

21.02.09

6 Deputy I. Gardiner of the Minister for Education regarding students with settled status under the Jersey E.U. Settlement Scheme (OQ.24/2021)

What actions are being undertaken to ensure that all students who have settled status, or are yet to apply for settled status under the Jersey E.U. settlement scheme, are provided with clear and timely guidance relative to their status and eligibility for student funding, and the necessary steps they must take to enable them to make informed decisions and advance to the higher education course of their choice?

Deputy J.M. Maçon (The Minister for Education):

There are 2 elements to this question. The eligibility criteria for students to access student finance is mainly to have 5 years' residency on Island. This is not subject to an individual's nationality, the passport they hold, nor whether they have settled status. Student Finance provides regular presentations in schools, holding evening presentations, is present at the higher education fair and skills show, promotes the service on social media and all the information is on gov.je. In recent times, Student Finance have had a virtual session during the COVID period. In addition, given the above, there is no reason to treat students differently as the settled status is not taken into account when awarding student finance. However, for an informed choice, regarding student visas for students who do not have settled status, the onus is on the student to work with the jurisdiction of studies to find out all the proper information and what visas may apply. Within the U.K., for students with settled status, this would guarantee Jersey students being treated the same and this information is on gov.je. It is to be acknowledged by the department and is due to be promoted and I thank the Deputy for raising this matter. The department will be writing to all relevant students anticipated to be in years 11, 12 and 13, before the cut-off date of 1st July. Of course, the sooner the better. I am aware of the U.C.A.S. (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) deadlines. One of the benefits of having settled status is students not being charged international fees at most U.K. institutions (there are some exceptions). All settled status information can be found under the Customs and Immigration section at gov.je. I hope that clarifies the matter.

6.6.1 Deputy I. Gardiner:

First of all, I am grateful to the Minister for his comprehensive answer and he did answer several aspects. I would like to clarify, so the home fees would be connected to the settled status and does it mean, if the Jersey students did not apply or did not receive settled status before, they will not receive home fees in the U.K.?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

What seems like a simple question has a complicated answer. If a student has settled status, but they might have a non-British passport and they are not Irish, then, yes, under the law changes in the U.K. they should be able to apply or receive home fee status in colleges and universities that are regulated or as part of the scheme in the U.K. So, for example, we know some institutions, opérateurs and dance academies, for example, charge higher fees anyway, and therefore are not subject to the home fee status at all. Other institutions charge everyone international fees and therefore any student will be charged them. But certainly what I would say to any student who has not yet applied for the settled status scheme, it is definitely in their benefit to apply for it, as they would be able to take advantage from the home fee status. The department will be writing to all relevant students in order to highlight this with them.

6.6.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask the Minister then, they are very complex answers, if I am a student with a foreign passport but I have done all of my education in Jersey and going to university? My home circumstances are that I receive full funding. Are there any obstacles to that happening in a U.K. university because I do not have a U.K. passport, or will I just continue as a Jersey student?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

No. There is the possibility that, if you do not have settled status or a British passport or an Irish passport, then you can be charged international fees as a student. Whether you come from Jersey or not is kind of irrelevant. So I would strongly encourage all students who can apply to get settled status so they will not have an obstacle later on. I hope that clarifies the matter. But, yes, there are many variables when you look at these situations.

6.6.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Is the Minister saying it is a case-by-case basis? If so, what is the turnaround for students to know the answer to that question? Because obviously they will be wanting to apply and know their futures.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Yes, it is in a sense a case-by-case basis. Due diligence to liaise with the institution in order to understand what fees they would be charged. It is not something obviously Student Finance do. It is something that is the responsibility of the student. So I hope that explains the situation.

6.6.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

What measures is the Minister taking in liaison with other Ministers to ensure that all those who should be applying for settled status do so before the timescale runs out?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

The officers had already identified this matter, speaking to the head of Student Finance yesterday about this. They have highlighted it and we were having a discussion about could you target it to certain people, what is the data information sharing thing. We decided it is much better to send a flier and a leaflet to every student. That way we will not miss anyone within the band I have highlighted. So that is the intention, therefore at least we know all students will be covered within that banding.

6.6.5 Deputy I. Gardiner:

I would like to double-check, Minister, if the Government or your department will keep track of those who are here, who are eligible, but they have only E.U. passports, and they applied or not applied too late with their settled status. So you would have this communication and connection to the home fees.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I do not think Student Finance keeps that detail. Therefore, I do not think it works that way. We have decided to do a blanket communication and therefore the information will get out there. But if the Deputy has any concerns, I am more than happy to meet with her to discuss anything where she feels more work could be targeted.