



**This Service Agreement is made between the Student Loans Company and the Higher Education Provider in respect of services undertaken for the administration of student finance.**

## **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this Service Agreement is to define the agreed commitments of SLC and HE Providers (HEPs) to deliver information requirements to each other in respect of the administration of student finance. The Service Agreement is the point of reference for the Service Standards that apply to these commitments.

The Service Agreement is not legally binding and does not have any scope of enforcement through statutory provisions. However, HEPs have committed to meet obligations of the student finance system as a condition of Institutional Designation.

## **2. Definitions**

“AID” means Agreement on Institutional Designation

“Alternative Providers” is the term used to categorise those HE Providers that are not in receipt of public funds.

“ARC” means Academic Registrars Council

“BUFDG” means British Universities Finance Directors Group

“HEFCE” means the HE Funding Council for England

“HE Providers” is the generic term for universities, university colleges, school-centres for teacher training, FE Colleges that deliver HE, alternative providers

“MoU” means the Memorandum of Understanding

“NAMSS” means National Association of Managers of Student Services

“Public Providers” is the term used to categorise those HE Providers that are in receipt of public funds.

### **3. Authorisation**

The authorisation for this Service Agreement is provided

(a), for publicly funded HE providers by the Agreement on Institutional Designation, dated 1 August 2014.

(b), for Alternative Providers - Conditions of Specific Course Designation

The AID and Terms and Conditions include a section, repeated herewith, which established the obligation for HEPs to adhere to the SLC's requirements for student finance administration, in 6 key areas;

#### **Requirements of the Student Loans Company**

HEIs and FECs agree to meet their obligations to the SLC to provide the information necessary to administer student support in line with the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 (as amended). The information requirements relate to the following areas:

- Data related to the course of study that is designated for support;
- Verification that the fee charged to the student, and the course quoted by the student in their application, accurately reflect the student's position;
- Information related to student registration and attendance;
- Confirmation of changes of any circumstance that affect the student's entitlement; and
- Timely reporting of when a student withdraws from their course.

This Service Agreement therefore provides the commitment on providers to deliver these information requirements.

SLC has developed service standards for each of these six information requirements, and has also defined standards for the delivery by SLC of enabling dependencies.

These service standards are defined in Appendix 1.

### **4. Duration**

This Service Agreement comes into force on 1<sup>st</sup> Sep 2017, in respect of AY 17/18 and each AY thereafter, until further notice.

With a formal review after the first year of operation to allow further discussion and refinement of the metrics between the SLC and providers. There will then be a formal review each February to determine if the Service Agreement, or any service standards, definitions or management provisions within, need to be changed. ARC and NAMSS will lead on the review on behalf of HEPs, with SLC.

Communications of any changes will be undertaken in writing by providing the updated version of this agreement to Academic Registrars or equivalent and through the Students Records Officers (SROC) conferences and the SLC's HEP Student Support Seminar.

## **5. Scope**

The scope of the Service Agreement is limited as follows

- HE Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses provided by UK HE public and private providers.
- Information requirements as listed in section 3.

## **6. Provisions**

### **6.1 Scope of Services**

The services falling into the scope of this Agreement, and the applicable service standards, are defined in Appendix 1.

### **6.2 Monitoring & Reporting**

The HEP will ensure that management and monitoring systems are in place to ensure achievement of the service standards.

SLC's Partner Services Division monitors the performance of the HEP against the target service standards. SLC will provide data to allow Academic Registrars or equivalent effective management of the service standards.

SLC's Head of Operations monitors and reports on the accuracy and timeliness of payments and reassessments.

### **6.3 Remedial Action and Escalation**

Actions are agreed to address any significant variances from the service standards, and may include the following:-

- Re-prioritisation of administration work
- Essential system and process training delivered by SLC's Account Managers
- Account Reviews with the HEP's SLC Account Manager.
- Implementation of improvement actions
- SLC will escalate issues with individual universities to the Academic Registrar, or for other HEPs, the equivalent head of administration services. The HEP may make available an alternative senior contact, at management level as a point of escalation.

### **External Remedies & Escalations**

SLC will report regularly to the Student Finance Operations Stakeholder Group the following information

- The performance of the sector against service standards
- The trends in performance over time
- The extent of remedial action plans

Individual HEPs will not be identified.

The SLC has an MoU with HEFCE by which the SLC is required to notify HEFCE of any HEP that is consistently falling short of the service standards or failing to implement improvement plans. HEFCE are required to consider whether these concerns merit action in relation to the AID.

SLC will report formally to ARC and NAMSS, who will, with SLC and in conjunction with BUFDG where required, consider whether interventions are required by ARC or BUFDG at sector level.

SLC is required to notify the relevant Education Department of the UK Government or a Devolved Administration where it believes HEPs are not making reasonable efforts to achieve the service standards. This may, and has in the past, led to suspension and/or withholding of fee payments.

## **7. Oversight**

This Service Agreement is owned jointly by the SLC and ARC on behalf of HE public providers. The monitoring of the achievement of agreed service standards will be undertaken by ARC as follows:

- At periodic meetings of the SLC Operations Stakeholder group.
- At an annual review by the ARC Executive
- By incorporation into HEFCE's Designation system

## **8. Complaints about the Service Agreement**

Complaints in relation to the use of the Service Agreement can be made to the signatory in writing, who undertakes an investigation and appropriate resolution.

## **9. Confidentiality & Publicity**


This Service Agreement is not deemed sensitive and therefore does not have any restrictions on circulation.


## **10. Publication**


This Service Agreement will be published in SLC's HEP Services website. It will be issued to all HEPs on an annual basis by SLC.

## 11. Approvals

Signatories to the Service Agreement are as below.

<p><b>Signed on behalf of SLC:</b></p> <p></p> <p>Paul Smith, Head of Partner Services                      Date: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017</p>
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<p><b>Endorsed and supported by the Academic Registrar's Council.</b></p> <p><b>Signed on behalf of ARC by</b></p> <p></p> <p>Sharon Harrison-Barker                      Date: 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017</p>
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<p>Signed on behalf of NAMSS</p> <p></p> <p>WAYNE DEWICK, DEPUTY CHAIR, NAMSS</p> <p>Date: 23/11/17.</p>
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## 12. Annex 1 Service Standards

Service / Process	Accuracy	Elapse Time to Complete
Register of Eligible Courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public providers, non-franchised</li> <li>- SCITTS</li> <li>- Franchised</li> </ul>	95% by end Jan 100% by end-June.	85% by end-Jan 90% by 31st March 90% by end-Feb
Provision of Applicant Data	100% accuracy of data passed to SIS	99% approved applicants details posted to SIS within 24 hrs of approval
Verification of Study Programme & Notification of Changes	99 % accuracy	75% of course and fee CoCs within two weeks of -course start-date. (this must precede a first term Attendance Confirmation)
Confirmation of start of study (Registration Confirmations)	99.5% accuracy.	80% registrations with 5 days of term start date. X% for APs with AB Registrations 99% registrations/Not Turned Up/ within 30 working days of term start date
Attendance Confirmations	99% accuracy of attendance reports	85% by due date for earliest payment 97% return before 30 days from due date 98% return before 60 days from due date
Cessation (withdrawals)	99% accuracy of attendances	80% of withdrawals reported within 60 days of effective date 95% of withdrawals notified to SLC within 7 days of the withdrawal decision being made
Change Of Circumstance Notifications	95% accuracy	80% of CoCs submitted within 60 days of AC return of a non-A code.
Reassessments (by SLC)	99.5% accuracy of automatic reassessments 98% accuracy of manual assessments	70% within 20 working days at peak 95% within 30 working days at peak 95% within 20 working days off-peak.
Fee Payments (by SLC)	99.5% calculated fee payments due are made	99% of due payments are made by payment date

HEP Enquiries (handled by SLC)	92% accuracy identified through quality checks	98% mail response within 10 days at peak, 4 days off peak. 95% of calls answered within 60 seconds, off-peak, 80% at peak
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## 13. Appendix 2 Definitions of Services

### Attendance

Attendance on a course means active and on-going engagement with the activities and learning opportunities made available by the Provider within the course duration, including, but not limited to, scheduled learning and teaching activities.

### Registration

Registration refers to <the duration of> a binding agreement between a person and an organisation for the delivery of educational services. Alternately 'registration' may refer to the event or process through which that binding agreement is concluded.

### Withdrawal

A Withdrawal refers to the point at which scheduled learning, teaching and assessment activities and other active and on-going engagement end in agreement with the Provider.

*A withdrawal applies where there is no intention on the student to re-engage, and means there is no further obligation on the student to pay fees to the HEP. A withdrawal results in termination of a student's period of student finance eligibility.*

## 14. Appendix 3 Technical Information

SLC maintains a technical specification for each performance report. This defines the derivation of the data used in each of the reports. The specifications will be subject to annual review and amendment if agreed by the Service Agreement signatories.

Copies of the specifications will be available upon request, from 15/01/2018.