

24 January 2012

Dear Members,

You will probably be aware by now that last autumn, the Scottish Government announced that they were changing the system of post-graduate funding in Scotland with the result that the previous grants for 300 students on the diploma course towards their fees would be scrapped and replaced with state funded loans. At that time there was a considerable amount of confusion as to how many of these state funded loans would be available for diploma/PEAT1 students and on what basis they would be distributed.

In the last few weeks, the Scottish Government has confirmed that all students on the diploma/PEAT1 course in 2012/13 shall be entitled to a state funded loan of £3,400 towards their fees, as long as they have not previously received postgraduate funding and are resident in Scotland. The SYLA are very disappointed that there will no longer be any grants, but changing the position from grants for less than half of all diploma students to state-funded loans for all, may assist students who previously would not have had the grades to get the grant or the private means to fully finance the diploma. The 300 students who would have got grants are worse off, the 350 or so who wouldn't, are better off.

The SYLA committee believe that although the grants were always distributed on the basis of academic merit rather than financial need, that should not detract from their importance in assisting fair access to the diploma/PEAT1. That they have been removed without consultation is a serious failing on the part of the Scottish Government. The current arrangements have only been confirmed for the coming academic year and the Government will confirm the future position in the autumn. Pleas by the Law Society for Scotland for consultation on future arrangements appear to have been declined by the Government. The SYLA will be calling on the Government to engage in meaningful and transparent consultation with the legal

profession on the future of post-graduate funding. Support of post-graduate law students is essential to ensure fair access to a career in law, irrespective of wealth and background.

Whether the change of funding will have an impact on applications for the diploma/PEAT1 course will be known in a few months. We shall update you on this matter as well as our work with the Law Society to engage with the Government on future arrangements in due course.

Last week, the Law Society for Scotland released traineeship statistics for 2011. They can be seen here:

<http://www.lawscot.org.uk/media/212372/traineesstatsjanuary2012.pdf>

The SYLA has requested further statistics from the Law Society which will allow us to review these in context. We will make these available to you as soon as we have them.

Should any member wish to discuss any of the above with the SYLA committee, please email mail@syla.co.uk. We would like to know your views.

Kind regards,



Catriona Headley
President, SYLA