



student finance england
The student finance experts

Independent Students

Estranged Students Update
Self Declaring Students
Estrangement Assessors
& Loan Repayments Explained



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Who is an Estranged Student?

- ❑ An Estranged Student is defined by SLC as: A student who has limited/sporadic or no contact with either of their biological/legally adopted parents. Therefore they do not maintain what SLC would consider as a functioning relationship. This includes living away from parents and receiving no emotional or financial support.
- ❑ SLC should as far as possible, satisfy themselves that the estrangement and students circumstances are genuine and that reconciliation in the future is highly unlikely if not impossible.



Customer Survey

SLC, Stand Alone and other representatives who support vulnerable students reviewed the feedback from our customer insight survey on Estranged students in August 2015. As a result of this feedback the SLC has reviewed our handling process of this group.

Feedback from this survey, stakeholders and student :

- Students feel shame in asking for a letter to evidence a breakdown in relationships
- Revisiting painful previous experiences to ask for the required evidence
- Writing and talking about their experiences can be traumatic and
- Too many pieces of evidence needed



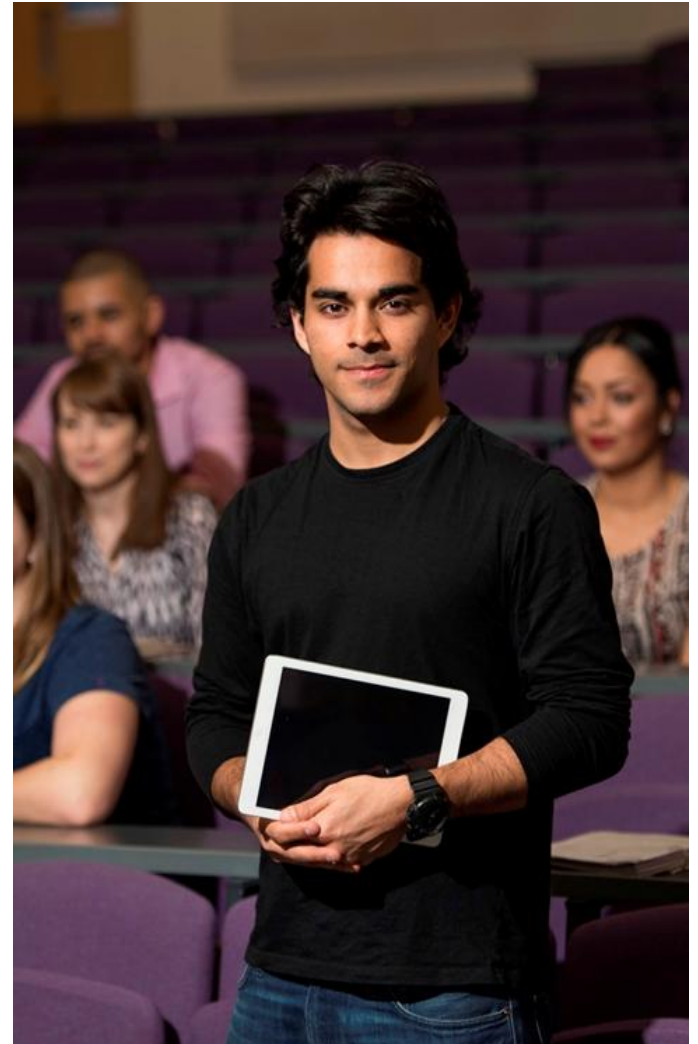
Enhancements to the Service

- Returning Estranged Students may not need to provide future evidence (Self Declaring)
- Dedicated Estrangement Assessor

Self Declaring Estranged Students

Returning Students

- ❑ A returning student who is considered estranged initially, previously, more often than not was required to provide evidence again in subsequent academic years. This was to show that they were still estranged (not including students who are awarded Estrangement for the duration of studies).
- ❑ A high percentage of these students the evidence provided initially (in the first academic year) was from a source the student was now no longer in contact with. Students may also have chosen to not disclose their family circumstances in their new setting or location at their new HEP. Therefore, there may be no valid professional person available to confirm that the estrangement still remains.



Dedicated Estrangement Assessors



A new service has been introduced in to SLC's processes for estranged students. This enhancement now means that a designated Estrangement Assessor will be allocated to support this unique demographic of Independent students.

This enhancement has been specifically targeted for those students who are viewed as being in a more vulnerable position and find it difficult to obtain evidence from a valid 3rd party source, as they:



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Dedicated Estrangement Assessors

How do we put this in to practice?

Telephone Review Process

- ❑ As part of being an Estrangement Assessor, we will initially contact the student, introduce ourselves and then proceed to ask a series of questions in order to obtain the necessary information.
- ❑ As a result of this interview, it will allow Estrangement Assessors to gain a better idea of the students circumstances and paint a clearer picture of what is required (if anything).



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Results of the Enhanced Service

The enhancements have resulted in the level of increasingly successful applications for this cohort of students at the start of the academic year.

SLC has seen an **increase of 25.8%** of successful applications for **Returning Estranged Students** for 2016/17 from the last academic year 2015/16.

2016/17 has also seen an **increase of 3%** of successful **New Estranged Students** from the last academic year 2015/16.



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An Idea of Scale...

As at 7th February 2017

- Total Independent Applications 22,938
- Total Estranged Applications 7982
- Of which are New 3073
- Of which are Continuing 4909
- Total Approved Applications 5979 (75%)



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Student Loan Repayment - overview

Students won't make repayments until their future income is over **£21,000** a year gross (before tax) or the weekly/monthly equivalent:

- If they study a full-time course, students will be due to start repaying in the April after graduating from/leaving higher education
- They'll repay 9% of any income earned over £21,000 and if employed, deductions will be made from their pay through the HMRC tax system
- If their income falls to £21,000 or below their repayments will stop
- Any outstanding loan balance will be written off 30 years after entering repayment



The repayment threshold will be £21,000 until at least April 2021, when the threshold will be reviewed

Student Loan Repayment - overview

Income each year before tax	9% will be deducted from	Monthly Repayment (Approx)
£21,000	£0	£0
£30,000	£9,000	£67
£40,000	£19,000	£142
£50,000	£29,000	£217
£60,000	£39,000	£292

Income
£25,000

9% Deducted
from?

Monthly
Repayment?



The interest rate is variable between RPI and a maximum of RPI+3%. Please visit www.studentloanrepayment.co.uk

Student Loan Repayment – key principles

- Student loans are always affordable as they are intrinsically linked to salary
- They are repaid through the HMRC / Payroll in the same way that tax and NINO is deducted
- For the Self- employed this would be paid via HMRC 's self assessment scheme
- Your Student Loan is classed as unsecured lending from the Government. It is not credit checked and not linked to your personal credit file
- If you take out a mortgage then the sum of money you pay out monthly will be taken into account to ensure you are able to repay the bank loan

Resources / Ongoing Support

- [SLC Funding Information Partners Account Managers](#) – regional Point of Contact for all University or College colleagues
- [SLC KnowledgeBase](#) – Source of Student Finance Information, search by ‘Key Word’. Web based, available to external practitioners. Click the link or Google ‘SLC Knowledgebase’
- Independent Pack for external use
- [Practitioner Website](#) – home of Fact Sheets / Online Support
- Vulnerable Student Stakeholder Group – feed in comments and drivers for change to Lynn Condell and/or Becca Bland who are both represented on the board.



Useful Contact Details

Independent Enquiries Inbox - Darlington Based

E-mail: *Independent_student_enquiries@slc.co.uk*

Estrangement - Estrangement assessors - Darlington Based

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