

Principal's Update 11.10.11

Colleagues

We are now into the new academic year and the campus was clearly buzzing during Freshers' Week. I know that it is a very busy time and that everyone will have been working hard to prepare for the new academic year and to help our new students settle in and adjust to university life.

New Library

Those new students will, of course, be some of the first to benefit from the new Library which opened last month. I am sure that most staff will by now have visited the Library and I think we can all be very proud of what is a spectacular building both inside and out. I am certain that it will prove to be a great asset to the University and I would encourage you to help us spread the word about this major new addition to the cultural and educational life of the City, Shire and indeed the North.

Scottish Government Consultation on Reform of Post-16 Education and Spending Review

I am sure many colleagues will be aware of the Scottish Government's Spending Review. This included excellent news for universities in the shape of an 8.2% increase in the revenue allocation to Higher Education for 2012-13. Considering that the overall budget increased by only 1.2% and that there was a reduction in the Further Education budget, the outcome is a positive one for universities and the Government's commitment to Higher Education as a major driver of its vision for Scotland's future is to be welcomed. The funding thus far announced is at a macro level and we understand that we should receive an indication of our funding from Government towards the end of this calendar year.

Accompanying the spending review has been the publication of the Scottish Government's proposals for the reform of post-16 education in Scotland which you can read at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/09/15103949/0>

In addition, there is a ministerial letter of guidance to the Funding Council in which the Minister's priorities for Higher Education for the year are articulated. Across both of these documents, the recurring themes that emerge are an emphasis on retention, on widening participation, providing an excellent student experience, a greater concentration of research funding on those institutions engaged in world class research, a step change in engagement with industry, and more effective collaboration with other institutions. We will need to engage positively with the workstreams which will guide the consultation, taking confidence from the fact that the key themes that I have mentioned above are all challenges that we have set for ourselves in our Strategic Plan and which I know we are all focused on delivering.

Rest of UK Fees

All the Scottish universities have now announced their fee proposals for Rest of UK Students and we are working very hard to promote and market the Aberdeen position to potential students. These changes in policy on Rest of UK fees and the tightening of Government immigration policy for international students will make the competition for students all the more difficult. For that reason I have asked Professor Stephen Logan, as Senior Vice-Principal, to review how through our resource allocation model we incentivise student recruitment as well as other academic activities and to bring forward any proposals for change to help encourage further success in student recruitment in all our key markets.

Best Regards

Ian Diamond

Principal and Vice-Chancellor