

31st October 2004

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

Dear Ann McVie,

MEDICAL TUITION FEES: REQUESTS FOR VIEWS BY 31 OCTOBER

Thank you for your letter of 1st September to which I am replying on behalf of Professor Burchell, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Dentistry and Nursing in the University of Dundee. We have considered your letter with our Convenor for Medical Student Admissions, Professor Keith Matthews.

We have two potentially conflicting concerns:

- 1) If Scottish Universities do not levy fees at all we can surely expect a potentially overwhelming increase in the numbers of English applicants to study in Scotland. This would be likely to accentuate the Scottish medical manpower planning problems identified in the Calman report.
- 2) The introduction of such fees would be inconsistent with attempts to broaden access to medical education to include applicants from less advantaged backgrounds.

Reconciling these issues is problematic. However, it is likely that one of the effects of introducing fees in England will be that Scottish applicants will show an increased interest in studying in Scotland, even with the financial protection (loans up to the full amount of the fees charged) for Scottish students studying in England. We think we should take this opportunity to focus on “getting it right” in terms of widening access for Scottish applicants, leaving the English schools to pursue measures to promote wider access for English applicants.

We would therefore be in favour of:

- 1) A flat rate tuition fee for the study of medicine by English applicants that is comparable with the fees charged by English universities for high demand courses. This may have the undesirable effect of attracting only the most advantaged applicants to Scotland, but is likely to be similar to the current situation.
- 2) A focus by Scottish medical schools on widening access for Scottish domiciled applicants. Perhaps some of the pooled fee income from English students could be used to support this approach: presumably as the loans used to support Scottish students at English Universities are repaid there will a sustained income stream from this source.

There may be other ways of trying to ensure that applicants to Scottish medical schools have a real desire to study and work in Scotland. For example, the development of a common admissions system for the Scottish medical schools (perhaps under the auspices of the Board for Medical Education proposed by the Calman report) could mean that applicants to the five Scottish schools could be restricted in selecting additional English schools among their four UCAS choices.

Yours sincerely,

Martin J Pippard
Professor of Haematology and Teaching Dean
University of Dundee Medical School