

## Student finance changes: 2026/2027 and beyond

There are a number of changes to the student finance system from 2026-7:

1. **Increases in tuition fees and loans**
2. **Introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE)**

### 1. Increases in tuition fees and loans:

**Universities can now set higher tuition fees**<sup>1</sup> because the Government has increased undergraduate **tuition fee caps** (the highest amount that universities can charge for tuition) for **all higher education providers**, in line with inflation for 2026/27 and 2027/28.

The Government provides students with a loan which comes in two parts:

- A **tuition fee loan** which covers the full tuition fee and goes directly to the Higher Education provider.
- A **maintenance loan** which supports living costs. It is **means tested** and its value depends on each student's personal circumstances, such as household income or where they will be living while studying etc.

### Tuition fees and loans:

In line with the tuition fee increase, the tuition fee loan has also increased:

#### How much you can get: Maximum tuition fee loans<sup>2</sup>

	2025 to 2026 academic year	2026 to 2027 academic year
<b>If you're studying for a degree</b>	Up to £9,535	Up to £9,790
<b>If you're studying an accelerated degree course (2 years)</b>	Up to £11,440	Up to £11,750

There have also been changes to the cost of **foundation years** (an extra year of study for undergraduate degrees, designed for students who haven't met the degree entry requirements, are changing subjects or have been out of education)<sup>3</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> [Government post-16 white paper](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Government student undergraduate finances](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Government full time student finances](#)

**Foundation year tuition fee costs and loans:**

<b>Course subject</b>	<b>2025 to 2026 academic year</b>	<b>2026 to 2027 academic year</b>
<b>Classroom-based, such as business, social science or humanities</b>	Up to £5,760	Up to £5,760
<b>Partly practical, including science, engineering, subjects allied to medicine or the creative and performing arts</b>	Up to £9,535	Up to £9,790

**Maintenance loans:**

There have also been changes to the maintenance loan, which will also increase in line with inflation.

**How much you can get: Maximum maintenance loan**

	<b>2025 to 2026 academic year</b>	<b>2026 to 2027 academic year</b>
<b>Living with your parents</b>	Up to £8,877	Up to £9,118
<b>Living away from your parents, outside London</b>	Up to £10,544	Up to £10,830
<b>Living away from your parents, in London</b>	Up to £13,762	Up to £14,135
<b>UK course with a year studying abroad</b>	Up to £12,076	Up to £12,403

For more details, see the [Government's guidance on tuition fees](#).

## 2. Introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement:

The **Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE)** is a new student finance system replacing the current post-18 finance system. From September 2026, learners will be able to apply for LLE funding for courses and modules starting from 1 January 2027 onwards<sup>4</sup>.

The LLE is a new way of funding those who are 18-60 years old and offers a pot of funding which can be **used flexibly**. Both full-time and part-time students will have access to loans and support. The reason for this is because the LLE moves from "years of study" to a "credit-based" system (where 1 year = 120 credits).

**The LLE loan can be used for tuition fee** for full courses at [level 4 to 6](#), and some level 7 courses, such as degrees, technical qualifications, as well as designated distance-learning and online courses, and PGCEs.

Students must check that their higher education provider is registered with the Office for Students (OfS) and their course is approved for LLE funding when applications open in September 2026.

LLE includes 1- and 2-year foundation years and integrated master's degrees and can also be used for modular study (i.e. part of a full qualification) but must meet criteria, such as:

- modules of high-value technical courses (HTQs) at level 4 to 5
- modules from full level 6 qualifications that align to priority skills needs and/or the government's industrial strategy, such as STEM related subjects like computing, engineering, and allied health<sup>5</sup>.

The Government has a phased approach to modular provision from 2027, so LLE will not be available for all institutions. An LLE qualifications gateway will be launched around January 2027 to help students.

### How much you can get: LLE

#### LLE tuition fee loan

The LLE tuition fee loan amount will be equivalent to **4 years of full-time study**. New learners able to access tuition fee loans up to a total amount of **£3G,160**. This is the same as around 4 years of full-time study (**£G7G0 per year x 4**) or 480 credits<sup>6</sup>.

To qualify for tuition fee and maintenance loans, a student must be **undertaking a minimum of 30 credits and a maximum of 180 credits in a year**<sup>7</sup>. You can get up to a maximum of **£G,7G0 for every 120 credits you study**.

#### Tuition fee loan amounts depend on:

- the number of credits studied

---

<sup>4</sup> [Government student finance Jan 2027](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Government student finance Jan 2027](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Government student loans Jan 2027](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Government support with living and other costs](#)

- the cost the university, college or training provider charges for each credit
- the university, college or training provider, for example, their type of Office for Students (OfS) registration and their Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) quality rating
- whether you study in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland
- if you are studying a lower-fee foundation year, undertaking a sandwich placement, studying or completing a work placement abroad or included in the Turing Scheme

### **LLE maintenance loan**

This will cover costs like rent and food and will increase annually in line with inflation<sup>8</sup>.

How much students get for the maintenance loan will depend on:

- where students live while they study, such as with parents, in London or abroad
- the number of credits they study
- how many weeks they study each year (If you study over 30 weeks a year, you may be able to get additional support depending on your household income).
- household income

Students must have at least **£1,587.50 left** on tuition fee loan amount and attend the course in person.<sup>9</sup>

If students study fewer than 120 credits in a year, the loan amount will be reduced proportionally. Students with disabilities and / or childcare needs can also access additional financial help. Sources of extra support include disability allowance and NHS bursaries but these may depend on personal circumstances.

### **Repayment terms:**

Repayment terms are the same as current Plan 5 terms so graduates will have to earn **at least £25,000** annual income before repayments begin. Repayments are 9% of earnings above the threshold. For example:

*A graduate earns £28,000 per year. They will repay 9% on £3000 (this is the difference between the repayment threshold of £25,000 and what they earn).*

*9% of £3,000 equates to £270.00 per year, or around £22.50 per month.*

Repayments are linked to RPI (Retail Prices Index), a UK measure of inflation (the rate of change in prices for goods and services). As the RPI increases / decreases, so will the interest added to the loan amount. However, if the RPI is very high, a cap may be applied to prevent the interest rate from becoming too high.

**As with Plan 5, any remaining balance cleared after 40 years.**

---

<sup>7</sup> [Government support with living and other costs](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Government student loans after Jan 2027](#)