

**Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee - Action and Decision Log**  
**Meeting No 42 – 16 November 2023**

*(Paper 1a)*

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Reference	Details	Action Owner	Due Date	Action Decision	Open Complete Approved Declined
28.09.23	2022-23 Committee Terms of Reference and Workplan	LTQ41: A01	A Campbell to review working of Student Support Paper	A Campbell		Action	Complete
28.09.23	2023-24 Draft Regional Outcome Agreement and 2022-23 Draft Self-Evaluation Report	LTQ41: A02	Members to feedback any recommendations and comments to A Campbell by close of play on Thursday 12 October.	ALL	12.10.23	Action	Complete
28.09.23	2023-24 Corporate Risk Register (V1): LTQC Extract	LTQ41: D01	The Committee approved the Risk Register – LTQC Extract at August 2023 for submission to ARC.	NA	NA	Decision	Approved

## Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

16 November 2023

<b>Strategic Objective</b>	SO1	An inspirational college experience
<b>Reference:</b> <i>(delete as appropriate)</i>	SO3	Embedding a culture of open leadership and empowerment
	SO5	High performing college underpinned by excellence in stewardship and governance
<b>Subject/Purpose:</b>	Analysis of the AY 2023-24 First Impressions Survey results	
	To provide an update on the results of the AY 2023-24 First Impressions Survey and actions arising from them.	
<b>Action Required:</b>	Discussion	
<b>Appendices:</b>	Yes	

## 1. Summary / Key Points

Student Satisfaction and Engagement activities are organised by the Quality Enhancement Team and the Student Association. They enable students to engage in the life and work of the College and provide feedback which informs planning and evaluation processes.

The gathering of college-wide Semester 1 student feedback is undertaken as a joint enterprise between the Quality Enhancement Team and the Student Association using a set of questions which were agreed a few years ago.

A review of the methods used to gather college-wide feedback was carried out last year due, in part, to traditionally low response rates to these surveys. It was agreed to have a series of shorter, sharper college-wide surveys across the academic year led by the Student Association. The first of these was the First Impressions Survey which was available for completion over 3 weeks to 13<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

The Student Association, supported by the Head of Quality Enhancement, agreed the questions to be asked and created the Microsoft Form which was used to deliver the survey. The survey was accessed via the student's MyLearning App.

The feedback from the Student Satisfaction and Engagement college-wide surveys is analysed by the Head of Quality Enhancement and the Student Association and action plans are agreed to address any areas of concern. Areas of good practice are also identified and shared.

## **2. Proposals and Recommendations**

### **Current Situation**

#### **First Impressions Survey Section 1**

Appendix 1 details the responses to the first section of the First Impressions survey. Where the questions correlated with previous years' questions, the percentage of positive responses provided in AY 2021-22 and AY 2022-23 are shown. Those coloured green indicate an improvement in satisfaction levels from AY 2022-23 while red shows a decrease in the satisfaction level.

There was an increase in the number of respondents from 824 in AY 2022-23 to 1158 in AY 2023-24 despite the window for completion being much smaller.

Another significant difference in the AY 2023-24 First Impressions Survey is the availability of a neutral response. The percentage of neutral responses is included in Appendix 1.

Each of the questions that can be compared with previous sessions show a decrease in positive responses. These results will be shared with the appropriate service and curriculum areas who will be required to undertake further evaluative activity to understand the reasons for this and agree improvement actions to be taken.

The highest level of satisfaction (92%) was to the statement 'I am enjoying my course'. This was followed by 90% agreeing that they know about the support available from Student Services and the LRC. 90% also found applying to college easy.

While one of the lowest levels of satisfaction (56%) was to the statement 'I really enjoyed the Freshers Events' - 30% of respondents recorded a neutral response. This could be because they did not participate in these events (e.g. not being on campus on the day they were held, returning students etc).

There was a drop of 29% in positive responses to the statement 'Getting help for my additional learning needs has been easy'. However, 25% of the total responses were neutral. This could be because these respondents have not had to seek help for additional learning needs.

The lowest level of satisfaction recorded was to the statement 'getting the funding sorted for my course was really easy' (50% positive; 11% neutral).

The next lowest level of positive responses was to the statement 'it has been easy to get my smart device connected to WIFI in the college' (53% positive, 11% neutral). However, 78% were positive about being 'able to log on easily to college systems.'

#### **First Impressions Survey Section 2**

The Student Association wanted to know if there were any other factors that may affect students' ability to remain on their course and achieve so section 2 asked:

‘During your first couple of weeks have you been worried about or felt affected by any of the following things?’

Statement	I am worried responses
Money in general	575 (50%)
The cost of public transport	211 (18%)
The overall cost of food on campus	259 (22%)
Access to childcare	42 (4%)
Smoking/vaping on campus	78 (7%)
Anti-social Behaviour/respect for others	90 (8%)
Feeling safe on campus	73 (6%)

By far the most worrying thing for students is money. The other worrisome areas are also linked to money – the cost of public transport and the overall cost of food on campus. Further analysis will take place to understand this, and the survey results will be disseminated to service and curriculum areas to consider if there are any actions they can take to alleviate this.

### First Impressions Survey Section 3 and 4

In order to help understand the reasons for potential withdrawals and enable actions to be taken to prevent this, the following questions were asked:

‘Have you had any worries about being able to carry on with your course?’

Yes, a lot	72 (6%)
Yes, a little	225 (19%)
I haven’t thought about it either way	327 (28%)
No, not at all	534 (46%)

It is pleasing to note that the majority of respondents (74%) are not worried about being able to carry on with their course.

Further analysis will take place to understand this, and the survey results will be disseminated to service and curriculum areas to consider if there are any actions they can take to help students who are worried to remain on their course.

The final statement was ‘If you are very worried about being able to finish or carry on with your course, it would be helpful to understand why that might be. Please tell us why (if you feel comfortable with that).

Students were signposted to seek help from their lecturer, curriculum manager or student services advisor if they are worried about anything. There was one safeguarding referral made due to a comment made by a student.

The majority of comments were around keeping up with course-work; money; health issues (including mental health) and childcare.

There were positive comments, too, about the support received from curriculum and service staff.

The detailed feedback from the survey is shared with the Executive and Senior Leadership Teams, Heads of Learning and Skills, Curriculum Managers and Service Managers and the Student Association.

The results will be discussed by course and service teams who will use it to agree their teams' actions for improvement and areas of good practice. This will be monitored through the Team Evaluation process.

Another short pulse survey focussing on Learning and Teaching is planned before the end of Semester 1. In Semester 2, the College will deliver the mandatory SFC Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey which contains 10 questions which are reported back to the Scottish Funding Council. Focus Groups will be facilitated by Class Ambassadors across all curriculum areas and targeted focus groups are planned around themes arising from the surveys.

The feedback will inform the College Evaluation activities for 2024-25, including the next Sector Evaluative Report and Action Plan (SEAP) which is being piloted in 2023-24 (Ayrshire College is a pilot college).

### **3. Associated Risks**

None identified.

### **4. Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (if applicable)**

EqIA not required.

**Doreen Wales**  
**Assistant Principal: Student Experience and Quality Enhancement**  
**6 November 2023**

*(Ann Heron - Head of Quality Enhancement)*

## **Publication**

This paper will be published on the College website

## Appendix 1

### The First Impressions Survey (September/October 2023)

#### Table of Results

1158 Respondents

	2023/24		2022/23	2021/22
1) Applying to college was really easy!	90%	4% neutral	98%	94%
2) The college kept in touch with me before my course started.	86%	5% neutral	93%	79%
3) Getting the funding sorted for my course was really easy.	50%	11% neutral		
4) I know who to contact if I need help with anything.	87%	5.5% neutral		
5) Getting help for my additional learning needs has been easy.	65%	25% neutral	94%	83%
6) I had all the information I needed for my first day/week at college	83%	5% neutral	94%	79%
7) I was able to login easily to college systems	78%	5% neutral		
8) It has been easy to get my smart device connected to WIFI in the college.	53%	11% neutral		
9) My course induction was informative and helpful.	83%	10% neutral		
10) I am enjoying the start of my course.	92%	4% neutral	98%	99%
11) I know about the support available from Student Services.	90%	5% neutral	94%	88%
12) I know about the support available from the LRC.	90%	5% neutral	96%	87%
13) I know what the Student Association does	68%	9% neutral	75%	48%
14) I know what a Class Ambassador is and does.	74%	7% neutral		
15) I really enjoyed the Freshers Events	56%	30% neutral		

Green = increase in % agreeing with the statement from previous survey

Red = decrease in % agreeing with the statement from previous survey

## Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

16 November 2023

<b>Strategic Objective</b>	SO1	An inspirational college experience
<b>Reference:</b>	SO2	Embedding diversity and inclusion
<i>(delete as appropriate)</i>	SO5	High performing college underpinned by excellence in stewardship and governance
	SO7	Developing staff and students to enable excellence

**Subject/Purpose:** Student Association Report

**Action Required:** To note

**Appendices:** No  
*(yes/no)*

### 1. Summary/Key Points

The Student Association team for 2023 consists of two elected officers. The Student President, Linda Corbett, and Student Vice President, Tim Chan. The Student Association is governed by a Student Executive Committee within which students hold various volunteer officer roles. The work of the Student Association is supported by a Student Association Advisor, and is overseen by the Head of Quality Enhancement, Ann Heron.

### 2. Proposals and Recommendations

The Student Association proposes to re-engage with the Wear it On Your Sleeve Peer Support Group as part of its ongoing actions relating to the Student Mental Health Agreement.

The Student Association proposes to continue with recruitment of Student Officer to their Executive Committee to ensure good governance.

The Student Association recommends the recruitment of a new Student Association Adviser.

### 3. Associated Risks

None

### 4. Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (if applicable)

None

## 5. Current Situation

### Student Association Governance

#### *Officer Recruitment*

The Sabbatical Officers undertook a review of the current Student Officer roles within their Executive Committee as part of their Operational and Enhancement Plan Review. It was agreed that there was scope for additional roles including:

- An English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Officer
- A Sustainability Officer
- An Equality and Diversity Officer
- A Men's Officer

Recruitment for these Officers commenced in September and applications were closed in mid-October. Marketing for the roles included an all-student email, posters in key campus locations, posting directly into our LGBT+ Teams channel and engagement with relevant Curriculum Managers.

The Student Association also undertook recruitment for the vacant Transgender Officer role and, with agreement, from the Executive Committee, recruitment to increase the number of LGBT+ Officers to ensure cross campus representation.

Applications received were as follows:

LGBT+ Officer	-	10 applicants
ESOL Officer	-	2 applicants
Equality & Diversity	-	1 applicant
Transgender Officer	-	2 applicants
Sustainability	-	0 applicants
Mens Officer	-	1 applicant

The Student President and Vice President reviewed all applications and are actively engaging with select candidates to ensure suitability and offer any support that may be required to undertake the role.

An additional LGBT+ Officer is now in place to represent the community at the Ayr Campus and the Men's Officer post has also been filled.

The Student Association will continue to actively recruit into the vacant and additional posts, whilst keeping available posts under review.

#### *Executive Committee Engagement*

The current Executive Committee have been active and engaged with the Student Association and have supported with decision making for the recruitment of Student Officers, funding applications and upcoming events, campaigns and activities.

#### *Executive Committee Meeting(s)*

The first formal meeting of the Committee was delayed due to the demands on time for the Student Officer recruitment and Class Ambassador Programme



implementation. The Committee are scheduled to meet on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2023.

### ***Student Voice and Engagement activities***

#### *Class Ambassadors – recruitment, training, and meetings*

The Student Association engaged closely with Heads of Service and Curriculum Managers throughout August and September to provide information and support on the Class Ambassador Programme. The purpose of this was two-fold:

- To ensure understanding of the vital nature of the Class Ambassador programme, it's purpose and implementation methodologies.
- To gain feedback and lessons learned from historical programme delivery whilst also gathering examples of good practice which could then be disseminated.

The Student Association would like to express their thanks for the high levels of engagement across many curriculum areas and our inclusion in departmental meetings. And, to the Quality Assurance Department for their continued and ongoing support of the implementation of the programme.

Upon review of traditional time frames for the programme, it was agreed that the Student Association would aim to recruit for Ambassadors earlier in the year. This came with the challenge of carefully balancing timeframes for students to get to know each other, training schedules and commencement of Class Ambassador Meetings.

The Ambassadors were recruited throughout the month of September with names to be submitted by 26<sup>th</sup> September, however, due to the September long weekend, it was agreed that names could be submitted by close of 29<sup>th</sup> of September.

Names for Ambassadors were then received by the Student Association in early October and the Teams page populated.

SPARQS (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland) (more information on SPARQS can be found [here](#)) were engaged for training purposes and kindly provided a two-phase training programme.

PHASE 1 – an online module available through the Ayrshire College MyLearning platform. Ambassadors could complete this at their leisure throughout mid-October.

PHASE 2 – a direct training session (via Zoom) with SPARQS Associate Trainers. Multiple dates and times were available at the end of October with a view to Ambassadors being able to choose a suitable session.

There is a cohort of Ambassadors who have come late to the programme for a variety of reasons including late submission of names and a change of ambassador.

In this instance, the online module has been made available and new ambassadors are encouraged to complete this and for phase 2, we have re-engaged with SPARQS to request further training dates.

Completion data for both phase 1 and 2 of the training should be available by close of November.

A yearly schedule of monthly meetings has also been created with the first set of meetings scheduled to take place in early November.

### *Student Satisfaction*

The Student Association, in collaboration with the Quality Enhancement Team and Business Intelligence and Information Systems, has created an early-stage student satisfaction survey which aims to capture student opinion on college induction, college services and campus provisions relating to the start of the academic year. The survey ran for several weeks throughout October and was available through an all-student email and the MyCollege App. There were 1158 responses and data is currently under analysis.

### *One-to-One Student Engagement*

The Student Association are making efforts to capture simple data on the contact method and nature of enquiry for student one-to-one engagements. This is to support the Sabbatical Officers to ensure their training and development meet the requirements of the students and to ensure the Student Association offices are appropriately provisioned.

### Student Association Events, Campaigns and Activities

#### *Student Clubs, Societies and Drop Ins*

The Student Association has or is engaged with existing Teams groups for LGBT+, Accessibility, Carers and Care Experienced and Estranged Students and Sustainability.

As a result of student and staff requests, we now also have additional Teams groups for ESOL, a Deaf Community Group and a Walking Group.

Further this, the Student Association have also supported students to set up a Chess Club, a Dungeons and Dragons Club and an online Gaming Club.

The Student Officers for LGBT+, the Care Experienced Officer and the Men's Officer are currently working on arrangements for student drop-in sessions.

Engagement levels for the groups vary. Where low engagement is identified, the Student Association keeps the area under review and will consider whether the group is likely to continue or how it could be re-invigorated.

The Student Association aim to support self-determination within the groups and provide support where required including information, communications, space to meet and resources for activities.

#### *Freshers*

Freshers was completed during the month of September and the Student Association noted an estimated attendance of over 800 students across all

three events. Freshers Fest 2023 included internal and external key stakeholders who were able to offer students information, guidance and advice, resources and lots of fun. Of note, the free Dominos pizza was popular along with the goodies from the Student Association and other organisations.

The Student Association undertook a review of the events and agreed that the events were a success, however we may consider the timings of the events. The events were scheduled for lunch time however late morning and early lunch were the busiest phases.

56% of students surveyed said they Strongly Agreed, or Agreed that they really enjoyed Freshers, 14% said they strongly disagreed or disagreed that they enjoyed Freshers and 30% gave a neutral response. We're satisfied that this indicates most students enjoyed the events.

#### *Battle for Scotland E-Sports Tournament*

Battle For Scotland is an online gaming tournament consisting of teams from Universities and Colleges based across the whole of Scotland. 2023 is the pilot year for Battle for Scotland and is run by the E-sports President from Dundee & Angus College.

The Student Association recruited for players during Freshers and had 75 students sign up. Vice President, Tim Chan, hosted trials for each game, from which the student teams were established. Teams consist of captains, players and substitutes. Students who did not go through to the competition stage of the tournament have been encouraged to band together and be part of the online gaming club.

To date, the Ayrshire College teams have won several games with successes being celebrated on social media. The tournament is set to conclude on 26 November 2023.

Following completion of the 2023 tournament, the Student Association will undertake an internal review to establish any lessons learned and use this to inform best practice for the upcoming Spring Tournament of Battle for Scotland in February 2024.

#### *Wear It On Your Sleeve – Men's Mental Health*

Wear It On Your Sleeve is a men's only group aimed at both students and staff that provides a space for male mental health. The teams page provides an online network for staff and students to come together and share resources such as websites, phone numbers and local support groups.

#### Student Association Visibility

The Student Association is making significant efforts to increase the visibility of the association and are doing this in a number of ways which includes increased cross-campus presence (peripatetic working), increased social media presence on both Twitter and Instagram, growing the audience on Twitter and Instagram, sending all-student emails from the Student Association email address (as opposed to a named person), implementing

protected on-campus time through Stop N Talk Drop In sessions and ensuring regular communications into the various student led Teams channels.

The Sabbatical Officers have also undertaken Class visits, engaged in communications and meetings with Curriculum Managers and Heads of Service.

The Student President participated in a “Welcome to Ayrshire College” video where she spoke about the function of the Student Association, and this was widely used during the induction phase with students.

The Sabbatical Officers are working closely with the college Marketing Team to arrange a brand refresh which will include some brand guidance. The Student Association will aim to do a launch of the updated branding at Refreshers in the new year.

As per their Operational and Enhancement Plan the Student Association Office spaces were reviewed for suitability for student use. This led to some housekeeping in Kilmarnock and housekeeping and re-arrangement at Ayr. The Sabbatical Officers are now satisfied that each office is a suitable space for student use.

The Student Association are satisfied that current activity in relation to visibility is supporting increased awareness amongst students of what the association does. 67.6% of students surveyed said they strongly agreed or agreed that they knew what the Student Association does.

### Student Association Funding Scheme

Each year the Student Association takes applications from classes and curriculum areas to access funding for a variety of activities.

Upon review of historical activities, processes in place and successful applications for funding, it was agreed that the Sabbatical Officers would implement new guidance that would narrow the focus of the fund and solidify its purpose.

The main criteria for the 2023/2024 Student Association Funding Scheme was agreed to be:

- Applications, where possible, should be student led and made in collaboration with staff. This was to encourage student leadership, student engagement with the Student Association and to support a sense of ownership i.e. Student Association Funding is for Students
- Applications should meet the criteria of the applied for activity, resources or materials being directly related to an enhanced student experience relating to their course or an enhancement to their learning experience where neither could be met by their curriculum budget

The Student Association created a comprehensive Funding Guide that included an FAQ section and launched their Semester One Fund at the start of September. Communications were sent to Heads of Service and to Curriculum Managers which included a copy of the guide for dissemination and discussion with their teams.

The Fund received 13 applications:

- 4 applications did not meet the criteria of having a named student, we replied to those applicants and supported them to resubmit their application
- 1 application was rejected as it did not meet the criteria of enhancement as described above
- 8 applications were successful (some of which were re-applications from the 4 who required further support)

Successful applicants received a “what now” guide that outlined the next steps.

Examples of successful applications include monies for the purchase of Boccia kits to allow Sports Students to run an accessible sporting tournament, the purchase of provisions to allow supported learning students to run an Enterprise project at Christmas time and monies for transport to take HND Sound Production students on an academic/industry visit to the BBC StudioWorks in Glasgow.

Due to the success of the Semester one fund, the fund was closed in late October, and an internal review will take place to determine what changes may be required for the Semester two fund, which has an intended opening date of early February.

## **6. Future Activity**

### 16 Days of Action

The Student Association are working closely with Charlotte Mitchell, Equality, Diversity and Performance Lead to undertake a significant programme of awareness raising activities for 16 Days of Actions which is a campaign that aims to draw attention to issues surrounding Gender Based Violence. The fortnight long campaign will also include awareness raising for the White Ribbon Campaign, which urges men to address issues of Gender Based Violence. The Campaign runs from November 25<sup>th</sup> to December 10<sup>th</sup>.

Planned activities include the following:

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November, 12 till 2 - Kilmarnock Campus Marketplace Event

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> November, 4pm till 5pm - Dragity (Drag Show) in aid of LGBT+ Youth Scotland (organised by students)

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December, 12 till 2 - Ayr Campus Marketplace Event

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December, 5pm - Reclaim the Night March (leaving from Kilmarnock Campus and organised by the STAR centre)

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December, 12 till 2 - Kilwinning Campus Marketplace Event

The events and campaign activity will also be supported by the colleges Liaison Officers for Police Scotland, NHS (Mental Health) and the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.

Additional activities will include student and staff communications and social media activity.

### Wear It On Your Sleeve – drop ins

The Student Association are engaging the skills and experience of their new Men's Officer who is also a volunteer with Men Matters Scotland, a mental health charity. The Men's Officer is trained in suicide prevention, group work for men's mental health and wishes to run a men's mental health drop in at the Kilwinning Campus where he is currently studying. The Student Association are working with a variety of college departments to support the Men's Officer with additional training and disclosures before commencement of the drop-in sessions.

### **7. Conclusion**

The Student Association will continue to work on a variety of projects and activities that will aim to increase the visibility of the association, foster engagement with students and work cross-departmentally to ensure continued collaborative working.

**Linda Corbett  
Student President  
6 November 2023**

### **Publication**

This paper will be published on the College website

**Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee**

**16 November 2023**

**Strategic Objective Reference:** SO1 An inspirational college experience  
SO2 Embedding diversity and inclusion.  
SO5 High performing college underpinned by excellence in stewardship and governance.  
SO7 Developing staff and students to enable excellence.

**Subject/Purpose:** AY 2023-24 Student Support Funds Position as at 03 October 2023 and funding application position as at 06 November 2023

**Action Required:** To Note

**Appendices:** No

**1. Summary/Key Points**

The College is responsible for administering student support funds on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Scottish Government and Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).

This paper provide details of the position of each student support fund as at the date shown. Members should note that while projected expenditure figures are included within this report, there are a significant number of variables still to be accounted for including student retention rates, outstanding awards and January 2024 courses.

Financial projections will continue to be refined throughout the year for reporting to both the Senior Leadership Team and the Business, Resources and Infrastructure Committee. These projections will also be refined to reflect the information reported by curriculum on student numbers.

**2. Proposals and Recommendations**

No proposals are noted in this paper.

**3. Associated Risks**

The disbursement of student support funds and financial monitoring arrangements are key areas of financial risk for the College. In addition, issues arising from the management of the student support funds can impact significantly on the reputation of the College.

**4. Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (if applicable)**

An impact assessment was completed in respect of the 2023-24 Student Funding Policy and Procedures.



## SFC Funds provided for Bursary Support

Total 2023-24 SFC Student Support Funds are £10,377,347. Table 1 below details the bursary support funds provided by SFC for 2023-24 together with projected expenditure figures as at 03 October 2023.

**Table 1**

Student Support Fund	Budget	Projected Expenditure	Difference
SFC Bursary	£8,716,972	£9,041,774	£(324,802)
FE Childcare	£404,716	£228,544	£176,172
HE Childcare	£217,924	£145,237	£72,687
FE Discretionary	£1,037,735	£868,302	£169,433
<b>Total</b>	<b>£10,377,347</b>	<b>£10,283,858</b>	<b>£93,489</b>

The above figures are based on the most up to date information on student applicants based on all students continuing with the College.

Student Funding will continue to review and revise the numbers to take account of student withdrawals, once these have been confirmed by the curriculum areas. The figures also include initial projections for January 2024 start courses. These courses have, however, traditionally attracted students who would be EMA eligible rather than eligible for Bursary due to their expected age.

The figures set out in Table 1 include circa £2,822,248 which relates to 397 care experienced students. The College has actively promoted the additional support available to care experienced students and continues to do so. Therefore, the level of support and the number of identified care experienced students may increase during AY2023-24.

## Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

EMA funding is provided by the Scottish Government to support eligible 16 to 17 year-old students. The College does not receive an allocated amount but are reimbursed through a reclaim system each month. The College is currently projecting EMA spent of £493,290 at this time. Members are asked to note that this figure includes projections for January 2024 courses.

There is no financial risk in this area as actual amounts paid out are reimbursed in full to the College a month in arrears.

## SAAS Funds provided for Higher Education Discretionary support

The College is also allocated funding from SAAS for eligible students completing HE programmes. This budget is administered in line with SAAS guidance and will be paid in two parts, split over two financial years.

Table 2 below details the HE Discretionary Fund Budget made available by SAAS for 2023-24 academic year. Payments will be made in two instalments, one in October 2023 (£85,259) and one in April 2024 (£42,629).

**Table 2**

<b>Student Support Fund</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Projected Expenditure</b>	<b>Difference</b>
HE Discretionary Allocation	£125,228	£125,228	£0
FE/HE International Discretionary Allocation	£2,660	£2,660	£0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£127,888</b>	<b>£127,888</b>	<b>£0</b>

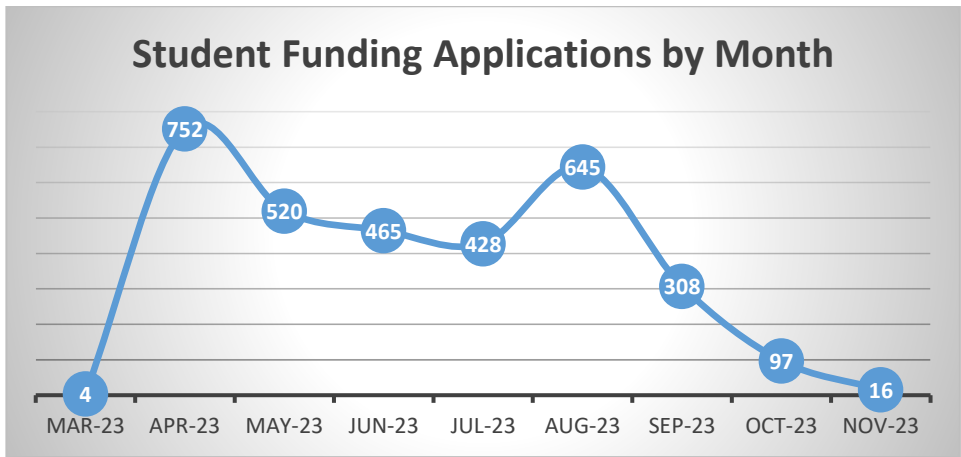
At this stage, the College cannot allocate more than the original budget of £127,888. If a supplementary allocation of funds is required, an application can be made from the in-year redistribution. Institutions are however advised to manage budgets based on initial allocation as there is no guarantee any funds will be available, as was the case in academic year 2022-23.

HE Discretionary Funding for 2023-24 has been reduced by 38%.

### Student Funding Application Position

The student funding application system went live on 07 March 2023 to allow early access and with a focus on encouraging continuing students to apply at the earliest opportunity. In line with SAAS, the College guarantees that all complete applications submitted before 30<sup>th</sup> June will be processed and ready for payment on the start date of the academic year. For 2023-24, all completed application received before 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023, were processed and ready for payment.

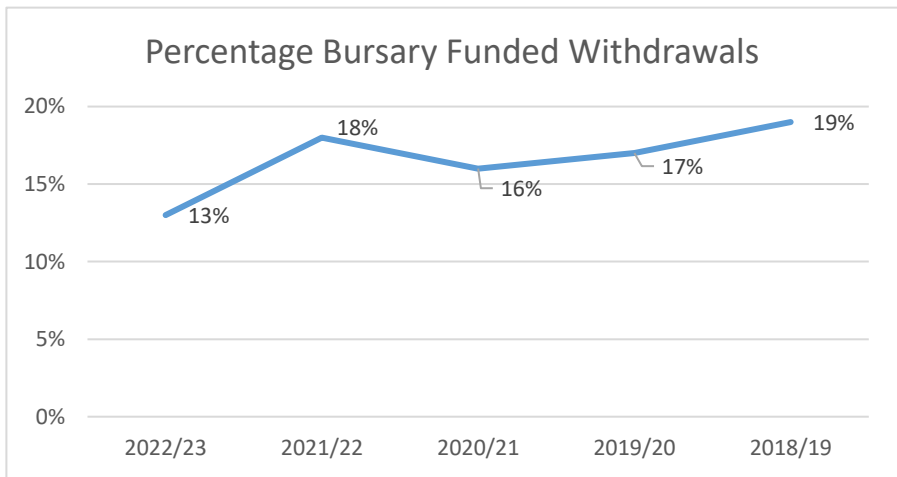
Early application for funding is critical to enable the funding team to process applications timeously. Any application received from August onwards is deemed a late application and can take several weeks to process. The chart below shows the trend per month between March and November. There were a significant number of late applications between August and November (1066).



In comparison to 2022-23 application numbers and, considering the 10% reduction in course delivery in 2023-24, FE full-time student numbers eligible to apply for funding, have reduced by only 3%. For August start courses 4,221 students were invited to apply of which only 8% chose not to. A further 381 invites to apply for January 2024 courses have been issued as at 06 November 2023. There is currently a three to five day processing time for applications with 99% complete applications awarded.

The student funding team are committed to ensuring that students are not financially disadvantaged and have supported 1,481 students and 15 childcare providers outwith scheduled payment dates with same day payments.

It is still too early to provide data regarding retention linking to student funding however college policies, systems and processes have been designed to be supportive, prevent unnecessary financial hardship and aid retention. The chart below shows a declining percentage withdrawal rate for Bursary funded students over the last five academic years.



A further update on student withdrawal for students in receipt of support funds 2023-24 will be provided at the next scheduled meeting in March 2024.

Support funds are constantly under review and it is anticipated that the College will be in a position to make additional payments at Christmas for students already identified as being the most financially disadvantaged. A proposal is currently being considered and will be presented to the senior management team for approval.

**Doreen Wales**  
**Assistant Principal: Student Experience and Quality Enhancement**  
**7 November 2023**

*(Louise Park – Head of Student Funding)*

### **Publication**

This paper will be published on the College website