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## Loan offer for Scottish postgraduate living expenses

**Postgraduate students will be able to get a loan of up to £4,500 to help towards living expenses, the Scottish education secretary has announced.**

Mike Russell told the SNP conference that thousands of Scots students could apply for the assistance from 2015.

As many as 5,000 undergraduates, mainly taking courses in science, technology, engineering and maths, could benefit.

The low interest loans would only need repaid in line with the current student loan income threshold of £16,365.

Cash for student bursaries will rise next year to £105m, meeting a call from the National Union of Students (NUS) Scotland for this to increase in line with inflation.

### 'Step forward'

In addition the minimum income students from poorer backgrounds get from loans and other financial support will also rise from £7,250 this year to £7,500 next year.

NUS Scotland president Gordon Maloney hailed the package as a "big step forward".

Mr Russell told SNP delegates in Perth that money for education was the "best investment Scotland can make in its future".

He said the student support package would get "even better", adding: "I know that providing protection for inflation for further education students in the next academic year has been a key campaigning priority for the National Union of Students in Scotland."

### Conference rally

Mr Maloney welcomed the package, saying: "Too often, students in colleges and universities have to take on multiple part-time jobs, or go deep into commercial debt, to avoid dropping out.

"While, of course, grants and bursaries would be better than loans, worst of all would be no increases in support at all."

Mr Russell's announcement came as the SNP conference drew to a close. The event was followed by a rally in support of independence.

Chief executive of the Yes Scotland campaign Blair Jenkins told the rally: "What unites us in the Yes campaign is that clear democratic principle that Scotland's future should be in Scotland's hands, that the best people to make decisions on what is right for our country are the people of Scotland themselves."

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