



RB/MJC/1.15.1

5 September 2008

Fiona Hyslop MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Education & Lifelong Learning  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

Dear Ms Hyslop,

**RE: New Horizons report.**

I am writing regarding the interim report of the Joint Future Thinking Task Force, *New Horizons*. Thank you for inviting comments on the report and I would be grateful if you could share the comments I make here with the rest of the Taskforce. In summary, I am calling for you to give equal student membership to the group you are currently calling the *Tripartite Advisory Group*.

For many years Scotland has prided itself on its level of student engagement and involvement with policy issues. It is disappointing that the "Tripartite Advisory Group" has actively excluded student representation. As far as I am aware, neither the majority of Principals, nor the Scottish Funding Council, oppose student membership to the group. Student involvement is instrumental in implementing successful change within individual institutions. It seems strange to exclude us, as the single largest stakeholder in Higher Education, from work that will directly affect the quality of our education nationally.

It is unclear how the current events for student representatives to engage with the Cabinet Secretary (namely the student leaders' summit) have influenced direction and policy so far and NUS Scotland only has observer status on the SFC. Although these opportunities are still extremely welcome, I would be far more comfortable with a more formal role for student representation, via NUS Scotland, regarding sector funding.

NUS exists to deal with matters that students' associations do not have the time or the resources to engage with. If they are not at the table, then it is unlikely that student representatives will be able to engage at all.

I believe one of the concerns is that student membership will make the group 'unwieldy' or slow to act. As a member of NUS, I can assure you that the work of this group will be a priority for the organisation, and they will commit fully to its work. Further more, the expertise the NUS can bring will be invaluable in assessing any impact a change in funding policy may have on students on the ground. This will add credibility to the group's efforts and ensure its members are fully informed of all possible effects of their decisions.

The hard work in pushing the issue of Higher Education funding to the fore is admirable, but now it is time to have students at the table when discussions are being made. Otherwise, it will be extremely difficult for HWUSA to support the further work of this group. Please give student representation a place in the group that will advise these changes.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Bush'.

Ruth Bush  
**Heriot-Watt University Students Association President**