

## **Student Loans Company Official Statistics**

### **Use made of the Official Statistics**

#### **Introduction**

The UK Statistics Authority published a Monitoring Brief on 19 October 2010 entitled “The Use Made of Official Statistics”. It tentatively suggested a set of generic classes of use. From those classes it appears that the use made of SLC Official Statistics fall within the following classes:

- Informing the general public’s choices about b) service providers, c) lifestyle choices and d) the state of the economy and society
- Government decisions about policy
- Informing private sector commercial choices (e.g. those targeting markets such as debt collection, services to disabled students, Loan Book purchase)
- Supporting third sector activity (e.g. those third sector organisations commenting on and lobbying on HE policy)
- Facilitating academic research

#### **Key users of SLC Official Statistics**

The key users of the Student Support Official Statistics are those with a direct interest in the effect of student support policy on Higher Education students; on their number; their profile; and the type of institution they attend. As well as the student support policy makers themselves, the users include the National Union of Students, the institutions themselves; researchers and commentators on Higher Education policy.

The key users of the Student Loans Debt and Repayments Official Statistics are those interested in the effect of student loans debt on the individuals who take out student loans as well as on the UK economy as a whole. The Higher Education sector users have an interest but that interest is less direct than it is with the Student Support Official Statistics. For the Student Loans Debt and Repayments series there are users with a particular interest such as the Bank of England, HMRC and the Treasury.

## **Use made of the SLC Official Statistics**

In our user consultations we ask the users what they will use the statistical information for. The answers given provide a very good summary of the range of uses made both within and outside of Government. The responses include:

- Policy analysis
- Estimating costs, answering parliamentary questions and queries from MPs and media
- Articles on higher education policy and the student loan system
- Policy analysis and student support modeling and forecasting
- Journalistic purposes (in stories to show the financial situation of students)
- Monitoring costs and help with monitoring student numbers
- To assess impact of this policy on the repayment process and to look at what we can do if the stats suggest any improvements could be made
- Policy analysis, media enquiries, public information on student funding and for comparative purposes for systems within the UK
- Research and learning resources
- Research, to support policy makers
- Academic research into the effects of the student support system
- Dissertation reports, e.g. on the financial incentives given by the UK, to provide students with the funding to go into further education

The House of Commons Library updates their statistical analysis of student finance each time SLC publishes another year's worth of statistics. This provides a quick reference document for MPs and the public alike.

In addition we can see how the Official Statistics are used by the number and type of follow on questions received via Parliamentary Questions, Freedom of Information requests and Press enquiries. These cover topics such as:

- The size of student loan debt incurred by each cohort of students
- The extent to which maintenance grants reach different sections of the student population from year to year
- The proportion of the student finance budget going to institutions in the alternative provider sector
- The number of students who benefit from additional targeted support
- The effectiveness of repayment processes including debt recovery and collection from borrowers now resident overseas
- Breakdowns of the published data (by geographical area such as local authority or constituency or by institution etc)

## Examples of usage

The House of Commons Library updates their Student Loans Standard Note each time SLC releases a new set of statistics. It provides an easy reference point for MPs and for everyone who is aware of the House of Commons Library resources. The July 2013 update can be found at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN01079/student-loan-statistics>

The Higher Education Policy Institute produced a paper called “The cost of the Government’s reforms of the financing of higher education” in October 2012. In that paper they commented on the likely average amount of “fee less waiver” for those students entering higher education in England after 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013. The SLC Official Statistics gave a provisional figure based on awards for that metric in November 2012 and then updated that figure based on payments in November 2013. The HEPI report can be found at:

<http://www.hepi.ac.uk/466-2094/The-cost-of-the-Government%e2%80%99s-reforms-of-the-financing-of-higher-education.html>

The National Union of Students used statistics from the Mortgage Style Loans section of the Student Loans Debt and Repayment Statistics when they criticised the sale of that debt in November 2013. The Guardian reported the details at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/nov/25/student-loans-sold-160m-pounds-government-debt>

In the Scottish Parliament the average debt per borrower figures from the SLC ICR Repayments publication were used to answer Parliamentary Question S4W-17799 on 8/11/2013 comparing the debt built up by students in Scotland with that in England and in Wales.

[http://www.scottishparliament.eu/S4\\_ChamberDesk/WA20131108.pdf](http://www.scottishparliament.eu/S4_ChamberDesk/WA20131108.pdf)

A public policy blogger on the “Adventures in evidence” website used the trends in the SLC statistics on Disabled Students’ Allowance payments for England, Wales and Northern Ireland in a comparison with those published by SAAS for Scotland. <http://adventuresinevidence.com/2013/12/02/disabled-students-allowance-a-case-to-watch/>

In their review of Higher Education Finances in November 2013, the Welsh Audit Office referenced statistics published by SLC either directly or via the Welsh Government modelling that takes SLC data as one of its inputs.

[http://www.wao.gov.uk/system/files/publications/HE\\_Finances\\_English\\_2013.pdf](http://www.wao.gov.uk/system/files/publications/HE_Finances_English_2013.pdf)