



10 FEB 2021

On 21 December 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

1. *How many 40+ year old students have applied for an extension of their student allowance past the 120-week threshold in 2020 and 2019?*
2. *How many 40+ year olds were granted extensions?*
3. *How many under 40-year old students have applied for an extension beyond their 200-week threshold in 2020 and 2019?*
4. *How many of these under 40-year olds were granted extensions?*

A student usually has a maximum of 200 weeks entitlement to a Student Allowance for tertiary study, or if aged 40 or over at the date they start study, a maximum of 120-weeks entitlement.

The 120-week limit provides support that enables students to complete most bachelor's degrees, or most sub-degree level study including foundation level study, certificates or diplomas.

Requests for an extension to the 120-week limit are paper based and applications are processed manually. The type of application and any decision to decline the application is held in the notes of individual case files. In order to provide you with information to answer questions one and three of your request, Ministry staff would have to manually review hundreds of files. As such, your request regarding question one and three is refused under section 18(f) of the Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

Approved applications for an extension are indicated by a flag in the system, therefore, the Ministry can provide this information.

To answer questions two and four of your request, please find **Table One** attached. This table shows how many applications for extensions were approved beyond the 120 and 200-week student allowance limits in 2019 and 2020 (calendar years).

Further information on student assistance is available through the Work and Income website and can be found via the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/students/index.html

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response in regard to student allowance extensions, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui



Jason Dwen

**General Manager Centralised Services
Housing and Income Support Services National Office**

Table One: Student Allowance applications approved for extensions to the 120 or 200-week limit for study starting in 2019 or 2020 (calendar years).

Approval type	2019	2020
120-week extension (40+ year olds)	47	40
200-week extension (Under 40 years old)	89	103

Notes:

- Student Allowance is capped at 200 weeks for students aged under 40 years of age, and 120 weeks for students 40 of age and older.
- The extension approval type (120 week or 200 week) has been determined based on the student's age at the start of their study.
- The data is as at 5 January 2021 but is subject to change as some of the 2020 applications will still be current, so there could potentially be extension applications submitted before the study end date.