

## RESPONSE FROM UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

The Consultation Document is influenced by the premise that, in the absence of a tuition fee, Scottish-domiciled students may be disadvantaged in their access to Scottish HE by well-qualified applicants from RUK. At present such an outcome is felt to apply only to medicine, but the use of tuition fees to restrain RUK demand permeates the document. This ignores the following:

- (i) Scotland's future demographics are different from those that will obtain in RUK.
- (ii) There is a case for using tuition fees to influence demand positively and to create a competitive edge for Scottish universities as RUK HE enters a volatile and uncertain phase.
- (iii) Tuition fees could be set differently across categories of cognate disciplines to reflect Scottish HE's future need to recruit more or less aggressively from RUK.

Against a volatile and uncertain situation in RUK, it would be prudent to postpone introduction of a general tuition fee until there is an evidence base from RUK on which to take informed decisions.

### GENERAL TUITION FEES

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

The principles (p.5) recognise the likely volatility of UK HE in 2006 and the need to have regard to the fee level outcomes in RUK, initially in England, and state the intention that the Scottish fee levels should be sufficiently high to influence demand. These statements identify a concern with a short-term time frame and the need to raise price sufficiently to restrict demand for places in Scottish HE.

It is well-recognised that Scotland's demographic pattern may impact in a few years' time on recruitment of Scottish domiciled students to Scottish HE in a manner that will not be reflected in recruitment of RUK domiciled students to RUK universities. This difference may well suggest a need for Scottish HE to compete more actively for RUK students. Thus, a short-term solution for 2006 may not be sustainable or desirable over the next few years.

The determination of a set of principles aimed to restrict demand, where only medicine is felt to merit special consideration at present, where Scottish market fundamentals will shift with demographic change and where the impacts of the changes to tuition fees in RUK cannot be known for some time, may amount to an unduly limited perspective. The Document's presumption against the use of tuition fees for RUK domiciled students to expand and influence the pattern of demand may be misplaced.

***If you do not agree, please suggest alternatives.***

The principles should include acknowledgement of the need to begin thinking about tuition fees in the context of the likely impact of Scotland's demography on recruitment to Scottish HE and should involve a commitment that the relationships between price, recruitment and demographic change should be a matter for continuing consultation between the Executive and Scottish HE.

***Question - At what level should general tuition fees be set for 2006/07?***

English HE institutions will use tuition fees and scholarships/bursaries as a mechanism to compete with one another, with courses for which demand is relatively strong (weak) setting

high initial fees but awarding low (high) incentives to applicants through scholarships/bursaries. A general tuition fee without scholarships/bursaries, in the nature of a poll tax, denies any such flexibility to Scottish HE institutions where, looking forward, some courses may be content with current levels of RUK recruitment, some may wish to contain the growth of RUK recruitment, and yet others may welcome a higher level of such recruitment.

The Consultation Document contains insufficient information on the assumptions behind the figures given on likely RUK tuition fees net of scholarships/bursaries and on their impact on likely overall and RUK demand for places on different Scottish HE courses to enable considered comment on the recommended tuition fee and its applicability to circumstances in Scotland. The suggested tuition fee level may be a good or an inaccurate 'guesstimate' but, if implemented, should be acknowledged as an **initial and short-term** administered solution reflecting an overall judgement.

Any decision on the use of tuition fees for RUK domiciled students should be delayed until the tuition fee impacts and their incidence in RUK and in Scotland are revealed.

## **SELF-FUNDED SCOTTISH DOMICILED STUDENTS**

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

On grounds of access and opportunity, **consideration should be given to protecting** self-funded and non-UK domiciled students 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?***

In general those taking first degree and Higher National programmes should be protected from any increased level of tuition fee.

The Consultation Document asks for comment on three specific groups:

- *Students studying for a second undergraduate degree.* The case here is less compelling at a general level than for first undergraduate degree and Higher National students. However, there are courses, e.g. in Law, where the particularly Scottish nature of the degree content may mean the prospect of displacement by RUK applicants is very limited. A tuition fee designed to avoid such displacement then serves primarily to discriminate between Scottish students studying for a first undergraduate degree and those studying for a second undergraduate degree. This is not the purpose of the proposed tuition fee but is a potential consequence of an approach undifferentiated by course.
- *Students with an HND who enter university in first year and are therefore liable to pay tuition fees for one year.* Many students entering Scottish universities in this way are those for whom the more customary route from secondary school did not apply. The financial burdens for many of this group are already high and adding a further tuition fee would counter access and inclusion agenda.
- *Students who repeat one or more year.* There are students for whom there is good cause, be it academic, personal or medical, for repeating a year. The purpose of the tuition fee proposal is quite different from further raising the cost of 'good cause' repeat and should not be applied in these cases.

## **MEDICAL TUITION FEES**

***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?***

This is a sensible way forward in that the particular circumstances of medical courses have been examined and assessed. The recognition of the need for fee differentiation in the context of recruitment and taking into account the fee levels being set elsewhere for comparable courses is welcome in the light of comments above.

The focus in discussion of medical tuition fees should be on the protection of the interests of Scottish domiciled students, recognizing that medical schools must not discriminate in entry criteria, and should not be complicated by wider concerns, however justified, about the ability of the NHS in Scotland to recruit and retain graduates of whatever origin. Building that wider and complex set of concerns into debate about initial recruitment should not be allowed to influence recruitment practice.

***Question - If you do not agree, please suggest alternatives.***

Not applicable.

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

Tuition fees for RUK domiciled medical students should be set at a level (net of scholarships/bursaries) which will ensure the comparability of tuition fee costs between studying in Scotland and studying in RUK.

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

Not applicable.

***Comments are welcome on the statement from NUS Scotland.***

While sympathetic to the NUS view that greater consideration should be given to encouraging more graduates to practise medicine in Scotland, that matter is at one remove from the issue of protecting the interests of Scottish domiciled applicants to medical schools. The differentiated tuition fee approach is appropriate.

***Comments are welcome on the statement from Universities Scotland***

See the response to NUS Scotland.

***Comments are welcome on the statement from BMA Scotland***

In the context of recruitment, BMA Scotland raises the issue of 'artificial barriers to medical education for Scottish domiciled students'. If BMA Scotland believes these barriers to be discriminatory, that is a matter BMA Scotland should discuss with the Scottish medical schools. The tuition fee proposal is intended to protect the interests of Scottish domiciled applicants by neutralising an incentive for greater numbers of RUK students to apply to study medicine in Scotland.