

RC/mak

23 May 2005

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

University of Paisley  
Paisley PA1 2BE  
Scotland

tel: +44 (0)141 848 3971  
fax: +44 (0)141 848 3972

Dear Ms Carson

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

Please find attached the University of Paisley's response to the above.

Should you wish any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Dr Roger Cook  
Director  
Planning and Development Office

## **CROSS BORDER STUDENT FLOWS: HIGHER EDUCATION TUITION FEE LEVELS**

**Question – do you agree with the principles on which the general fee level should be based?**

**Question – if you do not agree, please suggest alternatives.**

The University is broadly supportive of the proposals in paragraph 26 to ensure a rough parity of fee for the total period of studying leading to an honours degree between England and Scotland. However, in view of the considerable uncertainty as to what will be the “average” fee for an English HEI (given differentials in student support as well as between HEIs) we support the view of Universities Scotland that 2006-07 is too early to introduce the proposed increase in Scottish tuition fees.

Not only are we concerned that the proposal is being introduced too early, and should be delayed by at least a year, but we feel there are practical consequences that need further elaboration. In particular:

1. The impact on Scottish self-funding students (including part-time students) needs further clarification;
2. The differential between a period of study in an FEC and a HEI needs to be considered as this could have an impact on flows of students between FE and HE;
3. The proposal makes no mention of a bursary system for English students who would be exempt (or pay a significantly reduced) fee if they studied at an English HEI. This is important as a point of principle, as, as the proposal stands, poorer English students will be effectively unable to study at a Scottish HEI. If, on the other hand, the intention is for Scottish HEIs to offer a similar bursary structure to those in place in England then this will need to be taken into account when the basic fee level is set as such arrangements are proving to be very expensive for English HEIs to administer.

The current proposals are also not clear as to whether students will be expected to repay more of their fee than currently on graduation. Effectively will the Graduate Endowment increase from the current value of £2154 (04/05) to something nearer to £3000+ to mirror the increase in basic tuition fees? As a University, Paisley is aware of the impact of potential debt as a deterrent to widening access to HE, and would be concerned if these proposals did lead to an increase in the Graduate Endowment.

Finally the University has a serious concern with the proposal in paragraph 22 that the proposed increase in fee will alter the balance of institutional funding between SHEFC block grant and individual fee. The current relationship offers most HEIs considerable confidence in the level of income going forward and a degree of stability that makes both long term planning, and the ability to recover from short term shortfalls, financially viable. If a significantly increased amount of funding will now come from a per-capita source then all HEIs will be affected by a greater degree of funding volatility.

**Question – at what level should general tuition fees be set for 2006-07?**

Given our concern at the impact of setting a tuition fee between £1700-1900, our proposal is that tuition fees rise at the expected rate to around £1200.

**Question – should any self funded Scottish and non-UK EU domiciled students be protected from the increased level of tuition fee?**

**Question - if you agree, which categories of Scottish and non-UK EU domiciled students should be protected from the increased level of tuition fee?**

As above, the University is not in favour of the proposed increase in tuition fees for 2006-07. However, if this is to be introduced then we agree that all Scottish domiciled students who are ineligible for SAAS support be protected from the increase.

Accepting this, it is worthwhile noting that implementing this and setting up appropriate procedures, will be a further administrative cost for HEIs, SHEFC and SAAS that could be avoided by delaying the introduction of the increased fee.

**Question - do you agree with the principle of using tuition fee levels to protect the interests of Scottish domiciled students by setting fee levels for medicine that are broadly comparable with those being set elsewhere in the UK?**

**Question – if you agree, at what level should tuition fees for medical courses be set?**

**Question – if you do not agree, what alternative measures could be taken to protect the interests of Scottish domiciled students?**

Since the University does not directly offer medical degrees we feel it is inappropriate to comment in detail on these proposals. However, as a broader point of principle we believe that Scotland gains from attracting students from elsewhere in the UK, the EU and wider, and that a significant number of these students then stay to take up work within Scotland. On this basis we would be concerned at any proposal that was designed to minimise these flows.

**Question – do you agree that the Executive should retain current tuition fee levels for HNs?**

**Question – if you do not agree, please suggest an alternative.**

The University believes that this needs much more careful consideration than it has received so far in the consultation paper. If there is a significant cost difference between studying for 2 years in an FEC and for the same 2 years in a HEI then more students will opt for the FEC alternative (especially if, as we mention above, the increased fee is reflected in the size of the Graduate Endowment repayments). It is also not clear if this proposal to maintain current fee levels for HN students applies to those studying in HEIs and FECs or just in FECs. In either case this proposal could have a significantly destabilising impact on student choices of where to attend when they first begin higher education study.

This proposal, if not carefully managed, could have a major impact on all post-1992 HEIs that already take a significant number of students from FE who have a HND into the third year of degree programmes.

**Question - do you agree that gap year students should be treated as having entered HE in 2005-06, i.e. prior to the planned changes taking effect.**

**Question – if you do not agree, please suggest an alternative.**

If the new fee arrangements are to be introduced then the University endorses the proposal to treat gap year students as having started their programme of study in 2005-06 for fees purposes.