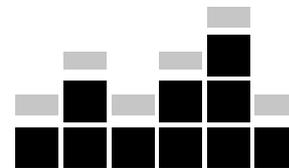


sound advice on

STUDENT FINANCE



Independent student status 2017/18

What does being an independent student mean?

It means that we won't take the student's parental income into account when working out the household income and contribution.

If the student is married, in a civil partnership or over 25 and living with their partner, we will take the income of their husband, wife, civil partner or partner into account.

What's an independent student?



A student is considered independent if:

- they have care of a person under the age of 18 on the first day of the academic year which they're applying for support;
- they're 25 or over on the first day of the academic year which they're applying for support;
- they've been married or in a civil partnership before the start of the academic year, even if that marriage or civil partnership has ended;
- they have no living parents;
- they've supported themselves for at least three years before the start of their course. This includes any time they:
 - were in paid, full-time employment
 - got Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or other state benefits
 - got any pension, allowance or other benefit because of their disability or by any other reason of confinement, sickness or illness
 - got training under any scheme for the unemployed or other funding by any state authority or agency
- their parents can't be traced or it's not practical or possible to contact them;
- their parents live outside the European Commission and an income assessment would put them in jeopardy, or it's not reasonably practical for them to send funds to the UK if a contribution were assessed (this may apply if the student is a refugee);
- they've not communicated with their parents for one year before the beginning of the academic year in which they're applying for support, or they can demonstrate they're permanently estranged from their parents; or
- subject to certain exceptions, they were looked after by a local authority throughout any three-month period ending on or after the date they turned 16, and before the first day of the first academic year of their course.

Evidence

If a student is, or has been, married or in a civil partnership, we will need to see their marriage certificate or civil partnership schedule.

If they're applying as an independent student because they've supported themselves for three years or more, they must provide evidence to show how they've supported themselves. If they've been working or claiming benefits, they must provide written confirmation of this.

Acceptable proof includes photocopies of their P60s or letters from employers (signed, dated and on headed paper) confirming the dates they worked there and what they earned. For periods where they've claimed benefits, students should ask their local Jobcentre Plus office for a letter confirming the dates they claimed benefits and the type of benefit received.

If a student has care of a child and applies for independent status, they should send their child's original birth certificate and provide evidence they're caring for the child, for example, evidence they receive Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit or the child element of Universal Credit.

If a student doesn't provide the correct evidence, their application will be delayed and they might not get all the student finance they're entitled to.



Estrangement

A student might be classed as being estranged if they can show they have little or no contact with their biological or adoptive parents and they receive no physical or financial support from them either. Students don't always have to provide reasons for the estrangement, but it could make it easier for us to award independent status.

If a student wants to apply for independent status because they're estranged from their parents, they must provide confirmation from a professional person, outside their family, who knows about their circumstances.

Examples of evidence they could provide are:

- a letter from their social worker, if they have one;
- a letter from their local Jobcentre Plus office showing they claimed Income Support when they were under 18;
- a letter from their school or college (from a teacher, personal tutor or advice worker) confirming their circumstances, if their relationship with their parents broke down while they were at school;
- a letter from their doctor to confirm their circumstances, if they visited the doctor because of problems relating to the breakdown of their relationship with their parents.

In more complex cases, we may be able to accept supporting documents from a university or college tutor.

To qualify for independent status through estrangement, the student will need to prove the lack of contact with their parents is permanent. We would normally expect the student to have had no contact with their parents for at least 12 months, although this may not apply in exceptional circumstances.

A student won't be able to apply for independent status just because they don't get on with their parents or because they don't live with them. Similarly, they won't automatically be able to apply for independent status because their parents refuse or don't want to provide details of their income.

For more information, read our 'Stand Alone (supporting people that are estranged) - student guide' available from www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/practitioners

Student Finance Wales is a service provided by the Student Loans Company. We provide financial support on behalf of the Welsh Government to students from Wales entering higher education in the UK.

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