

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

Dear Mrs Carson,

CROSS BORDER STUDENT FLOWS

I am not responding to all the questions in the consultative document but set out some comments below in relation to individual paragraphs.

Paragraphs 22 and 23. The total sum per student will remain the same (paragraph 22) which involves a transfer from the Funding Council budget to that of the Student Awards Agency. In that case I am not sure where the extra funds referred to in paragraph 23 will come from. Surely, the first call on the reduction in the teaching support is the compensating increase in the fee level. What is left over to go towards non-means tested loans?

Paragraphs 26 to 30. There seems to be a missing piece of information here. What level of support towards fees at Scottish institutions will be received by students from England, Northern Ireland and Wales from 2006-7? If their fees will be covered by loans from the Student Loans Company, then perhaps the problem is not as complicated as this presentation suggests. Paragraph 30 contains several assumptions. Will every student at an English HEI receive a bursary or scholarship? If not, the calculation of a fee of £2,200 to £2,500 looks suspect. There are also assumptions about the length of degree courses. There are some degree courses at English HEIs that last for only two years and there are some, which last for four years or longer. There are some degree courses in Scotland which last for three years and some which are longer than four years. If the great majority of English HEIs are going to charge the full £3,000, the most obvious response would be to make the Scottish figure £3,000.

Paragraphs 33 to 37. All of this is framed on the basis that HEIs have little discretion in these matters. Is it not the case, however, that they can charge whatever fee they decide in these cases? Since the paper does not refer to these groups I do not know what is intended for post-graduate teacher training or social work training courses.

Presumably these fees would be paid by SAAS. There is also the question of the Diploma in Legal Practice for which special arrangements existed some years ago. I think it is a reasonable principle that support should be given from public funds for one degree course only. I am doubtful about giving support for a repeat year. Presumably an HEI can treat an individual student exceptionally where there are suitable reasons, for example of ill health.

Paragraphs 38 to 44. Where are the increased savings referred to in paragraph 44? If there is a transfer from the Funding Council to SAAS, the money is used up. There are statements elsewhere about the expected volatility of the 2006-7 position. Would it not be sensible to wait and see what happens in the case of medical students? The 2002-3 proportion of Scottish domiciled students is higher than the 2001-2 proportion anyway. The powers exist to take action later if that is justified.

Annex B. The list of consultees looks short of non-Scottish bodies. What about the Education Departments of England, Wales and Northern Ireland? It would also be worth including the Health Departments.

I enclose the Respondent Information Form.

*Yours sincerely,
Alastair Weatherston*

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