

Part 4: Summary report on the use of student support funds in 2000-01

Introduction

1. This report provides a summary of the information returned by HEFCE-funded institutions in receipt of student support funding during the academic year 2000-01. It evaluates the monitoring process and then analyses the data from the returns to identify trends. The tables at Appendix 1 summarise spending in 2000-01.

Funds available

2. For the academic year 2000-01, the DfES gave the HEFCE a total of £83,862,126 excluding administration funds. This was broken down as follows:

- Undergraduate Fund – £49,069,263
- Postgraduate Fund – £6,755,213
- Further Education Fund – £1,024,649
- Fee Waiver Fund – £12,361,700
- Mature Student Bursary Fund - £14,690,000

3. In January 2001 institutions were also allocated £1,566,169 in funds returned from previous years, making the total funds available for 2000-01 £85,466,994.

4. The DfES also allocated £1.36 million from the user support baseline to the Learning and Skills Council for the HE students in further education colleges. In addition to this £114,474 was allocated to the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) for School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT).

Allocation

5. The individual allocations to institutions were published in HEFCE 00/28 'Hardship Funds for higher education institutions 2000-01'. The allocation was made on the basis of the number of full-time equivalent students, weighted according to level and mode of study, and age group and neighbourhood type.

Commentary

6. An individualised monitoring disk was sent to institutions for completion for return by 7 November 2001. The monitoring return requested information on the spend for 2000-01.

7. The overall quality of data improved from the previous year. The majority of returns were received by the Council by the return date; however once again this year some were not returned until December.

Analysis

8. The analysis describes the trends in spending during 2000-01 and compares these trends with the spend in 1999-2000 where appropriate. The comparisons between 2000-01 and 1999-2000 have been made on a proportional basis.

Opportunity Bursaries 2001-02 interim return

9. Of the 5,900 students who received an Opportunity Bursary, 63 per cent were from Excellence in Cities areas, 20 per cent were from Education Action Zones and 16 per cent were from areas other than EiC areas or EAZs. There were 470 unspent Opportunity Bursaries, which were re-allocated in January 2002.

2000-01 Access and Hardship monitoring return

Table 1: Mature Student Bursaries end of year return

10. This table shows that 15,828 Mature Student Bursaries were distributed in 2001-02. The average Bursary awarded was £867. Over 90 per cent of the money available was spent on Mature Student Bursaries.

Table 2a (i and ii): Payments for hardship (excluding payments for part-time Fee Waivers and Mature Student Bursaries)

Table 2a(i): Payments for hardship

11. The data show that in 2000-01, as in 1999-2000, the bulk of payments made for general hardship (excluding payments for Fee Waivers and Mature Student Bursaries) were given to full-time undergraduate students, over 80 per cent of which were given to students who were over 21. This reflects the accepted view that older students generally have higher costs than younger students, and fewer sources of alternative support. The fact that the main group to benefit was older students also shows that the criteria for Hardship Funds continue to function correctly, especially as this group is likely to contain the highest proportion of lone parents.

12. In comparison with 1999-2000 when numbers decreased compared to the previous year, there has been an increase in the number of part-time undergraduates who received a payment.

Table 2a(ii) Bursary schemes through the Hardship Fund

13. There is a slight increase in the number of bursaries issued through the Hardship Fund (not including Mature Student Bursaries), compared to last year. A total of 3,264 students were awarded bursaries compared to 2,773 in 1999-2000. The average bursary also increased, from £711 to £807.

Table 2b: Payments for Fee Waiver funds – part-time undergraduate students only

14. Expenditure on Fee Waivers increased markedly compared to 1999-2000, up from £8.8 million to £12.7 million. The majority of students who received a Fee Waiver were 25 or over (89 per cent), which mirrors the pattern seen in Table 2a(i), and met the criteria that they were on benefit or a low income.

Table 3: Reason for payment for hardship

15. As in 1999-2000, the largest proportion of payments in 2000-01 went to cover accommodation costs and the greatest average payment was for childcare costs.

Table 4: Loans for repayment

16. The data for 2000-01 show a similar result to those returned for 1999-2000. Once again institutions recouped 69 per cent of loans paid out. The majority of the funding (65 per cent) was used for students who did not have loan cheques, and the minority (35 per cent) was given for other reasons. However there was a reduction in money expended to cover loans, down to £2.7 million in 2000-01 from 4.8 million in 1999-2000.

Table 5: Periodic information and interest earned

17. The amounts of interest institutions are earning is in line with Council expectations and similar to 1999-2000.

Table 6: Summary

18. The summary table shows that institutions have spent 94 per cent of the funding available. Of the remaining funds, 5 per cent will be carried forward to 2001-02 and 1 per cent will be reclaimed by the Council.

Conclusion

19. Overall the monitoring return data show that student support funds have been successfully targeted at the groups identified by the Government. Table 6 shows that the vast majority of the funding was spent, with only small amounts of funding carried forward or returned to HEFCE. We intend to provide data from the monitoring return, good practice publications and seminars to inform institutions' forward planning in relation to student support.

Appendix 1 – see Excel document