

Board meeting minutes

The 135th meeting of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council was held on Friday, 3 February 2023 at 10.00am, by video-conference.

Present: Mike Cantlay (Chair)
Karen Watt (Chief Executive)
David Alexander
Sheila Duncan
Mhairi Harrington
Dr Paul Little
Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam
Andy Kerr
Lorna Jack
Professor Ewart Keep
Professor Sir Peter Mathieson
Dr Veena O'Halloran
Caroline Stuart
Professor John Wallace
Professor Lesley Yellowlees

Officers: Helen Cross
Sharon Drysdale
Richard Maconachie
Lynne Raeside (Secretary)
Angela Seymour (Clerk)
Kate Powell (items 23/04 – 23/05)
Kate Wane (items 23/04 – 23/05)
Cat Ball (item 6)
Gordon Craig (item 7)

Observers: David Blaney (HEFCW)
Ellie Gomershall (President of NUS (Scotland))
Steve Keightley (Staff Representative)

Apologies: Martin Boyle
James Dunphy

23/01 Welcome

The Chair welcomed all present and congratulated Professor Sir Peter Mathieson on his Knighthood.

23/02 Chair's business: Papers for discussion and declarations of interest

The Chair invited members to indicate if they wished to discuss any of the starred items on the agenda. The recommendations contained within papers SFC/23/09 through to SFC/23/16 were **agreed** without discussion.

Members were reminded that it is their responsibility to indicate to the Chair if they have or may be perceived to have any conflict of interest under any item on the agenda and to take appropriate action.

23/03 Minutes of the 11 November 2023 meeting (SFC/22/Min06)

The minutes of the 11 November 2023 meeting were confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

23/04 Action Tracker (SFC/23/01)

The Board received an update on the actions from previous meetings of the Board.

23/05 Chief Executive's report (SFC/23/02)

The Board received a paper providing a report from the Chief Executive on current operational issues.

In discussion the Board noted:

- The update on recruitment.
- That SFC is actively engaged with the sector and the Scottish Government on the funding for mental health and wellbeing.
- The decisions of the SLC Board in respect of ongoing employment issues.
- That SFC is engaging with the newly appointed Commissioner for Fair Access.

The Board:

- Noted this update on current issues.

23/06 Priorities 2023 (Presentation)

The Board received a presentation on the organisational priorities that underpin the development of SFC's delivery plans.

In discussion the Board:

- Discussed sector transformation and adaptation, noting the importance of investment for change.
- Highlighted the importance of conveying strong messages about research excellence.
- Emphasised the need for clear multi-year funding commitments and planning assumptions from the Scottish Government.
- Noted the high priority being given to the development of funding modelling for future years..

23/07 Review of Skills Delivery Landscape (SFC/23/03)

The Board received a paper providing a summary of the SFC response to the Call for Evidence which was published in late 2022 as part of the Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape. The response reflected Board members' feedback from the November meeting, SFC engagement to date, sector engagement and next steps.

The Board:

- Noted this paper and acknowledged the considerable work that had gone into finalising the SFC submission.

23/08 Research Landscape Analysis Update (SFC/23/04)

The Board received a paper providing an update on ongoing work to develop a comprehensive baseline analysis of Scotland's research landscape following the publication of the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF) results.

In discussion the Board:

- Thanked the team and the RKEC sub-group who are working on this complex piece of work.
- Highlighted the importance of balance in our approach to science and innovation alongside Scottish social policy research

to ensure research continues into issues such as social policy, justice, economics, education and skills.

The Board:

- Noted the progress update of SFC's ongoing analysis and evidence development.

23/09 Scottish Government Draft Budget 2022 – 23 (SFC/22/05)

The Board received a paper outlining the draft Scottish Budget for Financial Year (FY) 2023-24 for college and university funding, following the Scottish Government's [announcement](#) on 15 December 2022, and the funds consequently available for the sectors in Academic Year (AY) 2023-24. This paper also set out the timeline for publishing indicative and final funding allocations for colleges and universities and recommended a set of principles to guide SFC's work on allocations.

23/09

In discussion the Board:

- noted the draft FY 2023-24 Scottish Budget for colleges and universities, the subsequent funding available for AY 2023-24, and some of the issues and challenges arising;
- noted the discussion at the Finance Committee on 24 January, and the Finance Committee's recommendation to the Board to support the proposed approach to modelling options for indicative funding allocations; and
- noted the proposed timeline for further consideration, approval and publication of indicative (and final) funding allocations for AY 2023-24.

The Board:

- considered, discussed and approved the proposed approach to modelling options for indicative funding allocations.

23/10 Financial Transactions Programme (SFC/23/06)

The Board received a paper summarising the outcome of the University Financial Transactions programme FY2022-23 and inviting the Board to approve funding for the four proposals which were submitted.

Dr Veena O'Halloran declared an interest in this item.

In discussion the Board:

- Was informed that, following presentation of this paper to the Capital Decision Point Committee on 14 December 2022, the

Committee recommended the approval of funding for the four projects.

- Noted ongoing efforts to ensure the full capacity of the FT programme is met in future.
- Discussed ways of encouraging technology infrastructure proposals to support the transition to net zero, given the concentration of property improvement projects.

The Board:

- Approved offers of funding for the four projects listed (University of Strathclyde, Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), Glasgow Caledonian University and The University of Stirling).
- Delegated authority to the Chief Executive to finalise negotiations and make offers of funding to the proposals recommended for funding, of up to the amounts stated in the annex.
- Noted the three expressions of interest, which were not submitted as full proposals (Glasgow School of Art, Newbattle Abbey College and Abertay University).

23/11

Risk Management Strategy and Framework (SFC/22/07)

The Board received a paper presenting a summary of the key changes included in the revised Risk Management Strategy & Framework:

In discussion the Board:

- Suggested that all Committees consider the risks relevant to their remits.
- Requested that the Framework be reviewed alongside the Risk Register after its next review.

The Board:

- Noted the paper.

23/12

Risk Register Update (SFC/23/08)

The Board received a paper presenting an update on the SFC Corporate Risk Register.

The Board:

- Noted the process and timetable for bringing an updated Risk Register to the Board.

- 23/13 Audit & Compliance Committee minutes (22 August 2022)
(SFC/23/09*)**
- The Council noted the minutes of the Audit and Compliance Committee held on 22 August 2022.
- 23/14 Capital Decision Point Committee (14 December 2022) (SFC/23/10*)**
- The Council noted the minutes of the Capital Decision Point Committee held on 14 December 2022.
- 23/15 Finance Committee minutes (4 October 2022) (SFC/23/11*)**
- The Council noted the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 4 October 2022.
- 23/16 Finance Committee minutes (6 December 2022) (SFC/23/12*)**
- The Council noted the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 6 December 2022.
- 23/17 Remuneration Committee minutes (16 September 2022)
(SFC/23/13*)**
- The Council noted the minutes of the Remuneration Committee held on 16 September 2022.
- 23/18 Remuneration Committee minutes (2 December 2022) (SFC/23/14*)**
- The Council noted the minutes of the Remuneration Committee held on 2 December 2022.
- 23/19 Research, Knowledge Exchange Committee minutes (24 August 2022)
(SFC/23/15*)**
- The Council noted the minutes of the Research Knowledge Exchange Committee held on 24 August 2022.
- 23/20 Research Knowledge Exchange Committee minutes (7 December
2022) (SFC/23/16*)**
- The Council noted the minutes of the Research Knowledge Exchange Committees held on 18 August 2021.
- 23/21 Long-term agenda (SFC/23/17)**

The Council received a paper informing members of substantive agenda items proposed for future.

23/22 Any other business (Oral)

There was no other formal business.

23/23 Next meeting: 10 March 2023