



10th September 2008

Dear Cabinet Secretary

On behalf of the Aberdeen University Students' Association I would like to thank you for your invitation to be involved in the consultation process on the interim report of the Joint Future Thinking Task Force, *New Horizons*. In our consultation we would like to identify what we believe is the largest failing of the report, the creation of a committee to move forward issues in funding for Universities with no formal representation from Students, the largest numbered stakeholder. As identified in the 1994 Education Act, the importance of student representation in all levels of discussions on Universities should be of great importance to Universities. It is with this in mind that we find the creation of a committee without student representation to be both undemocratic and against the established direction for universities in Scotland.

The interim report of the Joint Future Thinking Task Force, *New Horizons*, has actively excluded student representation, an unusual circumstance in Scotland where successive governments have prided themselves on their level of student engagement and involvement with policy issues. As we have learned in conversation with our peers across Scotland, neither the majority of Principals, nor the Scottish Funding Council, oppose student membership to the group. It would be a dangerous trend to exclude the single largest stakeholder in Higher Education, students, from work that will directly affect the quality of our education.

As member of NUS we believe that the addition of Student Representation through a national body such as NUS, that not only represents the majority of students in Scotland, but can bring expertise that will be invaluable in assessing any impact change in funding policy will have on students both within and beyond the University of Aberdeen, is essential to the success of any solutions drafted by the *Tripartite Advisory Group*. We feel the concern raised by some members of the *Tripartite Advisory Group*, that the additional membership will make the group 'unwieldy' or slow to act is unfounded and engaged to only limit the success the group can have to enhance higher education in Scotland.

As we are sure you are aware, efforts engaged without student representation lack the essential input that will make them successful and often lack the credibility to be pursued beyond the committee level. The working relationships of Student Associations and their respective Universities, and the NUS and successive Scottish governments should act as an example to the *Tripartite Advisory Group* and not be rendered as insignificant on a national level. We urge you to act on our request for formal student representation on the *Tripartite Advisory Group*. Thank you for taking the time to consider our concerns and we look forward to discussing our comments further.

Kind Regards

Duncan McKay
SA President 2008/09

