



Llywodraeth Cymru
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Changes to student support and fee protection regulations for 2026 to 2027 (SFWIN 07/2025)

Describes the amendments included in student support and associated regulations for academic year 2026 to 2027.

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Describes the amendments included in student support and associated regulations for academic year 2026 to 2027.

The Education (Student Finance) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No. 3) (Wales) Regulations 2025 (“the 2025 Regulations”) will make changes to those regulations which provide for statutory student support and tuition fee protections (for home fee status and capped tuition fees to apply). These changes apply to eligible students who are ordinary resident in Wales and taking a designated course of higher education in an academic year beginning on or after 1 August 2026.

Please note: the information described in this notice is for guidance only and depends on the 2025 Regulations being made into law. This notice does not cover every detail of the policy and should not be treated as legal advice or a complete explanation of the law.

We’ve made every effort to ensure the information is accurate at the time of publication, but it should not be relied upon as a complete and accurate summary of the 2025 Regulations. In the event of differences between this notice and the 2025 Regulations, the 2025 Regulations prevail.

The 2025 Regulations are expected to come into force in December 2025.

Eligibility for student support and fee protections for bereaved partners and children of Gurkha and Hong Kong military veterans discharged before 1 July 1997

The UK Government’s Home Office made changes to its Immigration Rules to include Gurkha and Hong Kong military unit veterans discharged before 1 July 1997 as a new Appendix within the Immigration Rules. This provides a route to settlement for partners (and bereaved partners) and dependants of these military veterans or of a deceased military veteran. Previously, the Home Office

operated a concession outside the Immigration Rules for Gurkhas discharged before 1 July 1997, whereby they could apply for indefinite leave to enter or remain. There was no similar provision for Hong Kong military veterans.

The Welsh student support and fee protection regulations currently make protected partners (which includes bereaved partners) eligible for student support. The regulations also provide for the child of such a person to be eligible.

The 2025 Regulations will extend the scope of the protected partners eligibility category to include bereaved partners of Gurkha and Hong Kong military veterans discharged before 1 July 1997 and their children.

The amendments will apply to an academic year of a course beginning on or after 1 August 2026 and will apply to new and continuing undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Increased maintenance loan for full-time students in extended years

Currently, students undertaking a full-time undergraduate course can apply for an additional amount of maintenance loan when their academic year extends beyond 30 weeks and 3 days.

Our policy is that those students on a sandwich year or those following certain NHS related courses, and who are in receipt of a means tested NHS bursary for that course, are not eligible for the additional maintenance loan. The NHS makes available additional support for its students in extended years.

Support for full-time NHS students was increased in the 2024 to 2025 academic year by making available the full rate of maintenance loan. In doing so, NHS bursary students and sandwich year students were unintentionally brought into scope by the regulations for the additional loan provision in extended years.

The 2025 Regulations will amend the Education (Student Support) (Wales)

Regulations 2018 (“the 2018 Regulations”) to ensure policy is implemented as intended. This means NHS bursary and sandwich year students will not have access to the additional maintenance loan in extended years.

The amendments will apply to an academic year of a course beginning on or after 1 August 2026 and will apply to new and continuing full-time undergraduate students.

Grants for Dependants for care-experienced students

The 2018 Regulations allow for care-experienced students (aged under 25 at the start of their course) studying on a full-time or part-time course to receive the maximum amount of maintenance grant on a non means-tested basis; this means students are not required to submit details of household income (HHI) when applying for this support. Similarly, care-experienced students (aged under 25 at the start of their course) studying on a full-time course can apply for a travel grant without the need to submit details of their HHI.

Our policy is for care-experienced students (aged under 25 at the start of their course) to also receive Grants for Dependants (if applicable) without the need to submit details of their HHI. This is not currently provided for within regulations.

The 2025 Regulations will amend the 2018 Regulations to ensure policy is implemented as intended.

The amendments will apply to an academic year of a course beginning on or after 1 August 2026 and will apply to new and continuing full-time and part-time undergraduate students.

Termination provisions for persons who cease to have leave to enter or remain as a protected partner

To be eligible for student support and fee protections, a person must have a sufficiently strong and current connection to the UK. All those who fall within the protection-based eligibility categories under the relevant student support and fee protection regulations must have existing leave to enter or remain to qualify as an eligible student. If a person no longer has leave, then termination provisions will apply and their eligibility will terminate (immediately before the first day of the academic year in respect of which the person is applying for support or support is to be provided).

The Education (Postgraduate Doctoral Degree Loans) (Wales) Regulations 2018 and the Education (Student Support) (Postgraduate Master's Degrees) (Wales) Regulations 2019 include the eligibility category “persons granted leave to enter or remain as a protected partner and their children”. However, the corresponding termination provision is absent from these postgraduate regulations.

The student support regulations for undergraduate students includes both the eligibility category and the corresponding termination provision.

The 2025 Regulations will amend the postgraduate regulations to ensure the termination of support can operate consistently across all student support and fee protection regulations.

The amendments will apply to an academic year of a course beginning on or after 1 August 2026 and will apply to new and continuing postgraduate students.

Additional technical changes to the student support and fee protection regulations

The 2025 Regulations make a small number of additional technical amendments

to improve clarity within the student support and fee protection regulations, and remove provisions and references that are no longer required. These are summarised below:

Protected Ukrainian nationals

Certain wording of provisions within the 'protected Ukrainian nationals' eligibility category can potentially be misinterpreted. The 2025 Regulations will amend existing wording of student support and fee protection regulations to ensure clear understanding of the requirements for eligibility. Additionally, relevant paragraphs within the Immigration Rules will be referenced for information. There is no change to policy arising from these changes.

Oxbridge college fee loans

The student support regulations allow for college fee loans to be provided for students undertaking a designated full-time Oxbridge course leading to certain qualifications or a course which attracts a means-tested bursary or award made under section 63 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 or Article 44 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. These courses were previously subject to separate charges by the college and the university providing the course; there is now only a single standard tuition fee charge. These provisions are no longer required and will be removed (including associated references).

Netherlands Antilles

The current definition of Netherlands Antilles (Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten) referenced within the student support and fee protection regulations is incorrect. References to the Netherlands Antilles within regulations will be replaced with the correct terminology for the overseas territories of the Netherlands.

Coronavirus

The student support regulations continue to include provisions relating to the coronavirus pandemic, where the course is a distance learning course. These provisions allow a person who is unable to be in Wales on the first day of the first academic year of the course for a reason related to coronavirus to qualify for student support. As there are no longer travel restrictions into the UK or into Wales for reasons related to coronavirus, all related provisions (including associated references) within student support regulations are no longer needed and will be removed.

First day requirements for students who are settled and ordinarily resident within the UK

Regulations provide tuition fee protections for certain students. A person on a qualifying course who falls within a 'settled category' (contained in the Schedule of the fee protection regulations) and meets the relevant residency criteria will qualify for home fee status and the tuition fee limit. The ordinary residence requirements set out within the fee protection regulations are clear. However, there is potential for the meaning of "academic year" within the fee protection regulations to be misunderstood. The 2025 Regulations will amend existing wording of fee protection regulations to provide clarity that a person who is settled need only be resident in the UK on the actual course start date (for example, the day on which the first academic year of their course actually begins) and not before (for example, the first day of the standard academic year: 1 January, 1 April, 1 July, 1 September) to be eligible for home fee status or tuition fee limits. There is no change to policy arising from these changes.

These additional technical changes to regulations will apply to an academic year of a course beginning on or after 1 August 2026.

The Education (European University Institute) (Wales) Regulations 2014

The Education (European University Institute) (Wales) Regulations 2014 (“the EUI Regulations”) provided for maintenance support for up to one Welsh student per academic year to undertake postgraduate study at the EUI. However, the UK’s membership of the EUI Convention ceased as a result of the UK exiting the European Union. Following the UK’s cessation of its formal participation in the EUI, the regulatory regime provided for under the EUI Regulations no longer aligns with the support arrangements needed by students from Wales. Therefore, the 2025 Regulations will revoke the EUI Regulations and remove related provisions.

Enquiries

If you have queries about applications, how to apply, payments or any other aspect of the service, please contact **Student Finance Wales** (<https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/contact/>).

If you have any queries about this Information Notice, please **email the Strategy and Funding Division** (<mailto:studentfinancedivision@gov.wales>), Welsh Government.

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