

STUDYLINK NEWS

A resource for education providers and student associations

JUNE 2014

SEE P2

Budget 2014



SEE P3

Online Services update

SEE P4

Second semester



SEE P5

From the Helpline

Kia Ora Tatou

We are well on track with our plans to build on the better services for students that we delivered last peak season.

We have lots on the go, with a focus on streamlining the application process, and shifting the peak workload, so that more students have applications finalised by the time they start study.

The feedback from you and students has helped us to focus on key areas that we can change and that will make the most difference.

An example of one of the changes is for the second semester peak, we have sent 18,000 emails directly to students who have told us they are planning to continue to study. Instead of submitting another application, if requirements have been met then we can just re-verify their study. This reduces the time for students reapplying and means we are not processing unnecessary applications.

Looking towards the end of this year, we will be encouraging students to apply by 16 December again. 90,700 did just that last year, which was a 45% increase on the same time the previous

year. This meant that we could finalise applications before study started for most of them and in turn resulted in fewer calls for us to answer.

We have more enhancements being made to MyStudyLink. These enhancements will happen over the next couple of months, and will increase its usability and provide students with key information they need to know quickly and easily.

Thanks to all of you who attended and contributed to the four education provider roadshows held recently. The opportunity for our team along with TEC, NZQA and MOE to get together with you to discuss topical issues makes helps us all to see how we can improve the student support system.

Keeping with the theme of enhancements and improvements, our new StudyLink for Providers website is currently being constructed. This website will be important as it will provide you easy access to relevant,

tailored and up to date StudyLink information.

The StudyLink for Providers website recognises your need to have the right information at the right time, at your fingertips, as it is essential to providing students with a better wrap around service. We are looking forward to sharing this with you in the next month.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge that it is Matariki, the Māori New Year. As celebrations draw to an end, I am reminded that this is a time to reflect on the roles we play, and to plan and renew for the coming year, a fitting sentiment as we move forward to build on delivering even better services for students together.

Nga mihi nui



Susan Kosmala
General Manager

RECAP

STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT THRESHOLD

The Student Loan repayment threshold will remain at \$19,084 per annum (\$367 per week) until 1 April 2017.

The decision was made to suspend the adjustment to the Student Loan repayment threshold for New Zealand-based borrowers. This suspension will increase total repayments made and reduce their repayment times.

SOURCE OF FUNDING CODES

From 2015 the Source of Funding code will be included with Verification of Study details passed from education providers to StudyLink.

This is a technical change that will help manage eligibility to Student Allowances and Loans for students completing Youth Guarantee programmes and fees-free level 1 and 2 qualifications.

StudyLink will be working with education providers to implement this change.

MORE INFO

You can find more information about changes that may affect students as part of Budget 2014 at www.studylink.govt.nz.



Budget 2014

SOURCE OF FUNDING CODE

The April edition of StudyLink News introduced the change to include the the Source of Funding (SoF) code to Verification of Study (VoS) response files. This requirement follows the decision made by Cabinet in August 2013 to extend eligibility for the Youth Guarantee programme to include students aged 18 and 19 years old.

All education providers, electronic VoS users and SMS vendors have now been advised of the changes and requirements. We have also presented these changes at the recent TEC Roadshows in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland where we had the opportunity to further discuss the changes with attendees. If you were unable to attend we have attached the presentation for your reference.

We will continue working with education providers and SMS vendors on the technical changes and will be communicating testing requirements shortly.

What you need to know:

- The SoF code must be provided with all VoS responses for study starting on or after 1 January 2015.
- Study starting 2014 does not require a SoF code.
- Testing of these changes with SMS vendors or education providers is scheduled to commence from early August 2014.
- Testing is only required for electronic VoS users (those affected have already been contacted).
- Education providers need to be ready to provide SoF codes to StudyLink by 19 November 2014, when the six-week VoS lead period for 2015 study begins.

If you need more information about the SoF change, have any questions, or require a copy of the technical requirements document, please email StudyLink_ChangeSupport@msd.govt.nz.

CHANGES TO ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT FOR SOLE PARENTS

On 10 June the Government announced changes to the support available to sole parents while they are studying.

From July 2015, the rates of Accommodation Benefit for sole parents who are receiving a Student Allowance will be aligned with the rates of Accommodation Supplement available on a benefit.

This will mean that sole parents who are studying full-time, and receiving a Student Allowance, will receive the same amount of accommodation support as they would on a benefit.

Additionally, from late 2015, sole parent students will no longer have their child support arrangements disrupted if they access a benefit in the summer break, and will be able to keep any child support they receive over this period instead of it being offset against their benefit.

From late 2016, the stand-down when moving from Student Allowance to a benefit during a break in study will be removed for sole parents. This will mean sole parent students will no longer need to apply for a Student Allowance Transfer Grant.

UPDATE FROM INLAND REVENUE

REPAYMENT EXEMPTION FOR FULL- TIME STUDENTS

Inland Revenue is reminding full-time students who are working that they can apply for a repayment exemption if they expect to earn less than \$19,084 in the tax year. Note: this amount includes any Student Allowance they may receive from StudyLink.

Once a student is granted the exemption, they need to present the repayment exemption certificate to their employer. With the certificate, this means the borrower doesn't have to use a tax code with the "SL" repayment code and they won't have student loan repayment deductions made from their salary or wages. This exemption applies to their main and secondary earnings.

For more information on the repayment exemption and to apply for one, go to

[www.ird.govt.nz/
studentloans](http://www.ird.govt.nz/studentloans)

(keyword: repayment
exemption)



Inland Revenue
Te Tari Taake

Online Services update

StudyLink is continuing to focus on enhancements to our online services in 2014 to promote year-round use and improve the client experience. We have changes being implemented in June, September and November this year to increase and enhance usability of Apply Online and MyStudyLink as well as making re-applying for returning students more efficient.

The first of these releases went live on 29 June, which delivered enhancements to MyStudyLink including log-in re-direction, an application progress bar and homepage redesign.

The log in re-direction will mean that full account holders will be taken straight to the MyStudyLink Homepage.

The redesign of our homepage allows students to quickly access key information such as next payment details and application status as soon as they log in, rather than having to navigate to several different pages.

The progress bar will allow students to visually see where their applications are in the application lifecycle. Students will be able to clearly see what is required to help us move their application along or when they can relax and let us take care of the processing.

Keep an eye out for information about the other upcoming enhancements in the September issue of StudyLink News.





Second semester

StudyLink is looking to continue the success of the 2013/14 peak season as second semester approaches. We have now emailed more than 18,500 students with a single semester application that ends between May and July.

Students who are continuing with the same course at the same provider can email us to request a Re-VoS to confirm their new study details rather than having to complete a new application. This initiative will reduce the number of unnecessary applications for students returning to study.

Information explaining what students need to do to get their finances for second semester sorted is also available on our website.

A second email campaign is scheduled for release in the first week of July, and will be sent to all those who are yet to act on the earlier message.

You can support us by encouraging students to check their MyStudyLink account to confirm their study dates and follow these guidelines on reapplying for second semester financial assistance.

Useful resources

SEVEN STEPS TO STUDENT FINANCES

Our application process is emailed to all students after they apply online.

It explains the different stages in the application process and the services available to help students track their applications' progress.

Many students have told us they find the chart helpful, so if you'd like a poster of the Seven steps to student finance please log your request under the 'Brochure Request' option in SAKBase. Please also include the number of posters needed and the physical address to send these to. If you aren't a SAKBase user you can email us on StudyLink_Helpline@msd.govt.nz or contact us on 0508 885 885 and we can discuss setting you up as a user for the SAKBase tool.

The chart is also available in a range of our printed material, as well as online at www.studylink.govt.nz/financing-study/making-your-application/the-application-process.html.

SEVEN STEPS TO YOUR STUDENT FINANCES

EXAMS FINISH



STEP 1 – Apply at www.studylink.govt.nz for your financial assistance



STEP 2 – We will start processing your application
We'll check the information you give us and get things underway. You don't need to do anything at this point unless you hear from us.



STEP 3 – We will contact you

You'll receive a letter telling you what we need next. Make sure you read it, sign and return it (if required) and send us any documents we ask for.



STEP 4 – Use MyStudyLink to track your application:

- › check to see if your documents have been received
- › check your Student Allowance and Student Loan status
- › view and accept your Student Loan Contract
- › view and update your personal details
- › apply for your course-related costs
- › get your mail.

Please note: MyStudyLink only displays payments and information relating to Student Loan, Student Allowance and scholarships.



STEP 5 – We check your details with your education provider

You need to make sure you're fully enrolled before this can happen.



STEP 6 – We will finish processing your application

We will send you a letter letting you know what you qualify for and when your payments will start.

COURSE STARTS

STEP 7 – Your payments can start

The earliest your payments can start is in the second week of your course. This is because we make payments in arrears.

REMEMBER: if you have applied for Unemployment Benefit Student Hardship, we'll write to you soon to let you know what happens next. You need to allow enough time for all seven steps to be completed, so apply as soon as you can. If you don't apply on time or don't give us all the information we need, we can't pay you on time.

Save time – Get it done online www.studylink.govt.nz

New Zealand Government

STUDYLINK
New Zealand
Ministry of Education

REMINDERS

RE-SENDING PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Payment schedules that you receive through the VoS Online site are available on the website for fourteen days.

If you wish to store them for future reference we recommend that you download these from the website. StudyLink only stores files for three months before they are archived and we may not be able to re-send these to you outside of this timeframe.

Want to know more?
Contact the StudyLink Helpline through SAKBase.

VOLUNTARY COMPLETION FILES

Education providers are able to submit additional completion files to provide semester one results to the Ministry of Education (MoE) in addition to those required for the scheduled Single Data Return (SDR).

Doing this can help reduce the number of Statement of Satisfactory Progress (SSP) forms that may be generated for semester two applications prior to the scheduled September SDR being submitted.

Please note that this process is voluntary and it is up to individual providers to determine the benefits of submitting an additional file.

If you have any technical questions regarding processing and updating your SDR files please contact the MoE Sector Service Desk either via email sector.servicedesk@minedu.govt.nz or phone 0800 422 599.

For more information, or if you have any questions, contact the StudyLink Helpline on studylink_helpline@msd.govt.nz.

From the Helpline

CROSS-YEAR ENROLMENT CHECK

The StudyLink Helpline will be conducting a cross-year enrolment check that we aim to have completed by September.

The check is used to identify any students who are studying cross-year, e.g. semester two 2014 to semester one 2015, but do not have a vacation period (i.e. for the Christmas/New Year/Summer School period) reported in their latest VoS response. We'll be contacting education providers to ask them to confirm whether the student will remain in study, or if a study break of over three weeks should be included.

To limit the number of students we'll contact you for, and to ensure that they do not use their Student Allowance and/or Student Loan entitlement on periods which they are ineligible for, please remember to include any applicable vacation periods in your VoS responses.

These breaks should start from the Monday after the student goes on break, and conclude the day before they return, for example Monday 17 November 2014 to Friday 23 January 2015.

If you have any questions, please contact the StudyLink Helpline at studylink_helpline@msd.govt.nz or 0508 885 885.



BANK ACCOUNT REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENT LOAN APPLICATIONS

It is timely to remind all education providers that all provider bank accounts, to which compulsory fee payments are made, are held by StudyLink and are not required to be entered by a student at any stage of an application for Student Loan or Student Allowance, by a student.

The only bank account required during the application process is one nominated by the student for the purpose of receiving their personal entitlements (Student Allowance, and Student Loan living costs, course-related costs).

Education provider bank account numbers are already known to StudyLink and all Student Loan fee payments are paid direct to those accounts.