



Student
Loans Company

HE PROVIDER JOINING PACK



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1.0 WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

1.1 How to use this document

This document is for new Higher Education Providers or new colleagues within existing providers. It aims to outline the procedures for providers that require to register with SLC, in addition to providing both new and existing colleagues with information in relation to services and products provided by SLC.

New HE Providers should refer to the document in its entirety to ensure all set up procedures are completed in a timely and accurate manner.

New colleagues at existing providers should refer to the relevant sections depending on their role within the institution.

If you are taking on the role of primary contact for any of the services, please also ensure that you notify **HEI_Services@slc.co.uk**

1.2 About Us

The Student Loans Company (SLC) is a non-profit making Government owned organisation set up in 1989 to provide loans and grants to students in universities and colleges in the UK. We work with the Student Awards Agency for Scotland, the Education and Library boards in Northern Ireland, Higher Education Providers and HM Revenue and Customs, to provide student support in the UK.

Paying and Collecting

The Student Loans Company (SLC):

- Pay loans and grants to students
- Pay tuition fees to colleges and universities
- Work with HM Revenue and Customs to collect loan repayments
- Collect repayments on 'mortgage style' loans issued before 1998
- Make maintenance payments to school pupils aged over 16 in Northern Ireland and Wales
- Make fee payments to students studying FE Courses in England
- Pay bursaries and scholarships on behalf of universities and colleges
- Run all the administration and processing associated with these activities

Grant, Loan & Fee Payments

For most students in the UK we provide loans to help cover their living costs, as well as loans for their tuition fees. We pay the maintenance loans directly into their bank accounts at the start of each term, (monthly for students in Scotland) and the tuition fees direct to their college or university.

2.0 HE RELATIONSHIP, ACADEMIC TIMELINE AND BUSINESS INTERACTION

2.1 HEI Services

HEI Services manages, develops and maintains business products, services and relationships with external organisations, partners and stakeholders, fundamentally supporting institutions which offer Higher Education including School-Centred Initial Teacher Trainer (SCITT) providers, Colleges and Universities.

HEI Services works in partnership with Higher Education Providers to inform the design, development and roll-out of products and services, gathering feedback and ideas from institutions regarding enhancements to current services, changes to processes to reflect new policy or requests for new services.

HEI Services coordinate and gather this feedback through:

- One to one business/service reviews with individual institutions
- Service Review Forums on a regional basis
- IT Advisory Group
- Focus Groups both domicile and product specific
- HEBSS Steering Group
- SIS User Group
- Courses User Group

HEI Services provides business to business relationship information, advice, training and guidance to institutions and communicates this via:

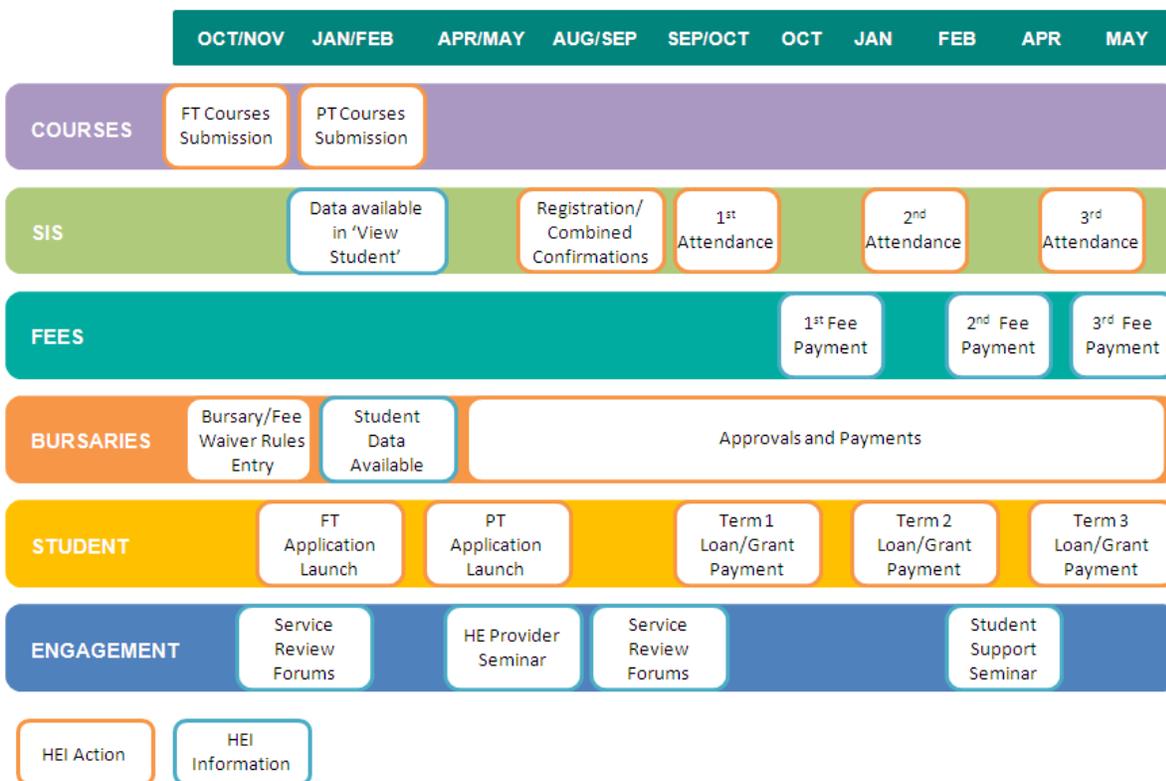
- HEI Services page of SLC corporate website – www.slc.co.uk
- Regular release of information bulletins
- Annual Student Support Seminar
- Annual HE Provider Seminar
- Workshops and representation at various sector conferences

HEI Services can also support institutions regarding analysis of statistical data gathered from National Support applications; this includes a Household Income Distribution Report, which provides a breakdown of residual household income at time of application. Upon request other ad hoc reports may be available for example data around student place of residence at application or post HE.

Products and Services are managed by Product Consultants who coordinate the annual academic 'roll out' and changes to the service including enhancements. Institutions are directly supported by an HEI Relationship Manager, the role based on geographical area throughout the UK. The team is managed by the HEI Services Development Manager.

The team acts as a primary point of contact for institutions regarding business to business advice, best practice and future developments and can be contacted through **HEI_Services@slc.co.uk**.

2.2 Academic Year Timeline



2.3 Operations Services

Operations Services manage the day to day running of business to business systems including:

- Registration confirmation processes to release maintenance support to students
- Attendance confirmation processes to release tuition fee payments to institutions (including Change of Circumstances)
- Courses Service to collect institutional course data from institutions
- Financial Information Service giving information and guidance to students about institutional awards and contact details for student services
- Bursary Service for the assessment and award of bursaries, scholarships and Fee Waivers
- The department also work with institutions regarding operational queries and issues via email or the HEI Helpline on **0300 100 0642**. Please refer to section 5.0 Contacts and Further information (page 19) for the email address for each service.

2.4 Registering with SLC

New Public or Alternative Providers or those offering Publicly Funded Courses for the first time.

Public Institutions

Publicly funded institutions should initially contact Operations Services via the HEI Helpline number on **0300 100 0642** or emailing **hep_services@slc.co.uk**

The advisor will email a form for completion which captures both institutional and course information.

(From AY 14/15 only authority funded institutions will have courses automatically designated).

Alternative Providers

If the institution is private or part private/part public they the institution should contact the Course Designation Team at HEFCE on 0117 931 7290 or by email **coursedesignation@hefce.ac.uk**.

The institution will be required to provide information relating to course type, course details, current prospectus and validation of the course before designation status will be granted. Private Providers will be unable to add course information to the Courses Service on the HEI Portal until the provider and their courses have been designated by HEFCE and confirmed by BIS.

Franchise and Merger Arrangements

Franchise Agreements

If the institution states that a course is solely franchised, without any directly funded students, the course should be added to the Courses Service under the institution who is providing / validating the course.

This institution will then be responsible for confirming registration for the purposes of releasing maintenance payments to students and confirming attendance for the purposes of releasing tuition fee payments. Tuition fee payments for franchised courses are paid directly to this institution and it will be subject to an agreement between the two institutions with regards to subsequent distribution of the payment.

Merger of institutions

Should institutions merge the lead institution should provide confirmation of the following on headed paper: details of the HEI code to be retained, any name change, the date of the merger and bank details. Any queries should be directed to **hep_services@slc.co.uk**.

2.5 Designation of Courses

In order to access Higher Education student support the higher education course must be a designated course. Eligible higher education courses that are wholly provided in the UK by authority funded institutions are automatically designated under the student support regulations. In addition, the Secretary of State has the discretion to designate courses which are not automatically designated. These are generally validated courses which are developed and delivered by alternative providers (including private businesses, profit making institutions and private schools).

Details of the courses that have been specifically designated for courses up to and including AY 13/14 for the purposes of student support can be found on the Student Finance England – Practitioners website - **<http://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/policy-information/designated-courses.aspx>**

Details of the courses that have been specifically designated for courses up to and including AY 14/15 for the purposes of student support can be found on the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) website – **<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/reg/desig/search>**

2.6 OFFA and Access Agreements

The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) is an independent, non departmental public body. Their role is to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for lower income and other under-represented groups following the introduction of higher tuition fees in 2006/07.

They safeguard fair access by approving and monitoring access agreements – agreements in which universities and colleges set out their tuition fee limit and the access measures they intend to put in place e.g. outreach work and financial support.

Access agreements cover full-time undergraduate courses and PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) and ITT (Initial Teacher Training) courses for home /EU students at English universities and colleges. In future, subject to Parliamentary approval, they will also cover part-time students. Access agreements do not cover postgraduate courses or apply to overseas students.

All publicly funded providers of higher education in England who wish to charge tuition fees above the basic level have to submit an access agreement to OFFA for approval. They monitor institutions progress in meeting their access agreement commitments on an annual basis. They also have a role in identifying and disseminating good practice and advice connected with access agreements and bursary support.

For further information contact: **enquiries@offa.org.uk**

3.0 HE SERVICES

3.1 Fee Service – Reporting and Payment of Tuition Fees to Institutions

SLC make tuition fee payments directly to providers if a student has requested a tuition fee loan (for Welsh FT students commencing study AY12/13 this may be a mixture of tuition fee loan and fee grant).

Tuition fee loans will be paid to providers in 3 instalments during the academic year. The payment schedule is based upon the course start date, for Autumn starters payments are made 3rd Week in October (25%), 1st Week in February (25%) and 1st week in May (50%). The student must be in attendance at the HE Provider throughout the year to receive the full tuition fee payment.

Fee Payment Schedule

Season (Academic Year Start)	Payment 1	%	Payment 2	%	Payment 3	%
AUT (Sep - Dec)	3rd Wed Oct	25%	1st Wed Feb	25%	1st Wed May	50%
WIN (Jan - Mar)	1st Wed Feb	25%	1st Wed May	25%	3rd Wed Oct	50%
SPR (Apr - Jun)	1st Wed May	25%	3rd Wed Oct	25%	1st Wed Feb	50%
SUM (Jul - Aug)	3rd Wed July	25%	1st Wed Feb	25%	1st Wed May	50%

Maximising Fee Payments

The Student Information Service is used to view student information and for the attendance reporting and payment of fees to institutions, please see further detail in section 3.3. In order to maximise the receipt of tuition fee payments in a timely manner, HE Providers are encouraged through best practice to:

- Assist student application by highlighting the necessity to provide evidence of identity and return the student declaration form.
- Pro-actively view student data at the earliest possible time and identify those student applications with invalid or missing National Insurance Numbers.
- Pro-actively view student data and submit Change of Circumstances via functionality within the Student Information Service for course or fee mismatches, including any assessments against temporary courses, in advance of student registration and/or attendance confirmation.
- Submit a Change of Circumstance notification advising of a 'transfer in' should a student arrive at the HE Provider requesting acceptance on a course, having previously applied to another institution.
- Undertake attendance confirmations at earliest opportunity, prior to payment dates.

3.2 HEI Portal

The HEI Portal hosts a number of key services which support the delivery of the HE Student Finance Systems.

Different people will require access to all or some of the services provided through the HE Portal depending on your role within your institution. A summary of each of the services including contact details and further information and support is detailed below.

The HE Portal is accessed via the HEI Services website <http://www.heiinfo.slc.co.uk>.

All new users (either at new or existing HE Providers) should ensure that they enter their details on the "Maintain Contacts" which can be accessed upon logging into the HE Portal to ensure Operations Services can contact the relevant person at your institution if required.

3.3 Courses Service

Purpose of the service

The Courses Service is a central repository of institution details managed by SLC. It contains key information on all UK based institutions and the courses that they provide and allows individual institutions to access and maintain their own data.

The information provided is used by Award Authorities to assess students for statutory support and as such, institutions are requested to update their course information on an annual basis. Once this has been completed and their course information has been "promoted" to the live environment it becomes available for award authorities to complete student assessments.

Responsibilities and Key Timings

The full time Courses Service is normally available in October/November to allow institutions to update their information for the following AY. Part time course information is normally requested each February. It is important that the majority of information is submitted and promoted to the live environment prior to the launch of the student application service. This will ensure that students intending to study at your institution can be assessed for support.

3.4 Student Information Service

Purpose of the service

The Student Information Service (SIS) enables HE Providers to view student information, confirm student registration, confirm ongoing attendance, complete change of circumstance notifications and view financial reports on-line.

View Student Information -

Allows institutions to view student information when an application is fully approved or approved but awaiting the return of a student's signed declaration. Institutions can use this data to aid their internal business processes such as identify missing NINOs, incorrect fee amounts and missing bank details.

It is recommended that for best practice HE Providers check student data at the earliest opportunity, notifying assessing authorities via Change of Circumstance of any amended detail such as a course change or incorrect fee. This will enable positive attendance confirmation and subsequent release of fees to the HEI at the start of the AY in line with the Fee Payment Schedule.

Registration Worklist

Provides a facility for institutions to confirm registration to release maintenance support to students, either via the portal screens or by file import. The registration worklist populates with those students awaiting registration, 30 days in advance of the course start date.

Registration is undertaken once per Academic Year (AY), generally at the start of the AY. Following registration maintenance support is released to the student at the start of each of the 3 terms.

Attendance Worklist

Provides a facility for institutions to confirm attendance to release tuition fee payments to institutions either via the portal screens or by file import.

Students who require attendance confirmation will be populated within the Attendance Worklist at each liability date throughout the AY, the course start date for each of the three terms. Tuition fee payments are subsequently released at each payment date, following a positive attendance confirmation for each of the liability dates.

Institutions are only entitled to receive the full tuition fee loan if the student is in attendance at each of the 3 liability dates.

For Part Time students there is only one liability confirmation date at the start of their course.

Should an HEI submit a Change of Circumstance retrospectively, a fee waiver for example, the institution is required to re-confirm attendance and the course/fee for each of the liability periods affected.

Combined Worklist

Provides a facility for institutions to confirm both registration to release maintenance support to students and the first attendance confirmation to release tuition fees either via the portal screens or by file import.

The combined worklist is populated 30 days in advance of the course start date. If an institution provides positive registration confirmation via the combined worklist, then SLC will apply a positive attendance code to both the maintenance the first installment of the first tuition fee.

HE Providers are expected to submit a Change of Circumstance to correct any incorrect information on the student records such as course or fee, prior to the second liability date (first day of the second term).

Change of Circumstances (CoC)

Allows institutions to submit notifications when a student's circumstances alter. These can be submitted via the portal screens or by bulk upload.

Should a student's circumstances change for example; a change of course or fee, the institution should notify the Assessing Authority by submitting a Change of Circumstance. The Assessing Authority will reassess the National Support application, and the revised data will be passed back through to the Student Information Service.

The following CoC categories are automatically reassessed (unless notes are included within the notes box) and pass back through to SIS:

- Fee Changes
- Withdrawals
- Course Changes within an institution before the start of the first term.

CoC Processing Times

CoC Type	Automated (48 hours)	Peak (30 working days)	Non Peak (20 working days)
Fee (without notes)	✓		
Fee (with notes)		✓	✓
Transfer (internal pre-liability, without notes)	✓		
Transfer (all post liability)		✓	✓
Withdrawal (without notes)	✓		
Withdrawal (with notes)		✓	✓
Suspension		✓	✓
Resumption		✓	✓
Repetition		✓	✓

To ensure the timely release and correct payment of fees to institutions, Change of Circumstances should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity, as changes occur.

The process for sending notifications to SAAS for Scottish students is via paper form or email, in line with SAAS Guidance to HEIs

Financial Reports

The suite of reports provides institutions with a tuition fee forecast report, tuition fee balance information for each academic year, remittance files and details for students who have not returned the online declaration form.

Tuition Fee Forecast Report – Provides a forecast by academic quarter and liability period. The report displays the number of students and corresponding tuition fee amounts for each instalment of each academic year quarter and the total amount of tuition fees to be paid to the HE Provider for the selected academic year.

Tuition Fee Balance Report – Provides a tuition fee breakdown by academic year and type – student attendance not confirmed/confirmed, students awaiting reassessment, blocked fee payments, fees paid and any overpayments. The report is updated weekly.

Remittance Report – Shows by student the support paid to the HE Provider regarding both full and part time students. The remittance report list can be filtered by month and academic year. Remittance reports are created each Wednesday in line with any tuition fee/grant payment made to the HE Provider.

Outstanding Online Declaration Report – This report shows a list of students per Academic Year who have applied for student finance but who have yet to return a signed online declaration form. This will enable HE Providers to chase their students to provide the necessary form as without a signed online declaration form no maintenance payments and/or tuition fees will be paid.

Blocked Maintenance Payments Report - The report provides details of students where maintenance loan or grant payments are blocked for an Academic Year and the reasons why they have been blocked.

Responsibilities and Key Timings

Institutions can submit registration confirmations up to 30 days before the start of the first term to ensure timely payments of maintenance support to students and will be required to confirm ongoing attendance at each of the three liability points (start of each term) to release tuition fee payments. HE Providers are only entitled to receive the full fee loan / fee grant if the student is in attendance at each of the liability points.

Institutions can submit Change of Circumstances throughout the AY and we would request that these are submitted as soon as the institution becomes aware of a change. Withdrawals should be prioritised over other categories to mitigate overpayment to the student and the institution.

3.5 Bursary Service

Following the introduction of variable fees and mandatory discretionary bursaries SLC were mandated to deliver a bursary administration service for English and Northern Ireland HEIs and, as a result, the Higher Education Bursary and Scholarship Scheme (HEBSS) was launched in June 2006.

A year later, the Welsh Government adopted the same approach and, subsequently the Welsh Bursary Scheme (WBS) was established.

Subscribing Institutions can view student information derived from National Support applications; this includes the household residual income as used in the assessment of financial support.

In line with both current Access Agreements, institutional widening participation objectives and National Scholarship Programme requirements, the Bursary Service can be used to identify and make awards to students eligible for either fee waivers or cash bursaries.

This is an optional service to which institutions can subscribe via contractual agreement and is managed on a “not for profit, not for penalty” basis.

Data is provided in respect of every student who has applied for their National Support funding via an award authority and who has selected your institution as their 1st choice on their application form and they/sponsor(s) have consented to share information for bursary purposes – this is irrespective of whether or not you have offered a place yet or they meet their conditional requirements. Should a student or sponsor(s) wish to give retrospective consent to share following submission of the National Support application, they should each contact the Award Authority directly by telephone.

Responsibilities and Key Timings

Student data will be released as soon as the application cycle for the upcoming AY is open with institutions able to enter their award criteria. The release of data is subject to institutions having returned their service contract and paid any outstanding invoices.

3.6 Financial Information Service

Purpose of the service

The Financial Information Service provides functionality to enable institutions to capture, edit and maintain their own financial information:

- Web address
- Course fees
- Information on bursary and scholarships offered
- Relevant contact details

This information is used to populate the Student Finance Calculator, which, depending on the student's domicile, is accessed via Directgov, Student Finance Wales or Student Finance NI. In addition to the estimate of national support entitlement prospective students will then be able to view this supplementary financial information for any chosen institution.

Responsibilities and Key Timings

The Financial Information Service is normally available in October/November to allow institutions to update their information for the following AY. It is important that the information is submitted prior to the launch of the student application service to ensure potential students are able to view details within the Student Finance Calculator prior to making an application for financial support.

4.0 HEI INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Student Support Seminar

The Student Support Seminar is held in March each year at a central location, where we look back at the successes and challenges of the previous academic year and look to provide you with our latest plans and service design for the new academic year.

The seminar is aimed at student support managers and practitioners in HEIs, FECs and SCITTs. Both existing and new staff from Finance, Student Services, Admissions and Welfare benefit most from attending, Technical staff also find this a useful seminar to attend.

Service Review Forums

The Relationship Managers run a series of forums twice per year.

The forums offer the institutions a chance to receive updates on current and future services and to provide feedback to SLC. The feedback received is used to improve and develop the services we offer.

The forums also provide an excellent environment to share best practice with peers from neighbouring institutions and are aimed at student support managers and practitioners who are responsible for the business to business interactions between SLC and the institution, including staff from the following areas:

- Finance (Fees)
- Registry (Attendance & Courses)
- Student Support Services

In order to ensure that the topics covered at the forums reach the correct people at institutions we would expect that all attendees cascade the information presented at the forums to the relevant parties at their institution.

Find out who the Relationship Manager is for your region at
<http://www.heiinfo.slc.co.uk/information-advice/relationship-managers.aspx>

HE Provider Seminars

Our annual HE Provider Seminars are held at central locations throughout England.

The events aim to provide delegates with comprehensive information relating to recent and future developments in the range of products and services delivered by SLC to institutions which support the delivery of the HE student finance systems. The seminars are aimed at student support managers and practitioners in Colleges and SCITTs who are responsible for the business to business interactions between SLC and the institution.

HEI Services Website

The HEI Services Website is designed and maintained by the HEI Services team in order to provide HEI Portal users with up to date information and guidance. It also provides access to the HE Portal which hosts a number of key services that support the delivery of the HE Student Finance Systems. Further information on each of these services along with user guides, technical specifications and service definitions can be found on the HEI Services section of the site - <http://www.heiinfo.slc.co.uk/hei-services.aspx>

The site is also regularly updated with Bulletins, Newsflashes and detailed information on forthcoming seminars and events hosted by the Student Loans Company.

The link in which to access the HEI Portal, where all these services are hosted can be found on the front page of the site - <http://www.heiinfo.slc.co.uk/>

The HEI Website is now part of the wider Student Loans Company corporate website which provides further information on all aspects of the work the Student Loans Company undertakes as well as providing links to and further information on, our various stakeholders - <http://www.slc.co.uk/>

HEI Bulletins and Newsflashes

The HEI Bulletin is a quarterly newsletter issued by the HEI Services team informing institutions of any relevant announcements or forthcoming changes. The HEI Newsflash is issued on an adhoc basis as required to inform institutions of any important messages in between issues of the bulletin.

The bulletins and newsflash are issued to nominated contacts within each institution, who are asked to disseminate this within their institution as appropriate. If you wish to have your name added to this mailing list please contact HEI_Services@slc.co.uk

Latest and previous copies of the bulletins can be found here:
<http://www.heiinfo.slc.co.uk/information-advice/hei-bulletins.aspx>

5.0 CONTACT DETAILS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

HEI Services

The team acts as a primary point of contact for institutions with regards to general advice, best practice and future developments and can be contacted through **HEI_Services@slc.co.uk**.

Operations Services

The department manage the day to day running of business to business systems. The department also work with institutions regarding operational queries and issues.

Should you have queries of a business operations nature, please contact Operations Services through the HEI Helpline telephone number and service specific email addresses as listed below:

- HEI Helpline – **0300 100 0642**
- Courses Service – **hep_services@slc.co.uk**
- Student Information Service – **sis@slc.co.uk**
- Tuition Fee Payments – **feepayments@slc.co.uk**
- Change of Circumstance – **coc@slc.co.uk**
- Bursary Service – **bursary@slc.co.uk**
- Financial Information Service – **fis@slc.co.uk**

Policy and Guidance

Questions and advice concerning the general interpretation, guidance and application of Regulations/policy should be directed to the Practitioners Team through **SSIN_Queries@slc.co.uk** or the Practitioners Helpline on **0300 100 0607** via option 2.

The Practitioners Helpline also responds to queries about the designation process for the Courses Service these can also be addressed to **Designation_Queries@slc.co.uk** or **0300 100 0607** via option 2.

National Support Application Processing

For application processing related queries the institution should contact the Award Authority relating to the domicile of the student.

Student Finance England – Student Applications – 3rd Party Consent to Share

Institutions are able to speak to Student Finance England regarding specific student cases only if 3rd party consent to share has been given to the HEI by the student.

The student creates a 'consent password' and telephones SFE on 0300 100 0607 requesting that the consent password is stored against their account. The student gives the password to an HEI advisor, in doing so the student is agreeing that any advisor from the HEI can use the password. When the HEI staff member phones SFE, they will be required to give the following details: Customer name, CRN or SSN, Customer D.O.B, Consent Password and the HEI advisor name.

When telephoning on behalf of a student please call the Practitioners Helpline on 0300 100 0607 and press option 1 to be transferred to someone who can answer your query.

Consent to share is read only, 3rd parties cannot make updates to the account.

For queries regarding DSA, students will have given consent to share via the DSA application form.

Escalation of Queries

In contacting SFE on behalf of a student using 3rd Party Consent to Share, should an institution feel that resolution is not forthcoming, a request should be made to escalate the query to a Tier 2 advisor, whereby the case will be referred onwards to a senior advisor.

HE Services Guidance Notes and Information Page

A new Guidance Notes page has been created on the HEI Services website. The page provides the user with comprehensive guidance on the arrangements for Tuition Fee & Attendance Processing for both full and part time students as well as providing links to further information pages covering all the services offered through the HE Portal. The page is an excellent reference point for any new HEIs as well as a refresher for colleagues within existing institutions and can be accessed via the following link –

<http://www.heiinfo.slc.co.uk/information-advice/hei-services-guidance.aspx>

Service User Guides

User Guides for the HE Gateway and each of the services giving extensive detail and instruction, are found on the HE Gateway Homepage, and the relevant Homepage for each service.

HEI eLearning Modules

An eLearning Catalogue containing eLearning training modules on all our services is accessible from the front page of the HEI Services website. The modules allow new and existing users to gain experience of our portal services away from the live environment.

Websites

The Student Loans Company corporate website provides information on all aspects of the work of the Student Loans Company, and provides links to/further information on our stakeholders - **<http://www.slc.co.uk/>**

The HEI Services website provides access to the HEI portal and for bulletins, newsflashes and detailed information on events - **<http://www.heiinfo.slc.co.uk>**

The Practitioners Website provides HEIs with a range of information, online tools, downloadable fact sheets, presentations, videos and print materials to help your students understand national support if applying to Student Finance England.

<http://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk>

Advice and Guidance about student funding is domicile specific and can be found through the following sites:

- Student Finance England – **www.gov.uk/student-finance/overview**
- Student Finance NI – **www.studentfinaceni.co.uk**
- Student Finance Wales – **www.studentfinance.wales.co.uk**