



20 May 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 24 March 2025, requesting information about processing of StudyLink applications in 2025 and documentation on delays.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request set out separately below.

I have also included some general information about StudyLink application processing at the end of this letter, for your further information.

Question 1: The average processing time for Studylink applications so far in 2025, and a breakdown of the average processing times over the past five years.

StudyLink through its annual call to action campaign encourages students to make their applications for the upcoming academic year before 16 December (for example, a student studying in 2025 is encouraged to submit their application by 16 December 2024). This allows time for StudyLink to request any required information from the student, for the student to gather that information, and then for the student to send the requested information to StudyLink for processing. This is an intentional, long-standing strategy that gives the student the best chance of having their application finalised/paid before their study starts.

It is important to note that an application cannot progress to approved until we have received a Verification of Study (VoS). VoS is the information that we collect from the student's education provider in relation to their study dates, what they are studying, fees amount, and any other relevant information. This information cannot be confirmed by education providers until closer to the student's study start date. Generally, this is around 5 to 6 weeks prior to study starting. This means that an application received prior to 16 December, will not be finalised until (at the earliest) 5 to 6 weeks out from the student's study start date. It is also contingent on the accepted enrolment of the student with their education provider. If a student's enrolment has not been finalised with their education provider (for example, the education provider might be waiting on the student's NCEA results), this means that it will take some additional time while the student's enrolment is finalised. Once the study details are finalised, StudyLink can continue to progress the student's application.

Please refer to **Appendix One** which provides the mean and average Student Loan and Student Allowance application approval times, broken down by the month that the application was received, between 1 January 2019 and 31 March 2025.

Question 2: A breakdown of the number of Studylink applications across the past five years, inclusive.

Please refer to **Appendix Two** which provides the number of Student Loan and Student Allowance applications received. This information is broken down by the month that the application was received, between 1 January 2019 and 31 March 2025.

Question 3: Any internal documentation relating to a delay in approving Studylink,

Question 4: Any contact with either the Minister for Social Development or the Tertiary Education Minister relating to Studylink payments or delays so far in 2025.

These parts of your request are refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

General information about StudyLink application processing

It has been a busy time for StudyLink, as we have experienced a higher number of applications this year, with most students having now started their studies.

To manage the increased demand, we have reallocated staff to support with additional processing and we also temporarily extended our StudyLink Contact Centre hours to help assist more students. There has not been a substantial change to the number of core StudyLink staff.

Despite the increase, we are ahead in terms of the amount of applications we have finalised when compared to last year.

We ran an awareness campaign encouraging students to apply by 16 December to help manage demand. Students who had applied by the 16 December are more likely to have their applications finalised and receive their first payments on time (in their second week of study).

Where applications are not yet finalised, the main reasons are:

- We are still waiting on information to be supplied from the student, or
- We are still waiting on verification of study to be supplied from their education provider, or
- We are still processing the student's application and associated information/evidence they have supplied to us.

Students with access to MyStudyLink can track the progress of their applications and update a lot of their information online themselves.

We would encourage any students who are struggling, to contact us, so we can support with assessing their circumstances to determine the best way to help them.

There are a number of reasons that affect the wait time for an application to be processed. First amongst these is that we cannot confirm a student's study details until approximately five weeks before their study starts.

For example, we would encourage someone looking to start University in Semester One to apply prior to 16 December of the previous year, but their application would not be finalised until January/February, giving them a wait time of several months. Whereas another student also looking to study in Semester One, but who did not apply until January, may also have their application finalised in January/February, but with a wait time of only a few weeks.

This means it is hard to take the time from application through to a finalised state at face value, as we encourage people to apply as early as they can.

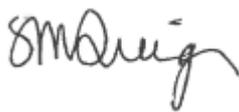
We also rely on applicants supplying all the relevant paperwork and the time they need to get this to us.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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 my decision on your request, 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

pp. 

Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services