

National Assembly for Wales Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Secondary Legislation: 9 November 2005

The Committee considered the following item of subordinate legislation on Wednesday 9 November 2005. A verbatim record was taken and can be viewed on the Committee's WebPage.

Assembly Learning Grants and Loans (Higher Education) (Wales) Regulations 2006 (ELL-16-05)

The Minister provided a copy of the draft regulations, explanatory memorandum, regulatory appraisal and a list of those consulted.

The Regulations set out the student support arrangements for students ordinarily resident in Wales in academic year 2006/07, and will enable the National Assembly to make awards of grants and loans to eligible students. The Regulations set out the eligibility criteria for applying for and receiving student support, the loans and grants available (including both full and part-time provision, and special additional support), financial assessment and payment methods and related schedules.

Discussion

In discussion, the following points were made:

- The Assembly had already approved the Higher Education Act 2004 (Commencement No.2 and Transitional Provision) (Wales) Order 2005, which has the effect of making the Assembly responsible for delivery of student support for the 2006-07 academic year.
- The regulations will govern the first year of devolution of student support to Wales. This is a transitional year that will see some changes, most notably an enhanced Assembly learning grant of up to £2,700 targeted at students from lower-income households.
- The package of student support for the 2007-08 academic year will see further changes, following the all-party agreement on 22 June. However, that is for further regulations that will be brought in for 2007-08.
- There are a number of packages relating to tuition fees, loans, grants, grants for loans and grants for maintenance. There is a slightly different level of tuition fee relating to different packages, and to the combination of packages. Those are set out in the regulations. The key regulations are 20, 28 and 29.
- It was important that students were made aware of how to access the information on the support packages. Communities First Partnerships might be able to assist in this process.
- Students applying to universities and higher education institutions have to apply through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. The service

will inform students of all the finance available and will direct them to where to apply.

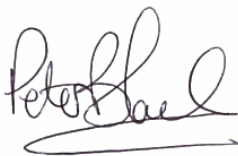
- The grants and loans will be administered by the new Student Finance Wales system, which is a partnership between the Assembly, local education authorities and the Student Loans Company Limited. Students will be able to apply online using the Student Finance Wales website.
- The different grants and loans were assessed against a number of different levels of household income. The Minister was asked to consider whether simpler arrangements could be introduced.
- The Minister was asked whether any problems would arise because of the difference in support available for students from Wales who study at Welsh universities and those who choose to study at universities in England.

In response, the Minister made the following points:

- A number of factors had led to different levels of grant and loan eligibility, for example the Assembly learning grant previously took into account a particular income level but the new higher education grant had been introduced at a higher level. UK grant elements and tax thresholds also had an impact.
- There would be an opportunity before the regulations from 2007 onwards were introduced, to look at these issues.
- The regulations delivered on the commitment that that people are supported at the current level this year.

Committee Decision

No amendments were proposed and the Committee recommended approval of the draft regulations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Black', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Peter Black AM
Committee Chair