



**Universities (Scotland) Act 1966: Reinstating the Ability of the University of St Andrews to
Award Certain Degrees and Licences
Response from the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh**

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh is a professional membership organisation that sets clinical standards and aims to improve the quality of patient care. Founded in 1681, we support and educate doctors in the hospital sector throughout Scotland and around the world with over 13,000 Fellows and Members in over 90 countries, covering 54 medical specialties and interests. The College enables a worldwide community of physicians and their teams to advance the health of our global population for the long-term benefit of society acting as the voice of our membership, engaging in health policy and promoting equality and human rights.

The College has received mixed views from Fellows on the proposal to amend the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966 in order to reinstate the ability of the University of St Andrews to grant degrees in medicine, midwifery and dentistry. Some consider that the reasons given more than 50 years ago to single out St Andrews are out of date and it is a historic anomaly that St Andrews has these legal restrictions in place.

There is however a need to consider if it would be a good use of resources to create another clinical school in Scotland, and if so, whether St Andrews would be the best location to do so. St Andrews would also be awarding Scotland's fifth medical degree for a population of five million.

Any university in Scotland should be allowed to bid for a new medical school or indeed increase the number of places in established Universities. The effect of COVID may reduce applications from international graduates, which is a significant source of income and thus there may be more places to fill, but based on applications from 2019 there is still an approximate 4 to 1 ration of applications to medical schools and places available.

The Scottish Government decides where to allocate places to restricted programmes such as medicine. Perhaps that mechanism is a more logical place than an Act of Parliament to resolve concerns about location, use of resources, availability of attachments locally, cost effectiveness, and other considerations.

Increasing the number of medical schools in England was based to some extent on areas where recruitment of a local workforce was challenging and hence creation of a local medical school was seen as a potential solution. This may not be as applicable to Scotland.