

15/04



The Educational
Institute of Scotland

Supporting a Smarter Scotland (CON 1115)
CSU, Spur U5b
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
EDINBURGH
EH11 3XD

Ref: KN/Smarter Scotland
13 April 2009

Dear Sir/Madam

**SUPPORTING A SMARTER SCOTLAND – A CONSULTATION ON SUPPORTING
LEARNERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Please find enclosed the Educational Institute of Scotland's – University Lecturers' Association's response to the above consultation paper.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Belsey'.

David Belsey
National Officer
Further and Higher Education

Encl.

The Educational Institute of Scotland

Response to Consultation Document: Supporting a Smarter Scotland

The Educational Institute of Scotland is the largest lecturers' union in Scotland, with over 7,000 academic members in both the further and higher education sectors. The EIS is the sole representative body for further education lecturers in Scotland while also being the largest representative body for academic staff in the post-1992 higher education sector.

The EIS welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Supporting a Smarter Scotland consultation by the Scottish Government. The EIS has used the questions posed in the consultation document to frame its response.

Option 1 – Begin transition towards a grants-based system

Option 1a - What are your views on the proposal to begin a move to grants by extending the Young Students Bursary?

The EIS favours an extension of the Young Students' Bursary as it is non-repayable by students.

Do you feel that the focus of bursary support should continue to be on dependent students?

The EIS does not feel that the focus of bursary support should be on dependant students as independent students leave higher education with the highest debt burdens.

Option 1b – Extending YSB to more independent students.

What are your views on the extension of bursary support to independent students as part of a transition to grants?

The EIS favours an extension of bursary support to independent students as this group of students leave higher education with the highest debt burdens.

Option 1c – Introducing full bursary support in colleges

What are your views on the proposal from the ASC to introduce full bursary/grant support for higher education courses in colleges?

The EIS believes that HE students in FE and HE Institutions should be treated equally.

In particular, what are your thoughts on the potential for this to change the nature of support so that it would be based on what type of institution you were attending rather than your level of study?

The EIS believes that HE students in FE and HE Institutions should be treated equally.

Option 2 – Increase the minimum level of income available

What are your views on the NUS proposal to increase the overall support available by increasing the grant support currently available?

The EIS is in favour of the principle of increasing the overall grant support to students.

How should we address the potential effect on parental or partner contributions?

The EIS believes that parental income should be considered whilst deciding on the level of support for dependant students.

The EIS believes that partner income should be considered whilst deciding on the level of support for students.

How should the increase in income be addressed for independent students who receive no bursary support?

The EIS favours an extension of bursary support to independent students as this group of students leave higher education with the highest debt burdens.

The EIS favours doing more for independent students than merely changing the loan into a grant, i.e. the EIS believes the total support should increase. This may mean giving a Young Students' Bursary as well as an entitlement to go for a loan of £ 4510.

Option 3 – Increasing income and reducing debt for a more focused group

What are your views on this hybrid option aimed at those on the lowest incomes?

The EIS favours the option of increasing support and simultaneously reducing the debt burden.

Other Options

Are there any other initiatives or ideas that you believe we should explore further?

No.

FAIRER ENTITLEMENT TO SUPPORT

What are your views on the options proposed to ensure that the funds available are used as fairly as possible to give students adequate support for their first degree?

The EIS favours the two principles of increasing student support and decreasing student debt. The EIS believes that this is best done by the Option 3 hybrid for first degree students.

Do you agree that we should consider removing student loan support for second degrees?

The EIS agrees that consideration should be given to removing or reducing student loan support for second degrees.

Alternatively, should we be maintaining funding for this group to explore more avenues to support opportunities to retrain or upskill those who may face redundancy as part of the effects of the economic situation?

The EIS does believe that Higher Education may be used to retrain staff selected for redundancy. The EIS would favour the employer making a financial contribution to this objective.

Do you believe that there is a case for removing the minimum loan?

The EIS does not believe there is a strong case for removing the minimum loan since it is discretionary.

Do you think that support for travel expenses should be subsumed into the main grant pot or should it remain a separate, claim-based fund?

The EIS believes that travel expenses should remain a separate, claim-based fund since the distances travelled by individual students varies.

Should we differentiate between day-to-day travel expenses and trip to and from home from those who stay away from home?

The EIS does believe there is a strong case for paying travelling expenses to and from home for those students who have no choice but to stay away from home.

What are your views on our proposals to service existing student debt if funding becomes available in future?

The EIS would not favour sacrificing support for current students by servicing the existing universal student debt as many of the students will be in gainful employment. The EIS may support a scheme that services some student debt, such as the third/fourth loan etc

Overall, based on the options and issues presented in this paper, we would welcome your views on what our funding priorities should be for the £30 million pounds available in 2010-11 and in future years.

The EIS would question the savings suggested by moving from a part loan system to a whole grant system, as it believes the cost of administering the grant system would have a zero cost.

The EIS would favour the employer making a financial contribution to retraining or upskilling redundant or potentially redundant staff.

EIS 09.04.09