



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

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14 JUN 2012

Mr Chris Miller
fyi-request-230-09874e0c@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Miller

Thank you for your email of 17 May 2012 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

"I would like to request any information or statistics you have on the number of students claiming limited full-time status due to disability or health reasons this year and for the last five years, the average number of papers taken by these students (or the average course weight), the number of these who are receiving a student allowance, and any documentation, reports or correspondence you may have on how the changes to student allowances may affect them."

StudyLink connects students with financial assistance for a range of situations. This includes help with health, accommodation, work, childcare, and training costs. There is also help if students cannot find work during the study break, help for people with disabilities, help for emergencies, and information about family assistance.

Limited full-time status allows a student, who is not undertaking full-time study, to be treated as a full-time student when applying for financial assistance through StudyLink. The eligibility criteria for limited full-time status are set out in section 12(2) of the Student Allowances Regulations 1998, as follows:

12 (2) An allowance continued by regulation 3(a) to (e) may be paid to every student enrolled, or intending to enrol, in a course that is less than a full-time course, who would otherwise be eligible for such allowance, if—

(a) The chief executive has, on the advice of a tertiary provider or the principal of the appropriate secondary school, approved a course of study that is less than a full-time course for that student for that year—

(i) Because of that student's illness; or

(ii) For any cause that is, in the opinion of the chief executive, a sufficient cause that is outside that student's control; or

(iii) Where the chief executive considers such a course to be in that student's best interests;

(b) In the opinion of the chief executive, the student—

(i) Will complete that course; and

(ii) Is taking a course, or combination of courses, that constitutes more than half of a full-time course."

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Due to the large number of students who apply for support under limited full-time status the Ministry is unable to provide you with the information you have requested. To provide this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review the files of over 3,000 students, to determine the reason for limited full-time status, work out the average course weight and check whether they are receiving a Student Allowance. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act as the information requested requires substantial collation. Obtaining this information would remove staff from their business as usual duties and the greater public interest in the effective and efficient administration of the public service would not be served.

The changes announced by the Government on 24 May 2012 to Student Loans and Student Allowances will come into effect for study that starts on or after 1 January 2013. The changes are:

- The Student Allowance will no longer be available for postgraduate study (except Bachelor degrees with honours).
- Exemptions to the 200 week lifetime limit for Student Allowance will be removed, except for special circumstances.
- The current Student Allowance parental income threshold of \$55,027.96 will be maintained without CPI adjustment until 31 March 2016.
- Pilot training students will be limited to borrowing up to \$35,000 per Equivalent Full-time Student (EFTS) from the compulsory fees component of the Student Loan.
- Student Loan borrowing will be limited to two EFTS of study each year.

All exemptions to the 200 week limit for Student Allowance will be removed from 1 January 2013, except for special circumstances. Students with an exemption approved for study that starts prior to 1 January 2013 will continue to be eligible for the period approved. Students can only apply for an exemption in 2012 if their 200 week limit will be reached in 2012.

Students who have been approved limited full-time status due to an illness or disability may still qualify for an extension to the 200 week limit, under the special circumstances provision. Each application is considered on its own merits.

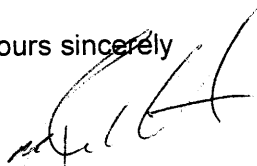
The Ministry of Education is responsible for Student Allowance policy. I considered transferring your request, for any documentation, reports or correspondence on how the changes to Student Allowances may affect students with limited full-time status who have disabilities or health issues, and consulted with the Ministry of Education but have been advised that it does not hold any information in the scope of your request.

You can find more information about eligibility criteria for limited full-time status and 200 week limit Student Allowance extension at www.workandincome.govt.nz.

I am sorry I could not be more helpful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsmen
PO Box 10-152
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Smith', written over the typed name below.

Mike Smith
Deputy Chief Executive Students, Seniors and Integrity Services