

# Independent Student Status

**2014/15**

## What's an independent student?

A student is considered independent if:

- They've 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 formed a civil partnership before the start of the academic year even if that marriage or civil partnership has ended
- They've 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 or Jobseeker's Allowance or other state benefit
  - got any pension, allowance or other benefit because of their disability or by any 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 EC 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 it's a refugee)
- They've not communicated with their parents for one year before the beginning of the academic year they're applying for support for, or they can demonstrate they're permanently estranged from their parents
- 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

## What does being an independent student mean?

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

If the student is married or in a civil partnership, Student Finance Wales will take into account the income of their husband, wife or civil partner.

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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## Evidence

If a student is, or has been, married or in a civil partnership, Student Finance Wales 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 have supported themselves. If they've been working or claiming benefits, they must provide written confirmation of this.

Acceptable proof includes photocopies of their P60 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 benefit and 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 other evidence they're caring for the child. For example, evidence they're receiving Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit or the child element of Universal Credit.

If a student doesn't provide the correct evidence, it'll delay their application and they might not get all the student finance they're able to get.

## Estrangement

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 proof they could provide are:

- A letter from their social worker, if they have one
- If they claimed Income Support when they were under 18, a letter from their local Jobcentre Plus office showing they got benefits because of their situation
- If their relationship with their parents broke down while they were at school or college, a letter from an advice worker or personal tutor or teacher, confirming their circumstances
- If they've visited their doctor because of problems relating to their broken relationship with their parents, a letter to confirm their circumstances

To qualify for independent status through estrangement, the student will need to prove the lack of contact with their parents is permanent. Student Finance Wales 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'll not be automatically able to apply for independent status because their parents refuse or don't want to provide details of their income.

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