

# Health Education Funding in England from 2017/18: Open Day Information

## What's changing?

From 1 August 2017, new students in England on nursing, midwifery and most allied health professional (AHP) pre-registration courses (courses which lead on to registration with the NMC or HCPC) will have access to the standard student support package of tuition fee loans and support for living costs, rather than getting an NHS grant.

The Government is currently consulting on implementation of the changes (closing 30 June 2016).

At the same time, there's much that isn't changing: the process for getting on to a course, the standards of education and the reasons for going into a career in health are all the same.

## Which courses does this affect?

This change affects a wide range of courses that lead to professional registration:

- Nursing (all four pre-registration fields: adult, child, mental health, learning disability)
- Midwifery
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Podiatry
- Diagnostic and Therapeutic Radiography
- Dietetics
- Orthoptics
- Operating Department Practice
- Prosthetics/Orthotics
- Dental hygienists
- Dental therapists.

These reforms do not as yet include funding for paramedic courses. These courses are currently on a mixed funding model (some students are already on the loans system, some are funded by Ambulance Trusts and some are supported by Health Education England).

The reforms do not include post-registration education, including salary-supported programmes such as Health Visiting, District Nursing, clinical psychology and child psychotherapy.

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### Purpose:

With university open days for courses starting in September 2017 now underway, this information sheet sets out some of the key information on student support arrangements for nursing, midwifery and most AHP pre-registration courses from 1 August 2017.

**Publication date:** 20 April 2016

**Relevant for:** Prospective students, staff advising students at schools and colleges.

**CoDH contact for more information:** [Jon Eames](#)

**For more information:** [www.thefundingclinic.org.uk](http://www.thefundingclinic.org.uk)



## Will I be able to afford to go to university?

Lots of people worry about whether university is affordable. It's important to know that you don't have to pay money upfront: tuition and living cost loans work like a tax on earnings above a certain amount, not like a commercial loan or a payday loan:

- When you make an application to the Student Loans Company the tuition fees are transferred to the university automatically – you don't have to get involved with that process.
- Under the current rules, you only start paying back the loans when you earn above £21k, and pay 9% of any income above £21k. If your income drops below the threshold you stop having to repay the loan.
- To give you an idea of what that means in practice, under current rules if you started on a Band 5 salary in the NHS of £21.7k you would repay £5.25 per month (9% of £700/12).
- You pay back the loans gradually from your pay packet – it's done automatically so you don't have to worry about missing repayments.

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## What could I get in terms of living support?

Under the student support system, students are eligible for a range of means-tested loans, including a specific loan designed to support students on courses that have a longer than average student year. There are also special allowances, for example for childcare, adult dependents and parents' learning. These special allowances are grants not loans, so you don't have to repay them.

The day to day level of living support is significantly higher for most students under the loans system – with students making the maximum claim having access to up to 38% more in living support.

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- Students inside London and living away from the parental home: the maximum amount of living cost support per year would increase from £8750 to £12058 (a 38% increase);
- Students outside of London and living away from the parental home: the maximum amount of living cost support per year would increase from £6975 to £9256 (a 33% increase);
- Students living in the parental home: the maximum amount of living cost support per year would increase from £5,623 to £7588 (a 35% increase).



### I've got kids: what about help with childcare?

Under the new system, the childcare allowance, which is a grant not a loan, is more generous than under the old NHS bursary rules. In both systems, you can claim up to 85% of the maximum rate:

- For one child, this is currently a maximum of £155.24 per week on the general HE system, compared to a maximum of £128.78 per week on the NHS Bursary system.
- For two or more children, this is currently £266.15 per week on the general HE system, compared to £191.45 per week on the NHS Bursary system.

There are some particular circumstances in which the allowances under the new system aren't as high as under the bursary system, specifically if the student has one child dependent but no adult dependent, or if the student has large numbers of children (five or more). The consultation on the implementation of the reforms has highlighted this issue and asked for views on how it might be addressed.

### What happens if I've already got a student loan?

It's not usually possible for students who already have loans from a first degree to access student loans for a second degree at the same or lower qualification level (the Equivalent or Lower Qualification (ELQ) rule). The Government has said that it is making these courses exempt from the ELQ rule, meaning that you can access a second set of loans.

That might sound daunting but the 9% repayment over the earnings threshold applies even if you've got more than one set of loans. So if you take out loans for two degrees you will still pay back 9% not 18%. The rule about the remainder of the loan being written off after 30 years applies from the first loan you take out.

### What if I have a Plan 1 and a Plan 2 loan?

Repayments for student loans have changed over time. If you took out a loan for a course starting before September 2012 this is a 'Plan 1 loan'; if the course started from September 2012 this is a 'Plan 2 loan'. Although the two loans have different repayment thresholds you will still only pay back 9% of your earnings over £21,000 whatever type of loan and however many loans you have taken out, as the 9% is apportioned between them.

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### **What about other expenses, like travel to placements?**

Nursing, midwifery and AHP students spend a large portion of their courses on placements, which means that students have additional travel and accommodation expenses. Under the BIS student support arrangements, students contribute an excess (around £300) towards their placement travel costs before costs are reimbursed.

This has been flagged in the consultation on the implementation of the reforms. We will be urging Government to plug the gap and make sure that students still have these costs met under the new system.

### **What about access to loans for Muslim students?**

The Government has been looking at the possibility of an alternative way of funding higher education for students who cannot take out interest-based loans for religious reasons. Following a public consultation in 2014, the Government has agreed to offer an alternative finance product that would be Sharia compliant and is planning to introduce legislation to implement this. [You can find more detailed information on the plans in the Government's Higher Education Green Paper, pp. 40-41.](#)



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