



24 March 2026

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your email of 30 January 2026, requesting data on Studylink complaints, summaries, call wait times and reviews into customer service performance.

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.

- *Number of formal complaints about Studylink.*

Please refer to **Tables One and Two** in **Appendix One** for a breakdown of Studylink complaints in the period 1 January 2023 to 31 January 2026.

Please note that from January 2025, responsibility for complaints and escalations transitioned from the StudyLink Client Review team to the Centralised Services StudyLink operations (i.e. the StudyLink Processing Centre). With this transition there has been a shift in the management and categorisation of the activity of this nature, which has contributed to the observed reduction in reported complaint volumes from 2024 to 2025.

Please note that some complaints from Students are laid over the phone to contact centre staff but are logged into a separate system and are not easily collated. Therefore, your request for all Studylink complaints is refused in part under section 18(f) of the Act as substantial manual collation would be required to collate this information. If held, this information would only be contained within individual client files, which would each require manual review to respond to your request. 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.

- *StudyLink's average resolution time. By resolution time, I mean the average amount of time it takes between a student submitting an application with StudyLink, and that application either being confirmed or declined. I*

understand there may be different averages depending on what the application is for.

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 2026 is encouraged to submit their application by 16 December 2025). 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 Two**: Data on Studylink application processing timeframes which provides the mean and average Student Loan and Student Allowance application approval times, broken down by applications received for Months between December, January and February 2022/2023 to 2025/2026.

- *StudyLink's average hold time on the phone.*

Please find the average hold time for the Studylink 0800 number from January 2023 to January 2026 by month in Table One of **Appendix Three** below.

- *I am seeking formal reviews into customer service across StudyLink specifically.*

Your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the document alleged to contain this information does not exist. There have been no formal reviews into customer service across Studylink.

- *I am seeking any training or quality assurance issues that have been raised internally in StudyLink, specifically anything to do with students being dissatisfied with StudyLink and that being internally traced back to a wider training or quality issue.*

StudyLink does not have a central database of training and quality assurance issues or trends that have been identified. However, as part of our focus on client service and business improvements, any identified issues or trends from quality assessments, review of decisions, complaints, student experience or while staff are working on a file would be raised in real time to staff, managers or our learning and continuous improvement teams to consider mitigation actions.

Your request for this information is very broad, and substantial manual collation would be required to locate and prepare all documents within scope of your request. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

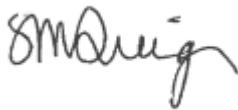
I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

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

Appendix Three

Table One: Average hold time (in minutes) for the Studylink 0800 number by month from January 2023 to January 2026.

Month	Average Hold Time (in minutes)
January 2023	20:42
February 2023	18:32
March 2023	16:00
April 2023	12:03
May 2023	11:05
June 2023	12:00
July 2023	14:43
August 2023	10:50
September 2023	12:42
October 2023	12:30
November 2023	10:35
December 2023	07:14
January 2024	09:16
February 2024	10:09
March 2024	08:02
April 2024	05:41
May 2024	08:41
June 2024	09:36
July 2024	09:10
August 2024	08:11
September 2024	06:55
October 2024	07:15
November 2024	07:23
December 2024	07:58

January 2025	09:06
February 2025	10:57
March 2025	09:36
April 2025	07:44
May 2025	08:12
June 2025	07:53
July 2025	08:54
August 2025	08:10
September 2025	08:00
October 2025	08:00
November 2025	07:30
December 2025	08:16
January 2026	10:03