

Higher education student finance for the 2020 to 2021 academic year

Equality Analysis

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Introduction

Under the Equality Act 2010, the Department for Education (DfE), as a public authority, is legally obliged to give due regard to equality issues when making policy decisions – the public sector equality duty, also called the general equality duty.

One means of meeting this requirement is to carry out an Equality Analysis which helps us understand the potential impact of new policy proposals and regulations on people from different groups in society and whether some are likely to be affected more than others.

DfE as a public authority, must in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard to the need to:

- a) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons with protected characteristics;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic; and
- c) Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons it disproportionately low.

The general equality duty covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

To date we are yet to find evidence to suggest that the characteristics of gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation have an impact of the likelihood of a student to receive certain student support products beyond the assumption that pregnant women or mothers would be more likely to receive or go on to receive certain targeted grants designed to support those with dependants or childcare. There is also no robust data collected on religion or belief at undergraduate level and so there are limitations in assessing the effect of policy changes for 2020/21 on different religious groups.

As disadvantage in education is still apparent in connection to family income and economic status we will also consider the impact on individuals from lower income groups. We will use the terms protected and disadvantaged groups as well as protected characteristics. Protected groups are a reference to people with protected characteristics, and disadvantaged groups refer to low income groups with low participation rates more widely.

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Summary of equality impacts across the proposed changes

Changes to the overall student finance system

A number of policy proposals considered in this equality analysis concern changes to student finance arrangements for the 2020/21 academic year with maximum loans and grants for living and other costs and postgraduate loans uplifted by forecast inflation (2.9%).

- Increases in grants that act as a contribution towards the cost of living for students starting full-time undergraduate courses before 1 September 2016 by 2.9%;
- Increases in dependants' grants and disabled students allowances for undergraduate courses by 2.9%;
- Increases in loans for living costs for undergraduate courses by 2.9%; and
- Increases in loans for students starting postgraduate master's degree courses and doctoral degree courses in 2020/21 by 2.9%;

Our overall assessment is that these proposed changes will have a marginally positive impact for those with and without protected characteristics. Although student loan debt may rise, this is largely due to increases in loans for living costs for undergraduate courses and loans towards the costs of postgraduate courses, which if not implemented would make higher education less affordable, and consequently potentially less accessible, for students from lower income backgrounds.

Proposed changes to loans, grants and allowances in 2020/21

Support for Undergraduate Courses

Loans for living costs for new full-time students and continuing full-time students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016.

- Maximum loans for living costs for new full-time undergraduate students and eligible continuing full-time undergraduate students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016 will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) in 2020/21.
- For students living away from home and studying outside London, the maximum loan for living costs for 2020/21 will be £9,203. The equivalent loan rate for students living away from home and studying in London will be £12,010, for those living in the parental home during their studies, £7,747 and for those studying overseas as part of their UK course, £10,539.

Loans for living costs for new full-time students and continuing full-time students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016 who are entitled to certain benefits.

- Maximum loans for living costs for new full-time undergraduate students and eligible continuing full-time undergraduate students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016 and who are eligible for benefits will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) in 2020/21.
- For undergraduate students who are entitled to benefits who are living away from home and studying outside London, the maximum loan for living costs for 2020/21 will be £10,490. The equivalent loan rate for students who qualify for benefits and who are living away from home and studying in London will be £13,098; for those living in the parental home during their studies, £9,140; and for those studying overseas as part of their UK course, £11,732.

Loans for living costs for new full-time students and continuing full-time students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016 who are aged 60 or over at the start of their course.

- The maximum loan for living costs in 2020/21 for new full-time undergraduate students and eligible continuing full-time undergraduate students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016 who are aged 60 or over on the first day of the first academic year of their course, will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) to £3,893.

Maintenance Grants and Special Support Grants for full-time students who started their courses before 1 August 2016

- The maximum maintenance grant and special support grant for eligible continuing full-time undergraduate students who started their courses on or after 1 September 2012 but before 1 August 2016, will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) in 2020/21 to £3,801.
- The maximum maintenance grant and special support grant for eligible continuing full-time undergraduate students, who started their courses before 1 September 2012, will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) in 2020/21 to £3,489.

Loans for living costs for full-time students who started their courses before 1 August 2016

- Maximum loans for living costs for eligible undergraduate students, who started their course on or after 1 September 2012 but before 1 August 2016, will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) in 2020/21.
- For students who are living away from home and studying outside London, the maximum loan for living costs will be £6,597. The equivalent loan rate for students living away from home and studying in London will be £9,205; for those living in the parental home during their studies, £5,247; and for those studying overseas as part of their UK course, £7,838.

Loans for living costs for full-time students who started their courses before 1 September 2012

- Maximum loans for living costs for eligible undergraduate students, who started their course on or after 1 September 2009 but before 1 September 2012, will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) in 2020/21.
- For students who are living away from home while studying outside London, the maximum loan for living costs will be £5,938. The equivalent loan rate for students living away from home and studying in London will be £8,309; for those living in the parental home during their studies, £4,604; and for those studying overseas as part of their UK course £7,068.

Long Courses Loans

- Maximum long courses (living costs) loans for new and continuing undergraduate students who are attending full-time courses that are longer than 30 weeks and 3 days during the academic year will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) in 2020/21.

Dependants' Grants

- Maximum amounts for dependants' grants (adult dependants' grant, childcare grant and parents' learning allowance) will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) in 2020/21 for all new and continuing full-time undergraduate students.
- The maximum adult dependants' grant (ADG) payable in 2020/21 will be increased to £3,094. The maximum childcare grant (CCG) payable in 2020/21, which covers 85% of actual childcare costs up to a specified limit, will be increased to £174.22 per week for one child and £298.69 per week for two or more children. The maximum parents' learning allowance (PLA) payable in 2020/21 will be increased to £1,776.

Disabled Students' Allowances

- Maximum grants for full-time and part-time undergraduate students with disabilities will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) in 2020/21.
- For a full-time course: to £23,258 for a non-medical personal helper, £5,849 for major items of specialist equipment (for the whole course) and £1,954 for other disability related expenditure.
- For a part-time course: to £17,443 for a non-medical personal helper, £5,849 for major items of specialist equipment (for the whole course) and £1,465 for other disability related expenditure.

Part-time grants and loans

- For undergraduate students who started part-time and full-time distance learning courses before 1 September 2012 and who are continuing their courses in 2020/21, maximum fee and course grants will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) in 2020/21. Maximum fee grants will be increased to £959, £1,150 or £1,442, depending on the intensity of study of the course. Maximum course grants will be increased to £314.
- The maximum loan for living costs in 2020/21 for new part-time undergraduate students starting degree level courses on or after 1 August 2018 will be £9,203 for students living away from home and studying outside London. The equivalent loan rate for students living away from home and studying in London will be £12,010; for those living in the parental home during their studies £7,747; and for those studying overseas as part of their UK course £10,539. The amount of loan a part-time student qualifies for will, in addition to household income, depend on the intensity of study on the course when compared to a full-time course.

Support for Postgraduate Courses

Maximum loans for new students starting Postgraduate Courses in 2020/21

- Maximum loans for new students starting Postgraduate Master's Degree courses in 2020/21 will increase by forecast inflation (2.9%) to £11,222.
- Maximum loans for new students starting postgraduate doctoral degree courses in 2020/21 will be increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) to £26,445.

Disabled Students' Allowance for Postgraduate Students

The single DSA for postgraduate students was increased from £10,993 to £20,000 for 2019/20 to provide additional help for a small number of postgraduate students with high support needs. For 2020/21, the single postgraduate DSA will be further increased by forecast inflation (2.9%) to £20,580.

Analysis

We know that some disadvantaged and protected groups are overrepresented amongst recipients of different student support products, so are more likely to be impacted by the proposed changes. For example¹:

- **Loans for living costs (available for full-time undergraduate students):** female and younger students are slightly overrepresented amongst this population, while disabled students are slightly underrepresented amongst this population;
- **Dependants' grants for full-time undergraduate students:** older students are overrepresented across all grants, female students are overrepresented amongst CCG and PLA recipients, whilst male students are overrepresented amongst ADG recipients.
- **Disabled Students' Allowances for undergraduate and postgraduate students:** by definition, recipients are more likely to have a disability.

¹ The equality analysis for the 2016/17 student support regulations provides more detailed information on the characteristics of those students who receive loan and grant support and the proportion of student support claimants by protected group and type of student support awarded
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482110/bis-15-639-student-finance-equality-analysis.pdf

- **Part-time grants and loans (available for part-time undergraduate students starting courses before 1st September 2012):** students studying part-time courses² are more likely to be female and older when compared with the full-time student population.

Table 1 below provides details on the profile of full-time undergraduates awarded student support by product. Academic year 2018/19 (as at 20/08/19)

Student Support Product	Awarded Applicants	Disability Status		Gender		Age	
		Receiving DSA	Not Receiving DSA	Male	Female	Under 21	21 and over
Maintenance Loans for living costs	1,115,200	6%	94%	43%	57%	77%	23%
Maintenance Grant	56,500	8%	92%	50%	50%	77%	23%
Parents' Learning Allowance (PLA)	56,600	9%	91%	20%	80%	4%	96%
Child Care Grant (CCG)	21,000	11%	89%	11%	89%	5%	95%
Adult Dependants' Grant (ADG)	15,900	8%	92%	52%	48%	1%	99%

Source: DfE analysis of Student Loans Company data

Notes: (1) Awards do not necessarily translate into payments. An awarded applicant will only receive payments once SLC have received confirmation from the student's provider at the start of the academic year that the student has been registered on the course. (2) This group will include students who declare a disability but are not eligible for DSA. Not all students with a disability will have one that impacts on their ability to study in HE; (3) Age at start of course; (4) Ethnicity figures not reported because of poor data returns.

² A proxy we will use for recipients of a part-time fee loan or grant

Undergraduates and Postgraduates

By increasing the maximum level of support available across these different streams of funding in line with forecast inflation, it will ensure that students do not suffer a real term reduction in their income. This means they should be able to make the same spending decisions as they did previously with regards accommodation, travel, food, entertainment and course related items such as books and equipment, the costs of which will also have been rising over time³.

The inflation-indexed uplift in loans for living costs and loans for postgraduate master's degree and doctoral degree courses will have a positive impact on students from low income backgrounds who tend to be more reliant on financial support and are more likely to have certain protected characteristics⁴. We do not currently find any evidence that some protected groups will benefit more from the increase in loans than others. This is based on the latest Student Income and Expenditure Survey (SIES) published in 2018 which does not find any significant differences in the expenditure of full- and part-time students in England by gender, ethnicity or class suggesting that all protected groups experience broadly similar rates of increase in living costs⁵.

While an increase in loan funding will increase student debt (in nominal terms only), an equivalent increase in grant funding will not (since it does not need to be repaid). However, the income contingent nature of loan repayments means that the longer-term impact will only be felt by high/middle earning borrowers who go on to repay all or nearly all of their student loan. Any outstanding loan balance is cancelled at the end of the students' loan term.

³ In the twelve months to Sept 2018, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 2.2%. This will figure will vary across different goods and services produced in the UK economy

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/september2018>

⁴ DWP analysis

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/437246/households-below-average-income-1994-95-to-2013-14.pdf

⁵ DfE (2018) Student Income and Expenditure Survey (SIES) for 2014/15

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693184/Student_income_and_expenditure_survey_2014_to_2015.pdf

Debt Aversion

The concept of debt aversion

Debt aversion, in the context of higher education, is a reluctance of prospective students to borrow money to finance the cost of study, even when it may be in their longer-term interest to do so.

Debt aversion among prospective HE students can be attributed to a range of factors. These can include family experiences of borrowing money in the past, cultural attitudes towards debt, and risk and uncertainty around the future returns from investment in HE⁶.

As well as any explicit costs and risks associated with borrowing money, debt aversion also involved potential psychological effects such as distress and anxiety⁷. Debt aversion can influence the decisions which prospective students make about HE to the point that they make poorer choices about HE, including choosing not to participate in HE. This can lead to such students achieving lower earnings over the course of their working life than they may otherwise have done.

Impact of student finance changes on debt aversion

Attitudes to debt are not uniform across the student population. Available evidence suggests that students from ethnic minorities, disadvantaged backgrounds and mature students are more debt averse and more cost sensitive⁸. Additionally, research suggests that single parents and female students are more likely to be debt averse⁹.

The inflationary increase in undergraduate loans for living costs and grants for living and other costs for 2020/21 will not significantly alter participation decisions or have a differential impact across protected groups. The increase will be nominal; in real terms students will be neither worse nor better off. Further, there is little evidence that the

⁶ See for example *Student aversion to borrowing: who borrows and who doesn't* published by the United States' Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) in 2009
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED503684.pdf>

⁷ Callander, C. and Mason, G. (2017) *Does student loan debt deter higher education participation: new evidence from England*
<https://www.llakes.ac.uk/sites/default/files/58.%20Callender%20and%20Mason.pdf>

⁸ See NUS (2012) *Never too late to learn*
https://www.nus.org.uk/pagefiles/12238/2012_nus_millionplus_never_too_late_to_learn.pdf and Million+ (2017) *Forgotten learners: building a system that works for mature students*
http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/documents/Forgotten_learners_building_a_system_that_works_for_mature_students.pdf

⁹ Callander, C. and Mason, G. (2017) *Does student loan debt deter higher education participation: new evidence from England*
<https://www.llakes.ac.uk/sites/default/files/58.%20Callender%20and%20Mason.pdf>

2012 reforms which saw a significant increase in HE fees and associated debt levels, have had a significant impact in deterring participation in higher education amongst disadvantaged groups of students. In addition, the experience of introducing loans for undergraduate students suggests students are increasingly accepting of debt when it represents an investment in their education.

As with undergraduate support, the amendments to increase the maximum amount of loan available for postgraduate master's degree courses and postgraduate doctoral degree courses in line with inflation for 2020/21, are likely to have a relatively small impact on debt averse groups, as the maximum loan amount will be increased only enough to maintain its value in real terms.

Other proposed changes to higher education student finance for 2020/21

Introducing a new eligibility category for 'Calais Children'

- In November 2018 the Home Office introduced a new category of limited leave for individuals who did not qualify for a leave to remain under existing rules and were transferred to the UK as part of the Calais camp clearance to reunite with a family member between 17 October 2016 and 13 July 2017, 'Calais Children.'
- Individuals who qualify for leave under paragraphs 352J, 352K, 352L or 352T of Part 11 of the Immigration Rules and their dependent children granted 'leave in line' will have the right to study, work, access public funds (claim benefits and housing support) and healthcare for five years, and if their Calais leave is renewed after five years apply for a further residence permit after five years and indefinite leave to remain after ten years. A new eligibility category is being added to HE Student Finance Regulations for undergraduates and postgraduates and also to Further Education Regulations for the 2020/21 academic year, so that Calais Children and their dependent children qualify for student support and home fee status. To qualify, individuals must have been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands for three years prior to the start of their course.
- Eligible persons who are granted leave under this category who start new undergraduate courses in the 2020/21 academic year will qualify for loans for fees and living costs and grants for living and other costs where applicable. Those granted leave under this category who are starting postgraduate master's degree courses in the 2020/21 academic year and postgraduate doctoral degree courses in the 2020/21 academic year will qualify for postgraduate master's degree and postgraduate doctoral degree loans.
- Eligible persons who are granted leave under this category and start courses at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence in the 2020/21 academic year will qualify for grants for living and other costs to undertake postgraduate courses at the EUI.
- Eligible persons who start new Further Education courses in the 2020/21 academic year who are granted leave under this category will qualify for Advanced Learner Loans.

Analysis

549 children were transferred to the UK as unaccompanied minors between 17 October 2016 and 13 July 2017, in connection with the clearance of the Calais camp,

for the purpose of being reunited with family. Those who receive Calais leave will be individuals from this group of 549 children who do not qualify for refugee status or humanitarian protection.

The limited data and evidence available means that a detailed analysis of the potential equality impacts has not been possible. However, we conclude that the creation of the new eligibility category for student support will have a positive impact on individuals from protected groups. It will enable them to access higher education and provide them with the opportunity to benefit from the well documented high average financial returns associated with obtaining a degree and from the wider, more social benefits associated with higher education study.

Students in this category will have to satisfy the requirement for three years' ordinary lawful residence, in line with most other applicants, before they become eligible for home fee status, tuition fee caps and student support. In some cases, this may mean a gap in students' educational progression whilst this three years' residence is acquired; this will not be the case for all students, some of whom may need to undertake study in the UK before being admitted to higher education.

Of the 549 transferred to reunite with family, 525 were male and 24 were female, and the most common countries of nationality are: Afghanistan (201), Eritrea (129), Ethiopia (34) and Sudan (156). The proposal could therefore particularly affect those with the protected characteristic of race (which is defined as including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins) and sex. It will particularly benefit people from the African Sub-Saharan and the Middle East and males. On the data available we have been unable to assess the other protected characteristics covered by the Equality Duty.

Introducing a new eligibility provision in Regulations for victims of domestic violence or domestic abuse who have been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain on this basis

- The Home Office makes special provision to grant Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) for victims of abuse who are in the UK by virtue of a partner visa or sponsorship by a British citizen or settled person. Where an individual's relationship has broken down with their partner/sponsor as a result of domestic violence or domestic abuse, and they have provided evidence of this, they can be granted ILR. Partners of refugees and those of certain armed forces personnel may also be granted ILR.
- Unlike most categories of application for ILR, individuals applying for leave as a victim of domestic violence or abuse are not required by the Immigration Rules to have an existing grant of leave. This is in recognition that a person may have

been subject to controlling, coercive and threatening behaviour, violence or abuse, which affected their ability to renew their leave.

- Victims of domestic violence or domestic abuse who have been granted ILR may not satisfy the three-year ordinary residence requirement for student support in England. While they may have had three years' lawful residence in the past, and may have been in the UK for a significant time, there may be gaps in their lawful residence as a result of the abuse they have suffered which prevent them from qualifying for student support for a higher education course.
- From the 2020/21 academic year, eligible persons who are granted leave under this category will qualify for loans for fees and living costs and grants for living and other costs where applicable for undergraduate courses. Those granted leave under this category who are studying for postgraduate master's degree courses in the 2020/21 academic year and postgraduate doctoral degree courses in the 2020/21 academic year will qualify for postgraduate master's degree loans and doctoral degree loans.
- Eligible persons who are granted leave under this category will qualify for grants for living and other costs to undertake postgraduate courses at the European University Institute.
- Eligible persons granted leave under this category will also qualify for Advanced Learner Loans.

Analysis

The limited data and evidence available means that a detailed analysis of the potential equality impacts has not been possible. However, we conclude that the removal of the three-year ordinary residence requirement for those granted ILR as a victim of domestic violence or domestic abuse will have a positive impact on individuals from protected groups. It will enable them to access higher education immediately and provide them with the opportunity to benefit from the well documented high average financial returns associated with obtaining a degree and from the wider, more social benefits associated with higher education study.

The majority of those granted ILR as victims of domestic violence or abuse are female, with most grants being made to nationals of countries of the Indian sub-continent. The proposal could therefore particularly benefit those with the protected characteristic of race (which is defined as including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins) and sex. On the data available we have been unable to assess the other protected characteristics covered by the Equality Duty.

Automatic designation of courses offered by private providers in the devolved administrations

- From 2019/20, higher education courses offered by providers in England that are registered with the Office for Students are automatically designated in order to attract fee loan and living costs support for students domiciled in England. Courses offered by providers in the devolved administrations, and funded by the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, or the Northern Ireland Department for Employment and Learning or the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development, are also automatically designated for support for students domiciled in England who are undertaking their courses in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.
- A new provision is being added to HE Student Finance Regulations for undergraduates and postgraduates for the 2020/21 academic year so that courses offered by certain private providers in the devolved administrations can be automatically designated for the purposes of student support for students domiciled in England. Courses offered by providers in Wales and Northern Ireland, which are specifically designated by their own ministers for students domiciled in their own territories, will be automatically designated for the purposes of student support for students domiciled in England. There is an additional requirement in Scotland, which reflects reflect differences in the specific designation processes that apply in Scotland. Courses offered by providers in Scotland will be automatically designated for English-domiciled students in 2020/21 if they are designated by the Welsh and Northern Irish Governments as well as by the Scottish Government.
- Similar provisions for automatic course designation are being added to Doctoral Regulations, in respect of Welsh designated postgraduate doctoral degrees only, as Scotland and Northern Ireland do not have the power in regulations to designate postgraduate doctoral degree courses.
- The changes for 2020/21 will apply to students domiciled in England starting or continuing their courses at designated private providers in the devolved administrations. [Analysis](#)

We do not have specific data in relation to protected characteristics for all impacted providers because private providers in the devolved administrations (DAs) generally do not submit data to the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA). However, we do have HESA data for both private providers in England, and for authority-funded

higher education institutions¹⁰ (HEIs) across the UK, which can provide some context for the impact of our proposal. Though we cannot extrapolate from these data to draw conclusions on what student characteristics might be at private providers in the DAs, they do give a flavour of the differences found between students attending private providers and authority-funded institutions, and between students studying in England and the DAs.

As we do not have data for the private providers in the DAs that were previously designated by the DfE, we have used proxy data to understand who these changes might impact. However, the characteristics presented are unlikely to be representative of students at private providers in the DAs.¹¹

The English HEI student population is noticeably more ethnically diverse than those in the DAs (with 27% in England from ethnic minority backgrounds in 2017/18 compared with 11% in Wales, 9% in Scotland and 3% in Northern Ireland). English HEI students are generally less likely to be older (aged 30 years and older) than their counterparts in the DAs. In turn, English private providers have a higher proportion from ethnic minority backgrounds (46%) and aged 30 years and over (38%), in comparison to HEIs (across all DAs).¹²

Under these proposals, in general, courses that in 2019/20 are already specifically designated for English student support will remain so from 2020/21. Furthermore, new courses that are not currently designated for support for students domiciled in England will become so by virtue of being designated by the relevant devolved administrations. Automatic course designation will therefore have a positive impact of continued, and

¹⁰ From 2019/20 onwards, higher education institutions formerly funded by HEFCE ('authority funded institutions') and private providers in England register with the Office for Students (OfS) as Approved (Fee Cap) and Approved Providers. The former are subject to maximum fee limits.

¹¹ This is because we have no evidence that providers in the DAs offer a similar range of courses to those in England (and student characteristics typically vary by course type) and because we expect that students in the DAs will have different characteristics from those in England (due to differences in the general population). Furthermore, while we compare the characteristics of students at HEIs in England and the DAs, this is for illustrative purposes only: there is no evidence that these differences will be replicated to the same extent in the private provider student populations.

¹² Data for HEIs taken from HESA, [Higher Education Student Statistics, 2017/18](#). Data for private providers taken from HESA, [Higher Education Student Statistics: Alternative Providers, 2017/18](#). Percentage calculations for ethnicity are for UK domiciled students only and exclude those with unknown ethnicity. Other percentages are calculated for all students, irrespective of domicile.

likely increased, access to higher education in the devolved administrations for English-domiciled students with the identified protected characteristics.

It is the Department for Education's policy intent that courses offered by private providers in the devolved administrations should only have English designation if they have designation in the relevant devolved administrations; these proposals for 2020/21 will have particular impacts for postgraduate courses, as there may be prospective students domiciled in England, who had intended to study on postgraduate courses that will not be automatically designated under these proposals. By tying designation of the impacted providers to the regulatory checks and decisions of the bodies who are most familiar with them, we ensure, in general, that outcomes are maintained for both existing and prospective students domiciled in England with the protected characteristics identified. We will also consider ways in which access to student support for existing students domiciled in England can be protected.

Specific arrangements in Scotland in 2020/21 academic year mean that courses offered by Scottish private providers will require designation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in order to have automatic designation for support for students domiciled in England. This will mean that access to higher education courses, for prospective students domiciled in England with the protected characteristics identified, will not be as wide in 2020/21 as it would otherwise have been if automatic course designation arrangements in Wales and Northern Ireland had been replicated. We consider that the need to maintain high quality higher education courses for English domiciled students outweighs the potential impacts on those prospective students with protected characteristics.

Family Test

A number of policy proposals considered in this family test analysis concern changes to student finance arrangements with maximum loans and grants for living and other costs for undergraduate courses and grants and loans for postgraduate courses uplifted by forecast inflation (2.9%) in 2020/21:

- Increases in maintenance grants for full-time students starting full-time undergraduate courses before 1 September 2016 by 2.9%;
- Increases in dependants' grants and disabled students' allowances for full-time undergraduate courses by 2.9%;
- Increases in loans for living costs for full-time and part-time undergraduate courses by 2.9%;
- Increases in loans for students starting postgraduate master's degree courses and postgraduate doctoral degree courses in 2020/21 by 2.9%; and
- Increases in disabled students' allowance for postgraduate students by 2.9%.
- Increases in fee grants and course grants for students starting part-time undergraduate courses before 1 September 2012 by 2.9%.

Our assessment is that in general these proposed changes will not have a particular impact on families. The increase in debt will be in nominal terms only meaning that students with family commitments will be no worse or better off as a result. Moreover, the income contingent nature of loan repayments means that the longer-term impact will only be felt by those students with family commitments who go on to earn more than the minimum repayment threshold after they graduate, which is currently set at £25,725 for further education and undergraduate HE courses and £21,000 for postgraduate master's degree and doctoral degree courses.

Numbers of Calais Children and individuals granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) as victims of domestic violence or domestic abuse are so small that we do not have sufficient data to determine whether the new proposals will have an impact on families. However, the new eligibility criteria increases the number of people who are likely to be eligible for student support to undertake higher education courses and, for those granted ILR as a victim of domestic violence or domestic abuse, may assist access where specific grants are available for those students who are parents and for those with childcare and adult dependent responsibilities.

Our assessment of automatic course designation for private providers in the devolved administrations is that, in general, it will not have a particular impact on families. Automatic course designation will enable the continued, and likely increased, access to higher education for English-domiciled students in the devolved administrations. The impact on families from this change will be in line with the wider impacts of changes to student finance arrangements.



Department
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