

# **Briefing: Provide tuition grants to support medical students studying medicine as a second degree**

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 04 Hydref 2021  
Petitions Committee | 04 October 2021

Reference: SR210837

Petition Number: P-06-1189

**Petition title:** Provide tuition grants to support medical students studying medicine as a second degree

**Text of petition:**

Students studying undergraduate medicine courses having previously studied the first degree are having to pay £9,250 upfront for tuition, totalling £37,000 by the start of their fourth year of studies.

Many students are having to work part-time jobs during their intense studies and have to try to find external support. Provide these medical students with tuition fee grants to avoid students being unable to focus on, and being unable to fund their studies.



## 1. Background

Those who wish to study an undergraduate medical doctor course are able to access the usual package of student tuition and living costs support from Student Finance Wales for the first four years of their course. During the fifth and subsequent years they apply to the NHS for tuition and living cost support and an income assessed healthcare bursary, and to Student Finance Wales for the reduced rate maintenance loan.

### 1.1. First Degree rule

In most cases, if a student already has a first degree from a UK institution, they are not eligible for further student financial support for either their fees or their living costs to study for a second degree.

Student Finance Wales practitioner guidance explains that:

Students who hold a first degree cannot access further student support, unless they are topping up a an Ordinary degree or a Foundation Degree to an honours degree..

### 1.2. Exception to the First Degree rule

The regulations allow for an exception if the second undergraduate degree is a medical doctor degree, but this exception applies to living cost support only. In these cases, students are not eligible for further tuition fee support.

This means, as the petitioner points out, that such students will have to self-fund their full tuition fees (£9,000 to £9,250) for the first four years of the course (they may become eligible for NHS support from the 5<sup>th</sup> year). This situation is the same in Wales, England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

### 1.3. Numbers impacted

Approximately 360 Wales domiciled students enrolled onto a medicine undergraduate degree in 2019/20. It is not known how many of these were studying medicine as a second degree and therefore it is not possible to assess the financial impact of introducing this policy.

## 1.4. Tuition fee grants

The petition calls for tuition fee grants to be provided in the relevant cases. Prior to 2018, Welsh Government provided tuition fee grants to new undergraduate students as part of its normal student financial package. These were funded from the Welsh Government budget. The same First Degree Rule applied in relation to tuition fee grants.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.