

Number: WG15131



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

www.cymru.gov.uk

Welsh Government

Consultation Document

The Assembly Learning Grant for Further
Education (ALG FE) Scheme for academic year
2012/13

Date of issue: **28 March 2012**

Action required: Responses by **16 May 2012**

The Assembly Learning Grant for Further Education (ALG FE) Scheme for academic year 2012/13

Overview	This engagement exercise seeks views on the proposed ALG FE Scheme 2012/13.
How to respond	Any comments that stakeholders might have on the scheme should be sent to the Welsh Government by 16 May 2012 . Comments should be made in writing on the accompanying response form and should be posted/e-mailed to the address below.
Further information and related documents	<p>Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request.</p> <p>A copy of this consultation can also be found on the Welsh Government's website at www.wales.gov.uk/consultations</p>
Contact details	<p>For further information: Simon Gough Welsh Government Tŷ'r Llyn Clos Llyn Cwm Swansea SA6 8AH</p> <p>e-mail: studentfinancedivision@wales.gsi.gov.uk</p>

Data protection

How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

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

Where are we now?

The Assembly Learning Grant (Further Education) (ALG FE) (Wales) Scheme for 2012/13 will run as per the previous ALG scheme for 2011/12, as an administrative scheme under Sections 14–17 of the Education Act 2002.

The ALG FE provides financial assistance to persons aged 19 years old or over in post compulsory education who are ordinarily resident in Wales on the first day of the first academic year of their course and taking eligible further education courses. The ALG FE can be up to £1,500, and is means tested and paid in respect of an academic year to help meet the costs of studying.

Proposed changes

ALG (FE) Learning Grant Agreement (LGA)

The current ALG (FE) policy requires returning students only to sign the Learning Grant Agreement as their indication that they wish to formally apply to the scheme. It replaces the need to complete another application form. The LGA also confirms the student's agreement to attend the school or college and to meet the given attendance rules, standards and objectives.

For AY 20102/13 it is proposed to require all ALG (FE) students to sign an LGA irrespective of which year of study they enter. For those applying for ALG (FE) for the first time, they would also be required to complete an application form. The use of the LGA for all ALG (FE) students will provide consistency and clarity of the expectations set out by the particular school or college for each ALG (FE) student.

In AY 2012/13, all ALG FE students, new and returning, will have to sign an ALG (FE) LGA at their Learning Centre before any ALG (FE) payments will be released by the Student Loans Company (SLC). Learning Centres must enter confirmation on the Learning Centre portal that an ALG (FE) LGA has been signed by individual ALG (FE) students as part of the payment process. This ensures that all ALG (FE) students confirm their agreement to attend the school or college and to meet the given attendance rules, standards and objectives prior to payment.

Student Support ALG FE – Funding for prisoners in 2011/12

In 2011/12 a fast-track application facility for the ALG FE was adopted for those in custody who are on Release on Temporary Licence (RoTL) to attend further education. Such a person in custody can apply for an ALG (FE) whilst they study but before they are released. Their application is assessed through the fast-track process and is exempt from means testing. No payment is made during the period of RoTL and it is upon release that the person receives their Final Notice of Entitlement letter. Once satisfactory attendance, after release, is confirmed by the college, the current system calculates payment of the full amount of ALG (FE) grant appropriate to either full-time or part-time study up to, and including, the current term. It does not take account of the funding support provided indirectly by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) for the period of the course where the individual attended under RoTL.

The proposal for AY 2012/13 is to refine this process to calculate a payment calculated by reference to the term in which the individual is released from custody. The payment will be based on the course information entered onto the LC portal by the school or college, such as the contact hours and study profile (the expected period/number of terms over which the course is due to run).

Example

Current situation in 2011/12

A full-time course of 500 hours over three terms duration is entered by the school or college for an individual attending under RoTL. The individual's start date under RoTL is September 2012. The system will allocate payment over the three terms as Term 1 40%; Term 2 30%; and Term 3 30% of the £1500. No payment would be released whilst the individual was attending under RoTL. The individual is released from custody in February 2013. Once SLC receives confirmation of continued attendance from the school or college, later in February/early March, the system will assess a non-means tested payment, based on attendance, and release a payment for Term 1 and Term 2, i.e. 70% of the £1500. Payment for Term 3 will be subject to continued attendance and would be released in the usual way during Term 3.

In practice the individual would have received support from NOMS for the entire period of Term 1.

Proposal for 2012/13

A full-time course of 500 hours over three terms duration is entered by the school or college for an individual attending under RoTL. The individual's start date under RoTL is September 2012. The system will allocate payment over the three terms as Term 1 40%; Term 2 30%; and Term 3 30% of the £1500. No payment would be released whilst the individual was attending under RoTL. The individual is released from custody in February 2013. Once SLC receives confirmation of continued attendance from the school or college, later in February/early March, the system will assess a non-means tested payment based only on the second terms attendance, i.e. pay Term 2, 30% of the £1500. Payment for Term 3 will be subject to continued attendance and would be released in the usual way during Term 3.