SUPPLEMENTARY WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM THE NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS
SCOTLAND – 23 NOVEMBER 2007

Graduate Endowment Abolition (Scotland) Bill

Further to NUS Scotland’s written and oral evidence given to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee on Wednesday 14 November, we supply, as requested, additional information for consideration.

Under the current proposals within the Graduate Endowment Abolition (Scotland) Bill, only students who will become liable to pay on 1 April 2008 and beyond would be affected. Graduates who have already become liable to pay the graduate endowment will continue to remain liable.

NUS Scotland supports the proposal to abolish the graduate endowment, as we believe that this will go some way towards alleviating student debt and encouraging access. However, NUS Scotland does not believe that graduates who have already become liable to pay the graduate endowment should be included in this proposal. We believe it would be a poor use of public funds to refund the graduate endowment to graduates while current and future students still face high levels of hardship and debt. While, in an ideal world we would like to see graduates’ loans paid off, under current conditions we feel that these public funds would be put to better use by increasing student support in order to alleviate the crippling hardship that many students continue to face during their studies.

In addition, we believe that repaying the graduate endowment fees already paid by previous cohorts of students would set a precedent on previous or future changes to student support arrangements. This precedent is dangerous, and potentially very expensive.

As stated in previous evidence, NUS Scotland has policy, which has been set by our 600,000 members, to support any policy that will alleviate student hardship. We support the abolition of the graduate endowment on that basis but cannot support the use of public funds to repay debt of previous graduates who have made it through the system, albeit a difficult and unfair system. We urge the Committee to consider using any and all available public funds so that the system can be improved for current and future students.