

PE1395/P

Employability, Skills and Lifelong Learning Directorate
Higher Education and Learner Support Division

T: 0300-244 6759 F: 0300-244 1060
E: gill.morrison@scotland.gsi.gov.uk



Mr Stuart Todd
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
T3.40
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP



26 October 2012

Dear Mr Todd

Consideration of Petition – PE1395
Targeted Funding for Lesser Taught Languages and Cultures at Universities

Thank you for your letter of 10 October 2012 regarding the further consideration of the above petition. You asked the Scottish Government to respond to the points raised in the petitioner's submission of 20 September 2012.

We confirm that we have reviewed the points raised in the petitioner's submission. As stated in our previous correspondence, it is the responsibility of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to ensure that there is coherent provision across the higher education sector. We are satisfied that the SFC has carried out a review of the current position in relation to language provision across Scotland's universities and has concluded that it is neither necessary nor appropriate to intervene in the decision made by Glasgow University at this time.

We fully understand and accept that it is necessary for universities to adapt their education programmes in response to fluctuations in demand. Where there is little or no demand for a particular course of study, universities must consider whether it is right for that course to be suspended or closed. In this specific case, we understand that the University has retained the capacity to reinstate the provision should demand increase in the future and that the SFC will continue to monitor and review the position.

As regards the petitioner's comments about including in Glasgow University's outcome agreement with the SFC, a firm commitment 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*', it is our position that we do not consider that Outcome Agreements are an appropriate forum for detailing the provision of such individual courses of study. Outcome Agreements establish the contribution that an individual university will make to the overall impact expected of the sector in return for public funding.

Furthermore, we do not consider that there is a need for targeted funding for languages at this time. Instead, it is our view that the SFC should continue to monitor modern language provision in Scotland's universities in order to ensure coherence and an appropriate response to future demand.

I hope that the Committee finds this reply helpful.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Morrison
Higher Education and Learner Support