

## PE1395/N

### Petition 1395: Targeted Funding for Lesser Taught Languages and Cultures

#### Petitioners' Response to letters from the Scottish Funding Council dated 25 July 2012 and 9 August 2012

We would like to clarify some points made in these two letters from the Scottish Funding Council.

1. The SFC letter of 9th August 2012 states: *"The University has also confirmed that it continues to offer post-graduate diplomas in all 3 languages (i.e. Czech, Polish, Russian), along with Slovak."* The postgraduate diplomas in Czech, Polish and Russian have been suspended. No students were allowed to matriculate for the 2012-13 session. Furthermore, Glasgow University has *never* run a post-graduate diploma in Slovak and is not doing so now. The Slavonic Studies course dealing with the cultures of Eastern Europe, which attracted more than 100 students in 2010, has been closed down.

2. Mark Batho's letter of 9 August 2012 continues: *"The University of Glasgow will continue to offer teaching in Czech, Polish and Russian in academic year 2012-13."* This statement overlooks the fundamental point that as from this year, teaching of Polish and Czech of language only will only be offered at levels one and two (the first two years of a degree) and students are currently no longer able to study the Polish and Czech languages and cultures to degree level.

3. The SFC letter of 9 August 2012 states: *"The University's Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies (CRCEES) (...) has developed and expanded its activities, including providing teaching materials in Russian."* This statement is misleading. Slavonic Studies Section *is* a part of CRCEES. It is Slavonic Studies that provides language tuition in Slavonic languages for students at the University of Glasgow. Yet it is the Slavonic Studies language and culture Honours provision which has been cut and the Slavonic PG Diplomas suspended, in conflict with the requirements of CRCEES.

4. The SFC letter 25 July 2012 quotes the SFC briefing note of 16 March that states: *"Studies of Central and Eastern Europe are not only the preserve of the University of Glasgow; other institutions, notably the universities of Edinburgh and St Andrews, have academic interests in the region across a range of disciplines."* Whilst these universities have pockets of interest in the region, they do not offer language-based degree-level university courses studying central and Eastern Europe. They are unable to access the local political, social and cultural discourse in these countries, which are conducted in the vernacular languages. Glasgow's provision is unique.

5. The SFC briefing note points out that there are a number of evening classes in Central and East European languages provided by various institutions throughout Scotland. This is immaterial to this discussion which is about the protection of a full university undergraduate and post-graduate provision. The Slavonic languages are difficult and complex languages which require serious study to achieve mastery.

Since we met with the Scottish Funding Council in May 2012, we are pleased to note that Glasgow University has committed itself in its 2012-13 Outcomes Agreement with the Scottish Funding

Council to maintain a basic provision of teaching Czech and Polish language:

*“In the coming academic year 2012-13 the School of Modern Languages and Cultures will offer teaching in 9 languages - French, German, Polish, Russian, Czech, Spanish, Catalan, Italian and Portuguese as well as Translation Studies. We currently have no plans to stop teaching any of these subjects.”* (Article 26, p. 11 of the Outcomes Agreement.)

While we petitioners welcome this statement, we do not feel it offers protection for these vulnerable, yet strategically important, university subject areas. Teaching language only at Levels 1 and 2 is not sufficient.

**For the unique provision at Glasgow to survive, we believe a firm commitment must be made in Glasgow University’s Outcomes Agreement to retain an integrated Honours language-based cultural studies course dealing with Central and Eastern Europe, allowing students to pursue full degree pathways in Czech, Polish, Russian and Slavonic Studies at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The teaching must be both in the languages and cultures of the region.**

The University of Glasgow is in fact in now creating a new Honours language-based cultural studies programme dealing with Central and Eastern Europe. We therefore hope it can commit itself to the programme’s long-term future in the forthcoming Outcomes Agreement concluded with the Scottish Funding Council.

We are also pleased to report that in the autumn of 2012, recruitment for the Level 1 Czech and Polish language classes is steeply on the increase. Both classes have double-digit enrollment. Up to half of the enrolled students are post-graduates requiring language tuition for their advanced research. The increased student numbers suggest that there is considerable potential for developing this area of study.

We hope that the Scottish Parliament request that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Scottish Funding Council should advise Glasgow University to fully commit itself to protecting and developing an integrated language-based cultural programme about the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, due to the unique position of this provision in Scotland.