



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE Tuition fee limits and financial support for higher education students in the 2024/25 academic year

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BY Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language

The Welsh Government has been consistent in our approach that supporting students with day to day living costs is our key priority in ensuring that everyone, no matter their background, can access university. We are proud that we continue to offer, by far, the highest level of student maintenance support in the UK. The support provided to each undergraduate student increased substantially in the 2023/24 academic year to reflect the challenges students faced during the cost-of-living crisis. Despite significant budget constraints this year, I can confirm that support will once again increase for all eligible undergraduate students in the 2024/25 academic year.

Maintenance support for eligible undergraduate students from Wales will increase by 3.7%. This increased rate of support will be available to new students. It will also be available to those continuing on a course which began on or after 1 August 2018. In addition, a range of other grants and allowances will also be increased for 2024/25, as they are every year. Everyone, no matter their background, should be able to afford a higher education.

The Welsh Government has had to make difficult choices in all areas this year against the backdrop of continued inflationary and budget pressure. Higher education is no different. My intention throughout the latest draft budget round is to do everything we can to protect the maintenance support we provide to undergraduates. However, other difficult decisions have been made to support this.

We have resisted calls to raise the tuition fee cap in the past, but sustained inflationary pressure on higher education providers in Wales means an increase is now unavoidable. The tuition fee cap – the maximum that regulated providers can charge to certain students on certain full-time undergraduate courses – will increase from £9,000 to £9,250. The tuition fee cap will be increased only to the same level already charged by higher education providers in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Welsh domiciled students who are studying in England, Northern Ireland or Scotland are already paying this fee level and will therefore see no change.

This change will provide additional funding for Universities and other providers in Wales, helping to safeguard provision and investment in the student experience. The increased tuition fee cap will apply to any eligible student studying in Wales, not just Welsh students.

I recognise that students may be disappointed by this. I will increase the tuition fee loan to up to £9,250 for students ordinarily resident in Wales who study in Wales (and for certain others who study here). This continues the longstanding policy of no student having to pay their tuition fees upfront.

The fee limit changes will not result in an increase to the monthly repayment which students will make. Nor does it affect our policy of partial cancellation of debt of up to £1,500 when a student begins repaying their loans. This is unique to Welsh students, no matter where they study.

This increase of 2.8% in the tuition fee cap is the first since 2011. Prices (as measured by CPIH) increased by 29% between 2011 and 2022. Maintenance support for Welsh undergraduate students has grown by 39% since the introduction of the Diamond reforms in 2018.

Decisions on the tuition fee to be charged to students are a matter for higher education providers. The Welsh Government does not set fees, only the maximum which may be charged in certain circumstances. Students should speak to their University or other provider about their fees.

Tuition fees for part-time undergraduate study and for postgraduate study are not regulated. No changes will be made.

We have taken the difficult decision that grants currently available to postgraduate Master's students will now be replaced fully by repayable student loans. This will apply to new students in 2024/25. However, the Welsh Government will once again increase the maximum value of support available to new Master's students in the 2024/25 academic year in line with a measure of inflation. The overall amount of support will increase by 0.9%. The available loan is significantly more generous than that provided in England. The loan available to support doctoral study will also increase by this amount.

The decision has also been taken to reprioritise our funding for postgraduate incentive bursaries to protect core education funding, subject to confirmation to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales later this year. We continue to provide maintenance grant and tuition fee loan support for those aged over 60 years wishing to undertake undergraduate study for the first time.

The Welsh Government has protected funding for those undertaking a course of higher education for the first time. Maintenance support for undergraduate study will

increase once again. We continue to offer a greater level of support to postgraduate Master's students than that available in England in recognition of the living costs that students face. The increase in the tuition fee will assist Universities and other providers of higher education in Wales in continuing to provide an outstanding education to their students. These changes balance the day-to-day needs of students from Wales with our aim to ensure that all who may benefit from a higher education can do so, and will ensure that support remains affordable in the very difficult financial situation which the Welsh Government faces.