

Universities  
Scotland



# the real value of T



# The university Teaching Grant: an investment in every student

The Teaching grant, or 'T' Grant as university planners and others in HE call it, is the funding that higher education institutions receive to provide an undergraduate education to every Scottish and EU domiciled student.

Teaching funding is about making sure every student has the support they need to realise their full potential. Crucially, it's a central element of making sure that wide access to university is wide access to graduation, with the right elements of both challenge and support to meet students' needs. Scotland's universities are committed to giving every student the best possible opportunity to succeed.

'Teaching' is something of a misnomer as it underplays the real value of this grant. The Teaching Grant is spent on teaching students but it is also spent on a wide range of services that are vital to support students through their years at university. Services like study skills, support for mental health, wider welfare, retention, employability and careers advice. It supports the additional features that ensure a high quality experience for learners; features like having students as partners in quality enhancement and embedding enterprise and entrepreneurship into our teaching. It also covers many hidden 'backroom' but fundamental services like timetabling and registry.

The Teaching Grant starts work for students even before they have enrolled at university. It supports widening access, outreach into schools and partnerships with colleges. It supports the whole admissions process including work to contextualise admissions and recognise an applicant's potential.

On the teaching side of the Teaching Grant, the funding covers the creation and development of new courses, it supports partnerships with employers, industry and others to make sure courses are professionally relevant. The Grant supports teaching that is informed by current research, as driven by academics, so that students get the very most from studying at university.

At an average of £6,999 of Scottish Government funding per student place, universities make this Grant work very hard for every student.<sup>1</sup>

The stories that follow are just a small indication of the huge range of roles and activities that the Teaching Grant supports. The stories, from the dedicated and committed staff working in our higher education institutions, show the contribution they make and the value they add to the student experience in higher education.

That's the real value of the university Teaching Grant.

<sup>1</sup> Audit Scotland (2016) Audit of Higher Education in Scottish Universities. Paragraph 61. Based on 2014/15 data. For a technical explanation of how the Teaching Grant is calculated please see page 26.



# Professor Rebecca Sweetman

Professor of Ancient History and Archaeology



## OUR STUDENTS BRING A WEALTH OF VIEWS TO EXCITING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As an active researcher, I have found that some of my most rewarding work has been with students in the classroom or on site, as we explore, argue and engage with the latest research. Our students can bring a wealth of views and approaches to understanding new and exciting research questions.

As an archaeologist, portraying a vibrant view of the past is fundamental to my teaching; it is not simply teaching archaeological methods and history, it is about allowing students to develop their own skills and views through interactive and research-led teaching.

As there is no one text book to provide the answer, students take ownership of their learning by becoming active researchers. This kind of approach allows students to take a broad view of a region or period which enables them to build up a really good sense of the decision-making processes of the past.

Research has shown that students who are involved in the process of discovering the material and issues about a subject, are more engaged learners. I have also found, that rather than just telling students about the issues, exploring them together makes students more motivated to engage.

# Dr Neil Croll



## Head of Widening Participation

Everyone deserves an equal and fair chance to realise their potential, regardless of where they were born or their life circumstances; talent should be nourished and fulfilled wherever it is found. The freedom to pursue education is a fundamental right which should be open to everyone. The fact that it is not makes widening participation necessary.

I love this work. It is successful because of the people involved and their imagination, creativity and willingness to fight for a just cause. But the main draw is of course seeing pupils or adult returners to education progress to university via our widening participation programmes, despite

having the odds stacked against them through complexities of life or deprivation caused by poverty and the disadvantages this can bring.

If we are truly successful in widening participation to higher education, I should one day find myself redundant within the university sector and seeking a new line of employment. If it comes, I'll approach that day with the same sense of achievement, anticipation and sheer joy I see on those students' faces, but until then, I'll enjoy fighting for them each day in what I am proud to call my work, in what I feel is one of the most important roles we as a university sector can play.

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# Dr Monique MacKenzie



Senior Lecturer in Mathematics & Statistics

## COMPLEX SUBJECT MATTER IS DELIVERED BY AN INSPIRED ACADEMIC WORKING IN THE FIELD

I am a statistician working with scientists, industry professionals and decision-makers from a range of external organisations including UK-based environmental agencies, Marine Scotland, marine renewables-based companies and African-based conservation organisations.

I am passionate about teaching, and where possible I use these real-life examples as case studies in lectures and practical classes.

In the early years, university teaching tends to focus on content delivery to larger classes, when adequately supported by small group sessions. In the later years however, as students become active producers of knowledge, classes are necessarily smaller. At this more senior stage, it helps if complex subject matter is delivered by an inspired academic working in the field who has a deep knowledge of the specialist issues and how these are changing. It is at this point that students also benefit most from the personalised feedback delivered by such specialists.

Crucially, smaller classes give students the opportunity to build confidence communicating with peers and professionals with different backgrounds and points of view. A small group setting also helps students develop enterprising skills – problem-solving, thinking critically about an issue and creatively exploring ideas as part of an iterative process. These skills are particularly relevant in my field: preliminary models are fitted, criticised and necessarily updated as more is learned about the data and problem at hand. Students undertake bespoke problem-solving, careful evaluation, judgement and decision-making faced with incomplete information.

Communication is increasingly important in a world where biased opinions are deliberately touted as facts and small group teaching forms a crucial part of developing graduates who are both productive and able to explain difficult information to anyone who might need it.

# Dr Karen Petrie

Reader and Associate Dean for Learning & Teaching

Our graduates are known to be the people you employ if you need someone who really considers the users of software. Our Industrial Advisory Board told us that Scottish Industry needed people who had a very clear eye on the user, but also understood more of the mathematical concepts that were underlying. What they required was a Computing Science degree.

Four years on we now have approximately 50 students entering this degree course every year. We regularly consult our Industrial Advisory Board to make sure that we keep the content current and applicable. Last year 90% of our students

were in employment within 6 months of completing the degree program. The other 10% were in further study (MSc or PhD).

My current challenge is to work with employers on an even closer basis to craft our new Graduate Level Apprenticeship programs. These programs use work based learning to blend the HE and industrial environments. Each of these students is in the work place 4 days a week and attends university the other day. These degree programs must be industry led to be viable. I very much look forward to the proud day when I attend the graduation of our first Graduate Level Apprenticeship cohort in 4 years' time.

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# Chris Smyth



## Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Coordinator

Within my role it's key to engage with the students early on and show that you don't need to come from a business background or be studying business to benefit from enterprise and entrepreneurial education.

The enterprise challenge is an extra-curricular programme that I deliver content on and is usually a student's first encounter with enterprise and entrepreneurship. What makes it unique is the informal vibe of the sessions that are delivered. The material is presented in a way that is relatable and open to students of any level and discipline. At the beginning of the programme I see that many just come for the enterprising skills and don't see how it would be possible for them to start a business, however, by the end many of them have gone from doubting their capabilities to actually believing that this could be a potential career path for them.

Our enterprise modules run within the curriculum in various schools and start off with the students expecting them to be run like a traditional module, however, as the weeks go on the students become more engaged and enthusiastic about the area of enterprise and the new way of the material being delivered. Towards the end of the module the energy in the room changes, there is a buzz of excitement and energy in the room as [students] present their business ideas in front of the class. You can see the appetite and passion coming through, which is what makes the job worthwhile.



**THERE IS A BUZZ  
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# Heather Marshall

Senior Librarian - Academic Liaison



## WE ARE NOT JUST TEACHING LIBRARY SKILLS BUT LIFE SKILLS

Our library is often the first our undergraduate students have used and I show them how to make the best use of our resources. My team and I teach classes and see students for appointments – we are particularly busy around induction and dissertation time. Students can come in a bit of a panic and I recently saw a distressed student who had done a significant amount of work on her proposal only to find out she had to change it. We worked together to revise her search and she went away much happier and clearer on how to progress. I know I made a real difference for her and that happens every day for me and my team.

I use my first meeting with any new person, whether in a big induction session or a one to one with a new researcher, to welcome them to our service – you are invited in and this space and its resources are yours to use. Student feedback is very important to

me and shapes our service for the better – whether it is providing more silent study space or extending drop-in enquiry times. I work closely with our academics to keep up to date with their teaching, developing our collections in line with their teaching and research is a constant conversation. Librarians are naturally collegiate and collaboration (chatting) is vital as it keeps our collections relevant. Working side by side with academics gives me an insight into how courses are developed, it really influences the library's strategy and lets me know what to prioritise.

Your library develops much needed abilities. The amount of information available can be overwhelming and librarians can show you how to evaluate it and select the good from the bad. We are not just teaching library skills but life skills – from the importance of evidence-based decision making to evaluating news reports. Love your library!

# Dr Iliyan Stefanov

Head of Student Services

## ALMOST 60% OF STUDENTS NEED HELP FOR MENTAL HEALTH. ONLY ONE IN FIVE SEEK SUPPORT

Over the past 15 years or so there has been an explosion of mental health issues among students. From a university study in Scotland, we know that almost 60% of students have needed help for mental health or wellbeing issues. However, only one in five of them sought support.

This has highlighted an issue for student services. Our services are traditionally geared to react to demand, but we have discovered that when a student requires assistance, because of a mental health issue, they are typically more likely to withdraw and not seek support.

In response, in my previous workplace, a colleague and I organised suicide prevention and mental health first aid training attended by more than 4,000 students over six years. At the university I work at now, I

took this further, training 24% of all staff. I initiated an organisational change which was designed around the idea of placing the student at the centre of our efforts. I developed a programme, called Stay-on-Course that helps identify students who may have wellbeing issues. We would then connect with them to offer early support, sometimes before they even realise they may need such help. It brings together all the university's support structures to deliver the right kind of help, when it is actually needed, to ensure students stay on track.

Crucially, our service not only helps struggling students to survive their university journey, it aims to equip them with self-confidence and to ensure they feel positive about their future.

When we achieve some of that, it brings such a sense of fulfilment and joy.



# Katrina Swanton



## Head of Quality & Enhancement

I'll be honest, I usually dread it when people ask me what I do for a living. Saying I work in Quality Management in Higher Education is usually met with quizzical looks of bemusement. Unlike my colleagues who lecture or provide front-line student support services, I work 'behind the scenes' and actually, if I do my job well, my contribution should be more or less invisible to the majority of our students, and to the wider public – hence the bamboozled faces.

A student wants to be confident that their chosen degree course provides a high quality learning experience. A student wants to know that after graduation, their qualification is understood and respected and that employers will understand the level of knowledge and skills that this qualification delivers. My job is to produce the policies and the procedures which are applied across the university during the process of course development, approval and review.

In my view, students should not be passive consumers of their education, and another fantastic feature of the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework is the emphasis placed on student engagement. Elected student officers are members of our quality and enhancement committees and we take student partnership seriously.

As my academic colleagues design their courses, it is my role to ensure that they are incorporating opportunities for students to actively engage in their learning. We recognise that our students have a voice, and universities have a responsibility to provide frequent opportunities for students to provide feedback on their learning. We also work in close partnership with the Students' Association to ensure that each course has a representative to gather collective student views.

My role may be little understood, but I am proud that I make a positive impact on every student.

**STUDENTS SHOULD NOT BE PASSIVE CONSUMERS OF THEIR EDUCATION. WE TAKE STUDENT PARTNERSHIP SERIOUSLY**

# Hazel O'Hara

Tutor, Effective Learning Service

We have an open door policy and students are free to drop in any time they want. If we are free, we will help them with whatever problem they are dealing with. We liaise very closely with the library staff and share information about particular students' needs. We also liaise closely with lecturers – they may contact us regarding students they have concerns about or ask for us to run a particular session for certain groups of students. This could be on any aspect of writing – critical analysis, reflective writing, report writing. It is possible to build up relationships with the students over the three to four years. To see the students developing their writing and beginning to become competent critical thinkers is a real pleasure.

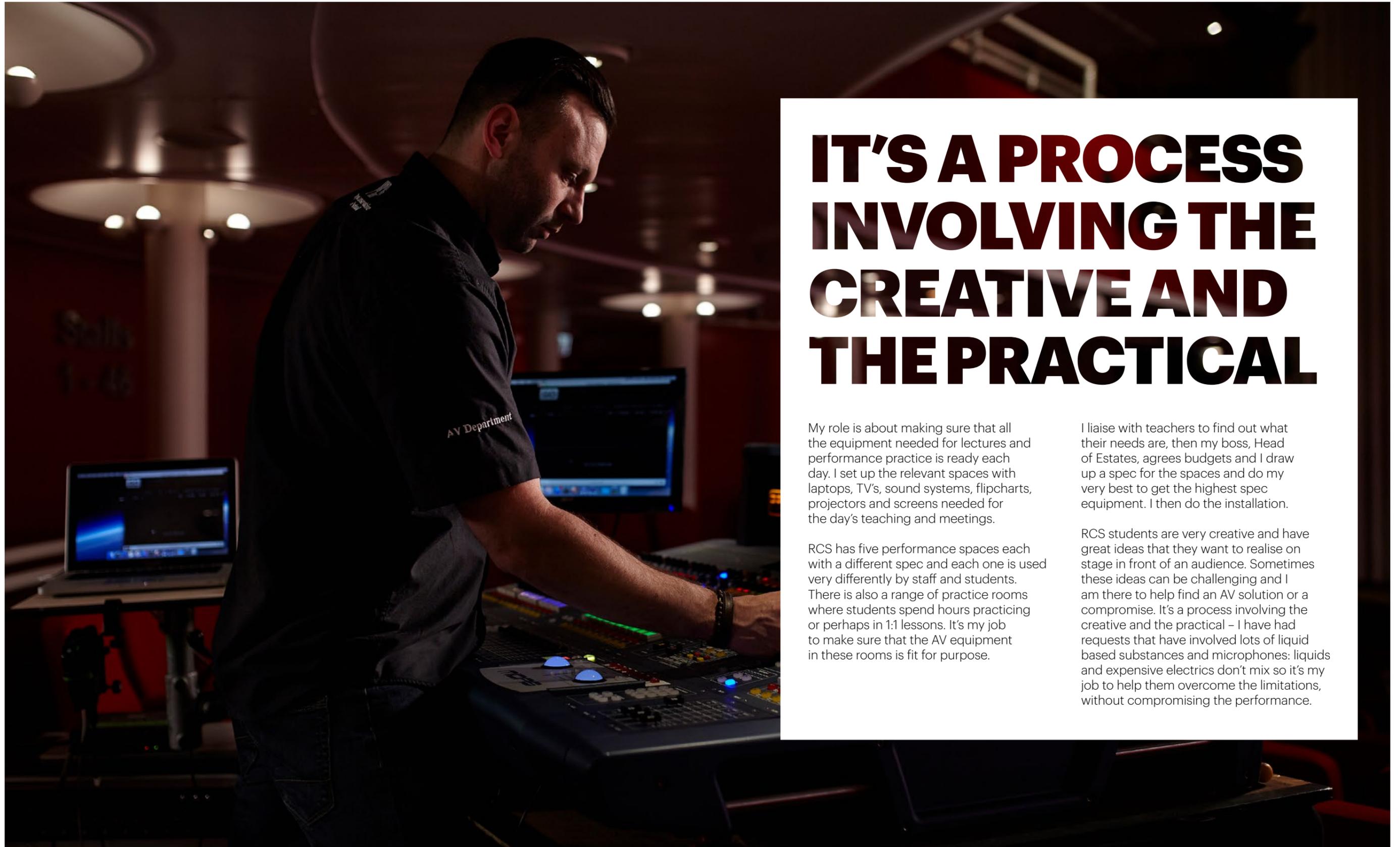
I love developing materials for the students to use and refer to. These materials take the form of handouts and are a response to student requests for guidance in particular aspects of writing. Many students at the beginning are unsure about structuring an essay, writing reflectively, writing critically and I am continually updating our resources to meet their needs. Handouts on aspects of punctuation fly off the shelves. I enjoy responding to student needs and helping them develop in any way I can. I want them to feel that this is a space that is always open to them.

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# Gerrie Victor

Sound Technician



## IT'S A PROCESS INVOLVING THE CREATIVE AND THE PRACTICAL

My role is about making sure that all the equipment needed for lectures and performance practice is ready each day. I set up the relevant spaces with laptops, TV's, sound systems, flipcharts, projectors and screens needed for the day's teaching and meetings.

RCS has five performance spaces each with a different spec and each one is used very differently by staff and students. There is also a range of practice rooms where students spend hours practicing or perhaps in 1:1 lessons. It's my job to make sure that the AV equipment in these rooms is fit for purpose.

I liaise with teachers to find out what their needs are, then my boss, Head of Estates, agrees budgets and I draw up a spec for the spaces and do my very best to get the highest spec equipment. I then do the installation.

RCS students are very creative and have great ideas that they want to realise on stage in front of an audience. Sometimes these ideas can be challenging and I am there to help find an AV solution or a compromise. It's a process involving the creative and the practical - I have had requests that have involved lots of liquid based substances and microphones: liquids and expensive electrics don't mix so it's my job to help them overcome the limitations, without compromising the performance.

# Shona Johnston

Head of Careers, Employability & Enterprise

**STUDENTS  
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The idea that the Careers Service is where students come in their final year to find a job has completely changed. From the very beginning of first year, students have access to a huge range of fantastic opportunities to help them develop their skills and find out where their passions lie – such as getting involved in clubs and societies, giving something back to the community through volunteering or taking part in an interdisciplinary team project with real world applications.

Work experience is hugely valuable both to help students apply their learning in the world of work, and to try out potential future career paths. It's really important to us that these opportunities are open to all students, regardless of background, and we have a number of schemes to help with this – for example, the School Tutoring Programme which places students in a primary or secondary school and our award-winning Internship Module which offers a flexible 30 hour micro-placement that students can fit around their studies. Again, what really makes a difference to students is not just the experience but being supported to reflect on what they've learned and how they can apply this to their future plans, and this is often revelatory – huge numbers of students come back to tell us that their placements have led to further work, amazing contacts who help them to progress and in the most satisfying cases, their "dream jobs".

Finally, we encourage students to get advice from the Careers team and we work closely with academic colleagues and all kinds of graduate employers to ensure that we are well-informed about career options and trends. We're trained to be impartial and so students feel "safe" in telling us about their hopes and dreams, and being able to help them along the road to these is such a privilege.



# How the university Teaching Grant is calculated

The teaching grant is worked out, or 'validated', using a price x place model by the Scottish Funding Council. The 'price' element is one of four price groups depending on the subject studied and based, in part, on the budget available. The 'place' element is the number of undergraduate places available to students as decided by the Scottish Government.

Audit Scotland recently estimated the average price per student, paid by the Scottish Funding Council, as £6,999. It added: 'the price paid does not directly reflect the actual cost of the activity in each university'.<sup>2</sup> The value of total Teaching Grants available to higher education institutions in 2017/18 was £692.8 million.<sup>3</sup>

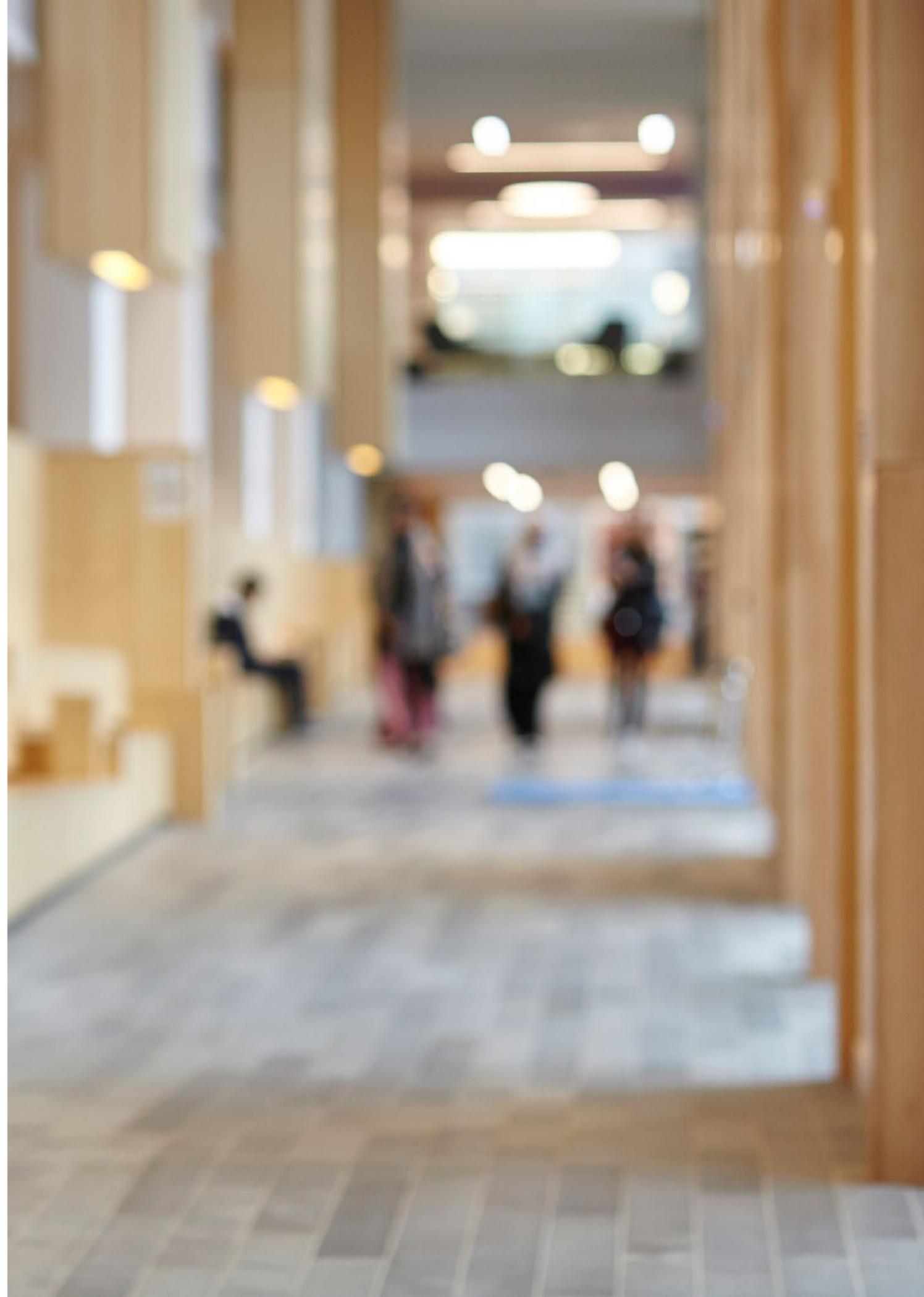
\*the Teaching Grant is typically calculated using a price x place model and it will be again from 2018/19. There was a slight change to the price x place model of teaching funding from 2013/13 to accommodate a phasing-in of the Scottish Funding Council's new price teaching groups. The transition phase helped prevent against the adverse impact that could have arisen from sudden changes in funding levels. At present, it is technically correct to describe the teaching grant as being 'validated' – or checked using the price x place model.<sup>4</sup>

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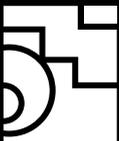
<sup>2</sup> Audit Scotland (2016) Audit of Higher Education in Scottish Universities. Paragraph 61.

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Funding Council (2017) Outcome Agreement Funding for Universities. Annex A.

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Funding Council (2017) Outcome Agreement Funding for Universities 2017/18: additional guidance. P 2-3.



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