

STUDENT TUITION FEES

Introduction

This briefing note provides information on student tuition fees for undergraduate courses in the UK, Ireland and Europe.

UK Student Tuition Fees

The following useful summary of undergraduate student tuition fees for 2009/10 is provided on the BBC website:¹

- England: £3,225 p.a.
- N. Ireland: £3,225 p.a.
- Scotland: free to Scots, £1,775 to other UK
- Wales: £1,285 to the Welsh, £3,225 to other UK
- Students from elsewhere in the EU pay the same as those locally
- Those from outside the EU pay whatever the university charges

Northern Ireland

The Higher Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 enables higher education institutions to set their own fees, up to a basic amount specified in regulations. Institutions that wish to charge fees above this rate will only be able to do so if they have in force a plan approved by the Department. The Department has the power to make regulations setting out what must be contained in these plans. If institutions have an approved plan, they may charge up to a higher amount, also specified in regulations. Fees for international students are excluded from the provisions of the Order.²

¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/3013272.stm>

² Explanatory Memorandum to Higher Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 - <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2005/05em1116.htm>

The prescribed basic and higher amounts were first set in the Student Fees (Amounts) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 as follows:³

Prescribed basic and higher amounts

3. Subject to regulation 4, for the purposes of Article 4 of the 2005 Order the basic amount is £1,200 and the higher amount is £3,000.

Prescribed basic and higher amounts for specified courses

4. For the purposes of Article 4 of the 2005 Order the basic amount is £600 and the higher amount is £1,500 in the following cases –

- (a) the final academic year of a course where that academic year is normally required to be completed after less than 15 weeks' attendance;
- (b) in respect of a sandwich course, an academic year –
 - (i) during which any periods of full time study are in aggregate less than 10 weeks; or
 - (ii) if in respect of that academic year and any previous academic years of the course the aggregate of any one or more periods of attendance which are not periods of full time study at the institution (disregarding intervening vacations) exceeds 30 weeks;
- (c) in respect of a course of initial training of teachers (including such a course leading to a first degree) an academic year during which any periods of full time study are in aggregate less than 10 weeks;
- (d) in respect of a course provided in conjunction with an overseas institution, an academic year –
 - (i) during which any periods of full time study at the institution in the United Kingdom are in aggregate less than 10 weeks; or
 - (ii) if in respect of that academic year and any previous academic years of the course the aggregate of any one of more periods of attendance which are not periods of full time study at the institution in the United Kingdom (disregarding intervening vacations) exceeds 30 weeks.

³ The Student Fees (Amounts) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 - <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/sr/sr2005/20050290.htm>

New regulations are introduced by the Department each year to increase the prescribed fees in line with inflation. The fees for the 2009/10 academic year have been set by the Student Fees (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 at £1,285 for the basic amount and £3,225 for the higher amount. For specified courses, the basic amount has been increased to £640 and the higher rate to £1,610.⁴

The latest Statutory Rule, the Student Fees (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 will increase the maximum basic and higher rates to £1,310 and £3,290 respectively for the 2010/11 academic year.

The recently announced Higher Education Strategy Review⁵ in August 2009 may lead to recommendations in relation to student fees beyond 2010/11.

England

The prescribed fees for 2009/10 have been set at the same basic and higher amounts in England by the Student Fees (Amounts) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.⁶ The latest Statutory Rule, the Student Fees (Amounts) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 will set the fees for 2010/11 at the same basic and higher amounts as in Northern Ireland.

An Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance was launched on the 9th November 2009. The terms of reference for the review are set out as follows:⁷

“The Review will analyse the challenges and opportunities facing higher education and their implications for student financing and support. It will examine the balance of contributions to higher education funding by taxpayers, students, graduates and employers. Its primary task is to make recommendations to Government on the future of fees policy and financial support for full and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students.”

The Review will report to Government with recommendations next year. Any changes implemented following the Review would come into effect in the academic year 2011/12 at the earliest.⁸

⁴ The Student Fees (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 - http://www.opsi.gov.uk/sr/sr2008/nisr_20080455_en_1

⁵ <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news/news-del/news-del-august-2009/news-del-060809-minister-announces-chair.htm>

⁶ The Student Fees (Amounts) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 - http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2008/uksi_20082507_en_1

⁷ Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, Ministerial Statement, November 2009 - <http://hereview.independent.gov.uk/hereview/written-ministerial-statement>

⁸ Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, Ministerial Statement, November 2009 - <http://hereview.independent.gov.uk/hereview/written-ministerial-statement>

Wales

In 2007, following the National Assembly elections, the *One Wales* agreement between the Labour and Plaid Cymru Assembly Groups set out a programme for government between 2007 and 2011 containing the following commitment on student finance:⁹

“We will provide extra assistance with student debt and maintain existing fee levels in Wales up to and including 2009/10. We will maintain the current level of resource throughout the four year Assembly term, doing whatever is possible to mitigate the effects on Welsh-domiciled students if the Westminster government lifts the cap on fees in 2009.”

The Assembly Learning Grants and Loans (Higher Education) (Wales) (No.2) Regulations 2008 provide for financial support for students who are ordinarily resident in Wales taking designated higher education courses in respect of academic years beginning on or after 1 September 2009. The maximum amount of grant available under this regulation to an applicant in respect of an academic year of a qualifying designated course is £1,940 or the amount by which the fees payable by him or her exceed £1,285, whichever is the lesser. The maximum amount of grant available in respect of specified courses is £970 or the amount by which the fees payable by him or her exceed £640, whichever is the lesser.¹⁰

This effectively means that Welsh students studying in Wales do not have to pay above the basic amounts of £1,285 for standard university undergraduate courses and £640 for specified courses.¹¹ European Union rules mean the grant is also available to all EU students studying in Wales, but not those from the rest of the UK.¹²

However, a review of student finance arrangements was conducted in 1998 and the review group recommended that the tuition fee grant policy in Wales should be phased out. It was proposed that the tuition fee grant should be replaced with enhanced levels of tuition fee loans (in order to maintain the policy of no up-front fees).¹³ It is not clear whether or not this recommendation will be taken up by the Welsh Assembly or, if so, when it might be implemented.

⁹ “Review of Higher Education in Wales Phase 1: Student Finance Arrangements”, Report from the Chair of the Task and Finish Group, Professor R. Merfyn Jones, October 2008.

¹⁰ The Assembly Learning Grants and Loans (Higher Education) (Wales) (No.2) Regulations 2008 - http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/wales/wsi2008/wsi_20083170_en_1

¹¹ See Student Finance Wales site for more information - http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/portal/page?_pageid=56,1275515&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

¹² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/nov/25/welsh-tuition-fee>

¹³ “Review of Higher Education in Wales Phase 1: Student Finance Arrangements”, Report from the Chair of the Task and Finish Group, Professor R. Merfyn Jones, October 2008.

Scotland

Tuition fees were abolished for Scottish domiciled students and EU students (excluding non-Scottish UK domiciled students) studying full-time higher education courses in Scotland in 2000.¹⁴ A Graduate Endowment was introduced in 2001 for these students by the Education (Graduate Endowment and Student Support) (Scotland) Act 2001.¹⁵ Students who began their course in the 2006/2007 academic session were due to pay £2,289 on graduation.¹⁶ However, the graduate endowment has now also been abolished by the Graduate Endowment Abolition (Scotland) Act 2008.¹⁷

This effectively means that Scottish students studying in Scottish universities have no fees to pay. For 2009/10, other UK students studying in Scotland have to pay a flat fee of £1,820 for standard undergraduate courses (or £2,895 for medical courses).¹⁸

However, according to the Scottish Press, some pressure is mounting on the Scottish Government to conduct a review of higher education funding.¹⁹

Ireland

If you are an Irish or EU undergraduate student studying at a publicly funded third-level educational institution in Ireland, you do not, in general, have to pay fees.²⁰ In order to qualify for free fees:

- You must be an EU national or have official refugee status and
- You must have been living in the EU (this includes any of the accession states) for at least 3 of the 5 years before starting your course and
- You must be undertaking a full-time undergraduate course of at least 2 years duration and
- You must not have a previous qualification to the same level (Students who hold a National Certificate or Diploma and are progressing to degree courses may be eligible) and
- You must not be repeating the year because of failing your exams or changing course. (This exclusion may be waived if you have to repeat a year due to certified serious illness.)

¹⁴ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/scotland/618698.stm>

¹⁵ The Education (Graduate Endowment and Student Support) (Scotland) Act 2001 - http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2001/asp_20010006_en_1

¹⁶ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/6747811.stm>

¹⁷ Graduate Endowment Abolition (Scotland) Act 2008 - http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2008/asp_20080003_en_1

¹⁸ http://www.dundee.ac.uk/undergraduate/fees_funding/faq_funding.htm

¹⁹ Herald Scotland, 28 October 2009 - <http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/education/expert-calls-for-a-fresh-review-of-university-funding-1.929061>

²⁰ Irish eGovernment website Citizens Information - <http://www.citizensinformation.ie/categories/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees> ; see also Student Finance - <http://www.studentfinance.ie/mp9386/undergraduate-courses-of-not-less-than-two-years-duration-in-colleges-in-list-1/index.html>

The undergraduate courses for which the free fees arrangements apply are courses in:

- Universities
- Institutes of technology
- Colleges of education
- National College of Ireland
- A number of religious education institutions

Europe

A 2005 Communication from the EU Commission²¹ made the following statement in relation to student tuition fees:

“The debate on social and private returns from higher education has highlighted its role as an investment benefiting both the individual (through higher income and status) and society as a whole (through higher employment rates, lower social costs and later retirement). It has been shown that free higher education does not by itself suffice to guarantee equal access and maximum enrolments. This casts the much debated issue of tuition fees in a fresh perspective. In the consultation, those universities arguing for higher fees suggested that a major benefit would be higher quality education. Some analysts also point out that tuition fees could in practice provide better access for students from lower income groups if the incremental funds were recycled into a sound student aid system. Given the differences between national systems, there can be no uniform response to this issue: each Member State needs to choose the approach best suited to its circumstances.”

²¹ EU Commission COM 152 “Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy” - http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/comuniv2005_en.pdf

The following table for fees in 2007/08 was published by the Ifo Institute for Economic Research in Munich:²²

Tuition fees in Europe 2007/08		
	Tuition fees	Remarks/exemptions
Austria	EUR 363 per semester for home students and citizens of the EU, the EEA ^{a)} and Switzerland (for foreigners: EUR 726 per semester). Higher fees for some private universities.	Grants are offered. Dependent on social factors. Students who qualify for public scholarship (Studienbeihilfe) also receive the grant. The grant only has to be paid back if the course of studies is not completed.
Belgium	EUR 500–800 p.a. (dependent on university and course of studies).	Flanders: Scholarships offered by government, scholarships and loans offered by universities. Walloon: Scholarships and low-interest loans are offered by government.
Bulgaria	Public universities: Every year the government sets a maximum number of students' places. A portion of them are allocated to the students who do not pay fees ("state quota"). For the remaining places tuition fees range between EUR 50–200 p.a. Foreigners: EUR 2,200–5,500 p.a. (depending on university and course of studies). Private universities set their own fees.	The government determines who and how many students will receive scholarships or student loans for public universities. The government does not offer student loans for private universities.
Cyprus	None (foreigners max. EUR 6,850).	
Czech Republic	None (for foreigners in courses in English USD 3,000–10,000 p.a.).	
Denmark	None (non-EU foreigners: EUR 9,000–16,000 p.a.)	
Estonia ^{b)}	EUR 420–1,200 per semester (non-EU foreigners: EUR 960–1,500 per semester).	A student loan of EUR 960 guaranteed by the government is offered.
Finland	None.	
France	Public universities: None. Private universities: Up to EUR 7,500 p.a.	Enrolment fees between EUR 150 and 420 p.a.
Germany	None in some Länder, in others between EUR 100 and 500 per semester.	In Länder with tuition fees a low-interest loan offered that is paid back after completion of the course of studies. Tuition fees have no effect on Bafög (federally funded scholarship).
Greece	Universities set the fees.	Grants offered.
Hungary	EUR 16–48 per month (foreigners pay more).	Students who are particularly gifted or particularly needy do not have to pay the fees.
Ireland	None (non-EU foreigners: Up to EUR 36,000 p.a.).	
Italy	Minimum EUR 750 p.a., universities set the fees.	Students who receive a public loan based on need or a performance-related scholarship are exempt from the fees.
Latvia	EUR 700–5,811 p.a. (foreigners pay EUR 750–5,000 p.a.).	Loans and scholarships are available.

²² Ifo Institute for Economic Research, University of Munich, "Tuition Fees in Europe 2007/2008" - <http://www.ifo.de/pls/guestci/download/CESifo%20DICE%20Report%202007/CESifo%20DICE%20Report%204/2007/dicereport407-db5.pdf>

(Table continued)

	Tuition fees	Remarks/exemptions
Lithuania	EUR 0–3,475 p.a. (foreigners: EUR 1,000–5,000 per semester).	Grants offered by the government.
Luxembourg	EUR 100 per semester.	
Malta	None (foreigners: EUR 1,250–1,500 per semester).	
Netherlands	EUR 1,538 p.a. (less for part-time students).	The payment of the fee is either at start of the academic year or in instalments during the year. Loan to pay for tuition fees is offered. Payments based on earnings after completion of studies.
Norway	None.	
Poland	Public universities: None. Private universities: EUR 4,000–10,000 p.a.	
Portugal	EUR 500 p.a. Private universities: EUR 150 per month.	
Romania	USD 350–650 p.a. for public and private universities. Foreigners: Depending on course of studies between USD 3,200 and 8,000 p.a.	Government scholarships for students with good academic performance and in cases of need.
Slovak Republic	None (foreigners without a scholarship from Slovakian government: USD 2,000–8,000 p.a.).	
Slovenia	Undergraduates: No. Graduates: Up to EUR 1,500 p.a.	Scholarships and grants available.
Spain	Public universities: Dependent on region and course of studies between EUR 550 and 900 p.a. Private universities: Up to EUR 6,000 p.a.	Fees are reduced for students from large families.
Sweden	None (fees for foreigners at some universities).	
Switzerland	EUR 1,230–2,900 p.a.	The universities set the fees. Some universities require fees of foreigners. The cantons set the requirements for grants.
United Kingdom	Public universities in England/Wales: Up to GBP 3,070 p.a. (Up to GDP 3,145 p.a. 2008/2009). Private universities and graduate programmes: Up to GBP 16,000 p.a. Scotland: No.	England/Wales: Universities set fees. The government initially pays the tuition fees for every student. After completing the course of studies and taking up work the graduate pays the fees back to the government (HMRC ^{c)} . This is done only after earning an income of GBP 15,000 p.a. The amount paid monthly depends on the income of the graduate. Scotland: Tuition fees are paid by the Student Awards Agency. For Scottish students and EU-foreigners the fees are paid in full (depending on income) and in part (depending on income) in the other parts of the United Kingdom.
Russia	15% of students at public universities pay fees (those who are working towards a second degree or did not quite fulfil the entry requirements). The amount is geared to the market value of a program and the prestige of the institution rather than to the actual costs. Fees vary depending on university and course of studies between USD 2,500 and 8,000 p.a.	Government scholarships and student loans are available.
United States	Universities and colleges set the fees. These vary from USD 2,000 p.a. (community college) to over USD 37,000 p.a. (graduate programmes in Harvard). The average amount is between USD 12,000 and 16,000 p.a.	A broad range of loans and scholarships are available.
^{a)} EEA: European Economic Area (EU-25 and Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein). – ^{b)} Academic year 2001/2002. ^{c)} Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.		

Sources: www.studieren-in-holland.de/index.php?idcat=25&idlang=1. – www.daad.de. – www.bmbwk.gv.at. – Department for Education and Skills. – Student Awards Agency of Scotland. – EBS, Estonian Business School (www.ebs.ee/index.php?id=3167). – Latvijas Universitate. – Schweizerische Rektorenkonferenz (CRUS) (www.crus.ch/navigation/pulldown_frameset/studinfos_schweiz/). – Eurydice (www.eurydice.org). – www.educationireland.ie/html/why_ireland/main.htm. – www.harvard.edu. – www.studyindenmark.dk. – CIRIUS (www.ciriusonline.dk/). – www.study-in-romania.ro/annualbudg.htm. – www.college-contact.com/wissen/studienfuehrer/bulgarien.htm. – Education in Russia (www.russia.org.my/education/).

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