

2018/19
**HOW YOU
ARE PAID**

Full Time Higher Education Student
Finance - Entitlement to Support
and Payment

 studentfinance *ni*



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Introduction

Student Finance NI will use the information provided in applications for student finance (and the separate documentation) to decide whether a student is entitled to tuition fee support and Maintenance Loans and grants. They also use this information to decide how much funding a student can get.

This booklet applies to the academic year 2018/2019. It provides guidance only, and does not cover every circumstance. The legal position is as set out in the Education (Student Support) (No.2)

Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009, as amended. **The information relates to full time study.**

If you want information on part time study, you should refer to the booklet, 'Part Time 2018/19 - A guide to Financial Support for Part Time Students in Higher Education' (available summer 2018).

For further information, you may wish to visit the website at www.studentfinancenl.co.uk.



Eligibility for financial support

SUMMARY

This section tells you about the conditions you will need to meet to be eligible for tuition fee support, Maintenance Loan and grants. These conditions can be divided into three main areas as follows:

- your personal eligibility (see below);
- course eligibility (see page 5); and
- university or college eligibility (see page 6).

1. Personal eligibility

Basic residence requirements

Normally, you must meet three requirements relating to your residence and immigration status on the first day of the first academic year of your course (see note 1). On that date you must:

- be 'ordinarily resident' in Northern Ireland; and
- have been 'ordinarily resident' (see note 2) in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for the three years immediately before this date (other than mainly for the purpose of receiving full-time education); and
- have 'settled status' – which means you must be settled in the UK within the meaning of the Immigration Act of 1971.

Note 1:

academic years start as follows –

- 1 September for a course starting in the autumn term,
- 1 January for a course starting in the winter term,
- 1 April for a course starting in the spring term, and
- 1 July for a course starting in the summer term.

Note 2:

the term 'ordinarily resident' means where you usually live, and is defined as 'habitual and normal residence from choice and for a settled purpose throughout the three-year period, apart from temporary or occasional absences'.



Eligibility for financial support

If you were away from this country because you or a specified family member were temporarily employed abroad, you may be treated as if your residence in the UK had not been interrupted.

If you were away from this country during all or part of the three-year period because you or a specified family member were serving abroad as a member of the regular armed forces (the army, navy or air force), this will be treated as a temporary absence. This will not prevent you from being eligible for support towards your fees or your living costs.

If you are living here mainly to receive full-time education and you would normally have lived elsewhere, you will not usually be treated as having been resident in the UK.

If you do not meet the three basic residence requirements, and your course is eligible, you may still be able to apply for tuition fee support, Maintenance Loan, grants, or bursaries. For example, you may be eligible:

- if you, your spouse, civil partner, parent or step-parent are recognised by the British Government as a refugee and you have lived in this country since this status was awarded;
- if you, your spouse, civil partner, parent or step-parent have been granted humanitarian protection, discretionary leave or exceptional leave to enter or stay in the UK by the Home Office, as the result of a failed asylum application. You must meet the three-year ordinary residence requirement in this country. However, the settled status requirement will not apply to you;

(Please note that if you are claiming as the spouse or civil partner of a refugee or a person with leave to enter or remain, you must have been so at the time of your partner's application for asylum to the Home Office. If you are claiming as the child or step child of a refugee or a person with leave to enter or remain, you must have been so at the time of your parent's application for asylum to the Home Office, and also have been under 18 years at that time).

- if you, your spouse, civil partner, parent or step-parent, child, son or daughter-in-law or child's civil partner are an EEA or Swiss migrant worker, frontier worker or self-employed person, and you have been living in the EEA and Switzerland during the three years prior to the start of your course;
- if you have settled status in the UK and you do not meet the three year ordinary residence requirement in this country, but you or a relevant family member have exercised a right of free movement within the EEA and Switzerland before returning to the UK;
- if you are an EU national who has been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands throughout the three year period immediately before the first day of the first academic year of your course;
- if you are the child of a Swiss national, and you have been ordinarily resident in the EEA and Switzerland for the three year period immediately before the first day of the first academic year of your course; or
- If you are the child of a Turkish worker and you have been ordinarily resident in the EEA, Switzerland or Turkey for the three year period immediately before the first academic year of your course.

This is not a comprehensive list, and students are advised to contact their local Student Finance NI office (see page 22 for details), or visit www.studentfinancenico.uk.



Eligibility for financial support

Your Student Finance NI office will decide whether you meet the residence requirements to qualify for tuition fee support, Maintenance Loan and grants.

If you do not fall into the categories on page 3, but you are a European Union national (or a family member of an EU national), you may be eligible to apply for a Tuition Fee Loan. If you are an EU student, and applying through UCAS, they will send you an application form for the fee loan when you are offered a place on a course. If you do not apply through UCAS, you will be able to get an application form from the EU Customer Services Team at:

Student Finance Services European Team
PO Box 89
Darlington
DL1 9AZ.

Phone: 0141 243 3570 (9am – 5:30pm)

Website:

www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance-EU

You should send the completed form direct to the above address.

Leaving your course or transferring to a new course

Study on a previous course can affect your entitlement. It is important to remember the rules about previous courses if you are thinking about leaving your course before it ends or transferring to a new course, as this could affect how much help you can get if you take another course in the future.

It is very important if you want to transfer courses or withdraw from your course that you talk to your college and your local Student Finance NI office as soon as possible.

If you do decide to change course, you must tell your local Student Finance NI office. If the fees are higher than those you have to pay on your current course, you may be able to apply for an additional loan for tuition fees.

Age

Student Loans for Tuition Fees – There are no age limits for Student Loans for Tuition Fees.

Student Loans for Maintenance – If you are under 60 at the start of your course you may be eligible for a Student Loan for Maintenance.

Grants for fees and other costs – There are no age limits for grants.



Eligibility for financial support

2. Your Course

As well as being personally eligible, your course must also be eligible. Generally, courses are eligible for financial support in the following circumstances:

- If they are full-time courses (including sandwich courses) or, in certain cases, part-time courses of initial teacher training, and they lead to:
 - a first degree, such as a BA, BSc or BEd or Foundation Degree;
 - a Higher National Diploma (HND);
 - a Higher National Certificate (HNC);
 - a Certificate of Higher Education;
 - a course for the initial training of teachers;
 - a course in preparation for a professional examination of a standard higher than that of examination for advanced level GCE or the examination at higher level for the Scottish Certificate of Education or the examination for the National Certificate or National Diploma of BTEC or SQA, not being a course to which a first degree (or equivalent qualification) is required; or
 - a course providing education, the standard of which is higher than that of examination for advanced level GCE or the examination at higher level for the Scottish Certificate of Education or the examination for the National Certificate or National Diploma of BTEC or SQA, but not higher than that of a first degree course and not being a course to which a first degree (or equivalent qualification) is required.

Some courses are extended beyond their normal length to include a foundation year. These are designed to prepare students for study in their chosen subject if their qualifications or experience are acceptable for entering higher education, but are not appropriate for normal entry to their particular course. Foundation years are eligible for help if:

- the foundation year is an integral part of the course and the course as a whole is designated by or under the Education (Student Support) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009, as amended; and
- when first enrolling, students enrol for the full length of the extended course.

The following courses are not covered:

- All postgraduate courses, including NVQ level 5 – except postgraduate courses of Initial Teacher Training.
- Pre-registration nursing and midwifery diploma courses and any nursing or midwifery course for which you receive a non income-assessed DoH/NHS bursary or award under the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968.
- Access or conversion courses which prepare students to take a higher education course.
- Courses of further education up to and including level 3.

If you are taking or thinking of taking a course and you are not sure whether it is eligible for support towards fees or a student loan, contact your local Student Finance NI office or the college you are hoping to go to. They should be able to help you.

Student Financial Support for Architecture Courses

Eligible students who study Architecture can receive the undergraduate support package for the degree (RIBA Part I), the placement year and the postgraduate diploma (RIBA Part II). This full package of support is generally only available if you do all of these elements without a break in study.

If you take more than one year out between Parts I and II you will be required to inform your institution and your Student Finance NI office so that your student financial support can be suspended until you return to study. Student Finance NI offices cannot offer student financial support for the additional years; however, they will still regard you as not having had a break in study and will be able to offer you support for the postgraduate diploma (RIBA Part II).

If you do not inform your institution or your Student Finance NI office that you have suspended your studies or that you intend to return at an agreed date to complete RIBA Part II, you will be regarded as having withdrawn from your course. This means that you will not be eligible for a Tuition Fee Loan or a means-tested maintenance grant for your Part II studies, although you may be eligible for a Maintenance Loan.



Eligibility for financial support

Students on Work Placement

Students on work placements may have different funding arrangements. The rules are complicated. Whether you can receive funding depends on the type of work you are doing and how long the placement lasts. You should contact your local Student Finance NI office giving details of your work placement and ask them to let you know what support you are entitled to.

Distance learning – students with a disability.

If you will be studying a full-time undergraduate course and will not be able to attend for a reason related to your disability, you should contact your local Student Finance NI office for more information about support that may be available.

3. Your University or College

The university or college you plan to study at must be either:

- publicly funded (paid for by Government) and in the UK or Republic of Ireland; or
- privately funded in the UK but running individual courses that receive public funding (the course must have received a 'specific designation' from the Department for the Economy).

'Current system' students at privately-funded colleges

If you are a Northern Ireland student attending a higher education course at a private institution, you should be aware that for certain private institutions, you will not receive the full Tuition Fee Loan support to cover your tuition fees. The maximum Tuition Fee Loan available is £4,160.

You will be responsible for funding the difference in the additional cost of your tuition fees. The onus is on you to find out what tuition fees are charged by the private institution and what Tuition Fee Loan support is available from Student Finance NI before you start the course.

'Old system' students at privately-funded colleges

If you are an 'old system' student studying on a designated course at a private university or college in the UK, you can apply to your local Student Finance NI office for Tuition Fee support of £1,555 in 2018/2019. Your household income will not be assessed for this support, but you should be aware that private colleges and universities can charge more than £1,555 and you will need to pay this extra cost yourself. Your local Student Finance NI office will be able to tell you if the course you are doing is eligible for support towards fees and student loans.

If you are studying at a privately funded university or college, you will not be eligible to apply for a non means-tested Tuition Fee loan.

'Current system' and 'Old system' students should also be aware that some private higher education institutions in the UK and ROI may not attract any support and students will be responsible for all their costs. Students should check what funding is available before making a decision.

Please refer to page 7 for a definition of 'current system' and 'old system' students.



Assessing how much financial support you may be entitled to

SUMMARY

This section tells you how your local Student Finance NI office uses the information you supply to decide how much financial help you may receive. Your local Student Finance NI office looks at your household's income which includes:

- for dependent students, their parents' income;
- for independent students, their partner's income, if any (see note below).

Note: See page 14 for definitions of an "independent student".

General information about income for all students

The amounts of most of the grants (including the tuition fee grant and the Higher Education Bursary for 'old system' students, and the Maintenance Grant or the Special Support Grant for 'current system' students) that you will receive, and part of the Maintenance Loan, depend on your household's income. The lower the household income, the more grant or Maintenance Loan you will be entitled to – see page 11, 12 and 13. If you want to apply for this means-tested financial support, you will need to supply information about your income on the application form. Relevant members of your household will also need to declare their income, even if you filled in a similar form last year.

If you choose not to provide information about your household's income, the most support you are likely to receive is a reduced rate of the Maintenance Loan (this is normally 75% of the maximum available depending on your circumstances). However, you will still be able to apply for a loan to cover the full cost of approved tuition fees.

'Old system' or 'current system' student?

The type of help you can get, and the way the amount you can get is worked out, depends on whether you are an old system or a current system student.

- **Current system** students are those who started their course in the UK in September 2006 or later. It also includes students who started their course at a relevant institution of higher education in the Republic of Ireland in September 2013 or later.
- **Old system** students are those who:
 - are continuing on a course that they started before 1st September 2006, or
 - transferred on to their current course from a course that they began before 1st September 2006, or
 - were treated as a gap year student, and started their course after 1st September 2006, or
 - started an 'end-on' degree or honours degree course (other than a first degree course for the initial training of teachers) after completing a Foundation Degree, Higher National Certificate (HNC), Higher National Diploma (HND) or Diploma of Higher Education course which they began before 1st September 2006, or
 - began the current course on or after 1st September 2006 but before 1st September 2013 at a relevant institution of higher education in the Republic of Ireland.

For your information, the table on page 8 gives details of what types of help are available to 'old system' students, and 'current system' students.

Further information is contained in the booklet '2018/19 Full Time - A guide to Financial Support for Full Time Students in Higher Education'.



Assessing how much financial support you may be entitled to

| Type of help available | For 'current system' students? | For 'old system' students? |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Tuition fee grant | No | Yes |
| Student Loan for Tuition Fees (or for a tuition fee contribution) | Yes | Yes |
| Maintenance Grant (or Special Support Grant) | Yes | No |
| Higher Education Bursary | No | Yes |
| Student Loans for Maintenance | Yes | Yes |
| Extra help if you have a disability | Yes | Yes |
| Extra help if you have children or adult dependants | Yes | Yes |

1. Your Income (applies to all students)

You may be expected to contribute depending on how much income you have and where it comes from. Your local Student Finance NI office will ask you to estimate your total income for the coming academic year. This income includes all money that you earn or receive that you pay income tax on, except for income from work done during any academic year of your course (including holiday, evening or weekend working but not including any sums paid in respect of periods for which you have leave of absence or are relieved of your normal duties for the purpose of attending your course). It will also include certain social security benefits.

Your parents' income will be added to yours to arrive at the total household income.

2. Your household income – parents

The local Student Finance NI office will assess your parents' income, including the income of a relevant partner of your parent unless:

- you are an independent student (see page 14); or
- you choose not to provide details of your parents' income because you only want support that is not assessed on your household income.

Personal allowances and trade losses which are deducted by HMRC when calculating liability for income tax are not deducted from taxable income which is used to calculate 'household income' for student support. The whole amount of any redundancy payment (including the first £30,000 which is not taxed) is taken into account in the household income assessment for student support.



Assessing how much financial support you may be entitled to

Your local Student Finance NI office will then take the following allowances off the household income:

- Pension payments that qualify for certain specified tax relief.
- £1,153 for any child other than you who is totally or mainly financially dependent on them.

Using your household income, your local Student Finance NI office will work out whether your parents should make a contribution and if so, how much it will be. Your local Student Finance NI office will then work out whether you are entitled to a Maintenance Grant or Special Support Grant if you are a 'current system' student, or a Higher Education Bursary if you are an 'old system' student. They will also work out whether your parents should pay a contribution towards your fees and living costs.

Your local Student Finance NI office will usually look at your parents' income before deductions for the prior financial year. But if your parents' income has fallen by at least 5% they can ask your local Student Finance NI office to look at their estimated income before deductions for the current financial year.

Current Year Income Assessment forms can be downloaded from www.studentfinancenl.co.uk. Please note that income for the prior financial year must be fully verified before a reassessment on the current year's income can occur.

If your parents are separated or divorced, the local Student Finance NI office will take the income of whichever parent they consider to be appropriate in the circumstances, plus partner's income where applicable. Your parents must declare their partner's details and income. It is an offence to withhold information. They will ignore the income of the other parent.

A parent's "partner" means one of the following:

- A spouse (husband or wife);
- Civil partner;
- A person ordinarily living with the parent as his or her spouse;
- A person ordinarily living with the parent as his or her civil partner.

If your parents' circumstances change during the year and they begin living with/ cease living with a partner they need to let Student Finance know immediately as it will affect your entitlement.



Assessing how much financial support you may be entitled to

3. Assessing the household contribution

Old system dependent students only

If you are an 'old system' student who is a dependent student, your household contribution is assessed as outlined below. For definition of 'old system' student see page 7.

Your local Student Finance NI office works out your parents' (generally including a partner of your parent) residual income. They do this by taking your parents' gross income (before tax and National Insurance) and taking off allowances for the following.

- Pension payments that qualify for certain specified tax relief.
- £1,153 for any child other than you who is totally or mainly financially dependent on them.
- £1,153 if the parent is also a full-time student.

Once your local Student Finance NI office has worked out your parents' residual income, they add this to your income and assess a household contribution as follows:

- No contribution if the total income is less than £24,770.
- £45 if the total income is £24,770.
- £45 plus £1 for every £12.50 by which the total income exceeds £24,770.

For example, if the total income is £28,000, your local Student Finance NI office would assess a contribution of £45 plus £258, giving a total contribution of £303.

Old system Independent students only

If you are single and have independent status, you will have an income threshold of £11,535. Your local Student Finance NI office will ignore all the same types of income that apply for other students. It will assess for a contribution in the way shown below.

- No cost if the student's income is less than £11,535
- A £45 cost if the student's income is £11,535
- £45 plus £1 in every £9.50 that their income is over £11,535

Students who are eligible to receive a Higher Education Bursary and are entitled to the full £2,000 will have the maximum amount of loan reduced by £1,500.

Those entitled to receive a bursary of less than £2,000 will have the maximum loan reduced by the amount of the bursary.

If you are an independent student who is married see page 15.



Assessing how much financial support you may be entitled to

4. Assessing the household contribution (applies to “Current system” dependent students only)

Once your local Student Finance NI office has worked out your parents’ residual income, they add this to your income and assess a household contribution as follows:

- No contribution if the total income is less than £41,540.
- £1 for every £9.50 of the total income above £41,540.

For example, if the household income is £45,000, your local Student Finance NI office would assess a contribution of £364.

The first line of the table below shows the household income level at which you would receive the full-rate Maintenance Loan or the maximum rate Maintenance Loan in your final year. If you are on a one-year postgraduate ITT course (for example, a PGCE course), that year will not be treated as a final year.

It then shows the household income levels at which you would only be entitled to the 75% of Maintenance Loan that is not income-assessed.

| Household contribution – current system students | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| | Full year | | Final year | |
| Support covered | Household residual income | Household contribution | Household residual income | Household contribution |
| Full-rate Maintenance Loan (or maximum-rate final-year Maintenance Loan) | £41,540 | Nil | £41,540 | Nil |
| 75% Maintenance Loan – student living away from home and studying in London | £57,643 | £1,695 | £56,170 | £1,540 |
| 75% Maintenance Loan – student living away from home and studying outside London | £53,035 | £1,210 | £52,180 | £1,120 |
| 75% Maintenance Loan – student living at home | £50,451 | £938 | £49,568 | £845 |



Assessing how much financial support you may be entitled to

5. Assessing maintenance grant entitlement (applies to 'Current system' students who are on courses other than Initial Teacher Training Courses not leading to first degrees).

You may be entitled to receive a non-repayable Maintenance Grant of up to £3,475 a year.

If your household income is £19,203 or less, you may be entitled to the full Maintenance Grant of £3,475.

If your household income exceeds £19,203 but does not exceed £29,019, the amount of grant you can receive will decrease by £1 for every £4.55 of household income above £19,203.

If your household income exceeds £29,019 but does not exceed £41,065, the maximum amount of grant you can receive is £1,318 and reduced by £1 for every £9.50 of income above £29,019. If your household income is £41,065, you may be able to receive the minimum Maintenance Grant of £50.

If the household income is more than £41,065, you will not be able to receive any Maintenance Grant (see table on next page).

6. Maintenance Grant entitlement for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) course students (applies to 'Current system' students only)

If you are on an ITT course you may be eligible for a Maintenance Grant of up to £3,475.

If you are starting or continuing on an ITT course (for example, a PGCE course but not a course for a first degree) in 2018 and your periods of full-time attendance are in aggregate 10 or more weeks in the academic year, you may receive a £1,318 Maintenance Grant. Depending on your household income, you may be able to receive up to £3,475 in total.

If you are starting or continuing on an ITT course (other than a course for a first degree) in 2018 and your periods of full-time attendance are in aggregate between six and ten weeks, you may receive a £659 Maintenance Grant. Depending on your household income, you may be able to receive up to £1,738 in total.

7. Maintenance Loan entitlement for people who receive a Maintenance Grant (applies to 'Current system' students only)

If you apply for a Maintenance Grant, you can also apply for a Maintenance Loan (the rate of which will vary according to where you are living or studying). However, if you are eligible to receive a maintenance grant, your loan entitlement will be reduced.

If you receive the full Maintenance Grant of £3,475 and you qualify for a Maintenance Loan, your Maintenance Loan entitlement may be reduced by £1,887.

If you receive a grant of greater than £1,318 the loan will be reduced by £1,887 less £1 in every £17.25 by which the household income exceeds £19,203.



Assessing how much financial support you may be entitled to

| Maintenance Grant and Maintenance Loan entitlement | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|--|---|
| Household income | Maintenance Grant | Maintenance Loan – living away from home and studying outside London (maximum £4,840) | Maintenance Loan – living away from home and studying in London (maximum £6,780) | Maintenance Loan – living at their parents' home (maximum £3,750) |
| £19,203 | £3,475 | £2,953 | £4,893 | £1,863 |
| £25,000 | £2,201 | £3,289 | £5,229 | £2,199 |
| £30,000 | £1,215 | £3,625 | £5,565 | £2,535 |
| £35,000 | £689 | £4,151 | £6,091 | £3,061 |
| £41,540 | £0 | £4,840 | £6,780 | £3,750 |

Different rules apply if you have a brother, sister or parent who is also receiving full-time student support. Your local Student Finance NI office will work out your household's contribution before they share it between you and the other students in your family. In normal circumstances, it will be shared out equally. However, in certain circumstances it may be shared differently to make sure that the amount of contribution reflects whose income has been included in the income assessment. Your local Student Finance NI office will be able to give you more information.

If your circumstances change during your course, (for example, if one of your parents dies or remarries or if a parent starts/ceases to live with a partner) your local Student Finance NI office will assess the household contribution again.

8. Special Support Grant (applies to 'Current system' students only)

If your household income does not exceed £41,540 and you fall within certain prescribed categories – these include students who are eligible for income support or housing benefit – you may be entitled to receive a Special Support Grant. The amount of grant payable is assessed in the same way as the Maintenance Grant (see above). Students who are eligible for the Special Support Grant will not be eligible for the Maintenance Grant. For more detailed information on the Special Support Grant refer to page 9 of the booklet '2018/19 Full Time - A guide to Financial Support for Full Time Students in Higher Education'.

If you apply for the Special Support Grant, you can also apply for a Maintenance Loan (which will vary according to where you are living or studying). However, if you qualify for a Maintenance Loan, the maximum amount of loan you can receive will not decrease if you are assessed to receive a Special Support Grant.



Assessing how much financial support you may be entitled to

9. Independent students (applies to all students)

If you are an independent student, the local Student Finance NI office will not take your parents' income into account when working out the household income and contribution.

You are an independent student if you meet one of the following conditions:

- You have care of a person under the age of 18 on the first day of the academic year for which you are applying for support.
- You are 25 or over on the first day of the academic year for which you are applying for support. For courses starting in September/October 2018 the first day is 1st September.
- You have been married or formed a civil partnership before the start of the academic year for which you are applying for support, even if that marriage or civil partnership is not still subsisting. Your local Student Finance NI office will need to see your marriage certificate or civil partnership schedule.
- You have no living parents.
- You have supported yourself for at least three years before the first day of the first academic year of your course. This includes any time when you:
 - were in paid full-time employment;
 - received Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance or other state benefit paid to a person who is available for employment but is unemployed, or registered for unemployment;
 - received any pension, allowance or other benefit by reason of a disability to which you are subject or by any reason of confinement, sickness or illness; or
 - received training under any scheme for the unemployed or other funding by any state authority or agency.
- Your parents cannot be traced or it is not practical or possible to contact them;
- Your parents live outside of the EU and an income assessment would put them in

jeopardy, or it is not reasonably practicable for them to send funds to the UK if a contribution were assessed (this may apply if you are a refugee);

- You have not communicated with your parents for one year before the beginning of the year in respect of which you are applying for support, or you can demonstrate that you are permanently estranged from your parents (see "Students who have no contact with their parents" on page 15) – your local Student Finance NI office will review your situation each time it assesses your application for a new academic year); or
- Subject to certain exceptions, you were looked after by a local authority throughout any three-month period ending on or after the date on which you turned 16 and before the first day of the first academic year of your course.

If you are claiming to be an independent student because you have supported yourself for three years or more, you must provide evidence to show how you have supported yourself. If you have been working or claiming benefits, you must provide written confirmation of this. Acceptable proof includes letters from employers confirming the dates you worked there and your levels of earnings. For periods where you have claimed benefits, you should ask your local Social Security Agency office for a letter to confirm the dates you claimed benefit and the type of benefit received.

If you do not provide birth or marriage certificates or evidence to prove you have supported yourself for three years, it will delay your application.

If you have care of a child and are claiming independent status, you should send your child's original long birth certificate and provide other evidence that you are caring for the child (for example, evidence that you are receiving Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit).



Assessing how much financial support you may be entitled to

Students who have no contact with their parents

If you want to claim independent status because you are estranged from your parents, you must provide confirmation from a professional person outside your family who personally knows about your circumstances. Examples of proof you could provide are:

- a letter from your social worker (if you have one);
- if you claimed Income Support when you were under 18, a letter from your local Social Security Agency office showing that you received benefits because of your situation;
- if your relationship with your parents broke down while you were at school or college, a letter from an advice worker or personal tutor or teacher, confirming your circumstances; or
- if you have visited your doctor because of problems relating to your broken relationship with your parents, a letter to confirm your circumstances.

To qualify for independent status because of this, you will need to prove that the lack of contact with your parents is permanent. You must provide evidence of this to your local Student Finance NI Office explaining in full the circumstances which led to this. Your local Student Finance NI office would normally expect you to have had no contact with your parents for at least 12 months although this may not apply in exceptional circumstances. Please ask your local Student Finance office for forms SEF and IVE.

You will not be able to claim independent status just because you do not get on with your parents or because you do not live with them. You will also not be able to claim independent status simply because your parents do not want to give details of their income, or refuse to provide financial support to you.

For more information on estrangement refer to the 'Stand Alone' booklet which is available on our website at www.studentfinancenl.co.uk

10. Your household income – husband, wife or partner of either sex (applies to all students)

If you are an independent student who is married or is in a civil partnership, the Student Finance NI office will take into account the income of your husband, wife or civil partner. This will apply regardless of when you started your course.

If you are 25 or over on the first day of the academic year for which you are applying for support, the income of your same sex or opposite sex partner will also be taken into account. These rules may not apply if you have transferred on to the current course or are on an end-on course. The Student Finance NI office will be able to tell you what a transfer or an end-on course is, and whether these rules apply to you.

Your partner's residual income will generally be worked out in the same way as your parents' residual income and is calculated as £9.50 for every £1 over £24,770. Parental contribution is £12.50 for every £1 over £24,770. The household income threshold is also the same. However, different rules apply if you separate from your partner.



How you will receive any payments due to you

SUMMARY

This section tells you how much financial help you will receive, and how you will be paid any support.

1. Notice of entitlement

The Student Loans Company (SLC) will send you a letter telling you how much support you can get and the contribution (if any) you and your family are expected to make towards your living costs (and towards your tuition fees if you are an 'old system' student).

This letter will also contain a payment schedule that tells you how much your payments are and when your instalments are due. The payment schedule will also include details of any grants or other payments you may be due. You will usually receive any amounts due in three instalments, normally one at the start of each term.

2. Payment of your loans

Most students will receive their first loan instalment straight into their bank account after they have enrolled on their course. However, their college must first have confirmed to the SLC that they are attending the relevant course.

There are several things that as a student you can do to make sure that you receive your payment promptly.

- 1) Open a bank or building society account and give the SLC your account details before the start of term.
- 2) At enrolment, make sure you bring any documents that your college needs, in particular your notice of entitlement issued by the SLC.

- 3) Make sure that you always refer to yourself in the same way on all of the documents you are asked to fill in. For example, if you apply for a university place through UCAS as 'John Anthony Smith', please refer to yourself in the same way in your student support application. It is best to give your full name as it appears on your birth certificate or passport in all dealings with UCAS, your local Student Finance NI office, the SLC and your university or college.
- 4) If you made an on-line application you must return your student signature form to the SLC.

For a few students, the SLC will make the first instalment by cheque, which you can collect from your college at the start of term. The payment method will be shown on the payment schedule SLC send you.

For all students, the SLC will pay further loan instalments straight into your bank or building society account.

If you have taken out a loan to cover all or part of your tuition fees, this will be paid direct to your university or college.



Other help available

Training bursaries for Teacher Training in England

If you intend to study a full-time postgraduate teacher training course in England, and are not currently employed as a teacher, you may be eligible for a teacher training bursary. Bursary amounts vary depending on the subject and degree class or highest relevant academic qualification.

The table below summarises the standard training bursaries available in academic year 2018/19.

For more detailed information about the available bursaries and whether you are eligible to apply, please refer to www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/funding/postgraduate-funding or contact the Teaching Information Line on 0800 389 2500

| | Eligibility 2018/19 | | |
|--------|---|-------------------------|---------|
| | Trainee with 1st, 2:1, 2:2, PhD or Master's | Early-career payments * | Total |
| Maths* | £20,000 bursary | £10,000* | £30,000 |
| Maths | £22,000 scholarship | £10,000* | £32,000 |

| | Eligibility 2018/19 | |
|-----------|---------------------|---|
| | Scholarships | Early-career payments * |
| | | Trainee with 1st, 2:1, 2:2, PhD or Master's |
| Physics | £28,000 | £26,000 |
| Chemistry | £28,000 | £26,000 |
| Languages | £28,000 | £26,000 |
| Computing | £28,000 | £26,000 |
| Geography | £28,000 | £26,000 |
| Biology | | £26,000 |
| Classics | | £26,000 |

| | Bursaries for other subjects | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|----------------|---------|
| | Trainee with 1st / PhD | 2:1 / Master's | 2:2 |
| English | £15,000 | £15,000 | £15,000 |
| D&T | £12,000 | £9,000 | £0 |
| History, Music, RE | £9,000 | £4,000 | £0 |
| Primary Maths | £6,000 | £6,000 | £6,000 |

* You could receive £30k or £32k in total - £20k as a tax-free bursary or £22k scholarship with additional payments of £10k after tax once in teaching. You'll need to have completed a non-salaried teacher training course and received a bursary or scholarship in the academic year 2018/19. You'll receive two additional early-career payments of £5k each in your third and fifth year of teaching - enhancements to these payments are available if you teach in specified areas in England. You must have taught in a state-funded school in England since completing your teacher training course.

View the full terms and conditions at www.gov.uk/government/publications/mathematics-early-career-payments-guidance-for-teachers-and-schools



Other help available

Undergraduate Medical and Dentistry Courses

For years one to three of your first primary degree course, you will receive the standard student support package. In your fourth year of study and beyond, depending on whether or not you follow a one year intercalated degree, if you are studying in the UK, you may be eligible to receive a means-tested healthcare bursary from the Department of Health (DoH) and have your tuition fees paid in full by the DoH. You may also be eligible to apply for a reduced rate non-income assessed Maintenance Loan. You may also get extra allowances, for example, if you are disabled or have dependants.

You will apply for support through your Student Finance NI office for the full duration of the course and regardless of where you are studying in the UK. As your Student Finance NI office administers the bursary arrangements on behalf of the DoH, you should contact them for further information on the level of bursaries available. A Student Finance Medical and Dental Fact Sheet is available on our web-site www.studentfinancenl.co.uk.

Graduate Entry Medical Courses

If you are attending a four year graduate-entry medical course (fast-track course) in England, Wales or Scotland, you will not be eligible for a DoH healthcare bursary, tuition fee support or maintenance grant. You will be required to pay your own fees to the university. You can, however, apply for a Maintenance Loan through your Student Finance NI office for the duration of the course.

Funding for Healthcare course

If you intend to study a healthcare course, you should note that the student support available to you may differ from the support available for other higher education courses.

Allied Health Professional Courses

If you are planning to undertake a first primary Allied Health Professional degree course (e.g. physiotherapy, occupational therapy, radiography, speech and language therapy, podiatry or dietetics), the student support available to you depends on where you are studying.

If you intend to study in Northern Ireland, you may be eligible to receive a means-tested healthcare bursary from the DoH and have your tuition fees paid in full by the DoH. You may also be eligible to apply for a reduced rate non-income assessed Maintenance Loan. You may also get extra allowances, for example, if you are disabled or have dependants. You will apply for support through your Student Finance NI office for the full duration of the course. As your Student Finance NI office administers the bursary arrangements on behalf of the DoH, you should contact them for further information on the level of bursaries available.

If you intend to study in England, Wales or Scotland, different funding arrangements can apply and these can be significantly different from Northern Ireland. From September 2017 new policy was introduced whereby Northern Ireland students studying in England and Scotland can apply for the standard support financial support package. Northern Ireland students studying in Wales can apply for the bursary support package, subject to eligibility requirements (committing to 2 years working for the NHS in Wales). Students who don't commit to this can apply for the standard financial support package.

You should contact the relevant funding body for further information on the support available (see contact details on pg 23) and do not make any decision until you are aware of the funding you are eligible to receive. If you are eligible to apply for a means-tested healthcare bursary from any of these funding bodies, you may also be eligible to apply for a reduced rate non-income assessed Maintenance Loan through your Student Finance NI office.



Other help available

Nursing and Midwifery Courses

If you are planning to study a pre-registration nursing or midwifery course, the student support available to you depends on where you are studying.

If you intend to study in Northern Ireland, you may be eligible to receive a non means-tested healthcare bursary from the DoH and have your tuition fees paid in full by the DoH.

For further information, please contact

The Bursary Unit,
Business Services Organisation,
2 Franklin Street,
Belfast,
BT2 8DQ,
Telephone 028 9536 3818

or e-mail: studentnurse.bursaries@hscni.net

If you intend to study in England, Wales or Scotland, different funding arrangements can apply and these can be significantly different from Northern Ireland. From September 2017 new policy was introduced whereby Northern Ireland students studying in England and Scotland can apply for the standard support financial support package. Northern Ireland students studying in in Wales can apply for the bursary support package, subject to eligibility requirements (committing to 2 years working for the NHS in Wales). Students who don't commit to this can apply for the standard financial support package.

If you intend to study in England, Scotland or Wales, you should contact the relevant funding body for further information on the support available (see contact details on page 23). If you are eligible to apply for a means-tested healthcare bursary from any of these funding bodies, you may also be eligible to apply for a reduced rate non-income assessed Maintenance Loan through your Student Finance NI office.

Social Work courses in Northern Ireland

If you are a Northern Ireland domiciled student intending to study a social work degree in Northern Ireland, in addition to the standard student support package, the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) at the DoH provide a bursary. For further information, please contact:

Social Work Student Funding Scheme:
Bursary Administration Section
Social Services Inspectorate
DoH(NI)
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3SQ
Tel: 02890 520517

Social Work Training:
NISCC
7th Floor Millennium House
19-25 Great Victoria Street
Belfast BT2 7AQ
Tel: 02890 417600
Website: www.niscc.info

Course Applications:
Universities Central Admissions System (UCAS)
Tel: 01242 222444
Website: www.ucas.ac.uk

Postgraduate funding

The student support system does not provide the same support for students on postgraduate courses as those on undergraduate courses except for initial teacher training. There are studentships and research grants available for postgraduate courses from the research councils and some other charitable sources. Since September 2017 loans are available for designated postgraduate courses.

For further information please contact the Postgraduate Office, Student Finance NI, Ballee Centre, Ballee Road West, Ballymena BT42 2HS Tel: 028 25 661444
E-mail: StudentFinance-pg@eani.org.uk



Other help available

Research councils

Northern Ireland students wishing to apply for a studentship tenable at an institution in Great Britain must approach the appropriate academic department at the institution(s) and inquire about:

- obtaining a place for your chosen course of study; and
- the procedure for applying for an award from one or more of the following bodies:
 - Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) at www.ahrc.ac.uk
 - Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) at www.bbsrc.ac.uk
 - Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) at www.epsrc.ac.uk
 - Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) at www.esrc.ac.uk
 - Medical Research Council (MRC) at www.mrc.ac.uk
 - Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) at www.nerc.ac.uk
 - Science and Technology Facility Council (STFC) at www.stfc.ac.uk

The institutions will advise you of the date by which application forms will be available for the body which support your chosen course, the closing date for receipt of applications, and the date by which applicants will be advised of the outcome.

Professional and career development loan

Postgraduate students (or in certain cases, an undergraduate student who has already obtained a degree and who wishes to study an additional bachelors degree), may be eligible to apply for a Professional and Career Development Loan (PCDL). A PCDL is a bank loan which is designed to help people pay for work-related learning to help gain experience, training and qualifications to improve job skills or launch a new career. Like any bank loan, you must repay the money you borrow but, with PCDLs the interest is paid on your behalf on the loan while you are learning and for up to one month afterwards. A learner can borrow anything between £300 and £10,000 to help fund up to two years of learning (or up to three years if the course includes one year of relevant practical work experience). For more information on PCDLs, and to find out if you are eligible to apply, you should call 0800 100 900 or visit: www.gov.uk/career-development-loans

Educational trusts and charities

There are also educational trusts and charities that make individual awards to students. You can find standard lists of these in most public libraries. Further information on useful publications are included on page 24.



Other help available

Benefits

Although most full-time students are not entitled to social security benefits, certain students in vulnerable groups (including single parents and disabled students) may be eligible for social security benefits including Housing Benefit. If you want to take a full-time course of education, you should ask your local Social Security Agency (SSA) office how this may affect your benefits.

If you are eligible for benefits, the SSA will take account of any income you receive through loans (and some grants) under the main student support arrangements. **If you are eligible for a loan, SSA will take account of the money available to you whether or not you take it out.** If your partner is eligible for benefits, the SSA will take account of your student income in the same way when they work out his or her benefits. They do not take account of support towards your tuition fees. The Special Support Grant, Childcare Grant, Parents' Learning Allowance and Care Leavers' Grant are not taken into account for benefit purposes. Payments from the Support Funds that are not intended for general living costs should also be ignored for benefit purposes.

European study - The Erasmus Exchange Programme

If you are planning to study abroad as part of your course, you may be able to get help through the Erasmus exchange programme if the country in which you want to study is part of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

The scheme is currently administered by the British Council with 33 countries taking part. Most higher education institutions in the UK listed on the 'Recognised Bodies Charter' take part in Erasmus exchanges and a wide range of subjects are covered.

NI Students who are on an Erasmus study year or Erasmus work placement year, may be eligible for a tuition fee waiver for the year in question. The study or work placement must be for a full academic year, which is at least 24 weeks not including weekends and holidays. Students who qualify to take part in the scheme will also be eligible to apply for a mobility grant.

Universities and colleges in England, Wales and Scotland can charge up to 15% of the maximum tuition fee charge of £9,250 to Erasmus students.

In academic year 2018/19 this amounts to a maximum £1,385. Students will be able to apply for a Tuition Fee Loan to cover this cost.

For more information, contact the European Office in your university or college.

The address of the British Council is provided below but **please note they cannot answer other questions about student finance.**

British Council Northern Ireland
The Boat
7th floor
49 Queen's Square
Belfast
BT1 3FG

Telephone: (0)161 957 7755
Email: general.enquiries@britishcouncil.org
Website: www.nireland.britishcouncil.org



How to find out more

| Addresses of Student Finance NI offices | Covering local Government District(s) |
|---|--|
| <p>Student Finance NI 40 Academy Street BELFAST BT1 2NQ Telephone: 028 90 564000 Email: student.finance-br@eani.org.uk</p> | <p>Belfast</p> |
| <p>Student Finance NI Ballee Centre Ballee Road West Ballymena BT42 2HS. Telephone: 028 2566 1222 Email: student.finance-ner@eani.org.uk</p> | <p>Antrim Ballymena Ballymoney Carrickfergus Coleraine Larne Magherafelt Moyle Newtonabbey</p> |
| <p>Student Finance NI Grahamsbridge Road Dundonald BELFAST BT16 2HS Telephone: 028 90 566200 Email: student.finance-ser@eani.org.uk</p> | <p>Ards Castlereagh Down Lisburn North Down</p> |
| <p>Student Finance NI 3 Charlemont Place The Mall ARMAGH BT61 9AX Telephone: 028 37 512432 Email: student.finance-sr@eani.org.uk</p> | <p>Armagh Banbridge Cookstown Craigavon Dungannon Newry and Mourne</p> |
| <p>Student Finance NI 1 Hospital Road OMAGH Co Tyrone BT79 0AW Telephone: 028 82 411499 Email: student.finance-wr@eani.org.uk</p> | <p>Fermanagh Limavady Londonderry Omagh Strabane</p> |



How to find out more

For information about NHS bursaries in England, contact:

NHS Student Bursaries
Ridgway House
Northgate Close
Middlebrook
Horwich
Bolton BL6 6PQ
Phone: 0300 330 1345
Website: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students

Information for students in Wales

For more information on NHS bursaries in Wales, contact:

Student Awards Services
6th Floor
Churchill House,
17 Churchill Way,
Cardiff CF10 2TW
Phone: 02920 376854
Website: www.nwssp.wales.nhs.uk

Information for students in Scotland

For more information about NHS bursaries in Scotland, contact:

The Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS)
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3UT
Phone: 0845 111 0241

Other sources of funding and information.

Scholarship Search UK

Provides information about other sources of funding for undergraduates.

Website: www.scholarship-search.org.uk

National Union of Students (NUS/USI)

Write (enclosing a stamped addressed envelope) to:

NUS/USI Student Movement
42 Dublin Road Belfast,
Northern Ireland BT2 7HN
Telephone: 028 9024 4641
Fax: 028 9043 9659

Website: www.nistudents.org

Educational Grants Advisory Service (EGAS)

Part of Family Action, the Educational Grants Advisory Service (EGAS) is an independent advice agency which provides information on sources of charitable educational funding for further and higher education. EGAS maintains a database of trusts and charities that assist students. EGAS can also give detailed advice about the statutory funding system to those who are considering entering further or higher education.

To obtain further information, visit www.family-action.org.uk/educationalgrantssearch or call the information line on 0207 254 6251.



How to find out more

HM Revenue & Customs

If you need help and advice on tax and tax credits, phone 0845 300 3900 or visit www.hmrc.gov.uk.

If you qualified under the old system, you should continue to qualify for help.

Visit www.HMRC.gov.uk/taxcredits or call 0845 300 3900 (textphone 0845 300 3909) or drop into your HMRC Enquiry Centre (listed under HM Revenue & Customs in the phone book).

For more information about how tax affects you, visit www.HMRC.gov.uk/students and download the TAX + U information pack.

Teacher training

For information about how to become a teacher, including what support may be available, you should contact the following authorities –

- **Training in Northern Ireland**
Department of Education (DENI)
Website: www.deni.gov.uk
E-mail: mail@deni.gov.uk
Phone: 0289 127 9100
- **Training in England**
Department for Education Teaching Agency
Website:
www.getintoteaching.education.gov.uk
Phone: Teaching Information Line on 0800 389 2500
- **Training in Scotland**
Teach in Scotland
Website: www.teachinScotland.scot
E-mail: training@infoscotland.com
Phone: 0845 345 4745
- **Training in Wales**
Teacher Training in Wales
Website: www.teachertrainingcymru.org

Useful publications

The Directory of Grant Making Trusts 2018/19, published by DSC (www.dsc.org.uk), ISBN 978-1-78482-042-8;

The Charities Digest 2018, published by Waterlow Professional Publishing (www.wlrstore.com), ISBN 978-1-85783-247-1;

The Grants Register 2018 - the complete guide to postgraduate funding worldwide, published by Palgrave Macmillan (www.palgrave.com), ISBN 978-1-13759-209-5.

There are various survival guides available for students to purchase or alternatively to borrow from your local libraries.



What to do if you are not satisfied

Summary

This section gives you some advice on what to do if you are not satisfied and you feel that you may want to complain or appeal.

Making a complaint or an appeal

You will have seen from this guide that you might be dealing with a number of different organisations involved in student support – your Student Finance NI office, the SLC, your college, the Department for the Economy, HM Revenue and Customs and so on.

All these organisations want to provide good services. But sometimes things go wrong or mistakes are made. For example, there may be an unacceptable delay, or you may find that you are not dealt with politely, or a decision in your case seems wrong.

If this happens, you will need to decide if you want to make a complaint or to appeal against a decision that has been made. But before considering what to do, you should make sure that you have done everything that you should have. For example, have you provided information or documents that you have been asked for or done things on time?

What you should do if you want to complain

All public services should publicise their system for handling complaints. They often do this in a leaflet or as part of other publicity material. It will help you and the organisation that you are dealing with if you follow their system.

So the first thing to do, if you do not know already, will be to find who to make your complaint to. This may be to the person you have been dealing with or to one of the managers in the organisation.

You should also find out how to make your complaint. In the first place it may be fine to do it by phone, when perhaps the matter can be sorted out quickly and easily. If you are still not satisfied with the way you are being treated or the problem is more complicated, it may be appropriate to put things in writing.

The organisations system for dealing with complaints should also be clear about what happens if you are still not satisfied with the way that your case or complaint is being handled. This usually involves you being able to take a complaint to higher positions in the organisation ending with the head of the organisation, perhaps the chief executive, chief officer or a director.

If you have been through the complaints system of the organisation concerned and you are still not satisfied, there may be an independent review of complaints that you can go to. The organisation's publicity material on their complaints system should describe this and how to get in touch with that person or organisation. If it does not, please ask them what you should do.

Some organisations may have set up their own arrangements for providing an independent review of complaints, which they should include in their publicity material.

But generally, the main ones involved in aspects of student support are:

- the Commissioner for Complaints (for services provided by Student Finance NI);
- the Parliamentary Ombudsman (for services provided by central government, for example, the DfE);
- the Student Loans Company Assessor; and
- the Adjudicator (for services provided by HM Revenue and Customs, who will be involved in collecting repayments of your loan after you have finished studying).



What to do if you are not satisfied

What you should do if you want to appeal

This is different from making a complaint. You may be happy with the way that the organisation has dealt with you (they have been efficient and polite and so on) but feel that the organisation has reached the wrong decision in your case. For example, on whether you are eligible for financial support, or how much support you are entitled to.

This means that appeals should be about:

- matters of law;
- decisions or action based on the interpretation of law or regulations; or
- breaking their obligations;

rather than failures in administration.

As with considering making a complaint, the organisation that you are dealing with should be able to give you information on how to appeal.

So your first step should be to make sure that you have this information. But before going any further you should also make sure that you have told the organisation concerned that you are unhappy with their decision. You should also ask them for an explanation of how they have reached it. This may help to sort the problem out without the need to take it any further.

If you are still not satisfied, you should make sure that you know how to appeal and who to appeal to. Some of the organisations you will be dealing with have their own appeals arrangements, which you should use first. These range from appeals to the Chief Executive in the Student Finance NI cases to appeals to the tax commissioners, for decisions taken by HM Revenue and Customs.

But in some circumstances you may have to consider using the legal system (going to a county court or applying for a judicial review in the high court) if, for example, you need to take the appeal to another stage. This can also apply if it is the only route of appeal available in your particular case.

If you are thinking of doing this, you must first get independent legal advice, for example from a solicitor, a legal advice centre, the advice centre in your university or student union, or Citizens Advice (which used to be the citizens advice bureau).



Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

You can get a copy of this guide from **www.studentfinanceneni.co.uk**

For general enquiries speak to an adviser on **0300 100 0077**.
The Customer Support Office can be contacted on
Monday to Friday between the hours of **8am and 8pm** or on
Saturday and Sunday between **9am and 4pm**.

You can order forms and guides in braille, large print or audio by emailing with your name, address, customer reference number along with what form and format you require to: brailleandlargefonts@slc.co.uk or you can telephone us on 0141 243 3686. Please note: the above email address and telephone number can only deal with requests for alternative formats of forms and guides.

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