

## RESPONSE FROM UNIVERSITIES SCOTLAND

### General tuition fees

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

*Answer:* **Yes.**

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

*Answer:* **Not applicable.**

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

*Answer:* **We think that a cautious approach should be adopted in accordance with the final principle which recognises that “the marketplace for HE in the UK in 2006 is likely to be a volatile one” and that it is necessary “to avoid a rise which is so high that it risks any significant reduction in students coming to Scotland from the rest of the UK”. Since the current number is some 17 percent lower than the corresponding number in 1998, it is unlikely that numbers would return to that 1998 level in 2006-07 even if the general fee level remained unchanged. Our view is therefore that the Executive should seriously consider the option of applying no general fee increase in 2006-07, and using that year to assess the impact of higher fees in England prior to making any appropriate adjustments in 2007-08 on the basis of hard evidence rather than intelligent guesswork. Although it is our preference that there be no general fee increase in 2006-07, if a higher general fee level is set for that year, we strongly favour a small increase, and regard a figure in the region of £1,700 to £1,900 per annum as being very much at the top of the range. We also believe that, if and when any increase in the general fee level does take effect, provision should be made for students from less well-off families in other parts of the UK to receive bursary support equivalent in value to the bursaries which would be available to them in their own countries.**

### Self funded Scottish domiciled students

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

*Answer:* **Yes. However, if the Executive accepts our suggestion that there should be no general fee increase in 2006-07, it will avoid the need to introduce new student support systems any earlier than is necessary.**

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

*Answer:* **We think that all Scottish and non-UK EU domiciled full-time first degree and Higher National students should be protected from the increased tuition fee.**

### 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?

*Answer:* **Yes.**

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

*Answer:* **It should be set at a level such that the total fee cost over the full duration of the course for an English student studying Medicine in Scotland does not exceed the corresponding cost were the same student to study Medicine in England. Moreover, comparability should extend to making bursaries available to students from less well-off families coming to study Medicine in Scotland of equivalent value to those which would be available to the same students in England.**

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

*Answer:* **Not applicable.**

Comments are welcome on the statement from NUS Scotland.

**While we understand the NUS Scotland position, we think that it fails to appreciate that, if medical fees in Scotland for English students are significantly lower in Scotland than they are in England, this is almost certain to lead to an increase in the number of applications from English students, with a consequent reduction in the opportunities for Scottish-domiciled students to be admitted to Scottish medical schools.**

Comments are welcome on the statement from Universities Scotland.

**We stand by our earlier comments.**

Comments are welcome on the statement from BMA Scotland.

**Although we recognise the merits of BMA Scotland's suggestion that admissions criteria be reviewed, the fact that universities are obliged to operate fair admissions policies makes it impossible to exercise positive discrimination in favour of Scottish applicants, and an increase in the number of English applicants will inevitably lead to an increase in the number of English-domiciled students attending Scottish medical schools, to the disadvantage of Scottish-domiciled applicants.**

## **Implications for FE**

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

*Answer:* **No.**

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

*Answer:* **Since the fee changes in England will affect HN programmes in exactly the same way as degrees, any changes in fee arrangements in Scotland should also apply to both. Scottish-domiciled students, whether eligible for full fee support or not, will not be disadvantaged if (as we propose above) protection against the fee increase is applied in the case of those currently responsible for paying their own fees. On the other hand, we believe that the same caution should be exercised with regard to HN fees as we have**

**suggested should apply in the case of the general fee level for full-time first degree courses.**

### **Transitional arrangements**

*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.

***Answer:* Yes. However, we also reiterate our preference for there being no increase in the general fee level in 2006-07.**

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

***Answer:* Not applicable.**