

STUDYLINK NEWS

A RESOURCE FOR EDUCATION PROVIDERS AND STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

DECEMBER 2012

Welcome to the latest edition of StudyLink News.

It's been an exciting year at StudyLink with lots of changes and a strong focus on helping over 200,000 students with their study support.

The igovt logon service is up and running, and uptake is looking good – so far 123,000 students have linked their logon to their existing MyStudyLink accounts. The linking process allows students to access their MyStudyLink account. The igovt logon service also allows students to use the same logon details to access all participating government service providers online services.

We've made improvements to our Student Loan contract. Working closely with Inland Revenue we have made the contract easier for students to understand, removed some non-essential policy information and reduced the length from 17 to 7 pages. In November we were delighted to receive a WriteMark award for Best Plain English Turnaround for the work we've done over the last few years on improving this document.

Following the security breach through the Work and Income kiosks, the way client data is managed has been reviewed right across The Ministry of Social Development. Keeping information safe is a top priority, and we'll continue to make improvements to our processes to ensure that data is always handled appropriately and held securely. We expect to have new self service workstations available in our sites by May, so students can use them to access our online services.

StudyLink is now well into its busiest time of year as students prepare for 2013. There has been a huge amount of planning and training to ensure we are in the best shape to manage the significant increase in applications we will receive from November to March.

The Ministry of Education's latest forecast indicates that we will receive nearly 70% of Student Allowance and Loan applications for the year during this time. I



StudyLink National Manager Service Support, Geordie Cassin, and General Manager, Susan Kosmala, with the WriteMark award for Best Plain English Turnaround received for the latest version of the Student Loan Contract.

really appreciate the effort and commitment of our StudyLink team to ensure we deliver the best service possible through this busy period.

We know that many of you are busy too, as you finish off for the year and make adjustments for the changes to student support being implemented next year. I'm encouraged by the positive relationships we have. Thank you for working with us over 2012. Together we can make a real difference for students and continue to improve the student support system.

Very best wishes for a safe and happy festive season, and I look forward to working with you again next year.

Susan.



IGOVT LOGON

Since implementation of the igovt logon service in August, over 123,000 returning students have successfully completed the one-off linking process and linked their existing StudyLink username password to their igovt logon.

The linking process means students are able to log on to MyStudyLink quickly and easily using their igovt logon. Students will not be able to access their MyStudyLink account or apply online using their MyStudyLink account until they have completed the linking process.

The StudyLink website has instructional videos to make the linking process easier. These can be viewed on our website, www.studylink.govt.nz. We encourage students to complete the linking process before applying for their student finance for 2013, as linking is much simpler when completed as a separate process. If you receive enquiries from students about the igovt logon service, please refer them to the information and videos on the StudyLink website.

Students can also call us for further assistance on 0800 88 99 00.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION contact Derek Carey, Project Manager, at derek.carey001@msd.govt.nz

NATIONAL STUDENT NUMBER UPDATE

In the December 2011 edition of the StudyLink News we told you we'd received confirmation that the Office of the Privacy Commissioner has no objection to our becoming an authorised National Student Number (NSN) user.

Since then significant progress has been made, and the regulations allowing StudyLink to use the NSN were authorised in November.

We do not intend to start using the NSN immediately, but will keep you updated on progress in future editions of StudyLink News.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION about this article contact Geordie Cassin, National Manager Service Support, at geordie.cassin002@msd.govt.nz





BUDGET CHANGES 2011 AND 2012

Students starting study on or after 1 January 2013 may be affected by changes to Student Allowance and Student Loan eligibility. These changes were announced as part of Budget 2011 and 2012, and have been previously communicated through earlier editions of StudyLink News and other channels.

For more information on these changes, please see the 2012 FAQs spreadsheet, attached to this email.

BUDGET 2011

STUDENTS AGED 55 AND OVER

From 1 January 2013, students aged 55 and over will only be eligible for the compulsory fees component of the Student Loan, unless they meet grandparenting criteria.

If a student was aged 55 or over before 1 January 2013 and continues to study the same qualification they were enrolled in on 19 May 2011, they meet the grandparenting criteria and will be able to access all components of the Student Loan. Their eligibility remains unchanged until they complete their qualification or until 31 December 2014, whichever occurs first.

Students will be asked new questions when applying for Student Loans in order to determine their eligibility for the grandparenting provision.

OVERDUE LOAN REPAYMENTS

Students will not be able to borrow through the Student Loan Scheme if they have \$500 or more in default when they apply if some of that amount has been overdue for a year or more. The amount in default includes repayments, late payment interest, penalties and any amounts under instalment arrangements.

This applies to all new Student Loan applications received on or after 7 February 2013. Students will be asked new questions when applying for Student Loans, and from 7 February 2013, an automated check will be completed with Inland Revenue before applications are approved.

BUDGET 2012

ALTERNATIVE CONTACT PERSON

People applying for new Student Loans for study starting on or after 1 January 2013 will need to nominate an alternative contact person.

The alternative contact person needs to be based in New Zealand. If a borrower hasn't met their repayment obligations and cannot be contacted directly, Inland Revenue will get in touch with the alternative contact person to obtain the borrower's current contact details. The alternative contact person cannot view or make changes to the loan account, and they are not responsible for the borrower's repayments.

INCREASE IN REPAYMENT RATE

The repayment rate for standard Student Loan deductions will be increased from 10 cents to 12 cents in the dollar from 1 April 2013.

STUDENT LOAN BORROWING LIMITS FOR PILOT TRAINING STUDENTS

Students who begin pilot training on or after 1 January 2013 will have their eligibility capped at \$35,000 per EFTS. The amount of fees a student can borrow relates to the EFTS they're enrolled in, e.g. a student enrolled in 0.5 EFTS will only be able to borrow \$17,500 in compulsory fees. This change means that a Student Loan may not cover the total amount of tuition fees.

Students enrolled on a pilot training qualification between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2012 will be able to continue to access a Student Loan to fully cover their fees until they complete that qualification, or until 31 December 2015, whichever occurs first.

StudyLink has made system changes to ensure that the fees payable via Student Loan for pilot training are capped at \$35,000 per EFTS.



CHANGES TO LEVEL 1 AND 2 PROGRAMMES

As part of Budget 2012, the government will now provide full funding of level 1 and 2 courses. This funding means that some foundation level courses can be delivered fees-free. Those level 1 or level 2 programmes that are now fees-free will not be eligible to have fees paid via the Student Loan scheme.

StudyLink has made system changes so that fees cannot be paid via Student Loan for fees-free programmes.

STUDENT LOAN ANNUAL BORROWING LIMIT

From 1 January 2013, students will be limited to 2 EFTS of Student Loan borrowing per 52 week period. A year of full-time study is usually between 0.8 EFTS and 1.2 EFTS, which means this change will affect students with heavy workloads or those who change courses during the year. System changes have been made so that a student cannot be approved for a loan that exceeds this limit.

If a VoS is received that will cause a student to exceed their 2 EFTS limit, the VoS will not be approved, and the student and education provider will be notified.

STUDENT ALLOWANCE CHANGES FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY

Students studying NZQF level 8 and above (excluding Bachelor degrees with honours) will not be eligible for Student Allowance for any new study starting on or after 1 January 2013.

There is an exemption for up to 1 year (ending 31 December 2013) if a student is continuing with the same qualification they received Student Allowance for in 2012 and:

- received a Student Allowance in 2012 and has a recognised partner and/or children, and
- continues to have that recognised partner and/or children in 2013.

Students will be asked additional questions to determine their eligibility. StudyLink has been advised of the postgraduate qualifications affected by the change and will decline Student Allowance applications for these qualifications unless students meet exemption criteria. A postgraduate qualification has been determined by its Qualifications Award Category (QAC) Code of 01, 10, 11, 13 or 14.

EXEMPTIONS TO THE 200 WEEK LIFE-TIME LIMIT FOR STUDENT ALLOWANCES

Exemptions to the 200 week life-time limit for Student Allowance will be removed for study starting on or after 1 January 2013. This means that recognised long programmes and programmes of national interest will no longer be eligible to receive Student Allowance beyond 200 weeks, except in exceptional circumstances.

There will be a transitional period for students who already have an approved extension. These students will be contacted by StudyLink staff when their 2013 application is received.

CLARIFYING STUDENT ALLOWANCE REGULATIONS

A number of clarifications have recently been made to the Student Allowance regulations. Changes to Limited full-time study are the most significant of those, which are outlined below. All other changes have been reflected in the information on our website.

CHANGES TO LIMITED FULL-TIME STUDY

The Limited full-time study category 'best interests' is being narrowed to 'academic best interests' for study starting on or after 1 January 2013.

To qualify under the academic best interests category a student must be likely to fail if he or she undertakes a full-time course, but would be likely to pass more than half of the course if he or she studied part-time. Students will normally not qualify for Limited full-time status under this criterion unless it is clear that it is for a temporary period and the student will eventually study full-time.

Students who have competing demands on their time, such as athletes, or students who have recognition of prior learning will no longer qualify for Limited full-time study.

Students who were approved for Limited full-time study under the 'best interests' provision before 31 December 2012 will continue to be eligible for Limited full-time study under that approval until either 31 December 2014 or until they complete their programme, whichever occurs first. These students must also meet all other eligibility requirements.



DISABILITY ALLOWANCE - CHANGE IN PRESCRIPTION COSTS

From 1 January 2013, the Ministry of Health is increasing the amount people contribute towards the cost of their medication from \$3 to \$5 per subsidised prescription item – this cost is often referred to as a co-payment or prescription charge. People may not have to pay this increase until they renew their prescription costs. If the medicine is not fully subsidised, there may be an additional cost.

This change may impact students receiving a Disability Allowance that includes prescription costs. When they begin to be charged the increased amount, students can contact StudyLink on 0800 88 99 00 to have their Disability Allowance entitlement reassessed.

It is important to note that the change in costs does not take effect until 1 January 2013. Students receiving Disability Allowance will not be able to claim for the increased costs until after that date.

The consumer and health sector web pages on the Ministry of Health's www.health.govt.nz will be updated to reflect the change.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION on the prescription charge changes visit the Ministry of Health website at www.health.govt.nz/medications



VOS ACCURACY

It is vital that VoS responses contain correct information - the accuracy of our decision making is reliant on the correct study dates and details being passed to us in VoS response files, and therefore correctly entered in enrolment systems.

This incorrect information has serious implications for students, as it can lead to the wrong decision being made on a student's application for Student Loan or Student Allowance.

Where an overpayment occurs, a debt must be created to recover the funds. This is stressful and upsetting for students and generates significant work for StudyLink.

For this reason we want to reiterate the importance of providing correct study information to us.

Education providers have a responsibility to ensure the processes that generate study dates and other information are robust and help us provide these assurances to students. Please check your responses carefully.

In future, in cases where overpayments have been created as a result of receiving incorrect study information, we will be asking the provider to assist with meeting these costs.

If these costs are not met, students will be referred to the education provider to discuss these costs directly.

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PLEASE CONTACT THE STUDYLINK HELPLINE TEAM on 0508 885 885 immediately if you identify that you have reported incorrect information.



HELPLINE UPDATE

CONTACTING THE STUDYLINK HELPLINE

The StudyLink Helpline is a dedicated service for education providers. We can assist with all VoS and student finance queries.

Over the 2011/2012 summer season, education providers contacted the StudyLink Helpline by fax, email, phone or SAKBase over 18,000 times. It's important to use the right contact channel in the right situation, so that we can resolve your issue in a timely manner,

CONTACT CHANNEL	BACKGROUND	USE WHEN YOU...
SAKBase	Available 24 hours per day at sakbase.studylink.govt.nz Most issues are resolved in 8 working hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want to advise that a student is not attending or meeting their course requirements. Want to advise that a student has returned and is now attending and meeting their course requirements. Have a VoS issue, or have sent a VoS response you need locked in place. Have a query about a student's results of study or fee payments. Have a question about a student's loan status that isn't shown in your Status Report.
Helpline phones	Available 8:00am-5:00pm on 0508 885 885.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need your password to VoS Online or SAKBase reset. Have an immediate query that needs less than one working day to be answered. Have a complicated query that would benefit from a phone discussion.
Email	Available 24 hours per day at studylink_helpline@msd.govt.nz Five working day resolution time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have a general question that isn't time-sensitive. You need to send an attachment or a screen shot (for example – when you have an error using the VoS Online website).
VoS Online	Available 24 hours per day at vos.studylink.govt.nz Responses generally applied within 1-3 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want to advise that a student has changed their enrolment (for example there has been a change in their course end date or a change in programme), has additional fees or has withdrawn from study.

STUDENT CALLS

We ask that you do not request that we take calls from students, whether directly from them or from you on their behalf. The Helpline is a dedicated service for education providers, and we need to make sure the service is available to you when you need it.

Students can use MyStudyLink to check the status of their applications, or call the StudyLink Contact Centre on 0800 88 99 00, which is open Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 7:00pm. Students can also submit queries through our Ask A Question service at www.faqs.studylink.govt.nz



SAKBASE CATEGORIES

Below is a list of general categories and their purpose that should be used when you raise issues or enquiries to StudyLink through SAKBase.

CATEGORIES	USE WHEN YOU...
Work Requirements/Attendance	Need to advise that a student is not meeting coursework or attendance requirements or if they are now are meeting those requirements.
Request VoS-Lock	Require a particular VoS response locked on to a Student Allowance or Student Loan, for example when you've needed to send a blank VoS because your system's automated responses will give different dates.
Results of Study Query	You have a query about the results you've submitted through the Single Data Return, or about a Statement of Satisfactory Progress.
Student Loan	You have a query regarding the student's loan which is not covered by the other categories, for example when fee payment has been delayed.
Update Provider Code	You operate more than one education provider, and a student has entered the wrong one on their application. Please note, we're unable to change the provider to or from one not operated by you.
Update Student ID	A student has given an incorrect or blank student ID number, and you're unable to correct this by returning a VoS response.
VoS Issue	Have a query regarding a VoS.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT STUDENT HARDSHIP

For students receiving the Unemployment Benefit Student Hardship (UBSH) over summer, it is important to remember that this weekly payment comes with obligations. Students must be available for, and actively seeking, full-time work while receiving UBSH. They must be registered with either Work and Income or Student Job Search, and be prepared to attend interviews and accept any offer of suitable employment that is made to them.

UBSH acts as a safety net for those unable to find work over the summer break, but it cannot match the benefits of summer work – better pay, opportunities to gain employment skills and references from employers are all available to students who undertake employment while they are not studying.



CHANGES TO VOS ONLINE

BUSINESS RULES AND OPERATIONAL MANUAL – BUDGET CHANGES

The VoS Online Business Rules and Operational Manual have both been updated to reflect recent system and policy changes. Both of these can be found in the reference section of VoS online, at www.vos.studylink.govt.nz

THE CHANGES:

Business Rules:

- Added information in Section 8 about the annual 2.0 EFTS cap, and fees caps.
- New Section 12 discusses postgraduate students.
- New Section 13 discusses fee caps.
- The period Student Loans will stay open following the student's study end date has increased from 58 to 88 days.
- Smaller changes in other sections including the glossary, section 17 and the appendix.

Operational Manual:

- Section 3.3 discusses VoS Online Access and Termination.
- Section 6.1.9 advises that the end date on a withdrawn VoS mustn't be prior to the study start date.
- Section 8 further discusses the 2.0 EFTS cap.
- Section 12 further discusses postgraduate students.
- Section 13 further discusses the fee cap.
- Section 17.1.6 advises that the StudyLink Finance Team will contact an education provider when a fee cap affected student is studying multiple programmes and a refund is received, to confirm which programme the repayment is for.
- Appendix 1 – VoS Change Events has some minor changes to indicate when StudyLink staff would contact an education provider for further information following a VoS response.
- Appendix 2 – Updates the list of statuses and contexts that appear on the daily Status Reports.
- Appendix 3 – adds the VoS Online Terms and Conditions, and Access/Termination forms.

CHANGES TO STATUS REPORTS

Each day, StudyLink produces a report, downloadable from VoS Online, which shows the status of the Student Loans your students have applied for to pay their fees.

Up until now, each education provider has been able to choose which statuses they want to appear on their report. Unfortunately, this means that if a student's application has a status which you have not nominated, they won't show up on your report.

This has caused some problems with students disappearing from view, and education providers have needed to contact the StudyLink Helpline to work out what has happened. To help resolve this, and to ensure you receive a full picture of your students' applications as they progress, we'll be introducing a standard status report from 1 February 2013. The new standard report shows all available statuses and contexts.

Each status will also have a duration of 40 weeks, to make sure you can see students for a full academic year. No statuses will be removed, so you won't miss any information you're already getting.

If you have any queries around status reports, or you are concerned that the additional information may affect your enrolment systems, please contact the Helpline on 0508 885 885.





UNPAID PRACTICAL WORK (UPW) APPLICATIONS

Over the summer peak season, StudyLink receives an increased number of these applications from students looking to have their Student Allowance or Student Loan entitlement extended to cover additional study they're undertaking.

UPW applications are intended to extend entitlement where students are undertaking practical work that is both:

- required as part of their course
- occurs outside of the regular study period.

However, the majority of applications received are for students that are either enrolling in summer school, or whose study end date has been changed to give them extra time to complete a paper. These situations don't meet the criteria for UPW – but instead require an updated VoS to be sent.

If you're approached by faculty staff or students in regards to an application, please discuss with them whether it is required, or if a VoS is more appropriate.

SENDING EVIDENCE TO STUDYLINK

If a student asks you to send items to StudyLink on their behalf, please include on a cover page, where it is known: StudyLink client number, full name, current postal address and phone number details for any birth certificate, passport, Inland Revenue or bank account evidence you send. If the item already has an address on it, they just need to confirm that it is current by noting so on the document.

Having a confirmed address helps us when checking whether the student already has a record with the Ministry, and in creating a record if they don't. Having their contact details enables us to contact the student if no applications have been made by the time StudyLink receives the evidence.





CALL TO ACTION CAMPAIGN

Our call to action campaign for 2012-2013 is well underway. This campaign encourages students to apply early for their Student Allowance and Student Loan, to ensure there are no payment delays when courses begin.

You may have seen our online advertising on Facebook, news websites, Skype and TVNZ ondemand, and our hard copy posters and floor decals on campus. We have had a good response so far from students keen to get their student finance organised early.

LOOPED DVD

The 2012-2013 Looped DVD contains useful information for students about changes, how to apply and how to contact us, as well as their obligations when receiving assistance.

It is an excellent resource for making sure students know exactly what they need to do to make sure they are well prepared for study.

The DVD is available to education providers and can be played in reception or waiting areas.

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THE LOOPED DVD CLIP CAN BE ACCESSED from our website at www.studylink.govt.nz/tools-and-calculators/video-clips/index.html.

You can also request a copy of the DVD from the StudyLink Helpline Team.



STUDENT JOB SEARCH

Student Job Search (SJS) is New Zealand's leading student employment service. They place students into over 25,000 jobs each year, from which students earn over \$60 million dollars.

SJS has a plenty of work available for students, catering to a wide variety of interests and skill levels. Even lower-level jobs help build up work experience and can lead to other opportunities.

Once registered through the SJS website, employers can list and manage their jobs online. SJS will interview applicants over the phone and put together a shortlist of candidates that match the employer's job description and specific criteria.

For more information on what SJS can offer visit www.sjs.co.nz, or contact dean.jervis@sjs.co.nz