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12 March 2026

Dear Convener,

My predecessor the Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Veterans Graeme Dey MSP previously wrote to the committee to advise that [a Consultation on Support for Part-Time Study and Disabled Students](#) was published on 26 June 2025.

The consultation had three strands of engagement to ensure a wide range of views were considered from students, parents, carers; and also the Higher and Further Education sectors, training providers, third sector organisations and all others who have an interest.

I am pleased to advise that a report of the findings from the consultation has been published today. A range of supporting documents are also available to ensure this information is published in accessible and alternative formats for all those interested in the findings. This includes:

- A Technical Annex
- Infographic summary of consultation findings
- Infographic summary of qualitative research findings
- An Easy Read version of the main report
- A British Sign Language (BSL) translation of the main report's Executive Summary

The report and documents above can be accessed on the Scottish Government website at - <https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781806438716>.

The consultation has provided valuable insight into how part-time and distance learners, and disabled students, are being supported. The analysis of findings identified clear themes (both financial and non-financial) where respondents welcomed support and where the support they receive is helping them to study towards their goals.

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The findings also highlighted areas where changes could be considered in the future for example relating to the eligibility criteria for the Part-Time Fee Grant (PTFG), the provision of living cost support for part-time and distance learning students, as well as the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) model and application process.

The report also highlighted the importance of holistic support to students in relation to visibility of information and advice for students, student agency in advocating for support from institutions; and the need for effective engagement between students and institutions, including implementation of tailored support and access to wellbeing support.

Additionally, the consultation sought views on expanding the current widening access SIMD target to include part-time degrees rather than limit this to full-time first degree entrants (which is currently the process). The findings found that the majority of respondents supported the inclusion of part-time degrees in the target. However, it was also indicated that wider consideration of widening access targets and measures would be necessary if considering changes of this nature.

We will now give consideration to the consultation findings in more detail to understand the complexities of issues facing students and the sector; and how the student support on offer can continue to best meet the needs of students at our institutions across Scotland. We will report on progress in Autumn 2026.

I am also sending this letter to the Convener of the Education, Children & Young People Committee to update them on this consultation.

Yours sincerely,

BEN MACPHERSON MSP
Minister for Higher and Further Education

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