

SDR 41/2014

13 March 2014

## Student Support Applications for Higher Education, Wales – update at end of February 2014

This monthly Statistical First Release presents information on the number of Higher Education student support applications and Tuition Fee Loan (TFL) applications received from, and Tuition Fee Grants (TFG) awarded to, Welsh domiciled students (wherever they study) and EU domiciled students studying in Wales in the academic year 2013/14, as at 23 February 2014. The release is based on data provided by the Student Loans Company and is correct as at 23 February 2014 (see Notes for further details).

Student support is money to help students with living and learning costs while they are studying in higher education. Since 2006/07, students have been able to apply for non-means tested loans to cover tuition fee costs.

From 1 September 2012, students who normally live in Wales and are entering an UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) or college charging variable tuition fees (of up to a maximum of £9,000) will be eligible to receive a Tuition Fee Grant (TFG) of up to £5,425. EU students will be eligible for this TFG if they are studying in Wales. Welsh domiciled students and EU domiciled students studying in Wales who started their course between September 2006 and August 2010, are eligible for a non-means tested TFG of up to £2,085 (2013/14 level). The grants are not means-tested and are non-repayable. Welsh domiciled students and EU students commencing their studies between 1 September 2010 and 31 August 2012 are not eligible for a TFG (except those who deferred entry to higher education).

### Key results

These data are the eleventh monthly data concerning applications for 2013/14. As at 23 February 2014, student support applications were up by 6 per cent on 2012/13 (*Chart 1*). Changes in timing of the application process may have affected percentage changes seen in the cycle as the comparison with last year continues to change monthly. Table 1 illustrates how the comparison with 2012/13 has changed over the cycle <sup>1</sup>.

- In the 2013/14 academic year to date, a total of 61,230 applications had been received for student support, up 6 per cent on 2012/13. The total number of applications has exceeded the year end figures for 2012/13 by 3,245 (6 per cent) (*Chart 1*).
- 52,865 applications had been received for TFLs, up 5 per cent on the same date for 2012/13 figures (*Chart 2*).
- To date, 37,235 students have been awarded a TFG.

**We have recently consulted on the future method of releasing these data. Please see para 6 of Notes.**

<sup>1</sup> For academic year 2013/14 the application process started 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013 whereas for academic year 2012/13 the application process started 21<sup>st</sup> March 2012. As a result there was a significant increase in the number of applications being automatically approved for payment in April this year.

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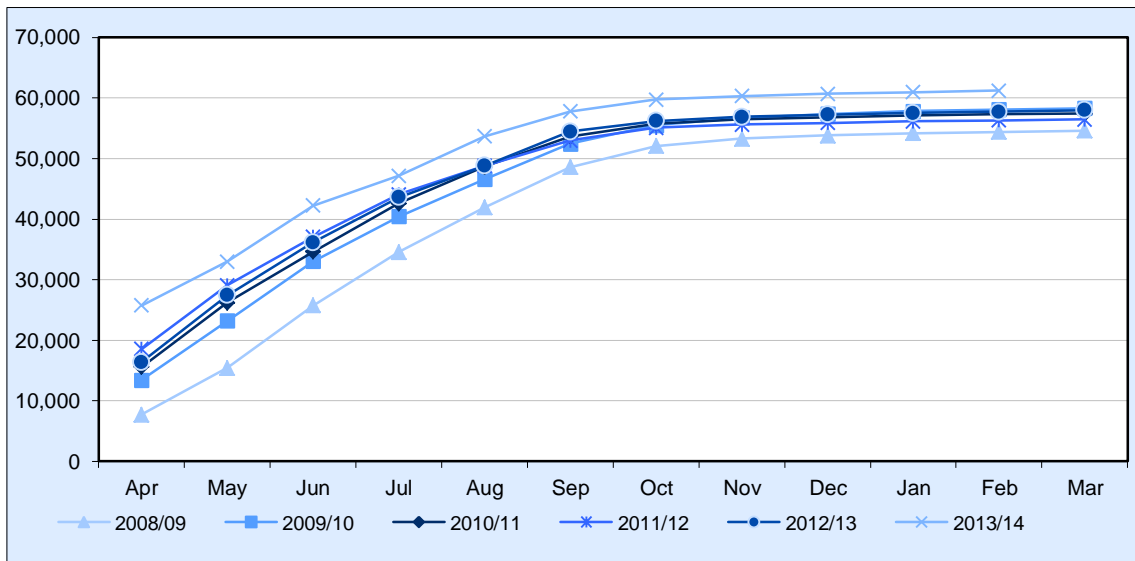
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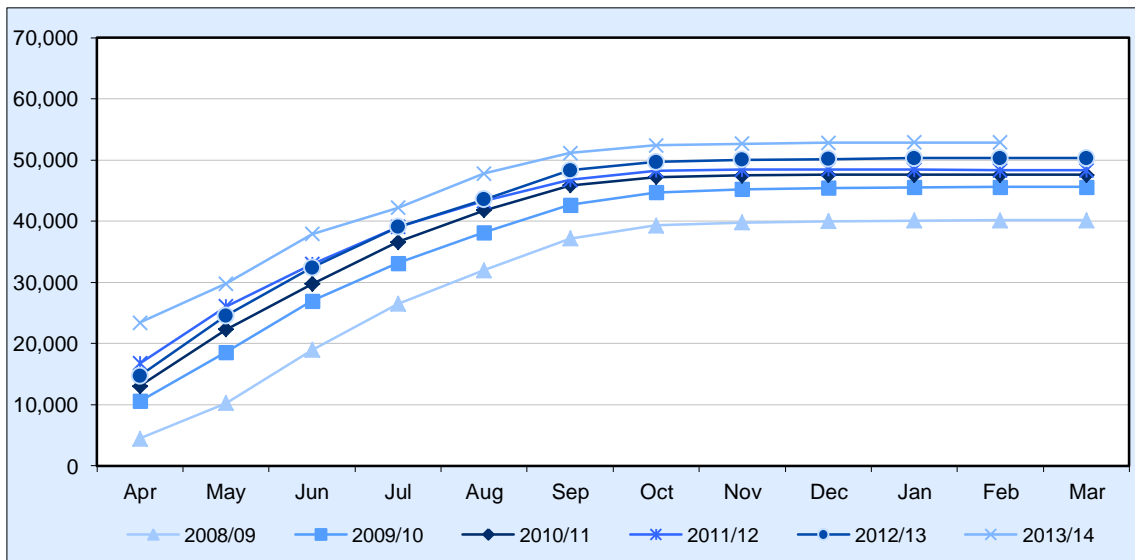



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**Chart 1: Cumulative number of all student support applications received, by month and year of study**



**Chart 2: Cumulative number of all TFL applications received, by month and year of study**



Associated figures can be seen here: 

## **Annex 1: Notes**

### **1. Policy/Operational Context**

Student support is money to help students with tuition fee and living costs while they are studying in higher education. In 2006/07, loans to cover the cost of tuition fees (TFLs) became available to all Welsh students and those EU domiciled students studying in Wales. Tuition fee payments can be deferred until students have left higher education and are earning over £15,000 (or £21,000 for those entering higher education from 2012/13).

From academic year 2012/13, new arrangements have been put in place following the introduction of higher variable tuition fees of up to £9,000. From 1 September 2012, students who normally live in Wales and are entering an UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) or college charging variable tuition fees (of up to a maximum of £9,000) will be eligible to receive a Tuition Fee Grant (TFG) of up to £5,425. Welsh domiciled students and EU domiciled students studying in Wales who started their course between September 2006 and August 2010, are eligible for a non-means tested TFG of up to £2,085 (2012/13 level). The grants are not means-tested and are non-repayable. Students commencing their studies between 1 September 2010 and 31 August 2012 are not eligible for a TFG.

These monthly updates may provide an early indication of student numbers compared with the previous year, though changes in the application process, such as timing, can affect comparisons as seen for this year. For academic year 2013/14 the application process started 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013 whereas for academic year 2012/13 the application process started 21<sup>st</sup> March 2012, a difference of 7 weeks. As a result there was a significant increase in the number of applications being automatically approved for payment in April this year.

### **2. Rounding strategy**

Figures in this release have been rounded to the nearest 5.

### **3. Data source**

Student support applications and payments are administered by the Student Loans Company (SLC). Relevant data are entered by SLC staff onto an administrative database, and are also stored in a management information data warehouse for the purpose of management reporting, operational performance reporting, audit of processes, statistics, future policy planning and forecasting. Processes and systems which enable customer and application assessment data to be held electronically are subject to periodic audit and integrity checks. Management Information extracted from SLC systems are subject to quality assurances prior to distribution. Due to the way data is extracted from SLC's data warehouse, figures are usually reflective of the position as at the last Sunday of the month.

With regard to student support applications and TFL applications received, the following workstages (as defined by SLC) are included: eligibility incomplete; entitlement incomplete; pending LEA manual assessment; awaiting validation; awaiting LEA approval; approved; held; approved - awaiting signature.

With regard to TFGs, figures are for "awarded grants" and all will not necessarily be paid. The following workstages (as defined by SLC) are included: eligibility incomplete; entitlement incomplete; pending LEA manual assessment; awaiting validation; awaiting LEA approval; approved; held; approved - awaiting signature.

## 4. Key Quality Information

### 4.1 Relevance

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the key users are:

- Ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- Officials in the Welsh Government and other government departments;
- Students, researchers, academics and universities;
- Individual citizens, private companies, and the media.

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- advice to Ministers and officials on the performance and efficiency of the student finance application process, and application trends compared with previous years;
- monitoring and forecasting the cost of student finance;
- to inform and evaluate the education policy-making process in Wales.

### 4.2 Accuracy

Statisticians within the Welsh Government review the data and query any anomalies with the Student Loans Company before tables are published. The updated monthly figures for the current academic year are correct at the time of publication.

### 4.3 Timeliness and Punctuality

This is the eleventh monthly publication for academic year 2013/14. Monthly updates during a given academic year are published as soon as possible, a few weeks following the end of a given month, and according to a planned and pre-announced series of publication dates.

Applications for academic year 2013/14 began on the 1 February 2013, whereas applications for academic year 2012/13 began on the 21 March 2012. Final 2012/13 data was published in November 2013. Final data for 2013/14 will be published in November 2014.

### 4.4 Accessibility and Clarity

This statistical release is published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables on StatsWales, a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

### 4.5 Comparability

New system Welsh and EU domiciled students studying in Wales (i.e. those entering the new support arrangements introduced in September 2006) were subject to tuition fees of £1,200, while Welsh domiciled students studying in England were subject to variable tuition fees of up to £3,000. In 2007/08, variable tuition fees (up to £3,465 in 2013/14) were introduced in Wales, affecting all students who started their courses from 2006/07 onwards. In 2012/13, increased tuition fees of up to £9,000 and a new Tuition Fee Grant of up to £5,535 were introduced, affecting all students starting their course from 2012/13.

## 5. Further Information

Updates providing the number of student support applications during 2013/14 will be published monthly, and will be found on the [Statistics for Wales](#) website.

Comparable monthly data for all academic years can be found in the StatsWales table on [Cumulative number of applications for student finance by academic year and type of support](#).

From academic year 2013/14, applications will be published by academic year, type of support and entry cohort. Applications were previously published by academic year, type of support and year of entry when the student first entered Higher Education. Entry cohort means the grouping of student support applicants according to their student finance regulations against which the applicant was assessed for support. Further information about student support can be found at [www.StudentFinanceWales.co.uk](http://www.StudentFinanceWales.co.uk).

## 6. Future of this Release

A consultation on [Proposals relating to Official Statistics](#) has recently been closed. This included proposals to stop publishing the monthly Student Support for Higher Education and EMA statistical first releases, but ensure that monthly data will still be available through [StatsWales](#) and accessible to all users. Less frequent statistical releases will be published. We appreciate any feedback from users (contact details below).

## 7. Related Articles

Statistical Releases on other strands of student support in Wales are available via the following link: <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/student-support-applications-higher-education/?lang=en>

The latest annual Statistical Release on Student Support for Higher Education in Wales, published by the Student Loans Company, is available via the following link:

<http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics/national-statistics.aspx>

## User Feedback

We want to engage with users of our statistics and we invite you to send your comments on the publication to [post16ed.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:post16ed.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

## Contact Information

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