

Board Meeting

Date of Meeting	Monday 30 October 2023
Paper Title	Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Transition Fund 2023-24
Agenda Item	14
Paper Number	BM1-G
Responsible Officer	Martin Boyle, Executive Director
Status	Disclosable
Action	For Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To seek the approval of the Board for the distribution of additional funds to support student mental health and wellbeing in 2023-24.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Board is asked to **approve** the allocation of £306,960 in respect of funding to support student mental health and wellbeing, and the distribution of funds, to the three Glasgow colleges, for 2023-24.

3. Student mental health and wellbeing 2023-24

- 3.1.** On 25 September 2023, the Scottish Funding Council issued guidance on the additional funding to support student mental health and wellbeing. The background, to this funding, is set out in the circular, i.e.:

“In its 2018 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government committed to ‘provide more than 80 additional counsellors in Further and Higher Education over the next four years with an investment of around £20 million’. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) announced the first year of this funding in November 2019². We are grateful that the tertiary sector has been able to deliver this commitment and continue to support student mental health. This commitment has now been fulfilled and the funding associated with it concluded at the end of AY 2022-23.

As student mental health is an important area for the Scottish Government, a one-year Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Transition Fund has been created to support institutions’ transition from the previous funding, which focused on supporting additional counsellor provision, to a sustainable approach to support student mental health. We recognise some institutions may want to use the fund to continue supporting their counselling provision while others may want to explore funding new or existing initiatives and, therefore, suggested actions this funding supports could include but are not limited to:

- Counselling provision.
- Online mental health services or resources.
- Engaging with local support services.
- Early intervention/Internal support mechanisms.
- Mental health advisers/nurses/coordinators.
- Peer to peer student support.
- Student wellbeing officers.
- Pilot/evaluate approaches to support mental health and wellbeing.

- 3.2.** Details of the full announcement are available via the following link:

<http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/announcements/2023/SFCAN182023.aspx>

4. Allocation of funding to support student mental health and wellbeing 2023-24

- 4.1.** The proposed basis of the allocation is the same as has been used previously by GCRB for these funds i.e. an equivalent amount to each college. On this basis, the proposed allocation (2023-24) is £102,320 for each college in Glasgow.
- 4.2.** The proposed allocation has been discussed with the principals of the three assigned colleges. The proposal was supported by two colleges but not the third. The college, which did not support the proposal, advocated that the allocation

should be proportionate, based upon the level of activity within the three colleges.

- 4.3. The argument in favour of this alternative approach is that the allocation would be proportionate to the number of students. On the other hand, the funding for 2023-24 is intended to be transitional i.e., to enable each college to develop an alternative model of provision at the end of this financial year.
- 4.4. Since this funding was introduced four years ago, GCRB has agreed to allocate this funding equally to all colleges. This basis of allocation was again supported by all three colleges when the 2022-23 allocation was approved in February 2023.
- 4.5. It is noted that GCRB has already sought to provide additional support in this important area via additional funding for mental health support via the Programme of Action 2023-2024, and the funding allocation for this was on an equal split allocation.

5. Risk and Compliance Analysis

- 5.1. The Executive Director is responsible for implementation of the regional strategic plan, management of risk and oversight of resources.
- 5.2. There are no legal implications resulting from this decision.

6. Financial and Resource Analysis

- 6.1. The financial implications are set out in the body of the report above. The total funds will be received by GCRB in November 2023 and April 2024 and will be paid immediately to the three colleges.

7. Equalities and Learner Implications

- 7.1. In accordance with the SFC publication, it is expected that:

“As institutions plan for future support, SFC expects them to engage closely with students and student associations. We also strongly encourage institutions to work together, where possible, to ensure high quality and relevant support is available to students throughout their learning journey.”