

Performance & Resources Committee Meeting

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 6 December 2016
Paper Title	Additionality Activity
Agenda Item	13
Paper Number	PRC3-J
Responsible Officer	Robin Ashton, Executive Director
Status	Disclosable
Action	For Discussion

1. Report Purpose

- 1.1 To update members on SFC guidance and sector developments related to delivery of additional credits above 18 credits to an FE student or 15 credits to an HE student.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- **note** the current SFC guidance on activity considered as ‘additionality’ and ongoing sector dialogue with regards this;
- **note** the 2015/16 level of additionality for the Glasgow College Region and the reasons for this additionality;
- **request** the Executive Director to liaise with the assigned colleges to ensure that levels of additionality for the Glasgow College Region do not increase, are reduced where appropriate and that contingency planning is undertaken to manage risks if the SFC were to require a reduction in one plus activity for the 2016/17 year;
- **request** the Executive Director to work with the Glasgow SFC ROA managers to inform them of regional intentions and plans for one plus activity for 2016/17 and beyond; and
- **request** a further update on additionality prior to the start of the 2017/18 academic year.

3. Background to Classification of Activity as Additionality

- 3.1 The introduction by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in 2015/16 of a new Credit based funding method removed the use of set tariffs for learners. Under the previous method of funding, colleges received funding for 20 units for full-time FE learners and 15 units for full-time HE learners, even if colleges delivered more or fewer units than these set tariffs.

- 3.2** The new Credit based funding method provides colleges with funding for the specific number of units delivered to each individual learner. Any Credits delivered beyond 18 credits to an FE student or 15 credits to an HE student is considered by the SFC as ‘additionality’ (also termed ‘one-plus’) and is counted towards college and regional totals and reported to the respective Outcome Agreement Manager.
- 3.3** SFC guidance states that colleges must be able to justify claims for these credits, whether they are delivered over single or multiple programmes of study, as part of the audit process.
- 3.4** The SFC do not cap the number of credits that can be claimed for an individual student in a single year but their guidance suggests that colleges must give due consideration to the needs of all prospective students across the region.

4. Additionality Activity in the Glasgow College Region

- 4.1** A number of educational reasons exist why the Glasgow colleges are currently delivering one-plus activity. These include:

4.2 Additional Credits for work-experience

The Glasgow College Region is committed to enhancing alignment of the curriculum to employer and economic needs, supporting entrepreneurship, and increasing the employment prospects of all our learners. Actions to achieve this include increasing opportunities within programmes for learners to participate in course-related work experience opportunities which support learners in developing the core and employability skills required for employment. Therefore, many courses include additional work-experience content and in line with SFC guidance, for work experience that is not accredited, the colleges claims 1 credit for every 80 hours undertaken by the learner. This is particularly the case for Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) courses which are based on national standards and require extensive on the job training, courses which develop skills and experience within a specialist environment (for example, Professional Cookery or Automotive Repair courses), and courses which prepare learners for occupations where the development of essential and employability skills is of critical importance to successful progression to employment for example Childcare and Social Care courses.

4.3 Learners undertaking additional, employment relevant qualifications

The employment and progression opportunities for many learners are enhanced by the attainment of employment relevant qualifications additional to their main course of study. Examples of this include Higher National students across a range of computing qualifications undertaking vendor qualifications such as CISCO, Microsoft and ORACLE which significantly enhances their employment prospects. Similarly, employers within

the journalism industry value the NCTJ qualification and this addition significantly enhances the students' employment prospects.

4.4 Courses designed in partnership with employers

In order to support better alignment of the curriculum to economic needs, all of the Glasgow College Region colleges have sought to prioritise the role of employer engagement, particularly in course where possible. However, this can mean that many courses exceed the 1 FTE criteria. For example, CITB courses have been rated as 20 credits per programme in line with the attendance pattern and delivery mechanism required by the industry. For the SVQ provision across a range of engineering courses, this activity is designed in conjunction with the students' employers who require them to undertake activity in excess of the "standard" provision. All of this activity is designed to meet the needs of the employer.

4.5 Additional Credits for personal learning and development

The Glasgow College Region serves some of the most disadvantaged communities of Scotland and supporting high levels of learner success in such a context is extremely challenging. Recent Education Scotland research on maximising learner success in Scotland's colleges highlighted the significant role deprivation can play in learner success and showed that over the past four years, success rates for learners living in the 10% most deprived areas have remained around eight percentage points lower than those living in less deprived areas. Furthermore, this gap in educational attainment, which increases with the scale of the deprivation, is also reflected in attainment levels at many of our partner schools despite recent progress in raising attainment within the City.

This delivery context has strongly influenced regional curriculum planning and the colleges have sought to provide learning which is personalised and bespoke to individual circumstances and learning needs. All courses are expected to develop essential skills and promote positive learner engagement in both the planning and delivery of the curriculum. In support of this, many full-time courses provide opportunities for learners to take responsibility for their own learning, including opportunities to record, monitor and reflect on progress, both in terms of attainment and wider achievement. This is facilitated by the use of Individual Learning Plans as part of structured guidance processes. This provision also includes additional tuition for core skills development.

As evidence of the impact of these approaches to supporting personal learning and development, despite the challenges of the delivery context outlined above, the Glasgow College Region has significantly increased learner success rates over a number of consecutive years, with indicative data for 2015/16 suggesting further improvements in regional attainment.

4.6 Scottish Wider Access Programme courses

A fairly significant volume of one plus activity relates to Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) delivery, in which course design and study hours are specified by SWAP following discussion with their HEI partners. The SWAPWest office works in partnership with 17 colleges and 8 Higher Education Institutions in the West of Scotland to provide routes into Higher Education for adults with few or no qualifications or whose qualifications are out-of-date. Successful completion of a SWAP Access Programme can lead to a guaranteed place on an HN or degree course at a college or university. Through close partnership with SWAP West, the Glasgow colleges provides a large number of SWAP courses across a wide range of vocational study routes including Medical Studies, Engineering, Chemical and Biological Sciences, Nursing, and Humanities.

4.7 Other reasons

A range of other reasons as to why a learner may study beyond one plus criteria exist. This includes when, on an individual basis, learners undertake additional units of study to address a prior core skills deficit or to recognise individual wider achievement. In some cases these units may contribute to an appearance of 'one plus'.

4.8 In 2015/16 2.95% of all Glasgow College Region activity was delivered as one-plus activity. The sector guidance on what SFC currently consider an acceptable level of one-plus activity is not yet clear.

SFC guidance for 2014/15 had initially suggested that a threshold of 2.5% was considered an acceptable level for additionality. Then in 2015/16, SFC guidance removed any sector threshold. However, in December 2015/16 communication was received from the SFC Interim Chief Executive which asked that colleges review any one plus activity which represented more than 1% of all activity and stated that, *"Although we have not explicitly stated a threshold for 2015-16 we would like there to be less 'one plus' provision from 2015-16 onwards."*

Following this communication, in September 2016, the SFC Funding Team wrote to colleges and asked them to justify any one plus activity for 2015/16 beyond a 2.5% threshold.

Based on the responses received by the SFC for their request for college justification of one-plus activity, the SFC have established an advisory review group to consider the following issues:

- Review the threshold of 1% and consider whether or not it should be raised;
- Work experience/placements and further guidance on credit claims;
- Access programmes specifically SWAP courses;
- Employer programmes for the oil and gas industry (eg OPITO and UOGITTS);
- The use of additional units for all students – to improve retention or improve prospects for employment.

Members should note that the GCRB Executive Director is a member of the SFC one plus advisory group. One meeting of this group has been held to date and the work of the group has only begun to review potential ways in which the above issues may be considered.

4.9 Members should also note that recent meetings of the Scottish Government Public Audit Committee have concerned the Audit Scotland Section 22 report on Edinburgh College and the financial issues the college faced when SFC did not allow funding to be claimed for what they considered an unacceptable volume of one-plus activity for 2014/15. Details of the level of one-plus considered by SFC as unacceptable are not known, but it is known that in 2015/16, 11 other college regions had levels of additionality above 2.5% (including Edinburgh) with the highest large college having a level of additionality over 8%.

4.10 It is also known that for three colleges who had activity levels above 2.5% in 2015/16, SFC requested a reduction in their 2015-16 credit claim due to: a specific concern about the high level of additional work placement credits; the high level of distance learning activity; and a general concern over the level of one plus activity. Following discussion with the SFC, the three colleges had to reduce their 2015-16 credit claims by between 300 – 700 credits each.

Based on the above, it is suggested to the Committee that in order to manage delivery of one-plus activity going forwards, that the Executive Director works with:

- the assigned colleges to review curriculum planning in relation to planned levels of additionality to ensure that levels of additionality for the Glasgow College Region do not increase, are reduced where appropriate and that contingency planning is undertaken to manage risks if the SFC were to require a reduction in one plus activity for the 2016/17 year;
- the Glasgow SFC ROA managers to agree with them of regional intentions and plans for one plus activity for 2016/17 and beyond; and
- the SFC one-plus advisory group to contribute to any new sector guidance.

It is also suggested that the committee receive a further update in relation to additionality guidance and developments prior to the start of the 2017/18 academic year.

5. Risk Analysis

5.1 There is a risk that the SFC implement a threshold for additionality in 2016/17 which leads to the Glasgow College Region being unable to claim funding for activity which has been delivered. Depending on the extent and timing of this, this could potentially lead to the region not being able to meet its Credit target. However, given the current extent of additionality across the sector in comparison to the Glasgow College Region, and the very limited reductions enforced by the SFC in 2015/16, the likelihood of this for 2016/17 is assessed to be minimal.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no specific legal implications associated with this paper.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 If the region as a whole does not achieve its planned activity target this could have a negative financial impact on 2016/17 funding levels.

8. Regional Outcome Agreement Implications

8.1 If a low additionality threshold was applied by the SFC, this could impact negatively on college delivery designed to provide learners with additional learning and support to maximise learner success and progression to further study or employment.