EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE COVID-19 STUDY DISRUPTION PAYMENT SCHEME REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2021

S.R. 2021 No.52

1. Introduction

1.1 This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department for the Economy ("the Department") to accompany the S.R. 2021 No.52 which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

1.2 The Statutory Rule is made under section 1(1) of The Financial Assistance Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 and is subject to the negative resolution procedure.

2. Purpose

2.1 The Statutory Rule will enable a Covid-19 Study Disruption Payment to be made to full time students studying in Northern Ireland. This will be a one-off discretionary payment of £500 made before 31 March 2021 to all full time UK and EU higher education students enrolled (during the month of February 2021) at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education Colleges (FECs). The estimated number of students who would receive a payment is 39,900.

3. Background

3.1 On 4 February 2021 the Executive approved proposals for a package of support to eligible Higher Education students who have suffered disruption as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This package includes the one-off discretionary £500 payments to full-time UK and EU higher education students at NI institutions.

4. Consultation

4.1 The institutions involved in making the payments have been consulted in the drafting of this Statutory Rule, as required by the Financial Assistance Act, and they have indicated that they have the capacity to administer this payment by the 31 March 2021 deadline.

4.2 As this is legislation has been brought forward at speed to assist the Covid-19 response, it was not possible to carry wider public consultation.

5. Equality Impact

5.1 Given the urgency of the situation there has not been time to finalise an assessment. Consideration has been given to compliance with section 75 of the NI Act 1998.

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1 This Statutory Rule does not impose costs on businesses. A regulatory impact assessment has not been conducted.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 The estimated cost of this scheme is £22m.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1 The Department is satisfied that this Statutory Rule complies with the provisions of Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

9. EU Implications

9.1 Not applicable.

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

10.1 There is no equivalent legislation in GB. This Statutory Rule applies to Northern Ireland only.

11. Additional Information

11.1 Not applicable.

12. Contact

12.1 Queries about this rule should be directed to: dfemail@economy-ni.gov.uk