

## **Tuition Fee Loans for Part-time Undergraduate (and Distance Learning) Students**

The Department for the Economy is to extend its student support package from the beginning of the 2017/18 Academic Year, with tuition fee loans being made available for part-time undergraduate and full-time distance learning study.

The main features of the new loan are as follows:

- it is a non-means-tested tuition fee loan of up to £3,022.50 per year;
- it is available to new and continuing students from the beginning of the 2017/18 academic year;
- it is available in respect of part-time undergraduate, full-time distance learning, and part-time distance learning courses;
- courses must be studied at no less than 25% intensity of an equivalent full-time course in any academic year;
- courses must be completed in four times the full time equivalent or less; and
- it is available for Northern Ireland-domiciled students studying at authority/ publicly funded institutions, and certain private colleges, in the United Kingdom, and EU\* students studying at authority/ publicly funded institutions in Northern Ireland.

Loans will be paid directly to Higher Education Providers on behalf of students.

Students who already hold a qualification, gained in the UK or overseas, which is equivalent to or higher than the new qualification being undertaken will not be eligible for the part-time undergraduate (or distance learning) tuition fee loan.

Please note that students will become eligible to make loan repayments from the earlier of April 6<sup>th</sup> after the course end date; or April 6<sup>th</sup> after four years have elapsed from the first day of the course - subject to their income exceeding the minimum repayment threshold (for Academic Year 2017/18 this is £17,775 per year, £1,481 per month, or £341 per week before tax and National Insurance). A repayment rate of 9% of any earnings over the minimum income threshold will apply to the loan balance.

Students will still be able to apply for a means tested non-repayable tuition fee grant of up to £1,230 per academic year, and a course grant of up to £265 towards books and travel. The grant income thresholds and amounts will not change under the new arrangements. The grants don't always cover the full cost of course fees so students will be able to apply for the part-time tuition fee loan as a top-up. Students in receipt of tuition fee grants will simply see their tuition fee loan level reduced accordingly.

Guidance on the Part-time Tuition Fee Loan will be available from this website in the coming weeks, and application forms will be posted directly to those students who

continue on the same course they studied during the 2016/17 academic year. All NEW starts from September 2017 can obtain a PTL1 Form from this website or from their University/College. The forms will be available mid-June 2017.

\* EU application forms will be available from -

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Opening hours: Monday to Friday – 9am to 5:30pm