

Policy Manual

Issues Policy

Issues Policy 04 (IS-04): Student Financial Assistance

Adopted by: Board of Directors

Adopted on: March 22, 2011

Amended by: Board of Directors

Amended on: September 09, 2014

Summary:

Student financial assistance can be a means of enhancing the equality of access to post-secondary education across incomes and the social groups that experience income disadvantages. It can also be a means of improving completion rates in post-secondary education, and thereby improve the efficiency and efficacy of the system both socially and fiscally. However, not all forms or applications of what is commonly referred to as student financial assistance achieve these objectives, and no form or application of student financial assistance achieves these objectives to the same degree in all broader frameworks of post-secondary education financing.

The Union supports those forms of student financial assistance that best achieve the objectives of equality of access and support of program completion and those frameworks of post-secondary education financing that make most effective use of student financial assistance resources.

Policy:

- I. The Union supports:
 - a. Student financial assistance that is targeted to financial need;
 - b. Student financial assistance that improves participation rates in post-secondary education, particularly amongst currently marginalised populations;
 - c. Student financial assistance that improves completion rates in post-secondary education, particularly amongst currently marginalised populations;
 - d. An equitable determination of student financial need that accounts for a comprehensive range of expenses including, but not limited to:
 - i. Tuition and other fees;
 - ii. Textbooks, stationary supplies, and other education-related consumables;
 - iii. Food, housing, and other necessities of life;
 - iv. Travel and relocation;
 - v. Education-related technologies;
 - vi. Childcare and other dependant expenses;
 - vii. Non-education-related debt;
 - viii. Accommodation of disabilities and/or special needs;
 - e. Eligibility requirements for student financial assistance that are limited to the demonstration of financial need;

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- f. The integration and harmonisation of student financial assistance programmes with the aim of reducing confusion, delays, errors, superfluous requests for information, and duplication of administration;
- g. The public provision of accessible and thorough information on all aspects of student financial assistance programmes;

II. The Union opposes:

- a. The use or design of student financial assistance programmes as a means of justifying greater user fees for post-secondary education;
- b. Student financial assistance that increases the overall cost of post-secondary education for recipients;
- c. Student-funded student financial assistance;
- d. Eligibility requirements for student financial assistance that reference:
 - i. Full-time or part-time status;
 - ii. Academic standing;
 - iii. Changing program of study;
 - iv. Definitions of independent student status that:
 - 1. Include age;
 - 2. Include a waiting period after a parent or guardian stops claiming the student on their federal income tax return;
 - 3. Require the student to maintain a minimum income level;
- e. All user fees charged to students applying for or benefiting from student financial assistance including, but not limited to application fees and service charges;
- f. Any delay in disbursement of student financial assistance that has a detrimental effect on the recipient;
- g. Any penalty to recipients of student financial assistance due to delays in disbursement of that assistance including, but not limited to, course cancellation and the imposition of late fees;
- h. The treatment of student financial assistance as income in the determination of eligibility for government assistance programs;
- i. Requirements in public funding for student financial assistance and student financial assistance distribution mechanisms that rely on an institution's fundraising capacity over the financial need of individual students;
- j. Work study programmes as a replacement for student financial assistance.