

Dear Gordon MacDonald MSP,

We are writing to you, as one of our local MSPs, to let you know that NUS Scotland has recently launched their latest national campaign, #SupportUs. The campaign calls for improvements to be made to the financial support available for students.

Funding to support education not only helps people reach their potential and realise ambitions – it also helps shape Scotland’s future and build a better society. However, students can only succeed when they are fairly funded and provided with financial support to get by.

Whilst the Scottish Government has made clear education is a priority area and recognised the need for long term change by committing to a full review of student support, we cannot ignore the students struggling to make ends meet right now.

At Heriot-Watt University Student Union we are extremely concerned that the draft budget fails to recognise the need for increased levels of financial support for all students. If action is not taken then this will be a missed opportunity to ensure that students can thrive in education.

Students in Further Education come up against a system that fails many of them, leaving many at risk of dropping out due to uncertainty of whether they will receive any support at all. Students in Higher Education need to see an increase in the opportunities available for students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring that they are appropriately supported.

We want to see the final budget commit to:

- A £4m increase in the FE bursary budget to ensure recurring funding gaps are closed and give students certainty that they’ll receive funding and to ensure all bursaries increase by inflation.
- A £4m increase in the HE discretionary fund budget to provide students with a year-round funding safety net and increased access to vital support throughout the year.
- An assurance from the Scottish Government and SFC that the universities budget will protect additional places for widening access and articulation, to ensure the important targets set by the Commission on Widening Access are not missed.

In addition, while the increase in funding for mental health services is a positive move and something that NUS Scotland called for in the run up to the Scottish elections, the Scottish Government must now ensure that the needs of our diverse student population are reflected in the distribution of the funding and the new mental health strategy when it is published.

Heriot-Watt University Student Union is joining together with NUS Scotland in calling on MSPs from all parties to #SupportUs and back NUS Scotland’s campaign for a final budget that gives students the support they need to access education, stay there and succeed.

I want to see MSPs stand together with their local students and make student financial support a personal priority through the budget negotiations.

We would like to discuss these matters further with you, ahead of the Scottish Budget being finalised and would like to request a meeting to discuss the issues facing students in your constituency further.

Yours,



Diarmuid Cowan,
President,
Heriot-Watt University Student Union

#SupportUs

nusscotland
national union of students