



Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee

The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
economy@parliament.scot

Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli,
Principal and Vice Chancellor of
the University of Glasgow

Sent by email only

27 August 2020

Dear Professor Muscatelli,

COVID-19: impact on young people

The Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee is carrying out an inquiry on the impact of COVID-19 on Scotland's economy, businesses and workers. Our current focus is on the impact on young people, with a specific focus on employment and training or education prospects. Details of the inquiry can be found at this [link](#).

As you will be aware, the Fraser of Allander Institute estimates youth unemployment could increase in Scotland by over 37,000 this year "*without government action*". The Committee has agreed to seek written evidence from you and would be grateful if you were able to respond to the issues set out below.

Professor Blanchflower's evidence

In oral evidence to the Committee (on 11 August), Professor Blanchflower said:

'One of the big measures that we could take relates to the big role that universities could play. If Chinese students are not coming to Scotland, the worry is that the required number of students will not come. The view of Anton Muscatelli and other university principals is that universities could do something. If no such students are coming, universities could potentially step in. We should talk about that. Anton Muscatelli's view is that we are well placed to do that.'¹

Professor Blanchflower went on to say:

'Maybe we should also just forget about grades and admit to Scottish universities every person who has applied. That would need money, but the payback and rate of return for that would be huge.'²

¹ <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12737&mode=pdf>

² <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12737&mode=pdf>

The Committee would be grateful for your response to these comments.

Anchor institutions

What is your understanding of the term “anchor institution”? Given the Scottish Government’s acceptance of Recommendation 21 of the [AGER report](#), what more can universities do as “anchor institutions” in helping support and grow the economies of the communities they are part of? Are the policy responses listed on page 64 of the [Government’s response to the AGER](#) sufficient considering the crisis now facing many of these communities? What levels of investment are needed to ensure that the Scottish Job Guarantee and other schemes are effective? What other policies should be pursued at this time?

I would be very grateful to receive a response within one month of the date of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gordon Lindhurst". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G".

Gordon Lindhurst MSP

Convener

Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee
