

## **PE1738/B**

Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills submission of 29 October 2019

Thank you for your letter of 23 September 2019 regarding the above petition calling for the Scottish Government to provide bursaries for undergraduate teaching students undertaking full-time work placements.

You raise three specific points in your letter and I will address each in turn:

### **Is the financial support currently available acting as a barrier to recruiting more people into teaching?**

I do not believe that the student support available to those undertaking Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes is acting as a barrier to teacher recruitment. Whilst we know that there are recruitment challenges, the situation has been improving. Teacher numbers are at their highest since 2010 rising to 51,959 in 2018 and primary teacher numbers are at their highest level since 1980.

While challenges remain in certain subjects and geographical locations, we have been working with the universities and local authorities to address these by:

- Supporting universities in the development of alternative routes into teaching, including a focus on increasing the number of STEM teachers
- These routes have attracted over 770 people, over the last 2 years, who may not otherwise have entered teaching. Several of the alternative route programmes are delivered by distance learning to enable those in rural areas to access initial teacher education programmes more easily.
- Adding Napier and Queen Margaret universities as teacher education providers.

The Scottish Government does offer a limited number of bursaries of £20,000 specifically to attract students and career changers to undertake ITE in STEM subjects where the demand is at its greatest. The bursary scheme exceeded its target during a successful first year, with 107 bursaries approved against a target of 100 in 2018-19.

### **The disparity between financial support provided to teaching students compared to nursing students**

The education programme for nursing is significantly different from other undergraduates: they are required to study for 45 weeks of the year and must attend full time clinical placements for 50% of this time. Placements may be at unsocial hours, including evening, weekend and overnight working, and away from home. Scottish domiciled nursing and midwifery students are eligible to receive the Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary (NMSB) of £6,578 per year rising to £8,100 from 2019/20 and to £10,000 from 2020/21. A non-means tested bursary is also considered essential to continue to attract sufficient numbers into the profession. Students in receipt of the NMSB are not entitled to apply for student loans.

In general undergraduate students, including teaching, study for around 30 weeks of the year, with around 50% of programme content delivered on campus. Students may be eligible to receive student loans of up to £4,750 a year. The Scottish Government provides significant funding for student support. In addition to free tuition for eligible full-time undergraduate students, the student support package provides a minimum income of £7,750

to students, including teaching, through a combination of bursaries and loans, for eligible students with a household income of less £21,000.

**The level of financial support available for students on courses with a significant element of work on placements.**

The majority of undergraduate programmes of ITE do not entail students undertaking full-year work placements. Most deliver staged placements in years 2-4 of their ITE programmes. At present, there is only one institution who runs a programme with the full year placement in Year 3 and you will wish to note that they are no longer recruiting to this programme. On this specific programme, the Year 3 placement experience reflects the school academic year, students are not on a full-time timetable and also benefit from the school holidays.

Student placements are an integral part of teacher education programmes and ultimately result in the award of university qualifications. Universities offer re-imbursment for travel and living expenses for students undertaking school placements on their ITE courses.

In addition, following graduation, ITE students are guaranteed a fully paid supported placement on the Teacher Induction Scheme so that they can achieve the Standard for Full Registration.

There are currently no plans for further consideration of bursaries for student teachers on full-time placements.