



## Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

**Petition Number:** [PE1429](#)

**Main Petitioner:** Mr Wajahat Nassar

**Subject:** Making Scottish International Education More Accessible

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to change the eligibility criteria of the priority countries for Scotland's Saltire Scholarships programme to benefit students of all nationalities.

### Background

Scotland's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are autonomous institutions and they are able to set their own variable tuition fees for international students from outside of the EU (Scottish HEIs will be able to charge full-time first degree students from the rest of the UK variable tuition fees from academic year 2012/13 onwards, at a cap of £9,000 per annum). Typically, tuition fees for full-time international students from outside of the EU are substantially higher than the fixed rates set by the Scottish Parliament for 'home' students. Fees for undergraduate or postgraduate level study at Scottish HEIs can be around £4,000 to over £15,000 per academic year. International students are not entitled to any form of student support (fee or maintenance) from the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS).

However, international students can apply for a variety of scholarship schemes as outlined below (different eligibility criteria and conditions apply). For more detailed information on higher education tuition fees in Scotland and the UK, please see SPICe briefing [SB11/89: Higher Education Tuition Fees and the 'Funding Gap'](#).

### International Student Scholarships Available in Scotland

[Scotland's Saltire Scholarships](#) (SSS) is one of a programme of higher education scholarship schemes, available to support international students wishing to study in Scotland. The SSS is run by the Scottish Government, in partnership with Scottish HEIs. The scheme offers up to 200 scholarships annually, each worth £2,000, offered on a matched funding basis between the Scottish Government and Scottish Higher Education Institutions. Awards through the SSS contribute towards the cost of tuition fees, for any one year

of study, on a full-time Undergraduate, Masters or PhD course at any of [Scotland's higher education institutions](#) (not online or distance learning).

To be eligible for a Saltire Scholarship, students need an unconditional or conditional offer from a Scottish university. The scholarships are also targeted at specific subjects in the Scottish Government priority sectors of creative industries, life sciences, technology, financial services and renewable and clean energy; and are limited to international citizens from the following countries:

- Canada
- China (Hong Kong also being eligible as it is a Special Administrative Region of China)
- India
- United States of America

The countries eligible for this scholarship programme are linked to the Scottish Government's [International Framework](#), identified as priority countries for Scottish international engagement, primarily to support the Scottish Government Economic Strategy in encouraging economic growth. Other saltire scholarships are also available, such as [Malawi Saltire Scholarships](#) which are saltire scholarships to support Malawi women into rural teaching and the [Saltire Scholarship for Scottish Literature](#).

The Scottish Government also contributes funding to a number of organisations and programmes for international education, including:

- The [Students Without Borders](#) campaign, a National Union Students (NUS) Scotland led initiative to improve Scottish HEIs engagement with, and services for, international students,
- The [International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience \(IAESTE\)](#) programmes. IAESTE arrange international work experience for young scientists, engineers and architects, assisting employers and students in over 80 countries. IAESTE arranges paid course-related vacation training abroad on a reciprocal exchange basis so that in every participating country IAESTE trainees are both entering and leaving for placements. In the UK IAESTE is administered by the [British Council](#).
- At a UK level, the [UK-India Education and Research Initiative](#) and the [UK Council for International Student Affairs](#).
- At an EU level, the [Erasmus, Leonardo and Grundtvig programmes](#), which fund higher education, vocational education and training, and adult education.

The UK Government and other UK organisations also offer a range of international student scholarships and awards for studying in Scotland, particularly for postgraduate students. The Fulbright Commission offers [scholarship awards and exchange programmes for American citizens](#) to study, lecture or research in the UK, including the [UK Fulbright Summer Institutes](#).

The [Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan](#) (CSFP) is an international programme under which member governments offer scholarships and fellowships to citizens of other Commonwealth countries. CSFP Scholarships are usually for between one and three years. They cover the cost of travel to and from the UK, tuition fees and living expenses.

Under the CSFP the UK offers 7 types of award (including scholarships in postgraduate level study and fellowships), awarded by the Commonwealth Scholarships Commission of the UK (CSC). Specific awards are available for individuals from Commonwealth developing countries. The CSC supports around 700 awards annually. Awards are funded by the [Department for International Development](#) (for developing Commonwealth countries), and the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#), the [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills](#) and the [Scottish Government](#) (for developed Commonwealth countries), in conjunction with [UK universities](#). The CSC also nominates UK citizens for [scholarships to study in other Commonwealth countries](#) under the CSFP.

[Royal Society Fellowships](#) offer incoming fellowships for postdoctoral scientists from North America and Asia to undertake research at a UK laboratory. The fellowships are available for up to two years for individuals from the USA and Canada and up to one year for individuals from Asia.

[British Chevening scholarships](#) is the UK government's global scholarships programme. Established in 1983, these scholarships support study at UK universities, covering all or part of the cost of a one-year postgraduate course in the UK for students with demonstrable potential to become future leaders, decision-makers and opinion formers. Chevening Scholarships are currently offered in approximately 110 countries, in most regions of the world. In the current academic year, there are over 700 Chevening scholars at universities across the UK. Chevening Scholarships are mainly funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), with some contributions from universities and other partners in the UK and overseas, including governmental and private sector bodies.

The [EducationUK](#) website provides information on study opportunities in Scotland at all levels and a searchable database to help overseas students to identify potential sources of scholarship support.

## **Scottish Government Action**

On 12 April 2012, the Scottish Government announced in a [press release](#) that the Saltire Scholarships programme has been extended to cover more higher education courses than it previously did. The programme used to provide scholarships only to those studying for a Masters qualification. Whilst there are no published reviews of the Scottish Saltire Scholarships programme, recent [Scottish Government correspondence to the petitioner](#), dated 3 April 2012 states

“The Scottish Government actively reviews the Saltire Scholarship programme on a regular basis and recently this has brought about a number of changes. Based on feedback the scholarships have now been extended to cover a wide range of qualifications and are now available for a wider range of courses. Unfortunately there are no plans at present to increase the number of eligible countries from the four listed – Canada, China, India and the USA - however this may be reviewed in the future.”

### **Scottish Parliament Action**

To date, the specific issue of eligibility criteria for the Saltire Scholarship programme does not appear to have been considered by Scottish Parliamentary Committees or in the Chamber.

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**08 May 2012**

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