

Leighton Andrews AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref SF/LA/6104/11
Nick Ramsay AM
Chair, Enterprise and Business
Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

2 November 2011

Dear Nick,

Thank you for your letter of 26 October, following my appearance before the Enterprise and Business Committee for scrutiny of the Education and Skills MEG Draft Budget.

The Evidence Paper provided to the Enterprise and Business Committee was consistent with the information provided in the Draft Budget document which took the indicative figures from the Supplementary Budget published in June 2011 as the baseline figures. This approach was adopted by all departments this year and I understand the concerns you have raised have also been expressed by a number of other committees. In particular, this issue was raised with the Minister for Finance and the Leader of the House by the Finance Committee on 12 October. A copy of the response is in the Members Library in which she has agreed to reflect further on the approach in future. Similarly, I will consider the presentation of the Education and Skills budgets to ensure any underlying changes are transparent and understandable.

The other complication surrounding the presentation of the Education and Skills MEG Draft Budget this year related to changes in the budget structure which were designed to more clearly reflect the purpose of each budget line and alignment to our key priorities in the Programme for Government. A reconciliation of these changes was published as an annex to the budget document on 4 October. Notwithstanding this, I note your concerns in respect of the baselines and I will take forward your committee's recommendation in conjunction with colleagues in Strategic Budgeting.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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*Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)
paper*


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Turning to your recommendations relating to higher education tuition fees, my officials will continue to work with key delivery partners and stakeholders through the Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Programme Board to monitor the impact of higher tuition fees and other changes, including reform of the higher education system in England. The position will be kept continuously under review as we move into the new system from academic year 2012/13. This will enable us to analyse the impact the changes have on students and the HE Sector in Wales.

I am aware that there are some students who fall outside the proposed student support arrangements for part-time study, in particular those under 25% study intensity, postgraduates and students who have undertaken previous higher education study. These forms of study are currently subsidised through the HEFCW funding formula. I have asked officials to monitor the situation closely and will review arrangements for these students as we move towards implementation of the new part-time system.

I have already made it clear that the Welsh Government received legal advice before adopting its position on tuition fees last year. I am confident of our position, and as I have said repeatedly, appropriate provision is in place to support the funding of tuition fees for the lifetime of this Government.

I have replied separately to you on the additional information requested at Committee in my letter of 31 October. I trust this response clarifies the issues you have raised.

Yours sincerely

Leighton Andrews AC / AM

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