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Vicki Carson  
Scottish Executive  
Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Europa Building  
450 Argyle Street  
Glasgow G2 8LG

*Dear Mr. Carson*

#### **Cross Border Student Flows: Higher Education Tuition Fee Levels**

I am commenting on behalf of the University of St Andrews on the draft proposals published by the Deputy First Minister.

Our response is in two parts, the first dealing with what we regard as the principles that should underlie the proposals, the second answering the specific questions raised in the consultation document.

Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) in Scotland operate within the UK Higher Education Sector and are part of this sector for the recruitment of staff, students, and for research grants and contracts. The broad remuneration structure for staff is set within the UK context and we interact with UK-based research councils and with UK as well as Scottish government departments. The introduction of tuition fees elsewhere in the UK was intended, presumably, to begin to balance the true costs of the provision of higher education in England to the people directly benefiting from it, who repay the cost when they can afford to do so. The proposals outlined by the Scottish Executive in this consultation do not seem to have taken into account that need for balance.

In the consultation exercise the Executive appear to regard Scottish Universities as importers of students, where students are a cost burden. This University regards itself as a provider of excellent higher education, much of which is exported to other parts of the UK and the world. As an exporter the University delivers significant financial benefits to Fife and to Scotland. It also introduces a significant amount of talent to Scotland, in line with the goals of the Scottish Executive's 'Fresh Talent Initiative'.

The proposals assume that the sole driver of student choice is cost, and that by equalising the cost barrier to entrance into higher education, the executive will be able to maintain the current levels of student flow within the UK Higher Education sector and between Scotland and the other parts of this UK system. While we recognise that cost is a factor in a student's decision, and that failure to equalise fees may have an unintended impact on student flows, we believe it is equally desirable to balance cost and quality of

service delivery. Given that the introduction of higher tuition fees in England will have implications for standards in research as well as teaching, the Executive may wish to begin to consider how, or whether, its funding policies can, over the longer term, contribute to the sustainability of some of Scotland's universities at world class levels of competition.

The Executive might also recognise the cost burden which will fall to individual institutions for the collection of the higher fees, as well as the likely additional cost of bad debt. Recognition of this cost should be incorporated in any implementation programme.

We are also concerned by the proposal to increase tuition fees in Scotland without the provision of related bursary arrangements for prospective students who require financial assistance to maintain full time studies. This lack of provision will disadvantage self funded Scottish domiciled students, and non Scottish domiciled students from other areas of the UK, where government policy is to widen access.

### **General Tuition Fees**

We accept that the cost to students of higher education should be similar throughout the UK, but the cost should reflect the quality of service. The Executive should ensure that the additional resources being made available within the higher education sector take account of the disproportionate impact that tuition fees elsewhere in the UK will have on individual universities in Scotland.

### **Self funded Scottish domiciled students**

We believe that an essential element of any decision to increase the costs to students should be an effective bursary or delayed payment mechanism to ensure that higher education is available to all who will benefit from it.

### **Medical Tuition Fees**

We believe that the best way to train and retain medical practitioners in Scotland is to provide an adequate number of places in Scottish universities, supported on an appropriate basis by Scottish NHS.

### **Implications for FE**

I do not believe that it would appropriate for us to comment on this area.

### **Transitional arrangements**

The transitional arrangements seem to be reasonable.

I trust that you will find these comments useful.

Yours sincerely  
D. J. P.