

STUDYLINK NEWS

A resource for education providers and student associations

APRIL 2014

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Kia Ora Tatou

Welcome to the first edition of StudyLink News for 2014.

Our focus on delivering better services for students resulted in a lot of changes leading up to peak season. Taking on board your feedback and ideas from NZUSA and themes from our student research underpinned these changes. Together these changes have made a real difference and have contributed to a very successful start to 2014. These changes meant more students had their applications finalised by the time they started study, reduction in complaints and increase in and student satisfaction during peak season.

Our call to action campaign encouraging students to apply for their 2014 Student Loan and Allowances by 16 December was worked well with 46% more lodging an application compared to the same time December 2012. This contributed to 85% of applications received by 16 December 2013 for study starting in 2014, being finalised by 3 March, prior to major study state dates.

By the end of March, more than 170,000 students had applied for 2014 study with over 336,000 applications finalised. Having more applications in and finalised earlier meant that fewer

students needed assistance at the last minute.

The peaks season saw improvements like standardising the Vos Lead in Days (VLI) to 42 days before students' advised study start date. This change meant that we were able to confirm enrolments and complete applications for Student Loan course fees and Allowances prior to the student's study start date.

The introduction of standardised daily status reports gave education providers a comprehensive picture of their fee-paying students' loan applications, regardless of their status. This allowed better engagement with students about what they need to do to complete their applications.

We are continuing to build on this success in 2014 with the launch of MyStudyLink mobile view, and plans for an education provider website. MyStudyLink mobile view was launched on 16 March and provides student's easy access to some of their most common questions on their mobile device. They can easily check their next payment date, status of their application, what documents have been received, and their personal

details. Having this information at their fingertips should reduce the need for students to call us.

The Education provider website is underway. This will provide a dedicated site to share our latest news with you on the home page as it happens. The website will allow easy access to the information you need and be your new primary access channel to existing SAKBase and VoS online services.

The value of us working together to deliver better services for students has made a big difference this peak season. I really appreciate your commitment and contribution to the great results this year. We look forward to working with you in 2014 to continue to improve services.

Nga mihi nui



Susan Kosmala
General Manager

ANNUAL GENERAL ADJUSTMENT 1 APRIL UPDATE

The Annual General Adjustment (AGA) will take place on 1 April 2014. The AGA is an adjustment to benefit rates according to changes to the cost of living occurring over the last 12 months.

From 1 April 2014, rates are increasing by 1.38%. There will be increase to Benefits, Student Allowances, Student Loan living costs, New Zealand Superannuation and Veteran's Pension payments for 1 April 2014.

Students will see an increase in their Student Allowance and Student Loan living costs payments. They (and their partner if they have one) will also be able to earn a higher rate of income before their Student Allowance payments are affected.

The Student Allowance parental income cut-out points are also increasing which means more students will be eligible for a parentally income tested Student Allowance. There is more information about this change on our website.

Mobile view for MyStudyLink

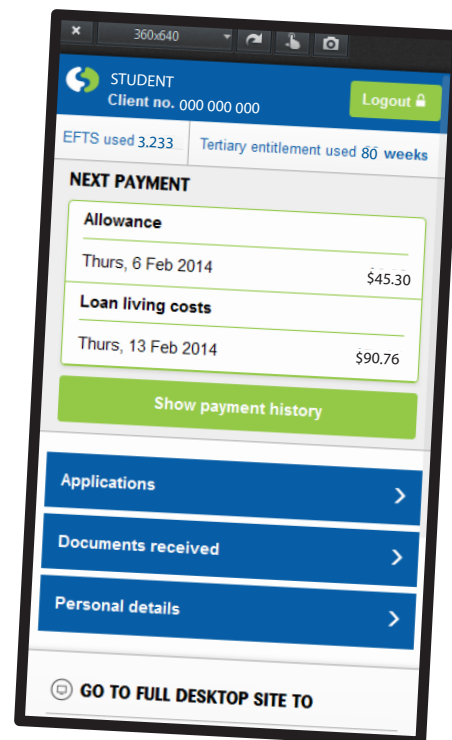
StudyLink has developed a new mobile view for MyStudyLink to provide a quicker and more convenient way to access information online.

Students can now use the mobile view to access key information in MyStudyLink, including:

- when their next payment will be
- the status of their application
- what documents have been received
- their personal details.

This information will be 'view only'. To update information in MyStudyLink, students can simply toggle between the new mobile view and the full MyStudyLink website without having to login twice.

It's important that students use our online services to manage their information and check up on their financial assistance. Helping students to help themselves online allows for quicker access to important information.



StudyLink for Providers website

Development of our new web resource for education providers is now well underway.

We'll have issues of StudyLink News on the site, as well as the ability to share our latest news with you on the home page as it happens.

The site will also contain the information you need easy access to, like VoS documents, agreements and training material, and will be your new primary access channel to existing SAKBase and VoS online services.

A section dedication to helping students will contain the information that education providers need about Limited full-time, extensions and more.

The site will be launched in June - we will let you know as soon as it's ready for you to check it out.



From the Helpline

YOUTH GUARANTEE AND LEVEL 1 AND 2 FEES FREE STUDENTS

If a Youth Guarantee (YG) or Level 1 or 2 Fees free student has asked for fees to be paid by Student Loan we will issue a Study and Fees VoS request.

We have received some enquiries from education providers about why StudyLink is still sending a VoS request for some students where a confirmed VoS response has been already been sent.

This occurs when the 'Requested Fees' are returned as \$0 and 'Total Fees' are returned at \$0. To close the VoS cycle 'Total Fees' cannot be returned as \$0.

If you are an education provider who offers a Youth Guarantee/ Fees Free Level 1 or 2 programme and receive a Study and Fees VoS Request from StudyLink for this, could you please enter 'Requested Fees' at (\$0) and Total fees at (\$ how much the total fees would be if not paid through Youth Guarantee/ TEC funding) on the VoS Response. By returning the VoS response this way, it will close the VoS cycle.



STUDY AND FEES VOS RESPONSE WHEN A STUDENT HAS ENROLLED IN MULTIPLE PROGRAMMES FOR THE SAME STUDY PERIOD

If you have a student who is enrolled in multiple programmes of study in the same study period, you need to return a VoS Response for each programme code. The VoS Response must have the same Total compulsory Fees and Requested Fees amounts entered on the VoS Responses, so the full fees will pay. This needs to be the total fees of all the programmes the student is undertaking.

For example, the student is studying both Bachelor of Law (fees of \$5,000) and a Bachelor of Science (fees of \$4000) at the same time. The total compulsory fees and the total requested fees must be entered as \$9,000 on both lines of study on the VoS Responses. If this is not done, and each programme contains only the fees for that programme, then the full fees amount will not pay.

VOS ONLINE ACCESS

A recent review of education provider VoS Online users found that StudyLink is not always being informed when staff who have this access no longer require it or cease employment. It is important that StudyLink are informed when this occurs and a VoS Online user termination form completed.

Please contact the StudyLink Helpline on 0508 885 885 when we need to be advised of changes and we will work with you and provide the forms/support if necessary to add/remove VoS online users.

STATUS REPORTS

Status reports are a valuable way for education providers to monitor the status of fee payments being made by Student Loan.

Status reports are available through our VoS Online service or by fax. These are produced on a daily basis. This allows education providers to keep track of Student Loan applications that their students have made to pay their fees. Email notifications are sent out to VOS Online users when each report is available.

You don't have to view the report each day but you will have the information you need, when you need it, so you can monitor Student Loan application progress. We urge you to check your status report before calling us to check the status of a Student Loan application.

If you are approached by students wanting to know the status of their Student Allowance application please refer them to their MyStudyLink account or our 0800 88 99 00 phone service.

SOCIAL HOUSING ASSESSMENT MOVES

From 14 April 2014, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) will manage applications and assessment for social housing which has previously been completed by Housing New Zealand.

The main changes are:

- extending the availability of the income-related rent subsidy to registered non-government and community housing providers (to date the income-related rent subsidy has only been available to Housing New Zealand)
- transferring the responsibility for assessing people's social housing need from Housing New Zealand to MSD
- introducing tenancy reviews to help prioritise social housing for people with the greatest need, for as long as they need it.

MSD will be responsible for screening eligibility, assessing people's housing needs and calculating income-related rents.

Existing Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants on the waitlist will get a letter early in 2014 advising them of the changes and how these will affect them.

For more information about the changes please go to www.msd.govt.nz or www.hnzc.co.nz.

Changes to Youth Guarantee programme and fees-free Level 1 and 2 qualifications

There have been a number of changes to the Youth Guarantee scheme and fees-free Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications from 1 January 2014.

The Youth Guarantee provision has been extended to 18-19 year olds that started study on or after 1 January 2014 (this was previously only offered to 15-17 year olds). 18-19 year olds on this programme may be able to access the living costs and course-related costs components of the Student Loan if they meet the relevant criteria. Any students who turn 18 while on this programme will not be eligible for course-related costs or living costs until their next enrolment.

Fees-free Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications are now available to some 18-24 year olds that started study on or after 1 January 2014 (this was previously only offered to students under the age

of 18). 18-24 year olds studying these qualifications may be able to access the living costs and course-related costs components of the Student Loan if they meet the relevant criteria. Any students who turn 18 while studying these qualifications will not be eligible for course-related costs or living costs until their next enrolment.

In addition, students under 18 years of age studying a fees-free Level 1 or 2 qualification that started on or after 1 January 2014, are no longer eligible for a Student Loan. Previously they were able to access the living costs and course-related costs components of the Student Loan.

Adding Source of Funding Code to VoS

In August 2013, Cabinet agreed to extend the eligibility for the Youth Guarantee programme to include students aged 18 and 19 years old.

This means that the 18-19 year old students completing Youth Guarantee programmes can be eligible for the course related cost and living cost components of the Student Loan. Also included in this are 18-24 year olds who are studying fees-free level 1 and 2 qualifications. 16-17 year old students who are completing Youth Guarantee programmes will continue to not be eligible for any component of the Student Loan.

Due to the timing of the policy change, a manual solution was put in place for the 2014 academic year, with a mandate from Ministers that a system solution would be in place in time for the 2015 academic year.

In order to capture this information, StudyLink are looking to make a change to the VoS information exchange process to include the Source of Funding code so we can efficiently and accurately manage different student support eligibilities for learners from 2015.

StudyLink will be in touch with Student Management System (SMS) Vendors and relevant education providers shortly to begin discussions around the changes that are required to VoS and to provide more detail around this. StudyLink view the technical changes as minor and will be working closely with our stakeholders to implement this.

If you have any questions please email StudyLink_ChangeSupport@msd.govt.nz

Inland Revenue Update

Changes to Student Loans from 1 April 2014 are set to affect overseas-based and New Zealand-based borrowers.

For NZ-based borrowers

From 1 April 2014, borrowers need to inform Inland Revenue if they receive other types of income or need to make any changes to their income so their repayment obligations are calculated correctly.

Some examples of these other types of income include:

- the amount of salary given up in exchange for the private use of a company car
- income kept by a closing company in which the borrower is a major shareholder
- distributions from a trust that is not beneficiary income and the borrower is not a settlor of the trust.

A full list of income types is available on the Inland Revenue website.

For overseas-based borrowers

In May 2013, the Government announced several changes to be included in the Student Loan Scheme Amendment Bill No. 3, which is currently before Parliament.

The following proposed changes take effect from 1 April 2014 and will affect overseas-based borrowers:

- Their annual repayment obligation will be set at a fixed minimum based on their loan balance as at 31 March 2014, or if they left NZ after this date, their date of departure. It will no longer decrease as their balance decreases.
- Those who have a loan balance over \$45,000 will need to repay more per year towards their loan each year.

- Those who have not been meeting their overseas-based repayment obligations may be stopped from leaving New Zealand next time they visit.

Inland Revenue has also been receiving contact details from overseas adult passport applications and renewals from the Department of Internal Affairs, so they can contact overseas-based borrowers in arrears.

Further details about these changes are available on www.ird.govt.nz/studentloans



Youth Week Awards 2014

The Ministry of Youth Development is calling for nominations for the Youth Week 2014 Award. This award will recognise and celebrate a number of young people aged between 12 and 24 who have made a significant contribution to their community.

Recipients of a Youth Week 2014 Award will be announced by Hon Nikki Kaye, Minister of Youth Affairs, during Youth Week held between 17 and 25 May 2014.

Award categories

The Youth Week 2014 Award will be awarded to a number of recipients in each of the following categories:

- **Change Maker**
Awarded to a young person who through embracing diversity is creating change in their community.
- **Giving Back**
Awarded to the young person whose

actions address a current need and have had a significant impact on their community.

- **Leadership**
Awarded to a young person who has demonstrated their leadership in a project or organisation.
- **Working for Youth**
Awarded to a young person whose actions specifically support other young people, this may include sport, cultural or arts activities.

Nomination criteria

Nominees must:

- participate in the activities they have been nominated for outside of their regular study or work commitments
- be aged between 12 and 24 on 17 May 2014
- have lived in, and be currently in, New Zealand for the past 12 months

- have participated in the activities they have been nominated for within the past 12 months.

Selection Process

Please complete the Youth Week 2014 Award nomination form with all the information you know about the young person you are nominating.

The nomination form can be found at <http://www.myd.govt.nz/news/2014/youth-week-2014.html>

Nominations close 9am Monday 28 April 2014. Nominations received after this deadline will not be considered.

