

## Document 1

### University of Edinburgh – Ms Gilruth meeting with Principal on 11 January 2024 – Note of meeting

#### Attendees:

- Jenny Gilruth MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
- Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Edinburgh
- [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information], University of Edinburgh
- [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information], Lifelong Learning and Skills Directorate, Scottish Government

1. Peter Mathieson (PM) noted his desire to see a well funded higher education system, should the current tuition fees policy in Scotland remain in place. He expressed concern at the continued risk to the unit of resource, and the extent to which international student fee income, along with other income streams such as accommodation and events, are cross-subsidising teaching and research.
2. PM said that around 30% of Edinburgh Uni students are Scottish domiciled, and could be higher if there was not a 'cap' on this number due to the tuition fees policy.
3. PM said that international students were crucial to universities' sustainability during the pandemic. Although international student demand is still strong at Edinburgh Uni, with more resource it would be able to do more. The University's largest student market remains China, which has not been affected by the recent UKG visa changes. These changes will however impact on the university's ability to increase recruitment from other markets such as India.
4. Jenny Gilruth (JG) asked about the impact of Brexit on higher education research. PM noted that the loss of Horizon for a number of years had affected UK universities' leadership role in the programme; that the Turing Scheme and Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP) could not replicate the benefits of Erasmus+; and that the ability to recruit staff from EU countries has been adversely impacted. UK and charity research funding has been otherwise relatively unaffected by Brexit.
5. PM noted that [Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation].
6. In terms of the University's international reach, PM noted the strengths of its Insights Programme, where Widening Access students have the chance to gain confidence, connections and knowledge in preparation for the workplace after graduation. This programme provides students with the opportunity to learn from alumni across Scotland, the UK and internationally. **JG asked officials for information on any similar programmes in place at other Scottish universities.**

7. JG asked about the impact of the pandemic on students' readiness for higher education. PM noted that while the long-term impact remains to be seen, he is confident that students will be able to adapt despite challenges at an earlier stage of their education. PM noted that many students still want the traditional campus and face-to-face experience, albeit with more flexibility and the option of hybrid learning.
8. On the extent to which school qualifications are preparing students for higher education, PM observed that many universities are still too dependent on school attainment as the primary measure used for admissions, and that other measures such as interview performance could be better utilised. PM also suggested there is a lack of equity of access to a range of senior phase qualifications across different parts of Scotland.
9. PM cited the strengths of the Hong Kong education system, including use of the international baccalaureate and four year degree model. On the latter point, PM noted his preference for the four year degree model in Scotland compared to three years in England.
10. PM considered whether a joined up approach to the UK qualifications and admissions system was possible, including the potential for a post qualifications admission system.
11. PM and JG discussed the emphasis on school examination performance and strict timetables in the current system, and the challenges of making changes that would benefit students across local authorities with different approaches.
12. PM noted the ways in which the University and region had benefitted from the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, including the ability to make improvements to data science learning across Scotland.
13. On recent media coverage of widening access admission to Law at the University, PM explained that the University was not seeking to lower standards; rather the intention was to improve access to higher education by students from the most deprived backgrounds. PM also suggested that the media suggestion that students from less deprived backgrounds were being 'squeezed' out of university places was overstated.

## Document 2

<b>What</b>	Meeting with Principal of University of Edinburgh
<b>Where</b>	Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh EH8 9YL
<b>When</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> January 2024, 16:30-17:30
<b>Key Message(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite a challenging financial environment, we are keen to work with you to ensure that the Scottish higher education sector continues to play a key role in the lifelong learning and skills system in the years ahead, delivering the best outcomes and impact for learners, the economy and society.</li> <li>• We continue to recognise and value the world-leading teaching, research, innovation and knowledge exchange delivered by Scottish higher education institutions, and the high esteem in which they are held internationally.</li> </ul>
<b>Who</b>	Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Edinburgh
<b>Why</b>	You accepted an invite to meet with Sir Peter Mathieson as part of a series of introductory engagements across the higher education sector.
<b>Supporting official</b>	[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]
<b>Briefing contents</b>	<p><b>Annex A:</b> Visit programme  <b>Annex B:</b> Post-school reform  <b>Annex C:</b> Budget and HE funding  <b>Annex D:</b> International student recruitment challenges  <b>Annex E:</b> Widening Access  <b>Annex F:</b> Student and staff wellbeing  <b>Annex G:</b> Industrial Relations in HE sector  <b>Annex H:</b> Edinburgh Uni – Other issues  <b>Annex I:</b> Biography / campus map/ parking</p>
<b>Media Handling/ Social Media</b>	<p>Comms arrangements to be handled separately.</p> <p><i>SG Comms:</i> [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]</p> <p><i>Uni contact:</i> [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]</p>
<b>Meeting point on arrival</b>	<p>Arrival at Old College reception to be met by the Principal.</p> <p>The reception is the first major entrance on your left as you enter the main Old College quad from South Bridge, and is well signposted.</p>

## VISIT PROGRAMME

Time	Item
16:30-16:35	Arrival at Old College Reception, to be met by Principal, accompanied by [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]
16:35-17:30	<p>Meeting with Sir Peter Mathieson</p> <p>Suggested potential items for discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of higher education (and Edinburgh Uni) in post-school reform agenda, following Mr Dey's parliamentary statement in December (funding pressures and latest budget likely to form part of this discussion)</li> <li>• Recruitment of international students and challenges</li> <li>• Widening Access and how Edinburgh Uni is supporting this</li> <li>• Edinburgh Uni measures to address student and staff wellbeing (e.g. mental health, gender based violence)</li> <li>• Industrial relations in higher education sector (lessons learned from marking and assessment boycott, next steps to address underlying issues)</li> </ul>
17:30	Minister departs.

## POST-SCHOOL REFORM

1. In November 2023, Universities Scotland submitted a paper to the ECYP Committee on its response to the Purpose & Principles, and reform of the post-school system:
  - a. **We would like to see clear joined-up policy-making from the Scottish Government** in response to the recommendations in the Withers review, the purpose and principles work, the Hayward review, and the work to implement the careers review.
  - b. **The Withers Review makes no mention of research and innovation**, despite the important connections between skills and innovation and between teaching and research. The report also does not mention international students or rest of UK students who represent a sizeable number of students in our institutions.
  - c. We note the desire to create a single post-school funding body in both the review and the purpose and principles work. We think that this is a complex issue and **have serious concerns that a disaggregation of the public bodies funding university teaching, research and innovation will lead to less effective policy and funding support** for universities' integrated contribution across these areas.
  - d. We note the recommendation to look at one funding model for post-school qualifications. Whilst we obviously support fairness and clarity in how funding is distributed, **we do not support simplicity at the expense of supporting excellent higher education provision in a way that reflects its cost.**
  - e. **We welcome the recommendation to look at maintenance support for part-time (PT) students.**
  - f. **We are keen to avoid any skills planning arrangements risking any ONS classification change for universities**, which would be hugely problematic for universities and for government. Any changes that increase government influence/ direction over university provision will tend to increase the risk of reclassification of universities to the public sector.
  - g. **We would strongly suggest that the SFC's work in developing a common approach to quality (or tertiary quality framework) forms the basis for quality arrangements in colleges and universities.**
  - h. We note that the purpose and principles is clear that the new qualifications body would have responsibility for post-school qualifications, except degrees. **It will be important to clarify that the qualification body is not responsible for any qualifications where a university is the awarding body.**
  - i. **We are concerned that there are several other initiatives to look at data for accountability purposes at present** including data for the new quality arrangements, the purpose and principles logic model, and SFC's work to set up a national impact framework. We would like to see a more joined up approach.

### **Top lines:**

- We have been clear that we want to take forward reform of our lifelong education and skills system and won't shy away from decisions which will deliver better services for individuals and employers.
- The programme for government sets our commitment to outline plans for implementing reform of our education and skills bodies, putting the voices of children, young people and adult learners at their core.
- In December the Minister for Higher and Further Education updated Parliament on the next phase of work in the development in our approach including:
  - clarity on skills planning;
  - first steps in simplification of our funding landscape;
  - how we will work across the system to deliver change, including with employers, and;
  - a short, sharp review of Community Learning and Development.
- We will continue to work closely with the Scottish Funding Council, Skills Development Scotland and the Student Awards Agency for Scotland as well as individual institutions and other partners and stakeholders to agree how we can best work together to respond to both the necessity and opportunities for reform.
- The Scottish Government is committed to bringing learner support funding together, and to bringing funding for provision, including apprenticeship provision, into the one place.
- Work to develop the new Learner Funding Model is still at an early stage. We want the new funding model to make better use of the money in existing budgets to deliver outcomes more efficiently.

### **Despite a challenging financial environment, we are keen to ensure that the higher education sector continues to play a key role in the lifelong learning and skills system in the years ahead, delivering the best outcomes and impact for learners, the economy and society.**

- We continue to recognise and value the world-leading teaching, research, innovation and knowledge exchange delivered through our universities, and the high esteem in which they are held internationally.
- The Scottish Government continues to work alongside the Scottish Funding Council to ensure the financial sustainability of our universities, however it remains vital universities continue to develop their own mitigating strategies to minimise negative impacts on their financial sustainability.
- Since 2012/13, we have invested over £1 billion per year in Scotland's universities.
- Between 2012/13 and 2019/20, the university sector resource budget increased by £23m in cash terms (£1,002.2m to £1,025.3m).
- Since 2020/21, the university sector resource budget has increased by a further £46m in cash terms (from £743.1m to £789.2m in 2022-23).

**In The Purpose and Principles, we reflected stakeholder views that any erosion of baseline funding will impact on research excellence and the ability to lever additional competitive funding and we acknowledged that the dual funding mechanism for research is critically important.**

- As part of any changes being considered, we have no intention of disrupting or changing how research funding is delivered.
- We will work with universities to ensure research funding is positioned in the public sector landscape in a way that avoids any unintended consequences.
- The Scottish Government continues to recognise the vital role of Scotland's research and knowledge exchange ecosystem in creating the strong foundations that allow Scotland to drive long-term, real-world impact.
- Research sits at the heart of a number of key Scottish Government priorities and strategies.
- Our National Innovation Strategy highlights the central role of research in innovation and sets out a vision and roadmap for Scotland to become one of the most innovative small nations in the world
- We will continue to protect and sustain the research and science base in Scotland through continued long-term investment.

**Although we face a challenging economic backdrop, this is not about taking money out of the system but ensuring that we are getting the best outcomes from the £3bn annual investment that we make.**

- We understand that institutions may have concerns about the prospect of a new funding model. However, this must be balanced against the need to ensure the system works for those who use it, including learners and employers, and continues to demonstrate value to the public purse, offer regional autonomy and helps to achieve the parity of esteem that the Withers report called for.

**The willingness to break-down deeply unhelpful and false dichotomies between vocational and academic routes and put learners and employers at the centre is to be welcomed.**

- We welcome the commitment from universities to play a major role in supporting the processes that will help to break down these barriers and support the learning outcomes we all want to see.

**We have committed to review the support for those who study part-time and flexibly, and the current income threshold will also be subject to consideration.**

- The Scottish Government's provision of funding to students for living costs and tuition fees, whether loans or otherwise, involves the allocation of finite resources. In the case of Part Time Fee Grant (PTFG) funding it was decided that eligibility criteria would include an income cap of £25,000.
- The existence of the income cap allows the Scottish Government to focus this level of support to low earners and maintain the overall affordability of the student support package.

**I appreciate that the university sector may have concerns about any potential reclassification of universities by the Office for National Statistics in future. We are taking this into consideration as part of our wider reform work.**

- ONS have confirmed it will contact the Scottish Government and sector stakeholders in early 2024 when it resumes planning for the timing of its classification review, including training sessions to learn more about its scope.

**The Scottish Government expects the Scottish Funding Council to work in consultation with all interested parties, including QAA and Education Scotland, to strike the appropriate balance between assuring and enhancing the quality of tertiary provision, recognising the distinct contribution as well as the interconnectedness of each part of the tertiary education system.**

- We continue to value and place great importance on the work and functions of the existing agencies. There will be no immediate impact on current service delivery whilst they consider and consult on the way forward.

**The new qualifications body will be responsible for setting the standards for those awarding bodies offering qualifications in Scotland which seek accreditation for their qualifications, apart from universities, as well as deciding what qualifications have met these standards in order to be accredited.**

- The purpose of the Education Bill consultation is to seek further views on how a new national qualifications body, and the removal of the inspection function from Education Scotland, can meet the needs of people across the education and skills system.



## HE BUDGET 2024/25 AND HE FUNDING

1. Professor Mathieson has previously raised concerns about the Scottish Government's funding of the HE sector. In a May 2023 Herald article, Professor Mathieson was quoted as saying the following:
  - a. "the number of Scottish-domiciled students that we can accept is capped by the Scottish Government, an inescapable consequence of its policy to pay tuition fees for this group"
  - b. "the funding that we receive for these students is inadequate to pay the full costs of their education and has not increased for a number of years, therefore it is being eroded in real terms."
  - c. "RUK fees have also been fixed and are therefore being eroded. International students pay higher tuition fees and therefore cross-subsidise "home" students".
  
2. In advance of this meeting, Professor Mathieson has also raised concerns about the "unit resource" or "per student" funding for the sector. This follows an Institute for Fiscal Studies report in December 2023 stating that *"Scottish universities received direct public funding of £7,610 for each Scottish student this academic year.....around 19% less in real terms than in 2013–14, as a result of the freeze in the 'tuition fee' and below-inflation rises in per-student teaching grants."*
  
3. However the same report notes that *"university figures are per year of study, and undergraduate degrees are typically longer in Scotland (four years instead of three), so total funding for teaching a Scottish undergraduate over their whole course is likely to be around 5% higher than funding for teaching an English undergraduate."*
  
4. In Universities Scotland's submission to the ECYP Committee ahead of James Withers' November 2023 evidence session, sustainability of funding for universities was highlighted as a key requirement of skills reform. The submission stated:
  - a. *"The core problem faced by institutions isn't the funding methodology, it's the chronic under-funding of each Scottish-domiciled student and the over-reliance on cross-subsidy from international fees (as Audit Scotland has previously warned) which is now baked-in to the Scottish Government's funding model for home students."*
  - b. *"The priority needs to be investment at sustainable and competitive levels. We cannot support simplicity in a single funding model at the expense of supporting excellent higher education provision in a way that reflects its cost."*

### **HE Budget 2024/25 - Top lines:**

- The in-year savings announced by DFM in November for 2023-24 have set the context for elements of the reductions in 2024-25.
- **HE capital and resource have received funding of £1,117.6m which translates to a reduction of £32.3m or 2.8% in comparison to £1,149.9m in 2023-24.** This is in the context of a cost-of-living crisis, where difficult

choices have had to be made but we have tried to mitigate the impact on the sector.

- Since 2012/13, we have invested over £1 billion per year in Scotland's universities.
- Universities have a significant role to play in mitigating financial pressures by prioritising their resources and flexibly delivering provision to learners.

#### ***HE capital funding:***

- Despite the overall reduction in HE funding, **HE capital has increased by £16.2m in 2024-25 to £356.9m representing an increase of 4.8%**. In choosing to increase funding shows we recognise the importance of investing in the long-term success of Scotland's universities.
- *Note that the increased allocation has yet to be allocated between different research and maintenance lines below level 4, and only level 4 figure can be used currently.*
- [Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation].
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#### ***HE resource funding:***

- For **HE resource, there is a reduction of £48.5m** against the 2023-24 budget with £760.7 million being allocated in 2024-25, which is a **6% decrease in cash terms**. It should be noted, of the £48.5m reduction announced in the draft budget, £30m is repeating savings from 2023-24, of which the largest component is the £20m transformation fund, which was not intended to be part of universities' core funding.
- Where possible, reductions to resource budgets have been targeted in a way that minimises the direct impact on learning and teaching.

#### ***HE research funding:***

- Scotland's world class university research, and its key outputs of new knowledge and insights, are fundamental to green economic recovery and growth.
- The Scottish Government remains committed to research which sits at the heart of a number of our key policies and strategies, such as NSET and the National Innovation Strategy.
- We have provided a multi-year funding commitment to research and knowledge exchange and they are included in the SG Capital Spending Review 2021-2022 to 2025-2026.

#### **Path to Balance for 2023/24 budget:**

- The 23-24 position remains extremely challenging with high inflation, increased pay expectations, economic uncertainty and the on-going cost of living crisis. However, we remain focussed on delivering on our priorities, and are working extensively to ensure funding is prioritised to those that need it most.

- This severe challenge is shared across sectors, and across all 4 Nations, with our Welsh and Northern Ireland colleagues, and UK Departments all struggling to manage within existing allocations.
- We have a robust set of processes and controls in place to manage the current position including a rigorous monthly budget monitoring processes, regular discussions on the financial position, and extensive spending controls.
- We are working extensively to manage the position and any further re-prioritisation of budgets required will be fully set out transparently as part of the Spring Budget Revision process and approved by Parliament.
- SFC has identified potential savings of £102m in financial year 2023-24. Our focus has been to minimise the impact on frontline allocations for learning and teaching and support for students. Many of the savings are in demand led areas, where demand was lower than forecast.

***Free tuition policy - Lines to take:***

- The Scottish Government firmly believes that access to university should be based on the ability to learn and not the ability to pay, however there is a need to exert a level of control over the higher education budget, which means that the number of students able to access a funded place is not unlimited.
- Our commitment to free tuition means that, unlike elsewhere in the UK, Scottish students studying in Scotland do not incur additional debt of up to £27,750, and that average student loan debt for Scottish students is the lowest in the UK.
- There is no evidence to suggest that Scottish students are going elsewhere in the UK. The most recent HESA figures (for 2021-22) show that Scottish domiciled full-time first-degree entrants to degree courses elsewhere in the UK accounted for only 5% of the total number of Scottish entrants that year, and that proportion has remained broadly unchanged since 2006-07.

***'Per student' or 'unit of resource' funding – Lines to take:***

- Where possible, reductions to resource budgets have been targeted in a way that minimises the direct impact on learning and teaching.
- We have committed to developing a new funding model for post-school education provision which continues free tuition and improves the parity of living cost support on offer for those wishing to study part time or flexibly, and which continues to promote post-16 education as a positive destination for widening access students.
- Differences in degree lengths, funding groups and how institutions receive funds, through teaching grants and tuition fees, make comparisons difficult between Scottish and rUK universities in terms of per student funding.

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES**

1. On 3 November, Universities Scotland briefed SG on emerging concerns about a sector-wide fall in international student recruitment. Data collated by the SFC on this so far has shown the following:
  - a. Largest declines are from South Asia and West African countries, particularly India and Nigeria.
  - b. The overall decline is predominantly at taught postgraduate level, with a decrease of about -3,675 or -15% in first-term enrolments, and a projected decrease of about -6,320 (-18%) over the whole session. Eleven universities have had a decrease in first term taught postgraduate enrolments.
  - c. Undergraduate enrolments have remained relatively steady, with a reduction of about -80 (-1%) in first-term enrolments and a projected decrease over the whole session of about -250 (-3%). Eight universities have had a decrease in first term undergraduate enrolments.
2. US have advised that **[Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]**.
3. US have suggested that the fall in international student recruitment could be attributed to a range of factors, including increased competition from other countries such as Australia, Canada and USA; economic challenges in key markets such as Nigeria and China; and the UK Government's visa restrictions and charges.
4. US are concerned if this loss in international student fee income is the beginning of a longer-term trend, and at the continued reliance on this income stream by many universities to cross-subsidise teaching and research, whilst there is a continued erosion in core public funding for teaching and research.
5. In correspondence sent to you on 28 November, US suggested that the combination of reduced international student recruitment, alongside the recent £102m savings to SFC's in-year budget for 2023/24, mean that institutions are at a "tipping point" in their continued ability to provide high quality provision and support for the wellbeing economy.
6. On 7 December the Convenor of US wrote to FM to request that SG gives the most sympathetic consideration possible to safeguarding universities' contribution to the nation, as Scottish Budget decisions are being finalised. In outlining the difficulties already being faced, he also stressed the UKG Home Secretary's announcement on 4 December of a review of international students entitlement to post-study work opportunities in the UK, risking UK universities' competitiveness in attracting international students, as well as potentially restricting this source of talent to the Scottish economy.
7. SG analysts have noted that international postgraduate student numbers have increased by 48% since 2020, and by 116% since 2018. A 15% decrease into 2023-24 would still therefore result in figures higher than pre-pandemic.

***Increasing reliance of universities on international student fee income – Lines to take:***

- Ministers acknowledge the risks of over-reliance on international student fee income, due to global market forces and external shocks.
- Appreciate that the higher education sector is not homogenous, with some institutions more reliant on international student fee income than others.
- This government and the Scottish Funding Council will continue to support universities in developing their own mitigating strategies to minimise negative impacts on short, medium and long-term financial sustainability.
- We are very concerned that the UK Government's latest doubling down on the hostile environment means not only that we could see fewer international students studying in Scotland, but that it could be harder for our universities to attract international staff. The changes relating to dependants are particularly challenging.
- I have agreed to work with Universities Scotland to make representation to the UK Government to review the visa situation for postgraduates and their families, while recognising the limitations of the devolved government.

***International Education Strategy – Lines to take:***

- Scotland is an outward looking country with an international focus. We welcome international students and recognise the important and valuable contribution they make to the Scottish economy, our educational environment and Scottish society.
- Scottish Government's priority is to become more active internationally, fostering good global connections by promoting educational and research exchange to raise the profile of Scotland as a place to live, work and study.
- We have engaged closely with key stakeholders, including universities and colleges, to develop an International Education Strategy and expect to launch this early in 2024. The Strategy will promote Scotland's education offer globally and attract a diversity of students to our institutions.
- The Scottish Government has agreed a plan with Connected Scotland to run promotional campaigns in 2023-24 to target International student recruitment in North America and South East Asia, and to target activity to promote Scotland as a study destination at seven major events in 2023-24.

**WIDENING ACCESS**

1. In early 2023 an issue around places at Edinburgh University being offered only to widening access students received media coverage and was raised at FMQs. An FOI request had found that a number of degree programmes, including Scots Law, only admitted students with a widening access “contextual flag” for that admissions cycle.
2. This was due to the number of applicants with a widening access flag – who receive a guaranteed offer of entry – exceeding the number of places available on those programmes.
3. The University of Edinburgh confirmed that they would review their admissions process for 2024 entry to ensure it was not disproportionately focused on a number of high-demand programmes. Sir Peter Mathieson later commented on the issue in The Herald (10 May 2023), linking the issue to the overall cap on funded places.
4. On 4 January 2024, following an FOI request, the Telegraph reported that students from the least deprived areas were four times less likely to receive a place to study Law at Edinburgh Uni in the 2023/24 academic year than students from the most deprived areas. Officials do not yet have access to the data cited and have reached out to the university to understand the issue further.

***Widening Access – Top lines:***

- With 16.5% of full-time first degree entrants coming from deprived areas, we have achieved the interim Commission on Widening Access target to have 16% by 2021 across all institutions.
- We also have a record high number of students from deprived areas, with 5,595 Scots entering university up 41% since the establishment of the Commission on Widening Access by this Government.
- This illustrates the important work achieved by institutions in supporting people into Higher Education.
- Widening access is a priority for this Government, but we know there is more to do.
- That is why we are working with the Commissioner for Fair Access and sector representatives on measures that can be used to support universities and colleges to make contextualised admissions.
- This includes through the Access Data Short-life Working Group, which aims to investigate whether additional measures can be used alongside SIMD to identify widening access students. We expect the group’s report shortly.
- Professor John McKendrick was appointed as the new Commissioner for Fair Access in January 2023, and we are working with him to drive forward progress on achieving fair access to higher education. We look forward to receiving his first report in due course.

***Widening Access issue with Law entrants at Edinburgh Uni:***

- Thank you for your ongoing and public commitment to widening access, and for the work undertaken by staff at the University of Edinburgh.

## STUDENT AND STAFF WELL BEING

### ***Student mental health – Top lines:***

- The Scottish Government will continue to engage closely with universities and colleges on student mental health support, and we will outline further actions following the publication of the overarching Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy earlier this summer.
- The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, published in the summer, places strong focus on prevention, early intervention and recognises the importance of a diversity of service provision.
- The Strategy is supported by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Action Plan, and Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan, published in Autumn 2023.
- The draft Student Mental Health Action Plan is informed by these and research, including the Thriving Learners Surveys, and we will very shortly consult with the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Working Group on that draft Plan.
- The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Working Group, chaired by the Minister for Higher Education, is driving this work forward. **The University of Edinburgh is represented on that group.** Wider membership includes NUS Scotland, Think Positive, Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland.
- Universities are autonomous bodies with responsibility for ensuring that they have appropriate support in place for students and staff.

### ***Student mental health funding:***

- Over the past four years we have supported institutions to introduce more than 80 extra counsellors to help their students with a total investment of almost £16 million. That Programme for Government commitment has now successfully concluded.
- On 11 July we announced the provision of a one-off funding allocation of £3.21 million for mental health and wellbeing provision in institutions in academic year 2023/24, to enable institutions to transition to a more sustainable means of providing mental health support for students.
- The Scottish Government will continue to engage closely with universities and colleges on student mental health support and we will outline further actions following the publication of the overarching Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy earlier this summer.

### ***Equally Safe in colleges and universities:***

- The Scottish Government remains absolutely committed to eliminating violence against women and girls in all its forms. Scotland's colleges and universities should be places where students can live, study and research, safe from gender-based violence, misogyny, exploitation, and sexism.
- Scottish universities are autonomous institutions and, as such, are responsible for all matters relating to the management of their institution. The Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers are unable to intervene in internal institutional matters.
- **On 18 December 2023, Scottish Government officials met with the University of Edinburgh student support team** and received assurances on their commitment to the safety of staff and students and actions in support of that.

- It is imperative that all institutions take actions to reduce the risk of Gender-Based Violence happening, and that they are able to respond quickly, effectively and transparently if and when it does.
- That is why we have supported Emily Test to create its ground-breaking Gender-Based Violence Charter which recognises good practice across the sectors, and that is the only initiative of its kind in the UK.
- We expect institutions to adopt a Gendered Analysis, as set out in the Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit, and put in place policies, reporting processes and support arrangements to keep students safe and engaged with their studies while meeting the needs and considering the diversity of survivors.

***Collection and use of violent criminal proceedings data:***

- A Working Group was set up in February 2023 to undertake a review of the collection and use of student data in relation to relevant unspent criminal convictions and extant criminal charges. The Group has met three times, most recently on 12 September.
- Universities Scotland are currently developing guidance for universities on how that data should be requested, held and used to improve student safety.
- I am grateful to Universities Scotland and all of our universities for their hard work and diligence and to Ellie Wilson for her continued engagement on this issue.



**INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN HE SECTOR**

1. Pay negotiations and terms and conditions for staff in HE are negotiated at the UK level, via the negotiating body New Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES), which comprises employer and HE staff union representatives. On JNCHES, the employers' side is represented by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA).
2. UCEA made their latest final pay offer for 2023-24 during the ACAS facilitated dispute resolution talks in February 2023. This offer includes a pay uplift of 5 percent on all pay points, with higher uplifts for those below Spinal Column Point 20 of up to 8 percent.
3. Current position of the five HE trade unions:
  - a. UCU rejected the 2023-24 New JNCHES pay outcome and have taken industrial action under the 2022-23 dispute. November 2023 ballot result meant that UCU did not meet the minimum threshold and did not secure further mandate for either strike action or action short of a strike.
  - b. UNISON rejected the 2023-24 New JNCHES pay outcome. On 16 November UNISON announced a re-ballot at 16 HEIs in England and Scotland to extend its current and recently expired mandates for strike action, closing on 19 February 2024.
  - c. Unite rejected the 2023-24 New JNCHES pay outcome and have balloted or are balloting 18 HEIs for industrial action on a disaggregated basis. Unite have secured mandate at five of the ten HEIs it has balloted.
  - d. Between September-November 2023, EIS undertook an aggregated ballot at 15 HEIs over the 2023-24 New JNCHES pay outcome. EIS did not meet the minimum ballot threshold to secure mandate.
  - e. GMB have conducted regional consultative ballots to determine whether to pursue industrial action in relation to the 2023-24 New JNCHES pay uplift, but have not announced any statutory industrial action ballots.
4. In September 2023, UCEA confirmed that trade unions had accepted their proposals for independently facilitated talks on a review of sector finances, and further talks on pay-related matters raised by UCU and other HE trade unions. However delays in getting it started have meant that this is highly unlikely to be concluded before the next pay round takes place

***Industrial Action at universities across UK regarding pay and conditions - Top lines:***

- While matters concerning pay and working conditions are for universities to determine, this government has encouraged university employers and trade unions to engage in constructive and meaningful dialogue in pursuit of a resolution.

- I expect fair work principles to be applied in the higher education sector, including that employers, workers and trade unions work together to reach the right decisions and ensure workers are treated fairly.

***UKG consultation on Minimum Service Levels in education services:***

- Scottish Ministers have devolved responsibility for education, and UK Ministers impacting in this area undermines the devolution settlement.
- I urge the UK Government to avoid introducing any regulations associated with the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act that would have an impact on education in Scotland.
- The Scottish Government does not intend to formally respond to the UK Government's consultation, or provide assistance with the development of any regulations that may arise from this exercise.
- The Scottish Government will continue to encourage both employers and trade unions in the further and higher education sectors to engage constructively to resolve disputes. Industrial action is in no-one's interests, least of all students.
- The Scottish Government and Scottish Funding Council will continue to work with the further and higher education sectors to support the embedding of Fair Work practices. This includes action to tackle the gender pay gap, as well as the inappropriate use of zero-hours contracts.

## EDINBURGH UNI – OTHER ISSUES

### Principal expenses

1. In July 2023, student publication The Tab reported that, according to Freedom of Information (Fol) data, Professor Mathieson spent nearly £13,000 on business class flights in the previous year.
2. In October 2023, the Scotland on Sunday reported on Fol data showing, for 2021-22, £43,966 paid in university expenses towards the Principal's Regent Terrace residence.
3. The University and College Union (UCU) said: *"UCU members at the University have been docked hundreds of pounds for their participation in the marking and assessment boycott. The disparity between those at the top with the workers delivering the teaching, research and student support is as stark as ever"*.

### **HE senior pay – Lines to take:**

- Universities are autonomous institutions and matters relating to pay, remuneration and staffing matters are for them to determine.
- The Scottish Government expects universities to exercise restraint in setting senior pay, and senior pay packages should be in step with the salary, terms and conditions offered to other university staff.
- The Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 did not introduce wage controls and the salary levels of Principals and Vice-Chancellors are a matter for each university's governing body and remuneration committee.
- However, by ensuring trades unions and student representatives are on every university governing body, the Act means all voices on campus are heard during decisions on remuneration.

### Edinburgh University finance system

1. The 'People and Money' IT system is a centralised HR, payroll and finance system which the university first introduced in November 2020. It was then rolled out completely in 2022.
2. However, issues in the final phase of the project meant thousands of invoices issued to the university were left outstanding.
3. In November 2022, Edinburgh University apologised to students, staff and suppliers after payment delays following rollout of its new finance system.
4. In the aftermath of the backlog, in 2023 the university paid the IT systems supplier, Inoapps, an extra £8m. The initial contract advertised in 2017 was worth £14m, which later rose to £25.3m in 2020, before increasing for a third time in 2023 to £33.5m.
5. In December 2023, a report published by an external consultant on behalf of the University found:
  - a. challenges that arose during the introduction of the new system had a "profound impact on staff wellbeing";
  - b. "excessive stress" on some members of staff at the university, due to having great volumes of workload;
  - c. some members of staff who tried to raise constructive feedback with management felt they were considered disruptive and ignored;

- d. members of staff dealing with multiple complaints from suppliers, who were not paid due to the IT error, with little guidance on how to deal with the situation;
  - e. "Staff are unclear if and when things will be resolved causing further concern".
6. In response the University has welcomed the report's findings and recommendations, and have committed to avoiding similar issues in future.

***Lines to take:***

- Aware of issues with rollout of the University's new financial system, however universities are autonomous institutions with responsibility for their own operational matters.
- We would expect the University's governing body and leadership to work to resolve these issues as quickly as possible.
- Aware that the University has apologised to students, staff and suppliers experiencing delays in payments, and that the issue relating to stipend payments for PhD students was escalated to resolve as quickly as possible.

**Confucius Institutes hosted by Scottish universities**

1. In recent years there have been concerns raised about Confucius Institutes co-funded by the Chinese Government, increasing numbers of Chinese students and Chinese investment in research funding, with the perception that the Chinese Government is subverting academic freedom on overseas campuses, and damaging the reputations of autonomous academic institutions.
2. Confucius Institutes are hosted at the universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Heriot-Watt and Strathclyde.
3. The University of Edinburgh has relationships with more than 50 Chinese universities. These include the universities of Peking, Tsinghua, Renmin, Fudan and Xiamen, and the Beijing Film Academy amongst others. The China Office maintains these relationships and assists with local arrangements to facilitate research symposiums.

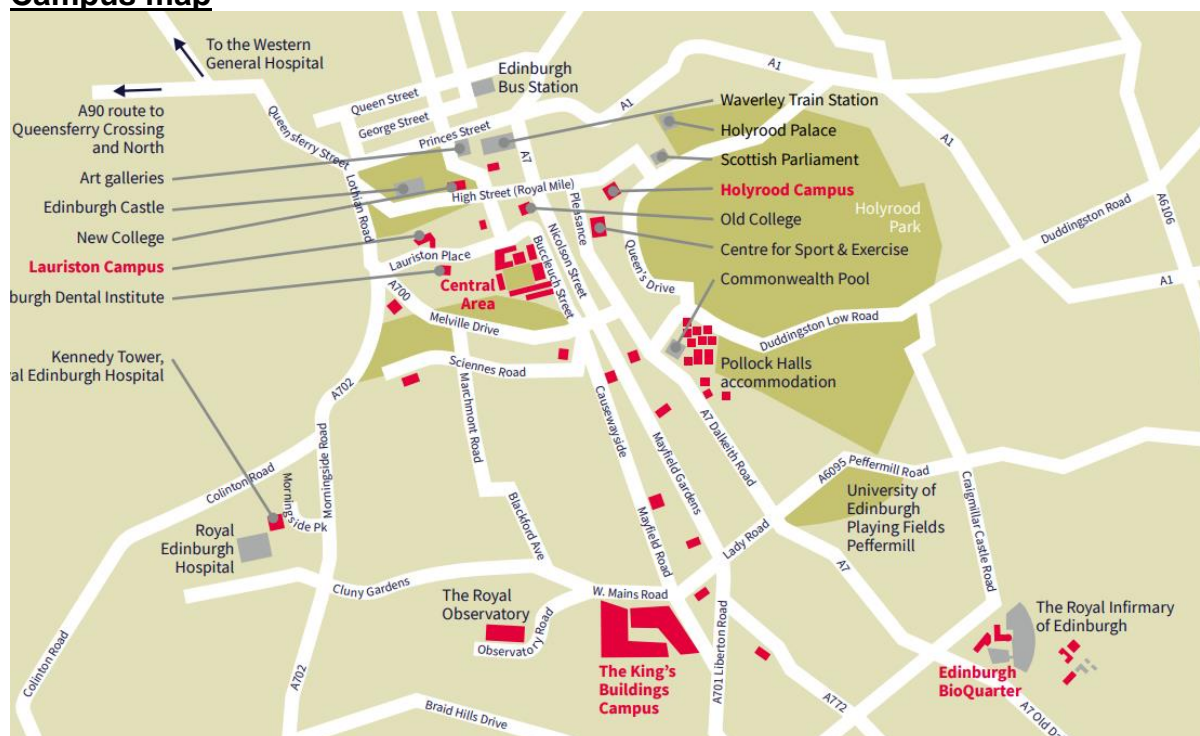
***Lines to take:***

- Our universities are autonomous institutions and the alliances they forge across global academic networks are a matter for them and their governing bodies, however we are concerned by any suggestions of foreign interference in Scottish universities.
- We expect all universities to understand and manage the reputational, ethical and security risks associated with international partnerships. This includes conducting appropriate due diligence before entering into new international partnerships, monitoring existing partnerships, and listening to the campus community when taking decisions affecting the university, its staff and students.
- Academic freedom is of paramount importance in Scotland, and the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016) requires our universities to aim to uphold the academic freedom of persons engaged in teaching, or the provision of learning or research at the university; and ensure that appointments held or sought, and entitlements or privileges enjoyed, are not adversely affected by engaging in these activities.

### Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor - Biography

- Peter went to a state grammar school in Penzance, Cornwall and was the first member of his family to go to university. He read Medicine at the London Hospital Medical College and qualified with First Class Honours from the University of London in 1983.
- In 2007, Peter became Head of the University Department of Clinical Science at North Bristol, and in 2008 was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Bristol.
- In April 2014, Peter assumed office as President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, and in February 2018 he assumed the office of Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh.

### Campus map



### Parking

The University can ensure a place is available to drop off on West College Street (to the west of Old College in map above), where there is also an entrance to the Old College Quad. The University would not be able to arrange a parking space for this area as it is controlled parking, though there are a number of paid parking spaces in the area if the driver needs to wait.

### Document 3

**From:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 9, 2024 11:01 AM  
**To:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>  
**Cc:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Ms Gilruth meeting with Sir Peter Mathieson - 11 January 2024 - 16:30-17:30

Hi [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

Thanks for sharing. I'll probably arrive shortly before Cab Sec, so I'll give you a call on arrival.

As for a rough agenda, happy to go with the following:

- Role of higher education (and Edinburgh Uni) in post-school reform agenda, following Mr Dey's parliamentary statement in December (I assume funding pressures and latest budget will form part of this discussion)
- Recruitment of international students and challenges
- Widening Access and how Edinburgh Uni is supporting this
- Edinburgh Uni measures to address student and staff wellbeing (e.g. mental health, gender based violence)
- Industrial relations in higher education sector (lessons learned from marking and assessment boycott, next steps to address underlying issues)

Thanks,

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information] | **Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills | Scottish Government**

5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU

E: [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

**From:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 9, 2024 10:23 AM  
**To:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Ms Gilruth meeting with Sir Peter Mathieson - 11 January 2024 - 16:30-17:30

Dear [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information],

Of course – I will attend along with the Principal. My number is [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information] for any issues on the day.

The location for drop-off and pick-up would be the West College Street entrance - <https://maps.app.goo.gl/ZyadeUW5Fk6yZtZv5>. There is a single yellow line there where the Cabinet Secretary could be dropped, and picked up from if needed. Please let me know if required, as if so I will meet you there to walk you along to the Old College reception.

Following on from the Principal's thoughts on agenda below, is there anything that the Cabinet Secretary is particularly keen to raise?

Thanks,

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

**From:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot

**Sent:** 09 January 2024 08:17

**To:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>

**Cc:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; Peter Mathieson <[principal@ed.ac.uk](mailto:principal@ed.ac.uk)>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot

**Subject:** RE: Ms Gilruth meeting with Sir Peter Mathieson - 11 January 2024 - 16:30-17:30

Hi [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

Thank you for sharing the details below. Grateful if you could confirm if any other university officials will be in attendance as well. I will attend in support of the Cabinet Secretary. Could you share a mobile number I can contact upon arrival, should there be any issues on the day?

Parking will not be required for the Cabinet Secretary, however if you could have a place for drop-off and pick-up in case this is needed as you suggest, that would be great.

Thanks,

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information] | Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills | Scottish Government

5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU

E: [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

**From:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 3, 2024 12:06 PM  
**To:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; Peter Mathieson <[principal@ed.ac.uk](mailto:principal@ed.ac.uk)>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Ms Gilruth meeting with Sir Peter Mathieson - 11 January 2024 - 16:30-17:30

Dear [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information],

I hope you had a relaxing break.

Further to the Principal's email before the holidays, happy to confirm that the meeting point will be at Old College, South Bridge, EH8 9YL ([map](#)). This is conveniently the same building as the Cabinet Secretary's event that evening.

If the Cabinet Secretary could arrive at the Old College Reception at 16:30 that would be ideal. The reception is the first major entrance on your left as you enter the main Old College quad from South Bridge, and is well signposted. The Cabinet Secretary will be met by Professor Sir Peter Mathieson on arrival. We will advise if others are due to attend the meeting as well, and would be grateful if you could confirm whether any Scottish Government officials will be attending?

Should the Cabinet Secretary require parking, we can ensure a place is available to drop off on West College Street, where there is also an entrance to the Old College Quad. I don't believe we would be able to arrange a parking space for this area as it is controlled parking, though there are a number of paid parking spaces in the area if the driver needed to wait.

I have copied Professor Sir Peter Mathieson's short bio and photo below for any briefing you might be preparing for the Cabinet Secretary.

If there is anything else you need in the meantime, please let me know.

Many thanks,

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]



**Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor**

Peter went to a state grammar school in Penzance, Cornwall and was the first member of his family to go to university. He read Medicine at the London Hospital Medical College and qualified with First Class Honours from the University of London in 1983.

In 2007, Peter became Head of the University Department of Clinical Science at North Bristol, and in 2008 was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Bristol.



In April 2014, Peter assumed office as President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, and in February 2018 he assumed the office of Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh.

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

The University of Edinburgh | Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann

Email: [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

Teams: Chat with me on Teams

[www.ed.ac.uk](http://www.ed.ac.uk)



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EH1 2QL



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* EDINBURGH

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Is e buidheann carthannais a th' ann an Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann, clàraichte an Alba, àireamh clàraidh SC005336.

**From:** Peter Mathieson <[principal@ed.ac.uk](mailto:principal@ed.ac.uk)>

**Sent:** 21 December 2023 14:07

**To:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot;

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>

**Cc:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot;

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk>

**Subject:** RE: Ms Gilruth meeting with Sir Peter Mathieson - 11 January 2024 - 16:30-17:30

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

I think many of my relevant colleagues will now be on leave but I am adding in copy [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information] and [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information] who might be able to help with some of the practical considerations. The meeting was requested by Jenny as an introduction, so I would expect the agenda to be mainly hers. Naturally I am interested in the role of

higher education in the Scottish Government's priorities; the unit of resource; the threats to recruitment of international students, fee income from whom cross-subsidises home students and also cross-subsidises our research programmes; widening participation; student and staff wellbeing; industrial relations. I also have a UK-wide role in international security which she might wish to know more about. Also I am Lead Member for Health for Universities Scotland and can address issues around recruitment into healthcare education and training programmes across Scotland.

With best regards,  
Peter

**From:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot

**Sent:** 21 December 2023 12:17

**To:** Peter Mathieson <[principal@ed.ac.uk](mailto:principal@ed.ac.uk)>; [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@ed.ac.uk

**Cc:** [redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot;

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]@gov.scot

**Subject:** Ms Gilruth meeting with Sir Peter Mathieson - 11 January 2024 - 16:30-17:30

Good afternoon

I have been asked to prepare briefing for Ms Gilruth's meeting with Sir Peter Mathieson on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at University of Edinburgh. I would therefore be grateful for any assistance you can provide in gathering the following information to prepare this:

- Please provide a note of agenda items which Sir Peter wishes to discuss
- Who the Minister will meet on arrival and where
- Attendee list and any biographies
- Venue map and parking location

Let me know if there is another colleague who may be better placed to provide this information. I'm conscious of the fact that many of these details will not have been arranged yet, however I'd be grateful for anything you can provide by close of **22 December**.

Many thanks

[redacted - section 38(1)(b) of FOISA - personal information]

Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills | 5 Atlantic Quay | 150 Broomielaw | Glasgow | G2 8LU

Check out the new Scottish Government resource <https://www.studentinformation.gov.scot/>. Everything you need to know about student finance, including help for parents, carers and education professionals.