

**Minister for Higher and Further Education; and
Minister for Veterans**
Ministear airson Foghlam Àrd-ìre is Adhartach; agus
Ministear airson Seann Ghaisgich
Graeme Dey MSP/BPA



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Your Reference: Glasgow College

25 July 2023

Dear Pam,

Thank you for your letter regarding compulsory redundancies at the City of Glasgow College on 4 July to the First Minister. I am responding as issues affecting the college sector are within my Ministerial portfolio.

As I have alluded to in the Chamber and in Committee as well as in my correspondence with trade unions, employers and MSPs, the Scottish Government budget process was extremely challenging this year, which has resulted in significant funding challenges for 2023-24. This requires that further education institutions balance the needs of the sector and students with affordability and colleges should consider the steps that they must take in order to ensure their financial viability and sustainability. It is for each individual college to determine how best to secure its sustainability while continuing to deliver provision to meet learner needs and to respond to regional economic drivers.

Scotland's incorporated colleges and regional strategic bodies must consult and seek approval from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on plans to run Voluntary Severance Schemes. While the SFC have to approve Voluntary Severance Schemes, they do not typically provide additional finance for such schemes, with the exception of where such schemes are required due to institutional mergers.

There is no similar requirement for colleges to seek SFC approval for compulsory redundancies and ultimately this is a matter for individual colleges to consider, in line with their compulsory redundancy procedures. However, I expect colleges, and regional strategic bodies, to follow the current institutional guidance which advises them to consult with SFC, or regional strategic board as appropriate, when any Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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college is considering compulsory redundancy action.

I wrote to all College Principals, including Dr Paul Little, on 7 June and within that letter I noted my appreciation of the difficult financial context that colleges are operating within and their need to ensure their financial sustainability within current budget allocations. I also reflected that as a result of current economic circumstances, there was the regrettable possibility of job losses in the sector, however, I reminded all Principals that while colleges are not bound by Public Pay Sector Policy, it is my expectation that they should have regard for it when making any decisions around staffing matters.

I was also clear in my letter that any job losses must be a last resort and that central to the Scottish Government's Fair Work approach is the expectation that employers, workers and trades unions should work together to reach the right decisions and ensure workers are treated fairly. I will continue to reiterate that colleges must view job losses as a last resort and exhaust all other avenues before turning to compulsory redundancies.

As regards meeting EIS-FELA representatives, I met with national representatives on 10 May, where we discussed the situation at City of Glasgow College and I have been in dialogue with them since – most recently on issues at North East Scotland College, which I followed up with the Principal of the College. I will continue to listen to trade unions and follow up on concerns that they raise with me, if required.

I hope this response is helpful and assures you that although matters surrounding compulsory redundancies are operational decisions for colleges, I will continue to urge Colleges to treat workers fairly and ensure job losses are a last resort.

Yours sincerely



GRAEME DEY

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