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Dear Convener

PUBLIC AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT – 3RD REPORT 2015 – REPORT ON SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES 2015

Thank you for your letter of 23 February about further education (FE) student support following the Committee's meeting on 10 February. I am pleased to provide the following information collated by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

Student support budget breakdown over the past five years:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Bursary	£78,696,801	£78,708,244	£81,274,008	£82,251,572	£83,968,996
Childcare	£13,665,621	£13,691,571	£7,259,677	£14,502,823	£14,258,400
Discretionary	£7,095,947	£7,106,857	£14,314,668	£7,263,367	£7,002,635
TOTAL	£99,458,369	£99,506,673	£102,848,353	£104,017,763	£105,230,031

Additional funds provided to the student support budget over the last five years through In-Year Redistribution (IYR):

Year	Total FE Student Support (£m)	Funds allocated by SFC through in-year redistribution (IYR) (£m)
2011/12	95.5*	2.7
2012/13	95.6*	6
2013/14	102.8	7.1

2014/15	104	3.48**
2015/16	105.2	1.83**

*The 2011/12 and 2012/13 figures do not include the HE (at college) childcare figures which were added to the college baseline for the first time in 2011/12.

**In addition to SFC funds allocated by SFC, total requested funds by colleges met through the redirection of colleges' existing resources

Managing demand for FE student support needs to reflect the changing profile of student intake each year. To help colleges do so effectively, and ensure best use of the £105 million made available by the Scottish Government, the SFC works closely with colleges to confirm their requirements. Part of this involves an in-year review and redistribution of FE support funding.

This year's exercise confirmed the improvements that the SFC had made in its initial allocations to colleges, with requests for additional funding significantly lower than in 2014/15. The SFC was able to meet a proportion of the shortfall through the reallocation of existing FE support funds; however, as was the case in 2014/15, the remainder was met through the redirection of colleges' existing resources, thereby allowing them to continue to meet their commitments to learners.

In your letter you also asked about in-year payments to students. The SFC advise that students' payment profiles are mostly agreed at the start of their course (fortnightly payments are the norm) and do not change in-year, unless the student receives additional allocations from Discretionary Funds or payments are stopped because of persistent and unexplained absence or withdrawal from the course.

I hope you find this information useful. If you require anything further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



PAUL JOHNSTON