

STATES OF JERSEY



INCOME SUPPORT: ELIGIBILITY FOR EDUCATIONAL OR TRAINING COURSES (P.66/2010) – AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 6th July 2010
by the Minister for Social Security

STATES GREFFE

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COURSES (P.66/2010) – AMENDMENT

PAGE 2 –

For the words “in order to” and paragraphs (a) to (c) substitute the words –

“, with the review to include consideration of –

- (a) the range of courses that are available;
- (b) the relevant Income Support Guidelines used by Social Security staff;
- (c) the communication of any new policies to stakeholders”.

MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY

REPORT

The proposition (P.66) of the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel seeks a review of Income Support policy in relation to adults undertaking educational and training courses. The proposition sets out three specific outcomes from this review –

- a definitive and clear list of acceptable courses;
- amendments to the Income Support guidelines;
- communication of the list to stakeholders in advance of the September 2010 intake of students.

This amendment seeks to clarify the current position, explain the actions that have already been taken in respect of the September 2010 intake, and provide a clear framework for the review.

Timetable for review

The original proposition referred to communication of the results of the review taking place “in ample time for the September 2010 intake of students”. Waiting for this matter to be debated in the States in the week commencing 19th July would have been to leave it too late.

The Scrutiny Panel report that accompanies the proposition itself mentions (on page 15) that a review is taking place in respect of the 2010 intake. This joint review by the Social Security Department and Highlands College has now been completed and has already resulted in improvements to the application process for the 2010 intake. Students who are offered a conditional place on the Return to Study course or the Access to Higher Education course are now required to confirm their Income Support status in advance so that there is no possible confusion regarding financial support during their period of study.

This amendment removes the reference to the September 2010 intake, as most prospective students have, by now, already received advice from Careers Jersey, Highlands and Social Security, made applications and many have received their conditional offers. The intention is that the review will be completed by December 2010, so that any recommendations can be incorporated into the application process for 2011.

List of Courses

The original proposition requires the review to “produce a definitive and clear list of acceptable courses”. It is not clear from the proposition itself but the wording of the report suggests that the purpose of the list is to remove any decision-making from Income Support officers so that any student studying a course on the “list of acceptable courses” would be eligible for Income Support.

The main subject of the review proposed by P.66/2010 is the eligibility for Income Support of mature students. Creating **automatic** eligibility for Income Support through a specific list of courses is one possible outcome of the review. However, this would be a major change from the current policy and would have a significant cost. There are other possibilities that should also be considered as part of the review.

The amendment provides for a thorough review to take place but does not presuppose the outcome. It also takes the opportunity to widen the review to consider the range of courses that should be available in light of the comments within the P.66/2010 report regarding the current level of unemployment and the training support that should be provided, in particular for unemployed young adults.

Departmental guidelines

Departmental guidelines are kept under regular review and any policy changes arising from the proposed review will be incorporated into the Income Support guidelines.

Financial and manpower implications

The financial implication of providing automatic entitlement to Income Support for all students on approved courses would be significant, in particular if that entitlement extended to full-time childcare costs. The additional cost to Income Support could exceed £0.5 million per annum.

However, there are no additional financial or manpower implications arising from the amendments to the proposition. This work is already scheduled for the second half of 2010 as part of the planned review of Income Support.