

Q&A: Gap-Year Students

1. **Q** When do I have to apply for deferred entry in order to be regarded as a gap-year student starting a course in academic year 2010/11?

A In order to be regarded as a gap-year student (and therefore be eligible for tuition fee grant as a continuing student under the student support regulations for academic year 2010/11) you must have applied and received your offer from your university by 1st August 2009.

2. **Q** What if I want to wait and apply for deferred entry after I've got my A Level results?

A You must have applied to your institution **and** have received your offer of a deferred place by 1st August 2009. If you wait until after you have received your A Level results to apply, you will not have received your offer of a deferred place by this date and will therefore be considered as a "new" student (not eligible for tuition fee grant) if you defer until 2010/11.

3. **Q** Will I be expected to have anything to "prove" that I've taken a gap-year and that I qualify for the tuition fee grant?

A You will normally be asked to provide the relevant letter from your institution or a printout of the offer on the Track screen from UCAS confirming that you have applied for and received an offer of a deferred place by 1 August 2009.

4. **Q** What happens if, during my gap-year, I change my mind about what course I want to do? Will I still qualify as a gap-year student?

A This will depend on whether the subject matter of the course you want to change to is largely the same as the course for which you originally applied. If your institution considers that the subject matter of the course you want to change to is, in whole or in part, the same as the one you originally applied for, then you will continue to qualify. If they do not consider it to be so, you will no longer qualify as a gap-year student.

5. **Q** What happens if, during my gap-year, I change my mind about which institution I want to go to?

A You need to have received an offer from your institution by 1st August 2009 to qualify as a gap-year student. You would then be expected to take up your place at that institution, except where the course is withdrawn and you have to go to a different institution to do the same (or similar) course. If you simply change your mind about where you want to study, you will not qualify as a gap-year student and will be considered as a "new" student if you defer entry until 2010/11.

6. **Q** What happens if I do a foundation degree first?

A If you undertake a foundation degree and immediately go on to a full-time [honours] degree (“end on” course) in AY 2010/11 will be considered as a continuing student and therefore eligible for tuition fee grant if studying at a Welsh higher education institution.

7. **Q** What happens if I apply to start in 2009, received an offer from my institution for that year, but decide to take a gap-year?

A To qualify as a gap-year student you must have received an offer of a deferred place from your institution by 1st August 2009. If you originally apply to start in AY 2009/10, receive your offer for that year, and then change your mind about when to start, you need to contact your institution to see whether they can offer you a deferred place for AY 2010/11. There is no guarantee that they can do this, or that they would be able to do so by the 1st August 2009 deadline.

8. **Q** If my entry to university is delayed for a year - for example, if my institution requires me to do an art foundation course as a prerequisite for an art and design course - will I still qualify as a gap-year student?

A Students who have received an offer of a place for AY 2010/11 by 1st August 2009 will qualify, even if the institution requires you to undertake an art foundation course initially.

9. **Q** What happens if I appeal against my A Level results and can't go to university in 2009/10 as I intended to?

A If you successfully appeal against your A Level results after you have received an offer of a university place for AY 2009/10 and cannot, therefore, take up your place in 2009 as planned, you will be in the same position as an eligible gap-year student.

10. **Q** What happens if I get a 2009/10 university place through clearing or through “adjustment”, but then decide that I want to take a gap-year and start my course in 2010/11?

A To qualify as a gap-year student you must have received an offer from your university for deferred entry in 2010 by 1st August 2009. The clearing/adjustment process takes place in mid to late August, so if you decide to defer a university place following clearing/adjustment, you will be considered as a “new” student for 2010/11 entry. *Places obtained through the clearing process are normally for courses which start in that year and are not usually deferrable.*

11. **Q** What student support will I receive in 2010/11 if I am considered to be an eligible gap-year student in 2009/10?

A Students taking a gap-year in 2009/10 and who subsequently start their studies in 2010/11 will be considered as continuing students and, depending on family income, be entitled to the following levels of support:

- A tuition fee grant (up to £1,940*) for Welsh domiciled students studying in Wales;
- A tuition fee loan (up to £1,285* if studying in Wales and up to £3,225* if studying elsewhere);
- A means tested Assembly Learning Grant (maintenance grant) of up to £2,906* (household income of £18,370* or less for full grant of £2,906*, between £18,371* and £39,329* for partial grant, and over £39,329* no grant (except for some teacher training students));
- A maintenance loan (up to £4,745* if living away from parents home or up to £3,673* if living at parents' home and £6,648* if living away from home and studying in London);
- A means tested Welsh Bursary of £319* a year for students from Wales with a household income of up to £18,370*.

12. **Q** What student support will I be eligible for if I do not satisfy the criteria in order to be regarded as a gap-year student and start my course in 2010/11 instead of 2009/10?

A “New” students who begin their studies in 2010/11, including those who do not qualify for gap-year, will, depending on family income, be entitled to the re-modelled levels of support:

- Assembly Learning Grant (maintenance grant) up to a maximum of £5,000;
- The upper household income threshold for partial Assembly Learning Grants will rise to around £50,000*;
- No Tuition Fee Grant (not available to 2010/11 starters);
- An enhanced Tuition Fee Loan of up to £3,225* to ensure no full-time undergraduate students have to pay up front fees;
- All new Welsh domiciled students who take out a maintenance loan from academic year 2010/11 will receive up to £1,500 debt relief when they enter repayment. (Indicative levels of maintenance loans are provided at Q12). Continuing students who take out a maintenance loan in 2010/11 may also be eligible for debt relief.

13. **Q** What happens if I attend university in September 2010 as an eligible gap-year student but realise I'd be better off financially as a new (2010/11) system student?

A You need to contact your local authority (to confirm this is the case) and you would have to withdraw formally your gap-year status and re-apply as a 10/11 year student.

Students should work out their likely statutory support for AY 2010/11 as part of their decision as to whether to take a gap-year.

* Please note that the figures provided here are for 2009/10 and may be subject to change (uprating) for the academic year 2010/11.