

College Financial Forecasting Return: User Guide

May 2021

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) guidance. This financial model replaces the IFMC. Please note, the Finance Record (FR) will continue to be a standalone return that collects audited prior year data every December. The 2021 FR will be redesigned to match the lines and coding of the CFFR.

This guide will describe each tab and provide instruction for completion of the fields required. Further guidance on user inputs is within the Guide tab of the model workbook, as well as *in situ* where the ① symbol is shown (click cells containing this symbol to see information and guidance).

The CFFR allows you to add extra tabs in the model to carry out workings. However, any changes to the structure of the model's original sheets will result in it being rejected and resubmission will be required. Please ensure that there are no links to external workbooks when you submit the CFFR, otherwise a resubmission will be required.

This year's CFFR is the baseline model that the agency will continue to use moving forward. Each year, the ESFA will look to improve parts of the model, including anywhere that limitations have been discovered. Any planned changes to the model will be reviewed by the College Insight and Test Group before implementation to ensure that the sector continues to feed into the model's improvement.

The ESFA will be providing support to colleges in the following forms:

- Walkthrough and Q&A calls will be taking place throughout May-July. These sessions will be recorded and made available to users who cannot attend.
- Specific or technical queries will be dealt with via the enquiry form in the first instance with support from finance colleagues where necessary.
- 1:1 Support we may be able to offer a phone call to users to support the completion of the new financial model where users are having severe difficulty.
- Updates to this guidance document we will continue to develop this guidance document on specific topics that emerge as common queries.

If you still encounter issues in the model after reading this document and the in-model guidance, or have any suggestions about additional support or guidance that would help then please contact us using the <u>ESFA enquiry form</u>.

2. ToC (Table of Contents)

This sheet sets out the structure of the model. The CFFR has been designed so that it should be completed in the order listed on this sheet. The user can click on any of the sheet names and be taken to the top of that page. Every input and output sheet has "ToC" written in cell A3 (top left), and users can click on this to be taken back to the contents page.

This sheet also contains the model check summaries in columns A and B, so that a user can quickly identify where an error has occurred. This tab should be checked prior to submission as any college submission will be rejected if there are outstanding error checks to resolve and the model will then need to be re-submitted.

3. Error checks

The CFFR uses error checks on its input sheets to minimise user error. Where an error arises, the row in which the check has flagged will show an 'Error' message in column A. The sheet containing the error will also show an 'Error' message in cell A2, while cell A1 informs the user that the model contains an error in one or more sheets.

To see an overview of any errors, click on the ToC link in cell A3 on any sheet and the user will be taken to the ToC tab. This will enable the user to quickly identify where an error has occurred.

On input sheets, if A2 is showing an 'Error' message, click on the cell to be taken to the row containing the error. The user can then click on the 'Error' cell in the row to be taken to the right-most section of the sheet, where an explanation for each check is available by hovering the mouse over the ① symbols.

4. Navigating through the CFFR

The ESFA received key feedback from the sector about improving the useability of the model. Hyperlinks are included throughout the CFFR that will take users to inputs and sheets that will save time.

Users can familiarise themselves with the links available in the top left of every input and output sheet and learn to use these to reduce the time required to complete the model, locate errors, and make amendments.

Calculated cells (grey) cannot be changed; however, they can be double-clicked to show the source of that calculation. Users may need to double-click multiple cells to be taken back to the source, but this is another way of tracing data through the model without needing to unpick formulae.

Wherever possible, the CFFR attempts to avoid the use of SUMPRODUCT, INDEX/MATCH and SUMIF formulae to improve the traceability of inputs. This is not always possible, but cells containing these formulae can be double-clicked to highlight where they are looking for data on the current sheet.

5. Guide

This tab provides a college with a key of the different cell types within the model and summary instructions for completion of the model.

This tab also has the version number of the CFFR written in cell C9. Please make sure that your version number is correct before submitting the template. If you submit the wrong version, it will be rejected.

5.1. Order of completion and minimum inputs (rows 36-86)

Please ensure that anyone completing the model familiarises themselves with this sheet as it will greatly simplify the inputting experience. The guide provides a suggested order of completion on rows 36-86, distinguishing between areas of the model that are part of the minimum requirement (yellow) or optional inputs (green).

5.2. Input and output sheets guidelines (rows 87-132)

This section sets out links to the individual parts of the model. They are presented in the recommended order of completion. Where multiple users are completing the model, the cells in column E can be used to leave notes to each other, e.g., Cell E97 could contain "Have you checked learner number assumptions for FY2023?", and cell E121 could contain "Can you check the FH grade self-assessment?".

5.3. I&E and loans input guidance

The remainder of the sheet contains guidance on completing the I&E inputs and the loans inputs.

5.4. Inverted signage

The model is designed for most inputs to be positive. However, sometimes negative entries are required to derecognise income or expenditure. Entering inverted signage will not result in an error. This is also the case for most balance sheet items such as working capital and capital grant liabilities. These accounts can enter an inverted position (negative debtors / positive creditors) without triggering an error. The model may issue a warning when these entries are made, but this is only to check that the user intended to enter the unexpected input and will not impact submission. Non-current asset accounts and loan accounts should not enter a negative position, as this will result in an error.

6. Setup

6.1. College details and dates

This is the first input sheet, where users must enter their name and specify the dates that apply to the model. The college details will populate automatically once the college name is chosen in the dropdown cell E10.

Next, users should enter the first and last day of actuals entered in the model. All users must ensure that their starting date is 1st August 2020; however, users may choose to end their actuals at the end of April, May, or June.

6.2. Year-to-date (YTD) option

For this first return of the CFFR, users have the option to enter a YTD figure in the last month of their actuals. This was designed to save time in splitting out all actuals back to August. Users should specify if they are doing this in cell E29.

If a college says 'yes' in cell E29, they are telling the model that they wish to enter all of their monthly actuals. If 'no' is selected, the model will adjust the formatting on the I&E sheet so that a single YTD figure can be entered in the last month of actuals.

Entering your I&E actuals on a YTD basis will save time; however, the inputter must ensure that this is made consistent throughout the rest of the model. For example, any inputs for Capex must be entered in the last month of actuals, and on the 'BS Forecasts' working capital must be flatlined until the last month of actuals where the closing balance at the end of the final month of actuals should be entered. See section 19 below to read about completing the model with this option. All other parts of the guidance assume that monthly actuals are being entered.

This YTD option will not be available in future years.

7. Learners and staff

Please enter your learner assumptions for FY2021, 2022 and 2023. The actual learner numbers from FY2020 are an optional input (coloured in green).

8. I&E Monthly

Users should complete the recognition of income and expenditure for the relevant periods in this tab. It includes inputs for prior, current, and 2 future financial years. While the prior year is optional (green cells), users should complete the current and 2 forecast years' entries in line with the requirements of the College Financial Planning Handbook. A 10-year optional forecast is also available. Use the link in cell V6 to take you there quickly.

Actuals must be entered on this page.

8.1. Links to other sheets

Note that some I&E rows require the user to follow hyperlinks in columns E-G that will lead to the input sections on different sheets. Therefore, it is not possible to completely fill in the I&E sheets without populating at least some of the below BS related inputs and Investing Inputs. This is so that data is only entered once, which avoids duplication and reduces the risk of errors in the model.

There are 2 possible approaches:

- i. While filling in the I&E inputs, ignore the line items that are linking to other sheets and cannot be filled in on the I&E sheet(s). This means you would not be able to get a full picture of the I&E before completing the BS inputs but will be able to maintain the flow of the model and minimise switching between sheets.
- ii. As you are filling in the I&E inputs, use the links provided (in columns E-G) to navigate to the relevant model sections where you can fill in the specific inputs linking to the I&E. This will allow you to have completed the I&E inputs and have a full view of the I&E before moving on to the remaining inputs. Take note of the units and signage on each row.

Financial values need to always be entered in thousands of pounds without using currency signs. Manually enter financial figures in the yellow cells (actuals and forecasts) and green cells (optional inputs for prior year and 10-year forecast).

Annex A gives a breakdown of what should be contained in certain income or expenditure lines, where this is not specified in the model itself.

8.2. Education-specific EBITDA

Users should enter any Restructuring Facility related expenditure into the Educationspecific EBITA section in rows 193-199 to ensure this figure is correct.

9. I&E Annual

This optional tab allows users to update their forecasts using profiles and annual forecast figures. If the user prefers to use monthly, manually entered forecasts, they can ignore this tab

This is a useful tool for I&E lines where there is usually a set profile to how income or expenditure is recognised through the year (straight-lined or otherwise). The user can manually forecast some lines on the Monthly sheet and profile others on the Annual sheet.

Ensure that you have entered actuals on the I&E Monthly sheet before using this tab. The model pulls actuals through from the I&E Monthly sheet to populate the corresponding months in the I&E Annual tab.

- Tell the model which lines you would like to profile using column G. Where 'Monthly' is selected, the model will pull actuals and forecast data through from the I&E Monthly tab. If "Annual" is selected, the model will only pull actuals through from the I&E monthly tab and look for profiling information from column E and Columns W:Y to complete the forecast.
- To create profiles, go to the I&E Profiles tab and create a profile name in column D, then fill out the profile in columns AA:BJ.
- This profile should now appear on the dropdown list in column G of the I&E Annual tab. Select the profile you want.
- Enter the forecast for each year in columns W:Y.
- The model should now have profiled a forecast for all future months.

You should still see forecasts for the lines labelled as 'Monthly' in column G (if you have entered forecasts manually on I&E Monthly), as the model aggregates all I&E data in this tab to complete the outputs.

10. Opening Balances

In this tab, the user can enter their opening Balance Sheet for the current financial year (as at 1st August).

The user can also enter their opening balances for FY2020 (as at 1st August 2019) if they wish to use the prior year in the model. These cells are green to indicate that they are optional. If users do this, it will activate prior year balance checks on the other input sheets, which should be addressed before continuing with the current and future forecast years (see section 20.1).

Accounts can be entered with negative signage, for example, where capital grants have entered a debtor position, and this will provoke a warning but not an error in the model.

The model will check that the college's opening position balances.

Please be advised that when the loan opening balances are entered, this will trigger errors on the loan sheet until the user reconciles the opening balances on the loans data table (see section 11.1).

11. Investing Inputs

The 'Investing Inputs' tab comprises inputs for specific capital items and includes 6 separate sections.

In using this tab, we recommend that the college use the links in the top left to quickly navigate through the page.

11.1.Capital expenditure (row 8 to 47)

This section covers capital expenditure (additions). Users input a description of each capital project / acquisition in column D and select the asset type from a dropdown box in Column E. In column F users should enter the source of any funding (ESFA / finance lease / donation) and in column G a college inputs the percentage of the capital spend that is capital grant funded. If the addition is 100% college funded, column G should be left blank. The % grant funded column does not affect any outputs; it is simply for information. From column AA onwards the value of the additions should be manually profiled across the actual and forecast periods.

Investment additions should be added in the Account Balances section.

11.2. Assets under Construction (row 48 to 72)

Users can enter the points at which Assets under Construction are completed and moved into a new Non-current asset (NCA) category.

Users should input expenditure on AUC in the Capex section (above) by describing the project in column D before selecting 'Assets under Construction' in the column E dropdown.

Once the project is completed, the balance can be transferred out of AUC and into the correct NCA account using the Asset under Construction section. The project should be described in column D, before designating the NCA group that the value of the asset is being transferred to in column E, the date of transfer in column F and finally the Net Book Value (NBV) of the asset in column G.

Once a date and NBV have been entered, columns AA:BJ will auto populate so that the transfer will flow through to the correct account balance.

11.3.Revaluations (row 73 to 98)

This section covers revaluations to Non-current assets (NCA). A college must describe the revalued asset(s) in column D and choose a category for the NCA asset from the dropdown list in column E. The date of the revaluation is input in Column F. In column G, users should enter the revaluation amount.

Once a date and revaluation amount have been entered, columns AA:BJ will auto populate so that the transfer will flow through to the correct account balance.

Transfers from the Revaluation Reserve to the I&E Reserve and vice versa can be set up at the bottom of the BS Forecasts tab.

11.4. Assets held for sale - AHFS (rows 99 to 124)

Users can use this section to transfer assets intended for sale out of the NCA accounts and into current assets.

Users should complete the table in rows D:G to provide details of the asset being held for sale. The project should be described in column D, before selecting how the asset is currently classified in column E. Next, the date of moving to held for sale and the NBV can be entered. Once the details are completed, columns AA:BJ will auto populate so that the transfer will flow through to the correct account balance.

If the asset needs to be shown at fair value rather than book value, users should use the Revaluation section to make the appropriate changes before moving the asset to AHFS.

11.5.Disposals (row 125 to 199)

This section covers disposals of NCAs, including investments. Enter a description of the disposal in column D. In column E, select which asset category of NCA is relevant from the dropdown list. Columns F, G and H should be populated with information about the disposal (column F – date of sale, column G - gross sale value, and column H - NBV of the NCA).

The greyed section below the input table in rows 125 to 144 can be ignored. This section prepares data to be taken to other parts of the model.

11.6.Account Balances (rows 200 – 300)

This section summarises the entries made in the 5 sections listed above, by type of NCA. Users should enter depreciation for each NCA account in this section.

This section is used to enter investments additions, and fixed asset retentions should also be entered here. Fixed asset retentions (FAR) relate to the acquisition of fixed assets which have not yet been paid. Note that movements in year are split into 4 categories: Land & Buildings, Equipment, Investments and Other NCA. A positive figure should be entered here to tell the model that funds are being withheld. As funds are paid, negative figures should be entered to reduce the FAR closing balance.

11.7.NCA Reclassifications

Where NCAs require reclassification, users should use the transfers section at the end of the Investing Inputs sheet.

Select the accounts involved in the reclassification in column D, before entering the increase in the first NCA account. These figures will flow up into the summary of each NCA account in the rows above.

12. Loans

12.1.Loans data table

The CFFR has been designed to allow users to manually input their loan repayment and interest payment schedules for each loan. The loans tab begins with a blank data table of all loans drawn down by a college.

Users should begin by listing their loans in the data table, starting with the lender (col. D), loan category (col. E), Total Loan Amount (col. F), Loan Opening Balance (i.e., outstanding amount at 1st August of the current year (col. G) and any Accrued interest payable in relation to the loan (Col. H).

Next, enter the Loan Term Start and End Dates in cols. I and J and leave column K as 'No' before entering the interest rate attached to the loan in column L. The Loan Covenants columns (M:O) are optional inputs but can be used to tell the model a year end date in column M at which to classify the loans balance as due within one year when a breached loan covenant is forecast.

The remaining columns of the table are only relevant if the user wants to use the automatic interest calculator (see section below).

In rows 40-43, a table will provide the total opening balance that was entered on the 'Opening Balances' tab. Users must ensure that the opening balances entered in the loans data table match what was entered on the 'Opening Balances' tab.

Users should be aware that when they enter the loan amounts on the 'Opening Balances' sheet, this will trigger a balance check in rows 40-43 on the 'Loans' sheet. Users can remove the error by correctly completing column G of the loans data table ('Loan Opening Balance' column).

12.2.Manual entry

This will be the most popular entry method for users.

Once the loans data table is complete, for each loan from row 45 downwards users can begin to enter their drawdowns, capital repayments, early repayments, accrued interest, and interest paid and early repayment fees in columns AA:BJ. Users may need to scroll to the right to see the se input lines.

Early repayments are separated so that these do not impact on the college's debt service cover ratio, which is part of the proposed FH scoring system being trialled in the CFFR.

Users should only enter obligatory loan payments (as per the loan agreement) on the regular capital repayment lines for each loan.

As seen on other input sheets, there are optional green cells in column V and columns BP: BW to allow the college to enter prior year and long-term data.

12.3. Automatic entry

If users would like their interest payments to be calculated by the model, select "Yes" in column P on the loans table. This will unlock the remaining cells where you can inform the model of the frequency of payments and compounding. If the interest rates are variable, "Yes" can be selected in column K on the Loans table and a forecast interest rate can be entered next to the table in columns AA:BJ.

The date of first forecast interest payment must be after the last date of actuals entered on the Cover Sheet. Actual interest expense and payments (i.e., that occurred during the actuals period) must be entered manually.

Additional guidance for loans can be found on the 'Guide' tab.

13. BS Forecasts

On this sheet, users will be able to enter the closing balances of all their working capital accounts, as well as enter movements for Investments in JVs, Finance Lease Obligations, Capital Grant Liability and Pension provisions.

Users should enter the monthly closing balances for each account. There are checks to ensure that the entire BS Forecast balances.

The CFFR calculates cash on an indirect basis, therefore the monthly movements in working capital will determine the college's monthly cash position.

13.1.Pension provisions

The ESFA understands that it is almost impossible for users to predict certain elements of their LGPS pension provision (actuarial gain/loss, expected return on assets) and they should either leave those lines empty, or enter amounts that match the prior year's figures. However, some of the items in the LGPS scheme have an impact on a college's operating surplus, such as employer contributions paid, current service charge and past service costs. Users should attempt to forecast these as a best estimate, relying on prior year data if necessary. Primary and secondary employer contribution rates are available to colleges on the LGPS Board website (www.lgpsboard.org) and these can be used to create a forecast in the model.

These lines are included in full so that the new Finance Record can have corresponding line codes with the CFFR.

13.2. Transfers between reserves

At the bottom of the sheet, users can arrange transfers between reserves (e.g., where a revaluation has resulted in additional depreciation and the revaluation reserve must offset this on the I&E).

14. User template

This is an optional tab where the user can set out their workings using the model's timeline. Rows can be inserted.

If preferable, the user can also simply add a new blank tab to the workbook and set out their workings in a familiar format before completing the inputs.

15. Fin Stat

There are no inputs in this tab: it is a reporting output tab. This section provides a college with 3 years of financial statements comprising SOCI, balance sheet, direct and indirect cash flows. If the college has completed optional inputs on **every** input sheet (e.g., prior year, long-term forecasts), this will pull through to the financial statements as well. The same principle applies to additional forecast year data.

Each row of the financial statements is hyperlinked to take you to the source information.

16. Ratios

There are no inputs in this tab: it is a reporting output tab. This section provides a college with 3 years of performance-related ratios. If the college has completed optional inputs on **every** input sheet (e.g., prior year, long-term forecasts), this will pull through to the outputs as well.

17. Financial Health

This section provides a college with the calculated ESFA financial health ratios based on the model inputs. The template calculates the autoscore financial health points score and grade. A college must enter a self-assessment of financial health using the dropdown list. Where the self-assessed grade is different to the autoscore grade, a college will need to provide a rationale for this difference which will need to be consistent with the moderation criteria detailed in the Financial Planning Handbook. The existing system of financial health is the only score that will be used for formal assessments from this return.

This section also includes the proposed new financial health scoring system. Users are not obliged to enter a self-assessment, but if you have feedback for the proposed system these can be left in the self-assessment box. We are including the proposed Financial Health methodology as part of our consultation with users on the new system. This score will not be used for any formal Financial Health Assessments in FY2022 (the year ending 31st July 2022). Please look out for communications from ESFA about consultation with users on Financial Health if you have feedback or are interested in getting involved.

If you would like to provide feedback or thoughts on improving the proposed system, please contact us via the <u>ESFA enquiry form</u>.

18. Cash Flow Summary

There are no manual inputs in this tab: it is a calculation tab. This sheet visualises the college's cash position over the assessment period. The first graph shows the monthly cash balance and how operating, investing and financing activities influenced any movements. The second graph shows the monthly cash balance and cash days. An abridged Statement of Cash Flows is also provided.

19. WC Dashboard

This sheet contains a graph that visualises the profile of trade receivables and trade payables. This is a tool to sense-check these key working capital accounts and how they change over the course of the year. Users should look for unexpected spikes, low points, or unusual movements and be able to understand why these are occurring.

20. Dashboard

This sheet summarises the overall position of the college. The sheet includes financial health scores for the assessment period, ratios on performance, financing, and solvency, as well as summarised financial statements and total debt. Graphs are available that show the users results compared to FEC benchmarks. If the college has its own benchmarks, these can be entered in column F and the graphs will update to include these.

21. YTD option

If the college chooses to enter their actuals on a YTD basis, the following should be considered. If this advice is not followed, the Cash Flow Summary graph will show confusing data. Ideally the cash position should be flat from 1st August through to the end of the actuals period, at which point it will show the closing cash position before forecasts begin.

Upon selecting "No" against "Monthly breakdown provided for actuals for FY 2021", the formatting of the model will change on the input sheets to aid entry.

21.1.1&E inputs

Enter all actuals in a single YTD figure in the last month of actuals (the CFFR's format should change to make it clear which month the user has chosen as the last month of actuals).

21.2.Investing Inputs

Enter all YTD capital evens as if they occurred in the last month of actuals. For example, if May 31st has been selected as the last day of monthly actuals on the Cover Sheet, the following entries should be made:

If an asset was acquired in December, the data should be entered in May.

If a disposal occurred in January, the date of sale should be set to May in the model.

All YTD depreciation should be entered as a single figure in May.

21.3.Loans

Enter all YTD drawdowns, capital repayments, early repayments, accrued interest, and interest paid in the last month of actuals.

If a loan term ends during the YTD period, the user should tell the model that the loan term end date is at the end of the actuals period to avoid an error flag on the 'outstanding loan balance at term end' check.

21.4.BS Forecasts

All opening balances should be flatlined out to the end of the YTD period, at which point the closing balance should be updated. For example, if the last day of monthly actuals is set at 31st May and the Trade receivables opening balance at 1st August is 500

(£500,000), the closing balance of trade receivables from August-April should be 500. In the last month of actuals, the latest closing balance should be shown.

All YTD transactions relating to investment in JVs, finance lease obligation, capital grants and provisions should be inputted as a single figure in the last month of actuals.

22. Optional year entry

22.1. Prior year entry

Users have the option of entering additional data in the prior year if they wish to. When the user first enters opening balances for the prior year (PY) on the 'Opening Balances' sheet, this will trigger some PY balance checks on the 'Investing Inputs', 'Loans' and 'BS Forecasts' sheets.

The user should not be alarmed, as they have not yet entered the necessary inputs to balance the PY. Continue through the model and once all prior year inputs have been entered, the error checks should have disappeared.

The user can easily find the PY error checks by going to the ToC sheet, identifying tabs that contain errors, and use the error finding technique outlined in section 3 to remove errors.

For this reason, if the PY is being used, we suggest that users complete this first before completing the current and forecast years in the model.

22.2. Additional forecast years

For additional year figures to pull through to the Fin Stat sheet, and for the Fin Stat sheet to calculate correctly, the user must have inputted data in the corresponding row of every input sheet. Users can enter 0s in otherwise empty additional year columns to ensure that the data pulls through correctly to the Fin Stat sheet.

23. Queries

If you have any questions about the CFFR, please contact us via the ESFA enquiry form.

Select your college type, then select 'College financial returns'.

Annex A – Definitions (where not included in the CFFR)

| Category | Description |
|--|--|
| ESFA other funding | To include income from the post-16 partnership funds and the Skills Development Fund, and income in respect of research carried out by the college. |
| Subcontracted in (all categories) | Refers to income that the inputting college receives from other colleges to deliver on their behalf |
| Of which: subcontracted out (all categories) | Refers to income that has subsequently been paid out to a 3 rd party to deliver on the inputting college's behalf |
| HE Loans | Higher Education courses designated for HE Loans |
| OfS grants | To include income directly received from OfS for prescribed HE, including that transferred from ESF. Includes OfS recurrent grant. |
| ESFA European Social Fund | To include income from co-financed projects directly from ESFA. If the College receives this funding via another college, it should be recorded on the subcontracted in line (M-IE-1e-SI) |
| Other European funds | Users receiving funds (from European structural funds) before incurring costs should recognise a current liability for the unspent proportion of the grant |
| Bursaries – net income (5% admin fee, ALLB and Free Meals) | To include the net income from bursaries. There is no option for net/gross to ensure that all users recognise this in the same way. Bursaries should only be recognised on a net basis. |
| Student training facilities | To include income from facilities run by students as part of their education or training. If users would rather show this income against lines below (e.g., catering / conferences) then they may do so. |
| Other income from non- learning activities | To include income not included elsewhere for example services rendered to outside bodies, other non-teaching-related activity not already separately identified |
| Staff costs (excl. restructuring) | To include basic pay costs, overtime, other allowances and additions, and employer NI costs. Pension costs are captured via the pension provision accounts on the BS Forecasts tab (follow links in columns E-G) |