

STUDENT SUPPORT INFORMATION NOTE (SSIN)

ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS FUNDED UNDER THE STUDENT SUPPORT REGULATIONS

SSIN 06/12

March 2012

To:

Student Finance administrators and practitioners in institutions of higher education;
Student Finance advisors, and
The Student Loans Company

Dear Colleague

BIS AND MOD CO-FUNDED HIGHER EDUCATION SCHEMES.

Introduction

1. The purpose of this SSIN is to give information about two Higher Education (HE) schemes developed by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and co-funded by MOD, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and the Devolved Administrations (DAs) that are available to a small number of students attending HE courses in England:

- The **Service Leavers' Support scheme**, which is a scheme to provide payment of tuition charges for service leavers in higher education, and
- The **Education Scholarship Scheme for Bereaved Service Children** which is a scheme to provide HE scholarships for the children of deceased service personnel.

This SSIN provides details of the HE provision for English domiciled students, but it should be noted that the schemes also make provision for eligible students domiciled in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and parallel provision exists for students studying further education courses.

Background

2. These schemes formed part of the Coalition Agreement published in May 2010, and fall under the Armed Forces Covenant. Both schemes are administered by MOD, which is also the lead department. BIS works closely with MOD on all aspects of financing the schemes, and also provides help and advice to MOD on relevant aspects of higher education. The eligibility of both schemes has been aligned with the Student Finance Regulations to

ensure that beneficiaries of both schemes will also be able to access the relevant parts of the standard student finance package.

Description

3. The Service Leavers' scheme, which has been in operation since 2009, pays in full the tuition charges for certain service leavers to gain a 'first bite' at an HE qualification, up to and including an undergraduate degree. It does not provide funding for postgraduate qualifications. To be eligible, applicants must have registered on the MOD Enhanced Learning Credits (ELC) scheme whilst serving with the Armed Forces. The ELC provides a fixed level of funding towards fee charges: BIS and DA funds serve to 'top-up' this amount to meet any difference between the amount available to individuals through MOD, and the full amount charged for tuition. Support for living costs will be available for eligible students through the student finance system, in the same way as for other students. Currently around 226 individuals are registered with the scheme. However, recent improvements to the eligibility criteria mean that MOD expects increases in the future uptake of the scheme.

4. Administration of the scheme is provided by the ELC Administration Service (ELCAS) on behalf of MOD. Once a service leaver has secured a place on a higher education course, an application for help is made direct to ELCAS. Applicants will need to make a separate application for each year of their course. Once an application has been agreed, ELCAS notify the individual who should inform their institution on registration that their fees are being paid via this scheme. Institutions invoice ELCAS directly, who will pay the tuition charge direct to the institution. To ensure prompt payment, institutions should ensure that invoices for these students provide all the information requested by ELCAS.

5. The Scholarship scheme is a scheme to provide HE scholarships to children of service personnel who have died in the service of their country. MOD expects that the total number of scholarships available under this scheme will be relatively small (i.e. not more than 100 in payment at any one time), and currently around 60 scholarships are in payment. The scheme covers eligible full time students beginning courses from September 2010 (i.e. backdated to the beginning of the 2010/11 academic year). The total cost of the scholarships will be funded by BIS and DAs, and are initially worth £8,240 a year to students studying at an English institution. However, the increases to tuition fees for students studying in England from 2012/13 onwards will substantially increase the value of the scholarships for students starting courses in September 2012/13 and beyond.

6. Administration of the scheme is provided on behalf of MOD by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA), to whom students make their application. Once the application has been agreed, the applicant will receive payment of the scholarship direct into their own bank account. Scholarship recipients must re-apply each year of their course for continuation of their scholarship. It is the recipient's decision whether to use the

scholarship to pay their tuition charge in full, or to use it towards their living costs, or a mixture of both. Recipients can also therefore apply for help under the student finance system towards their living costs, or their tuition charges, or both.

7. It should be noted that under the Student Support Regulations scholarships are not counted as income for the purposes of income assessment, as they are classified as exempt income for tax purposes.

Further information

8. Public enquiries about the scheme should be addressed as follows:

- For the Service Leaver's Support Scheme - to the scheme administrator at ELCAS on 0845 300 5179
- For the Education Scholarship Scheme for Bereaved Service Children - to the scheme website at www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/Personnel/SPVA/EducationScholarshipSchemeForBereavedServiceChildren.htm

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