

Council meeting minutes

The 126th meeting of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council was held on Thursday, 24 June 2021 at 10.00am, by video-conference.

- Present:** Mike Cantlay (Chair)
Karen Watt (Chief Executive)
Douglas Mundie (Deputy Chair)
David Alexander
Sheila Duncan
Mhairi Harrington
Lorna Jack
Professor Ewart Keep
Andy Kerr (SFC/21/22 onwards)
Dr Paul Little
Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam
Dr Veena O'Halloran
Caroline Stuart
Professor John Wallace
Professor Lesley Yellowlees
- Officers:** Martin Boyle
Lynne Raeside (Secretary)
Dr Stuart Fancey
Lorna MacDonald
Angela Seymour (Clerk)
Claire McPherson item 21/36)
Rufus Logan Item 21/37)
Linda McLeod Item 21/40)
- Observers:** David Sweeney (UKRI/Research England)
David Blaney (HEFCW)
Matt Crilly (President of NUS (Scotland))
Dr Linda Pooley (Scottish Government)
Katherine Peskett (Scottish Government for Minister)
Susan Pryde (Scottish Government)
- Apologies:** Peter Mathieson

21/31 Welcome

The Chair welcomed all present.

21/32 Chair's business: Papers for discussion and declarations of interest

The Chair informed members that the Minister, Jamie Hepburn and Dr Peter Bonfield from Westminster University would be joining the meeting and noted the agenda would be amended to allow for the Minister's attendance.

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/21/27 through to SFC/21/35 were **agreed** without discussion.

The Chair reminded Council members of their responsibility to indicate if they have, or may be perceived to have, a conflict of interest under any item.

The following members declared an interest:

- Douglas Mundie in relation to the University of St Andrews and the Institute of Directors.
- David Alexander in relation to West College Scotland.
- Professor Ewart Keep in relation to his role as an Associate Fellow of the Scottish Centre for Employment Research, University of Strathclyde.
- Andy Kerr in relation to South Lanarkshire College, New College Lanarkshire and the Scottish Government with respect to Fair Work.
- Mhairi Harrington, as Chair of the Adult Learning Strategic Forum Scotland.
- Dr Paul Little in relation to City of Glasgow College, Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, co-author of the Cumberland/Little Report, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and Vice-Chair of the college sector Employers' Association.
- Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam in relation to Glasgow School of Art and an Advisory Board member of the University of Edinburgh.
- Dr Veena O'Halloran in relation to the University of Strathclyde.

- Professor John Wallace in relation to the University of St Andrews and the provision of occasional advice to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.
- Professor Lesley Yellowlees in relation to Edinburgh Napier University and the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

21/33 Minutes of the 12 March 2021 meeting (SFC/21/Min02)

The minute of the 12 March 2021 meeting was confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

21/34 Action Tracker (SFC/21/20)

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

21/35 Introduction of Minister

The Chair introduced the new Minister to Board members and thanked him for attending so early into his new appointment.

The Minister began by thanking SFC colleagues for their commitment in responding to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and asked for his thanks to be passed on. He then led a discussion on the following points:

- Covid 19: a safe return to campus and in-person teaching.
- Skills alignment.
- SFC Review.

21/36 Review of coherent provision and sustainability (SFC/21/22)

The Council received the latest and near final draft of the Review Report; an outline of planned activity to support publication; and a mock-up of the final design.

In discussion the Council:

- Welcomed the hard work that had gone into the Review.
- Welcomed the inspirational and comprehensive list of recommendations.
- Noted that the feedback from the Board member sessions had been reflected in the redraft.
- Reflected on comments from the Minister.

- Recognised the need for an implementation plan supported by strong project management.

The Council **agreed** the general direction and recommendations within the Review Report so that it could be finalised for submission, on behalf of the Board, to Scottish Government Ministers on 29 June.

21/37

Net Zero and Presentation from Dr Peter Bonfield (SFC/21/23)

The Council received a presentation from Dr Peter Bonfield outlining the challenges and opportunities that net zero presented. His presentation was supplemented by a paper introduced by the Director of Research and Innovation which:

- Highlighted the opportunity for universities and colleges to contribute to a just transition to our sustainable future economy and society.
- Identified the role of SFC in delivering the Scottish Government's legal commitment to achieve a net-zero carbon Scotland by 2045.
- Indicated actions SFC is taking, and could take, to support the transition.
- Sought approval of the Board for the further transformation to our activity that is required, in the context of our Review and future Strategic Framework.

In discussion the Council:

- Acknowledged that people drive sustainable behaviour.
- Recognised the role of procurement in sustainable development.
- Noted the need to set bold goals.
- Recognised the significance and urgency of the climate emergency.
- Noted the opportunity for Scotland's universities and colleges to contribute to meeting the legal commitments made by Scottish Government and the expectation that we will meet those commitments through a just transition.
- Agreed the imperative for SFC to play its proper and extensive role in supporting and enabling the sectors to respond to the climate emergency.
- Approved the recommended activities outlined as our Framework for Action.

- Considered the role the Board and SFC’s committees should play in supporting the further development of the Framework for Action.

21/38 Chief Executive’s report: items for report (SFC/21/21)

The Council received a paper providing a report from the Chief Executive on current operational issues, including an update on delivery of our emergency Operating Plan for 2020-21 and the updated Risk Register. The paper also sought approval to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to finalise the allocations of additional student support funding provided by the Scottish Government.

In discussion the Council:

- Noted the addition of a new risk on cyber security to the sector risk register and that the SFC risk has been increased.
- Acknowledged the addition of new risks to SFC’s risk register for SFC in relation to delays or cost overruns on new projects and to SFC’s reputation and standing.
- Noted that the Government will shortly be confirming funding for 2021-22 for the Young Person’s Guarantee and National Transition Training Fund.
- Noted the additional funding for student support.

The Council **agreed:**

To delegate to the CEO authority to finalise the allocations of additional student support funding provided by the Scottish Government.

21/39 Use of delegated authority (SFC/21/25)

The Council noted the Chief Executive’s use of delegated authority from the period 23 January 2021 to 8 June 2021 under the terms of its Scheme of Delegated Authority.

21/40 Remit for 2021 – 22 AY outcome agreements (SFC/21/26)

The Council received a paper seeking agreement for the proposed arrangements which will inform the AY2021-22 Outcome Agreement (OA)

guidance and SFC's engagement with institutions and RSB's over summer and autumn 2021.

In discussion the Council:

- Acknowledged the need for continued flexibility into AY2021 – 22.
- Recognised that central to SFC priorities will be the student experience and enhanced outcomes and that digitally enabled learning will be a key feature of the learning experience.
- Noted that the focus will be on ensuring fair access and equality; and generating a skilled workforce for sustainable economic growth.
- Noted the need, following publication of the SFC Review Report, to start immediate plans for AY2022-23.

The Council **agreed:**

- The proposed arrangements and development of the OA guidance, as set out in the paper.
- To delegate authority to the CEO to finalise and issue the 2021-22 OA guidance to the sectors, consistent with the proposals in this paper.

21/41 Audit & Compliance Committee minutes (SFC/21/27*)

The Council noted the minutes of the Audit and Compliance Committee held on 5 March 2021.

21/42 Finance Committee minutes (SFC/21/28*)

The Council noted the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 23 February 2021.

21/43 Finance Committee minutes (SFC/21/29*)

The Council noted the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 23 March 2021

21/44 Finance Committee minutes (SFC/21/30*)

The Council noted the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 27 April 2021

21/45 Remuneration Committee minutes (SFC/21/31*)

The Council noted the minutes of the Remuneration Committee held on 18 March 2021.

21/46 Research Knowledge Exchange Committee minutes (SFC/21/32*)

The Council noted the minutes of all of the Research Knowledge Exchange Committees held during 2020.

21/47 Research Knowledge Exchange Committee minutes (SFC/21/33*)

The Council noted the minutes of the Research Knowledge Exchange Committee held on 20 January 2021.

21/48 Research Knowledge Exchange Committee minutes (SFC/21/34*)

The Council noted the minutes of the Research Knowledge Exchange Committee held on 20 April 2021.

21/49 SEAL Committee minutes (SFC/21/35*)

The Council noted the minutes of the SEAL Committee held on 20 April 2021.

21/50 Long-term agenda (SFC/21/36)

The Council received a paper informing members of substantive agenda items proposed for future meetings and future meeting dates for 2022.

21/51 Any other business (Oral)

There was no other formal business.

21/52 Next meeting: 2 September 2021