

Good news for university students

The Education Department is pleased to announce that, following lengthy negotiations with Universities UK, it has secured a deal which will mean Bailiwick students will see little change in the way their university studies are funded in the next couple of years.

New fee arrangements in England mean that universities are free to charge tuition fees of up to £9,000 from next September. When this new fee structure was announced by the UK Government there was no guarantee that students from Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man would be charged the same level of fees or whether universities would begin charging our students the much higher overseas fee rates.

‘By working together with the other Islands we have successfully negotiated an agreement that our students will be charged the same fees as English students,’ said Higher Education Working Party chairman, Deputy David de Lisle.

‘Although in some cases the tuition fees we will be charged from September 2012 are higher than now, we would like to reassure current and prospective students that the current means-tested grant scheme will continue on the same basis as now, with no additional burden being placed on parents.

‘We believe it is important that our young people should be given the opportunity to continue their studies at university level and this has been supported by the Assembly when they agreed we should continue with the current funding system,’ said Deputy de Lisle.

The Education Department has a ‘ring-fenced’ budget for funding Higher Education which currently stands at £6.5M – the same cash level since 2006. There are currently 811 students being supported by this budget. The agreement the Department has reached with Universities UK will not affect students already at university who will continue to be charged tuition fees at the existing rate (plus any annual inflation uplift) until the end of their degree course. This means that the impact of the fee increases on the Department’s budget will be gradual as existing students leave and incoming students on the new arrangements take their place.

‘We are planning to bring a States Report to the Assembly in March which will provide further detail of the impact on our current budget,’ said Education Minister, Carol Steere.

‘However with the deadline for university applications for 2012 fast approaching we wanted to give some comfort to those students currently considering their options and wondering which university to choose. Our message is that students should continue to choose the best option for them in terms of course and location,’ said Deputy Steere.

‘There have been several factors which have helped reduce the impact of the increased university fees on our Higher Education Budget. Despite initial indications that most universities would charge the maximum £9,000 fee, many have reconsidered and revised their fees downwards. Guernsey’s population of 18 year-olds is also reducing and so we expect fewer students to be going to university over the next few years. We have also been very prudent with our Higher Education budget and so believe that it will be sufficient, with any RPI uplift, to cover the fee increases until at least 2014. We

will need to come back to the States before then with more long-term proposals for higher education funding from 2014 onwards,' said Deputy Steere.

The Education Department will continue to means-test parents to confirm the level of contribution to both tuition fees and maintenance costs and does not anticipate any major increase in the maximum contribution to fees (currently £6,094) until 2014 at the earliest.

Details of the current schedule of fees and allowances and general information about funding for university is available on the Education Department's website at www.education.gg/unifunding