

Submission from Voice Scotland

No tuition fees for full-time further education or higher education Scottish students, when studying for a first degree or equivalent, has certainly been a positive move to support young people in their education. However, for those students studying part-time and coming from a deprived background, there is the possibility that any income earned in fact primarily supports their family. Therefore, it is submitted that the distinction between part-time and full-time is revisited to ensure that there is no disadvantage. Additionally, it is submitted that distance learning courses should similarly be funded in full to ensure equity.

Whilst eligible Scottish domiciled higher education students wishing to study outwith Scotland, at an institution elsewhere in the UK, are entitled to a non-income-assessed loan of up to £9,000 a year towards the cost of their tuition fees, it is submitted that the prospect of future debts does limit the choices of students in selecting a place of study. It is our organisation's view that the UK Government should be taking similar steps to scrap tuition fees.

In addition to the Education Maintenance and Bursary Maintenance Allowances, there are a number of potential funding opportunities to support full-time further education students, depending on their personal circumstances. It would be helpful for these funds to be made available in as streamlined a way as possible to ensure that all students receive what they are potentially entitled to and to ensure that part-time students are also in receipt of adequate funding.

It is also noted that student loans are available based on household income, with the maximum amount available for a young student with a household income of less than £17,000 per annum being £6,750. Bursary support, where applicable, is in the sum of less than £2000.

A student requiring to relocate for their studies can easily spend £400 per month on rent (presuming they are sharing their accommodation with others) excluding bills, food, textbooks, etc.

It is submitted that many further and higher education students whether full-time or part-time, particularly those from a deprived background, will require to work to financially support their studies. Juggling the responsibilities of study and employment and, potentially, other family responsibilities, could compromise the likelihood of the student concerned successfully completing their qualification. The free time to engage in other activities associated with student life to enhance one's CV and to undertake work placements relevant to their studies is also compromised.

It is submitted that detailed consideration is given to the costs faced by both further and higher education students to ensure that funding available sufficiently supports all students in their studies, to minimise the likelihood of educational outcomes being adversely affected. This might be, for example, by way of a full living costs loan available to all students

