



THE FUTURE OF DIPLOMA IN LEGAL PRACTICE FUNDING

In light of expected change to the funding for the Diploma in Legal Practice, you may find this helpful to know prior to any formal announcement from the Scottish Government in the near future.

Since the inception of the Diploma in Legal Practice in 1981 a number of Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) funded places have been allocated to the Diploma in Legal Practice. There have been 300 funded places each year since 1995.

In late 2008, the Scottish Government announced to the Law Society of Scotland its plans to change student support arrangements for the Diploma in Legal Practice. Any changes are part of a much wider review of the Postgraduate Student Allowance Scheme (PSAS) funding. Interim arrangements have been in place since, pending the outcome of the review. During this time, the Society has issued a guidance note for students explaining the position. This note has also been made available on our website and has been included with the application forms for the Diploma.

Last month, representatives of the Higher Education and Learner Support Division of the Lifelong Learning Directorate of the Scottish Government met the Society's Director of Education and Training to give notice of changes to Diploma funding for the 2012/13 academic year, as part of changes to the overall PSAS funding arrangements. It is likely that the changes will involve replacing the current arrangements with a system of loans for postgraduate courses. At this stage, we have no information on how many loans there will be. We do know that the specific allocation of 300 awards to the Diploma will cease and that universities will be required to bid for Diploma funding alongside their other postgraduate courses.

The postgraduate contact in each university had also been informed that there would be change, although no detail was available. After the Society's meeting with the government, we contacted all Diploma directors to inform them that the meeting had taken place and that the likelihood was a move from fees awards funding to loans which would require them to request funding to be allocated to Diploma places from within the university's overall funding bid.

It is our understanding that the Scottish Government will make a formal announcement within the next two weeks, but in the meantime if you have any queries, please forward them to the Society at lizcampbell@lawscot.org.uk and we will do our best to answer them. Alternatively, you may prefer to speak to the Diploma director or Head of School at your own university.

Liz Campbell
Director (Education and Training Policy)
Law Society of Scotland