



[News \(http://www.scotsman.com/news\)](http://www.scotsman.com/news) [Sport \(http://www.scotsman.com/sport\)](http://www.scotsman.com/sport) [Business \(http://www.scotsman.com/business\)](http://www.scotsman.com/business)

[What's On \(http://www.scotsman.com/what-s-on\)](http://www.scotsman.com/what-s-on) [Lifestyle \(http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle\)](http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle) [Jobs \(http://www.scotsman.com/jobs\)](http://www.scotsman.com/jobs)

[Directory \(http://www.scotsman.com/findit\)](http://www.scotsman.com/findit) [Motors \(http://www.scotsman.com/motors\)](http://www.scotsman.com/motors) [Property \(http://www.scotsman.com/property\)](http://www.scotsman.com/property)

[Deals \(http://www.dealmonster.co.uk/deal/edinburgh/\)](http://www.dealmonster.co.uk/deal/edinburgh/) [More](#)



[\(http://www.scotsman.com/\)](http://www.scotsman.com/)

Scottish independence: University fee refuge fears



by CHRIS MARSHALL

EIGHTY per cent of university places in an independent Scotland will be taken up by “fee refugees” from the UK unless they can be charged for the cost of their tuition, education secretary Mike Russell has claimed.

Addressing a higher education conference in Edinburgh yesterday, Mr Russell said research carried out by the Scottish Government had shown there would be a dramatic rise in the number of UK students crossing the Border in the event of a vote in favour of independence in September.

Students from the rest of the UK are currently charged up to £9,000 a year to study in Scotland. However, should Scots back independence, universities would have to offer English, Northern Irish and Welsh students [free tuition](#) in line with that offered to other EU citizens – unless the Scottish Government can mount a legal challenge.

Mr Russell said: “Presently, only 1.5 per cent of students domiciled in the rest of the UK study in Scotland. If that total were to rise to 10 per cent – and scoping of the issue suggests the number might go higher – then 80 per cent of existing university places in Scotland would be filled by those students.

“Right now, around 88 per cent of Scottish students remain in Scotland to work after graduation, so the numbers of Scottish graduates available to Scottish employers would fall dramatically and would not be adequately replaced by the 36 per cent of graduates from the rest of the UK or Europe who stay after studying in Scotland.”

Mr Russell said he hoped to see a return to [free tuition](#) in England, which would remove “the potential challenge of fee refugees”.

Legal experts have questioned the SNP's assertion that UK students could still be charged for tuition following independence.

When asked about the legality of the move yesterday, Mr Russell again cited legal advice obtained by Universities Scotland last year, which raised the possibility that the Scottish Government could charge fees to EU nationals – including those from the remainder of the UK – if it was able to prove the higher education sector would be “imperilled” by the surge in demand.

He also revealed he had now ruled out the introduction of a so-called “management fee”, which would have allowed the Scottish Government to claw back some of the cash paid in tuition for non-UK EU students.

“It’s quite clear that those countries who have looked at and imposed management fees have had to give up the concept of free education,” he said. “I am not willing to compromise on that issue.”

Mr Russell’s comments came after he had accused the UK government of “xenophobic” immigration policies, which he said were hurting Scotland’s universities.

Yesterday, he received backing from Professor Anton Muscatelli, the principal and vice-chancellor of Glasgow University, who told the [higher education](#) conference organised by Edinburgh University that moves by the UK government to tighten up immigration had “hampered” attempts to attract the best students from overseas.



Click here to win
First class train
tickets to London
with East Coast Rail



**Find out what's
on in your area.**
Your local
entertainment
guide.



**Find the right
property for you.**
Buying or renting?
Your search starts
here.

Competition



WOW ²⁴/₇



Property

