



To:

Higher Education Institutions in Wales providing designated Higher Education courses
Further Education Institutions in Wales providing designated Higher Education courses
Private Institutions providing designated Higher Education courses
The Student Loans Company
UCAS
The Open University in Wales
Student Finance Wales Stakeholder Group
NUS Wales
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
Universities Wales
Colleges Wales
and other interested bodies

10 November 2015

Dear Colleague

**HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT SUPPORT -
CHANGES TO BE INCLUDED IN THE WELSH STUDENT SUPPORT REGULATIONS
FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2016/17**

Amendments to the Education (Student Support) (Wales) Regulations 2015 which provide for higher education student support for students ordinarily resident in Wales are currently being drafted. The amendments will apply to the provision of support to students in relation to an academic year which begins on or after 1 September 2016 ("AY 2016/17").

A small number of policy changes and technical amendments to the existing legislation have been proposed for AY 2016/17. The proposed limited technical changes are detailed in the annex below. Attached to this letter is a response proforma for stakeholders to complete if so required.

ENQUIRIES

If you have any queries about the regulations or this Information Notice, please contact, in the first instance, the Higher Education Division, Welsh Government - email HEDConsultationsMailbox@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK

Student Finance Wales Information Notice (SFWIN 03/2015)

Overview	This engagement exercise seeks views on the proposed policy changes and minor technical changes to the existing student support legislation to be contained in the forthcoming Education (Student Support) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2016.
Audience	Higher Education Institutions; Further Education Institutions; National Union of Students; Student Loans Company; the Open University in Wales; other interested parties.
How to respond	Any comments which stakeholders might have on the proposals should be sent to the Welsh Government by 22 December 2015. Comments can be made in writing on the response sheet that accompanies this letter and should be e-mailed to the address below: HEDConsultationsMailbox@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK .
Further information and related documents	Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request. A copy of this SFWIN can also be found on the following website: www.studentfinancewales.co.uk
Contact Details	Further information about this limited engagement exercise can be obtained by e-mailing HEDConsultationsMailbox@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK . or by writing to: Higher Education Division, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ
Data Protection	How the views and information you give us will be used: Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this engagement exercise is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future engagement exercises. The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the engagement exercise was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Student Finance Wales Information Notice (SFWIN 03/2015)

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though this is unlikely to happen often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would contact the person and ask their views before deciding whether or not to reveal the information.

Summary of changes to student support regulations for AY 2016/17

The next set of student support regulations are expected to issue under the title of the Education (Student Support) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2016.

Level of grants and loans

The package of support available to eligible higher education students in Wales is usually reviewed annually to take account of inflationary pressures on the fee levels and on the associated levels of student support.

1. Fee support

What we are proposing:

For full-time students who commenced their studies on or after 1 September 2012 and are studying during the academic year 2016/17:

- the maximum tuition fee that institutions in Wales are able to charge will remain at £9,000;
- there will be an inflationary increase in the maximum tuition fee loan (from £3,810) to £3,900 for students studying on or after 2012. The amount of tuition fee grant will reduce by an equivalent amount to £5,100;
- for continuing students studying in Wales, England and Scotland who started their course prior to September 2012, the maximum tuition fee support will continue to be frozen at £3,465;
- the maximum tuition fee loan available to continuing students (those who started their course before September 2012) studying in Northern Ireland will be increased to £3,925 to reflect the expected increase in the fees charged there.

Intended outcome:

Full-time students will remain eligible for sufficient fee support to avoid upfront fees in line with the Programme for Government commitment:

“No full time undergraduate student ordinarily resident in Wales will pay higher fees in real terms during the lifetime of the next Assembly than if they had been students in 2010/11. This will apply no matter where the student chooses to study, in Wales or elsewhere in the UK”

2. Maintenance support

What we are proposing:

For full-time students who commenced their studies on or after 1 September 2012 and are studying during the academic year 2016/17:

- a means-tested Welsh Government Learning Grant (maintenance grant) of up to £5,161 depending on household income
- an inflationary increase to the overall maintenance support of approximately 10%, (up to £4,786 if living at parents' home, up to £6,183 if living away from parents' home, and up to £8,662 if studying in London) giving access to a total of up to £7,367 maintenance support for those students with the lowest household incomes living at home; up to £8,764 if living away from parents' home, and up to £11,243 if studying in London; as well as
- partial cancellation of up to £1,500 of maintenance loan once repayment has begun.

3. Changes to Childcare Grant (CCG)

Currently all students who are eligible for student support, studying at 50% intensity or more, and who have dependent children, may apply for a childcare grant (CCG) which provides an income assessed contribution of up to 85% of their actual childcare costs. From early 2017 the UK Government is expecting to introduce Tax Free Childcare (TFC) for working families where they will pay 20% of childcare costs up to a maximum of £10,000. Both parents must be in work and earning under £150,000.

Whilst it is unlikely that many students in higher education will be entitled to Tax Free Childcare, there is a possibility that a small number of students could potentially be double funded.

What we are proposing:

From AY16/17 full-time and part-time students will not be entitled to apply to Student Finance Wales for a Childcare Grant (CCG) if they or their partner has declared they are in receipt of Tax Free Childcare for a three month entitlement.

Intended outcome:

The aim is to prevent double government funding to ensure support towards childcare costs will only be claimed from one government source, even where that funding does not cover the full costs of childcare.