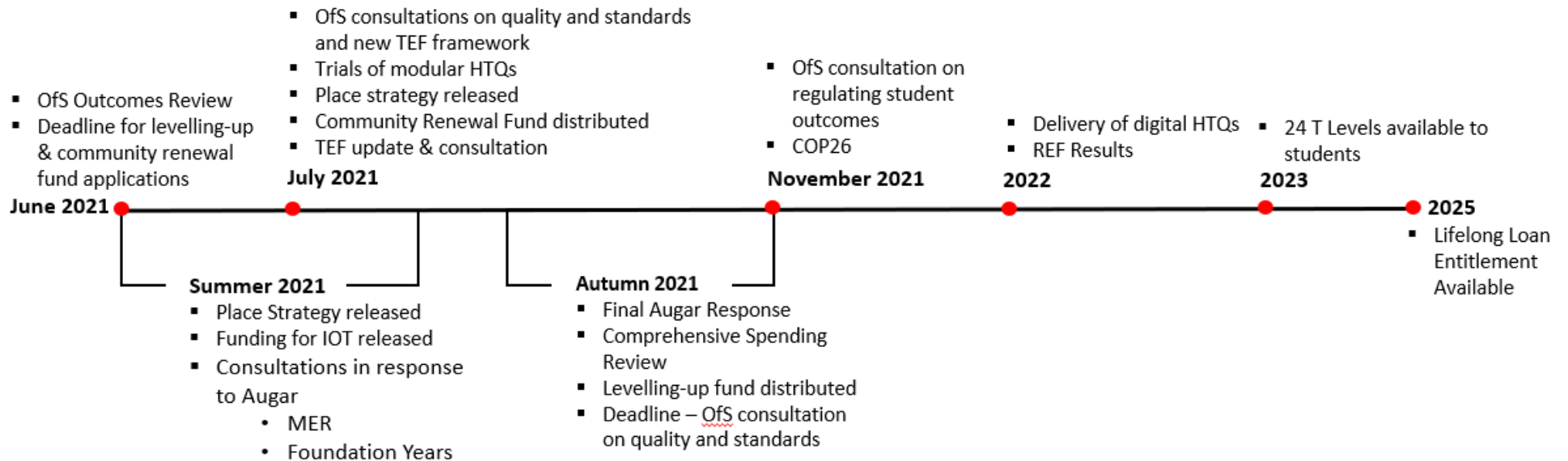


Civic connections

Mapping the higher education and research policy landscape - July 2021

This document aims to map some of the key policy ‘hooks’ of most relevance to ‘civic’ agendas, with the dual aim of helping institutions and their localities capitalise on the available opportunities as well as identifying potential government agendas of most relevance to universities’ civic mission.

The policy pipeline:





The policy landscape (in more detail):

HE /Augar Response	<p>It has been over two years since Philip Augar and colleagues released their Review of Post-18 Education and Funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is currently much speculation and uncertainty for HE. The Government is expected to release an options paper, as part of its response to Augar, imminently. The paper is expected to cover foundation years and changes to tuition fee terms and conditions plus possible consultation on minimum entry requirements (with a potential for these to be based on GCSE results), changes to tuition fee levels and/or differential fees and student number controls. • Following this consultation/options paper, the Government is expected to provide its final response to Augar, in Autumn 2021 alongside the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) for 2021.
Skills Push	<p>‘Skills’ reform is a key priority of the government, with a clear priority to invest in the Further Education (FE) system. This follows a number of announcements as part of the CSR in 2020 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in FE to ensure that core funding for 16 to 19-year-olds is maintained in real terms per learner, rising in line with demographic growth. • Providing £1.5 billion over six years to deliver the government’s commitment to bring all FE college estates in England up to a “good” condition. • Plans to work with the Office for Students (OfS) to ensure the institutes that offer Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) ‘are high-quality and really valued in the labour market’. <p>The Lifetime Skills Guarantee was introduced in the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill. It is expected to be active from 2025. Key elements of the Government’s Skills agenda include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE), with a consultation on the detail and scope expected in 2021. Introduction of an LLE was a key recommendation from the Augar Report • Adults without a full level 3 qualification (A-level equivalent) are to be able to gain one for free from April 2021 in a range of sectors including engineering, health, and accountancy. • Strategic Development Funding (SDF) will be available in 2021/22 in a number of pilot areas to support colleges to reshape their provision to address local priorities that have been agreed with local employers.



- A focus on Institutes of Technology (IoTs) for providing STEM skills.
 - The first wave of 12 IoTs is currently being established across the country and the Wave Two Competition is expected to conclude in **summer 2021** with eight IoTs selected.
- From **2023**, it is expected that 24 T Levels covering 11 technical education routes will be available to students.

In **June 2020**, the Government [announced](#) an [£18 million Growth Fund](#) to support capacity-building and readiness to deliver new approved Digital Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) from September 2022, and cycle 2 Digital, Construction, and Health and Science HTQ routes from September 2023.

- Up to £10 million for Institutes of Technology (IoT) to develop and deliver higher technical short and modular courses in STEM disciplines like engineering, manufacturing, construction and digital (available **Autumn 2021**).
- £2 million to support the development and delivery of high-quality modular training focused on upskilling employees to help address future skills gaps in high value manufacturing.

The **National Skills Fund** is intended to support providers expand their high-quality higher technical education provision; this will come in waves. Other aspects include:

- A phased, multi-year roll-out of approved HTQs, with different occupational routes coming on stream over 4 years.
- Using the existing quality assurance mechanism of Office for Students (OfS) registration to quality assure providers delivering approved HTQs.
- HTQ provision is starting with the Digital route in **2022**, followed by the Construction route and Health and Science route in **2023**. The future roll-out pattern will broadly align with Government priorities and early T Level waves.

According to the [Skills for Jobs](#) paper released in **January 2021** the government are planning the following consultations to reform the funding and accountability system:

- Simplification and streamlining of funding for FE to support high-value provision relevant to the labour market, with elements of simplified and streamlined funding to be tested ahead of consultation.
- Give more certainty to providers over their funding, including considering a move to a multi-year funding regime.
- Reform accountability approach, relaxing ringfences and reporting; instead, focusing on outcomes.
- Introduce new accountability structures to underpin the delivery of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP)



Devolution / Levelling Up	<p>The new Levelling Up white paper expected to be published later this year will supersede the long-delayed devolution and recovery white paper, effectively handing the reins over levelling up policy from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government to Number 10 and the Cabinet Office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It was decided in May 2021 that the Devolution White Paper was to be replaced by the Levelling Up White Paper, the original paper was intended to cover how Government would have partnered with places across England to build a sustainable economic recovery and set out our plans for future devolution arrangements.• A new Number 10 Cabinet Office Unit will be set up to drive through work on the White Paper and the Prime Minister has also appointed Neil O’Brien, MP for Harborough, as his Levelling Up Adviser.• A Levelling-up Fund has been created to invest £4.8 billion in high value local infrastructure and to support investment in places where it is most needed. Submissions made by 18 June 2021 with the initial round of funding to be distributed by autumn 2021.• The Prime Minister gave a heavily trailed speech on Levelling Up on 15 July 2021. Criticised for its lack of detail, the speech reiterated existing government policies and called for more “county deals” to devolve power to local areas, which he said would not be “one size fits all”.• On 12 July, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published guidance for the £5 million Partnerships for People and Place fund. The project aims to facilitate greater coordination within and between central government and local places in support of the levelling up agenda. The project is funded through HMT’s Shared Outcomes Fund and will support government departments and their partners in up to 15 pilot places (in 34 longlisted local authorities) in England to focus on a particular local challenge and to identify and evaluate interventions to address it. The delivery period will be for two years across the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years.
COP26	<p>The UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) at the Scottish Event Campus (SEC) in Glasgow on 1 – 12 November 2021. The climate talks will bring together heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree coordinated action to tackle climate change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• On 12 December 2020, the UK communicated its new Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The NDC commits the UK to reducing economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. This has since been updated to achieve a 78% reduction by 2035. ○ The new target will become enshrined in law by the end of June 2021. ● G7 agenda includes climate change. ● There are several ongoing consultations by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on enabling renewable energy systems and practices to meet the UK’s climate targets. ● Ahead of COP26, the government launched the campaign, <u>Together For Our Planet</u>, calling on businesses, civil society groups, schools and the British public to take action on climate change. ● Ahead of COP26, the UK intends to publish a Net Zero Strategy, setting out the government’s vision for transitioning to a net zero economy by 2050, making the most of new growth and employment opportunities. ● The Government’s Industrial decarbonisation strategy, released May 2021, sets out how industry can decarbonise in line with net zero while remaining competitive and without pushing emissions abroad. ● The Climate Challenge Cup, a transatlantic competition to uncover and help scale innovative partnerships between universities, civic authorities and local communities to tackle climate change, will be launched in early August 2021 and will culminate in an innovation summit and award ceremony during COP26. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judged by an expert panel, twelve shortlisted partnerships will have the opportunity to present their project ideas to an audience of global changemakers, and two of them will be awarded a prize. ○ The Climate Challenge Cup is sponsored by the UK’s Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and supported by the City of Glasgow who are hosting COP26. It is being delivered by UK innovation experts Young Foundation and US climate innovation organisation MetroLab Network. ○ Supporters also include the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Innovate UK and The University of Glasgow.
R & D Roadmap/ Place Strategy	<p>The Research & Development Roadmap was published in July 2020 and committed the UK to an increase in R&D funding with the goal to achieve £22 billion per year by 2024 to 2025. Additionally, government hopes for the UK to become a world class research centre following the success of the vaccine rollout.</p> <p>Alongside this, the Government’s Place strategy, which is led by BEIS, is expected summer 2021.</p>



	<p>The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is expected to publish the government’s Innovation Strategy imminently. As part of this, they consulted around eight different pathways: Missions, Technologies, Places, Talent, Global, Ecosystem, Adapt & Finance.</p> <p>Other developments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The UK Community Renewal Fund will provide local areas across the UK with access to £220 million of additional funding as they prepare for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund due to launch in 2022. Submissions are to be made by 18th June 2021 with the initial round of funding to be distributed by late July 2021 onwards.• Research England are currently consulting on their terms and conditions for 2021/22.• The Connecting Capability Fund (CCF) funded by Research England supports HEI collaboration in commercialisation through competitive projects and formula funds. There are currently 18 projects funded by CCF. Overall, these projects involve 60 HEPs collaborating with each other and 128 individual businesses and investors, as well as wider business investor networks. The CCF is on hold.
Knowledge Exchange Framework, England	<p>The aim of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) is to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public funding for knowledge exchange (KE) and to further a culture of continuous improvement in universities. The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) is an assessment of how English universities carry out knowledge exchange and is a key element of Research England’s benchmarking of universities, alongside the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and Research Excellence Framework (REF).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The UK Govt set out plans for a Knowledge Exchange Framework in 2014, with further recommendations published in September 2016. The KEF will be led by Research England who ran a pilot during 2019 and published details of the first iteration in January 2020.• Following publication of the first iteration of KEF results in March 2021, they will undertake a review of the KEF, including seeking feedback from the sector and users.• Rather than a sector ranking, KEF represents a chance for higher education institutions (HEIs) to examine their own performance on knowledge exchange and the civic permission and understand how this compares to similar institutions (presented as a cluster) as regards to size, funding, and mission.• A review of KEF is underway, with there is a survey to feedback on the first iteration, alongside virtual focus groups; the first of these is on 26 August and is focused on the Local Growth and Regeneration perspective.



Office for Students	<p>2021 is the final year of the Office for Students' (OfS) first, three-year strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The current business plan only runs to June 2021, so new consultations and changes are to be expected in the new academic year along with the new business plan.• There are some staffing changes expected with a new director for fair access & participation to be appointed following Chris Millward stepping down, and a new director of free speech.• There are ongoing discussions around a Post-Qualification Admissions system (PQA), the consultation is currently paused.• The Office for Students (OfS) will develop a new framework for the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), an update on the new framework will be provided in July 2021.• Key areas of focus in the coming months are expected to be investigating increased flexibility for mature students and free speech regulation.• Potential for a move in interest to more outcomes-based results than access, relating to the value for money debate.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Will be looking at recent developments in outcomes due to the pandemic over July• Potential for new metrics to be developed and implemented such as GEE- “a geography of employment and earnings”.• Graduate outcomes data for 2018/19 will be published on 20 July 2021.• In May 2021, the OfS published a new experimental ‘Proceed’ metric which combines continuation and employment data. Whilst the Proceed metric is experimental and the OfS says it has no plans to use it for regulatory purposes, its development supports a drive to identify ‘low value’ or ‘low quality’ courses.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The OfS have also recently announced that HESA PIs, which looks at performance compared to benchmark, this will no longer be published, continuing a preference for absolute rather than benchmarked metrics.• Three further consultations have been announced by the Director for Regulation at the OfS.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ July - Consultation on a set of revised quality and standards conditions that relate to students’ academic experience, the resources and support they need to succeed, rigorous assessment practices, and reliable standards.○ July - Consultation on the new proposed framework for TEF.○ November - Further consultation on a revised approach to regulating student outcomes.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OfS has published its consultation on quality and standards conditions, which will run from 20 July to 27 September 2021. The proposed changes will allow England’s regulator to “intervene more frequently in universities and colleges where courses fall below expectations and require improvement” The changes are in line with OfS’ principles-based regulatory approach with requirements expressed as minimum baselines for all HE at all levels, and will focus on providers falling below minimum baselines. The proposals would result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proposal 1: for registered providers, three ongoing conditions of registration relating to quality and covering: i. Academic experience ii. Resources, support and student engagement iii. Assessment and awards. ○ Proposal 2: for registered providers, one revised ongoing condition of registration relating to standards that extends the definition of ‘sector-recognised standards’ to allow the regulation of undergraduate degree classifications. ○ Proposal 3: for providers seeking registration, two new initial conditions of registration that set evidence requirements in a way that is clearer and easier for high quality new providers to meet. ○ Proposal 4: revised guidance for each of these conditions that includes OfS’s approach to gathering evidence, assessment and compliance • 2020/21 was the first year of new five-year university Access and Participation Plans as part of new more ambitious and strategic approach to access and participation within the OfS’s remit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A report from the House of Commons Education Committee calls on the Office for Students to set clear expectations and targets for the participation of white working-class students.
Wales	
<p>Framework for Regional investment in Wales</p>	<p>The Framework for Regional investment in Wales describes the Welsh Government’s vision for regional investment to support jobs and growth in communities across Wales.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The framework focuses on four investment priority areas: business productivity and competitiveness, healthier, fairer and more sustainable communities, the zero-carbon economy, and reducing economic inequalities for people. • The strategic objectives within the four investment priority areas are to enable a well-being economy, a prosperous economy, a green economy, and a fair economy. • FE and HE institutes that are anchored in local communities are expected to have a significant role to play in upskilling and offering employment to people who often come from areas of high deprivation.



Research Wales Innovation Fund, Wales	<p>The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) provides annual funding to Welsh HEIS through its Research Wales Innovation Fund (RWIF) to support all forms of knowledge exchange including Civic Mission and Public Engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ RWIF has been designed to support activities that result in economic and social impact, including the wider civic mission role of institutions.○ RWIF is provided to incentivise institutions to work with businesses, public and third sector organisations, community bodies and the wider public.○ KE activities that contribute to economic growth, productivity, and supporting the civic role are high priorities for investment.○ The Research Wales Innovation Fund in 2021/22 has been set at £15m and is a combination of specific support for capacity, alongside formula allocations based on performance.○ Institutions are required to have an approved three-year RWIF strategy which includes detail of their priorities for civic mission and public engagement. Strategies include relevant key performance indicators for this area and institutions are asked to provide an annual case study to highlight impact. The NCCPE was involved in assessment of the RWIF strategies providing useful feedback to improve engagement and performance across Wales.
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, Wales	<p>The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) subject to legislation, will be established as an independent Welsh Government sponsored body by 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● It will be responsible for overseeing the post-16 sector in Wales which includes FE, HE, apprenticeships, sixth forms and Welsh Government funded research and innovation in the post-compulsory education and training (PCET) sector.● The commission has five strategic aims;<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ensuring a system that enables lifelong learning and development for all, supports people to make informed choices about their future, and is accessible to all.○ Creating a system that strengthens Wales' economic well-being, collaborates with businesses, provides the skills employers and workers need, and grows our research and innovation base.○ Providing an accessible and effective PCET system that supports learning, assessment and progression through the medium of Welsh and is central to Welsh cultural life.○ Having PCET providers which are diverse and cohesive communities of learning, valued by the communities they serve.○ Having PCET providers which maximise public value and are economically and environmentally sustainable.



Civic University
Network

<p>Civic Mission Framework, Wales</p>	<p>Universities Wales launched a new framework in January 2021 to help universities build upon the ways they work with people, schools and communities. This new tool will support universities in delivering significant economic and social benefits by connecting more closely with communities across Wales and further afield.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Framework enables universities to share best practice in developing and delivering civic mission projects and supports the sector in demonstrating the positive impact of its civic mission work. • The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is at the heart of the Civic Mission Framework. • The framework is based on 5 key pillars; global issues, links with schools, active citizenship, social enterprise and leading place.
<p>Fee and Access Plans, Wales</p>	<p>Universities in Wales can also evidence student-specific civic mission activity (such as student volunteering or mentoring) through the annual fee and access plans. In meeting fee and access plan objectives, regulated institutions in Wales contribute to their civic mission through investing full-time undergraduate fee income in various activities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve Welsh language skills • work with civic partners such as health boards, charities, schools and colleges • widen access to HE • arrange volunteering programmes • collaborate with other regulated institutions • host community events, and • deliver youth engagement projects.
<p>Higher Education Investment and Recovery Fund, Wales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEFCW's Higher Education Investment and Recovery Fund has also supported a collaborative project, Home and Hinterland, a multilingual, multigenerational arts-based project involving Aberystwyth, Bangor and Swansea universities concentrated on the themes of home and hinterland. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The focus of the project will be on building new narratives in a post-Brexit, post-pandemic world, working in particular with students and communities from under-represented groups that do not have regular or sustained access to the arts. ○ The project will engage with students unions and community organizations to encourage student and community working, and develop the civic mission of the three institutions.



Scotland	
Review of tertiary education and research	<p>The Scottish Funding Council published phase 3 of its review of tertiary education and research at the end of June 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amidst serious concerns about lack of coherence in provision and sustainability, given the tight finances of many Universities and even more difficulties in the College sector, the review acknowledged that change was needed and called on the Government to develop a clear strategic and longer-term vision for the sector, together with multi-year funding if the country was to effectively mobilise its assets. • Amongst the recommendations are the adoption of a mission-based approach to harness the power of research, Knowledge Exchange and innovation in tackling big societal challenges, the creation of next-generation ‘Research Pools’, together with continued SFC investment in innovation centres, cross-sector networks with a focus on challenge-oriented research collaboration. • There were calls to mobilise the entire ecosystem of knowledge exchange and innovation more effectively, nurturing early career researchers and providing training and to develop a National Leadership Programme to bring together colleges and universities to invest in current and future adaptive leaders, galvanising them to work together to develop the system.
Scottish Upskilling Funding	<p>This stream of funding is intended to build on 2019-20 activity and continue to develop the capacity of universities to offer short, flexible provision to allow people to upskill or reskill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first year of the Upskilling fund was launched in September 2019 and a further upskilling funding for micro-credentials announced in March 2021. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Additional upskilling funding was paid in one lump sum in March 2021 and provision is expected to be delivered within AY 2020-21. • The funding should be used to further develop the capacity of universities to provide more agile support for employees and employers to upskill and reskill. To enable the sector to be more responsive to local and national economic challenges, in particular dealing with the economic crisis from COVID-19 and the resultant unemployment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New provision is expected to be shorter in duration – usually significantly shorter – than a full academic year. ○ New provision is expected to be flexible in terms of start dates, so that potential students don’t have to wait a whole year to access it.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFC would like the sector to continue to develop a range of diverse delivery models, collaborating where possible to minimise duplication by geography, delivery method and curriculum area subject to the following broad parameters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New provision should be shorter in duration – usually significantly shorter – than a full academic year. ○ New provision should be flexible in terms of start dates, so that a potential student does not have to wait a whole year to access it.
<p>The Saltire Research Awards, Scotland</p>	<p>The £3 million fund was announced in June 2021 to facilitate international collaboration between researchers based in Scotland with researchers in the EU for up to two years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fund, delivered via the Scottish Funding Council and Royal Society of Edinburgh, will be open to all research disciplines including arts, humanities and social sciences and multidisciplinary projects before the application deadline on July 12th 2021. • Applications are invited from Scottish-based researchers to include a European Higher Education Institute (HEI), Research Institute (RI) or Cultural Institution of your choice as per eligibility. • The RSE provides up to £6,000 per year and up to a maximum of £12,000 over two years. The partner institution is expected to provide the equivalent level of funding per two-year joint project.
<p>Scottish Funding Council University Allocations</p>	<p>The Scottish Funding Council’s (SFC) final decisions on funding allocations for universities for 2021/22 were released in May 2021. The key points in the final funding announcement for AY 2021-22 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFC’s Revenue budget has increased by 5.9% (£61.6 million) from 2020-21 • Teaching funding has increased by 7.8% • Research and Innovation budgets have increased by 1.5% (£4.4 million) • University Innovation funding has increased by 10.2% (£15.1 million) <p>As announced in March, SFC has taken over responsibility for the funding of Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs) in Scotland’s universities from 2021-22.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,378 FTE funded student places will be allocated in total; distributed amongst universities based generally on their past provision of GAs, adjusted on the basis of their capacity to deliver this commitment.