



31 January 2020

Dear parent/guardian

Student Finance Northern Ireland will be **moving to an online application system** for the 2020/2021 academic year. This marks a change from the system in previous years, so you are advised to read the following information carefully in order to support your child with their application.

All Higher Education students, including new first time students hoping to go to university or college in September 2020, will be required to either:

- Submit their online application details to the SFNI website ([www.studentfinancenir.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk)) in mid-March 2020
- Download paper copies of the PN1 form and PN1 notes

**The SFNI online portal is scheduled to be available from mid-March 2020. Your child should not attempt to apply at this stage for Student Finance online, as the relevant forms for 2020/2021 entry are not yet live.**

**Students who hold current UK passports**, providing they input their correct UK passport numbers, will have their identity status automatically checked by the Education Authority via a Student Loans Company link to the UK Passport Office. **Students who do not have a UK passport (e.g. Irish passport holders)** can either submit their original Birth Certificate and an identity form or forward their original current non-UK passport to their Student Finance NI office. All original passports will be returned by recorded delivery.

Students with disabilities, including dyslexia and specific learning difficulties, are encouraged to submit their online application details in mid-March, rather than wait until after they receive their examination results in August. Students with disabilities may be entitled to additional financial help via the **Disabled Student Allowance**. Early application for DSA will help to have approved support in place for the start of the academic year.

The Education Authority's Student Finance NI office in Dundonald aims to have financial support in place for first-time students at the beginning of the first term, **provided students have submitted full application information before the closing date of Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020**. Applications submitted after the 24<sup>th</sup> April are not guaranteed to have support in place at the beginning of the academic year.

Students who wish to study **Part-Time Higher Education Courses** can submit their Part-Time application details to Student Finance NI website in mid to late June 2020.

Guidance notes about student finance can be found in the attached documents and on the Student Finance NI website. For a simple guide to Student Finance, check out the following link: <https://www.studentfinancenl.co.uk/student-finance-explained>. There is also a dedicated section for parents on the Student Finance website, which you may find useful: <https://www.studentfinancenl.co.uk/parents-and-partners/>

GCS Careers Department