

SDR 63/2012

19 April 2012

Student Support Applications for Higher Education, Wales – update at end of March 2012

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, Wales domiciled students (wherever they study) and EU domiciled students studying in Wales in academic year 2011/12, as at 25 March 2012. The release is based on data provided by the Student Loans Company and is correct as at 30 March 2012 (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. Students applying before 2010/11 would also have been eligible for a non-means tested tuition fee grant of up to £2,030 (2011/12 level). New students commencing their studies on or after 1 September 2010 are not eligible for a TFG (except those who deferred entry to higher education).

Key results

As at 25 March 2012, student support applications were down two per cent on 2010/11 (*Chart 1*). Efforts to encourage earlier application may have affected percentage changes early in the cycle (see comparability notes).

- In the 2011/12 academic year to date, a total of 56,470 applications had been received for student support (*Chart 1*).
- 48,305 applications had been received for TFLs, an increase of one per cent on 2010/11 (*Chart 2*). Part of this increase may be as a result of the TFG not being available to new students from 2010/11.
- 12,215 students had been awarded a TFG.

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

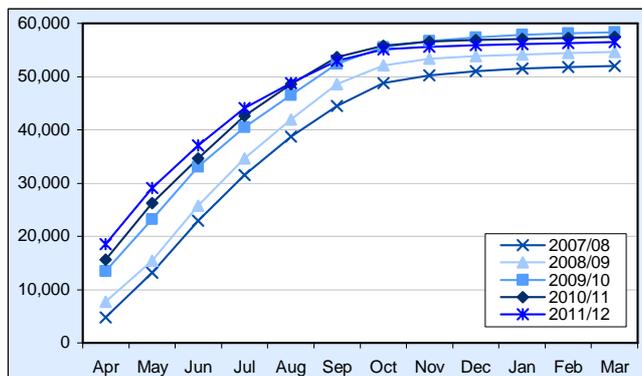
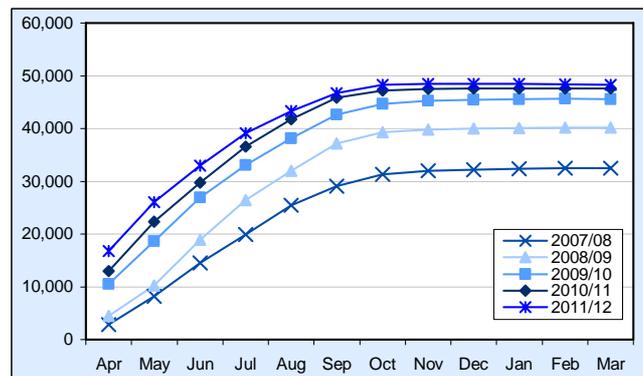


Chart 2: Cumulative number of all TFL applications received, by month and year of study



Associated figures can be seen here: 

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Annex 1: Notes

1. Policy/Operational Context

Student support is money to help students with living and learning 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. Therefore, tuition fee payments can be deferred until students have left higher education and are earning over £15,000. Pre-2010/11 new system Welsh and EU domiciled students¹ who study in Wales are also eligible for a TFG of up to £2,030 (2011/12 level). The grant is not means-tested and non-repayable. New students commencing their studies on or after 1 September 2010 are not eligible for a TFG (except those who deferred entry to higher education). 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.

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 (for April, due to an administrative issue, this was not possible and the effective date was therefore 1 May 2011), rather than the last day.

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.

In August 2011, administrative errors were discovered in the 2007/08 Academic Year data in StatsWales table 003821. As a result, all data for May and June 2007/08 were revised on 11 August 2011.

¹ Continuing students who started a course of higher education on or after 1 September 2006 but before 1 September 2010.

4.3 Timeliness and Punctuality

This is the final monthly publication for academic year 2011/12. 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 2010/11 began on 7 December 2009, whereas applications for academic year 2011/12 began on the 21 February 2011. The deadline for applications from new students was brought forward from 23 April (for means-tested support) and 28 May (for non means-tested support) in 2010 to 15 April in 2011. Final data for 2010/11 was published by the SLC on 29 November 2011. Final 2011/12 data will be published in November 2012.

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 £3,375 in 2011/12) were introduced in Wales, affecting all students who started their courses from 2006/07 onwards.

In April 2011, 2011/12 student support applications were up by 19 per cent compared with 2010/11. This gap has narrowed to applications being down by two per cent in March 2012. Changes in timing of the application process, and efforts to encourage earlier application may have affected percentage changes early in the cycle.

Below is a table showing the percentage change seen between each month's update of the number of student support applications in 2011/12, and the same period in 2010/11.

Percentage change in the number of student support applications in academic year 2011/12, compared with 2010/11

| | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar |
|---------------------|-------|-------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Percentage increase | 19.2% | 10.8% | 7.1% | 3.5% | 0.4% | -1.3% | -1.2% | -1.7% | -1.7% | -1.7% | -1.7% | -1.7% |

2010/11 TFG data includes some applicants who have indicated that they are on an end-on course, or have been on a Gap year. 2011/12 TFG data includes some applicants who have indicated that they are on an end-on course. A course is an end-on course if:

- the student completed a full-time course last academic year and is starting a new one this academic year; and
- the student is doing either of the following things:
 - starting to study for a degree having completed a lower level HE qualification (eg foundation degree or HND); or
 - converting an ordinary degree to an Honours degree.

5. Further Information

Updates providing the number of student support applications during 2011/12 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 [StatsWales table 003821](#).

Further information about student support can be found at www.StudentFinanceWales.co.uk.

Related Articles

Statistical Releases on other strands of student support in Wales are available via the following link:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/post16ed/student-finance/?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/newnationalstatistics1.aspx>