

STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL  
UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW



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September 1, 2011

Christine Hamilton-Rice  
Higher Education and Learner Support Division  
Scottish Government  
5 Atlantic Quay  
150 Broomielaw  
Glasgow  
G2 8LU

Dear Christine,

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Draft Student Fees (Specification) (Scotland) Order 2011. We do not agree with the proposals outlined, and I have attached our detailed response to the questions posed in the consultation document. I hope that our feedback is considered in detail and that the views of the students that we represent are fully considered during the consultation process.

Glasgow University Students' Representative Council represents the interests of over 25,000 students registered at the University of Glasgow to the University and nation. Council comprises up to 45 elected students who meet throughout the year, and is a fully independent representative organisation being non-affiliates of NUS (National Union of Students).

Sincerely,

Vice-President (Learning & Development)  
Glasgow University Students'  
Representative Council

Glasgow University Students' Representative Council:  
Detailed response to the consultation on the Draft Student Fees (specification)  
(Scotland) Order 2011

**Do you agree that we need to respond to the changes in tuition fee policy taking place elsewhere in the UK?**

No

**If not, why not?**

Whilst we believe that in principle tuition fees are wrong, we appreciate the Scottish Government's need to react to tuition fee policy changes in the rest of the UK. At present however any arguments made for or against the proposed changes for RUK students are based solely on conjecture and we believe it would be a huge gamble to implement changes to the RUK fee policy from an uninformed position.

We are therefore calling for the Scottish Government to implement a moratorium on any planned tuition fee policy changes until 2013-2014 at the earliest. A moratorium would provide time to enable a full and informed assessment of the impact the changes in the rest of the UK have on applications to Scottish Universities from 2012-2013.

Alternatively if this was not felt to be a viable option we would suggest that any fee increase be set at an upper limit of £6750 per year. This would bring a normal 4 year degree at a Scottish University in line with the cost of the equivalent 3 year degree in the rest of the UK at £27,000.

**Do you agree with the suggested approach of deregulating fees for RUK domiciled students, thereby allowing Scottish universities the flexibility to offer those students courses on an equal basis, in terms of overall tuition fee costs, with universities in other parts of the UK?**

No

**If not, why not? And how would you ensure that Scottish universities do not become the "cheap option" for RUK domiciled students?**

We do not agree with the suggested approach by the Scottish government. It is based on the presumption that most Scottish universities will set their annual fees for RUK students at around £6,375, yet evidence from England shows that most universities chose the upper limit of £9,000 despite the UK government suggesting this would not happen. We believe most other Scottish universities will follow the lead of their English counterparts with the implementation of the full fee.

The Scottish four year degree programme will place RUK students in Scotland at a significant financial disadvantage. The four year programme creates a financial liability of £36,000 as opposed to the £27,000 costs incurred through studying the traditional three year English degree programme.

Whilst the four year degree is crucial in preserving the rich tradition of Scottish education, the extra year of living costs, as well as having to wait another year to enter employment (while students in England can enter full-time work after three years) ensures that a Scottish degree will be an unfeasibly expensive option for most prospective RUK students.

More importantly we do not support the consumerisation of education and the practice of universities defining their service and performance in monetary terms.

**Do you agree that the differential fee for medicine should be removed?**

Yes

**Do you have any comments on the draft Order and associated documentation (Annex B)?**

We believe overall that the proposals outlined in the draft Order and associated documentation has the potential to damage the Scottish higher education system. Giving Scottish universities the option to charge up to £9,000 fees per year is likely to dissuade RUK students from studying in Scotland. Many universities in Scotland have a diverse student population composed of students from Scotland, the rest of the UK, the EU and around the world. It would leave a significant cultural gap were the likely sudden drop in the proportion of RUK students at Scottish universities to occur.

If implemented, the proposals of fee deregulation will encourage the trend towards entrance to education being based not on ability but ability to pay.

While we accept that fees are not paid upfront, and that there are schemes of loans and bursaries in place, we feel that the knowledge of a degree potentially costing an individual up to £36,000 would put many people off applying for university when they may have otherwise done so.

We believe the Scottish Government has an opportunity to take the lead on educational policy and display ingenuity in seeking out innovative solutions to this difficult situation. We hope that the tradition of fairness and equality that is a cornerstone of Scottish education is not compromised.