

# Guidance on General, Eligibility and Financial Assessment Administration

Text referring to new or amended provisions for 2009/2010 is set in green bold type.

Section 22 page 6 has been revised week ending 23/01/2009

Current Year Income page 18 two new scenarios added from 30/04/2009

Current Year Income page 18 five new scenarios added from 22/05/2009

Page 9 section 44 has been amended.

Page 7 section 30 Migrant Workers.

Page 25 section 125 'Additional Codes' U and G no longer applicable.

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## Introduction

1. This chapter provides **LAs and Student Finance England (SFE)** with general administrative information about the processing of applications.
2. **LA/SFE** will notify all applicants who are eligible for support for 2009/2010 of the outcome of their financial assessment using the LA Portal.

## Policy

3. There are no policy implications in this guidance. Please refer to the 'Assessing Eligibility Guidance' chapter and the 'Assessing Financial Entitlement' chapter for policy guidance.

## General Administration

### New students

4. **All new student applications in 09/10 will be processed by the Student Finance England (SFE) at Lingfield Point in Darlington.**
5. **New students can apply for the 09/10 academic year from February 2009.**
6. **New students should be encouraged to apply online in the 09/10 academic year. If LAs are approached by potential new students they should advise them to log onto the Customer Portal. Alternatively if they wish to apply on a paper form they may download a PN1 (new student application form) from the direct.gov website [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance).**
7. **The student can also contact the CSO on 0845 300 5090 to request a PN1 form with separate guidance notes to be sent to them.**
8. **From February 2009 Student Finance Direct (SFD) will be known as **Student Finance England** [www.studentfinanceengland.gov.uk](http://www.studentfinanceengland.gov.uk).**

#### English-domiciled students

**The branding Student Finance England (SFE) applies to all English-domiciled students and sponsors who apply for support during academic year 09/10. All related paperwork and online communications will also be branded as SFE. This affects all new, returning and part-time students.**

### All other years

- **From February 2009 Student Finance Direct (SFD) will be known as **Student Finance England** [www.studentfinanceengland.gov.uk](http://www.studentfinanceengland.gov.uk)**
9. All other year students will automatically be sent one of the following. Please refer to table below to see which one will be sent.

- Renew online letter – this encourages them to apply online in 2009/2010. The letter will also advise that they may download a form PR1 from the [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance) or contact the CSO on **0845 300 5090** to request a PR1 form with separate guidance notes be sent to them.
- PR1 - returning students application form. If they are sent this form they can still choose to apply online if they wish.
- PR1a – condensed returning student’s application form to apply for NMTO support. If they are sent this form they can still choose to apply online if they wish. Please note that PR1a’s cannot be sent manually or resent via the LA Portal. The LA will need to send a PR1 if a PR1a is required after the initial print run and automatic sending exercise.

LAST YEAR'S APPLICATION	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4 ONWARDS
Online	Renew online letter	Renew online letter	Renew online letter
NMTO paper	Renew online letter	Renew online letter	PR1a
MT paper	Renew online letter	Renew online letter	PR1

#### Additional supplies of forms

10. PDF versions of the PN1 and PR1 forms will be available from the LA Portal home page and DIUS website. Additional forms may be obtained from Prolog on 0800 731 9133.

#### Additional financial forms

11. Standard evidence forms are again being produced for the 09/10 academic year. They will have the ‘Aim Higher’ and ‘**Student Finance England**’ logos on them.

The forms are:

- ‘Confirmation of Benefits’ (CB2)
- ‘Confirmation of Income’ (CI2)
- ‘Confirmation of Earnings from Self Assessment’ (GSA1)

These forms will be coded into the system. LAs will be able to send them directly from the system and a covering letter will go out with them. These can be requested via the LA Portal in Correspondence in the miscellaneous category. PDF versions of these forms will be available from the LA Portal home page and the DIUS website.

#### Distribution of the printed materials

12. The SLC will issue the PR1, PR1a forms and renew online letter direct to continuing students at their home address and the SLC will

contact the LA/SFE when this has been done. The LA will also be given a supply of PR1s.

13. LA/SFE will receive the number of copies of the booklets 'Financial Support for Higher Education Students 2009/2010' and 'Student Loans – a guide to Terms and Conditions' that they have requested.

### Accepting and processing applications

14. For the 2009/2010 academic year, LA/SFE will be dealing with applications in two formats:
  - New applicants (PN1) will be processed by SFE in Darlington, and continuing students (PR1) and (PR1a) who choose to apply on paper will complete, sign, and return their application form to their LA/SFE.
  - New applicants and returning students who choose to use the online facility will submit an application via the Customer Portal.

LA/SFE will find the applications that are awaiting assessment using the application search function, and process them as they are submitted.

### Student's responsibilities

15. The regulations specify that the student must sign the declaration on the paper application form in order for it to be considered. If they make an online application they will be sent an online declaration after the application has been considered and approved. Payments will not be released until this is returned to the SLC.

### Loan Request Form (LRF)

16. For 2009/2010 the LRF in the main forms will be for both the Tuition Fee Loan and the Maintenance Loan but they will be available separately on the LA Portal in correspondence and will be called Maintenance Loan Request Form which is found in Entitlement and Tuition Fee Loan Request Form which is found in Miscellaneous.
17. The student is required to complete, sign, and return the LRF to their LA/SFE if they wish to take up either or both loans.
18. LA/SFE must process a completed LRF using the LA portal at the same time as they process the application form if possible, or as soon as they receive it from the student if sent separately. Once processed they must complete the student's **Customer Reference Number (CRN) previously known as the ART ID** section at the top of the LRF and forward these on a weekly basis to the SLC for storage using the LRF Return Pro forma available on the homepage of the LA Portal. Please refer to the 2009/2010 DIUS Audit Guidelines for further information. If a student has missed off a contact, the missing details can be taken over the telephone and added to the system and the LRF sent to the SLC as usual. **For 09/10 it will not be mandatory to complete the contact details on the LRF. However if entered must be entered in full, if partial information is entered the following message will be displayed. 'Contact Details of First Contact are incomplete'. The same applies for the second contact. They must be entered in full or**

**not entered at all. SFE will endeavour to collect this information.**

19. If a student has completed a PR1a form, the loan request is incorporated into the form and is not a separate part of the application. Therefore the whole PR1a needs to be forwarded to the SLC in the same way as the LRFs and you will have to use a separate return pro forma for this as these will be batched separately from the LRFs.

#### **Late applications**

20. Students should make an application for financial assessment and provide their financial information and evidence within nine months from the start of their academic year. LA/SFE have discretion in exceptional cases over whether to accept applications received after nine months. They will need to consider the circumstances of each case.

#### **Deciding who should administer an application**

21. In accordance with the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2009, it is the Secretary of State who is responsible for accepting applications for support. This responsibility has been transferred to LA/SFE.
22. If an LA **receives a PN1 application** they should send the application back to the student and advise the student to forward the application to **SFE: Student Finance England, P.O. Box 210, Darlington DL1 9HJ** ). If SFE receive a PR1 form which was **intended to go to an LA, the application should be forwarded to the LA.**

#### **Applicants moving to England from elsewhere in the United Kingdom and Islands**

23. Under Schedule 1,1 (3) an applicant who is ordinarily resident in England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man as a result of having moved there from another of those areas for the purpose of undertaking their current course, should make application to the relevant authority, or SFE in the case of England, in the place from which they have moved. This regulation also applies where the applicant moved to their existing residence for the purpose of undertaking a course they have just completed. For the purposes of this regulation the applicant's residence during vacations should be disregarded.

#### **Applicants moving to England from elsewhere in the United Kingdom and Islands: end-on courses**

24. An end-on course is a degree course which students take immediately after completing a Foundation Degree, HNC, HND or Dip HE course.
25. **All end-on students will be processed by SFE at Darlington and will be dealt with the same way they would have been by the LA that accepted and assessed their previous application, whether or not they were assessed as eligible, ie: They will need to supply eligibility evidence again.**

26. In the case of a student who has moved from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man to England in order to attend a designated course and who is now applying for a second designated course end-on to their first course, the regulations specify that the student should be treated as ordinarily resident in Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man as appropriate and apply to the relevant authority in that area. Again, the requirement does not extend to cases where the student moved for reasons other than to attend the first course.

#### **End-on course following a non-designated first course**

27. Schedule 1.1 (3) does not apply where the previous course was a non-designated course. Therefore, a student studying a non-designated course may be ordinarily resident in the place where they are studying that course. They should apply for their support for a designated course which is end-on to the non-designated course to **SFE**.
28. Applicants boarded out/in care or tenants of a Local Authority. The applicant should apply to **SFE**
29. An applicant may be attending boarding school, or be provided with accommodation by a Local Authority. The applicant should apply to **SFE**.

#### **Other cases**

30. For all these cases the applicants should apply to **SFE**:
- a) Gap year students
  - b) Apprentices/Sponsorships
  - c) Prisoners
  - d) Seamen
  - e) Nursery Nurses (nannies)
  - f) Nurses and Student Nurses
  - g) Medical Students
  - h) Agriculture Students
  - i) Architecture Students
  - j) **Migrant Workers –see the Transfer of Migrant Worker Instructions issued by BIS August 2009. Also see the Assessing Eligibility Guidance.**

#### **Students who transfer courses**

32. Once an applicant has had their application for support for one course accepted by an LA/**SFE** that LA/**SFE** should administer their support for any course the student transfers to. Where a student moves to an end-on course the student should apply to **SFE**.

### Customer Reference Number and Student Support Number (SSN)

33. The system will allocate **Customer Reference Number (CRN)** and Student Support Numbers (SSN) to each applicant. **The CRN** is a randomly generated 11 digit number and is now the main reference for students.
34. Where the LA Portal or Customer Portal identifies to an LA/SFE that an applicant has an existing **CRN** action should be taken to use this and not allocate a new **CRN**
35. The LA Portal and the Customer Portal have been designed on the assumption that, once allocated, a student will retain the same SSN for life. Consequently there is no facility in the LA Portal or Customer Portal to override an existing SSN record. If an LA/SFE believes that a student's SSN should be changed (because, for example, the SSN they have is for a different LA/SFE) they should raise a task for the LA Liaison Team giving reasons for their request.

### Duplicate Customers

36. When a duplicate customer is identified within the LA Portal the LA/SFE need to determine which customer is the duplicate. If the LA/SFE is unsure they can contact the LA Helpdesk for advice.
37. The LA/SFE now needs to edit the students profile within the LA Portal. They should reference the correct customers **CRN** against the duplicate customer's forename (without any spaces or brackets), for example: Alexander45786547158 remove any middle names **and the National Insurance Number (NINO)**. The LA/SFE may need to raise a 'change to application details' task in order to arrange for the SLC to make these changes. The task should be assigned to the SLC Contact Centre. Next they should change the duplicate customer's address to 100 Bothwell Street, Glasgow, G2 7JD to prevent any correspondence being sent to the customer and finally to prevent the customer using the website and the IVR with the incorrect ART ID they need to create a 'Change of Personal Details' task against the duplicate customer. The task should be assigned to SLC HEI/LEA Liaison Team. Within the 'details' field you must state that the customer should be suppressed as they are a duplicate customer.

### Students studying more than one designated course

38. If an applicant is intending to study for more than one course, for example, BA and an ITT course at the same time, they will only be eligible to receive fees and living cost support for one of the courses.

### Prevention of fraud

39. The Department expects LA/SFE to continue to take adequate measures to detect and deter fraudulent applications. LA/SFE should refer to the 09/10 Audit guidance for further information on this.
40. Students applying on the PN1 forms are asked to provide the relevant evidence with their application, for example P60s to confirm income. Those applying online will be asked for the same evidence. This should ensure that all applicants will be asked to provide the same initial evidence.



41. From the 2007/2008 academic year UK nationals have been asked to confirm their identity by submitting a valid original UK passport. **From 09/10 all UK nationals when applying will be asked to submit their Passport details on a PN1 form or Online. The new applicant will no longer be asked to send their passport for verification. The SLC will verify the details with the Identity and Passport Service.**
42. Applicants should be strongly encouraged to submit their passport **details** where they hold one. Alternatively, they may instead submit an original birth certificate; but this must now be accompanied by the identity confirmation form completed by a third party confirming their identity. This third party must be a 'person of standing' such as professional, civil servant, form teacher or person of good standing within the community. This is based on the well-established process for applying for a UK passport. This form can be downloaded by the student from [www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk).
43. **Non UK nationals will still need to submit their original passport.**
44. LA/SFE may require students and sponsors to provide additional documentary evidence to support and verify the financial or other details supplied on the application form. The nature of these documents and how the information is provided by the student is the LA/SFE discretion. Careful consideration should be given to the suitability of the document. If the evidence provided adequately supports the information provided, it should be accepted by the LA/SFE. **The departments view is that LAs must retain copies of any evidence that has been supplied which supports a figure on the application form in all cases. Please see Audit Guidance section 32.**
45. When the details of an application have been data input using the LA Portal, the rules engine will prompt the LA/SFE about any missing information that is preventing a full financial assessment of the applicant.

#### **Students in Witness Protection Program**

46. **Should the LA/SFE be contacted by anyone** i.e.: Student, Police regarding a student in the Witness Protection Program they should immediately contact the Special Investigation Unit at SLC.

Under no circumstances should the LA/SFE add a note to any system.

The SIU contact details are: Email : [siu@slc.co.uk](mailto:siu@slc.co.uk)

Fiona Innes	SIU Team Leader: 0141 243 3487
Angela McArthur	SIU Administrator: 0141 243 3488
Debbie Goldie	SIU Administrator: 0141 243 3049
Gerry Brown	SIU Administrator: 0141 243 3814
Darren Brodie	SIU Administrator: 0141 243 3815

#### **Change of circumstances**

47. A student's eligibility for financial support, or the amount of support they are entitled to, may change if their circumstances change. Students are required to tell LA/SFE if any of the information given in

their application changes. Particular changes of circumstances that may have an effect are:

- Taking up a place at a different university or college to the one disclosed on their original assessed application;
- Obtaining a bursary or scholarship from any source, for example, Department of Health Bursary;
- Changing their term, home or parental address;
- Changing their plans on whether or not to live in their parents' or their own home during term time;
- Changing the start date and/or the end date of their course;
- Changing the academic year in which they will begin their course;
- Deciding not to commence study;
- A change in their family circumstances.

Wherever possible the student should complete a 'Change of Circumstances' form (CO1) to notify their LA/SFE of their changed situation. The Change of Circumstance form (CO1) can be downloaded from the LA Portal homepage and the DIUS website. To action any change for a student, LA/SFE should refer to the LA Portal user guide.

## Eligibility Administration

### System determination of eligibility

48. All new applications for the 2009/2010 academic year will be made either on a PN1 form, which will be input by SFE staff using the LA Portal or directly onto the system by the student using the Customer Portal.
49. Decisions on student eligibility are taken initially by SFE. During the processing of the application the applicant's eligibility will be considered. The LA Portal contains a rules engine that is activated when an automated assessment is undertaken. The rules engine will not let an assessment go through to the awaiting approval stage if eligibility is undetermined.

### Seeking eligibility information

50. Applicants who apply using a paper form will provide eligibility information on a form PN1 and will be prompted to send eligibility and financial information for 07/08 tax year with their completed form. Where a paper application has been input onto the system and the applicant has provided insufficient eligibility information for the rules engine to determine whether they are eligible for support, SFE should continue to enter all the eligibility and financial information that has been supplied. In this way they (and the system) will be able to identify any further gaps in the information supplied and hence attempt to resolve all queries about the application in one go.
51. Where LA/SFE need to gather additional information from a student, their parents/guardian, or spouse/partner, they should generate the relevant letters through the LA Portal. In some circumstances, LA/SFE may need to write their own letter and record it as an interaction on the LA Portal. They should then pend the application

until they have received the outstanding information if the application cannot be progressed any further.

### **Applicants who are ineligible**

52. If the rules engine determines that an applicant is not eligible after an automated assessment is undertaken, the correspondence screen will be displayed, if the assessor agrees they must select the options within the correspondence screen which reflect the circumstances of the individual application. The options selected will determine which paragraphs will be inserted into the letter. Refer to the LA Portal system user guide 'Dealing with Ineligible Applicants' for further information.

### **Applicants who are in default of or who have not ratified a previous student loan**

53. When an application is submitted for assessment and the student is in default of or has not ratified a previous loan, the LA Portal generates correspondence telling the student that they cannot receive support whilst still in default or with non ratified loans and the application cannot be processed further. The system will also raise a task for the SLC. The SLC will investigate the situation and advise **SFE** regarding if any further action can be taken.

### **Applicants who breach any obligations to repay any previous student loan after they have been assessed**

54. An applicant who breaches any obligation to repay a previous student loan after receiving a financial notification confirming their eligibility for support will remain eligible for support.

### **Residence**

55. **SFE** staff should refer to the 'Assessing Eligibility Guidance' Chapter for guidance under the UK and EEA residence requirements of the student support regulations.
56. Before an applicant can be declared eligible for support they must provide to **SFE** the original of any documentation (for example in the case of a Non-UK applicant, a passport, appropriate identity document or travel card, visa or a Home Office letter with the appropriate vignette ) that confirms their residential status.

### **Identity**

57. There are different requirements to be met for UK and non-UK applicants for verifying identity.

### **UK applicants**

58. For the purposes of the student support regulations a UK applicant is one born in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. Applicants in the Isle of Man or Channel Islands are treated as non-UK applicants.
59. **SFE** are required to verify an applicant's country of birth and date of birth.

60. LA/SFE need to establish the age of an applicant, since eligibility for loans and for living costs support will depend in part upon the applicant's age at the start of the course. LA /SFE will also wish to establish whether a student is 'independent' on age grounds.
61. To verify the information supplied by a UK applicant SFE should request sight of original documentation. From the 2007/2008 academic year UK nationals will be asked to confirm their identity by submitting a valid original UK passport
62. Applicants should be strongly encouraged to submit their passport details where they hold one. Alternatively, they may instead submit an original birth certificate; but this must now be accompanied by the identity confirmation form completed by a third party confirming their identity. This third party must be a 'person of standing' such as professional, civil servant, form teacher or person of good standing with in the community. This is based on the well-established process for applying for a UK passport. This form can be downloaded from [www.studentsupportdirect.co.uk](http://www.studentsupportdirect.co.uk)
63. SFE should ensure that the applicant's stated place of birth is verified by the documentation received.

#### Documentation requirements

64. There is no requirement in the regulations for specific documentation to be provided. Regulation 9(1) says that students should provide such information as the Secretary of State requires. However, the Department's view is that the following types of evidence should be sought -
65. For students born in the United Kingdom, **from 09/10 all UK nationals when applying will be asked to submit their Passport details on a PN1 form or Online. The new applicant will no longer be asked to send their passport for verification. The SLC will verify the details with the Identity and Passport Service.**
  - Alternatively, they may instead submit an original birth certificate; but this must now be accompanied by the identity confirmation form completed by a third party confirming their identity. This third party must a 'person of standing' such as professional, civil servant, form teacher or person of good standing with in the community;
  - For students born outside the United Kingdom, a 'valid' passport (unless he is a refugee or does not hold one, however he should have an appropriate Home Office convention travel document);
  - Discretion for SFE to accept copied birth certificates or other documents.
66. **For non UK nationals**, if the applicant is unable to supply either their original passport or original birth certificate, SFE can exercise their discretion to accept certified true copies of documents where they consider it unreasonable to insist on originals, however every endeavour should be made to have sight of original identity documents, preferably a Passport or identity card. A certified true copy is a photocopy of an original document which must have been stamped and signed as being a true copy of the original by a 'responsible' person. The person certifying the copy must provide

their profession, name, address and contact number. The certifying person must not be a relative.

The Department is aware that **SFE** have their own audit requirements and this flexibility should still allow these to be followed. Where the student is not in possession of such documents it will be for **SFE** to decide the acceptable form of identification. Further information can be found in the 'Assessing Eligibility Guidance' Chapter.

67. In this context a **responsible person** means a consular officer, minister of religion, medical or legal practitioner, established civil servant, teacher, police officer, registering officer of the Ministry of Defence, legal executive or commissioner of oaths.

The definition of 'responsible' person has been extended to include registering officers of the Ministry of Defence to ensure that the birth certificates of children born abroad to service personnel can be accepted as proof of identity.

#### **Obtaining and returning supporting and identity documents**

68. Arrangements for obtaining and returning certificates and passports are a matter for **SFE** to decide. In any case, **SFE** must not retain such documents for any longer than is absolutely necessary to verify and record the required details.

Adequate security procedures should be in place for the safe receipt, handling and storage of passports while in **SFE** care.

#### **Applicants who have lost their birth certificates**

69. If the applicant cannot find their birth certificate they should approach the Register Office in the sub-district where their birth was registered for a replacement, or, if they do not know what the sub-district is, the General Registrar's Office. Relevant addresses are given in paragraph 71 below.

Depending on who issues the certificate the copy will be signed by a Registrar, Superintendent Registrar, or the Registrar General. The certificate will contain the statement that the document 'is certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody'. This certificate will also be accompanied by the identity confirmation form completed by third party confirming their identity. The third party should be an official or professional person such as a minister of religion, doctor, lawyer, accountant, engineer, civil servant, teacher/lecturer or police officer.

The General Registrar's Office has advised that birth certificates are not in themselves proof of identity of the person holding the certificate. However, the certificate will provide a cross-check against other information supplied by the applicant.

#### **Applicants whose birth was never registered**

70. If the applicant's birth was never registered, and therefore they do not have a birth certificate, they must provide alternative documentation. The applicant should contact the Office of National Statistics who will investigate the circumstances.

### General Register Offices

71. Applicants who need to obtain a copy of their birth certificate should contact the General Registrar's Office.

For applicants born in England and Wales the address is:

General Register Office  
PO Box 2  
Southport  
PR8 2HH

Phone: 0870 243 7788

Fax: 01704 550013

Email: [certificate.services@ons.gov.uk](mailto:certificate.services@ons.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.statistics.gov.uk/registration/](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/registration/)

For applicants born in Scotland the address is:

New Register House  
3 West Register Street  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3YT

Phone: 0131 314 4411

Fax: 0131 314 4400

Email: not available  
Website: [www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/grosweb/grosweb.nsf/pages/bdm](http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/grosweb/grosweb.nsf/pages/bdm)

For applicants born in Northern Ireland the address is:

Oxford House  
49/55 Chichester Street  
Belfast  
BT1 4HL

Phone: 02890 252000

Email: [gro.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:gro.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.groni.gov.uk/index.htm](http://www.groni.gov.uk/index.htm)

### Applicants who have been adopted

72. If the applicant has submitted their adoption certificate or a certified copy of the adoption certificate, it must also be accompanied by the identity confirmation form completed by third party confirming their identity. The third party should be an official or professional person such as a minister of religion, doctor, lawyer, accountant, engineer, civil servant, teacher/lecturer or police officer.

An adoption certificate replaces the birth certificate for an adopted person. Once an adoption certificate has been issued, the original entry in the Birth Register is unacceptable for official purposes and legal matters relating to the adopted person's name. A photocopy of the adoption certificate is not normally acceptable but see paragraph 69 above.

### **Non-UK applicants**

- 73.** To verify the necessary information for applicants born outside the UK, including those born in the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, **SFE** must obtain either:
- The applicant's passport;
  - A letter or other document signed by a 'responsible person' stating the details of the applicant's name, date of birth and their place and country
  - A birth certificate signed by an official of the country must also be accompanied by the identity confirmation form completed by third party confirming their identity. The third party should be an official or professional person such as a minister of religion, doctor, lawyer, accountant, engineer, civil servant, teacher/lecturer or police officer

### **Institution name, course name, codes and HEI Database**

- 74.** The LA Portal will contain the 2009/2010 HEI courses database. This gives details of institution names, course and codes. The correct institution, course and course year must be linked to each applicant's record. The database contains details of all designated courses. However, inclusion on the database does not guarantee that a course is designated. **LA/SFE** must make this determination themselves.

Where a designated course is not shown on the LA Portal, the **LA/SFE** may wish to check the course title on the UCAS database against the name of the relevant HEI. Where the course exists the **LA/SFE** should raise a HEI Database Maintenance task for the HEI Liaison Team to investigate the absence of the course. At this point the application cannot be assessed as the record is not 'linked' to any course or college information but data input can be completed.

The HEI Liaison Team will contact the relevant HEI asking them to provide details of the missing course. Where the SLC and the HEI are unable to match the applicant's course with a code the **LA/SFE** should seek clarification from the student.

The HEI Liaison Team will load onto the HEI database a temporary course code for each location of each HEI during the summer of 2009. This will ensure that no student is prevented from receiving a payment on the first day of their course due to the absence of a record on the HEI database.

The information held against each institution and course on the database determines where the first term's support is sent by the SLC.

## **Administration of Financial Assessments**

### **Students who do not wish to provide financial information**

- 75.** Students may not wish to provide any financial information with their application. In these circumstances they will have indicated, in the appropriate section of either the on-line or paper application form



that they want to apply for non-income assessed support only. Students are sometimes confused by the choices they are required to make at this stage of the application. LA/SFE should critically view the student's application and ticked boxes and consider what is in the best interest of the student, e.g. if a student has ticked non-income assessed Maintenance Loan but has also ticked against an income assessed grant the LA/SFE officer could, before any assessment, clarify with the student what support the student actually wants to apply for. Another approach could be for the LA/SFE officer to process a NMT assessment and write to the student explaining what they have been assessed for and what they need to do if they wish to be considered for additional grants or loan.

#### **Those who wish to complete their financial details separately**

76. Members of a student's family may wish to provide their financial details separately indicated on Section 11 (PN1) and 09 (PR1) of the application forms. This may be because they do not wish any of the other parties to have access to their financial details or because one or more of them has completed and submitted their details on-line. In these circumstances, the LA/SFE should enter the student's application onto the system and send (REQFIN – Request sponsor financial information) to the family members concerned. A blank PFF1 form (new students) or PFF2 form (continuing students) will be sent from the SLC with these letters. Information from each of the parties should be entered as it is received to ensure that the student's record is kept up to date. Once financial details from all the parties associated with the student's application have been received a full assessment can be carried out.

#### **Deadline for applying for financial assessment**

77. A student must apply for financial support within nine months after the first day of the academic year for which the support is intended (Regulation 10(1)), usually the beginning of June; i.e. three months before the end of the relevant academic year. This deadline is designed to ensure that LA/SFE can carry out financial assessments and that students can be paid before the beginning of the next academic year.
78. A non-means tested only student whose circumstances change during the academic year may apply to be financially assessed at any time during the nine month application period.
79. The deadline does not apply to Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs), which are not income assessed.

#### **Students who are not able to supply the required financial information**

80. Where a student cannot provide all the necessary financial information by the nine month deadline for reasons beyond their control, LA/SFE have discretion to extend the nine month application deadline.
81. Genuine reasons that will prevent students from supplying financial information immediately include students -
- Whose parents or spouses have asked to be assessed on a 'current year' basis;



- Whose own income cannot be confirmed until the end of the academic year;
  - Who are entitled to the supplementary grants because their spouse or partner, if applicable, has a low net income after allowances, and an accurate assessment of the student's entitlement to a grant cannot therefore be made until the end of their academic year.
82. In these cases, the application should be processed to ensure the student receives some support at the start of their studies.

### Prior Year Tax

83. From academic year 2009/10 the financial evidence will be based on the financial year prior to the start of the academic cycle. (i.e. 07/08 FY for 09/10 applications) and customers will not be asked for financial information and evidence until the information and evidence currently held expires.
84. If the financial information provided for 09/10 is higher than that previously supplied for 08/09: The LA/SFE should satisfy themselves that the income is 08/09 financial information. If the income is 07/08 additional financial income the LA/SFE should determine whether to reassess the 08/09 application and ask for additional evidence.
85. If the sponsor provides financial information on the 09/10 application and it is lower by 15% or more than that provided for in the 08/09 application: The LA/SFE should write out to the sponsor/s and ask if they would like a current year income assessment, i.e. using the 09/10 tax year. The 08/09 tax year should be disregarded.

Further information will follow in the 09/10 Release Notes

### Current Year Income

86. *Processing Scenario A. NEW for Current Year Income (CYI) 09/10*
- Student applies in February 09 for the 09/10 academic year,
  - Student supplies 07/08 (PYT) tax year financial evidence,
  - May 09 the student requests a CYI assessment. In May 09 student sends in an estimate of CYI for 09/10 tax year not 08/09 tax year,
  - Application is reassessed on a CYI using the estimates.
  - Student starts course in September 09,
  - April 2010 student sends in financial evidence for 09/10 tax year.
  -
87. *Processing Scenario B. RETURNER for Current Year Income (CYI) 09/10*
- Student applies in 08/09 Academic year for CYI assessment,
  - Student supplies and is assessed on estimates for 08/09 tax year,

- Student applies for 09/10 Academic year. The 08/09 application is still provisional for CYI 08/09 tax year. If the assessor tries to make payment on the 09/10 application using 08/09 tax year estimates a message will display advising that the 09/10 application cannot be approved until the 08/09 application is Finalised on the 08/09 tax year.
- The 09/10 application will be automatically Pended as CYI,
- Once the 08/09 application is Finalised on the 08/09 tax year the 09/10 application can be approved and Finalised on the 08/09 tax year.

The 10/11 application will also be assessed on the 08/09 tax year providing the 09/10 application has not been reassessed on a CYI basis using 09/10 tax year estimates.

**88. Processing Scenario C.**

- Student 1 LA
- 1<sup>st</sup> year at 2008/09 AY and assessed on 2007/08 FY
- Applied for CYI and with 15% drop now assessed on 2008/09 FY
- 2<sup>nd</sup> year at 2009/10 AY and will be assessed on 2008/09 FY
  
- Student 2 (sibling) SFE
- 1<sup>st</sup> year at 2009/10 AY and will be assessed on 2008/09 FY

**89. Processing Scenario D.**

- 08/09 PN1 application - Sponsor 1 only 07/08 FY
- 09/10 PR1 application –Sponsor 1 and New Sponsor 2 in this scenario the 09/10 application will be assessed using 07/08 tax year.

**90. Processing Scenario E.**

- 08/09 application was NMTO 07/08 no sponsors linked.
- 09/10 application MT sponsors linked and they supply 07/08 tax year information.

**91. Processing Scenario F**

- This scenario is classed as a COC
- 08/09 application 1 sponsor linked 07/08 tax year
- 09/10 application 2 sponsors linked 07/08 tax year.

**92. Processing Scenario G**

- 08/09 application Mother linked 07/08 tax year
- Student now lives with Father in 09/10
- 09/10 application Father linked 07/08 tax year.

93. All eligible students are entitled to the non-means tested elements of support which are not dependent on the provision of any financial information.
94. Every student who has submitted a PN1 or a PR1 form that includes financial information before the deadline of 26 June 2009 and 22 May 2009 respectively will receive either a full assessment, a provisional assessment or a Non Means Tested Only assessment in time to enable them to apply for and receive their support at the start of term in accordance with the SLA.

#### Reasons for provisional assessments

95. A student's entitlement to support may be provisionally assessed for a number of reasons. These include:
- The LA/SFE does not receive all information or evidence required to make the assessment Final;
  - The student's own income cannot be confirmed before the end of the academic year;
  - The assessment has been made using 'Current Income' which cannot be confirmed until after the end of the financial year;
  - The student is in receipt of provisional grants e.g. Child Care Grant which cannot be confirmed before the end of the academic year.
96. Where there is insufficient information to proceed to a provisional or an NMTO assessment when the application is originally processed, the student or their sponsor(s) will be sent a letter requesting the missing information using the relevant LA Portal letters.

#### Student's responsibility

97. Once a student and their sponsor(s) have been requested to supply additional information in order to receive further support, it is the student's responsibility to supply the requested information, within the specified timescales, without the need for this to be followed up by the LA/SFE.

#### Identifying students who have a provisional or temporary assessment

98. The Exception (RE3) report is now available on the LA Portal Homepage. This information report will list the following. This information will be displayed for both the current and previous academic year.
- Students on Temporary Course Code
  - Students on Provisional assessment
  - Students Requiring Revised FSN Following ESPN
99. LA/SFE should use this report to review the application status of every student on the report and initiate action to finalise their assessment or to manually record those students where it is not yet appropriate to issue a reminder. It can then be used to determine those cases which require further reminders or later action.

100. However, the report does not give the reason an assessment is provisional. LA/SFE may choose to run additional reports in Microstrategy to help them identify the reason an application remains provisional.

### **Reassessing provisionally assessed applicants**

101. As soon as information is received that will increase a student's support then a reassessment should be processed. It may be necessary to process more than one reassessment for a particular student if the requested information arrives at different times.

### **Vulnerable students**

102. Priority should be given to processing applications from vulnerable students; for example, independent students who are also single parents. However, LA/SFE should not include any grants for dependent children where their birth certificates have not been provided.

### **Timetable for finalising provisionally assessed students**

103. LA/SFE should aim to finalise all provisionally assessed students no later than early **January (to be confirmed.)** This will help ensure that there will be fewer changes to students' tuition fee positions after institutions have been paid the public contribution of tuition fees and that the Attendance Confirmation Reports sent to institutions will contain the latest fee information.
104. In some cases LA/SFE will not be able to finalise students' assessments until after the payment date of their final instalment of support for the academic year. Where this happens there is a danger that the student may receive an overpayment of loan or grants. Guidance advising LA/SFE how overpayments are dealt with is issued separately in Change of Circumstances Administration Guidance.

### **Issuing reminder letters & Forced NMTO**

105. **Forced NMTO is a new process for 09/10 which can be used for new students in 09/10 by SFE and Returning students both for SFE and LAs.**

**Where a customer's paper application is manually pended or online automatically pended for the reason of 'Await Evidence Sponsor 1' and/or 'Await Financial Evidence Sponsor 2' a communication will be automatically issued to the sponsor(s) when the pend is applied.**

#### **This communication will include:**

- **A description of the status of the application;**
- **What actions the customer is required to do to allow the application to progress;**
- **Advice to logon to their online account to view the missing evidence required;**
- **The next steps for their application if the actions are not completed.**

**Where the sponsor has supplied a valid email address, this communication will be issued via email, otherwise by paper**

- 106.** Depending on when the application is pended i.e. how near to the course start date, correspondence will be automatically sent. This is usually 20 days after the application was pended and if no evidence or communication is received another letter will be sent 40 days from the original Pend. This correspondence will advise a deadline date for Forced NMTO and after another 20 days, if no evidence is received the application will be automatically assessed as NMTO and the Pend will be automatically released.
- 107.** Where a forced NMTO assessment has been approved, a communication will be issued to the customer. This communication will include the following key messages:
- The steps the customer must take to progress with their means tested support which they originally applied for;
  - Explain why they haven't been processes as Means Tested, listing the missing information and/or evidence;
  - Inform the customer that if they have already sent in the requested details then it will be dealt with accordingly and a new notification issued.

This information will be communicated alongside the customers non means tested notification. The channel for this communication will be via the paper channel only.

More information will follow in the 09/10 Release Notes.

#### Issuing general reminder letters

- 108.** It is for LA/SFE to decide which letters, and combination of letters, to send to obtain outstanding information. However, LA/SFE should follow-up all applications where there is information outstanding in December and January unless the LA/SFE is aware that the student is unable to provide information for genuine reasons.
- 109.** In cases where LA/ SFE do not issue any letters when they do a first assessment they may wish to now issue the letters in the system that would normally have been issued when the application was first processed ('Request more information from Student' or 'Request more information from Parent or Spouse/Partner'), or locally produced alternatives. However, LA/SFE should still aim to finalise these provisionally assessed students no later than early February and therefore need to decide when to send other follow-up letters with suitable deadlines to these students.
- 110.** Where LA/SFE issue a letter requesting the missing information or evidence at the time that they performed the first assessment, whether they used the letters on the system or locally produced alternatives, two reminder letters should be sent to students and, where appropriate, their sponsor(s).
- 111.** The first reminder letter giving a 28-day deadline by which information or evidence must be provided, should be issued immediately.

The second reminder giving the student a further final 14 days to

supply the outstanding information should be issued as close to the first deadline expiry date as practicable.

112. We would recommend that whenever outstanding information is requested from a sponsor the student is advised of the request. This will ensure that the student is aware of any deadlines set for the supply of the information and the possible financial implications of the information not being provided, i.e. the assessment will be finalised, most probably as NMTO.
113. LA/SFE are asked to make notes on each student's record on the system whenever it is not clear which letters have been sent out. This will assist the CSO/Contact Centre in responding to any queries from the student.

### Bulk Operations Process

114. From AY 09/10 SLC will introduce a mechanism for an action to be performed on bulk by processing LA's. To support this there will be a function available for users to be able to select the appropriate bulk operations category. The categories that will be available are:
- Self Employed/Directors Income
  - CCG 2 Actuals Reminder (academic year specific x 4 to cover all possible start dates within the academic year)
  - Student Income
  - NHS Bursary
  - EEA Migrant Workers
  - Adult Dependants Grant (ADG)
  - Current Income

#### Bulk operations will:

- Be available on the LA Portal for SFE and all LA's
- Will not apply to MT NHS Bursary
- Cover all full time customers (new and returning)
- Always be available to be performed manually on ad-hoc basis as required
- Generate paper correspondence only (no other channels will be utilised for bulk operations)
- Be issued from Hillington
- Be visible on customers accounts when a bulk operation has been performed

Further information will follow in the 09/10 Release Notes

### Automatic Approvals

115. From AY 09/10 onwards an automatic approvals function will be in place.

This is a new process for AY 09/10 onwards and will be for all processing LAs (this includes SFE at Darlington and all other existing LAs).

From AY 09/10 onwards a payment should be deemed as able to be approved automatically by the system where:

- The assessment has not been manually overridden,
- It has been assessed by an assessor who is authorised to have their payments automatically approved,
- The payment has not been selected for checking,
- The payment amount is not above the threshold.

There will also be the facility to allow the assessor to send a payment for manual approval. This will provide an over ride facility for assessors if, following an assessment, there is any doubt over the payment amount the customer has been awarded.

Further information regarding this new process will be in the Release Notes for 09/10.

#### **Finalising an assessment where the student supplies the required information**

116. Where a student submits the information specified by the LA/SFE and completes and returns their financial form within the deadline set, the LA/SFE should finalise the financial assessment.

#### **Students who do not supply the required information within the requested time**

117. Where the student does not supply the required financial information within the time limit stated on the letter and the student does not provide a genuine reason for not doing so, the LA/SFE should process a reassessment based on what they definitely know the student is entitled to receive. In many cases this will be the non-income-assessed support (NMTO) only.

#### **Students who remain provisionally assessed at the end of their academic year**

118. If a student remains provisionally assessed at the end of an academic year their application for support for a subsequent year should not be finalised in advance of receiving the outstanding information. For example where a student's 2008/2009 application remains provisional awaiting the arrival of their sponsor's income from self employment, their 2009/2010 application, even if all the requested information has been supplied, should remain provisional. This will reduce the chances of an overpayment to the student. **Please also see section on Prior Year Tax and Current Year Income**
119. Where the student is current year assessed and the necessary information may not arrive until the cut-off date for self assessment tax returns, LA/SFE may wish to advise the student's sponsors of the financial implications for the student of the late arrival of the information.
120. LA/SFE should regularly review these cases and decide when to take action to follow up on the outstanding information.



121. Where the student is in receipt of provisional grants, e.g. Child Care Grants, separate procedures to finalise these are already in place and can be found in the guidance chapter 'Grants for Living Costs'.

### **NHS/DOH Bursaries**

122. Where the applicant will be in receipt of an income assessed bursary from the NHS or the DOH, the system will calculate their living cost loan at the 50% rate and include this figure in letter 17 ASSESS. Where the applicant has applied for an income assessed bursary from the NHS or the DOH and is waiting for the outcome of that application, LAs should assume that the bursary application will be successful and proceed with the application. A final assessment should be completed for these students as soon as the outcome of their bursary application is known. In the event that a student advises that their application for a means tested bursary has been unsuccessful, but they will instead receive a non means tested bursary, the LA/SFE should reassess them as ineligible for any grants or loans from the student finance system.

### **NHS contact details**

#### **NHS courses in England and Wales**

For information on careers in the NHS call the NHS Careers Helpline on 0845 6060655.

**Website:** [www.nhs.uk/careers](http://www.nhs.uk/careers)

**E-mail:** [advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk](mailto:advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk)

For NHS bursaries in **England**, contact:

NHS Student Grants Unit  
200-220 Broadway  
Fleetwood  
Lancashire  
FY7 8SS.  
**Phone:** 0845 358 6655

For NHS bursaries in **Wales**, contact:

NHS Wales Student Awards Unit  
3rd Floor  
14 Cathedral Road  
Cardiff  
CF11 9LJ.  
**Phone:** 029 2019 6167

For NHS bursaries in **Scotland**, contact:

The Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS)  
Gyle View House  
3 Redheughs Rigg  
South Gyle  
Edinburgh  
EH12 9HH.  
**Phone:** 0845 111 1711

For NHS bursaries in **Northern Ireland**, contact:

The Department of Health



Social Services and Public Safety Human Resources Directorate  
D 1.4  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3SL.  
**Phone:** 028 9052 2674

### **Students attending for less than a full year**

- 123.** Where possible, the system will assess a student's entitlement to support based on the term dates and attendance pattern shown for the student's course in the HEI database and present a message for the LA/SFE user to check the automated result. In most cases this will be for a full year. Where the student is attending for less than a full year, or has a different attendance pattern, for example, periods at college alternating with periods of work experience the LA/SFE user should manually calculate the student's entitlement. Details of the regulations governing these circumstances can be found in the 'Assessing Financial Entitlement' chapter. The user can then amend the automated result as appropriate before they authorise the student's assessment.
- 124.** LA/SFE should use the notes facility to record the basis of the recalculation. This note will assist LA/SFE/CSO and Contact Centre staff in dealing with any future query from the student.

### **Students who will be attending a place of study away from their home HEI at the start of term**

- 125.** Some applicants will not be in attendance on the first day of the academic year to receive the first instalment of their loan because at that time they will be:
- studying overseas, or
  - on a work or medical placement.

In these circumstances, the user will need to select an 'Additional Code' on the notification screen. The code selected depends on the student's circumstances but will ensure that the student receives their first payment via BACS. Selection of an incorrect code will cause the payment to fail in CLASS (see LA Portal system user guide). The codes are:

- O** Applicant studying overseas as part of their course, including students studying in Eire
  - M** Applicant is on a medicine or dentistry course or some other professionally related course, and will be attending a placement at a hospital away from their home university or college
  - P** Applicant attending work placement as part of their course
- 126.** Where a student falls into one of the above categories, the SLC will pay the first instalment of support to these applicants up to 25 working days prior to the academic year start date shown on the HEI database. This advance payment allows for such applicants to establish themselves prior to the course start date. Both subsequent instalments for the year will be made at the start of the second and third terms.

### Arranging exceptional payments

127. In exceptional circumstances where it is a pre-requisite condition for the applicant entering the country where they are studying, the SLC may pay the full entitlement in a lump sum rather than three instalments. Where a student in these circumstances contacts their LA/SFE to request a lump sum payment, the LA/SFE should ask the student for proof and once satisfied, complete a Manual Payment Pro forma available on the LA portal home page and e-mail it to [manual\\_paymentrequest@slc.co.uk](mailto:manual_paymentrequest@slc.co.uk).
128. Where an applicant requests payment more than 25 days before the course start date shown for their course, on the HEI database and owing to compelling academic reasons, (for example, where the overseas course start date is more than 25 days before their UK course start date), the user, should first confirm that the request is genuine, and then complete a Manual Payment Pro forma available on the LA portal home page and e-mail it to [manual\\_paymentrequest@slc.co.uk](mailto:manual_paymentrequest@slc.co.uk).

### HEI Bursaries

129. LA/SFE will not be required to have any interaction with HEIs regarding household income. An LA/SFE will action a student's assessment as normal. The student will indicate on the PN1/PR1 that they wish to be considered for a bursary and once the LA/SFE have sent the student's assessment for payment the data is migrated into the HEI Portal. Each HEI has its own 'rules criteria' which is then applied to the student. Students get confirmation and payment as specified by the HEI.
130. If a student or parent does not complete the bursary section of the application form and then subsequently wishes to apply for a bursary they need to contact the SLC helpline to confirm their consent to share. The LA/SFE will not be able to amend the consent section once an application has been approved.

### Guidance on Self-Certification and the Single Financial Assessment

131. Please refer to the [2009/2010 SFA and SC Guidance](#) chapter.