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Student Support for Higher Education in Northern Ireland, Academic Year 2015/16 (FINAL)

Introduction

This statistical first release presents figures on the student support awarded to applicants and paid to students or their Higher Education Provider. It shows final figures for 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 academic years.

Once applicants who were awarded support have their attendance at a HE Provider confirmed and their first payment made, they are classified as paid students.

This release shows the number of loans, grants and allowances awarded / paid to full time undergraduate applicants / students or their Higher Education Providers.

It covers applicants and students domiciled in Northern Ireland taking a course in a Higher Education Provider in the UK or in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) as well as applicants and students domiciled in the EU (Outside UK) studying in a Higher Education Provider in Northern Ireland.

Key points

- Final figures show that 48,300 full time applicants were awarded some support in academic year 2015/16 which is equivalent to £395.3 million. This is an increase of 2% on the number of full time applicants awarded support in 2014/15 and an increase of 4% on the amount awarded in 2014/15 (see Table 2, Charts 1 and 2).
- In academic year 2015/16 Higher Education Providers were paid Tuition Fee Loans on behalf of 40,500 Northern Ireland domiciled students studying in the UK or the Republic of Ireland plus EU (Outside UK) domiciled students studying in Northern Ireland which amounted to £190.1 million. This was an average of £4,690 per student. The average figure in 2014/15 was £4,350 (see Table 4B, Charts 5 and 6).
- In academic year 2015/16, 36.6% of applicants were awarded the full maintenance grant of £3,475. 21.6% were awarded a partial grant and 41.8% were not awarded a grant. This represents a decrease of 1.0% points on the full maintenance grant, a decrease of 0.7% points on the partial maintenance grant and an increase of 1.7% points on those not awarded a grant (see Table 3A, Charts 3 and 4).

Contents

Introduction	1
Key Points	1
Table of contents	2
Definitions	3
Statistical commentary	5
Data sources	9
Data quality	9
Data uses	9
Revisions	9
Policy context	9
Related statistical publications	10
Notes for users	10
User consultations	11
National statistics	11
Table guide	12

Definitions

Term	Definition
Alternative Provider	An Alternative Provider is any provider of higher education courses which is not in direct receipt of recurrent funding from the Department for Economy or from equivalent bodies in the other Government Administrations; or does not receive direct recurrent public funding (for example, from a local authority, or from the Minister for Economy); and is not a further education college. Only providers with courses designated for student support are included in the statistics.
Applicant	This is a person applying for student support. Not all applicants take up a place. Applicants become students once they took up place and the SLC has received a confirmation of their attendance.
Award	Number of and amount of money awarded to applicants for student finance who have passed the eligibility criteria as stipulated within the student finance regulations and have been assessed for the respective support package accordingly. Awards will be paid on condition that the applicant subsequently attends the Higher Education Provider at which point will be considered a student and payments will be released according to the payment schedule for the support types awarded.
Country of Study	The country in which the higher education institute is located to which the applicant intends to/ is studying at.
Domiciled	The country in which the applicant normally lives. Student Finance Northern Ireland covers those students domiciled in Northern Ireland and European Union Students studying in Northern Ireland.
Estimated Eligible Population	The numbers of students that are eligible to apply for student finance including those who do not apply. Figures for the estimated eligible population are supplied by the Department for Economy (DfE).
Entry Cohort	Grouping of student finance applicants according to the student finance regulations against which the applicant was assessed for support. Student finance applicants are covered by transitional protection which means they continue to be assessed against the regulations in place for their first year of study. Students changing courses, or starting a new period of study no longer receive transitional protection and will be assessed under the arrangements in place for their latest year of study.
Final Figures	The final position refers to the readiness of the statistics being in a steady state. Final figures are not expected to change significantly and should represent the final outcome.
Full Year Maintenance Loan	The amount of maintenance loan available to students varies between those studying in their final year and those studying in an earlier year of their

	course. Those in their final year will be entitled to a reduced amount to reflect the reduced length of time in attendance at their university over which maintenance support is required.
Level of Support	Identifies if the applicant was awarded the full level of means tested grant, partial level or no grant.
Maintenance Loan Rate	The rate determines how much loan is available to the applicant in principle and depends on where the applicant is residing during their term time. There are three rates: Home rate, London, and Elsewhere (not London).
Public Provider	A Public Provider is any provider of higher education courses which is in direct receipt of recurrent funding from the Department for Economy or from equivalent bodies in the other Government Administrations; or in receipt of direct recurrent public funding (for example, from a local authority, or from the Minister for Economy); or is a further education college. Only providers with courses designated for student support are included in the statistics.
Residual Income	The income from the household from which the applicant normally resides. This income determines how much means tested support the applicant is entitled to. Residual income comprises of the taxable earned and unearned income of the applicant and/or the taxable earned and unearned income of the applicants sponsors minus any allowable deductions.
Student	Those student finance applicants for whom an attendance confirmation has been received from the university which indicates that the applicant is or has taken a place at university. This is an important distinction as those making student finance applicants go on to take a place at university.
Student Support Arrangement	The range of support available, the eligibility rules, and income thresholds which are in place for a given academic year.
Take up rate	The rate of which the Eligible Population chooses to apply for maintenance loan.
Targeted Support	Grants and allowances which are aimed to provide additional student support to student to meet costs specific to their circumstance. Covers Travel Grant, Parental Learning Allowance, Childcare Grant and Adult Dependants Grant.

Statistical commentary

Chart 1: Number of awards to Northern Ireland domiciled applicants for student support (000's)

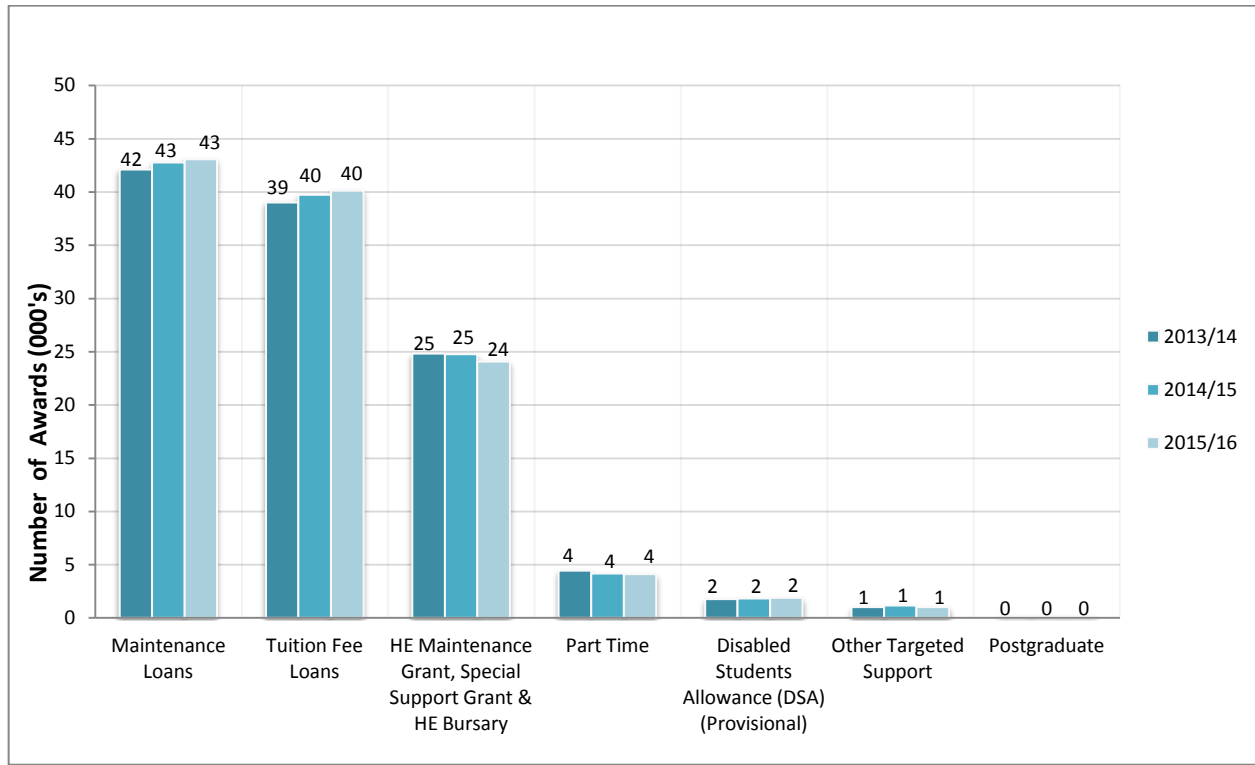


Chart 1 shows the number of awards for all successful applications for Higher Education student finance from applicants domiciled in Northern Ireland. See Table 2.

Chart 2: Amount of support awarded (£m) to Northern Ireland domiciled applicants by Product

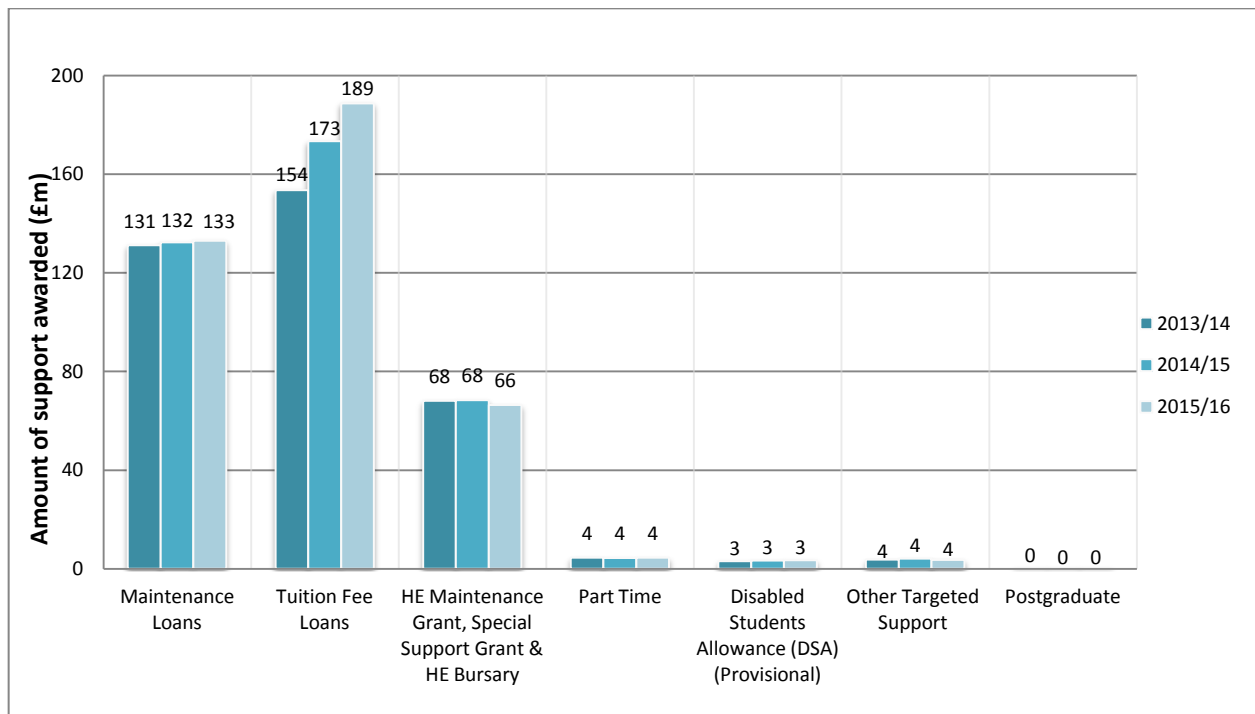


Chart 2 shows a rise in the amount of tuition fee loans awarded over the past 3 years which is a result of the shifting of the student body from the pre 2012/13 to the post 2012/13 fee system.

See Table 2.

Chart 3: Amount (£m) of Maintenance and Special Support Grant awarded to Northern Ireland domiciled applicants

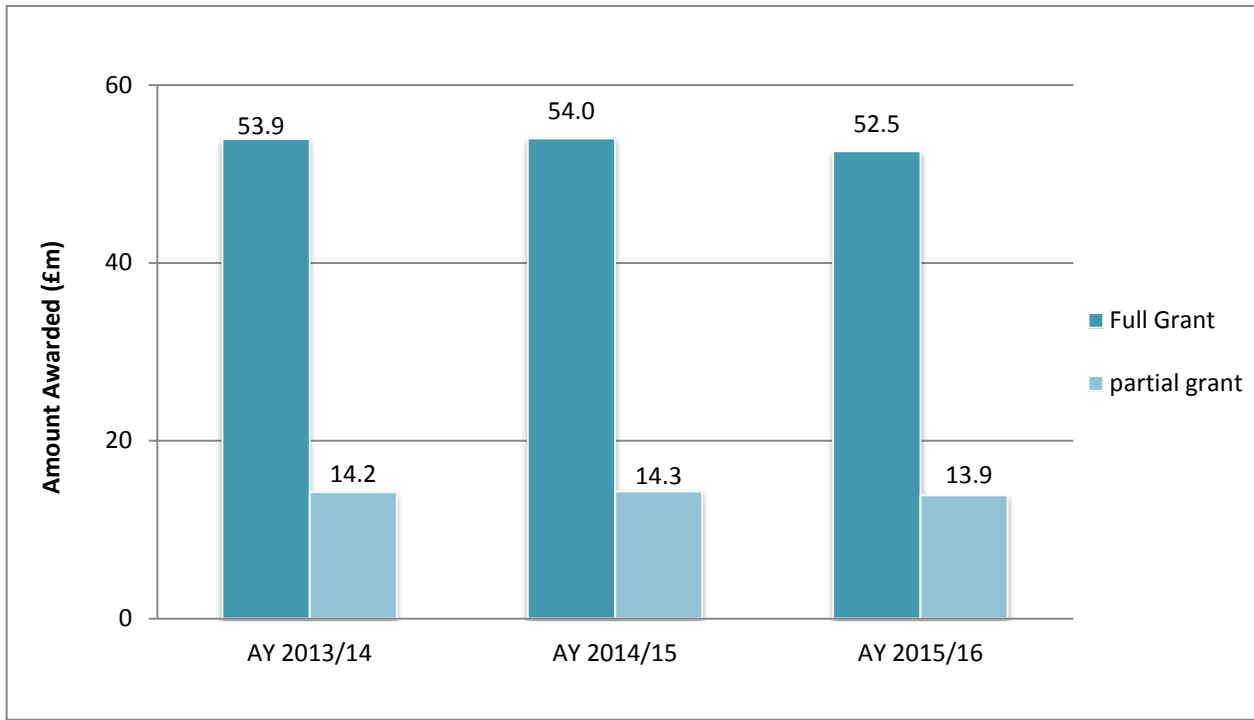


Chart 3 shows the amount awarded as full and partial maintenance grant to Northern Ireland domiciled applicants has remained fairly constant over the past 3 academic years.

See Table 3A.

Chart 4: Distribution of Maintenance and Special Support Grants awarded to Northern domiciled applicants

Maintenance & Special Support Grant distribution

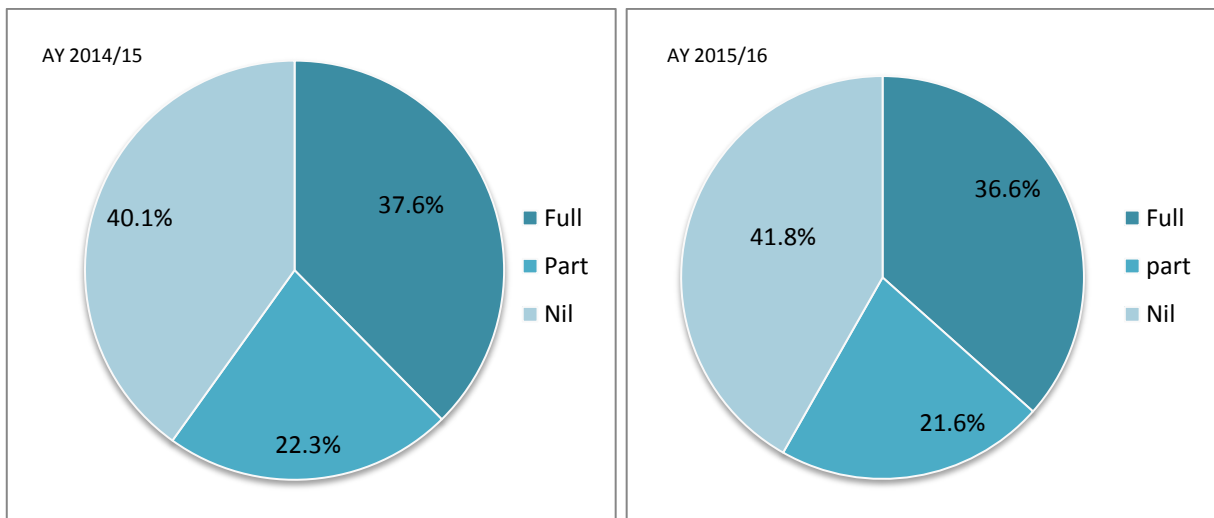


Chart 4 shows that distribution of Maintenance & Student Support Grants has changed only slightly between AY 2014/15 and AY 2015/16.

See Table 3A.

Chart 5: Number of Northern Ireland domiciled and EU students studying in Northern Ireland (000's) taking out Tuition Fee Loans by Academic Year & Domicile

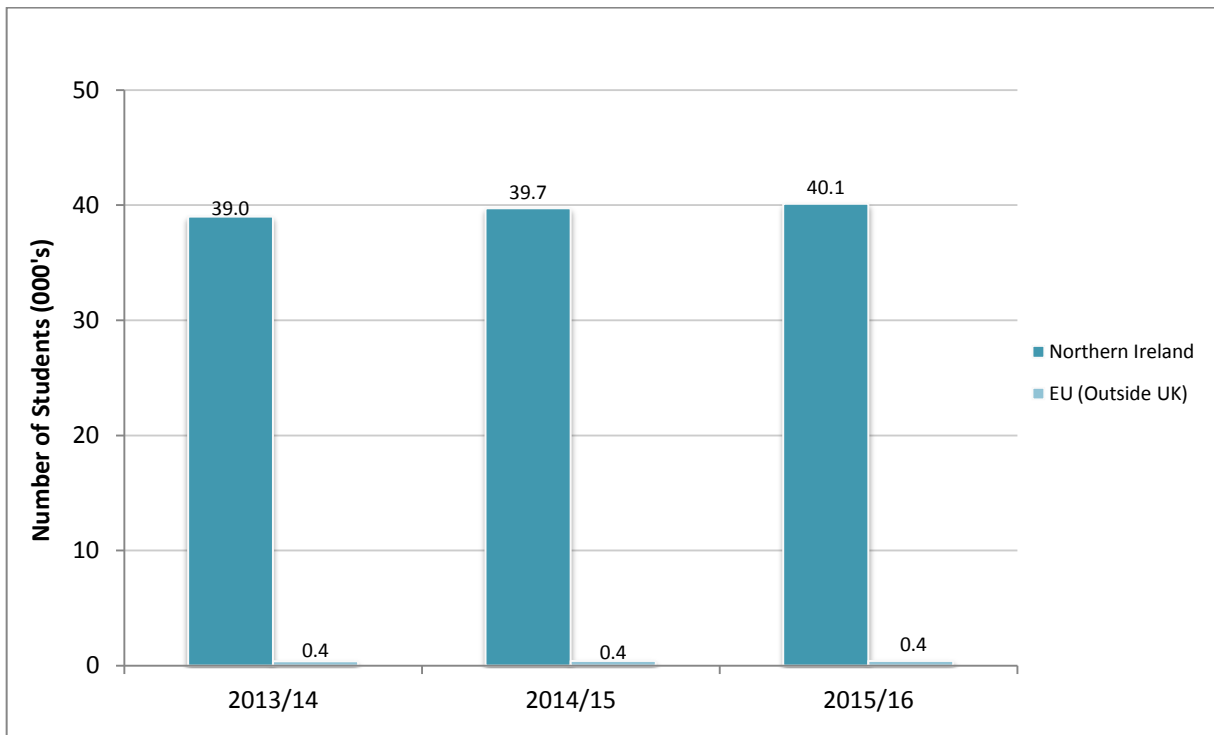


Chart 5 shows that the number of Northern Ireland domiciled students being awarded Tuition Fee Loans rises slightly year on year however the number of EU domiciled students remains fairly constant. See Table 4B.

Chart 6: Tuition Fee Loans paid to HE Providers on behalf of Northern Ireland domiciled and EU students studying in Northern Ireland by Academic Year & Domicile

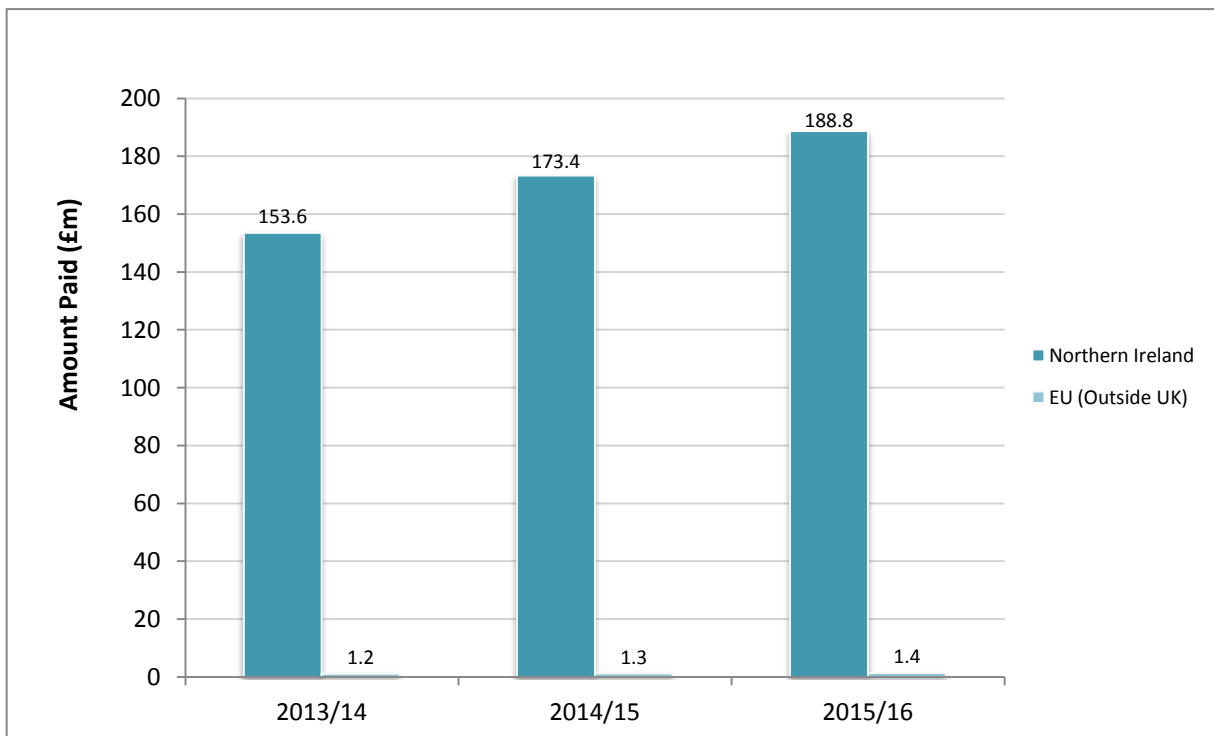


Chart 6 shows an increase in the amount of tuition fee loans paid year on year to institutions on behalf of Northern Ireland domiciled students. See Table 4B

Chart 7: Payments to Part-Time students (£m) domiciled in Northern Ireland and EU domiciled students studying in Northern Ireland

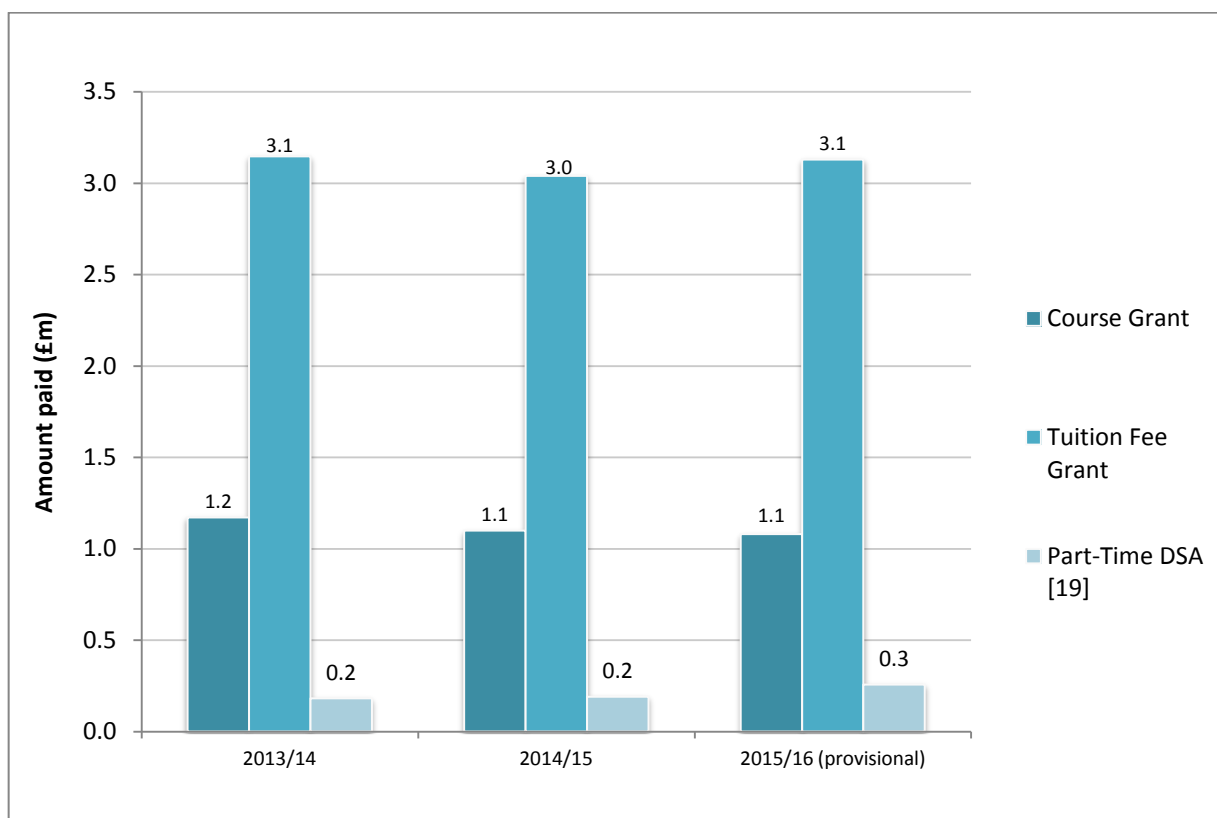


Chart 7 shows that payments for part-time tuition fee grant and part-time course grants drop slightly between academic year 2013/14 and academic year 2014/15, figures for academic year 2015/16 are provisional and will be revised in November 2017. See Table 5.

Data sources

1. This publication uses data from a single source: administrative data from the SLC Customer Ledger Account Servicing System (CLASS). For details of the administrative sources see the published Statement of administrative sources published on the SLC website using the following link http://www.slc.co.uk/media/5450/slc_statistics_-_statement_of_administrative_sources.pdf

Data quality

2. SLC has published the Quality Guidelines that it follows. As per those guidelines a Quality Plan is produced for each publication. The Quality Plan stipulates two stages of Quality Assurance. Data is extracted from the administrative systems then reviewed using a standard Quality Assurance checklist. The statistical tables created using that data are quality assured using the Statistical Quality guidelines. Further details can be found by following the link below http://www.slc.co.uk/media/5403/slc_statistics_-_quality_guidelines.pdf

Data uses

3. SLC has published a Uses Made document for Official statistics. Further details can be found by following the link below http://www.slc.co.uk/media/5454/slc_official_statistics_-_use_made.pdf

Revisions

4. Revisions within the data are denoted with an [r]. Some of these revisions are carried over from the previous year's publication and are, therefore, not revisions to this year's publication. Further details can be found by following the link below http://www.slc.co.uk/media/5449/slc_statistics_-_revisions_policy.pdf

Policy context

2015/16 entrants

5. No significant changes have been made to the policy introduced for new entrants in 2012/13.

2014/15 entrants

6. No significant changes have been made to the policy introduced for new entrants in 2012/13.

2012/13 entrants

7. Full-time students from Northern Ireland who start a course on or after 1 September 2012 in England, Wales or Scotland can apply for a tuition fee loan of up to £9,000. All other full-time Northern Ireland domiciled students can apply for a tuition fee loan of up to £3,805.

2011/12 entrants

Maintenance grant

8. Postgraduate teacher trainees (or those on equivalent courses) who commenced their teacher training courses before 1 September 2010 and are continuing on that course in AY 2011/12 receive a portion of the maximum grant irrespective of their income (the maximum amount of guaranteed grant is £1,318 for NI domiciled students); and the remainder is income assessed. Note that postgraduate or equivalent teacher trainees on part-time or short flexible courses which commenced before 1 September 2010 receive about half the rates of maintenance grant / special support Grant quoted above.

2010/11 entrants

9. Maintenance grant -- Northern Ireland domiciled teacher training students on postgraduate or equivalent courses will still be awarded a minimum maintenance grant / Special Support Grant regardless of income, with the remainder income assessed. If a full-time undergraduate student receives maintenance grant, a portion of the loan is substitutable for a grant of £1,887 for Northern Ireland domiciled students.
10. Maintenance loan -- For all students entering HE in September 2006 or later (other than those on an ITT course of type 1,2 or 3) reduce the maximum loan by the amount of grant awarded if the grant is less than £1,318. If the grant awarded is the maximum £3,475, reduce the loan by £1,887. Where students are eligible for a grant between £1,318 and £3,475, reduce the loan by £1,887 less £1 in every £17.25 by which the income exceeds £19,203 or the actual maintenance grant awarded if less; =
11. If the student is being assessed for a financial contribution, deduct the assessed contribution from the financially-assessed part of the loan.

Related statistical publications

12. Statistics on loans and grants awarded to students in HE in Northern Ireland in academic year 2014/15 (final) were published in SLC SFR 07/2015 on 02 December 2015. These can be found at <http://www.slc.co.uk/media/6671/slcsfr072015.pdf>
13. Statistics on the repayment of loans in financial year 2015-16 were published on 16 Jun 2016 in SLC SFR 03/2016. These can be found at <http://www.slc.co.uk/media/7596/slcsfr032016.pdf>

Notes for users

14. The figures in this first release have been compiled by the Student Loans Company Limited (SLC). All student numbers and amounts have been rounded to the nearest 100 and £100,000 unless specified otherwise. All totals and averages are calculated from un-rounded numbers.
15. Details of the amounts of loans and grants available in academic year 2015/16 are publicly available in the Student Finance NI booklet 'A guide to financial support for higher education students in 2015/16', which can be found on the Student Finance NI website.

16. Figures also include postgraduate applicants and students taking their Initial Teacher Training (ITT) course on a full-time, part-time or flexible basis. All other part-time and postgraduate applicants and students are excluded as they are entitled to different support packages.

User consultations

17. Consultation exercises are conducted by SLC on the Official Statistics it produces in order to understand who uses the publications, for what purpose, and to find out how they can be made more useful in terms of content, methodology, timeliness and presentation. As part of the consultation process SLC runs surveys. See the User Consultation Survey section of the SLC website at <https://www.tellslc.co.uk/R.aspx?a=63& E=SLC>

18. The most recent response to user feedback can be found at http://www.slc.co.uk/media/5452/consultation_response_nov-jan_13_v7.pdf

National statistics

19. This is an Official Statistics publication. National and Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

Table guide

Section 1 - Student Support Available

Table 1A shows the maximum support available for maintenance in Northern Ireland through the grants and Maintenance Loans schemes for student support scheme students between academic years 2012/13 and 2015/16.

Table 1B shows the support arrangement for new entrants in academic year 2015/16.

Section 2 - Overview of Support Awarded

Table 2 shows the overview of all the products for student support scheme in Northern Ireland. It details the number of awards and the total amount of support awarded to Northern Ireland domiciled applicants for academic years from 2012/13 and 2015/16.

Section 3 - Grants and Allowances

Table 3A shows the distribution of Maintenance Grants for Northern Ireland domiciled students between academic years 2012/13 and 2015/16.

Table 3B shows the summary of Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) expenditure authorised for payment to full time Northern Ireland domiciled students, between academic years 2011/12 and 2015/16.

Table 3C shows the distribution of Other Targeted Support awards to Northern Ireland domiciled applicants between academic years 2012/13 and 2015/16.

Section 4 - Loans

Table 4A shows the number and take up of maintenance loans, the amount borrowed and the average loan value for the student support scheme for students domiciled in Northern Ireland between academic years 2012/13 and 2015/16. The Table also shows the take-up rate of Maintenance Loans in academic years 2011/12 and 2014/15.

Table 4B shows the number of Tuition Fee Loans taken out, the amount borrowed and the average loan value for the student support scheme for all students domiciled in Northern Ireland and for EU (Outside UK) students attending HE courses in Northern Ireland between academic years 2012/13 and 2015/16.

Table 4C shows the number of Tuition Fee Loans taken out, the amount borrowed and the average loan value for the student support scheme for all students domiciled in Northern Ireland broken down by Northern Ireland and other UK countries of HE Provider attended between academic years 2012/13 and 2015/16.

Table 4D shows the number for Maintenance Loans and Tuition Fee Loans combined, the amount borrowed and the average loan value for the student support scheme for students domiciled in Northern Ireland between academic years 2012/13 and 2015/16.

Section 5 – Part Time and Postgraduate

Table 5A shows the support given to part time students domiciled in Northern Ireland and EU (outside UK) students studying in Northern Ireland between academic years 2012/13 and 2015/16.

Table 5B shows the DSA support to Postgraduate students between academic years 2012/13 and 2015/16.