



To: Members of the Education, Children and Young People Committee
Via email, to members' email addresses

17-June-2024

Dear members of the Education, Children and Young People Committee

Letter on Funding Allocations

Further to the meeting of the Education, Children and Young People Committee on 12 June 2024, I am writing as Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University since I am concerned that some questions from Members about post-1992 universities were not fully addressed and that some of the views being expressed by Universities Scotland on behalf of Scotland's higher education sector on this particular occasion were not a unanimous representation of the position of Scottish institutions.

The funding allocations have been applied to Scotland's universities for 2024-25 in an understandably challenging public sector funding context. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) throughout were clear with universities about the context in which they needed to make these allocations. The Principals in Scotland had a number of meetings throughout the process with SFC officials who kept us up to date with their approach. SFC were clear that their allocation involved making some difficult decisions.

Universities Scotland had asked collectively for SFC to maintain the teaching unit of resource and to prioritise the Research Excellence Grant, both of which SFC did as requested. SFC also said in several meetings that they needed to take some unfilled funded undergraduate places out of the Scottish system and to reallocate other unfilled funded undergraduate places to universities that had a track record of delivery of filling their funded places. SFC have followed through on this clearly stated intent; although their decision may not have been popular, its reasoning was clearly communicated.

At Glasgow Caledonian University, we recruited the largest number of Scottish domiciled undergraduate students in the student recruitment process in the summer of 2023. As such, we had the highest number of UCAS acceptances from Scottish undergraduates in the sector (4,800), an increase of around 1,000 on the previous year, and significantly higher than any other university in Scotland. In addition to this, we increased our Graduate Apprenticeship intake by 45% consolidating our position as the leading provider of GAs in Scotland. Glasgow Caledonian had the highest number of UCAS acceptances from SIMD20 areas in 2023-24, and 20% of the share of all SIMD20 UCAS acceptances in Scotland.

In the SFC Early Statistics return we reported a full-time undergraduate total in non-controlled subjects that was 8.5% above the consolidation number; a 29% increase in entrants from SIMD20 areas to over 1,100; and a student nursing population of over 2,200 following our successful recruitment to the controlled intake target for Nursing set by the Scottish Government this year. The number of entrants joining us from college also increased on the previous year, building on our success as the leading university for articulation as evidenced through the SFC national articulation



database. This demonstrates our strong contribution to meeting the overall sector target for funded places and the extent to which we are providing opportunities for students from the widest diversity of backgrounds.

In the Indicative Funding Allocations published on 18 April 2024, the University was allocated an additional 220 funded places. The University was not informed of any additional places being provided ahead of the SFC Board meeting at which the allocations would have been signed off. Ideally, we would have been granted more additional places and we would like more in future to continue our growth of SIMD20 students as our intakes and our ability to deliver for Scotland will otherwise be constrained.

Our applications through UCAS are up 11% compared to this time last year and so we are expecting another strong student recruitment round again this summer.

Glasgow Caledonian University is clearly in a position to continue to support further the widening access agenda and to increase opportunities for Scottish-domiciled students. Our data speak for themselves. We stand ready and able to grow.

I believe that our student number allocation at Glasgow Caledonian was clearly made on the basis of evidence of our strong track record of filling our funded undergraduate places and having strong student and graduate outcomes as evidenced by Glasgow Caledonian being the leading modern university in Scotland in all of the UK league tables.

I am surprised that Universities Scotland expressed the view in their submission to Education Committee that there was a lack of transparency and I struggle to understand what they mean. In order to increase transparency, if this is a particular matter of concern, I suggest that the Early Statistics Returns from universities to SFC for 2023-24 are published at institutional level alongside the planned sector level report due to be published this month, so that there is clarity for Scotland's universities and tax payers as to which universities are filling their funded places and which are not, and where there is capacity for additional places for Scottish students to be allocated to universities. This could become an annual event to support two-way transparency between SFC and institutions, and to encourage more strategic dialogue that looks at the size and shape of the HE sector as a whole across Scotland.

I would be happy to provide further information or to have a discussion with members of the Committee if helpful given the differing positions of modern (post-1992) universities and the differing views in the sector.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor Steve Decent
Principal and Vice-Chancellor