

The National Scholarship Programme – Year One

Fundamentals

- The National Scholarship Programme (NSP) will be available to benefit students entering higher education from autumn 2012.
- Government contribution to the National Scholarship fund will be £50m in financial year 2012-13, £100m in 2013-14 and £150m from 2014-15.
- 2012/13 is the first year and the arrangements will be reviewed and amended in light of experience and feedback to support full implementation of the Programme in 2014/15.
- Provisional allocations to institutions for 2012/13 will be announced by HEFCE by early March 2011, based on size of institution, to meet wide scheme objectives.
- NSP is open only to English institutions in receipt of direct funding from HEFCE.
- Institutions will be responsible for making individual awards to students and will publicise their NSP award schemes on their websites.
- UCAS will provide a portal on their website linking to each institution's NSP scheme.
- Guidance for institutions on the operation of the Programme will be developed by HEFCE, working with OFFA and BIS and subject to ministerial agreement.
- NSP allocations and Programme outcomes will be managed and reported through the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment with links to the Access Agreement where present.
- HEIs will be asked to supply appropriate data to help monitor the effectiveness of targeting the awards.

NSP is a direct benefit to the individual

- NSP will provide a direct benefit to individual, eligible students.
- Each eligible student will receive a benefit of not less than £3,000 (FT and pro rata PT to a minimum intensity of 25%). This is a one-year benefit, not a recurrent, annual entitlement.
- No more than £1,000 of the overall NSP award is to be provided as a cash bursary.
- NSP is not to be used to fund outreach programmes, which universities will continue to fund through alternative means.

The menu

- Institutions may offer one or more of the following:
 - a fee waiver or discount;
 - a free foundation year where leading to progression to a professional career via a course with high entry requirements;
 - discounted accommodation or other similar institutional service;
 - a financial scholarship/bursary – capped as a cash award at £1,000.

Student eligibility for NSP awards

- No one with a declared income over £25k (eligibility for a full grant) will be eligible but receipt of a full grant does not represent an entitlement to NSP.
- Institutions will decide their own detailed eligibility criteria, based on targeting guidance and their own circumstances.
- Eligibility criteria must be clear, transparent and published on the HEI's website.
- Students will be considered for an award in the year they begin their studies.

Match funding by institutions in first year 2012/13

- For this first year, OFFA will have discretion over the match funding level it requires through the Access Agreement. This will mean OFFA can use its discretion in 2012 to reduce the match funding level within the overall access investment totals. This discretion should be used only to avoid unintended consequences, that is where the match funding pressures on the individual HEI are very high and the effect would be that they cannot invest effectively in outreach activities.
- The starting assumption should be a match funding expectation at 1:1 for any institution with an Access Agreement.
- Institutions without an Access Agreement who wish to take part will have a reduced match funding requirement (50% for the first year). HEFCE will apply the same discretion on match funding, as above, if appropriate.
- Institutions may decide to match fund by increasing the number of eligible beneficiaries or increasing the value of individual awards (above £3,000).

Evaluation and future development

- HEFCE and OFFA will develop an evaluation strategy and review method to help inform the design of the full programme.
- The future scheme will prioritise:
 - increased student choice;
 - improved and earlier signalling of individual eligibility;
 - improved integration and signposting through outreach.

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