

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1189
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/11000/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

14 September 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 31 August regarding the petition (P-06-1189) to provide tuition grants to support medical students studying medicine as a second degree.

The Welsh Government is committed to investing in the training of our NHS workforce to attract the very best health professionals in Wales. More widely, we moved from a position of providing tuition fee grants to tuition fee loans in direct response to the Diamond Review recommendations on tuition fee support. Key to this decision was to ensure student support remained stable and sustainable. Resources are finite and difficult decisions are taken by the Welsh Ministers to maintain the affordability of student support across Wales, balanced with the objective to allow as many students as possible to access the support for the first time. Care is taken to ensure that the offer of support is fair as possible.

We fund the education and training for a range of Health Education Courses through our NHS Wales Bursary Scheme. The Bursary Scheme provides financial support to eligible students who are studying Health Education Courses and to incentivise them, following qualification, to work within the health care sector in Wales. The student's tuition fees are paid by the Bursary and they can apply for assistance towards their living costs (a non-means-tested £1,000 grant and a means-tested Bursary up to £2,643 per year), including additional support if they have dependents, and Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). The student can also apply for a reduced rate maintenance loan of up to £4,675 from Student Finance Wales (SFW).

The NHS Wales Bursary Scheme is only made available to students who have been offered places on certain courses. For a second degree, tuition fees (a maximum of £9,000 charged in Wales) would need to be self-funded by the student for the first four years. In year five students will be eligible for support from the Bursary Scheme for living costs and tuition fee support. This support is the same as that received in year five by students doing medicine as a first degree depending on when students start their course.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

With regard to statutory student support, our generous package of support is limited to eligible students undertaking a first undergraduate degree in accordance with Education (Student Support) (Wales) 2018 Regulations, as amended. Eligible students undertaking a five year degree in medicine in Wales, as a first degree, may be eligible under the regulations to apply for support from SFW on the same terms as other full-time students for the first four years of their course (subject to previous study). For the fifth and subsequent years of their course the student will apply to the NHS Wales Bursary for tuition fee support and help with living costs; they can also apply for a reduced rate maintenance loan from SFW.

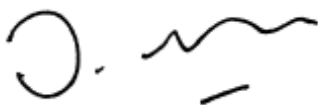
For years one to four of a first degree, eligible students can apply to SFW for a tuition fee loan up to £9,000 per year and a mixture of means-tested maintenance grant and loan support up to £10,350 per year; the maintenance amount is also subject to where the student is living whilst studying in Wales. They can also access means-tested grants for dependants and non-means tested DSAs. For most, the level of maintenance support provided is equivalent to the National Living Wage.

However, limited support is provided under the regulations to students who have already obtained an honours degree in the UK and wish to pursue a five year degree in medicine as a second degree. The support available from SFW would be a full rate maintenance loan for years one to four (up to £9,350 per year) and a reduced maintenance loan for year five (up to £4,675); the amount awarded is also subject to where the student is living whilst studying in Wales. No fee support is available from SFW for all years of the course, however, the student would be able to apply to the NHS Wales Bursary Scheme for fee support in year five.

I have set out in the Annex below the tuition fee support arrangements for a second degree in medicine. There are no plans to amend the funding arrangements in our student support regulations for students wishing to undertake a second undergraduate degree / postgraduate degree, or equivalent qualification. However, to further support students in this area, the Minister for Health and Social Services has recently announced an increase of funded student places for the C21 North Wales programme to 25 places in September 2021 and 40 places in September 2022 as well as an uplift of Swansea University's graduate-entry medicine intake to an extra 25 students in 2021.

I appreciate the comments raised by the petitioner and I trust the above provides clarity on the support arrangements for eligible medical students.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of loops and a horizontal line at the end.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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Annex

4 year accelerated graduate entry course in Medicine as a second degree (fees charged up to £9,00 in Wales)		
Year of Study	NHS fees support	SFW support*
1	No fee support – student must self-fund £3,465	Tuition Fee Loan available up to £5,535
2 to 4	Yes – up to £3,465 in Bursary support per year	As above per year
<p>*In year 1 students can apply for a full rate maintenance loan from SFW. Years 2 to 4, as these students can apply for income assessed healthcare bursaries from NHS Wales, they may be eligible for a reduced rate maintenance loan from SFW.</p>		

5 year undergraduate course in Medicine taken as a second degree in Wales		
Year of Study	NHS fees support	SFW support*
1 to 4	No fee support	No fee support
5	Yes – provided by the NHS Bursary Scheme	As above
<p>* For years 1 to 4 the student can apply for the full rate maintenance loan from SFW. In year 5 this will be the reduced rate maintenance loan from SFW. Students can also apply for help with living costs from the NHS Wales Bursary in year 5.</p>		