

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2044](#): Recommit the £26 million pledged to colleges in the 2023-24 Budget

Background

The petition calls for £26 million pledged to colleges in the 2023-24 Budget to be reinstated. The petitioner states that colleges are having to make cuts to college courses and staff due to lack of funding. The role of colleges in mitigating poverty, providing opportunities, and supporting the economy is highlighted.

Budget 2023-24 and funding reversal

A resource funding increase of £46 million - £20 million for universities and £26 million for colleges - was announced during the [Budget Statement by the then Deputy First Minister, John Swinney MSP, on 15 December 2022](#).

On Tuesday 2 May 2023, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Graeme Dey MSP, [wrote to the Education, Children and Young People Committee](#) (ECYP Committee) to announce that the planned resource funding increase of £20 million for the university sector and £26 million for the college sector for 2023-24 would not be going ahead as the money had been identified as a “necessary saving”. In an evidence session with the ECYP Committee on 17 May 2023, the Minister provided further information, stating:

“...this is principally about the teachers’ pay settlement.” – [Official Report, 17/05/23](#)

Table 2 below sets out the budgets for Higher Education and Further Education resource and capital from 2021-22 to 2023-24. The final column highlighted in yellow shows figures following the reversal of the planned resource funding increase.

Table 2: Further and Higher Education Budgets (Level 3)

Level 3	2021-22 Budget £m	2022-23 Budget £m	2023-24 Budget £m	2023-24 Budget (following revision) £m
HE Resource	768.2	789.2	809.2	789.2
HE Capital	346.7	348.0	340.7	340.7
Net College Resource	675.7	675.7	701.7	675.7
Net College Capital	33.7	74.7*	82.4*	82.4*

Source: [Scottish Budget: 2023-24](#)

*Includes £5m to be apportioned between the college, university and CLD sectors

Sector response

In response to the funding reversal, [Colleges Scotland](#) said colleges were “deeply disappointed and dismayed by this U-turn”, describing colleges as “already cash strapped, making cuts to courses and winding down parts of their offer due to a lack of funding”.

[NUS Scotland](#) said the removal of funding was “unjustifiable”.

[The EIS](#) said the decision would impact pay in the college sector, making it “more difficult for college lecturers to get a pay rise commensurate with that of their colleagues elsewhere in the public sector”.

[UCU Scotland](#) urged the Scottish Government to “recognise that improving the life chances of people across Scotland requires investment in education and the people delivering it.”

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20 September 2023

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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