

Grants for Part-time Students Guidance for HEIs

Higher Education Student Finance in England 2011/12 Academic Year

TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

August 2011

GUIDANCE ON FEE AND COURSE GRANTS FOR PART-TIME STUDENTS

1. Attached is the guidance for HEIs on the policy and administration of fee and course grants for part-time students.
2. In 2011/12 the fee grant entitlement for eligible part-time students who meet the qualifying conditions will continue to be linked to the intensity of study. For students domiciled in England or Northern Ireland studying at less than 60% of the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) the maximum fee grant available will be £820. For those studying from 60% but less than 75% FTE the maximum fee grant available will be £985. For those studying at 75% FTE and above the maximum fee grant available will be £1,230. The course grant remains at a maximum of £265.

For students domiciled in Wales studying at less than 60% of the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) the maximum fee grant available will be £670. For those studying from 60% but less than 75% FTE the maximum fee grant available will be £800. For those studying at 75% FTE and above the maximum fee grant available will be £1,000. The course grant has been increased to a maximum of £1,125.

These arrangements apply to new and continuing students.

3. Applications for part-time grants will be processed by ELB/LA/SFE. Payment of the course grant will be made to students by the SLC from around mid-September 2011 onwards following certification of the student's application by their institution as stated in this guidance. A new student must have been undertaking their course for at least two weeks before an institution can certify their application.

Each student will be sent a notification similar to that for full-time students showing their entitlement to the course grant and fee support once their application has been processed. HEIs will therefore not be aware of part-time students' entitlement to fee support at the time they certify a student's application.

4. Payments of the public contribution to tuition fees will be made to institutions from mid September onwards by the SLC using existing fee payment arrangements. Remittance advices will be provided with payments, giving student details and public contributions to fees.

5. The Student Finance Services European Team will process applications for part-time fee support from EU nationals and their family members who fall within paragraph 9 of Part 2 of Schedule 2 to the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2009 but not within any other paragraph of that Part of Schedule 2 students in this category are eligible for the fee grant only.

EU nationals and their family members may be eligible for the fee grant, course grant and DSAs if they fall within another paragraph of Part 2 of Schedule 2. If so, they will be assessed by their ELB/LA/SFE (as described in paragraph 3 on page 1).

Supplies of the Part-time Grant Application form are not being sent to HEIs. They can be ordered by from the Practitioners website at:
www.practitioners.studentfinanceengland.co.uk

Those students who were in receipt of a part-time loan under the scheme that existed before the introduction of fee and course grants in 2004/2005 academic year may now be eligible for fee and course grants under the current system. Such students should check that their ELB/LA/SFE will send them a PTG1 application form for the 2011/12 academic year.

6. Enquiries

If you have any queries on this section please contact:

	Telephone	Email
Practitioner Support Team	0845 602 0583	designation_queries@slc.co.uk

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This guidance is not exhaustive and is not a substitute for consulting the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2009 as amended [*England*], the Assembly Learning Grants and Loans (Higher Education) (Wales) Regulations 2011 [*Wales*] or the Education (Student Support) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 as amended [*Northern Ireland*] which are the legal basis of the student support arrangements for the academic year 2011/12.

Nothing in this guidance can replace the Regulations and if there is any difference between this guidance and the Regulations, the Regulations prevail.

This guidance is based on the Regulations as they stand at the time of publication.

The Regulations may change in future.

Introduction

1. In 2011/12 the amount of fee grant available to students will continue to be linked to the intensity of study. The 2011/12 part-time support package (England and Northern Ireland domiciled students) will comprise:
 - a) a non-repayable fee grant of up to £1,230 depending on the intensity of study; and
 - b) a non-repayable course grant of up to £265.

The 2011/12 part-time support package (Wales domiciled students) will comprise:

- c) a non-repayable fee grant of up to £1,000 depending on the intensity of study; and
- d) a non-repayable course grant of up to £1,125.

In addition, students with disabilities who meet the qualifying conditions will be able to get Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs) under the same terms as in 2010/11. The amounts available to part-time students for the current academic year are as detailed in regulation 141 (England), regulation 93 (Wales) and regulation 130 (Northern Ireland). DSAs for students undertaking a part-time course with the Open University are administered by the Open University and not by ELB/LA/SFE.

Intensity of study is calculated annually and is based on the actual level of study undertaken by the student in each academic year. Intensity of study is expressed as a percentage and is calculated using the formula PT divided by FT with the result being multiplied by 100 to give a percentage figure.

PT represents the number of modules, credits, credit points, points or any other unit, as specified by the academic authority, that the student will be awarded if he completes the current academic year.

FT represents the number of modules, credits, credit points, points or any similar unit as specified by the academic authority that a standard full-time student would be required to achieve in each academic year in order to complete the full-time equivalent course within the period ordinarily required to complete that course.

"full-time equivalent course" and "standard full-time student" are to be interpreted in accordance with regulation 137 (England), regulation 90 (Wales) and regulation 124 (Northern Ireland). The period ordinarily required to complete the full-time equivalent is to be calculated in accordance with the regulations above.

Example

Student A is in the first year of a part-time degree course. At the beginning of the year the student agrees with their HEI that he intends to study at an intensity rate of 75%. For this student this means that he intends to achieve 90 credit points in that academic year. (This gives the PT figure to be used in the formula as outlined above). The number of credit points that a standard full-time student would need to achieve in order to complete the full-time equivalent course within the period ordinarily required to complete that course is 120. (This gives the FT figure to be used in the above formula.)

Inserting these figures into the formula PT/FT multiplied by 100 gives $90/120$ multiplied by 100 – which gives an intensity rate of study of 75% in

Year 1 of the student's course.

- 2.** This guidance is intended to help institutions carry out their role in determining which courses will attract that financial support. These arrangements will apply to both new and continuing students who meet the qualifying conditions.

General Policy

3. The package of student grants for 2011/12 continues to link the maximum amount of grant for fees available to the intensity of study. A banding system is to operate as follows.

Support available to students domiciled in England or Northern Ireland:

Intensity of study	Maximum fee grant	Maximum course grant	Maximum Total
More than 50% but less than 60% FTE *	£820	£265	£1,085
60% to less than 75% FTE	£985	£265	£1,250
75% + FTE	£1,230	£265	£1,495

* It is possible for a student to study at an intensity level of less than 50% in a particular year and still receive support equivalent to the 50% FTE rate – provided that the student averages 50% FTE a year overall on the course.

Support available to students domiciled in Wales:

Intensity of study	Maximum fee grant	Maximum course grant	Maximum Total
More than 50% but less than 60% FTE *	£670	£1,125	£1,795
60% to less than 75% FTE	£800	£1,125	£1,925
75% + FTE	£1,000	£1,125	£2,125

The package of financial support for part-time students is part of a wider strategy to provide greater flexibility to students and to encourage wider participation in higher education. The fee and course grants are aimed at students on low incomes who do not already have a first-degree from a UK institution and who are taking courses at an overall rate of at least 50% FTE.

4. Students can apply for the fee and course grants when they begin their course and may apply up to six months after the beginning of the academic year. Applications may be submitted more than six months after the beginning of the academic year in the circumstances set out in regulation 142(5) (England), regulation 104(3) (Wales) and regulation 131(5) (Northern Ireland).
5. In order to qualify for the grants, a student must meet certain eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria consist of:
- Course eligibility; and
 - Personal eligibility
- A student must also prove their financial entitlement to income assessed part-time grants.
6. ELB/LA/SFE will assess the student's personal and course eligibility and financial entitlement to part-time grants. Institutions are asked to certify the student's application to confirm that, in their opinion, the course meets the course eligibility criteria and that the student will be able to complete the course within the required time limit.

Course Eligibility

7. In order to qualify for the part-time grants or Disabled Students Allowances, a student must be undertaking a part-time course that meets the requirements in regulation 135(1) (England), regulation 90(1) (Wales) or regulation 124(1) (Northern Ireland) or is specifically designated by the Secretary of State under regulation 135(7) (England), regulation 90(6) (Wales) or regulation 124(7) (Northern Ireland). The requirements in regulation 135(1) / 90(1). 124(1) are:
- a) the course is listed in Schedule 2 to the Regulations other than a course for the initial training of teachers;
 - b) the course must last for at least one academic year;
 - c) it must be ordinarily possible to complete the course within twice the period ordinarily required to complete the full-time equivalent (the Regulations set out how to determine the period ordinarily required to complete the full-time equivalent);
 - d) the course is wholly provided by publicly funded institutions in the UK, or by such institutions in conjunction with institutions outside the UK, and;
 - e) the course is not designated under regulation 6 (England / Northern Ireland) or regulation 5 (Wales) or regulation 118 (England), regulation 73 (Wales) or regulation 107 (Northern Ireland).
8. One year 60-credit courses can be supported provided that they are not Access/Foundation year courses, unless the one year foundation course is an integral part of a longer course on which the student is enrolled to study. More guidance on integral foundation years can be found in the Assessing Eligibility Guidance.
9. Prior to 2010/11, part-time ITT courses could be designated under Regulation 6, and did not qualify for part-time support. (See Assessing Eligibility Guidance 2011/12 for further information.)

For courses starting in 2010/11 or 2011/12, part-time undergraduate and postgraduate ITT courses that are at least 1 year in length attract the part-time support package if the intensity of study is at least 50% of an equivalent full-time course over the duration of the course. Part-time PGCE and equivalent ITT courses (e.g. in-service DTLLS courses) do not meet the criteria for the full-time fee and maintenance support package: they are not full-time courses and they do not meet the minimum 300 hours per academic year criterion for full-time non-first degree courses. All flexible PGCE courses of a year or more length starting in 2010/11 or 2011/12 attract the part-time package of support.

10. Regulation 135(7) (England), regulation 90(6) (Wales) and regulation 124(7) (Northern Ireland) allow the Secretary of State or devolved authority to specifically designate courses which do not meet the usual criteria above. Private institutions that wish to have their courses specifically designated must apply to:

Phil Bell, Practitioner Support
Student Loans Company Ltd
The Memphis Building
Lingfield Point
McMullen Road
Darlington
County Durham
DL1 1RW

Telephone 0845 602 0583 or Email designation_queries@slc.co.uk

11. A complete and up-to-date list of specifically designated courses can be accessed on the Department's website at http://practitioners.studentfinanceengland.co.uk/portal/page?_pageid=133,4210374&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

Length of the course

12. Part-time courses must last for at least one academic year in order to qualify.

Course load

13. In order to be designated under regulation 135(1) (England), regulation 90(1) (Wales) or regulation 124(1) (Northern Ireland) it must be ordinarily possible for the relevant part-time course to be completed in not more than twice the period ordinarily required to complete the full-time equivalent. Regulation 135(6) (England), regulation 90(5) (Wales) and regulation 124(6) (Northern Ireland) sets out how the period ordinarily required to complete the full-time equivalent course is to be calculated.
14. An eligible part-time student who undertakes a designated part-time course will cease to be eligible for support in connection with that course if it becomes impossible for him to complete the course in the period above even if he increases his intensity of study (regulation 136(5) and (6) (England), regulation 91(5) and (6) (Wales) and regulation 125 (5) and (6)). The student's eligibility for support will terminate at the end of the academic year in which it becomes clear that he cannot complete the course in the required period.
15. The initial expectation must be that a student will complete his course in not more than twice the length of time it would take to complete an equivalent full-time course leading to the same qualification. How long a student is expected to take to complete his course will need to be assessed each time that the student applies for support for an academic year of the course. Where, for example, a student has to repeat the first year of study in year 2 because he has failed his exams in year 1, in order to be able to get support for year 2, it must still be possible for him (with or without an increase in the intensity of study) to complete the course within not more than twice the length of time it would take to ordinarily take to complete the equivalent full-time course.
16. Provided that it remains possible for a student to complete the course within the required period, the Regulations allow for flexibility in course load in an academic year. Some institutions encourage part-time students to take a lower course load in their first year while they adjust to the requirements of taking a higher education course. A growing number of institutions allow students flexibility to decide the amount of time they can devote to a course, offering students the opportunity to take a lower number of modules in any year if necessary. However, institutions should keep in mind the requirement in respect of the period that the student will himself take to complete the course.
17. The maximum contribution towards the fees will vary from £820 up to £1230 (England and Northern Ireland) and £670 to £1,000 (Wales) depending on the intensity of study, as outlined in paragraph 3 above.
18. Where students transfer from a designated course that is a full-time course to studying it part-time (i.e. the course must be in the same subjects and leading to the same qualification as the full-time course) before he

completes the full-time course, the part-time course is to be treated as satisfying the requirements of regulation 135(1) (England), regulation 90(1) (Wales) or regulation 124(1) (Northern Ireland) if the period of part-time study to be undertaken by the student is at least one academic year and does not exceed twice the time normally required to complete the remainder of the full-time course from which the student transfers (please see the following examples).

Examples

Student A takes a course leading to a BA in History, which would normally be completed in three years if studied full-time. He studies full-time in the first year and transfers to the equivalent part-time course in the second year. He plans to take five years in total to complete the course (i.e. he will take a further four years to complete it). This means that the course can be treated as satisfying the requirements in regulation 135(1) (England), regulation 90(1) (Wales) or regulation 124(1) (Northern Ireland). Provided that the other relevant conditions are satisfied, student A may qualify for part-time support in connection with that course.

Student B takes the same course. He completes two years as a full-time student and then transfers to the equivalent part-time course. He plans to take five years in total to complete the course (i.e. he will take a further three years to complete it). He plans to complete the remainder of the course over a period (three years) that is more than twice the time normally required to complete the course on a full-time basis (one year). This means that the course will not satisfy the requirements in regulation 135(1) (England), regulation 90(1) (Wales) or regulation 124(1) (Northern Ireland). Student B cannot qualify for support in connection with that course.

Health care bursaries

- 19.** Students will not be eligible for support if they are in receipt of certain healthcare bursaries in respect of their course as set out in Regulation 133(3)(a) (England), 88(3)(a) (Wales), or 122(3)(a) (Northern Ireland). These are:
- a) a healthcare bursary whether or not the amount of such bursary is calculated by reference to the students income;
 - b) any allowance under the Nursing and Midwifery Student Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 2007

Previous study

- 20.** Students will not be eligible for a fee or course grant for another undergraduate course if they already hold an honours degree from a UK institution. Students who hold qualifications below degree level can qualify for support if they are topping up to a higher level course.

Students will not be eligible for support if they have received a maximum of eight years' support. This will include both support given as loans before the academic year 2004/05 and student support since 2004/05 which has been given in the form of fee grants and course grants.

Part-time open or distance learning courses

- 21.** Students undertaking a designated part-time course through distance learning or open learning are eligible for the part-time grants and, where applicable, DSAs provided they meet the eligibility criteria described. For a student to get a fee grant, they must be undertaking the course in England (subject to regulation 137 (England), regulation 92 (Wales) or regulation 126 (Northern Ireland)). For a student to get a course grant or DSA, they must

be undertaking the course in the UK.

Access to Learning Fund and Additional Fee Support Scheme

22. Continuing part-time students who received a fee waiver in 2003/04, and who continue to study on the same course in 2011/12, may be eligible for transitional protection to help with the cost of their course fees. Students whose actual course fee is higher than the relevant fee grant can apply to the Access to Learning Fund for a top-up to their fee grant up to the actual level of the fee charged for their course. We expect that linking the fee grant to course intensity should reduce the demand for transitional 'top-ups' from the Access to Learning Fund.
23. Since September 2006 institutions have been able to operate the Additional Fee Support Scheme for new and continuing part-time undergraduate students alongside their Access to Learning Fund. The rationale for the scheme is to allow additional fee support for low income part-time undergraduate students studying at least 50% FTE where their statutory fee support is insufficient to meet the full tuition fee cost. However, the Scheme is very flexible and institutions have a wide discretion over who can get additional fee support and how much support students can get.

Institutions that operate the Additional Fee Support Scheme can decide whether to provide transitional protection for former fee waiver recipients via this scheme or via the Access to Learning Fund. Institutions should ensure that a student only receives additional fee support from one scheme and does not receive more support than the total cost of their tuition fee.

Information about the Additional Fee Support Scheme is available as part of the Access to Learning Guidance for 2009/10 on the student support website at http://practitioners.studentfinanceengland.co.uk/portal/page?_pageid=133,4210352&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

24. Institutions will continue to have the discretion to provide help from the Access to Learning Fund for part-time students facing hardship, for example in meeting childcare costs.
25. Students should contact the Student Support Services at their institution for advice on applying for help from the Additional Fee Support Scheme or the Access to Learning Fund.

What does certification of form PTG1 involve?

26. Students should complete the application form for part-time grants (PTG1) and pass it to their institution. The institution will be asked to endorse the form confirming:
- That it considers the course to be a **designated part-time course** (as defined in the Regulations) for the purposes of receiving student support.
 - Where the student is making his first application for support that the student has undertaken at least two weeks on the course. In other cases, the HEI has to certify that the student has enrolled to undertake the course detailed in section 4 part c and the academic year in question. (Please also note that if the student intends to do a full BSc/BA course then this final qualification that they intend to achieve should be entered in section 4 part d and not for example Year 1 Cert HE, Year 2 HND, Year 3 FD, Year 4 BA).
 - The course start (the date the student first began their program of

study), the end date (the date the full program of study is expected to be completed) and the course length (the amount of years the student intends to take to complete the full program of study) is correct.

- 27. Section 6 must be fully completed by the Institution and not the student.** Institutions are required to declare in Section 6 of the PTG1 application form the following:
- a) The total course fee for the current academic year (**not** the price per credit or module).
 - b) The number of units the student is studying and the equivalent for studying on a full time basis. (A full time course consists of 120 credits. The first section requires the number of credits the student will be studying in the academic year of a part time basis. So if the student is studying 50% intensity the credits for part time should be 60. The box underneath this is for the full time equivalent credits in one academic year).
 - c) The intensity of study as this will determine the student's tuition fee entitlement.
 - d) The amount of years a full time equivalent course would last, this must be the full time equivalent of the course entered in section 4.
 - e) That it is possible for the student to complete the course in no more than twice the length of time it would ordinarily take to complete the equivalent full-time course (the relevant period is determined in accordance with regulation 135(1) (England), regulation 90(1) (Wales), and regulation 124(1) (Northern Ireland).
 - f) When the institution is asked to certify a form later in the year, the Department considers that it would not be appropriate to certify a form where the student has already withdrawn from or abandoned the course.

The institution should declare that it has agreed that the student meets the relevant attendance requirements; together with the other requirements shown in paragraph 26 above, by stamping the PTG1 form with the institution's official stamp. **If a stamp is not used the form will not be validated.**

- 28.** Once the institution has returned the endorsed application form to the student, the student will send the form to their ELB/LA/SFE who will undertake the assessment. Upon completion of the assessment the ELB/LA/SFE or the SLC will contact the student to confirm whether any financial support is payable.
- 29.** Any contribution towards tuition fees will be paid direct to the institution and any contribution towards course costs will be paid direct to the student's bank account via BACS. An institution must be entered on the SLC HEI course database with a tuition fee payment location in order to receive payment. For further details contact SLC HE PORTAL SERVICES TEAM by telephone on 0845 7023 316 or by email at hei_data@slc.co.uk.
- 30.** Where the course is being provided through a franchise agreement the relevant institution should indicate that is the case when the form is certified and for which institution the course is being provided, please refer to section 4 part b. This will help avoid queries being raised by ELB/LA/SFE, particularly if the college providing the course is not listed on the SLC's database of colleges and courses.

Timetable for administration

- 31.** The grants will be paid to students via BACS with effect from the autumn term onwards. Institutions should begin certifying application forms from

continuing students immediately after the students enrol. They should not begin certifying forms from new students until the students have completed 2 weeks of their course. Once the institution has certified the student's form, the student should send the form and any supporting evidence to their ELB/LA/SFE. The SLC will pay the student within 10 working days of receiving instructions from the ELB/LA/SFE.

32. In general, students must apply for the grants within six months after the beginning of the academic year. Where the student's course begins in the autumn quarter, the academic year begins on 1 September and the deadline for applications is 28 February 2012. However, applications may be submitted more than 6 months after the beginning of the academic year in the circumstances set out in the Regulations.

Payment of tuition fees

33. Payment of part-time tuition fees to institutions will start in the week commencing 19 September 2011. Thereafter payment will be made weekly. Payment will be made to the tuition fee payment location and account shown on the SLC's database of colleges and courses for an institution. Each payment will be accompanied by a remittance advice which will give details of the amounts to be paid in respect of each student. The remittance advice will contain details of both full-time and part-time tuition fee payments. The part-time payments will be shown together to assist institution staff in processing these funds. Details of the Tuition Fee Remittance Advice data fields can be found in AY11/12 Tuition Fee Attendance Confirmation Reports Guidance.

Transfers and withdrawals

34. Part-time students may transfer to other part-time courses or to full-time courses. Where students transfer to another course or withdraw from the course, institutions are asked to advise ELB/LA/SFE of the change in the students' circumstances promptly. A change of circumstance form (CO2) is available for this purpose and may be obtained from the website – http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/DG_171624

When a student transfers from one part-time course to another part-time course the institution where the new course is being taken must complete the certification section of the change of circumstance form for the student before it is sent to their ELB/LA/SFE. This will ensure that an accurate assessment can be made of the student's eligibility for part-time grants.

Students from the EU

- 35.** EU students may qualify for the fee grant, and the course grant and DSAs if they have been ordinarily resident in the UK (apart from temporary absences) for the three years before the start of the course. The other circumstances in which EU students and their family members are eligible for support are set out in the Regulations. EU students and their family members who are eligible for fee support only should be advised to contact the Student Finance Services European Team at the address shown below to request the appropriate application form.

The Student Finance Services European Team
Student Loans Company Ltd
The Memphis Building
Lingfield Point
McMullen Road
Darlington
County Durham
DL1 1 RW

Phone: 0141 243 3570 (10am to 4pm Monday to Friday)
Website: www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance-EU

These students will need to apply by completing form EUPTG1.

Students at the Open University

- 36.** The Open University administers applications for support from its own students. This includes applications for the course and fee grants as well as for DSAs.

Students who enter or leave Prison

- 37.** If a student spends any time in prison they are ineligible for any support whilst in prison. However with effect from AY 08/09 pro-rata support is available to the student for a period of time within the academic year for any period of time not spent in prison. Where an HEI become aware that one of their students is in prison, they should make the ELB/LA/SFE and SLC aware of this fact.

Welsh PT Pro-rata Support Grants

- 38.** For Wales from 09/10 academic year, applicants may be entitled to Adult Dependants' Grant, Parents' Learning Allowance and Childcare Grant. If the student withdraws the entitlement to ADG & PLA will be recalculated according to the number of days the student has spent on the course from the start of the academic year.

Annex 1

PART-TIME GRANT PROCESSING 2011/2012

Application

Part Time Grant Processing 2011/12

