

Courses Management Service

Service Definition

Overview

The Student Loans Company's Courses Management Service (CMS) is a directory of:

- higher education (HE) providers
- full- and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate course information

We use it each academic year, to enable accurate assessments of student finance applications and the scheduling of payments.

Data processing

Each year, we will create the new academic year for designated HE providers. This activates the course information on the system and lets you update and amend your course information. We will notify you by emailing a nominated primary contact once this process is complete.

Updates will include amendments to existing full- and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses, adding new courses and closing courses where needed.

New providers and providers that have yet to complete mandatory CMS training will not have direct access to update and amend their course information. We will contact you for this information and will make any changes on your behalf. Alternative Providers will have details of their undergraduate and postgraduate courses listed on CMS.

Data validation

When you enter courses, the system will carry out validation steps to ensure that:

- you have completed all necessary fields for each submitted course
- business rules are imposed on the course data, in line with the most recent version of the Education (Student Support) Regulations
- all courses you submitted are designated and therefore entitled to statutory support

The system will not let you save a course if it finds any errors in the course data you have entered. An on-screen message will tell you what the error is and how to correct it.

We will carry out further validation checks outside the system to ensure that course information is in line with guidance. If we find any discrepancies, we will contact you to resolve these.

Availability of course data for student finance applications

Once you have successfully saved a course on CMS, then the course, course locations and the corresponding provider information will be immediately available for student finance applications. An on-screen message will tell you if your course submission has been successful.

Providers with access to CMS can edit and amend certain fields for both full and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses after the course has been made available for student applications.

Providers who do not have access to CMS will need to validate their course information and ask us to edit and amend details on their behalf.

Course designation

You should only submit designated courses to CMS, meaning courses which are valid for statutory financial support. We will carry out checks to ensure that your courses are valid and designated.

Automatic designation

If you are a provider with automatic designation, CMS will let you create undergraduate courses in all domiciles that you are designated for.

UK-domiciled providers can enter postgraduate master's courses, but only English and Welsh-domiciled and EU students will be able to apply for these courses that lead to the Postgraduate Loan.

Northern Irish students studying a postgraduate course at any authority-funded or OfS-registered provider in the UK will be eligible for the Northern Ireland Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan.

Scottish postgraduate students can apply for the undergraduate support package for these courses.

Specific designation

Courses that are provided wholly or in part by an Alternative provider fall outside the scope of any automatic designation under the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011. These courses need to be specifically designated so that eligible students may access student support.

System access and availability

We will initially issue all usernames and passwords. After this, you can maintain your staff's access to the system via the HE Gateway. There are no restrictions on the number of users per HE provider.

There are three types of access available for authority-funded (public) HE providers:

- Course DB User Administrator access: lets the user create, modify and delete user accounts on CMS
- Course DB Administrator access: lets the user update, enter and validate courses
- Course DB Advisor access: gives the user read-only access to the system

CMS restrictions ensure that users at providers with restricted access always have a read-only view of the system, irrespective of their individual user access types mentioned above.

Each individual must hold their own user account. For security purposes we will monitor the system for any users signed in to multiple sessions at the same time, and will automatically limit usage if this happens.

We will provide such notice as is reasonably practicable of any known times when the HE Gateway will be unavailable due to planned maintenance or system upgrading.

For optimal performance, we recommend that you use CMS with Microsoft Internet Explorer 11 or above, Chrome 74 or Firefox 59 browsers. Enabling JavaScript will further enhance system performance.

Higher education provider support

Our Partners Support Desk team handles operational calls and helps HE providers with all CMS enquiries. The support desk is available between 9am and 5.30pm Monday to Thursday and between 9am and 5pm on Fridays. The telephone number is 0300 100 0642.

If you experience any issues when using CMS, you should let our Partners Support Desk know as soon as possible.

CMS includes interactive on-screen help tools that you can use within the system. We also have a further guidance document available on the HEP Services website:

<https://www.heinfo.slc.co.uk/hep-services/courses-management-service/guidance-further-information.aspx>

Each HE provider in the UK and the Republic of Ireland has an assigned account manager. You can contact your account manager with any CMS queries, training requests, suggestions for enhancements and general guidance. You must ensure that you have a sufficient number of nominated staff who are trained in using the HE Gateway. You should also identify staff members who can cascade training to other users.

Performance requirements and service level agreements

Our responsibilities

The minimum availability of CMS is 95% of the supported window (excluding any periods of scheduled maintenance). The supported window runs from 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Thursday and 9am to 5pm on Fridays (excluding Scottish public holidays). You can use the system outside these business hours, but no support will be available.

We intend that the average response time for retrieving data from the system will be 5 seconds.

We will notify all named contacts by email when CMS is temporarily unavailable. We will also confirm when the system is fully available again.

We will provide up to date support and guidance to HE providers as needed and will ensure our staff are fully trained to deliver this.

On a yearly basis we will manage the accurate population of HE provider regulatory fee caps into CMS.

All of the above is reviewed annually.

Your responsibilities

It is your responsibility to ensure that your courses meet the relevant student support regulations. You must also make sure that the details we hold for all your full- and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses are correct before the launch of student finance applications. This will enable us to assess students against the correct course details and ensure that any fee payments we issue to you are accurate and timely.

You must submit all your course information by the date we have determined for the relevant academic year. We will let you know this date before we make CMS available for the new academic year so that you can be ready.

If you experience any issues when using the system, you should contact our Partners Support Desk on 0300 100 0642.

You must ensure a suitable number of staff members are fully trained on all aspects of CMS and are available if we need to contact you.

You must also ensure that an IT contact (either internal or external) is available on request.

It is also your responsibility to review your contact details regularly and notify us if there are any changes involving your primary CMS contact.