

P-05-884 Amendment to Education (Student Support) (Wales) Regulations 2018 to include UK institutions with operations overseas, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 02.03.20

Monday 2nd March 2020

Dear Ms Finch-Saunders,

Following the Minister for Education's letter addressed to yourself on 25th February 2020, a copy of which I recently received, I would like to take this opportunity to respectfully present my thoughts and opinions to the Committee.

As a student at the University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP), I am obviously not in the position to apply for specific designation for ULIP, however, I have passed on this information to the relevant staff at the Institute who I am sure will pursue this if the need arises.

I still struggle to understand why ULIP should have to apply for specific designation as they did not have to do this in order for English, Scottish and Northern Irish students to receive student loans/grants. I feel this is very unfair and, if I'm to be completely honest, it seems a bit unnecessary. As far as I'm aware, applying for specific designation is a long process which could mean even more Welsh students losing out on something so simple as attending a British university which happens to be based in Paris. The location is also not completely irrelevant as it plays a major pedagogical role because ULIP's focus is on French Studies. No new Welsh students were able to attend ULIP this academic year and I believe no Welsh students have applied to start in the next academic year which is probably due to the fact that the ULIP website states that Welsh students are not eligible for student finance through Student Finance Wales. If ULIP have to go to the extreme and apply for specific designation, it could not be guaranteed that Welsh students who cannot afford to fund their own studies would be able to study at ULIP in the 2021/22 academic year. Personally, applying for specific designation shouldn't be the case as I strongly believe ULIP should automatically be considered a 'normal' British university just like the University of Cardiff or Glasgow, for example. On an economic note, surely the whole process of applying for specific designation would cost the Welsh Government a considerable amount of money which could be better used elsewhere. From a financial point of view, the easiest, fairest and best solution would be to allow Welsh students to receive student loans without the drawn out process of applying for specific designation. The fact that England, Scotland and Northern Ireland consider ULIP students/applicants eligible for funding should surely be enough to allow Welsh students to have access to loans and grants.

At a time when the Welsh Government seem to be trying to strengthen Franco-Welsh relations by establishing the Wales France Business Forum (Le Club), I would have thought that encouraging Welsh students to study in Paris would be beneficial for these relations. Our Minister for Education obviously thinks otherwise. I'm not sure if the Welsh Government is aware of this, but ULIP offers a French Studies with Business degree and I would have thought the government and the representatives of Le Club would want to take full advantage of this. There could be Welsh students who are fluent in French and English, and potentially Welsh, who also have a solid knowledge of business and have an excellent knowledge of Paris and France. Unfortunately, Le Club will not be able to make the most of this until Welsh students are given the same opportunity as English, Scottish and Northern Irish students. If ULIP applies for specific designation, which I believe is granted by Welsh Assembly Members, I truly hope that this petition and previous correspondence would not affect the Minister for Education's decision in granting ULIP special designation. I have found her letters addressed to yourself to be quite blunt and at times they read as quite rude. I would like to trust that the decision concerning special designation is taken without malice or spite and that the decision is taken based on what is best for Welsh students.

I sincerely hope that you as the Committee can find a better solution to this problem which disadvantages Welsh students.

Yours sincerely,
Alanna Jones