

Fol document 1

Constituency Office
6 Church Street Dumbarton
G82 1QL
Tel: 01389 734214
Email: jackie.baillie.msp@parliament.scot

Mr John Swinney MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House Regent Road Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Our Ref: [redacted]

02 April 2019

Dear John

[redacted]

I have been contacted by the above noted constituent.

[redacted] wishes to express her frustration and disappointment with the current Scottish Government policies for Higher Education that are limiting access to Scottish university places for young people.

In her son's case this has resulted in no offers from university in his final year at school.

To add to this initial disappointment, she has discovered that she has been misled by UCAS who report on their website that applicants can apply for 'extra' and then through 'clearing' should their initial applications be rejected. The options that appear as 'extra' are not available to Scottish applicants and Scottish universities do not offer 'clearing' for Scottish students.

Had her son been aware of this he would have submitted a wider array of applications and perhaps had an improved chance of success.

Her son achieved 8 A's at National 5 level, with hard work. In S5 he had a serious sports injury that resulted in hospitalisation, surgery and a significant recovery period. He decided to defer his exams on advice from his teachers. He has subsequently applied to university with no higher results from his 6th and final year at school and is currently taking his higher exams for the first time this year.

She notes that her son does not meet the widening access criteria.

She believes that it is a great pity that the Scottish Government appear to be limiting education to a one generation cycle. With current policies and funding caps limiting the opportunities of many young people.

Whilst she recognises that children from disadvantaged backgrounds require additional support and wider access to higher education this should not be at the cost of limiting the life chances of bright, hard-working individuals who have equal rights to education.

I would be grateful if you would advise how she can proceed to support her son to access higher education in Scotland and any actions she should take to ensure that her son receives a university education.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Baillie MSP
Dumbarton Constituency

Fol document 2

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

26 March 2019

John Swinney MSP

Dear Mr Swinney

I am writing to you on behalf of my family to express our collective frustration and disappointment with the current Scottish Government policies for Higher Education that are limiting access to Scottish university places for our young people. In my son's case these have resulted in no offers from university in his final year at school.

To add to this initial disappointment, I have discovered that we have been seriously misled by UCAS (the universities' application body) who report on their website that applicants can apply for 'extra' and then through 'clearing' should their initial applications be rejected. This, it transpires, is a misrepresentation of the reality as it appears the options that appear as 'extra' are not available to Scottish applicants and indeed Scottish universities do not offer 'clearing' for Scottish students. Had my son been aware of this reality he would have submitted a wider array of applications and perhaps had an improved chance of success however this information was not available to him or us as parents. In my view this is a serious deception that must be challenged.

My son achieved 8 A's at National 5 level (achieved by 1% of boys , SQA statistics) with hard work and parental support. In S5 he had a serious sports injury that resulted in hospitalisation, surgery and a significant recovery period where he decided to defer his exams on advice from his teachers. He has subsequently applied to university with no higher results from his 6th and final year at school and is taking his Higher exams for the first time this year. Contacting the universities to request if information was required to support his application in light of this resulted in only one institution responding to indicate that they did.

In addition, my son does not meet the widening access criteria as he has benefited from that fact that his parents are both first generation in their respective families to attend university, effectively a 'middle class' background with parents who value and promote education at home. It is a great pity that as a nation we appear to be limiting education to a one generation cycle, it is possible to access higher education to improve attainment but not to maintain attainment, is it any wonder Scottish citizens choose to leave?

It is clear that current polices/funding caps are limiting the opportunities of many of our young people and while we all recognise that children from disadvantaged backgrounds require additional support and wider access to higher education this should not be at the cost of limiting the life chances of bright, hard-working individuals who have equal rights to education. As parents, we have prioritised education within our family and this has influenced many of the decisions we have made, it seems this has been to our son's detriment.

I have two younger sons; how easy will it be to motivate them to be knowledgeable; informed; and to work hard at school and in life if their experience is that this limits your life opportunities? Right at this moment, as with many other parents throughout Scotland I have the challenging task of motivating a young man to do just that for 'the most important exams in his life'..... not an envious task. Is it any wonder that mental health issues are increasing within our young population?

It is suffice to say I am angry and emotional, we all are. The Scottish Government policies are failing our hard- working family. I would be grateful therefore if you could advise how we, as a family, might proceed to support our son access Higher education in Scotland, any actions we should take and what you, the deputy First Minister and Secretary for Education and Skills within the Scottish Parliament , will do to address this.

With grateful thanks
[redacted]

Tel [redacted]
[redacted]

Fol document 3

From: [redacted]
Sent: 19 March 2019 21:37
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Rejected at St Andrews University

Dear Nicola,

Please can you advise why my daughter has been rejected from St Andrews University to study English. The criteria for the course is 3 As at higher level. My daughter achieved 5As at higher level as well as 10As at National 5. Her Personal Statement was exceptional. This brings me to the question of are Scottish Universities keeping their spaces for students from abroad as our Scottish Students cannot achieve any more to be accepted. This is degrading for our children when they have worked so hard to achieve this . I await your response with interest Regards [redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

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Fol document 4

John Swinney MSP
Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House Regent Road
EH1 3DG
Our Ref:[redacted]
08 March 2019

Dear John,

[redacted]

I am contacting you on behalf of my constituent [redacted] of the above address. [redacted] recently applied through UCAS for the PGDE courses offered at Glasgow University and Strathclyde but was rejected.

I have permission from [redacted] to share her letter (below) which outlines her situation in her own words. Attached is a copy of the letter from [redacted] supporting the pathway of education that was in place when [redacted] was taking her exams.

'Dear Sir

I have recently applied through UCAS for the PGDE course (Secondary Education) at the University of Glasgow and Strathclyde University, and I have previously encountered a rejection of my application due to my qualification in Mathematics. I should like to elaborate a little on the reason why my S4 and S5 examination levels and results differ somewhat from the national norm.

A decision was taken by my school, [redacted] College, Glasgow, as part of the switch-over to the Higher Still examination system of the early 2000's, to get pupils to focus mainly on Higher level in the subjects they had chosen in S3.

In practice, this meant that pupils were not presented for Intermediate 2 (or Standard Grade) in almost all subjects, including the subjects which they had eventually decided to drop at the end of S4. Instead, in the latter case, we were presented for a module at Higher level only. It would seem that the school's rationale behind this was based on a belief that, if the SQA's stressing (at the time) of the importance of Unit Assessments and modules were to be taken seriously, a pass in a module at Higher level would be regarded as at least the equivalent of a pass at Intermediate 2 or Standard Grade by prospective employers and universities. The major exception to this policy was in Modern Languages, which explains my awards at Intermediate 2 in French and Spanish. Because of the difficulty of the first module in Higher Mathematics, a very small number of weaker candidates were, in fact, presented for Standard Grade in this subject. My parents specifically requested that I be allowed to sit this examination, but this was refused as I was deemed not to fall into that category. I am writing to ask you to take this situation into account as I have previously been denied entry to the course for lacking the required Maths Qualification. I have completed the Intermediate 2 Maths course and proceeded to sit Higher Unit 1, a level of study higher than the required

National 5 for entry. I feel it would be unfortunate, to say the least, if I were felt not to meet the present-day Maths requirement for the course because of an historical anomaly in my secondary education which was outwith my control. I have previously spoken to the admissions teams at both Glasgow and Strathclyde who are unable to make any exceptions as the admissions criteria are set by the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Having finished my degree as a single parent and struggling to overcome many obstacles in the process, I feel that this admissions policy is causing me unnecessary hardship. At a time where Scotland is experiencing a shortage of teachers, I am very disappointed at being prevented from pursuing the career which I have worked so hard towards due to this issue with my Maths qualification.

I have attached written evidence from my school, which I obtained for a previous application for the same course, confirming that this policy operated there at the time. Thank you for your consideration of this matter and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

[redacted]

I would be very grateful if you could review this issue and provide some clarity and direction for my constituent.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Doris MSP for Maryhill and Springburn (SNP)

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[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

Telephone Number: [redacted]
Mobile Number: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]
31 May 2019

Nicola Sturgeon
The First Minister
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear First Minister,

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland - 100 Renfrew Street, Glasgow, G2 3DB - Withdrawal of Unconditional Offer for [redacted]

I am writing to you on behalf of my 19 year old son, [redacted].

[redacted] is currently completing an HND in Music at [redacted] College. [redacted] plays saxophone and piano.

I am writing to you regarding an issue with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. I will refer to them in this letter as RCS.

[redacted] received on 12th February 2019, a Guaranteed Unconditional offer to study a Bachelor of Music Performance, B(Mus) course at RCS.

However, on Thursday 23rd May 2019, he received an email at 5pm advising that the offer had been "withdrawn" due to an "administrative error".

[redacted] receiving a place at RCS Glasgow, fulfilled an ambition of his to attend what he has always regarded as being a highly rated and prestigious establishment. [redacted] has for a long time had a strong ambition to further his studies at degree level with RCS. This in turn would allow him to progress towards a career in classical music, which has always been his dream.

I would wish to outline the history of events regarding his situation as follows:-

November 2018 – [redacted] attends an audition and interview at RCS.

16th November 2018 - RCS offer a Reserved Unconditional Place to [redacted].

4th December 2018 – [redacted] accepts Reserved Unconditional offer.

12th February 2019 - RCS upgrade their Offer to a Guaranteed Unconditional offer, which [redacted] accepted by email. [redacted] then telephones RCS to make sure that they have

received his acceptance. This was because he was so excited to have fulfilled one of his ambitions of securing entry to RCS after many years of hard work and application on his part.

14th February 2019 - RCS Glasgow send [redacted] an email to confirm that his acceptance was received by them.

21st February 2019 – [redacted] withdraws, on his UCAS Undergraduate application, his other choices to apply to study at Glasgow University or Napier University (which were his alternative applications). This was because he had now secured a Guaranteed Unconditional place at RCS to commence in September 2019.

1st May 2019 – [redacted] receives an email from RCS inviting him to join an RCS portal for the forthcoming 1st year students at RCS, giving him access to various information and social media, organised by RCS.

23rd May 2019 – [redacted] receives an email at 5pm, prior to the May holiday weekend, advising of the withdrawal of his Guaranteed Unconditional offer due to an "administrative error".

24th May 2019 - I telephone UCAS for advice in respect of this matter. I am told that this is unheard of by them and that RCS are not entitled to withdraw the UCAS offer. They state that the offer, which was accepted by [redacted], is a legally binding contract and state that the place is [redacted] and not something which RCS can withdraw. I am instructed by UCAS that we absolutely do not accept the withdrawal and I asked them to put a note on [redacted] file about this issue.

24th May 2019 - I telephone RCS, Admissions Department around 8 times. I am unable to have a meaningful conversation with anyone who has the appropriate authority to assist me with clarifying matters, including providing further details of what the administrative error was and meaningfully discussing the issue regarding [redacted].

Eventually on 24th May 2019, I manage to speak to someone more senior, but again they are not able to discuss in detail the issue with me. I eventually, on 24th May 2019, am passed to the Personal Assistant of [redacted]. The Personal Assistant tells me that [redacted] is on holiday and informs me that someone from Admissions Department will contact me. I then send an email to RCS advising that [redacted] is not withdrawing from the course, that this was their error and that it is their legal obligation to allow [redacted] to attend their establishment and proceed with his course. This was in line with what I was advised to do by UCAS.

Subsequently RCS then delete [redacted] application and his offer of the course from the UCAS website.

[redacted] of RCS, telephones me on the evening of 24th May 2019 and apologises, telling me that in her 20 years' experience, this is unprecedented. I explained that this is not satisfactory and we have been advised by UCAS that they are not entitled to withdraw [redacted] offer and that we had been advised not to withdraw [redacted] application for the course. During the telephone conversation, she then offers [redacted] a free half hour lesson each week instead. I am shocked by her offer and I explained that this is not acceptable, that he is about to complete an HND at [redacted] and is devastated by what has occurred.

During the conversation [redacted] advises that RCS think [redacted] could do with another year prior to starting RCS, to enable him to reach the standard required. I reminded her during the conversation that [redacted] is a Grade 8 Saxophonist, that he fully complied with all entry requirements in his application to them, that he attended what was a rigorous entry process of interview and audition, and that he satisfied all entry requirements for the course. This was not disputed during the conversation nor has it been disputed to date. [redacted] offered no further explanation of what the administration error was.

I also, during the conversation, explained that [redacted] had been taking extra private lessons from his [redacted] School Tutor, who is also employed by RCS Junior Ensemble. I explained that [redacted] had gone through a very difficult and intensive application process with RCS, which resulted in the two offers being made to him which I have referred to.

I also during the conversation pointed out that I could not understand how it could take a prestigious institution, such as RCS, 6 months to detect what they described as an "administrative error", when there are only a few places available for a saxophonist on the B(Mus) course. I also asked [redacted] to put [redacted] UCAS Application and Offer back on their website whilst this matter was still pending. The application subsequently came back on their website but with the result now being changed to "unsuccessful" in respect of [redacted] application.

27th May 2019 – [redacted] telephones me to advise that she has spoken to the [redacted] at RCS, [redacted]. [redacted] states that RCS are prepared to offer [redacted] a tuition package of continuing education. Upon my request for clarification, she confirms that no certification at the end of the year would be given to him. She also confirmed that this would only allow [redacted] to enrol as a part-time student and that he would have one weekly half-hour lesson, and he would be entitled merely to the use of the Practise rooms in RCS and only to observe some classes. You will appreciate that I was extremely shocked for [redacted] to be given such an offer.

We agreed to meet RCS on Wednesday 29th May 2019. However, I received advice from [redacted] College (where he is presently attending) not to attend this meeting. They advised me that it was very early in the process and that they felt that we would be in a very vulnerable position, that we could feel pressurised into accepting something less than what they had originally offered i.e. a Guaranteed Unconditional place. [redacted] College advised me very clearly that my son was entitled to his place and that RCS Glasgow legally should commit to allowing [redacted] to attend and complete the original offered course for the full duration and that they were obliged to do so.

28th May 2019 - I cancelled the meeting on the aforesaid advice, by sending an email to [redacted], RCS.

28th May 2019 – [redacted] College communicate with UCAS. UCAS confirm with RCS that they have given a revised offer to [redacted]. However, UCAS are informed by RCS that

[redacted] had agreed to this revised offer. This was entirely inaccurate information. The revised offer has never at any time been accepted by [redacted]. You will appreciate that once again I was shocked to hear this.

As you can imagine we are extremely disappointed regarding this situation. [redacted] himself is devastated as am I to receive this withdrawal (which we have been advised by UCAS is illegal). We are extremely shocked to receive such a withdrawal 6 months after the first offer. I am refraining in this letter from giving details about just how upsetting and distressing this has been for [redacted], because I wish to focus on the other issues involved at this stage.

This has also left [redacted] with no other alternative study course for the forthcoming Academic Session of 2019/2020. When he accepted the Guaranteed Unconditional place from RCS, he naturally closed the application process for his other courses.

[redacted] is an extremely conscientious student. He has developed his musical skills over a long period of time. In recent years he has worked extremely hard to get to a level where he would be considered by RCS as a potential candidate. All the work he has done in recent years has been directed towards developing his skills to a level where he would be able to present himself as a viable candidate to gain entry on this course with RCS, to allow him to continue to develop his skills.

We are extremely concerned at the conduct of RCS in this matter. [redacted] should not have to suffer the consequences of RCS's conduct, whether that be financial or otherwise.

I believed in your declaration that "Scotland should be the best place for a child to grow up".

Seeing [redacted] hard work being rewarded by RCS, granting him a place for this course, together with him being able to, as an ordinary Scottish young man, embark on such a course, with the support of the Scottish Government, gave myself, [redacted] and our family tremendous pride at Scotland's Government supporting him in following his dream. That is why in recent years myself, my husband and family have supported your political direction and believed in your commitment to supporting persons, such as [redacted] in higher education and in your commitment that this is available to all persons regardless of their background.

I appreciate that the RCS has a high level of international students who pay well for the privilege of studying at such a prestigious educational establishment. However, I am left wondering what the basis of RCS' s decision is and whether other factors have arisen which has consequently deprived [redacted] of his place on the course which RCS committed to give him.

Going through this process, you will appreciate that we are now questioning our belief in the education system in this country.

I am now seriously calling into question whether equal opportunities are really provided for ordinary, hardworking and ambitious students such as [redacted].

I would still like to believe that my son has equal opportunities and that yourself, as my duly elected First Minister, will intervene appropriately in this situation and ensure that this matter is resolved and that [redacted] is able to attend his course at RCS.

This is not a situation where [redacted] has not earned the right to his place in the course. [redacted] did everything expected of him by RCS leading up to and during the application process. They fairly granted his application. Had his application been refused at the time, this would clearly have been explained to him. However, his application was granted (on two occasions) ultimately leading to the place being confirmed.

I would be grateful, considering that the end of the academic year is now fast approaching, if you could intervene in this matter promptly.

I am grateful for your consideration to the terms of this correspondence and I look forward to hearing from you as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

Fol document 6

From: [redacted] **On Behalf Of** First Minister
Sent: 02 October 2019 12:06
To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: University Access

MACCS case please for OR

[redacted]
Office of the First Minister
Scottish Government
5TH floor/St Andrews House/Regent Road
Edinburgh EH1 3DG
Tel 0131-244-5214

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From: [redacted]
Sent: 30 September 2019 15:27
To: bill.grant.mp@parliament.uk
Subject: University Access

Dear Bill

I just thought I'd put a question to you about the entry requirements for young Scottish students who wish access into Veterinary Medicine.

My Daughter (17 years old) has studied extremely hard for the last 3 years at school gaining qualifications in National 5, Highers and Advanced Higher education:

Her grades are:

National 5:	English A , Maths A , Chemistry A , Biology A , Religious Education A , History A , Art A , Physics B
Highers:	English A , Maths A , Biology A , History A , Music C
Advanced Highers	Chemistry B , History B , Biology C

I'm sure you'll agree these are excellent qualifications; but they are not enough for her to be even considered for Veterinary Medicine. She has gained a lot of experience: milking, lambing, observing a post-mortem on a cow, volunteering at a veterinary practice, living on a farm house for 1 week on her own taking care of 4 horses, 4 chickens, 2 dogs and 2 cats (while owner was on holiday) volunteering with "Riding for the Disabled" volunteering in kennels, volunteering at [redacted] feeding the Alpacas, ponies and rabbits, stayed at a farm for a weekend and helped de-horning calves.

My question is this: Do you think it's fair that the entry requirements are so tight? **She missed a "B" on Advanced Higher Biology by just 3 marks.** She is also not allowed to re-sit the subject.

I know there must be very definite guidelines, but can the universities not look at the student and the “full picture” and give them a chance? My daughter is absolutely devastated, and for a university to make her feel she’s not good enough because she has just missed the qualification entry requirements seems to me to be extremely ruthless.

I do of course understand the reason for the tight guidelines, but when you have a student who has worked so hard towards her goal and for the sake of 3 marks the universities will not even consider her. How can they seriously think she would be not capable of being a good vet because of 3 marks?!

I’m not sure what I expect to come from this email if anything at all, I just feel so frustrated and totally concerned for my daughter that I suppose I’m just reaching out for some sort of sensible objective explanation. I don’t see why they couldn’t look at the full personal statement because she would be a committed hard-working student who is more than capable. She has no plan B for her career and has no idea what she is going to do with all of her qualifications.

I would also like to add that for our young people this is not exactly conducive to their mental well being and could have an adverse effect on their futures. They get very stressed over sitting exams and then when they don't gain the grade, that's it!!! No re-sit!! No second chance!!

I’ve always known it’s difficult to get into Veterinary Medicine, but it just feels like it doesn’t make a lot of sense when they can’t even consider a student of this ilk. She got an A in Biology for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher pre-lim was a B, could this not even be considered?

Many Thanks in advance for your response.

Kind Regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

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From: [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, July 28, 2019 9:59:29 PM
To: Swinney J (John), MSP
<John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot<mailto:John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>>
Subject: Request for assistance- Scottish Student

Dear Mr. Swinney,

I have forwarded a copy of this email to the First Minister, but it is within your remit.

I write to you in a last ditch attempt to put right an injustice.

My son, [redacted] applied in October for a place on the Medicine Course at Dundee University. Academically he is in the top percentile. That said, his UKCAT score was mediocre, primarily because of a family bereavement at the time of sitting, and initially, sometime in November, he received a rejection from the University.

In May this year, he received an email out of the blue from your Admissions Department, inviting him to participate in a Skype interview. He was elated and a short time later had his interview. Unfortunately he was unsuccessful. The reasons stated were that the interviewers had concerns over his empathy and insight into ethical matters. From what I could glean from [redacted], this appears to have related to a question about organ donation.

I was very surprised to hear that empathy was perceived to be a problem, he is the most empathetic person I have come across. Also one of our local doctors took it upon herself to coach him about ethics and in particular organ donation. I am sure he could have recited the arguments in his sleep. So what went wrong in this 18 minute interview?

I have spoken to [redacted] at depth. He was overwhelmed by the importance of the interview and did not present himself in a positive light. This is unlike him, but sadly something I have to accept.

That said, I have mulled this over and I find fault with the system. You will appreciate, there is varying degrees of help and assistance available to candidates from socially deprived background and the like, but nothing that appears to cater for students from a rural area where their exposure to the rigours of such interviews and the position they find themselves in when applying for Medicine is either non existent or extremely limited.

By contrast, one of his school friends has got a place at [redacted]. His father is an A&E Consultant and his mother a GP. He already had a massive head start. My background quite simply is I am a retired Police Officer and my wife, a recently qualified Nurse, she entered late in life because of a lack of opportunity. How can we prepare or help him to the same extent others can? Simply we can't, but why should that be reflected in his lack of opportunity?

One of the proud boasts of the Medical School and the Scottish Government is that you wish to widen participation and open it up to all no matter what background. A fine boast, but in practice one in which our son is left out in the cold whilst others succeed. Is it his fault we aren't Medics? Then you have to ask yourself, is it a level playing field? I think you know the answers to both these questions. I truly wish I

could help the boy to the same degree as others, but I can't. I can only fully support his attempts to get into Medical School, which have now come to a full stop.

So what is left for him? A 5th UCAS choice of BioMedicine, in the hope that he gets a sufficiently good degree and goes onto Medicine or to wait for a year and reapply uncertain whether he will get in or not? If he doesn't, his confidence will have been shattered, his life marred by the experience.

The whole situation is quite vexing and an unsolvable dilemma from my perspective and I wish you to be aware that Scotland is missing out on a candidate who would be an outstanding Medical student but someone whom is eminently suited to be a Doctor.

Can you help? I don't want platitudes, I want someone that can and will make a massive difference to a young person's life. Someone who can recognise that a young Scot's life opportunities shouldn't be restricted because of where he lives!

Kind Regards, [redacted]

Sent from my iPad Pro

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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba: A' toirt deagh bhuidh air beatha sluagh na h-Alba

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Fol document 8

From: [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, August 18, 2019 1:57:19 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: Kerr L (Liam), MSP
<LIAM.KERR.msp@parliament.scot<mailto:LIAM.KERR.msp@parliament.scot>>;
Swinney J (John), MSP
<John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot<mailto:John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>>;
Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
<Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot<mailto:Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>>
Subject: Re: [redacted]

After a bit of research about the widening participation I understand that part of this is lower socio- economic background I am a single parent and work as a [redacted] in [redacted] council. I do not earn enough money to pay tax and I have struggled to put my other children through university. [redacted] suffers from [redacted]. [redacted]

On Fri, 16 Aug 2019, 13:33 [redacted] wrote:

Dear [redacted],

Thank you for your e-mail. I am afraid that you are mistaken; we have no more places for Home students this year unless they meet the Scottish government's widening participation criteria. I have just written at length to [redacted] outlining various possibilities. I hope that he will share the information with you.

With best wishes,
[redacted]

[redacted],
Student Recruitment and Admissions Service,
University Office,
University of Aberdeen,
Regent Walk,
Aberdeen,
AB24 3TU

Fol document 9

From: [redacted]

Sent: 19 September 2019 12:28

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Fw: Higher Results/BBC Question in the Commons etc etc

Dear Sir

I have attached a self-explanatory email trail. Unfortunately Ms Monagan didn't see fit to even acknowledge my email let alone provide any sort of response.

I am not familiar with the SNP's reporting structure but in your capacity as Deputy 1st Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education I am hoping that you will either be able to respond to my note or ask Ms Monaghan to do likewise.

The difficult questions are always the hardest ones to provide satisfactory answers.

Regards

[redacted]

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [redacted]

To: carol.monaghan.mp@parliament.uk <carol.monaghan.mp@parliament.uk>

Sent: Tuesday, 3 September 2019, 18:38:01 BST

Subject: Fw: Higher Results/BBC Question in the Commons etc etc

Dear Madam

I have been listening with interest to your comments in the House of Commons on the BBC just now about the success of the Education system in Scotland under the SNP Government..

I have attached a dialogue between myself and my local Councillor in Inverclyde that, by coincidence, has been taking place over the past few days. Please take your time to read through it.

Having listened to your comments on the BBC, I would welcome your views and thoughts on the undernoted email trail.

Two points I will make.

1. I don't support the Political Party that my Councillor represents (to save you time Googling he's a Tory) but I have always respected his views, support and opinions that he has always given to me.
2. If I do not receive a response from either you or your office by end of business 6th September I will contact the BBC. Hopefully we will both be able to put our points across live to the BBC about the success or otherwise of the SNP's Education policies.

Kind Regards

[redacted]

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [redacted]

To: [redacted]

Sent: Monday, 2 September 2019, 11:45:49 BST

Subject: Re: Higher Results

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for taking the time to get back to me.

Trying to take the positives out of it, you're quite right, Nottingham Vet School does get an excellent name.

By her own admission [redacted] made a mess of her higher English. That said, unless you want to follow in the foot steps of Doctor Dolittle I would have thought that the 3 Sciences and possibly Maths would rank more important than English.

As I'm sure you are aware REACH is meant to assist entry to the top degree courses and to allow entry by way of adjusted entry requirements. Designed exactly to be able to adjust entry based on results such as a C in English. As I mentioned Glasgow put [redacted] on a waiting list but Edinburgh confirmed to me that they only give consideration to adjusting entry for students in schools in the East and not the West. They would not even consider an application from [redacted]. Not a very inclusive approach.

You ask a good question about lobbying the Head. I spoke to the Assistant Head and whilst he listened to me and spoke to Glasgow University, they told him nothing that they hadn't already told [redacted] and I.

The real point that I tried to get across to him was - 'don't support and advocate REACH if it doesn't work. Having students spend (waste?) 3 years completing a programme and giving them false hope is wrong and unfair on them, if it doesn't achieve anything' - I guess he didn't see taking such an approach as a career enhancing move but in my opinion that's exactly what schools should be doing. So - Mr Swinney, and Scottish Funding Council don't ram this programme, down our throats claiming how successful it is and then don't deliver on your commitments.

When I wrote to The Scottish Funding Council they had no idea how many students were successful in gaining admission via Widening Participation notwithstanding that it is them who finance it. I find that astonishing. Absolutely no accountability.

Is there anything that you can do to help? Get Glasgow to admit her !!!

Seriously - I'm not sure if there is but thanks for the offer. One thing that I do find very unfair is not allowing [redacted] to be considered at Glasgow just because she's been accepted to Nottingham. That's unfair and a cop out. Her grades are far stronger than Glasgow's requirements. Does your University Network stretch wide enough to either pull a string or at least get a sensible reason as to who [redacted] should not be allowed admission? If that's not possible or asking too much then I fully understand.

As I mentioned, I'm not sure if you or your colleagues ever debate this sort of scenario but please quote this case if it helps get a point across.

I guess (this week in particular) our Political friends may have more pressing matters in their minds.

Kind Regards

[redacted]

Fol document 10

From: [redacted]

Sent: 15 August 2019 18:35

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Lack of University places for Scottish Students

Dear Mr Swinney

I am writing to you on behalf of my young nephew [redacted]. [redacted]. He applied for course at Glasgow University and was advised to attend their 4 week Summer School in order to guarantee his place based on his postcode deprived area G42. He did this and received an A Marking.

He has now been told the courses he applied for are full and that there is no place for him. This did not deter him as he then received word from Strathclyde University initially offering him a place. However this has now also been retracted. The reason given is that they have filled their Quota of Scottish pupils.

As a family we always vote for SNP MSPs and MPs and are fully supportive of SNP policies.

However we feel that the situation pertaining to [redacted] highlights that the policy for students from poorer backgrounds being able to attend University and having the ability to do so do not go anywhere near fulfilling SNP Government promises.

Thank you for taking time to listen and hopefully you will be able to look into this matter which leaves many Scottish students feeling at a loss despite their hard work and difficulties they face through no fault of their own.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

Fol document 11

From: Jamie Hepburn MSP <Jamie.hepburn.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 07 August 2019 12:56

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: University Places (Case Ref: [redacted])

Dear John,

I have recently been contacted by my constituent, [redacted], regarding the availability of university spaces in Scotland.

[redacted] stated to me that his daughter had attained exceptional grades through S5 and S6, yet was not accepted or any of her choices that she registered through UCAS.

His daughter has the ambition of studying Medicine in order to become a doctor, and thus sat UCAT Admission Testing to apply for her courses.

[redacted] is concerned regarding the impact that UCAT Scores have on the admissions process, and believes that they are being used to restrict the number of places available. [redacted] also has concerns regarding the number of spaces available for domestic students in Scottish universities.

I would be grateful if you could outline to me what steps the Scottish Government is taking to ensure that there are enough spaces available to study medicine for students that show that they have the adequate grades and for any information you could provide on the level of provision for medicine for prospective domestic students.

I look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,

Jamie Hepburn MSP
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth

Fol document 12

[redacted]

John Swinney MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education

19 June 2019

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I have been contacted by a constituent whose son is currently looking to attend university, however she has raised questions with me regarding spaces available for Scottish students:

I took my son to the open day at Edinburgh University yesterday. We had a good look around and then spoke to a woman from admissions. My son is interested in history and archaeology. We were informed for history there are about 200 places; 45 are for Scottish and EU students. In archaeology there are 100 places and 6 are allocated to Scottish and EU students. From that small number of places a certain number quite rightly are reserved for widening access. My son's hopes of getting a place at Edinburgh are squashed. My elder daughter applied to both Edinburgh and St Andrews with all As she was not offered a place and is now studying in England. It is a joke that education is free in Scotland. It is very difficult to get a place at a good Scottish University because of the government cap. They fund places up to £5000 whereas English students pay £9250, no wonder the universities fill up with students from England. It is outrageous. Scotland will pay heavily for this in the long term because bright young people will be forced south to go to university and I expect many of them will not return.

I would be grateful for any comments you can provide which I may relay to my constituent.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce Crawford MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for the Stirling Constituency
Scottish National Party (SNP)

Fol document 13

Ross Thomson MP
Member of Parliament for Aberdeen South
HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr John Swinney MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills Scottish Government
St. Andrews House Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Our Ref: [redacted]

10th April 2019

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Re: University places for Scottish students

I am writing to with concerns raised by some of my constituents in regards to university places for Scottish students. One of my constituents , in particular, is currently a student at [redacted] in Aberdeen and applied to study at the University of St Andrews.

The grade requirements for the course were AAAB, and my constituent achieved an outstanding five A1 grades and is expected to achieve high results in the forthcoming exams this year. In spite of exceeding the requirements set out by the university, this application was rejected.

It has been brought to their attention that the reason for this outcome was because the quota of Scottish student had been filled. T find it concerning that it has been suggested to my constituent and their family that this could be the result of the school attended and potentially the careers of their family. Policies which aim to promote fairness appear to have had the unintended consequence of several talented young people being rejected from universities.

My constituent has received various unconditional offers from universities in England. Scotland has a proud history of exemplary standards of higher education, but it appears that the policies relating to enrolment have driven passionate and talented young people south of the border.

I would appreciate it if you could inform me what your government is doing to ensure fairness within university enrolment processes.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

Ross Thomson MP

Fol document 14

Constituency Office: 192 Holburn Street, Aberdeen AB10 6DA Telephone: 01224 592229

Email: ross.thomson.mp@parliament.uk Twitter: RossThomson_MP

Facebook: [facebook.com/rossthomsonMP](https://www.facebook.com/rossthomsonMP) Website: www.rosstthomson.org.uk

The Scottish Parliament
Parlmaid na h-Alba

Jeremy Balfour
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian

John Swinney MSP
Deputy First Minister | Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

15 March 2019

Dear John,

I have been contacted by a constituent highlighting grave concerns regarding her son's refusal to Edinburgh University to study medicine. He has also been refused a placement at Glasgow and Dundee University. He awaits a decision from Aberdeen University. Her son is a grade A student and has been told by the Universities that he is an excellent candidate but they only have so many places for each course.

Could you please advise me why Scottish students are missing out on places which are being given to the rest of UK and International students who appear to be fee paying. It would seem there is discrimination against Scottish students because there are students getting places with lesser achievements, and getting places simply because they are fee paying.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

Jeremy Balfour MSP
Lothian Region

Fol document 15

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5960 email: Jeremy.Balfour.msp@parliament.scot

From: John Swinney MSP Office <no-reply@johnswinney.scot>
Sent: 27 August 2019 17:25
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: John Swinney MSP Contact Us Submission

Here is a copy of the Contact Us form submitted on :

www.johnswinney.scot

Name: [redacted]
Email: [\[redacted\]](#)
Phone: [redacted]
Address: [redacted]
Post Code: [redacted]
Subject: Uni places

Message: My grandson who is autistic but has 4 advanced higher canâ€™t get a place at Aberdeen uni couldnâ€™t go through clearing because a place was pending they sent him out a leaflet on halls now have told him there is no place. This boy is brilliant at languages and wanted to train to be a teacher Funnily enough 2 uniâ€™s in Coventry and Wales have offered him a place [redacted] Liam Kerr has been trying to help him but is getting nowhere I would you to investigate as at one point they had places in clearing
GDPR Consent: Yes

We will get back to you as soon as we can.

Regards,

John Swinney MSP

Fol document 16

[redacted]
Aberdeen
[redacted]
17th April 2019

Nicola Sturgeon
First Minister of Scotland
The Scottish Government
St Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear First Minister,

[redacted] UCAS personal ID [redacted]

Young carer

My son, [redacted], has received a total rejection for his application for joint honours MA economics and international relations at both Edinburgh and St Andrews Universities, despite having excellent Higher examination results. My son is distraught at this outcome, yet in two weeks time is to sit another round of SQA examinations. [redacted] is a most capable student who would have seized the opportunity to study at either St Andrews or Edinburgh Universities.

We have made a formal request for a selection decision to be reviewed, in light of relevant new information. Unfortunately Edinburgh still consider that his Higher results of A grades in mathematics, chemistry, physics and modern studies with a B grade in French are inadequate.

Our family has had a traumatic year, which is difficult for me to come terms with, let alone my children. [redacted]. [redacted] has been involved in providing care for myself, during my recovery, as his father travels frequently on business and works long hours and is often not present at home. Edinburgh have pointed out to us that as [redacted] has had a caring role in 2019 and not 2018, this piece of information is irrelevant .

[redacted]

[redacted]

With these considerable family pressures, It would have had great peace of mind, had my son [redacted] been able to secure an undergraduate place at either St Andrews or Edinburgh University, where he would have been part of a welcoming and supportive student community.

I was happy when my son showed great direction and conviction as to which subjects, he wished to study as an undergraduate at University. [redacted] has a long standing fascination

with global affairs and has an innate interest in politics. He has a firm grasp of how vitally important the study of economics is for development of government policy. [redacted] is an extremely motivated diligent and determined young man.

Both [redacted] and myself are extremely disappointed that he has received total rejections from both Edinburgh and St Andrews universities for his undergraduate applications.

Given a good university education, I had hoped that he would reach his potential and be of value to society.

I would be grateful for your explanation as to why Scottish universities have reduced places for Scottish students, which results in the universities requesting exceptionally high results from the potential students. I would also value explanation as to why sixth year results are now disregarded totally, and no conditional offers are being made.

Finally I would appreciate any assistance with my son's appeal for the selection decision's at these universities.

I thank you for reading this letter and send you best wishes for Easter.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Fol document 17

From: [redacted]

Sent: 22 November 2019 15:24

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Application to medical school in Scotland

Mr Swinney

I am emailing as a concerned parent of a scottish born and bred teenager with her heart set on studying medicine in Scotland.

My 17 year old daughter [redacted] has studied hard and made sacrifices throughout her senior school life to achieve the exam results required for entry to medical school. [redacted] achieved 9 National 5 subjects at A band plus 6 subjects at Higher grade all band A . She is currently in 6th year studying subjects at advanced higher grade.

I am heartbroken for her to learn that because of the average score she achieved in the UKCAT test she has been ruled out of being considered for the course she so desperately wanted to study in Scotland . [redacted] has a true calling to become a doctor and practice medicine in Scotland. What a tragedy that this wonderful caring and committed young person is being passed over by a computer selection process , discarding applications that have scored less than 2600 in the UKCAT test.

Mr Swinney I will move heaven and earth to help my daughter be given a chance to become a wonderful doctor dedicated to help people in Scotland.. Can you please explain to me why the UKCAT test results are preventing the young person applying for medicine full application being considered ? Why is the UKCAT test result not part of the interview process instead of being the deciding factor in who goes forward for interview? [redacted] has dedicated 6 years of her life to achieve the exam results required for entry to medicine , for this to be discarded on the performance in a 2 hour test is a tragedy. Is there any ray of hope you can offer [redacted] ?

Sincerely

[redacted]

Fol document 18

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]

Sent: 07 March 2019 12:59

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Fwd: University places

> Nicola,

> My son, who achieved 8 A's at national 5, 5 A's at higher & is predicted 3 A's at advanced highers has today been rejected from Edinburgh university medical school & told he was an excellent candidate but they only have so many places for each few group. I am absolutely appalled that a child with the grades my son has & the drive since primary school to be a doctor to be told sorry, it doesn't matter how well you've done, we can't give you a place is an absolute disgrace! I have always told my kids that your work hard & reap the rewards, seems I was wrong. If the government really want to make sure all kids, irrespective of background, can have a free further education you might want to stop thinking up ridiculous schemes like the baby box & the named person scheme & spend the money ensuring that kids who have worked so hard to secure their place on the course they want to study, can actually get a place. I sincerely hope you take this email onboard & act accordingly, as I know it's not the 1st message like this you've received! Stop making out to the electorate that SNP are securing our kids futures when you certainly are not.

> He has had a rejection from Glasgow & Dundee too. He awaits the outcome from Aberdeen but I don't hold out much hope given the number of applicants versus the number of places. He is devastated, his teachers are devastated for him & so is the family. If you want to educate the rest of the world while Scottish students miss out on places because they get funded, stop the rhetoric about your humble beginnings & a free education for all. However, if you are serious about that, SNP need to take a long hard look at what you're doing with this.

>

> Regards,

>

> [redacted]

>

> Sent from my iPhone