

ENTERPRISE AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

Wednesday 8 May 2002
(Morning)

Session 1

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2002.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Copyright Unit,
Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ
Fax 01603 723000, which is administering the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate
Body.

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by The
Stationery Office Ltd.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office is independent of and separate from the company now
trading as The Stationery Office Ltd, which is responsible for printing and publishing
Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body publications.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 8 May 2002

Col.

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS (POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL DEGREES) BILL	2608
ITEM IN PRIVATE.....	2612

ENTERPRISE AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

15th Meeting 2002, Session 1

CONVENER

*Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab)

Brian Fitzpatrick (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP)

*Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)

*Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)

*David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con)

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD)

Andrew Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*attended

WITNESSES

Professor Colin Bird (University of Edinburgh)

Dr Andrew Riches (University of St Andrews)

Ann Scott (Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department)

Iain Smith (North-East Fife) (LD)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Simon Watkins

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Judith Evans

ASSISTANT CLERK

Jane Sutherland

LOCATION

Committee Room 4

Scottish Parliament

Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee

Wednesday 8 May 2002

(Morning)

[THE CONVENER opened the meeting at 10:05]

The Convener (Alex Neil): Good morning and welcome to the 15th meeting in 2002 of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee. I would not normally start a meeting with only a quorum of three, but we have received five apologies this morning. Tavish Scott, Andrew Wilson and Rhona Brankin, who is ill unfortunately, cannot make the meeting. Brian Fitzpatrick will be late and Ken Macintosh is at a meeting of the Standards Committee, but he will join us if we require him. Before we get on to the agenda item on the lifelong learning report, the members who are here might want to make a judgment about how far we can take the report with so few members present. We can perhaps deal with that later in private.

This is the first meeting of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee since Wendy Alexander resigned as the Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning. I put on the record the fact that I, as convener of the committee—and I am sure that I speak for the whole committee—had a very good working relationship with Wendy Alexander. She was extremely helpful and worked well with the committee. We did not always agree—Wendy and I do not always agree politically—but there was a good relationship between the committee and the minister. I am sure that that will continue now that Iain Gray is the Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning. We should put on the record our gratitude to Wendy for the way in which she worked with the committee.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): I support that view entirely.

University of St Andrews (Postgraduate Medical Degrees) Bill

The Convener: We will take evidence this morning on the University of St Andrews (Postgraduate Medical Degrees) Bill. I welcome first Ann Scott, who is from the Scottish Executive's higher education and science division. This is not the first time that she has been before the committee and I am sure that it will not be the last. There is nothing ominous in that.

It is fair to say that the bill is not particularly controversial. I believe that an important amendment will be lodged at stage 2, but we can cover that in the evidence that we will take this morning. I ask Ann Scott to lead off and give us the Executive's view.

Ann Scott (Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department): I can add very little to the Executive's memorandum. The bill has no financial consequences for the public. If the University of St Andrews is happy with the bill, the Executive sees no reason not to support it.

The Convener: No members want to ask questions.

I welcome Iain Smith, who is the sponsor of the bill and the local MSP, and Dr Andrew Riches, who is head of medical science at the University of St Andrews. Iain Wright from the University of St Andrews is not here. I ask Iain Smith to kick off and to keep what he says as short as possible.

Iain Smith (North-East Fife) (LD): Thank you for those words of welcome, convener. I forward apologies from Iain Wright, who is dealing with a small family problem and is unable to be here this morning.

I thank the non-Executive bills unit for its work on the bill. Although the bill is small, the unit has spent a considerable time working on it and has been extremely helpful throughout the process from when I first considered the proposal.

I will start by saying a few words by way of background to the bill and ask Dr Riches to explain the university's position and why it wishes the bill to be passed. I will finish off by explaining the probable amendment at stage 2.

The proposal for the bill was made a couple of years ago when I was still a minister. Professor Michael Steel from the University of St Andrews approached me to ask whether it would be possible for the university to award postgraduate degrees for medical research. At that time, I investigated with the Executive what would be required and it emerged that primary legislation

would be required. Although the Executive indicated that it would be prepared to consider the matter if a suitable vehicle came along, it did not think that it was sufficient in itself to merit an Executive bill. When I ceased being a minister, the opportunity arose for me to introduce a member's bill and it seemed appropriate to do so.

The bill is straightforward. The intention is simply to allow the University of St Andrews to award medical research degrees to people who are suitably qualified. It is important to stress that the bill will not result in the award of a qualification in medicine. It is simply to allow people who are qualified in medicine to conduct research. As such, it will be a useful addition to the university's portfolio. Dr Riches will explain more about the purposes of the degree and why the university is keen to promote it.

Dr Andrew Riches (University of St Andrews): I emphasise that the bill refers to a postgraduate qualification for which medically qualified graduates will be eligible. The MD qualification is not registrable.

We would like to reintroduce the qualification because it is an important part of research training and it will contribute to the lifelong learning experience. In particular, it will attract good medically qualified graduates to the Fife area, who will be able to take a research degree in association with the university. The MD is a research qualification that is aimed at medical graduates as part of their continuing medical experience. It is important to the university because it will enhance our research profile. We think that it is important to new medical graduates because it will attract them to the region to study at a more advanced level.

In summary, we have held probing consultation within the university and with the other Scottish universities. If the bill is passed, we will go ahead and award the MD.

Iain Smith: The aim of the bill is to amend the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966 to allow the University of St Andrews to award the degrees in medicine that it is unable to award at present. The intention is that the university will be able to award those degrees to anyone who is suitably qualified.

We examined the bill after it was introduced and discovered that the terms in section 1(2) might be drawn too narrowly in that they might exclude people with certain overseas qualifications. We intended that those people should be able to apply for the degree under section 19 of the Medical Act 1983. It is my intention to lodge an amendment at stage 2 to rectify that omission.

I have nothing else to say, but I am happy to answer questions.

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): As a fellow Fife MSP, I welcome the bill and the fact that it will allow more medical graduates to study in Fife. Iain Smith and I attended a meeting with Fife NHS Board at which it said that it welcomes the opportunity that the bill will present. I fully support the bill.

The policy memorandum talks about the possibility of introducing a medical PhD at the university in future years, which would be worth while. How likely is that?

Dr Riches: We want to keep the legislation open. As in any university, our patterns of research training are evolving. We would like to introduce the straightforward MD initially, but perhaps follow on with PhDs.

Miss Goldie: It seems that the committee is the 2002 equivalent of a papal bull. We are simply asked to validate the proposal.

I have one technical question. I noticed that in responding to Professor Steel, the dean of the faculty of medicine at the University of Dundee expressed the hope that a viva examination might be part of the assessment of a thesis. I do not know what a viva examination is, but I would like to know whether it is a worthwhile suggestion and whether the University of St Andrews proposes to take the dean's advice.

10:15

Dr Riches: Yes. In essence, a viva is what we are doing now—you are quizzing me and getting information. Hopefully, I have got my facts right. As part of a research qualification, people submit a thesis, which is examined by experts from another university. The experts read the thesis and write a report, but they also meet the candidate. The candidate has an oral examination, which we call a viva. It is an essential part of the process—it is an auditing process to ensure that the candidate has undertaken the work and also provides an opportunity to discuss the candidate's research, which is supposed to be at the cutting edge. We have to stretch the candidate and ensure that the degree can be awarded. It is a valuable suggestion and we will certainly incorporate it.

Miss Goldie: So it is a metaphorical rather than a physical dissection of the candidate.

The Convener: Thank you, Dr Riches. We will now hear from Professor Colin Bird, who is speaking on behalf of the other universities.

Professor Colin Bird (University of Edinburgh): I have consulted my fellow deans in the medical schools in Dundee, Glasgow and Aberdeen. We all agree that we support the proposal, so I can be relatively brief.

Miss Goldie: So can we.

The Convener: Is it true to say that the bill is non-controversial?

Professor Bird: Absolutely. There is no controversy at all. The proposed regulations are standard and the procedures involved are common to all the other medical schools and universities in Scotland.

The Convener: Thank you.

We must consider the contents of our report at stage 1 on the general principles of the bill. Do we authorise the clerks to prepare a report for stage 1 saying that the committee agrees with the principles of the bill?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Are members happy with the consultation? It has been more than adequate this morning.

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: I pay tribute to the non-Executive bills unit and reinforce Iain Smith's comments. I have personal experience of lodging a member's bill—one that Iain Smith opposed—and I know that the unit is one of the Parliament's biggest assets. The unit provides an excellent service and its assistance is extremely helpful.

Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab): When I was a member of another committee, I dealt with the non-Executive bills unit and we would not have achieved all that we did without the unit's help.

Item in Private

The Convener: We must consider whether to take the discussion of the remit and work programme of our tourism inquiry in private. I propose that we take that discussion in public because I see no reason to take it in private. I am in favour of taking reports in private because that is a more effective way of getting through the business. However, given the wide-ranging debate on the future of the tourism industry, I think that it would be welcomed if the committee considered its remit and work programme in public.

Miss Goldie: I have no problem with that.

The Convener: Is it agreed that we discuss the remit and work programme of our tourism inquiry in public?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: We now move into private to discuss our final report on the lifelong learning inquiry.

10:19

Meeting continued in private until 10:31.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, 375 High Street, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Wednesday 15 May 2002

Members who want reprints of their speeches (within one month of the date of publication) may obtain request forms and further details from the Central Distribution Office, the Document Supply Centre or the Official Report.

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

DAILY EDITIONS

Single copies: £5

Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT, compiled by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, contains details of past and forthcoming business and of the work of committees and gives general information on legislation and other parliamentary activity.

Single copies: £3.75

Special issue price: £5

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Standing orders will be accepted at the Document Supply Centre.

Published in Edinburgh by The Stationery Office Limited and available from:

The Stationery Office Bookshop
71 Lothian Road
Edinburgh EH3 9AZ
0131 228 4181 Fax 0131 622 7017

The Stationery Office Bookshops at:
123 Kingsway, London WC2B 6PQ
Tel 020 7242 6393 Fax 020 7242 6394
68-69 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AD
Tel 0121 236 9696 Fax 0121 236 9699
33 Wine Street, Bristol BS1 2BQ
Tel 01179 264306 Fax 01179 294515
9-21 Princess Street, Manchester M60 8AS
Tel 0161 834 7201 Fax 0161 833 0634
16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD
Tel 028 9023 8451 Fax 028 9023 5401
The Stationery Office Oriel Bookshop,
18-19 High Street, Cardiff CF1 2BZ
Tel 029 2039 5548 Fax 029 2038 4347

The Stationery Office Scottish Parliament Documentation
Helpline may be able to assist with additional information
on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament,
their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries
0870 606 5566

Fax orders
0870 606 5588

The Scottish Parliament Shop
George IV Bridge
EH99 1SP
Telephone orders 0131 348 5412

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

www.scottish.parliament.uk

Accredited Agents
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers