

**Scottish Executive Consultation:
Cross Border Student Flows: Higher Education Tuition Fee Levels**

UCET Response

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

We agree with the general principles set out: the Scottish Executive has to take account of fee levels in England; 4-year courses in Scotland should not be significantly more, or less, expensive than 3-year courses in England; and the fee level should be sufficiently high to generate savings to cover the cost of the fees incurred by Scottish students attending HEIs in England.

At what level should the general tuition fees be set for 2006/07?

We agree with the line of argument which points to an increase of between £500 and £700 per year.

Should any self-funded or non-UKEA domiciled students be protected from the increased level of tuition fee?

On balance, and in the shorter term, we consider that self-funded and non-UKEU domiciled students should not be protected from the fee level increase: their circumstances ought not to be affected by the political decision that has created divergence of practice north and south of the border. However, in the longer term, in the light of current discussions about Scotland's projected shortfall of highly skilled workers, it may be necessary to introduce financial incentives to study in Scotland and through that to attract more graduates to live and work in Scotland.

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

We strongly agree with Universities Scotland that it is fair and reasonable for the Scottish Executive to seek to 'optimise the benefit to Scotland of its investment in medical education'. We therefore support the principle of a higher flat-rate fee for medical courses. We note the BMA's concerns that there should be no further disincentives for those from underprivileged backgrounds to study medicine, especially in view of the recognised need to widen participation in medicine and to create a workforce that more closely reflects the diversity of the wider community. However, we suggest that the best response to this problem lies in the creation of scholarships, a practice which most universities have been persuaded to adopt, taking advantage of their right, denied to institutions in Scotland, to charge top-up fees.

Do you agree that the Executive should retain current fee levels for HNCs and HNDs?

We support the view of the IAG that there is no need to alter the current fee level for HNCs and HNDs in Scotland.

Do you agree that gap year students should be treated as having entered HE in 2005/06, that is, prior to the planned changes taking effect?

We agree that, as in England, gap year students in Scotland should be treated as having entered an HEI in the year in which they are accepted by an HEI for admission.