CURRICULUM, QUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DATE:	29 August 2023
TITLE OF REPORT:	Curriculum and Credit Update
REFERENCE	
AUTHOR AND CONTACT DETAILS	Stella McManus, Principal Stella.mcmanus@slc.ac.uk
PURPOSE:	To provide members with an update against the College's credit target, the indicative funding allocation for 2023-24 as well as to update members of activity taking place across the College.
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS/ DECISIONS:	Members are recommended to: • note the achievement of the 2022-23 credit target pending the credit audit; • consider and note the credit target for 2023-24 as well as the flexibilities outlined in Annex A by the Scottish Funding Council; • note the impact of the industrial action; • note the update on the recruitment of the Vice Principal for Learning, Teaching and the Student Experience; • note the work being undertaken by curriculum areas and alternative funding; and • note the good news stories.
RISK	• That the College does not meet its overall credit target due to recruitment challenges. • That the quality of learning, teaching and assessment declines impacting on the student experience.
RELEVANT STRATEGIC AIM:	• Successful Students • Highest Quality Education and Support • Sustainable Behaviours
SUMMARY OF REPORT:	• The College has met the credit target for 2022-23, pending the credit audit. • The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) released further flexibilities for the 2023-24 academic year. • Industrial action in the form of Action Short of Strike Action (ASOS) has had a significant impact on students. • Recruitment is underway to appoint a Vice Principal for Learning, Teaching and the Student Experience with interviews scheduled for 14 September 2023. • The Minister for Higher and Further Education visited the College at the start of August 2023 to launch a new mobile heat pump and training facility. • Student recruitment is steady, however, it has been impacted by ASOS (industrial action) and the College expects to achieve the credit target for 2023-24 academic year. • End of year retention is high at 89%, which is 2.4% higher than in 2021-22.

	• A substantial amount of good practice has taken place over the end of the academic year 2022-23 and over the summer period.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This paper provides an update on the credit target for academic year 2022/23, the indicative funding allocation for 2023-24, and an overview of learning, teaching and alternative funding activity since the May 2023 Committee. .

2 CREDIT AND RECRUITMENT ACTIVITY 2022-23

2.1 For the 2022-23 academic year the College has a core credit allocation of 48,591 and 221 credits for Foundation Apprenticeships totalling 48,812 credits.

2.2 A reminder that the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has also provided colleges with a 2% positive or negative threshold tolerance against its target, however, should colleges consistently be 2% under their credit targets then clawback of funding should be assumed.

2.3 College teams have worked tremendously hard to have achieved the credit target. This is of course dependent on the credit audit which takes place at the end of August 2023.

3 FUNDING ALLOCATION 2023-24

3.1 The Scottish Funding Council announced the indicative funding allocations for the academic year 2023-23 on 13 April 2023. The Scottish Funding Council has rebased credit allocations for all colleges, lowering them by 10%, with a balancing price increase to ensure funding remains unchanged from academic year 2022-23. However, the Lanarkshire region has had a further 0.75% decrease, which has impacted the college's funding.

3.2 Following the current regional financial memorandum, the South Lanarkshire College (SLC) allocation arrangement is 27.1%. This means that the credit allocation for 2023-24 is 43,601 credits, a reduction of 5,211 credits in comparison to the 2022-23 academic year.

3.3 Karen Watt, Chief Executive Officer of the Scottish Funding Council, sent a letter to all colleges providing additional flexibilities for the sector. These include

3.3.1 a reduced activity threshold, (note this is for colleges who have struggled to meet their activity targets);
3.3.2 the 2% tolerance on the threshold,
3.3.3 the alignment of the required date with universities, relating to student retention dates: and
3.3.4 the decoupling of 20% of the value of credits to represent semi-fixed costs.

3.4 In addition, the funding guidance stating a maximum of 17 credits for full time further education students has been overturned as it is recognised that depending on learner needs credit claims for individual learners will exceed this figure.

3.5 It is also interesting to note that the SFC have stated that colleges do not need to claim a credit for every activity and that individual institutions can exercise choice regarding how the target is met. However, this has cost implications for institutions.

4 ACTION SHORT OF STRIKE ACTION

4.1 The academic teaching union EIS-FELA announced that they were undertaking “Actions Short of Strike Action” (ASOS) from the 2 May 2023. In accordance with the ballot, the industrial action short of a strike has taken the following forms:

4.1.1 'working to rule', where members perform their duties strictly to the letter of their contract i.e. refusing to take on any additional duties or attending voluntary or extracurricular meetings or events; and

4.1.2 a resulting boycott, involving members withholding students' results.

4.2 It was anticipated that the industrial action short of strike action will continue until 14th September 2023, though it will end earlier if a resolution is found. This will affect 142 academic staff at the College.

4.3 This action has had a significant impact on students who require their results to progress onto further study or employment. It has also prevented planned external verification activity from happening as well. In addition, as progress forms for apprentices have not been completed this is now starting to affect income from organisations such as the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). To date, the College has 17,000 outstanding results and this has affected 3,000 students.

4.4 The Colleges Principals’ Group met on 14 August 2023 and there is no sector wide stance on ASOS, instead colleges have been advised to seek legal advice where appropriate and to manage the industrial action locally. The Scottish Government has asked all colleges to complete a weekly survey so that the national situation can be assessed.

5 RECRUITMENT

5.1 The College is actively recruiting for a Vice Principal for Learning, Teaching and the Student Experience, with the interviews scheduled for 14 September 2023. The College received a high volume of applications, so to aid with the shortlisting short online chats were held to reach a shortlist. Interviews are scheduled for 14 September 2023.

6 MINISTER FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION VISIT

6.1 The College was pleased to welcome Mr Graeme Dey, Minister for Further and Higher Education and Minister for Veterans to the College in on 2 August 2023 to formerly launch a mobile heat pump training facility.

6.2 The new mobile training and assessment facility, hosted by the Collage is available to colleges across Scotland to provide heat pump training to heating installers, with a particular focus on rural and remote areas and in places where there is not currently college training provision. The mobile centre will also act as an extra training facility for colleges responding to surplus demand for heat pump training.

6.3 Installers will be able to visit the mobile centre to be trained and certified on heat pump installation and also to gain their Water Byelaws/Regulations and Domestic Vented and Unvented Hot Water Storage qualifications.

6.4 The project has been fully funded by the Scottish Government and has come to fruition thanks to a collaboration between Energy Saving Trust, Energy Skills Partnership (ESP), South Lanarkshire College, and heat pump manufacturer NIBE Energy Systems.

6.5 James Jamieson, Curriculum Manager for Building Service Engineering was pivotal in the success of the project and continues to work closely with the Energy Skills Partnership to create more opportunities for the College.

7 CURRICULUM AND ALTERNATIVE FUNDING UPDATE

7.1 The curriculum management teams led by the Associate Principals were tasked with reducing the curriculum portfolio due to the national funding reduction. Working with the Curriculum Managers the portfolio target for the 2023-24 academic year is now 44,214 credits. Key metrics such as the quality of provision and recruitment were considered for this reduction.

7.2 The College is confident of meeting the credit target for 2023-24, overall, applications are on par with previous years, with 4,993 received to date. 394 applications have been received in the last two weeks alone. More offers have been issued to students than last year, and for 2023-24 there have been 3,253 offers vs. 3,201 offers in 2022-23.

7.3 However, the conversion of applications to enrolment has been more challenging due to two factors affecting the enrolment process, the ASOS results/marking boycott and the acceptance of HNC level students at university level. Overall, the numbers for the enrolment process are down. Last year by the end of July 2022 there were circa 2000+ students enrolled, this year this is around 1200+ students. The drop of 800 students at this stage is linked to the pending conditional offers over the summer which equated to about 800 students.

7.4 The conditional offers would have previously been moved to unconditional and therefore enrolled if results had been completed before the summer. The College expects a further 1,000 students to enrol over the course of the next few weeks in August 2023, which would be on par with the previous year. In addition, some students progressing internally have been impacted, however, the College has taken the view to progress these students so that their learning and teaching experience is not impacted.

7.5 The College has introduced Paypal as the new payment system for courses, which means that students must pay courses before the start of their course. This now negates the College from having to “chase up” student debt during the year.

7.6 Apprenticeship numbers are either levelling off compared to the last two years and in some cases reducing. This is linked to the higher interest rates and cost of living having an impact on the housing sector. Other areas which have experienced a drop in demand include the Applied Science curriculum which has experienced a drop in demand with only one cohort being offered instead of two. The College will continue to monitor this and take appropriate action to mitigate any impact on credits**,** with the Curriculum and Alternative Funding Teams recruiting in other areas.

7.7 Across Healthcare Practice, Social Work, Childhood Practice and Social Science subjects demand has remained high. This year the College has experienced a higher number of students declining offers due to more places being offered at university. This is a known trend and teams have allowed for this in recruitment forecasts.

7.8 Two Curriculum Managers retired over the summer period and the College has used this as an opportunity to review the curriculum and structures, especially areas which have not recruited well over the past few years. The managers have not been replaced, and curriculum teams have been merged.

7.9 The Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) funding is coming to an end on 30th September 2023. The series of wraparound programmes including Transition to College; Employability workshops, an Employability Hub and a Guidance Hub, as well as Resilience, Health and Well-being Support has supported a total of 1,241 students from 16 to 24 years of age, with priority on those from the most deprived or challenging backgrounds. This has helped develop new transition routes to college with a number of new partners including South Lanarkshire Social Justice Services, a number of local schools and colleagues from South Lanarkshire Council Education Department.

7.10 In conjunction with Developing the Young Workforce East Dunbartonshire an Employer Mentoring Pathways event was held on 18 August 2023, with 25 delegates in attendance, including local employers, mentors and young mentees.

7.11 The aim was to raise awareness of the benefits of mentoring school pupils by business employees, with presentations from MCR Pathways, mentoring organisation, and Career Ready, a charity supporting young people. The objective is to encourage local employers and their employees to set up mentor relationships with local high schools and pupils, in order to support life changing career pathways for enhanced employment prospects or further education. The event was a great opportunity for networking and possible partnership arrangements to support transition to college.

7.12 An additional £15k to the initial £170k 2022-23 Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) allocation was secured over the Summer. This is allowing the College to continue to deliver upskilling programmes for an additional 5 companies in growth sectors with a focus on renewables installation. A total of 44 local companies have been supported in the last 6 months. The announcement for further funding is still to be confirmed.

7.13 UK Shared Prosperity Funding, in conjunction with South Lanarkshire Council, has allowed the delivery of numeracy workshops, which started in the Summer, and planning is in train to deliver further numeracy workshops in College, in Lanark and for employers in the workplace.

7.14 The programme will target students, the unemployed and employees above the age of 19. VASLAN (Voluntary Action for South Lanarkshire) are also recipients of their own fund, and we are working with them to ensure capacity across South Lanarkshire is not duplicated.

8 RETENTION

8.1 The table below shows the retention and withdrawal figures as of May 2023. Retention has remained stable due to intervention and support actions by Curriculum areas and

Student Services to support students to remain and complete their courses. The College's key focus is to improve attainment rates especially for those students on FT FE (Full Time Further Education) programmes as per the College's enhancement plan.

8.2 The year end retention rate for 2022-23 is 89%, this is 2.4% higher than the previous year.

8.3 *Table 1: Enrolments, Retention, Early and Further Withdrawals August 2023*

Mode	No. of Enrolments	Early Withdrawals	%	No. of Further Withdrawals	%	Retention %
FT FE	1,490	125	9.7	158	12.3	78%
FT HE	885	52	6.6	90	11.4	82%
PT FE	3,355	61	1.9	84	2.7	95.4%
PT HE	337	23	7.7	13	4.4	87.9%
Overall	**6,067**	**261**	**4.7**	**345**	**6.3**	**89%**

(A full breakdown by curriculum area can be seen in Annex 1**)**

9 GOOD NEWS STORIES

9.1 Good news stories have continued over the summer with Kyle Burns (4th year Roofing Apprentice) being selected as a finalist for this year's BMI Roofing Apprentice of the Year competition, which took place in July 2023 at the BMI Roofing Academy, and the De Vere Hotel at the Cotswold Waterpark, Gloucestershire. This was more than just a standard competition, as finalists were coached on a wide range of topics, ranging from presentation skills and social media for business through to estimating and making technical assessments. The final assessment considers both performance and development over the 2-day event.

9.2 HN photography student Liam Cunningham has been shortlisted in the black and white category, in the MPB Scottish Portrait Awards competition, with his image "Cheeky Chappy." This means that his work will be part of the SPA exhibition that will be displayed in Edinburgh, Kirkcudbright and Glasgow between September 2023 and February 2024. The prize-winners will be announced on 7th September 2023.

9.3 At the end of the 2022-23 academic year Persimmon Homes donated over 3,000 roofing tiles to South Lanarkshire College to support the next generation of construction workers. This is at a time where the cost of materials has increased considerably over the last 12 months, and it is therefore a very welcome donation to support students in the new academic year.

9.4 South Lanarkshire College has been delivering training and employability support for the last 5 years from its main base in Lanark and in community venues across rural communities in South Lanarkshire. This initiative has been funded by South Lanarkshire Council and the European Social Fund.

9.5 In 2022-23 through the Rural Academy the Childcare team delivered a very successful programme in conjunction with South Lanarkshire Council, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), offering accredited training opportunities to residents in the rural localities for them to access job opportunities as Education Support Assistants in local schools.

9.6 Rural communities are particularly affected by high levels of unemployment and inactivity due to lack of transport links and local employment opportunities. Rurality is also a barrier to education, where learning opportunities are not geographically accessible. Employers with vacancies also feel restricted.

9.7 This initiative has allowed local people to access local jobs. It has allowed mothers mainly to access free childcare through the project, learn and gain a qualification locally, build their confidence through work placements in local schools and ultimately gain employment. 18 students out of the 20 enrolled who completed the PDA Classroom Assistant course in March 2023 got an interview with South Lanarkshire Council. All were offered a job (specific place or on the supply list). This project has been entered for a College Development Network award.

9.8 A sustainable enterprise project was set up in 2022/23 focussing on recycling and reusing donated clothing helping to reduce landfill. The ‘College Way Market’ allows students to access clothing for free from monthly pop-up shops on campus. Clothing donations are requested from staff and students and donation bins are located throughout the college. Staff and students sort donations and display them in a ‘boutique-style’ market.

9.9 The project is planned and managed by students from the Learning Development (LD) department’s supported programmes. The objective is to increase LD student’s customer service skills, provide valuable hands-on work experience in a retail-like environment that they take full responsibility for, while they learn about sustainability.

9.10 The Market provides SLC students access to free clothing they can wear to college, and smart workwear they can wear to interviews, reducing barriers to employment for those who can’t afford professional clothing. The access to free clothing is helping students on low incomes during the financial crisis. Students update their wardrobes for free, reduce the effects of fast fashion and high street shopping, promoting sustainability and contributing to the decarbonisation agenda.

10 RISK

10.1 That the College does not meet its overall credit or funding target due to recruitment challenges.

10.2 That the quality of learning, teaching and assessment declines impacting on the student experience.

11 EQUALITIES

11.1 There are no new matters for people with protected characteristics or from areas of multiple deprivation which arise from consideration of the report.

12 RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 Members are recommended to:

- consider and note the achievement of the 2022-23 credit target pending the credit audit;
- consider and note the credit target for 2023-24 as well as the flexibilities outlined in Annex A by the Scottish Funding Council;
- note the impact of the industrial action;
- note the update on the recruitment of the Vice Principal for Learning, Teaching and the Student Experience;

- note the work being undertaken by curriculum areas and alternative funding; and
- note the good news stories.

ANNEX A

26 July 2023

By email

College Principals

Dear Principal

Credit Guidance Clarification

Our new funding distribution model for Academic Year (AY) 2023-24, and associated credit guidance, builds from joint work over the last year and provides colleges with enhanced flexibility and greater opportunity to decide how best to respond to regional and national needs in these challenging times.

Our early engagement and discussion with colleges has highlighted the need for further clarification, which is set out below.

Context for change

In order to maximise the flexibility we are now offering colleges, the new approach to your funding allocation and our credit guidance needs to be considered together, as a whole package. Therefore, when you are looking at the effect on credit claims, you should take a rounded view of the combined impact of the introduction of the reduced threshold; the alignment with universities on the 2% tolerance in relation to credit delivery; a similar alignment on the required date for student retention; and the decoupling of 20% of our core funding from potential funding recovery action.

Many colleges have had challenges in meeting credit targets in recent years. This has meant that colleges have been exposed to the risk of the recovery of funds associated with the shortfall in credit delivery. This exposure has affected colleges' ability to develop long term financial planning. SFC is committed to minimising colleges' planning uncertainty and exposure to the risk of recovery of funds where possible.

In addition, we put in place a range of emergency responses that were relevant to the critical phases of the pandemic. These rule changes and responses, agreed collaboratively with the sector, cumulatively introduced inconsistencies and complexity into our funding approach. To improve stability, transparency, and accountability, and after consultation with the College Funding Group, we have reshaped the funding distribution model for AY 2023-24. We will continue to engage with individual colleges to discuss their specific context in relation to funding allocations and the credit guidance.

The key change is to remove credit targets and introduce the concept of a credit threshold to which colleges must deliver to avoid funding recovery. In doing so, we have pitched the threshold to reflect learner and employer demand more realistically. This is the first step towards a more dynamic funding model. At the same time, we have increased the credit value to ensure that, for a lower number of credits, colleges receive the same level of funding. Because colleges will be receiving the same level of funds to deliver to a lower threshold, colleges may choose to deliver activity above their credit threshold to meet demand from learners and employers in their region.

In addition to the lowered threshold and increased credit value, we have maintained the 2% tolerance for under-delivery of credits. We have also aligned the required date with that for universities. This means that colleges can now claim credits for full-time students on courses lasting over 20 weeks if the student is still in active learning after 5 weeks from the course start date. For shorter courses, the required date continues to be after a quarter of the course has been delivered. Across the sector this equates to an estimated further flexibility of 35,000 credits.

Finally, recognising that colleges will bear an element of semi-fixed costs even when credits are not delivered, we have decoupled 20% of the value of those credits to recognise that sunk cost. Therefore, when considering potential recovery in respect of under delivery against credits, we will discount any recovery by to reduce planning volatility.

To summarise, all colleges will benefit from:

- a reduced threshold,
- the 2% tolerance on the threshold,
- the alignment of the required date with universities, and
- the decoupling of 20% of the value of credits to represent semi-fixed costs.

Average credits per full-time student

We have stated in the guidance, colleges should not exceed an overall average of 17 credits for full-time FE students and 15 for full-time HE students across the full-time cohort. This should not be viewed as an upper limit for individual courses or students. In some cases, credit claims for individual learners and class groups will exceed this average figure.

Our new approach also means you may not always need to claim a credit for every activity – you can exercise choice about how you meet the benchmark average. On that basis, we have not anticipated the need for significant change to curriculum plans for AY 2023-24, although some colleges may need to make adjustments going forward to stay within our credit guidance and to make full use of the flexibilities within that guidance.

Students funded from multiple sources

We have not changed our guidance in relation to students funded from multiple sources. If a student's programme is funded from multiple sources (including from SFC) colleges should only claim credits from SFC for the activity not covered by other funding.

We will work with the sector, Skills Development Scotland, and the Scottish Government over the coming months to explore the total cost and funding involved in delivering Modern Apprenticeships, including the different frameworks, the impact of multiple sources of funding and the need for consistency and comparability across the sector.

Next steps

We recognise that colleges are operating in particularly difficult circumstances and understand the challenges they face. The credit guidance is issued around this time each year but we note that, prior to publication, the majority of colleges had finalised curriculum plans and may already be planning for reduced activity levels in AY 2023-24.

Where a college is concerned that their plans do not align with the revised credit guidance, now or through the course of the academic year, we are happy to discuss this with individual colleges, so that we understand the reasons for this. Where appropriate, SFC will work with colleges in respect of pre-existing curriculum plans and credit arrangements in AY 2023-24 to better understand the educational and operational rationale for different approaches and to identify areas where the sector can better align activity with the evolving guidance from AY 2024-25.

We will set up workshops with the sector to discuss the guidance and offer any further points of clarification. In addition, we will work with college auditors to reflect the above to support the interpretation of our guidance as they conduct their audit work. We will also ensure our own processes reflect this approach.

We look forward to engaging with you on the implementation of our revised approach to funding allocations and credit guidance for AY 2023-24, and to the further evolution of our funding distribution model for the future.

Yours sincerely

KWatt

Karen Watt

Chief Executive

ANNEX B

Table 2: Overall Curriculum Area Enrolments, Retention, Early and Further Withdrawals August 2023

Mode	No. of Enrolments	Early Withdrawals	%	No. of Further Withdrawals	%	Retention %
Building Service Engineering	466	10	2.3	16	3.6	94
Built Environment	500	47	10.8	61	14	75
Business Management and Media and Accounts	814	35	5	27	3.8	91
Carpentry and Joinery	425	2	0.5	4	1.1	98
Early Education and Childcare	489	25	5.6	39	8.4	86
Hairdressing, Beauty and Make Up Artistry	616	46	8.2	46	8.2	83.5
Health and Social Care	765	16	2.3	40	5.7	92
Hospitality, Tourism, Legal and Police Studies	754	29	4.3	39	5.8	90
Learning Development	487	18	4.2	29	6.8	89
Life Sciences	360	20	6.3	33	10	83.4
Wet Trades	393	13	3.4	11	2.9	94

(Note due to curriculum area mergers not a like for like comparison to May 2023)