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Student Loans for Higher Education in Wales:
Financial Year 2017-18

Introduction

This statistics publication (SP) provides statistics on loan outlays, repayments and borrower repayment status for Welsh domiciled students studying in Higher Education (HE) in the UK and EU students studying in Wales. The figures cover Income Contingent Loans (ICR), which were introduced in 1998/99, for financial years up to and including 2017-18.

Key points

- The amount lent to HE students in financial year 2017-18 was £505.7m, an increase of 15.3% when compared with 2016-17. *Table 1 and Chart 1*.

- The total lent in financial year 2017-18 for the new Postgraduate Loan was £18.6 million. *Table 1 and Chart 1.*

- Net repayments posted to customer accounts amounted to £114.4m in financial year 2017-18, an increase of 14.9% compared with 2016-17. Repayments included voluntary repayments to the value of £15.4m, an increase of 28.0% compared with 2016-17. *Table 1.*

- The total loan balance at the end of financial year 2017-18 was £4.1 billion, an increase of 11.9% when compared with 2016-17. *Table 1, Chart 2.*

- With the entry of the 2018 repayment cohort into repayment in April 2018, there were 222,900 borrowers liable for repayment and still owing (an increase of 6.8% compared to April 2017). There were a further 64,000 borrowers not yet liable for repayment bringing the total still owing to 286,800. *Table 3.*

- The average Loan Balance for the 2018 repayment cohort on entry to repayment was £21,520. This is a £2,520 increase on the previous year average of £19,000. *Table 5A(iii) and Chart 5*

- 47,345 (17.4%) of the borrowers who had become liable to repay had fully repaid their loan. *Table 3A and Chart 6.*

Contents (click for hyperlink)

Definitions

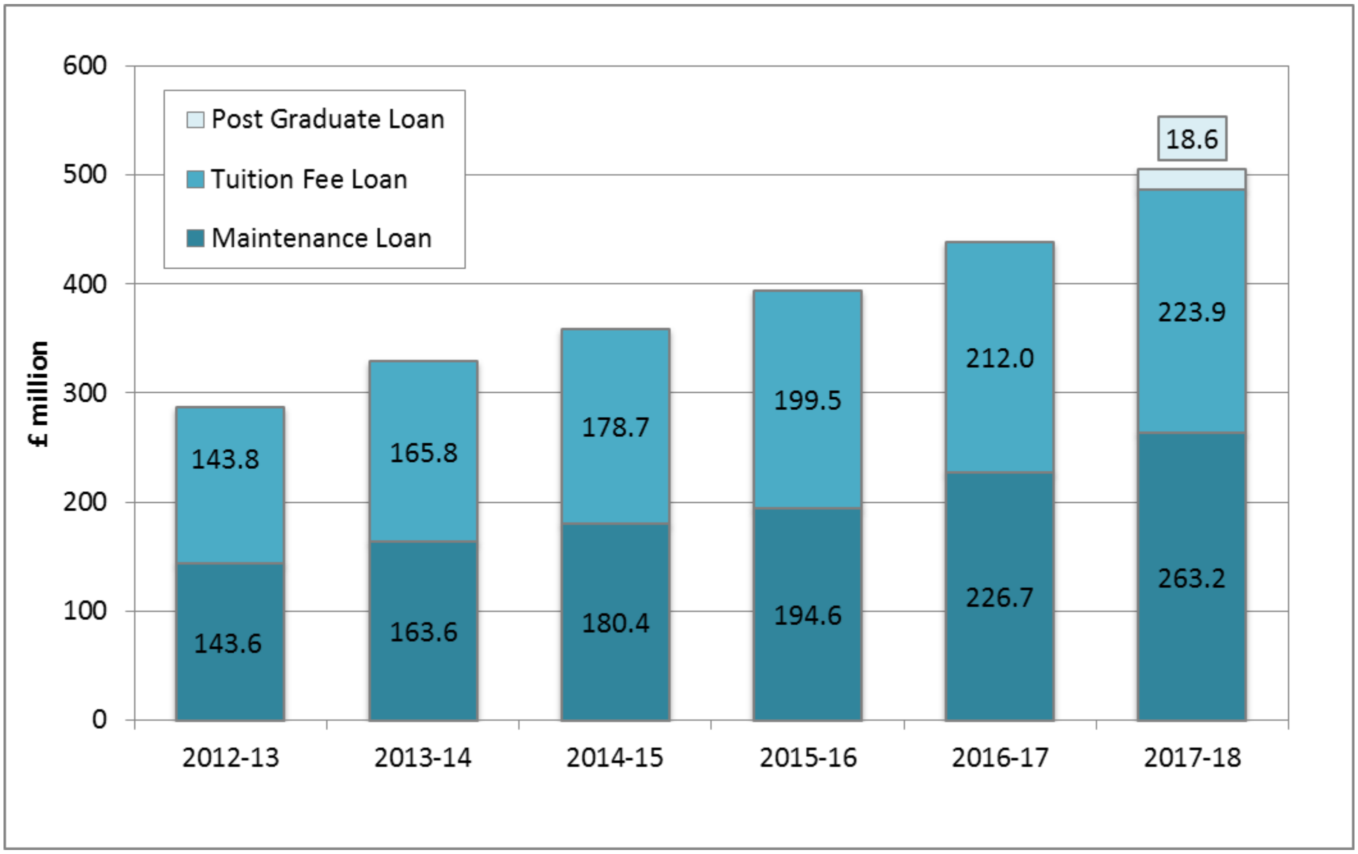
The following is a glossary of terms:

Account repaid in full	The borrower has repaid the account in full without it being cancelled or written off. It includes accounts with trivial balance write-offs. Also includes accounts closed under the Repayment of Teacher Loans (RTL) Scheme.
Balance transfers	Transfers which can occur between different portfolios of loans.
Cancelled loan	The borrower no longer has any liability to repay as provided for in the loans regulations. A borrower's liability shall be cancelled: • On the death of the borrower; • On reaching the age cancellation criteria for their loan (age 65 or after 25 or 30 years depending on the type of loan and year taken out); or • If borrower is in receipt of a disability related benefit and permanently unfit for work.
In arrears	Borrowers who have at least one loan on which repayments are overdue. Arrears arise when a borrower moves overseas and fails to repay SLC according to their repayment schedule. Additionally any borrower who moves overseas and fails to provide the information required to agree the appropriate repayment schedule will also be placed in arrears.
Income Contingent Loan	Also known as Income Contingent Repayment (ICR) Loan. Introduced in 1998, repayment is 9% of income above the income threshold. Includes ICR Maintenance Loans, Tuition Fee Loans, Hardship Loans and part-time loans. Hardship Loans and part-time loans ceased to be issued after 2003/04.
Income Threshold	The income level at which borrowers liable to repay will make repayments. In the case of repayments deducted by employers under Pay As You Earn (PAYE) the term "earnings threshold" is also used.
Liable to repay	The borrower has reached their Statutory Repayment Due Date (SRDD). See definition of SRDD.
Losses through phishing	Losses through phishing are write offs for loan payments re-directed by a fraudster that would otherwise have gone to a student. Phishing is a fraudulent attempt to obtain from customers information such as usernames, passwords and bank details by masquerading as a reliable entity in an electronic communication such as e-mail or instant messaging. If a student responds to the phishing email, payments that would otherwise go to that student may be redirected by the fraudster.
Maintenance Loan	Maintenance loans are loans to cover living costs.

New borrowers	Borrowers who had no loans at the beginning of the financial year and took out new loans during the financial year.
No live employment at Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC)	Borrowers in the UK tax system where HMRC does not have a record of any current employment when the data cut is taken for these statistics and SLC does not yet have information to determine an alternative status.
Non-UK EU Borrower	A borrower who was originally domiciled in an EU country prior to entering higher education in Wales. Such borrowers are eligible from academic year 2006/07 and for Tuition Fee Loan only.
Overdue Debt	That part of the Loan Balance that is overdue for those borrowers who are in arrears.
Partial Cancellation	Partial cancellation is a policy introduced by the Welsh Government for students receiving Maintenance Loans in 2010/11 or after, whereby a cancellation of up to £1,500 may be applied on receipt of the first repayment against the first of those loans.
Postgraduate Loan	Postgraduate loans are loans towards tuition and living costs.
Refunds of Income Contingent Repayments	Where over-repayment is identified, a refund is provided to the borrower by SLC.
Repayment Cohort	A borrower is placed in a single repayment cohort. In some circumstances the repayment cohort may change, i.e. withdrawal from course of study. The repayment cohort is based on the year of the earliest Statutory Repayment Due Date (SRDD). See definition of SRDD below.
Repayment Plan	From 1 September 2012, the ICR Loan scheme has been separated into two different repayment arrangements called Repayment Plan 1 and Repayment Plan 2. They differ in the earnings threshold used to trigger repayment and the interest rate applied to outstanding balances. Repayment Plan 1 is applicable to students who started their course before 1 September 2012 while Repayment Plan 2 is applicable to students who started their course from 1 September 2012 onwards.
Statutory Repayment Due Date (SRDD)	The point a borrower becomes liable to begin repaying a loan, the April after graduating or otherwise leaving their course. After the SRDD borrowers are required to make repayments if their income is above the threshold.
Tuition Fee Loan	Tuition Fee Loans are loans to cover all or part of the cost of tuition. They are paid directly to the Learning Provider.
Written off loan	The borrower remains liable to repay but recovery is deemed unlikely by the loan administrator or not possible by legal judgement.

Statistical commentary

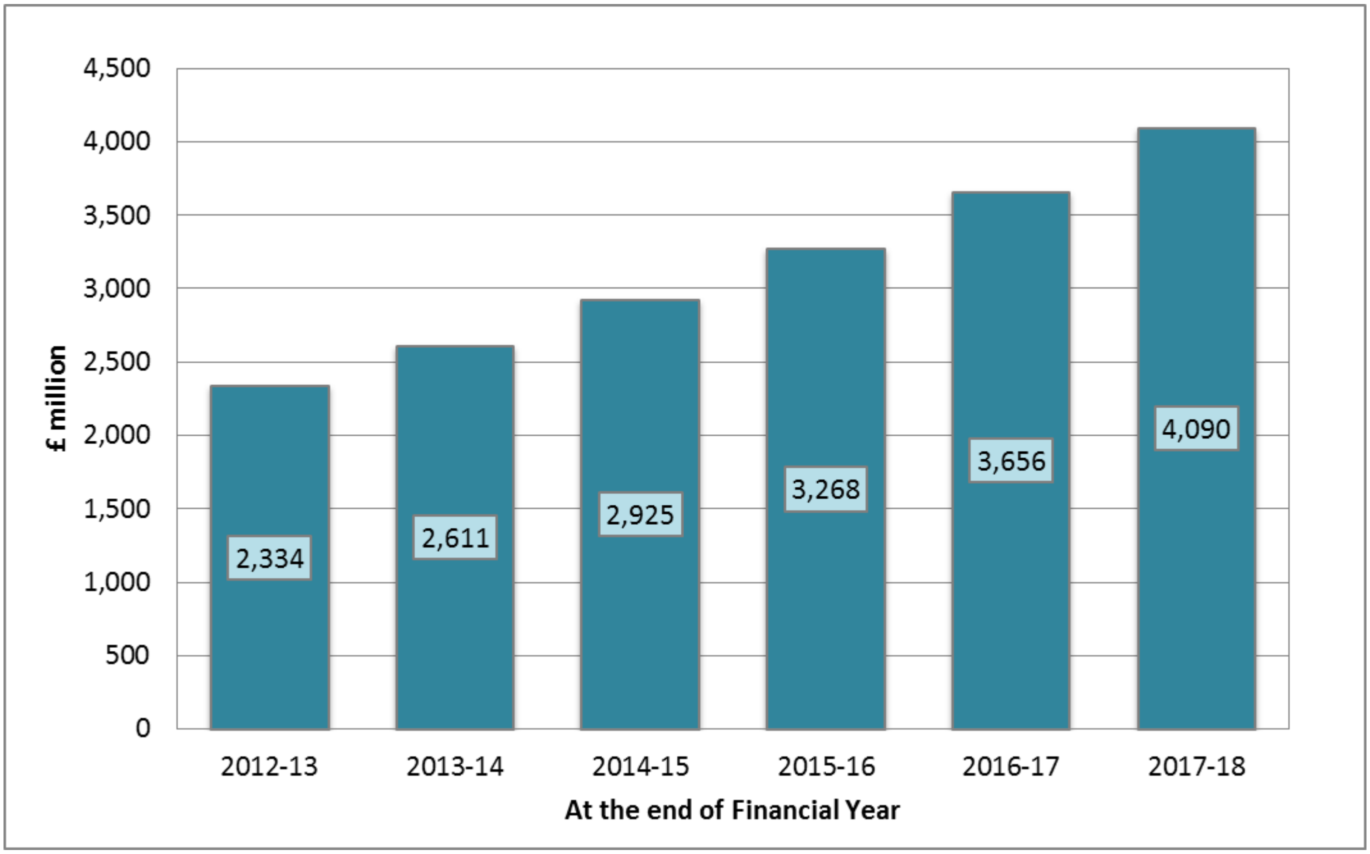
Chart 1: Total amount lent in financial years 2012-13 to 2017-18



The total amount lent in financial year 2017-18 was £505.7 million, which is an increase of 15.3% when compared with financial year 2016-17.

The amount lent in financial year 2017-18 for the new Postgraduate Masters was £18.6 million.

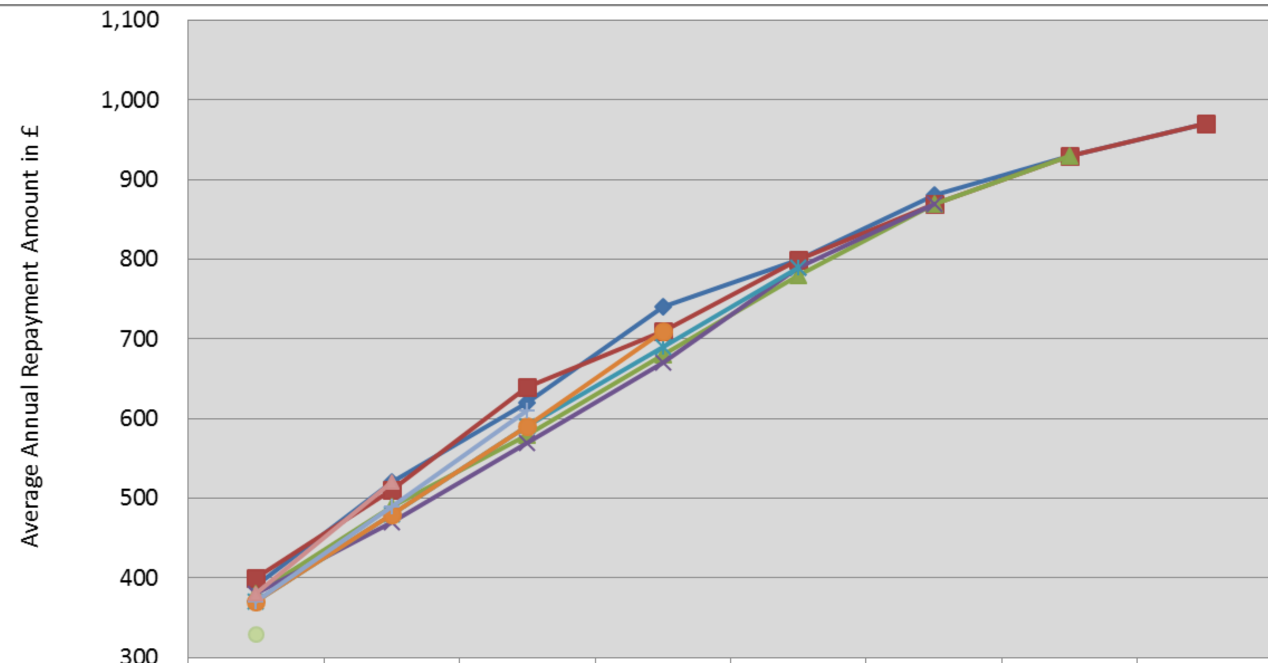
Chart 2: Total balance of income contingent student loans at the end of financial years 2012-13 to 2017-18



The total Loan Balance at the end of financial year 2017-18 is £4.1 billion, which is an increase of 11.9% when compared with 2016-17.

At this point in time the new lending and the interest added outweighs the repayments being made by those borrowers who are now liable to repay.

Chart 3: Average annual amount repaid by ICR Student Loan borrowers making repayments via HMRC (repayment cohorts 2008 to 2016)

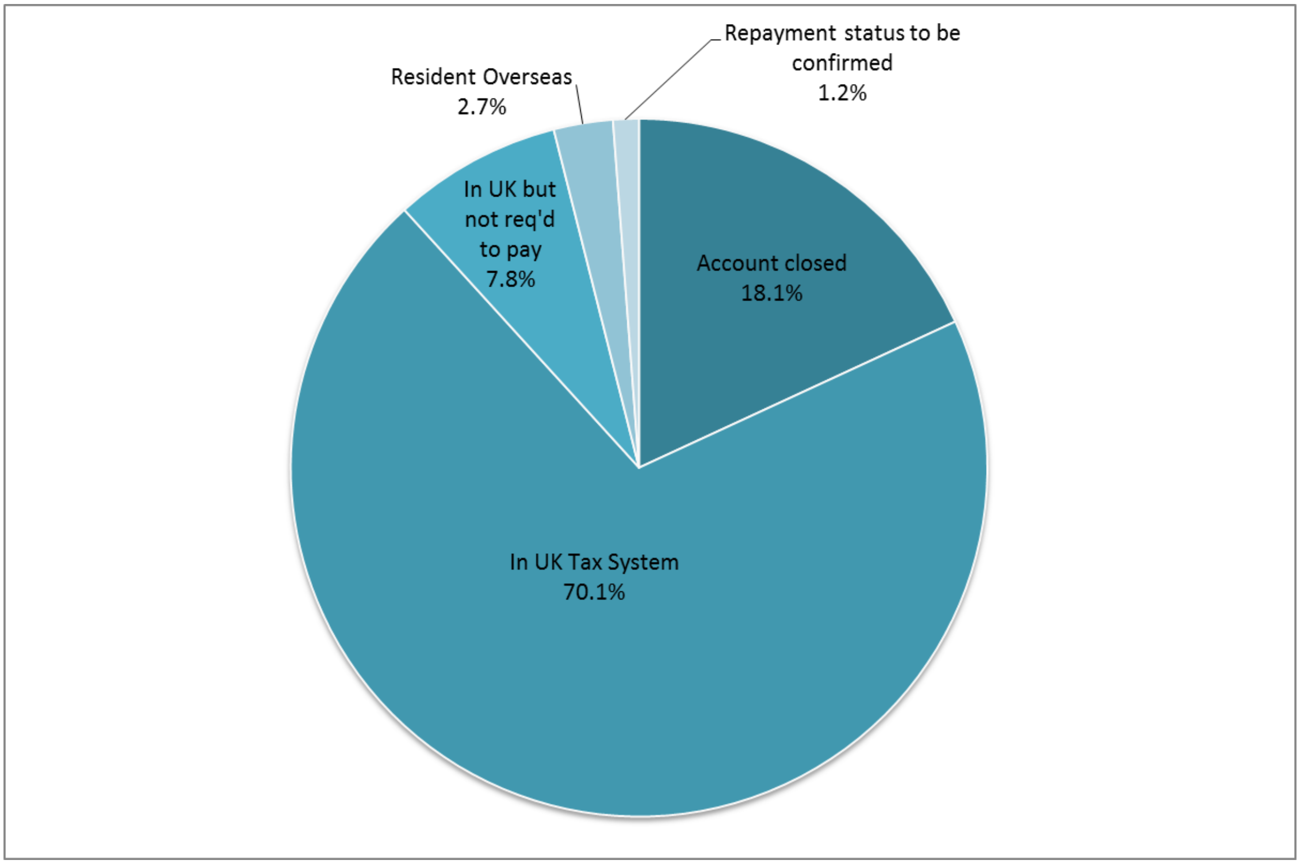


	1st year of repayment	2nd year of repayment	3rd year of repayment	4th year of repayment	5th year of repayment	6th year of repayment	7th year of repayment	8th year of repayment
2008 Cohort	390	520	620	740	800	880	930	970
2009 Cohort	400	510	640	710	800	870	930	970
2010 Cohort	380	490	580	680	780	870	930	
2011 Cohort	380	470	570	670	790	870		
2012 Cohort	370	480	590	690	790			
2013 Cohort	370	480	590	710				
2014 Cohort	370	490	610					
2015 Cohort	380	520						
2016 Cohort	330							

The average amount repaid increases sharply in the first and second years of repayment, followed by a more gradual increase over the following years. The increase is caused by income growth in the years after leaving HE. It can also be seen that the average repayment in the first year of repayment increased gradually until 2009 and has decreased slightly since then.

The most recent data points for financial years 2012-13 onwards show the effect of the increased income threshold which reduces the repayment amounts if the borrower income does not increase to the same extent. For later years there will be a downward trend in the average as borrowers start to fully repay. At the point they fully repay they are more likely to be repaying at a level above the average of those left in the cohort at that point.

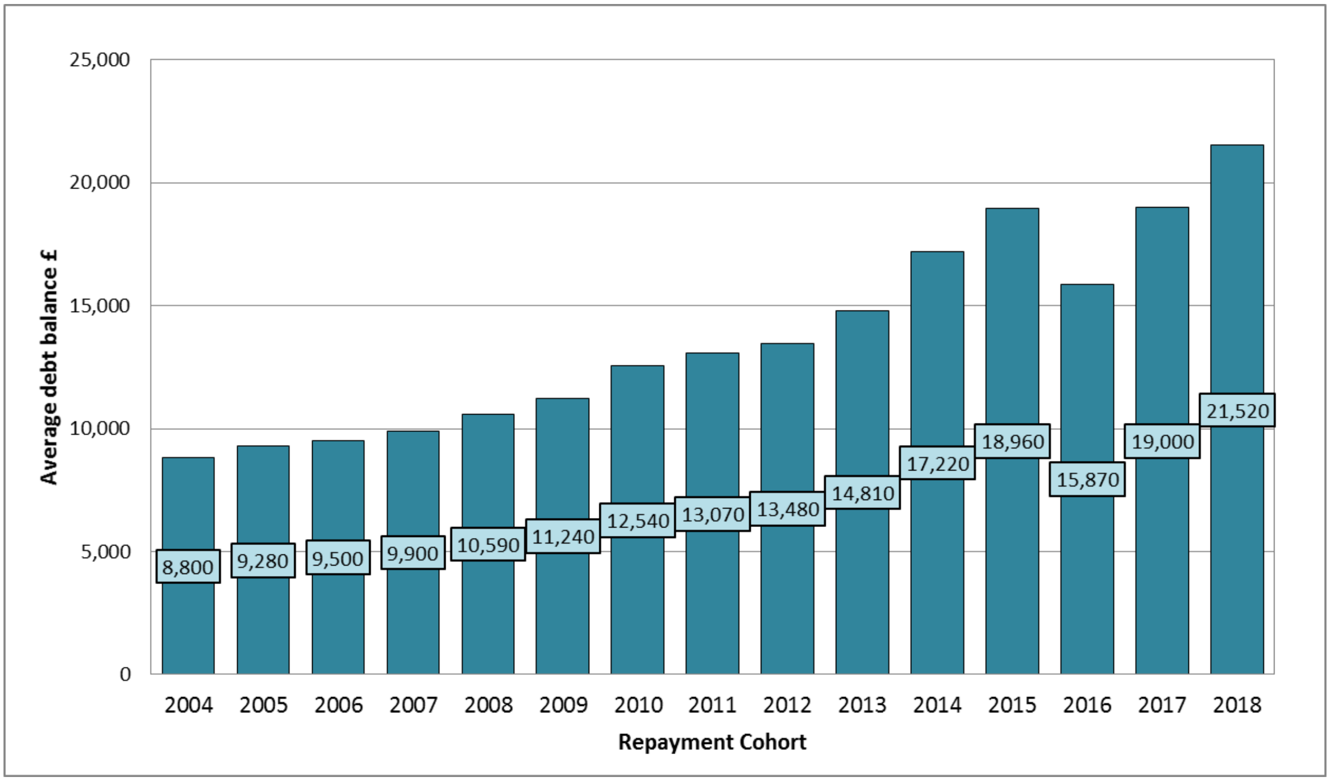
Chart 4: Borrowers by repayment status



This chart covers all borrowers in all repayment cohorts as at 30 April 2018. 17.4% no longer retain any Loan Balance mainly due to full repayment. 70.1% are in the UK tax system.

Table 3A shows how the number and percentage of borrowers in each repayment status varies by cohort.

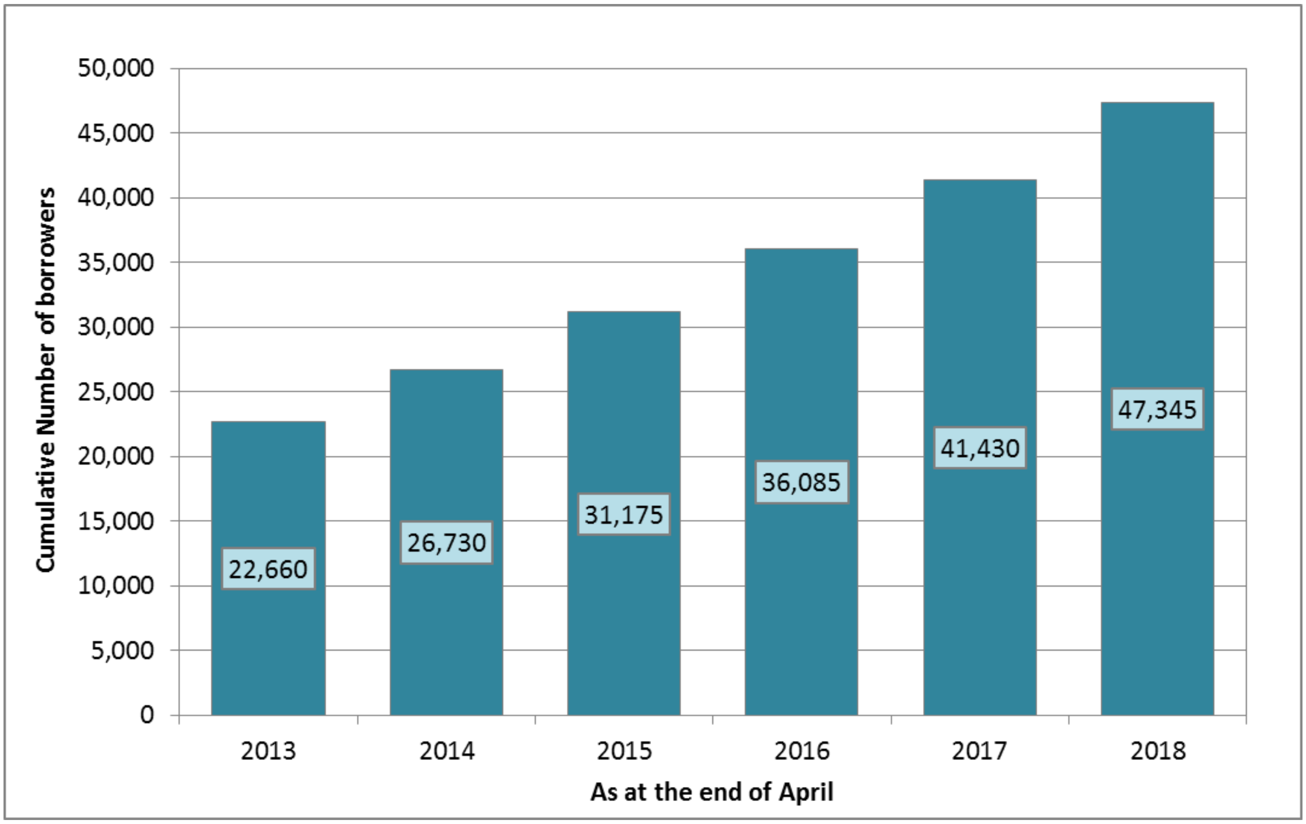
Chart 5: Average Loan Balance on entry into repayment by repayment cohort



This chart shows the average Loan Balance for borrowers at the point where their liability to repay first began.

The average Loan Balance reflects the amount of loan available whilst studying and the number of years that the borrower chose to take loans for.

Chart 6: Cumulative number of borrowers who have fully repaid



As at 30 April 2018 there are 47,345 borrowers who have fully repaid. See Table 3A(i).

Please note, the figures at the end of the previous years are taken from the equivalent table in the previous year's publications.

Data sources

1. This publication uses data from a single source: administrative data from the SLC Customer Ledger Account Servicing System (CLASS). For details of the administrative sources see the published Statement of administrative sources published on the SLC website using the following link:
http://www.slc.co.uk/media/5450/slc_statistics_-_statement_of_administrative_sources.pdf

Data quality

2. SLC has published the Quality Guidelines that it follows. As per those guidelines a Quality Plan is produced for each publication. The Quality Plan stipulates two stages of Quality Assurance. Data is extracted from the administrative systems then reviewed using a standard Quality Assurance checklist. The statistical tables created using that data are quality assured using the Statistical Quality guidelines. Further details can be found by following the link below:
http://www.slc.co.uk/media/5403/slc_statistics_-_quality_guidelines.pdf

Data uses

3. SLC has published a Uses Made document for Official statistics. Further details can be found by following the link: http://www.slc.co.uk/media/5454/slc_official_statistics_-_use_made.pdf

Revisions

4. Revisions within the data are denoted with an [r]. Some of these revisions are carried over from the previous year's publication and are, therefore, not revisions to this year's publication. Further details can be found by following the link:
http://www.slc.co.uk/media/5449/slc_statistics_-_revisions_policy.pdf

Changes included in this Statistics Publication

5. Changes have been made to the Table 4 section of this 2017-18 publication. Table 4C now contains data relating to Welsh-domiciled borrowers who are making scheduled repayments directly to SLC. Table 4D represents EU borrowers who are making scheduled repayments to SLC. Table 4E focuses on Welsh-domiciled borrowers making voluntary repayments to SLC and Table 4F, on EU-domiciled making voluntary repayments to SLC.

Notes on policy

6. The statistics on student loans in this release were compiled by the Student Loans Company (SLC). They include public sector loans only, which are repaid on an Income Contingent basis. Responsibility for the Income Contingent Loan book was transferred to the Welsh Government in 2006.

Student Support arrangements from 2012/13

7. New entrants from Academic Year 2012/13 may have been eligible for a means-tested Assembly Learning Grant of up to £5,000 and had their Maintenance Loan reduced by £0.60 of every £1 of Assembly Learning Grant entitlement from the maximum Maintenance Loans up to a reduction of £2,844. The Assembly Learning Grant was renamed to Welsh Government Learning Grant in 2014/15. In 2017/18 the maximum for this grant is £5,161 of which will be reduced by £0.50 for every £1 of grant received, up to a maximum £2,580 reduction.

8. New entrants from 2012/13 studying in any publicly funded UK university or college were subject to variable tuition fees and were entitled to a Tuition Fee Loan of up to £4,296. In 2017/18 the maximum for this loan is £4,046 for those with fees of £9,000 and £4,296 for those with fees of £9,250.

9. New entrants from 2012/13 who were Welsh domiciled and studying in any publicly funded UK university or college (or EU students studying in Wales), subject to the new higher fees were also entitled to a new Tuition Fee Grant up to a maximum of £5,535 to make up the difference in fee costs of up to a maximum of £9,000. In 2017/18 the maximum value of this grant is £4,954 (the same for those with fees of £9,250)

10. Where a designated course is provided wholly by a private institution, students domiciled in Wales are eligible for a Tuition Fee Loan of up to £6,165 (no Tuition Fee Grant is available).

Repayment of Income Contingent Loans

11. Repayments are at the rate of 9% of income above the income threshold. Apart from a few exceptions, where borrowers live overseas or have small balances, SLC does not collect monies from borrowers with Income Contingent Loans – this is done through the taxation system.

12. Over-repayments can occur due to the fact that the employer does not know the loan balance and simply makes the 9% deduction in the pay period. The employer is instructed to stop deductions once the SLC knows that the customer has fully repaid. Hence, with this process there is always a residual over-repayment by the customer which is refunded by the SLC. Another type of refund is where deductions were made in one or more pay period but the total earnings over the tax year are less than the earnings threshold.

13. From December 2009 a new repayment option was introduced which would allow those borrowers who were nearing end of repayment to switch to direct debit repayments. In doing so, borrowers avoid the possibility of over repaying their loan.

14. Students who took out a Maintenance Loan from Student Finance Wales in academic year 2010/11 or after may receive a Partial Cancellation of up to £1,500 from the Welsh Government. The cancellation is applied on receipt of the first repayment against the loan. Hence, the cancellations appeared for the first time in financial year 2011-12 after completion of academic year 2010/11. If a student has loans for more than one academic year the cancellation is only applied to the first year's loan even where the resultant cancellation is limited by the remaining balance to an amount lower than £1,500.

Repayment Plan 1

15. Students who began their course prior to 1 September 2012 are on Repayment Plan 1. Repayments for Repayment Plan 1 loans are at the rate of 9% of income above the income thresholds shown below:

Period Applicable	6th April '00 to 5th April '05	6th April '05 to 5th April '12	6th April '12 to 5th April '13	6th April '13 to 5th April '14	6th April '14 to 5th April '15	6th April '15 to 5th April '16	6th April '16 to 5th April '17	6th April '17 to 5th April '18
Annual Repayment Threshold	**£ 10,000**	**£ 15,000**	**£ 15,795**	**£ 16,365**	**£ 16,910**	**£ 17,335**	**£ 17,495**	**£ 17,775**

16. The Repayment Plan 1 interest charge is set each year from 30 September to 31 August. It is affected by a cap at the bank base rate of +1%. The interest rate is the lower of the Retail Prices Index (RPI) at the preceding March, or 1% above the highest base rate of a nominated group of banks calculated regularly during the year. The interest rate does not affect the monthly repayment amount of Income Contingent Loans; it will affect the time taken to repay. The RPI at March 2015 was 0.9% so the cap did not apply between 1 September 2015 and 31 August 2016 where the interest rate was 0.9%. The RPI at March 2016 was 1.6% so the cap was applied from 1 September 2016. The interest rate was initially set at 1.25% because the bank base rate was 0.25% at that point.

Repayment Plan 2

17. Students who begin their course on or after 1 September 2012 is on Repayment Plan 2 and are subject to a different income threshold for repayment which is £21,000 from April 2016. They make repayments at 9% of their income above the threshold. Borrowers are normally liable to make repayments from the April after they leave their course.

18. The Repayment Plan 2 interest charge is set each year from 30 September to 31 August. The interest rate whilst studying is RPI+3% and remains so up until the April after leaving the course. Once borrowers are due to repay, interest will be variable and income contingent.

19. Those earning £21,000 or less will be charged at the rate of inflation (RPI), interest rates for those earning between £21,000 and £41,000 will be on a sliding scale from RPI to RPI+3%; and those earning £41,000 or more will accrue interest at RPI+3%. Anybody finishing or leaving their course before April 2018 is charged RPI only from the April after they leave until April 2018.

Interest rates

20. The annual Retail Price Index from March to March is always used as the basis for the interest rate for both types of student loan from the following September to August. However, additionally for Repayment Plan 1 ICR loans, the interest rate cannot be more than 1% higher than the base rate of major banks.

Period Applicable	1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015	1 September 2015 to 31 August 2016	1 September 2016 to 31 August 2017	1 September 2017 to 31 August 2018
RPI (@March)	2.5%	0.9%	1.6%	3.1%
Maximum Interest Rate (Plan 2)	5.5%	3.9%	4.6%	6.1%

Variable Interest Rates

21. A Variable Interest Rate (VIR) is an interest rate dependent upon the borrower's earnings once they become liable to repay. It was a system introduced for loans taken out by England and Wales-funded entrants from 2012/13 onwards. The loans are known as Repayment Plan 2 loans. The interest rates are based on the UK Retail Price Index (RPI) plus (VIR) and are added to the amount owed from the day of first payment until the loan is repaid in full. The RPI part of the interest rate is updated once a year in September, using the RPI from March of that year. Until the Statutory Repayment Due Date (SRDD) is reached the VIR part of the interest is 3%. The earliest SRDD for Plan 2 loans was April 2016 so the first tax year where the interest actually started varying was 2016-17.

22. Once the SRDD is reached the interest rate is dependent on the borrower's earnings. Borrowers who do not respond to requests for information or evidence become 'Non-compliant' and incur the highest interest rates of RPI + 3% irrespective of income, until all required information is received. The table below indicates the variable part of the interest in force at the end of tax-year 2016-17:

Year Ending	Variable Part of Interest Rate Incurred					Of those incurrring 3%	
	0%	0.01-0.99%	1.00-1.99%	2.00-2.99%	3%	*Compliant*	*Non-Compliant*
2016-17	78.2%	14.6%	4.2%	0.9%	2.1%	22.4%	77.6%

23. The majority of Plan 2 borrowers in tax year 2016-17 earned less than the Plan 2 earnings threshold of £21,000 per year and so incurred an interest rate of RPI + 0%. The majority of borrowers charged the highest percentage of VIR were borrowers who were non-compliant at the end of the year.

Related statistical publications

24. SLC also produces the Official Statistics: 'Student Support for Higher Education in Wales'. This publication provides statistics on Welsh domiciled and EU domiciled applicants studying in Wales, which have been approved for student support by academic year of application. The latest publication can be found at: http://www.slc.co.uk/official-statistics/student-loans-debt-and-repayment/wales.aspx

25. For information on student support arrangements in place for Welsh domiciled students and EU students studying in Wales, visit the Student Finance Wales website: http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

26. Link to Welsh Government Student Finance Statistics website: http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/post16ed/student-finance/?lang=en

Factors affecting time series

27. The number of HE borrowers becoming liable to repay for the first time in April 2016 (the 2016 repayment cohort) was uncharacteristically large at 24,435, an increase of 83% compared with April 2015. This increase was explained by many post-2012 entrants to HE, who would ordinarily have entered repayment earlier (with loans for fewer years of study), entering repayment later than is normally the case in April 2016. The 2017 repayment cohort is more reflective of the full- and part-time Repayment Plan 2 loans (paid out under the post-2012 fee regime).

28. The 2016 repayment cohort is atypical within the time series. Borrowers who withdrew from their courses in 2012/13 or 2013/14 would normally have been placed in the 2014 and 2015 cohorts respectively but repayment was deferred because the Plan 2 repayment regime did not begin until April 2016. Hence, the 2016 cohort includes three years' worth of year 1 withdrawals rather than just one year's worth. The 2014 and 2015 cohorts are also atypical because they will not contain the usual number of withdrawal students. Hence, the typical cohorts are 2013 and 2017 with the three intervening cohorts of 2014, 2015 and 2016 being atypical. The impact would be as follows compared to typical years:

    i. Higher average balance per person in 2014 and 2015 and lower average balance per person in 2016 (Table 5).

    ii. Higher likelihood of being in a repaying category in 2014 and 2015 and lower likelihood of being in a repaying category in 2016 (Table 3).

    iii. Higher average repayment amount per person (Table 4) in 2014 and 2015 and lower average repayment per person in 2016.

29. Note however, that there are additional factors in 2016 to the above impacts caused by the nature of Plan 2 accounts. 83% of the 2016 cohort borrowers have Plan 2 full time accounts. The factors are:

    iv. The average balance for Plan 2 borrowers will be lowered by the inclusion of part time borrowers with lower borrowing than full time students

    v. The average repayment amount for Plan 2 borrowers will be lower due to the higher repayment threshold

30. Additional repayment status verification processes which include checks with DWP for borrowers on benefits have lead to a modified profile across certain repayment categories as shown in Table 3. Borrowers now move more quickly from the "No live employment" categories into the category called "Status that does not require repayment at this point". The effect is more prominent for the new cohorts than for the old ones because the old cases only need to enter the new processes when they move out of live employment.

31. The 2016 repayment cohort had an average loan balance on entry into repayment that was lower than the 2015 cohort a year earlier. The key causes of this drop were: a) those students who started after 1 September 2012 who were on short courses or who withdrew, who are part of the 2016 cohort rather than the cohort directly after they finished study; and b) those part time students who took out Tuition Fee Loans and have now finished their studies or withdrawn from study. The average for the 2017 repayment cohort resumes the upward trend because it only includes one year's worth of students on short courses or who withdrew from study.

32. The first two repayment cohorts (2000 and 2001) are atypical because they will comprise borrowers on one year courses (such as HNC and postgraduate Initial Teacher Training) or they will be students who dropped out before completing three years of study. The first repayment cohort containing graduates from three year courses is the 2002 cohort.

33. From April 2005 the Income Contingent Repayment threshold changed from £10,000 to £15,000. Those borrowers prior to April 2005, who were earning more than £10,000 and less than £15,000, would cease repaying until their income reached the new threshold. The threshold remained at £15,000 until April 2012 when it increased to £15,795 and it has been increased every year since in line with inflation.

34. From 2009, SLC have been taking action against those borrowers who moved overseas and did not provide SLC with adequate information to allow the processing of repayments. One of the measures is to place borrowers in arrears so that legal action may be brought against them. This necessary change in the process led to an increase in the number of borrowers residing overseas and in arrears. It should be noted that the figure will also include UK borrowers who have moved overseas after completing their studies.

35. The 2010 cohort of EU borrowers is the first significant group of EU borrowers who have come into repayment, comprising of 2006/07 entrants on three year courses. The 2011 cohort includes some 2006/07 entrants on four year courses and those who have repeated a year. Academic Year 2006/07 was the first year that European Union domiciled students could be awarded tuition fee student loans. Therefore EU borrowers in earlier repayment cohorts will mostly comprise of those borrowers on one or two year courses or those who have dropped out of their course.

Notes for users

Repayments via Self-Assessment (Table 1)

36. It has been necessary to estimate some of the repayments made via self-assessment in the financial years 2016-17 and 2017-18 in order to maintain a comparable time series with earlier years. This is due to some information not being received until after the usual capture date for table 1. The estimates are based on actual data for self-assessment repayments posted in the first weeks of the next financial year. Where figures have been impacted, they are clearly marked with an 'e' for estimate.

Repayment Status (Table 3)

37. Some of the repayment status categories in Table 3 are the result of information received from HMRC. This information is received on a monthly basis, giving the up to date employment status of borrowers. Borrowers are grouped as follows:

    vi. If HMRC cannot identify the borrower in their records from the information provided by SLC the borrower will be in the category of "Not Currently Repaying - Further Information Being Sought".

    vii. If HMRC identifies a status such as on Incapacity Benefit then they will be placed in the category of "does not require repayment at this point". However the vast majority in that category are placed there by subsequent SLC processing (checks with DWP to find that the borrower is on Benefits or direct contact with the borrower to establish their status). Many of the borrowers in this category have been found to have returned to study.

    viii. If they are in their first year of liability and it shows they are in employment then they will be in the category of "awaiting first tax year return to determine if earnings above threshold".

    ix. If HMRC have found the borrower but there is no employment record at the end of the latest month they are in the category of "In UK tax system – No Live Employment at HMRC".

    x. Once the borrower has been in the tax system for one tax year HMRC will be able to pass on returns from the borrower's employer(s) to show if the borrower is above or below the earnings threshold for repayment. HMRC notify SLC of repayments deducted by employers during a year once employers provide those details to HMRC on their annual returns after the end of the tax year. So it is only when that happens, that SLC will know if a borrower has been above or below the earnings threshold. The borrower will then be shown in the appropriate category.

xi. However, if the borrower has ceased to have an employment record they will revert to being in "In UK tax system – No Live Employment at HMRC" because that is a more up to date indicator than the post tax year earnings record.

38. The profile of EU domiciled borrowers is different to that of UK domiciled borrowers for a number of reasons: firstly only those who have worked in the UK will have a National Insurance number. Secondly, they are more likely to go overseas after HE than UK domiciled borrowers. Although the profiles are different it should be noted that the majority of borrowers who are known to be resident overseas are UK nationals.

Repayments via HMRC (Tables 4A and 4B)

39. The average repayment amount dropped for all repayment cohorts except the 2004 cohort between financial year 2004-05 and 2005-06 due to the increase in the income threshold from £10,000 to £15,000. The growth in earnings in Year 2 of repayment for the 2004 cohort was enough to offset the effect of the income threshold change.

Repayments via direct repayment channel to SLC (Table 4C/D/E)

40. The average repayment is significantly higher than repayments made via HMRC (Table 4B). This is because some borrowers have chosen to make direct repayments to repay their balance in full or make large lump sum repayments to reduce the balance. Direct repayments to SLC include voluntary repayments (Table 4E) which can be made by borrowers who are not yet due to repay, and additional voluntary repayments from borrowers who are also making repayments via HMRC.

    Direct repayments from borrowers before they become liable to repay (typically voluntary repayments) have been much larger for the 2016, 2017 and 2018 repayment cohorts, than for previous cohorts. Repayment cohorts prior to 2016 were predominantly borrowers with Repayment Plan 1 loans, whereas repayment cohorts 2016, 2017 and 2018 are predominantly made up of Repayment Plan 2 borrowers (who are charged a higher interest rate whilst studying). Direct payments also include payments from EU Tuition Fee Loan borrowers who are living overseas, who are liable to repay, and are doing so via a repayment schedule (Table 4C). Details of repayment rates per country of residence can be found at: http://www.studentloanrepayment.co.uk

Loan Balances (Table 5)

41. The average loan balance for each repayment cohort at the point they become liable to repay has always been higher than for the preceding cohort. The 2016 cohort is an exception - see Factors affecting time series. Thereafter, for each cohort the average balance tends to go up before coming back down. Interest added to the balance in the early years of repayment has tended to outweigh the repayments made and many of the borrowers have gone on to take out further loans after their initial loans became liable for

repayment. Table 5 excludes those who have fully repaid their loans; therefore figures on average amount owed cover those who have a remaining balance only.

User Consultations

42. Consultation exercises are conducted by SLC on the Official Statistics it produces in order to understand who uses the publications, for what purpose, and to find out how they can be made more useful in terms of content, methodology, timeliness and presentation. As part of the consultation process SLC runs surveys. See the User Consultation Survey section of the SLC website at: http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics/statistics-user-consultation.aspx

National Statistics

43. This is an Official Statistics publication. National and Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in The Code for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs. The outputs typically include information on quality using the dimensions of Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability. They are produced free from any political interference.

Table guide

Table 1 The amounts paid out in Income Contingent Loans and repayments applied to individual loan accounts during financial years 2012-13 to 2017-18 broken down by repayment plan and study mode.

Table 2 Detailed breakdown of figures for Income Contingent Loan borrower repayment activity for 2016-17 and comparisons to figures for financial years 2012-13 and 2017-18.

Table 3: The repayment status of the ICR borrowers by repayment cohort as at 30 April 2018

Table 4: ICR Student Loans borrowers making repayments via HMRC by repayment cohort and tax year as at 30 April 2018. Table 4C,D, E & F details repayments made directly to SLC.

Table 5: The outstanding loan balance for ICR borrowers at the end of each tax year since their liability to repay began.

Tables

The tables are available at:
http://www.slc.co.uk/official-statistics/student-loans-debt-and-repayment/wales.aspx