

PE1395/K

Petitioner Letter of 8 June 2012

Dear David Stewart,

During Glasgow University's Senate meeting on Thursday 7th June 2012, the Principal Anton Muscatelli informed those present that the "climate of funding of Scottish Universities is changing" and that from now on, the Scottish government and the Scottish Funding Council will not provide funding for Scottish universities without conditions attached.

Muscatelli said that from now on, Scottish Universities will have to sign annual "outcome agreements" with the SFC and the government. These "outcome agreements" will stipulate which provision Glasgow University will be duty-bound to sustain and protect.

We were told by Muscatelli that the SFC and the Scottish government will henceforth apparently require of the Scottish Universities to secure a "coherence of provision" of courses in Scotland. Scottish Universities will also have to prove that the courses they offer have strategic and social relevance to Scottish society and benefit Scottish learners and the economy.

Already, we were told by Muscatelli, the SFC is requesting that Glasgow University secure the provision of courses in nursing (this, apart from Slavonic Studies, was one of the areas that Glasgow University management wanted to close down last year).

The first "outcomes agreement" between the SFC and Glasgow University is supposed to be signed by the end of July 2012. The next meeting of the SFC and Glasgow University managers will take place on 18th June.

Would it be possible for you as Head of the Petitions Committee to write to Mark Batho requesting that the 2012-13 "outcomes agreement" between Glasgow University and SFC secures full Honours language-based culture provision in Czech, Polish, Russian and Slavonic Studies, due to the uniqueness and strategic importance of these subjects in Glasgow?

The language-based culture provision dealing with Central and Eastern Europe is particularly important in connection with the new language policy of the Scottish government and in connection with the fact that there are tens of thousands of Central and East Europeans living in Scotland now whose children will very soon want to study their Central and East European roots, thereby assuring economic, social and cultural links between Scotland and the new EU member states.

What is particularly important is that Glasgow University's postgraduate provision (Diplomas in Czech, Polish and Russian) is re-instated, regardless of possibly small numbers of applying students.

These intensive one year post-graduate courses are designed to equip especially selected graduates with a high research potential with the linguistic ability to access archive material written in the East European languages. Glasgow University has abolished this globally unique provision as of the autumn of 2012. This means that researchers can no longer acquire the knowledge of Central and East European languages enabling them to participate in local political and cultural discourse in the new accession countries. These courses now exist nowhere in the UK.

Even if you have only two or three students taking these intensive language courses per year, these will become major academic players in the field of Central and East European Studies and will be of considerable benefit to Scotland. Without the reinstatement of these courses, Scotland will have no such specialists.

A delegation of petitioners (Hugh McMahon, Mary Heimann, Amy Mackinnon and myself) were received by Mark Batho, the SFC Chief Executive, on 28th May. He listened carefully to our arguments especially to the arguments explaining why it is necessary to reinstate the Czech, Polish and Russian Diplomas and promised to mention this to Anton Muscatelli.

It would be very helpful if the Petitions Committee could support our request and ask the SFC to include assurances about the continuation of the Czech, Polish, Russian and Slavonic Studies courses up and including the PG level in the forthcoming 2012-13 Glasgow University "outcome agreement" with the SFC.

Thank you very much in advance for your help.

Jan Culik
University of Glasgow