

**SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL  
SFC BOARD**

**Minute of the meeting held Friday 17 May 2024 at 10am via Teams**

The 144<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Scottish Funding Council [SFC] was held Friday 17 May 2024.

**PRESENT:** Dr Mike Cantlay OBE (Chair); Ms Karen Watt (Chief Executive); Ms Lorna Jack (Vice Chair); Mr David Alexander; Ms Linda Hanna MBE; Ms Mhairi Harrington OBE; Professor Ewart Keep; Mr Andy Kerr; Professor Irene McAra McWilliam OBE; Mr Grant Ritchie; Professor John Wallace CBE; Professor Lesley Yellowlees CBE; Ms Sheila Duncan.

**APOLOGIES:** Professor Sir Peter Mathieson

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Dr Jacqui Brasted (Interim Director, Access, Learning and Outcomes); Ms Helen Cross (Director of Research & Innovation); Mr Martin Boyle (Director of Policy, Insights and Analysis); Mr Richard Maconachie (Director of Finance); Professor Dame Jessica Corner (Observer); Ewen Brierley (Observer); Mr Rory Stride (Unite Observer); Mr Ryan Bell (Deputy Director People and Transformation); Mr Gordon Craig (Deputy Director Tertiary Education Funding); Ms Sarah Kirkpatrick (Assistant Director Policy); Ms Ursula Lodge (Deputy Director Institutional Sustainability and Capital); Ms Lynne Raeside (Deputy Director External Affairs); Ms Louisa Baker (Deputy Director Governance & Planning) (Board Secretary); Ms Jules Davidson-Welch (Senior Business Manager) (Acting Board Clerk).

### 24/ 046: Welcome and Opening Remarks

1. The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and apologies were **noted**.
2. The Chair took the opportunity to express his thanks for the contributions of Ms Gomersall as the NUS representative, and welcomed news of her successor, Sai Shraddha Suresh Viswanathan, as NUS Scotland president.

### 24/ 047: Chair's Business

3. The Chair noted that due to declared interests, Professor Keep, Professor McAra McWilliam, and Ms Hanna would not be present during the colleges' allocations part of item #9, and that Ms Hanna, Professor McAra McWilliam and Professor Yellowlees would not be present for the universities' allocations part of the same item.
4. The Chair reported that the Board member appointment process was progressing well, and was now at the interview stage.

### 24/ 048: Minute of the meeting held 15 March 2024

5. The minute of the meeting held 15 March 2024 was **approved** as an accurate record.

## 24/ 049: Minute of the meeting held 21 March 2024

6. The minute of the meeting held 21 March 2024 was **approved** as an accurate record.

## 24/ 050: Board Action Log

7. The Board received and **noted** the Action Log, presented by the Deputy Director, Governance & Planning. Members raised questions on two of the entries:
  - (i) It was agreed that the Finance Committee would give further consideration to the funding of College Employers Scotland to complete due diligence, with the potential to refer back to the Board if necessary.
  - (ii) It was agreed that a date for inviting the Chief Executive of the Royal Society of Edinburgh to deliver an update to the Board should be arranged as soon as possible.

**ACTION:** Deputy Director, Governance and Planning

## 24/ 051: Board Long Term Agenda and Dates of Future Meetings

8. The Board received and **noted** the Long Term Agenda, presented by the Deputy Director, Governance & Planning. The Board **approved** the proposed 24/25 dates for the Board and Committees, with the caveat that Committee meetings may be rescheduled if necessary, and welcomed the proposed location for the strategy day in November.
9. Board members were invited to reflect on the proposal to hold Board meetings on Thursdays, and the matter will return to the 28 June Board meeting for formal clarification.

## 24/ 052: Chief Executive's Report

10. The Board received and **noted** the Chief Executive's Report. To supplement the written paper, the Chief Executive highlighted a number of elements verbally:
  - (iii) *Redacted.*
  - (iv) Noting the continuation in post of the current Minister for Higher and Further Education and Veterans, and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, the Chief Executive updated the Board on continuing efforts to work through government priorities and thinking around reform and related themes.
  - (v) The Board noted the recent Ministerial announcement to consult on the proposal to dissolve the Glasgow and Lanarkshire Regional Strategic Boards.
  - (vi) The Chief Executive highlighted that the most recent Ministerial Letter of Guidance clarifies the Scottish Government's intention for SFC to drive work on reforming funding distribution models.
  - (vii) The Chief Executive drew Board members' attention to a recent Financial Sustainability report by the Office for Students that highlights significant concerns around reduced numbers of international students.
  - (viii) The Chief Executive has been invited to give evidence to a meeting of the Education, Children and Young People Committee on 12 June.

## 24/ 053: Revised Approach to Assurance and Accountability and Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework

11. The Interim Director of Access, Learning and Outcomes gave a presentation on how SFC is operationalising the recommendations on assurance and accountability set out in SFC's Review, including those on research, and recommendations to develop a Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF).
12. The Chair of the Skills, Enhancement, Access and Learning (SEAL) Committee commended the work of the teams involved in these strands of work and emphasised the extent of collaboration across the sector.
13. Board members reflected on a number of themes covered in the presentation, including how institutions might contribute to economic growth. In particular, Board members were keen to understand how performance would be measured. It was noted that measures will be developed in an iterative manner and will adapt as appropriate. The Board asked for an update on the outcomes of this approach to be provided in due course.

**ACTION:** Interim Director, ALO

14. The Board noted that careful consideration should be given to how the framework and institutions' performance against it is communicated more widely.
15. The Board **endorsed** the approach to assurance and accountability and **noted** the update on TQEF.

#### 24/054: Final Funding Allocations for Universities and Colleges AY 2024/25

16. Professor Keep, Professor McAra McWilliam, and Ms Hanna left the meeting while final college allocations were discussed. The Deputy Director Tertiary Education Funding briefed the Board on adjustments to the interim allocations for colleges, which included a revision to the distribution of student support funding to better reflect patterns of spend for individual colleges and regions. He noted that the overall budget remained the same.

17. *Discussion redacted.*

18. The Board **approved** the proposed allocations.
19. The Board also **delegated authority** to the Chief Executive to finalise the final college and university funding allocations for publication by the end of May 2024.

#### 24/055: Dunfermline Learning Campus

20. *Discussion redacted.*

#### 24/056: Annual Review of SFC Risk Management Strategy and Framework

21. The Deputy Director Governance & Planning introduced a report on the annual review of the Risk Management Strategy and Framework. The paper includes the Executive Team's

recent review of corporate risks, an update of our risk categories, and risk appetite statement.

22. David Alexander, as Chair of the Audit Committee commended the review, recognising the significant amount of work that has gone into it. The Board noted the review and approved the changes to the amendments to the risk management strategy and framework.

#### 24/057: Delivery Plan 2022/24

23. The Board received the final report on performance against the 2022/24 Delivery Plan, and noted highlights from the completed actions, as summarised in the paper. Members noted that work on college governance had been paused and it was agreed future activity would be channelled via the SEAL Committee.

**ACTION:** Interim Director of ALO/  
Director of Finance and Funding

24. The Board **noted** the final iteration and update of the 2022-24 Delivery Plan.

#### 24/058: Delivery Plan 2024/25

The Board received and endorsed the 2024-25 Delivery Plan.

#### 24/059: Board Development & Engagement Plan

25. Due to time constraints, the Board agreed to defer discussion of the Board Development and Engagement Plan to the next meeting schedule 28 June 2024.

#### 24/060: Health and Safety Update

26. Due to time constraints, the Board agreed to defer the update on Health and Safety to the next meeting schedule 28 June 2024.

#### 24/061: High Engagement Institutions

27. Due to time constraints, the Board agreed to defer the update on High Engagement Institutions to the next meeting schedule 28 June 2024.

#### 24/062: Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee: Minute of the meeting held on 31 January 2024

28. The Board received and **noted** the minute of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee meeting held on 31 January 2024.

#### 24/063: Finance Committee: Minutes of the meetings held on 01 March and 10 April 2024

29. The Board received and **noted** the minute of the Finance Committee meetings held on 01 March and 10 April 2024.

#### 24/064: Date of next meeting

30. It was noted that the next meeting of the Board would take place Friday 28 June at 10am in Apex 1, Edinburgh.

#### Reserved Matters

##### 24/065: CEO Recruitment Update

31. SFC Officers, with the exceptions of the Deputy Director of People and Transformation and Senior Business Manager, left the meeting. The Board **noted** an update on CEO recruitment.