Our ref: 2012/0026974  
24 August 2012

Dear Mr Haddow

Thank you for your letter of 13 August regarding living costs loans for students studying the Diploma in Professional Legal Practice (DPLP).

Education and lifelong learning are key drivers for jobs and economic growth. The Spending Review reflects our commitment to enable children and young people to improve their life chances, reach their full potential and make the best possible contribution to Scotland's economy. However, the Scottish budget faces real and significant long term cuts in coming years and tough decisions have had to be made to prioritise spending.

The living cost element of the outgoing Postgraduate Students’ Allowances Scheme (PSAS) was discontinued 2 years ago to enable us to use the funding to increase the number of students eligible to receive tuition fee support. The number increased from 1,820 to 2,700 and there are no plans to re-introduce living costs.

As you are aware the new postgraduate loan scheme will commence in academic year 2012-13, loans of up to £3,400 will be available to all eligible Scottish domiciled students (and EU) studying the DPLP rather than the previous ring-fenced 300. The new scheme will also mean that around 5,000 full and part-time postgraduate students will be eligible to apply for the Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan, which is nearly twice the number of those who were able to benefit under PSAS.

You mention the PGDE and the DipSW, you may wish to note that the PGDE course is not covered by the current Postgraduate funding mechanisms. The PGDE attracts the same support as an undergraduate course and the policy basis for this is that by helping as many people as possible to gain a teaching diploma, the Scottish Government can meet its obligations on teacher numbers. Students on this course apply for funding to SAAS.
The DipSW is currently funded by the Scottish Social Work Council, not SAAS. This support was instigated to support unqualified Social Workers to train as the profession introduced the requirement for formal qualification. At that time, most students on the DipSW had given up employment as unqualified Social Workers (and therefore their salaries) in order to achieve the qualification. Most students now progress to the DipSW straight from an undergraduate degree and SSWC is in the process of reviewing it’s funding provision.

Limited resources mean that we are not able to reintroduce student loans for living costs to DPLP students, rather we have chosen to use the money available to support more postgraduate students in meeting the cost of tuition fees.

Andrea Fleming
Higher Education and Learner Support