EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

The Education (Student Support, etc) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025

S.R. 2025 No. 32

1. Introduction

1.1 This Explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Department for the Economy ("the Department"), which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

1.2 The Statutory Rule is made under Articles 3 and 8(4) of the Education (Student Support) (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and Articles 4(8) and 14(4) of the Higher Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 and is subject to the negative resolution procedure.

1.3 The rule will come into operation in accordance with regulation 1(2), (3) and (4) of these Regulations.

2. Purpose

2.1 This rule amends the principal student support Regulations - The Education (Student Support) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 (the Student Support Regulations). It further amends The Student Fees (Amounts) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 (the Fees Amounts Regulations).

2.2 This rule also makes necessary corrections and technical amendments.

3. Background

3.1 Inflationary increase to tuition fee levels

This Statutory Rule contains amendments to the Student Fees (Amounts) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 by applying an increase of 2.3% to the basic and higher fee amounts for academic year 2025/2026. This sees the maximum amount of tuition fee level increase from £4,750 in 2024/25 to £4,855 in 2025/26 an increase of £105.

3.2 Long residency changes

These amending regulations will introduce termination provisions for the long residence category, applicable from academic year 2025/26. The introduction of a termination of eligibility provision for this category will ensure that only those students whose leave status is renewed will continue to be eligible for funding in future course years. This will bring this category in line with provisions that already exist for other residency categories

3.3 **Graduate Entry Medicine courses in Northern Ireland**

From academic year 2025/26, the Student Support Regulations are amended so that students studying a Graduate Entry Medicine course in Northern Ireland will be able to avail of a tuition fee loan. The amount of tuition fee loan available to these students is likely to be the lesser of the maximum tuition fee loan cap or the actual tuition fee charged by the provider (£4,855 in academic year 2025/26).

3.4 **Maintenance loan uplift for full-time undergraduate students**

These amending regulations provide a 20% uplift to the maximum Maintenance Loan support to full time undergraduate students from Northern Ireland:
- for students living at home from £5,250, to £6,300;
- for students living away from home from £6,776 to £8,132;
- for students living in London from £9,492 to £11,391.

A 20% uplift is also applied to the applicate rates for specific cohorts including final year students, long courses loan and those eligible for the reduced rate maintenance loan.

3.5 **Tuition fees in other jurisdictions**

Tuition fees levels charged by Higher Education Institutions across the rest of the United Kingdom have increased from academic year 2025/26 to up to £9,535 for a full-time undergraduate course, or up to £11,440 for those undertaking an accelerated degree in England. These regulations increase the fee loan available to eligible students from Northern Ireland studying in other jurisdictions of the United Kingdom to enable them to fully fund their tuition fees.

3.6 **Non domicile tax references**

The UK Government, via HMRC, are making planned changes impacting the current tax system, and associated UK income tax legislation, from 6 April 2025 for those individuals who are residents of the UK but not domiciled here for tax purposes.

As a result of this change, the current tax rules for non-UK domiciled individuals will end, to be replaced by a system based on tax residence and associated references to UK non-domiciled status will be removed from UK tax legislation. To align with this, technical amendments have been made to the Student Support Regulations whereby references to non-domiciled tax status have been removed.

3.7 **Miscellaneous**

These amending regulations will also make some minor but necessary technical amendments to the Student Support Regulations.

4. Consultation

There is no statutory requirement to consult on those elements of these Regulations.

5. Equality Impact Assessment

Section 75 Equality of Opportunity Screening exercises have been carried out and it is our view that the proposals will not have an adverse impact on any of the Section 75 categories.

6. Rural Needs Impact Assessment

A Rural Needs Impact Assessment has been prepared.

7. Regulatory Impact Assessment

A Regulatory Impact Assessment has not been prepared for this rule as it has no adverse impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies.

8. Financial Implications

The financial implications associated with any amendments captured within these regulations have been considered and are considered affordable within existing budgets.

9. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

The making of this rule complies with Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act.

10. EU Implications

This rule does not relate to withdrawal from the European Union / trigger the statement requirements under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act.

11. Parity or Replicatory Measures

Historically, the Department's Regulations were made in broad parity with England and Wales but following the wholesale changes that were implemented in England and Wales from academic year 2012/13 as a result of the Browne Review this is no longer necessarily the case.

12. Additional information

If you require any further details regarding this rule you can send an e-mail to studentsupport@economy-ni.gov.uk