Previous Study Rules

# Undergraduate Study

Eligible students can apply for tuition fee support and means tested grants for the standard length of a Higher Education course plus an additional year if needed.

The number of years of support available for your course will, however, be reduced if you have studied on a previous full-time Higher Education course at a publicly funded UK, ROI or overseas institution but did not achieve a qualification. You will have the number of years of support available to you reduced by the number of years of previous study.

Previous part-time study which did not lead to a qualification is not taken into account for previous study purposes.

The previous study rules normally apply to the Tuition Fee Loan, the Student Contribution Loan and the Maintenance Grant/Special Support Grant. The rules do not apply to the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), Parents’ Learning Allowance (PLA), Adult Dependents’ Grant (ADG) or Childcare Grant (CCG).

In some cases, students with previous study can also get funding if they are ‘topping up’ a lower-level higher education qualification. For example, if you have studied a full-time Foundation Degree, Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND) you **may** still qualify for student finance to study for an Honours degree.

However, you will not be eligible for a Tuition Fee Loan or means tested grants if you enter year 1 of a degree course having previously studied a 2-year full-time Foundation Degree, HNC or HND.

If you have a Level 4, 5 or Foundation Degree / HNC or HND obtained on a part-time basis you will be eligible for full student support in year 1 of a full-time first degree (subject to other eligibility criteria).

If you hold an Ordinary degree, you can receive further funding to top-up to Honours degree level.

If you already hold a qualification which is of the same level or higher than your new course of study you will not be eligible for any Tuition Fee Loan, Student Contribution Loan, Maintenance Loan or Maintenance/Special Support Grant for your new course. However, you would still be able to apply for extra support such as DSA, PLA, ADG and CCG.

There are some exceptions where students who already hold an equivalent or higher-level qualification can receive Maintenance Loan.

This applies if your new course leads to a qualification as a:

* Medical Doctor,
* Dentist,
* Veterinary Surgeon,
* Architect,
* Teacher (subject to certain criteria).

Students are also entitled to apply for DSA, PLA, ADG and CCG. For example, if you already hold an honours degree in Philosophy but want to go on to study a Dentistry degree you would be eligible to apply for a Maintenance Loan, as well as DSA, PLA, ADG and CCG, but not a Tuition Fee Loan or a Student Contribution Loan. Tuition fees or the student contribution fee will be your responsibility.

From 25/26, a Tuition Fee loan will also be available to new and continuing Northern Ireland domiciled students who attend the full-time graduate entry medicine (GEM) course at Ulster University, Magee. Students are not eligible for a Maintenance Grant or a DoH bursary.

Previous study is disregarded for eligible students with previous qualifications who wish to study either a Social Work degree at a NI University where they are eligible to apply for the Tuition Fee Loan and means tested student finance or for students on Allied Health Professional courses at Ulster University where they are eligible to apply for a reduced Maintenance Loan and the Department of Health bursary.

The rules relating to previous study are complicated. If in any doubt about the level of entitlement available, students can get more information from their local Student Finance NI office.

Use ‘Find your local office’ on the website [www.studentfinanceni.co.uk](https://www.studentfinanceni.co.uk/find-your-local-office/) to get the contact details.