

Huw Lewis AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-610  
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/05441/14

William Powell AM  
Chair Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

24 November 2014

Dear William

Thank you for your letter dated 14 November about the petition from the National Union of Students (Wales) regarding the proposed closure of the Financial Contingency Fund - Higher Education (FCF HE) Scheme from academic year 2014/15.

I am proud of the support the Welsh Government has provided to students and to further and higher education institutions in Wales, but the cuts imposed by Whitehall have meant I have had to take some very difficult decisions on education support this year. From 2012, universities have been able to charge home students tuition fees of up to £9,000 per year and they have also recruited increased numbers of international students. As a result, I decided they should now provide help to disadvantaged students from their own substantial income. I initially removed FCF support for higher education institutions from September this year.

However, after listening to stakeholders, I decided to re-establish the Fund for this year only and this was welcomed by NUS(W). But I think it is appropriate that from academic year 2015/16 universities should establish their own discretionary hardship funds, and my officials will be discussing with institutions how they intend to accomplish this.

Higher education student support in Wales still remains the most generous package offered by any of the UK administrations.

Yours sincerely

**Huw Lewis AC / AM**  
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
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