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5<sup>th</sup> December 2003

Headteachers of Schools with Sixth Forms  
(copy enclosed for the Head/Director of Sixth Form)

Dear Headteacher

### **Financial Support for students entering Higher Education in September 2004**

I am writing to inform you about changes in the administration of financial support for students in Higher Education and to explain how these will affect the timing and processing of financial support applications to be made by those of your students planning to start full time courses of Higher Education in September 2004.

As part of a programme of modernising the delivery of Higher Education student support, a new streamlined application process is being introduced together with a centralised, web-based, computer system which is currently being rolled out to all LEAs in England and Wales. We will be using it from January 2004 onwards.

When the single system is fully operational an improved on-line application facility will be launched (currently planned for April 2004), enabling students and parents to apply submit their details and track progress via the Internet. However there will still be the option of applying on paper using a new single form (PN1). After their applications have been registered, students will also have access to a new Customer Support line that will be available from 6:00am until midnight, 7 days a week.

One of the effects of these changes is that the application process will start later than in previous years. As usual I will be sending you supplies of paper application forms (PN1) and DfES booklets for distribution to students entering Higher Education at the start of the next academic year. However **you will not receive these until March 2004**. The completed forms and supporting documents will still need to be returned direct to the LEA for processing. Meanwhile, during **February 2004**, I will be sending you supplies of an introductory leaflet to provide your students with basic information about the financial help available in 2004/05 and the application process.

Information will also be available on the Student Finance Direct web site ([www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk)) including (from February 2004) the facility for applicants to obtain an estimate of the amount of financial help that may be available to them. Pending the launch of the on-line application facility, students and parents will be able to register their interest in the web site and be kept informed of developments by e-mail.

In addition to the new administrative processes and systems there will also be some important changes in the financial support scheme itself from the start of the academic year 2004/05. The most significant of these is the introduction of a new **Higher Education Grant** of up to £1,000 per year for new students from low-income families. This grant will be paid in addition to the existing financial support and is not repayable. The full amount of £1,000 will be paid if the household income is £15,200 or less. A reduced grant will be paid if the household income is between £15,201 and £21,185.

Experienced members of the Student Support Team will again be available to visit schools from February 2004. This is an opportunity for your students and their parents to obtain the most up-to-date information about the financial support available in 2004/05 and how to apply for it. We are able to do these presentations either during school time or in the evenings. If you have not already taken up this offer and you would now like to do so, please contact Sharon Jay (Tel : 01603 222439 ; E-mail [sharon.jay@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.jay@norfolk.gov.uk) ) as soon as possible.

If you would like further information about the financial support arrangements for 2004/05 and/or the administrative processes please do not hesitate to contact me.

I am enclosing an additional copy of this letter for you to pass on to your Director/Head of Sixth Form.

Yours sincerely

David Andrews  
Head of Student Support

cc Head/Director of Sixth Form