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MG/faa

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Ms Ann McVie
Enterprise, Transport & Lifelong Learning
Higher Education and Science Division
Scottish Executive
Europa Building
450 Argyle Street
Glasgow G2 8LG

Dear Ms McVie

Medical tuition fees: Request for views

Thank you for giving the School of Medicine of the University of Aberdeen the opportunity to respond to your proposals. Whilst we support fully the attempt to address the possible destabilisation that may occur if there is a significant increase in the proportion of applications from English-domiciled students, we are not certain that establishing a principle that a particular discipline should be treated differently is the most appropriate mechanism.

There are a number of practical considerations that the current proposal needs to address. It is stated that it is a priority to ensure that Scottish students are not disadvantaged as a result of the proposed changes in England. However, the current proposal will disadvantage those Scottish-domiciled students who, for any reason, are not eligible for funding, and thus do not qualify to have their tuition fees paid by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS). Under current regulations, students are entitled to a maximum of five years funding from SAAS, if undertaking an undergraduate programme in Medicine (plus an intercalated BSc year, if undertaken). Medical schools are developing options for widening access and increasing the number of Scottish students graduating in Medicine. Likely options include developing fast-track programmes for graduate students, and extended programmes incorporating additional Science teaching. Potential students in both cases will be required to complete, in total, more than five years in full-time higher education. Exposing these students to a substantially higher fee for the additional years is not in the best interests of Scotland, and could be a significant deterrent.

In addition all Scottish students currently pay the same fee in respect of the graduate endowment. We seek an assurance that, if a higher flat-rate fee is established for Medicine, graduates in this discipline are not subsequently and separately required to pay a higher graduate endowment.

Yours sincerely

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Head of School of Medicine

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