

# Scottish Fiscal Commission

Annual Audit Plan 2021/22



 AUDIT SCOTLAND

Prepared for the Scottish Fiscal Commission

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# Contents

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Introduction	3
Financial statements audit planning	5
Audit dimensions and Best Value	8
Reporting arrangements, timetable, and audit fee	10
Other matters	13

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# Introduction

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## Summary of planned audit work

1. This document summarises the work plan for our 2021/22 external audit of the Scottish Fiscal Commission. The main elements of our work include:

- evaluation of the key controls within the main accounting systems
- an audit of, and provision of an Independent Auditor's Report
- an audit opinion on regularity and other statutory information published within the annual report and accounts including the Performance Report, the Governance Statement and the Remuneration and Staff Report
- consideration of the appropriateness of the disclosures in the governance statement and the financial sustainability of the Scottish Fiscal Commission in line with the requirements for small and less complex audited bodies (see paragraph [24.](#) ).

## Impact of Covid-19

2. The coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic has had a significant impact on public services and public finances, and the effects will be felt well into the future.

3. The Auditor General for Scotland, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland continue to assess the risks to public services and finances from Covid-19 across the full range of our audit work, including annual audits and the programme of performance audits. The well-being of audit teams and the delivery of high-quality audits remain paramount. Changes in our approach may be necessary and where this impacts on annual audits, revisions to this Annual Audit Plan may be required.

## Adding value

4. We aim to add value to the Scottish Fiscal Commission through our external audit work by being constructive and forward looking, by identifying areas for improvement and by recommending and encouraging good practice. In so doing, we will help the Scottish Fiscal Commission promote improved standards of governance, better management and decision making and more effective use of resources. Additionally, we attend meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee and actively participate in discussions.

## Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the Scottish Fiscal Commission

5. The [Code of Audit Practice \(2016\)](#) sets out in detail the respective responsibilities of the auditor and the Scottish Fiscal Commission. Key responsibilities are summarised below.

### Auditor responsibilities

6. Our responsibilities as independent auditors are established by the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 and the [Code of Audit Practice](#) (including [supplementary guidance](#)) and guided by the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard.

7. Auditors in the public sector give independent opinions on the financial statements and other information within the annual report and accounts. We also review and report on the arrangements within the audited body to manage its performance, regularity and use of resources. In doing this, we aim to support improvement and accountability.

### Scottish Fiscal Commission responsibilities

8. The Scottish Fiscal Commission is responsible for maintaining accounting records and preparing financial statements that give a true and fair view.

9. Also, the Scottish Fiscal Commission has the primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation and establishing effective arrangements for governance, propriety and regularity that enable them to deliver their objectives.

### Managing the transition to 2022/23 audits

10. Audit appointments are usually for five years but were extended to six years due to Covid-19. 2021/22 is the final year of the current appointment and we will work closely with our successors to ensure a well-managed transition.

# Financial statements audit planning

## Materiality

**11.** Materiality is an expression of the relative significance of a matter in the context of the financial statements as a whole. We are required to plan our audit to determine with reasonable confidence whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement. The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement over both the amount and the nature of the misstatement.

### Materiality levels for the 2021/22 audit

**12.** We assess materiality at different levels as described in [Exhibit 1](#). The materiality values for the Scottish Fiscal Commission are set out in [Exhibit 1](#).

## Exhibit 1

### 2021/22 Quantitative materiality levels for Scottish Fiscal Commission

Materiality	Amount
<b>Planning materiality</b> – This is the figure we calculate to assess the overall impact of audit adjustments on the financial statements. It has been set at 2% of gross expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2022 based on the budgeted annual expenditure in the Quarter 2 finance report for 2021/22.	£38,000
<b>Performance materiality</b> – This acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of errors identified during the financial statements audit exceeds performance materiality, this would indicate that further audit procedures should be considered. Using our professional judgement, we have assessed performance materiality at 75% of planning materiality.	£29,000
<b>Reporting threshold (i.e., clearly trivial)</b> – We are required to report to those charged with governance on all unadjusted misstatements more than the 'reporting threshold' amount (5% of planning materiality, rounded).	£2,000

Source: Audit Scotland

## Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

**13.** Our risk assessment draws on our cumulative knowledge of the Scottish Fiscal Commission, its major transaction streams, key systems of internal control and risk

management processes. Also, it is informed by our discussions with management, meetings with internal audit, attendance at committees and a review of supporting information.

**14.** Based on our risk assessment process, we identified the following significant risk of material misstatement to the financial statements. This is the risk which has the greatest impact on our planned audit procedures. [Exhibit 2](#) summarises the nature of the risk, the sources of assurance from management arrangements and the further audit procedures we plan to perform to gain assurance over the risk.

## Exhibit 2

### 2021/22 Significant risk of material misstatement to the financial statements

Significant risk of material misstatement	Sources of assurance	Planned audit response
<p><b>1. Risk of material misstatement due to fraud caused by the management override of controls</b></p> <p>International Standard on Auditing (UK) 240 requires that audits are planned to consider that management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of management's ability to override controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. This is presumed to be a significant risk in all audits.</p>	<p>Owing to the nature of this risk, assurances from management are not applicable in this instance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the design and implementation of controls over journal entry processing, and test journals to focus on significant risk areas.</li> <li>Evaluate significant transactions outside the normal course of business.</li> <li>Assess accounting estimates, including any changes to the methods and underlying assumptions compared to the prior year.</li> <li>Substantive testing of expenditure transactions around the year-end to confirm they are accounted for in the correct financial year.</li> <li>Focused testing of accruals and prepayments.</li> <li>Focused testing on accounting adjustments at the year end.</li> </ul>

Source: Audit Scotland

**15.** As set out in International Standard on Auditing (UK) 240: *The auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of financial statements*, there is a presumed risk of fraud over the recognition of revenue. There is a risk that revenue may be misstated resulting in a material misstatement in the financial statements. We have rebutted this risk for the Scottish Fiscal Commission as the only source of revenue is Scottish Government funding, which we consider is not subject to significant risk of fraudulent recognition.

**16.** In line with Practice Note 10: *Audit of financial statements and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom*, as most public-sector bodies are net spending bodies, the risk of material misstatement due to fraud related to expenditure recognition may in some cases be greater than the risk relating to revenue recognition. We have rebutted this risk for the Scottish Fiscal Commission because the majority of expenditure incurred is administered using well established Scottish Government systems and controls.

**17.** We have not, therefore, incorporated specific work into our audit plan in these areas over and above our standard audit procedures.

### **Other areas of audit focus**

**18.** As part of our assessment of audit risks, we have not identified any other areas where we consider there are also risks of material misstatement to the financial statements.

### **Audit risk assessment process**

**19.** Audit risk assessment is an iterative and dynamic process. Our assessment of risks set out in this plan may change as more information and evidence becomes available during the progress of the audit. Where such changes occur, we will advise management and where relevant, report them to those charged with governance.

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# Audit dimensions and Best Value

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## Introduction

20. The [Code of Audit Practice](#) sets out the four dimensions that frame the wider scope of public sector audit. The Code of Audit Practice requires auditors to consider the adequacy of the arrangements in place for the audit dimensions in audited bodies.

## Audit dimensions

21. The four dimensions that frame our audit work are shown in [Exhibit 3](#).

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### Exhibit 3

#### Audit dimensions



Source: Code of Audit Practice

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22. In summary, the four dimensions cover the following:

- **Financial management** – financial management is concerned with financial capacity, sound budgetary processes and whether the control environment and internal controls are operating effectively.
- **Financial sustainability** – as auditors, we consider the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting as part of the annual audit. We will also comment on financial sustainability in the longer term. We define this as medium term (two to five years) and longer term (longer than five years).

- **Governance and transparency** – governance and transparency is concerned with the effectiveness of scrutiny and governance arrangements, leadership, and decision-making and transparent reporting of financial and performance information.
- **Value for money** – value for money refers to using resources effectively and continually improving services.

**23.** In addition, there is a duty of Best Value. [Ministerial Guidance to Accountable Officers](#) for public bodies and the [Scottish Public Finance Manual](#) (SPFM) explain that accountable officers have a specific responsibility to ensure that arrangements have been made to secure Best Value.

**24.** The Code of Audit Practice includes provisions relating to the audit of small and less complex audited bodies. Where the application of the full wider audit scope is judged by auditors not to be appropriate to an audited body then the annual audit work can focus on the appropriateness of the disclosures in the governance statement and the financial sustainability of the body and its services. In the light of the volume and lack of complexity of the financial transactions, we plan to apply the small and less complex audited bodies provisions of the Code to the 2021/22 audit of the Scottish Fiscal Commission.

**25.** We have not identified any audit dimension risks for the Scottish Fiscal Commission.

# Reporting arrangements, timetable, and audit fee

## Reporting arrangements

**26.** Audit reporting is the visible output for the annual audit. All Annual Audit Plans and the outputs, as detailed in [Exhibit 4](#), and any other outputs on matters of public interest will be published on our website: [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk).

**27.** Matters arising from our audit will be reported on a timely basis and will include agreed action plans. Draft reports will be issued to the relevant officers to confirm factual accuracy.

**28.** We will provide an independent auditor's report to the Scottish Fiscal Commission, the Scottish Parliament and the Auditor General for Scotland setting out our opinions on the annual report and accounts. We will provide the Scottish Fiscal Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland with an annual report on the audit containing observations and recommendations on significant matters which have arisen during the audit.

**29.** [Exhibit 4](#) outlines the target dates for our audit outputs, and we aim to issue the independent auditor's report by the statutory deadline of 31 October 2022. We acknowledge this will be challenging due to the ongoing pressures and uncertainties caused by Covid-19.

## Exhibit 4 2021/22 Audit outputs

Audit Output	Target date	Audit and Risk Committee Date
Annual Audit Plan	17/02/2022	17/02/2022
Independent Auditor's Report	30/09/2022	October 2022
Annual Audit Report	30/09/2022	October 2022

Source: Audit Scotland

## Timetable

**30.** To support an efficient audit, it is critical that the timetable for producing the annual report and accounts for audit is achieved. We have included a proposed timetable for the audit at [Exhibit 5](#) that has been discussed with management.

**31.** Covid-19 has had a considerable impact on the conduct and timeliness of the audit. We recognise that it is in the best interests of public accountability to get the reporting of audited accounts back toward pre-pandemic timelines. To this end, 2021/22 is a transition year with the reporting deadline brought forward by one month relative to the two prior years. We are identifying ways to work more efficiently to expedite the 2021/22 audits whilst at the same time maintaining high standards of quality.

**32.** We will continue to work in close partnership with management with clarity over timescales and the requirement for high quality unaudited accounts and supporting working papers. Progress will be discussed with management and finance officers over the course of the audit.

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### Exhibit 5 Proposed annual report and accounts timetable

 Key stage	 Provisional Date
Latest submission date for the receipt of the unaudited annual report and accounts with complete working papers package	18 July 2022
Latest date for final clearance meeting with the Head of Strategy, Governance and Corporate Services	19 August 2022
Issue of Letter of Representation and proposed Independent Auditor's Report	29 August 2022
Agreement of audited and unsigned annual report and accounts	29 August 2022
Issue of Annual Audit Report to those charged with governance.	September 2022
Signed Independent Auditor's Report	October 2022

Source: Audit Scotland

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## Notional audit fee

**33.** The agreed audit fee for the 2021/22 audit of the Scottish Fiscal Commission is £28,760 (2020/21: £28,190). In determining the notional audit fee, we have taken account of the risk exposure of the Scottish Fiscal Commission, the planned management assurances in place and the level of reliance we plan to take from the work of internal audit.

**34.** Where our audit cannot proceed as planned through, for example, late receipt of unaudited annual report and accounts, the absence of adequate supporting working papers or being unable to take planned reliance from the work of internal audit, a supplementary fee may be levied. An additional fee may also be required in relation to any work or other significant exercises out with our planned audit activity.

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# Other matters

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## Internal audit

**35.** International standards on Auditing (UK) 610: *Considering the work of internal audit* requires us to:

- consider the activities of internal audit and their effect on external audit procedures;
- obtain an understanding of internal audit activities to inform our planning and develop an effective audit approach that avoids duplication of effort;
- perform a preliminary assessment of the internal audit function when there is scope for relying on internal audit work which is relevant to our financial statements' responsibilities; and
- evaluate and test the work of internal audit, where use is made of that work for our financial statements responsibilities to confirm its adequacy for our purposes.

**36.** From our initial review of the internal audit plans, we do not plan to place formal reliance on internal audit's work for our financial statements' responsibilities. Due to the areas of work covered, we will consider the findings of internal audit to support our audit intelligence.

## Independence and objectivity

**37.** Auditors appointed by the Auditor General for Scotland or Accounts Commission must comply with the [Code of Audit Practice](#) and relevant supporting guidance. When auditing the financial statements, auditors must also comply with professional standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council and those of the professional accountancy bodies. These standards impose stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors. Audit Scotland has robust arrangements in place to ensure compliance with these standards including an annual *'fit and proper'* declaration for all members of staff. The arrangements are overseen by the Director of Audit Services, who serves as Audit Scotland's Ethics Partner.

**38.** The engagement lead (i.e., appointed auditor) for the Scottish Fiscal Commission is Mark Taylor, Audit Director. Auditing and ethical standards require the appointed auditor to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of audit staff. We are not aware of any such relationships pertaining to the audit of the Scottish Fiscal Commission. Mark Taylor also leads Audit Scotland's work on financial devolution and he therefore interacts with the Scottish Fiscal Commission about its core work as well as matters related to the annual audit.

## Quality control

**39.** International Standard on Quality Control (UK) 1 (ISQC1) requires a system of quality control to be established, as part of financial audit procedures, to provide reasonable assurance that professional standards and regulatory and legal requirements are being complied with and that the independent auditor's report or opinion is appropriate in the circumstances.

**40.** The foundation of our quality framework is our Audit Guide, which incorporates the application of professional auditing, quality and ethical standards and the [Code of Audit Practice](#) (and supporting guidance) issued by Audit Scotland and approved by the Auditor General for Scotland. To ensure that we achieve the required quality standards, Audit Scotland conducts peer reviews and internal quality reviews. Additionally, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS) have been commissioned to carry out external quality reviews.

**41.** As part of our commitment to quality and continuous improvement, Audit Scotland will periodically seek your views on the quality of our service provision. We welcome feedback at any time, and this may be directed to the engagement lead.

# Scottish Fiscal Commission

## Annual Audit Plan 2021/22

Audit Scotland's published material is available for download on the website in a number of formats. For information on our accessibility principles, please visit:

[www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accessibility](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accessibility)

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