

17 March 2011

Communicating the new student finance package for 2012/13 onwards

We are writing to update you on our plans for communicating the student finance reforms that will affect students starting higher education from 2012/13. As you know, the new financial support package includes more generous maintenance support for nearly all full-time students, larger income-contingent tuition loans and a more progressive graduate contribution scheme.

We must make sure students are not put off applying to university due to a lack of understanding of the student finance package on offer. We are determined to ensure that prospective students – and all those who influence them – have access to accurate and detailed information. We hope that we can continue to work with you to help achieve this.

To date:

- We have worked with the Universities Marketing Forum and Universities UK to ensure basic information is available to higher education institutions and prospective students – an update was distributed to institutions at the end of 2010 and I am grateful to the sector for their use of this in university prospectuses and on websites.
- We have published further information on the BIS website about how the new funding regime will work, particularly for part-time students (at www.bis.gov.uk/studentfinance). We have also worked with the National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA) on their material for National Student Money Week.
- Because the internet is the first point-of-call for prospective students, we have also been using Government's main online channel, Directgov www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance. By working with partners to raise awareness of this information, we have already achieved over 18,000 hits. We are now working on delivering comparable information via independent websites, including Push, The Student Room, BrightsideUNIAID, Fullonmag, Prospects, Lifetracks and Got-a-teenager.

All of this remains available. However, we recognise that we need to do much more if people are to understand fully how the new system will work. As we enter a key time of year in the application process, we are determined to make it easier for people to find the information they need. To this end:

1. The attached flyer is designed to provide the essential facts in an accessible format. It covers both the support available to students and the repayment terms. We hope you will feel able to circulate it and use this new information to update your websites.

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<http://www.bis.gov.uk/>

Enquiries +44 (0)20 7215 5000 | Email stakeholder@bis.gsi.gov.uk

2. We have also developed a more detailed Frequently Asked Questions. This FAQ is a live document which will reside on the BIS Student Finance web page. It will be updated as new questions come up.
3. We are working with the Student Loans Company to ensure a strong presence at UCAS conventions. The events play a vital part in helping applicants decide about what and where to study within higher education. They are free-of-charge and aimed at 16 and 17-year-old students. Annually around 250,000 people attend the events. SLC will have a presence at all 30 English UCAS conventions scheduled to take place between March and June. SLC staff will provide top-line information to students and parents on the 2012 package, with all participants directed to the Directgov site for more information.
4. BIS will launch a new marketing campaign in May. This will enable us to deliver a focused and integrated campaign in the key months of the application cycle. This campaign will cover studying in England and will include paid-for digital channels, such as Facebook, alongside youth media partnerships and mobile applications. Parents and influencers will be targeted via radio stations known to be popular with these groups. The campaign will be particularly focused on people in hard-to-reach groups.

As this programme develops, we are keen to continue working in partnership with you. If you have any thoughts, perhaps on the information available to date, or the channels we are using to distribute the information, we would be delighted to hear them. You can send your feedback at any time to our stakeholder engagement team by email on stakeholder@bis.gsi.gov.uk.

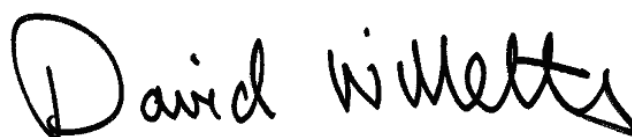
We are sending the flyer and FAQ to Vice-Chancellors and Admission Tutors as well as to university Communications and Marketing Directors. It is also going to students' unions through the NUS, to the higher education mission groups, national organisations covering headteachers, careers and guidance counsellors, and youth groups and websites. Our aim is to ensure this information is available as widely as possible.

We will continue to update you on our communications activities and the details of the reforms as they are finalised. Work is already under way for an equivalent key facts flyer for part-time students which we will include in our next mailing.

Yours sincerely,



Vince Cable



David Willetts