

SLC SP03/2026

18 June 2026

Coverage: Northern Ireland

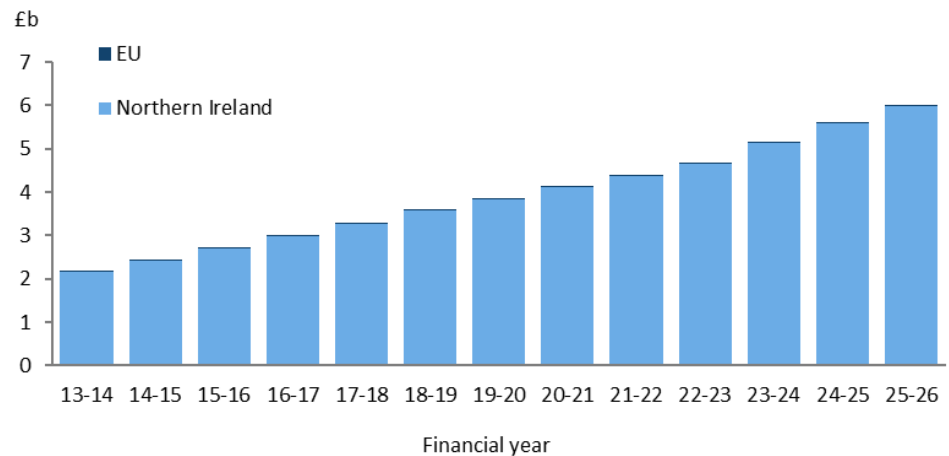
Theme: Children, Education  
and Skills

## Student Loans in Northern Ireland Financial year 2025-26

### Income Contingent (ICR) Student Loan balance Higher education ICR student loan balance totals £6.0 billion

Figure 1: Total balance of Income Contingent Student Loans at the end of financial year 2013-14 to 2025-26 (£ billion)

The legend follows the same order as the stacks in the bars.



Source: [Table 1](#)

[Download the data for Figure 1 \(ODS, 6KB\)](#)

Figure 1 indicates that the loan balance grows year-on-year as new lending and interest added to existing balances outweighs repayments and write-offs.

The total higher education loan balance has increased from £2.2 billion in financial year 2013-14, to £6.0 billion by 2025-26.

Annual increases slowed from 12.4% in 2014-15, to average at 6.8% between 2019-20 and 2022-23. Financial year 2023-24 however, reported a 9.9% increase on the previous year. Increases have continued, yet slowed through to 2025-26, reporting a 7.3% increase, to £6.0 billion (+ £0.4 billion).

The EU borrowers' balance has increased from £7.3 million in financial year 2013-14, to £31.2 million by 2025-26. This is a notable 17.5% higher (+ £4.6 million) when compared to the previous year. This increase is in line with the previous three years.

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Tuition fee funding for new EU students in Northern Ireland (without a [‘settled’ or ‘pre-settled status’](#)) ceased in academic year 2021/22. However, those continuing a course remain eligible for financial support for the duration of their course and Republic of Ireland (ROI) students (who make up the majority of EU students studying in Northern Ireland) also remain eligible.

Of the total loan balance, 81.1% are amounts which are liable for repayment. This means that a borrower has passed their Statutory Repayment Due Date (SRDD). This is the point they would become liable to begin repaying a loan (normally the April after graduating or otherwise leaving their course, provided they are earning above the relevant income threshold).

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## Introduction

This statistics publication presents figures and observations on student loan outlays, repayments and borrower activity for Northern Ireland domiciled Student Loans Company (SLC) customers. This covers students who are studying, or borrowers who have studied in higher education (HE) and further education (FE) in the United Kingdom (UK). Figures are also shown for European Union (EU) students studying in Northern Ireland.

Figures provided here are for Income Contingent Repayment (ICR) Loans administered by SLC, which were introduced in academic year 1998/99.

This publication covers financial years up to and including 2025-26.

Complete information on student finance arrangements in Northern Ireland is available at the Student Finance Northern Ireland [website](#).

## Accessibility

[Public Sector Accessibility Regulations](#) mean that all public sector organisations have a legal duty to make their websites accessible for everyone, including those with disabilities. In 2023, as part of SLC's ongoing commitment to improving accessibility of our websites and content, we made changes to the way we publish our statistics.

The changes mainly affected the way we provided visual information, including:

- including descriptive information of the full time-series for each graph within the main body of the statistics publication.
- providing data used to form each graph in accessible / downloadable tables.
- changing the way we present charts and graphs to be more accessible, including changes to colour, labels and legends.

We create our statistics publications in a way that helps to ensure that the department's statistical outputs are accessible, while continuing to meet the statistical needs of our users.

## What can you use these statistics for?

These statistics can be used as a reference to the value of the Student Loans Company (SLC) loan balance at the end of the financial year, student outlay within a financial year and information on borrower activity and repayment amounts.

The data used in this publication is sourced from Student Loans Company's 'Customer Ledger Account Servicing System' (CLASS). This system only holds information on borrowers who have received funding from SLC. This publication also only includes information on loan products and does not include information regarding grants and bursaries. Under normal circumstances grants and bursaries are not considered repayable.

Due to this, these statistics cannot be used to analyse trends or to draw conclusions regarding the full UK education funding landscape.

## Things you need to know

### More Frequent Data Sharing (MFDS)

From April 2019 the frequency in which repayments data is provided to SLC by HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC) increased. Before this SLC received customer repayment data, reported by employers, annually from HMRC after the end of the financial year. This increased to weekly. This meant for SLC customers being paid monthly through the Pay as You Earn (PAYE) system, SLC receives information of student loan deductions monthly. **This increase in frequency resulted in a change in time series for repayments and interest applied for the 2019-20 financial year.** From the 2020-21 financial year, the time series normalised with a single years' worth of repayments data being included (just those processed by SLC within that financial year).

For more information on how this affected repayments and resulting interest calculations, please refer to our [Additional information](#) section and for further detail, please refer to [GOV.UK](#).

### Self-Assessment data

Self-Assessment repayment data is supplied from HMRC to SLC via a different process to PAYE. As a result, this will still be provided annually after the end of the financial year (and not weekly as for PAYE customers). This will therefore still show in the financial year in which it was posted to the customers' account, as in previous years. For this reason, financial year 2025-26 will mostly comprise of Self-Assessment repayments data from the previous financial year. This will also be true of the interest calculations being applied for these borrowers.

In Table 1, in previous years we have had to mark the figures relating to Self-Assessment repayments as 'estimated' due to this being provided later than anticipated. From 2018-19 this has been provided as expected, allowing this to be included as final figures.

In Table 4A we therefore mark the latest financial year of repayment as 'provisional' as the 2025-26 Self-Assessment earnings information is received from HMRC after the 30 April effective date. The final figure is shown in the following years' publication.

### Effective dates

The effective dates used in this publication are as follows:

Table 1 and 2:	31 March
Table 3, 4 and 5:	30 April

Tables 3, 4 and 5 provide information which requires annual PAYE end of year data supplied by HMRC to SLC, even after the introduction of [MFDS](#). This is received after the financial year ends hence the later effective date.

## Executive Summary - Financial year 2025-26

For more detail, please click on the individual headline...

- **Higher education ICR student loan balance** totals £6.0 billion
- £379.0 million paid out in **undergraduate lending** in 2025-26, 4.8% higher than in the previous year
- Fifth year of notable increase in the amount paid out in **Tuition Fee Loans to EU undergraduate borrowers**, up a further 28.2% to £4.6 million
- **Postgraduate borrowing** shows modest second consecutive increase, up by 1.2% to £9.6 million
- Continued reduction in interest rates leads to a 22.5% fall in total **interest applied to higher education loans**, to £212.7 million in financial year 2025-26
- Provisional 4.7% increase in the **average higher education borrower's loan balance entering into repayment** in financial year 2025-26, at £29,180
- 85.6% of all **ICR borrowers who are liable to repay are in the UK tax system** and 56.0% **made a repayment** in financial year 2025-26
- 2.9% increase in **higher education loan borrower repayments** in financial year 2025-26, rising to £186.9 million
- Provisional figures indicate a 3.3% decrease in **HMRC repayments by higher education borrowers**, at £155.9 million in financial year 2025-26 - likely attributed to the continued increase in the repayment threshold
- 3.6% increase in total amount **repaid by higher education borrowers via scheduled repayments** made directly to SLC, to £8.8 million
- 15.9% decrease in total amount **repaid by borrowers via voluntary repayments** made directly to SLC, to £16.3 million
- Finalised data for 2024-25 indicates a 2.9% increase in the **average amount repaid by higher education ICR loan borrowers via HMRC**, to £1,070

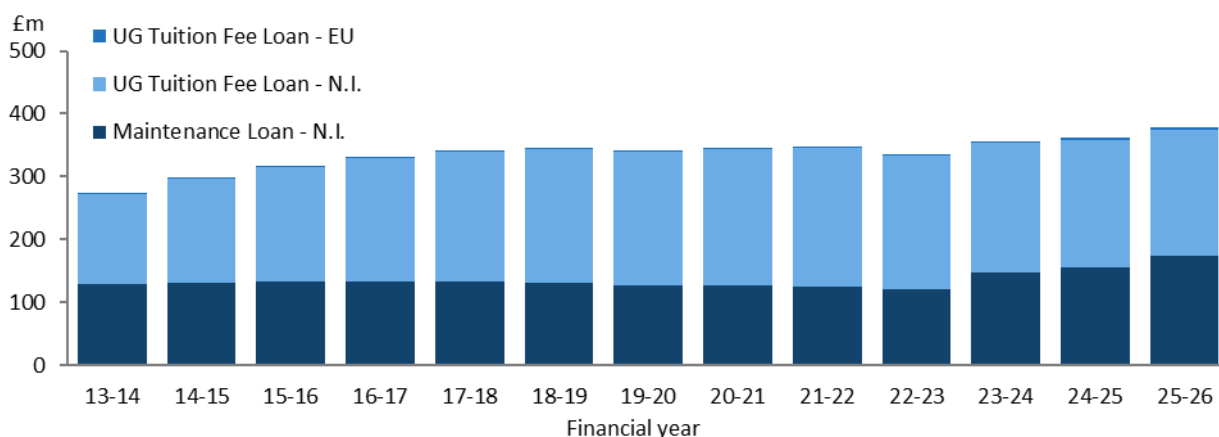
## Total amount paid out in loans to student borrowers

Loans discussed in this section include Tuition Fee Loans and Maintenance Loans for undergraduates and Tuition Fee Loans for postgraduates.

### £379.0 million paid out in undergraduate lending in 2025-26, 4.8% higher than in the previous year

Figure 2: Total amount paid out in loans to higher education undergraduate borrowers in financial years 2013-14 to 2025-26 (£ million)

The legend follows the same order as the stacks in the bars.



Source: [Table 1](#)

[Download the data for Figure 2 \(ODS, 6KB\)](#)

The total amount paid out in higher education (undergraduate and postgraduate) loans was £273.3 million in financial year 2013-14, increasing to £388.6 million by 2025-26. This is 4.7% higher (+ £17.3 million) in comparison to the previous year, a more significant increase than the 1.6% noted in the previous financial year.

Figure 2 shows the total amount paid out to undergraduate borrowers increased from £273.3 million, to £344.9 million by 2018-19. Financial year 2019-20 reported the first decrease (down 0.9%), followed by marginal increases in the subsequent two years. In 2022-23, the amount paid out reduced by 3.4%, down to £335.7 million.

In financial year 2023-24, the increasing trend resumed with a 6.2% increase in the amount of loans paid out (+ £20.8 million). Increases have since continued, to £379.0 million in the most recent year, up 4.8% (+ £17.2 million).

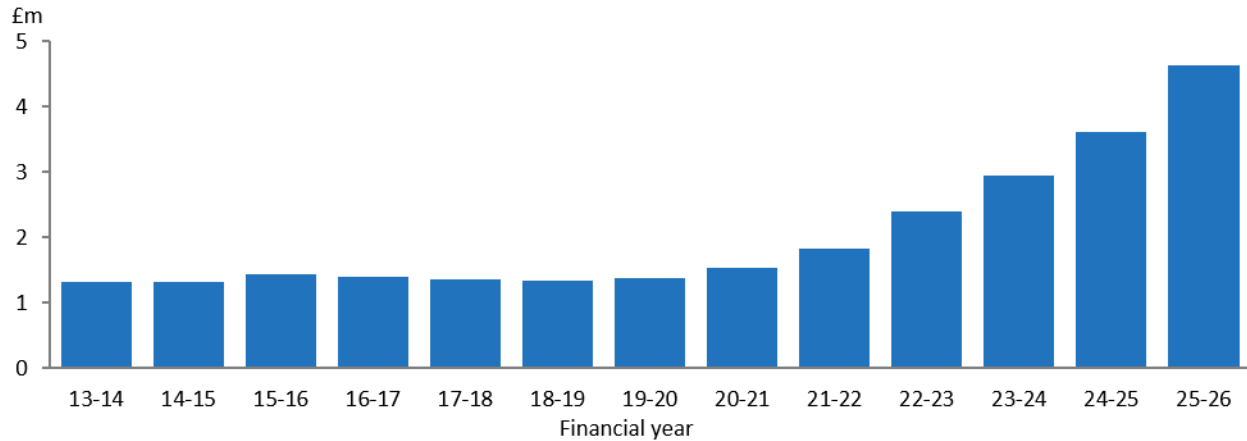
£142.1 million in Tuition Fee Loans was paid out on behalf of Northern Ireland-domiciled undergraduates in 2013-14, increasing to £219.8 million by 2021-22. Since this point, the amount has decreased year-on-year, down to £200.8 million in 2025-26, 0.6% lower than in 2024-25.

£129.9 million was paid to undergraduates in the form of Maintenance Loans in financial year 2013-14, with figures first peaking in 2016-17 at £134.1 million. The amount paid out then reduced year-on-year down to £120.4 million by 2022-23. Financial year 2023-24 reported the first increase, up by a considerable 22.6% to £147.6 million. This was likely attributed to the 40% increase in the maximum Maintenance Loan available for academic year 2023/24, compared to the previous year, from £4,840 to £6,776 (based on the 'Elsewhere' rate – student studying away from home, outside London).

Increases have since continued, of varying levels. In the most recent year, an additional 11.2% in Maintenance Loans was paid out, a total of £173.5 million.

## Fifth year of notable increase in the amount paid out in Tuition Fee Loans to EU undergraduate borrowers, up a further 28.2% to £4.6 million

Figure 3: Total amount of Tuition Fee Loans paid out on behalf of EU undergraduate borrowers in financial years 2013-14 to 2025-26 (£ million)



Source: [Table 1](#)

[Download the data for Figure 3 \(ODS, 6KB\)](#)

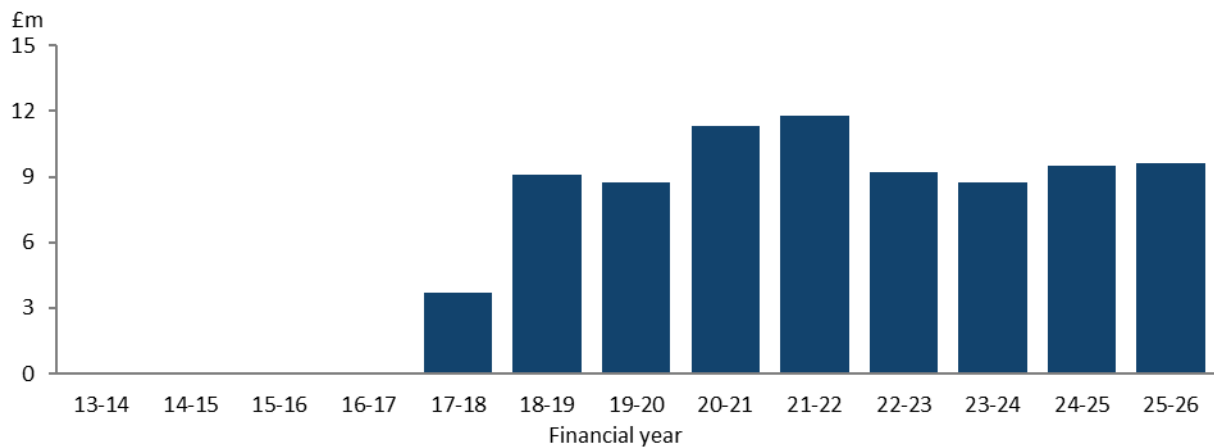
Figure 3 shows that £1.3 million in Tuition Fee Loans was paid on behalf of EU-domiciled undergraduates in financial year 2013-14. This fluctuated circa. £1.4 million until 2019-20.

Since 2020-21, much more significant annual increases have been reported, beginning with an 11.5% uplift, up to £1.5 million. Between 2021-22 and the most recent year increases have averaged 24.9%, to £4.6 million by 2025-26.

Tuition fee funding for new EU students in Northern Ireland (without a '[settled](#)' or '[pre-settled status](#)') ceased in academic year 2021/22. However, those continuing a course remain eligible for financial support for the duration of their course and ROI students (who make up the majority of EU students studying in Northern Ireland) also remain eligible.

## Postgraduate borrowing shows modest second consecutive increase, up by 1.2% to £9.6 million

Figure 4: Total amount of Tuition Fee Loans paid out on behalf of postgraduate borrowers in financial years 2013-14 to 2025-26 (£ million)



Source: [Table 1](#)

[Download the data for Figure 4 \(ODS, 6KB\)](#)

Figure 4 illustrates that in 2017-18, the first financial year in which tuition fee loans were made available for postgraduates, £3.7 million was paid out.

A typical significant increase was reported in the loan's second year (+ 143.6%) to £9.1 million.

Following a small decrease in 2019-20 the amount paid out increased for the subsequent two years to peak at £11.8 million in 2021-22. The significant increase of 29.8% reported in 2020-21, could have been due factors including:

- The annual funding cap being removed in academic year 2020/21 to allow students to access the full amount for their studies.
- The perceived reduced employment opportunity due to the COVID-19 pandemic, either encouraging undergraduates to continue to postgraduate level, or non-students to return to study, therefore it is reasonable to expect a reduction in comparison to this outlying year.

In contrast, the two subsequent financial years reported decreases, most significantly in 2022-23, of 21.5%. This is despite the maximum postgraduate tuition fee loan available increasing by 18%, from £5,500 to £6,500 in academic year 2023/24.

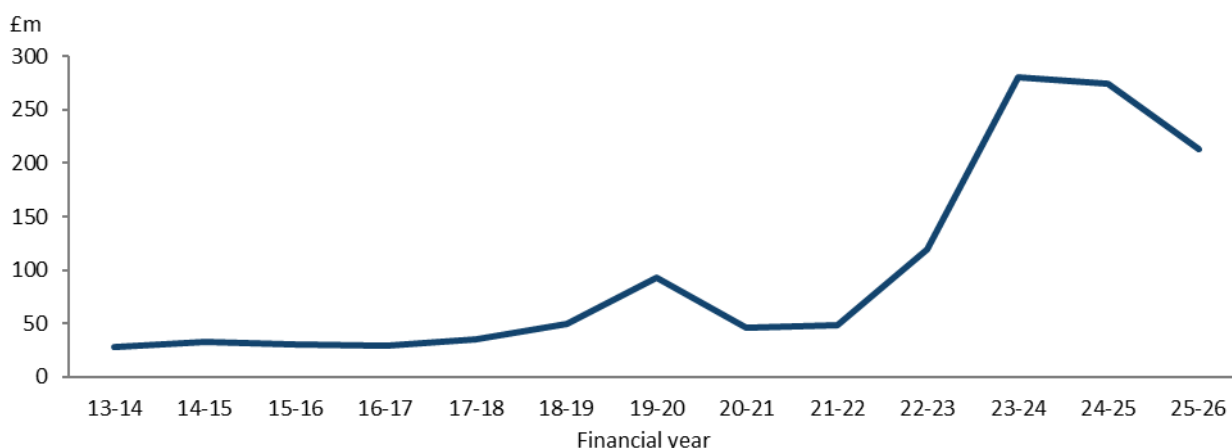
Financial year 2024-25 reported a change in trend with an 8.5% increase in the amount paid out, followed by a 1.2% increase in the most recent year, to £9.6 million.

## Interest added to Income Contingent Loans

The Retail Price Index (RPI), which measures inflation and changes in the UK cost of living, plays a key role in determining interest rates. The interest rate charged on these loans is subject to a low interest cap, calculated as the lower of the applicable RPI or the Bank of England Base Rate plus 1%. The interest rate does not affect the monthly repayment amount, yet it will affect the time taken to repay.

### Continued reduction in interest rates leads to a 22.5% fall in total interest applied to higher education loans, to £212.7 million in financial year 2025-26

Figure 5: Total amount of interest accrued on higher education loans in financial years 2013-14 to 2025-26 (£ million)



Source: [Table 1](#)

[Download the data for Figure 5 \(ODS, 6KB\)](#)

Figure 5 shows that interest accrued to higher education loans equated to £27.5 million in financial year 2013-14, increasing to £49.5 million by 2018-19. A sharp rise occurred in 2019-20, when accrued interest increased by 87.5%, to £92.9 million. This was largely driven by the introduction of 'More Frequent Data Sharing' (MFDS), the more readily available data provided to SLC by HMRC. As a result, almost two years' worth of customers' PAYE repayments, and the associated interest calculations processed by SLC in both 2018-19 and 2019-20, were recorded within the 2019-20 financial year. Further details are provided in the [Additional information](#) section. The time series normalised in financial year 2020-21

Higher Education loan interest is subject to a low interest cap, calculated as the lower of the applicable RPI or the Bank of England Base Rate plus 1%. As a result of the notable increases in both rates during financial year 2022-23, the interest applied to these loans increased by 147.7%, to £118.9 million. Owing to further rate increases in 2023-24, the amount accrued rose by a further 136.1% to £280.7 million. In September 2024, the applicable rate of RPI fell to below bank base rate meaning that for the remainder of financial year 2024-25, the rate applied to these loans reduced. This caused the total interest accrued over the year to stabilise against the previous year (down 2.3%, to £274.4 million).

The further rate reduction in the interest rate applied from September 2025 resulted in the total interest accrued in 2025-26 to reduce by a further and more notable 22.5%, to £212.7 million. As a % of the loan balance in the previous year, interest equated to 3.8% in 2025-26, compared to 5.3% in 2024-25.

Typically, regardless of interest rates, the total interest accrued will increase as the loan balance grows year after year (up 7.3% in 2025-26). However, due to the notable reduction in rates applied, this has offset any increase in the most recent year.

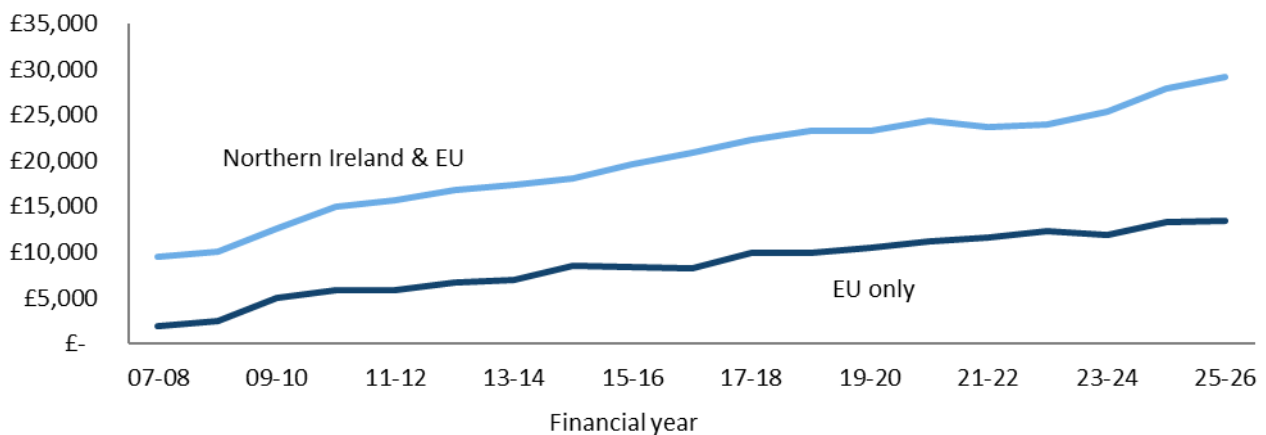
For more information on interest rates, please refer to the [Income Contingent Student Loan repayment plans & interest rates and calculations](#) section on GOV.UK.

## Average Income Contingent Loan balances

This section looks at the average loan balance for borrowers in the first financial year in which their liability to repay first began. A borrower usually becomes liable to repay the April following the completion, or withdrawal from their course, provided they are earning above the relevant income threshold. The average loan balance reflects the amount paid to borrowers, plus interest added whilst they were studying, minus any voluntary repayments made by borrowers prior to them becoming liable to repay. The figures in this section are calculated as at 30 April following the relevant financial year-end.

### Provisional 4.7% increase in the average higher education borrower's loan balance entering into repayment in financial year 2025-26, at £29,180

Figure 6: Average higher education loan balance on entry into repayment by financial year - 2006-07 to 2025-26: Northern Ireland & EU and EU only (£)



Source: [Table 5A \(iii\)](#)

[Download the data for Figure 6 \(ODS, 6KB\)](#)

Figure 6 indicates that the average loan balance for a higher education borrower entering into repayment has increased from £8,810 in financial year 2006-07, to a provisional £29,180 by 2025-26. This figure will be finalised in our 2027 publication.

In comparison to the previous year, the average has increased by 4.7%. This follows a 9.6% increase in the previous year. These continued increases are likely driven by the 40% uplift in the maximum Maintenance Loan introduced in the 2023/24 academic year, alongside ongoing year-on-year increases in the repayment threshold.

Following a similar trend, for EU borrowers entering repayment the average balance has increased from £1,920 in financial year 2007-08 to a provisional £13,430 by 2025-26. When comparing this to the previous year, there was a small 1.1% increase. This follows a notable 11.7% increase in the previous year.

From academic year 2021/22, new EU students in Northern Ireland (without a '[settled](#)' or '[pre-settled status](#)') were no longer eligible for tuition fee funding. However, those continuing a course remain eligible for financial support for the duration of their course and ROI students (who make up the majority of EU students studying in Northern Ireland) also remain eligible.

Full-time students completing three- or four-year courses are included in these averages but are diluted by other borrower types such as those on longer or shorter courses, part time study and students that have withdrawn before completing their studies.

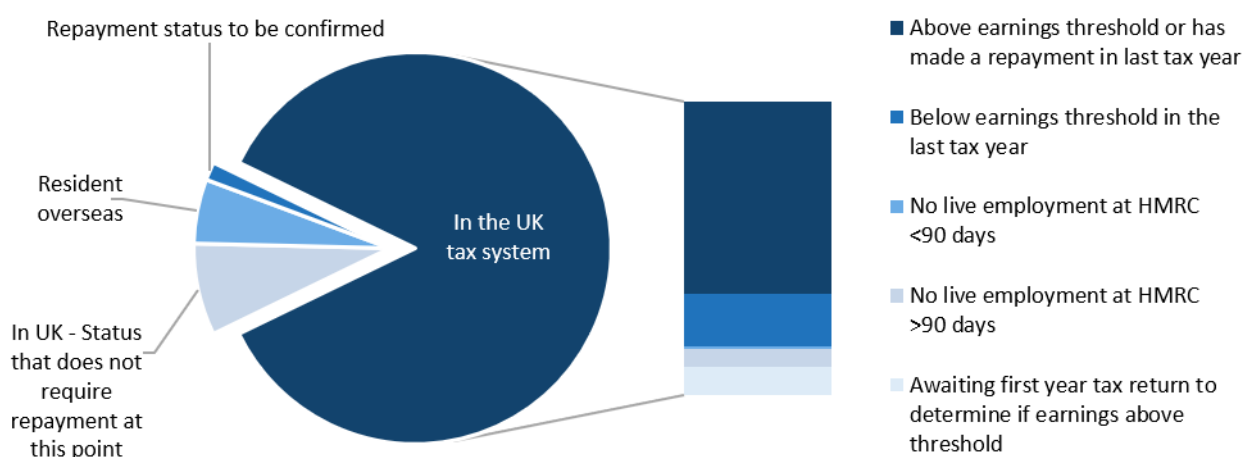
## Income Contingent Loan borrower repayment status

This section looks at borrowers categorised by their repayment status as at the end of the financial year. This status may change throughout the year depending on their circumstances. Until their loan balance is fully repaid or cancelled, they can move into and out of any of the other statuses.

**Note:** In the 2026 edition of this publication, we have made some changes to Table 3, which are reflected in *Figure 7*. The 'Account Closed' column has been removed following the scheduled deletion of closed customer accounts. As a result of these, and future deletions, the figures within this column are no longer considered to be representative of 'Fully repaid / cancelled' borrowers. Going forward, Table 3 will **only include borrowers with a loan balance**. SLC's deletion activity includes eligible fully settled customer accounts where more than six years have passed since full repayment. This approach aligns with SLC's Records Management Policy and Master Retention Schedule in accordance with GDPR requirements.

### 85.6% of all ICR borrowers who are liable to repay are in the UK tax system and 56.0% made a repayment in financial year 2025-26

Figure 7: ICR student loan borrowers by repayment status as at the beginning of FY 2026-27



Source: [Table 3A \(i\)\(ii\)](#)

[Download the data for Figure 7 \(ODS, 5KB\)](#)

*Figure 7* includes all ICR loan borrowers in all repayment cohorts who have become liable to repay as of 30 April 2026 and have an outstanding balance. Included in these figures is the 2026 repayment cohort. This cohort has been in repayment for less than one month from the effective date of these statistics, therefore the profile of this repayment cohort is very different to that of earlier repayment cohorts.

The number of borrowers who were liable to repay, were in live employment and made a payment in financial year 2025-26 was 127,900, a small increase on the end-April position in 2025 of 127,000 (+ 0.7%). The number in the UK tax system but not yet required to make a repayment was 35,200 in April 2026, a 10.9% increase on the 31,400 noted in the previous April.

The number of borrowers liable to repay showing no live employment for less than 90 days increased by 3.8% to 1,400 by 30 April 2026. Those showing no live employment for over 90 days was 2.5% higher than the 11,700 noted in April 2025, at 12,000.

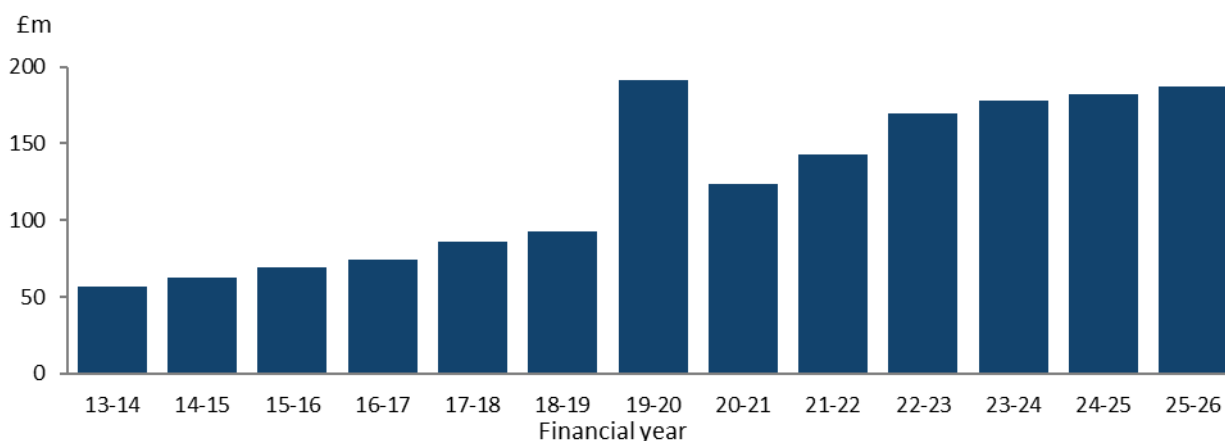
At end-April 2026, of those overseas and above the earnings threshold for that country, the number repaying increased to 2,800 (up 2.6%). The number of those overseas who have defaulted in arrears has increased by 13.4%, from 4,700 to 5,400.

## Income Contingent Loan repayments

Borrowers normally become liable to make repayments from the April following the completion of, or withdrawal from their course, providing they are earning above the relevant income threshold. Repayments are either made via HMRC (either PAYE or Self-Assessment) or directly to Student Loans Company in a scheduled or voluntary basis.

### 2.9% increase in higher education loan borrower repayments in financial year 2025-26, rising to £186.9 million

Figure 8: Total amount repaid by higher education borrowers in financial years 2013-14 to 2025-26 (£ million)



Source: [Table 1](#)

[Download the data for Figure 8 \(ODS, 6KB\)](#)

Figure 8 demonstrates that in financial year 2013-14, higher education borrowers repaid a total of £56.9 million. This steadily increased to £92.3 million by 2018-19.

In 2019-20 a considerable increase of 106.9% (to £191.0 million) was reported. This was largely driven by the introduction of 'More Frequent Data Sharing' ([MFDS](#)), the more readily available data provided to SLC by HMRC. As a result, almost two years' worth of customers' PAYE repayments processed by SLC in both 2018-19 and 2019-20, were recorded within the 2019-20 financial year. Further detail on MFDS can be found in the [Additional information](#) section. The time series normalised in 2020-21.

Over the subsequent two financial years, total repayments increased by an average of 17.0%, to £169.5 million. This could be attributed to the marginal increases in the repayment threshold, which rose by 2.6% followed by a further 1.5%. Owing to much more significant increases in the repayment threshold in 2023-24 and 2024-25 (+ 9.0% and 13.5% respectively), total repayments increased at a much slower rate - up by 5.0% then 2.0%.

In the most recent year, £186.9 million was repaid, 2.9% higher than in 2024-25. This was despite a much lower 4.3% increase in the repayment threshold. As a % of the previous year's loan balance however, repayments remained relatively constant (at 3.3% vs. 3.5% in 2024-25).

86.2% of higher education repayments were received via HMRC (vs. 84.5% in 2024-25) and the remaining 13.8% were made directly to SLC (vs. 15.5% in 2024-25). This split does not take into account refunds made).

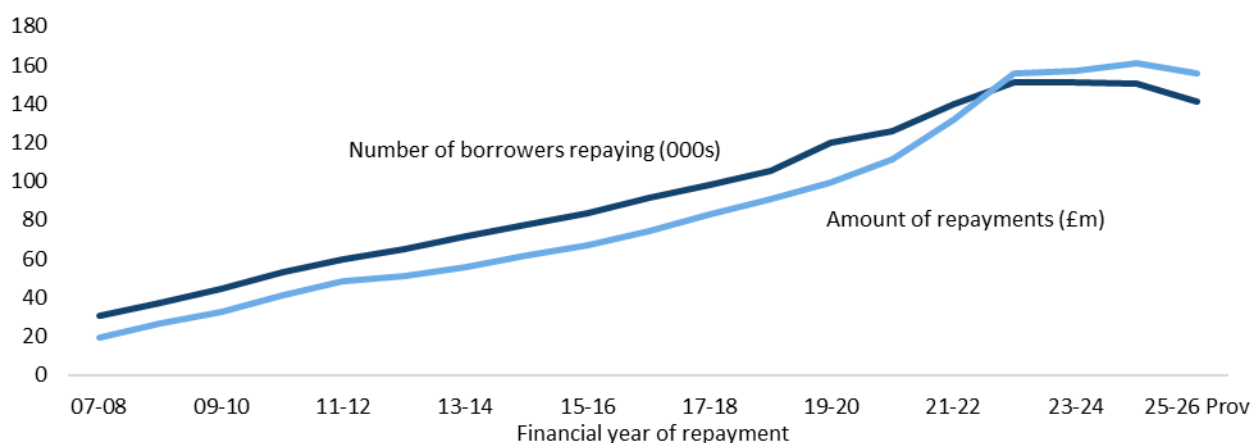
Typically, repayments will continue to increase due to the growing proportion of a rising total loan balance which is liable for repayment, irrespective of other factors. For more information on repayment plans, please refer to the [Income Contingent Student Loan repayment plans & interest rates and calculations](#) section on GOV.UK.

## Income Contingent Loan repayments by repayment method

Repayments can be made by three methods, via HMRC (for UK taxpayers who are paid via PAYE or self-employed submitting Self-Assessment), along with scheduled and voluntary repayments which are made directly to SLC (outside of the HMRC deduction system). Scheduled repayments are made by borrowers nearing the end of their repayment term or from those overseas. Borrowers can opt to move onto a direct debit scheme paid directly to SLC to avoid overpayment via PAYE deductions. Voluntary repayments are additional repayments which a borrower can choose to make at any time and can be paid alongside scheduled repayments and those via HMRC.

### Provisional figures indicate a 3.3% decrease in HMRC repayments by higher education borrowers, at £155.9 million in financial year 2025-26 - likely attributed to the continued increase in the repayment threshold

Figure 9: Number of ICR student loan borrowers who made a scheduled repayment via HMRC & total amount repaid by financial year of repayment 2006-07 to 2025-26 provisional



Source: [Table 4A \(i\)\(ii\)](#)

[Download the data for Figure 9 \(ODS, 6KB\)](#)

Figure 9 shows the number of higher education borrowers making repayments via HMRC has increased from 23,300 in financial year 2006-07, to 150,200 by 2024-25. The total amount repaid also increased, from £12.3 million to £161.2 million.

As at end-April 2026, the provisional number of borrowers who made a repayment via HMRC in financial year 2025-26 was 141,300. This is 5.9% lower than the final figure for 2024-25 (- 8,900). The provisional amount repaid was £155.9 million, 3.3% lower in comparison to the final figure for the previous financial year (- £5.2 million).

Generally annual increases in repayments made via HMRC can be predominantly attributed to the growing proportion of loans becoming liable for repayment, up to 80.0% of the total higher education loan balance by 2024-25. However, this has been potentially offset due to the effect of the recent notable repayment threshold increases.

The most recent financial year's figures are marked as 'provisional' due to the 2025-26 Self-Assessment earnings information being received from HMRC after Table 4A's 30 April 2026 effective date. **These provisional figures are therefore subject to change.**

The movement between the provisional and final figures for financial year 2024-25 was an additional 9.2% in regard to the number of borrowers making a repayment and an additional 6.7% in the amount repaid.

This movement is in line with 2023-24's finalisation.

The provisional position for financial year 2024-25 can be found in the previous year's [publication](#). 2025-26's figure will be finalised in our 2027 publication.

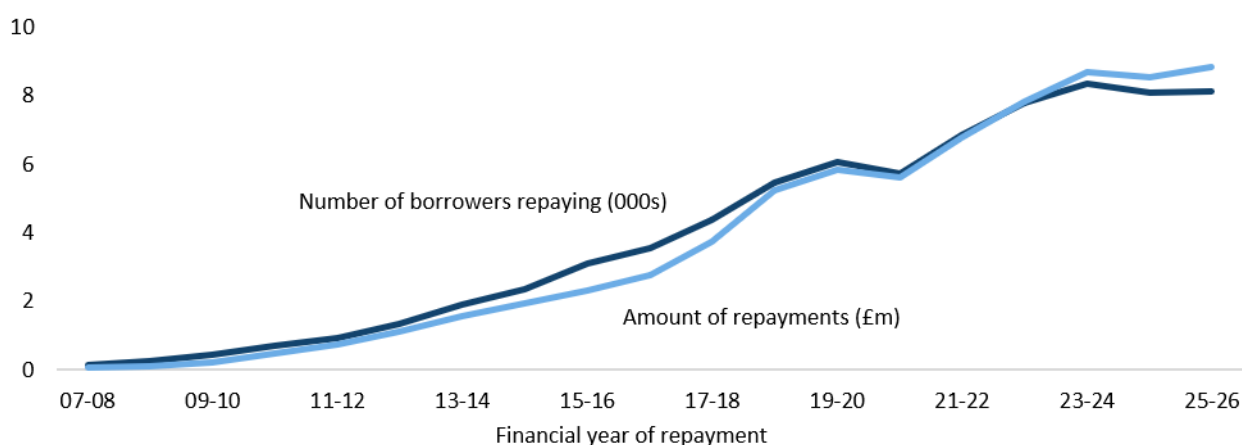
Note: The impact of [MFDS](#) for the 2019–20 financial year is not reflected in *Figure 9* as repayment figures were refreshed in the following year, with repayments attributed to the financial year to which they pertain, rather than the year in which they were reported to the SLC.

## Scheduled repayments made directly to SLC

Scheduled payments are repayments which have been made directly to SLC from borrowers who have arranged a repayment schedule. This includes those who have joined the 'direct debit scheme'. SLC routinely encourages customers to join the direct debit scheme when they become eligible to do so, 23 months prior to the repayment of their loan. Also included in this data are borrowers who reside overseas, who are liable to repay, and are doing so via a repayment schedule. Both UK and non-UK EU domiciled borrowers may make scheduled overseas repayments.

### 3.6% increase in total amount repaid by higher education borrowers via scheduled repayments made directly to SLC, to £8.8 million

Figure 10: Number of ICR student loan borrowers who made a scheduled repayment directly to SLC & total amount repaid by financial year of repayment 2006-07 to 2025-26



Source: [Table 4C \(i\)\(ii\)](#)

[Download the data for Figure 10 \(ODS, 6KB\)](#)

*Figure 10* shows that the number of higher education borrowers making scheduled repayments directly to SLC has increased from just 100 in financial year 2006-07, to 8,100 by 2025-26. In comparison to the previous year, this is a small increase of 20 (+ 0.2%).

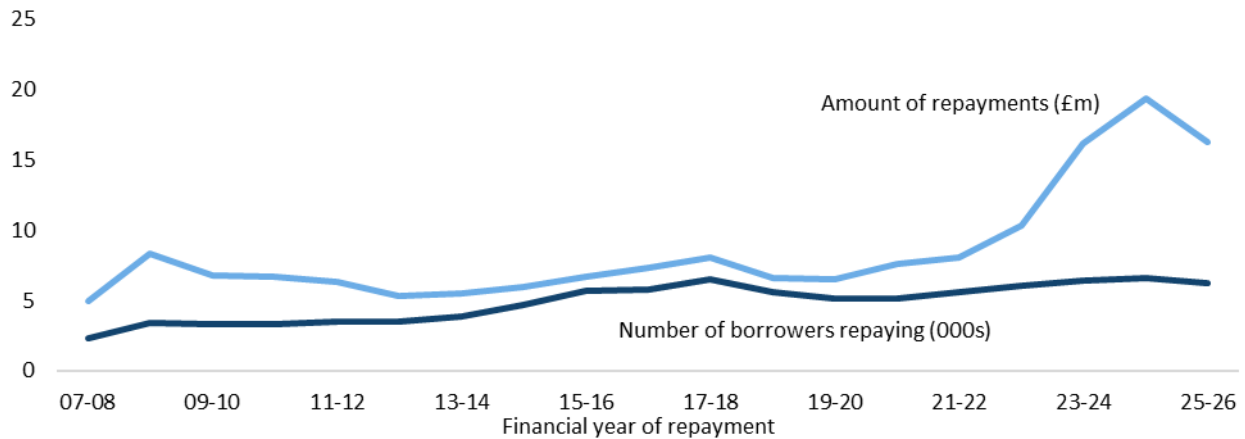
The total amount repaid via scheduled repayments followed a very similar trend, increasing from £16,000 in 2006-07, to £8.8 million by 2025-26. In comparison to the previous year, this is an increase of £304,100 (+ 3.6%).

## Voluntary Repayments made directly to SLC

Voluntary repayments are repayments which have been made directly to SLC from borrowers who are **not yet liable to repay**. Borrowers who are liable to repay and are making repayments via HMRC can also make additional voluntary repayments.

### 15.9% decrease in total amount repaid by borrowers via voluntary repayments made directly to SLC, to £16.3 million

Figure 11: Number of ICR student loan borrowers who made a voluntary repayment directly to SLC & total amount repaid by financial year of repayment 2006-07 to 2025-26



Source: [Table 4E \(i\)\(ii\)](#)

[Download the data for Figure 11 \(ODS, 6KB\)](#)

Figure 11 demonstrates that trends in voluntary repayments made directly to SLC are significantly more volatile than HMRC and scheduled repayments. Therefore, variances to the previous year are not necessarily evidence of a trend.

Overall, the total amount of voluntary repayments has increased from £3.9 million to £16.3 million between financial year 2006-07 and 2025-26 yet has noticeably fluctuated throughout this time-period.

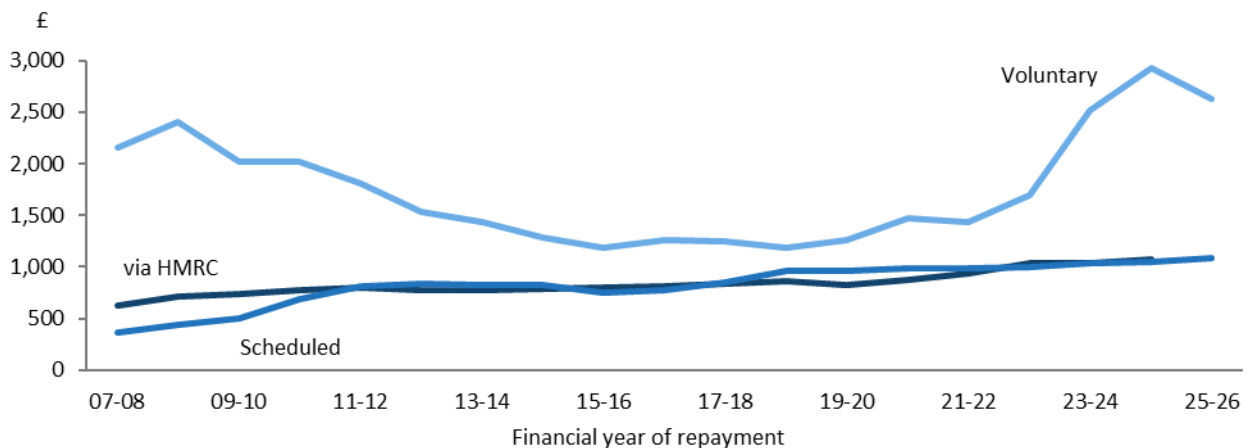
The number of borrowers making voluntary repayments has increased overall from 1,900 in 2006-07, to 6,200 in 2025-26 also fluctuating, but to a lesser extent than the amount repaid.

When comparing 2025-26 to the previous year, there has been a 6.4% decrease in the number of borrowers making voluntary repayments (- 400) and a 15.9% decrease in the amount repaid (- £3.1 million).

## Average amount repaid by repayment method

### Finalised data for 2024-25 indicates a 2.9% increase in the average amount repaid by higher education ICR loan borrowers via HMRC, to £1,070

Figure 12: Average annual amount repaid by ICR Student Loan borrowers by repayment method and financial year of repayment 2006-07 to 2025-26



Source: [Table 4A \(iii\), 4C \(iii\) and 4E \(iii\)](#)  
[Download the data for Figure 12 \(ODS, 6KB\)](#)

Figure 12 indicates the average amount repaid by repayment method.

**Please note:** Repayments made via HMRC within the 2025-26 financial year are not included in Figure 12 as the average is considered to be provisional until all Self-Assessment data is included. This figure will be finalised in the 2027 publication.

The average repayment made via HMRC has increased from £530 in financial year 2006-07 to £1,070 by 2024-25. When compared to 2023-24, this was a £30 increase (+ 2.9%).

The average scheduled repayment made directly to SLC was just £280 in 2006-07. By 2025-26 this had increased to £1,090, a £40 increase on 2024-25 (+ 3.8%).

The average voluntary repayment has fluctuated between £1,180 (in financial year 2015-16) and £2,930 (in 2024-25). In the most recent year, compared to 2024-25, there has been a £300 decrease (- 10.2%). Trends in voluntary repayments made directly to SLC are significantly more volatile than scheduled and HMRC repayments.

For both HMRC and scheduled repayments, this average includes only those borrowers who have become liable to repay (usually the April following the completion, or withdrawal from their course, provided they are earning above the relevant income threshold). For voluntary repayments, this includes all ICR borrowers who made a repayment (including those who are not yet liable to repay).

## Additional Information

### The MFDS Effect on repayments data in financial year 2019-20

Repayments of Income Contingent Loans are shown in this publication in the financial year they are posted to customer accounts. As SLC were previously notified of repayments by HMRC usually within one year of the financial year ending, the repayments shown in a given financial year (prior to FY 2019-20) were mainly for the year before. The same was also true for the associated interest calculations being applied to these customer accounts.

In the first financial year of receiving this information at a greater frequency (FY 2019-20) more repayments data was evident than in previous financial years. Almost two years' worth of customer PAYE repayments and interest calculations (those processed by SLC in both FY 2018-19 and 2019-20) were included.

HMRC still provide SLC with annual information within one year of the financial year ending, which is reviewed and applied to customer accounts like before. This end of year file will be the end of financial year position for the borrower. This could result in minor adjustments to customer balances. These adjustments will be included in the following year's reporting data.

It should be noted that **this did not adversely affect the borrower's balance** – this effectively brought a more up-to-date representation of loan balances at that point in time

The figures / trends in this publication which have been affected by MFDS are clearly marked throughout this publication but for additional information in regard to MFDS please refer to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

### The MFDS Effect on interest rate calculations in financial year 2019-20

The interest applied to accounts, like repayments, is reported within this publication in the financial year it was posted to the customer's account, and not necessarily the year the interest was accrued. For PAYE repayers this is dependent on when repayment information is received from HMRC and thus affected by the introduction of MFDS in the 2019-20 financial year (explained above).

Pre MFDS, PAYE repayment information was received by SLC annually from HMRC for each borrower, usually after the end of the financial year. At this point the account was re-calculated using the repayment information supplied and interest backdated and applied. This would be reported within this publication in the following financial year data.

With the introduction of MFDS and repayments information more readily available, interest is also calculated and applied to the accounts more readily. **This resulted in a change in time series for financial year 2019-20 for interest applied**, as almost two years' worth of customer PAYE repayments and interest calculations was included (those processed by SLC in both FY 2018-19 and 2019-20). From the 2020-21 financial year, the time series normalised with a single years' worth of repayments information and resulting interest calculations being included (just those processed by SLC within that financial year).

### Office for National Statistics decision on student loans

In December 2018 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reached a decision to partition UK student loans into lending (government assets) and expenditure (government spending) on the Government accounts. Up until this point they had been classed entirely as lending. This decision was implemented in September 2019. This decision was because repayments associated with ICR loans are conditional on a borrower's future income, and under certain conditions the loan obligation itself may be cancelled. These cancellation conditions are reported on Table 1 and 2 of this publication.

It has been calculated that the treatment of student loans in this manner will better reflect the government's financial position. Government revenue will no longer include interest accrued that will never be paid due to the conditional nature of ICR repayments. Government expenditure related to the cancellation of student loans is also accounted for in the periods that loans are issued, rather than decades afterwards. The ONS decision on student loans has no effect on the figures produced within this publication. Further information on the ONS decision and the methodology used to partition student loans can be found on the ONS [website](#).

## Data sources

This publication uses data from SLC's administrative systems. For details of the administrative data sources used in our publications refer to our [Statement of Administrative Sources](#).

## Data quality

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. Refer to our [Quality Guidelines](#) for further information.

## Revisions and estimates

Revisions within the data are denoted with an [r]. Further details can be found on our [revisions policy](#). In earlier years (pre-2018-19) we have had to mark the figures relating to self-assessment repayment as estimated [e] due to this being provided later than anticipated. From 2018-19 this has been provided as expected, allowing this to be included as final figures.

## Related statistics publications

As part of the same series this publication belongs to, SLC also publishes statistics on student loans for England, Wales and Scotland. These are released at the same time as part of the series entitled [Student loans for higher and further education](#). SLC also publishes a series named [Student support for higher education](#) covering higher education funding for Northern Ireland, England and Wales, individually. The latest releases of this series were published on the 27 November 2025 covering academic year 2024/25.

The Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) publish details of higher education funding in Scotland in their publication Higher education student support in Scotland. The [latest release](#) of this series was published in August 2025 covering academic session 2024/25.

SLC also releases several 'official statistics in development' publications, covering themes including withdrawals, over-repayments etc. These can also be found in our ['Other statistics'](#) section of GOV.UK.

## Notes on policy

The statistics on student loans in this release were compiled by the Student Loans Company. They include public sector loans only, which are repaid on an income contingent basis. Student loans are available to eligible full-time undergraduate students and those taking full-time or part-time postgraduate initial teacher training courses. In the four academic years from 2000/01 onwards some other part-time students were able to take out loans, but these were then replaced by part-time course grants and part-time fee grants. From academic year 2017/18 part-time fee loans were re-introduced in addition to the above grants.

Complete information on student finance arrangements in Northern Ireland are available at the Student Finance Northern Ireland [website](#).

## National statistics

This is a National Statistics publication. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

This publication series was awarded National Statistics status in October 2011 following a full assessment against the Code of Practice, which can be found on the [Statistics Authority website](#). Tables 3, 4 and 5 were awarded National Statistics status in April 2014 having initially been assessed as a separate publication, which can also be found on the [website](#). These tables were subsequently merged into this publication.

Since the assessments by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made several improvements including the following:

- **[Cross country comparisons](#)** – First introduced in 2014, providing a cross-country comparison of the total loan balance, in 2018 additional comparisons were introduced showing the average borrower balance on entry into repayment, average repayment (via HMRC, scheduled and voluntary).
- **Postgraduate loans** - An additional breakdown for loans for postgraduate students was added, as loan payments have been made to borrowers in this education sector from September 2017.
- **Direct repayments** – From 2017 onwards we have included tables to show borrower numbers for borrowers repaying directly to SLC. In 2018 we disaggregated these tables further to show borrower numbers for those making scheduled and voluntary payments.
- **Expanded main publication** - Our main publication was completely redesigned in 2020. We introduced more charts along with written insight and analysis on all key elements in the excel tables, along with headlines to summarise the latest trends.
- **HTML** - From 2022 we began to produce an HTML version of the main publication document.
- **Accessibility** - In 2023 we made considerable strides in improving the accessibility of the publication. For more information, please refer to the [introductory section](#).
- **Executive Summary** - Additionally, in 2023, we incorporated an '[Executive summary](#)' towards the beginning of the publication. This summarised all the headlines, with individual links to the detailed insights within the document.
- **Changes to Table 3, 4 & 5** – To maintain statistical integrity, small changes have been made to tables within these sections following the routine deletion of closed customer accounts and associated financial transaction data in accordance with GDPR requirements.
  - In [Table 3](#), the 'Account Closed' column has been removed, and the table will now include only borrowers with an outstanding loan balance. As accounts continue to be deleted, this column would no longer provide an accurate representation of 'Fully repaid / Cancelled' borrowers.
  - In [Tables 4 and 5](#), financial years up to and including 2018–19 have been reinstated from the 2025 edition of this publication and will continue to be included going forward. As there is no material change in these earlier years, and given ongoing data deletions, their accuracy would otherwise diminish over time. The latest rolling seven-year period will be refreshed annually.

## Definitions

For definitions of terms used in our publication, please refer to our [Definitions](#) page.