



Jack Sargent MS
Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

6th August 2021

Dear Sir

Re: Petition P-06-1163 Extend the postgraduate STEMM bursary to all MSc students in Wales

In response to your question regarding designation. As an alternative provider, one of just four in Wales, the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) does not receive automatic designation and applies for specific designation on an annual basis through HEFCW. The final decision on designation is formally taken by Welsh Government.

As part of our external Quality Review in 2017 CAT participated in a Higher Education Review for Alternative Providers (HERAP). This requires Alternative Providers to meet Higher Education Quality requirements and allows to operate Higher Education Courses but does not provide the basis to apply for full designation or a 'fee and access plan.' CAT is currently preparing for its next external quality review under the Gateway Quality Review scheme. If the outcome of this Gateway review is successful, this would allow CAT to apply for full designation as part of its future plans.

When the consultation on Postgraduate Taught Masters Incentivisation Bursaries W19-24HE was circulated in July 2019 we responded at the time on behalf of the students at CAT. The consultation throughout referred to Higher Education *Providers* rather than Higher Education *Institutions*, and so our response included statements that Welsh students studying STEMM subjects at Masters level at CAT would welcome the opportunity to apply for the bursary on the same basis as their peers at Welsh Universities. Furthermore, as our courses have a clear sustainability focus they align closely with Welsh Government objectives in meeting the environmental aims of the Well-being of



Future Generations (Wales Act, 2015), which was one of the key principles of the original policy consultation.

Although CAT has recruited well to its STEMM courses since 2019 and operates a waiting list of places due to meeting its targets, we still have many Welsh applicants for our courses who are unable to accept a place due to financial barriers. CAT's typical STEMM Masters students are in their mid-30's on enrolment and so unlike many Masters students often have additional financial commitments they have to meet when returning to higher education. Consequently, as the proposals would benefit Welsh CAT students rather than CAT itself, then CAT was happy to administer the distribution of any bursaries as applicable.

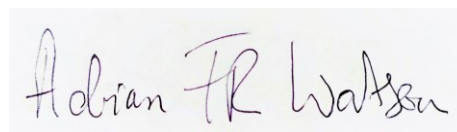
We did not receive any reply to our consultation response, until the bursary was formally implemented, and noted CAT students were not included in the eligibility. At which point we raised a query with HEFCW about the lack of bursary availability for CAT students but were told that it was too late to reverse the criteria in that first year of operation. They agreed the principle that as a student focussed bursary, that Welsh CAT students were not treated the same as their peers, but the scheme has continued in the same manner since.

Whilst the petition made to the Welsh Government was an initiative led by one of our students rather than CAT itself, we wholeheartedly support the principles of an equal consideration for all Welsh STEMM students returning or continuing with higher education, in keeping with the principles behind the original policy aims of the bursary scheme.

Yours sincerely



Peter Tyldesley
CEO
Centre for Alternative Technology



Adrian Watson
Head of Graduate School
Centre for Alternative Technology