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## Welsh Students Get The Most Financial Support For Tuition Fees In The UK

The Huffington Post UK | By Isobel Cockerell

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Welsh students who attend university get more financial support than any of their UK counterparts, as their government foots the bill wherever they decide to study.

Whilst students from England are made to cough up £9,000 a year under the coalition, their contemporaries in Wales can study anywhere in the UK for just £3,685 a year, with the Welsh government picking up the rest of the bill. Scottish and Northern Irish students, meanwhile, have to study at home to escape the fee hike.

It has also emerged Welsh students from middle to lower income families are given the most generous grants on the broadest scale.

The report was carried out by former Scottish civil servant Lucy Hunter-Blackburn. It comes following last week's prediction by the Institute for Fiscal studies, [who declared it 'highly unlikely' the violently opposed triple hike in fees would save money after all.](#)

Controversy has also surrounded the fact Scottish and EU students studying in Scotland are able to do so for free, while the Rest of the UK (RUK) coming to Scotland are saddled with a £36,000 bill at the end of their four-year course. This could all change if Scotland vote yes to independence, [when the practice would be illegal, according to European law experts.](#)

Scotland's government is comparatively tight-fisted with grants, however. Their lowest-income students receive just £1,750. Only those in families earning below £17k are eligible for the full amount, whilst £34,000 is the upper limit.

It means poorer Scots struggle to pay for their living costs while at university. According to Hunter-Blackburn, attendance at Scotland's universities is therefore elitist, reserved for students from more affluent backgrounds. "Free tuition in Scotland is the perfect middle-class, feel-good policy," [she said in the report for the Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and the Economic and Social Research Council.](#) "It benefits the better-off most, and is funded by pushing the poorest students further and further into debt."

England, meanwhile, offers only a token contribution of £50 to those earning less than £42,620. Lower-income students are offered a maintenance grant of up to £3,354 a year. Northern Irish students get a similar amount. Wales, on the other hand, is by far the most generous, broadly supporting students from families with a moderate income of up to £50,000. The Welsh government grant all low-income students with more than £5,000 a year, which they never have to pay back.

"It's our firm belief that access to higher education should be on the basis of the individual's potential to benefit, and not on the basis of what they can afford to pay", Welsh education minister [Huw Lewis said, speaking at Cardiff University in November.](#)

Unlike in Scotland, there is no particular discrimination against students from the RUK coming to Wales. Instead, the Welsh Assembly simply combats Cameron's inflated fee change by financially supporting their own students on all levels, wherever they may choose to study.