue to ensure that the use of evidence from both processes is aligned, and that unnecessary reporting is avoided.

103. Institutions are expected to discuss their annual ILR reports as part of QESR activity and during ILM meetings with QAAS officers. In addition, institutions are encouraged to share information about current issues not only in the annual report, but also, where appropriate, through ad hoc briefings on a ‘no surprises’ basis. This might be particularly helpful where there is follow-up action to address any issues arising from an institution-led/PSRB review but might also deal with other issues which may emerge from time to time.

Issues of concern, action and reporting

104. Where external review and intelligence (including QESR, ILM, ELIR, and the [Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme](#)) identifies issues of significant concern, SFC will require institutions to prepare a detailed action plan to address the deficiency(ies) and to take urgent action, as necessary. Given the importance of governance and accountability in these cases, any such action plan should include commentary on how the governing body will be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the plan.