

PE1395/H

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



T: 0300-244 6759 F: 0300-244 1270
E: Gill.Morrison@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

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

20 March 2012

Dear Mr Todd

PUBLIC PETITION NUMBER PE1395

Thank you for your letter of 28 February in which you have asked for the further views of Scottish Government on the petition raised by Jan Culik on targeted funding for lesser taught languages and cultures at universities.

I refer to the Committee's question regarding consideration given by the Scottish Government to utilising some of the funding provided for Scottish universities over the spending review period to meet the concerns of the petitioner. Through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Scottish Government is allocating over £1 billion to universities in financial year 2012/13 which represents a cash terms increase of 8% on the funding provided in the previous year. As a result of new legislation to de-regulate tuition fees charged to students ordinarily domiciled in the rest of the UK, the SFC has anticipated that removing funded places at our Universities for these students will free up £27.8 million in 2012-13. However, this funding is being reallocated to restore cuts made to the Main Teaching Grant in academic year 2011-12 and to support higher cost subjects and expensive controlled clinical subjects.

In his letter of guidance to the SFC issued on 21 September 2011, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning set out the Government's priorities for investment in colleges and universities over the spending review period to enable the Council to provide indicative allocations for academic year 2012-13 across teaching, research, knowledge exchange, learner support and capital spending budgets.

The letter of guidance asked the Council to ensure improved outcomes in the pattern and spread of provision across the higher education sector. This request was later supplemented by the Cabinet Secretary's letter to the Council requesting that the provision of Slavonic languages in Scotland be kept under careful review. The Cabinet Secretary is

satisfied that the Council has taken into account Scotland's economic, social and cultural needs in making its funding allocations to universities for academic year 2012-13.

Following recent discussions with the sector, the Council has provided full briefing to the Cabinet Secretary in relation to the current provision of languages at higher education level in Scotland. The briefing confirms that the sector continues to support academic studies in a wide range of languages and cultures, including Mandarin, Japanese, Arabic and Russian, all of which are in demand and politically and economically significant.

In relation to the University of Glasgow, we understand that it currently offers teaching in 27 languages. The School of Modern languages and Cultures offers Russian, Polish, Czech and Slovak and the University's Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies (CRCEES) also offers teaching in a number of other languages of the region, in particular Latvian, Estonian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian. In addition, we understand that several other institutions in Scotland offer tuition in a wide range of languages.

The Council has indicated that it does not consider there is a need for targeted funding for languages at this time but rather that it should continue to monitor modern languages provision in Scotland's universities in order to ensure that such provision is coherent and responsive to demand. Having given full consideration to the information available, the Cabinet Secretary is supportive of this view.

The Committee has also requested information about funding support from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to the University of Glasgow's Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies (CRCEES). We understand from information provided by HEFCE and the SFC that CRCEES, based at the University of Glasgow, received a strategic grant from 2006-11 from two of the UK research councils, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Whilst HEFCE supplemented the award made to centres in England, the SFC supplemented the award made to CRCEES, which enabled postgraduate students to access specialist teaching from the School of Modern Languages and Cultures. The funding ceased in 2011 when the project came to an end. It is our understanding that SFC will be providing additional information to the Committee in relation to this particular funding allocation.

I hope the Committee finds this reply helpful.

Yours sincerely

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