SLC SP06/2026

26 November 2026

Coverage: Wales

Theme: Crime, Education and Justice

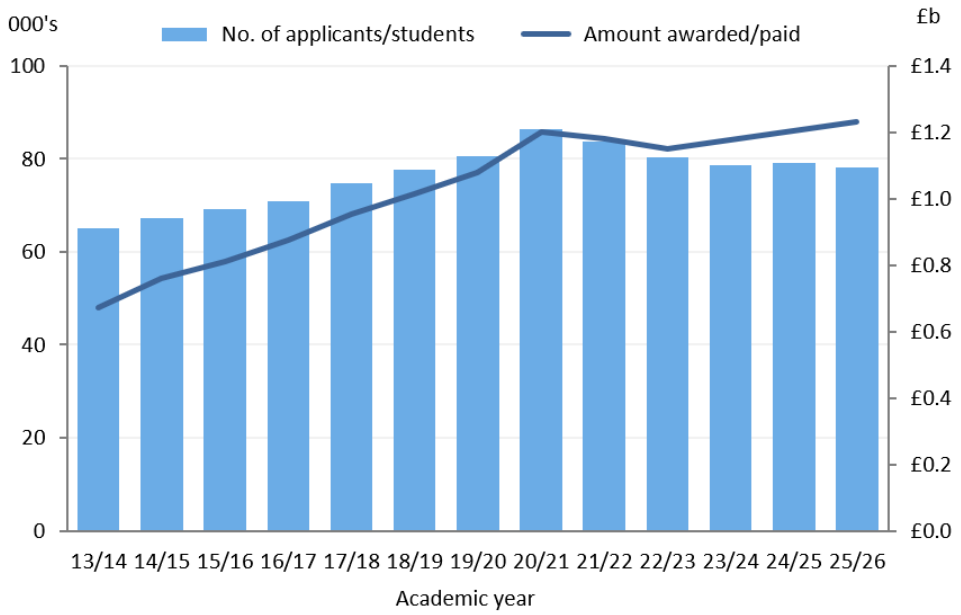
Student Support for Higher Education in Wales 2026:

2025/26 full year and 2026/27 early in year

2.1% increase in higher education student support paid out in academic year 2025/26, at £1.23 billion

Figure 1: Number of students domiciled in Wales and EU (outside UK) receiving higher education support and amount awarded/paid

The columns in this chart depict the number of applicants/students against the left-hand axis, and the line illustrates the amount awarded/paid against the right-hand axis.



Source: **Table 2**
Download the data for Figure 1 (ODS, 6KB)

Figure 1 shows that 65,000 full-time, part-time and postgraduate applicants/students were awarded/paid student finance in academic year 2013/14. Numbers increased by an average of 3.7% per year up until 2020/21, when a more significant 7.1% increase was reported with numbers peaking at 86,300.

This was made up of a 4.8% increase in undergraduates and a significant 30.8% increase in postgraduates receiving funding - likely a result of the perceived reduced employment opportunity due to the COVID-19 pandemic, encouraging new students to pursue higher education and current students to continue their education.

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In academic year 2021/22, there was a 3.0% reduction in the number awarded/paid as figures normalised against an outlying year. However, numbers continued to decrease in the two subsequent years, down to 78,700 by 2023/24.

Following a relative standstill in the following year, 2025/26 has reported a small 1.2% decrease to 78,200. This can be attributed to a 1.1% decrease in undergraduates receiving student finance and a 2.0% decrease in postgraduates.

Figure 1 also shows that the total amount awarded/paid in student support across full-time, part-time and postgraduate students in academic year 2013/14 was £0.67 billion. Following a notable 13.4% increase in the following year, increases slowed to an average of 7.2% to £1.08 billion by 2019/20.

In 2020/21 the amount increased by a significant 11.2% to first peak at £1.20 billion, made up of a 9.2% increase in undergraduate funding and a significant 38.2% increase in postgraduate funding. As previously mentioned, this was likely a result of the perceived reduced employment opportunity due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In academic year 2021/22, figures normalised against an outlying year, yet levels continued to decline in the subsequent year, to £1.15 billion.

The next three years however reported growth, averaging 2.3% to reach £1.23 billion by 2025/26. The first increase was the result of a 10.4% increase in the maximum undergraduate Maintenance Loan available, from £9,710 to £10,720 ('Elsewhere' rate), followed by further, yet slowing increases since, reaching £11,345 for academic year 2025/26.

The average full-time Maintenance Loan paid to a Wales-domiciled student in 2013/14 was £3,310 increasing to £3,500 by 2015/16. There was a sharp increase of 18.9% to £4,160 in 2016/17 owing to the first notable increase in the maximum maintenance loan available, with similar occurring in the following year. The first and only decrease in the average loan borrowed was reported in 2018/19 (down by 3.4%), likely due to the notable increase in the maximum full-time Welsh Government Learning Grant available to new students (increases of between 33% and 96% dependant on where the student resided whilst studying). The average has since increased to peak at £8,450 in academic year 2025/26, a 3.7% increase on the previous year.

For more information on maximum loans and grants available, please refer to **Table 1A**. For more detail on **undergraduate Maintenance Loans** please refer to the relevant section later in this publication.

The average full-time Tuition Fee Loan paid on behalf of a Wales-domiciled student in 2013/14 was £3,410, increasing steadily by an average of 3.5% per year to £3,920 by 2017/18. A sharp increase of 43.6% was reported in academic year 2018/19 owing to the Welsh funding review in which Tuition Fee Grants were discontinued to new students, resulting in the average loan taken out increasing to £5,630. Annual increases have since slowed overall, down to 3.0% in the most recent year, bringing the average amount to peak at £8,820.

For more information on **undergraduate Tuition Fee Loans** please refer to the relevant section later in this publication.

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Introduction

This statistics publication presents figures and analysis on student support awarded to applicants and paid to students or their higher education provider. The publication covers academic years 2013/14 to 2025/26, or from the year in which a particular support product was introduced, where later. The 'Early in Year' section provides an initial indication of activity in academic year 2026/27.

The publication covers applicants and students domiciled in Wales undertaking a designated higher education (HE) course at a UK higher education provider, as well as applicants and students domiciled in the EU (outside UK) undertaking a designated course in Wales.

What can you use these statistics for?

These statistics can be used as a reference to the number of students awarded/paid and the amount awarded/paid out by the Students Loans Company for students studying in higher education between academic years 2013/14 and 2025/26, along with an early view of academic year 2026/27.

The data used in this publication is from Student Loans Company's administrative systems. These systems only hold information on students who have applied for and/or receive funding. Due to this, **these statistics cannot be used to analyse trends or to draw conclusions regarding the full UK student population**.

Things you need to know

Payments vs. awards

The primary purpose of this publication is to measure student support paid to students funded by Wales during each academic year. This includes Maintenance Loans, Tuition Fee Loans, postgraduate loans, Welsh Government Learning Grants and targeted support such as Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

Throughout this publication, a distinction is made between **awards** and **payments**.

- **Awards** represent the amount a student is entitled to receive if they remain in attendance for the full academic year.
- **Payments** represent the actual amount paid to, or on behalf of, students. As a result, payment amounts may be lower where a student does not attend, withdraws during the year, or does not draw down their full entitlement.

Due to data reporting limitations, it is not possible to separately identify payments for some grant products. Consequently, expenditure relating to Maintenance Grants and other targeted support products, such as Adult Dependants' Grant and Travel Grant, is reported as awards rather than payments.

Finalisation of figures

As payments are made to, and on behalf of, students throughout the academic year, and in some cases after it has ended, additional transactions may be recorded after the effective dates used for this publication.

In order to capture these later payments, where indicated, figures for the most recent academic year are revised once in the subsequent edition of this publication. At which point they are considered final and supersede the previously published figures.

These revisions may result in changes to sub-totals and overall totals.

Executive summary – 2025/26 full year and 2026/27 early in year

For more detail, please click on the individual headline…

- 2.1% increase in **higher education student support** paid out in academic year 2025/26, at £1.23 billion
- 3.3% increase in the total paid out in **Maintenance Loans to full-time students** in academic year 2025/26, to £433.7 million
- Maintenance Loans form 71% of the total **full-time maintenance support package** in academic year 2025/26
- 6.2% increase in **part-time Maintenance Loan** take-up in academic year 2025/26, to 12,300
- **Full-time Welsh Government Learning Grant** take-up in 2025/26 remains relatively static, at 47,800
- Small reduction in the proportion of eligible full-time students awarded full, and partial **Welsh Government Learning Grants**
- 3.4% increase in **part-time Welsh Government Learning Grant** take-up in 2025/26, up to 15,500
- Minimal change in take-up of **full-time Tuition Fee Loans** in academic year 2025/26, at 49,300
- **Average full-time Tuition Fee Loan paid** increases, across all UK countries of study in academic year 2025/26
- 4.7% increase in take-up of **part-time Tuition Fee Loans** in academic year 2025/26, to 13,400
- Following four years of decline, a small increase in **Postgraduate Master's Loan** take-up reported for 2025/26, up 1.6% to 5,600
- Take-up of **Postgraduate Doctoral Loans** remains static in 2025/26, at 635
- 1.8% decrease in the amount paid out in **full-time undergraduate Disabled Students' Allowance** in academic year 2024/25, at £8.0 million
- By end-October 2026, a total of 68,800 **undergraduates and postgraduates** have been awarded/paid a total of £353.4 million for **academic year 2026/27**
- Early figures indicate a 2.7% decrease in the number of **new students receiving student finance** in academic year 2026/27, and a 0.5% decrease in **returning** students

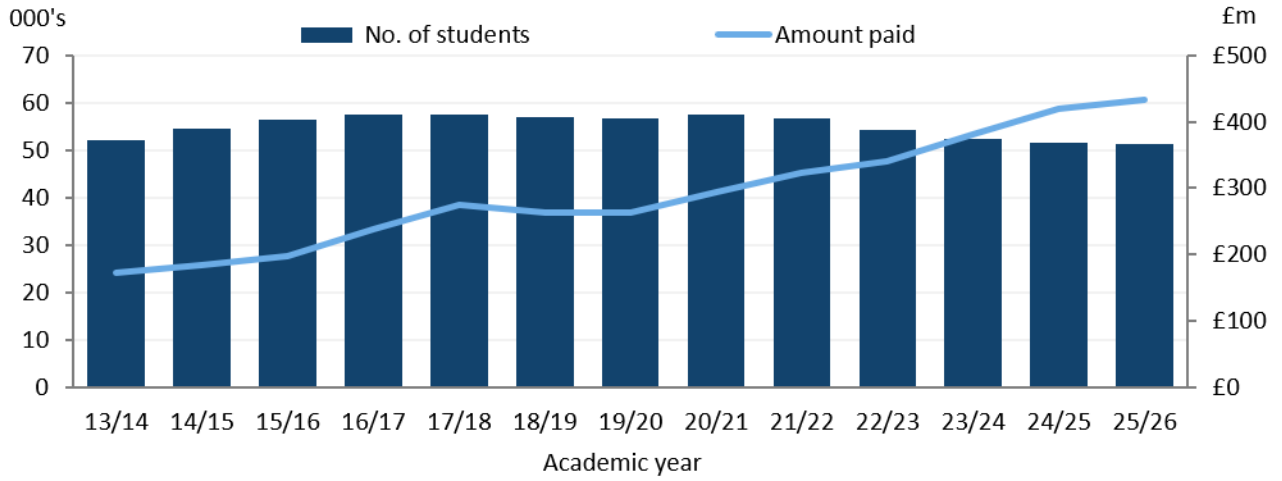
Undergraduate Maintenance Loans

An undergraduate Maintenance Loan is funding to help with day-to-day costs, such as rent or food, whilst studying. These loans are available to those studying an eligible undergraduate, initial teacher training or postgraduate certificate of education course, at an eligible higher education provider on a full or part-time basis. The amount awarded is dependent on household residual income.

3.3% increase in the total paid out in Maintenance Loans to full-time students in academic year 2025/26, to £433.7 million

Figure 2: Number of students domiciled in Wales receiving full-time Maintenance Loans and amount paid

The columns in this chart depict the number of students against the left-hand axis, and the line illustrates the amount paid against the right-hand axis.



Source: **Table 3A (i)**
Download the data for Figure 2 (ODS, 6KB)

Figure 2 shows the number of full-time students in receipt of a Maintenance Loan in academic year 2013/14 was 52,100. Following an initial increase of 4.7% in 2014/15, annual increases slowed each year until 2017/18 when numbers remained relatively constant at 57,400. The following two academic years saw small reductions (of 0.6% and 0.9% respectively), before a small outlying increase in 2020/21, reverting the total number of loans paid out back to 2016/17 levels.

While take-up since resumed its decline, the rate of decrease has slowed since 2022/23, to 0.4% in the latest year, with take-up standing at 51,300.

£172.8 million was paid out in the form of Maintenance Loans in 2013/14. There was a moderate increase until 2016/17 when the annual increase accelerated to a significant 21.1%, to £238.6 million. This was a result of the first notable rise in the maximum maintenance loan available ('Elsewhere' rate up by 15.0% from £5,376 to £6,183). Similar increases in the maximum loan available were reported in the following two years, up by a further 12.0%, then 15.6%, to £8,000. For more information on maximum loans available please refer to **Table 1A**.

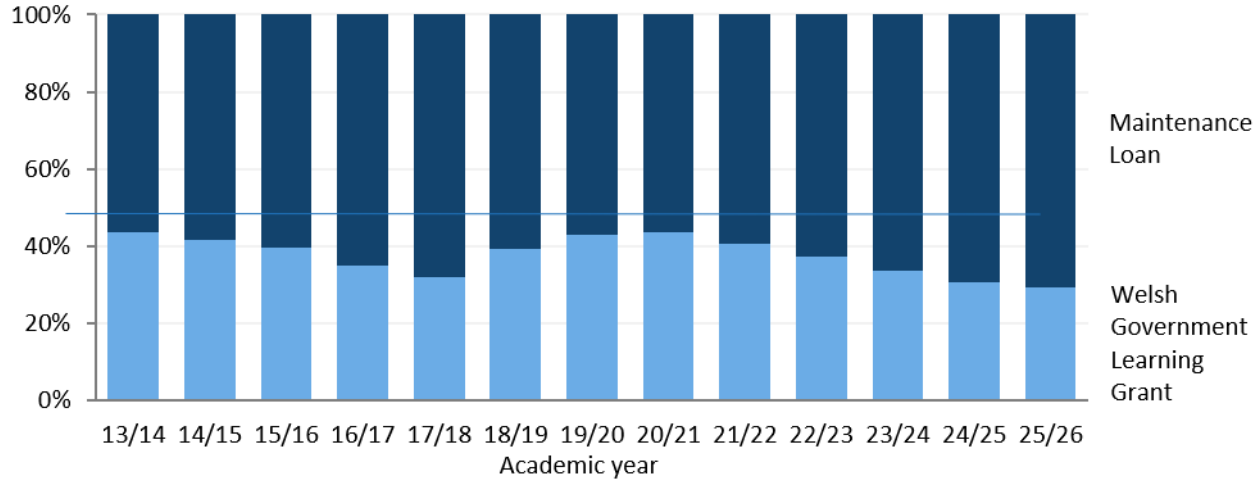
The first and only decrease in the amount paid out was reported in 2018/19 (down 4.1%). This was driven by a small reduction in the number of loans paid out, alongside a 3.4% decrease in the average loan taken. Following little movement in 2019/20, at £263.2 million, the upward trend resumed, averaging + 9.8% per year.

In 2025/26, £433.7 million was paid out in full-time Maintenance Loans, representing a 3.3% increase compared to 2024/25. Much of the growth seen over the period is likely attributable to successive increases in the maximum Maintenance Loan available, which rose from £8,810 in 2020/21 to £11,345 by 2025/26.

Maintenance Loans form 71% of the total full-time maintenance support package paid out in academic year 2025/26

Figure 3: Maintenance Loans paid and Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG) awarded as a % of the total maintenance package paid out for students domiciled in Wales (full-time)

The line indicates the 50% point.



Source: **Table 3A (i) and 4A (i)**
Download the data for Figure 3 (ODS, 6KB)

Figure 3 indicates Maintenance Loan payments and Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG) awards as a percentage of the total maintenance package paid/awarded to full-time students domiciled in Wales.

In 2013/14, Maintenance Loans accounted for 57% of maintenance support. This proportion steadily increased, reaching a peak of 68% in 2017/18. The rise was primarily driven by annual increases in the maximum Maintenance Loan available (from £5,150 to £6,922 over the same time-period), while the maximum Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG) remained frozen at £5,161.

Following the implementation of policy changes recommended by the **Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales**, otherwise known as the Diamond Review in 2018/19 the proportion of support attributed to loans first reduced, down to 61%. This shift was due to a significant increase in the maximum WGLG available (up 57% to £8,100), compared to a more modest (+ 16%) increase in the maximum Maintenance Loan available (up to £8,000).

Since 2018/19, the maximum WGLG has again remained unchanged, at £8,100 while the maximum Maintenance Loan has continued to rise annually. From 2020/21 this caused the earlier trend between loans and grants to resume, with the proportion of support attributed to loans increasing year-on-year.

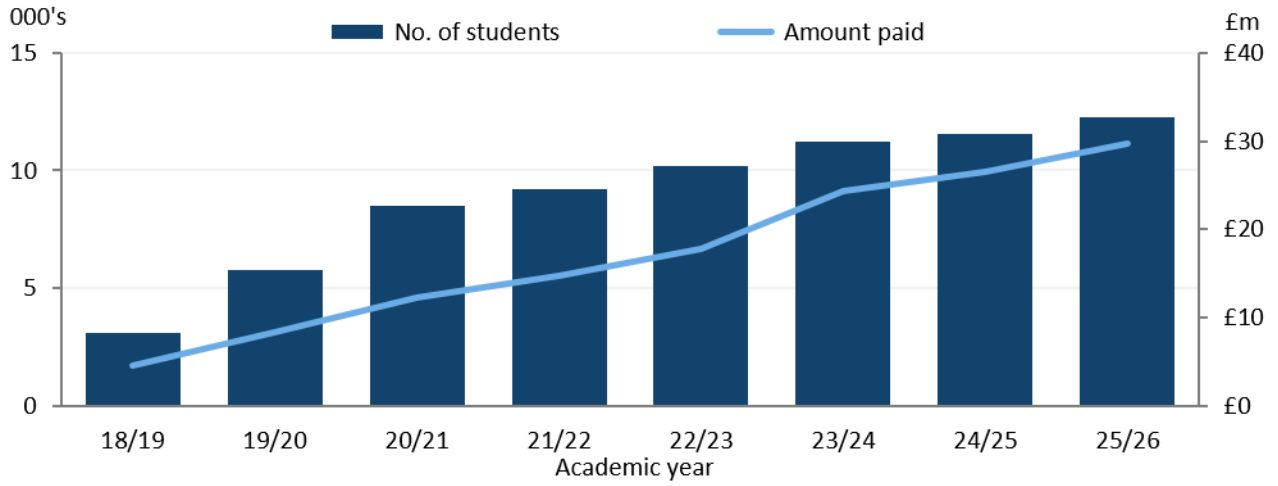
By 2025/26, the maximum Maintenance Loan available increased by 2% to £11,345, compared to the unchanged WGLG maximum of £8,100. Consequently, loans comprised 71% of all maintenance support.

For more information on maximum loans and grants available, please refer to **Table 1A**. For more details on the Welsh Government Learning Grant, please refer to **page 9.**

6.2% increase in part-time Maintenance Loan take-up in academic year 2025/26, to 12,300

Figure 4: Number of students domiciled in Wales receiving part-time Maintenance Loans and amount paid

The columns in this chart depict the number of students against the left-hand axis, and the line illustrates the amount paid against the right-hand axis.



Source: **Table 5A**
Download the data for Figure 4 (ODS, 6KB)

Maintenance Loans for part-time higher education students domiciled in Wales were introduced for new students in academic year 2018/19. Combined with the part-time Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG), this forms the part-time maintenance package. For academic year 2025/26 this is up to a maximum of £6,829.

Figure 4 shows that in the first year of availability 3,100 part-time loans were issued. Take-up rapidly increased in the second year, characteristic of a new type of student support, by 86.3% up to 5,700.

Year-on-year growth subsequently slowed, falling to 2.8% in academic year 2024/25. However, 2025/26 saw a stronger increase of 6.2%, with the number of loans paid rising to 12,300.

In 2018/19, £4.5 million was paid out in the form of part-time Maintenance Loans. This increased by 85.4% to £8.3 million in the following year. Growth in the amount paid out then slowed, reaching 8.4% in 2024/25.

In academic year 2025/26 £29.8 million was paid out, representing a 12.6% increase compared to the previous year.

The stronger growth in amounts paid, relative to the increase in the number of loans issued, is likely to reflect continued increases in the maximum loan entitlement. Since the introduction of the loan, the maximum available amount has increased by an average of 5.0% per year.

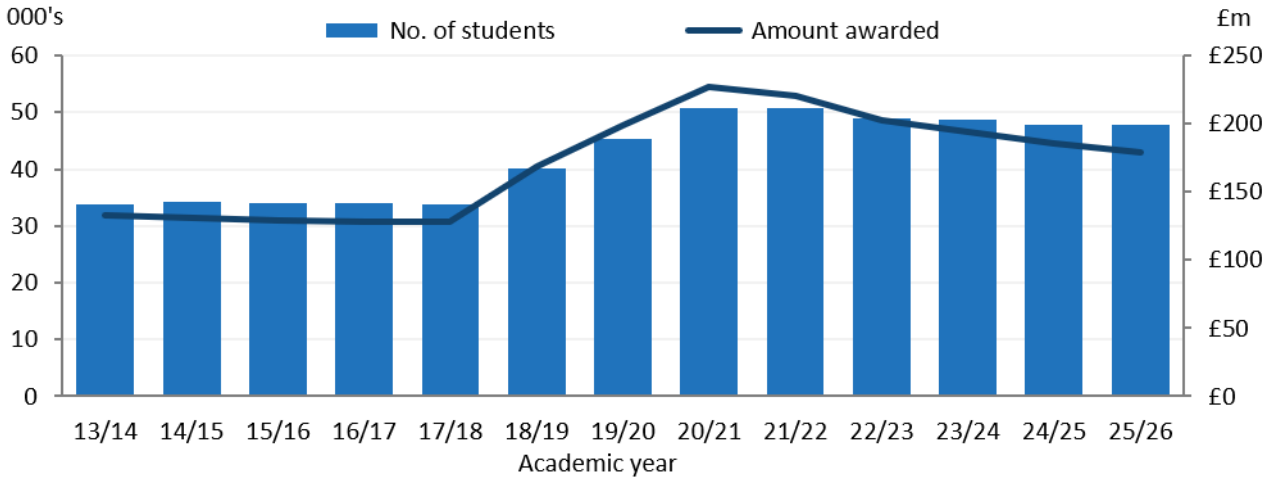
Welsh Government Learning Grant

The Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG) is funding to help with day-to-day costs, such as rent or food, whilst studying. WGLGs are available to both full-time and part-time higher education students studying at an eligible higher education provider and studying an eligible undergraduate, initial teacher training or postgraduate certificate of education. The amount awarded is dependent on household residual income and is a non-repayable grant. Students can take both WGLG and a Maintenance Loan as a combined maintenance package to cover living expenses.

Full-time Welsh Government Learning Grant take-up in 2025/26 remains relatively static, at 47,800

Figure 5: Number of students domiciled in Wales receiving full-time Welsh Government Learning Grant and amount awarded

The columns in this chart depict the number of students against the left-hand axis, and the line illustrates the amount awarded against the right-hand axis.



Source: **Table 4A**
Download the data for Figure 5 (ODS, 6KB)

Figure 5 shows that the number of full-time students in receipt of a Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG) in academic year 2013/14 was 33,900. Numbers remained relatively constant, averaging 34,000 through to 2017/18.

Prior to 2018/19, those with a household residual income of over £50,020 were not entitled to a grant. However, following a **review** of student funding, all full-time students commencing their course on or after 1 August 2018, were entitled to a minimum amount of £1,000 in WGLG, regardless of their household residual income. This change in policy caused a significant increase in take-up (up 18.8%) in 2018/19 with 40,000 grants awarded. Increases continued in the subsequent two years (up 13.4% and 11.8% respectively), to peak at 50,700.

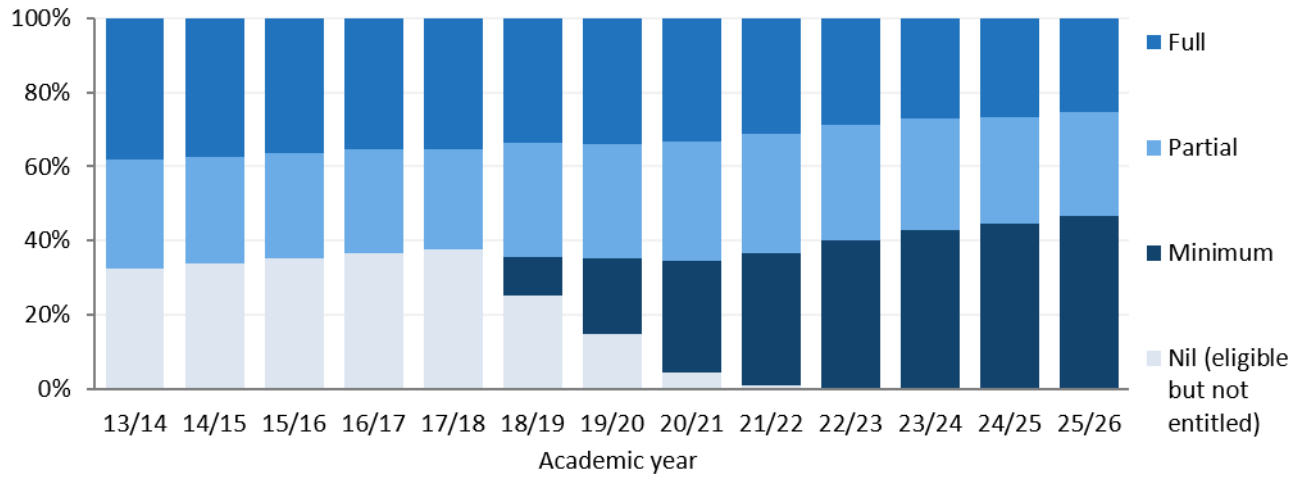
Following a year of relative stability, the declining trend returned in 2022/23, with take-up gradually decreasing to 47,800 by the most recent year.

The total amount awarded in full-time WGLG was £132.5 million in academic year 2013/14. This reduced to £127.7 million by 2016/17. In line with the number of grants awarded, the amount awarded increased significantly to peak at £227.1 million in 2020/21. In the following year, the decreasing trend resumed, down to £179.2 million by 2025/26, 3.6% lower than the previous year.

Small reduction in the proportion of eligible full-time students awarded full, and partial Welsh Government Learning Grants

Figure 6: Proportion of full-time Welsh Government Learning Grants awarded by level of grant support

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



Source: **Table 4A**
Download the data for Figure 6 (ODS, 6KB)

Figure 6 shows how changes in Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG) policy have affected the proportions of full-time Wales-domiciled students receiving different levels of support.

Between academic year 2013/14 and 2017/18, the split of WGLG awarded by the level of support averaged at 36% for a full grant, 28% for partial grant and 35% who were eligible, but not entitled to a grant.

Since the **funding review** in 2018/19, it is evident that the previously 'eligible but not entitled' students (the 'Nil' category) have concluded their studies, as this proportion has since reduced to less than 0.01% of all grant-eligible students. As a result, by academic year 2025/26 almost 100% of full-time students were in receipt of some level of WGLG.

In the first-academic year post-Welsh funding review, just 10% of all those awarded a full-time WGLG received the minimum £1,000. By academic year 2025/26, this has increased to 47%, an increase from the 44% in the previous year.

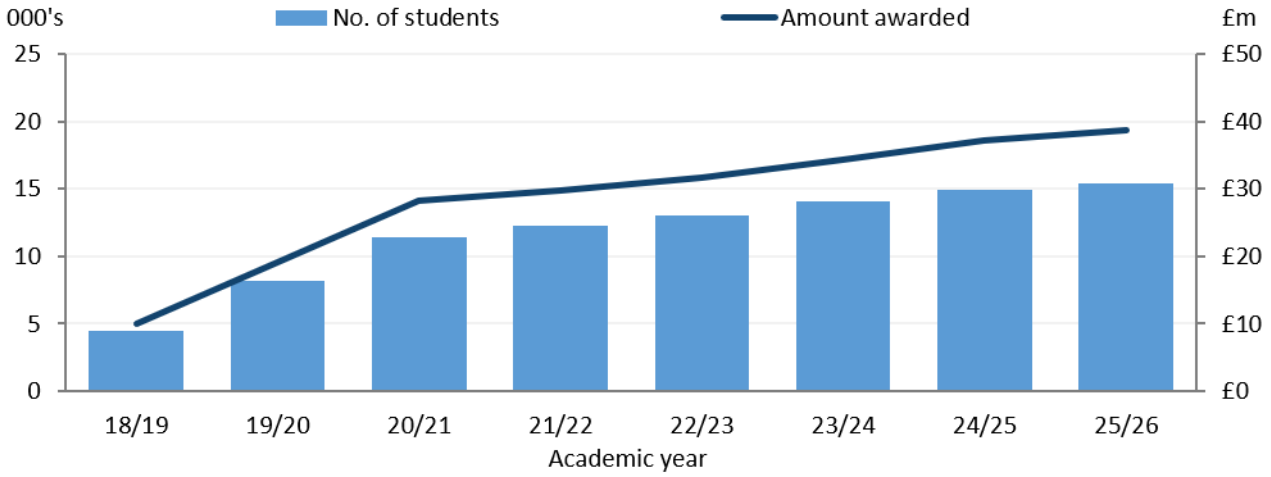
In terms of the total amount awarded, the 'minimum' category of entitlement equated to £5.5 million in 2018/19, by 2025/26 this has increased to £22.3 million.

In academic year 2025/26 the percentage of eligible full-time Wales-domiciled students receiving a full grant has reduced to 25% (down from 27% in the previous year). Those receiving a partial grant decreased to 28% (down from 29%).

3.4% increase in part-time Welsh Government Learning Grant take-up in 2025/26, up to 15,500

Figure 7: Number of students domiciled in Wales receiving part-time Welsh Government Learning Grant & Special Support Grant and amount awarded

The columns in this chart depict the number of students against the left-hand axis, and the line illustrates the amount awarded against the right-hand axis.



Source: **Table 5A**
Download the data for Figure 7 (ODS, 6KB)

Figure 7 shows that in academic year 2018/19 (the first year of availability), the part-time Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG) was awarded to 4,500 students. Characteristically for a new student support type, large increases were reported in both the second and third years (of 81.8% and 40.5% respectively) to 11,400.

Whilst the rate of increase has since slowed, the number of part-time learning grants awarded has continued to rise, to peak at 15,500 in 2025/26, up 3.4% on the previous year.

In 2018/19, £10.0 million of part-time WGLG was awarded. With similar growth rates to that of the number of grants awarded, the total amount increased to £38.6 million by 2025/26, a 4.0% increase on the previous year.

The maximum amount of WGLG a part-time student could be awarded in 2025/26 was £4,500. This, combined with the part-time Maintenance Loan formed a maximum total maintenance support offering of £6,829. As with the full-time Welsh Government Learning Grant, the amount awarded is dependent on household residual income and course intensity.

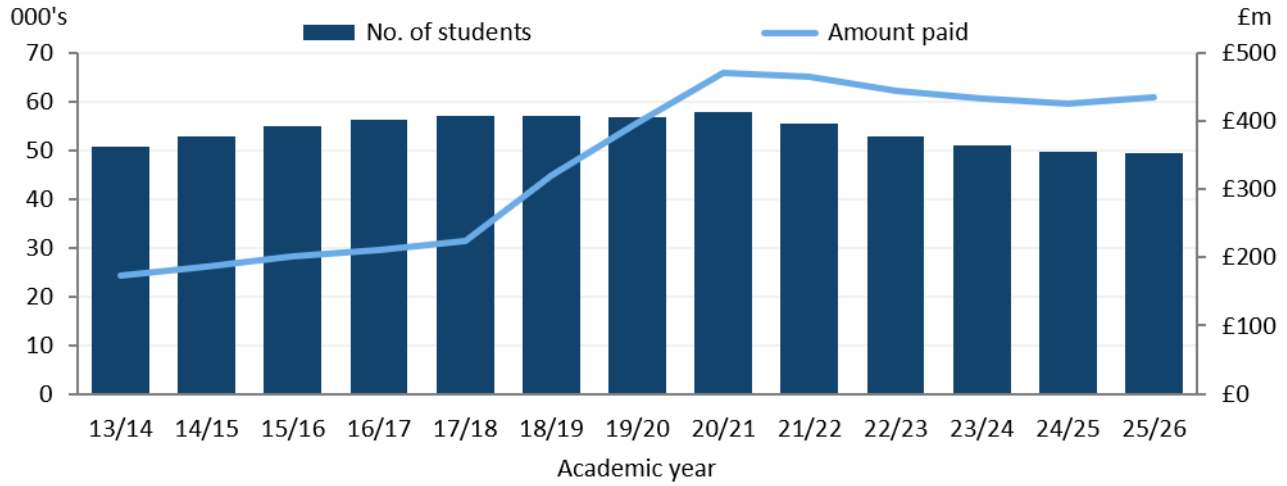
Undergraduate Tuition Fee Loans

An undergraduate Tuition Fee Loan covers the cost of the tuition fees charged by the university or college. These loans are available to those studying an eligible undergraduate, initial teacher training or Postgraduate Certificate of Education course, at an eligible higher education provider on a full or part-time basis. Tuition Fee Loans are not dependent on household residual income.

Minimal change in take-up of full-time Tuition Fee Loans in academic year 2025/26, at 49,300

Figure 8: Number of Tuition Fee Loans paid on behalf of full-time Wales and EU (outside UK) domiciled students and amount paid

The columns in this chart depict the number of students against the left-hand axis, and the line illustrates the amount paid against the right-hand axis.



Source: **Table 3B (i)**
Download the data for Figure 8 (ODS, 6KB)

Figure 8 shows that the number of Tuition Fee Loans paid out on behalf of full-time students in 2013/14 was 50,600. This number gradually increased to 57,100 by 2017/18. Numbers remained relatively stable over the subsequent two academic years, followed by a small outlying increase to peak at 57,700 in 2020/21.

Numbers have since reduced to 49,300 by 2025/26, a small 0.8% reduction compared to the previous year.

The amount paid out in the form of full-time Tuition Fee Loans in 2013/14 was £172.6 million. This rose steadily to £223.6 million by 2017/18.

From academic year 2018/19, the maximum Tuition Fee Loan available increased substantially following a policy change that allowed new full-time students studying at providers in England to be charged up to £9,250 in tuition fees. This represented an increase of 115% compared with the £4,296 maximum fee charged to full-time students in 2017/18.

Students continuing their studies in 2018/19 remained on the 2012/13 cohort funding arrangements for the duration of their course. As a result, they were charged tuition fees of £4,450 in 2018/19, with fees subsequently increasing by an average of 2.7% per academic year.

Tuition Fee Grants were no longer available to new full-time students following the **funding review**, in the

same year**.** For context, in 2017/18, students who began higher education from 2012/13 could receive up to £4,954 as a Tuition Fee Grant. This accounted for 55% of the total tuition fee support of £9,000 (based on higher education providers in Wales), with the remaining 45% provided as a loan. By contrast, students beginning full-time study in Wales in 2018/19, after the grant was discontinued, the maximum support remained at £9,000, but this was entirely loan-based.

These changes in policy resulted in the amount paid out increasing by a considerable 43.3% to £320.5 million in 2018/19.

Notable increases were also evident in the following two years to peak at £470.8 million in 2020/21. These increases can be attributed to the reducing proportion of students who remained eligible for the lower Tuition Fee Loans and/or the Tuition Fee Grant (e.g. pre-2018/19 students).

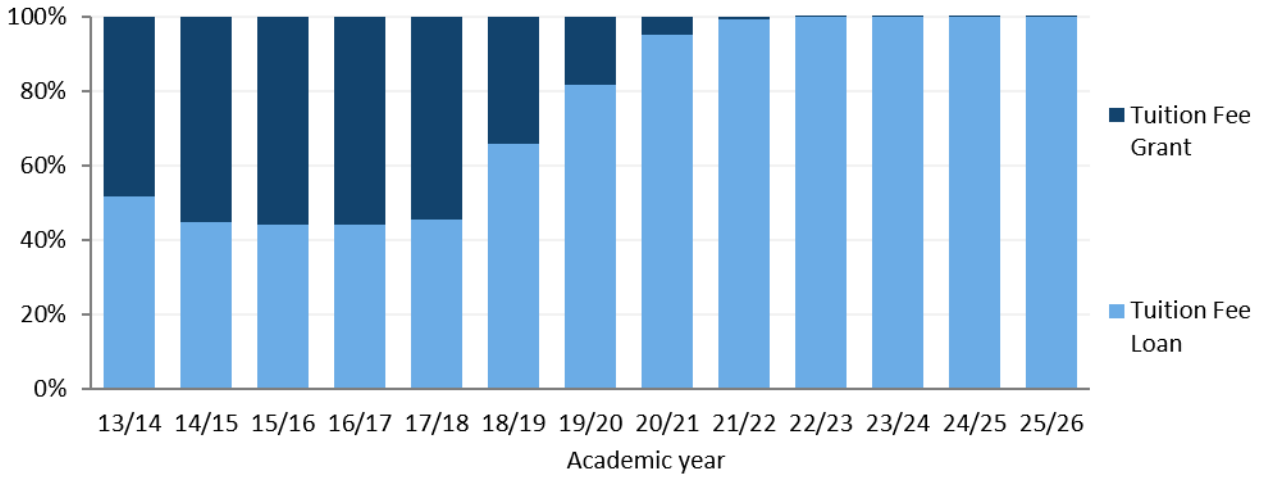
In academic year 2021/22, the first, albeit small, decrease was reported, with the amount paid out falling by 1.2%. This was followed by three more substantial yet slowing decreases down to £425.0 million by 2024/25. These reductions are likely attributable to declining loan take-up over the same period.

2025/26 saw the decreasing trend reverse with a 2.3% increase to £434.6 million. This is likely attributed to the 3% increase in the maximum Tuition Fee Loan made available for 2018/19 cohort students and a 6% increase for those in the 2012/13 cohort.

More information on the changes to policy following the funding review can be found on **GOV.UK**.

Figure 9: Amount paid/awarded in full-time tuition fee support split by Tuition Fee Loan and Tuition Fee Grant

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



Source: **Table 3B (i) and 4D**
Download the data for Figure 9 (ODS, 6KB)

Figure 9 illustrates, as a proportion of total tuition fee support, the changing proportion of Tuition Fee Loans vs. Tuition Fee Grants.

In 2013/14, Tuition Fee Loans accounted for 52% of the total tuition fee support package, while Tuition Fee Grants made up the remaining 48%. From academic year 2018/19, following the introduction of the **funding reforms**, the Tuition Fee Grant was withdrawn for new full-time undergraduate students. New students instead became eligible for a Tuition Fee Loan covering the full cost of tuition fees. Continuing students remained on the previous funding arrangements until completion of their course.

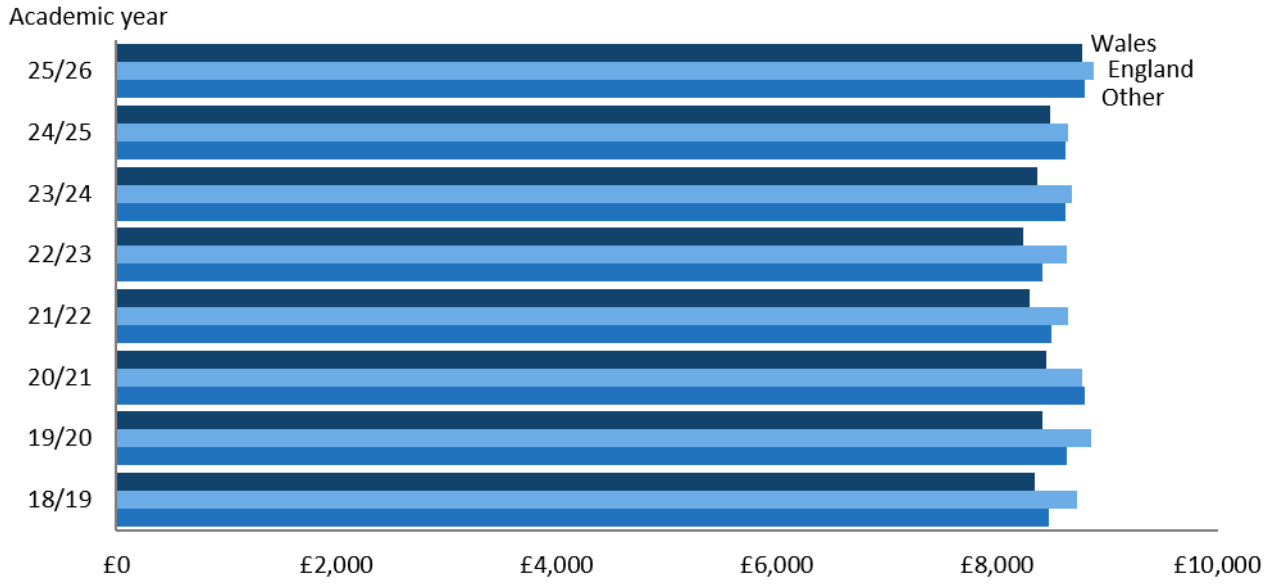
The declining proportion of full-time students eligible for the grant is particularly noticeable between the academic years 2017/18 and 2020/21. During this period, the total number of full-time students accessing tuition fee support remained relatively stable, yet the share of total support attributed to grants fell significantly (from 55%, to just 5%).

By 2025/26, Tuition Fee Grants made up less than 0.01% of the total tuition fee support package as the remaining Tuition Fee Grant-eligible students (pre-2018/19 students) have concluded their studies.

Average full-time Tuition Fee Loan paid increases, across all UK countries of study in academic year 2025/26

Figure 10: Average full-time Tuition Fee Loans funded by Student Finance Wales by country of study (post 2018/19 entry cohort funding)

First cluster labelled.



Source: **Table 3B (ii)**
Download the data for Figure 10 (ODS, 6KB)

Figure 10 shows the average full-time undergraduate Tuition Fee Loan paid out between academic years 2018/19 and 2025/26, based on the country in which the undergraduate is studying.

The average loan taken by a Wales-domiciled student studying in Wales was £8,340 in 2018/19. This has fluctuated over the subsequent academic years to arrive at £8,770 by 2025/26. This is a £290 increase on the previous year.

The average for a Wales-domiciled student studying in England was £8,720 in 2018/19. This also fluctuated until reporting an average of £8,880 in 2025/26, a £240 increase to 2024/25.

The average full-time loan for a Wales-domiciled student studying outside of Wales or England (shown as 'Other' in *Figure 10*) was £8,470 in 2018/19. By 2025/26 the average was £8,880, £180 higher than the previous year.

Across the time series, Wales-domiciled students studying in Wales took out the lowest average Tuition Fee Loans compared with their counterparts studying outside Wales.

The overall average loan taken across all UK countries of study increased from £5,620 to £8,820 between

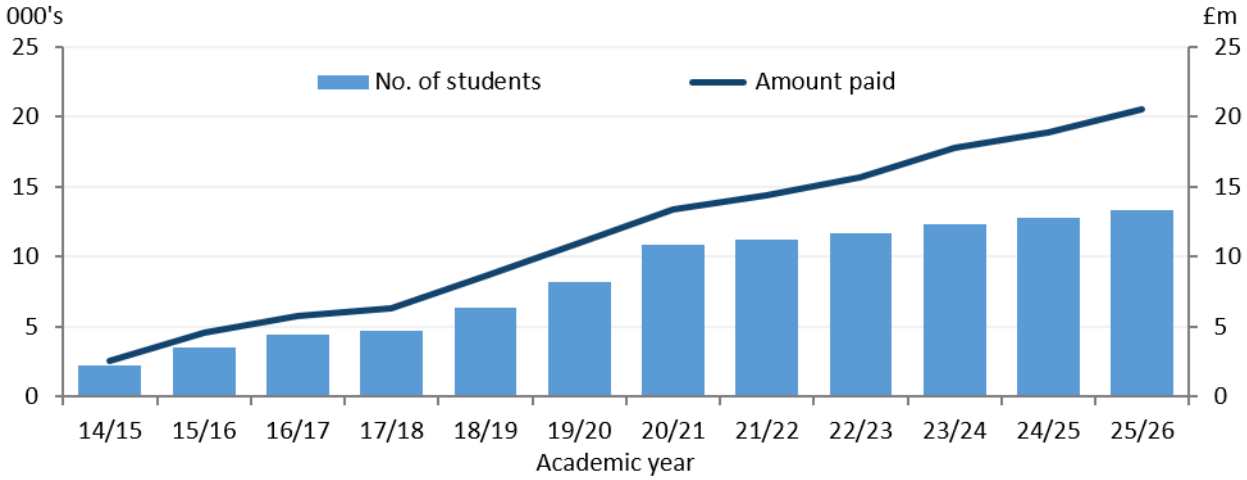
2018/19 and 2025/26. Compared to the previous year, this is an increase of £270 (+ 3.2%). This more significant increase than noted in the previous four years can be attributed to the increase in the maximum amounts UK providers can charge in tuition fees.

For further information, please refer to the main **Tuition Fee Loans section**.

4.7% increase in take-up of part-time Tuition Fee Loans in academic year 2025/26, to 13,400

Figure 11: Number of Tuition Fee Loans paid on behalf of part-time Wales and EU (outside UK) domiciled students and amount paid

The columns in this chart depict the number of students against the left-hand axis, and the line illustrates the amount paid against the right-hand axis.



Source: **Table 5A**
Download the data for Figure 11 (ODS, 6KB)

Tuition Fee Loans were made available to part-time students in academic year 2014/15.

Figure 11 shows that, in the first year 2,200 Tuition Fee Loans were paid on behalf of part-time students. Take-up significantly increased in the second year (characteristic for a new type of student support), up by 58.8% to 3,500. Year-on-year growth then slowed, down to 7.2% by 2017/18.

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21 there was a period of notable increase (averaging at 32.0% per year), up to 10,800. This was likely attributed to the discontinuation of the part-time Course Grant to new students in academic year 2017/18. For context, in 2017/18 part-time students in Wales were eligible to apply for a maximum Tuition Fee Grant of £1,155, contributing up to 31% toward their tuition fees. The remaining 69% was available via a loan. However, from 2018/19 onwards, tuition fee support became entirely loan based.

Since 2021/22 yearly increases have slowed to an average of 4.3%, up to 13,400 in 2025/26.

Showing a consistent trend to that of the number of loans paid out, in 2014/15, £2.6 million was paid on behalf of students. This increased, first by a notable 77.3%, reaching £13.4 million by 2020/21.

Increases in the latest five academic years have averaged 8.9%, arriving at £20.5 million by 2025/26.

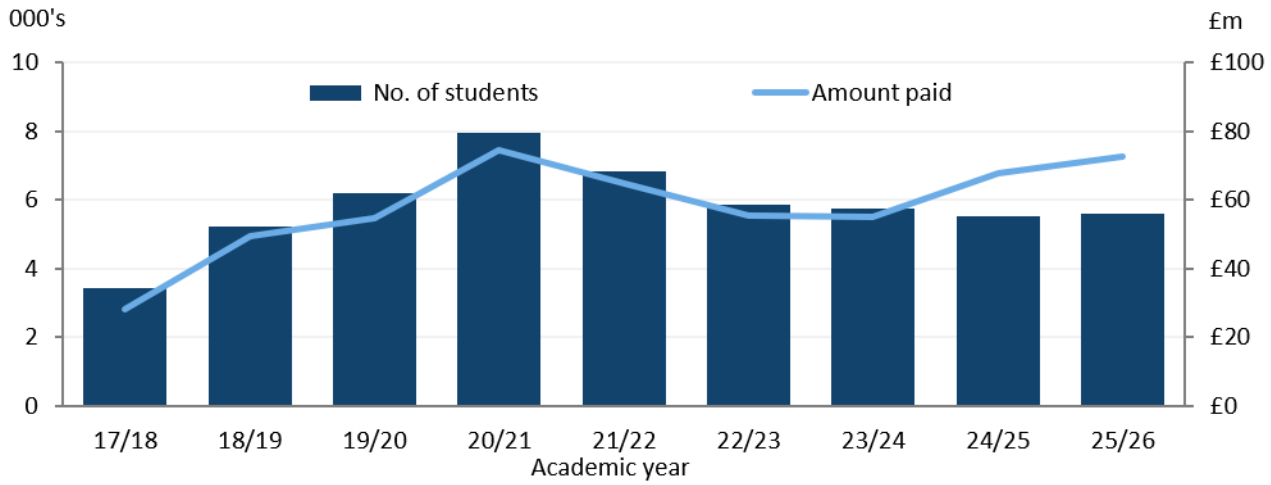
Postgraduate student support

A Postgraduate Master's or Doctoral Loan is funding to help with course and living costs whilst studying an eligible postgraduate level course. They are paid directly to the student and are not based on their income or the residual income of their household. Students studying either a Postgraduate Certificate of Education or an initial teacher training course are not eligible for postgraduate funding, they can alternatively apply for undergraduate finance. From academic year 2019/20, Postgraduate Master's students were also entitled to a means-tested grant. This grant was discontinued from academic year 2024/25.

Following four years of decline, a small increase in Postgraduate Master's Loan take-up reported for 2025/26, up 1.6% to 5,600

Figure 12: Number of students domiciled in Wales and EU (outside UK) receiving Postgraduate Master's loans

The columns in this chart depict the number of students against the left-hand axis, and the line illustrates the amount paid against the right-hand axis.



Source: **Table 6A**
Download the data for Figure 12 (ODS, 6KB)

Figure 12 indicates that in the first year of availability, 3,400 students received a Postgraduate Master's Loan. Typically for a new type of student support, in the second and third year numbers notably increased, up to 6,200 by 2019/20.

Academic year 2020/21 also reported a more significant increase in take-up, up 28.4% to 8,000. This could be attributed to the perceived reduced employment opportunities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, either encouraging undergraduates to continue to postgraduate level or non-students to return to study.

In 2021/22, figures normalised against an outlying year with the first decrease in take-up, down 14.1% to 6,800. However, figures continued to decrease, down to 5,500 by 2024/25.

In contrast, 2025/26 reported a small 1.6% increase compared to the previous year, at 5,600.

The amount paid out in Postgraduate Master's Loans follows a near identical trend up until 2024/25. In 2017/18 £28.3 million was paid out, increasing to peak at £74.5 million by 2020/21. In the three subsequent years, amounts reduced, most significantly in 2022/23 (down by 14.5%).

Despite the reduction in take-up, in 2024/25, £67.6 million was paid out, 23.1% higher than in the previous year. This is a result of the discontinuation of the Postgraduate Master's Grant Iin the same academic year. For context, in 2023/24 eligible postgraduate master's students in Wales were eligible to apply for a

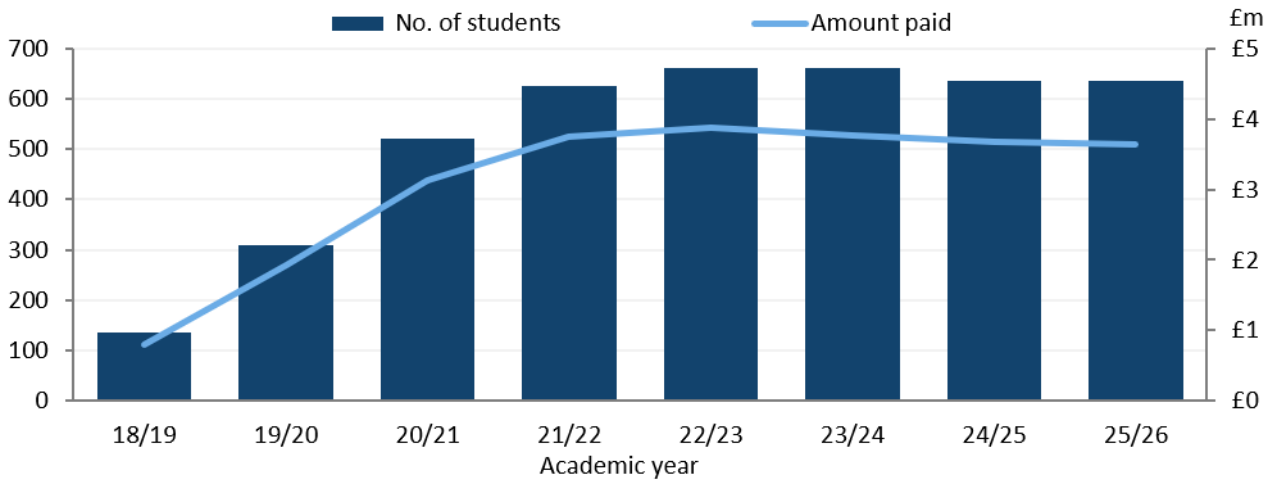
maximum grant of up to £6,885, contributing up to 37% toward their support package of £18,770. The remaining 63% was available via a loan. However, in the following year, following the discontinuation of the grant, support became entirely loan based, a maximum entitlement of £18,950 for 2024/25.

Increases continued into 2025/26, with a 7.2% rise to £72.5 million. This is attributed to the continuing effect of the grant discontinuation, coupled with the 1.6% increase in the maximum loan available, up to £19,255.

Take-up of Postgraduate Doctoral Loans remains static in 2025/26, at 635

Figure 13: Number of students domiciled in Wales and EU (outside UK) receiving Postgraduate Doctoral Loans and amount paid

The columns in this chart depict the number of students against the left-hand axis, and the line illustrates the amount paid against the right-hand axis.



Source: **Table 6B**
Download the data for Figure 13 (ODS, 6KB)

In academic year 2018/19, Postgraduate Doctoral Loans were made available to both eligible Wales and EU (outside UK)-domiciled students who commenced an eligible doctoral degree course.

Students can apply for the loan amount they will require for the entire duration of their course (up to a maximum of £29,130 in academic year 2025/26) whilst also providing an estimate of the number of years over which they will study (this can be changed at any time). Each academic year's instalment is capped at a maximum rate (at £14,325 for 2025/26 applicants).

Figure 13 indicates that in the first year of availability, 135 postgraduates received a doctoral loan. In the second and third year, numbers considerably increased (up 129.6% and 67.7% respectively) to 520. These levels of increase are characteristic for a new type of student support.

Numbers continued to increase, yet at a slowing rate up until 2023/24 when take-up came to a standstill at 660. Academic year 2024/25 reported the first decrease, down 3.8% to 635. Numbers remained at a rounded 635 in 2025/26.

Mirroring the trend in loan take-up, in academic year 2018/19 a total of £0.8 million was paid out to eligible students. In the second and third year the amount paid out increased significantly (up 141.7% and 62.7% respectively), to £3.1 million. The total amount of loans paid out continued to increase but at a lesser rate, to peak at £3.9 million in 2022/23. Academic year 2023/24 however, reported the first decrease, down 2.9%. Decreases have continued, yet at a slowing rate, to £3.6 million in 2025/26, 0.8% less than the previous year.

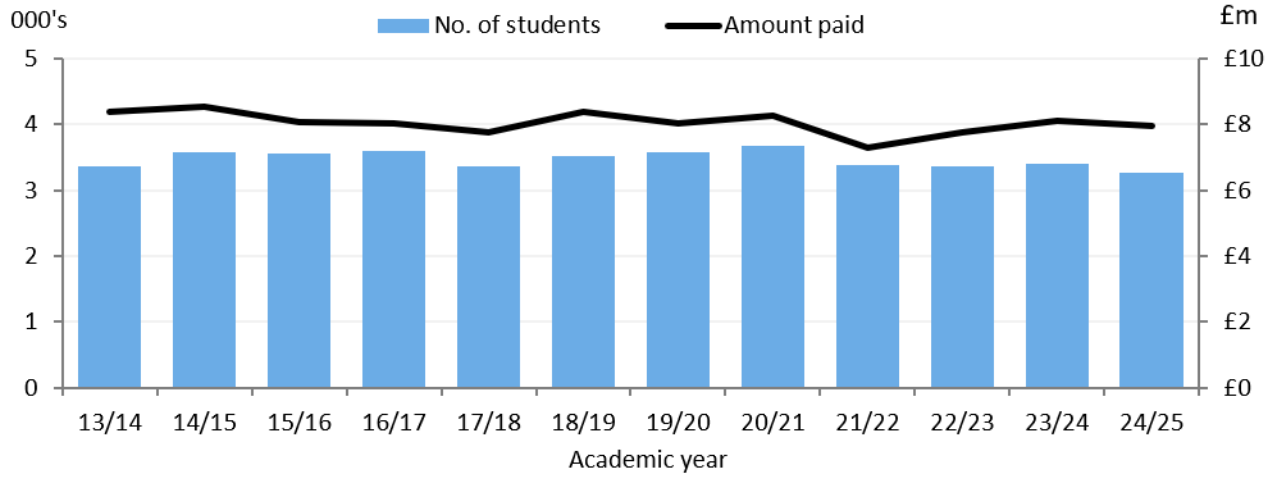
Disabled Students' Allowance

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is an additional part of the student support package and helps pay for extra costs a student might incur in higher education as a direct result of their disability. This includes long-term health conditions, mental health difficulties, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia or dyspraxia etc. The allowance is non-repayable and does not depend on household income. The individual's condition must meet the definition of a disability under the Equality Act 2010. Generally, Disabled Students' Allowance is paid direct to the providers of equipment and services covered by the allowance although students may receive some funding paid directly to them, depending on their circumstances.

1.8% decrease in the amount paid out in full-time undergraduate Disabled Students' Allowance in academic year 2024/25, at £8.0 million

Figure 14: Amount of DSA paid on behalf of full-time undergraduates by category and academic year (effective one year later)

The columns in this chart depict the number of students against the left-hand axis, and the line illustrates the amount paid against the right-hand axis.



Source: **Table 4B**
Download the data for Figure 14 (ODS, 6KB)

The vast majority of DSA is paid to suppliers once the Student Loans Company receive invoices for equipment or services. As these continue to be received well after the end of the academic year, we also capture a more finalised position by reporting figures one year after the end of the academic year – the following end-August (hence 2024/25 being the most recent figures in *Figure 14*).

The total number of full-time undergraduates in receipt of DSA for the 2013/14 academic year was 3,350. Numbers then fluctuated, peaking in 2020/21 at 3,650. By 2024/25 numbers have decreased to 3,250. This is 4.0% less than 2023/24's finalised figure, and the lowest point in the displayed time series.

The total amount claimed in full-time DSA was £8.4 million for the 2013/14 academic year. This has also fluctuated, arriving at £8.0 million by 2024/25, a 1.8% decrease on the previous academic year.

As at 31 August 2026, a total of £7.4 million has been paid for academic year 2025/26. This is a 4.4% increase on the £7.0 million paid by the same point for 2024/25.

Figures in regard to part-time undergraduate and postgraduate DSA can be found in the supporting **tables** (Table 5C and 6C).

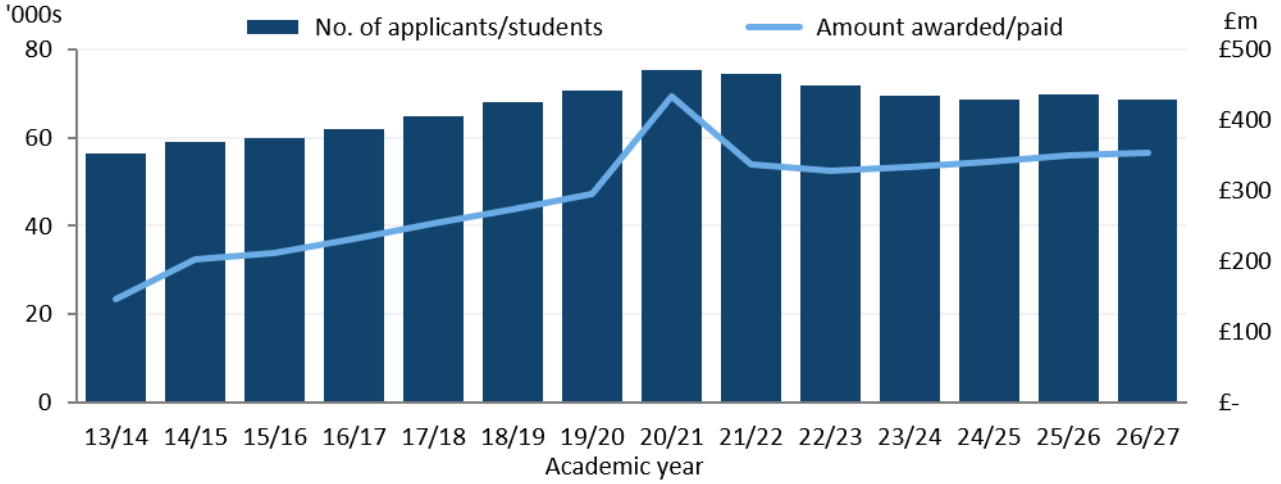
Early in year overview – academic year 2026/27

Table 7C (i) shows an early view of academic year 2026/27 at effective date 31 October 2026. This would be approximately two months into a typical academic year. These figures will be near-finalised in *Table 2* of the next update of this publication, due to be released in November 2027.

By end-October 2026, a total of 68,800 undergraduates and postgraduates have been awarded/paid a total of £353.4 million for academic year 2026/27

Figure 15. Early-in-year: Number of students domiciled in Wales and EU (outside UK) receiving higher education support and amount awarded/paid

The columns in this chart depict the number of applicants/students against the left-hand axis, and the line illustrates the amount awarded/paid against the right-hand axis.



Source: **Table 7C (i)**
Download the data for Figure 15 (ODS, 6KB)

Figure 15 shows that by end-October in academic year 2013/14, a total of 56,500 undergraduates and postgraduates had been awarded/paid student support. This early view increased year-on-year over the subsequent six academic years to 70,700 by 2019/20. The total amount awarded/paid by this early point of the same academic years followed a very similar trend, growing from £145.5 million in 2013/14 to £294.8 million by 2019/20.

As at end-October 2020, a total of £433.4 million had been awarded/paid to 75,300 students for the 2020/21 academic year. Despite a 6.4% increase in the number of students awarded/paid, the amount awarded/paid was 47.0% higher than at the same point in the previous year. This significant increase was predominantly attributed to an **early second instalment** of undergraduate tuition fees payments made to higher education providers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (two payments made in October 2020, instead of the typical schedule of one instalment paid in October and one in the following February). For further detail, please refer to our **Additional Information** section.

Figures normalised in the following year with the amount awarded/paid reducing to £338.0 million. Omitting the previous outlying year, the amount awarded/paid showed a steady increase between 2019/20 and 2021/22, in line with previous annual increases.

The early in-year view of academic year 2022/23 indicated a further decrease in both the number awarded/paid and the amount awarded/paid, down 3.6% and 2.8% respectively. While the decline in recipient numbers continued in subsequent years, the amount awarded/paid returned to growth, increasing by 1.4% and then a further 2.5%.

In 2025/26, the amount awarded/paid increased by an additional 2.7%. This was driven by a 3.1% increase in the maximum tuition fee for new students, rising from £9,250 to £9,535, alongside a 1.7% increase in the number of students awarded/paid.

As at 31 October 2026, a total of 68,800 applicants/students have been awarded/paid for academic year 2026/27. This is 1.3% less than at the same point in the previous year. The total awarded/paid however recorded a further small increase of 0.8%, to £353.4 million. This can again be attributed to an increase in the maximum Tuition Fee Loan available for new students, up a further 2.7% to £9,790.

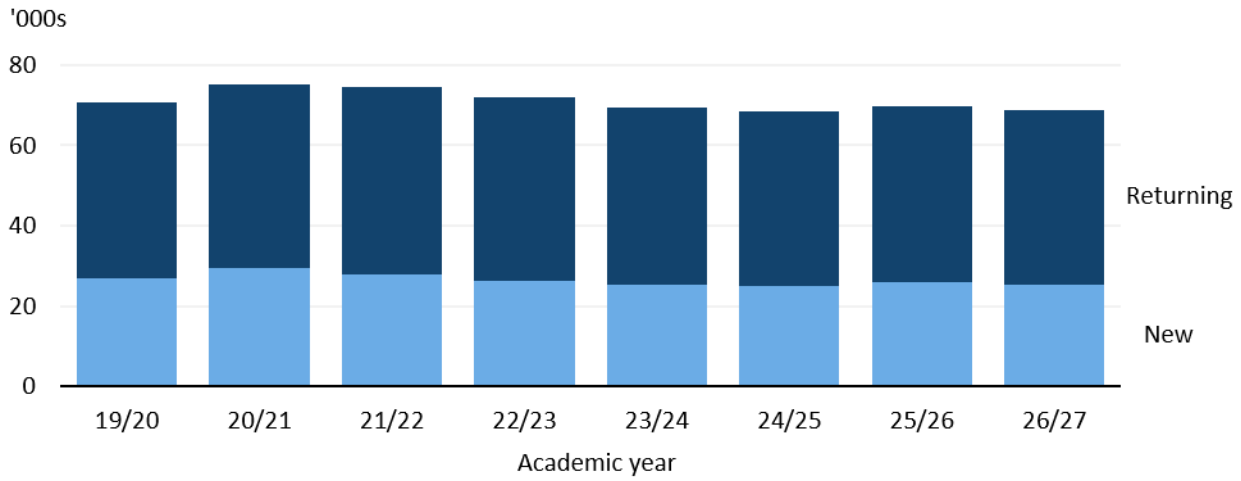
Of this, £330.2 million had been awarded/paid to 63,900 undergraduate students. This is a 1.1% decrease in numbers in comparison to the end-October position in the previous year (- 700), yet a 0.8% (+ £2.7 million) increase in the amount awarded/paid, owing to the increased maximum fee loan.

Compared to the same point last year, full-time undergraduate numbers have decreased by 1.3%, to 52,700, whereas part-time has remained at a rounded 11,300.

The early look at the 2026/27 academic year also indicates a total of £23.2 million has been paid to 4,900 postgraduate students so far. In comparison to the same point in 2025/26, this is a 4.0% decrease in the number of postgraduates paid. However, due to the increase in maximum support available for both masters' and doctoral courses, the total amount paid out has remained relatively unchanged (+ 0.3%).

Early figures indicate a 2.7% decrease in the number of new students receiving student finance in academic year 2026/27, and a 0.5% decrease in returning students

Figure 16: Early-in-year: Number of new and returning students domiciled in Wales and EU (outside UK) awarded/paid student support



Source: **Table 7C (ii)**
Download the data for Figure 16 (ODS, 6KB)

Within this publication, 'new' students are defined as those who have not previously received student support from the Student Loans Company (SLC). 'Returning' students are defined as those who have.

Figure 16 indicates that the number of 'new' students awarded/paid student support by the end-October position for academic year 2019/20 was 27,000. This increased to peak at 29,300 by the same point in the following year (up 8.4%). In the four subsequent years, numbers decreased, most significantly in 2022/23, down to 24,800 by 2024/25.

2025/26 however reported an outlying increase in the number of ‘new’ students, up by 4.9% to 26,000.

As at end-October 2026, 25,300 ‘new’ students had been awarded/paid for academic year 2026/27. This is 2.7% lower than at the same point in the previous year.

The trend in ‘returning’ students includes a much larger proportion of students.

The number of ‘returning’ students who had been awarded/paid student support by end-October in academic year 2019/20 was 43,700. This increased to peak at 46,700 in 2021/22. Numbers have since declined, down to 43,700 by 2025/26.

At end-October 2026, 43,500 ‘returning’ students had been awarded/paid for academic year 2026/27. This is 0.5% less than in the previous year.

As a proportion of all awarded/paid students at this early point in the academic year, ‘new’ students have decreased overall from 38.2% in 2019/20, down to 36.8% by 2026/27.

‘Returning’ students have increased overall from 61.8% to 63.2% over the same period.

Additional Information

Available student financial support

Details on student support available in academic year 2025/26 and 2026/27 can be found on the Student Finance Wales **website**.

Factors affecting early in year figures academic year 2020/21

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Education and devolved administrations of Wales and Northern Ireland requested that the Student Loans Company revised the schedule of undergraduate tuition fee payments to higher education providers for the 2020/21 academic year. This revision enabled providers to access the second instalment of tuition fee payments early (two paid in October 2020, instead of first paid October 2020 and second in February 2021), while ensuring that students were not impacted by the change. This is evident on Table 7C (i) and (ii). The normal schedule resumed in academic year 2021/22.

These early in year figures for academic year 2020/21 may also have been affected by the Ofqual standardisation of grades, allowing students whose exams were cancelled in the summer of 2020 to receive calculated grades enabling them to progress to further study. For more information, please refer to **GOV.UK.**

Definitions

For definitions of terms used in our publication, please refer to our **Definitions** page.

Data Sources

This publication uses data from SLC's administrative systems. For details of the data sources used in our publications please refer to our **Statement of Administrative Sources**. We also publish details on our data management which can also be found on **GOV.UK**.

Data Quality

Student Loans Company publishes documentation which outlines our approach to ensuring that our statistics publications are robust, reliable and fit for purpose. As a producer of official statistics, SLC is committed to upholding the principles and standards set out in the UK Statistics Authority's **Code of Practice for Statistics.** For more information, please refer to our policies and procedures page on **GOV.UK**.

Related Statistics Publications

Student Loans Company publishes statistics on higher education funding for England and Northern Ireland as part of the same series this publication belongs to. These are published at the same time as part of the series **Student Support for Higher Education**.

The Student Awards Agency for Scotland 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 on 27 August 2026 covering academic session 2025/26.

SLC also publish statistics on the repayment of student loans for higher education in the series 'Student Loans in Wales'. The **latest release** of this series, covering financial year 2025-26 was published on 18 June 2026.

Accredited Official Statistics

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

This publication series (publications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland) was awarded Accredited Official Statistics status in October 2011 following a **full assessment** against the Code of Practice for Statistics. Since that assessment, we have continued to comply with the Code and have made a number of improvements. These are detailed on **GOV.UK**.

Information detailing our compliance with the Code across all our publications is available on our **SLC Statistics: Policies and Procedures** page on GOV.UK. This page includes details of improvements that have been implemented, as well as those planned for the future in our Annual Statistical Work Programmes.